

March 29, 1968

To: Businessmen of St. Louis
From: Jacqueline Grennan, President, Webster College
Subject: The Commitment of Webster College

For the last five years Webster College has been involved in a process of reorganization and redefinition. We have deliberated long and hard as to the conflict of interest generated when a religious order makes itself responsible for a public institution, yet remains subject to juridical control by the Church. This type of progressive thinking culminated in the transfer of full authority and ownership of Webster College to a self-perpetuating board of directors last November. The transfer was made possible because of the forward thinking of the then-governing board of Webster College, made up of the General Council of the Sisters of Loretto.

They have always understood the needs of and met their commitment to past generations. The Sisters first involved themselves in education in 1812, when they set up log cabin schools in the frontier settlements of Kentucky. In the mid-19th century they traveled west with the pioneers, establishing schools throughout the southwest; and in 1915, they established the first Catholic women's college west of the Mississippi. Last November, the Sisters of Loretto again set educational precedence when they transferred full ownership of Webster College to a lay board, and thus implemented their conviction that the governing power of an institution of higher education belongs in the hands of the public, whom the institution serves.

Webster College continues to be an innovator in higher education. Today we feel that there is a real need for liberalizing education as distinct from liberal education. Our aim is to create a community in which a student is encouraged to search one discipline so that his search will lead him to inquire into others. A student must be continually involved in the process of learning to learn.

For a liberally educated student to function well in the real world the student must involve himself in the surroundings and problems of a political and economic society--in mathematics and the sciences, in literature and the arts, in language and communication, in philosophic and theological thinking. His education must be relevant to his future role in society.

Today, two definite forms of research and development centers for undergraduate education are emerging: 1.) an "experimental college" within a university community that is separated from the red tape of the parent university; and 2.) a comparatively small liberal arts college with the concurrent determination to align itself with the larger college or university system.

At Webster College we are moving in the direction of the latter kind of experimental college. We have realized the necessity of the College's commitment to the society in which it lives, and we have designed a curriculum to excite in our students a growing and deepening curiosity in that society.

No longer ~~are~~^{can} colleges ^{be} the ivory towers of past years. Today, "field work", which exposes the student to the baffling elements of society and compels him to attempt solving its problems, is far more important than ^a "theory" of how-to-do-it. Today's student must be involved in political activities, student teaching, social work, and laboratory and computer technology from the beginning of their undergraduate education.

At Webster College we are working to create an environment that will foster and support a student's future role in the real world.

A.) Webster College has dispensed with rigid general education requirements. Students are permitted to structure their own academic program beyond the traditional limits of their major field. Some classes have been moved from ~~the classroom~~ ^{academic} ~~to~~ ^{action} the urban/centers, the city slums, mental hospitals, and county political campaign offices. The College students tutor children in low-rent housing areas. Some of our students spend a full term away from their college curriculum to work on an approved project relative to their studies. We opened a laboratory school in 1963, for the first through sixth grades. At the College School various materials of elementary curricula are researched. Our students receive laboratory experience in mathematics and the sciences in research programs at Monsanto Company and Washington University. Our art and english majors are involved in projects relating to environmental design and communications media. Students receive experience in professional educational theatre through participation in the various productions of the Loretto-Hilton Reperatory Company.

Let us look for a moment at two specific programs in which Webster College feels deeply committed.

1.) For some time Webster College has felt the need for involvement in the problems of inner city life. Four years ago the College initiated an educational program in the inner city when it opened the Mullanphy House, a pre-school for young Negro children taught by Webster faculty and students. From this initial project grew a close association between Webster College and the people of the inner city.

Students are permitted, in some cases encouraged, to take sabbatical leaves from their classes for a semester, to engage in the practical application of societal problems they encountered in the classroom. Through this program the student learns first-hand the social, economic and political problems involved in the life of the inner city residents. Faculty and students work in the inner city complex tutoring children, finding work for the adults, and building a political organization for greater representation in city government.

An outgrowth of inner city and Webster College cooperation is the Mid-City Congress Committee. A faculty member of the College is the executive director of the Committee.

In line with the College's philosophy of involvement in inner city life and education, Webster College has been the site of OEO-sponsored Upward Bound program since 1965. Presently 120 students, the majority of whom are Negro, are involved in the program. They come from St. Louis families to the College through scholarships awarded by the Office of Economic Opportunity. These students attend Saturday classes during the regular school year and live on campus during the summer. Summer enrollment reaches 180 students. They are taught by College faculty members and Negro personnel from local schools.

This summer the College hopes to initiate a new program--Webster Summer Institute, a summer school for high school students outside the Upward Bound program. Summer Institute students will share teachers, facilities, and dormitories with the Upward Bound students. Encounters between students of different social and cultural backgrounds outside the classroom, whether in the cafeteria, in the dormitories, or in recreational activities, will be as important to the development of each student as are the classes themselves.

2.) Webster College is strongly committed to the preparation of teachers for the elementary and secondary schools. We feel we must educate the kind of teacher who will be in tune with the world in general, and the world of education in particular.

At the present time a significant number of our students are preparing for a career in education in one of three different areas: a.) "specialized teaching" (prepares them to teach a major subject in grades 1 through 12); b.) "secondary specialized teaching" (prepares them to teach a major subject in grades 7 through 12); and, c.) "elementary school teaching" (prepares them to teach in a self-contained classroom.)

