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New Look At Bowie State College

By GEORGE COLLINS

BOWIE, Md. — "We are trying to meet the need of a growing community, without fuss or fanfare.

To community colleges are destined to play an important role in the life of the community and we must be ready."

Dr. William Henry, president of Bowie State Teachers College, gave that explanation for a unique, and highly successful program of integration at the school.

Integration at Bowie is a fact.

And, according to Dr. Henry, chief architect of the transition, it is working smoothly.

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LOCATED 28 miles south of Baltimore and 18 miles north of Washington, Bowie, in an enchanted forest-like setting in Prince Georges County, is attracting hundreds of students—white and colored—who prefer a small college near their homes.

In proportion to its student population, the $4 million educational plant has more integration than any Comparabe institution in the state.

So unique and quiet has been the move that it has been referred to as "integration in reverse."

Ever since it became a state school, 54 years ago, Bowie has been an all-colored teacher training center.

Today it has a total enrollment of 667 students. Of this number 143 are white.

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THE COLLEGE, founded 95 years ago in Baltimore as "The Industrial School for Colored Youth," is made up of three divisions — college (day and evening classes), and the Charlotte Robinson Laboratory School.

Of the 370 day school students, 25 are white, Dr. Henry said, and the 40 evening students are divided between 29 white and 29 colored.

The enrollment at the "lab" school, a new trend in modern education, includes 159 colored and 98 white pupils from kindergarten through the sixth grade.

The "lab" school is an innovation in education where elementary grade children are taught on an individual level. Homework, classroom assignments, and other activities are tailored to the individual needs and ability of the student.

Pupils progress at their own rate, rather than on the basis of a selected group, Wayne Herman, principal, said.

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INTEGRATION on the 187-acre campus completely overshadows desegregation in other county schools, where "token integration" is the rule, rather than the exception.

But it doesn't stop at the student level. Both the faculty and administrative staff at Bowie are integrated.

Of the 22 college faculty members, three are white. In addition to Mr. Herman, a candidate for the Ph.D degree, there are two white teachers in the lab school.

The office staff, maintenance crews and library staff are integrated also.

The unusual story of integration at the teachers' college doesn't follow the script. It was completely devoid of publicity, "incidents," and controversy which have become part and parcel of transition in education.

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DR. HENRY and residents of the Bowie area attribute the easy change to several developments. Among them are:

Population explosion in a heretofore sparsly settled community, convenience, economics, and growing popularity of small, community colleges.

The college, now undergoing a $261,700 capital improvement program, is nestled between four rapidly growing communities — Belair, Laurel, Carrollton, and Bowie, all within an eight-mile radius.

To Belair, the newest develpment is the site of the newest Levittown housing project which is scheduled to number 7,000 dwellings and house 35,000 people.

Formerly the site of The Woodward Farms and home of the great thoroughbred racing horse, Nashua, Belair is one and a half miles from the school.

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MUSHROOMING school populations are also coming into evidence in Laurel, eight miles away; Carrollton, six miles distance, and Bowie; just two miles from the college.

Nearest college to the newly blossomed urban-rural area, which two short years flourished with rolling fields and forests, is College Park, near Washington and Baltimore.

The sudden influx of people seeking higher education at a price they can afford with the added advantage of living off campus are major factors in the swift and silent change at Bowie, Dr. Henry believes.

Pointing to the new trend in education, Dr. Henry said:

"The popularity of area community colleges is rapidly growing and people see no need to go to the added expense and inconvenience of attending schools in distant towns and cities when they can get the same training in their own back yard."

THE NATURAL attraction of a small college where students can get individual instruction not possible at bigger schools, is another reason for the highly successful transition, the president believes.

Although integration existed in theory since the Supreme Court decision of 1954, it didn't become a reality until this year, Dr. Henry said.

Last year there were two white students in the entire school — one in college and one in the lab school, who, because of her adjustment is given credit for the current success of the integration in the elementary classes.

The little girl, sporting a blonde pig tail, Dr. Henry recalled was perfectly at ease when she entered the lab school last year.

"White parents who saw her were equally impressed and began enrolling their children," the president told the AFRO.

"Now we have applications as far ahead as 1967," he pointed out.

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WHITE area residents who work in the day, but desired to further their education by attending school at night, spurred integrated enrollment of the college, Dr. Henry said. Fifteen more white students have enrolled for next year, he added.

The sudden influx of students, pushing Bowie into a new and vital role in the community, has meant an increased budget and expanded curriculum.

Bowie's budget for the 1962-63 fiscal period is $869,479 as compared to $685,582 last year, an increase of $183,879.

