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**The
Educational Plan
for
Bennington College**

THE EDUCATIONAL PLAN
for
BENNINGTON COLLEGE

(Revised Edition . . . First Edition issued March, 1929)

OFFICE OF BENNINGTON COLLEGE
109 EAST 73rd STREET, NEW YORK CITY
JANUARY, 1931

ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF THE BENNINGTON PROGRAM

1. SELECTIVE PLAN OF ADMISSION on the basis of quality of the candidate's entire school record and personal history, with no required examinations or certificates in a specified list of school subjects (pp. 6-7).
2. TUITION TO COVER FULL COST OF INSTRUCTION with generous scholarships for those who need and deserve them (p. 8).
3. SELECTIVE REGIONAL AND SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIPS awarded on a four year basis to prospective students of unusual promise (pp. 8-9).
4. INDIVIDUALLY ARRANGED WORK FOR THE FIRST TWO YEARS taking full account of previous school courses and of differences in personal development and interest, instead of general requirements or free election of courses (pp. 9-10).
5. TWO YEAR SEQUENCE OF INTRODUCTORY COURSES designed to show the significant content and the particular method in each major field (pp. 9-10).
6. RECOGNITION OF THE FINE ARTS as one of the four major fields in the college curriculum (pp. 9-10).
7. PREPARATION DURING FIRST TWO YEARS FOR INFORMAL, INDIVIDUAL METHODS of the latter years by membership in a trial major conference group (p. 10).
8. TOOL COURSES, such as mathematics and foreign languages, prescribed only for those who look forward to major work requiring their use; not for all (p. 10).
9. ADVANCEMENT FROM JUNIOR DIVISION (first two years) to Senior Division (last two years) only by demonstration of distinct ability and interest in one of the major fields; no advancement to Senior Division or award of degree by mere accumulation of grades or by passing a specified number of courses (pp. 10-11).
10. WORK OF LAST TWO YEARS FOR ALL IN A CHOSEN MAJOR FIELD similar in aim and method to honors type of work now open to selected students in several existing colleges (pp. 11-12).
11. MAJOR WORK FOR STUDENTS NOT LIMITED TO DEPARTMENTAL SPECIALIZATION but planned for varying vocational, pre-vocational, or avocational life interests (pp. 11-12).
12. OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW SIDE INTERESTS as they develop, through individual work rather than by attending courses, thus aiming at self-dependence (p. 12).
13. A LONG WINTER RECESS giving both students and faculty opportunity for travel, field work, and educational advantages of metropolitan life (p. 12).
14. PROVISION FOR NON-RESIDENT WORK IN UNIVERSITY AND OTHER CENTERS during last year or two whenever facilities for advanced work are more favorable than at Bennington (pp. 12-13).
15. COMMUNITY SUPPORT OF "STUDENT ACTIVITIES" which have intellectual, artistic, or recreational value and limitation of campus organizations to such activities (pp. 13-14).
16. SMALL, SELF-GOVERNING HOUSE GROUPS FOR ALL, serving as centers of social life and informal faculty-student contacts (pp. 13-14).
17. CONTINUOUS UTILIZATION OF ALL KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENT PERSONNEL for more accurate, thorough diagnosis of the real needs of modern girls in home, school, college, and occupation (p. 14).
18. FACULTY CHOSEN PRIMARILY FOR TEACHING ABILITY; adjustable and ample faculty salaries, with policy of careful selection and reappointment of faculty, President, and Trustees, to avoid "dead wood" and to maintain flexibility (pp. 14-16).

History and Status

**Origin of
Idea for
Bennington College
1923**

Under leadership of Dr. Vincent Ravi-Booth, an Old Bennington group interested in higher education met to consider shortage of facilities for higher education of women, and opportunity it presented for a departure in undergraduate education in line with best modern standards and insight.

**Charter Secured after
Conferences with
Educators;
Bennington Residents
Pledge \$646,600
1925**

New York meeting of 500 educators and interested persons in April, 1924, followed by second summer conference in Bennington, resulted in securing of charter, formation of board of trustees for a women's college at Bennington, and pledges of \$646,600, including President's house and campus site, from Bennington residents.

**Campus Site,
Bennington, Vt.**

Campus site of 140 acres in the southwestern corner of Vermont, two miles from the New York line, 16 miles from Williamstown, Massachusetts, and Williams College, less than five hours by train from New York and Boston; situated on a beautiful plateau, flanked by the Green Mountains and Taconic Range, an ideal spot—accessible, beautiful, healthful.

**Educational
Survey Presented
1926**

Miss Amy Kelly, formerly of Wellesley College Faculty, now Head of Byrn Mawr School, Baltimore, made field study of higher education in the United States and Europe, for a Trustee group.

