

Mortal Combat: The Fight to Preserve Collegiate Structure
by Brent Gotsch

If collegiate structure is to survive, we can expect to see the implementation of the principles of collegiate structure by giving the College units a greater degree of academic autonomy in the expansion of courses, programs, and curricula; or, we can expect to see the collegiate units suffocate from their inability to make meaningful changes in Harpur's academic program. Thus we find ourselves with challenges on all sides as a small undergraduate college makes the transition into a larger university complex. The way in which we go about meeting these challenges is in large measure up to each member of the university community.¹

-Sandy Lazar, Assistant Editor for the West Harpur Other, 1969

Severe challenges to collegiate structure, the heart and soul of Hinman College, arose in the mid-1970's. During this time in history, the whole United States and in particular New York State was going through a severe budget crisis. Funds that used to be available just were not there anymore. In an effort to save the State money, politicians in Albany decided that funding to the SUNY system had to be cut. This was one of many measures that trimmed government services. With the state doling out fewer funds, the colleges and universities in the SUNY system got less support and had to find ways to trim their own budgets. Tuition increases were one measure, but this was not enough to sustain the financially strapped institution. Eventually, the SUNY Binghamton administration turned its sights on the fledgling residential colleges.

The first rumblings of a threat occurred in the Fall of 1973. On September 19, 1973, Edward J. Demske, the university's Vice President for Finance and Management, sent a memorandum to the Masters of all the colleges in the university. Although at this stage Demske was not looking to eliminate collegiate structure, his financial report would herald a new wave of challenge to collegiate structure. In his report he itemized the costs incurred by the colleges for faculty, staff, custodial support, office supplies and equipment, and other miscellaneous expenses. All told the colleges had expended \$22,247.97 of their \$74,500 allotted to them.² While the units were spending well within their means, the expenditures for housing resident faculty and paying for lecturers to teach within the borders of the colleges seemed high to some.

Making the colleges more economical became a battle cry for the challenge to collegiate structure.

The administration of SUNY Binghamton was also concerned that the colleges were simply getting too independent. A faculty Task Force assigned to oversee and assess collegiate structure had made only halfhearted attempts at oversight. A memo from then SUNY Binghamton President Clifford D. Clark to Associate Dean Daniel Fallon, who was then chairing a committee seeking a new Faculty Master for Newing College, went to great lengths to show the administration's desire to completely restructure the colleges to bring them more into line, under the direct supervision to the university administration. The memo, dated April 14, 1975, states in part, "this is in response to your...commitment to a process of thorough review, encompassing the possibility of complete restructuring of our present mode of operation, of the collegiate unit system at SUNY-Binghamton. Because I believe a constructive review of this matter is timely...I am pleased to commit the administration to the initiation of such a review."³ The memo went on to give a brief report on the findings of the Colville Report. It also recognized that a few committees had been charged to evaluate collegiate structure, but, in the words of President Clark, by the fall of 1970 they had "quietly disappeared."⁴ President Clark also made known his desire to address the "administrative authority of the Masters, the budgetary status and accounting process of the colleges, the role of faculty fellows and graduate or teaching assistants within the colleges, the nature and function of academic programs within the colleges, the governing structure and organizational patterns, both academic and social, within the colleges, and the scope and variety of student service functions such as advising and counseling within the colleges."⁵ The most pressing issue to President Clark was the organizational problems associated with the colleges, chief among them the relationship of the

colleges with existing schools, departments, governments and committees.⁶ Though this memorandum may have seemed moderate and benign to the outside observer, those closely involved in collegiate structure knew its implications. In short, President Clark had thrown down the gauntlet with respect to collegiate structure. Ivory tower war had been declared.

President Clark assigned Vice President for Student Services Dudley “Doug” Woodard to the task of reviewing the residential colleges and restructuring them in an attempt to save money. By the summer of 1975, Woodard and his cronies had come up with a plan that would all but completely eliminate collegiate structure from SUNY Binghamton. Also involved in overseeing the restructuring of the residential colleges was Vice President for Academic Affairs Norman F. Cantor. Both men would be looking for ways to dismantle collegiate structure and find ways to shift resources to other areas in order to save the university money. Although both men would be on the same side, so to speak, they did not get along and at times fought more with each other than they would with the men and women working hard to preserve collegiate structure. At this time, both Woodard and Cantor were waging a sort of turf war, and the battle over the future of collegiate structure was just one front in that war. Dwindling resources for the university meant that the offices of both men received less funding and each saw the colleges as a way to get some of that back. Cantor in particular believed that by restructuring collegiate structure at SUNY Binghamton he could control the residential colleges, increase his power and overshadow his administrative rival, Doug Woodard. Though far from friendly to each other, they were still the opponents of those seeking to preserve the sacred idea of collegiate structure. Over thirty years later, Paul Stroud would say, “They [the administration] were the people out to dismantle collegiate structure. The administration was the enemy.”⁷

In a draft memorandum, Woodard reported on his committee's plans to overhaul collegiate structure. Woodard's plan called for the reallocation of \$87,500 that was intended for the use of collegiate units, completely undercutting their budgets. This would potentially save the university \$40,000 dollars overall.⁸ This plan, known as Proposal A or sometimes as Model A, called for a complete restructuring of the collegiate units. It called for the elimination of collegiate advisors, the consolidation of unit administration under a sole coordinator, and advising of declared majors by faculty within their own department. These moves would profoundly change student-faculty interactions and drastically alter collegiate structure.⁹ The proposal aroused the ire of many supporters of collegiate structure, including all the Faculty Masters of the residential colleges. The most vocal of all these defenders of collegiate structure was none other than Hinman Faculty Master Vito Sinisi.

The irony was that Model A would become the preferred model to be used after the formation of the Task Force on the Academic Development of Collegiate Units. Paul Stroud, who at the time was Coordinator of College-in-the-Woods, served on the committee. He, like others on the committee, wanted the colleges to operate on a classical model such as the one developed in the Colville Report years earlier and as they presently functioned. However, as time progressed and the university pressed them to come up with a money-saving alternative to how the colleges were operating, the committee members realized that Model A, as bad as it was, was the best alternative offered.

During this turbulent time the Task Force on the Academic Development of the Collegiate Units was the group fighting tooth and nail to preserve collegiate structure at SUNY Binghamton. Its chairman was Philosophy Professor and Hinman Faculty Master Vito Sinisi. Serving on the committee alongside Sinisi were numerous university faculty, staff and students

including Economics Professor Alfred B. Carlip, the Coordinator of Dickinson Community William E. Creed, Professor of English and Comparative Literature Mario A. DiCesare, Associate Professor of Nursing and Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs Grace Dowling, Associate Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences for Harpur College Daniel Fallon, Professor of Music and Chairman of the Music Department Harry B. Lincoln, the Coordinator of Graduate Housing Gail Markham, Associate Professor of Physics and the Master of Newing College Robert L. Pompei, Professor of Geology and Chairman of the Geology Department Herman E. Roberson, Professor of Philosophy Stephen D. Ross, Associate Professor of Political Science and Chairman of the Political Science Department Arthur K. Smith, Jr., the Coordinator of Off-Campus College Jack A. Sperling, Associate Professor of English and Education and Master of College-in-the-Woods Patricia E. Speyser, and the Coordinator of Student Services for College-in-the-Woods Paul E. Stroud. Also serving on the committee would be five students: Astrid Berg, Tom Riley, Robert Sass, Michael Smith, and Rudy Troisi.¹⁰ These twenty individuals represented some of the best and brightest that the university had to offer. More importantly, they would also be completely dedicated to preserving collegiate structure as it was.

