PLANNING BULLETIN

Bulletin #1
NOTES ON ADMISSIONS
by
Van R. Halsey
Director of Admissions
The Planning Bulletin series is intended to convey to the public a sense of the steps Hampshire College is taking toward its opening in September 1970. Each Bulletin represents present thinking in a specific area of concern, and is thus more likely to be an approximation of what Hampshire will be than a final portrait. But the intended direction of such steps is clear: the creation of a high quality college, using the most promising ideas to redefine the nature of liberal arts education.

Bulletin #1
NOTES ON ADMISSIONS
by
Van R. Halsey
Director of Admissions

January 1969
Background and Philosophy of Hampshire College

Hampshire College is a new, independent, experimenting liberal arts college which will open for students in 1970; it is intended specifically as a national pilot enterprise for innovations in American higher education. Hampshire was brought into being through the initiative of faculty and administrative leaders of four institutions in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts: Amherst, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts. It is the result of planning begun in 1958, and its establishment was approved by the Trustees of its four neighboring institutions. In 1965, the new college received a pledge of $6 million from Harold F. Johnson, an Amherst alumnus, and was incorporated under a charter granted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Exemption from federal income taxes as a charitable institution was granted in December 1965, and eligibility to borrow or receive grants-in-aid from the federal government was established in January 1967. In addition to Mr. Johnson's original gift, the most significant support has come from the Ford Foundation, which has given Hampshire a $3 million grant on a two-for-one matching basis, the largest Ford Foundation grant ever given to a college, and the only one given to a college not yet accepting students.

The College now owns 500 acres of land in the towns of Amherst and Hadley, and is in the process of planning a campus and buildings.
Construction of the first academic building, the first residential and dining unit, and the Hampshire College Library has begun. The architects, master planners, and architectural consultants are Hugh Stubbins and Associates; Sasaki, Dawson, DeMay Associates, Inc.; and Pietro Belluschi.

Hampshire plans to have a student body of approximately 1500 by the middle of the 1970's, and may expand in time to 3600 students. The history and character of the early planning for Hampshire College are detailed in Working Paper Number One, The Making of a College, by Franklin Patterson and Charles R. Longsworth (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966). This volume, which elaborates the intentions of Hampshire College, is not considered a static blueprint, but a thorough approximation of all aspects of the College's planning.

The Hampshire College program, as presently planned, introduces a number of departures from conventional academic procedures; among them a three-School academic structure instead of the more fragmented departmental arrangement, a flexible time schedule of three sequential Divisions in lieu of the usual four-year rule, and replacement of fixed graduation requirements based on prescribed course credits by a system of comprehensive examinations and independent research or creative projects. Time off campus will be encouraged for travel, work periods, independent research, and community service.

Hampshire College will undertake an innovative role in several broad interrelated realms of higher education. The College will seek, through continuing experiment, consultation and review, to redesign liberal education so that it
better serves the growth in every human dimension—intellectual, emotional, intuitive, sensuous—of those who comprise its community, and thus offers a more substantial ground for continuing self-education and self-expression;

becomes a more effective intellectual and moral instrument of responsibility for the quality of life in America.

Hampshire will seek new ways of securing the economic viability of the private liberal arts college in an era in which the demand for quality education is confronted with rapidly rising costs. And Hampshire intends to spur the further development of interinstitutional cooperation in education in the Connecticut River Valley of Western Massachusetts—thereby serving the interests both of educational vitality and sound economy. Hampshire hopes to demonstrate nationally the advantages of a regional complex of closely cooperating public and private institutions.

Hampshire College is explicitly designed to serve as a source of innovation and demonstration for American undergraduate education. The implications of this fact are threefold. First, while determined to avoid the kind of "laboratory school" role which so often compromises the institution's primary responsibility for its own students, Hampshire intends to develop and conduct its programs with a careful eye to their transferability: many of the lessons learned should be applicable to other settings. Second, the College will develop new techniques for institutional self-evaluation, so that its experimenting character does not devolve into just one more narrow, rigid "experimental" orthodoxy.
Third, through a continuing series of conferences, consultations, and publications, Hampshire will solicit other relevant experience and make widely known the results and review of its own efforts. The subtitle of The Making of a College--Working Paper Number One--implies a series of monographs dealing with different and successive aspects of the College's life as it unfolds.

