DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 114 JC 920 412

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TITLE Montgomery College in Its Formative Years, 1946-1979.
INSTITUTION Montgomery County Historical Society, Rockville, MD.
PUB DATE Aug 92
NOTE 14p.
AVAILABLE FROM Montgomery County Historical Society, 111 West Montgomery Ave., Rockville, MD 20850 ($2.25).
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Montgomery County Story; v35 n3 Aug 1992

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Campuses; *Campus Planning; College Administration; College Buildings; College Planning; Community Colleges; *Educational Development; *Educational Facilities; *Educational History; Educational Trends; Enrollment; *Enrollment Trends; *Multicampus Colleges; School Demography; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Montgomery College MD

ABSTRACT

The evolution of Montgomery College (MC), in Maryland, has taken place in four chronological phases: the founding years (1946-1950); the years of establishment of the college (1950-1965); the years of transition and development (1965-1980); and the period of college consolidation and enhancement (1980 to the present). The college was established in 1946 by the Montgomery County Board of Education (MCBE), and offered its first courses in the evening at a local high school. In its opening year, MC enrolled 186 students, increasing enrollment to 473 by the 1949-50 academic year. In addition to recent high school graduates, a substantial proportion of MC's first students were veterans returning from World War II. By the second year of operation, temporary buildings were constructed on the high school campus. In 1950, MC was granted formal accreditation and, shortly thereafter, moved to a newly purchased site in Takoma Park. Between 1950 and 1964, fall semester enrollment increased from 541 to 2,780 students, and degree programs increased from 19 to 30. Following desegregation legislation in 1954, the George Washington Carver Junior College in Rockville was incorporated as a branch of MC. In 1961, the MCBE purchased close to 100 acres of land in Rockville, and by 1965 a new campus was opened at the site, marking the beginning of MC's growth into a multi-campus community college. The 1960's and 1970's were marked by increasing student participation in governance, and a growing multicultural student body. By 1980, the college offered services at three campuses and had an annual enrollment of approximately 50,000 students. (PAA)

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The founding years, the first four years of the College, were in a sense an "on-trial" period when the College defined its initial role and program, demonstrated it could offer a sound and respected higher education, and earned both continuing support from the community and formal accreditation from the appropriate professional association of colleges and universities. These were frugal, enterprising years during which the College operated during after-school hours in borrowed high school facilities and temporary wooden buildings. The enrollment in the College in the fall of 1946 when it began was 186 students; by the academic year 1949-1950, the enrollment had grown to 473.[1]

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The Montgomery County Board of Education is the parent of the College. With the concurrence of the Maryland State Department of Education, the Board established the College in the spring of 1946, after considering the recommendations of a local ad hoc committee that studied the

need for a public junior college in the County. With virtually no detailed planning or administrative preparation, the Board authorized the formation of the "Montgomery Junior College" and provided funds to support the initiation of the first classes in the fall of 1946. It also appointed the administrative chief of the College, Hugh G. Price, whose title was Dean and who at the time was a teacher of chemistry at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. The College was organized as a small part of the County's public school system and scheduled its classes in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School after 4 p.m. weekdays and on Saturday mornings. Thus, the College began very modestly as a night school operating on borrowed time in borrowed facilities until it could prove itself worthy of more permanent status!

As a "junior" college, the College was required to limit its courses to those typically offered in the first two years (freshman and sophomore levels) of a baccalaureate "senior" college. Additionally, it could offer courses of a technical-occupational nature (not intended to lead to a baccalaureate degree), courses of a general cultural nature, and student extra-curricular activities.

The founding of the College was justified by the Board of Education as a service not only for the County's current graduating high school seniors and qualified adults, but also for County military veterans. Many veterans returning from World War II could not begin or resume a college education because of overcrowded facilities at colleges and universities throughout the nation. For its first year and intermittently for many years thereafter, military veterans, aided by federal education entitlements earned as a consequence of their military service during World War II, the Korean conflict, or the Vietnam conflict, constituted a substantial proportion of the student body.