As noted earlier, since nearly the very beginning, just about everyone on the committee realized that they were fighting a losing battle. However, Vito Sinisi believed that they should fight the university every step of the way and perhaps even keep some of what the colleges offered. This tenacious fighting spirit inspired committee member and fellow Faculty Master Bob Pompei to give Vito the nickname “Don Vito” after the character Don Corleone of the now famous, though at the time newly released, film *The Godfather*. Vito, ever the hot-blooded Italian, loved the name and the symbolism behind it.¹¹

Two sides emerged in the fight over collegiate structure at SUNY Binghamton. In one corner was the Task Force on the Academic Development of the Collegiate Units, which held the philosophy that collegiate structure as it was at the university was sound and any alteration to it would be detrimental to the students living within the residential colleges. On the other side would be the university administration represented mostly by Vice Presidents Woodard and Cantor and President Clark. The ensuing struggle over the fate of collegiate structure at SUNY Binghamton was not a fight over philosophy or individual egos (though there would be much of them throughout) but more as a battle to decide where specific resources would be reallocated to save the financially strapped university. Still, tensions and tempers ran high and antagonism directed at each side was mounting. Rather than duking it out in an actual match of fisticuffs, the committee members and adversaries in the administration, virtually all of whom were university faculty or staff, fought the good fight the Ivory Tower way, warring with numerous memos and reports, each directed at undercutting the other's position on collegiate structure.

During this flurry of reports and memos a furor was rising in Master Vito Sinisi. Bob Giomi, the Director of Social and Academic Programs for Hinman during most of the 1970's, Head Resident of Lehman Hall, and perhaps the most influential founding father of Hinman College, remembers that turbulent time and the intense involvement of Vito Sinisi. While Giomi's position as Head Resident was secure, the plans called for academic and career advising in the units to be centralized within one office. Therefore one of the most important parts of his job would be eliminated. This would be the beginning of a shift from the decentralized and mostly autonomous residential colleges to centralized Residential Life and academic advising offices. Over thirty years after the heated debates over the future of collegiate structure Bob Giomi would say, "Vito was very involved in the fight to preserve collegiate structure. [Pete]

Gruber and Vito were the most dedicated faculty working with students at Binghamton. Vito fought for students and he always fought higher administration officials. Every part of the collegiate structure was done for students. He [Vito] was always an advocate for the students and allowed me and my colleagues to do everything we could to provide for the students.”¹² During his tenure at Hinman, Bob would see two great Faculty Masters come and go. Gruber was the one who hired Bob, and when he decided to leave in 1972, Bob, along with others, was given the task of interviewing potential candidates and making recommendations on who should succeed beloved Master Christian “Pete” Gruber. Today Bob admits, somewhat sheepishly, that Vito was not his first choice to replace Gruber, that he felt other candidates were stronger. However, he would say, “I came to regret that decision after seeing how dedicated Vito was to the students and how hard he worked for them.”¹³ The mutual respect that they had for one another coupled with their intense desire to help the student body in anyway they could, brought these two men closer together than most co-workers could ever hope to be. Even though both men would move on, Bob eventually taking a position at Whittier College in California and then as an Assistant Dean at UC Berkeley (Vito Sinisi’s alma mater) and Vito eventually retiring, they would remain close friends and communicate regularly until Vito’s death in 2005.

Paul Stroud fondly remembers Vito as well. “Vito was a trip. He was someone I liked. He cared about the people and collegiate structure and could work with all sorts of people. Students just gravitated toward him and he gravitated toward them. He always spoke his mind and was never afraid of doing so...He had a clear idea of what he thought collegiate structure should be and he pursued it.”¹⁴ Bob Pompei also remembers his fellow Faculty Master. “Vito was very Machiavellian and Medici at the same time. He was the major player and the senior Master at the time and instrumental in the committee and in the college.”¹⁵

On September 9, 1975, the Masters of Newing, College-in-the-Woods, and Hinman met with President Clark and Vice Presidents Doug Woodard and Norman Cantor to discuss the issue of retrenchment in the colleges.¹⁶ Bob Pompei remembers this day clearly. “Back in those days the Masters had real power. Vito, Pat Speyser, and myself were known as ‘The Gruesome Threesome.’ That’s how scared they were of us. Whenever the administration saw the three Masters together they were scared [expletive deleted] of us.”¹⁷ In the academic world, when a faculty member receives tenure or a professional staff member receives continuing appointment, it is difficult to fire them without just cause. Retrenchment in the academic world involves the laying off of faculty regardless of tenure status. During the mid-1970’s, university administration constantly threatened faculty with retrenchment due the harsh financial crisis. Retrenchment would allow for the elimination of programs, thereby saving the university money. The fear of retrenchment was very real and frightening to faculty during that time.

Over thirty years later Bob Pompei would say, “The underlying theme of the whole thing was retrenchment. It was never said, but that’s what it was all about.”¹⁸ Typically when a faculty member comes to the university they are assigned to a department (English, History, Biology etc.) depending upon what their specialization is and what they teach. Once they receive tenure, that department acts as a protective force for the faculty member and it becomes very difficult for them to get fired. However, what Clark and others in the administration wanted to do was to take faculty and transfer them to the residential colleges. They called it “Strengthening the Residential Colleges.” On the surface it may have appeared that way, but the reality was far more sinister. Once that faculty members were assigned to a residential college, they were no longer protected by their department and were in fact out in the open and easily subject to retrenchment. Bob Pompei says it best when he said, “...the faculty would be exposed

in the colleges. They would be sacrificial lambs.”¹⁹ The whole point of the September 9 meeting between the administration and the Master and of the ensuing war over the future of the collegiate units centered upon this issue. The administration wanted to reduce spending any way that they could and they saw the residential colleges as a place to do this. Not only could they reduce spending within the colleges themselves (as evidenced by the proposition of Model A), but also by assigning faculty to new academic units in the colleges they made them vulnerable to retrenchment.

During the meeting, the three Masters proposed to the three administration representatives that only three professional positions be retrenched as opposed to the administration’s desire to retrench five. In this meeting between the holy and unholy trinitities in the battle over collegiate structure, arguments were respectfully heard and debated, but ultimately the President agreed to the proposal of keeping some of the professional staff that were pegged for retrenchment. This acceptance was important in that it invalidated an important part of Model A, the part which assigned only two professionals to Hinman and CIW.²⁰

The Masters also strongly objected to the proposal of Model A that the professional staff of the residential colleges report to Mr. Ed O’Connor, the Director of Residential Life and a former Coordinator in Hinman. “The Masters made it clear that such a reporting function destroys entirely the concept of a residential college.”²¹ After discussing the issue, the three administration men agreed to go along with the proposal of the Masters which kept the professional staff reporting to the Masters and not the Director of Residential Life.²²

The final topic of discussion during that meeting was the Model A proposal to reduce the rank (the ultimately the pay grade) of the college Coordinators. The Masters strongly objected to this reduction in pay grade and called for it to remain in place for all currently active

Coordinators within the colleges. This was something of a sticking point for the administration, though they relented somewhat by promising that the reduction in grades would undergo an administrative review before any decisions were made.²³

On September 22, 1975, Director of Admissions Dale Terry, received a charge directly from Vice President Woodard that noted that duplication of efforts between the Task Force and Student Life subcommittee should not occur. The memo stated in part:

In order to ensure that there is ample divisional input and opportunity to comment on my proposal or to propose alternative models, I have recommended that each of you ([Messrs.] Terry, Richardson, Bullock, and Benson) chair a subcommittee whose constituents would be selected from the groupings of units proposed under the model...The Student Life subcommittee should comment on areas within Student Life that can be dealt with without the collegiate task force report and should comment on the other proposed areas of reorganization. I will ask the Student Life subcommittee to continue to function until they (sic) [parentheses in original] have had a chance to review the collegiate task force report and make final recommendations to me on the Student Life area based on this additional information.²⁴

Attached to that memorandum was a copy of Model A. To Vito Sinisi and the rest of the Task Force on the Academic Development of the Collegiate Units, it was all too clear what the Student Life subcommittee was supposed to do. This subcommittee would enter into the fight on the side of those opposed to collegiate structure.

