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To: The Faculty and the College Community
From: The Curriculum Committee

At the Moderation hearings in the fall it was reaffirmed that the Moderation is an important factor in a Bard education, and the dominant sentiment was that it remain so. It also became evident then that the Moderation was not now considered as effective as it should be and as, perhaps, it once was. It was felt that there were needless complexities and obstructions in the present Moderation Document, that the Moderation itself had in some cases become too rigid and in others a mere formality, that it did not effectively predict a student's success in the Upper College, and that the prospect of Moderation caused an irrational and unproductive anxiety among students in the Lower College, even as early as the first semester of the Freshman year. The revision of the Moderation Document which is proposed here, is meant to simplify and clarify procedures and to give new life to the Moderation itself.

At the Faculty Meeting on April 15 the Curriculum Committee, with the support of the Educational Policies Committee, will move that the Moderation Document, as approved by faculty action December 16, 1964, and as revised May 22, 1968, be revised so that it read:

MODERATION

1. The Purpose of the Moderation.
   The Moderation is a very significant feature of Bard's educational program. It is that crucial point midway in a student's career at which he signals his readiness and intention to pursue a 'major' in the Upper College and at which the faculty of the College reviews his preparation for such pursuit. The purpose of the Moderation is to enable the student to assess his intellectual maturity, his clarity and seriousness of purpose, and to receive recommendations from informed and concerned members of the faculty for his program of study for his remaining years at Bard in the light of the academic goals of the College and of his own educational and professional objectives.

2. Timing of the Moderation.
   The Moderation will normally take place during the second half of the second semester of the student's sophomore year, at the end of which he should have accumulated about 60 course credits. However, a student who believes he is ready to moderate earlier or who has reason to moderate later may, with the support of his adviser, elect to do so in any semester after his first year and prior to his senior year, and he should communicate that choice, with the endorsement of his adviser, to the Chairman of the Division into which he intends to moderate and to the Registrar during the last two weeks of the semester preceding the semester in which he intends to moderate. A student who transfers into Bard from another institution will normally moderate earlier than his second semester at the College, and the option for a later Moderation is the same for a transfer student as for a student who begins his career at Bard. All students must moderate, and refusal to moderate by the end of the junior year will constitute grounds for academic dismissal from the College.

3. The Form of the Moderation.
   The Moderation conference is a colloquy between the student and several members of the faculty (usually three) concerned in the general area of knowledge the student proposes as his major concentration for his work in the Upper College. In connection with the Moderation the student will be expected to demonstrate his proficiency and his promise in a particular discipline by way of a formal presentation indicative of his best work, which may take the form of a critical or scholarly paper, a group of paintings, a musical performance, a feast of acting or directing, the working of a laboratory problem, or some other appropriate example of his work, the precise nature of which will be determined by the discipline the student proposes for his major. During
Remarks in Explanation and Support of the Motion

The Moderation is now described in the Moderation Document as that 'crucial point in the individual student's career at Bard at which, with the help of his teachers, he assesses his past record and plans his future course of study.' It is this aspect of the Moderation which the proposal aims to reinforce by what it is, in effect, a reaffirmation of a long-established assumption essential to Bard's pedagogical philosophy, enunciated early in the life of the College in the so-called 'Blue Document' which outlined academic policy for the then new Bard and often since then, that 'the student will be expected to assume the chief responsibility for his own education.'

Under the present Document the stress has tended to shift from that assumption so that the Moderation is sometimes thought of as a qualifying examination, useful as a means to select and exclude students with particular strengths and weaknesses. Under the revised Document the Moderation itself is essentially unchanged - the student is expected to demonstrate his proficiency in a particular discipline by way of a formal presentation of his work to a Board made up of informed members of the faculty, and the Board is expected to write an evaluation of the student's accomplishments and prospects at the College - but the responsibility for making the decision whether or not a student shall attempt to pursue a major in the Upper College is shifted from the Moderation Board to the student, and the initial intention of the Moderation with its focus on student self-determination thus again comes into force. In reaching such a decision the student will have the evaluation and recommendations of his Moderation Board, and he would normally consult his advisor. Dismissal from the College for academic deficiency remains unaffected by the change in the Moderation Document.

It should be stressed that neither the idea of the major itself nor the principle that a student should be expected to show considerable expertise in the pursuit of knowledge by the time of the Moderation is questioned. And it should also be stressed that the Senior Project is considered by those making this proposal to be as essential to a Bard education as the Moderation - the Committee has explicitly rejected all suggestions that the requirements for the Senior Project be diluted, or that the Senior Project be reserved for 'Honors' students only.