A faculty member during the founding years, Allen H. Jones, recalled some of the salutary effects of the maturity of the veterans:

> "But the students of those earlier years were also dedicated. Many veterans were among them and included some of the best students I ever had in a class. They were serious about their education. They were older and more mature than those coming straight from high school. They had seen life and sometimes death during their time in the service. They knew what they wanted, and they were convinced that a good college education was a prerequisite. Courses that might prove difficult for them were not evaded or dropped. The challenge was there and they faced it. The interaction of dedicated people, faculty and students, resulted, I like to believe, in a firm mutual respect which made teaching and learning a gratifying experience."[2]

Military veterans, however, were not the only students attending the College that first year. Because of the very brief time between the founding of the College and the beginning of fall classes, recruiting recent high school graduates and adults to enroll in the first classes required special efforts. Dr. Bernice F. Pierson, a founding member of the full-time faculty, was Dean Price's recruiter that first summer of the college's existenc "I went literally from door to door, visiting parents of students who had recently graduated from county high schools, telling them

of our college and the advantages which we offered. Sadie Higgins and I spent a good deal of time pinning notices of biology and other subject offerings on the bulletin boards of the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Navy Medical Buildings."[3]

Dr. Pierson recalled further about the College and her experiences that first year:

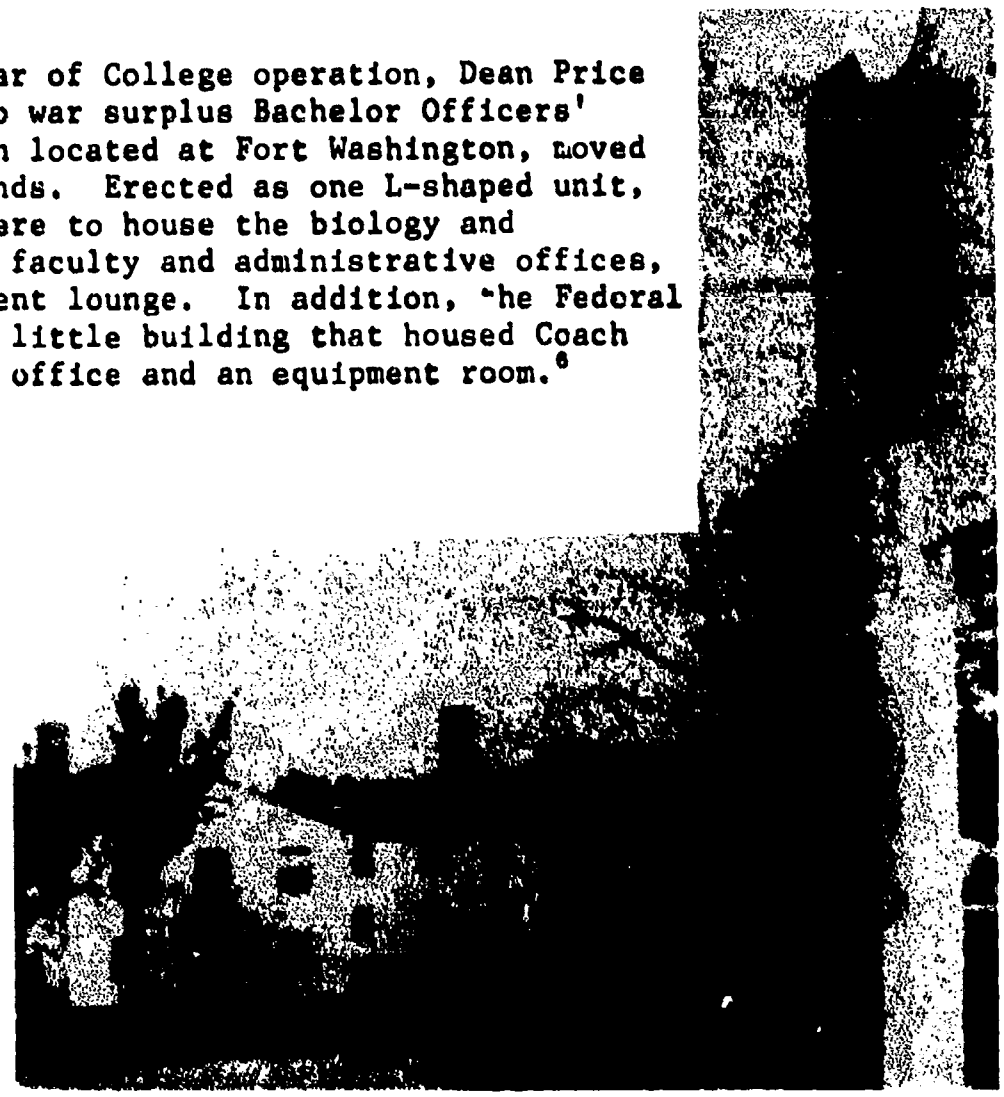
> "A delightful afternoon tea given by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter of the American Association of University Women welcoming the women students and women faculty members. I remember the lovely home, the artistic arrangement of the delicious food on the tea table, and how genuinely gracious everyone was to us. Of course in those far away days of more formality we were dressed for the occasion, hats, gloves, high heels, etc. ... The All-College picnics were held at the Meadow Brook Recreation Center in Rock Creek Park ... the students, faculty and their families ... swinging on the swings, playing baseball, eating gobs of ice cream and singing and singing until dark ... Acquiring war surplus materials for the laboratories and classrooms of the college: an autoclave, instrument sterilizers, animal cages, thermometers, typewriters, adding machines, tables, chairs, desks and other office equipment. These we picked from lists prepared by the government. They came through to College Park in box cars on long freight trains and were stacked on the station platform ... Trips to the slaughterhouse in Washington, D.C. ... for windpipe, with lungs and liver ... hearts, kidneys and any other 'bits' I could pick up for my zoology class."[4]

