

BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE BULLETIN

Volume I Number 5

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GRADUATION AT BLACK MOUNTAIN

Black Mountain College has a highly trained and competent faculty, including distinguished scholars and artists from America and abroad. The majority have had, beyond actual teaching, widely varied life experiences and a number are persons of international reputation. The ratio of teacher to student at Black Mountain is one to four.

Black Mountain makes academic achievement only part of its educational philosophy, and sees non-intellectual work and community living as definitely important in the development of a whole person. Because of the nature of the life and work in the community, students have an unusual opportunity for constant daily association with members of the staff, both inside and outside the classroom.

The environment naturally resulting from such close association is conducive to emphasis at Black Mountain upon seriousness of purpose and excellence of accomplishment.

It is no doubt due to this emphasis that, in ten short years, the leading universities of America have come to look with approval upon students recommended to them by the Black Mountain College faculty.

The Black Mountain program is in many ways unique. Progress in college and ability to graduate are not mechanically measured. They depend upon individual initiative, ability and achievement.

JUNIOR DIVISION

All entering students are placed in the Junior Division, which is conceived as a period of study, usually about two years, during which students get a strong foundation for later more specialized work in the Senior Division. The Junior Division also serves as a period of exploration, during which they may familiarize themselves with the main areas of knowledge: the Arts, the Languages and Literature, the Social Studies and the Natural Sciences.

Entering students usually do not know in what field they wish to specialize or the kind of work they wish to take up after leaving college. Often they make decisions based on ignorance, prejudice or illusion. In the Junior Division they should find their way, broaden their horizons and acquire needed tools.

As a further aid in this direction, each student selects a faculty advisor with whom he frequently consults.

SENIOR DIVISION

When a student feels he is capable he may apply for entrance to the Senior Division.

The faculty judges the student's fitness for this advanced work through a review of his academic foundation, his preparation and talent for his particular Senior Division Plan of study, and his personal development and degree of maturity. These are demonstrated by his record, by his general reputation and by special written and oral examinations, originated at Black Mountain, designed to test his capacity as well as his knowledge.

A Senior Division Plan of study sets forth the student's field of concentration. It may begin with only a general outline, which is elaborated and filled in as the work progresses. Flexibility is permissible but an organic and significant plan must result. Naturally the subject matter itself is a determining factor. The amount and quality of work required for graduation is at least equal to that required for an A.B. degree at other colleges of high standing.

OUTSIDE EXAMINERS

As an objective test of a student's work for graduation, outside examiners from the foremost colleges and universities, specialists in the field in which the student wishes to graduate, are called to the college to give thorough examinations both written and oral.

The requirements for these final comprehensive examinations vary somewhat according to the field of study, but in general they call for seven three-hour papers with oral examinations following. In most cases two of these papers deal with the student's subject extensively, one paper with related fields of knowledge, and three papers with subdivisions of the student's subject which particularly interest him. The seventh paper is concerned with some special problem connected with the subject and may be presented in thesis form. In the arts, performances or exhibitions may take the place of some of these papers.

The examiner's recommendation, coupled with the faculty's detailed

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knowledge of the student's work and personal development, form the basis for graduation.

The following are a few of those who have visited the College and served as examiners:

Phillip Putnam Chase Lecturer in American History	Harvard University
C. F. Tucker Brooke Sterling Professor of English	Yale University
Robert Roswell Palmer Assistant Professor of History	Princeton University
John Frederick Dashiell Kenan Professor of Psychology	University of North Carolina
Calvin Bryce Hoover Professor of Economics	Duke University
Stringfellow Barr President	St. Johns College
Marcel Breuer Assistant Professor of Architecture	Harvard University
Frank Allen Patterson Assistant Professor of History	Columbia University
Corydon Perry Spruill Jr. Professor of Economics	University of North Carolina
Dexter Perkins Watson Professor of History	University of Rochester
Bruce Simonds Dean, School of Music	Yale University
Christopher Tunnard Lecturer, School of Design	Harvard University

STATEMENTS OF EXAMINERS

The following are a few brief excerpts, covering a variety of fields, from reports of a number of outside examiners. The full report is a detailed statement, usually two or three pages in length. Presented to the student upon graduation, this report, together with a comprehensive statement of accomplishment from the student's advisor and major professor, forms a valuable record of his total achievement.

