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**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991**



BOWDOIN COLLEGE
BRUNSWICK, MAINE



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ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991

TO THE GOVERNING BOARDS, ALUMNI,
PARENTS, AND FRIENDS:

This is the Annual Report of the President to the Governing Boards of the College, the first I have had the honor to prepare as president of Bowdoin College.

Although the reporting year ended on June 30, before the unfolding of the summer's events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, I cannot submit my report without noting the excitement and sense of responsibility they generate in my colleagues and me. We are seeing the moral reawakening of peoples who for seventy-five years have been deadened by the thought control and linguistic corruption of party bureaucracies and police forces. Individuals formerly driven by fear and hopelessness into interior lives are speaking out with freshness and clarity, and they and Eastern European universities are addressing issues of personal integrity and human governance with a passion we have not seen in the world for a long time. I deeply believe that Bowdoin, with deep roots in our democracy, is wonderfully placed to reinforce—possibly help rejuvenate—in our American academy this free spirit of intellectual passion and openmindedness.

It is the particular responsibility of colleges and universities to do this. We are part of what some have called the “middle web”—the institutions lying between the state and the family that give a democracy its temper and character. In all our just campus concerns for financial soundness, for equity and civility and diversity, and for the personal rights and needs of faculty and students, it is still essential to remind ourselves of the great social role we at Bowdoin play and the dependence of American democracy upon institutions like our own to create an intellectual environment of intensity and greatness of spirit.

There was, in fact, much in this past year to suggest the vibrancy and health of the College. Faculty won a number of major national awards to pursue research and curricular development in such disciplines as computer science and mathematics that will have a national impact on teaching and learning in their fields. At last count, six members of the faculty had brought out books during the year; the tenure process promoted seven faculty members of uncommonly high quality to permanencies at the College; and the recruitment of new faculty seemed to me to attract people of genuine distinction.

Among the honors won by Bowdoin students were three National Science Foundation fellowships—awarded nationally to those likely to provide the next generation's scientific leadership in America—and a Watson and a Truman. Two student-written musicals provided a spectacular evening of talent and creativity, as did the year-end dance program. I had the ennobling experience of watching, from “King James's” seat in the Chapel, a Ben Jonson masque, brilliantly staged, choreographed, and orchestrated by a Bowdoin senior. Our leading male diver won the Division III NCAA Championship; a Bowdoin football player was one of the 22 winners of the National Scholar-Athlete prize; and a woman skier was the NCAA Division II champion in the giant slalom.

The Bowdoin Museum of Art had a rich and varied year—three major exhibitions and an array of grants and gifts. The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum and Arctic Studies Center completed the renovation and climate control of its collections room and extended its program of field trips, research and publication. The Hawthorne-Longfellow library opened its on-line computerized catalogue that gives access to the catalogues of Bates, Colby, and the University of Maine.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991

Bowdoin, a new president swiftly discovers, is a cheerful place, its dining rooms and public spaces a hubbub of lively discussion. Whether it was debate about the Gulf war or about diversity and gay/lesbian studies, debate and argumentation at the College seemed to me to be vigorous and focusing on the right subjects. Even a person who has lived for four years in Paris must grant that the achievements, day in and day out, of the Bowdoin Dining Service are spectacular and provide the nutrition and contribute to the atmosphere that underlies Bowdoin's social and intellectual life.

The College also showed financial vitality. Between July 1, 1990, and June 30, 1991, the value of the endowment increased to \$159 million, thanks to the Pickard bequest and good management by the Investment Committee in an adverse market. Gifts totaled over \$19.4 million, an historic high, while alumni and friends contributed nearly \$3 million to the Annual Fund in a difficult year economically in the Northeast. Admissions remained buoyant: although applications slipped three percent, the percentage of students accepted who entered Bowdoin this fall, and their quality, remain high. The Hatch Science Library, its spaces airy and flexible, opened on time—a fine first step in the needed upgrading of the College's science facilities.

