

REPORT  
OF THE  
PRESIDENT

WILKES  
COLLEGE

WILKES-BARRE  
PENNSYLVANIA



SPRING

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# *Report*

*to the*

## TRUSTEES ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

**A**S WILKES COLLEGE approaches its twenty-fifth anniversary, it necessarily concerns itself with the future and reviews the past only that the constructive experiences of the first quarter century may be projected into the future.

It has been said over and over that Wilkes was founded in depression and grew in the midst of vicissitude. This is so true that its founding in 1933 was described as "a miracle of our day", and its sturdy development since that time has been a demonstration of faith. During those days of depression many were pessimistic for the future, and in Wilkes-Barre it seemed that the economy of our Valley was coming to an end. Under such circumstances, faith was required of those who believed that the depressing influences of the thirties could be turned into hope and constructive achievement. Only faith in the creative talent of oncoming generations of young people could have sustained this conviction which inspired the struggle to create a new college.

Since the founding of the College in 1933, this faith has justified itself in the lives of some seven thousand young people and adults; and new confirmation of this faith comes from the slow reversal of economic trends in the Valley, the attraction of new industries, and the first rise in local employment — aside from the war period — in thirty years. A combination of vision, team-play, and constructive work have reversed the downward trend of the past three decades and have justified the faith of those who established this College.

## WHEN THE COLLEGE WAS FOUNDED, FEW, IF ANY, ENVISAGED THE GROWTH THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE IN LESS THAN A QUARTER CENTURY, AND NO

one dreamed, at that time, that the newly established College could commit itself so completely to the dual objectives of high scholastic standards and community service. Both objectives, however, have been the natural consequence of experience. When first founded the College attracted two groups of students; ambitious and able students constituted one-half of the student body and the other half was made up of students who were neither able nor ambitious. Efforts to serve both groups proved to be impracticable; the work that challenged the able was beyond the grasp of the weaker group, and the work that was suitable for the weaker group was of no significance to the able students. After four years of frustrating effort with these two groups, it was concluded that the only sound policy was to center our efforts upon the able group. Only because of this policy has it been possible for the faculty to develop a program and standards designed to challenge and nurture the capabilities of the stronger students.

Development of the College under these policies has been steady, and enrollment trends have tended to move upward in spite of the declining population in the area. Although a lowering of standards would undoubtedly have doubled enrollment during the post war decade, it has not seemed advisable to deviate from accepted policies of admission. To do so would have required a revision of the educational program and an expansion in facilities that was inconsistent with the financial needs of the College. Rather than use every dollar for plant expansion, we have always increased our endowment as we have increased our plant. Although this practice has slowed up the expansion of physical facilities, it has provided a sound basis for further development. It provides supplementary income for teachers salaries and maintenance, and reduces the dependence of the College upon an inflated enrollment. Only by adhering to this middle-road policy is it possible to combine plans for steady growth with the maintenance of scholastic standards.

Each of my previous reports to you has been concerned with developments of the past and with the immediate prospects of the College. In this report I am taking it for granted that you are aware of the problems and growth of the past, and, therefore, will concentrate upon plans for the future, which are in reality no more than a projection of the past.

When the College was founded, few dreamed that the College, in its day and evening programs, would ever enroll and serve 1,500 students yearly, and probably no one imagined that the day enrollment would exceed a thousand carefully selected students. The founders were convinced, however, that our young people needed an opportunity for development and self-realization and deemed it their responsibility to create opportunities for the education of able and ambitious students. Motivated by this conviction, a small beginning was made in a rented building, but only as the values of education to students and the community were demonstrated did the vision of an independent non-denominational college, committed to serve the people of this populous area of the state, gain substance. As the concept of a community college grew, new responsibilities were thrust upon those administering and supporting Wilkes. Slowly, they gained the realization that the future well-being of the students, the college, and the community were inseparable: sound development of one helped the development of the others.