On September 25, 1975, the Masters of the residential colleges wrote to Terry:

It will not be possible for the Masters of the colleges to serve on your subcommittee on student life at this time since we are heavily engaged in work on the Task Force on Collegiate Structure, which is committed to report to the President on December 1. The proposal and exhibits that are enclosed with your memorandum of September 22 cannot be 'dealt with without the collegiate task force report', [sic] since the reshaping of collegiate structure is their main thrust. It would be a waste of valuable time to attempt to duplicate or anticipate the work of the task force that has been assigned to that work by the President.²⁵

This was the Masters' way of not only buying time, but also resisting the strategies of the Director of Admissions to undercut the Masters' efforts to preserve collegiate structure at SUNY

Binghamton. Neither Vito nor any of the other Faculty Masters wanted to be involved in a subcommittee that would potentially undercut everything that they were working so hard to preserve. Furthermore, the subcommittee would review recommendations that the Task Force would develop, which would create a serious conflict of interest.

On September 29, 1975, Dale Terry responded to the masters. He stated, I was sorry to receive your memo refusing to participate in the subcommittee deliberations...that does not, however, preclude the valuable input of collegiate structure personnel in the consideration of other aspects of divisional reorganization. The intricacies of interaction between all offices and groups indicated on the reorganization chart dictates the necessity of such input. Consequently, on the direction from the Vice President, I am asking that you advise all professional staff, both full and part time, of the meeting to discuss divisional reorganization...I trust I may assume your cooperation in encouraging full attendance.²⁶

In short, this memo was requiring the professional staff of the colleges to help dismantle collegiate structure. Rather ironically, some of these staff members had already been pegged for retrenchment according to the now notorious Model A.

That meeting of the subcommittee was scheduled for October 6, 1975, in the University Union Room 205-206. Exactly who attended this meeting is unclear, but what is known is that Dale Terry was present at the meeting. Also attending the meeting was someone who, though originally invited, was now certainly not welcome to be speaking in front of that subcommittee. That someone was Vito Sinisi. Sinisi strode into the room with an iron will and a four-page speech venting all of his anger and frustrations with the group that was working around the clock to destroy everything that he held dear. Sinisi stood before the group and read from his papers stating that he strongly objected to Vice President Doug Woodard's charge to the subcommittee to meet and make recommendations based upon the Collegiate Task Force report. Sinisi charged that it was illegal for the subcommittee in its present state to exist. He argued that the Task Force was assigned responsibilities that the subcommittee was trying to subvert. These tasks

included transferring a major share of the workload to the collegiate units for the 1976-1977 academic year (codeword for moving faculty to the collegiate units and thereby making them vulnerable to retrenchment), providing recommendations on the academic development of the collegiate units, and reorganizing and strengthening the colleges as well as Dickinson Community (which by this time had become graduate student housing).²⁷

Using his characteristic style and flair Sinisi, a skilled logician, stated before the mostly hostile crowd:

Making recommendations on the reorganization of the Colleges and Dickinson Community has been assigned to the Task Force by the President. To have a subcommittee within the Division of Student Services arrogate to itself this charge and assignment is the height of conspicuous presumption.

The formation of this subcommittee raises serious questions of conflict of interest since Bill Creed, Jack Sperling, and the three Masters are members of the Task Force. The Task Force consists of 25 members; each of the Colleges and Dickinson Community has a student representative. Surely the members of the Task Force can raise serious objections to the formation of this subcommittee. It is strikingly inappropriate for a person to participate in the recommendations and deliberations of the Task Force and then to participate in a subcommittee of Student Services which will review those recommendations and make recommendations of its own. This is precisely where the conflict of interest lies.

I feel that it is singularly inappropriate for a professional staff member of the Colleges and Dickinson Community to serve on this subcommittee. Students and staff of the Colleges and Dickinson Community are well represented on the Task Force.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I have no objections to the Division of Student Services reorganizing itself, but I do object when the Division of Student Services attempts to abrogate a responsibility given to the Task Force by the President.²⁸

Although the exact reaction of the gathered crowd to this challenge will probably never be known, it can be safely assumed that it had an impact, an impact that would shake the walls of the Couper Administration building all the way up to the office of the President. Vito Sinisi had made it known that he and his Task Force would not go down without a fight. If Collegiate

Structure and the Faculty Masters were to go down, they would take everyone in the administration that they could down with them.

October 27, 1975, saw the release of a memorandum from the Subcommittee on a Collegiate-less College to the Task Force on the Academic Development of the Collegiate Units. This subcommittee consisted of members of the original Task Force and was meant to investigate different areas and to report back to the original committee. They were not formally assigned per se; rather it was simply a rearrangement among the members of the original Task Force. This memorandum contained the subcommittee's findings on what it would mean to abolish collegiate structure from the university, namely that it would save the university desperately needed money by removing the Faculty Master position from the current form of collegiate structure. However, it was also clear to state that this would have an obvious negative impact on not only the residential colleges but the university as a whole. The memo states in part:

It follows from our definition of collegiate structure that to abolish it means to abolish faculty involvement with a particular residential-model approach to teaching contemporary and interdisciplinary academic subject matter... Thus, to abolish collegiate structure means to eliminate the Masters and whatever academic support is unique to the function of the Masters.²⁹

The memo would go on to concede that the removal of the Faculty Master position would result in significant savings for the university. The memo also spoke about potentially eliminating teaching assistants assigned to the colleges, which would also save the university money. The subcommittee predicted that if significant portions of Model A were imposed on collegiate structure, the university could save a total of approximately \$50,000.³⁰ The subcommittee would go on to state, "Once having eliminated collegiate structure as we now know it, there are an infinite number of student and residence hall organizational models form

which to choose. Some of these would be very similar to the current collegiate structure system, but without the real and symbolic involvement of the faculty in academic programming in the colleges.”³¹ Without collegiate structure as it was, the system of residential living would be similar to that of Off Campus College (OCC). Jack Sperling was a Task Force member and the Coordinator of OCC. But there had been some antipathy between the on-campus residential colleges and OCC. Sperling had pushed to get OCC a Faculty Master for some time but was usually rejected. OCC was so dissimilar to the on-campus residential colleges that the system used on-campus would not translate well for those students living off-campus. Sperling’s idealism led Bob Pompei to comment, “Jack Sperling was an academic Jerry Garcia.”³²

The Subcommittee on a Collegiate-less College would cite another model that had the potential of saving the university nearly \$100,000, but would provide virtually no academic programming and residential colleges would be really nothing more than sort of sleazy hotel. This proposal was so outlandish that even the subcommittee would state that “such models often acquire adjectives like ‘zoo-like’, or ‘prison-like’, and we see no point in outlining them here.”³³ In this way the subcommittee was trying to show not only members on the Task Force but also those in the university administration that eliminating collegiate structure as it was then would be detrimental to the university as a whole.