"I would like to add here that the standard of achievement shown by these students seems to me an unusually high one. The developing of the individual talents seems to go hand in hand with a developing of sound human qualities:—for me the best guarantee

for further expanding of the personality beyond the guidance of the college.

"All four students show a remarkable sense of responsibility, expressed in tact toward others and a fair estimate of themselves. They are filled with an unspoiled and refreshing interest toward things to come and to learn. It seems they are not only talented young people of fresh approach, but workers of exact control and thoroughness, fit for the most varied situations to be faced in the outside world. As far as I can see, the level of these four art students, represented in their works and in their personalities, is in many directions much higher than that of average college graduates."

Marcel Breuer, Harvard University, May, 1940

"To draw comparisons with students in more academic institutions whom I happen to have examined, I would rate (the candidate's) performance, both written and oral, as clearly above that of A.B. candidates majoring in Psychology, and superior to that of most A.M. candidates."

John Frederick Dashiell, University of North Carolina, May, 1937

"(The candidate) wrote a set of excellent papers . . . Her knowledge of the facts of literary history is also adequately full and detailed . . . The examination has convinced me not only of the capacity of (the candidate) herself, but of the educational effectiveness of the honors system in practice at Black Mountain College. This candidate has profited in the development of her own taste and knowledge of life; and she has also been well prepared for further professional study of literature."

C. H. Gray, Dean, Bard College, May, 1943

"While certain deficiencies, primarily with reference to factual data, were apparent, these were no greater than were to be expected from an undergraduate majoring in economics. On the other hand (the candidate's) ability to reason upon the basis of the facts and theory which he knew was far above average. I believe he could carry on competent work as a graduate student in economics or that he would be competent to begin work as an 'apprentice economist' in government employ. My reading of his paper on Co-operative Cafeterias in New York confirms this opinion."

Calvin B. Hoover, Duke University, May, 1937

". . . I am willing to say emphatically that at the present time he is not only qualified to enter graduate study in Milton in Columbia University, but that he is able to hold his own at the present time with the best of my graduate students . . ."

Frank Allen Patterson, Columbia University, May, 1938

"In his written work the candidate gave evidence of unusually wide and careful reading, of high power of organization and critical evaluation. His performance in this area was comparable to Ph.D. preliminaries. In any graduate work in anthropology his preparation should place him well in the lead of most students.

"The oral examination, however, was less successful . . ."

Cora Du Bois, Sarah Lawrence College, April, 1942

"I feel that (the candidate) should continue her study of music. I understand that her background before coming to college was somewhat limited and with that in view it seems to me that she has made very good use of her time after coming to Black Mountain."

Bruce Simonds, Yale University, January, 1942

"Altogether I have formed a very high estimate of (the candidate). I would have no hesitation in recommending him for admission to graduate work at Columbia, and I would like to have him as one of my students and friends."

Jeffery Smith, Columbia University, May, 1942

"In sum, I should judge that (the candidate's) performance was the equivalent of that required for an honors (cum laude) degree at most colleges and of that required for high honors (magna cum laude) at very many. I should have no hesitation whatever in recommending her admission to the Graduate School at Duke or any other university for graduate work in psychology."

Donald K. Adams, Duke University, May, 1942

"Comparison with other institutions is difficult. I am sure that (the candidate) has met an exacting test with unusual success, that he would be a credit to any college, and that, had he been a student at any institution with which I am familiar—at Chicago, Cornell, or Princeton—he would be, in both intellectual preparation and in qualities of personality, among the most promising students in even a large class."

Robert R. Palmer, Princeton University, May, 1942

". . . His performance in written and oral tests, while by no means superlative, was more than merely satisfactory. He has, I think, gained greatly from his studies and is not without originality."

Stringfellow Barr, St. Johns College, February, 1942

"Throughout his examinations (the candidate) showed an ability to think about musical problems, historical and theoretical, and to arrive at essentially correct solutions, or, at least, appraisals.

"His musicality was evident not only in his theoretical work but

also in his horn playing in which he should be encouraged to continue his studies. In addition he is well qualified to enter any university as a graduate student in musical research."