**President Chosen
1928**

January, 1928, Trustees elected as President Robert Devore Leigh, A.B. *summa cum laude*, Bowdoin, 1914; Ph.D., Columbia University; specialized in education and government; assisted actively in educational experiments while serving on faculties of Reed, Columbia, Barnard, and Williams Colleges; at time of election, A. Barton Hepburn Professor of Government at Williams; author of "Federal Health Administration in the United States" and other studies in fields of public opinion and public administration.

**Building Plans
Prepared by
Ames & Dodge,
Architects
1928-31**

Twelve, Homelike Dwelling Houses, an Educational Building (Class-Rooms and Administrative Offices) and an infirmary comprise the original planned physical equipment.

**\$1,262,000 to Begin College
\$1,013,400 Already Pledged**

To begin construction in 1931, \$1,262,000 necessary; of this \$1,013,400 already pledged or given; therefore \$248,600 now needed in order to open College in September, 1932; entering student body limited to 80 Freshmen, with full college enrolment of 240.

**\$ 248,600 Still Needed to
Open in 1932 with
80 Freshmen**

**\$4,000,000 Program to
Be Completed after
1932**

After 1932, an additional \$2,738,000 will be needed to complete building and scholarship program. Since the Bennington educational task is a qualitative one requiring only a small student body with no need or desire for

quantitative growth, and since necessary increases in current operating costs are to be met by increased tuition charges rather than by new appeals for gifts, the College once established with the \$4,000,000 total will be free to give undivided attention to its primary educational work.

The Educational Plan For Bennington College



HE plan to establish a new college for women at Bennington, Vermont, is in definite response to the general need for a thoroughgoing experiment in higher education along modern lines. Although the original proposal coincided with a period of unusual pressure in numbers for entrance to the women's colleges of the Northeast, this emergency was considered only as offering a favorable opportunity for the new institution, never as an important reason for establishing it. Fortunately the project has enjoyed the advantage of freedom from a limited outlook and from the hampering dictation of any one donor with dogmatic conceptions or personal idiosyncrasies.

The plans for the College have been taking shape as a result of seven years of interviews, conferences, public meetings, and surveys. Gradually these have brought to a focus the insistent need expressed by schools, educators, and parents, for a new institution such as Bennington proposes to be.

NEED FOR A NEW COLLEGE

The primary demand for a new College comes from the so-called progressive schools. Starting at the bottom of the educational ladder a generation or more ago these schools have grown in numbers, support, and influence until today they represent one of the most significant movements in our educational system. In many respects their faith and philosophy have been justified not only by their individual experiments but also by the psychological analysis and scientific measurement of school processes, which constitute the other notable features of the same period.

The progressive schools, discarding the medieval intellectualist tradition, have insisted on dealing with the whole personality of the child; modern psychological analysis points plainly to the necessity for this broader attitude if we are to promote through the schools either usefulness or happiness. The newer schools have taken the individual child as a starting point in making school programs; scientific studies, by showing objectively the enormous differences between individuals both in ability and in tastes, fortify this viewpoint. The experimental schools have stressed the values of direct experience and pupil activity as well as a content vitally related to contemporary social life in giving meaning and interest to the learning process; scientific studies and psychological experiment, by breaking down the false values attached to formal discipline in older subject matter and by relating discipline to the drive for a desired end, abundantly justify this approach. The progressive schools have set up initiative, self expression, creative work, independent reasoning, self dependence, adjustment to a changing environment, as aims; from a number of sources comes authoritative justification of this emphasis.

We are now approaching a period when the progressive schools must ally themselves more closely with the scientific students of education in the common effort to evaluate the newer methods carefully, accurately, and impartially to the end that their valid features may gradually be extended into general public school practice. In this effort, however, progressive schools find themselves severely handicapped. The newer school program can proceed in a thoroughgoing fashion only up to the point where the college reaches down with its formal admissions requirements; from this point on the progressive schools must modify their own chosen programs in the interest of their students' immediate future. And it is just at this point that the newer methods and

spirit begin to have their greatest possibilities for evaluation. Only the continuance of such work through the secondary school and college can test their validity. For here initiative, self-dependence, honest artistic expression, and ability to think independently, can be measured by adult standards and proved by mature accomplishment. At least one college is needed with sufficient funds and high grade teaching personnel, which by the nature of its entrance requirements will leave the schools free to teach what they think best; which will in its own program emphasize individuality, direct experience, serious interest, initiative, creative, independent work, and self dependence as educational aims.

This does not mean that such a college should necessarily limit itself to the graduates of progressive schools or that it should uncritically adopt progressive school technique. Surprising interest and support for such a new college for women have come also from the heads of traditional schools who see the need of more freedom for advanced instruction as well as of more individually discriminating entrance requirements for students of specialized ability. In a very real sense the Bennington project is fashioned out of the demands coming from an active, influential minority among parents and teachers in schools of all kinds.

