

*Report of the President
May 1955*



*Wilkes College
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania*

Report to the Trustees, Alumni and Friends

When Wilkes College was founded in 1933 as a branch of Bucknell University, no one could foresee its development nor predict the relations that would develop between the College and the community. These prospects then lay hidden in the future and awaited the unfolding of plans and events.

During its first two decades the College passed through distinct phases. From 1933 to 1945 it sought to attract students from the community and through them to render a limited community service. Between 1945 and 1950, the College stretched its facilities to the limit so that it might serve a significant portion of veterans and high school graduates seeking opportunities for self-realization. And, in the midst of this second phase the College extended its program from two to four years and at last gained sufficient strength of personnel and finance to undertake a more active part in community affairs.

With greater participation in community affairs the College assumed new obligations and expanded its plant so that it might provide for a growing enrollment. Its success of the past now poses a question for the future: Can the money required to maintain the standards of the faculty and to expand the plant of the College be obtained? If Wilkes is to continue the growth and strength that have characterized its first twenty years, the answer to this question must be in the affirmative.

When the College was established it was confronted by only one certainty and by many uncertainties. It was certain that the young people of the community could benefit from college, but there was no certainty that they would take advantage of these new opportunities nor was there any assurance that the community leaders would support this new effort. Today it is clearly evident that our young people seek the advantages of college, and years of mutual effort have demonstrated the support of community leaders for an independent college committed to the service of the community and its people.

As students now turn to the College in increasing numbers, we are faced with the question that confronts every independent college. How can we gain the funds required for the job? The future of Wilkes which seems assured in so far as students are concerned, now rests upon the answer to this question. Although it has been proven that the College can render a real service to the community, it remains to be seen whether funds required for greater service will be forthcoming.

This problem must be faced by all who believe that Wilkes has a part to play in the lives of our young people and in the future of our community.

ENROLLMENT

The influences of depression, war, and cold war have all exerted their influence upon this young college. Founded in the midst of depression it struggled for a decade to serve a handful of students, and throughout the war it carried on so that it might be ready for service when peace once more permitted our young people to pick up the threads of their individual lives. For years, as a junior college, it maintained an enrollment of about two hundred, and at one time during the war its enrollment fell to 55 students plus the contingent assigned to the College by the Air Corps. Then the deluge came and day enrollment reached a peak of more than 1200 students even though only about a third of the applicants were able to qualify for admission. With the termination of the G. I. bulge the enrollment fell to a half of its peak and then slowly commenced the upward trend that seems to ensure an enrollment of 900 to 1000 carefully selected full-time day students by 1957.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS BY INTERVALS

Year	Day	Evening	AAF	Total
TRIAL				
1933	164	29		193
1934	193	96		289
1935	154	155		309
1936	157	175		332

WAR

1941	199	156		355
1942	182	59		241
1943	111	26	250	387
1944	137	59	250	446

GI BULGE

1946	797	235		1032
1947	1227	437		1664
1948	1102	621		1723
1949	985	944		1929

KOREA

1951	596	1179		1775
1952	644	1021		1665
1953	659	787		1446
1954	757	762		1519

PREDICTED ENROLLMENT

Year	Day	Evening	Total
1955	840	700	1540
1956	930	605	1580
1957	1000	575	1575

These figures, which are based upon the maintenance of freshman admissions at their present level, suggest the task that confronts those who are responsible for the future of our young people and for the development of Wilkes. As the work of the past twenty years is projected into the future, a challenge and an obligation are thrust upon those who have assumed responsibility for its growth. The promise that lies ahead demands greater efforts and renewed dedication.

AN EMERGING CHARACTER

As a new and unknown college, Wilkes adapted itself to unfolding conditions and rolled with the punches of depression and war. In its formative years it sought to define its character, but first it had to explore the possibilities for service within the community and to lay the foundations for growth.

After twenty years "agrowing" it has attained sufficient stability and status to permit and require a definition of its purpose and its character. During these years it has committed itself to community service on the one hand, and to a broad educational program that is designed to awaken the latent abilities of individual students by opening new vistas and by "whetting" intellectual curiosity. To accomplish these dual purposes it has been necessary to select able students capable of intellectual growth, and to participate in many activities concerned with enriching our community. In the area of education it has set its standards for the ambitious and the able; in the area of service it seeks to participate in many activities that are of cultural and practical value.

Beyond 1957, when swollen enrollments are expected, it is likely that the obligations of the College must be re-examined in the light of new conditions. It is likely that two alternatives will then confront us—an enlarged student body or a more selective policy of admissions.

FACILITIES REQUIRED

Attainment of the possibilities that lie ahead, of course, requires expanded facilities and equipment, for we cannot depend upon our neighbors for the use of their buildings as we did during the post-war bulge. During an emergency these neighbors were willing to help us, but it is neither practicable nor desirable to request the use of their facilities for a permanent expansion.

Although the prospects before us require immediate action, every step should be considered in its relation to long-term plans. Improvisation will be necessary, as it has been this year when the cafeteria was shifted to Harding House to accommodate an increased group of dormitory students, but such improvisation is justified only as it contributes to the attainment of our ultimate objectives.