Dr. Pierson vividly remembered her first days at the College:

> "After climbing the high steps of the 'side' entrance of BCC's Main Building ... I was greeted in the Center Hall by the smiling, convivial Dr. Eric Labouvie, Professor of Languages, grasping my hand, pumping my arm, and in delightful accents warmly welcoming me to Montgomery Junior College. Next I was introduced to Dean Hugh Price, the dynamic chief administrator, and to Miss Sadie Higgins, Secretary and the Dean's mainstay, as well as instructor in the secretarial courses. She was witty and kept things moving. Soon I was taken on tour of the 'College Rooms.' In the basement Library I met sweet Miss Golda Payne, a college librarian of considerable experience. And I saw the classrooms which we were to share with the high school."[5]

Among that first year's students were at least two young men who exercised campus leadership then and are now prominent County residents. One is Milton Clogg, now an attorney, who served as the first president of the Montgomery Junior College Student Association. The second is Donald Coupard, now an architect, whose design for the College seal won a competition and, in slightly modified form, is still in use as the official College seal. The design includes a drawing of the cupola of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Hign School as well as the flags of United States and Maryland.

By the second year of College operation, Dean Price had arranged to have two war surplus Bachelor Officers' Quarters, which had been located at Fort Washington, moved to the high school grounds. Erected as one L-shaped unit, these frame buildings were to house the biology and chemistry laboratories, faculty and administrative offices, a bookstore, and a student lounge. In addition, the Federal Works Agency provided a little building that housed Coach Frank ("Rube") Rubini's office and an equipment room.[6]



Temporary Buildings
at Bethesda-Chevy
Chase High School
about 1948

The quality of instruction and educational services offered by the College in those early years was enhanced by many very talented and dedicated part-time faculty: professional scientists, artists, writers, businessmen, and others. Some were recruited from the National Institutes of Health and the Navy Medical Center. Dr. Ross MacCardle of the National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health taught for over ten years. He was a distinguished teacher, who put the progress of each student above everything else, and would use both hands as he filled the blackboard with diagrams, labelling and lecturing as he went along.[7]

