



Strengthening the Academic Mission of the College

Haverford College distinguishes itself as an institution committed to student and faculty collaboration, innovative curricular programs, and intellectual community. How is Haverford's approach to a rigorous liberal arts education invigorated by the Quaker way of pursuing truth? This is an open question that invites vigorous discussion. One starting point is the way in which Quakerism and liberal arts education both see the pursuit of new insights as being relentless. Truth is contestable — it can be expected to continually evolve. And the process of discovery is not constrained by any established authority.

In 1888, as today, the emphasis is on letting one's life speak, seeking to eliminate any discrepancy between word and deed. The point is not to "preach" with empty words, but to ensure that one's entire life is a message of integrity.

Haverford's approach to education has been strongly influenced by Rufus Jones (1863-1948), who taught philosophy at Haverford for more than 40 years. In addition to academic excellence, Rufus Jones identified an intangible quality in a Quaker academic institution as "an atmosphere of sincerity [where] the deeper issues of life are honestly met." Jones saw Quaker education as "fearless education" where students are challenged to develop an "unflinching" quality in approaching not only academic challenges, but also the broader challenges of life.

In looking for evidence of that same spirit today, one might point to the Center for Peace and Global Citizenship, the Quaker studies coursework, the Peace and Conflict Studies concentration, the social justice requirement, and the Quaker Collection in the library. Students learn to engage in critical thinking, enter into academic discourse, and generate inventive ideas. The close student-faculty interactions at Haverford take place in a context of mutuality and respect, exemplifying the Quaker emphasis on the value of every individual and the capacity of each person to seek truth for himself or herself. Academic competition is de-emphasized as students are encouraged to be inwardly driven, supporting and learning from each other. The goal is to move beyond superficial "niceness" into respectful, vigorous and passionate debate.

The academic experience at Haverford, which encompasses the best qualities of the liberal arts tradition, interacts with Quaker traditions in a way that is continually evolving. The assumption is that intellectual and ethical growth are never complete. What results is a distinctly Haverfordian experience that depends on the best effort of each member of the community.



Supporting Community and Diversity

At Haverford College, each person is valued for his or her own uniqueness. There is an attitude of fundamental respect that resonates with the Quaker way of life. A belief in the sacredness of each person is integral to many religious and ethical systems, including Quakerism.

Haverford College is a diverse community. Haverford celebrates the fact that people of all cultural, racial/ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds can contribute to excellence in education through academic achievement and moral concern. The College recruits, welcomes and advocates for students of diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic class backgrounds, as well as bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgendered students. Community members are encouraged to grow in understanding of multicultural issues and in confronting the implications of various kinds of privilege. Students are encouraged to discover meaning for themselves, whether their path is philosophical, religious, or non-religious.

There are many organizations at Haverford that celebrate the diversity of the campus. But if you feel that there isn't one that represents you, it's very simple to create your own group, and it would have the support of the school and other students. Quaker traditions promote equality, and at the end of the day that is my goal.

– Steven Ramirez '09

Being a true community means including everyone: not only faculty, students, alumni and other supporters of the College, but also those who work here during the day, or during the early shift or the late shift. The sense of community at Haverford is strengthened by a consistent emphasis on integrity in the College's business practices, and by efforts to be truly open to the concerns of the Students' Council and the Staff Association. Quaker-style community meetings and memorial services provide opportunities to gather together for a common purpose. At Commencement each year, honorary degrees are awarded to people whose lives reflect the values that inspire the community.

Quaker business process and decision-making practice—with all its strengths and imperfections—has long served as a powerful connection to the College's Quaker roots. Taking the time to carefully hear and consider the wisdom in each of us can be cumbersome, but it often results in a stronger, more unified community of teachers, learners, and staff.

– Emma Lapsansky-Werner, Professor of History



The Honor Code

Haverford's Honor Code is an ethical system that is created and administered by students. It challenges students to reflect deeply on their own behavior while providing a framework for living the values of trust, concern and respect. "Confrontation" is an element of the Honor Code that refers to the responsibility to speak one's mind in an attitude of open dialog.

