



Centennial College: exciting and successful

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Some call it the liveliest night spot on campus. Others call it the most exciting educational innovation at the University in years.

Sounds paradoxical? However, "it" happens to be the Centennial College — the University's only residential college.

The Centennial College with its 180 students will be completing its first year of operation at the end of this semester. The main purpose of the College is to combine the student's academic and non-academic life into one experience. The curriculum includes much independent study and the student is given a wide choice of what he wants to study.

The faculty of the Centennial College is claiming that the residential college has been a great success in its first year.

"The College is so much better than the regular University that it is ridiculous to compare them," remarked Phillip Scribner, one of the College's teaching fellows.

Centennial College Director Robert Knoll described the success of the College by saying, "It seems to be totally obvious that Centennial students are more open, more critical, more involved, more alert, more awake to different possibilities and more committed than our special control group of non-Centennial students."

Knoll said that the residential college idea should be expanded at the University since it has been so highly successful in the Centennial College.

One of the integral parts of the College has been its coed lounge which is open 24 hours a day. However, Knoll noted, the College hasn't had any more trouble with its coed lounge than any other dorm.

Knoll warned that the College is not a panacea to all the problems of education. He admitted that the program has not been beneficial to all the participating students.

Scribner noted that some students have not benefited from the college because they could not become accustomed to the College's loose structure which demands that the student take the initiative in his education.

"We could force students to read books, write papers, and attend meetings," Scribner said. "But that is a waste of time. Students aren't going to learn unless they take the initiative."

Jerry Petr, another teacher in the College, agreed with Scribner. "I have become convinced that for effective learning to take place there has to be internal motivation on the part of the student," Petr said. "Very little intellectual growth can occur when the student is driven only by external forces."

The Centennial College next semester will be expanded to 250 students. Next September, 125 new freshmen and 25 upperclassmen will be admitted, and 100 former Centennial scholars will return.

Knoll explained that the curriculum and structure of the College will be modified for next semester after consulting with the current Centennial students.

The work during this year's Centennial College has been divided into four major divisions with the students choosing a topic within each of the divisions.

Students this year have been studying social change, stasi, nvironmental change and utopias. However, Knoll said that the Centennial course next year will not be arbitrarily divided as was done this year.

'I really like the atmosphere'

How do the students who have lived with it for its first year feel about Centennial College?

"There's really nothing I dislike here," said Steve Timmons, a freshman. "I really like the atmosphere."

He commented that the Centennial College experience will probably be most beneficial to liberal arts majors, because it teaches constructive thinking rather than facts.

Timmons defended the college of criticism that it is too unstructured and is actually no more than a 24-hour coed lounge.

"The structure of the college is loose because this year's students have wanted it that way," he said. "I think the academic structure may become tighter next year, but the social structure probably won't change."

Junior Ken Wald said he enjoys the general diversity in the college. "It's beautiful in contrast with the straight university," he said.

"Critics say the College is subverting the University," Wald said. "I wish this were true, but it is not. The fact is that if Centennial College were not here, there would be a lot more people out working for educational reform."

One commuter student, who is not electing to return to the college next year, said it is necessary to live-in to get the full benefit of the program. "The residence part of the college has been one of the best things about it," he said. "It's hard to commute and get much good out of the program."

Freshman Diane Wanek said Centennial courses are easier than regular University courses in the sense they are easier to enjoy. But, she added, they are much harder in that it takes a lot of self-discipline to learn from them.

She added that the Centennial concept of learning should really be used in grade schools. "Then there would be a much better chance that students coming to college would know what they should specialize in," she said.



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