**WITHIN THE PAST FIVE YEARS THE COMMUNITY HAS DEMONSTRATED THE VIGOR OF ITS LEADERSHIP AND THE LONG PERIOD OF ECONOMIC DECLINE HAS BEEN REVERSED. EFFORTS OF THE PAST ARE AT LAST BEARING FRUIT, AND,**

in consequence, the College must now plan to accommodate a full-time student enrollment of 1,100 to 1,200 students and must prepare also for the expansion of its evening program for adults. For the first time in the life of the College, it is possible to grapple with positive rather than negative developments in the community.

Although local employment trends have just begun to move upward, the day enrollment at the College has tended to move upward for a number of years. In consequence, the present day enrollment is too large for the plant and there is every prospect that this upward trend will continue until an upper limit is established by action of the College authorities. The high birth rate of the past two decades assures the continued growth of college enrollments, and simultaneously the need for trained citizens and workers increases the proportion of young people seeking the advantages of college. Broad vision, adequate information, and technical skill are demanded by the nature of our social and technological progress; and, it is recognized by young people, as never before, that ignorance impedes individual advancement and endangers the free ideals and institutions of our country. Personal and social forces combine to increase the ever-growing demand for education.

As we approach the twenty-fifth anniversary of the College, practical considerations and sentiment unite to create a strong urge for the initiation of a new period of development. New buildings are required for the immediate future if the College is not to reject many desirable students. To meet its obligations, the College must, therefore, expand its facilities, and sentiment adds to this desire to strengthen the College on the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary.

We wish to make our twenty-fifth anniversary a significant milestone in the growth of the College, and the Board of Trustees has decided, therefore, to complete a development program that will provide essential facilities and will strengthen the influence of the College. Because the needs of the College are numerous, it is difficult to rank one need above the other when, if possible, all should be satisfied at once. As it is not likely that all needs can be met simultaneously, it has been decided, after extended consideration, to give the following priority to each project:

#### TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

1. Funds for teachers' salaries.
2. Scholarship funds.
3. A science building for teaching and research.
4. An assembly hall with music and art studios attached.
5. A new library equipped to house at least 100,000 volumes and to seat 400 students.
6. Dormitory facilities for 150 additional students.
7. Engineering laboratories.

#### FACULTY SALARIES:

Funds for teachers salaries are placed first because of the conviction of the Board of Trustees and the administration that the true strength of the College rests in its faculty. Although equipment and buildings are essential, they are only as valuable as the faculty makes them. It is the influence of the faculty that encourages study, stimulates thinking, develops breadth of vision and soundness of judgment. These innate qualities, that are the goals sought by all teachers, result from the give and take of ideas, and the influence of personality upon personality. The best of bricks and equipment are only of use in the hands of capable and dedicated teachers.

The importance of salary improvements is also demonstrated by actions of individual faculty members and by a study of salaries paid at Wilkes and in other colleges of Pennsylvania. Although one teacher has recently resigned to accept an appointment which offers more money, a number of faculty members have refused higher salaries elsewhere in order that they may carry on with their work at Wilkes. We regret the loss of the single person who felt impelled to seek a greater income, but we recognize a real obligation to those who have remained because of their devotion to an ideal, and their conviction that Wilkes will continue to grow in stature. In justice to those who have stayed, we are impelled to offer a remuneration that is comparable with that offered by other colleges. Their loyalty would be unjustified if it were not recognized and returned.

Fortunately the generosity of two trustees and the promised grant of the Ford Foundation already have assured \$264,000 for endowment of teachers salaries. The income of this investment, amounting to approximately \$10,000, will make a start in improving teachers salaries; but as this will amount to less than \$200 per teacher, it will not overcome the lag in salaries that has developed since 1950. It is proposed, therefore, that the Ford grant of \$156,000 be matched by adding \$48,000 to the \$108,000 recently given for teachers salaries.

To compliment this annual income it is suggested that an additional sum of \$50,000 be sought and set aside for use over a period of ten years. By combining the income from special endowment with at least \$5,000 from the principal of the \$50,000 fund, salaries can be increased by an average of about \$350.