Furthermore, it is not anticipated and certainly not proposed that the Moderation become less exacting. With the onus of making a 'final' decision lifted from the faculty, and with the anxiety of having a 'final' decision imposed upon him lifted from the student, the Moderation itself should be more honestly serious and more productive. Some now feel that the major purpose of a Moderation is to 'Pass' or to 'Fail' student, and that a 'Pass' might just as well be achieved as quickly and with as little fuss as possible, whereas a 'Fail' should be simply 'justified' by extended proceedings. In both cases the tendency is to focus less on the immediate encounter than on its consequences. The purpose of the change is not to 'spare' the weak student, but to make greater demands on all students, and especially to challenge the best students to superior accomplishment. It is expected that under the revised procedures higher standards will be possible and that every student will be set tasks commensurate with his highest abilities so that the Moderation might become a challenge to excellence (as it presumably once was) rather than (as it is sometimes said to be now) ritual rite of passage for some and extended inarticulate despair for others.

The Committee has given considerable time in an effort to predict the effect of this proposal on the College as a whole, and on the Upper College in particular. Predictions are to be entered into cautiously, but it is felt that the revision will lead to a decrease in anxiety which in turn might contribute to an improvement in cultural and intellectual 'morale' among Lower College students. Faculty in various disciplines were questioned about consequences to the control of quality in the Upper College, especially among majors, and most felt that the proposed changes would not make a significant difference. It was pointed out that few students are in fact now denied admission to the Upper College, that the Moderation does not efficiently predict success, and furthermore that a number of those not promoted have maintained such academic standing in the College that dismissal was likely anyway. The possibility was also raised that the change might lead to a substantial increase in the number of Upper College students and thereby threaten the already precarious Major Conference system in some departments. The actual effect on numbers is difficult if not impossible to predict, but it should be pointed out that over the past few years only 8% of the students who stood for Moderation were failed, and an unknown number of these were subsequently promoted in another Division. It seems doubtful, given the complexities of the attrition problem at Bard and in colleges throughout the nation, that the change would lead immediately to substantial changes in the composition of the Upper College.

In summation, Moderation procedures are not very much altered by this proposal, but it is believed that the essential purpose of Moderation will be better served, that more self-determination will be given to the student, that both the student and members of the faculty will be relieved of unproductive anxiety, and, most important, that the Moderation itself will more readily become a 'meaningful educational experience,' or more particularly, that standards of excellence can be set and a student can be induced to perform more effectively; with the change the Moderation will become more directly connected than it is now with the achievements, at whatever level, of the individual student, and the written evaluations will be more genuinely disinterested and thus of more honest value.

(David Corey, Fred Crane, Mary Goodlett, Ws Monroe, Peter Swift, James Sullivan, Bernard Tager, William Warner, William Wilson.)

As the Government Department Moderation boycott enters its third week, response from the rest of the school has begun to materialize. The boycott originated out of the various major department feelings that the recent moderation needed in the area of moderation, particularly in the Government Department, but also the faculty vote against the Curriculum Committee reforms, led by the Government faculty, support for the more radical reforms suggested by the boycotters, and the suggestions of the Moderate Reforms suggested by the Government faculty, support for the more radical reforms suggested by the boycotters who have come from many quarters. The boycotters' suggested reforms, which center on the concept of each department having its own chosen form of moderation, are in direct contrast to the suggested form of the Moderation Reform Document which calls for a standardized form for the entire school.

However, the boycotters are not asking for support of their own demands at this point, but are rather asking for support of moderation reform in general, now that certain elements of the faculty have shown themselves hostile to such reform.
Reform of the Moderation process has been a need for a long time now, but it was not until this semester that the dam of inertia was broken with the Curriculum Committee and the Government Department students both taking action in regard to this autocratic and increasingly irrelevant institution. In the one case, a committee has suggested that we leave the process intact, but, in the words of Dr. Crane, 'pull the teeth' of moderation. In the case of the government students there continues to be a concerted boycott of Moderation until reform is achieved. These people urge a more radical solution to the problem of Moderation with each department having its own choice in the 'moderation procedure,' but they are mainly interested in achieving reform. However, this hope has been frustrated by the negative faculty vote of a week ago.

