

QUAKER INFLUENCE ON THE HISTORY OF HAVERFORD COLLEGE

Haverford College had its beginnings in 1833 as a modest academy opening with 17 faculty and 21 male students. The school also had a small library that included the seven Quaker books that form the nucleus of what is now a collection of more than 40,000 books by and about Quakers. The founders of Haverford College, who placed a high value on intellectual excellence, stated at an organizational meeting in 1830 that they envisioned a school with a course of instruction “as extensive as given in any literary institution in this country” (Jones, History, 3).

In reflecting on Haverford’s first 100 years, Rufus Jones (a Haverford graduate and major contributing figure in the history of the College) described the motto of the College’s founders as “Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold, but not too bold” (Jones, History, 3). Jones’ “not too bold” refers to the founders’ intention to provide a “guarded education” which would shield young minds from corruption by avoiding art, music, fiction or anything else seen as a distraction from the search for Christian truth. Within these carefully limited boundaries, the earliest College leadership hoped to graduate young men of high integrity, firm self-discipline, and a deep respect for elements of divinity in the earthly community.

Haverford’s early years saw a struggle against these boundaries. As early as 1846, enrollment was opened to non-Quakers. Eventually the idea of a “guarded education” was abandoned. By 1933, Rufus Jones noted that there was a general agreement that “‘guarded education’ [was] not in any true sense education” because “it is difficult to become either intellectually or morally robust” on a “selected mental diet.” Instead, students need to be “given the opportunity to face all the facts on which their truth is to rest” (Jones, History, 4).

Note that Jones says that students should find *their* truth; that is, students should discover what is true for *them*. Throughout its history, Haverford College has been characterized by an *inner* framework of ideals, aims, aspirations, and standards of scholarship, along with an assumption that each individual will cultivate a passion for sincerity, truth, and honesty. These values are, of course, characteristic of a wide range of religious and ethical traditions, not just Quakerism.

The boundaries continue to expand. Today, the Haverford College student body, numbering more than 1,100 young men *and* women, taught by a faculty of 111 full-time and 5 part-time scholars, has access to study in almost every conceivable discipline. Off-campus study opportunities in this country and at institutions all across the world offer seemingly limitless intellectual boundaries. Yet the College’s basic goals and values have not changed: to encourage and support young people in developing high integrity, firm self-discipline, academic excellence, and a deep respect for the preciousness of the earthly community.

Expanding Boundaries – Reaching out to the Wider World

When Haverford first opened, the school’s goal and focus was to protect young people from the temptations of the outside world. Plain clothing was required, and students were

not allowed to go into Philadelphia. Everyone followed a rigid, lockstep daily schedule, which included a curriculum of Greek, Latin, mathematics, and religious training.

That initial vision gave way to greater openness. By the end of the 19th century, the school newspaper, *The Haverfordian*, reflected some challenges to the old curricular limits. Rufus Jones, a student during the 1880s, remembered that growing student energy:

It was a new idea then that students had anything to say about the kind of college, or the kinds of classes that were to be provided for them. They were supposed to be passive recipients of the intellectual food that was believed to be good for them, and they were to be “seen and not heard.” We challenged that ancient theory and claimed a voice.” (Jones 98)

The last decades of the nineteenth century also brought a new president, Isaac Sharpless, who supported the idea of student self-government. He also advocated broadening the academic curriculum. For the first time, professors began to include fiction in the literature program. Previously, the library had prohibited fiction, as it was deemed a departure and distraction from “truth.” Nevertheless, by the 1870s, students had formed the Everett Society and collected some fiction, reading it surreptitiously until the faculty confiscated the collection in 1874. With Sharpless’s arrival in 1887, the College shifted away from narrowly defined Quaker discipline and laid the foundation for an academic experience more in tune with the outside world.

By 1893, when Rufus Jones returned to the College to teach, the campus was more ready to reach out into the world. Jones, who would become a world-renowned scholar of religions, helped bring fourteen Quakers from across the United States to coordinate an intellectual and spiritual response to World War I. Out of that gathering was formed the American Friends Service Committee which remains an essential force in organizing humanitarian work and advocacy.