To develop these plans, Hampshire College is assembling a small academic and administrative staff. Its most recent additions include the Dean of the College, Richard C. Lyon, formerly the Chairman of the Program of American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Francis D. Smith, newly appointed Dean of the School of Humanities and Arts, formerly the Community Relations Director of the Massachusetts anti-poverty program, after an extensive career as a novelist, playwright and teacher; the Dean of the School of Social Science, Robert C. Birney, who was Chairman of the Department of Psychology at Amherst College; and the Dean of the School of Natural Science, Everett M. Hafner, formerly Professor of Physics at the University of Rochester.
Notes on Admissions

The Hampshire admissions process will not be a contest. We will encourage each interested student to become a partner with us in judging his or her readiness for the Hampshire program, and to do this by sharing the responsibility for candid exchange.

As a college with a distinctive and demanding program, Hampshire College is necessarily approaching the question of admissions with the goal of identifying those students most likely to benefit from experience in that program. Although the full admissions policy is not yet formed, certain guidelines are taking shape. One of these recognizes a need for a greater flow of pertinent information between the high school student evaluating the college, and the college evaluating the high school student. A second guideline points toward a smoother transition between high school and college, a period which ought to be one of growth and not of apprehension. These two guidelines overlap on occasion. It is not the purpose of this Bulletin to describe the entire admissions policy of Hampshire College, several aspects of which will be taken up in subsequent Bulletins. Here the intent is to point to some possible implications of the two guidelines.

Too often today the transition from school to college is seen as an isolated activity, carried on by the high school guidance office and the college admissions office. There is very little connection between
the student's twelfth year activities and his earlier successes or failures, which—if known by the college—would help to illuminate the admissions process. Once the student is admitted he is too often shunted to the freshmen dean's office and thence to an upper class dean, a major advisor, an honors program advisor, and ultimately to the alumni office. What Hampshire seeks to do is to see the student on a continuum of educational development, on campus and off. Counselors and headmasters who have come to Hampshire have urged us to begin our conversations with students and parents earlier than the normal pattern dictates and to continue them on into the student's collegiate career. This idea has suggested a number of possibilities.

**Links with the High School**

One possibility is the admission to college of some students in tenth grade with matriculation deferred until after completion of twelfth grade. This would remove from them the enormous pressure for extrinsic reward that now fills the high school years. Another possibility recognizes that a number of secondary schools have become unhappy with the programs that the students carry in the last half of their senior year after they have been admitted to college. Hampshire is considering a variety of programs which may form a link between the secondary school, the student, and Hampshire College at the midpoint of a student's twelfth grade year. These might include field work supervised jointly by Hampshire and the high school; they might include the beginnings of the Hampshire program itself. There need be nothing pressured or intense about this arrangement; what is important is that at a period in
the student's life when he may need a different kind of experience, there should be an opportunity by which he can satisfy that need and also grow from one institutional setting to another.

Between High School and College

Another set of possibilities also involves breaking some of the habits of American education. It appears that for some of today's high school graduates it would be very useful to leave the academic world for a few months, a year, or two years before tackling college. Where appropriate, some students will be actively encouraged by the College to take time to express their social concern through action, or to gain a degree of purpose. Responsible experience in business or government, in poverty programs or Peace Corps work, or in community development is very much a part of Hampshire's idea of a modern liberal education. The basic intention is to allow the student who wants and can benefit by a break between secondary school and college to have it.

Hampshire College agrees with the ideas expressed by Yale Professor Kenneth Keniston, author of The Uncommitted:

The whole problem of the attitude and responsibilities of higher education needs investigation. I've been studying drop-outs recently. I have a strong feeling that we ought to look at people who join the Peace Corps, or work, or take two years before the mast, or discontinue their education completely.

We concluded that for a great many students four years of college at age 18 makes absolutely no sense in terms of their general overall development. They're not ready for it, or they're
ahead of it. Colleges force people to conform to a timetable that just doesn’t fit. Why should everyone go to college immediately after high school graduation?