#### PROPOSED FUND FOR TEACHERS SALARIES:

##### ENDOWMENT:

|                                                                 |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Ford Grant .....                                                | \$156,000 |
| Gifts and pledges received for teachers salaries. .             | 108,000   |
| Additional sum required to match Ford Grant...                  | 48,000    |
|                                                                 | <hr/>     |
| Total funds for endowment.....                                  | \$312,000 |
| Principal fund for disbursement over a<br>ten-year period ..... | 50,000    |
|                                                                 | <hr/>     |
| Total required .....                                            | \$362,000 |
|                                                                 | <hr/>     |
| Pledged to date .....                                           | \$264,000 |
| Balance required .....                                          | \$ 98,000 |

These sums will not be sufficient to restore faculty salaries to the value of 1945 salaries, but they will begin to correct the inequities that have resulted from inflation and a lag on the part of the College in raising both salaries and tuition. To restore salaries to their former purchasing value, it will be necessary to supplement these special funds by a greater income from tuition. This requires, of course, an increase in student rates and poses the problem as to how far we can raise tuition without excluding many of the able students for whom the College exists. It is quite apparent that we can raise the tuition rates too high for the student, but it is also equally apparent that if tuitions are not high enough to attract and hold a strong faculty, the students will not receive the type of education that will be of greatest benefit to them. We must seek to maintain a happy balance between tuition and salaries, but tuition at Wilkes, as at every independent college concerned with the quality of its work, must be supplemented by annual gifts and by income from a growing endowment.

## SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS:

Many of our most able and ambitious students cannot, even with great sacrifice, aspire to a college education without some assistance from the College. As these students are frequently among the best in their class and their generation, it would be a tragic waste of talent to deprive them of the opportunity for self-development offered by the College.

In a real sense those who contribute to the education of these students are cultivating the greatest resource of our nation; they are releasing and nurturing the creative talents of promising young people. In their turn, and in consequence of opportunities offered by the generosity of friends, these young people will ultimately make more significant contributions to our nation and our civilization.

It has been the experience at Wilkes, as at comparable colleges, that approximately one-third of the student body requires aid in the form of scholarships. For the past two years the sum granted to students has approximated \$50,000, and it is this amount that we are asking our friends to give.

Every gift to the scholarship fund gives new hope and new opportunity to a promising student.

## A SCIENCE BUILDING:

The steady expansion of full-time day enrollment from a low of 596 in 1951 to the present figure of 898, to an anticipated 1,000 by the fall of 1956, has created a serious plant problem. Although we enrolled more than a thousand full-time students during the G. I. bulge of the post-war years, we did so by imposing upon the generosity of neighbors who were willing to loan us their buildings during a period of emergency. We cannot expect them to assist us to meet our permanent needs and must, therefore, erect buildings of our own.

Added classroom space of any sort would relieve the present over-crowding, but it is desired in relieving this crowded condition to build facilities that will be of the greatest permanent value. Consideration of long-range plans, in relation to existing conditions, has, therefore, caused the administration and Board to give first priority to a new science hall. The erection of this building offers three advantages. It will eliminate the use of very small laboratories and will, thereby, reduce the costs of instruction. It will provide laboratories for industrial research, and will enable the College to serve industries requiring technical services. It will release the present laboratories in Conyngham Hall for use as classrooms.

## AN ASSEMBLY HALL AND ART CENTER:

Never since the College moved to South River Street has the need for an assembly hall been so pressing. Heretofore we have depended upon the generosity of our neighbors and have successively occupied the Presbyterian Church House, the Presbyterian Church, our own Little Theatre, the Baptist Church, the Jewish Community Center, and the gymnasium. Today we have outgrown all but the gymnasium and the Presbyterian Church, and by fall we will have outgrown everything but the gymnasium. This gymnasium can always be used as an auditorium, but its use for assemblies and recitals interrupts the athletic and physical education programs. In consequence, these programs suffer and in our efforts to avoid unnecessary interference, many desirable programs are omitted. A new assembly hall is therefore needed to accommodate a wide variety of activities including:

- Student Assemblies
- Cue 'n' Curtain Productions
- Television Broadcasts
- Philharmonic Concerts
- Band Concerts
- Choral Recitals
- Town and Gown Series
- Professional and Regional Conferences
- Debates

The music department, which has outgrown Gies Hall, will occupy the studios, offices, and rehearsal rooms, and will frequently use the assembly hall for student recitals. Similarly, it is hoped that art studios and rooms for permanent and traveling art exhibits may be included in this building. Such provisions will enable the College to extend its present programs in art and music for the training of artists and for the cultural enrichment of all students.