While the ties between Haverford and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) are no longer direct, the two organizations still echo each other in terms of core values and inspiration for the future. Haverford students have been interns or volunteers at the AFSC. In 1999, Haverford created a new program on campus called The Center for Peace and Global Citizenship (CPGC). The mission of the center was to extend Haverford’s long-standing concern for social justice, working to create a more just and peaceful world through research, education and action. Today, both AFSC and CPGC reflect the Quaker emphasis on social justice, working to broaden and deepen strategies for peace in the world.

The First World War represented a critical juncture for the College, for it brought an abrupt halt to what remained of the earlier focus on boundaries, isolation and a “guarded education.” In both World War I and World War II, the Quaker tradition of hearing and respecting all voices led to controversy on campus. In 1940, when Felix Morley became president, students expressed their hope that he would lead them into a place of active involvement with the tragedies of the world, while protecting their values. This task proved to be more difficult than imagined. When Morley recommended that the school

support training programs for noncombatant army positions, some saw this choice as a weakening of the Friends' stance against violence in any form, and particularly against military interventions as a way to resolve conflicts.

Nevertheless, members of the Haverford College community did develop a "Quakerly" response to the international crisis, enlisting a number of men—and several dozen women—in a program known as Relief and Reconstruction (R & R). This on-campus training prepared these young people to teach nutrition and repair buildings and machinery and taught them foreign languages before deploying them to assist in rebuilding war-ravaged areas of Europe. In the years following World War II, a similar curriculum known as the Social and Technical Assistance program continued the spirit of the wartime R & R, since many people in the campus community were convinced that only with strong political, economic, and public-health supports could world peace be sustained. This conviction is still central to the philosophy of Haverford's current Center for Peace and Global Citizenship.

By the late 1940s, under the leadership of President Gilbert White, the College offered unequivocal support for those who chose to become conscientious objectors. When it turned out that a student's draft board hearing was on the same day that President Gilbert White was to attend a ceremony where he was to be honored, White chose to testify at the student's hearing instead (Fractured 34). At the end of World War II, sociologist Ira D. Reid—Haverford's first black faculty member--described what he saw as the foundation of Quaker non-violence:

The dynamics of peace is the perpetual challenge to the Society of Friends. It is to be ever alert to the problems man faces as he tries to achieve a sane and healthy balance between the world-he-believes-in and the world-he-lives-in. Failure to achieve this balance is ever a clear and present danger to humanity. (Reid 84)

Haverford's Evolving Spiritual Focus

Required weekly Meeting for Worship (known as "Fifth Day Meeting") was a strong, unifying tradition during the College's early years. It consisted of a quiet period in which everyone was expected to sit in the silence and reflect, meditate or pray. Any person feeling led to do so could rise and deliver a brief message to the group. Rufus Jones described the Fifth Day Meeting of his 1880s college days as "the center of the spiritual life of the group" (Jones 62):

We sometimes *sat*, and nothing happened. But very often there was a circulation of life and power. Something broke through and *found* us. Those who were more ripe and spiritual did something by the intensity of their spirit and the elevation of their souls to raise the whole level of the meeting and to bring it into concentration and unity of purpose. (Jones 65)

As the years went by, and as all types of traditions were increasingly challenged in the larger society, many students found it hard to take Fifth Day Meeting seriously. Student pranks were infamous. The quality of the campus-wide search for integrity had not

declined, but enforced meetings for worship seemed an artificial and hollow way to acknowledge that search. After all, hadn't the Religious Society of Friends been born as an attempt to escape rituals?

