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ABSTRACT

Six selected nontraditional approaches to curriculum at the University of Minnesota, each leading to a baccalaureate degree, are described. The programs are designed to provide flexibility to students enrolled in the university or to extend a university education to people not otherwise served. Each involves individual student selection of work to be done for the degree. Learning methods range from enrolling in existing courses to designing self-directed, community-based experiences. The kinds of students served, guidelines within which they develop their degree programs, the learning activities, evaluation methods, advising procedures, and the implications for higher education in general are examined. The six approaches are: the Inter-College Program, the Bachelor of Elected Studies program, Option II (through which liberal arts students develop individualized curricula leading to a BA or BS at the Morris campus), Experimental College, the General College's Bachelor of Applied Studies and Bachelor of General Studies programs (combining vocational and general education), and University Without Walls. (LBH)

comment
CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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Undergraduate degree programs: *assessing the alternatives*

Concern over flexibility and innovation in undergraduate education, accentuated by the wave of expressed discontent with traditional programs beginning in the 1960's, has brought about a variety of curricular changes, ranging in scope from a single component of a single course to an entire degree program.

This special issue of Comment is concerned with innovation of the latter variety, focusing for emphasis upon six selected nontraditional approaches to curriculum at the University of Minnesota, each leading to a baccalaureate degree. The programs are designed to provide flexibility to students enrolled in the University or to extend a University education to people not otherwise served. Each involves individual student selection of work to be done for the degree. Learning methods range from enrolling in existing courses to designing self-directed, community-based experiences.

Collectively, the six programs selected for discussion here do not represent an overwhelming budgetary commitment, nor do they serve large numbers of students (their combined enrollment is just over 1,400). But their value, and that of other alternative programs, extends beyond the students enrolled to their exploration of questions facing the people and institutions involved in undergraduate education.

The kinds of students served by these programs, the guidelines within which they develop their degree programs, the learning activities, evaluation methods, and advising procedures used, and most importantly, the implications of these and other programs for higher education in general are the subject of this issue.

These six alternate routes to the baccalaureate degree are discussed:

- *The* ***Inter-College Program*** *of University College, which awards BA and BS degrees for student-designed, cross-college programs.*
- *The* ***Bachelor of Elected Studies*** *program, which offers College of Liberal Arts students an opportunity to develop programs primarily within the college, independent of traditional graduation requirements.*
- ***Option II*** *of the University of Minnesota, Morris, through which liberal arts students develop individualized curricula leading to the Morris BA or BS.*
- ***Experimental College,*** *in which students seeking the University College BA or BS take responsibility for their own education, through courses or self-directed study, in a community learning context.*
- *General College's* ***Bachelor of Applied Studies*** *and* ***Bachelor of General Studies*** *programs, offering a blend of vocational and general education.*
- ***University Without Walls,*** *which awards a University College BA or BS for work done on or off campus through courses or self-directed learning experiences.*

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UC's Inter-College Program:

cross-college coursework

The most seasoned of the degree programs designed to open curricular options to University undergraduates, the Inter-College Program of University College has for more than forty years provided an avenue by which a student may obtain a BA or BS degree through UC for an approved, self-designed program which combines coursework from two or more colleges. Staffed by two program coordinators, ICP has no faculty and offers no courses other than a UC independent study number; all work is done with faculty and through programs of other colleges of the University.

The Inter-College Program was for years the only program of, and therefore synonymous with, University College. It acquired a name of its own only in 1969 when it became necessary to differentiate ICP from the several experimental programs newly added to UC's administrative responsibilities. Establishment of UC, like that of General College, resulted from the high-level review of the University's mission and programs at the onset of the Depression. On the basis of this review, it was concluded that curricular innovation was needed to meet the changing needs of a student population more aware than previously of the world beyond the campus, more motivated by the need to earn a living, and thus more interested in flexible programs through which to pursue individual objectives. UC's founders in 1930 hoped not only that the program would provide alternatives for participating students but that its success would help loosen the thinking of other units with regard to course requirements and similar curricular matters.

To guard against ICP becoming or being perceived as a "soft" alternative, its administrators in early years set a policy of high entrance and graduation requirements (students must complete 190 credits instead of the more usual 180) and a small student body. As a result, the program developed an unintended reputation as an "honors college."

Except for the immediate post-World War II years, when UC proved particularly amenable to the needs of returning veterans, the number of students remained below 80 until 1969. Then, in response to sharply increased demand for flexible undergraduate programs, enrollment was allowed to grow over a two-year period to near its current limit of 300. Helping to keep the program small was a policy of avoiding publicity and with it, it was hoped, students with less-than-genuine reasons for seeking admittance. Even today, informational efforts are low-key and most applicants report they have learned of ICP by word of mouth or have been referred by University counselors.

Students are admitted to ICP for their junior and senior years, following at least one quarter in another college of the University. Their ages currently range from late teens upward through the 50's, with an average of 26. They tend to have quite definite ideas about their educational needs and how these translate into specific courses, ideas often based on experiences outside the college setting. Most often the student is seeking preparation for a particular career—perhaps a better version of a job he or she already holds or has held—for which there is no existing academic program. Others may wish to pursue intellectual curiosity in a number of fields (not necessarily related to one another), perhaps at the same time meeting requirements for graduate

school. For some, ICP offers a way to earn a degree after changing a major from one college to a second which will not accept the work from the first.

An applicant's proposed program, including a statement of goals together with a list of courses planned to be taken and those already completed, must be approved by a faculty advisor in each of the student's major areas of study before being submitted to the ICP admissions committee. The committee, applying more flexible criteria than in the program's early years, looks above all for a cross-college program well suited to the student's stated objectives. All programs involve "areas of concentration." These are generally defined as 30 or more credits of upper division work taken in each of at least two colleges (one of which is usually CLA). A growing number, however, are structured around a theme, such as environmental studies, and involve somewhat smaller chunks of work from as many as four or five different colleges. Programs must include 190 credits of work, 75 of them upper division. BA programs must fulfill foreign language requirements and generally include more liberal education courses than those for the more specialized BS degree.

While the Inter-College Program is built on

Three students' degree programs exemplify approaches to ICP

Donna, 45, seeks a career working with children involved with police or the courts. She has built a cross-college program focusing on the problems of such children, how they are affected by the family and other institutions, and how they are dealt with by police, courts, and other agencies. Her ICP program includes 40 credits in sociology; 16 each in child psychology and family social science, and supporting courses in criminal justice studies, social welfare, and psychology (lower division work in CLA included some psychology and sociology). Off campus, she is enrolled in a training program through Hennepin County Department of Court Services which includes volunteer service as a probation officer and doing intake screening at a juvenile center; she will receive independent study credit based on those experiences.

Tom, 29, became interested in ecology and biology, particularly as both relate to water, through his employment as an environmental aide at Northern States Power Company and his work in a two-year science-oriented General College program. He decided to complete a baccalaureate program through ICP, specializing in the various aspects of water systems and marine life and their importance to man. His program includes basic work in mathematics, chemistry, and biology as well as 5-20 upper division credits each in ecology, entomology, botany, and public health.

Gail, 21, recently completed the University's two-year program in dental hygiene and now seeks a baccalaureate degree to enable her to pursue career opportunities in the area of community dental hygiene programs. Her program involves a concentration of public health courses to help relate dental hygiene skills to knowledge of community health. This concentration is supported by sociology, speech, and other courses to help her better understand and deal with individuals and groups.

coursework, many students also undertake large-scale independent study projects or internships under the supervision of University faculty, usually to gain knowledge and experience in a career-related area for which no formal course is offered. A student also may receive up to 45 credits for approved work in a vocational-technical program, provided it is directly related to the student's degree program, under a recently approved experimental arrangement.

