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ABSTRACT

The concept of progress by examination at Hampshire College is discussed in one of a series of progress reports on the college in its attempt to redefine the nature of liberal arts education. A student's academic progress is measured by examinations rather than by credit hours and grades. The system has been enthusiastically supported by the faculty and the indications are for continued support. The role of advising by faculty members is examined, and student responsibilities outlined. They include assignment to advising centers, examination proposals, and transcripting. Post-graduate placement is also described. Strengths and weaknesses of the system are considered. Outside evaluations have reinforced the college's notion that the examination or evaluation process contributed strongly to the college's overall objective of increasing the student's autonomy and independence as a learner, not just in the classroom, but in everyday life. It is noted that whether this new and innovative process will continue and grow depends more on the ability and success of the graduates than on any evaluative technique. (LBH)

Hampshire College

PROGRESS REPORT

The Progress Report series is intended to convey to the public a sense of the steps Hampshire College has taken since its opening in September 1970. The Reports represent progress on programs planned in specific areas of concern. They do not attempt final portraits. But the progression of such steps is clear: the ongoing creation of a high quality college, using the most promising ideas to redefine the nature of liberal arts education.

REPORT #2

PROGRESS BY EXAMINATION

by

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November 1975

Amherst, Massachusetts 01002

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AT
HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE

"It is the intention of Hampshire examinations to encourage self-education, self-knowledge, and the ability to identify and correct one's own deficiencies, as well as to demonstrate and to share with the community one's knowledge and skills."

"The Examination Process"
(Hampshire College, 1975)

Introduction

By the end of the 1974 academic year, when Hampshire College's first four-year class received their B.A. degrees, the College's faculty numbered one hundred and twenty persons (86.0 full time equivalents) compared with forty-six persons (30.25 full time equivalents) when the College welcomed its first students in September 1970. The faculty had been drawn from diverse backgrounds and various excellent educational institutions throughout the United States to a new institution which asked that they commit themselves to extraordinarily heavy teaching and advising loads, ambiguous work situations, and ill-defined or cramped working spaces on the growing campus. Yet the new faculty rallied to this call because they sincerely believed in the non-traditional notions of higher education which Hampshire College supports. In particular, they expressed solid backing of a system designed to measure students' academic progress by examinations rather than by credit hours and grades. The faculty's enthusiastic support of progress by examination has been sustained throughout the College's short history and there is every indication that the system will continue to dominate Hampshire's academic structure.

Progress by Examination at Hampshire College

"Conceptual inquiry (i.e., *seeing the uses of mind as involving learning, using and revising propositions, theoretical constructs, concepts, and methodological principals in inquiry, not inquiry simply as gathering and classifying or categorizing data)* has become an intellectual necessity in general background or basic courses as well as in advanced courses of a specialized nature; it cuts across all fields and all levels."[1]

[1]Daniel Bell, *The Reforming of General Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

Briefly, progress by examination at Hampshire College is a system of six diagnostic and evaluative meetings between Hampshire students and faculty committees of students' own choosing to determine their path and rate toward the eventual satisfactory completion of academic work for a baccalaureate degree at Hampshire College. These six encounters comprise the three Divisions (academic levels through which a student must progress to fulfill the College's degree requirements).

The first four of these six encounters compose Division I which has as its objective the imparting of a certain amount of general education through distribution of learning across major fields in a liberal arts education. The four concentrate on the "modes of inquiry," the ways in which professionals in each of the fields under study go about asking questions, engaging in analysis, producing results, or acquiring further knowledge in their fields.[2] The four areas in which "examinations" must be undertaken are Social Science, Natural Science, Humanities and Arts, and Language and Communication. These four disciplinary groupings comprise the four major schools at Hampshire College, and all students are required as their initial task at Hampshire to design and successfully complete an examination in each of these Schools.

The fifth diagnostic-evaluative encounter which a student undertakes is a Division II exam. This encounter concentrates on reviewing and evaluating work undertaken by the student in the course of a self-defined, previously approved "concentration." The completion of this second level of a student's career at Hampshire can be compared to a student's fulfillment of formal academic requirements toward a major at a traditional institution, but with much wider and usually interdisciplinary scope.

