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# CREATING AN EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE OF A STATE UNIVERSITY WITH STUDENTS AS FULL PARTNERS

## The Case of the College at Old Westbury State University of New York

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In 1966, as part of its general expansion, the State University of New York decided to establish on Long Island a new residential college to open with 1,000 students in 1970 and ultimately grow to some 5,000 undergraduates and an undetermined number of masters students. As part of University Chancellor Samuel B. Gould's program to make the 60-campus institution "the most ambitious laboratory in the world for innovation in higher education" the University trustees decided, on Gould's recommendation, that the proposed new college at Old Westbury would be an experimental one that "pays heed to the individual student and his concern with the modern world." Among several specific innovations promised in the University's 1966 Master Plan, the new college was committed to "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," and to "use mechanical devices to free faculty scholars from the academic drudgery of repeated lectures, conducting classes devoted to drill and marking many examinations" in order to promote "meaningful exchange with students, -- research, and -- artistry." The Master Plan stated further that, "since the campus is to be built literally from the ground up, the president and the faculty members the president recruits will have an almost unrestricted opportunity for innovation and creativity." Chancellor Gould, in appointing me president in November 1966, gave an additional mandate: "to review all the conventional ingredients such as admissions policies, grades, course systems and academic divisions, and break whatever barriers may stand in the way."

According to this mandate, innovation was being asked for four overlapping but different areas: architecture, academic program, administrative organization, and college governance. A beautiful 600 acre wooded estate was to be developed into a hundred million dollar campus, with the most up-to-date provisions for new learning technology. We were supposed to experiment in new curriculum and better ways of teaching and learning. We needed to design an administrative organization that would institutionalize experimentation so that it would continue over the years ahead, not begin and end in one creative burst. And we were to do all this with students as full partners.

For better and for worse, we chose to proceed along all these lines simultaneously. Instead of first appointing key administrative colleagues and working out a detailed plan of development, I enlisted at the same time several prospective members of our faculty and some students who came on leave from other colleges to serve on our first planning staff. And we asked the architects, already selected by the State University, to participate as members of our planning roundtable. Our aim was a college that plans rather than a planned college, and for this a living organism, a nucleus of the real thing, with faculty and students as well as administrators and architects in dialogue with each other, seemed preferable from the beginning. In bringing such a planning group into being, I lost the opportunity of working out on my own, or with a few administrative colleagues, a grand design that would then be imposed on future faculty or students, But I assumed that Old Westbury should be more than any one person's grand design and more than any one particular academic plan; that is, its grand design should be a college of continuing search for good liberal education, with more than one line of search underway.

Students on the planning staff from the beginning seemed important, moreover, in order to realize the idea of full partnership. If no students were involved in the original planning, and then 1,000 students came a few years later to a campus and a curriculum planned without student participation, the chance of any real partnership developing seemed slim. So we employed surrogate students, seven in the first six months of planning, and then more in the next year, most of them on work-study terms from other campuses. The first group came largely from other so-called experimental colleges, three from Antioch, and one each from Goddard and San Francisco State; there was a freshman drop-out from the nearby State University Center at Stony Brook, and a Berkeley graduate. The next group, a summer planning seminar, consisted of a dozen students interested in educational reform, chosen through the student organizations of the campuses of the State University of New York. During most of the first year and a half of planning, students constituted nearly half of the membership of our planning roundtables. They participated in academic, architectural and administrative planning, and served on the panels interviewing and recommending faculty appointments and student admissions.

In taking seriously the University's mandate to include students as full partners, I did not suppose they would or should predominate in decision-making or dominate the dialogue or diminish the curricular leadership of the faculty. I hoped that student participation would contribute significantly to the academic search and education at Old Westbury, and saw them serving as essential leavening. In our Statement of First Program in 1967, our initial catalog, we wrote:

> "In creating this new college the State University sees the restlessness, curiosity and questioning of youth not as a spectre, but an opportunity. The turbulent, critical mood of today's students 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."

The first faculty members who joined the planning staff were of diverse backgrounds but with strong interest in educational innovation. A professor of philosophy joined us in the first weeks full-time; he had been chairman of his department at the Cortland College of the State University and a consultant on educational reform to both the United States Office of Education and the Basic Systems division of Xerox. A professor of psychology and an associate professor of English Literature soon came to us from an intense experience in planning a new college of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. The president of Webster College, now president of Hunter College, who was then transforming a small Catholic girls' school into a coeducational secular institution and who was a member of Zacharias's White House Committee on Education, spent several months with us as a full-time planner and then continued as one of our chief consultants. A professor of history from the University of Wisconsin, a pioneer in a new teaching method of "doing history", later to become a University Professor on joint appointment at Stony Brook and Old Westbury, and several others, were regular consultants.

To complete the cast of original characters, the first eight academic administrators must be described, all of whom wanted to teach and participate fully in the curricular planning. Five had at one time or another been teachers, and two had led adult education programs. Five had served on the staff of the Peace Corps, and saw it as a form of education-in-action, a kind of university in dispersion. Two were lawyers and interested in law teaching. Two were graduates of the University of Chicago under Hutchins and two were graduates of St. John's college, and all four were loyal to the tradition of great books seminars.

An additional personal note about the president is pertinent. I, too, came from the Peace Corps and the great books period at Chicago; I came with a long-standing special interest in designing an undergraduate liberal arts curriculum around the themes of law, medicine and theology; and I had an addiction to Socratic seminars which I tried to put at the center of any enterprise. As lawyer and law teacher, I had been persuaded that law was a good lens through which to look at the body politic and problems of self-government, and I had a hunch that the other ancient professions of medicine and theology, taken broadly to include psychiatry as well as physical medicine, and Eastern as well as Western religions, would be good as major undergraduate subjects unifying our knowledge about the mind, body and soul. Some such unification of knowledge through a coherent curriculum of liberal arts rather than a scattering of elective courses, seemed to me the main object of curricular reform. I did not suppose that a law-medicine-theology curriculum would necessarily be the best such liberal arts curriculum, although I thought it a promising one; nor did I expect Old Westbury to limit itself to the great books or to any one particular approach. Yet those who appointed me and everyone of the first staff knew that the opportunity to develop the law-medicine-theology curriculum was one of the reasons I had come, and that the relevance of the great books was my most stubborn dogma. So my first colleagues were not invited to an entirely clean slate.

For about six months nearly twenty of us on this first planning staff conducted an almost continuous planning roundtable. Some seventy-five outside consultants came for one or more days on campus, or we went to meet with them in Cambridge, Washington, Santa Barbara and New York, in separate planning sessions on science, the arts, teaching, programmed and computer-assisted instruction, experiential or action-education, architecture, law, medicine, theology, to name just a few of the subjects.

From the beginning most of the students and some of the faculty members pressed to turn the planning staff into a parliamentary body where decisions were made by a majority vote. They were not satisfied with the response from me that in the planning discussions we should submit ourselves to the dialogue and follow the question where it led with complete equality around the table, but that when we left the table we went back to our separate responsibilities, functions and powers, hopefully enlightened. Our obvious aim was to reach an agreement on a program that would be better than anyone might impose, but I had no intention of abdicating the executive powers of the presidency, limited as they are, or of undermining the teaching responsibility of the faculty, or of blurring the lines between administration, faculty and students. This view of a kind of federal republicanism in which separate persons and constituencies contend in a continuing dialogue, seeking mutual persuasion while exercising their appropriate respective powers, often including mutual vetoes, runs counter to the prevailing concepts of "participatory democracy" and "community." Most of the students on our planning staff held rather ardently the notion that we should be a community in which all major decisions would be made in the fashion of a Greek democracy, one-man-one-vote.