The Boards and I were both aware that my first year would not be an easy one. Finance inevitably would be the most pressing agenda item. The College had run a deficit for the past five years, and 1989-1990, it turned out, was in the red by something over \$2.5 million. Two eagerly-awaited projects—a new science center and a refit of the disused athletic complex for student activities—would fairly clearly have to be postponed. In addition, the College had been without

a treasurer for a year, and other long-standing senior administrators had indicated intentions to depart their posts.

New presidents and their institutions must take one another's measure with care and much conversation, however, and at no time more than in their first year does the doctors' Hippocratic oath apply to college presidents: "Do no harm." So it was agreed that in this first year the President would have three goals—and that the financial agenda should not crowd out other vital, long-term objectives. First, he should begin to understand Bowdoin College—its history, its nature, and its faculty, student, staff, alumni, and community constituencies. Second, he should make a serious first step toward budgetary control, accepting that equilibrium would require a three-year strategy. Finally, he should put in place a senior administration.

Recruitment of Senior Staff

Beginning with the recruitment of senior staff, to which faculty, staff, and members of the Boards have given splendidly of their time, I can report unqualified success.

—Charles R. Beitz, professor and chair of political science at Swarthmore, will take up the redefined post of dean for academic affairs, succeeding Dean of the Faculty Alfred H. Fuchs, who is returning to the faculty as professor of psychology after 16 years in the deanship. Dean Beitz will have enhanced responsibility for curriculum and academic organization. He has just appointed as associate dean Randolph Stakeman, associate professor of history and chair of the Afro-American Studies Program at the College.

—Kent John Chabotar, lecturer at the Harvard School of Education and the Kennedy School and a specialist in higher education finance and management, will take up the post of vice president for

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991

finance and administration and treasurer. He led a successful recruitment for an experienced budget officer: Gerald L. Boothby has come to us from Cornell. The search for a controller is well advanced.

—William Mason, director of admissions, resigned and has accepted an appointment at the College of the Holy Cross. Richard Steele, former director of undergraduate admissions at Duke, became dean of admissions on July 1. He will report directly to the president. He has recruited as his deputy Linda Kremer, formerly director of admissions at the University of Vermont, and he has already, with the assistance of the Publications Office, redesigned key pieces of Bowdoin's admissions literature and has initiated research on Bowdoin's admissions position.

—The Development Office has been reorganized, and William A. Torrey, formerly director of development, is now acting vice president for development and alumni affairs. Richard A. Mersereau, formerly director of public relations and publications reporting to the vice president for development, will now report directly to the president as director of college relations.

—Jane L. Jervis, who has served Bowdoin with great ability for three and one-half years, will continue to hold the post of Dean of the College.

Every member of the senior staff, and most notably departing colleagues Al Fuchs and Bill Mason, could not have been more vigorous or loyal in their service to the College during the transition. Jane Jervis, as acting president, took a number of tough issues in hand and had them under control for my arrival. Thomas J. Hochstettler, dean for planning and administration, had begun to introduce financial and administrative disciplines that needed only affirmation and support from the new president.



Top: President Edwards, center, meets with members of the senior administration: left to right, Steele, Boothby, Chabotar, Beitz, Edwards, Jervis, Torrey, Hochstettler, Stakeman, Mersereau. Above: Boothby and Chabotar confer about budget planning.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991



Top: Associate Professor of Physics Syphers and students study the magneto-resistance of semi-conductor systems under investigation. Above: Students enjoy the study spaces in the new Hatch Science Library.

Assembling the Budget

The preparation of the 1991-1992 budget was only a partially successful engagement, as it was expected to be. We encountered peculiar difficulties in its preparation. We had no clear baseline, since the 1989-1990 year could not be formally closed until April of 1991. Nor did we have great confidence in the timeliness or accuracy of our financial controls and reporting. Financially, there were singular obstacles. Since Bowdoin's fee, its endowment spending, and its annual gift stream from donors—which add up to roughly 85 percent of our revenues—are already very high, the deficit solution, it became immediately clear, would be a matter of cost reduction rather than revenue enhancement.

