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## ABSTRACT

After a full year of operation, many questions have been asked about Empire State College (ESC) concerning the type of students who seek such an institution and how these students handle the major responsibility of planning and carrying out their studies. A group of 10 graduates were selected from the 30 graduated in fall 1972 for lengthy interviews about their experiences at Empire State College. The sample included a range of persons with different educational backgrounds, life experiences, varied career interests, and individual approaches to learning methods. The structure of the student interviews center around six elements: interpersonal competence (the ability to interpret the intention and attitudes of others and to improvise appropriate responses); awareness (openness to new ideas and experiences); clarifying purposes (self examination); Self-reliance; self-understanding and understanding of others; and self-consistency. Initial contacts with ESC, contracts and evaluations of learning, and personal contacts were all rated either satisfactory or better. Orientation, program of study, and assessment of prior learning were rated less than satisfactory. The report included the questions asked during the student interviews.  
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TEN OUT OF THIRTY

Studies Of The First  
Graduates Of  
Empire State College

*palola and bradley*

*office of research and evaluation*

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T E N   O U T   O F   T H I R T Y

Ten Case Studies of the  
First Thirty Graduates

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1973

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E. G. P.

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May 1973

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## INTRODUCTION

The original planning report for Empire State, Prospectus for a New University College, made several predictions about the new institution. The College was to "...transcend constraints of space, place, and time..." It was to "...serve a variety of individuals of all ages, throughout society, according to their own life styles and educational needs." This variety would especially include those persons not generally served by traditional institutions: people holding full-time jobs, older people, women with families. It was to make the entire State's "...educational resources available to the students..." Most important, it was to "guide and assist the students in achieving an open process of learning... according to his individual needs and interests." Now, after a full year of operation, many people are asking questions about Empire State College:

- Who are the people who are trying, somewhat against the current, to implement this vitally needed educational alternative?
- Where exactly is this college without a campus?
- What does a student do when given major responsibility in planning and carrying out his studies?
- Who are the students who seek out such a place and what makes them want to become embroiled in a new institution?

In order to attack these questions, a purposive sample group of ten graduates were selected from 30 who graduated in fall 1972 for lengthy, tape-recorded interviews about their experiences with Empire State College. The sample came from the College's three original regional learning centers (Albany, Manhattan, Rochester) and included a range of persons with different educational backgrounds, life experiences, varied career interests and individual approaches to learning methods. This group of case studies put Empire State College to the test in many ways.

Empire State College began matriculating students in fall 1971, a scant seven months after the presentation of a Prospectus for a New University College. Operating out of leased facilities, the College spent much of its first year trying to develop and implement rational academic and procedural policies. However, because students were already enrolled, the pace was hectic for all. Important records were misplaced, paychecks were delayed, and mail was missent. As one mentor observed:

Don't forget to cast all of the early graduates in a setting where administratively, everything was messed up: no chairs, no desks, few procedures, etc...The College was ready to go under.

Through all of this, Empire State College survived and, as many of the cases show, even prospered at times. Future members of the ESC community owe a debt of gratitude to the early students, faculty members, and administrators for their perseverance as much as for their foresight.

Because of the varying states of chaos the College experienced in its first year, some people may question the sense of using the initial graduates for case studies. Aside from the value of gathering baseline information about ESC, there is other rationale for these case studies. First, in conducting the interviews with faculty and former students, the research and evaluation team learned much about the College. This allowed us to report problem areas early so that the institution could begin immediate reforms. It also provided us with information about areas needing further, more focused attention. Second, the cases allow the College to begin answering some of the questions highlighted above. As time goes on, we will have a better sense of how unique the problems and successes of the first graduates really were.

Before beginning the cases, it is useful to review some of the elements of Empire State College that were tested by the "10 out of 30."

## ORIENTATION

The first official contact with Empire State College for many students is at a required orientation workshop. These sessions attempt to provide information for students and give them a chance to meet with a number of mentors from a variety of disciplines. The initial ESC students also took a battery of three standardized instruments: the Student Information Form, a biographical inventory published by the American Council on Education; the Survey of College Achievement, a test of cognitive learning published by the Educational Testing Service; and the Omnibus Personality Inventory, an instrument which assesses intellectual interests and personality characteristics published by the Psychological Corporation.

## PROGRAM OF STUDY

All ESC students are expected to develop an individualized academic plan in cooperation with their faculty mentor. These programs of study describe past educational and occupational experiences and activities, primary interests and aspirations, and the major areas and activities to be undertaken at Empire State College. Programs of study can be prescriptive or general, ladder-like or lattice-like.

## CONTRACTS AND EVALUATIONS

The building blocks for programs of study are learning contracts between students and their mentors. Contracts contain four parts: a description of the general purposes which underlie the student's work at ESC, the specific

purposes which the particular contract aims to serve, the learning activities to be undertaken and the general schedule to be followed, and the ways in which the various aspects of this work will be evaluated. Contracts can either be full time or half time and can run for whatever period is most appropriate. A full-time contract assumes an investment on the part of a student of 36-40 hours each week while a half-time contract assumes 18-20 hours per week.

#### ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING

Advanced standing within the College is integrally related to Empire State's educational objectives. Judgments about advanced standing on the basis of prior learning have as their frame of reference the student's program of study and generally accepted expectations for college-level work. Where a substantial amount of advanced standing is granted, it is assumed that the prior experience is consistent with the student's goals, and that the time remaining is sufficient to satisfy both the student's purposes and College objectives. The student applies for advanced standing by preparing a portfolio with the help of his mentor. The portfolio summarizes past experiences and shows what the student learned from them. This portfolio is evaluated by an Assessment Committee at the learning center and later reviewed at the Coordinating Center. Advanced standing is granted on the basis of months earned toward a degree; 30 months being maximum toward a 36-month baccalaureate degree and 15 months being maximum toward an 18-month associate's degree.

#### PEOPLE CONTACTS

When fully developed, Empire State College will allow students many possible patterns for interacting with other people in the completion of programs of study. However, for the first graduates, such diversity was not the norm. Contact with others in the College for them was primarily limited to their faculty mentors. Mentors usually work on a one-to-one basis with students and help clarify educational goals, identify resources, and learning activities. They also assess student progress and, at times, tutor.

#### OUTCOMES

Two types of outcomes are important. Tangible outcomes include such things as job procurement and advancement, salary increases, and admission to further education. Intangible outcomes are somewhat more difficult to describe and are virtually impossible to identify at institutions which do not have clearly stated goals and objectives. Empire State College has spelled out its objectives believing that this can enhance educational effectiveness. The practice allows students to weigh their own purposes and values against those of the institution to see if there is sufficient agreement to warrant commitment of time and energy. There are both cognitive and affective objectives. Empire State's cognitive objectives are for students to develop:

knowledge of information, methods of inquiry, and judgmental criteria.



comprehension, knowledge converted into working form.

analysis, the ability to break down a communication or experience into basic elements.

evaluation, the ability to make qualitative and quantitative judgments.

synthesis, the ability to arrange disparate elements into meaningful patterns.

application, the ability to use theory in solving real problems.

Empire State also recognizes human dimensions that are important to students and encourages growth in these areas:

interpersonal competence, the ability to interpret the intentions and attitudes of others and to improvise appropriate responses.

awareness, openness to new ideas and experiences.

clarifying purposes, the process of self-examination.

self-reliance, becoming independent.

self-understanding and understanding of others, the capacity to move beyond relationships of simple understanding to those where there are sympathetic responses to diverse kinds of persons and their conditions.

self-consistency, which exists when words and actions are in harmony.

#### INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

These six elements were the structure of the student interviews. Each student's mentor was also interviewed covering a similar range of topics. Additionally, various elements - ESC Admissions Prospectus, transcripts, portfolios for advanced standing, and the results of the standardized questionnaires administered at the orientation workshops - were examined for each of the sample students. The results of these investigations emerge in the following case studies and in the final section, "General Observations."

CAROL

*Carol's personal situation and relationships while at ESC can be summed up in several key statements:*

*She has an uncommon understanding of the College...*

*She is legally blind...*

*Her contacts with the center were infrequent but intense...*

*Just the sight of her portfolio was staggering...*

Carol is 28 years old. She is married to a middle management executive and mother of a five-year old daughter. She first heard about ESC from a faculty member at the community college she last attended. The two-year degree program she took at that college in human services was flexible, student centered, and involved a self-actualizing learning process. ESC was thus a logical move since she could extend her work in the human services, obtain a bachelor's degree, and move one more step toward a teaching credential.

Carol came to ESC after having studied in several other higher education institutions. Although she completed a two-year degree with an "A" average and studied in an area that greatly interested her, she maintained that a lot of college work was too remedial:

*...Curricula are too rigid, professors lecture too much, students aren't treated as human beings, you must study topics that aren't relevant to your own learning, and we are generally molded as passive learners...*

ESC was thus a "natural fit" for her.

Carol had intense interests in certain literary authors and poets, the field of sociology, psychology and human potential, and she hoped to expand her skills and competencies in community human services. In other words, Carol knew generally that she wanted to create a four-year program in human services, and now needed an accepting and encouraging personal and social environment for her studies to proceed. As her mentor stated it,

*Carol's work derives from a center of interest in herself... a center that is continuously moving as contemporary events*

charge...she refuses to settle for easy, handy-made solutions...

An important element in this case is that Carol is losing her vision. Therefore, the number of contacts with her mentor at the learning center had to be limited. Often these trips required that her husband take time off from work to drive her to the center. Although reaching for ways to expand her self-actualization and independent existence, she is constantly reminded through daily events that her visual handicap places a significant limitation on mobility. She saw Empire State College as an opportunity to increase independence both as a woman and a handicapped person.

Carol's short but significant career with ESC began formally when she attended a one day student orientation workshop with fifteen other potential students plus 6-8 staff members. The experience was "sort of funny." The faculty were a bit "uptight" trying not to appear anxious about the uncertainties they felt during their initial workshop while also attempting to define the educational program and opportunities of the College. The staff discussed in general terms what learning contracts were, how students would work with mentors, and the resources in the local community that could be applied to student programs. Carol was inspired by what she saw and heard -- she couldn't believe it was real -- Empire had the potentiality for being even more open than her community college experience. The student could assume total responsibility for her learning.

Discussion of the portfolio for advanced standing was overwhelming -- "the description was overly technical and just went over everybody's heads." It takes time to "feel, taste, really get into" the idea of ESC. If anything, Carol wanted more time, a longer, more thorough orientation to the College. As presented, the portfolio assignment was hypothetical when what students wanted were explanations of how the College really functioned and how the process would start.

When asked to evaluate her "interpersonal contacts" during orientation using an adjective checklist, Carol described her experiences in the following way: "good," "sociable," "careful," "rational," "heavy," "sincere," "sensitive," "interesting," "believing," and "successful." Overall, student orientation significantly clarified the purposes and programs of the College for her. "Empire State is such a personal concept of education...this really came through to me during student orientation."

Compared to other portfolios prepared by ESC students, Carol's portfolio was remarkable because of its length, content, thoroughness, and richness. It consisted of five volumes, some 800 pages of documents, poetry, and essays on such topics as planning and development of a child care center; impressions of her own childhood; the meaning of and learnings from elementary and secondary schooling; post-high school activities and notes on a study of WWII, reflections on marriage, motherhood, and blindness; her attitude changes from racism to humanism; experiences and reactions to her work as a high school guidance counselor and social worker in the inner city; and her teaching activities and involvement with human services programs.

From Carol's interview and statements by her mentor, two reasons seem to account for the elaborate portfolio. First, limited vision forced Carol to take stock of life -- her "inbred dependence as a woman and potential dependence as a handicapped woman," -- to identify areas of future intellectual concentration, and to define the extent of involvement in community human services. Carol needed reassurance that she could evolve, had accomplished some worthwhile things, and had the resources to continue to grow. Second, a close personal friend had experienced problems with assessment of prior learning at ESC. According to Carol, her friend prepared a loosely organized portfolio so the learning center Committee on Prior Learning gave credit only for formal college work ignoring a rich array of lifelong learning. Her friend withdrew from the College because of this experience. As a result, Carol thought that the College needed to clarify criteria for assessments. The big effort she made to develop a top-notch portfolio was intended to "test the College" to make it "honor its claims."

Carol was awarded 30 months of advanced standing at ESC based on learnings documented in the portfolio. Her advanced standing included the equivalent of 23 months credit from other colleges and universities plus seven months credit for work and life experiences. She thought that the assessment of the portfolio was done fairly, "...their way of operating and decision on my case met my highest expectations." Developing the portfolio was described by her as terribly important because it helped to identify goals, relate past experiences to goals, and it gave insight into the direction her life was going.

Since Carol was given 30 months advanced standing toward her program of studies in community human services at ESC, she had only six months of additional work to earn a bachelor's degree. She did this in one six-month long contract. Carol's learning contract was complex, required much hard work, and included preparation of the portfolio mentioned above plus five other activities:

Continue her reading in the works of Hermann Hesse, keep a notebook of her reflections developed out of this reading and make available such other materials as may be produced in connection with the writings of this author. Work of Nietzsche may also be pursued if time under this contract allows. Paintings, sculpture and poetry derived from this, plus the thesis and paintings entitled "Multiple Man."

