

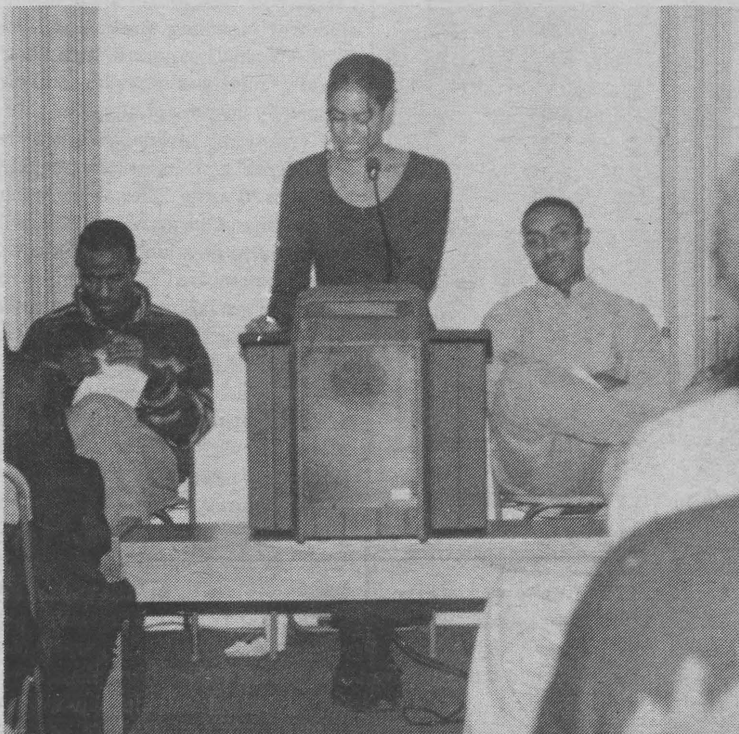
Minority Forum Elicits Promises

by TOM NASSIM
News Editor

Amid six short student presentations and a lengthy question-and-answer session, Dean of the Faculty Ronald Rosbottom made a public commitment to evaluate and reform Amherst's minority education process at a "Forum on Academic Concerns of Black Students at Amherst College," held Monday night in Charles Drew House.

Speaking to a crowd of approximately 30 faculty members and 100 students, Rosbottom vowed that he would organize a committee to find resolutions to academic problems facing minorities, particularly in the sciences; that he would study how other schools are dealing with problems faced by minorities in the classroom; that he would work on improving Amherst's academic support services; and that he and President Tom Gerety would work on providing adequate funding, both short-term and long-term, for such efforts.

The forum, organized by Shana Harry '97, included an audience of both white and minority students, professors from the sciences and humanities, as well as an array of College administrators, including Gerety, Dean of Students Benson Lieber, Associate Dean of Students Jean Moss, and



Louis Kessler

Shana Harry '97 addresses participants at a Drew House Forum Monday concerning the problems facing minorities in the humanities and sciences.

Rosbottom. Among students giving presentations were Lisa Blair '97, Amani Brown '97, Chad Brown '97, Harry, Karim Hutson '96, and L'Quentus Thomas '97.

Rosbottom, in a later interview, had nothing but praise for the meeting, calling it "very well organized and very well focused." He added that it was

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Administration Angers Campus With Dismissal

by TOM NASSIM
News Editor

The firing of Associate Dean of Admission Michael Whittingham '77 only days after he filed a racial discrimination lawsuit against the College has prompted various campus organizations to take action in protest. Angry students have planned a demonstration, scheduled to take place this morning outside of Converse Hall, to respond to the administration's handling of the situation.

Whittingham was dismissed last Thursday by Dean of Admission Jane Reynolds after months of conflict with the College; the tension stemmed from the May 1993 decision to promote Katharine Fretwell '81, who is white, over Whittingham, who is black and has three years more experience. According to Whittingham's attorney, Frederick A. Hurst, the Hampshire County Superior Court will hold a hearing today on a motion for a temporary restraining order which, while originally intended to prevent Amherst from firing Whittingham, could take the form of a writ of mandamus ordering the College to reinstate him. The College's lawyer, Felix Springer '68, declined to comment on any questions pertaining to the lawsuit, saying that remaining

silent is "the best policy to deal with court matters."

While at Amherst, Whittingham's duties included supervision of the Student of Color (SOC) Recruitment Program, which is designed to attract minority students to the College. Because of that role, students have expressed concern that the College's abrupt dismissal of Whittingham will undermine ethnic and racial diversity on campus. Late Friday night, for example, the executive board of the Student Government Organization (SGO) issued a statement calling for greater communication on campus and for the administration to "address the ramifications of Whittingham's termination for the preservation of diversity within the Amherst community."