The sixth and final encounter between a faculty member and a progressing student occurs at the Division III examination. At this level, a review is undertaken of the student's major independent research project which is the final formal requirement for obtaining a B.A. degree at Hampshire. Again, this meeting must be based on a project plan approved by the Examination Committee and the Division III standards Committee, a College-wide body.

Hampshire's system of progress by examination was formally proposed in the *The Making of a College* by Franklin Patterson and Charles Longsworth[3] and further described and defined in the early planning documents of the College in 1968 and 1969. The specific characteristics of this system of evaluation have undergone some changes in the years since the opening of the College. For example, in the first year of the College's operation, it was generally assumed that a Division I examination would not be entirely the creation of the student, but would rather consist of a combination of questions posed by both faculty and students which would then combine to form the subject matter of examination encounters. By the end of the first academic year, this system of combined faculty and

[2] See for further discussion. Franklin Patterson and Charles R. Longsworth, *The Making of a College* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1966). pp. 76-86.

[3] Ibid., pp. 92-98

student contributions to the construction of the examination had been replaced by the current procedure of students seeking faculty advice and consultation, and then composing an examination proposal, and the faculty generally agreeing to evaluate what the student proposes.

The requirement of submission of a proposal for examinations at the Division I level plays a significant part in limiting the Division I exams in scope and form that is appropriate for faculty review and evaluation. Each of the four Schools, with some variation in record keeping and timing, requires students to submit proposals for the work for which they wish to be examined.

These few examples of Division I exam proposals demonstrate the type of intellectual and academic skill that Hampshire's examination process seeks to promote:

> I propose to investigate the process by which the biologist Herman Muller's experiences with genetics led him to the belief that people should begin immediately to control their genetic make-up. I will begin with an examination of his most important experiment, the use of X-rays to induce mutations in the fruit flies Drosophila. I will then move to a discussion of the development of Muller's ideas on the genetic control of man.
>
> *Natural Science examination proposal*

> In light of the ideas of Edward Sapir, a renowned linguist and anthropologist, on culture, I will critically discuss the Westernizer-Slavophile debate. In the first half of the nineteenth century many Russian intellectuals became engaged in this debate concerning the condition of the Russian culture with respect to the culture of Western Europe. In discussing this topic, I will consider and apply Sapir's understanding of "genuine culture" and his concept of culture in contrast to civilization.
>
> *Language and Communication examination proposal*

> Over the last few years the federal government has been moving toward an assertion of a commitment to extend federal aid to parochial schools. Any such legislation toward this end would undoubtedly reach the Supreme Court for a judgment of constitutionality. The First Amendment's freedom of religion guarantee and previous Supreme Court decisions seem to make the government's position a tenuous one. My exam will consist of a research paper analyzing the constitutionality of that position.
>
> *Social Science examination proposal*

> I would like to discuss, in a critical essay, several ideas that have

been generated from a concentrated study of poetry and photography. First it will consider the process of making a poem and photograph, how it deals with and relates to experience — filtering it through language or the lens of a camera, how the form reflects and involves the artist, what it tells about his experiences and perceptions of life, and finally how his awareness can come to mean something for the reader/viewer in showing us something of the world we live in. In comparing poetry and photography, I would like to reflect my own experience of what goes into making a photograph, using those I've taken this spring in relation to the study of two poets–Robert Frost and Theodore Roethke, and relate this to the process of writing poetry as described by Frost and Roethke.

In writing about the content of poems and photographs, I will be considering the themes/concepts/ideas of landscape, space of interaction, limits and boundaries, illusion/reality, human relationships and emotions.

Through this task, I hope to consider the lives of two artists—what it was that they were concerned with, and become more aware of relationships between their experiences and their works, and thus be able to better formulate ideas about them.

Humanities and Arts examination proposal

The consequences of this relatively simple and entirely student-initiated process no longer seem remarkable to anyone on the Hampshire campus. However, one of the difficulties in reporting to outsiders about the Hampshire academic program is the way which this system of evaluation challenges such traditional norms of academic progress and reporting, such as record keeping, the accumulation of units, the qualifications and type of appointment of faculty, the kinds of learning experiences offered, and so forth — in short, the traditional narrowmindedness of how learning must be packaged.