Student is engaged in the inauguration and development of a human potential group. She will keep a journal in which the experience and progress of this group will be logged.

Consult the State Education Department's requirements for teacher certification. Canvass the offerings of local colleges and universities and enroll in appropriate education courses during the summer term.

Continue her involvement in the planning for a child care center and report upon its progress.

Courses in Law and Society and Social Movements she is currently enrolled in at Nazareth College will be completed.

Carol's work on the several items of the contract were evaluated in the following ways: the portfolio was reviewed by a Learning Center Committee on Prior Learning; a report on readings in Hesse was submitted and reviewed by Carol's mentor; a log and report about human potential groups was reviewed by her mentor; a report on the child care project was submitted and reviewed by her mentor; evaluations of her performance in the Law and Society and Social Movements courses were made by her instructors; and plans for Carol's further education were discussed between her and her mentor. One specific and interesting evaluative comment made by the mentor relates to Carol's continuing study of Hermann Hesse's writings:

Carol has radically reconceived the Hesse reading portion of her contract. On the one hand, reflections on Hesse's writings have merged with her thinking about the human potential group study and have contributed to her developing concept of "multiple man" as well as influencing her drawing, painting, and sculpture. On the other hand, she sees this and kindred reading not as something to be finished here and now, but as a resource to be called upon and used as it becomes relevant to life.

Carol was asked after graduating to rate the amount of perceived change on several dimensions of her personality and knowledge. For personality changes, she used the rating "very much" to indicate the extent that ESC work increased or clarified her "interpersonal competence," "awareness," and "purposes." Other personality items on the rating sheet including "self-reliance," "self-understanding, understanding of others," and "self-consistency," were also rated as strengthened while her perceived intellectual competence improved "very much" in "comprehension," "evaluation," and "synthesis." Strong gains in intellectual competence were also indicated in "knowledge," "analysis," and "application."

Another important outcome of Carol's work at ESC was the clarification of her educational objectives. Teaching social studies in a secondary school is no longer a primary goal for her. Instead she wants to continue her studies in a graduate program (when started) at ESC.

What accounts for Carol's success at ESC? Probably lots of things could be ticked off -- a flexible program, credit for prior experience, an extension of her interests in human services, and no required attendance in rigid classes. In addition to these reasons, Carol mentioned her mentor often:

He possesses the qualities of a great teacher and humanitarian. He excited learning in me while simultaneously conveying a

complete trust in my ability to develop a sound and evolutionary intellect. He believed in me, accepted me and encouraged my diverse intellectual groping. Always a rich resource, always a friend, he stimulated me to reach beyond any self-imposed limits. My success at Empire is in no small way a tribute to his caring and intellectual companionship.

Three months after graduation from ESC, Carol was hired as Instructor of Human Services at Tompkins-Cortland Community College. She was selected over people whose credentials and years of teaching far outnumber her own.

EVE

*Here is a very young girl, naive in some ways, impressionable, and caught up in many of the stereotypes of the "youth movement." Her personal contacts with ESC were minimal but, as we shall see, led to disappointments. She never developed a clear program of study and is an excellent example of someone who come to ESC searching and who left still searching. The question that remains is: was six months at ESC enough?*

Eve is a young girl who "first heard about Empire State from an old guy on a motorcycle." Since she was tired of the university that she was attending and looking into transfer anyway, an inquiry into ESC seemed sensible. Eve eventually chose to attend Empire because "it gave lots of freedom, promised personal attention, and required you to fill out fewer application forms."

From the beginning, lots of little things went wrong for Eve. "My orientation was a crowded affair held in the basement of a building on [a campus near the regional center]. For me, it was a disaster. Nothing worked." Eve was especially put off by the \$30 orientation fee just inside the door and was "irritated by the standardized tests. I had thought all of that was behind me." Also, she feels that little useful information about the College was presented at the orientation workshop. Despite these negative factors, she still saw potential and enrolled in ESC.

Eve's major interests lie in environmental studies. Her mentor felt that she should grasp some of the basics before she could channel her interests in a constructive direction:

In order to deal with environmental studies, you must know a basic amount of stuff. For me, you must know what a resource is and must understand some basic economic models used by governments, industry, entrepreneurs, etc.

Getting into economics in the first contract turned out to be a problem because she used a learning module--American Economic Theory--that was incomplete. According to her mentor,

Everything peripheral was there but the guts weren't. We had no economist on the staff, no outside person was available, and I was not strong enough in economics to tutor her myself.

Even with these difficulties, Eve began reading and writing about some of the well known resource theories: Zimmerman, Introduction to World Resources; Barnett, Malthusianism and Conservatism: Their Role as Origins of the Doctrine of Increasing Scarcity of Natural Resources; Firey, Man, Mind and Land; and Burton and Kates, Readings in Resource Management. According to her mentor, Eve is very bright, has a good analytic mind and a quick ability to criticize. "It was in getting into the readings that I think she began to take a hold and to show off what she had going for her, and secondly, to draw some conclusions about herself."

Along with the work in the economics of environmental studies in contract number one, Eve further developed an already evident skill with guitar through tutored study of music dictation. The aim was to bring her to the stage where she could transcribe recorded and live folk music to paper.

The evaluation describes the first contract as a success though "the difficulties in starting and obtaining materials for study certainly acted to slow down progress." This slow-down meant that Eve had still not focused her interests at the beginning of contract number two.

Eve wrote the second contract herself after much discussion with her mentor. It had six major sections dealing with environment -- philosophy of ecology, history of the conservation ethic, economic doctrines, planning and utopian philosophies, environmental law and politics, and environmental planning -- and continued tutored music dictation study. The references selected came from bibliographies supplied by the mentor.

Eve's internship with the Environmental Planning Lobby was an eye-opening time for her though as an academic exercise, the experience proved disappointing. The mentor's hope was that the internship would involve her in the realities of the political situation while she collected and disseminated information to State officials and the general public. However, she interned in the middle of the busiest time of the year for the Lobby and thus spent most of her time "stuffing envelopes." She did, however, have a chance to observe close-up the legislative process. Eve later described as her worst ESC experience "watching the stupidity of our government at work for hour after hour after hour. I never realized the extent to which our State is governed as a result of legal fictions."

Ironically, despite the care that went into identifying appropriate readings and activities for the two contracts, probably the most important academic thing that happened to Eve at ESC came by chance:

Culbertson's Economic Development: An Ecological Approach was a new book. It arrived when she was talking to me as I was opening up books. I glanced at the table of contents and suggested that she look it over. She was really turned on by the thing because here was a guy with a different view of the same things she had been reading about and seen on her internship. It factors in the effect of government policy on environment. It took her 'Earth Day' interest (though she



was not as poverty stricken as most people of this mentality) and gave her a theoretical framework. She began to have a better understanding of this environmental world and, in a way, the bureaucratic problems she was having with ESC itself, with her part-time job, and with her internship.

In part, because of the late discovery of the Culbertson book, Eve feels that she would have profited from a longer stay at ESC. Her request for advanced standing was based almost entirely on formal transcript credit and, when approved, left only seven more months to a BA. Eve's mentor noted in his final evaluation that concentrated study into various interpretations of "man and nature" will have to "...stand as temptations for her further curiosity after she graduates."

A prominent aspect about Eve's Empire State career is her contacts with other ESC people. Unlike most students, she lived only three blocks from the regional center and had frequent encounters with faculty, secretaries, and other students. She became enthusiastic about the College so that she took initiative to start a student newsletter and student organization. Both ideas flopped, the victims of student apathy, procedural problems, and general College-wide growing pains. The mentor notes that a bigger issue in her gradual disillusionment with ESC was the increasing difficulty Eve faced in trying to see people at the center:

Eve felt especially ripped off because she demanded a lot of personal attention and that personal attention was not always forthcoming.

Eve affirmed this observation when asked about the most important thing ESC should do to improve. She replied: "Decrease the number of students per mentor. Toward the end, it was getting impossible for a student to see his mentor. When you did get in, he was tired."

Eve moved west after leaving Empire State and is learning firsthand about job scarcity. She says that graduate school is now a "near-future possibility." Empire State College has brought Eve few immediate tangible rewards. However, she has "no lasting complaints...It will work out." Her mentor summarizes:

If ESC is looked upon to be the kind of place where people find themselves, we failed with her. But I am not worried... she is a very bright, optimistic, shy, and demanding person. When these traits are matched by development of her own maturity as a new facet of her self-confidence, she will be a challenge not only to the environmentalists today, but also to many of those in her younger generation.

AL

*In contrast to Eve, let's take a look at Al, an older person with many years of work experience in a furniture store. Having had no previous college, his assessment of prior learning was done through exams and informal assessment. He had a clear program of study and carried it out as planned. But, like Eve, his ESC experience has not proved immediately fruitful. His attempts at graduate school have been unsuccessful. Could his age have some bearing on this, and as with Eve, the question arises: what further responsibility does ESC have to Al?*

Al is one of the first students to attend ESC. His records include a wide array of results from a battery of aptitude, knowledge, personality and interests tests. These data provide an opportunity to know more about Al.

Some interesting items....

- + Al is a bright and capable person...
- + He is emotionally stable, thoughtful, objective, active, restrained, and ambitious.....
- + He is interested mainly in persuasive, artistic, literary, and computational activities and ideas...
- + He is orderly, autonomous, and aggressive...
- + His vocational interests are strongest in business, management, and sales...

A background questionnaire completed by Al shows that the highest level of formal education obtained by his parents was grammar school or

less whereas Al plans to complete a master's degree. He has some concern about having enough money to support his college education and expects to draw on savings plus part-time work. In deciding to go to college, Al cited two very important reasons: to meet new and interesting people and to prepare himself for graduate or professional school. His religious preference is Jewish, attends religious services fairly frequently, and spends much leisure playing chess, discussing politics, sports and reading about civil rights and liberties. His political views are "middle-of-the road." When asked to rate himself on various personal traits, Al sees himself in the "highest 10 percent" on academic ability, "above average" on defensiveness, originality, public speaking ability, intellectual self-confidence, stubbornness, and writing ability. In contrast, Al also rates himself "below average" on athletic ability, artistic ability, mechanical ability, popularity, and popularity with the opposite sex, and in the "lowest 10 percent" on cheerfulness.

Another part of the background questionnaire asks for opinions about several current issues. Al strongly endorses the views that the federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution, protect consumers from faulty goods and services, and to promote school integration, but strongly disagrees with statements that the death penalty should be abolished and that everybody should have an opportunity to go to college regardless of past performance and aptitude scores.

Al was first introduced to ESC through a feature story which appeared in a local newspaper about the College's nontraditional program and approach to undergraduate education. He saw the College as especially suited to him and others like him who have had many important learning experiences but missed college for one reason or another. ESC could recognize these learning experiences, award degrees needed for better jobs, and eliminate traditional classroom teaching. As he put it during the interview, "a lot of crap normally taught in college courses is avoided, thus giving me a valid chance to get into what's important and interesting."

In November 1971, Al became a student at ESC. His first formal contact with other students, the College faculty, and the educational program occurred at a two day student orientation workshop held at Saratoga Springs. "It was a highly valuable experience because many questions were answered, I met other students, and was able to talk my educational plans over with mentors."

Al had originally planned to go into Library Science but in the course of lengthy discussions with his mentor, it became clear that his real interest lay in architecture and the building sciences. Library Science had just seemed most expedient. As he put it, "I've always enjoyed books, thought library work would be my cup of tea, it looked like a natural solution to my career problem; but really, I've always been interested in buildings, their design and use, so a graduate program in building sciences looked right once I got an undergraduate degree." Based on examinations (CLEP) and his long-term business experiences, he was granted 30 months of advanced standing, leaving him with six months of work to complete his degree. Following are some excerpts from his first contract which developed over a period of weeks:

Contract #1, Three Months, Full Time

- Objective:** To synthesize and translate learnings from reading and field work in a study and critique of a particular building, a home for elderly people recently built in Troy. The critique will include what he considers the effectiveness of the functional design of the home in the everyday lives of the residents of the home. This will entail interviews with the residents and observations of basic living patterns and needs.
- Bibliography:** Some 40 articles and books (listed in the contract) covering philosophy and history of architecture, concepts about city-social economics, and housing and urban renewal will be used for background and analysis.
- Field Experiences:** AI will spend an 8 hour day weekly working with an architect at the State University Construction Fund on assessing, planning, and evaluating the human use of physical buildings.
- Courses:** The University architect will be giving AI an informal course in the following areas: (a) basic education in blueprint reading and evaluation, including vocabulary; (b) groundwork information on schematic drawings; (c) the internal workings of the State University planning group; (d) the process of planning and decision making from the idea to the completed project. This includes the dynamics and complexities of the many kinds of people, skills, departments, and economic and political consideration involved in alterations and building.
- Contact with Mentor:** Meetings will occur as often as is necessary to organize and direct his studies. We will spend a couple of sessions towards the middle and end of his contract in synthesis and determining relevant forms for communicating his learning. We will be in contact by telephone on a weekly basis. He will keep a weekly or bi-weekly log of his progress.
- Evaluation:** Discussions will be held between mentor and AI to analyze his progress in comprehending and synthesizing of reading and field experiences. Consultation with the University architect will also provide another perspective on AI's work and development.