Students are granted considerable independence in carrying out their programs. Once accepted, they simply register for the approved courses, checking back with the ICP office for needed advice or to negotiate program changes. There is no minimum credit load, and students may be automatically reinstated after a period of inactivity (one woman recently returned to complete graduation requirements after a 25-year lapse).

Advising, under ICP's dual system, is done by the two program coordinators and by some 100 volunteer faculty members representing nearly all University departments. The faculty advisors are considered important to the program because they are in a position to be familiar with course content in their department as well as with the job market and what constitutes appropriate career preparation in their field. ICP works with designated department members rather than having the student select an advisor from the faculty at large, so the advisor usually is quite familiar with ICP procedures and requirements.

ICP staff members meet from time to time with faculty advisors in an effort to keep communication open between the program and the departments, on whose cooperation ICP is virtually dependent. Such dependence can be a source of tension. For example, when full enrollment or budgetary restrictions cause a department to close courses to all but departmental majors, ICP students may be left unable to carry out their programs.

Because students pursue individually-defined objectives, there usually is little similarity in their programs. From time to time, however, increased popularity of a given interest area or type of career prompts a number of students to develop somewhat related programs. This has led to a significant contribution of ICP to the broader education effort at the University: the spin-off of major programs to regular credit-granting units. For example, majors in agricultural journalism, environmental studies, and urban studies now offered by other University units all are founded on the experiences of students who pieced together their own programs in these areas in the "laboratory" provided by the Inter-College Program.

An examination of files for the years 1945 through 1971 showed that 71 percent of the students admitted to ICP during that time graduated, while 29 percent left the program without a degree. As previously noted, students may and often do interrupt their studies to go on "inactive" status for a variety of reasons. Others, however, have left the program permanently, some to transfer into other colleges of the University, some because they lost faith in the value of a college education or their particular program, some for personal reasons such as family responsibilities or financial difficulties.

A 1972 survey attempted to evaluate ICP's effectiveness in helping students fulfill their occupational and educational objectives. Questionnaires were sent to the 925 people who had graduated from ICP from 1945 through winter, 1972. Survey results have been interpreted by ICP staff to indicate that most students enter the program with clearly defined objectives which remain relatively stable, and that students seem to be given both enough freedom and enough information to be able to plan their programs well. Half the responding graduates felt their ICP programs were more valuable in obtaining their first jobs than a traditional degree program would have been; only five percent believed them less valuable. A similar response was given regarding value of students' ICP programs to the work they were currently doing. Students who entered graduate school, particularly in recent years, were even more positive about the value of their ICP programs. Three-fourths of those graduating since 1969, and 54 percent of those from 1945 through 1968, felt their programs were more valuable than a traditional degree in gaining admittance; fewer than one percent rated them less valuable.

Bachelor of Elected Studies:

CLA experiment

The Bachelor of Elected Studies is an experimental program which allows participating College of Liberal Arts students the freedom to develop their own degree programs, and seeks to learn what happens when they do so. Students may put together any program of liberal arts courses and up to 30 credits of coursework not normally applied to a liberal arts degree. They need not obtain approval of their programs, although they are encouraged to consult with staff advisors as well as faculty advisors from their areas of interest. Encouraged but not required to consider the Council on Liberal Education distribution policy, they may use BES to develop programs which are concentrated or widely distributed; most choose the latter.

The BES program, which accepted its first students in winter quarter, 1972, was designed by the CLA curriculum committee as one of several CLA programs aimed at increasing student responsibility for their own educational experience. Its objectives: "to provide opportunity for students to plan educational experiences on their own responsibility, under appropriate guidance; to let them (and the College) test their often-expressed belief that they are mature individuals who can determine themselves what is most profitable for them; and to expand further the College's program of experiment in educational patterns designed for individual as opposed to mass needs."

Admissions standards specify that entering students be CLA freshmen and sophomores in good standing, although exceptions have been made to admit upper division students as well. Five hundred students may be admitted annually. When applications exceed openings, as they did in the first round by some 350, selection is by lot. However, applications now have leveled off just above the number of openings, with the effect that virtually any lower division CLA student in good standing who wishes to get into the program may do so. Current enrollment stands at 802.

Many students who elect the program seem to fit into one of two groupings, say BES advisors. The first is students who see in BES their ideal of a liberal arts education, namely an opportunity to spread coursework over a variety of interest areas and to delve into new fields. The second is students who have developed very specific educational and/or career goals which they cannot achieve through existing programs or under traditional distribution requirements. The program is attractive to some older students, as well as to some who simply like the feeling of independence that comes with not having to seek approval of course selections.

Educational goals and expectations of entering BES students have been assessed through a questionnaire submitted along with their application. Ninety-one percent of the initial group agreed that "My main interest in BES is that it allows me complete freedom to choose my courses." Other attractions were listed as lack of distribution requirements, diversity, and the fact that the student does not have to declare a major. Based on their responses, BES students apparently place high value on creativity, self-understanding, and knowledge for its own sake; are concerned with human and societal problems, and feel that learning is neither maximized by such traditions as the classroom setting and distribution requirements nor adequately measured by the grading system.

To what extent they share these characteristics with other CLA students, however, is not yet known.

As a follow-up to the initial questionnaire, BES students have been surveyed about two quarters into the program to determine how they view their progress in terms of their goals and expectations, and how satisfied they are with various aspects of BES. Results are used along with other information gathered by the staff in developing and evaluating BES office services to students. The follow-up survey of the initial group of BES students revealed a positive attitude toward both the program and the staff, coupled with some constructive suggestions. Sixty-nine percent disagreed with the statement, "I am disappointed with what the BES program has done for me." Only two percent agreed; the rest were neutral. Sixty-seven percent said they had more positive feelings about college having been in BES. Many, however, wondered how the degree would be viewed by other schools or by employers, and expressed

BES: flexibility, student responsibility, personal attention cited

Art, 29, is a BES freshman recently released from prison after nine years. He values BES for the freedom and latitude it gives him after being "overly regulated for too long." At the same time, he says, BES staff has given him considerable assistance in becoming acclimated to the University and in learning to look upon his age, previous lifestyle, and educational background not as barriers but as useful experiences upon which to build. Currently exploring a number of interest areas, he is at the same time seeking information about opportunities in various employment fields. The flexibility of BES will allow him to develop as he goes along a program maximizing both interest and opportunity, and qualifying him, he says, for the employment that will prevent his return to prison.

Richard, 21, hopes to enter medical school; he has taken the required courses, has fulfilled CLA course distribution requirements, and, by the time he has completed his coursework, will also have met the requirements for a major in physiology. Nevertheless, he has chosen to remain in the BES program because "it represents my wide range of interests more accurately." Once concerned about the degree's acceptance by medical school personnel, he has been assured that it will be considered without bias. He briefly majored in biology, the advantages being abundance of "interesting seminars" and ability to preregister in biology courses. However, he felt the program was too narrow to meet his interests (he also wanted to take a number of non-science courses) and would be largely repeated in medical school. He says BES has allowed him to pursue short-and long-term initiatives, to be responsible for his own education, and to get personal attention from program advisors.

Ellen, 21, transferred to the University as a pre-nursing student, then became undecided about a major and applied to BES, where she has developed a broadly-based general education. To her previous coursework (which, incidentally, fulfills CLA distribution requirements) she added many introductory courses, as well as concentrations in the Spanish language and Chicano studies. She hopes to join VISTA and eventually go on to graduate school, but has avoided more specific career plans. She feels the BES program allows her to be concerned about personal growth, to learn about decision-making, and to take responsibility for her own education. Ellen values both the sense of freedom and the personal attention from advisors, and has involved herself with others in the program by participating in life-planning sessions offered by the staff, volunteering her time on the BES newsletter, and working on the BES clerical staff.

desire for more information on employment prospects or on graduate and professional school possibilities.