We now have a situation where there is no real reform achieved, and where the student boycotters will wind up screwed into the ground. From talks with various faculty members regarding the faculty vote, we realize that not all voted out of a negative feeling towards reform of moderation, indeed, some say they voted against the proposal because it did not go far enough. Yet this winds up being a negative act nonetheless. We need reform, and we need it now. We need action not prevarication.

What we feel would be the best solution for all concerned is to pass the present reform proposal, thus allowing the student boycotters to pass through Bard, and not get screwed for their determined stand against a corrupt and disgusting system, and also give us all a chance to experiment a bit with the Moderation process, now under less restraint than before. The proposed reforms, while not to our own liking, will do for one, or maybe two semesters, until we can arrive at a system that is more rational. However, we cannot abide for any more time under the old gold star, black mark system. We appeal first for the progressive elements of the faculty to unite and pass this document, and second, we appeal for moderating sophomores to boycott moderation until reform is achieved. Too many years have gone by with a bad system getting worse— if we all unite now we can achieve a victory for joint student-faculty reform of an institution.
5. A Second Moderation.

If, as may happen in unusual cases, a student elects to change the concentration of a minor subsequent to his first
Moderation, he may petition for a second Moderation to evaluate his accomplishments and prospects in the new
discipline. In the normal course it is not expected that a student would want or have time for a second, and
certainly not a third, Moderation, but subsequent Moderations are not explicitly ruled out.


Although procedures may vary with the individual student and the nature of the discipline and no two
Moderations will be entirely similar in stress and sequence, the following will be considered normal college-wide procedures:

a. Each semester the Registrar's Office will furnish the Divisional Chairmen with lists of students expected to

    moderate in that semester, and the Divisional Chairmen in turn will transmit their Moderation schedules to the
    Registrar two weeks before the mid-term date. These schedules should contain the composition of each

    Moderation Board and indicate the specific nature of the presentations which will be expected. The Divisional
    Chairmen should also post Moderation schedules.

b. There should be no fewer than three faculty members on each Moderation Board, one of whom shall be the

    student's adviser. One member of the Board shall be

    designating the chairman. Wherever possible, the

    Board shall include one instructor who has not had the

    student in course or in conference, and it is highly

    desirable that at least two members of the Board have

    previously participated in Moderations. When desirable,

    in terms of the student's course of study, a member of

    another Division, or another department, or a fourth

    member may be invited to participate in the Moderation

    conference.

c. The Registrar will inform each moderating student that he must prepare in quadruplicate a written evalua-

    tion of his previous college work and a projection of his plans of study in the Upper College. One week after the

    mid-term date the student must submit the original of

    these papers to the Registrar's Office and a copy to each

    member of his Board, personally or through the campus

    mail.

d. The Registrar will also inform each moderating student of the specific nature of the presentation which

    is expected and which must be executed according to

    c. Before a Moderation conference the Chairman of the

    Board will collect the confidential grade sheets at the

    Registrar's office, and at the same time consult the

    complete file of the student in order to supply the

    Board with all pertinent information.

f. Just before each Moderation conference, the

    Board should spend from five to ten minutes deciding

    the most important points to be brought up during the

    conference.

g. During the conference, the Chairman of the

    Board should direct the Moderation proceedings. He

    should see to it that the points which have been decided

    on are covered, that even in the heat of academic dispute

    the central purpose of the meeting—to expose the

    student's academic accomplishment and promise—is

    maintained, and that the student is given sufficient time

    to formulate his answers. The Moderation should be

    conducted so that it will leave the student with a sense

    of its value in helping him plan his education, and not

    with a feeling that the Moderation is a mere formality.

h. At the end of the Moderation conference, the

    Board shall review the student's work at the College,

    evaluate his presentation, and make recommendations

    for his work towards his goals. In making its evaluation

    and recommendation, the Board will allow for other

    criteria such as the student's 1) past academic

    record, 2) his ability to speak and write effectively,

    3) his command of facts, methodology, and theories in

    his own and related fields, 4) his promise as a member of

    Upper College seminars, not only in his major but also

    in other subjects, 5) his ability to complete a satisfactory

    Senior Project in his major, 6) his performance during the

    Board's full academic evaluation, and 7) his clarity and seriousness of purpose.

The Moderation report shall promptly be transmitted to the

    Divisional Chairman and to the Registrar who will communicate its content officially to the student.

(End of revised Moderation Document)