Al's mentor wrote a lengthy and detailed evaluation which included evaluations by the architects who guided and supervised part of Al's learning contract. Excerpts from this final evaluation tell about Al's learning and development.

...Through his work with the architect of the State University Construction Fund, Al learned how to read blueprints, learned basic drafting and architectural vocabulary and concepts, learned the process and bureaucratic realities of planning a building or complex of buildings from its initial idea to its completion. The University architect confirmed Al's ability to quickly absorb and integrate the technical and intellectual knowledge offered.

...My evaluation of Al's first contract is that he had made exciting inroads into an area in which he was previously interested, but not seriously considering as a vocational and intellectual odyssey. His thinking has begun to expand encompassing cultural, social and economic realities as well as purely physical understanding of urban architectural planning...

...I have found Al to be challenging and insightful in his observations, appraisals of and thinking about physical planning...

In Al's second and final contract the same general line of study -- knowledge and understanding of architecture and design -- was pursued. This learning contract included three major parts: work with a practicing architect who was oriented to a user's approach to buildings and design and is an expert on the politicizing of architectural decisions, the "architecturizing" of political decisions, and the redistribution of urban space and economic resources from suburb to city; one day a week internship with a model cities program where an industrial park, recreation park, and marina and auxiliary services were being developed; and readings and conceptual learning focused on urban planning and renewal. Al's lengthy paper on city planning reflects a general approach to urban renewal theory, economic concepts and social aspects.

Three separate persons -- mentor, architect, and model cities supervisor -- evaluated Al's work, accomplishments and learnings. Short clips from these evaluations communicate how well Al performed.

Mentor ...

...I have been impressed during this second contract (as I was during the first) at the tremendous amount of new learning and the translation of that learning into practice of which Al is capable...

Architect ...

...Al has really caught on during our sessions to many basic concepts and problems it has taken years for me to identify and comprehend. He now sees more clearly the relationship between 'people behavior,' their personal wants, needs, hopes, and frustrations, and the design of buildings that takes this rich data seriously into thinking and conceptualization...

Model City Supervisor ...

...He has been reading and analyzing several working architectural journals under my supervision. Al raises insightful questions from these readings and has been able to offer solid and creative ideas for our project...

As is often the case at ESC, the student also writes an evaluation of his contract work. This is part of what Al said about this experience:

...I have learned how to dig out and evaluate architectural criticism...

...I have reinforced my 'user-oriented' attitude...

...I received a grounding in both the pragmatic and conceptual approach to urban renewal...

...I have learned something more about housing developments in general: their practical and political standards, their needs, their financing...

...I have learned about historical monuments, how they are created, and something of their effect on their neighborhoods...

...I have taken what amounts to a course in model-making and have to some extent created a new application of a method to transform a relief map into a three-dimensional terrain replica...

During an interview with Al after his graduation from ESC, he made three interesting and important observations about his experiences with this alternative type of higher education. He is completely sold on the concept of learning contracts as an open, flexible, and meaningful approach to student educational interests. His contracts were developed jointly with his mentor; in other words, Al had a lot of input to the content and structure of his contracts. The evaluations of his work were fair and he praised very highly the approach, skills and resources of his mentor. He criticized, however, the minimum six month's study period at ESC, suggesting that one year would be much better to get into contract learning and develop a realistic and useful program of study.

The second key observation concerned advanced standing. He sees the portfolio assignment and advanced standing as the single most important feature of the College. As he put it, "Finally, I'm given credit for what I've done and what I know!"

But his last observation is a killer -- "I've really enjoyed and support what ESC is trying to do, and is doing to a great degree... but I've also been screwed by the College, or my age, or something because I haven't been able to land a decent job in architecture or urban renewal, my application to the graduate program in building sciences, although informally ok'd, was finally rejected, and now I'm selling furniture again, but for someone else."

Perhaps Al is saying something critically important about where ESC is now. Apparently, the College's internal program is going fairly well, meets student needs, and makes sense but the institution's youth may impair the chances of students seeking new jobs or other opportunities. His case clearly raises a question: to what extent should ESC take responsibility for their graduates?

ANITA

*Anita is a highly independent and motivated person, extremely active in community projects and committees. Her experience at ESC was an extension of these activities. One can see clearly her initiative when reading about her project in the family court.*

Anita has long been active in many types of community action programs. Thus, her six month's study in this area at Empire State College merely culminated 15 years of interest and involvement. A tally sheet in her portfolio is impressive: three years of PTA leadership, two years of working in a community center, one year working in an inner-city day care center, one year teaching, one year developing a new high school report card system and working with an elementary school reading group, four years directing a YWCA literature class, two years in a pre-school mothers' group, and one year developing a community participation program. In addition, Anita attended two local institutions over the years, a community college and a university, and completed a total of 46 semester hours. She is, as indicated on the Omnibus Personality Inventory, an independent person with little fear of attempting new things and great concern for others.

The community activities engaged in by Anita are those of someone from a well-to-do family but Anita also has experienced another side of things. She was a grade 10 dropout. This seems to affect her perspective on many things. Anita describes her Empire State orientation session as:

...A room full of people just like me--people chomping at the bit. They needed a real piece of paper. The average age was about 35. Those with no college experience were quite frustrated and confused. Such people tend to be quiet and ready to take orders from the person in front of the room. I think I know how they feel, inferior. I only felt good about the orientation myself because I already knew [my mentor] pretty well.

At the orientation workshop Anita filled out the Student Information Form. On this, she described herself as generally an average person in academic ability, ambitions, and political beliefs. Where she differs is the strength of her feelings on educational issues. Anita agrees strongly that "college grades should be abolished," that "open admission should be adopted by all publicly supported colleges," and that "colleges would be improved if organized sports were de-emphasized." She also disagrees strongly that "college officials have the right to regulate



student behavior off-campus," that "student publications should be cleared by college officials," and that "college officials have the right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus." The firmness of these responses is perhaps partially explained by Anita's special interest in programs for young children which "...build on the natural interests and skills of the child." Many of her previous experiences have been with such programs and, as her mentor notes:

Anita tends to be wholly reliant upon self-determination as the most humanistic process for learning...this view also characterized her criticism of the Great Books discussions: when open and unpremeditated, it is likely to be good. If it is structured by the leader, even for a set of questions which are exploratory, it is unsuccessful.

Anita's program of study at Empire State College was built upon her interest in children and evolved into law and social action. Her first contract, begun at her initiative two months before the formal opening of her regional learning center, related readings in Piaget, Bruner, and Whitehead to her own observations of children. Performance on this one-month contract convinced the mentor that Anita was ready to embark on a study of family courts. Characteristically, Anita had already started. Her mentor notes:

She was in the Church Women's League which had begun a court-watching exercise aimed at observation and perhaps comment. But Anita, when she goes into something, goes in all the way.

Anita explains:

I was interested in the family courts and decided to find out how families and children get caught up in them. I observed and interviewed the court staff, people at related community agencies, and people in the community with past involvement in court actions.

Out of this came a great deal of data, a record of feelings and attitudes of several hundred people. Anita used the interview data to write a report which she submitted for evaluation to several people: an attorney, a jail minister, a judge, a representative of the local bail fund, and a representative of the local ecumenical court-watchers group. All assessed the report favorably as did the mentor. The report was then published and distributed into the community.

Looking back at this contract, Anita recalls:

...working 12 to 14 hours a day but that was because I was so enthusiastic about what I was doing. I spent five hours interviewing on week days. This was tricky because no one was allowed in the court without special

permission from the principals. Some gave it freely. However, I learned much of what I learned in the corridors. The interviews then had to be written up. Reading and research took the rest of the time.

She also had some evaluative comments: "I found that most social workers, attorneys, and judges are not thinking philosophically about what they're doing. They also don't know much about what kinds of things people went through before getting to them. This can make them insensitive to the needs of the people."

Anita's final three-month contract included writing the final draft of her family court study and also allowed her to explore community and social agency areas for future research. The mentor notes in his evaluation that:

The student made significant adjustments to the unpredictable data which developed in her examination of other research possibilities similar to the family court project...The student's breadth of information and experience now enables her to move easily and competently into new areas of investigation.

Assessment of prior learning proved in some ways a sour experience for Anita. She had responded well to the original ESC statements about credits for life's experiences.

I'd saved everything. I made a chart of the organizations and agencies that I'd been in. I then invented a weight scale: one full day a week was worth one-fourth of an academic year. Fortunately, I didn't have to reach too hard. For example, I did not have to ask for credit for being a Girl Scout leader because I'd been a PTA president where I really learned. Eight hours a day on that. I found that developing the portfolio was fun and worthwhile. I gathered up all the notebooks and got them organized.

However, by the time she had completed her requirements for advanced standing, the College had solidified its thinking into the notion that a portfolio should demonstrate "prior learning" and not "experience." Thus, the Assessment Committee at Anita's center asked her to write an essay on what she had learned from the many experiences. Anita remembers:

I got miffed. They had reviewed the portfolio without me and asked me to write a paper. They knew my work anyhow and I'd already spent three weeks getting the stuff together so I appealed the decision. I went to the Committee and it was like being on the operating table but they gave in. I guess the Committee was especially careful because they wanted the ESC degree to mean something but they shouldn't have changed the rules in the middle of the game.

The Committee gave her 30 months credit for her learning. Despite the strong feelings about what happened with her portfolio, Anita still thinks that granting advanced standing on the basis of a portfolio is a "great idea. I have recently been recommending to people generally that they make lists of what they have done as a way to figure out where to go next."

Anita was independent enough that she came to the learning center "only every two weeks or so" but she thinks that most students need a counselor, "a supportive person who can give a student lots of time. Many students cannot relate to their mentors for a while." This viewpoint came out of a fair number of contacts with other ESC students at the first few orientation workshops and at an open picnic held at her house. She feels that "ESC students should get together more often and be involved in every part of the College operations, especially assessment of prior learning."

In evaluating her cognitive and affective improvements, Anita rates her growth mainly in the middle and above-middle categories in interpersonal competence, awareness, self-reliance, self-understanding, knowledge, evaluation and comprehension. She sees only one very high area of growth, clarification of purpose.

Anita says that the best part of ESC was:

...knowing that SUNY considered this type of education possible and desirable. I am afraid that they may someday ruin the College with too many regulations. The worst experience? Assessment. An example of too many regulations.

Anita is having no trouble selling her degree to anyone. "I would not have been able to get interviews for at least a half dozen jobs if it were a problem."

KATHY

*Kathy is a nurse who came to ESC with a purposely vague program of study. She wanted to retreat from her medical environment occasionally and open her mind to "learn how to learn." She is a good example of someone who was not seeking a degree to lead to a better job or higher pay but someone who wanted to learn simply for the pleasure of learning.*

Kathy is a 28 year old, single, registered nurse anesthetist who works ten to fourteen hours per day at a major urban medical center. She grew up in a rural upstate New York community, attended a small conservative high school, graduated in the top five of her class, and worked for six months after graduation in the family glove-making shop until "I was bored stiff with the work" and had enough money to enter nursing school. Nearly three years of nursing school was followed by three years working as charge nurse in the intensive care unit and then another period of special training in anesthesiology.

She first learned of ESC from a doctor at the hospital who showed her a coupon taken from a local newspaper. She sent it in and received more information about the College along with another coupon which she completed and returned to the College in order to receive an admissions application form.

When she applied for admission to ESC in October 1971, Kathy wanted to study the sciences in order to prepare for medical school. Contacts with medical schools across the nation convinced her that her chances for being accepted were not very promising. She remembers being told, "You're too old...we have many, many strong applicants... Younger male candidates would be able to practice medicine much longer than you..." Reassessing her goals, she decided that her work at ESC should broaden her educational background beyond the narrow boundaries of nursing, anesthesiology, and medicine.

At student orientation in October, Kathy learned more about the College - what a learning contract was, that she would write a portfolio for advanced standing in the College, and what costs were involved. Most importantly, she learned "You could do what you wanted to do... I could really study those things that interested me!" Although she found a mentor to work with on her first learning contract, many students were irritated because they found it difficult to see a mentor they specifically wanted to talk with. "Too many students lined up to talk with one or two mentors while other mentors sat twiddling their thumbs...and when students go to see a mentor, they just sat there gabbing forever." Kathy attended another orientation later, just out of curiosity, and the same thing happened. Also a friend of Kathy's went to student orientation in February and found the very same problem.

Kathy completed two major three-month long contracts at ESC, both in the field of philosophy plus two minor one-month contracts in the field of art. Her program of study was a very open general liberal arts type where one interest and area of study grew out of the next.

The purpose of the first major contract is summarized as follows:

The focus of the contract is to clarify the concepts Theory and Fact. A multitude of sub-concepts are necessarily involved if one is to achieve any degree of clarity. Some of these sub-concepts are: proof, evidence, criteria, verification, meaning, methodology, induction, deduction, a priori, a posteriori, self-evident propositions, etc.