William J. Mitchell, Columbia University, May, 1942

GRADUATE STUDY

In the light of similar reports and upon the recommendation of the Black Mountain Faculty, graduates have been accepted for graduate study at such universities as Harvard and Columbia, although Black Mountain does not confer degrees. These graduate students have made excellent records at these institutions.

Collegiate evaluation in North Carolina, upon which the privilege of granting degrees is based, is measured quantitatively. This is due to the fact that qualitative exceptions are extremely difficult to determine. These quantitative standards contemplate an enrollment of at least one hundred students in a college, require an extensive physical plant and equipment for this number and insist upon a substantial financial endowment. Thus a college like Black Mountain falls outside the terms of definition. In the words of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction: "After considering the matter carefully, we are convinced that we do not have standards for the accrediting of an institution such as Black Mountain College."

However, in the ten years of its history, the College knows of only one instance where the lack of a degree proved a handicap to a Black Mountain graduate, and in this one case the circumstances responsible no longer obtain.

TRANSFER

In the past, instances have occasionally arisen in which the College was unable to offer advanced work in a particular area. In these cases students were urged to transfer to a university. Fortunately today, with a greatly enlarged teaching staff, similar suggestions are less frequently necessary.

As a result of this, however, over a period since the founding of the college a number of students have transferred to such institutions as the University of North Carolina, Northwestern, Columbia and Yale Universities, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Radcliffe and Swarthmore Colleges, where they have proved the value of Black Mountain training by doing excellent work.

Black Mountain's program is not designed for purposes of transfer. It is essentially a unique one, based upon the belief that, in themselves, grades and credits are not educational aims. Yet students whose circumstances require that they transfer should encounter no unusual difficulties.

APPROVAL FOR ENLISTED RESERVE

Black Mountain was assigned a quota in the Army's enlisted reserve corps. Excerpts from letters written by several colleges attest to the U.S. Army their confidence in Black Mountain's standards and their attitude in regard to Black Mountain students who wish to transfer.

ANTIOCH COLLEGE

Yellow Springs, Ohio

Offices of Administration

May 26, 1942

Mr. W. R. Wunsch, Rector
Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, North Carolina

Dear Mr. Wunsch:

Our delay in responding to your letter of May 7 did not mean lack of friendly interest in a matter so vital to Black Mountain College. It was difficult to find a time to bring your letter to the attention of the Administrative Council. When it was discussed, the Council indicated its entire willingness to accept Black Mountain students at Antioch without loss of time and on the same basis as students from accredited colleges. There has been enough traffic of students between the two institutions for us to have gained a considerable knowledge of and respect for the academic standards of Black Mountain. Mr. Walter Locke of Dayton, who is a member of our Board of Trustees, is also a member of your Advisory Committee and has visited your campus several times. We have consulted with him and he concurs in our judgment that Black Mountain maintains high academic standards. Louis Adamic who was on our campus just last week also knows Black Mountain and has expressed a high opinion of it to us.

I should add that the reports of your outside examiners on the comprehensive examinations taken by your students were most impressive.

We are willing to have you quote us as follows: Antioch College has been requested by Black Mountain College to make a formal statement to the effect that it will admit transfer students from Black Mountain. Because Antioch respects the work which Black Mountain is doing, and knows about it through student traffic between the two colleges, through faculty visitations and through Mr. Walter Locke of Dayton, Antioch Trustee, who is a member of the Black Mountain Advisory Committee, Antioch is glad to make such a statement. However, Antioch College in making this statement wishes to make entirely clear that it does not consider

itself in any respect an accrediting agency—except in the sense that every college makes judgments about both high schools and colleges in deciding whether to give full credit to their courses.

Antioch College will accept the students, either graduate or undergraduate, of Black Mountain College, on the recommendation of the Faculty of Black Mountain College, at Yellow Springs without loss of academic time (that is, to similar yearly standing) and without special examinations and subject only to the conditions which students of Antioch College normally accept. Black Mountain College is hereby authorized to use this statement in petitioning the proper Army and Navy departments for participation in their various programs for which formal accrediting is normally expected and in demonstration of their ability to fulfill the requirements which the Army and Navy may normally expect to ask of participating institutions. (End of statement for quotation).

We hope that this statement will be of some value to you in your efforts to secure Army and Navy approval.