Hampshire's system of evaluation does work. The students' movement from matriculation to graduation, with constantly increasing levels of skill, sophistication, and ability, is documented in the products of student research, in the observations of many faculty at Hampshire, and in the observations of faculty outside Hampshire College. In addition, the success of Hampshire College graduates in entering careers, graduate work, and professional training throughout the United States, having clearly mastered the various admission mazes constructed for entrance to such programs, is evidence that successful learning has taken place at Hampshire. It will take many years before strong conclusive evidence can be accumulated to either establish the equivalence of a Hampshire education to more traditional modes of learning, or, as we at Hampshire would prefer to believe, to

demonstrate the superiority of the Hampshire program to most others. However, there is no doubt that such evidence will slowly but surely be exposed.

In the meantime, our graduates have encouraged our belief in the value of a Hampshire education. Their reactions to their college experience in relation to current pursuits in jobs, self-employment, and further education have been extremely favorable. Many graduates comment positively and enthusiastically on the abilities to create, plan, organize, and push ideas and programs that a Hampshire student acquires. As one graduate summarized:

> When you get out of college people know that you are well-educated, but they want to see what you can do. A Hampshire student can show a substantial portfolio of self-designed work. At Hampshire you learn to think and present your work imaginatively, to be self-reliant. Those are useful, necessary traits.

Role of Advising in the System of Progress by Examination

> "The academic program at Hampshire avoids either a system of forced spoon feeding or a non-system in which the only direction given to studies is by . . . natural interest."[4]

It became clear in the earliest days of the life of the College that the key to the success of the progress by examination system lay in the extent and quality of advising provided by faculty for students at Hampshire. As a consequence, the advising system has received much attention during the development of the academic structure. *The Making of a College* did not call attention to the crucial nature of advising at Hampshire, and there were few if any guidelines for its specific shape and structure when the College admitted its first students. It was obvious that a system based upon considerable independence for students and autonomy for faculty required solid and consistent guidance concerning the ways in which the student's examination proposals might be undertaken. What was not fully realized was the training for Hampshire's traditionally educated faculty to advise students to understand and progress within this new academic structure.

Although the advising system is crucial to successful progress through the system, many students and faculty have not yet realized or committed themselves to its important role nor are they completely familiar with exactly what advising should be. It is clear now at Hampshire that advising is much more than simply telling a student how to master the registration process. Most faculty at Hampshire realize that what they knew as advising at their own graduate and undergraduate institutions bears faint resemblance to what they must undertake with their own students here at Hampshire. There are, of course, still those procedural and policy advising functions that must be performed. Much more importantly, however, are the tutorial and master-apprentice activities which now characterize advising,

[4]Ibid., p. 106.

particularly at the Division II and III levels. In effect, guidance must be provided by all faculty for their Division II and III students so that their students' curricula and academic programs are shaped to satisfy high academic standards, intellectual requirements, and student interests and career objectives.

Hampshire faculty share with Hampshire students in the ambiguity and autonomy of a new and highly individualistic academic program. Faculty, like students, often have no real sense of either their accomplishments or their shortcomings in the overall academic program. There is no way for them to compare their accomplishments or effectiveness with a faculty member at another institution. Even more importantly, faculty members sometimes feel that there are no consistent and reliable settings in which to compare and contrast their own performances with those of other faculty members in the College.

Hampshire faculty do feel that there is a need to create norms of behavior within this particular academic environment, and attempts are being made to meet this need. A series of workshops was organized to bring together small groups of faculty to share experiences, compare perceptions, and agree on what the norms of this society ought to be.

Several faculty, most of them at the senior level, meet regularly to discuss issues of concern to the Hampshire faculty and share their views. We hope that such gatherings can be made a regular and consistent part of faculty life at Hampshire. We are convinced that such meetings should lead to both the strengthening of the academic objectives of the College as well as the creation of interpersonal supports between and among faculty.