Analysis of the programs of the first group of BES students for their first two quarters in the program seems to indicate that they take social science and humanities courses more often than science and mathematics courses. The BES students most frequently took courses in sociology, history, English, psychology, political science, and humanities, in that order.

This orientation in course selection was reflected in responses to a section of the follow-up questionnaire in which 16 areas were listed and students were asked to indicate those in which they felt they had acquired some knowledge and skill (without specifying whether before or since entering BES.) Eighty-three percent felt they knew something about the behavior of individuals, 79 percent about the behavior of social groups, 70 percent about cultural differences. At the other end of the scale, only 26 percent indicated knowledge of mathematical relationships, 31 percent philosophic achievements, and 31 percent philosophic methods of inquiry.

This attempt to learn how students themselves estimate the dimensions of their education is a first step, perhaps, toward resolving what Miriam Kragness, who heads the program's staff of three part-time advisors, terms "a perceptual problem—the student's judgment of what he or she knows versus the college's judgment." She continued, "When students have taken a program of specified courses, we may assume they know certain things we think they need to know in a given area." Finding out what happens when they do not follow such a program, of course, is the point of the BES experiment. It provides, for example, an opportunity to study the educational effects of fulfilling or not fulfilling the various distribution requirements, since many students do plan programs without, say, foreign language or science courses. Although motivation is not a factor in admissions, Kragness believes optimistically that the majority of students seem to be using BES not merely to evade such requirements but to take specific courses they otherwise could not.

Kragness interprets findings of another BES study to indicate that simply going through the process of thinking about educational alternatives and choosing an option may have a beneficial effect on students' academic performance. Sampling the academic records of the initial group of 850 BES applicants (from which the 500 admitted students were chosen by lot), it was found that the grade point average of both those who *were* admitted to the program and those who *were not* tended to improve during the two quarters following their application (and acceptance or non-acceptance). Since the study covered only that two-quarter period, the stability of the rise is not currently known, but Kragness theorizes that the insight gained from thinking about educational goals and alternative ways of attaining them—a process much more likely to be undertaken when the student has access to such alternatives—enables or motivates the student to do better.

In addition to earning better grades following their admittance to the program than prior to entering it, BES students seem on the basis of preliminary evidence to take fewer courses on the pass-no record system and to have fewer incompletes and withdrawals than non-BES CLA students.

Questionnaires have also been given to the 138 students who have dropped out of BES (out of 1,539 admissions), asking their reasons for leaving, their immediate plans, and their opinions of the program. Sixty percent of those leaving BES have gone after another University degree, 37 percent in a college other than CLA. Forty-four percent have declared a major, while others are now in programs such as University College's Inter-College Program which do not require a major. Some former BES students have left school altogether for personal reasons such as finances or a move from the area. A few have left out of dissatisfaction with college itself. As Kragness explains, "BES doesn't change the course materials or structure. Students are still on a credit basis which means grading and the rest. If they don't like that, BES is not going to solve anything for them."

Staff members are continuing to measure attitudes and monitor scholastic performance of BES students. In addition, they plan to learn more during the coming year about comparable programs at other institutions, and are beginning a followup of the 104 students who have graduated to date to see how well the degree has served them and how it has been accepted by prospective schools or employers. (Advisors believe that most of the graduates are now in professional or graduate schools or employed.) Three professional schools have told BES advisors that the degree is an

(See BES, back page)

Morris' Option II:

liberal arts alternative

Liberal arts students at the University of Minnesota, Morris, have the opportunity to break away from a standard curriculum in favor of an individualized degree program under a plan known as Option II, which admitted its first students in fall, 1971.

The option grew out of an effort by the college's curriculum committee to develop a program embodying some of the flexibility being called for in various proposals by both faculty and students. Its aims, according to Academic Dean Gordon Bopp, are to provide more options to individual students who may have unique educational backgrounds or interests, to provide the college some information about its students through their use or non-use of the option, and to stimulate flexibility in the regular offerings of the college.

Students may enter Option II after one quarter as freshmen, or at any time during their college careers provided there remains enough time properly to develop and complete a program prior to graduation. Because of this flexible entrance arrangement, Bopp estimates that five to ten percent of the college's 1,500 liberal arts students are proceeding under Option II guidelines intending to enter the program, even though only six are now formally registered.

Those students who proceed, formally or informally, as Option II students tend to be independent learners, fairly good achievers, creative, and critical of the classroom approach, Bopp said; they often have already been exposed to a variety of non-traditional educational activities. The program allows students to build majors or areas of concentration which are not regularly offered as such by the college, and therefore is attractive to students with clearcut, perhaps somewhat unusual, career goals and educational objectives. Most students who formally register in Option II are oriented toward the study of human relations; their programs are in such areas as psychology, social welfare, human sexuality, human relations, and women's studies.

A student wishing to apply to Option II reports to the college's director of student counseling services, who assists in the selection of a faculty advisor from the student's major field or area of concentration for help in designing a program. If the program is to be interdisciplinary, an advisory committee is chosen which includes one faculty member from each discipline involved.

In consultation with the advisor or advisory committee, the student develops a comprehensive plan built around a major or area of concentration and designed to fulfill his or her curriculum objectives. The student then writes up a summary of the plan, which includes a statement of purposes and objectives as they relate to a liberal arts education, a title for the major or area of concentration, a list of courses and other experiences directly related to the major or area of concentration, and a list of other courses and experiences which fill out the program. The program, which must total 180 credits of work, 75 of them upper division, must be approved by the advisor or advisory committee and forwarded to the Option II programs committee. That committee, which consists of the academic dean, records supervisor, and a division chairperson, reviews programs giving particular attention to fulfillment of the all-University policy on liberal education.

Option II students tend to take a large percentage (up to one-fifth) of their coursework as directed study, and more than half of them take

Morris Option II students prepare for careers, graduate school

Robbie, 21, had completed a political science major in his junior year and was proceeding with a second major in economics, when he realized he was interested in taking far more business courses than would count toward the economics major. He briefly considered transferring to a college offering a more integrated business/economics program, but chose instead to seek an Option II major in business economics. He has taken not only all of the prescribed courses for an economics major, but has added a business specialization, taking all of the business courses offered at Morris and two evening courses as well; he feels his Option II major provides recognition of that work. To his regular major in political science and his Option II major in business economics he has added general education courses which fulfill the liberal education requirements. He has also been active in campus government, in his fraternity, and as an undergraduate teaching assistant. Upon graduation, he will seek a career in business management.

Jeff, 21, is pursuing an Option II major in child development, which he says "will embrace the development of the child from both psychological and sociological viewpoints, while placing it in an educational context." The program, which he has planned along with a traditional major in psychology as preparation for graduate work in child psychology, includes relevant courses in elementary education and sociology, as well as selected child-related psychology courses. His program includes field experiences under the assistance of a professional psychologist as well as supervised tutoring experience as part of his elementary education program.

Peggy, 20, seeks to develop the knowledge and skills required of a secondary school teacher of history and other social sciences. She plans two Option II majors, one in history and the other in the social sciences. Her history major will actually follow the traditional requirements, while her self-designed social sciences major will consist of at least 60 combined credits in anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, sociology, and history (credits in addition to those taken for the regular major). Her program includes interdisciplinary directed study, enabling her to compare the problems and methodologies of the different social sciences. She will also fulfill the secondary education requirements of the college as well as liberal education requirements.

part in off-campus learning experiences and internships. Most students are pursuing interdisciplinary programs and therefore register for an interdisciplinary directed study sequence offered by the college as a vehicle for earning credit for off-campus experiences. Other alternatives are to register under the University College independent study number or to do discipline-oriented directed study. In each case the student reports to a faculty advisor or project consultant who has final responsibility for evaluation of the student's work; the student may of course be directly supervised on the project by other faculty or community experts, who also contribute to the evaluation.