Kathy read works of various authors, including Kuhn, Morgenbesser, Nagel, Madden, Pepper, Shapere, White, and Richenback. She prepared audiotapes on her work and wrote a major final paper on "Theories and Facts."

Kathy's mentor evaluated her work on this contract in the following words:

Kathy completed this contract successfully. She has exhibited significant intellectual growth during the course of this contract. Her rather naive view of science has changed substantially and she now perceives some of the broader metaphysical and epistemological problems underlying natural science. Kathy really struggled with her paper and the final result was well worth the struggle. It is clear, concise, well written and exhibits a good analytical and critical ability...

Kathy also evaluated the worth and significance of this contract for herself. She concluded,

This contract has been full of difficulties and pitfalls, but with the help of my mentor I feel I have gained a good deal of insight into a number of the problems underlying natural science. For my own part, I feel I have substantially grown intellectually.

In the process of completing this contract, Kathy prepared her portfolio for advanced standing and appeared before the faculty assessment committee at her learning center to discuss her request -- an experience which was very surprising to her. Kathy requested 23 months of advanced standing and the committee decided to award her with 30 months. She said, "It's like buying an article and getting back more change than expected... I was amazed...After they explained their method, it made sense to me and it was really fair." Kathy was given 26 months credit for 68-1/2 credits

from nursing school and 4 months credit for 359 hours of class work in the School of Anesthesiology. In addition, she had three years experience as a nurse plus one and a half years experience as a practicing anesthetist and lecturer. She completed her final contract on the philosophy of science and graduated in 1972 with a bachelor of arts degree.

Kathy has very high praise for the way her mentor worked with her at ESC. She summarized the key features of this successful relationship in the following way:

My mentor -

was always available at his office or by telephone to discuss problems and give me guidance.

was a well-rounded individual, personally and educationally.

was very informal, put me at ease.

could spot within minutes what was going on with my studies, problems I was having, and whether I was prepared to discuss assignments.

gave me confidence in my work, was able to motivate me, generated excitement and enthusiasm in my studies.

What about the tangible and intangible outcomes for Kathy of her studies at ESC? She did not receive a pay raise or promotion at her hospital -- she was really not expecting this type of outcome. But she did gain four important things: First, she enjoys art more and spends leisure time exploring art works at galleries and museums. Second, she claims a broader knowledge base and feels more comfortable in social settings discussing important books and authors. Third, her writing skills improved significantly. And fourth, she feels much better prepared and able to "learn on her own," she now knows more about "how to learn."

Compared to the goals and objectives of the College for its students, Kathy had this to report:

Increased knowledge? Absolutely fantastic increases.

Communication skills? In writing, probably yes...  
Clarity and precision of speaking also definitely improved.

Increasing self-awareness, awareness of others? No, I think I've always known my strengths and weaknesses and have been in tune with others all along.

Independence? Self-confidence? I've been an independent person all along, but I do see more clearly now how important encouragement is from others to do my best work.

Kathy's "best experiences" at ESC were "...getting out of the medical environment, meeting other people, getting exposed to new ideas, and working with my mentor." And on the other side, Kathy reported her "worst experiences" as:

Getting my diploma, getting my finances straightened out with the College, and the cancellation of graduation really annoyed me...my friends were really wondering what kind of an institution I was attending--I guess being new and different, ESC hadn't quite gotten everything sorted out yet... but overall, I'm very pleased with my ESC work. In fact, I've recommended the College to several persons who are now students...Do treat them well."

SALLY

*Sally speaks enthusiastically about ESC feeling it gave her an excellent opportunity to delve deeply with good mentorial guidance into the fields of management and psychoanalysis. She is presently in graduate school and also teaching a few courses in nursing, an unusual thing for an RN without a bachelor's degree in nursing to be doing.*

Sally is 36 years old, married, the mother of two children, has a nursing diploma, and presently works as the "Inservice Supervisor" at City Hospital in New York. She comes from a family of moderate means and has spent her entire life on the eastern seaboard. Her political views are basically liberal and she sees ESC and other forms of "alternative education" as the truly meaningful way to educate people in a world that is too rapidly becoming depersonalized, dehumanized and insensitive.

Sally first heard about Empire State College through her Director of Nursing at City Hospital. The Director of Nursing was exposed to the College and its unique alternative thrust at a professional conference held in another state, and thought it would suit Sally's goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree while she continued working at the hospital. Credit for prior college work and life experiences were attractive to Sally since she saw a "quick" bachelor's degree as a stepping stone to graduate school and a master's degree in Community Health Education.

Sally enrolled at ESC in December 1971 and attended the first student orientation workshop held by the Manhattan Learning Center. She was literally angered and irritated with the orientation program; mentors could not answer most questions raised by students. Also, one mentor who was coordinating the session "...put us in a small group experiment where he was the experimenter. Good God, I about went out of my mind!" One faculty member who subsequently became Sally's mentor "...literally saved the day for me, and answered my many questions about the College, like how will I be assigned a mentor? Will I work with one or several mentors? Will I have a study program that really fits my interests and needs? How will my prior college credits and work experience be evaluated, and so on..."

Sally spent many hours and weeks prior to developing her first contract writing an 80 page "intellectual autobiography" and several short papers on various ideas and experiences important to her. She and her mentor thought that this would help her see more clearly where she was aiming professionally, how far her knowledge and wisdom about nursing had progressed, and where



ESC could logically plug into her life. Sally described the value of these "stock-taking" opportunities in the following way:

This was really a chance of a lifetime. Never before had I sat down with paper and pencil in hand and tried to realistically and honestly describe who I am, where I've been, what I've learned, where I'm going with my career and life, and hardest of all, to admit my weaknesses both in terms of my knowledge and personal shortcomings... So it really was a significant task for me, probably the most important single opportunity this College provided and encouraged me to do.

Sally's study plan at ESC involved work in three primary areas -- hospital management and administration, small group theory and research, and explorations in psychoanalytic theory. She brought to her program prior college credits, CLEP General Examination scores, and eight years of hospital work experience as a charge nurse, night nursing supervisor, and inservice supervisor. For her learning experiences, Sally was granted thirty months of advanced standing at ESC. The faculty assessment in making this judgment made the following summary:

She demonstrates intellectual and interpersonal competence, with considerable scientific knowledge, sufficient achievement in liberal arts as demonstrated by high scores in CLEP General Examinations, the ability to do research, absorb knowledge and conceptualize. The Committee approves her planned program of study.

Two 3-month contracts were developed and completed by Sally. The specific purposes of the first contract were stated in the following way:

As a nurse supervisor, Sally conducts group study sessions for nurses, patients and members of the community, provides orientation training, on-the-job or skill training for nurses, and is responsible for staff development, continuing education and clinical supervision.

She now seeks to study management and group dynamics to find new and broader concepts which will help her understand and interpret her work and career goals.

In this study plan she will read in management theory and group dynamics - both in terms of broad theory and in application to nursing and the hospital environment. She will trace significant concepts as they apply to her supervisory functions and activities and as they apply to her larger interest in community health planning.

The bibliography of readings was long and interesting for this contract, including Argyris, Personality and Organization, Understanding Organizational Behavior; Dubin, Human Relations in Administration; Likert, New Patterns of Management; Bion, Experiences in Groups; Homans, The Human Group, and Maslow, Motivation and Personality. Sally kept a log of her work experiences, selecting certain key theories and tracing the development of her observations and learning, then applying that learning to hospital work problems. Through bi-weekly conferences Sally and her mentor discussed the readings, log and papers. Her work was evaluated by her hospital supervisor in terms of contributions to managerial and group work, and by her mentor who assessed her learning experiences as demonstrated in conferences and papers. Sally wrote two major papers, one on the theory of management and the other on the theory of group dynamics as they apply to community health.

The mentor's written statements about Sally's work shows the usefulness and significance of contract learning to her intellectual growth and development.

Sally has done outstanding work on a difficult study plan and demonstrated the value of independent study when the student is intelligent, motivated, hard-working, disciplined and well organized. In her readings she has insightfully and brilliantly extracted the essential concepts and finer nuances and systematically applied them to her own work situation, to an expanded understanding of herself and others and to a sensitive grasp of the implications in the wider culture.

Specifically she has read diligently in group dynamics, administrative theory and hospital administration. Her supervisor at work reported her creative contributions. Her logs report enthusiastic and impressive learning progress, both theoretical and applied. Her discussions with the mentor reflect the ability to sort out ideas rationally, discard some, and integrate others into her own thought processes. Her written papers were brilliant applications of theory to her working interests.

Sally is an excellent student, working on the level of first-rate graduate students.

In a second and final contract on psychoanalytic theory, Sally was exposed to the thoughts, ideas and wisdom of such authors as Monroe, Freud, Erikson, Sullivan, and Maslow. She also looked at various social applications of psychoanalytic theory in Blitsen, The Social Theories of Harry Stack Sullivan; Erikson, Gandhi's Truth; Spiegel, Transactions; Leighton, The Governing of Men, and Lynd, On Shame and the Sense of Identity. A third focus, thanatology or the study of death, was pursued through Kubler-Ross, Death and Dying; Kutscher, Death and Bereavement;

Schoenberg, et al, Loss and Grief, and others. Sally continued a log on insights gained from her work and readings.

Sally's outstanding work and exceptional development during the second contract were described in the following terms by her mentor:

Sally demonstrates an unusual sophistication in handling ideas, difficult concepts and integration of theory with practice. Her ability to capture the essence of an idea, as well as the essence of an interpersonal relationship, enables her to exercise her unusual intelligence in learning experiences...

The dynamic that explains much of Sally's success at ESC was the relationship with her mentor. The effectiveness of the student-mentor relationship at ESC appears to involve awareness by mentors of three key student characteristics -- intellectual capacity, desire and ability for independent work, and academic subject matter interests -- and the mentor's skill in working with these characteristics. Sally repeatedly commented about the importance of her connecting in significant social and intellectual ways with her mentor.

During her post-graduation interview, Sally was asked to describe the outcomes both in cognitive and affective terms of her ESC educational activities. She listed "very marked increases" in interpersonal competence, awareness of self and others, self-understanding, self-consistency, knowledge, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and application. Concrete examples were given by her to illustrate these various "gains." Her reported accomplishments are directly on target with ESC's student goals and objectives.

Sally is now teaching basic courses in nursing at CCNY ("Amazing when you think of it...I'm the first person without a bachelor's degree in nursing to teach nursing courses...") and she is enrolled as a graduate student at Hunter College. When asked what she would like improved at ESC, it is not surprising that she replied, "Nothing...it's been a terrific experience and opportunity for me...I have nothing but good things to say about ESC's program and SUNY's decision to develop this exciting and worthwhile alternative education outlet."

ANNIE

*We now look at a middle aged woman -- wife, mother, and part-time business woman who came to ESC with the aim of preparing for a full-time teaching job. Though she got quite involved in her study of special education and feels enthusiastic about ESC, she has not yet received certification from the State Education Department.*

Annie wanted a degree. To a person growing up in a small, upper New York State town, the daughter of parents who never went to high school, a baccalaureate took on a special significance. Thus, though married and raising a family, Annie continued to grasp whatever educational opportunities were available: college daytime studies, college evening division, adult education, community college. She also studied on her own and took the CLEP general examinations, three CLEP subject area examinations (Western Civilization, Human Growth, History of Education) and two New York State proficiency examinations (Educational Psychology, History of American Education).<sup>\*</sup> Asked why she continued studying over the years, Annie observed: "I liked going to classes. Classes were almost a form of recreation." However, the now \$48 per student credit hour cost and the "strain of driving two hours for a one-hour class" made another year of courses questionable. Thus, Empire State was a "...great opportunity. I read about the College in July 1971, and got information by August. The attractions were the non-classroom aspects and the credit for experience--the whole concept of it. Also, one of the things that Empire State would allow was time for my part-time business."

Annie's first real contact with ESC was at her orientation workshop. She later noted "...it dragged on a bit. I found everything interesting but too long. We went from room to room and met with mentors, talking about contracts and things. The idea was to learn about the college but it left me not knowing at all how to proceed with ESC's program."

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<sup>\*</sup> Her scores on these exams, ranging from the 31st percentile for the natural science general examination to the 93rd percentile for the social science-history general examination, show that Annie is bright and has profited from her diverse learning experiences.

During her orientation workshop, Annie took some standardized tests and filled out questionnaires. One of them, the Student Information Form, reveals something of Annie. She responded positively to all questions asking for personal assessment of academic abilities and drive. Annie declared her aspirations to obtain a master's degree in special education and rated herself in the highest 10 percent in academic ability and in drive to achieve. She also endorsed statements concerning her expectation of above average performance, pursuing "honors" type studies, authoring a published article, and being more successful after college than most students. Another consistent pattern found by analyzing the SIF is Annie's general conservatism and practicality sprinkled with a quiet sense of the women's rights movement. Among the statements endorsed are: "strongly agree that most college officials are too lax in dealing with student protests on campus," "strongly disagree that marijuana should be legalized," "strongly disagree that parents should be discouraged from having large families," "strongly agree that student publications should be cleared by college officials." Also endorsed: "strongly agree that married women should receive the same salary as men for comparable positions" and "strongly disagree that the activities of married women are best confined to home and family." Another clear pattern that comes through on the SIF is the practical importance of the degree to Annie. The major reason why she decided to attend ESC was to be able to obtain a teaching position.