The subcommittee also emphasized their belief that eliminating student government, like HCC, from the collegiate units would seriously devalue the current quality of life experienced by students in the residential facilities:

We agreed that there would continue to be some form of localized student government arising from the actual location of students...However, we are not at all clear how this would relate to campus-wide government and to participation in student association activities. We believe it is very possible that a strong campus-wide student association would siphon off much of the leadership of the local units. *It was the consensus of students, and others, on our subcommittee that students would probably lose a*

*measurable portion of control over the quality of their lives should the formal collegiate structure system be withdrawn.*³⁴ [emphasis added]

The subcommittee believed that the quality of life of students would disintegrate if collegiate structure would radically restructure the way some in the university wanted it to.

The subcommittee would also comment on the concern many had that the colleges were eating up too much of the university funds. Funding for students and their organizations to create academic programs was, in the view of the administration, steering funds away from the university's coffers. The subcommittee would report:

There was general agreement that if collegiate structure were eliminated, some sources of student funds that currently are directed in support of collegiate academic activities would no longer be available for this purpose. Students currently allocate funds from their own sources in support of such functions as films for film criticism courses taught in the Colleges, guest lecturers for courses taught in the Colleges, and various supplies for such courses. These monies, which are referred to by the jargon name 'co-curricular support' are, we believe, allocated at present by students because of their direct involvement in the academic programs they go to support, and because of the direct influence of the Master and some Fellows. By withdrawing the Masters and the Fellows, one withdraws the principal catalyst for using these funds in this way, and the best judgment of our subcommittee was that the funds would instead be used for general student-activity support of a non-academic nature.³⁵

By eliminating collegiate structure, according to the subcommittee, funds would not be saved but only redirected and used in ways less valuable to the University's academic mission.

The final, clinching argument of the subcommittee was that the savings incurred by the university (approximately \$50,000) would be about the same amount they would have to invest in order to create a new system to handle the needs of students.

In summary, we believe the cost of the present collegiate structure system...is on the order of the magnitude of \$50,000. If this system were eliminated, there would be a need to develop a college-wide mechanism to provide for interdisciplinary programs and other sorts of programs of the kind now offered by the Innovative Projects Board. We believe this cost of setting up such a mechanism would be at least \$50,000. We thus conclude that there are no significant dollar savings to be gained from eliminating the collegiate structure system...Collegiate structure is a convenient mechanism for providing these services and we therefore conclude that, even if there were no strong intrinsic

academic and intellectual argument for the collegiate structure system, the system is nonetheless worth maintaining.³⁶

The subcommittee made it clear. The university would have to pay the same amount of money to implement an alternative to collegiate structure that it currently cost to run collegiate structure as it was now. Financially, it would make no difference whether collegiate structure stayed as it was or was completely restructured as some wanted it to be. The university would save no money by restructuring collegiate structure.

On November 5, 1975, the Task Force on Academic Development of Collegiate Units sent a memorandum to President Clark concerning their progress into investigating the value of collegiate structure. In the memo they gave a detailed report of all the documents, memos, reports, and meetings they had reviewed over the course of the year. This memo was used mostly as a means to show the President that the Task Force was working diligently to accomplish its goals. The memo clearly stated, “The Task Force has discussed almost all aspects of Collegiate Structure, from academic advising to transfer of faculty.”³⁷

Five days later, Vice President Doug Woodard sent another memorandum to Vito Sinisi. This memorandum was a copy of a report given to Norman Cantor and Edward Demske back in September concerning the available resources for the residential collegiate units. In the memo, Woodard stated, “As you can see, some of the underlying assumptions require further discussion, and some of the issues which your committee is discussing are not included.”³⁸ Attached to this letter was a memorandum dated from September 16 that, among other things, raised questions from the administration concerning the role of the Masters and their staff within the colleges. An interesting feature of this document, though, is the indication that the administration was not in favor of having the college coordinators report directly to the Director of Residential Life. Woodard himself stated, “I fully agree with you, Norm [Cantor], it would be inappropriate for

the college coordinators to report to the Director of Residential Life. College coordinators must report directly to the Masters as they now do.”³⁹ Although this report was mostly concerned with financial expenditures of the collegiate units and various other mundane and marginal issues, the report did make clear that the administration, as early as September, had been willing to work with the Task Force regarding some issues surrounding the restructuring of collegiate structure. Although the fighting had been vicious up to this point, this memo showed that some common ground could be found between the two groups.

A new year dawned and there were new engagements between the forces fighting to preserve collegiate structure, and forces appearing to be against it. On January 27, 1976, a preliminary report outlining recommendations and procedures from the Task Force was released. The intention was to get feedback and the from students, faculty, and administrators before any final recommendations were to be made. This report would be sent to Woodard and other members of the administration for their consideration.⁴⁰

On February 2, 1976, a day when most people were eagerly waiting to see if the groundhog had seen his shadow, Doug Woodard sent a memo to Vito Sinisi concerning the Task Force’s report on collegiate structure and their preliminary recommendations. In the opening paragraph, Woodard stated:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations developed by your task force. I appreciate the enormous amount of work your committee has put into the development of the recommendations, an especially difficult task during a period when we have been beleaguered by so many budgetary and organizational uncertainties. My comments are offered in a spirit of cooperation and do not reiterate objections and reservations I have already raised in writing and in conversation with your task force.⁴¹

Woodard recognized the efforts that the committee made in preparing their report and stated that his criticisms were nothing personal. To paraphrase another famous Vito, those comments were strictly business, nothing personal. While in his memo he would go to cite some objections and

concerns he had with the Task Force's proposals for collegiate structure, especially when it came to the expenses accruing to the university from the residential colleges, he still would do so in a way that made it clear that both parties were not looking to get one another, but rather they were all working together to do what was best for the university as a whole.

On February 5, 1976, the Task Force on the Academic Development of the Collegiate Units submitted their report concerning academic advising and their recommendations to President Clark. This was far from a final comprehensive report. It was the Task Force's recommendations on only one aspect of collegiate structure. Academic advising, and the role that faculty would play, would be a key issue during the height of the battles over the future of collegiate structure at SUNY Binghamton. Previously at SUNY Binghamton, students could seek academic and career advising from a number of different sources. There was a central advising office but it was very small in comparison to today. The Career Development Center (CDC) existed back then but it was mostly responsible for helping students prepare resumes and other career-oriented tasks. If a student needed to know something specific about their major requirements then they could go directly to their department's advising office. Also at this time, each residential college had an academic advising office staffed with an advisor. If a student had general questions about a major or about career issues, they could go to their residential college academic advising office and see their college's advisor. Bob Giomi in Hinman was an example. Among other areas, Bob was the chief academic advisor for Hinman during his tenure there. This system worked for the most part when the SUNY Binghamton was still a strictly liberal arts and sciences school. The introduction of the professional schools such as the School of Management and the School of Nursing made advising more complicated. The major problem

that the administration saw was that advising was too spread out and that they could save resources by centralizing the offices.⁴²

In the report the Task Force recommended that students who had declared their major would no longer be advised through their particular residential college, but rather through their major's department. This was a compromise position taken by the Task Force. Originally the Task Force wanted all advising to be retained within the colleges, but that plan was strongly resisted. Now, the Task Force also recommended that professionals within a central office, not the residential colleges, take the lead in advising undeclared students.⁴³ The report had long pages of detailed recommendations. However, the important part of the report was in its tone of compromise. The proponents and opponents of collegiate structure had come to agreements over the future role of collegiate structure within the university. Whatever bitter feelings of resentment may have lingered at this stage were unimportant. Headway for the sake of the student body was being made and, perhaps more importantly, peace between the two warring factions had been made. Or so it seemed.