Bennington College is, then, an experiment in college education. Although existing institutions are making piecemeal changes, the commitments of tradition and of assigned funds, the vested interests and conflicting aims of their faculty groups, are a distinct hindrance to a clean-cut, purposeful program. To bring about changes of a significant nature involving the creation of a new spirit and attitude among students and faculty, new institutions with staffs recruited for the purpose have often been necessary—at every stage from the kindergarten through the graduate school. At this time we especially need a thoroughgoing experiment in the college field.

PURPOSE OF BENNINGTON

Although almost all of the features of the Bennington program here described have been suggested by specific school or college experience, they represent in their entirety not a mosaic but a consistent plan presenting to the students an unusual opportunity. Briefly, Bennington says to girls in all types of schools: Have you serious interest and real promise in at least one of the fields of human achievement in which we offer instruction? If so, you may enter with us upon a period in which you may test that interest in the light of other interests while we assess your ability. If your competence is proved and your interest is sustained, you may go ahead under expert guidance with work in the field of your choice as widely and as deeply and as far as possible. No traditional, formal requirements or rules of residence will stand in the way of your getting the best instruction. No mere satisfaction of rules of class attendance, reading of specified books, or accumulation of course credits will suffice. Your degree will be given on the basis of a demonstration that you have learned how to stand on your own feet and to work with skill and understanding in your chosen field.

Nowhere are the colleges of the country carrying out this particular program—nor could they without a virtual internal revolution. Only a new college with adequate resources, built from the ground up on the basis of these ideas, can conduct such an experiment with the freedom and unified purpose demanded.

ADMISSIONS SYSTEM

The object of the Bennington admissions system is to discover and to select girls of serious interest and of unusual promise in one or more of the four major fields into which serious human achievement is rather artificially divided for practical purposes: i.e., literature, the fine arts, the natural and physical sciences, and the social studies. Such girls are not to be found in any one type of school, one part of the country, or one group in society. Nor are they to be discovered merely by setting up

minimum standard requirements attainable through certification or examination in a group of rigidly defined subjects formally studied in school.

Fortunately the accumulating experience of those colleges which, since the War, have introduced a system of selective admission, as well as scientific studies of the problem,* indicate clearly the best procedure for a college where no traditional or curricular limitations stand in the way of a realistic search for the students best qualified to profit by a college education. These studies show: first, that the quality of school work, as shown by grades and recommendations irrespective of the subjects studied, gives the most reliable prediction of college success; second, that no one set of impersonal tests, grades, or recommendations is so reliable as a judgment based upon all the evidence available regarding each candidate's past performance, quality, and promise.

Consequently Bennington will assign to an expert Director of Admissions the sole task of selecting the entrants to its Freshman class upon the basis of the following: (a) quality of the school record; (b) score on a scholastic aptitude test such as that now given by the College Entrance Examination Board and, where the school's standard of grading or accuracy of recommendations is unknown, an achievement test in one of the subjects in which the student has done her best work; (c) such general records, judgments, and personal history revealing indications of purpose, range and quality of interests, traits of character and personality, as can be obtained from school officials, parents, and other persons familiar with the candidate's out-of-school record, and from the candidate herself. Whenever distance does not make it prohibitive a personal interview with the applicant will be held.

The comparative weight to be given the various factors in the student's record will be left to the Director of Admissions, who should be able gradually to perfect her predictive devices by observing over a period of years their actual results in undergraduate success or failure.

Creditable completion of a secondary school course is the required minimum for entrance to Bennington, but it is not a guarantee of admission. (In unusual cases persons of maturity, serious purpose, and especial excellence who have not had formal or regular schooling will be admitted). The requirements are not stated in terms of a standard group of fifteen units in which students may be certified or pass examinations. The content and methods of work in the schools are left to the schools themselves, where they properly belong in this period of fruitful educational reconstruction. And by this means the College is able to create the largest possible area for selection, including the graduates of private preparatory schools, public high schools, and experimental schools throughout the country.

We know statistically that most able students are able in most things. And at Bennington, as elsewhere, students with uniformly good records will be welcomed. But a goodly proportion of students have unusual aptitudes in one field combined with what may be called temporary or permanent intellectual blind spots in others. Girls with such specialized ability will be encouraged to seek entrance. No one will be kept out merely because she has not succeeded in some one subject such as mathematics, Latin, or French. Nor will ability in the fine arts be obscured merely because it does not lend itself to school tests or to grading. Indeed a special aptitude in one line will give a candidate preference over another whose record is more uniform but mediocre in quality. The single emphasis is upon quality rather than upon a standard minimum in a varied group of subjects and the quantitative accumulation of credits.

Under such a method of individual selection the Director of Admissions can in the majority of cases make a decision regarding a student's application a year before the completion of her secondary school course. In the unusual circumstance of a student who in her last school year reveals weaknesses previously not apparent, the College will reserve the right to cancel the preliminary promise of admission.