To further communicate the importance of the advising system, we have recently produced several publications describing the role of advising in general, advising for examinations in particular, and advising in the area of graduate relations. We have moved to support and expand considerably the system of advising centers originated by the School of Humanities and Arts (see next section). There are now seven such centers in operation at the College. We have utilized two groups of outside consultants to help us better identify our problems and define potential solutions. We have undertaken a series of evaluations which have resulted in both quantitative and qualitative results which give us considerable hope that our efforts are beginning to bear fruit. Finally, we are in the final stages of producing a film on the Division I examination process which will be suitable for orientation purposes with our own faculty and students, as well as for explanation of our procedures to non-Hampshire audiences. This report cannot elucidate fully the changing perceptions of advising and the kinds of new structures which they necessitate for their adequate accomplishment. We want to emphasize that the creative processes under way in advising (as described later) will supplement and further strengthen the need for good advising at the College. But first the various facets of Hampshire's advising system must be described.

The Student's Responsibilities

"It will be a major goal of the College to develop and sustain a

style of life which will make it habitual for students to work together in groups, and individually, without constant recourse to the faculty."[5]

Hampshire expects that each student will assume primary responsibility for the direction of his or her own education. Examinations serve as guiding or diagnostic mechanisms in which faculty members use their perspective on a field to show students how far they have progressed and to help them determine the directions they can take. These exams are not "tests" in the conventional sense. They differ in the following ways:

- The student plays a major role in designing his or her examinations. S/he works with a faculty adviser, instructors, and members of an evaluating team in devising examination questions or tasks, which are fitted to his/her particular courses and projects.
- Examinations are ungraded. "Pass" is the only mark of record for successful completion, and students who do not pass may be examined again at a later date.
- Examinations are not merely retrospective but prospective. They are tests of knowledge and skill acquired through past effort, and they are a test of competences useful for the student's further work at Hampshire and beyond.
- Examinations may take many forms: a lecture, essay, mock trial, conventional classroom exam, computer program, musical composition or performance, theatrical production, painting or photographic exhibition, laboratory research.

A student is encouraged to take an examination at any time during the academic year, having determined his or her readiness with his or her faculty adviser. A reading and examination period is set aside at the end of the Spring Term when students and faculty can give the examinations undivided attention.

Assignment to Advising Centers

In the School of Humanities and Arts, an Advising Center was created two years ago to relieve some of the advising and teaching load (especially at the Division I level) borne by individual faculty members, by centralizing some of the advising functions at a center run by students and coordinated by one or two faculty members. The centralization of Division I advising by moving it into the hands of students who were more familiar with how to fulfill academic requirements across the College inaugurated an important advising system

[5] Ibid., p. 48.

change. The other three Schools have followed the School of Humanities and Arts' example, and presently each has a centralized advising center. As the services provided by the advising centers increased, the concept was adopted by several special interest groups, and there are now Legal Studies, Educational Studies, Feminist Studies, and Third World advising centers, as well as a House-based Division I advising center, in addition to those under the auspices of the Schools.

The Advising Center is particularly important to the entering student who is often confused by Hampshire's non-traditional terminology and structures. The entering student somehow knows that the advising system is a vital feature of the academic program at Hampshire, and that the quality of faculty advising and faculty/student compatability has substantial bearing on a student's adaption to and progress through the College's academic program. Yet, until the advent of the Advising Center, new students were assigned rather randomly to an adviser. Should the match prove to be unsuitable, adviser changes were often deferred until the student had become acquainted with a faculty member with whom his/her interests coincided—often not until the student's second year.

However, in the fall of 1974, a new advising practice was initiated. According to the student's background, interests, and potential field of study indicated on the application for admission, he/she is assigned to one of the four Schools. Preliminary advising is done by the faculty coordinator and/or student staff of the Advising Center. During the first month of the College, the new student has an opportunity to learn about and interact with the School's faculty through the Advising Center, and at the end of the first month each student chooses an adviser. Most students are able by then to begin their academic work with an adviser with whom they feel a good working relationship will develop.

Advising assignments are by no means permanent, and as a student begins to develop substantial intellectual interests in a particular area, an adviser change may be in order. Again, the Advising Center can be helpful in informing a student of faculty members who have appropriate interests and expertise. The most common time for adviser changes is when the student begins to design a Division II examination proposal; at this point the student may prefer to designate the examination committee chairperson as academic adviser as well.