To meet the challenge that lies before us, the following needs are suggested in what seems to be their relative order of importance:

1. An art center and assembly hall
2. Additional dormitory quarters for both men and women
3. A permanent dining hall for 200 to 300 dormitory students
4. An enlarged library*
5. A science building
6. Athletic fields

*Already assured.

FINANCING CURRENT OPERATIONS

Until 1953 it was possible for the College to balance its budget except for two years when it was first established and for one year during the war when the needs of the nation had sharply reduced college enrollment. These small and temporary deficits were inherent in the situation of the College and the nation and were to be expected as a normal experience for a young college.

The financial problem that now confronts us results from conditions that are likely to last, and in consequence long-term planning is required for the solution. Wilkes, with other independent colleges, is caught between two economic forces—the influence of an inflated dollar upon operating costs and the inability of students to pay these higher costs. We cannot prevent mounting costs of education for they are the product of war and international crises. And although we may strive to keep costs within bounds through efficient administration, we cannot make one depreciated dollar do the work of a dollar that bought twice as much as the present dollar. We must recognize also that tax funds lower educational cost to the individual even though the ultimate costs of public education may well exceed the final costs of education in the independent colleges.

Caught between these forces, Wilkes has drawn upon its operating reserves for the past two years and must continue to do so for several years more unless friends of the College are willing to give the annual support that now seems to be required by every independent college doing a sound piece of work. Fortunately, we established an operating reserve for such a contingency, but it is apparent that this reserve cannot be drawn upon indefinitely. To avoid the depletion of our resources we must find new sources of revenue so that tuition costs may not place the College beyond the reach of those able and ambitious young people for whose benefit it has been created.

It should not be thought that this financial problem is peculiar to Wilkes. Every college now faces the need for new funds; public colleges seek additional tax funds; church-related colleges turn to church membership for additional support; and non-denominational independent colleges must inevitably turn to friends who believe in the value of inter-denominational institutions.

In the belief that our own situation can best be understood by comparison with other institutions, the following table gives the endowment and annual gifts for several independent colleges of Pennsylvania.

ENROLLMENT, ENDOWMENT, AND ANNUAL GIFTS FOR

SELECTED PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGES

College	1954		Gifts - Last Fiscal Year			Total
	Enrollment	Endowment	Bequests	Scholarships	General	
Albright	602	\$ 731,908	\$	\$ 10,780	\$ 59,564	\$ 70,344
Bucknell	1821	2,739,571	1,000	8,945	248,571	258,516
Dickinson (Day)	894	2,098,970				150,391
(Night)	110					
F. & M.	1087	2,240,367	115,000	4,954	101,502	221,456
Juniata	625	1,200,000	25,000		135,000	160,000
Lebanon	600*	845,799				48,930
Lehigh	2600	11,200,000	71,300	237,605	608,000	920,208
Moravian	595	1,200,000	500		66,897	67,397
Muhlenburg	675	1,240,300	20,369	47,064	137,964	404,836
Pa. College for Women	412	2,584,333	5,827	4,660	225,553	236,040
Swarthmore	900	13,282,426				275,907
Ursinus	685	1,750,000				109,000
WILKES (Day)	757	799,777	22,184	29,836	7,162	59,182
(Night)	762					

*Approximate enrollment

The experience of these colleges shows that it is no longer possible to support a sound college program from tuition and fees. The total cost of a good college education is beyond the reach of the individual and supplementary funds are needed to keep the individual costs within bounds. If Wilkes is to retain its independent status and to develop its plans for the future, it must seek and obtain funds that will take care of the difference between operating costs and tuition.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE FUTURE

A recent article predicted that within the foreseeable future one-third of the independent colleges would disappear, one-third would become publicly supported institutions, and one-third would gain sufficient strength to render services of ever increasing significance.

While I do not fully agree with this writer's conclusions, I do understand the reason for his predictions. There are independent colleges that because of location and limited resources have no strong reason for being; there are colleges that have strong support and will continue to grow; there are also colleges that, with limited resources, are rendering needed service and must therefore be maintained in the years ahead.

Wilkes belongs in this last category. It is a community college dedicated to the service of Wyoming Valley and to the people of northeastern Pennsylvania. It brings to many thousands of young people opportunities that would be denied them were they compelled to leave home for an education. It seeks to stimulate and serve every group that is concerned with the bet-

terment of the area. And because it wishes to serve all, it is non-denominational, representing and serving all without regard for creed or color, but with great regard for the release and nurturing of individual talents, and for the creation of understanding, good will, and unity in the midst of diversity.

It is one of that group of non-denominational institutions dedicated to community service and committed to the idea that truth and understanding form the foundations upon which free institutions must stand. These colleges have had tremendous growth in the past half century. And, because they are close to the people and seek to serve their communities through adult programs and special services, it appears they are filling a great need in the American scene, and are destined for further expansion in the years ahead. More than any other institution they are able to bring the advantages of extended education to the people. They are found in every progressive community and, in consequence of services rendered, secure ever-increasing support for their work.

Wilkes now renders many community services, and if it is to expand these services, it must look to the community for continued support.

Faithfully yours,

Eugene S. Farley

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