Thus, in many ways, Annie represents the base roots on which this country is grounded. She comes from a small town background, the daughter of hard-working and nonformally educated parents. She married young and raised a family, but tried never to make the home the limit of her world. Empire State College was the chance to pull together diffuse educational accomplishments and realize two lifetime ambitions: a baccalaureate degree, and a career in teaching.

Annie was a hard working student at ESC. Her program of study was purposely vague as the mentor felt that Annie needed some "loosening up." As Annie described it: "she felt that I was maybe a little rigid..." Thus, in the first contract, Annie was encouraged to take almost free rein and she chose to explore all of her three interest areas: open classroom education, special education, and Montessori schools. In this contract, Annie was to make small contributions in each of the three types of learning situations but, according to her mentor, "...she never got the feeling of the planning, the implementation, and the evaluation that goes on like every day's work." Thus, for the second contract, the mentor became more directive. "We decided to concentrate on one school and have Annie be an actual participant and not just an observer."

Annie's second contract dealt with special education and concentrated in four specific areas: teaching of reading, special programs for children from low socio-economic areas, study of commercial materials (books, materials, and equipment), and the relating of theory to practice. She did field work as a participant helper in a local school where she also worked with the remedial reading teacher. One day a week was set aside for

reporting on the experiences and reading the rather extensive bibliography prepared by the mentor. This bibliography concentrated on observing and recording behavior, the thoughts of Piaget, working with children from disadvantaged areas, and the teaching of reading.

Annie's mentor believes in multiple types of rigorous evaluations noting that "...good teachers must be able to communicate both orally and in written form..." She then evaluated Annie according to their regular conferences, their informal phone conferences, and the four reports outlined below:

1. Teaching of Reading: Annie will come up with her own approach to the teaching of reading based on her readings and her field work. She will develop her own conceptual framework and defend it on the basis of her work.
2. Poverty Programs: Annie will check the literature for goals of compensatory programs including the broad classifications and methodology of inventory programs, recapitulation programs, and programmed responses. She will include a study of the Follow Through models.
3. Using her analysis of programs for the poor as a base, Annie will do an in-depth study out of which will evolve her own personal eclectic philosophy of how children grow and how they learn.
4. Based on her reading and examination of commercial materials, Annie will do an analysis which will serve as a framework for determining how to select specific teaching materials appropriate for specific children at the various age levels.

The mentor also requires all students to write personal evaluations of both themselves and the mentor.

Looking back at the contracts, Annie remembered: "I never caught up. I did more in six months than I would have done in two years at any other institution." The time spent helping in the second grade was "my best ESC experience. I was really needed. The more I helped, the more I learned." This time commitment made the writing load especially arduous but both Annie and her mentor agree, "...the more I wrote, the easier it got, and the better I got."

Annie began preparing for advanced standing assessment at the end of the first contract. The portfolio assignment was introduced via a printed description developed by her regional center. She found that putting the portfolio together was tedious though her credit request was documented mostly by formal transcripts. Fortunately, these transcripts and appropriate letters were easy to obtain. However, it took until after completion of the last contract to get the portfolio assessed and, even then, it was handled at a special meeting of the Assessment Committee at which Annie

was not present. Apparently, she was scheduled several times but "mentors kept just bringing their students into the Assessment meetings and me, with an appointment, got pushed off. That was the way a lot of things went last year. Maybe it's better now."

Annie made most of the contacts with her mentor over the telephone though she did visit the center every few weeks. She almost never saw other students and feels that a short required residential experience might be a good idea. She describes her mentor-student contacts as sincere, free, harmonious, and successful.

In Annie's evaluation of the extent to which she developed and grew with the College's objectives, she feels she was average in clarity of purposes, self-reliance, self-understanding and her understanding of others. She gave herself the highest rating for growth in oral-written ability, knowledge, analysis, evaluation, synthesis and application. In comprehension, awareness and self-consistency she rated herself above average but a step below the top.

Despite all these good things, there is a sad note in Annie's Empire State experience for the baccalaureate degree has proven to be a hollow triumph. She and her mentor both feel that Annie learned a great deal and personally broadened her outlook on life. She is now ready to be "...a teacher and not a schoolkeeper." But Annie has not yet gotten certification. As a result, Annie filled out perhaps a dozen applications to teach but has yet to receive an interview. Though this does not make her bitter, she feels that "...it belittles the College to have me not get certification or a job." Even without certification, Annie is hopeful that as the concept of Empire State College is more widely understood, she will be given a chance to teach full time. In the meantime, Annie hopes to begin working on a master's degree in the fall.

BERTHA

*For Bertha, an energetic, dynamic woman, ESC meant several things. Being foreign born, it meant a chance to pull together her many diffuse educational experiences and obtain credit for them. It also meant a chance to qualify for a degree, a necessity for her plans to build a paramedical training program. She talks enthusiastically about her ESC experience feeling it fit her needs.*

Bertha is Jamaican, married with two children. Her husband is also an ESC student. She came to the College with a varied background which focused heavily on intensive work in the health sciences and, more specifically, on nursing and educational programs for health care occupations. She had many foreign diplomas and certificates. Thus, to Bertha, Empire State College was an opportunity to pull together disparate learning experiences of a lifetime.

Bertha prepared for her portfolio an impressive array of documents, supporting letters, and transcripts of previous college work. She outlined her educational objectives as completing a bachelor's degree which would lead to enrollment in a Master's of Public Administration Program. The portfolio was carefully reviewed, studied, and checked by a faculty committee at her learning center. Their recommendation was as follows:

Bertha's portfolio consists of formal training, teaching and administration. It is the opinion of the committee that her professional experience is clearly related to prior formal education and to future educational goals. Her competence as a teacher and administrator is acknowledged by her colleagues as superior and her capacity for professional growth is evidenced by innovative programs in which she is actively participating.

We recommend Bertha be granted 30 months of advanced standing on the basis of academic credit hours, professional training, teaching and administrative experience.

The committee recommends that the program committee, which will establish guidelines for Bertha's final contract, consider the need for more work of a theoretical nature to integrate her practical training and accomplishments within an academic framework.



Bertha's own evaluation of participating in this process is interesting. She summarizes what it meant to her and suggests some ideas to strengthen the process.

It was a big job for me, bringing together all those documents, transcripts, and letters as well as saying on paper what my educational plans were; I did it, with a lot of sweat and elbow grease. But I still wonder about the educational worth of doing it. I could have spent a lot more time giving more details. If a student is asking for a lot of advanced standing, then maybe a contract needs to be done as part of it to really examine experiences in depth, to draw out relationships among different learning experiences and really to find out as much as possible what you know and what you don't know. Without this base information, how can you really plan your college studies?

Both Bertha and her mentor stressed the difficulty of writing a program of study with six months remaining to complete degree requirements. In Bertha's case, the time problem is eased somewhat because her past and future interests focus on nursing. When asked during the interview whether she had a program of study and what was it worth to her, she replied:

I don't think I had one. I just got into the two contracts needed for my degree as a passport to graduate school. The program of study thing doesn't seem to work for someone like me. I've got all kinds of credit and experience in nursing; it just needs that official OK. And my contracts were logical extensions of my work in nursing.

To complete the six months of her program that remained after assessment, Bertha took two contracts with a single mentor at ESC. Both contracts were extensions of her previous work experience and training in nursing with special emphasis on research design and methodology. Specifically, contract one included the following:

She will begin a study of Health Care Delivery System models, focusing on the consumer of services, particularly poor and/or minority people. This will take her into literature dealing with community-oriented health services, including cross-cultural perspectives. In this first contract, Bertha will look at the educational institutions which train health service professionals to determine if these institutions are effectively preparing their graduates for jobs in particular areas of health discipline.

Bertha will undertake this research field project in co-operation with and under the supervision of key personnel of the State Department of Health, Special Health Services and Manpower. The study will examine the Health Science Programs at a local community college to determine: (1) what the Health Science Programs comprise, including task analyses of basic skills and concepts of health career workers, translation of these basic skills and concepts into performance curricula adequate to meet job requirements, programming involving upward career and vocational mobility; and (2) the effectiveness of student training which will be determined by reviewing records, interviews and questionnaires sent to each graduate of the community college's Health Science Program for the last two years.

In addition, Bertha will develop an optimal health education program on a high school level for Licensed Practical Nurses including: (1) general course of study and program, (2) facilities to be used during the program, (3) staffing, and (4) financing and budget for the program.

At the end of this initial three month learning contract, Bertha had completed most of the work outlined above. She had developed a statement of the problem and hypothesis upon which the research is premised, designed the study centered on a follow-up survey of A.A.S. graduates in selected allied health fields from the community college, reviewed the literature related to the project, designed the survey instrument to be sent to alumnae including an extensive task-analysis of the various job skills required in the health science professions selected, and established communication with the community college President, Dean of Allied Health Science Departments, and Director of Alumnae, and obtained access to information and records. Bertha's work on these tasks with the community college received solid reviews from its staff, confirming Bertha's competency, perseverance and imagination in her research. Bertha also completed the second major phase of this first contract, the preparation of an optimal health education program on the high school level for Licensed Practical Nurses.

The second contract for Bertha consisted of three parts. First, she would participate in a Health Studies Seminar given by a local university's Health Planning Center. Second, she would complete her research project of training programs at the community college, and third, she would give a seminar on comprehensive integrated health care services for low-income groups.

Bertha's work on both contracts was evaluated by a diverse set of judges, her mentor and persons from the local university, the community college, and the State Department of Health. In every case, these different evaluations attested to the learning Bertha had accomplished and the important competencies she demonstrated. Statements from the evaluation reports document these conclusions:

Bertha attended most of the Health Services Seminars and found some of the areas discussed by lecturing participants to offer stimulating ideas and concepts, some of which Bertha found useful as resources in her own program of services development...

Bertha's research project on training programs in allied health areas at this [community college] was, for the time and resources available to her, a good piece of research...

Bertha, under the supervision of Mr. Jones, developed a good survey instrument tool, and the knowledge of correlating and evaluating the data collected...

Bertha, in my opinion, learned the basic research process and methodology. Her research was complex, involving 200 student alumnae, faculty, and administration of the Health Department...

The Student Symposium Workshop planned by and for students took place at the College... It was well attended by students. A number of students at ESC in both Human Services and Artistic Creation discussed, performed, and encouraged general participation. Student feedback was highly positive, as was Bertha's and my own...

Bertha's program proposal for human and social services programming to be sponsored by ESC is a good synthesis and culmination of Bertha's rich and varied experiences and readings...

Bertha summarizes her experiences with views about her learning contracts and the 6 month minimum requirement to complete her bachelor's degree in the following statement:

Four, five, six visits occurred between my mentor and me before we began to get clear on my first contract. Nothing was put on paper for at least a month. My first contract was to develop a research model, questionnaires, and interviews with people in health service programs. I think I did a good job on this task, even though it was really a task for me. My eventual goal is to establish a health training center for paraprofessionals. I think the present programs are racist and unrealistic. My second contract was really a continuation of the first contract. The main thing in the second contract was to complete the research outlined and designed in contract one. One thing I've really learned as a result of this is that a minimum of 6 months to complete a research project just isn't satisfactory. I really needed a minimum of 6 months to implement the study, that's beyond what it takes to design it. In a word, my contracts were too jammed. Wouldn't it make more sense if ESC set a full year of

study as a minimum requirement for the bachelor's degree instead of the present six months?

Various students interviewed brought up their concern about the lack of sufficient opportunities to meet other students and to work on projects together. Bertha worked with a mentor at the learning center to develop and run a Community Action Seminar. From January to May, the topics ranged from modern dance to free schools to prisons to setting up a student government at ESC. The mentor analyzed and evaluated Bertha's input to the seminar and its impact on her as follows:

Bertha co-chaired with me many of these meetings, lending to them a warmth, aliveness and well-informed empathy that was reflective of unique personal skills. Discussions of the greatest seriousness and depth became human and warm as well, as Bertha's intuitive sense of balance and artistry helped us touch and taste the principle...

Bertha is enthusiastic about ESC and now spends many hours voluntarily counseling prospective and new students. She had mixed reactions to her student orientation experience, and now wants to help students through this uncertain time. As she reported the experience, "It was like being in a fish bowl...the faculty were asking us all kinds of questions when we were the ones who wanted answers to our questions, like what's a contract? How much advanced standing will I get for this and so? Who will be my mentor?" Bertha thinks orientation should be stretched out and many mini-doses given after the student begins his work. She does not think ESC is for everyone, "Young students who don't know where they are going and have no other college experience aren't right for this college. And ESC isn't too well oriented to vocationally oriented students either."

On the whole, Bertha says that going to ESC was one of the best experiences she has had. When ESC has a graduate program Bertha wants to enroll. She now sees the prospect of attending a traditional graduate program as "...a real drag."

