

N. C. ESSAY STAFF

Robin Kaplan

Editor

Bill King

Advisor

Bev Petty
Courtlandt Jones
Rick Shoenberger
Penny Dennis
John Coggeshall
David Martin
Jon Thompson
Frank Wolff

Keith Pajkowski
Brad White
Sebastian de Grazia
Duke Ernsberger
Clifford Young
John Woodson
Alicia Henley
Michael Singleton
Robin Dreyer

A Plea For Creative Writing

Consider operas and song, illustration, dramatic reading and plays. All of these are most certainly a portion of an arts school. All of these depend on writing.

Plans have been set for a total phase-out of the writing department. Of the five students now in the department, two will graduate this spring. The remaining students will be allowed to graduate in the department under the instruction of their present teacher, Mrs. Kirby-Smith.

One primary reason for the phase-out is that writing departments of a very excellent nature exist in near-by colleges and universities and duplication is not wanted. This is assuming that only college students wish to have this instruction, forgetting that one of the primary functions of this school is to provide art instruction to high school students, who in public schools can receive no such education.

The major excuse for dropping the department is that writing is not a performing art and has no place in such a school. This is false. In all manner of writing one is making a presentation before the public, whether to cause reaction, inspiration, enjoyment, etcetera. The absence of one's physical presence does not render writing any less of a performance than it would recorded music, stage direction, design and production, visual arts, etcetera. All work together, can be used for each other's benefit, and are often necessary.

Those who are against the writing department feel it can be justified only as a facet of the drama department. This is unfair to the drama department and unfair to the writers. It is denying writing relationship to the other arts and denying that writing is an art form in itself. Writing is one of today's most widely-used and influential art forms.

The academic department has been given permission to increase their writing curriculum. This is very good and necessary, yet would not allow those whose predominate art form is writing to come to this school and study their art. As an art school we depend on all the arts for assistance and inspiration. We also have a responsibility to those who wish to study art. Without a writing department we are incomplete and failing as a school of the arts.

-Gavin

Transcendental Meditation

It isn't what I thought it was. I envisioned a cross-legged Indian yogi, but unless sitting cross-legged happens to be a person's normal and most comfortable way of sitting, it has nothing to do with transcendental meditation (TM).

Students' International Meditation Society (SIMS) says, "Transcendental meditation is a simple, natural, mechanical technique that systematically allows an individual to continue his thinking process to its natural end, whereby developing more creative, more effective thinking. TM is a process of direct experience rather than one of intellectual analysis. The technique can be explained in terms of the mechanics of the thinking process. Every thought develops from a fainter and more abstract impulse in the mind; ordinarily this impulse becomes perceivable as a thought only during the later phases of its development. The technique of TM allows the attention to be drawn automatically to these refined levels of thinking, which are found by experience to be increasingly more pleasant."

TM is not a religion or a philosophy, nor does it involve any do's or don'ts. It doesn't conflict with one's religion, but rather enhances it. It is, however, a preparation for dynamic activity.

TM, to this meditator, is so simple it seems absurd. While this simplicity is acceptable, TM's very effortlessness creates a problem. To a society which also equates accomplishment with effort and goodness with striving, the efficacy of so simple a technique is suspect. But - results are positive and SIMS files are full of praises. There are also the many reports of studies conducted by scientists, psychiatrists, colleges and universities, and even business firms throughout the world; plus the reports of investigations made by various magazines and established religious groups: the movement is on and growing and unbelievable.

There are seven steps in the learning process of TM. In the first step, the introductory lecture, a teacher discusses TM and its benefits. Then a preparatory lecture introduces the mechanics of TM.

Short interviews with the students are then held, followed by personal instruction by the teachers as third and fourth steps. The fifth step is verification of experiences.

In the sixth step, the mechanics of development of the nervous system are discussed. Finally, the teachers lecture on the long range benefits and possibilities of TM.

The process is taught over four consecutive days for an hour each day.

Three things are required to begin instruction. First, there is an obligation of time. The student must attend all four days of instruction. Second, a contribution of \$75 for working adults and \$35 for students is asked. The contribution covers a two-year program, with weekly and monthly meetings.

Third, anyone using non-prescribed drugs must abstain for at least 15 days prior to their instruction. This is required for physiological reasons.

Wanda Crouse

An introductory lecture on the technique of Transcendental Meditation as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi will be given by Joe Clark, Eastern Regional Co-ordinator for SIMS, on February 22nd at 3 P.M. in Room 329.

The N.C. Essay

The N. C. Essay recently requested that the different departments of the school prepare statements of their programs—the successes, failures, problems, hopes—for publication in THE ESSAY. Published below is the first report received—the Academic Department. The editor and staff hope that these articles will invoke student praise and constructive comment in the form of letters to the editor. The paper hopes to print statements from the Dance, Drama, and Production and Design Departments in the next issue. In the meantime, it is hoped that student questions and responses in letter form will also appear on this page and others if demanded.

-Editor

First In A Series: The Academic Department

Dear Robin:

In reply to your recent memorandum asking for a statement from the Academic Department for use in the paper, I give you the information below. This is not in any kind of order, but I hope that it will be useful. We would very much appreciate anything you may be able to do to publicize what we are doing and hope to do. We also hope that these statements from the various schools will be constructive and will solicit responsible, constructive comments from students and faculty.

Often the Academic program is criticized for not being more innovative, more "exciting." This is very frustrating for us. We all recognize that while our program is quite solid, it can always use improvement. We also realize that we are in a rather unique position to be able to do something really novel and important on a national level and to set some real "firsts" in curriculum approaches. Nothing different is going to happen here, however, until we are able financially to increase the staff so as to have smaller classes and to free teachers to design new approaches and instructional materials. When the money pie is divided, the Academic Department has always been on the short end of the stick. Substantial monies must be found to make it possible for us to move into new directions. The majority of the teaching-learning activity in this School must take place in the classroom. Schedules do not allow for much reliance on outside, homework kinds of assignments. The classes must be kept small enough to allow for individual instruction and attention in the class. The classes are outrageously large in English, Foreign Languages, and in some cases, Social Studies and the Sciences.