Although this disagreement on governance remained as a shadow overhead and occasionally consumed time and energy during the first planning year, we came to a remarkable degree of agreement on a first program and a general organization of the college. In my first announcement on being appointed president I had promised that Old Westbury would be a "school of the world." To the surprise of those of us from the Peace Corps who assumed that overseas programs would receive high priority, most of the students pressed for a focus on domestic problems of race and poverty, and especially on our urban crisis. "Old Westbury proposes to be a 'school of the world' in the broad sense of the word 'world': the world students will go out into, defined by its problems," we agreed to say in the catalog. "Take any of our major domestic concerns -- urbanization, education, integration, automation, poverty -- and they turn out to be world-wide problems." We did agree on a pilot program for some 20 students in Israel, including service on kibbutzim there, but our major activities were to be in the inner-city at home. However, we said that we would seek large numbers of foreign students and faculty; that students could spend a year or more in overseas programs such as the Peace Corps; and that international programs "would be high on the planning agenda."

What we agreed to as the first main program was a work-study, education-in-action curriculum, with a practical focus on urban problems, and a continuing common humanities seminar during off-campus as well as on-campus terms, with a reading list that included a high proportion of great books. We entered a rough treaty in which it was agreed that about half the reading of the year would be in common for all the seminars and agreed upon in advance, and the other half would be determined by each seminar as it went along. We took as the overall theme of this first program Whitehead's dictum:

> "The tragedy of the world is that those who are imaginative have but slight experience, and those who are experienced have feeble imaginations. Fools act on imagination without knowledge, pedants act on knowledge without imagination. The task of a university is to weld together imagination and experience."

Law, medicine and theology were thus deferred, although ingredients of each were planned for the first year. One student professed interest in such a curriculum if by law, medicine and theology, we really meant crime, disease and heresy, but most of the student planners and most of the faculty consultants opposed it as a first program. It, too, was placed high on the planning agenda, and teaching was added to law, medicine and theology as professions to be included by 1970 as a "major part of at least one of our basic programs."

Since the Statement of the First Program that we agreed to and published for new students and faculty set aims and raised expectations that became crucial to the next stages of the experiment, it is attached to this paper. It describes a number of other academic innovations in the first program: small seminars and workshops as the primary form of teaching; independent study required as one-third of a student's program beginning in the first year; a pass - nonpass grading system; a very simple structure of credits, etc.

In addition to an initial curriculum, we agreed upon a basic academic organization as our alternative to departments formed along conventional discipline lines. We said that Old Westbury would be a "college of colleges," in the tradition of Oxford and Cambridge, with a number of federated small liberal arts colleges, utilizing a central library and other common facilities and administrative services. "This plan," as we wrote in our catalog:

> "seeks to answer the complaints about the impersonality of a multiversity by combining the variety and large resources of a university with the unity and intensity of a small college.
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> "Each of the Old Westbury colleges will offer an academic program designed to provide a liberal education. These programs may vary from one another in teaching approach, educational emphasis or combination of subjects; but, in each, teaching and learning will be the first priority. The common question before the faculty and students of each college will be: What is the best curriculum for a college of liberal arts and science? These collegiate divisions will be small enough so that students

> and faculty can know each other; but they will not be self-contained communities. Students will generally spend at least half of their time in the particular college program they choose; they will be free in the other half of their time to work in the programs of the other colleges and will be encouraged to do so...
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> "In calling for the formation of one constituent college after another over a number of years, and not giving unlimited life to any one college curriculum but rather exposing each to continuing criticism and review, the opportunity for innovation and creativity will be extended far beyond the period of initial planning. Through these 'visions and revisions' Old Westbury will seek to give education the impetus and invigoration of a continuing experiment."

In this way, we said, "Old Westbury is being designed to test the possibilities for such a renewal of liberal education and of the liberal arts college in the center of the university."

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This was our proposed academic program, collegiate organization and strategy; an initial work-study, urban affairs curriculum; a constituent "college of colleges" structure instead of departments, and a plan of organic growth. Supported by considerable enthusiasm from our first student planners, faculty and administrative staff, we went to the central administration of the State University in Albany for authority to start the college on a pilot scale in 1968, two years ahead of schedule. We proposed opening temporary facilities with 150 students, including a number of older Masters Degree students who would be recruited from the Peace Corps and other domestic or overseas teaching or action programs. Such a smaller beginning seemed more promising than the larger 1,000 student opening planned for 1970.

Some thought we were mad to move so fast and to lose the opportunity to plan longer without the pressure of students. To us, however, developing a new curriculum by trial and error in actual classes seemed more practical than

than spending another two years planning in a vacuum. Planning while teaching, learning while doing, seemed more realistic.

There was another method in our madness. John Gardner, then Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, had given us strong advice which we had accepted. The biggest problem in academia is the departmentalization that cuts up the body of knowledge and keeps people from seeing the world steady and whole, he said. The most important task is to find a better form of organization than specialized departments. If departments ever get going at Old Westbury, he predicted, we would never be able to get rid of them. The guild is too strong. So start small, he urged -- so small that departments don't make any sense -- and in doing this you may discover the right alternative; you may rediscover the liberal college.

To the proposed early opening, most of our colleagues in Albany gave strong resistance. If we had proposed a conventional curriculum in a conventional structure the early start might make sense, they said; then later, on a solid beginning, we could start to experiment. A master's program, either in Teaching or in Community Action, they ruled out of the question; masters programs should only be created on the base of strong, proven undergraduate programs, with an experienced faculty. With the help of Jacqueline Grennan, who had developed the idea of an early master's program, we argued that such older and more mature students were essential for our opening mix, and that the program we were starting was in fact more clearly appropriate at the master's than at the undergraduate level. We were overruled on all points.

Finally, in early 1968, we took an appeal to Chancellor Gould. I was invited to make our case to him in the presence of the eight or nine top officers of the University who had recommended against our early opening. After a long argument, the Chancellor decided that we should open in September 1968, but with only 75 students, and all of them undergraduates.

Old Westbury (in temporary location at the Planting Fields, Oyster Bay campus of the State University) opened in September 1968 with some 85 students, two-thirds of them freshmen, one-third upper-division, transfer students from other colleges. The students were selected from out of some 700 applicants, almost all of whom visited campus to participate in seminars and to be interviewed. We had 85 instead of 75 students because about 95 per cent of those admitted accepted the offer, a far higher proportion than anyone had anticipated, and even after 23 chose to go to Israel in a special program arranged with Tel Aviv University there were 85 left at Old Westbury. Each applicant was interviewed by at least one of the student planners and one other staff member. The student planners participated fully in the decision-making of the admissions committee.

When the students arrived it became clear that the disagreements, arguments, and battles within the first planning staff were going to be renewed on a larger scale. They resembled very closely the kinds of students who were on our first planning staff, and strikingly shared their basic attitudes: a resistance to any required courses or books, and to most of what goes by the name "academic"; a fascination with the new life styles of the so-called youth culture; a determination to study only "relevant" subjects, usually defined as those related current social issues; a desire for a gentle community of equals with no lines between students, faculty and staff; and a commitment to one-man-one-vote participatory democracy as a condition for partnership. "Let everyone do his thing" (except the president) seemed to be their basic definition of an experimental college. Some were more politically activist than others, some more hippie than others, some more alienated than others, but there were no apparent conservatives, and almost none who simply wanted a good liberal education or were primarily interested in learning

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a vocation. "We're all to the left of Hubert Humphrey," said one of the students with some pride.

David Riesman had worried that our curriculum would be too unconventional for most of the students he expected would come to a low-tuition ($400) state college from the upwardly mobile middle-class communities of New York and Long Island. In addition to the political activists and those lost in search for themselves, he said, we would be serving the practical, career-minded students, fraternity and sorority types, scholars and scientists. To be representative and healthy, he advised, we would need to serve fairly all these types. We thought we had a curriculum that would do this, but the different types didn't come. We tried to plan a program that would "break the grip" of conventional wisdom and lead students away from an unexamined life, but almost all our first students were already immersed in the iconoclasm and skepticism of our twentieth century confusion; they already saw themselves in the avant garde of social revolution. "It's not a liberal education I want," said one seventeen-year old girl. "I hate liberals. I want an education to be a radical."