PEGGY

*The motivation which brought Peggy to ESC was twofold. She wanted the degree to enable her to continue her many professional activities and she also wanted enrichment and guidance in becoming a more independent learner. The latter took on more of the stress as she found herself involved in two quite distinct contracts. It is apparent that this interesting, active, and creative foreign-born woman found challenge and a degree of fulfillment of her purposes at ESC.*

Peggy is black. She grew up in Jamaica, came to New York City at age 13, and completed high school here. Now, she is 32 years old, married to a New York City bus driver, mother of four children, and works full time as director of a family planning clinic. Peggy is a licensed practical nurse, attended Queens Community College, and holds certificates in labor/liberal arts studies, planned parenthood, and sensitivity training. Prior to ESC, she also participated in various seminars and courses including community corporation training, human resources administration, conception control, research methods and self-motivation.

While completing her work at the Labor College in 1971, Peggy heard about ESC. Several former Labor College students attended the first ESC student orientation session in the City. Peggy commented,

The unstructured character of ESC described during orientation did not settle well with most students, especially students coming directly out of the Labor College. They wanted structure and they wanted it fast. Some persons were really angered by this experience. But it didn't bother me too much.

Peggy's mentor said that she was not a typical Labor College student,

...Peggy was more flexible and more open than other labor/liberal arts students...in fact, these personality traits along with the fact that she's a bright and competent gal were major assets to her work at ESC...With the right guidance, Peggy could have earned several Ph.D.'s by now.

Peggy knew what she wanted at ESC -- to increase her knowledge and understanding of political science, psychology, and human relations. She

was given 30 months advanced standing for her LPN training and Queens College experience towards a bachelor's degree and therefore had six months more work at ESC. During this six month period, Peggy worked with one tutor and three faculty mentors to complete two learning contracts: A major challenge for Peggy during this time was to become an independent learner. As she put it,

I've kind of always relied, maybe a little too much, on a structured curriculum and decisions being made by the teacher. ESC has really presented me a challenge because my mentor keeps throwing decisions back to me like when to prepare my portfolio, what to put in it, what kind of contract, and things like that. Let me tell you, it was rough!

The purposes of Peggy's first contract were described in the following way:

As director of ZM, Peggy is involved interpersonally with staff, associates and community residents. In studying human relations in this learning contract, she will seek the relationship of psychological theories to her past and ongoing experiences with people. She hopes to be able to find new perspectives and depth of understanding about her own and other's interpersonal relations. She also seeks to articulate her own observations and experiences as well as to have a better sense of what goes on in persons individually and in groups. Topics to be explored include: how a person develops, the role of anxiety, insecurity and defenses, group theory, the function of culture, the meaning of mental health.

As part of this contract, Peggy read various books and articles: Harry Stack Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry; Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society; Carl Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy; Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom; Irving Goffman, Human Dilemmas of Leadership. Her mentor conducted a weekly seminar on the topic of human relations which gave Peggy the opportunity to discuss and explore her readings with other students. In addition, Peggy met individually with her mentor for one to two hours weekly.

Both Peggy and her mentor describe their early experiences at working together in skeptical and critical terms: Peggy about her mentor, "She has cold, steely, blue eyes, is stern, overly academic and businesslike"; mentor about Peggy, "She is too stiff, wants others to make decisions for her, she takes things too personally, and she can't separate her emotional reactions toward me from her learning. In this way she is immature and must work to overcome this." Peggy needed assistance and guidance on her academic work and personal problems; her mentor structured office visits for her and visits and/or phone calls to the mentor's home for personal

discussions. This arrangement worked well to serve both areas and to prevent personal discussions from dominating academic topics. According to the mentor, Peggy learned a lot about managing personal matters and developed new attitudes that fostered her independent learning skills.

More information about Peggy's performance on her first learning contract comes out of her mentor's formal evaluation.

Peggy is bright, competent and a willing student. She reads easily, with understanding and comprehension. She has a good critical mind, questioning, comparing and seeking relationships of ideas. Her discussions with the mentor and in seminar meetings, as well as her logs, were convincing evidence of her thoughtfulness, reading and application of ideas to her life and work experiences. Her leadership of the seminar on Erik Erikson's work was cogent and well-planned.

The most striking element in Peggy's learning progress is her open mind - a strong receptivity to learning as a means of growth. She has pondered difficult questions of the meaning of humanity and maturity and in the process seemed to grow by leaps. Her own words describing her learning progress are: 'Growth, maturity, self-improvement, emotional security, humanity, fellowship.'

She has completed her Study Plan. Her final paper, 'The Results of the Poverty Business, the Youth...' is an intelligent, thoughtful analysis of the youth in her community program. She has successfully related concepts from many readings to her own work and life experiences.

She still has some academic weakness in a less than polished writing style, in which she shall receive tutoring in her next Study Plan.

Peggy's second learning contract moved in three different directions: to correct weaknesses in writing style, to expand her knowledge of poetry, and to improve her ability at conversational Spanish. Writing and Spanish competencies are directly related to Peggy's job with the family planning clinic. The work on poetry extends Peggy's long standing interest and enjoyment in writing poetry. A tutor for Spanish and two different mentors worked with her during this second and final contract.

The tutorial in writing connected with Peggy's study of poetry through writing assignments on different poets and types of poetry. Peggy also prepared an intellectual autobiography as part of her writing experiences. In this autobiography, which according to Peggy required much soul-searching and hard thinking, life career goals were discussed, strengths and weaknesses

in knowledge and factual areas were identified and steps suggested to learn how to become a more effective and independent learner. Peggy also wrote a short essay on her investigations into questions she holds concerning black women and the women's liberation movement. For this she read: Gerta Lerner, Black Women in White America and Toni Cade, Black Woman.

In poetry, Peggy began by reading a variety of representative works from Shakespeare to the present and discussed them in detail with her mentor. Also she wrote four analytic papers under her poetry mentor, all with specific references to the poems read.

Finally, Peggy worked with a Spanish teacher outside the College on her conversational skills. This required some 30 hours a week reading, listening to tapes, taking examinations, and talking in Spanish with her mentor.

The following summary comments were made by Peggy's three teachers:

The tutorial in writing improved her communication and writing skills. Peggy's writing is still rather undisciplined, she writes thoughts in the order in which they come. She is unusually rich in ideas and learned to connect ideas.

In conversational Spanish, Peggy was rated B+ overall, and the tutor is very satisfied with her learning.

Peggy's appreciation of and insights into the nature of poetry were sharpened and she learned technical principles through reading, thinking, writing and mentoring.

Her intellectual autobiography is a fine summary expression of the important influences in her growth, maturity and ability to become a student.

Recalling that Peggy came to ESC with clear educational goals but needed more positive attitudes, confidence in herself and skills to function as an independent learner, we want to review the outcomes of her experiences with the College to meet these different needs. Peggy's mentor offered the following evaluation:

Peggy came a long ways in a short time, just six months with us. But I am totally amazed by what happened to her, how she grew during this period. I wish we could have another six months; Peggy needs to get some valuable finishing touches, like more literature, more writing, and philosophy would have absolutely blown her mind.



Peggy is a highly emotional woman and she was very uptight initially. Only after we got to know each other did she relax. She learned to separate business and personal matters and understands that love/hate reactions to faculty need not control the learning process.

The best things she learned were confidence in herself and how to study on her own.

Peggy was asked to rate the outcomes of her work in terms of the knowledge and personal growth objectives identified for students by the College. On these dimensions, Peggy rated herself as increasing her knowledge, comprehension and application skills "very much." For example, she was writing "my own style of poetry, or what I call poetry," before studying with ESC but "real poetry" gives more meaning, background and context to her own work. She now reads poetry on a regular basis and obtains great pleasure from it. Similarly, her work on group and interpersonal behavior is applied at the family planning clinic with positive results. Ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate are cognitive skills that did not change significantly for Peggy. Possibly her short 6 month stay with the College was too brief for change in these complex dimensions to occur.

Peggy is especially pleased with her progress in writing and written communication, "I think I have really improved my writing, but I still make many technical errors." Her mentor confirms this growth.

Peggy's educational goals and purposes were clear when she started her program and they did not change while at ESC. Also Peggy rated "very little" impact of her ESC work on interpersonal competence or awareness of others. These skills she possessed before. The greatest and most significant changes in personal growth came for Peggy in increased self-reliance, self-understanding, and self-consistency. Peggy often mentioned how she came to the College attracted by its "openness" but in no way realizing or understanding how much hard work would be required.

I really had to get it together, like fast, or sink...  
 this place, this College, nearly did me in at different  
 times...the most frightening experience was writing my  
 portfolio and appearing before the faculty board to  
 answer questions...but I did it, I feel good about it,  
 it's helped me get much more confidence in what I can do...

Peggy has changed, has grown in important ways at ESC. She is now building on this experience in a master's program at Queens College. This program is much like ESC mode of operation and thus reinforces and strengthens Peggy's desire to "learn-how-to-learn."

MIKE

*Until ESC, Mike has spent years seeking a college where he could pursue a degree without jeopardizing his present job and family responsibilities. His program of studies in labor was definite and well thought out. An informal assessment of prior learning took into account his depth of experience in the labor movement and in labor journalism. Mike proved an excellent fit with ESC, achieving his purpose and gaining some further areas of interest that he will continue to pursue.*

Mike learned about Empire State College through a newspaper article in winter 1971 which discussed the theories and no-campus aspects of the College. As he clipped the article out and put it in his file "Education," he remembers saying to his wife:

Somebody in higher education has finally brought himself to the level of the working class and recognized the connection between the experience of a lifetime and education.

When ESC later located its Coordinating Center in Mike's town, he decided to investigate and "...arrived to see a building full of painters, carpenters, electricians, and a few administrators. I felt at home when [the Director of Admissions] interviewed me while we sat on two large cartons."

"Home" to Mike is a blue-collar world. He married young, and shortly after started work in a factory. He spent the next 18 years on an assembly line. During this time, he became deeply involved in union affairs as Financial Secretary of the local for 9 years, President and Bargaining Chairman for 4 years, and delegate to numerous regional, national, and international conventions and subcouncils. To prepare for these responsibilities, he took part in several non-credit leadership training sessions at such places as the UAW Education Center in Michigan.

Mike describes his most important personal concerns as: "...number one, to always support my family, and number two, to improve their lot as a family, to make our life better." These somewhat conflicting security and ambition motivations caused Mike first to grab and then relinquish several opportunities for post-secondary education. He was one of the initial students at a new

community college near his plant but "...the company wouldn't cooperate. They wouldn't let me come in 15-20 minutes late one day a week. They were afraid to set a precedent..." Later when on the night shift, he convinced another area college to accept him as its first-ever part-time day student. This went well for two months until his shift changed. The classes went. Next came courses in the evening division of another area institution. By driving for two hours on three nights a week, he completed 8 credit hours. These frustrating experiences made Mike quickly recognize the lack of a fixed class schedule as a key advantage of Empire State.

Mike describes his orientation workshop, the College's first, as "...chaotic...confusing for everyone who was there." However, since it was the College's first and because Mike had faith in the College staff, he overlooked much of the confusion and enjoyed most of the sessions:

There were lots of questions: What will this College use for a transcript? How will you evaluate past experiences? How many hours will I carry? I did not ask any questions because I felt if they are committed to what they say in that little phrase 'credit for life's experiences;' if the Chancellor recognizes it, if the Trustees recognize it, if everyone in higher education recognizes it, and they are really willing to lay it on the line and say 'you can do this--we are willing to go this far if you are willing to apply yourself;' then that is all I had in mind. I didn't want to muddy it up.

This first orientation, lasting two days and nights, was the longest ever held by ESC and allowed much informal banter. While Mike drifted quietly through the formal sessions, he did not remain silent all of the time:

A gratifying experience was the interest expressed by my fellow students in me. I probably answered more questions than the mentors in the small group meetings...lots about labor unions and the labor movement.

While Mike is generally complimentary in describing his orientation, he did criticize the administration of two standardized questionnaires, the Survey of College Achievement and the Omnibus Personality Inventory, as inappropriate for many:

To get students like me, you must realize that the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of a lot of people in this industrial age have been put on the shelf. You have to make this as easy a translation as possible. Guys like me are reluctant to participate in a stringent testing program because of the embarrassment that is involved.

Another form that the students filled out during the final session at the orientation workshop was the Student Information Form. Several of Mike's responses on the SIF reveal a low degree of self-confidence in academic areas at this stage in his ESC career. Mike listed his highest degree of aspiration as an Associate in Arts. He also rated himself below average in academic ability and originality and in the lowest ten percent in artistic and mathematical abilities. Furthermore, Mike responded that there was a "very good chance" that he might need extra time to complete his degree requirements and that he might "fail one or more study programs." One interesting variation to low self-confidence responses is Mike's belief that his writing ability is in the "top ten percent" and that this might well lead him to publish an article while in college.

A second pattern found by analyzing the SIF is Mike's liberalism. He identified himself as a "liberal" and endorsed the following statements: "strongly agree that the Federal Government is not doing enough to control pollution," "strongly agree that the Federal Government is not doing enough to protect consumers from faulty goods and services," "strongly agree that the Federal Government is not doing enough to promote school desegregation," "somewhat disagree that there is too much concern for the rights of criminals in courts," and "strongly disagree that college officials have been too lax in dealing with student protests on campus." Such responses seem on the surface much more typical of an 18-year old son of a college professor than of a 35-year old life-long factory worker.