The Advising Centers provide information and advice about class schedules, examination proposals, independent study projects, Five-College courses, etc. They offer preliminary advice on suitable examination topics, resource persons, and proposal format; they often have on hand sample examination proposals and lists of titles of previous Division I examinations and carry examination forms.

Examination Proposals

> "... the questions you ask are as important as the answers you come up with."[6]

[6]Gwen Kerber and Robert von der Lippe, *The Portable Adviser* (Hampshire College, 1973).

Usually sometime during a student's second or third term at the College, he/she begins to design the first Division I examination. Once a student determines a topic for a Division I examination, he/she seeks a potential examination committee which must consist of at least two persons, at least one of whom is a faculty member. The student discusses the intended project with the prospective examiners and, with their comments in mind, composes a proposal. After the examination committee approves the proposal, the student will meet with examiners periodically to discuss his/her progress and possibly to redefine the project should the scope appear to be too broad or the resources available too limited. When the student believes the terms of the proposal have been met, he/she schedules an evaluative meeting with the examination committee. At this time the committee will review the examination product, evaluating the student's understanding of the mode of inquiry—determining the ways the student has gathered data, the means used to evaluate the findings, and the validity of the conclusions reached. Should the committee deem the student's performance a pass, the committee chairperson prepares an examination report summarizing the project and evaluating the student's performance. This report becomes part of the student's official file, and the pass is recorded on the transcript.

The same process is followed for Division II and III examinations, except that the composition of the examination committee changes and the depth of inquiry of the examination increases.

The Division II examination must illustrate that the student has achieved a grasp on both particular techniques and the broader concepts which lie behind them in the student's chosen area of inquiry. The Division II examination committee must include two faculty members. Once the student has proved to the Division II committee that he/she has mastered the means of access to a subject area and is capable of undertaking more intensified, highly independent work, he/she prepares a proposal for the final examination (Division III). The contract must be approved by a committee of three persons, at least two of whom are Hampshire faculty members; it must describe a project which will deal with a sophisticated and complex set of questions, concepts, skills, and abilities which will result in a substantial paper or performance which can be evaluated.

Ordinarily the completion of the six required examinations takes four years. However, examinations may be taken whenever a student feels ready and, thus, progress may be accelerated or decelerated according to a student's motivation and academic objectives. Many Hampshire students choose to take a leave of absence or study leave during their degree program. For students who spend their leave engaged in academic work, the number of terms necessary to complete degree requirements is normally not extended and, in some cases, may be shortened. Non-academic leaves, however, may increase the time necessary to complete the six examinations.

During Division I (normally the first two years of the academic program) students usually take courses within each of the four Schools, and it is usual for a student to draw upon the

subject area of a class for the Division I examination. Division II, as a rule, will take one year and will consist of specialized, often interdisciplinary, classes in the area of concentration, sometimes of field work in the area under study, and independent study leading to the examination. Division III comprises a year-long advanced independent project, an integrative seminar, and a community service requirement.

Recently, the School of Language and Communication has inaugurated an experiment in support of the view of interrelatedness of course work and examinations at the Division I level. Because many faculty have felt that they have been overburdened by having to usher through a Division I exam a student who had taken no Language and Communication courses and thus had no background or familiarity with the modes of inquiry in his/her proposed examination field, the School instituted in the fall of 1975 a substantial change in the academic structure. Most faculty members will divide their teaching year in a way to accommodate better the dual system of education at Hampshire. One term will be spent in course planning and classroom teaching at the Division I and II levels, and the emphasis will be on helping students learn modes of inquiry at the Division I level and on exploring more advanced thinking and scholarship at the Division II level so that *good* examinations will be designed. During the teaching term, faculty will continue to work with advisees, concentrators, and Division III students, but will not be expected to work on Division I exams outside the courses he/she is teaching. During the tutorial-examination term, the faculty member will be relieved of classroom teaching responsibilities and will devote significant time to working with Division I students who are designing examinations based upon the previous term's teaching as well as continue working with Division II and III students, advisees, independent study students, and so forth. By instituting this system, the School of Language and Communication is reaffirming its commitment to progress by examination through emphasizing better classroom environments and better examinations.