Experience with Option II will help Morris faculty and administrators measure and evaluate the attractiveness of flexible programs to their students and potential students. "We are asking whether less structured programs can serve the needs of society, whether we really are offering an alternative with a long-range usefulness or merely demonstrating our willingness to respond to a small group who ask for a way to learn in their own personal style," Bopp said. "The proof rests with whether a significant number of students go into the program and emerge as valuable members of society." To discover that, the college will conduct followup studies of program graduates once there is a sufficient number; to date, 17 students have graduated from Option II.

Although there has not been sufficient experience with Option II to draw general conclusions, Bopp said it is obvious that students are not flocking to the program in the numbers anticipated. He suggested this may be due to the growing concern of undergraduates with preparation for a career. Programs such as Option II, with a primary emphasis on educational values, may be viewed by many students as "risky," in that students may suspect they will have a harder time getting a job with such a degree. Those students who do enroll, he said, would appear to be more interested in educational values than occupational considerations, and thus less concerned about any such "risk."

Bopp said the small number of students formally registered is in an administrative sense a blessing. Faculty are being asked to devote time over and above their regular duties to work individually with students in planning programs and carrying out projects, the programs committee must review and evaluate proposed student programs, credit must be assessed for off-campus experiences, and so on; all are time-consuming.

Morris faculty members tend to view the program with mixed feelings, according to Bopp, with social science faculty members most generous in their praise, "hard" science faculty most resistant, and humanities faculty taking a position somewhere between. The program was approved by an overwhelming 85 percent vote, and faculty have been very cooperative in working on a one-to-one basis with students and helping to assure that Option II can prove to be a solid learning experience for those involved.

The greatest value of the Option II program may prove to be in inducing a sense of introspection and inquiry among faculty and administrators, prompting them to evaluate and improve the college's regular offerings, Bopp said. They may well reason that if students are seeking nontraditional options, there must be a cause, and there must be changes that can be made, he said, adding that what is called a "traditional" course can of course be made a very exciting learning experience. And if options are available to students, he said, faculty members may see it as being in their best interests to make their own courses more exciting and thus more attractive.

Experimental College:

a learning environment

Established by the University College in 1970, Experimental College is an effort to provide an environment in which students can learn to develop their own educational objectives and to define and direct their own learning experiences, and to do so on the basis of community decision-making in which every student and staff member has an equal voice.

While a number of factors contributed to the establishment of Experimental College, much of the impetus sprang from the same dissatisfaction with national directions and educational processes that was manifested in the campus strikes following the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in spring of 1970. A proposal developed at that time by a group of students and faculty received University approval as a one-year pilot. Officially termed Experiment Number One, it was placed administratively under University College. (The University Senate had just extended UC's mandate, making that unit the umbrella for experimental programs of a collegiate magnitude.)

Faced with the task of implementing the proposal beginning in fall quarter, 1970, the 96 original students and staff soon found they had at least as many different interpretations of EC's goals and objectives. The early stages of operation were characterized by considerable turmoil, out of which guiding principles gradually emerged, and structures, however flexible, took shape. EC was approved for a second pilot year and then extended on an experimental basis through spring, 1980, with authority to grant BA and BS degrees through UC. As with other University experimental programs, it has no tenured faculty and no permanence. It is dependent on the resources of an established unit, and at the end of its designated term, it must win standing as a regular University program, find sponsorship to continue in an altered format, or cease to exist.

Much of the development of EC has been an attempt to identify and counter what participants perceive as the failures of traditional education, specifically at the University, and of the larger society. Activities and decisions have been predicated on a set of values among which are: freedom, innovation, and non-competitiveness in the learning process; the student's responsibility for his or her own education and the evaluation of that education; mutual support; flexibility; and integration of the educational experience into other life experiences.

Students drawn to EC tend to be of average or above average ability but "turned off" by what they see as the bureaucracy, rigidity, and impersonality of traditional education. Most are in their early 20's and have some college experience, although as EC becomes more established it attracts more first-time college students. Relatively few have specifically-defined educational objectives on entering EC; by far the larger number use the college to explore interests and define goals as they progress. When asked to outline academic interests for the admissions committee, most list several; among the most popular are the arts, psychology, women's studies, and education.

The admissions committee seeks students it believes will thrive in the EC atmosphere by stressing certain criteria: a commitment to experimental education and serious consideration of the educational process; knowledge of the academic requirements, governance processes, and

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Six U of M alternative undergra

Program	Began	Description	Faculty/Advising
Inter-College Program *(University College)*	Fall, 1930	Students design their own bachelor's degree programs, combining coursework from offerings of two or more colleges of the University without being bound by traditional requirements.	Staff advising by two ICP program coordinators. Faculty advising by designated member of each University department.
Bachelor of Elected Studies *(College of Liberal Arts)*	Winter, 1972	CLA students create degree programs independent of traditional course requirements. BES students may take any liberal arts course and up to 30 credits of non-liberal arts work.	Three part-time staff advisors. Faculty members serve as advisors by informal arrangement.
Option II *(University of Minnesota, Morris)*	Fall, 1971	Morris liberal arts students develop individualized curricula, taking courses from various departments and often doing independent learning projects on- or off-campus.	Student selects faculty advisor(s) in chosen field(s) of study. Off-campus experts may supervise projects.
Experimental College *(University College)*	Fall, 1970	Students develop and pursue educational objectives in a community learning environment. Learning activities may include EC or regular U courses, special projects, community or work experience, participation in EC governance.	Continuing and "short-term" staff hired from community and regular U faculty to teach, advise, and consult on projects.
Bachelor of Applied Studies, General Studies *(General College)*	Fall, 1970	Students combine vocational and general education in self-designed programs which involve courses taken at GC and at vocational-technical and other institutions, plus independent projects and supervised work experience.	Regular GC faculty and advisors. Community experts and faculty members work together to monitor off-campus projects.
University Without Walls *(University College)*	Summer, 1971	Students discouraged from attending college by time, distance, and other barriers are able to earn credit for work done off-campus through self-directed learning projects and community or work experience.	Seven staff "facilitators." Regular U faculty and community experts consult on individual projects.

ate degree programs at a glance

rance quirements	Degree Requirements	Degrees Awarded	Enrolled Winter, '74	Graduates to Jan., '74	For information:
er division standing, prior quarter at U. gram must be approved.	190 credits (75 upper div.); area(s) of concentration.	BA, BS	174[a]	1,495[d]	University College office; 105 Walter Library (Mpls); (612) 373-4638
freshman or sophomore od standing (some ors admitted). No gram approval required.	180 credits (75 upper div.).	BES	802	104	Miriam Kragness, advisor; BES office; 49 Johnston Hall (Mpls); (612) 376-7467
itted any time after quarter at U, if time ains to complete program. gram must be approved.	180 credits (75 upper div.); major or area of concentration; liberal education requirements.	BA, BS	6[b]	17	Gordon Bopp, academic dean; University of Minnesota, Morris; (612) 589-3215
dependent on scholastic ding. Commitment to erimental education, s of EC sought.	Two years' residence; development of responsibility for own education, as defined by EC graduation criteria and judged by graduation committee.	BA, BS	75	22	Elaine Joldersma, administrator; Experimental College office; 1507 University Ave. S.E. (Mpls); (612) 373-9782
ociate in Arts degree quivalent. Outline rogram is submitted with lication, along with ence of ability.	180 credits or equivalent; liberal education distribution requirements; area of concentration; graduation project.	BAS, BGS	153[c]	79	Coordinator of advising for baccalaureate programs; 10 Nicholson Hall (Mpls); (612) 373-4400
dependent on scholastic ding. Sample project posal submitted as ence of ability to ct own learning activities.	Mastery of learning skills as defined in graduation requirements and judged by graduation committee.	BA, BS	154	24	UWW office; 331 Nolte Center (Mpls); (612) 373-3919

[a]plus 50 following programs through Extension Division.
[b]plus 100-150 following program informally, with plans to enroll.
[c]plus 50 following programs through Extension Division.
[d]1,235 documented 1945-73; 260 estimated 1930-44.

