A PROPOSAL FOR HAMPShIRE COLLEGE

A group of students from Amherst and Smith have been meeting together for about two months to discuss education and formulate a proposal for Hampshire College. This is the proposal that has come out of these meetings. It is based on certain opinions about educational purposes, certain observations about the present state of college education, and certain ideas about society in general, and its demands. So these things may as well be stated first.

1) The need for a new kind of person and a new kind of thinking.

The United States faces problems today which cannot be solved through the approaches traditionally used by society. The solutions to the major internal and world-wide problems lie in policies not yet devised and in attitudes not now held. It is not that such problems as poverty, civil rights, and the war in Vietnam are being ignored. It is that no matter what we do, using the best tools available, the problems either stay the same or get worse. If the problems are to be solved, our educational institutions will have to find new ways to give students new tools to deal with the new problems. In light of this it seems to me that independent, divergent, and highly creative thinking should be one of the highest educational values. The need is not to perpetuate old ways of thought, but to foster new ones.

2) Individual differences

It is by now commonplace that the net effect of society, (including its educational institutions), on the individual is to make him conform. We think colleges should take the opposite view, and cherish and foster individual differences.

3) Isolation

It has long been part of educational thinking to make colleges separate from the ordinary flow of concerns in the outside world, or at least to relegate
activities and thought in this realm to the twilight of "extra-curricular activities." Our view is that one of the prime concerns of the college should be to study quite directly the problems of the modern world; everything possible should be done to break down traditional ivory tower isolation.

4) Intellectual Community

Colleges are not serving the function of being intellectual communities. Dialogue and the exchange of intellectual ideas is largely confined in practice to the classroom. What intellectual community there is exists largely in spite of, not because of, the college program. We feel every effort should be made to revive and foster this kind of community activity.

5) Responsibility

School administrations continually restrict the personal lives of students on the grounds that students aren't responsible enough to manage their own affairs. To us, responsibility is learned like anything else, and that the only way for students to learn to manage their affairs responsibly is to be allowed to manage them.

6) Self-motivation, interest

For many students a vital engagement with the subject of study is often obstructed by conventional curricula and classroom situations. We assume that students are naturally curious and interested and responsive to situations. We feel that the students' impetus to learn must be uncovered and employed as the sole motivation in education. The content of a person's education should be based on his particular interests and concerns.

Generally, we seek to broaden the definition of education. We want to put as much emphasis on the personal and social aspects of the student's life as on the intellectual aspects, on the assumption that these realistically cannot be separated. We want the design of the student's individual activities to come from him, and the
life of the group to arise from the group. We seek a democratic approach to education, in order to make it more vital; to make college education a heightened kind of life in itself as well as a preparation for later life.

THE OVER-ALL STRUCTURE:

The college would be divided into five autonomous residential and educational villages. Decisions concerning the management of the "village" would be decided democratically. The villages would be geographically separated, centered around those facilities that would have to be shared by the whole school. Each student would design his program, with a faculty advisor. The curriculum would have no specific requirements. The curriculum would center as much of each student's program, as possible, within his village group, without losing the advantages of a larger college community.

THE VILLAGES:

In each village there would be a series of residences housing various numbers of students, from 8 to 30. Each would contain a lounge and kitchenette. Single rooms should be provided for those who want them. It would be important for the architecture of the residences within each village to be varied. They should be designed to look like houses. Frame construction might be best.

Each residence would be administered by the students themselves, democratically. The students in each would be responsible for social rules, the cleaning of the dorm, and minor repairs. Room groupings would be chosen in the spring, though alterable anytime, and would be made on the basis of friendship. The decision as to whether or not live in a co-ed dormitory would be left to the students.

Each village would also have a central building, or commons, which would contain seminar rooms, living rooms, some sort of studio or shop facilities, and a dining room. Dining for each village would be central, although it would be good for the
dining room to have movable partitions to form smaller dining room areas if desired. The dining room would have to be easily convertible to a theater or meeting room.

The commons would be the center of village life. Here many of the members' classes would be held. It would be designed to be a center for formal and informal discussions, for various creative activities, for relaxation, and social events. Here also would be held community meetings where decisions would be made and committees elected to deal with village problems: maintenance such as lawn-mowing and painting and cleaning of the commons; social rules for the group as a whole; discipline when necessary; kitchen work; social events; and educational matters to be elaborated later.

The purposes of having a division into five villages are to make possible a variety of atmospheres, and more important, to have the basic educational unit small enough to make "community" possible and collective decision making workable. We think a democratically run village, by putting students in the position of having to deal with certain obligations (such as maintenance) and to make certain kinds of decisions, will develop a feeling and attitude of concern and responsibility. We think it would help integrate the intellectual and social life of the students.

THE EDUCATION CENTER

The five villages would share the Education Center, a centrally located complex of buildings providing facilities the villages would not provide. The library would be central. It would be designed to provide a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. A floor would be set aside for some small sitting rooms, a coffee shop, and an outdoor patio, and a gallery for student work. The library should be provided with large expanses of glass. There would also be a separate music building, a science building, administration building, and a gym, although no physical education would be required and there would be no intercollegiate athletics. There would also be one or two classroom buildings, with movable walls, for large classes, and for those which could not be conveniently located in one of the villages.
As much of the Center's operations as possible would be administered by the students, perhaps as scholarship jobs.

**CURRICULUM**

The purposes of the following system are several: 1) to base each student's program on his own interests and needs, 2) to place the responsibility for carrying out this program directly on the student, 3) to encourage rigorous self-evaluation, 4) to promote the development of each village as an intellectual as well as social community.

