

Self study examines operation of college;

By Robin Darling

Amassed over a period of two years, the facts and proposals outlined in the recently released "Self-Study 1971" were formulated as part of the requirements for the reaccreditation of Mary Washington College. The report is divided into 11 chapters, totaling 300 pages, some of which attempt to examine the future and recent past of MWC, others of which make evaluations and predictions.

Two of the report's recommendations, though phased conditionally, seem to be a response to drawn-out controversy on campus. First, in consideration of the present relationship between MWC and the University of Virginia, its 'mother institution,' the report cautiously advised legal autonomy for MWC. Second, it recommended, after citing the advantages and disadvantages of the change, the abolition of freshmen dorms and the integration of each entering class into all residential halls.

While specified committees in each department submitted particular evaluations and proposals, the Self-Study Steering Committee consists of two students, four faculty members, and three members of the administration. Former Dean of the College Reginald Whidden edited the report in its final form. Although the committee acknowledged the air of the MWC community in the makeup of "Self-Study 1971," various students and faculty members have complained that some of the report's statistics were "padded," others suggested that members of the committee were "arbitrarily" selected.

Previously, a Self-Study report had also been in the works for two years, in preparation for an April, 1962 visit of the Commission on Colleges and Universities. By the following September, the recommendations of that Committee's report had prompted considerable attention by the faculty and administration. According to the current report, these two bodies acted upon the Commission's suggestions by eliminating physical education and home economics majors, by compiling profiles of each freshman class, by adopting a four-point grading system, by instituting a counseling center, and by making statements on academic freedom and MWC tenure policy.

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The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

its formal divisions only superficially categorize the problems and procedures which influence the whole College.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Included in the review of administrative coordination was an unreserved commendation of the role of Chancellor Grellet C. Simpson as an intellectual leader within the College community, as well as an administrator willing to listen to the complaints and suggestions of the faculty and students. This section of the study reveals in particular the Chancellor's semi-independence of his legal superiors within the University system, the President and Board of Visitors of UVa. Simpson, it implies, has nearly automatic approval of these officers for the programs which he initiates at MWC.

Such a conclusion has been upheld as recently as last year, when the Visitors affirmed the right of the Chancellor to decide on Open House hours in MWC dormitories. Simpson had, prior to that decision, questioned whether the final authority in such a decision would rest with himself or with the Board.

Although the report stressed the importance of the Chancellor, the roles of the other top administration officials were not ignored. The position of Assistant Chancellor for Administration, which the Board of Visitors approved in 1970, was carefully detailed. The Assistant Chancellor last year administered diverse offices and as of this fall, has assumed direction of other divisions, such as the campus news service and the Alumnae Office.

In the absence of an internal development office, which the self-study specifically recommends, the Assistant handles certain funds in conjunction with other offices.

While positions such as Comptroller and Registrar are restrictive and generally easy to be defined, the offices of Chancellor and Assistant Chancellor have a relationship which has only recently evolved and which, in the study, is less easily characterized. From the information included by the Steering Committee, it appears that the former position is one of direction and policymaking, and that the latter consists mainly of the administering of College policies and the overseeing of various functions within the lower echelons of the administration. However, the report implies in this section

State Normal School, and its development as a teachers' college until 1944, when it affiliated itself by state law with UVa, and placed itself under the higher administration of that institution. Specifying the conditions under which MWC joined the University—as the women's wing of the school—the report goes on to state that with recent coeducation the character of both schools has changed, effectively invalidating the original reasons for the affiliation.

The study, in short seems to approve of the suggestion of the "Russell Report" (of the Higher Education Study Commission) made six years ago: that Mary Washington College gain independent status with a separate Board of Visitors. However, the Future of the College Committee recommended in 1967 that MWC remain within the University system, with the understanding that although it might one day stand independent, the benefits of affiliation at that time offset the advantages of separation.

Further, the study notes that the workable relationship and general cooperation between MWC and UVa has resulted largely from the personalities and mutual understanding of Chancellor Simpson and President Edgar Shannon. Without making a proof that such a relationship does exist, the report concludes that, although such an informal agreement may be the basis for good relations at the present time, a change of administrators or conditions in either of the two institutions may make that structural relationship inoperable.

In addition, it mentions the lack of coordination between the schools' academic programs and the upcoming retirement of the present Chancellor as other factors in the widening separation. The report acknowledges that the next chancellor's attitude toward autonomy may alter its predictions, but it cites MWC and UVa as competing institutions and recommends a separate Board of Visitors.

Perhaps the most frequently mentioned factor which ties the two institutions together is the budgetary system of the College. Separate from UVa as it presents its biennial requests to the House of Delegates' Appropriations Committee, MWC is nonetheless affected by the finances of the other school and by the attitudes of the state legislators.

FINANCES AND OPERATIONS

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The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools which is the regional accreditation agency which evaluates MWC, sponsors the Self-Study program every ten years for the stated purpose of improving educational effectiveness. The study is required for all members of Association to retain accreditation, and the Association provides questions around which the committee can conduct its study. Among these questions are "Are there channels through which students may make known their suggestions as to procedure and policies?" and "Does Mary Washington College fulfill its role and purpose as an effective institution of higher learning?"

At its outset, the Committee acknowledged that its findings could involve a revision of the previously-defined purposes of the college. This had, in fact, happened in the past, as this month's report mentions. In April of 1953, for example, the faculty adopted a statement of purpose which defined the College as an institution with an "obligation to meet the needs of the women of Virginia," while among the school's aims it listed "respect for religious beliefs" and "love of country and devotion to our democracy." In response to coeducation within the Virginia University system, the faculty's statement of purpose for March, 1970, deleted all references to a particular sex and substituted as the College purpose "to provide, without regard to race, creed, or national origin, an educational program of the highest quality." Most recently, characterizations of MWC in official correspondence and documents have been vague. Generally, MWC is termed a "single-purpose institution" and an acknowledgement of its limitations are included. Administrations, as the "Self-Study 1971" reveals, increasingly feel in competition with multipurpose universities, such as UVa and Virginia Commonwealth University on the one hand, and on the other, with specialized institutions, such as community colleges and professional and vocational schools.

Each chapter of the study deals with various bodies or institutions within MWC. However, the same financial problems which plague the Comptroller's Office in Chapter III, "Organization and Administration," reappear as factors affecting faculty salaries in Chapter V, "Faculty." The study, then, is best read with specific problems in mind;

Committee, it appears that the former position is one of direction and policymaking, and that the latter consists mainly of the administering of College policies and the overseeing of various functions within the lower echelons of the administration. However, the report implies in this section that much of the relationship between the two positions is dependent upon the nature of the persons who fill them.

A similar situation—of the personalities involved in two administrative offices—appears in a preceding section on the bond between MWC and the government of the University.

MWC-UVA TIES

In its discussion of the College and the body of the University, the report emphasizes the history of MWC as an institution of rapidly changing purposes. It notes its origin as the

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FINANCES AND OPERATIONS

Despite the fact that the report's stance on College finances is mostly explanatory, it cites certain factors as contributing to MWC's financial difficulties. First, before it is submitted to the state Division of the Budget, the biennial budget must receive approval from the UVa Board of Visitors. Presumably, the Board would attempt to coordinate the budgets of all other four-year divisions of the University.

Moreover, the report makes the prediction, based on the 1970-72 Virginia general fund allocations for MWC, that students fees will be increased along with the costs of operating the College. In other words, for reasons economic and political, Virginia legislators are becoming less and less

