

## Gerety To Review Residential Life

by SUSAN McWILLIAMS  
 News Editor

Freshmen can expect some initial rubbernecking from peers and professors during the first few weeks of school; rarely, though, do they attract as much sustained attention as they will this year. President Tom Gerety has told *The Student* that he will undertake an exhaustive review of residential life at the College, with a focus on the experiences of freshmen and sophomores. He said he will address the campus on the issue during his Convocation speech, entitled "Room-mates."

Gerety said that he had no pre-set agenda for review, but that he plans on developing a specific program with extensive input from faculty and student organizations. "I don't want to be seen as having a whole program," he explained. "There's a whole sense that this is a project we would work together on."

Possible subjects of review include the Introduction to Liberal Studies (ILS) program and the advising system, as well as social issues like the Deme system, off-campus fraternities and housing.

Gerety added that he plans to go to the Committee of Six at their first meeting this fall to begin identifying focal issues. He hopes to have a blue-



Irene Cheung

**Senior Resident-Counselors-in-training Jonathan Carr and Emily Griffen design the humorous banner which will soon adorn Moore Dormitory.**

print by which to review "the first two years" students spend on campus by late fall. "The College has a whole range of dials on its screen right now," said Gerety. "We are looking at, 'Is this one right, and how about this one?'"

Some of the work on this project

has already been underway for some time, only in other forms. ILS, for example, is currently under review by the ILS Committee and the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP). While this review is not specifically tied to a

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## College Offers Changes For Academic Support

by TOM NASSIM  
 News Editor

The College's current academic support services are unable to cope with the increasingly diverse Amherst student body, according to a report submitted to President Tom Gerety. The report came from a Committee on Academic Support, which was formed last year after former Dean of the Faculty Ronald Rosbottom promised an assembly of minority students that the College would make substantial improvements to its support services.

"We still too easily conclude that because a student has been admitted to the College, he or she should have little trouble with the curriculum," reads the report, which was written jointly by Rosbottom and Professor of Chemistry Patricia O'Hara. "On the contrary, we have discovered that many of our best students are not equipped, because of their pre-collegiate experience, to take the fullest advantage of what Amherst offers them."

According to the report, the inability of many students to succeed in classes—especially in math and sciences—stems not from an intellectual deficit but from a lack of preparation in high school. The goal of the proposed improvements is to create more of a

"level playing field."

The committee's recommendations would both bolster the existing support systems, such as help sessions offered by various science departments and the College's tutoring service, and establish new programs in areas where additional support is needed.

Gerety praised the report, calling it both "passionate" and "reasonable."

"A lot of the short-term recommendations were administrative in nature, so we're starting them right now," said Dean of Faculty Lisa Raskin, who replaced Rosbottom this summer. A four-person ad hoc subcommittee, co-chaired by Associate Dean of Students Jean Moss and Rosbottom (with Professor of Mathematics David Cox and Raskin filling out the group), has already begun implementing the report's short-term recommendations. For instance, data from the Registrar's and Admission Offices have already been combined in order to examine how well College programs adapt to the varied levels of preparation students bring to the school.

Many of the long term recommendations, on the other hand, need refining before they are ready for consideration by the Committee of Six—the

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# Committee Releases Proposal For Academic Supports

## Rosbottom, O'Hara follow up on last year's Drew forum with report titled "A Promise to Keep"

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faculty's executive committee—and the Committee of Educational Policy. This job of refining will also fall on Moss's and Rosbottom's subcommittee. "What we're trying to do is get a pilot program going and get the bugs out," said Moss.

The committee advised restructuring the Dean's Tutorial Service, making fewer but more carefully chosen tutors for each subject. Also recommended was expanding the budget of the tutorial program to reflect its current status as a widely-used resource.

According to the report, a Faculty Mentoring program would provide additional attention for a dozen specially designated students. "The mentors would give students access to another faculty member besides the person who is teaching the class," said Associate Dean of Students Jean Moss, a committee member. Mentors would not act as tutors, said Moss, but would

suggest "different approaches to getting work done."

In order to stimulate discussion of the curriculum, the CAS report recommends a series of outside speakers to bring fresh perspectives to the campus. Moss cautioned, though, that the "innovative work on the part of the Amherst faculty serves as the basis" for curricular development. Finally, the report concluded its short-term recommendations by endorsing a series of interdepartmental workshops to increase communication between departments, particularly in the sciences. According to Moss, these workshops will take place in the near future.

Long-term recommendations include a Curriculum Development Program that would provide funding for new teaching strategies, a Teaching and Learning Center for quantitative skills, possibly similar to the existing writing center, and a Transition Program for

freshmen who withdraw from introductory science and math courses because of academic difficulty.

The new subcommittee will adjust its recommendations and suggest new ones as it receives feedback from students and faculty members. Many of the long-term recommendations would have to pass a full faculty vote before they could be implemented.

Comprised of 18 faculty members, administrators and students, the CAS came into existence last year following a December 1994 forum at Charles Drew House focusing on the academic obstacles faced by minority students in the sciences. The forum impressed Rosbottom enough that he immediately promised to form a committee to figure out how to implement students' suggestions. He made good on this promise in January, when he formed the CAS and charged it with studying "ways of providing appropriate academic support

for students who have difficulties in quantitatively-based courses."

Raskin, a neurologist herself, said she shares the concerns of her predecessor for the quality of academic support at the College, particularly in the quantitative disciplines. "It's been a concern of mine for many years," she said, that some students come to Amherst unprepared in math and science." Raskin said she would like to emphasize cooperation between students and faculty to improve education at the College, rather than each simply blaming the other for a student's difficulty in a particular course. "I think the failure of a student to accomplish what he or she wants to in a class is the responsibility of the professor *and* the student." She admitted that this has the potential to become a "thorny" issue with the faculty when it comes up for debate in the spring.

Lisa Blair '97, who spoke at the Drew House forum, was one of student

members of the committee. "I felt my voice was definitely heard," said Blair. "They asked a great deal of us, but I felt they respected us."

To make its recommendations, the committee researched the history of academic support services at Amherst, interviewed student and faculty members and contacted other institutions to learn about other approaches. The report took care to note, however, that "no one seems to have found a magic formula" for successful support services.

Dean of Students Benson Lieber expressed his support for the committee's recommendations. "It will take some time and I think we feel very positive that the College is looking comprehensively at these supports," said Lieber. "A lot of what we have done over the years has been piecemeal."

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*Associate Editor Scott MacMillan also contributed to this article.*