

BOWIE STATE COLLEGE

BOWIE, MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

August 29, 1968

Dear Parent:

A faculty-student committee which studied the student demonstration of April 1968, at Bowie State College has asked me to describe to you the ill-effects that many of our students suffered. The committee also asked me to inform you of the many corrective steps we have taken to remove the underlying causes of student unrest and to clarify the College's position toward student protests.

Losses

Our students, including a large number who did not participate in the student demonstration, lost approximately two weeks from classes. There was an overall academic degeneration in the College after the demonstration. Most classes never caught up.

Several additional students have indicated they had a variety of reactions resulting directly from the demonstration; increased smoking; sleeplessness; excessive drinking; and other more serious illnesses, some requiring professional help. There were also other ill-effects.

The consensus is that student boycotts and similar forms of protests, even though conducted in the peaceful form of the Bowie demonstration, should be prevented because of the tremendous human cost inflicted upon your sons and daughters. To remove the underlying causes of unrest, we have worked long and hard to create a clean, safe, wholesome and beautiful environment for your young people. In addition, we have developed a revised curricula and have attracted twenty-seven additional first-rate professors to assure our students a sound modern education. We think we have been tremendously successful.

Changes in the Physical Plant

Tubman Hall, an old dormitory for women, has been closed. It will be completely rebuilt - except the brick exterior - in a year or so. Holmes Hall, formerly a men's dormitory, has been repainted - within and without - repaired and refurnished. The freshly redecorated dormitory will be used to house female students.

Kennard Hall, our upperclass women's dormitory has received necessary repairs (e.g., the heating system).

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New Modern mobile home units, providing our students with the maximum of privacy, have been installed for male students.

The old administration building, Banneker Hall, has been marked for demolition, except for one wing which will be renovated.

The road network within the campus is being completed.

New sidewalks have been laid on the campus.

Contracts have been awarded for plants, shrubbery and trees to beautify the campus in September.

In summary, our students will have a new campus in September.

New Programs

Students attending Bowie State College in September will have nine new majors. Majors are now available in:

- Art
- Biology
- Business Administration
- International Studies
- Mathematics
- Physical Education
- Political Science
- Spanish
- Speech

Twenty-seven outstanding professors have been selected from approximately 200 applicants to bring new strength and competency to Bowie State College.

These include specialists in African Studies, Latin American Studies, East Asian Studies, Data Processing and a number of other liberal arts fields.

A number of innovations are being made in the Language Department. A professor will come from the Foreign Service Institute to use techniques in teaching French which have proved successful in our Spanish Program. An archeologist is developing a program to take some of our students to Europe in 1969.

In addition, an incoming German professor will bring with him his thousand-slide collection of art. A Phi Beta Kappa from Swathmore College, who has completed work on her doctorate at Harvard, will introduce specialized courses in civil rights.

An even more dramatic innovation is the College Intersession, which will be initiated in January 1969. Students entering in September will be able to register for two extra hours of credit which they will be able to earn in a two-week period between the end of the first semester and the beginning of the second semester. Students must submit a plan of study. However, they will have a wide range of relevant activities in which to participate. For example, some students studying Spanish will live for two weeks with a Spanish speaking family in the Spanish ghetto of Washington. This experience will enable students to study the language and get an intimate knowledge of the culture of the people whose language is being studied.

Communication

One major deficiency leading to the student unrest of 1968 was a breakdown in the communications network in the College. Steps have been taken to develop an elaborate communications system:

1. Weekly personal meetings will be held between the President of the Student Government Association and the President of the College.
2. Bi-weekly meetings will be held by the President of the College with a group of Student leaders and a random sample of students. In general, these will be dinner meetings.
3. Each month the President of the College will have an open forum before the general student body. At this meeting any student will be able to state any grievance or complaint that he has with the assurance that it will receive the personal attention of the President.
4. The President will maintain an open door policy so that any student who feels that he has a legitimate complaint and who has not been satisfied by other officials of the College may make a direct appeal to the President.
5. Students have already been given equal representation in virtually all of the governing bodies of the College.
6. There will be a faculty representative at the regular meetings of the Student Government Association.
7. New personnel have been employed to provide professional advice to the Student Newspaper. In addition, a work-study program is being developed so that student editors may obtain practical experience in developing a strong student publication.
8. A faculty-student grievance committee has been approved by the faculty and the Student Government Association. Any student may refer any grievance to this committee, which will be under the direct control of the Student Government Association.

Position on Student Unrest

Having taken corrective action to provide our students with a modern physical plant, a superior Education Program and a voice in the government of the College, and a communications network to resolve grievances, there should be no need for student unrest at Bowie State College. In light of the decline of public sympathy for student demonstrators - traced primarily to the public disgust with the demonstrations at Columbia University - student leaders at Bowie State College also recognize that it would be not only unnecessary but unwise to encourage disturbances on the campus.

Nevertheless, unrest still exists in the country. In addition, there are self-serving individuals or adherents of violence in the country; therefore, the College must now state its position in the event of future disturbances. The College's basic position is as follows:

1. The basic rights and freedom of students at Bowie State College are recognized and will be protected. All students of the College are being issued a copy of the Student Bill of Rights endorsed by the major student and personnel associations of the United States of America.
2. A responsive dialogue will be maintained with students during any period of unrest in order to prevent any disruption to College activities.
3. Any disruption in the College's normal schedule or any interference with the ordinary operation of the College will be opposed.
4. Vigorous steps will be taken to deal with any outside agitators or other individuals seeking to create discord or disharmony in the College.
5. Any act of violence or property destruction will subject the offender to disciplinary action within the College and, if warranted, to legal action.

It should be repeated that this overall statement of policy is at the request of a faculty-student committee. All indications are that a harmonious relationship will prevail in the immediate as well as the distant future. Because of the preventive measures which have already been taken, because of the establishment of a communications system to detect early signs of discord, because of the determination of the faculty, student and administration to resolve any grievances which might arise, the chances of disharmony reappearing at Bowie State College are negligible if at all existent.

Very truly yours,

Samuel L. Myers
President

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