Each year more and more of our students are taking advantage of the opportunity to become a teacher with a speciality in one subject, capable of teaching that subject on any level. Thus, they are prepared to teach in the ever-increasing number of schools which are actively seeking personnel for team teaching and specialist assignments.

The result of this approach is that the preparation of the teacher becomes the concern and responsibility of the entire College. There is no Educational Department. All students are supervised in their teaching by a member of the department of their major field. This enables the apprentice teacher to receive specialized, professional guidance.

Within the teacher education program there is a strong emphasis on innovative curriculum development for all levels of education. Students are given the opportunity to produce material necessary for their implementation. We feel innovative teaching and curriculum research are important also as necessary and creative contributions to the development of the whole College. We ^{believe} hope that students working in the teacher preparation program will be able to recognize good curricula and even develop their own.

Within the College's teacher preparation program is the graduate program-- Masters of Art in Teaching. ^{Thw} MAT is designed for furthering the elementary in-service teacher's education in a specific discipline. Presently, we have enrolled in this program 300 St. Louis area teachers of whom 50 are from the inner city schools.

Intrinsic in Webster College's philosophy of teacher preparation and curriculum development is the College School. Three principles of this experimental school are: 1.) the use of the specialist teacher; 2.) the emphasis on the discovery of new teaching methods and the close association of College faculty members and student body with the College School in the development of curriculum materials; 3.) experimentation in organization and administration of the elementary school.

Many apprentice teachers as well as teachers and administrators from area schools and school districts observe teaching methods at the College School. All the School classes are open for observation on Tuesday and Thursday and by appointment on other school days.

Webster College sees education as a process rather than as a product. The emphasis on the specialist teacher, as well as his work within the College School, provides a two-fold enrichment experience. The College faculty member, as a researcher-teacher, becomes involved in the College School and the schools of St. Louis, bringing the best research can offer to the field of education; in return, he brings a sense of vitality from his involvement with the schools in curriculum development to his work on the college level.

B.) To further the commitment of Webster College to the St. Louis community, we feel that there is a definite need for cooperation and involvement between institutions.

We are moving toward implementation of a set of patterns for such institutional cooperation with public as well as private colleges and universities in the area. We ^{are working} hope to complement the strong points of our undergraduate education with the strengths of other colleges, universities and research centers, both graduate and undergraduate. In the near future we ^{plan} hope to exchange lecturers and permit cross-registration of classes *with Washington and St. Louis Universities.*

C.) We are also moving toward full co-education in the general college. Since 1962, we have enrolled male students in the fine arts department--music, art and theatre. This experience has had very gratifying results. The College commitment to liberalizing education is certainly as important and attractive in the education of men as in the education of women. Students, faculty, and administration are convinced that our commitment to an open world must preclude isolation of the sexes.

In the light of this co-educational move, we hope to increase student enrollment from the present 900 to 2,000 in approximately ten years, and to achieve a viable ratio of men-women students within that time. Because of this proposed enrollment, we are trying now to solve the problems of adequate housing, while attempting to find within the College meaningful but partial community ties.

To take the enrollment picture a step further, we hope to significantly increase student aid funds to raise the representation of Negro and foreign students within the College.

D.) To implement the present educational program, and future programs, Webster College is moving toward establishment of an efficient and effective administrative staff and faculty. *There is a need within educational institutions to develop the kind of middle management which has proved so effective in the corporate world.*

We have conceived and implemented a unique structure for offices of the deans. The Deans' Complex, as it is known, operates under the direction of the Dean of Faculties, and includes the deans for Curriculum and Research, for Teacher Preparation, and for Academic Advising. Within this structure we have for the first time a beginning organization to support and direct the initiative and energies of the top administration.

Similarly, an office of Student Affairs is developing under the Dean of Students, charged with representing the student body, in all phases, as fully as the Dean of Faculties represents the faculty.

There is, at this time, no professional staff in Institutional Planning. I have kept this portfolio under my own immediate jurisdiction, working with and through other administrators and faculty for planning and public relations. The reason is that we have seen institutional planning and fund-raising growing out of and relating to academic programs.

If the initiative and creativity developed in individual faculty members and departments is to be sustained and developed as the College moves toward a more complex organization, it is critical that we develop personnel and procedures for middle management in all areas. As faculties and student bodies press for greater participation in policy making in general areas, we must press for a new comprehensive role for some faculty members.

Within the next two years we intend to recruit a minimum of five department chairmen capable of sustaining individual initiative and esprit de corps within their departments; they must be determined to cooperate with administrators in exploring and implementing viable inter-departmental and inter-institutional cooperation on all levels. This team of department heads should be capable of developing broader patterns within the curriculum. We are not interested in a tight divisional system, but we do wish to work toward areas of common interest and focus in curriculum planning.

As you can see, we believe that Webster College has a clear commitment to the community of St. Louis, to its students, to their undergraduate education, and to its own faculty.

We feel that Webster College is an important experimental laboratory preparing students to cope with various national problems. We are focusing on the important problem of learning to learn--we are involved in the business of educating students who can live in and contribute to the world, and we believe they must be educated in that world.