The nature of Hampshire College’s academic program is such that it allows for maximum flexibility in the length of time a student is engaged in a residential course of study. Hampshire believes that a liberal education does not necessarily progress according to a fixed number of predetermined courses or credits. Therefore, students may finish their formal academic work at Hampshire in as little as two or three years or they may, through off-campus study, take as long as five or six years.

Various provisions will be made both before and during a Hampshire student’s college experience for these programs of off-campus study and/or work significantly related to study programs.

Delayed Residence Year

One such provision is an option available at the time of admission to Hampshire College. Hampshire College will accept a limited number of students in the spring of 1970 who have decided to begin their undergraduate experience with an off-campus year. This program--The Hampshire Delayed Residence Year--permits the student, on acceptance to Hampshire College, to submit to Hampshire for evaluation a projected year of experience and study, to be undertaken before taking up residence at the College. Such a delayed residence program might include for one student a year of special study in a pathology laboratory, for another a year of study with a music teacher, for
another an apprenticeship with a theater company, for another a year of VISTA, the Teacher Corps, or a community service program—the variations are limitless. The acceptability of any individual proposal for a year of delayed residence with full credit for study would depend on the following:

1. The candidate must have been accepted by Hampshire College through the regular admissions process.
2. The candidate must present evidence of considerable aptitude and readiness for independent living and study.
3. Hampshire College must approve the basic plan submitted by the student.
4. The student must agree that for the year in question he considers himself, as we consider him, a full-time Hampshire undergraduate, responsible for the presentation of progress reports and subject to review and evaluation by his Hampshire faculty supervisors.

Guaranteed Holdover Admission

A second provision is made, beginning in the spring of 1969, for students who simply want to wait for a year before undertaking any program of study and work at Hampshire College. Such a year might be spent in travel, a fellowship or scholarship to a foreign country, or a full-time job to help with eventual college expenses. In these cases, the students and the College simply agree that admission will post-date acceptance by one year.
Admissions Procedures for Guaranteed Holdover Admission
for the Academic Year 1969-70

1. The student should be completing his secondary education in the spring of 1969.
2. Application to Hampshire College should be submitted by March 15, 1969.
3. An interview on campus will be strongly encouraged and taken seriously, and it will involve a number of people from the Hampshire community, including--after 1970--Hampshire students.
4. The secondary school records, College Board tests, and recommendations should be submitted no later than March 15, 1969.
5. All students will be notified of the Admissions Committee action by April 15, 1969.

Counseling

As has already been noted, Hampshire College is attempting to break down the administrative boxes that students are too often placed in, from admission through freshman dean to alumni office. We also intend to have a more than passing relationship with the secondary school counselors who know these students well before they come to Hampshire. We would, moreover, like parents to tell us more about their sons and daughters once they are admitted to Hampshire College.*

*Although our goal is candor in the admissions procedure, our naivete has not blinded us to the implications of the national pressure for admission to college. Accordingly, after admission, we will seek information that may have been overlooked at an earlier stage.
We plan to send frequent reports and evaluations of students back to their high school guidance offices in hope that the transition from school to college can be made smoother and more controlled. The Admissions Office is exploring a variety of self-evaluation devices that it may give to students when they enter, and which it will ask the students to keep up to date as they move along through the Hampshire program. These successive evaluations of how the student sees himself and his progress may be used in a variety of human development situations at the College. In short, the Admissions Office intends to occupy the position between high school and college, attempting to make maximum use of its rich store of insight and information.

Progress Toward 1970

As Hampshire moves toward its first entering class in the fall of 1970, the Admissions Office is attempting to broaden and deepen its dialogue with the secondary schools. Counselors and headmasters are being asked for their advice on a variety of innovations in the application form, in teacher recommendations, and in counseling and guidance. Ways of evaluating students and ways of communicating what Hampshire will be like, are also being explored. Many of these ideas will not come to fruition until our early classes have come to Hampshire, but in a number of areas the College will be able to begin new programs and test out new ideas in the next year and a half.