After orientation, Mike and his mentor quickly began developing a program of study. Mike came to ESC with the idea of working around a Wayne State "canned" program on labor studies which included components of psychology, sociology, philosophy, collective bargaining, American History, constitutional law, etc. Together with the mentor, Mike compared these areas with his life experiences to determine weak areas. This led to a cohesive program of study centered around the history of labor and the working class. The mentor's rationale for this program was "...to remove me from narrowness and give me a complete picture of the world-wide labor movement."

Mike's two contracts (half-time) leading to his Associate in Arts with concentration on Labor Studies are models of consistency with variety. The scope of the first contract on the history of the labor movement is:

...broad, ranging from mid-19th century political/labor tracks through the condition of the early 20th century factory laborers, early labor organizing, surveying the way in which industrialists tried to answer the challenges laid on them by both labor and the productive mode itself and ending with a research project which touched on all of the preceding.

The contract featured extensive readings including Marx, Engels, Eugene Debs, Upton Sinclair, Samuel Gompers; a film entitled The Organizer

starring Marcello Mastroianni; and conference with a tutor who helped to define the topics of the major research paper on "The General Motors Sit-Down Strike, 1936-7." Evaluation of the contract was based on a student journal, conferences between the mentor and student, the research paper, and several short papers on such questions as:

How did the Communist Manifesto attempt to meet the needs of the working class people in the mid-19th century? How did Marx define the working class? The owner class? Given your own experiences both in the factory and out, how did these definitions relate to you?

Mike's papers drew much praise from his mentor:

The paper was both literate and resourceful, moving easily between theory and reality, and demonstrating both a fine historical sense and a rather impressive ability to execute a study in comparative sociology.

...Mike wrote an extremely interesting paper relating the ideas of these men to the world in which they lived. Often, throughout the paper, Mike made telling and well-substantiated judgments as to how well their ideas and organizations met the demands of the reality. Additionally, as he has done throughout his studies, he has been able to begin relating this early history of the labor movement to his own historical experiences as an organizer within the union.

Mike is one of the best undergraduate students that I have been in contact with.

Mike's second contract - lasting one month - explored the sociology of work: "those ways in which factory work affects the social existence and perceptions of working class people." By this time, Mike had decided to continue his studying beyond the AA so the second contract became a feed-in to a larger research project also on the sociology of work which was to be completed after the associate's degree. The contract involved reading both classical and current sociological literature related to the workers: Lynd and Lynd, Middletown; Zola, Germinal; Sillitoe, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning; etc. It also included a paper which was a proposal for the later project. The mentor's evaluation was again complimentary:

In addition to reading significant writings and formulating and approach to his forthcoming research, Mike once again demonstrated a good deal of resourcefulness and self-determination in locating people and materials which aided his understanding of the general problem.

Mike was one of the first Empire State College students to request a large amount of advanced standing for primarily informal experiences. The portfolio was exemplary and showed clearly the ways in which the program of studies was tying together his background and his goals. After examining Mike's rich experiences as documented in the portfolio, the Assessment Committee made its recommendation. Mike received the maximum allowable advanced standing toward the Associate in Arts degree. Furthermore, the Committee suggested that he reapply for more credit toward a BA upon completion of the AA. Thus, in the end, Mike received a total of 23 months advanced standing, 15 toward the AA plus 8 more after this plateau. Mike was pleased with the assessment but, again revealing an uninflated opinion of his self-accomplishments, admits that he would "...not have even considered questioning the Committee's judgment no matter what the decision."

Mike is most favorable toward the idea of granting credit for life's experiences but, thinking of what attracted him to ESC, criticizes the College's recent change to the expression, "assessment of prior learning."

You may have narrowed the number of people who apply here... If you tell them that you will give credit for 'learning' you are going to scare a lot of people away because all they are sure they know is how to put the same nut in the same hole over and over again and most of us don't consider that 'learning.' I see ESC as a tool to channel this deadening activity into a time for thinking. You can stand in front of a plant and ask 50 guys how much 'learning' they've had in the last 10 years and they will say: 'what are you, some kind of screw?' But if you ask about 'life's experiences,' they'll tell you what they have learned. Some work with OEO, a lot are craftsmen, a lot paint, some are music bugs, many are involved with kids' programs. After a guy gets in, it is up to you professionals to see how much he has learned. A few want something for nothing but no one expects it. Most just want a fresh start.

Mike's overall feelings about his mentor are most positive. He described their bi-weekly meetings, two lunches, and multiple phone calls as extremely sociable, interesting, intuitive, sincere, free, successful, and pleasurable:

I was fortunate. I honestly believe I had the perfect mentor for me. He fitted me like a hand in a glove. The whole theory of the College is unique and this guy is unique in himself as an educator. If this school is to survive, it needs guys like him. I was amazed at his versatility, his flexibility, his uncanny knack of being able to put in front of me materials that I would find interesting but I would never have read in a lifetime.

Mike's evaluation of his growth and development in terms of the College objectives were mixed which mostly reflects his high degree of personal development upon entry to ESC. He rated his growth very low on interpersonal competence, self-reliance and understanding of others feeling that these were strong points to begin with. He rated his growth more towards the middle of the scale in clarification of purpose, self-understanding and intellectual synthesis. Lastly, he rated his growth while at ESC high in awareness, self-consistency, knowledge, comprehension, evaluation and application.

Mike had difficulty in identifying the single best experience at Empire State but settled on "...receiving the AA. I'm the first in my family to accomplish this and we all shared the happiness. Also, my children were impressed with how hard I worked to get the degree." He has used this degree with immediate success. Mike is now an International Servicing Representative for the UAW with responsibilities for interfacing grievances at plants in New England and upstate New York as well as handling the union's regional public relations and editing a new regional newspaper. In these activities, he notes that the ESC experience sharpened his abilities and broadened his outlook toward union-management relations:

I've been doing a lot of work with arbitration cases lately, mostly writing briefs. I find I am able to analyse critically and in an organized way. I can also cross-examine more easily.

Mike came to Empire State College as an "uneducated" working man. He had little job security (as was proven when he was laid off for several months while an ESC student), little job satisfaction, and little reason to expect things to get better. ESC has meant to Mike the realization of his goals. He now has a degree which has brought him pride and more self-confidence. He also has a more secure and better paying job and is considering graduate school. As Mike summarizes:

My career put me on first base, I got to second base because of my many life experiences, I got to third base because I was able to document them, and I got home because of Empire State College and my mentor.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The cases show clearly that these ten students did indeed test Empire State College. The following table utilizing topics covered in the student and faculty interviews (see Appendices) summarize some general observations drawn from the ten case studies. Two topics - "Initial Contacts" and "Orientation" - were not part of the interview schedule for mentors, thus the NA or "Not Applicable" notation. To recap the reactions and experiences of students and mentors for each element, a simple summation scale - "Poor," "Fair," "Satisfactory," "Good," and "Excellent" - is used.

## PROGRAM FEATURES RATED SATISFACTORY OR BETTER

## Initial Contacts

Students learn about ESC in a variety of ways - feature articles in local newspapers and national news magazines, former college teachers, friends, and employers, and in one case, an old man on a motorcycle. Early attempts (during the first 6-10 months) by potential students to obtain printed information, bulletins, and application forms from the College were frustrating, and some cases quite embarrassing to the College. As one student summarized his experiences:

This place is really weird! I see what's meant about being nontraditional - don't answer your mail or telephone calls! Or, if I do connect with the College, I get ten different answers to the same question... I've concluded you really have to be persistent if you want to be a student at ESC...

These problems have been substantially resolved in recent months by developing systematic procedures for handling initial inquiries - mail and telephone - and admissions applications. When backlogs occur in general subject areas at learning centers, students are notified when openings are likely to occur.

Obviously, students consider other colleges. A variety of reasons are given by students for their selecting ESC. The outstanding reason among the case study students is the unusual amount of practical flexibility afforded to students thus allowing them to meet other responsibilities. Other reasons given and endorsed to varying degrees: the chance to pull together credit for all prior formal learning; credit for informal lifelong learning; desire for personalized attention; love of learning; speed in getting a degree; appeal of unstructured philosophy of ESC; special interest area is not offered elsewhere; and need for degree to get a better job or to get into graduate school.



-2-

Strengths and Weaknesses of Empire  
State College: Student and Mentor Reactions

<u>ELEMENTS OF ESC</u>	<u>STUDENTS SAY</u>	<u>MENTORS SAY</u>
Initial Contacts	Satisfactory	NA
Orientation	Poor	NA
Program of Study	Fair	Poor
Contracts & Evaluations	Good	Fair
Assessment of Prior Learning	Good to Excellent	Fair to Poor
People Contacts	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Outcomes - <i>Tangible</i>	Fair to Satisfactory	Fair
- <i>Intangible</i>	Good	Good

## Contracts and Evaluations

Contract learning seems to be working well for students and mentors. Twenty-five separate questions were asked during the interviews with students and mentors about contracts and evaluations although only a few of the findings are discussed here.

Students see contracts as a flexible means by which to independently study interest areas. The interviews confirm that contract writing is a joint effort of mentors and students. The interviews also show that initial students used potential public and community resources little beyond visits to local libraries, museums, and art galleries. Thus, a large pool of still untapped resources such as internships, field studies, organized programs,\* resident artists, tutors, and adjunct community faculty exists for present and future students at most learning centers. Perhaps because most case study students had only one mentor, successive contracts appear to "hang together." Students also spoke highly of their personal role in the evaluation process. They feel that where student and mentor evaluate the contract, a new dimension of learning occurs over and above more traditional "one way" grading practices. Students were especially pleased with mentors' competency and willingness to guide and counsel. Possibly the single most important conclusion from conversations with students and mentors is the super high value placed on student-mentor relationships. One student described her mentor as,

...always available at his office or by telephone to discuss things and give advice; informal, put me at ease; able to spot within minutes my progress and problems; and a person who gave me confidence about my work and motivated me to do my best.

Another student expressed her mentor relationships as follows:

He related to me as a person. During our first meeting he defined himself as a resource for me...The key and crucial thing he did beyond this was identifying options for me...he was great!

For faculty, regular contacts with students are highly valued mainly because they generate a wealth of information that would aid in planning and guiding the student's program. The individualized approach followed through these contacts allowed some faculty to come close to their idealized model of how learning best occurs. Faculty are concerned, however, about

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\*An organized program is a self-study learning module that can be used with or without a mentor. Organized programs are developed by the Learning Resources Faculty, an ever-changing group of high powered scholars, housed at the Coordinating Center in Saratoga Springs. The first organized program was completed in late 1972.

the time requirements of developing learning contracts (particularly a student's first contract) and of making arrangements for field studies, tutors, and related learning resources as student workloads continue to grow. In addition, these varied time commitments severely limit if not exclude opportunities for reading, conversation with colleagues, and general professional improvement. Thus some faculty assert that the Empire State College program and procedures are "burning them out."

The content and quality of learning contracts is a subject of continuing inquiry by special college task force on "Academic Quality" as well as new cost/effectiveness research beginning in this area.

### People Contacts

The amount of student contact with other students and mentors is working well apparently because two diverse important needs are partially met. On the one hand, some students want group contacts, occasions when students gather mainly for seminar-like study. This opportunity exists to some extent at each learning center. Some students and mentors would like more opportunities of this kind. In contrast, other students see the lack of group gatherings as suited to their family, job and other obligations. They feel that they do not need contact with other students or mentors and are pleased by its absence. As one student said,

I'm not here to socialize...I haven't got time for that. In fact, I would be attending a residential college if classes, seminars, student government, committees, and the like was my bag. But it isn't, and that's one big reason why I'm here.

All case study students highly recommended Empire State College to others, especially persons these students thought best suited for the college, i.e. "older", "more mature", "independent", and "self-motivated" individuals. These graduates reported they enjoyed the challenge of explaining Empire State College's philosophy and program to friends, employers, and others and that these people were very sympathetic with the College's alternative approach to post-secondary education.

### Intangible Outcomes

A fourth positively rated part of ESC's program is the "intangible outcomes" accrued by students. Included here are feelings about the College, its program, and staff; satisfactions with meeting personal education goals; general attitudes about oneself; and, intellectual and personal growth. Superlatives dominate in student assessments of these intangibles. For example,

Finally, I'm given credit for what I know...I've really enjoyed and support what ESC is trying to do, and is doing to a great degree...

ESC is one of the best experiences I've had...when ESC has a graduate program, I'll be one of the first to enroll...

My career put me on first base, I got to second base because of my life experiences, I got to third base because I was able to document them, and I got home because of Empire State College and my mentor.

I really had to get it together, like fast, or sink... but I did it, I feel good about it, the College has helped me get much more confidence in what I can do...

It's been a terrific experience and opportunity for me... I have nothing but good things to say about ESC's program and SUNY's decision to develop this exciting and worthwhile alternative education outlet.

Subjective ratings by the case study students of growth in terms of ESC's cognitive and personal development objectives also indicates generally satisfactory outcomes. These students "feel good" about ESC and in some cases can validate these feelings with concrete examples and other evidence.