The budget ultimately produced we called “transitional,” both in its method of production—by the administration and without much campus participation—and in its temporizing outcome—a budgeted shortfall of \$933,000. An array of meetings and discussions were held on the campus during budget preparation, however, and I believe the entire College, its faculty, staff, administration, and Boards are now seized not merely with the reality of the problem but with a commitment to its solution.

A major part of Bowdoin's cost problem has been a student-to-employee ratio of roughly 2.1 to 1—1385 students to roughly 640 employees (we are not yet sure about the precise head count or full-time equivalent numbers), unusually low for a college. Employee numbers have risen sharply over the last five years on both the academic and administrative sides of the College. The problem is compounded by a rather relaxed institutional regard for the budget—budgets at Bowdoin are “estimates, not contracts,” com-

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991

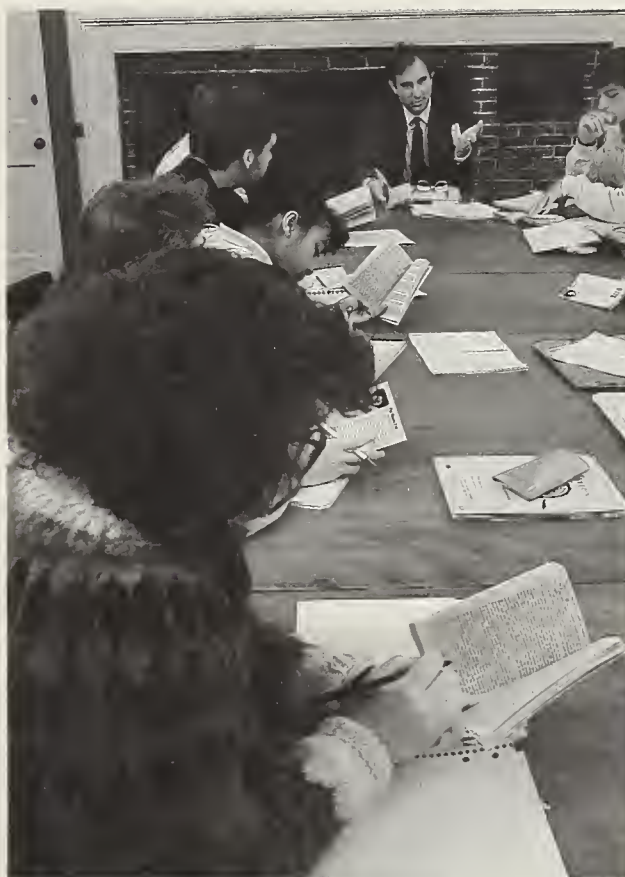
mented the financial consultant who was to become our new treasurer.

The 1991-1992 budget will be stringent, but not draconian. Every department of the College identified reductions of at least 4 percent in non-personnel expenditures. Twenty-five full-time equivalent positions were deleted from the budget (no permanent faculty positions among them), to be achieved through attrition and separation—in the latter case through a careful program of notice, assistance in relocation, and a separation package. The institutional pool for salary increases was held to 4.5 percent; higher-salaried administrators received no increases. Tuition was held to its lowest increase in fourteen years—6.8 percent, or one percent above the 5.8 percent Consumer Price Index for the 1990-1991 fiscal year. Spending from the endowment was frozen at the dollar amount of the previous year.

The process of assembling the budget made luminously clear what we need for an effective budget process. Bowdoin requires a systematic consultative mechanism for the campus (a Committee on the Budget, which has been appointed); a stronger information base and a budget-analyzing capacity in the Treasurer's Office; and a better analytical grip and clear policy on certain major "drivers" of Bowdoin's cost structure—student financial aid, faculty salary policy, and the size of the College's enrollment.

Understanding the Nature of the College

Finally, the third presidential goal: grasping the nature of the College. The tasks of recruitment and budgeting underlined how important, and rather difficult, it would be to "understand Bowdoin." The College, it seemed to me, had few natural forums for institution-wide conversation.