* Studies of results of various admission criteria at the University of Minnesota, at Leland Stanford, Jr., University, and elsewhere.

TUITION SYSTEM

The admissions system aims not merely at cutting off the least qualified candidates at the bottom of the list of applications. Bennington will seek positively to find and to attract students of initiative, independence, maturity, and stirring ambition. Girls with these qualities are likely to be attracted to such a college. And its peculiar financial system makes possible the use of scholarships for this purpose.

If one were told that existing colleges give all students—rich and poor, promising and unpromising—a scholarship amounting to one-half or more of the actual cost of instruction it would seem a strange practice. Yet this is the precise effect of the prevailing system under which tuition charges cover one-half or less of the current instruction cost. Under the Bennington plan students will be charged as tuition their full share of the current instruction costs, estimated to be \$950-\$975, exclusive of room and board. As a necessary corollary scholarships and loan funds must be provided to defray part or all of the tuition for those who need and deserve such pecuniary aid. It is estimated that this group will constitute approximately one-quarter of the student body. But girls of limited means, whose opportunities for self help and later remunerative employment are more restricted than is the case with boys, are not likely, in any numbers, to enter a college whose tuition fee is twice that of other reputable institutions, with only the hope that after a semester of successful work a scholarship may be granted them to reduce the tuition charge. Consequently the usual method of semi-annual scholarship awards after entrance is inappropriate.

The Bennington plan is to award scholarships to prospective students who are carefully selected for their promise of distinguished college success. As in the case of the Rhodes scholarships, the original award will imply its renewal each year of the student's college course unless her work proves unsatisfactory.

SELECTIVE SCHOLARSHIPS

For a large proportion of the scholarships there will be a selective award made on a regional basis. The country will be divided into twelve natural regions in each of which a scholarship of \$1,000 (sufficient to cover full tuition charges and traveling expenses from any part of the country to Bennington) will be awarded once a year. In each region a committee of educators and laymen will be organized to make the annual nomination. The actual award will be made by the College Director of Admissions, who will reserve the right to waive the award for any year in any region when the nominated candidate appears not to be properly qualified. The regional committees, aided by teachers and other workers with young people, will naturally be interested in seeking out girls of demonstrated talent and in urging them to apply for nomination as regional scholars.

That many young women will welcome such an opportunity there is little doubt. Studies such as that of the HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS IN MASSACHUSETTS (By Dr. McPhail of Brown University, published by the U. S. Bureau of Education) indicate that with all the opportunity for the discovery and development of unusual talent implied in our free school system there remains an appreciable number of young people of excellent quality who, largely for economic reasons, do not go to college at all. More commonly young people of limited means do go to college, but to a nearby local institution with meager equipment and mediocre faculty rather than to the college their talent deserves. Selective four-year scholarships will open to some of these unusually competent girls opportunity for greater individual attention, closer faculty contact, higher standards of achievement, and more stimulating association with girls from other parts of the country than would otherwise be possible. And to the opportunity for friendly contacts and exchange of ideas and attitudes, characteristic of the small residential college, these girls will add something of the valuable diversity of background found in the large university.

In order to insure that the machinery of award will be continuously adjusted to the primary task of discovering young women of exceptional ability a central advisory committee will be associated with the College Director of Admissions upon which the principal national organizations of women and girls will have representation. This board will assist in the creation and revision of the personnel of the regional committees and will be given power to recommend from time to time changes in the machinery and conditions of selection.

It is also hoped that from the beginning there will be a half dozen or more selective foreign scholarships with the larger annual stipend of \$1,675. For the nomination of students from foreign lands excellent machinery, such as that of the Institute of International Education, already exists and can be utilized.

In passing it should be noted that the Bennington curriculum, admissions system, and scholarship system depend organically upon one another. The absence of requirement that all students study Latin, mathematics, or a foreign language in Freshman year makes possible an admissions system based upon quality of work rather than upon a uniform list of formal subjects, thus opening the doors to girls from schools with widely varying curricula. In turn this makes possible a scholarship system with selection on equal terms over the broadest possible area. In the case of visiting foreign students both the admissions system and the flexible curriculum greatly facilitate the combining of undergraduate work in the United States with the later work in the home university.

FIRST TWO YEARS

A first principle of the College is to recognize the very real differences existing between individual students in previous work, in maturity, and in essential purposes. Some students will know perfectly well at entrance what they want to do and will have good reasons for doing it. Others will come to college with temporary enthusiasms, preferences, and aversions based upon inadequate school experience. Still others, although of good general intellectual ability, will as yet have developed no well-defined purposes, preferences, intellectual or aesthetic interests. A uniform first two years of work required of all these students would do violence to the immediate educational needs of a large proportion of them. Consequently, the work for this period will be individually arranged by deliberate conference between college officers and each student. This should not be taken to mean an unrestricted elective system; the student's program is to be based upon a careful analysis of her present needs, aptitudes, and interests in the light of her previous school experience, as well as upon a proper anticipation of the necessary requirements for later college work in the field of her preliminary major choice.