Despite the handicaps of the temporary accommodations and the difficulties of night-time operation, the College was granted formal accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1950, in recognition of the commendable quality of the College and of its achievements in the education of its students during the first four years. The accreditation was accompanied by a recommendation that prompt action be taken by the Board of Education to obtain a permanent campus site for the College so that a full range of facilities could be available for day as well as night classes and for related student and support services. This recommendation was implemented by the Board in the summer of 1950, when it purchased the Bliss Electrical School site, six buildings on about six acres in Takoma Park. The College promptly moved in time for delayed fall classes in 1950.[8]

The next phase in the College's formative process, the years of College establishment from 1950 to 1965, were a period when the College

truly established itself as a permanent County institution of higher education, both on and off the Takoma Park Campus. During those years the College broadened its programs and services, increased the number and variety of people served, gained increased community recognition and much greater financial support, and became a part of Maryland's new system of community colleges. Between the years 1950 and 1964, fall semester enrollment at the campus increased from 541 to 2780 students.

The pleasant neighborhood setting of the campus, shaded by large and overarching trees, created a comfortable, community-like environment for students, faculty, administrative staff, and residents of the surrounding suburban area. The campus site was small enough, and the number of students and faculty few enough, that people could readily and naturally interact daily, become acquainted easily, and develop a sense of community and a personal identity on the campus. The campus became a small educational community within the neighborhood community.

The Bliss Electrical School had been founded in 1908 when Louis D. Bliss, a pioneer in the electrical industry, purchased the North Takoma Hotel and converted it into a highly successful, nationally known Bliss Electrical School. When the site was purchased by the Board of Education in 1950 and the school was discontinued, its excellent electrical engineering program was adapted and incorporated into the curriculum of the College.

In the spring of 1951, after the Korean conflict had begun, the Board of Education signed a contract with the U.S. Navy to train electricians' mates on the Montgomery Junior College campus for the U.S. Navy, which set up the pilot program to gather data on operating such a program on a college campus in the event of a national emergency. While the regular programs and activities of the College continued, almost 1000 bluejackets went through the Navy program during the two years of its operation, 175 men at a time in classes of 25 for a 14-week course. For the College it meant $40,000 of additional income for two years and certain much needed kitchen equipment.[9]

Administration Building, Takoma Park Campus, about 1953, with World War I German Searchlight from Bliss Electrical School on Lawn

Because of the relatively small size of the campus and its relatively small enrollment during the 1950s and early 1960s, campus relationships among faculty and students were often small-group and face-to-face interactions. Irvin H. Schick, a member of the faculty beginning in 1950 and later a vice-president of the College, remembered some of the characteristic campus activities of those days:

> "... the physical education staff contending with the facilities at Silver Spring Intermediate School; students purchasing books in the space remodeled from the Bliss bakery (with occasional leaky pipes); students using lounge facilities created in the former Bliss storage and coalbin areas. Then there were the proms, the family picnics, the outdoor commencement exercises under the trees (especially the year locusts competed with the speakers), the drama production in the dining hall (sometimes blowing fuses) and even in a tent on the tennis courts, the outdoor holiday activities around the lighted evergreen tree (affectionately named 'Old Timothy') even after some vandal had 'topped' it, and the necessary pauses in activities in the cafeteria whenever the B&O freight trains came lumbering past." [10]

Hugh Price, the founding Dean of the College, left in 1953 to accept a position as head of a public junior college in Ventura, California, and was replaced by Donald E. Deyo, who had served on the faculty and in major administrative positions in several junior colleges in Connecticut and New York. He remained as Dean until 1965. During his tenure the campus enrollment grew substantially, reaching 2780 by the fall of 1964, and new buildings, programs, and services, as well as a site for a new College campus in Rockville, were incorporated into the operations of the College. His administration firmly established the College in Takoma Park and in the mid-1960s began the early stage of the transition and development of the College into a multi-campus, separately governed, comprehensive community institution within an expanding state system of higher education.