Transcripting

> "Each student's college experience is unique, and a transcript should permit a more humanistic presentation of students and their accomplishments than is possible through the traditional transcript."[7]

The Hampshire College transcript is a document unlike traditional college progress records. It does not record all courses taken, credit hours, and grades. Rather, the official transcript is a single sheet of paper with a list of the examinations that a student has passed and the dates on which they were passed. Appended to this document are supporting records which the student adds according to his/her own wishes or needs. It is usual to include a list of learning activities—classes, independent study projects, field work, and

[7] Aubrey Forrest, Richard L. Ferguson, and Nancy S. Cole, "The Narrative Transcript, An Overview," *Educational Review*, Winter, 1975

research activities. Students have the option of adding evaluation reports from course instructors and examination committees, letters of recommendation, progress summaries from the adviser, and course descriptions. Students also usually choose to have recorded on their transcripts the grades they receive in courses they take at Amherst, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts through the Five-College course interchange.

In essence, the transcript is tailor-made so that it best presents a student's background, abilities, and accomplishments to a graduate or professional school, potential career field, or transfer institution.

Because Hampshire encountered difficulties in presenting its transcripts to traditional institutions during its first years of existence, the College has taken the initiative in scheduling meetings of registrars and admissions officers from other well known alternative institutions of higher education to discuss the issue of narrative transcripts. These meetings have been productive in sharpening Hampshire's ability to guide students in the creation of transcripts which will present as clearly as possible the student's academic work to outside audiences.

Advising Supports

In order to help Hampshire students through and orient faculty to the progress by examination structure and its concommitant responsibilities, eight publications have been produced thus far. Perhaps the most generally useful of these is an advising notebook for faculty with helpful information for a Hampshire College adviser meeting with his or her new students for the registration of courses at the beginning of the semester. Indeed, there is nothing particularly unique about this first advising notebook.

The problem of registration at college is severe everywhere since the system of trying to provide students with a program of courses combining their wishes with the requirements of the institution is sharply different from what most students anticipate based upon their secondary school experience in the United States. Hampshire is not unique in this regard, except to the extent to which a knowledge of the academic offerings of our neighboring institutions with whom we have strong cooperative relationships is needed. The presence of Amherst, Smith, and Mount Holyoke Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts adds vastly to the academic strengths of the program offered at Hampshire College. It also necessitates a knowledge of a larger academic environment than usually has to be understood by most new faculty members. As a consequence, in addition to the usual information, the first advising notebook paid particular attention to Five-College advising. The advising notebook is revised annually in accord with changing policies and procedures, but it is not a policy document; rather, it is a guidebook for faculty to help them fully understand the Hampshire College academic program so that they may be better able to guide both new and old students through our own academic labyrinth.

Further supporting and supplementing the purpose of the advising notebook is a series of

small pamphlets, each entitled "The Portable Adviser." These have been created for two purposes: the orientation of new students to the Hampshire campus, and the orientation of students to the examination system in particular. Hampshire, in its short lifespan, has become somewhat infamous for its rhetoric. Although *The Making of a College* and the subsequent planning documents persuaded faculty at distant institutions to come here and teach, as well as students who were looking for alternatives in higher education to enroll, those publications could not adequately serve as day-to-day guides once faculty and students arrived on the Hampshire campus. Thus, we sought to create a series of documents which would be lighter in tone, yet would still convey the objectives of the various components of the academic program. Two issues of "The Portable Adviser" and one issue of "The Portable Adviser on Examinations" have been produced. There is evidence in evaluations undertaken that these documents are a successful way to disseminate information needed by students to find their way more easily through the Hampshire system of education.

A Graduate Relations handbook, intended to be a general reference for students preparing their files for graduate school admission, has also been produced. Coupled with this publication are two more highly specialized documents, "The Pre-Med Advising Booklet" and "The Pre-Law Adviser," which give specific advice to students who select those career fields. This set of graduate relations publications forms the core of what we hope will eventually become a series of graduate relations/options documents designed to provide a full range of information for Hampshire students on job placement and graduate and professional school as well as opportunities for field work and internship opportunities for Hampshire undergraduates.