#### PROGRAM FEATURES RATED LESS THAN SATISFACTORY

##### Orientation

The concepts and programs of ESC are not common knowledge to students and thus effective steps are needed to orient students. The problem is that orientation did not "work" for most students. Whereas new friendships may occur, significant increases of knowledge about the College, its programs, the role of students, and ways to connect with suitable mentors do not occur. One student who attended orientation recently remarked, "If you have read the printed material on the College, the orientation workshop really doesn't add much." Other students talk about the "fish-bowl phenomenon," namely, that mentors and staff ask the majority of questions of students. And a third major complaint focuses on the limited opportunities of students to meet mentors and carry on short discussions with them during orientation. One other comment seems to summarize the views of some disenchanted students: "Why bother with orientation, let's get lined up with a mentor and get to work!" Obviously the "tests," the "\$30 rip-off" and the "state bureaucracy" image at some centers creates negative reactions by students to the orientation workshop. A study is under way now to identify more clearly what is missing from orientation and to consider future alternatives.

##### Program of Study

The program of study concept was not central to the degree work of these initial ten graduates. The reason for this is fairly simple: mentors

and students were (are) confused about the concept--when a program of study best developed, how does it spell out program degree requirements, how can it be modified, and what is its relationship to the assessment of prior learning. Essentially all ten graduates received maximum advanced standing toward their ESC degrees and thus had only six months of work to complete. This six-month requirement was normally met with two or three contracts defined by the student in conversation with his/her mentor. Generally, program of study was tangentially related to this conversation or to the awarding of advanced standing.

When students and mentors were asked in this study if a program of study existed, the answers sorted out into four categories: there was no program of study (3 cases) it is simply the sum of the contracts completed (4 cases), a program of study is not relevant (2 cases), or "Huh? A what?" (1 case).

Recent work within the College reinforces the importance of each student having a program of studies regardless of the clarity of a student's educational goals or length of study with ESC. A program of study is intended to define the degree requirements for individual students by specifying the goals sought, the work required to achieve these goals, and the learning modes and resources that will be used.

### Assessment of Prior Learning

Students and mentors see the assessment of prior learning from much different vantage points and understandably have different reactions; students rate this area "Good to Excellent" but mentors rate it "Fair to Poor". We discuss the topic here as a "weakness" because of the problems encountered by mentors and the central importance of advanced standing to the future of the College.

The case study students view advanced standing as a boon and as one of the most positive features of the College. A common expression of this good feeling toward advanced standing is, "I'm finally getting credit for what I know." Students see the preparation of portfolios as demanding and time consuming, but a significant way to take stock of one's strengths and weaknesses.

For faculty, however, the procedures and processes of granting advanced standing are often a big hassle. The "big hassle" perspective of many faculty includes at least three related dimensions. One dimension is the legitimacy of ESC granting advanced standing, especially credit for informal or life experiences. A few faculty, by far not the majority, stew about this question. Another aspect of this dimension, which seems to disturb some faculty, is the legitimacy of mentor participation in the process. Some mentors basically question or disagree with the assumption that they should play a major part in student assessment. Their question reads: "Is assessment of prior learning an 'instructional' activity or something a college registrar should do?"

A second dimension of the problem is the time required of mentors. As student loads continue to climb, time for guiding portfolio preparation and for participating in assessment committee meetings is increasingly difficult to find. A further exacerbating factor: to participate fully in these meetings requires substantial amounts of preparation by each mentor.

Closely related to the second dimension of the portfolio problem is the lack of clearly defined College-wide and learning center policies and procedures to guide assessment of prior learning. Discussions about this topic have surfaced important issues regarding who finally "approves" advanced standing recommendations for students, the faculty of learning centers or Saratoga? Also, the role of the College-wide Office of Student Assessment is still blurred in the review of learning center recommendations, the development of guidelines and criteria, and the exchange of experiences and insights throughout the College. A recent task force on advanced standing has drafted revised policies and procedures which may help to resolve some of the problems in this complicated area.

### Tangible Outcomes

Maybe it is too early to ask about the tangible outcomes for some of ESC's first graduates. Some follow-up work has been done (cf, Palola and Ogden, "Study of ESC Graduates," Research & Review No. 5, ESC) and more of this will be done in the future. Nevertheless, it is interesting to review what has happened at this early point to the ten case study "finishers."

Two of the case study group now attend, and five hope to attend, graduate school. In these seven cases, no major problems were reported about acceptance of ESC work or transcripts by graduate schools. However, in one case, "A1," an unfortunate situation occurred when, perhaps because of his age, the College's "image," the content of his undergraduate studies, or some combination of these, he was not admitted to graduate school. It raises a question about how far ESC should and can "go to bat" for its graduates. Since no clear policy or guideline now exists in the College, this leaves follow-through to the student and sometimes to his/her primary mentor and the deans of the regional learning centers. In a small way, recent contacts by learning center staff with other local higher education institutions should assist with the resolution of this problem.

Three of the ten graduates report significant tangible outcomes: ability to meet new job requirements in one case, obtaining a better job as well as substantial raise in pay in another case, and in a third case, the graduate is now teaching nursing in college although her degree is in liberal studies and she is also attending graduate school. This is precedence-setting according to traditional practices in nursing.

Finally, one case student's hopes for teacher certification went unrealized. Since an ESC degree with concentration in education does not yet carry automatic certification, graduates of ESC must individually demonstrate to the State Education Department that they qualify for certification. "Annie" applied for certification but was denied. Whether this is an isolated incident or a common pattern is not yet known.

#### SERENDIPITY AND OTHER SONGS

It would be interesting to know:

To what extent students are being "ripped-off" by ESC, e.g.,

...jumping through 15 flaming hoops to document informal learnings;

...performing graduate level work for undergraduate credit;

...working full time as a half-time student;

...proselytized by mentors in their discipline, point of view, and educational dogma; etc., etc, etc.

To what extent students are "ripping-off" ESC, e.g.,

...obtaining advanced standing credit for questionable experiences;

...paying half time for full-time instruction;

...getting full contract credit for little work;

...hustling credits, contracts, advanced standing by verbal skills and personal influence, etc., etc., etc.

As searing and cynical as these suggested areas of study may be, they do include concerns already raised and discussed by staff and students alike. Future research and evaluation studies may provide some answers to these questions as well as progress in the academic areas discussed earlier.

STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(General Strategy: To determine what students are doing and the significance of these experiences to them.)

1) Initial Contacts With The College

How did you learn about ESC? When?  
 What was your initial contact with the College?  
 Were there alternatives you considered to attending this College?  
 Tell me about them.  
 What was attractive about this College?  
 Why did you attend ESC?

2) Student Orientation

Where was it held?  
 When was it held?  
 How long did it take?  
 How many students? mentors?  
 What happened at Student Orientation? Scheduled program?  
 Interactions? New Friends?  
 What did this experience add to your understanding of ESC?  
 Are there ways in which Student Orientation could have been  
 made more meaningful for you?  
 Things to keep as is?  
 Things to change?

3) Program of Studies

Did you have one?  
 What rationale did the mentor give you for having you do a program  
 of studies?  
 What did it say?  
 When was it completed?  
 Did this assignment serve a useful function in relation to your  
 education?  
 What was the mentor's and your roles in preparing the program of studies?  
 How was your program of studies related to the contracts you completed  
 or planned?

4) Contracts and Evaluations (focus on last contract)

How was this contract prepared? Your role? Mentor's role?  
 How long did it take?  
 How were readings chosen?  
 How were purposes clarified?  
 Describe a general workweek and pattern of study to complete this  
 contract. When? Where? How long?  
 How were field trips identified and used?



## 4) Contracts and Evaluations (continued)

How would you describe your first contract in terms of: clarity?  
completeness? challenge? relevance to educational goals?

Did you experience problems or difficulties in implementing this contract?

Did your mentor fulfill his commitments? Did he do his job?

What learning resources were you able to use?

How much contact did you have with your mentor while implementing this contract? What different kinds of contacts?

How was your contract evaluated? Mentor's role? Your role?

Criteria used? Your satisfaction with the outcomes?

(Ask more general questions about other contracts.)

In comparison to this last contract, how would you assess the value of your prior contracts?

Did your contracts hang together or were they discrete exercises?

## 5) Assessment of Prior Learning

How was the portfolio assignment introduced to you? What rationale?

Were written descriptions of the portfolio assignment used?

What was the mentor's role in the process? Others who helped you?

What did you do to prepare the portfolio?

How long did it take you to complete your portfolio?

How would you describe the importance of this assignment to your education? Did you learn anything?

How was your prior learning assessed? Role of your mentor?

Did you appear before an APL committee? Would you describe what happened?

When were you notified about the decision of the committee?

Do you think your prior learning was fairly assessed?

What criteria seemed to be important in this judgment?

Looking back on it, do you think APL is a legitimate and sound educational practice?

## 6) People Contacts

Generally, how often did you have contact with someone at the Learning Center? Who? How? Purposes?

Did you have contact with other ESC students? How often per week? Purposes?

What are your reactions to the six (three) month minimum requirement at ESC?

Would you recommend this College to others? For whom do you think this College is best suited?

## 7) Outcomes and Future Plans

Do you have more self-confidence?

Do you feel you have improved your communication skills?

Writing skills? Speaking?

Do you have some interest in reading? What?

What are the tangible outcomes for you in completing a degree at ESC?

Any problems in selling your degree to employers? Graduate schools?

Friends? Others?

What were the best and worst things that happened to you at ESC?

## 8) Other

Admission process? Bureaucracy? Uncertainty/anxiety?

(N.B.: Get concrete evidence, illustrations, examples, for instances to support "perceptions" of what's happening at ESC and what consequences it has had for students.)

## FACULTY INTERVIEW GUIDE

## Work Patterns

- 1) Describe day-by-day how you spent your time at ESC last week. Be sure to consider administrative activities, time served on committees, collaboration or conversation with colleagues, contacts with students, orientation sessions, and the like.

Is last week typical of most weeks for you at ESC?  
If not, what else must be said?

- 2) Have there been any important recent changes in your work pattern?

## Contacts With Students

- 3) Do you meet with groups of students? How is this arranged? You have been working as a mentor with student \_\_\_\_\_. I would like to ask you questions about this experience.

- 4) Program of Studies

- a) Did this student have one?  
b) What rationale did you give this student for preparing a program of studies?  
c) What was your role in preparing the program of studies? Student's role?  
d) How was this student's program of studies related to the contracts he or she completed or planned?  
e) To advanced standing?  
f) When was it completed?  
g) Did this student have any problems in developing the program of studies?  
h) Did this assignment serve a useful function in relation to the education?  
i) Did the program of study work? Evidence?

- 5) Contracts and Evaluations

(Could you please pull out your most recently completed contract for \_\_\_\_\_.)

- a) How was the last contract prepared? Your role? Student's role?  
b) How long did it take to prepare the last contract?  
c) How were activities chosen for the last contract - field work? reading? reporting?  
d) How were evaluation criteria identified and used?  
e) What learning resources was the student able to use?  
f) Did this student experience problems or difficulties in implementing the last contract?

- g) How much contact did you have with this student while implementing this contract?
- h) How would you describe the last contract in terms of: clarity? completeness? challenge? relevance to the student's educational goals?
- i) Were the student's purposes clarified?
- j) How was the last contract evaluated? Your role? Student's role? Criteria used? Your satisfaction with the outcomes?

(Ask the following general questions about other contracts)

- k) In comparison to this last contract, how would you assess the value of the student's prior contracts?
- l) Was the last contract related in a meaningful way to previous contracts? Example?
- m) Is the contract system working well for most students you know at ESC? Evidence?

#### Granting Advanced Standing

- 6)
  - a) How did you introduce the portfolio assignment to this student? What rationale did you use?
  - b) Were the written descriptions of the portfolio helpful to the student?
  - c) What was your role in the process of preparing the portfolio? Student's role?
  - d) How did you and the student determine how much advanced standing to request? Criteria followed?
  - e) How well did the assessment committee function?
  - f) How much of your time (specific estimate in number of hours) was invested in the preparation and evaluation of this student's past learning?
  - g) How would you describe the importance of this assignment to the education of this student? Can you give evidence of the student's learning?
  - h) Looking back on it, do you think granting advanced standing is a legitimate and sound educational practice? Do you think other colleges should adopt it?
- 7) How would you describe students you have enjoyed most working with at ESC? Enjoyed least?

#### Outcomes

- 8) How would you describe your experiences at ESC in terms of your professional needs? What about your personal needs?
- 9) How do you think about the workload for you at this College?

- 10) On a continuum of 0 to 100, how would you rate your morale?  
How about your colleagues?

Expectations

- 11) Can you identify the reasons you gave yourself for joining ESC?
- 12) What specific things were you hoping would be possible for you to accomplish at this College?
- 13) What are your future goals in terms of ESC?
- 14) What are the best and worst experiences you have had at this college?
- 15) If you could change one or two things at ESC, what would you change first?
- 16) Will this interview work?

(N.B.: Get concrete evidence, illustrations, examples, for instances, to support "perceptions: of what is happening at ESC and what consequences it seems to have had for students and mentors.)