It was our miscalculation, a Himalayan one, and we should have known better. With a pool of almost ten applicants for every one place, we thought that we would be able to select a balanced and representative first class, and our admissions criteria stressed such diversity. We thought the first curriculum's combination of required common reading of great books with direct field work on current problems would discourage those who didn't want to study or work hard. We emphasized some of these points in our catalog:

> "For both students and faculty the curriculum and the community of learning at Old Westbury will be demanding. Taking responsibility for one's own education and accepting partnership in a common venture will put pressure on each participant. The excitement of making a new college will not substitute for the attention required to master difficult arts or sciences. There will be disappointments for any who think they can change the world without understanding it, or understand it without study, or study without books. Contemporary studies will

> not substitute for the classics. Education-in-action, whether in the inner-city ghetto or suburbs of America or on the other side of the globe, should leave the actors thirsty for knowledge and theories to make sense of the experience.

But we underestimated Old Westbury's special appeal to a special student population. Publicity about the "college that students helped plan" had been widespread, and most of the articles had emphasized the idea of full partnership. This and the initial urban action curriculum and the general idea of an experimental college had great attraction for a large number of students in New York and all over the country; we had tapped a very large market. Moreover, our first student planners in their interviews with applicants attracted, and were attracted to, students more or less like themselves. Probably it was true of the whole pool of applicants, but in any case those finally chosen were skewed by these factors of selection and self-selection.

Ironically, students who were most practical-minded and academically inclined, even in a sense academically conservative, tended to be the fourteen black and Puerto Rican and the three Asian or African students. This twenty percent representation of non-whites (as they first called themselves) or of "third world peoples" (as they later called themselves) is the highest such proportion in any non-Negro mainland United States liberal arts college. This was the first group of students to make any academic demands. In the first week of school they presented a manifesto calling for courses "such as social organization, statistics, urban planning, languages, sciences and law." They said they could not afford to return to their communities "with merely a 'GG' or 'Grooving in the Grass' degree" but needed "meaningful degrees" representing "the attainment of certain tools" through "hard methodological courses." On social militancy, the black and Puerto Rican students set the pace, but on academic issues, unlike the majority of students, they inclined toward more requirements, examinations, grades and course structure, and were readier to accept the authority of teachers. They seemed much less interested than most white students in student power over academic matters.

To this rough profile of the first student class must be added some facts about the first faculty. Of the twelve men who taught full-time during the first year (one of whom didn't come until spring) only three had participated actively in shaping the first program (two of the first five faculty planners having gone on leave during the 1968-1969 school year).

Six were under thirty; one was a black militant from Panama with successful experience in community organization in Brooklyn, but no teaching experience; one was a journalist and novelist who had never gone to college; a second novelist came late in the year. Five had received Ph.D. degrees (two in philosophy, one each in psychology, sociology, and political science), one of whom was taking his first teaching job at Old Westbury. One had a law degree, one an advanced theological degree. In additon to these twelve, the Academic Vice President, a physicist and the Vice President for Planning and Dean of Administration, social scientists, and the President all taught regularly, along with four regular part-time faculty, two of whom were law teachers.

All these men had been drawn to the banner of experimental education, although only about half interpreted student partnership in terms of equal student power in academic decision making. All had read and discussed the catalog before they were appointed, and presumably were prepared to give the program at least a fair trial, although one had been outspokenly critical of the field program. They all had strong, though widely differing, visions of the educational reforms needed.

From the first meeting it was a turbulent and quarrelsome group. As one of the more experienced professors noted, "We don't have any of the oil of apathy that keeps most faculties running smoothly."

In their first days at Old Westbury the new faculty was hit very hard by the critical and demanding attitude of the students. When faculty meetings were called to go over the teaching arrangements for the first semester some students immediately protested the very idea of "faculty meetings," even professing shock that Old Westbury's faculty would do such a thing. The students wanted "community" meetings on all academic matters, and at the very least insisted upon being present and able to participate in all faculty meetings. At its first meeting, the faculty voted that its meetings would be open to students, subject to its right to close meetings by majority vote at any time. Not until the end of the first school year did the faculty vote to hold a closed meeting, although several faculty members repeatedly pressed for this.

The Academic Vice President and other older members of the original planning staff and I had counted on the first faculty to take over the program and assume vigorous curricular leadership. We expected the new faculty, several of whom were noted for their great popularity as teachers, to arouse the interest of the students and win their confidence in the new curriculum. To our dismay, the new faculty seemed to suffer an "identity crisis" at least as serious as that of the students, and to share many of the anarchic tendencies of the students, including the resistance to any program or anything passed on to them from others. Most of them had been critics or educational reformers or rebels on their home campuses. The transition to being the Establishment was difficult, and the challenge to their authority by students claiming to have an equal or dominant voice in academic affairs disconcerted them badly. In some sense the first faculty never recovered during the whole of the first year.

The very fact that some of them had been "stars" in their previous schools compounded the problem. In one case, for several years, a young teacher at a major university had been elected by the senior class as the faculty member who influenced them the most. The college editorial acclaiming him had been circulated to Old Westbury students in advance. It was difficult for anyone to live up to that advance billing, and Old Westbury students were particularly prone to puncture illusion.

In the month before college started danger signs rose over all three parts of the first semester program. All members of the faculty were to teach twice a week, in teams of two, the common humanities seminars with about 12 students each; but the notion of such co-leading of seminars was resisted strongly by some, and the book list that had been proposed after discussion with the planning staff by the Common Humanities Seminar chairman and published in the catalog, was sharply criticized. It went from Homer, Sophocles and Plato through Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Freud, to Joyce, Hesse, Tillich, Camus and Malcolm X. Over four years the seminars would discuss 40 or 50 of the "hundred great books." Several faculty members wanted one clearly stated theme, like "education" or "freedom," instead of a mere collection of great books. The chairman thought it wrong to impose a theme when part of the magic of such seminars should be the discovery by each seminar or each student of the many threads running through the books. The chairman prevailed, but the dissenters carried their criticism into the seminars, feeding the students' fears about the irrelevance of the books or the incoherence of the list.

Moreover, the resistance to the idea of seminars being led by two men of different disciplines brought into the open very different concepts of a seminar.

For some a seminar was just a little lecture, a lecturette; for others it was an occasion in which the expertise of the teacher was delivered through the manipulation of the discussion; for others it was a bull session providing an opportunity for everyone to express himself. Those of us from Chicago, St. John's or the tradition of great books seminars were appalled to discover how alien the idea of Socratic discussion was to most of our colleagues. For us a seminar was a common search for truth in which the important thing was not everyone expressing himself, but everyone following the question where it led; and the chief teacher was assumed to be the author of the book being discussed, with the seminar leader never seeking to impose his expertise but instead seeking to promote a direct encounter between students and book.

So what I and several others had seen as the key to our whole curriculum, the common seminar, was in jeopardy from the beginning. Several of the seminars worked fairly well, several reached an early impasse, and several had a mediocre career. The only thing that might have saved them, and brought them to the passion and discipline necessary to produce the central contagion we imagined, would have been long, hard faculty work together. We would have had to argue our disagreements to some resolution, appraise our different styles of seminar leadership, analyze the problems we were facing, and together learn to be good seminar leaders. Whether because of the sharpening of other disagreements or the diversion of energies into other issues or failure of nerve and leadership by some of us, this was never done. It should be added that the attitude of the faculty from the beginning gave little encouragement to any such collaboration. Perhaps we contained too many prima donnas.

The second part of the proposed curriculum, the social science workshops, suffered an even more severe fate. The chairman of the social science program presented an outline for a proposed set of common readings focussed on the urban condition, designed as an introduction to urban studies and a preparation for a term of field study. On the eve of college opening the six social science teachers suddenly discovered that if they taught in the common humanities seminar and in the social science program as proposed, they would not be able to teach any special elective subjects unless they took on an even heavier load. Fierce arguments were held about equalizing faculty teaching loads, reminding me of Robert Hutchins' prediction that the worst shock would be discovering how many teachers were interested primarily in how little they would have to teach. Finally, to the dismay of some of us, the majority of the social science faculty firmly decided that instead of a common social science program each would offer his own speciality -- psychology, history, sociology, political science, anthropology -- addressed to urban questions.

