

December 2, 2004

Dear Students:

It has come to my attention that there is a lack of information and a plethora of misinformation about the teaching program—the Center for Creative Teaching (CCT). There has never been a more vital time to remedy this situation. The CCT as we know it is in the process of being evaluated and is in danger of changing drastically and, in the opinion of some, for the worse. Student input has not been taken into account on this matter, which is why I appeal to you.

This term, the Dean's Office has initiated a self-study program of the CCT. While a committee comprised of faculty representatives from each discipline and some senior staff members has been meeting monthly to discuss the future of the program, at no point have they solicited any student input. Unfortunately there seems to be the incorrect idea that studying education at Bennington detracts from a student's study of other disciplines, particularly that in which s/he is seeking certification. There are currently only five required courses for the CCT (Teaching & Learning, Literacy & the Love of Words, a childhood studies class, the Senior Seminar, and the MAT seminar taught during the MAT/student teaching year), as well as many wonderful electives such as Telling Stories and, in past years, classes focusing on alternative education (Montessori, Waldorf, etc). Next Monday, December 6, the committee hopes to approve a ban on all elective courses, including education tutorials for undergraduates. This means that there would be no education classes available to students not in the program. This is unfair since students might like to take an education class even if they don't plan on becoming teachers. If we're allowed to take psychology classes without promising to become psychologists, why is a restriction being placed on education classes when that is just as valid an area of study? This change would go against Bennington's usual policy of encouraging students to explore many different subjects.

The CCT is a unique program especially vital during the era of No Child Left Behind and other such damaging and demoralizing legislation. It provides students who are passionate about teaching with the knowledge and certification they need to enter the real world and enact change without going through traditional methods classes. Bennington educates teachers to be creative and create plans for their classrooms beyond banal, habitual standardized instruction. As the literature for the program declares, "The education of great teachers cannot be dry or boring; it must be every bit as challenging and exciting as an historian's or a novelist's or a mathematician's." I fear that the program is in danger of becoming just the opposite. It is my experience that the CCT has succeeded wonderfully so far and I am personally grateful to be able to participate in this program. It has helped me better shape my own education at Bennington and helped me be a more thoughtful and careful student.

Please help me and other CCT students communicate to the committee *our* views about the importance of this program. Make sure our opinions are heard and considered. Contact Elissa Tenny to voice your opinion at x4406 or etenny@bennington.edu

If you have further questions, I can be reached personally at x4794 or valerenta@msn.com

Sincerely,
Valerie Wetlaufer
CCT SEPC