The primary objective set clearly before every student immediately upon entrance is to discover for herself the field of human achievement in which she possesses a marked interest combined with distinct competence. The general pattern of work for the first two years will be designed to aid her in this quest. In both the first year and the second year a course in each of the four major fields of instruction suggested above will be offered. Although the detailed content and method of these courses can be defined only after the instructors have worked out their joint program, the work now done in some of the colleges under the heading of orientation courses will be of help in understanding their purpose. But many such courses, by providing an extensive and cursory survey of a vast body of knowledge, miss the essential method of work in the field which they attempt to introduce. An attempt will be made to avoid this mistake at Bennington. In fact, one of the primary objects of the Bennington introductory courses is to reveal the techniques characteristic of the several fields. In the sciences this will mean the laboratory method, not, however, routine work of a purely preparatory nature; in fine arts, creation or expression as well as appreciation; in literature, creative work and the comprehensive, active understanding of great masterpieces rather than detailed or superficial literary history; in the social studies the careful, intensive, realistic, impartial analysis of contemporary problems.

Each introductory course must also have a content carefully selected to reveal the significance of achievement in that particular field. In most cases it will cover more than one academic department of knowledge. (However, it may seem best in some fields, as, for instance, the sciences, to maintain four semester courses dealing in sequence with geology, physics, chemistry, and biology). Necessarily the content of a course must be a representative sample rather than an encyclopedic survey.

In the work of the first two years an effort will be made, so far as is practicable, to correlate the four courses round a cultural epoch. It is planned to have the general subject of the first year, or even first two years, an attempt to understand modern western civilization—its literature, its art, its political, economic, and scientific bases. In such a program there are possibilities of breaking down barriers not only between departments and between fields of knowledge but also between the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities. The literary, artistic, and dramatic life of the undergraduates during these years may make ingenious contributions to the problem of understanding the culture which they are studying.

In addition to the two-year program of four courses a year there will be for each student the equivalent of a fifth course known as the trial major conference. This is an informal group attached to each of the introductory courses. Every student at the outset as a result of conference and guidance will make a tentative choice of her major field. This selection will determine the particular trial major conference group she is to enter. If experience dictates a change of major interest she will be transferred to another conference group. These conference groups will pursue work differentiated from that done by those taking the introductory course for exploratory purposes. They will serve to carry the student as rapidly as feasible into the more individual and informal methods characteristic of the last two college years. They will provide a content especially needed by those students who will go on to advanced work in each field. They will offer also abundant opportunity for the instructors in each major field of the curriculum to assess the ability of the undergraduates proposing to do major work in that field.

During the first two years "tool courses" such as mathematics and the foreign languages will be available for those who plan to pursue advanced work requiring their use. They will not be required of all. The command of written and spoken English, of course, is an essential tool in all branches of college work. At Bennington, however, this training will be carried on not as a separate course but by tutorial or conference methods in connection with the material of other courses. For students whose secondary school work in any field makes unnecessary one or more of the general introductory courses and who do not need any special "tool courses," advanced work in the line of their interest will be made available at once.

Thus although there is a general pattern for the work of the first two years each individual student's program will vary from this pattern to meet her particular needs.

ENTRANCE TO SENIOR DIVISION

The test for passage from the Junior Division (first two years) to the Senior Division (last two years) of the College will be simple and definite. Promotion will depend solely upon giving clear evidence of distinct ability in one of the four major fields, not at all upon the accumulation of a certain number of credits or grades. Failure to do satisfactory work in one or more courses outside of the field of the student's choice will not disqualify or delay her. The specific object of the introductory courses is the exploration of the various major fields to discover permanent interests and competence. That object is attained outside the major chosen as truly by failure as by success. But unless a student does distinctly creditable work in at least one course during both her first and second years, and unless she meets the obligation of effort required by her instructors, it is likely that she will be asked to leave college.

Admission to the advanced work of the Senior Division may be granted to a few students at entrance to college and to some others at the end of the first year. The

College will be interested in cooperating with secondary schools which, by providing an earlier orientation, will make this possible. On the other hand there may be students who because of a false start, delayed maturity, or for other reasons, will need and will desire a third year in the Junior Division in order to prove their capability as well as to make certain of their interest in a major field. No objection will be made to this plan as long as the two-year record indicates likelihood of real success in the third year. It will naturally not diminish the requirement of advanced work in the Senior Division before the award of the degree.

What percentage of the student body will be eliminated by the test for entrance to the Senior Division cannot be foretold. The admissions system is designed to attract the girl whose record and attitude give promise of proving competence in a major field. Every student from the day she enters will know that it is her responsibility to find her interest and to demonstrate her ability if she is to remain in college beyond the first two years. In this task she will be assisted by her courses and her instructors. It is likely that as large a proportion of Bennington students will qualify for advanced work as at existing colleges where progress depends mainly upon the amassing of course credits. In any case a system which permits students who have not found definite intellectual interests in which they possess real ability to proceed to advanced work leads to waste or misdirection of energy for all concerned.