The third part of the first program was to be independent study. The catalog had promised considerable faculty supervision, criticism and evaluation, with students generally required to write a major thesis on their work. But by now students were pressing for this to be very loose, so that students could do at least "one-third of their own thing." Several members of the faculty supported the students' contention. There is respectable academic opinion that independent study in the first year or two should be viewed as an occasion for students to mess around and to discover in their frustrations their need for self-discipline. But some of us were unpersuaded and unhappy when the faculty voted that there would be no common requirements or supervision of independent study but that any project approved by any faculty member would be acceptable, with whatever supervision that faculty member chose to give. One faculty member avowed that he would approve anything a student wanted to do, including looking up and counting the clouds for a semester. He thought we showed lack of respect for the students' intelligence in posing such a horrible example.

Soon after the semester began the same loosening of the program occurred in regard to second semester field assignments. The catalog had said that "for at least two semesters . . . students will study off-campus in field work assignments" and that "for most students" the first such term would be the second semester of the first year. Variations, such as a full year of campus study followed by field work the second semester, were presumed, and the catalog had what we called Option X, which read:

> "While it is expected that most students will seek to fulfill the requirements of this program, a student may present an alternative program of study to a faculty-student committee for approval."

Nevertheless, there was a Program which students were asked to follow and Option X was not designed to be a hole so large that most of the program could run out. The chairman of the Field Program fought to keep the exception small, but the faculty-student committee selected to approve alternatives to the field program acted in the looser spirit by then prevailing on campus; some 30 of the 85 students did not go to the field, and a dozen of those who did go went to assignments that the chairman did not consider appropriately rigorous. About half of the field programs had run out through the hole.

Ironically, the first and perhaps best test of the field program and one of the high points of the first semester came spontaneously and accidentally. In October the teachers' union struck and tried to close New York City public schools. The superintendent of the Fort Greene district in Brooklyn, where the chairman of our Field Program had been a community organizer, invited Old Westbury students to help keep classes open. Some 30 of our students petitioned the faculty to adjust the hours of seminars so they could go to Fort Greene each day as teacher aides. In a stormy faculty meeting, the faculty voted to switch their classes to late afternoon, evening or weekend, to accommodate to the students' request, without formally approving the student action or taking sides in the strike. Some faculty were dismayed by the discombobulation, just at a time when they thought the campus was beginning to turn to serious study. The students, however, swore that they would work harder and do better in their studies if enabled to respond to the human crisis in Brooklyn, where children (especially of working mothers) desparately needed volunteer teachers. Most of them lived up to their promise, working full-time in the schools for about three weeks, and keeping up with their college seminars in the evening. Several faculty members joined them as field supervisors, and conducted in-service teaching workshops. Some students say this was the hardest and most rewarding work they have ever done; others found it the hardest and most frustrating. Quite a number returned to campus with an awakened and serious interest in teaching, and took some aspect of that for independent study. Though the experience did add to the sense of flux on campus and create divisions among the students and faculty, it was also a kind of vindication for the catalog's statement of expectations about field work as a good form of apprenticeship learning. This education-in-action, as the catalog predicted, left some of these students "thirsty for knowledge and theories to make sense of the experience."

It also left many of them thirsty for more action. For sensitive and idealistic students aroused by injustice they had experienced in the ghetto, campus seemed very tame. In criticizing a statement of mine that the college "will continue and expand its concern for, and commitment to understanding the local, national and international problems of race and poverty," a group of students replied: "This college should be committed not only to understanding these things but to doing something about them." One of the ways to do something, they soon proposed, was the college's adoption of a policy that henceforth fifty percent of all student places or staff positions at Old Westbury would be filled by non-whites. A majority of the student body, including a majority of the white students, voted to support this.

The students then voted to ask the faculty not to deal with the issue separately as a faculty, but to join in a community meeting and vote on it together with the students, on a one-man-one-vote basis. In perhaps the most critical meeting of the year, just before Christmas 1968, the faculty voted to act on the issue separately and not to submerge themselves in a community meeting; and then finally it turned down the fifty percent proposal, recommending instead that the administration take various steps to increase the non-white representation among students and staff.

The faculty's assertion of its separate identity and authority was important, but in the process of dealing with the proposal it had seemed necessary for me to make it clear that as president I would veto any such racial quota, principal or goal. If I had not intervened it appeared likely that a majority of the faculty would adopt some such proposition, leading to a confrontation with the administration that the majority did not want. But by affirming my authority I precipitated the question of the presidential power -- or, more immediately, student power. During the second semester more and more students began raising the battlecry, "Power to the People!", and pressing for either the rule of one-man-one-vote in student-dominated community assemblies or referendums, or at the least, fifty percent student membership on all decision-making bodies, the "moderate" position.

Politics was not all that happened the first year, though it usually occupied center stage. Classes did get underway and seemed to go fairly well; at least they were fairly well attended, and some were quite popular. About forty students engaged in challenging field assignments in the New York area (eight students went to Cuernavaca, Mexico, in a Spanish language-learning program, and two more went to Israel). Field seminars, led by faculty who went for evening sessions in the city, were held regularly (although only one or two faculty members spent much time visiting students on the site of their work, or integrated their seminars with problems the students were encountering). Some of the independent study was impressive, and several very serious and successful on-campus seminars, including an intensive course in Plato, were held for those who did not go to the field.

Nor were all the political or governance activities unsuccessful. A Search Committee for new faculty, elected by the faculty and students, worked hard in recruiting new faculty; this thirteen member group (six faculty, six students, and the Academic Vice President as chairman) interviewed and participated in seminars with dozens of faculty prospects, and recommended some ten men and women. I made offers to all but one of these recommended, and six of them accepted our offers. The students on that committee were diligent and constructive, and brought a valuable perspective; and they and the faculty generally divided along lines other than age or status. Though the president's power to accept or reject the recommendations had been explicitly affirmed in the agreement setting up the search committee, my rejection of one recommendation caused considerable resentment.

Simultaneously, the admissions committee,with students constituting nearly half of the membership, was interviewing and recommending the student applicants for 1969. The Director of Admissions knew that she was personally responsible for every decision, but she chose to operate through committees in a kind of participatory democracy. At one point she faced a crisis in which a committee was about to force some admissions she could not in conscience approve, but by persuasion she prevailed, and she and I did not have to overrule her committee.

The best example of political success involved the issue of drugs. The first student planners had insisted that new life styles, especially the use of marijuana and LSD, should be part of the experimentation of an experimental college. But as they and their successors on the planning staff considered the political problems, including the police raids on nearby campuses, they concluded reluctantly that drug use on campus would result in great injury to the college. They helped persuade the advance guard of regular students, who came for summer employment in 1968, and together in the early weeks of school they persuaded the great majority of the first 85 students to adopt a prohibition of illegal drugs. Again the black and Puerto Rican students played a key part in insisting that the campus be not just cool but clean on drugs, partly because they knew intimately the damage hard drugs did in their communities, and partly because they did not want anything to jeopardize the success of the college.

In order to focus more attention on academic affairs, to make clear that the first urban studies program was just one of Old Westbury's offerings and not the whole of the college, and to divide the labor in such a way that coherent groups of faculty and students could proceed with different academic innovations, the Academic Vice President, the Vice President for Planning and I, concluded early in the second semester that the time had come to establish two or three constituent colleges. We proposed that we organize for 1969-70 three curricular programs, one a College of Urban Affairs, growing directly out of our first year experience, one a Disciplines College offering some of the traditional academic disciplines, and one a College of Human Development that would embody the idea of "Learning by Teaching" proposed by Professor Jerrold Zacharias in a paper we considered early in our college planning. Later this third approach was postponed and in its place a General Program was developed for those not ready to chose one of the first two colleges. This 1969 General Program taking the themes of inward and outward odysseys, including a concentrated treatment of the environment, was the only part of the curriculum carrying on the 1968 plan of common seminars.