Dance, art, creative writing figure in EC students' activities

Sue, 21, is beginning her second year at EC, where she concentrates on dance. Last year she took EC classes in modern dance as well as drawing; this year she continues to study dance and is taking private art lessons outside EC. She has also danced with an area company, taken part in an intnsive residency held at the University by a visiting company, taken part in two performances (one of which she helped organize), and shown some of her art work. Her participation in building EC structures included helping initiate various projects last year, including a dance workshop, a dance performance, and a course on women in the visual arts. This year she serves on the staff hiring committee and will teach a beginning dance class. Planning to graduate in spring, 1975, she intends before then to choreograph several pieces, possibly involving EC students in developing sets, lighting, and music, and to again show her art work. Her graduation project is likely to include a mixture of art and dance. A CLA student for one quarter, she had dropped out of school for a short time before entering EC. She says the group support and feedback available at EC have been especially helpful to her as a dancer and that the dance group, one of the strongest groups at EC, has created an exciting environment in which to work.

Kathee, 24, has been with EC since the beginning, transferring from CLA where she was a freshman uneasy with the traditional structures. She describes her EC education as beginning with a process of exploration, gradually focusing to selected general and then specific areas. She began with a year of courses in many fields, then spent two years in art (mostly drawing) courses, and this year has formalized into an academic program her ongoing interests in women's studies and community work as it relates to women. Most of her work has been done through EC structures, particularly student-initiated classes and continuing involvement in governance, although she has "dropped in" on some CLA classes and is currently working with an off-campus women's group to organize and conduct a women's school. She would like to pursue her women's studies/community organizing interests in graduate school, if she can find one flexible enough to allow such a program. Kathee says EC has taught her above all to be an active participant in the educational process rather than a passive recipient, a lesson she says has carried over into other aspects of her life.

Jim, 24, is building an EC program around his interest in creative writing. He joined EC in spring, 1972, after dropping in and out of the University several times over the previous four years and having tried out other University alternative programs. His first two quarters in EC were spent taking CLA courses dealing with poetry and creative writing. He gradually began to spend more time at EC, and with the development of a writer's workshop there, began devoting most of his energy to that group, which has continued with and without resource persons and in a variety of formats. He also has taken some other EC classes and is now involved in a Jung study group and a men's discussion group, each of which is being developed cooperatively by its participants. Thinking of graduating in fall, 1974, he says he has a lot more work to do first; his idea for a graduation project is to develop a portfolio of work and visit poets around the country to discuss the work with them. He participated last year on the EC budget committee and this year, as a student intern, has duties with the academic committee which is charged with interpreting and implementing various provisions of the college's newly revised constitution.

resources available at EC; awareness of other alternatives at the University and elsewhere; and an understanding of and willingness to undertake the kind of participation expected of EC students in academic, college community, and governance activities.

With a winter quarter enrollment of 75 students, EC is staffed by two administrators and six full- or half-time faculty members, all of whom are drawn from the community although in the past some have been regular University faculty members. EC also hires "short-term" staff to teach specific classes or consult with students on particular projects. Four regular University faculty members are currently serving in that capacity.

Students at EC may select courses offered by EC or other units of the University (usually CLA), initiate EC courses, or take part in group or individual projects. Twenty-five courses were offered by EC during 1972-73, of which 15 were initiated and taught by faculty, and 10 initiated by students and taught by students, faculty, or outside resource people. Among the most popular of the year's courses were humanistic psychology, dance, life drawing, women's studies, and images of the self. Courses offered this year include those on China, Jung, women's studies, communities in America, psychology of the streets, video, photography, voice, and dance.

EC is host to a number of "facilitated learning projects," which have developed out of the work of individuals, and though which students or staff "facilitate" the learning of other students. Current and past projects include: research and production of a radio program presenting news of interest to women; a writers' seminar; production of a documentary film about EC; genetics research; compilation of information about alternative education; and an elementary education task force. Alive and Trucking Theater Company, which has gained some local recognition particularly for its politically-oriented productions, also is an outgrowth of EC student efforts.

Students also work on projects of their own design, which may involve reading, research, writing, artistic achievement, or other activities. Involvement in the work of community agencies or in the governance of EC itself forms a substantial part of the learning process for many.

Participation in various learning activities was measured during spring quarter, 1973. Of the 77 students then registered, 40 were taking an average of 2.7 EC courses. At the same time, 19 students were enrolled in one or more courses in 26 different departments of the University.

According to a review of 56 student files in spring, 1973, three-forths of the students studied had taken EC or regular University courses at some time during their EC career, and a third of those had made coursework their sole form of learning experience. One-fourth of the students whose files were reviewed had taken neither EC nor University courses, focusing instead on individual or group learning projects. As for where their work was done, most students had participated in at least some EC-sponsored classes or projects, but 13 percent did their work entirely outside the college. The latter either had taken courses from various University departments or had worked entirely on self-directed projects.

Each student is expected to outline planned learning activities at the beginning of each quarter and to specify how these activities will be evaluated. Given EC's emphasis on self-development in the learning process, most evaluation is less concerned with content than with the student's ability to select and carry out projects, and through them to fulfill broader educational objectives. This sort of evaluation is usually accomplished in the context of the college seminar, a unit made up of approximately six or eight students and staff, often organized around a particular interest area, which meets weekly and in which participation is compulsory. Evaluation of the content of an experience may be sought from EC or other University faculty, or other persons considered expert in a particular field.

The college seminar plays a central role in EC. Created as a forum for evaluation and sharing of learning experiences, it has also become the basic political unit of the college, from which representatives are elected to report decisions to and from the college assembly. EC is governed by an elected student-staff assembly, after experimenting with other forms including government by consensus; specific tasks are carried out by a number of committees. Participation in governance is required of each student on the premise that it helps get the necessary work done and also brings people (particularly new students) together and teaches them to think critically, set goals, and follow through on decisions.

In keeping with EC's focus on the student's responsibility for his or her own education, it is the student who determines when to initiate the

graduation process, which takes a minimum of six months to complete. The student undertakes an approved graduation project involving at least two quarters of work, and develops a graduation contract outlining past work in evidence of fulfillment of graduation criteria, to be evaluated by a committee consisting of students, staff, regular University faculty, and community experts.

Many students feel the EC graduation requirements to be much more rigorous than those in other colleges: students, who in order to graduate must spend at least two years in residence at EC, are expected to develop a program involving breadth of study and an attempt to integrate the various fields involved, investigate in depth at least one area through study and praxis, be able to reason and discourse critically and analytically, be original or creative in their work, have a cross-cultural experience, fulfill in spirit the CLE distribution requirements, share their work with other members of EC, teach someone something, participate in evaluation of their own and others' work, participate in the evolution of EC structures, and make their studies accountable to the social conditions within which they live.

If graduation requirements are found to be demanding, even more difficult for many students is the very first task they face on entering EC: that of assuming responsibility for their own education. Without either the structured learning experiences or the external motivators to which they have become accustomed, students may experience trying times while learning to discover and define their own goals and look inward for motivation. The internal struggle may result in a period of apparent inactivity; once resolved, it often produces a strongly self-directed learner.