Top: Associate Professor Litvak conducts an English seminar class. Above: Carmen Greenlee, supervisor of the Language Media Center, instructs a student in the use of language laboratory materials.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991



The custom of departmental autonomy, both academic and non-academic, made discourse on budget-making and organization of the College narrow and fragmented. The first campus political issues—racial diversity and gay and lesbian studies—were raised with the president through the medium of a student demonstration blocking the library, not in a more tractable forum for discussion. To form habits of discourse, I began the practice of holding office hours for students in the Moulton Union for two hours each Wednesday morning. I also held meetings each term with the support staff and administrative staff groups; paid visits to each academic department to discuss its purpose and programs; and established the practice of an unfailing Tuesday morning meeting of the senior staff.



*Top: President Edwards meets with students each Wednesday morning in the Moulton Union.
Above: Students use the Department of Psychology computer laboratory to compile and analyze research data.*

As important as conversation on campus was discourse with Bowdoin's own alumni in Brunswick and across the country. Their love of the College, and their moral and financial support for it, are legendary, and Blythe and I needed to hear what graduates had to say about Bowdoin and about their own lives and their expectations of their College. We traveled to New York, Boston, Portland, Philadelphia, Washington, D. C., San Francisco, and Los Angeles for meetings with alumni clubs and a great number of delightful and valuable coffees, cocktails, and individual conversations. They, and Homecoming, the Inauguration, Reunions, and a number of other gatherings on campus impressed us deeply with the intensity of support the College enjoys, and we began to establish what we hope will be a habit of easy discussion about the College with those who hold it in respect and affection.

The College, however, also needed an objective forum in which to discuss itself and its goals. After

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991

discussion with the Boards, I appointed the Strategic Planning Task Force, a group of five faculty, five senior administrators, an administrative staff member, and two students, which I chaired.

The occasion for the Task Force was the budget deficit. It was not going to be easy, I thought, to excise five percent of the budget without getting from the Bowdoin community intimations of what should be saved—that vital feel for the essence of the College, its sense of itself, and its aspirations. Bowdoin needed a forum through which to view and discuss itself and inform the president.

But there was a broader reason. Bowdoin's new president had been absent from America for four years and had just returned to find its society fractious and uncertain and higher education under attack. He needed guidance about what American society expected of a college—and about the range of practical freedom that finance, academic convention, and politics would grant one of America's historically strongest colleges in choosing and pursuing its destiny. Would a representative Task Force articulate a vision, or would it perhaps exemplify the anomie and purposelessness that everyone from the secretary of education to the popular press seemed to find in American higher education? Certainly, public criticism abounded. The new president found a newspaper reporter describing college seniors who could define only indistinctly what the U. S. cabinet is; law firms complaining of new \$80,000-a-year associates incapable of drafting coherent contracts; an article in a business magazine scornfully comparing the \$20,000 fees and services of a traditional college with the \$7,000 charge of a bare-bones place with no playing

fields, no faculty research, and no history, but lots of teaching in an office block. What were Bowdoin's affirmations in the face of these attacks?

All this led to a deeper issue about the definition of higher education today. In the debate at Bowdoin which seemed to me to be going on largely between the present and past generations of the College, as to whether fraternities should exist and whether religious observances should be barred from campus ceremonies, a fundamental question was bubbling. Bowdoin was arguing about the place that values—matters of conviction and will, as well as intellect—should play in the education of the next generation of leaders.

Our forebears saw higher education not just as the training of the mind, but as the building of character—a mix of the spiritual and the intellectual—to prepare young people to join a civilized society. They believed it was not a solitary, self-interested business; it was a social activity to be pursued in intimate acquaintance with fellow students of good character and with faculty of openness of spirit as well as strength of intellect. Their real concern was not whether learning went on in small classes or in fire-lit dens, but whether a density of association existed between those who were scholars, master teachers, and mature human beings and those who were apprentice learners and inexperienced human beings. Were these the aspirations of a homogeneous, all-male, less “diverse” time whose model of a community was simple, uncritical, and even a trifle airless? For fear that it might express values that were sectarian, or “bourgeois,” or white, or male—be a “prep school,” not a college—should a college define its goal only as the enhancement of intellectual capacity? Or could it recreate and reflect its “best self,” *possibly* define a common ethic that would

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991

resonate with the best selves of men and women of Bowdoin who are far less homogeneous in background and far more independent in spirit than were their predecessors?