The following day, Vito Sinisi sent an internal memorandum to President Clark outlining who voted for and against the recommendations made by the Task Force. The recommendations passed by a margin of 12 to 3. Importantly, two of the three voting against the proposals were students. The memo ends with Vito Sinisi requesting that the Task Force's recommendations be published in *Pipe Dream* and that his committee would consider allegations that the professional schools, like the School of Management, had been drastically overlooked in regards to academic advising and the role that faculty should play in advising professional school students.⁴⁴

On March 23, 1976, President Clark released a memorandum to the entire university community concerning academic advising within collegiate structure. In the memo he stated that

after careful review of all the data and reports given to him by the various committees and subcommittees associated with collegiate structure he had come to the determination that a transfer of academic advising responsibilities would be appropriate.

As of April 1, 1976, the academic advising responsibilities which now reside in the Student Services area will be placed under the direction of the academic deans, and all resources currently devoted to academic advising will be shifted...The academic advising function is significant among the services offered to our students. I believe we can expect an improvement in the quality of our advising following this change because of the opportunity provided for increased attention by members of the faculty.⁴⁵

Clark's memo effectively ended any and all official academic advising functions within the collegiate units. No longer would the individual residential colleges be able to provide the type of academic advising services to their students that they were used to. That burden now fell upon different shoulders. For all intents and purposes, this was a loss for the defenders of collegiate structure. But the battle was far from over.

April 12, 1976, saw the Task Force submit their Preliminary Report to President Clark. In this report the Task Force reiterated its belief that collegiate structure as proposed in the Colville Report was sound and beneficial to the university community and that it had been successful in helping students have an overall better experience in their time at SUNY Binghamton. "The Task Force has made an exhaustive and detailed analysis of collegiate structure on this campus, and its major conclusion is that collegiate structure has a vital, important, and distinctive role in the life of this campus, especially that of the undergraduate student."⁴⁶

The Task Force shot down any idea that faculty should be reassigned to the residential colleges from their respective departments. While stating that the colleges thrived on faculty who associated themselves with the individual colleges, actually transferring faculty to the colleges would be detrimental to both the faculty and the colleges themselves.

...it may be argued that if faculty members are permanently assigned to the collegiate units, they will feel divorced from their departments and colleagues in their discipline. Furthermore, a faculty member permanently assigned to the collegiate units might easily feel himself/herself to be a prime target should further retrenchment of faculty be required...it is the recommendation of the Task Force that faculty members should not be permanently transferred or assigned to the collegiate units. Thus, the collegiate units would not assimilate a permanent faculty of their own and would pose no threat to established departments...It is hoped that the faculty member serving in a given semester would view his/her position neither as a hostage nor as a sacrifice, but rather as someone freed to perform a genuine educational service and perhaps to experiment in a different environment.⁴⁷

The most important part of the report that the Task Force made clear was its position that no faculty should be removed from their departments and reassigned to the residential colleges. The Task Force recognized that far from strengthening the residential colleges, this move would give the administration the ability to retrench faculty. Their recommendation made it clear that the residential colleges would have none of this.

The Task Force also discussed the future of academic programs in the colleges. The residential colleges, even though they were still relatively young at this stage, were pioneers in developing unique academic programming that challenged their students to a higher level of learning not found within the regular university curriculum. The Task Force stated that they wished to see the colleges take on a more active role in academic matters on campus.

The Task Force believes that one of the basic thrusts of the academic program in the collegiate units should be the development of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs. Interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary programs require an operational base which, at the present time, is effectively lacking at this university. An obvious place for such a base is the collegiate units. This is a natural gathering place for faculty and students interested in bridging disciplines and/or subdisciplines [sic], for faculty and students who wish to explore and develop areas which cannot be accommodated within the restrictions of departmentalized disciplines. The collegiate units might have one or several such programs.⁴⁸

The report also mentioned the importance of the Faculty Fellows who would be involved in the colleges and stated a number of ways to continue to include them in the colleges such as

giving them offices in the collegiate buildings and appointing them to three year terms as Fellows until they cycled out and a new faculty member came in.⁴⁹ Fellows, according to the Task Force, would be an integral part of collegiate structure because its main focus was to foster student-faculty interaction in areas beyond the classroom. Without the Fellows, much of what collegiate structure meant would be lost.

More importantly, the Task Force laid out its perception on what reorganizing and strengthening the collegiate units would be. It argued that in order to continue to foster a living/learning environment that was unique not only in the SUNY system but also around the country, they needed to preserve collegiate structure as it currently was at Binghamton. One of the more important issues that came out of the report was what to do with Dickinson Community (not part of the regular collegiate structure at the time) and OCC. The Task Force recommended that the Masters have administrative responsibility for the programs created and executed in the residential colleges and that the OCC Coordinator be responsible for these in regards to OCC. Besides that there would be no significant changes to how OCC or Dickinson operated.⁵⁰

The report also stated that the colleges would be responsible to both the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President of Student Services. Dickinson and OCC would be responsible solely to the Vice President for Student Services. The residential colleges would report academic matters to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and anything non-academic would be reported to the Vice President for Student Services. The Task Force recommended that the Vice Presidents be involved in any budgets set for the colleges and that they ensure that monies be made available to the colleges so that they could continue to host guest lecturers, films, and field trips. The Vice Presidents would also have a say in which personnel would be staffing the colleges. However, it also stated unequivocally that the Faculty Master would be in

charge of the residential colleges. The report stated, “We cannot expect a Master to be responsible for a college without being in charge of that college.”⁵¹ For a time the university administration was considering either eliminating the Faculty Master position or else significantly weakening their power within the colleges. Not surprisingly, the Task Force, on which all three Faculty Masters served, stated that they believed that the Master position should not be weakened and if anything it should be strengthened.

With their recommendations now in place the Task Force waited to hear what the administration thought of their report and for the inevitable fallout. On April 26, 1976, Vice President Norman Cantor fired off an angry and scathingly critical memo to Vito Sinisi concerning the preliminary findings of the Task Force. While he agreed with certain areas of the report he was highly critical of the majority of it. His response to the Task Force is as follows:

I very much regret that I must express deep disappointment at reading the Preliminary Report dated April 9, 1976. As Chief Academic Officer of this institution I could not commit further resources to collegiate units on the basis on this Report. I would recommend to the President that he not endorse the Report for the implementation—indeed the Report is so vague in character and so lacking in specific programmatic recommendations that there is very little in it to endorse.⁵²

Cantor goes on to criticize the Task Force’s failure to provide “any specific programmatic identity for the collegiate units” and that it would “not suffice as a justification for resource allocation.”⁵³ Cantor also said that there were plenty of other vehicles more apt to pursue this type of programming and more cost effective than the collegiate units.