Helping students through this process, while taking care not to impose structure or direction upon them, is considered an important function of EC. A number of factors, some of them structures developed specifically for the purpose, may help, such as advising on a one-to-one basis with a staff member, participation in the college seminar and in governance tasks, and interaction with students and staff engaged in a variety of learning activities.

Students may choose to be inactive for a quarter or two without penalty and many do, for reasons which range from mulling over goals to exploring individual interests to earning needed money. Those who fail to carry out learning activities for more than two consecutive quarters may be dropped from the program, to be readmitted only by again going through the admissions process.

Of the 252 students who have been admitted to EC over the years, 22 have graduated and 75 are currently enrolled, leaving 155 who have left the program and have not returned (although some still could). According to staff members, many of the latter dropped out because they needed more structure in their learning experiences, or, particularly in early days of the college, were unhappy with the directions in which it was evolving. Others have left because they felt they were not ready for college or for unrelated personal reasons. Another group, perhaps the most significant, is made up of students who entered EC full of indecision—often as a last, desperate educational option—and through the EC experience discovered educational objectives which they left to pursue through other means, whether traditional or nontraditional.

Of the 22 students who have graduated to date, five have applied and been accepted for advanced educational programs: two to law school, one to graduate school in psychology, and two for training and certification in the Montessori method of preschool education. A followup study is underway to discover where EC graduates are now and how the EC experience has affected later learning.

Students have varied greatly in their uses of EC, as evidenced by the wide scope of interests and learning activities pursued. This diversity, which once occasioned discord and organizational upheaval over the directions in which EC ought to go, is more readily accommodated now, in part because of some turnover in people and in part because the process of discussion and debate has resulted in clearer mutual understanding of expectations.

Today, EC participants appear to agree that the college is a place to take responsibility for one's own education, to learn about both education and decision-making by participating in all of the educational processes, and to come to understand education as a lifelong learning experience. Those who have participated in EC's development describe it in terms of "human energy," "dedication," and "commitment." Such factors as cooperation and mutual support are in their minds inseparable from procedural and structural developments. Because of this, and because of the early lack of

(See EC, back page)

General College Baccalaureate Programs:

an educational blend

For more than forty years, General College has provided a blend of occupational and general education through flexible, student-designed two-year programs. This same educational blend is now being extended to the baccalaureate level through the college's newly established Bachelor of Applied Studies and Bachelor of General Studies programs. Founded during the Depression as part of the University's effort to become more responsive to needs of students and society, GC has always functioned as an "open door" unit, extending the services of the University to students whose academic background would not have qualified them for admission under traditional requirements.

The baccalaureate programs grew out of a suggestion made at the GC faculty retreat in 1969 that the college explore ways in which graduates of two-year institutions (General College, community and junior colleges, and vocational-technical institutes) might continue their education. Studies have shown that large percentages are interested in doing so, but for most of them, appropriate programs beyond the two-year level have not been available. Concluding that development of such a program would be in keeping with the GC mission, and drawing upon their long experience with the kind of students it would serve, GC faculty and staff instituted a pilot program in 1970, obtained approval to establish the program on a regular basis the next year, and awarded the first degrees in June, 1972.

The 200 students enrolled in BAS and BGS study through regular or extension programs are graduates of Associate in Arts programs at General College or junior colleges, or have completed work at accredited public or private vocational-technical institutions; those who have not received the AA or its equivalent are admitted first to an AA course of study. Nearly all are from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, many are members of racial minorities, some are older students, a number are attending college under some type of enabling program, most work. While some are interested in an education for its own sake, most are seeking increased capability in their career field.

A student applying to GC's baccalaureate programs presents to the admissions committee (on which students outnumber faculty) a composition about his or her objectives and how the program can help fulfill them, as well as a partial list of courses; a formal program is required only after two quarters of study. The committee may ask for further information or even a personal interview as it attempts to ascertain that the program can fulfill the student's needs and do so better than other available alternatives, and that the program proposed by the student is one which both GC and the student have the demonstrated capacity to fulfill. Previous academic achievement is not a major consideration in determining student ability to do the kind of work expected. F. Faith Finnberg, coordinator of baccalaureate programs for GC, explained that GC faculty "are not inclined to penalize a student for freshman follies; a lot of us committed them ourselves."

Each student's program is an individual one which may attempt to integrate technical and vocational training with related general education, combine work from various types of institutions, and/or blend classroom learning with practical experience. General education courses are taken at GC or other units of the University, vocational and

technical courses at accredited public and private vocational-technical institutions.

Both degrees require 180 credits apportioned in keeping with their distinct purposes: the Bachelor of Applied Studies accepts more vocational work, with most of the general education credits earned in a related area of concentration and only minimum distribution requirements; the Bachelor of General Studies calls for considerable work in each of four specified areas of distribution and correspondingly less in an area of concentration. The latter also allows, but does not require, some technical-vocational studies.

The BAS or BGS student may develop a program largely "from scratch" or may choose to build upon an articulated vocational sequence for which arrangements have been worked out with cooperating institutions. The sequence is individualized and developed into a baccalaureate program with the addition of selected general education courses to meet the student's objectives. The

GC baccalaureate students choose applied or general studies

Louise, 37, has had training as well as work experience as a nurse and anesthesiologist. Her background was evaluated by GC for credit, part of which was applied to the AA degree and part toward the Bachelor of Applied Studies. An American Indian, Louise is pursuing a program preparing her to become a community health worker, possibly in the Indian community. Courses in community health, communication, psychology, and sociology make up part of her concentration area; coupled with these is a demonstration of proficiency consisting of directed experience gained through community health clinics and centers. On completing her degree program, she hopes to be able to plan, establish, and operate community health facilities.

Jim, 25, was recently appointed as community service officer in the public safety department of a suburban community. He soon found that his two years of college in a general program had not provided the ability to deal with people and their problems demanded by his new position. Jim has designed a BGS program strong in communication, psychology, and sociology. He will be applying on the job principles learned in his coursework, and this application will be part of his demonstration of proficiency. He expects that the additional academic background and the degree will enhance his opportunity for advancement in his field.

Robert, 24, describes himself as a generalist. His BGS program is built around an area of concentration he titles "Development of Personal Resources," to be accomplished through problem-solving, research, and judgment in a series of individual learning experiences. Interested in various aspects of expression and communication, he has planned a program including work in art, photography, filmmaking, symbolic systems, and writing. As projects undertaken for credit, he has produced a 30-minute super-8 sound film on outdoor play areas, which will be given instructional use in GC, served a volunteer internship at an advertising agency, gained experience in film scripting and technical scripting, and is producing a 16 mm. sound film on the University's late president William Watts Folwell. He has contributed material to a GC writers' group publication and serves as an undergraduate teaching assistant in a writing laboratory. Robert has no specific vocational goal, but stated on his BGS application his philosophy that "as man develops and perfects machines, the machines will be the specialists and man will be the generalist."

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college also helps individual students work out special arrangements to take courses at other institutions.

Students are allowed considerable flexibility in meeting requirements, and learning takes place in a variety of formats including the classroom as well as individual study, field work, and supervised employment or internships. Students are given credit not only for previous formal education but also for appropriate documented learning which has taken place in employment or other settings. Often, the student's previous education has supplied most if not all of the technical training required, and the student enrolls in the baccalaureate program to supplement vocational with general education.

In addition to satisfactorily completing a minimum number of courses, the student must undertake a major project, or demonstration of proficiency, aimed at pulling together the various aspects of the student's education and producing some tangible evidence of competence. The project, supervised by someone from the college or community knowledgeable in the student's area of study, is evaluated by that person and the student's faculty advisor.