By the 1960s it was clear that something had to be done. Recognizing the fundamental importance of this issue, a joint committee of administrators, students, and faculty spent several years pondering the situation. In their report, issued in 1966, they were forced to acknowledge the failure of everything that had been tried so far. Hugh Borton, then president of the college, made one last attempt at a solution. He suggested that a student might be required to attend only a limited number of times, if he could present a plan to fulfill the same purpose -- spiritual development -- in an alternative way. But the Board of Managers took a different approach. Consistent with Friends long-held belief that true religion was both internal and voluntary, they adopted the policy that students be released from the requirement of attending Meeting for Worship.

In more recent years, there has been a continuing concern about how to support students in their search for meaning, depth and balance in their lives, without imposing a form of religious practice. In order to encourage attendance at a much smaller voluntary Fifth-Day Meeting, the hour set aside for Thursday worship remained unscheduled in the College calendar until the 1990s. But the pressures of increasingly busy schedules eventually prevailed and the unscheduled hour was eliminated. Fifth-Day Meeting still continues, but since it occurs during scheduled class time, it is not heavily attended—except during periods of national or international crisis, when it can serve as a prayerful respite in a stressful world.

In addition, since the Quakerly experience of reflection or "waiting in silence" has been a key element of the College's unifying traditions throughout the years, today's students periodically reinvent it in a form that is relevant to their interests. In the words of the Board of Managers (February 21, 2006), there is a need to "create dynamic new interpretations of Quaker values which build on past practices to bring vitality to the present and promise for the future."

The Evolution of "Community": A Central Value

When Rufus Jones returned to Haverford as a faculty member, one factor that brought him back was the "unity of purpose" that he experienced through the College's various traditions. Many of today's faculty say that this same atmosphere of a cohesive community focused both on integrity and on the life of the mind is what attracts and holds the college's dedicated teachers and scholars. Students at Haverford today experience a sense of community cohesion through the Honor Code and the all-student Plenary that is held each semester, as well as through other traditions.

Especially important to "community" as it is experienced at Haverford is the idea that "unity" does not mean "conformity." The present-day community remembers and values this excerpt from President Isaac Sharpless' 1888 commencement address:

I suggest that you preach truth and do righteousness as you have been taught, whereinsoever that teaching may commend itself to your consciences and your

judgments. For your consciences and your judgments we have not sought to bind; and see you to it that no other institution, no political party, no social circle, no religious organization, no pet ambitions put such chains on you as would tempt you to sacrifice one iota of the moral freedom of your consciences or the intellectual freedom of your judgments."

In the 1940s, Quaker philosophy professor Douglas Steere joined Rufus Jones as a spiritual Quaker leader of the community. Several graduates remember one Fifth Day Meeting in which an alumnus criticized the student newspaper for publishing an "un-pacifist" viewpoint. Steere rose and said, "I trust that our friend will remember that true love respects the opinions of others" (Fractured 59, 87). While the principles of Quakerism promote pacifism, he reminded them, those same principles call on us to respect differing opinion.

In the 1980s, psychology professor Douglass Heath published *Fulfilling Lives*, based upon his interviews of Haverford alumni at various stages of their lives. Many of these interviewees recalled being held to a high standard of integrity and respect, growing out of the lessons learned from such as Steere and Jones.

Guidelines for shaping "fulfilling lives" was less complex when the student body was of one race, gender, and nationality. But in the years since the 1960s, more of the world's people have contacts, business associates, and even family members from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, and values. Haverford has struggled — and struggles still — to respond to this changing reality. As members of the Haverford community are ever more diverse — a diversity that includes gender, race, geographic, and economic background — spirituality also now takes many forms on campus. While there remains a Quaker undercurrent to the campus traditions, there is a very wide diversity in the ways students seek to develop a fulfilling life. For many students, the method of reflecting on integrity is found in poetry, philosophy, science, or the arts.

