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Special Issue

MARS HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

April, 1969

Development Institute Mobilized

Mars Hill College has been selected to establish a Model College and Community Development Institute for Southern Regional Education Board Internships. The Institute will correlate with other community-academic-oriented efforts now in progress.

The S.R.E.B., which previously operated out of Atlanta, Georgia, is a foundation to provide student manpower for local, state, and federal agencies. The agencies utilize student interns to alleviate their lack of manpower and to solve other problems pertinent to the success of the operation. Through matching funds from the concerned agency and S.R.E.B. the students have twelve weeks in the summer to research and report their findings and recommendations. Although faculty, agency, and technical advice are made available to the intern, he is essentially autonomous, free to establish his own guidelines and criteria for solving the problem. It is here that the real academic value lies for the student: he is free to exercise his intellectual initiative and to test the disciplinary practices he has learned in college. The success of such programs has prompted the establishment of a college institute program.

The Mars Hill College and Community Development Institute will provide immediate access to students for agencies in western North Carolina. The college will become a third funding source to enable as many students as possible to participate. At least twenty-five interns will be involved in the programs being developed. Their goals for the summer include researching the needs for day activity centers for the mentally retarded, making housing surveys for Model Madison, developing better recreational programs for the area, and laying the ground work for a community-oriented Christian Ethics Institute.

The Institute will seek to provide the resources necessary for carrying out these projects. The faculty will assist the interns by donating advisory time. The college is lending its facilities to enable as many students as possible to have access to and opportunity for participation in the internship program.

For additional information on any aspect of community development activities at Mars Hill College contact Richard Hoffman, Assistant Dean for Program Development, Box 514-T, Mars Hill, North Carolina 28754; phone area code 704, 689-2500.

What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

—Thoreau

Thrust for Excellence

For two and a half years Mars Hill College has been mapping out its strategy for the implementation of its development program entitled "Emphasis on Excellence." We have been upgrading faculty salaries and fringe benefit programs in order to retain our own faculty, as well as to attract outstanding new faculty. With a solid cadre of outstanding personnel it is now possible for the college to begin to develop new curricular emphases which will make us unique among the four-year, liberal arts colleges. The articles contained in this paper point up the direction in which we are headed and the uniqueness which we can claim.

We see emerging within this college community a genuine Christian concern for our fellow man. This concern can be directly implemented in college programs which give relevance to our course work, immediate application of studies for our students serving interns and conducting special research projects, and can definitely serve our community.

An important feature of this period of our development is for each of us to maintain proper perspective on this institution's development. All one has to do is look at where we were three years ago — a beginning four-year college, unaccredited, having little identity of its own. Today we are fully accredited, have uniqueness that is distinguishing us throughout this region, and have a faculty and student body that is genuinely concerned with institutional involvement. All of this should give us great optimism and hope for the future.

Remember this is only the beginning of the greatness that can come to Mars Hill College! The opportunity is before us to become the prototype of the excellence that can be had in a Christian institution of higher education.

—Fred Blake Bentley
President
Mars Hill College

55 Youngsters Encouraged By Upward Bound Program

The 1968 Summer Session at Mars Hill College was enlivened as 55 area high school students arrived on campus to compose the student body for Mars Hill's first Upward Bound Program.

The students were underachievers from families whose economic means were sub-standard and whose cultural enrichment was an unknown experience.

The goal of the program was to attack these problems on group and on individual levels. Students participated in group activity both inside and outside the classroom. Smaller dorm groups created greater intimacy, and each group was assigned to a tutor-counselor who participated in all phases of the student's life while he was a member of Upward Bound.

Academically, the Mars Hill program attempted to allow freedom from the traditional setting in which the student had performed poorly. Academic achievement was accomplished in such a way as to make the previously bitter experience of learning more pleasurable and meaningful. Classes appealed to the student's interests and were provocative enough to bear meaning to an adolescent group of the 60's.

The cultural phase of the Mars Hill program emphasized the introduction of students to areas previously unexplored. Through exposure to travel and visits to settings rich in historical value

and to academic, political and metropolitan areas, the students came to realize that life is a multi-phased experience and does exist in forms previously unthought of.

After eight weeks of such a program, 55 students left the campus acting, talking and thinking differently from the way they had at the beginning of their new uncertain journey of exploration; 55 students left their first Upward Bound experience a step closer to the maturity which qualifies men and women to operate tomorrow's world.

But Mars Hill did not leave the flame ignited in these students to die out. A staff was appointed to maintain contact with the students both in the home and the school. The purpose was to feed necessary fuel to keep the flames burning until they could be further nurtured in phase two of the programs this coming summer.

Mars Hill College was proud of its 1968's Upward Bound Program. There was pride in a program that encompassed the area and scope which last summer's program did. But pride went beyond the pen and paper outline of a program. Pride lived in seeing 55 students walk with a higher degree of self-confidence—a self-confidence capable of and strong enough to initiate personality changes responsible for remolding 55 human beings toward a productive and rewarding life.

In recent years critics have observed that colleges are too "ivory towerish," that faculty members are unwilling to test their models, designed through research and seminars, to the many urgent programs facing rural and urban communities. Furthermore, the critics contend that the curriculum and teaching methodology of the colleges do not reflect a proper concern for this critical time in our history. The faculty lecture from notes taken in graduate school, and the students in an unimaginative fashion give back the facts on examinations. There is little effort to blend classroom theory and service experience or to create a dialogue between faculty and students.

Mars Hill College recognizes the validity of much of what the critics have observed about traditional limitations of the liberal arts. In an attempt to redefine this concept, the college is seeking new alliances with the Appalachian region to provide a laboratory for welding together imagination and experience.

In brief, through its numerous community-related programs Mars Hill College is demonstrating its belief that learning can take place elsewhere than within the four walls of a classroom or the confines of a college campus. Service-learning experiences through internship programs, seminars, and independent study can be interrelated to produce a student who has examined and re-examined his basic assumptions to the extent that he can develop and defend a position which will enable him to participate effectively in society.

The College and Community Development Institute provides the structure for implementing this new approach to a liberal arts education. Essentially, the Institute acts as a catalyst to stimulate new programs and approaches within the various academic departments. Moreover, to assure maximum coordination of all efforts in developing the "College and Community" theme, project ideas are channeled from the departments to the Institute before being submitted to the funding agencies. One objective of such departmental input is for all programs to be academically based and interrelated and for the total college faculty and student body to move together in the development of the Institute. An advisory board consisting of faculty, students, and community agency persons functions to screen programs and to assist the Director in formulating policies for the Institute.

Student response to the internship concept and to the Institute as a catalyst for developing new program ideas has been most enthusiastic. A student intern in the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court stated, "I've learned more through practical experience than I could have learned in three years in a classroom."

Another student working with the Asheville City Human Relations Coordinator said, "I came in here very ignorant; I needed to overcome some of my prejudices. There couldn't have been a better agency than this for me. I know this is a cliché," he continued, "but I've had a chance to walk in someone else's shoes."

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