Because the project exemplifies the student's entire program, it also serves as a vehicle for sharing that program with other members of the college. In what Finnberg calls a "gift to the college," each graduating student goes before a meeting open to all students, staff, and faculty to talk about the project and its outcome, often using slides, videotape, other media, or samples of actual work in the presentation. Discussion ranges beyond the project itself to the student's overall experiences at General College and in what ways they have been satisfying or disappointing.

Each student is advised throughout the program by a volunteer GC faculty member who is competent to give assistance in the student's chosen area of study and who agrees to work with that student. The advisor's functions go beyond the traditional role of faculty advisor to include monitoring the student's quarter-to-quarter progress, maintaining records, coordinating independent study involving other faculty members, conferring with those who supervise business or community internships, and participating in evaluation of the graduation project.

With the program still quite new (nearly half the 400 students admitted to date were admitted in the past year), faculty members praise the work being done by students, saying they appear to be highly motivated in pursuit of their self-defined goals. They point to the rising enrollment as evidence of the need for and appeal of such a program, and to the apparent success of graduates to date in finding employment in the career of their choice (the college tries to keep informed about the job market in various fields and to advise incoming students accordingly).

A number of formal efforts are being made to gather more specific information on how well the BAS and BGS programs serve students. For example, a major study currently is underway of the 70 students who have graduated from the program as of the end of summer quarter, 1973. The study will attempt to learn how the student feels curriculum and advising might be modified to better serve their needs, how the graduate's actual occupation agrees with career plans declared on entering the program and on nearing graduation, and whether the student feels the required graduation project was actually valuable as part of the overall educational process. The latter question is being asked as part of a larger effort on the part of faculty to assess the graduation project's value to the student.

Once the survey of graduates is completed, a study will be conducted of the 120 persons admitted to the BAS and BGS programs who are not currently enrolled (and are not graduates). No breakdown has yet been done on how many of them may have been enrolled at one time, where they are now, or why they are not pursuing or completing their planned programs. All of these questions will be included in the study.

General College faculty believe their baccalaureate programs could have a statewide eduoational impact similar to that of their two-year sequences. GC students, whether in two- or four-year programs, frequently are preparing themselves for new types of paraprofessional positions (such as students in the legal assistant or human services generalist sequences), specialized business careers (several students, for example, are combining business management with other training in preparation for establishing particular kinds of businesses), or work in newly emerging interest areas (such as students who include in their programs the interdisciplinary package in ecology).

Graduates of programs such as these are changing the face of many career fields as they move into jobs which previously did not exist. **(See GC, back page)**

University Without Walls:

overcoming barriers

An outgrowth of the 1960s' concern with reaching new student populations, University Without Walls serves the mature, self-directed student who has specific educational goals but who is prevented by geographic, scheduling, or other barriers from pursuing a traditional, campus-based education. To overcome these barriers, and to enable a student to receive academic recognition for what is learned in a non-college setting, UWW offers a program centered upon individually designed, off-campus learning activities such as supervised employment or community service experience, field work, or a program of reading. Communication between students and staff, although it may include occasional visits, most often is accomplished by such means as letters, telephone, and video or audio tape.

The University of Minnesota's UWW program is part of a consortium of 30 units, each based to some degree on the model developed by the sponsoring Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, headquartered at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. The Minnesota UWW pilot project was funded in 1971-72 by the Ford Foundation and U.S. Office of Education; at the end of that year the project was approved for a six-year experimental term under University College, through which UWW students may earn either a BA or BS degree.

A student admitted to UWW must have well-defined educational goals which cannot be achieved through another program. Thus UWW is for many a college of last resort, a way to pursue an education otherwise impossible because of inflexible working hours, home and family responsibilities, incarceration, distance from an educational institution, physical handicaps, or other difficulties. Seventy percent of Minnesota's 154 current UWW students work full time, and most have about two years of previous college experience, although many have only a high school diploma and a few, participating under a new plan, are still working toward that. About half live in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, within commuting distance of the campus, but even they are seldom able to visit the campus. The remaining students are scattered across Minnesota as well as several other states and foreign countries. Students range in age from 16 to 64, with an average age of about 35.

UWW's approach to education is one aimed at developing the "life-long learner." On the premise that in this rapidly changing world much of what is learned today may be obsolete tomorrow, the emphasis is placed not on the content of education but on the process. The seven central staff members function as "learning facilitators," whose purpose is to assist students in developing degree programs to meet their goals and in planning and carrying out a series of individual learning projects.

Projects might entail extensive reading, study of a particular problem or phenomenon on the job or in a community service role, taking a regular University course (usually under "Y" registration—no required attendance—or as directed study), or similar activities. Projects may require a few weeks or several months of work, and a student may be involved in more than one at a time. A project is initiated by the student through a proposal outlining goals sought as well as activities and resources to be used. The staff advisor may facilitate the process by helping the student

develop the proposal, line up educational resources, recruit adjunct faculty from the University or the community to serve as project advisors, and the like.

The student reports his or her progress at least monthly to the staff advisor, who responds with comments and suggestions. Once the project is completed, the student submits a final report giving evidence of what has been learned and, more important in view of UWW's emphasis on learning process, discussing the methods and procedures used and their effectiveness. The project is evaluated by the adjunct faculty advisor, and both the student's documentation of work and the advisor's evaluation are entered on the student's narrative transcript.

As the student progresses, selected materials are compiled in a graduation dossier, to which may be added evidence of work done in employment, community service, or other learning situations prior to entry into the UWW program (for some students, accreditation of previous learning very nearly fulfills UWW graduation requirements).

Graduation is not figured on a credit basis; the graduation process is initiated by the student upon deciding that he or she has completed enough work to meet graduation criteria. The student's graduation dossier is given preliminary analysis by central staff members, and then reviewed by a graduation committee made up of University College and UWW staff, regular University and community faculty, and a UWW student or alumnus. The committee looks at the dossier together with a written statement of readiness from the student for evidence of mastery of self-directed study skills, communication skills, academic achievement, variety of learning activities, knowledge in the areas of man, society, and the natural world, and "contribution," a major project showing the student to be more than simply a consumer of others' academic efforts.

Predictably, the biggest problem facing UWW students is that of becoming self-directed. The problem shows up in a number of ways: inability to conceptualize a learning project, failure to complete (or begin) activities, lack of communication with advisors. Some students, even with the aid of advisors, are unable to carry out their programs and after a period of review they are dropped to make room for others, perhaps with a referral to a more structured program. UWW functions on a year-round basis; a student who wishes to postpone studies for a time may petition for up to two quarters of inactive status after which he or she must resume activity or apply for readmission at a later date.

The UWW staff has collected considerable data on many aspects of the program: its students; their educational goals, programs, and activities; adjunct faculty; and more. Now looking toward more qualitative evaluation, the staff is in the process of researching and writing a projected series of about 15 monographs, each 10 or 12 pages in length. Among them:

a followup of the program's 24 graduates to see how they have done in terms of employment, further formal and informal education, and the like;

a study of central staff and adjunct faculty personal characteristics, as well as attitudes toward and participation in the UWW program;

a study of UWW dropouts: why, and what happens to them (of 189 persons who have enrolled as tuition-paying students, 41 have left the program; that number is evenly divided between those who have withdrawn and those dropped by staff action);

a discussion of implications of the UWW experience for the University and higher education in general; and

a discussion of uses of media and technology in contrasting approaches to off-campus learning: one by which the institution assembles and sends various learning materials to the student, the other by which the student assembles resources available in the community and sends evidence of learning to the institution.