Race and Diversity: Evolving Challenge, Evolving Growth

Minority students on campus have a complicated history at Haverford. As early as 1926, the American Friends Service Committee highlighted a collective concern for the state of race relations in the U.S. They expressed a need for more open dialogue and increased understanding between economic classes and ethnic groups. That same year Haverford admitted its first black student, Osmond Pitter. Pitter, a talented cricket player, did not graduate, and it was not until the early 1950's that the first African American student received a Haverford degree. In 1946, the College hired Ira Reid, its first black faculty member. Beloved for his dedication to students and to learning, and for his unbending efforts in behalf of world peace, Reid had his passport confiscated during the 1950s McCarthy era. The College refused to dismiss him, and stood by him while he fought to have his right to travel reinstated. (Today the African American campus cultural house is named in Reid's honor.)

However, the first major steps toward active recruiting of a racially diverse student and faculty community did not occur until a student protest forced the issue in 1972, in which African American and Hispanic students challenged the college to deliver on its spoken

values by increasing diversity and improving the racial atmosphere in all areas of the college. In the following twenty years Haverford has increased its racial and ethnic diversity to the point where nearly one third of recent entering classes has consisted of students of color. Faculty and staff of diverse racial and ethnic groups, religious backgrounds, and sexual orientation are now also a visible presence on campus. In recent years the college has also worked to expand access for international students and students with disabilities, as well as to be open to the range of gender concerns which arise among the campus community.

Coeducation (Gender Issues): Conflict and Change

A most contentious issue was the decision on whether or not to admit women as students. In 1870, the Board of Managers first brought the issue of coeducation to the table, and it wasn't until a hundred years later, after much debate, that the issue was finally resolved when women were admitted.

The change came about gradually. In a short-lived master's degree program (1917-1927) women were granted degrees in religious studies and social work. Also, from 1918 on, women were granted honorary degrees. Haverford's long-time undergraduate bond with Bryn Mawr (a women's college) deepened in the 1960's and 70's, with a high percentage of students from each campus choosing courses—and *housing*—on the other campus. However, many felt that this did not go far enough. In a letter to *The Haverford News*, alumnus David Long '48 requested further consideration of full coeducation: “this is a Friend's College, and at the heart of Quakerism is equality, both in race and sex.” He pointed to other coeducational Quaker colleges, noting that Haverford was out of line with Quaker ideals.

Beginning in the late 1960's, the resistance melted, but slowly. First, during John Coleman's presidency, female transfer students were allowed on campus, as Haverford began to imagine an identity focused on inclusion and gender equality. Though both Coleman and the faculty supported coeducation, the Board of Managers held back, declaring in 1976 that women would be admitted *only* as transfer students in 1976. This decision resulted in the resignation of a frustrated President Coleman, who had devoted much of his term to working for coeducation. Three years later, the Board voted to move toward full coeducation. President Robert Stevens said at the time, “In terms of our Quaker traditions and heritage, I can think of no firmer commitment to the Quaker witness on equality than the decision to admit women.” Today, men and women alike have the opportunity to attend a Haverford where the educational experience is enriched for all.

Changes in the Honor Code Over Time

The Honor Code, which developed simultaneously with the late-nineteenth-century emergence of support for student self-government, began as an attempt to eliminate cheating (Ambler 3). The Student Association was formed in 1891 and the first Honor System was implemented six years later (Ambler 2, 3). Previously, the Board of

Managers made most of the crucial decisions of the College and even participated in disciplining students.

From its earliest years, the role of the Students' Council went beyond academic issues such as cheating. For example, in [year] Students' Council dealt with a food fight (a recurring problem) by suspending eleven students from the dining hall for a week (Ambler 8).

Over the years, the boundaries of the Honor Code expanded to include a "social code," which was developed in the mid-1940s. The 1945 Constitution of the Student Association offered the following concept of honor:

We realize that the success of any self-government system must be based on honor. The success of such a system depends upon the individual qualities of moral integrity, intellectual discrimination, and personal and social responsibility. It should be the aim of the Haverford College Honor System to foster through a constructive spirit of guidance, the development of these qualities of honor within each individual student. (Handbook 2, 3)

The Honor System's growth reflects an overall movement of the College from old-fashioned Quaker discipline towards a Quaker concern for social justice as each student becomes clear about his or her perspective as an individual, and also as a responsible member of the community.

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