This proposed three-fold division of the faculty and student body, with a provost to be appointed for each constituent program, produced another major political confrontation. Once such a division of the first nucleus occurred not everyone would be able to claim to be in on everything. One of the students opposing the division raised the slogan, "Paranoia is True Perception." And there was a certain reality in his paranoia: we did not want the first work-study, urban affairs program, and those drawn to it, to shape the whole college in that one image. We did want to diversify before the first organism simply replicated itself. But these negative considerations were only part of the strategy. Since we considered that our most important innovation in academic organization might be the model of constituent colleges, we wanted to proceed with that essential part of the experiment. And until there were at least two constituent colleges in being, however small, we could not say that we were a "college of colleges."

We underestimated the present's drive to control the future, part of the price you pay for organic growth. Our determination not to let the first group brought together around a particular set of educational ideas prevent the creation of the contrasting new programs that we had promised in the catalog seemed to many students and some faculty as a manifestation of the arrogance of administrative and presidential power. Moreover, my choice of provost for the Disciplines College was a man who had aroused widespread opposition by his fight against the fifty-percent racial quota, and by other actions, including a general resistance to the "do your thing" philosophy.

The faculty finally voted by a large majority to proceed with these constituent colleges and approved the choice of provosts, and after three more turbulent months, including many meetings with students and finally a sit-in by about a third of the students in the last two weeks of school, a majority of the students seemed at last to agree. But the parturition was painful, to say the least.

The sit-in was peaceful, and resolved relatively satisfactorily from my standpoint. The administration supported by the chairman of the College Council, a nine member group appointed by Governor Rockefeller, made it clear that under no circumstances would the student demand for either one-man-one-vote or fifty-percent power in decision-making be accepted. A governance plan was agreed upon, which provided for several policy-recommending bodies organized on the formula of six faculty, five students and two administrators, while affirming the president's general executive powers under University policies, including appointment and veto powers.

* * * *

It would be pleasing to report that the lessons of the first year were well learned and that the experience has led to a far better second year, in which we turned from political confrontation to academic study and curricular innovation. To some extent this has happened. The growth in faculty from twelve to twenty-four, and in students from 85 to 225 has been salutory. We no longer resemble an enlarged joint family; we feel more like, and act more like, a college. The division into three programs seems also to have been productive. The range of courses is wider, and a far greater proportion of time and attention is given to course work.

One of the most promising parts of the college is a program started in the summer of 1969 to recruit and offer special courses for a group of 25 economically and culturally disadvantaged students, all but one of whom were black or Puerto Rican. We adapted the model successfully developed at Southern Illinois University in East St. Louis, and brought to Old Westbury as our director one of the organizers of that program. This group of students has also increased the student readiness for academic work. The proportion of American non-white students has grown to almost 25 percent of the whole student body; including Asians and Africans the non-whites now number nearly 30 percent (and the faculty now includes four full-time and several part-time non-white professors). On balance they have used their influence to play down confrontation politics.

But other factors should be noted. As the sense of full student partnership, defined in terms of equal student decision-making power, has diminished, or perhaps just as the numbers have multiplied, the sense of responsibility for the college has also diminished. Kenneth Keniston of Yale wrote after a visit here this fall that he had "never seen a college where students were so thoroughly involved with the future of the college," but he had not observed the much greater intensity of the feeling of "this is our college" that prevailed the first year. Though drugs may not be used on campus more than, or as much as on some other nearby campuses, there is no longer the clear understanding that if anyone uses drugs he is endangering the life of the college. Nor are there any longer quite such strong feelings that this ought to be the perfect college, and that every discrepancy between rhetoric and reality is a betrayal. The "fatality of the multitude," so common to most multiversities, seems unhappily to be setting in. It is a cure to utopianism that some of us find worse than the disease.

The other danger that some of us have feared since the early days, that a tyranny of the majority will prevail, is still present. Only about 35 students each chose the General Program and the Disciplines College; over 150 chose the College of Urban Affairs, and in the elections to the College Representative Committee the student body elected one student from the General Program, none from the Disciplines College and four from Urban Affairs. In considering the six faculty-five students-two administrators formula for the all-College Committee, with recommending powers on major academic affairs, the majority of the student assembly affirmed its belief in the principle of equal student power in all decision-making. The more radical students then called for a walk-out, but only about a dozen followed suit; the rest accepted the faculty-administration plan for governance. The mood of the more extreme ones is reflected by the following notice put on the bulletin boards following that student meeting, by one of the leaders of the May sit-in:

"EPITAPH"

> "Old Westbury hasn't just failed. It's dead.
>
> "Westbury failed last year. It was never experimental; it never even attempted to be really different; and it didn't succeed in 'keeping us down.'

> "We knew Westbury failed last year. What died this year was -- Hope. For some reason, we hoped that our struggle last May would make a difference. The whole world was dying, but we hoped Westbury would be different.
>
> "It isn't. Black students demand the right to be middle class: to get a solid 'academic' education and a degree that will let them be teachers and social workers and lawyers and councilmen -- black American citizens enjoying the fruits of whatever it is that is vital in the American dream. White students oppose the intrusion of the American Way into their do-your-own-thing utopia. Students and faculty rally to the cause of their own self-interests.
>
> "Meanwhile, Bobby Seale is gonna hang. There will be one, two, three, many Song My's. A half-million Americans will be marched to Allenstown, Pa. And American businessmen will get an 'open world.'
>
> "Westbury isn't different. We're racist and imperialist and bourgeois -- and dead.
>
> "We're not alone. America is racist, imperialist, bourgeois -- and dead.
>
> "Heil, Hitler!"

From this one might expect this student to depart, but she either believes in Old Westbury's second coming or likes to linger around corpses, for she is very much in evidence. So is the moral imperialism that she represents. It tends toward a conformity as oppressive as any the non-conformists criticize. At Old Westbury, it has made it difficult for those students and teachers who do not think a university should be consumed with social action. Those who opposed the 50 percent non-white proposal were treated by many of those who proposed it as pariahs. Though my guess is that the wild and violent phase of the so-called Movement has peaked, Old Westbury will need to remain on guard against becoming an outpost for or an enclave of the so-called New Left. A good college should always encourage and support the most far-reaching study of politics and criticism of society, and it should engage in public problems, but it should not become an agent of any particular political persuasion or any revolution but the fundamental one of liberal education.

A last fact in this account of the creation of Old Westbury, 1966-1970, is that the

college now faces a change of presidents. After difficult soul-searching and the most candid assessment of the state of the college, I decided last August to accept Bryn Mawr's invitation to become its fifth president next August, 1970.
Among many considerations, it seemed to me that a new president, coming a year before the expansion to the new campus (probably ready for over 500 students in 1971, and 1,000 in 1972), would have the maximum leverage in applying the lessons we have learned in the first four years of planning and beginning the college. The history of dispute over issues such as "full partnership", for example, could best be swept aside, and the necessary limited definition accepted, with a fresh administration. We lived such intense lives together inthose first years that the time seemed to have come, earlier than one might expect, for the hand of the founding man to be removed, and the organism, reshaped by new leadership, to carry on its life. In any case, the umbilical cord is going to be cut in a few months.

So the search for a new president is underway, conducted by a four-man committee of Governor Rockefeller's College Council, and by a faculty-student committee headed by our Academic Vice President with a faculty and a student elected by each of the three constituent programs. Already the search has been a kind of reality-principle for the college, forcing it to look beyond its own house to the wider communities it serves.

"Power to the People!" is a seductive slogan, but when "the people" are finally recognized as the people of New York State, the slogan is somewhat more sobering. In a State University power does ultimately belong to the people -- to the people of the State and to their representatives in the legislature. The essence of the experiment at Old Westbury is the question of whether a truly experimental college is possible within such a system of state power. That experiment is now at a critical point with

Old Westbury's first transition of administrations. For it to succeed, such a college will need a president who can explain it and defend it in Albany and before the general public, and who can unite its internal constituencies in a continuing dialectic and fruitful collaboration. And a great part of the college's strength must come from the tradition of academic freedom and faculty power that has had to be fought for, from the original Academy until today.