In its first year, and in many hours of meetings, including an eight-hour Sunday “retreat,” the Task Force did not solve Bowdoin’s budget problem or develop an academic blueprint. It did demonstrate, however, wonderfully reassuringly, that there is clarity in the minds of the College community about what Bowdoin is in business to do. In some measure it is in the bones of the place. There is an earthy, gritty quality about a college on the granite of Maine, near the majesty and power of the ocean and the forests, and the trade routes of the world. Its context alone ensures that its educational programs are not fashionable or effete.

As it worked its way toward a fresh perception of Bowdoin, the Task Force underlined time and again that the intellectual mission of a liberal arts college is its heart. Tempering, deepening, and broadening the minds of able young women and men is what it is designed to do. What a person needs to know will surely change over time. The previously ignored contributions of blacks, women, and the world beyond Europe and North America must naturally and properly be incorporated into the core of academic concerns, just as the arts made their late and overdue entry earlier in this century. But the Task Force implicitly recognized that what an effective person needs to *be* has changed relatively little. Suffusing its debates was a recognition that a college could—had to—reinforce honesty, steadfastness, humane-ness, open-mindedness, and venturesomeness. A mature mind should also be a generous mind alert to the “common good.”

The Task Ahead

All these debates of the past year about budgetary priorities and the purposes of education that define them took place against a national and international background that makes this surely one of the most exciting times in history to be a college president. The summer of 1991 only emphasized that the foreign policy premises of the past forty years have changed. At one level, the United States is a colossus astride the globe. But the United States is now a debtor, dependent on the confidence of foreign lenders; it is only one of three major trading blocs; and it is deeply concerned about its productivity and the competence and ethics of its leaders in private and public life. That this anxiety extends to the academy, and to rectitude in scientific research and clinical expression, was made clear by a recent circular letter to college presidents from the Association of Schools of Medicine imploring colleges to report acts of academic dishonesty and ethical weakness of seniors applying to medical school.

The mission of guiding the development of a young person in the four undergraduate years remains a sacred trust, as it has always been. Today, however, there is no area of the College that does not exact scrutiny, thought, and heated debate. The composition of the College, from the point of view of gender, race, nationality, and sexual preference; financial allocations to salaries, financial aid, and “old” departmental and “new” cross-disciplinary program portions of the curriculum; the nature and utility of fraternities; the rituals of the College; its ways of making decisions; the relation between Boards and campus— all are the everyday grist of the president’s mill. It is strenuous, but it matters deeply, for society today knows no device better

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
PRESIDENT
1990-1991

suites for the development of the next generation of leaders than the liberal arts college.

In the coming year, the financial and policy questions will be even tougher. The answers the campus and its Boards reach on the size of the college, financial aid, salaries, and physical planning and the renovation of facilities in times of scarcity will carry us toward a capital campaign and the positioning of Bowdoin academically for the next century. Each of these questions will carry us deeply into the eternal educational questions of how one generation acquits its trust to shape, form, and launch a successor generation. The privilege of working on these questions, even on bad days, makes the job of a college president the best in the world.

I am grateful beyond words for the support and encouragement that members of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Overseers have given to Blythe and me in our first year, for the generosity of the campus community in giving this new president the benefit of understandable doubts, and for the interest and advice during the year of countless graduates of the College. We look forward eagerly to the year ahead.



President Robert H. Edwards and Blythe Bickel Edwards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert H. Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert H. Edwards

BOWDOIN COLLEGE

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Charles R. Beitz <i>Dean for Academic Affairs</i>	Richard A. Mersereau <i>Director of College Relations</i>
Kent John Chabotar <i>Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer</i>	Richard E. Steele <i>Dean of Admissions</i>
Thomas J. Hochstettler <i>Dean for Planning</i>	William A. Torrey III <i>Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations</i>

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