LAST TWO YEARS

For all students the work of the Senior Division will be similar in nature to the honors work now arranged for selected students in some of our better colleges. Every upperclasswoman will be enrolled directly under the supervision of the instructor or instructors in the field of her choice. Although the precise arrangement will necessarily vary with the major chosen it will be characterized in almost all cases by individual enterprises or projects involving continuous periods in the laboratory, studio, library, or field, checked by informal group conferences meeting once a week or less often. No daily round of class assignments will interfere with continuity so desirable and effective for advanced work. There will be a variety of individual and group arrangements impossible where such opportunities are strictly limited by highly organized machinery of requirements and attendance in four or five courses. Freedom from formality and daily routine is the medium in which self-dependence and initiative in intellectual or artistic work can best be promoted—qualities which are fundamental rather than incidental aims of the College.

The field of major interest in practically every case will be broader than any single academic department. It may be organized round a present interest leading to a future adult activity. Bennington has no sympathy with the false antithesis between vocational and liberal studies. The problem is that of gaining a broad, thorough preparation in a field of important adult activity where there is a real and lasting enthusiasm and interest. Whether in the after-college future this field will be entered as a full-time occupation, whether it is to be combined as a part or full-time activity with marriage, or whether it is to be carried on as an avocation in connection with the vocation of parenthood is almost impossible for any young woman to forecast. And fortunately it is not always necessary. The older professions, public affairs and international relations, the fine arts, child development, are examples of fields which may be unpaid avocations or full-time vocations depending upon individual preferences and the situation in which the young woman later finds herself. Each requires breadth of background, a liberal outlook, and a thorough preparation rather than the narrow, trade-school training often associated with vocational work even of "professional" character.

Especially where a vocation has as yet not developed academic preparation beyond the undergraduate college Bennington will not hesitate to include training in the necessary minor techniques required for successful entrance to it. For example, stenography and typewriting can be pursued as incidental parts of undergraduate work in the case of those young women who plan definitely to enter the secretarial field after graduation. The type of intellectual asceticism which fears that contact with

practice or reality will destroy the field for culture will be studiously avoided at Bennington. Breadth and thoroughness of work requiring sustained intellectual effort, whether directed toward a vocation or as preparation for leisure, will be the test of success rather than a program distinguished by its isolation from practical usefulness.

Breadth of outlook, which has always been associated with the liberal college, will be sought at Bennington in more than one way. Either during her school years or during her first college years each student will be introduced to the major fields of human achievement as a prerequisite to the intelligent choice of her field of concentration. Once she enters upon her major work her training, so far as the College is concerned, will be broadly in a major field rather than narrowly in a department or a single subject of study within a department, as is sometimes possible in the latter years of existing colleges. Furthermore, throughout her undergraduate life she will be in close contact with other students whose major interests differ from hers; thus she will constantly be subject to broadening influences. If during her last years she wishes seriously to follow interests entirely outside of her major she will be encouraged to do so. But instead of taking regular courses for this purpose she may arrange to do individual reading or other informal work. In this way, not only in the field of the major choice but in other fields, the methods are designed to encourage the habit of effectual self-dependence. Rather than a two-year period of required distribution of work followed by severely concentrated effort in the last years it is the plan at Bennington to encourage a broadening of interests and outlook along with the pursuit of a specialty so that both liberal outlook and specialization will be continued after graduation as a matter of choice.

NON-RESIDENT WORK

A small residential college with easy opportunity for individual attention is a favorable atmosphere for the early years when foundations are to be laid and intellectual interests awakened. But in the advanced work requiring specialized library, laboratory, and instruction facilities no small, independent institution can compare with the great metropolitan and university artistic, intellectual centers. Bennington College, recognizing this fact, will encourage its students to make full use of these metropolitan facilities for advanced work rather than itself attempt second-rate competition with them.

The College calendar is a first means to this end. In addition to a two-months' summer vacation there will be a winter recess extending from Christmas through Washington's Birthday. For both faculty and students this provision gives an opportunity for travel, for non-resident field work in groups, and for participation in metropolitan life at its most active period.

During the last two years those students who, in order to explore their special fields, need facilities which the College cannot itself offer, will be encouraged to go to centers where there are the best opportunities for continuing major work under the general supervision of the College. This plan will apply to those who need laboratory research facilities offered by certain universities; to those who wish to study national and international affairs in such centers as Washington, London, and Geneva; and to those who desire to study foreign languages and literatures abroad or to gain access to the leading centers of art and music.