* * * *

With that statement of the basic facts about the first years at Old Westbury, let me respond to the other questions presented by the East-West Center. I do so accepting responsibility for the set of miscalculations and mistakes explicit and implicit in this account, hoping that confession is indeed good for the soul.

"Is this innovation big, is it small, is it unique?"

We thought it was going to be big and we felt unique. In our highest and frankest moments we agreed that our aim was an educational revolution. We were going to demonstrate a good alternative to departmentalization, through interdisciplinary constituent colleges; to show students how to become their own teachers, through Socratic seminars and independent study; to cure academia of pedantry, through engagement in problems outside the college gates; to overcome the alienation from the intellect, through recurring adventures in ideas and innovations in curriculum. Against the specialization overwhelming liberal education, we were going to bring about a rebirth of the liberal arts college. Our graduates would be what the world most needs, liberal artists. The Plato lovers among us dreamed, as we would do in any age, of refounding the Academy.

We knew that Old Westbury was not entirely unique. Other universities, to be sure, have created experimental campuses, and California's Santa Cruz has developed a cluster college model, with contrasting constituent colleges, although not with the large curricular autonomy proposed for Old Westbury's colleges. Oxford and Cambridge have the constituent colleges, of the same size we intend, with a maximum of about 400, but having settled on a curriculum of liberal arts a long time ago, they are not engaged in the curricular experimentation for which our colleges were being created. Work-study programs, beginning with Antioch and Goddard, have long been tried, and more and more campuses are giving credit for off-campus field work; but none, to our knowledge, has aimed for the integration of field work into the curriculum to the extent Old Westbury has. Our "education-in-action" curriculum was designed to weld theory and practice, both on-campus and off-campus, with field work on complicated public problems serving as the grist for the mill of liberal education, with faculty following the students into the field. And no other new college that we knew about was being developed in any real partnership with students. Nor did we know of any college doing this curricular, administrative and governance experimentation all at the same time.

"What part did events play in shaping the innovation?"

Events have indeed often seemed to control us. The student explosion at Berkeley is no doubt what prompted Chancellor Gould and the State University to decide in 1966 to create a college designed to answer the complaints and respond to the criticism of the student rebels. Old Westbury was seen as a way of getting ahead of the game; hopefully of preventing a similar explosion in New York. That same chain of events which came to be called the Student Revolution has affected the development of the College from that day to this. It gave us a special leverage in getting support from the University and state officials more and more perplexed by student discontent; and it cost us far more than we imagined. With student alienation and activism increasing and becoming more threatening to the public, a college like Old Westbury received more and more attention, generally favorable. To some degree we were then hoist on our own good press. We became a lightning rod for all the hopes and fears of young people. A revolution of rising expectations was at work among students, and those who flocked to Old Westbury were no exception. What would have passed for "full partnership" in 1966, when the University Master Plan used those words was not, for example, a satisfactory definition in 1970. It may also be that the Student Revolution, in its present form, has in fact peaked, and that some of Old Westbury's troubles came simply because we started at the height of the students' preoccupation with power. In any case, in planning Old Westbury we wrestled with the most intense spirit of the age. If we survive the encounter, we should have learned a lot.

"Was it necessary for the innovation to occur immediately or did it take place gradually?"

At the time, we felt impelled to move fast, to bring our student and faculty partners into the planning, to start the college ahead of schedule. In retrospect, we could have taken our time and not opened until the new campus was ready, which would not have been until 1971. Our twin campus, the State University's new College at Purchase in Westchester County has done just that. The planning staff at Purchase has suffered great frustrations as a result, but they may have ridden out the worst wave of Student Power profiting by paying close attention to Old Westbury's travails. On the other hand, the State University wanted an experimental college. We might have been more successful as the world goes, waiting three more years to start and then moving immediately into a modern permanent campus, but we would not have learned as much about the difficulties of liberal education in this time of trouble. Moreover, after the first nine months of planning we felt very pregnant and ready for birth; and Socratic process, our definition of educational experimentation, calls for many deliveries. The midwives of a college should expect some windeggs.

"What was the strategy of innovation?"

Seeing student discontent as a major force for educational reform, we looked on the students as essential allies in creating a very new kind of college. We thought we needed this help in measuring the difficulties of liberal education for this generation and in discovering new ways. So we took advantage of the ambiguous phrase "full partnership" in the mandate as written by the State University to bring students into a full, formal and powerful role from the beginning. The aim was a three-way dialectic of administration, faculty and students with all of us learning from the dialogue and the president in particular gaining the ability to speak for the whole institution. We would follow the question where it led, one step at a time. Our planning would thus reflect the kind of education we wanted the college to embody.

"What and how much opposition existed to the innovation?"

Some of the officials of the State University were skeptical, to say the least, but except for the refusal to let us proceed with a Master of Arts in Teaching or any other master's program, we were not blocked on any important matter. We received generous financial support, with a favorable seven-to-one student faculty ratio. The criticism and questions received from Albany were generally useful in making us clarify our program. Often members of the faculty or students would ask anxiously, "What does Albany think of us?", but the fact usually was that with over sixty campuses to worry about Albany wasn't thinking of us one way or the other. The nine-member Council appointed by Governor Rockefeller, with largely advisory powers, also gave us remarkable freedom and support, even though almost all were Republican and most were relatively conservative. Although the student life-styles, beards and all, were shocking to most of them, the Council members took practically everything in their stride. At the time of the sit-in, when State University officials in Albany were initially pressing for police action against the students and I was myself about ready to ask for a court injunction, the Council advised further delay and the Council Chairman assisted in the negotiations. He impressed the students and faculty with his open-mindedness and fair style.

Nor did the Middle States accrediting association give us any trouble with our first program, inchoate as it was. Their Visiting Consultant who came to appraise us asked excellent questions, gave constructive criticism, and left with strong encouragement. "I'm convinced you've got something going that is appropriate to the times -- and all times for that matter. I wish I could be one of the students," wrote Dean Elizabeth Geen after her first visit in 1968. A year later, even after seeing how plagued we were with what she called the "Heracleitean flux" of each student generation demanding the right, as full partners, to change the college's erstwhile shape, she said, "You builded better than you knew."

Thus the real obstacles were not outside the college, but within it in our ideas or lack of them, in our disagreements, in the civil war we carried on. The fault lay not in our stars but in ourselves.

"At what stage is the innovation now? Is it still struggling for acceptance? To what extent did the original perception of the innovation change over time?

It is struggling.

Old Westbury is facing its greatest test as an experimental college. In an experiment you must be ready to acknowledge failure and then to assess what went wrong. The process of experimentation involves an expectation of recurring failures. Success is to be measured not in terms of avoiding failures but in learning from them.

Old Westbury has failed on many counts.

The promise of full partnership led to unrealistic student expectations and resulting disillusionment, frustration and anger. "The most important lesson you can learn vicariously from the planning at Old Westbury," one of our first professors, Larry Resnick, an analytic philosopher, warned the Organization of American Historians in 1969, is this:

> "Count on it -- if you are a liberal and are sympathetic to the goal of reforming the university, you will begin by pandering to the students. You'll get over it, but it is very bad for them because it gives rise to expectations which, later, you will not believe in fulfilling. So my advice is to get it out of your system as quickly as possible. Then you will be able to take students seriously which is what they need and deserve."

From this no one should conclude that student participation in governance and academic planning simply does not work, or that simply treating students as subjects would work. But the large degree to which student partnership was in fact realized at Old Westbury has not on balance been conducive to academic reform or educational excellence. The dominant student philosophy of "let everyone do his thing" seems to compound the educational anarchy of conventional academia.