Before this dispersal of resources occurs, there must be detailed justification for this departure, minimally involving specific academic identities for the collegiate units and detailed descriptions of unique programs to be offered in the collegiate units. Contrary to past practice in this university, the Academic Vice President does not write blank checks; budgeting is related to specific program identification and justification and a priority rating.⁵⁴

Cantor had virtually said that the collegiate units were not a priority and that they were undeserving of additional funds. Cantor also condemned the proposal to move faculty into the collegiate units for the development of the academic programming. Cantor writes, “such a transfer would likely require substantial revisions of faculty personnel policies and procedures’...The university personnel policies should not be given the status of the Ten Commandments—even the Federal Constitution has been amended several times.”⁵⁵ In this statement Cantor agreed with the Task Force’s opinion that faculty should not be transferred from their departments to the residential colleges. Cantor would go on to severely criticize several other sections of the report including the role of the fellows in the units, the lack of spaces available to permit the types of academic developmental programs that the Task Force envisioned and even the selection of the Faculty Masters. Cantor would end his tirade by stating:

Looking through the roster of the membership of the Task Force, I see several people, including yourself [Vito Sinisi], whom I greatly respect. Why such estimable people should in the end have put their names to a Report so singularly lacking in imagination, courage, educational wisdom, and effective specificity is a matter of grave concern to me. I would guess that on any significant issues before the Task Force, no consensus could be reached, except on vague platitudes. If this is what happened, then the whole future of any kind of academic program in the collegiate units is brought into doubt.⁵⁶

These harsh and critical words sent shockwaves through the academic community and all those involved in the debate over collegiate structure. Just as Vito Sinisi’s earlier words brought the debates to a fevered pitch, the ruthless condemnation of the Task Force’s findings by Vice President Cantor rekindled the fire surrounding the debate over the future of collegiate structure.

Cantor would not be the only one to harshly condemn the Task Force and its findings. On May 3, Vice President Doug Woodard, struck back with his own harsh conclusions regarding the Task Force’s Preliminary Report. Woodard would write in his own memorandum:

The report to me seems to be a philosophical endorsement of the 1965 Colville Report and a restatement of the values underlying the creation of the collegiate units. The

report, in my judgment, did not adequately respond to what I considered to be the President's overriding charge to the committee, i.e., the strengthening of the collegiate units by recommending, minimally, guidelines for the establishment of distinctive academic programs for each unit.⁵⁷

Woodard would go on to state that many decisions of budgetary, program, and personnel natures were held up while waiting for the findings of the Task Force. He claimed that the Task Force's report did not have adequate criteria to help university administration make these important decisions. Woodard called for the report to give a specific number of faculty to be assigned to the collegiate units rather than a vague, unspecified number. He also criticized the Task Force for not developing specific academic programs for the collegiate units to follow, even though the Chief Academic Officer of the University and the Office of the President gave them permission to do so. Specifically Woodard cited the Task Force's inability to clearly define the role of the Academic Councils within each collegiate unit and how they would function, even though the Task Force stated that programming would be their chief concern. He also stated that it was nearly impossible for the Masters of the units to have the sweeping power they called for in the report (it basically stated that all final decisions regarding programming would be channeled directly to the Master's office).⁵⁸ By the end of the memo, Woodard had condemned the report. He did so somewhat more respectfully, but there was no room for doubt in anyone who read his memo. The Task Force's report was judged to be of poor quality and it reflected very badly on those who were advocates of collegiate structure.

Essentially both men had savaged a report that was singularly lacking in specificity. Both Woodard and Cantor were looking for specific recommendations from the Task Force, and rightfully so. The broad generalizations contained in the preliminary report was, did little to help the administration find a way to better consolidate and save money. While philosophically the report was correct, details were lacking. Though the Task Force had made it clear that the

recommendations laid out in 1965 by the Colville Report were valid and that collegiate structure as it was at SUNY Binghamton was an asset and not a drain on the university, they failed to offer specific recommendations that the administration could implement to cut costs.

As hurtful as the comments made by Vice Presidents Cantor and Woodard were, they were not unexpected. Since the very beginning these two men had attacked collegiate structure as it was known at SUNY Binghamton. However, an unexpected twist occurred shortly after Woodard and Cantor released their respective memos. On May 5, 1976, the English Department wrote their own memo on their position concerning the Task Force's report. At first it agreed with the Task Force that faculty should not be permanently reassigned to the collegiate units. The English Department, like the other academic departments at SUNY Binghamton, was fearful of what this would do to their numbers, and with the specter of retrenchment constantly hanging over their heads the last thing they wanted was to put their jobs at risk by being assigned to the residential colleges. However it did offer up some concerns, one of which concerned the residential colleges and their ambitious goals of furthering unique academic programming through the colleges themselves.

While the English Department has always cooperated with students in the planning of academic programs through its undergraduate and graduate advisory committees, it is reluctant to share with random students, staff members, and other non-teaching personnel the responsibility for developing and maintaining any program to which it gives its sanction or devotes its personnel. In short, the department will not commit its faculty members to a program which it considers to be academically unsound.⁵⁹

The English Department essentially was concerned with what the colleges were planning on to offer with regard to academic programs. While the colleges saw them as unique and innovative, the English Department, and other academic departments, saw this partly as an intrusion on their turf, which was the conduct of academic and degree programs. More than that, the English

Department was concerned that any academic program created outside an already existing department would be of an inferior quality and that they did not want to be associated with it.

The report went on to state in part:

The department has contributed unstintingly to those worthy programs currently offered in the residential colleges...It chose to do this, however, because it agreed with the philosophy and basic academic integrity of the program and not because it had previously committed resources which were irretrievable. It would be folly to ask a first-rate department, which enjoys general student approbation, to offer up blindly a part of itself to a program over which it had no sanction. Unless we could be assured of direct departmental control over programs offered by our people, we will not participate in any scheme to divert departmental resources to the collegiate units...

To summarize, the department sees in the preliminary Report of the Task Force on the Academic Development of the Collegiate Units the potential for real and genuine development of a quality undergraduate program which would benefit undergraduate education at SUNY-Binghamton. However, it cannot give its approbation nor devote any of its resources to a program with which it is not in full accord.⁶⁰

As seen earlier, the English Department basically stated that it would refuse to commit itself to the residential colleges for fear that it itself would lose resources. The department, while not outrightly rejecting the academic programming proposed by the colleges, stated that unless quality of the programs could be ensured, they would not align themselves with them. The English Department, along with many other departments at the university, while certainly not against collegiate structure, saw the same problems in the preliminary report that were raised by both Vice Presidents Woodard and Cantor. The lack of specific recommendations in the preliminary report was a concern for the people in the English Department as well.

The English Department would not be the only department at the university to reject the findings of the Task Force. With the administration, numerous faculty members, and a growing number of departments within the university becoming increasingly concerned with preserving their resources, resources that collegiate structure was siphoning away from them, the Task

Force was forced to make some hard choices. It became abundantly clear to Vito Sinisi and other members of the Task Force that in order for collegiate structure to survive substantial changes had to be made. The Task Force quickly realized that while collegiate structure as they knew it would be altered, they could at least put their energy into trying to preserve it as best they could. The war over collegiate structure was about to face its final challenge.