Post-Graduate Placement

Because many graduate and professional school admissions officers were confused by the first few Hampshire transcripts submitted to them for evaluation, substantial efforts have been undertaken to familiarize such persons with Hampshire's academic program and means of evaluating student performance. A series of meetings with medical school and law school admissions persons have been held. Two meetings with medical school admissions deans and one with law school admissions deans have taken place. These meetings proved highly productive for educating outsiders on the process and validity of the progress by exam procedure. Hampshire students and faculty were present to answer questions and give positive demonstration of the extent to which highly qualified students were being trained at and graduated from the College. It has been particularly useful for us to be able to demonstrate to these educators in law and medicine how our unique structure produces highly qualified candidates for the most traditional programs, and the number of inquiries about Hampshire College transcripts has decreased significantly.

In no instance was either the advising system or the examining system threatened by these direct encounters with admissions officers. Rather our belief that the independence and

high motivation engendered by Hampshire's academic program produces stronger candidates for these professional fields was substantiated. In addition, there was considerable evidence that we had succeeded in convincing these admissions officers of the strength of our case, after a day on the Hampshire campus, they left enthusiastic and better educated about what we were trying to do.

Despite attempts to sharpen Hampshire's narrative transcripting practices, difficulties are still encountered with outside admission organizations such as the Law School Data Assembly Service and the American Medical College Admission Service. Interaction with such organizations illuminates the problems of fitting Hampshire's educational programs into the "square holes" of professional and graduate educational admission processes. We are improving at this, but our success has been at the expense of heavy use of faculty, student and staff time in the preparation of highly individual transcript documents.

We are identifying these problems in narrative transcript preparation, however, and beginning to respond to them. Our graduate relations office is making rapid strides in this direction. A "how to put together a transcript" information sheet is now available to students and the process of transcript preparation is becoming more streamlined. With a more standardized portfolio transcript form, though the content of each transcript remains highly individualized, graduate admissions offices are more readily accepting the Hampshire transcript. In addition, after the experience of two full graduating classes, a large number of graduate schools are familiar with Hampshire. With further experience, the Hampshire transcript and our relationship with graduate admissions will continue to improve.

Hampshire's Office of Management Systems has moved further on this problem with its work on a computerized academic history project. We are now able to produce rather extensive records of Hampshire's students' academic histories from computer stored information which will serve as the core for our narrative transcript system.

Despite difficulties with presentation of the Hampshire transcript and in convincing graduate institutions of the validity of a Hampshire education, our students have met with remarkable success in gaining admission to fine graduate and professional schools. Once admissions officers have familiarized themselves with the Hampshire education program and its expectations of students, they find that generally Hampshire students stand in good stead with their peers from high quality traditional institutions.

Thus far Hampshire has no well-developed job placement service. In the fall of 1974, however, the Graduate Relations/Options office was established. At present it makes little attempt to match students with jobs (we are fortunate to be able to cooperate with our Five-College colleagues in bringing positions to the attention of our students) but rather provides a more important service in light of the type of education students receive at Hampshire in the form of career counseling. Because Hampshire College frequently graduates students who do not generally fit into standard job categories, career counseling early on in a

student's undergraduate career is important so that he/she knows the potential applicability of particular areas of study. Since Hampshire has very few alumni so far, it is yet too early to reach many conclusions regarding the relationship of Hampshire education to various vocations or professions. It is interesting to note, however, that a fair number of our graduates are self-employed.

An Overview of the Strengths and Weaknesses

> "Integrate the affective principles of Hampshire as an environment with cognitive academic achievements and then investigate the richness of 'progress at Hampshire.'"[8]

Our initial objective for the first phase of evaluation of the system of progress by examination envisioned an effort to obtain information on examinations from students, from the faculty who participated in those examinations, and from outsiders. We feel fairly confident about the perspectives of students and faculty. Both students and faculty participated sufficiently to allow us to be quite specific about what the Hampshire evaluation system tries to do, how it is perceived by the students, the kinds of educational objectives which both students and faculty believe are elements of the system, and the general satisfaction of the faculty with regard to the effectiveness of this set of procedures. We have considerably less information about the views of outsiders. This can largely be attributed to the difficulty of recruiting, scheduling, and coordinating the visits and reactions of outsiders to Hampshire's exam process.