Every student is assigned an advisor, every faculty member having advisees within one village only. With his advisor, the student works out the best program he is capable of devising. The advisor should help this process, but not restrict the student's power to make the final decision. We feel it would be more beneficial for the student to learn by trial and possible error than to follow a program prescribed by someone else.

The freshman would spend three weeks at college before formal classes began. He would begin to explore the possibilities open to him: in books, in teachers, in students, in himself. To do this he must be left radically alone: no paper program, no courses, no external academic demands to camouflage the demands of his own imagination. Thus, the first week the freshmen are free to explore the campus, read, talk to and meet their classmates, to begin to wonder, What am I here to do?, and find that there is no one telling them the answer. There would be many things going on, however. The faculty would be meeting students, and talking about their work and interests. There might be a lecture about summer field work, a small group talk about the war, a concert, coffee klatches, etc. During this time the freshmen would be living all together in one of the villages, finding a few people they would like to live near, when they move to their residential village at the end of the first week.

After one week, the upperclassmen arrive. At this point a low-pressure village-wide study project, designed by the upperclassmen the spring before, begins. This is to acquaint the freshmen with the upperclassmen and get them into intellectual dialogues.
During this two-week period each student works out his program of studies with his advisor.

Each student would have three units of study per semester. He can choose from many kinds of programs. 1) Survey courses in basic disciplines would consist of a college-wide lecture series and seminars in each village. If a village does not have enough people who want to study a particular course for a seminar, those who do could join a seminar elsewhere. The content and method of each seminar would be jointly determined by the teacher and students. 2) Independent Study, in which the student and a faculty member would jointly determine the nature of the work. 3) Independent Creative Work would be organized the same as Independent Study. 4) Lab Science courses, held centrally. 5) Group Studies. Students wishing programs other than the above would organize group studies. These seminars would include work above the introductory level in most fields, and any other topics of particular interest.

THE PROCESS OF ARRANGING A PROGRAM

Each student on arrival at college would receive a booklet explaining the programs being offered, describing the procedures for setting up various kinds of programs, and listing each teacher's name, office location, field of study, and any particular topical interest he might want to teach. During the second and third weeks teachers would give lectures, hold meetings, and in other ways describe what they want to teach. Advisors would encourage advisees to explore new interest and would make appropriate suggestions.

For every survey course meetings would be held in each village where the seminar leader and interested students would discuss possible plans for the course. After these meetings, each student who decided to take the course would sign up for it with his advisor. Lab science courses would be set up the same way, on a school-wide basis. Students wishing science work for which equipment was not available could study at one of the other four colleges. Students interested in independent creative work or
independent studies would seek out a faculty sponsor in the field in question and with him devise a program. A student could do work in any field without a sponsor if he got permission from a teacher in that field. Students who wanted to organize group studies would post a notice on a special bulletin board in his village to that effect, and perhaps make an announcement at a meal or other meeting. He would also consult a teacher, preferably, but not necessarily from his own village, who was proficient in that field and arrange the course. Each teacher would have to coordinate his various group studies. Some might have to be split up or combined, in accordance with the needs and interest of the students and his own interests and abilities. Efforts would be made to confine group studies to individual villages, but necessity or desire might often make this impossible or unbeneficial.

CLASSES

Classes, most of which would be held in the villages, would be as small and informal as possible, and held in lounges and comfortable seminar rooms rather than traditional classrooms. Organization of the classes would be informal, and the group would be free to alter proceedings midway if they wished. Hopefully group studies would deal often with non-traditional topics and would, where possible, employ many disciplines.

EVALUATION

Evaluation and official records of each student would consist of: 1) written assessments of each student's work in each course by his teacher and by himself, 2) written assessments by the student's advisor and himself, made yearly, of the student's work as a whole up to that point. We think the student's own criticism is of as much educational significance as scholarly criticism.
SENIOR PROGRAM

To graduate, students must, by the end of their junior, design a coherent, rigorous, limited, and concentrated program of study. It must be approved, and, upon completion in the senior year, accepted by a panel of faculty and seniors in that field. The purpose of studying a limited problem in depth is to challenge and temper the student's appreciation and his accumulated knowledge and skills.

Non-resident terms, study at other institutions here and abroad, and fieldwork of all kinds would be available as part of a student's program.

ADMISSIONS

Applicants would be asked to make up and complete an application. They would be asked to live at the school for two or three days if possible. They would talk at some length to a member of the faculty and a student, and each of these in turn would write a brief evaluation of the applicant. He would be asked to submit any work he had done either in or out of school of which he was particularly proud. Initial decisions on an applicant would be made by vote of the dean of admissions, and the faculty and student interviewer. The final selection would be made by the dean.

FACULTY

The best faculty would be those sympathetic to this sort of program, flexible enough to work within it, and in particular willing to work with advisees on a close basis. If possible it would be good to have a number of faculty willing to live near or in the villages. There would have to be a small faculty student ratio.

MISCELLANY

To encourage and facilitate creative work, arts, and crafts materials and shops of all kinds should be available to all. (Printing, ceramics, carpentry, photography, etc.) A cooperative bookstore would be a worthwhile service and could be managed by the students. The campus should be used in the summer.
This of course is not a polished or complete proposal. Much has not been said that could be said, and many procedural problems would have to be worked out before it could be implemented. But it does outline our goals and what we would like to see college become. It describes a college that we believe could exist, that we believe would contribute to the realization of these goals.