Sincerely yours,
W. B. ALEXANDER
Dean of Administration.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
Chapel Hill

Frank P. Graham, President

June 10, 1942

To the Secretary of the Navy,
To the Secretary of War:

The University of North Carolina, aware that Black Mountain College is not yet accredited by the North Carolina Conference or the Southern Association, does nonetheless accept its students on the recommendation of Black Mountain College, at Chapel Hill subject only to the conditions which the University of North Carolina normally applies. Black Mountain College is hereby authorized to use this statement in petitioning the proper Army and Navy departments for participation in their various programs for which formal accrediting is normally expected and in demonstration of their ability to fulfill the requirements which the Army and Navy may normally expect to ask of participating institutions.

Very sincerely yours,
FRANK P. GRAHAM.

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
Swarthmore, Pa.

May 27, 1942

Dear Mr. Wunsch:

I am happy to inform you that Swarthmore College will accept students from Black Mountain College on precisely the same grounds on which we accept students from other institutions. We should want the recommendation of your faculty; and we should then want to have a personal interview, to study the applicant's program, and to set any qualifying examinations which seemed necessary. We should require the same conditions from students from other colleges or universities.

Black Mountain College is hereby authorized to use this statement in petitioning the proper Army and Navy departments for participation in their various programs for which formal accrediting is normally expected and in demonstration of their ability to fulfill the requirements which the Army and Navy may normally expect to ask of participating institutions.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN W. NASON,
President.

ALUMNI

In spite of the short period of time that Black Mountain alumni have had in which to prove themselves, the positions of typical graduates and former students give evidence of the fact that these persons are already becoming effective citizens in the communities in which they have settled.

Naturally the majority of the Black Mountain alumni and former students are at present in the armed services, where they are acquitting themselves admirably. Two were at Guadalcanal; one was killed while piloting an army bomber; the first non-commissioned WAC to land in England was a former Black Mountain College student.

OPINIONS ABOUT BLACK MOUNTAIN

Today Black Mountain is not only making it possible for its students to get a superior education but as may be gathered from the following comments by noted authorities the worth of this education is rapidly becoming accepted.

"Mere words would not convey my enthusiasm for all the work

which you people are putting into building up an outstanding educational institution. It seems almost incredible to me that you could have accomplished all that the pictures in the bulletin show."

DOUGLAS BEMENT, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

"Black Mountain is a living example of democracy in action."

JOHN DEWEY.

"The substitution of practical work on the farm and in building is a great idea. The second unique advantage of the College is the close personal relation between students and faculty. In both these respects Black Mountain is not merely better than the average place, but would, so far as my knowledge goes, be number one in the United States."

FRANK AYDELOTTE, Director, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey.

"I sincerely hope that the War will not interfere with the progress and growth of Black Mountain College. You stand for something distinctive in American education and deserve the support of all those who are interested in educational developments. We wish you the best of success and assure you of our desire to be of assistance whenever we can."

C. H. GRAY, Dean, Bard College, Columbia University.

"Black Mountain College has built up a new educational curriculum with very great success. We have followed the results and been very favorably impressed."

JOSEPH HUDNUT, Dean, School of Design, Harvard University.

"I only wish that many boys and girls could take advantage of this intimacy in education. If they did, I am afraid that your college would lose its charm."

MERRIL BISHOP, Principal, Harris School, San Antonio, Texas.

"I want to congratulate you upon the work you are doing. You are here as a little community to work with your hands and your brains, which is a good thing for you. What is done out of pleasure is much better done than what is done out of duty. If you had to climb mountains out of duty, you would not mount these high mountains. I think that is also true with the high mountains of the spirit."

ALBERT EINSTEIN.

"This remarkable educational institution, in the mountains of North Carolina, is a Democracy in the new understanding of the word; not an aggregate of opinion, an addition of votes, but an organic whole in which there is reciprocal dependence between the

individual and the general order. It has already become a model for the deep changes which must take place in American education."

EDWARD A. OLDHAM, Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel.

"There should be at least one college such as this in every state, operated independently of the big universities, to provide custom-tailored education for those who want it and to do the experimenting of which the big schools are almost incapable."

WILLIAM T. McCLEERY, PM's Picture News.

"A ringing answer to those who say that modern education is not in harmony with modern living . . ."

Friends Magazine.