In the dozen cases in which we were able to use outside evaluators, reactions generally fell into two categories. Those individuals who simply read a Hampshire examination at the Division I, II, or III level after the fact, knowing neither the student involved nor the faculty who conducted the evaluation, looked on the exams as comparable to term papers or term projects at their own institutions. This is not surprising since in format this is typically the case. At Hampshire a written exam (at least at the Division I level) is usually similar in content, though inferior in style, to a comparable term project at the freshman or sophomore level at another institution.

The other group of outside evaluators were faculty from our neighboring institutions who had actually participated as committee members on a Hampshire exam. Here the reactions are quite different, reflecting the complex nature of the actual process to a much greater extent than those reviewers who had read only the final piece of work. This latter group of full participants in the examining process tended to be much more favorably disposed to the final report. They are, not surprisingly, more able to talk about the way in which the final report reflects or does not reflect the range of work which the student compiled to reach the point of proposing the examination.

[8] Charles B. Teske, Academic Dean, The Evergreen State College, "Report on Academic Progress by Examination," December, 1974.

The report of Dean Charles Teske of Evergreen State College about his visit to Hampshire in February 1974 identified aspects of the evaluation system that both intrigued and troubled him. We found most helpful his insistence that we pay attention to what we call our evaluation process. His critique of our use of the terms "progress" and "examination" is as sharp and helpful as his insistence that we avoid the term "comprehensive" unless we really mean to use it in its proper sense. Dean Teske is quite correct that Hampshire exams are much more evaluations or performances than examinations. They are mainly the creation of the student and focus upon the student's presentation of his or her work with every encouragement being given to emphasize the student's strengths rather than weaknesses. Indeed, Dean Teske's awareness and focused attention to this aspect of our process has been very encouraging. Quite surprisingly, on reflection, a student can bring to the faculty at Hampshire his or her best work, in practically whatever form that student chooses, and still be critically appraised. This appraisal is not a reflection of whether the student is liked or disliked, attractive or troublesome, active or inactive on the campus, or of any other social or institutional status, but rather is a judgment based on work accomplished. If the judging uncovers inadequacies, they are communicated to the student. If the judging produces praise, this is likewise communicated. If the summary judgment is that the work is inadequate, the student is not passed but encouraged to look further into the topic, to find new resources for solving the problem, and is given increased support for doing a stronger job the next time around. If the work is successful, the evaluation is written to reflect the strengths of that performance and the extent to which that work will provide a basis for subsequent achievement.

Our second consultant, Robert Neiman, from Robert Schaffer and Associates in Stamford, Connecticut, reflected upon the strengths of an evaluation system which was initiated by students and in which the faculty play the role of respondent and evaluator to the student's initiative, rather than the more usual boundary setting role of traditional examiners. It was Mr. Neiman who reinforced our notion that the examination or evaluation process contributed strongly to the College's overall objective of increasing the student's autonomy and independence as a learner, not just in the classroom, but in everyday life. Learning and its evaluation need not be limited to course units but can be generalized to much broader gatherings of intellectual or academic experience.

In one sense we are quite convinced that the process is successful. Every day faculty members see evidence that students are growing academically, seeking challenging and rewarding new tasks for their minds to grapple with. The faculty's sense of students growing from the time of entrance to graduation is certainly as real and apparent here as anywhere else in American higher education. More importantly, however, the sense of these same faculty that their students are free to pursue an even wider range of intellectual material and to combine it in newer and deeper ways than any of us had experienced in other academic settings is also characteristic of this institution. It is faith in Hampshire's experiments which guides faculty and students in shaping the institution and contributing

to its long-term success. On the other hand, whether this new and innovative process will continue and grow depends far more on the ability and success of our graduates than on any evaluative technique.

Epilogue

In the summer of 1973 Hampshire College received an eighteen-month grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to examine and strengthen the College's examination system. The Fund aimed to give maximum flexibility to the institution in support of its unusual system of academic measurement and assessment of students' progress. Much of the evaluative information in this report was gathered during the grant period. In addition, the project support provided the impetus for some of the changes in the advising system described in the report as well as such academic supports as the faculty workshops and advising publications which have had a substantial impact on faculty and student understanding of the various facets and nuances of the progress by examination system.

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