In addition to UWW's main program, a number of experimental projects have been undertaken in an effort to extend its brand of learning to a broader range of students. These include:

Teacher Corps in Corrections. The University's UWW is one of four in the country to participate with the national Teacher Corps in a multilevel program aimed at training people for a new kind of teaching role—the "facilitator of learning" basic to UWW—in correctional settings. The Minnesota effort got underway in August at two locations, the Federal Correctional Facility at Sandstone and Operation de Novo, a pretrial diversion project in Minneapolis. At each site, a qualified team leader serves as learning facilitator to five interns—inmates, ex-offenders, or correctional personnel—each of whom carries out a program of study and in turn serves as facilitator for up to ten students

pursuing their own educational goals for credit through UWW.

As the project progresses, interns will be expected to develop competency in assisting students in the process of asking and legitimizing their own questions, organizing study programs, finding resources inside the walls or out in the community; and developing appropriate evaluation procedures—in short, functioning in the same way as do UWW staff members. Interns have had two years of college or equivalent training and should receive their degrees in the two-year program period; the students they are working with are at various educational levels but some have had some college and may also earn a degree in two years.

High school/college program. A grant from the U.S. Office of Education has made possible a program which began in October, in which a student who wishes to move out of the high school setting but not out of high school may simultaneously pursue both a high school diploma and a baccalaureate degree through independent learning experiences on the job or in the community.

Media applications. Grants from the Educational Development Program and educational equipment funds have made possible work on uses of media for off-campus learning, particularly the videotaping of courses and development of accompanying study guides for use by UWW students.

Morris learning center. Several University units are collaborating to serve residents of rural west

Creativity, drugs, business are focus of UWW self-directed study

Mary Pat, in her early 20's, had taken regular University courses before enrolling in UWW to pursue self-directed studies. Her UWW projects in dance, dance therapy, and stage movement evolved into a study of the role of what she terms "facilitators of creativity"—people who assist students in the arts to develop their creative potential. Her program has involved working experiences in psychology, art, crafts, creative drama, creative movement, music, mime, media, and education. Work at the St. Paul Open School led to a paper on volunteer organizations, for which she did extensive research on primitive trade cultures and social exchange concepts. She also developed an arts program, piloted this fall by an area Girl Scout council.

Clarence, 33, is an inmate at Stillwater State Prison. Having completed a high school equivalency exam but no previous college work, he enrolled in UWW, taking by correspondence such courses as sociology, American public policy, and efficient reading. His objectives becoming more focused, he undertook self-directed projects in the areas of drug abuse counseling and drug education; he is currently writing a book on drug abuse for possible publication. Clarence has also taken a drug abuse course through another college and counseling programs through the correctional system, and serves as a counselor for Stillwater inmates. After obtaining his baccalaureate degree through UWW, he plans to go on for an advanced degree; upon his release he intends to establish a community center to provide counseling on drug abuse and related problems.

Roger, who is in his mid-40's, directs the origination and development of new products for a large insurance company headquartered in a small town in Wisconsin. He had taken a lot of regular coursework prior to entering UWW, where his interests are in business administration, risk management, and marketing. Attracted by UWW's emphasis on self-directed study and encouraged by his employer, he has undertaken a number of learning experiences which have resulted in the writing of papers, and is presently teaching a basic insurance course through a technical school.

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central Minnesota through a UWW learning center which began in January at the University of Minnesota, Morris. The program will involve up to 50 off-campus degree-seeking students during the first year.

Demand for UWW services far exceeds capacity, even though locally the program has kept a low profile. Since UWW is a national entity, publicity frequently is generated at that level, and every mention in a national magazine brings another flood of inquiries, according to Jeff Johnson, program coordinator. Five hundred requests for application materials were received last September alone.

The Minnesota UWW unit has been able to operate more smoothly than some, he said, because it has consistently held to a narrower definition of its function. "We see ourselves as primarily educational, not a catch-all program to meet every need, to change social structures through direct action or provide a social support system for undecided students," he said. "Social and educational change will result from what we do, but it will be a by-product and not our primary goal."

Conclusion: *common threads*

While the projects described in this issue of *Comment* vary greatly in scope and intent, some common threads run through the discussion. To begin with, all six involve innovative approaches to educational delivery—they are primarily concerned not with substance but with structure, form, and style.

All are experimental; in addition, the term applies officially to three of them to indicate their non-permanent status at the University. The Bachelor of Elected Studies program, Experimental College, and University Without Walls all have only a designated number of years to function in their present form. Their operating budgets and faculty positions are not permanently built into the University structure, as are those of regular programs. Should an experimental program achieve sufficient growth and success, it could gain standing as a regular program of the University, by going through normal approval channels. But many such programs, particularly those which dare the most, probably will not survive intact. Hopefully, successful features of these will be incorporated into other programs, thus serving as leaven for the continuing educational offerings of the institution.

All of the programs emphasize an assumption of responsibility by the student for his or her own learning. The stress on individuality in planning and carrying out learning activities means that such programs are at least potentially quite costly. Precise cost-per-student figures for the new, often complex programs have been difficult to determine, however, because of the many hidden factors involved when work is done in a variety of settings and under many kinds of supervision. When the figures are finally in, they will probably show at least some of the new programs to be costlier than the traditional classroom approach, but others, using off-campus facilities and making special arrangements with persons serving in faculty/advising capacities, may prove to be less expensive.

An important reason for the existence of an experimental program, of course, is to teach the larger community of educators something about a particular kind of innovation. This means those doing the experimenting have a responsibility to provide information about what they are doing and discovering, and the rest of us have a concomitant responsibility to become familiar with and to learn from their efforts. Thus far, attempts to evaluate and chronicle the experiments have been extensive but largely unsatisfying. The programs are new (with one exception), and deal in concepts which are difficult to measure. When information is gathered, its use is often hindered by the fact that there is little available data on established programs with which to compare it.

Most experimental programs do have various informational materials, publications, progress reports, and the like, to share upon request with interested members of the University community. In addition, staff and students are more than willing to explain their activities as well as their perspectives on alternative forms of education. A call to any of the numbers on page 13 will get

your name on a mailing list or set up an appointment for a visit.

The best way to get to know a program, of course, is through the time-honored formula of learning by doing. Most of the programs need and welcome participation by regular University faculty in such activities as advising students, evaluating their work, or serving on graduation or other committees. Again, the offices of each of the six programs featured in this issue are on page 13.

BES, from page 7

excellent way for prospective students (who complete preprofessional requirements and then "fill in" with courses of their choice) to gain a broad educational background before entering specialized training. Generally, in fact, advisors theorize the new and unfamiliar degree may be accepted more readily by graduate and professional schools, which look at a prospective student's transcript, than by employers, who more often judge preparedness by the name of the degree.

EC, from page 16

clearly defined, common objectives, evaluation of EC has been difficult for those who have attempted it and who have in the process produced volumes of largely descriptive material. While all past evaluations have originated externally, EC this year will undertake an evaluation effort of its own.

Students and staff began the current academic year with two weeks of workshops designed to clarify the needs and expectations of this year's participants and to develop and refine the college's structures accordingly. The workshops set the stage for continued efforts to collectively provide a learning environment for EC students and staff while, as called for in the college's constitution, stimulating new modes of education and making possible a "critical interaction for clarifying the conditions which led students to choose the Experimental College over other departments of the University."

GC, from page 19

Their preparation demands innovative approaches to career training and program planning on the part of both institutions and students. The many interinstitutional arrangements involved in GC programs help extend the college's influence throughout the state. In addition, several of the two-year sequences introduced by GC, such as those for medical or legal secretary, have proven attractive enough to be picked up by public or private institutions in the area. When this happens, GC, with a policy of not duplicating any program readily available elsewhere, phases out that program and directs its resources instead to meeting unmet needs.

comment

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