At a forum that took place at noon on Saturday in the Octagon, students—including members of minority groups such as La Causa, the Black Student Union and the Asian Student Association—expressed their concern for the way Whittingham was fired and their support for the continuation of the SOC program. President Tom Gerety and Dean of Students Benson Lieber fielded questions, but many students were not satisfied with their responses. Erika

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Construction Annoys Residents

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Safety, the dust seeped in through the loose seals of the old windows in Valentine, while the removal of the old vent shaft from East, which will be relocated so that it doesn't go through the residential area, caused the plaster to tumble down.

Heavy drilling and pounding in the shaft above Slaughter's and Divya Rajaraman '98's room caused three large holes to form, enabling them to see the room above them. After calling Physical Plant, the two were told that the shaft was "small and dark up there and they [the workers] hit the wrong stuff." Fortunately, the workers immediately stopped whatever they were doing, cleaned it up, put up boards and plastered the wall.

One of Valentine Dormitory's second floor RCs, Jen Matuszek '96, stated that the most common complaints from those living in the construction site unsurprisingly include noise, temporary losses of electricity and heat, and shaking due to the jackhammering beneath the second floor of the East side of Valentine. "The East side has more problems than anyone else," she said. Rachel Slaughter '98, who lives on the East side of Valentine, concurred. "I can't study in here," she said. "I can't even sit here and talk to someone."

Matuszek also complained that construction's work hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. have not been enforced, citing instances of construction beginning as early as 7:15 a.m. and lasting as late as 4:45 p.m. According to Windblade, construction only extends beyond the normal working hours when it involves a "critical pour, a critical inspection or something basically out of our control."



Stan Kang

Work on the Lewis-Sebring Commons, formerly East Dining Room, will be minimized, allowing students to study in peace for their final exams.

dents who were most inconvenienced were given the opportunity to temporarily move into rooms in Milliken Dormitory, no one accepted the offer.

Moore resident Chris Mirick '95's biggest objection is that the College did not warn its students about the construction during last year's room draw. "My gut feeling is that the College must have known this construction would be going on this semester," he said. This may have affected the decisions of many Moore residents who chose the dorm based on its reputation as a quiet build-

he said. "They're [construction heads] treating us like five-year-olds. [They] tell us something to keep us quiet and then do not adhere to it." While he said that it is hard to get mad at the workers who are just doing their job, he feels that complaints are not producing results.

Matuszek feels that those involved in the construction are "willing to hear our complaints, but there is very little they can do." RCs bring resident complaints to Area Coordinator Rachel Raverby '94, who presents them at the

Drew Forum Explores Minorities At Amherst

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probably the most positive meeting of its kind that he had ever attended at Amherst College. "It brought up issues that I didn't know about," he said, "and that I'm sure many of the faculty in the room didn't know about." His promises, he said, were prompted by several students' expression of their disillusionment regarding teaching at Amherst. "We had not gone in with a list," he said, "but I was moved by and impressed by the presentations."

Gerety, meanwhile, pointing to the fact that Amherst "has come a long way in the last 20 years" in terms of curricular diversification, agreed that "we will inevitably come a long way further.... The forum showed that, in some respects, we are failing and that we need to reapply our sources. This is a good opportunity for planning."

The teaching of science was a particular target of criticism at the meeting. Ashaki Brown's '97 assertion that the language of science was "a foreign language" for many minority students was echoed by many others, as was her statement that problems for minorities surfaced primarily in the way tests are conducted.

Moss called for the science department to challenge students intellectually, and not to damage them spiritually. Blair's presentation, meanwhile, which gave a minority student's perspective of science, emphasized the value of help sessions and asked they be expanded from the math department to the other science departments.

Associate Professor of Chemistry Patricia O'Hara surprised many present,

had invited alumni to recommend changes in the teaching of the curriculum and had incorporated these suggestions in several applications for grants to pursue the recommended changes.

As the forum proceeded, the focus shifted from the natural sciences to the social sciences. Students directed heavy criticism to two departments in particular: Political Science and Law, Jurisprudence and Social Thought. One student called for classes on the civil rights movement, the contribution of minority caucuses in the federal government and the history of minority political groups and their impact on American Society.

Professor of Sociology Jerome Himmelstein disagreed with the need for many new courses, however, saying that while many courses in his department are not devoted specifically to minority issues, they are integrated into the syllabus. Similarly, Rosbottom suggested yesterday that students look at the curriculum carefully, talk to professors and explore options within the Five College. "We are not going to have everything everybody wants," he said. "Students are too damn smart and too interesting."

Largely, however, the faculty attending sat back and listened, nodding in agreement to much of what was said.

Rosbottom said that by the end of the academic year, he hopes to at least have a set of guidelines for resolving the problems addressed by the students. His performance Monday, however, left many students optimistic.

"The promises he made were phenomenal," said Student Government Or-