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The Anatomy of Our State U

Old Westbury Students Will Shape Own Destiny

Today, in the second article four-part series about the State University's branches on Long Island, The Press takes a look at the new State University College at Old Westbury.



By MARSHA KRANES

The restlessness of today's college student may be turning administrators prematurely gray on some U.S. campuses, but at the new State University campus in Old Westbury it is seen as a challenge—a welcomed challenge.

The college, which will offer something new in American education when it opens in September, is quite emphatic about the value of student turmoil.

It outlined its views on the subject in its first catalog:

"The turbulent, critical mood of today's student is a great occasion for education. Their complaints against the multiversity, their concern for relevance, their search for individual identity and their questioning of everything can lead to better teaching, more relevant courses, more disciplined and serious study, deeper personal understanding and greater involvement with public problems."



STUDENT DEMANDS being made at Columbia University and elsewhere are student rights at the new college, located on the 570-acre F. Ambrose Clark estate.

This was made clear in the State University's master plan in 1966, which stated that the new college at Old Westbury would:



Holding an informal talk outside the gazebo on the Old Westbury campus are college president Harris Wofford, left, student planner Muriel Keyes and Professor Larry Resnick.

"Admit students to full partnership in the academic world and grant them the right to determine, in large measure, their own areas of study and research."

As a result, students have been involved in the college's development from the beginning—from the moment Harris Wofford, former associate director of the Peace Corps and special civil rights advisor to President Kennedy, was appointed its president.

The curriculum, the college's organizational structure—everything—has evolved with the help of student planners and will change when the students think it is necessary.

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THE STATE master plan gave Wofford and his student and faculty planners two other guidelines, both as unusual as the first:

- "End the lock-step march in which one semester follows on another until four of youth's most energetic years have been consumed," admit qualified students without high school diplomas and grant degrees to "those who attain competency . . . without regard to length of collegiate study."

- "Use mechanical devices to free faculty scholars from the academic drudgery of repeated lectures, conducting classes devoted to drill and marking many examinations, thus allowing faculty scholars to turn their full creative powers to meaningful exchange with students, to research and to artistry."

With these instructions in mind, Wofford and his planners have created a college that is a mixture of Oxford and the Peace Corps.

The Oxford influence is seen in the structure of the college, which will be a federation of small colleges all making their home on what was once the grazing grounds of F. Ambrose Clark's championship steeplechase horses.

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THE MAIN building on the Old Westbury site was destroyed by fire last April. While major site development work will start this

month, the college will begin its first semester this fall at Planting Fields, which until recently was the home of the State University's International Center. The center is moving to Albany.

Later this year new structures will rise on the fields that once served as a championship steeplechase course. In the center will be a library and other instructional facilities. Around them will be clusters of small colleges, with both dormitory and classroom facilities.

By 1975 there should be about 5,000 students enrolled in 10 or more small colleges.

Each of the colleges will vary in approach and emphasis and remain open to innovation and change, according to the desires of its students.

The first of the colleges due to open in the fall with 75 students (50 freshmen and 25 juniors), will concentrate on the social sciences and humanities—with special emphasis on urban problems.

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THE COLLEGE'S curriculum is designed to get students involved in solving these problems both on and off campus.

Most students will spend part of their first year on field assignments that involve them in community action or teaching—enabling them to contribute to the community and learn at the same time.

The second year will consist largely of on-campus academic study with some part-time work in the community. The third year will feature field assignments with the fourth year spent, for the most part, on campus.

But this mixture of theoretical and applied learning is not a rigid formula. It is subject to the needs and preferences of each student. Among the variations possible is a two-year break for Peace Corps service during the course of study.

Right now, Wofford's staff is arranging field assignments for entering freshmen. About

20 are expected to spend their first semester at Old Westbury away from Old Westbury—in Tel Aviv.

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NEEDLESS TO SAY, the new college has attracted a great deal of attention in the academic world.

Among the more than 400 students who applied for admission this year, many had already completed one or two years at leading U.S. colleges but were willing to lose college credits and enter Old Westbury as freshmen.

"They want to be involved in building a curriculum and forming the philosophy of a college," explained Larry Resnick, a professor on the college's 13-man faculty.

He noted that most of the applicants were of Ivy League caliber.

The college accepted those considered "intellectually talented, mature enough for independent field work and capable of helping develop a college curriculum," he said.

Many students accepted by the college, he added, have worked as volunteers with the Office of Economic Opportunity or VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America).

"They're social activists—they want a relevant education and involvement."

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TEACHERS CHOSEN for the faculty were well known as campus innovators.

"They all find the notion of breaking loose from the traditional college structure very appealing," explained Henry Scott, director of student affairs.

"Our students and faculty are enthusiastic," he said.

"We've been planning this college for some time now, but no one knows what will happen when our students arrive and we open for business."

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TOMORROW: Long Island's three community colleges.