For a majority of students the facilities and staff at Bennington will be such that they will continue in residence throughout the last two years. The utmost flexibility in making the best individual arrangements will be permitted. In all cases the Bennington faculty will retain supervision of the non-resident work leading to the Bennington degree. And in every instance the work will bear a direct relation to the student's general plan of study.

Some students may prefer to effect a complete transfer to another institution for receiving the degree. To this no objection will be raised. Until, however, existing universities permit much more freedom in curricular requirements for transferred

students it can seldom be arranged with any degree of satisfaction to the students themselves. To facilitate complete transfer at the end of two years Bennington would have to revise its curriculum so that its students could meet the varying formal, traditional requirements of other undergraduate institutions. This would strike at the heart of the College's educational program. If the junior college and university reorganization movements eventually make such undergraduate transfer mechanically easy, Bennington will be in a position to reconsider its relation both to the schools and to the universities.

The Bennington degree will be awarded as the result of examinations, theses, or other objective tests designed to reveal objectively the accomplishment of the student in her field of major study. The degree of Bachelor of Arts only will be given. No graduate work is contemplated.

COMMUNITY LIFE

The city university attended largely by day-students may perhaps of necessity limit its responsibilities to the primary intellectual activities connected with the curriculum. But a residential college cannot ignore the fact that it is an organized community rather than merely a group of class rooms, laboratories, and libraries only. For good or ill, on its campus young people are gradually acquiring habits of play as well as of work; they are modifying their modes of conduct, making fundamental and emotional adjustments, absorbing new attitudes, ideals, and appreciations.

Until a generation ago college faculties held aloof from this student life outside of the classroom. In crude response, however, to a real educational need for practical activity the students have been gradually building up their own elaborate student-made curriculum. This extra-curriculum, neglected by the faculty although profoundly affecting the work of the classroom, has finally created an essential duality of organization and aim on the college campus.

On the one hand there is the college of the faculty, centering in the classroom where instructors carry on their work with such ability, enthusiasm, and initiative as they possess. In this classroom world the students, by and large, play a rather passive part, using little initiative, exercising a small degree of imagination and self-direction. Step outside the classroom, however, and one will see an amazingly different picture. Here are undergraduates engrossed in what are called student activities, exercising initiative, directing their own efforts willingly and enthusiastically toward their own chosen goals. In this world of the students the faculty plays a passive, almost negligible role. The juxtaposition of the two worlds on the same college campus causes friction and inefficiency. It is the primary task of those interested in the improvement of undergraduate life to bring about such reorganization as will produce a nearer approach to unity of purpose.

Any attempt in this direction in an existing college meets with the greatest difficulty. Traditional faculty attitudes and institutional arrangements as well as the prejudices and vested interests of student groups and embattled alumnae present almost insuperable obstacles to significant improvement.

Here, perhaps, even more than in the case of curriculum and method, is a unique opportunity for a new college. Bennington intends to take full advantage of it. By recognizing the value of many student enterprises, by basing students' tasks upon their fundamental ambitions and interests, by setting up skill and understanding in a major field as a principal aim to which both curricular and extracurricular activity will contribute, the College will do much toward destroying the gulf now existing between student and faculty purposes. The athletic, dramatic, musical, publication, self-government, and religious enterprises of undergraduate life, by intelligent guidance at the outset, can be incorporated into the main intellectual and artistic program sponsored by the faculty. Trivial and merely imitative student organizations will probably be proposed; but if these do not fall of their own weight they can be effectively discouraged before they become fatally imbedded in institutional tradition.

Student social organizations, such as sororities or their equivalent, are the cause of much trouble in educational institutions because of their snobbishness and highly competitive struggles for a meretricious prestige. In place of them Bennington will attempt a rational, inclusive social grouping of all students in connection with the living and eating arrangements. Groups of approximately twenty girls will occupy college houses, with each student assigned for her four year residence by a committee of students and college officers. In each house one or more selected faculty members will live, entirely free, however, from custodial or disciplinary duties. Each house will also have associated with it a number of other faculty members.

These arrangements will give Bennington an unusual opportunity to bring into natural, friendly contact people differing widely in maturity and background. The small residential college usually suffers because of a student body too homogeneous in viewpoint. Although the large university avoids this fault, it is unable to bring together its members with their divergent cultural and geographic backgrounds. Bennington will derive its varied student body from the operation of the selective scholarship plan, while its community life and atmosphere will lead to utilizing this variety for the stimulating exchange of ideas and attitudes based upon real tolerance and understanding.

In time there will grow up in each house a corporate group with its own alumnae, traditions, and individuality. Although the College itself is so small that many of its activities will cut across house lines, there will be opportunity in the houses for informal education in self-government, group budgeting, household management, hygiene, and other problems developing out of the normal needs and interests of the students themselves. Out of these activities there will almost certainly in some cases evolve more formal parts of the curriculum.