Even with the disadvantages we have, every effort is being made to design new courses and new approaches. Fortunately we have a very dedicated and flexible faculty whose interests and experience make it possible for them to function in several areas. The Academic Curriculum Research Team visits other schools and programs and examines new methods and materials. The Team reports back to the Academic faculty and new ideas found on these visits are incorporated into our program. This summer several members of the Academic faculty will be participating in a special institute sponsored by the State Department of Higher Education on curriculum reform. Dr. Baskin and Leslie Hunt, chairmen of the Curriculum Standards Committee, will attend an important meeting in Chicago in early March. This conference is sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education. The self-study for reaffirmation of the accreditation of the College program will begin in August and run for 18 months. Accreditation of the High School program by the Southern Association of School and Colleges will also begin around the same time and run for two years. Other innovative trends in our program include:

The American Studies program in the Social Studies of the High School is a new program this year. It is a topically oriented program rather than the more traditionally chronologically directed series. The new program better fits the trimester calendar. Conferences on these programs are attended by the Social Studies faculty (Ruark and

Burke). The students have more flexibility and choice in planning their program. Next year the courses in modern European history will be structured the same way.

The experimental seminar in contemporary poetry is a new program designed by Mrs. Johnston. It is limited to ten students and the students teach the sessions of the seminar. No exams are given but some academic credit is awarded.

A special working session in Mrs. Johnston's classes recently included a unit on libretto writing from literary works. President Ward worked with the students on the evolution of Verdi's *Otello* from Shakespeare's *Othello* and also drew from his own experiences with *The Crucible*. Problems of the librettist were explored and exemplified.

Also Mrs. Johnston has designed a tutorial approach to her course in the American novel which frees students from regularly scheduled classes for more reading time. The group meets once a week or every two weeks.

In Dr. Baskin Italian course (second year), the class is divided into two smaller groups of seven students each. Special conversation sessions are held for these smaller groups on alternate days. The full class meets twice a week for the other work in the course.

In the High School, the 8th grade science course of Mrs. Land is involved in self-selected projects and a weekly science newspaper. More student evaluation is encouraged. Mr. King's and Mrs. Shorter's 12th grade English courses are now more genre oriented and again, the trimester greatly helps with this division. Poetry, fiction and drama are the topics for each of the three terms of the year. Mr. King's English 5 is a special advanced section for students having done exceptionally well in English composition in earlier courses. This is a unit in world literature and advanced composition and is structured more along the lines of the tutorial with the student selecting which works are to be read. Especially effective recently was the use of some of the drama students in this class for presentation of a scene from *The Zoo Story* in connection with studying the Christ figure in literature.

The Academic program has not received the recognition and publicity it deserves. It is a very strong program on both High School and College levels and this can be demonstrated by the success our students have in entering other institutions. Also, on the High School level, the showing our students make in the National Merit Scholarship competition is extremely impressive. For the size of our student body, we have a very high percentage each year of National Merit Finalists.

The question of accreditation often arises and, again, the public is poorly informed about this. The High School program has been accredited by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction since the School opened. The College program did not become eligible to apply for accreditation until we had graduated our first class of college seniors. The college program has been fully accredited by the regional accrediting agency, the Southern Association of School and Colleges, since December 1970. Prior to that time, the College was a correspondent of the Southern Association which

means that we were considered by them to be in good standing, that we were applying for accreditation on schedule and that work taken at the School was considered transferable. It should be pointed out that, as is always the case, transfer credit is given by the institution to which the student is transferring. Courses in their curriculum have to parallel ours before credit can be allowed and only courses for which a grade of "C" or better has been made can be considered for transfer credit. In the arts work, the receiving institution always places students according to audition and/or demonstrable level of proficiency. Often schools have a minimum residence requirement for any degree it offers.

The College program here comes up for reaffirmation of accreditation in 1973. This will involve a major self-study, a comprehensive analysis of the instructional program and plans for the School. This will begin in August of this year and will last for eighteen months. Everyone in the School will be involved. Accreditation of the High School program by the Southern Association will also be undertaken at the same time as the College self-study and will last for two years. This additional accreditation status will greatly strengthen the prestige of the academic program of the School. Application is also being made now for further accreditation by the North Carolina Association of Colleges and Universities which is an important move for us now that we have been taken into the University of North Carolina system.

Some of the needs of the Academic Department, in addition to more faculty and smaller classes, are:

expanded courses for the academically disadvantaged students. Remedial reading, social studies, math and others badly need to be enlarged. We continue to encourage talented, disadvantaged students to come to the School, but we are not adequately equipped to do enough for them once they are here.

the need to know longer in advance what works the various arts schools are going to be doing so that these can be coordinated into our academic course offerings to give greater enrichment and interaction between the arts areas and the academic.

the need for a first-rate audio-visual center in support of the instructional program and a resource person to man this center. The center has been included in the new plans for the projected building which will hopefully take place soon. We are interviewing New Careers personnel in an effort to find someone we can train to handle this resource work for us. We also need improved physical plant (classrooms) with better lighting, more comfortable seating, better heating and air-conditioning facilities, library, etc.

The Academic faculty is now meeting by discipline to explore new materials and to better coordinate the courses and programs, especially where multiple sections exist.

The Academic Department welcomes constructive criticism and suggestions from students and faculty. We hope that a better job can be done in the future in making the needs of the Academic program more widely known and to show in what ways the program is successful.

Dr. William Baskin