Funds for a dining hall, student union building, staff housing, and roads and construction have also been granted.

Evening classes, additional liberal arts courses, designed to cater to preferences and money for a summer school are among other expansions and improvements of the school, which has suddenly and unexpectedly blossomed into a model of integrated education.

Mr. Herman, like Dr. Henry and other residents, agrees that the success of the transition is the result of a happy combination of circumstances. However, he gives this reason for its smooth working:

"Here, we talk children...no race, color, creed, or religion. We get positive results that way," he declared.

• • •

MOTHERS, waiting to pick up their children, agreed with the principal and enthusiastically added their personal approval.

"We are proud of this school. It offers our children so much. They get experiences here they couldn't possibly get elsewhere," said Mrs. Ethel Hubbell.

"It widens their background and helps them to develop and understanding, appreciation, and respect for other peoples," said Mrs. Lurene Chen, who was Mrs. Hubbell's neighbor on Guam during World War II.

Miss Joan Freeres, a student at the college, had this to say about Bowie:

"I was attracted here because it is a community school and has a lot to offer. You can get a well-rounded education here."

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AN informal survey of the colored students, most of whom live on campus, revealed complete approval and fierce pride in the newly acquired popularity of Bowie.

Said Mrs. Octavia Blake, editor of "College Eye," student newspaper:

"Here we get more individual treatment. It's like a family unit. And compared to other schools, it's inexpensive."

However, the mother of six children, who dropped out of school 13 years ago to fill the role of motherhood, hastily and emphatically added:

"That is not to say we are not getting a quality education. In fact Bowie graduates have been as successful as those from other schools for years. Just look in the classrooms throughout the state," she declared.

• • •

JAMES FEENSTER, editor of the Class of '62 yearbook, feels Bowie has become a magnet for area residents because:

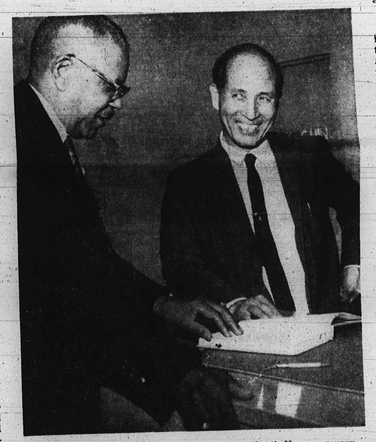
"Here, no one is a stranger. It's almost like a tightly knitted family. We lack the glamour of a big school, but we do get a decent education."

Spokesmen for the freshman, sophomore and junior classes chimed in approval and agreement and one added:

"This is the type of school I would want my children to attend. It's all for one and one for all!"

Like Dr. Henry, other faculty members, and residents of the community, they see the four-town community as a future vital nerve center of the area, and Bowie playing a major role in it.

NEW FACE OF BOWIE—This kindergarten class at the Charlotte Robinson Laboratory School on the college campus reflects the sudden but quiet progress of school integration. Mrs. Edith Williams, teacher, leads the students in songs and games.



TWO DOCTORS — Dr. Harrison Lyu, former South Korean government official, is assistant librarian at Bowie. He shows new Spanish volume to Dr. William Henry, college president.

POET'S CORNER

I want to be an astronaut,
Like Carpenter or Glenn;
And take an upwards trip to where
None but the brave ascend.
I want to drift in weightlessness,
Around the twinkling stars;
And leave a marker on a hill
Upon the Planet Mars.
I have an idea that in flight,
While I am elevated,
I'll find before my very eyes
A planet populated.
But like Columbus' maiden trip,
I may receive in woe
To find a tribe of Indians,
And herds of Buffalo.

PAUL D. MCALLISTER

BALTIMORE AFRO-AMERICAN
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It's On Back Page

The Man On The Way Up feature which regularly appears on this page can be found on Back Page in this issue. The feature will return to its usual place next week.

YEARN FOR LEARNING—This night school class at Bowie College is an example of key factors at work behind the success story of integration at the formerly all-colored school. Students, who work by day and further their education by night, are studying Human Growth and Development. They are (from left) Claude Waters, Mrs. Agnes Waters, Mrs. Florence Morrow, Mrs. Ahisale Surprennant and Joseph Surprennant.

ART LOVERS—This night school art and sculpture clasoyd, Audrey M. Moore, Sally N. Yochelson and Eleanor Mesdames Annabelle Scott, Sylvia Mitchell, Sarah D. Be is a favorite of adults student at Bowie. From left are B. Pasch.