PERSONNEL WORK

The small size of the college body, the careful cumulation of accurate individual student histories, the conference method of instruction, and the regular contact between faculty and students will provide increased opportunity for personnel work. Heretofore this term has been used to denote the activities of an expert staff dealing with individual students. It has been developed most extensively in large institutions where mass instruction has cried out for an individualization of the educational process. It represents a tardy and partial recognition of the fact that any sound educational program must consider the whole personality, not merely its intellectual side.

The small, residential college has seldom taken advantage of its superior opportunities for this kind of service. At Bennington not only will there be expert staff guidance for the physical, mental, emotional, and vocational problems of the individual student but an attempt will be made to enlist the faculty and all the resources of the institution in the cooperative task of gaining greater insight into the primary educational influences on modern youth.

The tastes, manners, morals, and ideals of the younger generation have become the subject of a veritable mythology. It is time they were made subject to patient, continuous, impartial analysis. The environment of the young woman today with its secularization of authority in manners and morals, its exciting, sophisticated modes of entertainment, its paradox of standardization and recurrent fashions forms an educational influence which few really understand but with which the teachers of youth must grapple.

The personnel problem in these broader aspects Bennington wishes to develop most of all to help the individual student under its charge, but also in order to keep its feet planted firmly upon the ground of reality, to provide a continuous criticism of its own program, and to throw light upon weaknesses and values in education below the college level.

FACULTY

A faculty for an institution such as Bennington proposes to be is easy to describe but difficult to secure. Attention will be concentrated upon obtaining and rewarding really gifted teachers of undergraduates. To this end any merely traditional requirements regarding formal academic training, experience, and research will be willingly sacrificed. Because the attainment of the Ph.D. degree has proved in practice to be an irrelevant standard for determining teaching effectiveness it will not be used as an important basis either for appointment or for promotion. And although the faculty will necessarily be recruited largely from the younger members of the college teaching profession, there will be appointments of persons whose training and experience has been entirely or in part outside academic life. The essentials sought in appointments will be both a thorough understanding of, and an enthusiastic interest in—the teacher's special field, the individual student, and the principles and problems of modern education.

Although original appointments will be made with great care, mistakes are bound to occur. Consequently, all first appointments will be made either to the lower grades with a one-year or three-year tenure, or to the full professorial grade where an arrangement will be made for a three-year appointment before promotion to permanent tenure. Permanent tenure in the full professorial rank cannot wisely be dispensed with. But every effort will be made to effect an intelligent, careful selection of those who are to be placed finally in this category. It will be the primary task of the President, aided by a capable faculty committee, to maintain a scrutiny of the effectiveness of the teaching staff with a view not only to giving helpful suggestions for improvements in method, but also to making discriminating decisions in the matter of all reappointments and promotions.

Reversing the usual order of determining faculty salaries, the College, will first fix a salary scale based upon existing data regarding an adequate academic standard of living; tuition charges will then be placed at an amount sufficient to cover the salary total. If the salaries prove inadequate, the tuition will be raised. From the outset experiment will be made with the adjustments of the salary to actual family needs (the family allowance system). This system is especially applicable to women's colleges where it has already proved successful in actual practice (as, for instance, at Wells College).

The opportunity for travel, freedom for independent work and for observation in intellectual centers, provided by the winter recess and regular Sabbatical leave as well as the educational investigation fund described below, should contribute to the continuous intellectual growth of faculty members.

FLEXIBILITY

Institutions have too often begun well abreast of current educational thought and practice only to become in time stupidly complacent and set in their ways. Bennington will seek from the start all available means to avoid stagnation, to test its original hypotheses, and to revise its program in the light of its own and others' actual experience. Machinery designed to facilitate such flexibility has been adopted as follows:

(1) All of the Trustees are elected for a seven year term, two retiring each year. The tradition of replacement at the end of a single full term has already been established.

(2) The President's resignation is in the hands of the Trustees to take effect seven years after the date of his original appointment. An advisory committee of outside experts will survey the College and report to the Trustees shortly before they act on the President's possible reappointment. By these and other careful arrangements the selection of his successor at this or any succeeding seven-year period can be made without embarrassment.

(3) The College proposes to establish a fund, the annual income from which will be at least \$7,500, for investigations in the field of higher education for women. The annual award of the fellowship under this fund may be made either to a member of the Bennington faculty or to an outside expert. Normally it will be used for the investigation of a specific educational problem arising directly in connection with Bennington. It will provide the kind of thorough study necessary for the successful inauguration of educational experiments and the continuous scientific evaluation of their results in actual operation.

(4) In order to aid the President, Trustees, and Faculty to keep in touch with non-academic centers of thought and movement in the various professional and scientific fields with which the College is concerned the President is empowered to appoint advisors to be consulted on matters of general policy. The following are some of the fields in which advisors are being selected: the fine arts, music, drama, journalism, vocations for women, natural sciences, medicine and hygiene, law, architecture, and religious education.

Bennington College

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