When the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 decided that race-segregated schools were unconstitutional, the segregated George Washington Carver Junior College in Rockville was incorporated as a branch of Montgomery Junior College. Five years earlier, Dean Price had established an ad hoc faculty committee to investigate the possibility of offering a junior college program in Lincoln High School, the County's negro high school in Rockville. In August 1950 the Board of Education established the college at Lincoln High School with Dr. Parlette Moore, then principal of Lincoln High, serving as Dean. When the new George Washington Carver High School-Junior College opened in 1952, with Moore as principal of the high school and dean of the junior college, the junior college enrollment was 125. Carver Junior College offered five curricula: Auto Mechanics, Building Trades, Dry Cleaning and Tailoring, Cosmetology, and Home Economics, with an option in clothing or foods. In 1954, Carver became the Rockville Branch of Montgomery Junior College.[11] There is no record of a separate branch operation after the academic year 1957-1958 and the building is presently used by the Board of Education for its administrative offices.

The fifteen years when the Takoma Park Campus was being established as the main focus of College development were years when new degree programs

and services were added to the College's offerings and when the College began to schedule some of its courses and services off campus. The number of degree programs increased from 19 to 30 as a result of research studies by the College to determine what new programs, especially those of a technical-occupational nature, would be useful to local employers and prospective employees. New intercollegiate athletic teams were added to College activities, as well as student clubs. Campus rooms were made available after classes for public use for meetings, discussion groups, conferences, training programs, and so on. A Montgomery Symphony Orchestra, begun in 1947 with participation from both College students and community residents, continued on campus and was affiliated formally with the College, as was the Montgomery County Light Opera Association in the mid-1950s. Extension courses were offered off campus, first at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory at White Oak and later in some of the public schools in the evening. The College increasingly was reaching out to the community.

As these new endeavors of the College were developed, the faculty and administration gave attention to the quality of what was being developed. Reputable and commendable quality has been an important criterion for whatever was offered since early in the College's existence and the attainment of such quality has been noted by regional and specialized accrediting agencies through the years.

By the late 1950s, the old facilities of the former Bliss school wore into disrepair and some of the buildings were demolished and several new buildings were constructed. Two new buildings that were constructed between 1958 and 1960 added greatly to the quality of campus facilities: a library

Academic Building, Takoma Park Campus, before 1950

building to accommodate about 25,000 volumes, and a science building with classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, faculty offices, a rooftop greenhouse, and a planetarium. Much more was needed.

As the enrollment of the College increased and as the population of the County grew markedly and spread northward to Rockville and beyond, the possibility of opening a second major campus and perhaps other campuses began to be considered seriously. In early 1961 the Board of Education bought almost 100 acres of farmland just beyond the city limits of Rockville, which had been a part of the family farm of Thomas Anderson, a judge and county resident. The Board intended to construct a second campus for about 3000 to 5000 students on the site and at the request of the Board the City of Rockville annexed the land in early 1963.

About this time, four new members were elected to the Board of Education, constituting a majority, and they questioned whether the Takoma Park Campus should continue to operate after the Rockville Campus was completed. The Board suspended construction of the new campus while questions about the future role, scope, governance, costs, size, and location of the College were reviewed and debated. Further expenditures for construction at the Takoma Park campus were held in abeyance and the future of both campuses became ambiguous at best. The Board studied these matters but took no action until May 1964 when it authorized construction on the Rockville Campus to resume. A partially completed campus was scheduled to open in September 1965 with a capacity for several thousand students.

Adding to the ambiguity and confusion of the circumstances of the College, in February 1965 Dean Deyo resigned. Dr. George A. Hodson, President of Skagit Valley College in Washington, was appointed and took office in the summer of 1965, with the title of President (rather than Dean) of Montgomery Junior College. The Rockville Campus facilities were not fully operational when the campus opened that fall, nor was the internal organizational structure of the Col ge decided. With so much unresolved, with many operational problems, and with considerable dissatisfaction among faculty, administration, Board members, and some student leaders, it is not surprising that Dr. Hodson decided to leave the College in June 1966.

