

Wilkes College Projecting the Past report, n.d.

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PROJECTING THE PAST

It has been customary at Wilkes to plot, at periodic intervals, the steps in our development that should be completed within a ten-year period. Through such planning we have been able to concentrate upon immediate objectives, and once these were attained, to shift our efforts to other objectives. This procedure has proved constructive and has enabled all friends of the College to direct their efforts toward a common goal.

Ordinarily, the program of development outlined in 1950, would need no re-evaluation at this time. The pressure of events and the need for a new concentration of purpose suggest the advisability of reconsidering the objectives that are still unattained, and of extending the plan to 1965.

Report of the Advisory Committee of the Middle States Association of Col- leges and Secondary Schools

The 1955 report of the special advisory committee of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was both encouraging and discouraging. The committee recognized the unusual efforts of the College and complimented us for the gains of the past and for the constructive and broad use of its limited facilities. It suggested, however, that we were attempting too much with too little, and strongly advised against further expansion of program or services until the resources of the College were enlarged.

This recommendation from the regional accrediting body of which the College has long been an approved member, confronts the trustees, administration, and faculty with two alternatives. The College can remain static for a period of years, or it can aggressively campaign for funds required for an extended program of service within the College and the community.

Consolidation Requires Growth

Consolidation of past gains is essential, but there is grave doubt that consolidation is possible unless accompanied by tangible evidences of dynamic and constructive growth. As our community

requires united and dynamic effort to reconstruct its economy, so does the College require similar effort to maintain its positive record of achievement and growth.

The trustees, administration, and faculty have long recognized that the College cannot continue to develop unless the economic decline of the Valley is checked. Recognizing this fact, and being aware of the many constructive acts required for the economic rehabilitation of the area, members of the College group have joined in varied efforts for community development. They have worked with the Industrial Fund and the Chamber of Commerce in their constructive efforts, with public officials of Luzerne County in planning for effective government, and with school officers in the study of educational problems. They have sponsored and supported the Wyoming Valley Philharmonic Orchestra and the organization of public forums, and through personal participation in other groups have given their support to a variety of efforts for community development. Although it is agreed that consolidation is essential, it is doubted that with the steady and widespread demand for extended services, there can be any real consolidation without the continual stimulus of dynamic growth.

What is Needed?

Because of the interrelations of the College and the community, it is always necessary, when planning for the future, to consider the needs of the College in relation to the needs of the Community. When the two coincide, there is no difficulty in arriving at a decision, but when they are not identical, adjustments are required so that the most constructive action may be taken. It is in consequence of these two needs that the following recommendations are made.

An Auditorium or Art
Center Including an
Auditorium

For seventeen years the College depended upon neighboring institutions for an assembly hall, and today assemblies are held in the College gymnasium. Sometimes it has been necessary to shift the assemblies because the neighbors were inconvenienced by the College use of their halls, and sometimes the growth of the student body has necessitated larger quarters.

We are grateful to our neighbors for their friendly assistance, but the student body is now too large for any nearby hall and we are ~~now~~ compelled to hold assemblies in the College gymnasium. We are grateful that assemblies can be held in the gymnasium, but we are always aware that the gymnasium provides an unsatisfactory setting for many programs, and we are equally aware that the use of the gymnasium for the weekly assemblies disrupts the program of physical education.

Although the immediate need of the College is an assembly hall seating 1200 persons, there are other possibilities that should be considered in planning an assembly. The music and art departments need new and larger quarters, and the pressure for additional space in the music department increases each year. As there is also considerable community interest in an art gallery, it seems most desirable that the needs of the College and the community be considered jointly and that an art center be constructed at the end of the River Common which will serve both College and community.

The construction of this center will be the largest undertaking thus far attempted, but the value to both community and College will be great. If funds for this center can be raised by 1957, its dedication in 1958 would fittingly mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the College.

Library

The continual growth of the library collection and the need for more desks for study and research will necessitate a new and larger library. Fortunately, the plans of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W. Weckesser will provide the nucleus for this much needed addition.

Science Building

Although Conyngham Hall and Conyngham annex provide working space for the sciences, the expansion of this program is impossible until a new science hall is erected which will provide adequate laboratories, classrooms, and research quarters.

The construction of a new science building will not only provide needed space for our present work, but will also provide space for applied research and laboratory tests desired by nearby industries. In addition, it will release classrooms for use by other departments.

It is recognized that the science building cannot be constructed at the same time the art center is underway, unless one building is financed by a single gift. To distribute the burden of cost, it is suggested that funds for a science building be sought for 1964, and the building erected in the following year.

Land

The plot of land bounded by West River, South River, and South Streets has been made available by the directors of the Art Museum for the erection of an assembly hall or art center. Unfortunately, the College possesses no plot of sufficient size for a science building, and must therefore seek additional properties that are contiguous to land now owned by the College. This may pose some problems, but if the developments of the past ten years are duplicated during the next decade, the needed space for a science building will be available by 1965.

Dormitories

When the last development program was projected in 1950, it was suggested that within ten years dormitory space for one hundred students should be procured. The gift and purchase of homes since that time has given us this capacity, and we now face the need of enlarging this space to accommodate the steadily increasing number of resident students.

Although it will ultimately be desirable and necessary to erect dormitories, it is likely that the procurement of further residences will permit a doubling of the number of students in residence, while, at the same time, the acquisition of these homes will provide the land required for the science hall and other buildings that may be erected in later years.

The new dining hall, with a seating capacity of approximately 500, will be of sufficient size to care for a considerably enlarged group of dormitory students.

Endowment

In the last report it was stated that endowment should be increased by at least \$500,000 each decade.

Since 1950, the endowment of the College has increased by more than \$400,000, and it would seem that before 1960, the endowment should exceed a million dollars. This increase is encouraging, but in large part results from inflation. It is quite apparent that the College cannot maintain additional buildings unless the endowment is increased or the amount received from annual gifts continues its upward trend.

As no independent college can maintain high standards and a balanced and dynamic program on receipts from tuition, it is evident that a continuous effort for "planned giving" is essential to the development of the College.

Playing Fields
and
Tennis Courts

In the earlier program of development, the acquisition of playing fields and tennis courts was recommended. In this report they are de-emphasized, not because they are of less importance, but because other needs are so pressing that they must be given first consideration. If the opportunity to acquire athletic fields should be offered us within the next decade, the College would be most fortunate. It seems, however, that the other needs are more pressing and must be satisfied before the College acquires its own athletic fields. For some time to come we can probably maintain an adequate program of sports by using the City fields and renting the Kingston field.

SUMMATION

The proposals that have been submitted for the decade may seem to be excessive in the light of economic conditions within the Valley. There is, however, a great possibility that these ends may be attained if all of us who are associated with the College remain united in our conviction that the work and influence of the College are vital to the economic and cultural development of the community, and are convinced that the work with students is nurturing their talents and broadening their horizons.

Those of us who have been most immersed in the work of the College are convinced of these things, and only because the faculty shares this conviction is it possible to hold our most valued personnel.

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