At the beginning we welcomed the student rebels to Old Westbury and regarded them as a collective Socrates, come to stir academia from its pragmatic slumbers. And as gadflies they sting rather well, in places where it hurts. Their negative insights were important: lectures are too large and too frequent and should not be the main form of learning; too little good teaching takes place and too little attention is paid to the quality of teaching; too much attention is paid to exams, grades and credits, with not enough joy in learning or in entertaining ideas; students are too often disregarded or manipulated, with neither their consent sought nor dissent heard; the body of knowledge is cut up in too many compartments, and the lines between them are too rigid; the structure of special departments leaves too little room in the curriculum for the study of critical general problems such as racial injustice, urban chaos and war, or perennial personal problems of sex, politics and religion.

But it takes more than negative insights to create a good curriculum of liberal arts. Students can smell sophistry, hypocrisy and irrelevance, especially in others, but with their current level of resistance or hostility to teachers, books, courses, history, laws, hard work and most of the other traditional sources of education, they are not likely to get much of a liberal education on their own. Nor is the self-indulgence that so often goes by the name of "identity search" an adequate equivalent. Power to control the curriculum, faculty or administration is thus no solution, and even the sharing of power, if it becomes too absorbing, can be as misleading an escape from education as the prevailing student notion of relevance. Not having ever tasted the clean water of liberal education, most students assume there could be no such thing, or that it would be irrelevant; knowing only dirty water, they are in no mood to search for springs where clean water might be found. Thus for all their signs of great thirst, they tend to settle for academia's dirtiest water, the ultimate irrelevance -- an undisciplined and unintellectual curriculum in an unlimited version of the elective system.

A second area of non-sucess so far is in the interdisciplinary curriculum we attempted, with emphasis on field action and contemporary problems. At least in the present enviornment of Student Power and political activism such programs tend to lack discipline and to serve as a poor substitute for a liberal education. The adrenalin that flows in action seems often to prevent not only the study of history but, in any serious sense, study itself. The student demand for relevance often turns out to be a desire to play to their existing strengths, to what they already know, and to avoid the difficult areas where they might be stretched and challenged. At Old Westbury the urgent has been the enemy of the important.

Again, the conclusion need not be that the Urban Condition or problems of race and poverty cannot be made the subjects for a good liberal education. Probably most of us at Old Westbury favor the continuation of Urban Studies; curricular planning in the second year is more promising than in the first, and any new curriculum takes a lot of time, energy and imagination to develop and test. But preventing Urban Studies from becoming another specialty, a training program for urbanists, and assuring that it includes the ingredients of a liberal education will not be easy. And many of the students most drawn to urban studies are the very ones who most need to be drawn away from the contemporary problems in which they have been too long sunk. Wherever they go in the world, today's students meet the twentieth century coming back. To get a perspective on this century, to get some distance from it, to consider other than the modern existentialist or Marxist views of the world, students may most of all need to immerse themselves in the world-view of 17th century England, or the Renaissance, or the Middle Ages, or fifth century Athens, or of early Christendom and Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. In this sense, the biggest cultural frontier many students most need to cross is to be found in the library. That point has not yet been made or made effectively at Old Westbury.

Part of our problems came from trying to do so much at the same time. The several lines of experimentation clearly got in each other's way more than they came together fruitfully. The experiment with student partnership in governance, for example, took time and energy away from the curriculum, and almost blocked the experiment in constituent colleges altogether.

Starting small made a lot of sense, but perhaps starting with 85 students was too small. At least in the first year Old Westbury seemed to become the intense, ingrown, incestuous and smothering small community that Jacqueline Grennan, then just secularizing herself and Webster College, warned us against. It was especially difficult in such a community to find or apply the right formula for the relationship between utopia and reality. Organic growth creates its own realities, including the tendency to create a little world of its own, disconnected from the larger realities of the outside community or the world. We began to fare better when we grew beyond 200, about the size Oxford and Cambridge colleges generally ascribe to their golden periods, though they existed inside a larger university of several thousand. Fortunately, Old Westbury will be a college of 5,000(in fact the sewers are laid for 10,000, and that may be the deeper clue to how a State University determines its size).

Another mistake we probably made in organic approach was in the choice of many of the first members of the organism. In assembling student planners and faculty who were accustomed to the role of leaven in established institutions, we did not take into account what happens when a group is all leaven and no lump. Not just the oil of apathy was lacking, but the sweat of hard work and the steady muscles of scholarship. Professor Resnick, who played a key role in selecting the first seven student planners, explained to the Organization of American Historians how he talked to students from experimental colleges and from standard colleges, and "almost without exception, the latter were dull and simplistic when they talked about educational reform whereas the students from the experimental colleges were provocative and interesting." Thus perhaps because we didn't wish to risk boredom, we erred in favor of the provocative and experimental, and our experiment was thereby very significantly skewed and probably complicated more than necessary.

Yet to say that the organic kind of planning was full of special problems, some of our own making, is not to deny its appeal, especially in contrast to conventional bureaucratic development. The old way of institution-building by hierarchy, from the top down, and of college-building by department head down, is probably not appropriate for this age or for the kind of college we want; but I understand much better now why, for at least two thousand years, this is the way men have gone about it. When you take the organic course, assembling a small group of senior and junior faculty, possible future heads of academic divisions and assistant professors -- and students -- all mixed up around a planning table, with the radical equality of a Socratic seminar minus Socrates, the ambiguity in relationships causes personal insecurities and tensions, especially when different roles are later to be allocated. At least it is one way of living -- or planning-- dangerously.

Our small organic beginning misled us in another critical respect. Because the planning staff of 15 or 20 was such a close community, most of us even living in one house together, we ultimately minimized the significance of our disagreements. They had been moderated by the friendships that developed while we argued, ate, drank, sang and danced together during the first year. "You can't fight so well against a president when you call him by his first name," one of the students told a reporter. Or as another student put it, leaving an administrator's home after a friendly evening: "I knew I shouldn't have come to dinner. It's going to ruin our confrontation tomorrow." Those ties don't work when numbers reach a certain size. Before we grew larger we should have taken drastic action either to resolve our disagreements, especially on governance, or to seek a very different kind of student body, with a much higher interest in scholarship and less interest in power. But the dialogue with our first seven students had been lively and even more or less fun, so, overconfidently, we thought that we were ready for whatever came; and eighty-five may have been just the wrong number to come: too large to deal with on the intimate terms of the first seven; too small to become really formal and to begin to live by laws.

Organic development presents another problem for an experiment. When people are involved, when a living organism is at stake such as the life of a college, it is painful and also difficult to appraise failures coolly and take appropriate remedial action. But an organism may contain a cancer cell that is out of control and require drastic surgery. It is also necessary to remember that there are fates worse than death.

Old Westbury is not dead, but is trying to diagnose its ills. It is probably earlier than we think, for after all it is a "college of colleges" for several thousand students and faculty that we have been expounding, not the "two hundred people problem" that I have been describing. At our lowest point, at the end of the first year, I suddenly realized the metaphor in my mind for all this. In World War II, when I was in the Air Force in Selma, Alabama, I used to go horseback riding with a veterinarian friend. Occasionally he would help a cow give birth to a calf. Sometimes the delivery was easy and a beautiful calf would emerge smoothly. Sometimes my friend had to give the cow a lot of help, even cut her some. Once my friend had to get ropes up inside around the calf and we had to pull and tug for a long long time. The calf is dead, he finally told me, but we have to get it out to save the cow. At last we did, and we saved the cow.

Need I tell you that the nickname for the College at Old Westbury is C. O. W., in fact, SUNYCOW? Was our first effort still-born and is our job now to save the college?

Or is the first program, and even the idea of partnership, somewhat blood and still to be adequately codified, alive and kicking? Such a question is a psychological test for any founding-father. One kind of parent looks at his newborn, especially a brain-child, and says, "Oh, this is not what I had in mind, not at all, throw this miserable thing out and let's start again." The other kind says, "It isn't quite what I hoped for, but life is precious, any life, and full of wonderful surprises. Let's nurture this little creature; let's help it become whatever it is capable of becoming"

Having chosen the organic way, I hope we will opt for life.

> "Is the innovation part of a larger process you can discern? What additional innovations do you see necessary to promote the larger process?