The fifteen years after the Rockville campus opened, 1965-1980, were years of transition and development when the College was transformed from a small one-campus junior college that was a part of a large public school system into a large multi-campus community college with an independent Board of Trustees to govern it. In the fall semester of 1964, the enrollment on the one campus of the College was 2780 students. By 1980, the College offered services and courses on three campuses and in leased or rented or borrowed facilities throughout the County, and sometimes beyond the County, with about 50,000 annual enrollments in its more than 1000 academic and community-services courses. Several hundred thousand people used its campus facilities or attended its cultural activities each year. The role and scope of the College had been redefined, hundreds of new courses developed, the faculty greatly expanded, the administrative structure extensively reorganized, and a massive construction program undertaken.[12]

When Dr. Hodson left the College in June 1966, the Board of Education requested the newly appointed Executive Dean of the Takoma Park Campus, Dr.

William C. Strasser, Jr., to be the Acting President. He served in that capacity until February 1967, when he was appointed President, a position he held until he resigned the presidency in July 1979 and became a professor on the faculty of the College.

Between June 1966 and January 1969 (the month when a separate College Board of Trustees was appointed by the Governor of Maryland under provisions of a new state law), both immediate problems and long-range planning needs were addressed. Funds were obtained to deal with extensive repairs and maintenance problems on the Takoma Park Campus, to add substantially to full-time faculty and staff for both campuses, to greatly increase campus parking spaces, and otherwise catch up to the burgeoning enrollment increases. Additionally, a series of community and internal advisory committees were appointed, and a construction program begun on the Rockville Campus.

Architect's Sketch, College Administrative Center, 1969
Rockville Campus

In January 1969 the newly appointed Board members began to serve as the separate Board of Trustees. In June 1969 the Board changed the name of the College from Montgomery Junior College to Montgomery Community College (or Montgomery College, in short form), effective July 1, 1969, and approved the long-range master plan that served as a framework for the development of the College during at least the following ten years.

One of the characteristics of American collegiate life in the late 1960s and much of the 1970s was student activism on campus. Montgomery College students became increasingly outspoken and involved in College matters, and took more initiative on campus in those transition years than they did before 1965. The humorous reminiscence of Dr. R. Justus Hanks, a member of the faculty and Chairman of the Faculty Senate during some of those years, captures in an exaggerated way the campus spirit (if not the behavior) of many Montgomery College students: "At a 1968 Sophomore Awards Luncheon I jokingly commented that it might not be a good year ... to hold

high the torch of learning lest they burn the place down."[13] Student initiative and outspokenness about college curricula, policies, and operations were relatively new to the American campus scene, but in terms of democratic values in higher education, such student activism was an intellectually healthy and desirable part of the collegiate learning environment.

Fortunately, Montgomery College did not experience the destructive extremes of physical damage and bodily injury evident on some college and university campuses, perhaps because student activism was accepted and welcomed by many faculty and administrators and because many well justified student requests and recommendations were favorably acted upon at the College. Students, young and older, were appointed to many College committees and advisory groups with full participation and voting rights, including a seat on the Board itself. Student leaders were invited to speak out at public College and campus forums. The college became a more responsive institution as a result of this.

As the College grew rapidly in size and multi-campus structure, the additions inevitably created a decentralized bureaucratic structure to replace the close-knit community of campus faculty and administrators who for years had daily interacted face-to-face on the Takoma Park Campus. The number of faculty and student committees, as well as the number of committee members, increased dramatically between 1965 and 1980. With limited success, the College administration attempted to compensate for this by encouraging and attempting to develop a sense of personal community and campus identity on each campus.

Among the desirable but less noted changes within the College during this period was the increasing internationalization of academic courses and student bodies of the campuses. Because the College is located in the metropolitan area of the nation's capital, an international community from many nations resides in the County, and both young people and older adults from this community enrolled at the College and became a part of campus life. These students enriched the multicultural experiences and education of American-born students. International clubs of foreign students were formed and sponsored international-day celebrations on the campuses each year. Academic courses in English as a second language were created to help these students (some of whom were refugees from various countries) to become fluent in the language of their adopted country.

The College substantially increased the multi-cultural content of its courses, increasing the number of foreign languages taught and adding new courses to incorporate foreign cultural content and perspectives into the curricula. Guest speakers, lecturers from embassies, and visiting foreigners spoke to student audiences and classes about their countries and cultures. Some courses and student visitations were conducted overseas.

