

# What we have here, is a plan to cooperate

by Stuart Smith

Five college cooperation has been around for almost twenty years, but until now nobody really paid any attention to it. A few brave souls stole up to Hamline every year to take an Area Studies course. Occasionally a Katie or a Tommie would use Macalester's library. Every so often, a Macite would venture down to St. Thomas or St. Kate's, spend an hour in a classroom, and come back home.

Then last spring, the five colleges put out a joint class schedule. Since then, the number of students coming to Macalester to take classes has doubled. The number of Macalester students studying at other schools has increased four fold.

**THIS FALL**, thanks to a \$600,000 grant from the Hill Family Foundation, five college cooperation is beginning to get off the ground. The five schools brought in Andrew Helmich, formerly an Assistant Dean at the University of Hawaii, to coordinate the effort. Helmich is in charge of synchronizing cross-registration, transportation, urban teacher training, minority education, project planning grants, and administrative cooperation--the six major aspects of the Hill Family program.

As the five colleges take these initial steps toward full-scale cooperation, the **Mac Weekly** took a few steps of its own--around Macalester and to the other campuses, to find out what kind of impact the idea is having on students.

Of the twenty people we talked to, only three had ever taken a course on another campus, but almost everybody knew someone who had. We even talked to one girl who had transferred from Macalester to St. Catherine's.



Photo by Jim Vauehan

**Neal Johnston:** "This place has a long way to go besides new buildings."

**MOST STUDENTS** were enthusiastic about the possibilities of the program.

"It gives you a chance to better evaluate what you're paying your money for here," said Neal Johnston of Hamline. Neal is taking Astronomy and Foreign Policy at Macalester this term.

How does he evaluate Hamline now?

"**THIS PLACE** has a long way to go besides new buildings."

"You get biased from just one school," observed Hamline freshman Andrea Jorgenson. She plans to come to Macalester for a theater course sometime.

"People tell me, 'go and take a course at another school, you'll appreciate St. Kate's a lot more,'" said Kathy Dornbach, a Katie freshman. But she added, "I don't think

it would help."

**MOST OF** the students cited scheduling conflicts or the existence of a particularly good course or department at another school as reasons for bolting the curricula of their alma maters.



**John Deihl:** "If I'd wanted to go to St. Thomas, I'd have gone to St. Thomas."

Quite a few, however, are bound to their campuses by their majors. St. Catherine's students involved in Nursing and Nutrition for example, can go no place else to take those courses.

**SCIENCE** majors often have a hard time taking courses at other schools. Karyn Hancier, a Hamline Biology major, explained that since the lab periods associated with science courses are often lengthy, she can't take such courses elsewhere because of her work schedule at Hamline. She said travel time plus course time would make it impossible.

Students cited travel inconveniences and registration problems as the two biggest barriers to cooperation at the moment.

Karyn has tried to sign up for Interim at St. Catherine's twice in four years, and the course she wanted has been closed both times. Sandy Knudson of Augsburg signed up for Macalester's Existentialism and Theology class this fall, and didn't find out that it was closed until she showed up for the first



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class. The professor let her in anyway.

**CLASS SCHEDULES** are not yet coordinated, which makes taking a course at another school all the trickier.

Efficient bus service really can't be worked out until all class schedules are made the same, and even then, there are likely to be problems.

Transportation for Augsburgian Sandy Knudson to her Monday night seminar at Macalester is nowhere near provided for by the bus schedule. Now the buses stop running at 5:15.

**THE HAMLINE** administration is paying Neal Johnston's transportation over to Macalester for his 8:30 Astronomy class because the intercampus shuttle doesn't leave Hamline until 8:20 and doesn't arrive at Macalester until 8:40.

Despite these drawbacks, most of the students we talked to saw some exciting possibilities in the cooperative effort.

Jim Larrabee would like to see students from different schools get together and plan "out of the ordinary" courses, not only for interterm, but for the semesters.

**ANDREA JORGENSON** thinks it would be a good idea if the schools "pushed the program more."

"Right now," she said, "we get course listings from the other schools, but no course descriptions. Maybe people would use the system more if they knew exactly what to expect."

Karyn Hancier saw a good opportunity to share visiting lecturers and coordinate international affairs special programs. She also thought there was a future in consolidating special organizations on the various campuses, like Tri Beta, the Biology fraternity.

**NEAL JOHNSTON** felt that activities on each campus should be better publicized on the other campuses. "I spend three or four mornings a week at Macalester," he said, "but I never really know what's going on. I just go to classes, study for a while, and come back."

A lot of students saw the cooperative as a chance to strengthen already strong departments at some colleges and make especially good faculty available to more students by initiating teacher exchanges.

**MARK BEITO**, Macalester Economics major, however, pointed out that that type of program could go too far. "We don't want to become like the University of Minnesota, where each school specializes in one thing," he said.

One final barrier to cooperation which a number of students pointed out was a kind of "culture shock" in entering the atmosphere of another school.

**MARILEE OPACICH**, who transferred from Macalester to St. Catherine's, thought that "going to Mac from St. Kate's could be hard on people's sanity."

Jim Thalhuber of St. Thomas pointed out Macalester's reputation as an open campus as one attraction for students from other schools, but he felt that too often classes here got "bogged down in Mickey Mouse."

Jim Larrabee and Neal Johnston said the "Mac mystique" and the school's reputation for radicalness played a big part in people's decisions about coming to Macalester for a course.

**DEBBIE ALBERT** of St. Catherine's had a different view of the Macalester "mystique."

"People there think they're so smart. They resent having girls from St. Kate's come in and lower their standards. I think Macalester's haughtiness has been one of the major roadblocks to cooperation all along.

"**I KNOW** a girl from here who took a Physics course at Macales-



**Marilee Opacich:** "Going to Mac from St. Kate's could be hard on people's sanity."

ter. The professor made so many slurring remarks towards St. Kate's in the first week that she left the course."

Indeed, the answers we gleaned from some of the Macalester students reflected a certain air of superiority.

"If I had wanted to go to St. Thomas, I'd have gone to St. Thomas," said John Deihl, who feels that cooperation is dragging Macalester "down to the lowest common denominator."

"I wouldn't go out and campaign actively against it," he said, "but it wouldn't bother me to see them wipe it out."



**Andrea Jorgenson:** "We got course listings from the other schools, but no course descriptions."

**JIM LANE** agreed. "I think Mac kids are more against it than anyone else," he said. "I'd consider taking a course at another school if I could be sure I'd get a good teacher and it was a good course. But you really don't know about that unless you've gone to a school for a while.

"I think it will lower the quality of education at Mac to cooperate. I chose to come here because Macalester was better than other places."

John Wheeler, Macalester's greatest Superfan, perhaps expressing a personal bias more than a lack of willingness to cooperate, was horrified when asked about the five college program. "Cooperate with St. Thomas," he exclaimed, "I'd rather die!"