In the list of Old Westbury's possible failures, the saddest would be failure to learn something about the nature of the crisis of student discontent out of which and into which Old Westbury was born.

From this experience it seems clear to me that the discontent of the young is part of a larger general alienation that is inextricably connected with the quantity and quality of modern education. We are facing a crisis of universal liberal education. People almost everywhere, and certainly in the United States, are becoming aware that liberal education, now generally including higher education, is a necessity for modern life.

This may always have been true of our "civilization of the dialogue," but the facts of life in this fast-changing scientific and technological modern society have made the truth inescapable. Consequently the commitment to universal higher education is being made in state after state, and no doubt it will soon be made in nation after nation, but no one yet knows how to do this well. That, in fact, is the most critical thing I think we have learned at Old Westbury: how far we are from knowing how to provide the liberal education necessary for this complex age, and how many obstacles there are in the way.

At least I feel we have a much better idea of how little we know -- of how inadequate most of our education is and most of our proposed reforms are, even all added together. Never have so many been so thirsty for the clean water of liberal education, or so lost in finding it. Never has the search for such an education been more important or more urgent or more difficult. The liberal arts appropriate to an age -- the arts by which people can learn to be free in a particular time and place -- have always been elusive, but never more so than now.

Professor Herbert Marcuse came to our campus and was asked, "What do students do, what do we protest when we're on all the committees and there is no military research or ROTC and we have interdisciplinary programs and small seminars and field work?" Marcuse said, "Why not be happy?" They said they couldn't be happy in a world where bombs are falling in Vietnam and rats are biting children in Brooklyn. He said, "Then get educated so that you can do something about those problems." And one of the students asked how you could get really well educated in a college that's established by the Establishment, of the Establishment, for the Establishment. Marcuse said, "All the education I have is based on what I learned at the Imperial Gymnasium of the Kaiser's Berlin. You can do it." He advised students to shun soft courses, to take fundamental ones, to read major books, to study history. This led some of the students to question the centrality of books or the relevance of intellectual reasoning. Marcuse held his head in his hands and said: "I see that you, too, like so many in your generation, have a deep intellectual inferiority complex, yet this is a time when anyone who wants to cope with the world has to be more educated, more theoretical, more intellectual than most men have ever been, and if you want to do anything toward bringing revolution of any kind in this world, you're going to have to be ten times as intellectual. Your resistance to things of the mind is deep-rooted, but deep-rooted though it be, it must be uprooted by love if possible and by force if necessary."

That is easier said than done, as we have learned rather painfully at Old Westbury, yet it must be done. With more than seven million Americans enrolled in colleges and universities, double the number a decade ago: with nearly half of all young people going on to higher education, and blacks and the poor demanding an education that will make up for the years of discrimination and poverty; with the expansion of knowledge outdistancing academia's ability to assimilate and teach it, and the big, buzzing confusion of the world reaching almost everyone through the mass media, nothing is more important than the search for an education that will enable citizens of the late twentieth century to see their world steady and whole.

Therefore, the search started at Old Westbury, however disappointing, should continue there and elsewhere, and we should hope the present discontent will continue until we get the education we need, by love if possible, by force if necessary. Fortunately the discontent seems strong and ubiquitous enough to bring the crises to some kind of head in the coming generation, though the mutual frustration and incrimination can become debilitating, as it did the first year at Old Westbury. And it should be noted well that the discontent is remarkably reciprocal: students don't seem to want teachers; both accuse administrators of being mere technicians and seek to reduce the administrators' power to just that.

Time will probably bring some resolution, yet it is not time alone that will help, but the constructive use of time. So our duty as educators is to do our best to turn the present tensions into intelligible dialogue. That is what we have been trying to do at Old Westbury.

It has taken no great wisdom or Socratic skill to puncture the pretensions of the students' platform of academic reform and show that it does not add up to a good liberal education, any more than it took great ability on the students' part to expose the most glaring faults of conventional academia. But this negative round will be worthwhile if we recognize our ignorance, take what we do not know as a statement of what we need to know, and join together for the next stage of the search.

Out of our college making in a time of trouble, I do have a few clues for the direction the search should now take, including the formation elsewhere of small experimental colleges or curriculums within existing colleges or universities, granting students well-defined areas of real responsibility in independent study and student-initiated programs, and the common reading and discussion of the classic books that offer contrasting views of the world. But before any affirmative steps can be taken with much success, there are some obstacles that should be cleared out of the way.

First, the academic water is badly muddied by the presence in colleges and universities of millions of young people who don't think they want to be there. Whatever the other ingredients of clean educational water are, there must be a high proportion of genuine intellectual curiosity and very little coercion. Teaching and learning the liberal arts required to master the knowledge of this complex age while at the same time searching for better ways of teaching and learning them is difficult enough. To do it with large numbers of students complaining that they are captives and refusing to cooperate, compounds all the difficulties. The draft puts heavy pressure on young men to stay in school in order to avoid an ugly war, and parents in particular and society in general put other pressures on young people to stay in school through a college degree, if not through an advanced degree. The consequent sixteen to twenty years of constant classroom education is too much for many people, and the element of coercion is corrupting for all.

The new draft lottery will be a partial remedy, and an end to the war in Vietnam would help here as in most other areas of our public life, but the coercion toward college will continue until either the draft itself or all student deferments are ended. American higher education should insist that one or the other of these steps be taken.

Another direct way the Federal Government could foster the educational autonomy of young people would be to end their financial dependence on parents for support in higher education. The Zacharias committee's proposal for an Educational Opportunity Loan Fund, with very favorable long-term loans, would do this. This or some equivalent program that would enable students to finance the full cost in a college of their choice should be adopted.

Relieving the coercion toward college of parents and society at large will be complicated, for it reflects a certain realism, but another good step would be to develop and make legitimate more opportunities for full-time work and service between high school and college, or for a year or more in the midst of college. The Peace Corps and VISTA are largely designed for college graduates or specially skilled technicians, but they point the way to equivalent programs for younger people. The Student Teacher Corps Act, being proposed by Senators Nelson, Javitz and Kennedy, would enable high school graduates and undergraduates to be employed as teacher's aides, working with older teams of the Teacher Corps in difficult elementary or secondary schools. This and other programs should be supported to encourage young people to serve in public schools, community action or public health projects, hospitals, prisons or other institutions in need of volunteer manpower. A federally financed National Volunteer Service Foundation could be created to offer living-allowance fellowships to young people working in such programs.

Another helpful step would be to increase opportunities for older students to resume their studies at later points in their careers, including women who have raised children.

We need to demonstrate that liberal education is not something to be sought solely in the years immediately following high school. Business and other institutions could give leadership by providing sabbaticals enabling employees to go back to school, just as colleges give sabbatical terms to enable faculty to get away from school.

Colleges and universities could encourage all this by advising students who want to take a break from school to do so, by making it clear that they will be treated favorably when they apply for admission later, by reserving places for older students, by granting some academic credit for off-campus service programs.

In these or in other ways, it should be made clear to students that they should not be in colleges or universities unless they want to be there, and that other reasonable alternatives are available.

These steps will not cure the alienation of many students or the ills of society which they see, but it may reduce some of the symptoms of alienation to the point where education and the search for better education can go on without almost insuperable obstacles. It would take away from students, faculty and administration some of their present excuses for not proceeding with that study and search.

No academic reforms will end tensions or discontent on campus, or make life easy for teachers or administrators. For the liberal education of any person inherently creates something of a crisis of discontent, within himself if not within his family or community. The liberal education of a number of young men during Athens' time of trouble contributed to the tensions in which Socrates was condemned and killed. The liberal education of millions of Americans, let alone people throughout the world, will certainly increase the tensions in modern society and alarm those who consider the unexamined life not only worth living, but the best possible life for most people. Universal higher education will thus assure some form of practically universal discontent. If a little education is a dangerous thing, a lot of education is likely to be even more dangerous. But there is no going back to a pastoral past, and in all realism, with the demands of the modern world, is there any other way to live?