The physical development of the College is probably the most obvious, though not the most significant outcome of this formative phase in the history of the College.[14] More than fifty million dollars was appropriated during these years to found, expand, reconstruct, and/or add buildings to each of the three campuses and the design of each campus won an architectural award in recognition of its excellence.

The great enrollment growth and institutional success of the College in the early and mid-1970s encouraged unrealistic excesses in both the number and the type of proposals for expansion made by various public officials, public agencies, and private entrepreneurs. During the span of a few years, no fewer than seven campuses were proposed to the College:

- a completely reconstructed, specialized, and expanded urban campus in Takoma Park to accommodate about 5000 students;

- a large, diversified suburban campus for about 10,000 in Rockville;

- a rural campus in rapidly growing Germantown, initially designed to accommodate about 2500 with future expansion possible to about 10,000;

- a second urban campus in the southern section of the County, possibly on Dennis Avenue in Silver Spring or in the Four Corners area;

- another suburban campus located in the eastern section of the County in the Fairland area, on a farmsite owned by the University of Maryland;

- a small, specialized campus for the performing arts, located either in Olney or on Shady Grove Road in Gaithersburg; and

- a small, residential liberal-arts campus in Europe for students desiring to study a semester or two abroad.[15]

The College analyzed and studied at some length most of these imaginative, well intended proposals. By 1979, the conclusions reached by the Board established that the College would function on only the first three campuses listed above, in addition to the host of off-campus facilities leased or rented by the College's extensive community services and continuing education program.

The end of the 1970s was the end of the formative years of transition and development. The citizens of the County by then were benefitting from a comprehensive, transformed community college which contributed handsomely to the educational, cultural and economic vitality of the County. Such fulfillment was the product of the efforts of hundreds of faculty, supporting staff, administrators, Board members, elected public officials, and countless citizens and students who gave very fully of themselves, many times in abundant measure and in outstanding, sustained, exemplary manner, far beyond reasonable expectation. The College became what together they made possible and is today a tribute to each and every one of them!

Dr. William C. Strasser, Jr. is President Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Montgomery College. He served as Executive Dean and Acting President of the College from 1966 to 1967, as President from 1967 to 1979, and as Professor from 1980 to 1986. He is now retired and lives with his wife, Jane Ann, in Provo, Utah.

NOTES

1. William Lloyd Fox, Montgomery College, Maryland's First Community College, 1946-1970 (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery College 1970), p. 101.
2. W. L. Fox, J. W. Henry, Jr., M. R. Dearing, and R. J. Smock, Editors, From Acorn to Oak, Montgomery College, Fortieth Anniversary (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery College, 1986), pp. 14-15.
3. Bernice F. Pierson, "Montgomery Junior College 1946-1947," News Letter, Spring 1977 (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery College, 1977), p. 6.
4. Ibid., pp. 2, 6.
5. Ibid., p. 2.
6. Fox, From Acorn to Oak, op.cit., p. 11.
7. Ibid., p. 8.
8. Fox, Montgomery College, op.cit., p. 31 et seq.
9. Ibid., p. 44.
10. Fox, From Acorn to Oak, op.cit., pp. 22-23.
11. Fox, Montgomery College, op.cit., p. 29 and History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, Maryland 1872-1961 by Nina H. Clarke and Lillian B. Brown (Vantage Press, New York, 1978), pp. 67, 103, 117, 144.
12. Montgomery College: Profiles 1966-1979, A Report from the President (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery College, 1979), pp. 1, 24.
13. Fox, From Acorn to Oak, op.cit., p. 49.
14. For detailed background information, see: Profiles: Montgomery College Facilities, 1966-1979, A Report from the President (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery College, 1979); Seven Year Progress Report: Capital Improvements and Perspectives for the Future, FY1968-FY1974 (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery College, 1973); and William C. Strasser, Jr., A College for a Community: A President's Perspective of Montgomery College, 1966-1979 (Provo, Utah: privately published, 1988)
15. Ibid.

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