The plot of land fronting the River Common and bounded by South River, South, and West River Streets has been given the College for this purpose by the Trustees of the Wyoming Valley Society of Arts and Sciences. This site overlooking the river and facing the Common is ideal for this purpose, and a handsome building on this site will add to the appearance of the city's most attractive area.

## A NEW LIBRARY:

A special committee of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was invited to make a special evaluation of the College in 1954. The committee gave special attention to the library and strongly urged the earliest possible enlargement of the library so that it could seat at least one-third of the students, and provide shelf space for several

times the volumes now owned by the College. In round figures this means that the new library should seat at least 400 students and should provide shelf space for 100,000 volumes.

Fortunately, this recommendation does not pose a serious problem as our former Board member, Fred J. Weckesser, bequeathed his substantial home on South Franklin Street to the College. This building will admirably serve as a library when stacks are built between the home and the garage. With this addition the Weckesser home will make a handsome and adequate library.

## DORMITORIES:

Boarding students have always been housed in the large residences given to or purchased by the College. These old homes have been more like clubs than dormitories, for the ratio of recreational and lounging rooms is greater than is deemed either necessary or desirable in dormitories, and the number of students per home is limited to approximately twenty. From the students' viewpoint, this arrangement is most desirable, although these small dormitories are expensive to operate. It is hoped that the acquisition of other homes will increase the capacity of dormitories from the present 100 to 250 before 1965.

## ENGINEERING LABORATORIES:

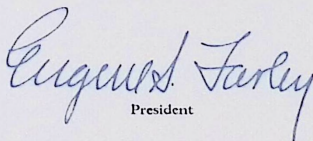
Since the College was established in 1933, only two years of engineering have been offered and students have at the end of their sophomore year transferred to the junior year of engineering colleges. This plan was continued after the other courses were extended to four years because of the great cost involved in establishing engineering laboratories. It is felt, however, that these laboratories should be established as early as possible so that Wilkes may attract and train more engineers, and so increase its contribution to the technical and production problems arising from the present prolonged shortage of engineers. With adequate laboratory facilities, students will be enabled to complete the work for their engineering degrees at Wilkes.

## A COMPARISON:

Twenty-three years ago no one was sure of the response that would be made to the establishment of a new college for the youth of Wyoming Valley. There was certainty that thousands of young people of this area could benefit from further education, but there was no assurance that students would grasp the opportunities offered by the creation of a local college. Time and events, however, have demonstrated the eagerness of our young people for further education, and, in consequence, the doubts of 1933 have been dissipated. We know that our young people will grasp the opportunities that are offered them, but their desire faces us with new questions. "Can we provide the facilities and faculty that are required by a steadily expanding student body? Can we offer the type of education that will prepare our students to grapple successfully with the great problems that confront us in this generation? Can we develop the understanding, conviction, and faith that are needed if freedom is to be preserved for future generations?"

By ourselves we cannot expect to answer these questions. Through our united efforts we can give a satisfactory answer to each. As we approach our twenty-fifth birthday in 1958, we confidently face the future. Assured that our efforts are right, we seek to move ahead so that the efforts of the past may come to fruit. In a real sense the difficulties that confront us are an outgrowth of past success. Does not the success of the past prepare us for greater achievements in the future?

Faithfully yours,

  
President

P.S. Since this message was written, two large gifts have advanced us toward our goal. A gift of \$900,000 has been given for the erection of the science building, and another gift of \$103,000 has been given for the endowment of teachers' salaries.

Heavily