That summer the Task Force sent their Final Report concerning the development of collegiate units to President Clark. Before submitting the report, the Task Force made substantial changes and offered proposals with more specifics. It also saw the introduction of the Integrated Semester Program. In the cover letter to the Final Report, Task Force Chairman Vito Sinisi all but pleaded the Task Force's case:

I believe that if the recommendations of the Final Report are implemented, collegiate structure on this campus will finally be placed on a solid foundation, and will make significant contributions to both the development of new and valuable academic programs as well as the enhancement of the learning and living environment of our undergraduate students.⁶¹

The body of the report the Task Force also pleaded with its audience, that is to say, the university administration to accept its recommendations. These recommendations were made with considerable input from outside sources such as experts in the field of collegiate structure at other universities and hours of tireless research. Not only were they well-developed proposals, but more importantly, if they were not put into place, collegiate structure would be substantially changed from its existing form.

During its year of work, the Task Force has threaded its way through a maze of contrary interests, mindful of its charge to propose the means to strengthen collegiate structure and mindful also that there are no new resources with which to implement the strengthening. It has accepted as implicit in its charge that raiding, and hence imperiling, the undergraduate (or graduate) program for resources is not an acceptable means to strengthen the colleges, but would indeed be self-defeating. Since the report of the Harpur College Council Committee to Evaluate the Undergraduate Program in Harpur

College reveals that the program is generally held in high regard by the university community, it would be inappropriate to recommend extreme redirection of the program or severe dislocation of its resources.⁶²

The Task Force developed its ideas throughout the report citing research and drawing heavily upon previous reports on collegiate structure including the Colville Report. It again reiterated its desire to increase student-faculty interactions by having faculty become associated with the residential colleges. This component of collegiate structure was perhaps the least favored among the faculty, most of whom were not willing to commit to interacting with students on a near daily basis outside the classroom. The report sought to assure faculty that this responsibility would not be detrimental to either their teaching or their research and that strong and innovative academic programs could be created out this collaboration.⁶³

The academic identity of the colleges was also an issue in the report. The student members were strongly against creating halls segregated by academic discipline, and it was agreed that all the residential colleges would serve majors from all departments within Harpur College and the professional schools. Furthermore the population of the colleges would be capped at 1,000 students in keeping with the model presented in the Colville Report. The Task Force did concede that the academic programming currently in the colleges did need to be revised, so that it offered more than piecemeal courses to students.⁶⁴

This led to the introduction of the Integrated Semester Program which would combine classes from different disciplines so that students would gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the material covered in their courses. The Final Report has this to say about the Integrated Semester Program:

The Integrated Semester Program is a natural fit with the existing collegiate structure at this University. The administrative capability and the concern are already present in the masters of the three residential colleges. Freshmen in the residential colleges will live

with others who are pursuing essentially the same basic course of study, reading the same books, and discussing them with the same instructors. Lectures, films, concerts, exhibits, and social events will bring them together in common pursuit of interests—a truly liberating experience for the new student whose choice of friends has been circumscribed by his neighborhood and the vagaries of school bus schedules.⁶⁵

For example, a Philosophy class teaching logic could be taught in conjunction with an English class. The Philosophy class would teach students a logical thought process, while the English class would hone their writing skills. The hope was add an enriching experience to incoming freshmen and to offer them an opportunity to bond with their classmates and their professors in an environment that was not typically offered in regular college classes.

The Final Report outlined five key objectives that they hoped the Integrated Semester would accomplish.

1. to provide entering freshmen a rigorous course of study in methods of thinking and writing, using as subject matter a topic examined by an interdisciplinary approach—through literature and political science;
2. to assist entering freshmen in developing the intellectual skills essential to a meaningful education in the liberal arts;
3. to provide for entering freshmen a minimal structure for their first experience of higher education—one that will not constrain them but will, while sharpening intellectual skills, provide a base from which the student can discover and explore his interests;
4. to serve as a catalyst for a more rational concept of “all-college requirement”—which is to say, of lower-division undergraduate education—in Harpur College;
5. to exploit to their fullest the possibilities inherent in the collegiate system for integrating the student’s academic experience with his personal growth.⁶⁶

The hope of the Integrated Semester Program was to allow different disciplines to complement each other and bring the student an exceptional educational experience. It also was hoped that it would combat the problem that many freshmen faced when entering college—that introductory courses were usually held in a large lecture hall with little interaction with the instructor outside of the classroom. The Integrated Semester Program was supposed to have smaller class sizes and promoted lots of interaction between the students and the faculty teaching their classes.

While the Integrated Semester Program would not last it would be the forerunner of the Learning Communities and the various area-based linked courses.

One of the major issues addressed by the report involves the faculty fellows within the colleges. The Task Force called for the fellows to be given a clear role in their respective colleges and encouraged them to become involved in student life there. The Task Force recommended that the fellows serve on the college's academic council, contribute to student government, play an active role in freshmen and transfer orientation, and participate in panel discussions, conduct non-credit courses or seminars for the students or even provide for lectures or other types of performances for the students in the college. The Fellows would also be expected to teach in the colleges when appropriate. The Task Force also called for funds for the fellows to compensate them for their work within the collegiate units beyond their normal teaching schedule.⁶⁷

The issue of who would be staffing the residential colleges was also raised. At that point full time professional staff members worked as Head Residents (later to be known as Resident Directors) and also played other roles in the central offices of the residential colleges. For a long time, the administration called for these positions to be made part time and for them to be given to graduate students. This was proposed in part because it would provide some graduate students with housing and a part-time job, but mostly because it would be cheaper to hire part-time non-professional graduate students than it would be to hire full-time professionals. The Task Force, fearing a decrease in quality, urged that full-time professionals be retained for these positions. It also proposed that the Masters Council be responsible for coordinating all the programs that occurred within the colleges. This was done to add specificity to the Final Report, something which was surely lacking in the Task Force's preliminary report.

The report also called for acceptance of the collegiate libraries. The libraries within the collegiate units were perhaps the most successful part of collegiate structure. Just about everyone lauded them and called for their expansion. However, resources were scarce and the report called for the libraries to seek new state monies and seek funding from other sources so as not to compete with academic departments on campus. The expansion of the libraries was to be key in the strengthening of the overall collegiate structure.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, this would not happen. The libraries, far from expanding, actually contracted. Instead of being areas where students could check out books and research material in the comfort of their own residential college, the libraries lost their books to the main Bartle Library and became mostly empty space that was at best a convenient study area

There was one final push for acceptance of these important measures. The section of the Preliminary Report (slightly modified in the Final Report) on Reorganizing and Strengthening of the Collegiate Units states:

Collegiate structure is a valuable and distinctive element of this campus. Few public universities and colleges in this country have sought to provide, as we have, undergraduate students with a living-learning environment which 'lies midway between the student's circle of friends, on one hand, and the total university on the other hand.' Each of the collegiate units provides a smaller, easily identifiable community for its students, serves as a focus for many of the student's activities, and provides many opportunities for the student to participate in the shaping and control of his/her environment within the matrix of a large university. The University has an obligation to provide students with not only the best educational experience possible, but with living the physical conditions supportive of these experiences...We must insure that students have adequate and attractive living spaces, a reasonable amount of privacy, and a social environment conducive to their studies.⁶⁹

This was the last impassioned plea by the diehard supporters of collegiate structure. Following the issuance of the Task Force's Final Report, President Clark and the rest of the university administration decided the fate of collegiate structure. The residential colleges wound up getting two professional staff members apiece, and that graduate students became the Resident