The Quaker tradition of "confrontation" affects people's willingness to deal with difficult issues. If a member of this community is bothering you (either with their actions or words) you are urged to "confront" that person and come to a resolution. I think many people's perceptions, words and actions get challenged when they come to Haverford, such as the person who used a derogatory word about homosexual people because, as he put it, "it was part of the culture of my high school." But when he came to Haverford, fellow peers "confronted" him and he stopped using the word, because he realized how negative it was.

– Shashi Neerukonda '08

Although there is no explicit connection between the Honor Code and Quakerism, the Code parallels the Quaker testimonies of truthfulness and integrity and Quakerism's focus on following one's Inner Guide rather than going along with the crowd. Students recognize that the Honor Code is the responsibility of everyone; it requires considerable hard work. In the same way, Quakers put tremendous effort in ensuring that their Meetings are as open and inclusive as possible.

Many of my friends from other schools don't understand how the Honor Code can possibly work, but it does because everyone likes to be trusted. It's like the difference between overbearing and trusting parents. When your kids feel they are respected and independent, they have no reason to rebel. Instead they grow into level-headed young adults who take responsibility for themselves and their actions.

– Erin Bagus '06



Consensus Decision-Making

“Consensus” is a voteless decision-making process that emphasizes inclusiveness, openness to new insights, and broad ownership in decisions. “Consensus” is used in meetings of the Board of Managers, the Corporation, the faculty, Students’ Council, Honor Council and all committees.

“Consensus” implies that people are carefully listened to, since each person is necessary and responsible for the growth and learning of all. That requires everybody to be open to the possibility of modifying his or her position. There is an active effort to incorporate minority views into the final decision. For consensus to work, people need to give up the tendency to form factions or seek “influence.” Instead, the community needs to be willing to struggle together for creative agreement.

Haverford also has a tradition of beginning meetings with a time of silence as a helpful way of enabling those present to center on the purpose of the meeting and to focus their thinking.

I’ve come to appreciate that “consensus” is not a synonym for “unanimity.” This is fortunate, because Haverford’s faculty is a group of thoughtful, strong-minded, and articulate individuals, who often disagree. Our method of doing business requires that we confront and address our differences. Even though forging a consensus can be hot and heavy work, I have seen it generate creative decisions that have strong faculty support. I wonder if we could achieve such robust outcomes if we merely voted “yea” or “nay” for specific proposals.

– Kaye Edwards, Associate Professor in General Programs



The College's Governance

Approximately one third of Haverford's governing board (the Board of Managers) is made up of members of the Religious Society of Friends. Quaker representation on the Board is a bylaw requirement, but the College's Quaker elements are not maintained through legalistic means, but rather through the way in which the Board as a whole continually honors the values of the institution. The College also has a 200-member Corporation, an essentially all-Quaker group that meets annually, holds title to the College's assets, approves key nominations and all changes to the bylaws, and assists in strengthening Haverford's Quaker elements.

This booklet was written under the direction of Thomas R. Tritton, Haverford's 12th President. Additional contributors include John Benson, Helene Pollock, John Morse, Emma Lapsansky-Werner, Jess Lord, David Dawson, Greg Kannerstein, Sunni Green Tolbert, John Van Ness, William Eagles, Lou Matlack, Trudy Rogers, Ethan Sorrelgreen, Robert Sutton, and Fritz Weiss.





Haverford strives to be a college in which integrity, honesty, and concern for others are dominant forces.

Haverford College, while a non-sectarian institution, has Quaker origins which inform many aspects of the life of the College. They help to make Haverford the special college that it is, where the excellence of its academic program is deepened by its spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions. These show most clearly in the close relationship among members of the campus community, in the emphasis on integrity, in the interaction of the individual and the community, and in the College's concern for the uses to which its students put their expanding knowledge.

- from the Haverford College Statement of Purpose



Haverford's beautiful 216-acre campus, which includes more than 400 species of trees and shrubs, a nature walk, and a duck pond, evokes a sense of peaceful serenity. The architecture is consistent with Quaker notions of simplicity. The College's Green Plan embodies principles of sustainability, which are mandatory for all major renovation and building projects. Haverford's policies of environmental responsibility resonate with the long-standing Quaker commitment to participate in the healing of the Earth.