

ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF
WILKES COLLEGE

SEPTEMBER, 1951

WILKES COLLEGE
WILKES-BARRE
PENNSYLVANIA

September 1951

To the Board of Trustees:

The report attached to this letter covers the high points of the work at the College during the past year. It ties together information that is already yours and seeks to show the relationship of each step we have taken to the development program of the College.

It becomes increasingly apparent that a forward-looking program is essential to the further growth of the College. We have made fine gains in the last fifteen years, but we cannot hold these gains and achieve the possibilities that lie before us unless we constantly clarify our vision of the services that we should render and the plans that must be developed.

Very sincerely yours,

Eugene Forley
President

JEF/bri

During the past decade the College has made a series of adjustments to unusual conditions. In 1941, it began the process of adapting itself to a war situation. In 1945, it adjusted itself to the post-war period and expanded its faculty and facilities so that it might take care of the boys returning from service. By 1951, we anticipated that conditions would once more be normal and that a period of self-evaluation and improvement would lie before us. Unfortunately, the war in Korea and world tensions have created an entirely new situation. Instead of obtaining a highly selected and stable enrollment of approximately 750, the College must again adjust itself to a period of declining enrollments and world crisis.

These recurrent crises constitute a challenge to the independent colleges of the nation. I believe, however, that a college which attunes itself to the needs of the times, adjusts itself to changing conditions, and seeks to render broader and better services will retain the support that is required for the perpetuation and extension of its services. It will be vitalized by the significance of its services and the vigor of its work. If those of us responsible for the maintenance of the independent colleges possess sufficient vision, we will meet the difficulties that face us and our colleges, and will emerge from the present crisis as stronger and finer institutions. Our strength can be no greater than our vision and hopes for them.

A liberal arts college that is primarily a community institution must ever keep in touch with the needs of the community and the trends of the times. Should it fail to do so, its students will suffer and the college will cease to grow. It is the responsibility of such a college to combine professional and practical training with the liberalizing influences of a broad education. Only by such a combination can we

provide an economic basis for the participation of our alumni in the great problems of our era. Common sense demands that we ever seek to unite the idealistic and the practical in education. We must remember that a man who is unable to sustain himself is hardly likely to make any great contribution to his neighbor or his community.

Were we content to confine our efforts to practical training, we would fail to meet our responsibility as a liberal arts college. A practical training may develop good technicians, but it seldom develops men of vision and constructive capabilities. An institution that is responsible for the development of youth must ever seek to quicken the mind and lengthen the horizons. If Wilkes fails to give its students a greater vision and understanding of mankind and of the world in which we live, it fails in its larger purpose. Although men must be trained to work, it is increasingly apparent that skilled technicians without vision can make a mockery of our ideals and create a world that may be mechanically perfect, but spiritually empty. Our challenge lies in the intellectual and spiritual spheres.

To provide this combination of inspiration and practical information, the faculty is constantly challenged to examine its work, methods, and programs. You will recall that for two or three years the faculty considered the objectives of the College and made changes in the curriculum which were designed to assist in the attainment of these objectives. This year they will re-examine the work that has been done to determine whether or not we are offering each individual student the maximum benefit from his education. We do this lest in our effort to attain high scholastic standards we have overemphasized certain phases of the program and slighted others.

To assist freshmen adjustment to the greater demands and increased freedom of college, a new orientation program was introduced during the past year. This program divides the students into groups of twenty-five or less who meet for weekly discussions of problems interesting to college freshmen. These range from personal to world problems. No credit is given for this course and no outside preparation is required. Its purpose is to stimulate the student to independent and critical thinking, to challenge his approach to the studies that lie before him, and to increase his awareness of the problems that must be solved if our western civilization is to meet the challenge that faces it. Although this program is new, we have had encouraging evidence that students are more aware of their own potentialities and of the opportunities and problems confronting them.

The College is naturally responsive to changes that take place in the community. Shifts in population suggest that if we are to maintain a reasonable enrollment and adhere to our highly selective standards of admission, it will be necessary for the College to draw from a larger area than the local community. It is hoped, therefore, that the dormitory facilities may be increased from year to year so that an increasing number of students from outside Wyoming Valley may be accommodated. This expansion requires the acquisition of additional dormitories and the simultaneous development of a widely spread public relations program. The gift of Mr. McClintock's home provides new space at a time when there is an opportunity for the College to increase the number of girls living in dormitories. McClintock Hall gives us four dormitories with accommodations for eighty students. The adaptation of Ashley and Barre Halls may increase this capacity to one hundred and twenty-five.

The acquisition of dormitories enables the College to attract students from other states and other nations. Thus far, most of our dormitory students come from northeastern Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. We have, however, attracted a handful from other states, and are slowly building up a representation of other nations. The two Chinese girls are now in their senior year, and by their presence have broadened the horizons of many students. This year they will be joined by three students from Greece and a small number from South American countries. We believe that association with students of varied backgrounds is in itself an educational experience. The exchange of ideas and the comparison of ways of thinking and living should do much to increase sympathy and understanding and should lead to an increased capacity for personal and international cooperation. Such contacts give meaning to the studies of the classroom.

Enrollment in colleges is, of course, shifting downward at the present time. It is anticipated that this trend will continue for several years as the military services and defense programs demand the services of more young people. Because of these military requirements, it is probable that the day school enrollment at Wilkes will decline for several years before there is again an upward trend. By 1957, however, the number of persons of college age will be greater than ever before, and it is expected that college enrollments will again increase unless the international scene becomes more chaotic. It is believed that Wilkes must now prepare itself for this period of expanded enrollments.

Evening school enrollment, contrary to our expectations, has climbed steadily ever since the war. This increase has resulted from an expansion of the evening program to include many practical courses in business and

economics and from the demands of workers and businessmen for job training. We can never be sure that these trends will continue because evening attendance is quickly influenced by economic and social conditions.

There are considerable differences in the character of the day and evening programs. Emphasis is upon the sciences and humanities in the day school; whereas the evening school stresses business subjects, with a minor interest in the humanities, and a slight interest in the sciences. This shift in emphasis results from public demand. Those who have had training in sciences and the humanities naturally work on a graduate level and do not wish to repeat their undergraduate work. On the other hand, graduates and men and women who have not attended college seek those practical courses which will assist them in their plans for self-improvement and job advancement. It seems inevitable, therefore, that the evening school students shall continue to seek practical training rather than a liberal education. In spite of this tendency, there will always be some demand for courses in the humanities and the sciences.

As we move into this period of international crisis, it is fortunate that the finances of the College are sounder than at any time in its history. Although the endowment is small, it has increased slowly each year, and it is hoped that this upward trend will increase persistently. It has always been necessary for the College to operate on a balanced budget, and we expect to continue to do so. By maintaining a minimum overhead, by giving careful consideration to the alternatives that lie before us, and by economical administration, it should be possible for the College to maintain itself during a period of restricted income.

The material development of the College is significant only as it contributes to the betterment of the educational program. Unfortunately,

it is not yet possible to evaluate accurately our educational program. This can only be measured by the success or failure of graduates, and because of the newness of the College, we cannot yet make this evaluation. It is gratifying, however, to note that between 25 per cent and 40 per cent of our graduates have entered the leading graduate and professional schools and have made records that are a source of deep satisfaction.

The material progress we are making is apparent. We must, however, be alert to new opportunities for expansion, and must at times acquire properties that may not be immediately needed. Only as we plan for the future can the services of the College be expanded and its value to the community enhanced.