Directors. The position of Faculty Master would be retained; however, the power of that office would be diminished and would continue to decline in the years that followed. The development of unique academic programs within the residential colleges was phased out and would never return. The colleges went from being on the cutting edge of academic programs to having virtually nothing to do with them. In the end the residential colleges kept their basic structure and function, though they would morph, change, and evolve over the future decades.⁷⁰

Today individual colleges still exist on campus. Eventually Dickinson became part of the collegiate structure when its graduate students were moved elsewhere. The latest residential community to follow the collegiate structure model is Mountainview College, built in 2003. In the Fall of 2006, even the apartment communities of Susquehanna and Hillside acquired a Faculty Master. Still, the glory days of the near fully independent residential college are gone. The Faculty Master, while certainly important, no longer has the power to hire staffs and set budgets and oversee the day-to-day operations of the unit. The lines of authority have changed. Residential Life is a far more centralized and bureaucratic system than it was before the mid-1970's. No longer can individual residential colleges operate in a semi-autonomous environment like they used to. Today, the office of Residential Life is highly centralized and the colleges have no choice but to answer to the various assistant directors and the Director of Residential Life. Unfortunately, this has led to a loss in autonomy for the residential colleges, stifling efforts at creating unique and innovative programming. Academic advising within the collegiate units is now handled by the various departments, the advising offices of the various schools, and even the Career Development Center. There are linked and area-based courses taught in the colleges that are new since the year 2000, but no longer are specific academic programs located solely in the residential colleges, like Environmental Studies (originated in Newing College), Journalism

(originated in Hinman College) and Psychobiology. Still, these courses share some similarities, in spirit if not in practice, to the courses offered only to students living within a particular residential college. The libraries, while still in existence in Hinman and CIW have no books and have become little more than convenient study spaces and computer pods for residents of the college. Faculty fellows play a minimal role in the various colleges. From the perspective of this author, collegiate structure still exists, but it is not what it was before 1975.

Looking back on the years when the fate and future of collegiate structure hung in the balance, Paul Stroud, who is now the Associate Director of Judicial Affairs at Binghamton University remembers the glorious past of the residential colleges and the promise they held for the future.

Looking back the university wasn't getting rid of the colleges. Still, it was a trying time for the colleges. They had good leadership at the time. If the Masters hadn't been there the colleges would be a lot different today... You had the sense that it [collegiate structure] was something special. A lot had to do with the Masters. The Masters were great people and cut through a lot of red tape...

The colleges are still around and a lot of places still don't have them... People see the colleges only as they are today, they don't know what they used to be... The philosophy of the colleges has changed. If people wanted it to be something different it would be that way. As to the future [of the colleges]... I wonder sometimes.⁷¹

Bob Pompei, who after serving many years as Faculty Master of Newing College returned to teaching in the Physics Department, offers similar sentiments.

It was because of the colleges that Binghamton got the reputation it has. The colleges increased the selectivity [of Binghamton]. [Binghamton] set itself apart because of the colleges. The application pool went through the roof. Lots of competition to get in here [because of the colleges]. Major hallmark because other places don't have it... They [the colleges] were charged to develop new academic programming. Environmental Studies, Biochemistry, Psychobiology, all these programs came out of the colleges. They don't do any of that anymore. They [Binghamton University] still advertises the colleges as these great places but they're not what they used to be...

I loved my job as Master, just as I've loved everything I've ever done. I remember back when I was Master of Newing I was in the Physics Department talking with a colleague

and then mentioned that I had to get over to Newing. He asked why I liked spending so much time over in “the sandbox” which is what they called the colleges at the time. I replied that I liked the people in “the sandbox” a lot more than the people here [the Library Tower/university academic departments]. The Masters used to have power too. I’d never want to be a Master again. As far as I see it they’re [the Masters and the colleges] just window dressing now. I’m not window dressing. The resources that the university spends aren’t spent to make it [the university] better. They’re used simply to get more money.⁷²

Over forty years after helping to write the Colville Report, the founding document of collegiate structure and thus of Hinman College, Francis Newman remembers the promise that collegiate structure held for the development of the university:

The main thing was that it wasn’t carried through as effective as it was hoped. We had this idea that there would be rose bushes outside each of the halls and that someone would tend to them for the four years that they were here and during their senior year they would take a freshman under their wing and teach them how to tend the bushes and when they graduated the freshman would take over and the cycle would begin anew. This was just an example of the investment that we hoped students would make in their college. That didn’t happen though. We didn’t want freshmen dorms, but that’s essentially what they became. The halls today have populations of mostly freshmen and sophomores. Most upperclassmen move off campus...the only seniors you see living on campus are RA’s for the most part.⁷³

To some it would seem that the grand experiment of collegiate structure has failed. Like Dr. Newman said, it was most certainly not carried out as well as it could have. There were a dizzying array of forces lined up against it since the very beginning. Truth be told, given the opposition to it during the mid-1970’s, it is surprising that it has survived as well as it has.

Even though collegiate structure is not today as it was originally intended, its form and legacy lives on. Independent thinking and community spirit is still seen throughout the residential colleges of SUNY Binghamton, with Hinman College leading the way. The ideas of collegiate structure inspired the creation of Hinman in the first place. Without them Hinman as we know it would not exist and neither would the great lasting legacies of the Hinman student organizations and activities such as HLT/HPC, Co-Rec football, HCC, Dorm Wars and Hysteria

among many, many others. If collegiate structure was the genius of the early years of SUNY Binghamton, then Hinman College is the heir of that spirit and continues to make innovations and challenge the ordinary to this very day. There were many gifts that collegiate structure gave to SUNY Binghamton, but the greatest gift of all, at least to the students who lived there, was Hinman College.

The author would like to thank Bob Giomi, Paul Stroud, Professor Robert Pompei and Professor Francis X. Newman for their invaluable contributions to this chapter and for their role in the development and preservation of the greatest assets on-campus: collegiate structure and the residential colleges.

¹ Sandy Lazar, "Hinman College---Past and Present...And Future," *The West Harpur Other*, 3, no. 1 (September 1969).

² Edward J. Demske, "Collegiate Structure Budgets," (memorandum to the Masters, SUNY Binghamton, Binghamton, NY, September 19, 1973).

³ President Clifford D. Clark, "Current and future status of collegiate structure," (memorandum to Mr. Fallon, Chairmen, Search Committee for a Master of Newing College, SUNY Binghamton, Binghamton, NY, April 14, 1975.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Stroud and Robert Pompei, interview with author, February 1, 2007.

⁸ Vice-President Doug Woodard, "Draft memorandum concerning resources for collegiate units," (memorandum to Vice-President for Academic Affairs Norman F. Cantor, SUNY Binghamton, Binghamton, NY, July 7, 1975).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Preliminary Report of the Task Force on the Academic Development of the Collegiate Units, report sent to President Clark, April 9, 1976.

¹¹ Robert Pompei and Paul Stroud, interview with author, February 1, 2007.

¹² Bob Giomi, telephone conversation with author, November 29, 2006.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Paul Stroud and Robert Pompei, interview with author, February 1, 2007.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Statement Read by Vito Sinisi to a group assembled by Mr. Terry, Director of Admissions, October 6, 1975.

¹⁷ Paul Stroud and Robert Pompei, interview with author, February 1, 2007.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Statement Read by Vito Sinisi to a group assembled by Mr. Terry, Director of Admissions, October 6, 1975.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

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