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## THE SINGLE COLLEGE TAKES A MATE

By

B. Richard Berg

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As befits a lady of her age and reputation, not to mention an endowment of nearly \$10 million, Lindenwood College took more than 20 years to make up her mind about marriage. The fact that a whole parade of her sisters announced decisions to enter into some form of cohabitation during 1968 and that most of the eligible bachelors - i.e. colleges for men only - had already bitten the dust, may have accelerated the decision process to some degree.

Is there a future for the single college in our society? The question has been carefully analyzed by some of the most prestigious colleges in the country and the impact of their decisions has reverberated throughout higher education. The Carnegie Corporation helped sponsor a year-long study at Princeton which revealed a number of facts that many of us had suspected.

(1) The best high school graduates were heading for coeducational colleges and universities.

(2) That only a small percentage of high school seniors were interested in attending a woman's college. We have been neglecting more than 75% of our potential student market in an era when private college enrollment has begun to decline, not only in relation to public institutions, but in actual numbers.

(3) The majority of faculty members prefer to teach coeducational classes.

Among women's colleges, Vassar publicly flirted with Yale and then decided to stay in Poughkeepsie after massive negative reaction from many powerful alumnae. When Vassar's decision to admit men was announced this year, President Simpson declared that the school had chosen coeducation over coordination because it was simpler, quicker, and cheaper.

It was quickly becoming clear that the decision on whether or not to remain single might not be our decision to make - the forces at work in private higher education may already have made the decision for us.

But let us back up somewhat and look at Lindenwood as a case study in planned change and see how the four basic steps of good public relations practice were implemented.

**The Lindenwood Colleges Saint Charles, Missouri 63301**

The four steps as defined by Scott Cutlip and Allen H. Center in their widely adopted Public Relations text book are:<sup>1</sup>

- 1) Fact Finding - information gathering and research.
- 2) Planning.
- 3) Communicating - and in transferring these steps to the area of academic administration and program management, this step might also be labeled, Implementing.
- 4) Evaluation

Fact finding begins with an analysis of the institution, its history, and the context in which it functions.

Twenty years ago, the Trustees of Lindenwood College foresaw the desirability of establishing some kind of close relationship with a men's college. Land adjacent to the present campus was purchased and held for that purpose. An attempt was made to woo Westminster College away from Fulton, a small town in Central Missouri, down to St. Charles, a growing 200 year old community on the edge of metropolitan St. Louis. Lindenwood was able to steal Westminster's president, Franc L. McCluer, but the campus remained in Fulton where Westminster has more recently perfected a platonic relationship with neighboring William Woods College. Whether or not marriage will be the ultimate result of that relationship is still a rumor.

Word that St. John's College in Annapolis was planning to establish a western colony reached receptive ears on the Lindenwood campus and a dowry of 70 acres of fertile Missouri farmland was offered to the potential suitor. With a gleam in its eye, St. John's overleaped Missouri and found a home in sunny Santa Fe, New Mexico. Disappointed, but not distraught, the Directors of Lindenwood College in 1966 charged their newly elected president, John Anthony Brown, with the task of resolving the question of an academic community with or without men.

Leadership of the fact finding process was delegated to Dr. Howard Barnett, chairman of the Department of English, and Assistant to the President for Academic Planning. He visited MacMurray College in neighboring Illinois to learn of their experience in launching a co-ordinate college for men ten years earlier, and several other liberal arts colleges. He also developed pertinent information on Lindenwood,

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<sup>1</sup>Cutlip, Scott M. and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1964)

its students, alumnae, where they came from and where they went. He discovered that most of the students who came to us did so because we were a women's college, and many of them left two years later for the same reason. More than 99% of those who transferred went to co-educational schools. Any survey of student opinion on the possibility of planned change would have to somehow include those students who had left as well as those who stayed.

As in most real life situations, the planning phase began well before the fact-finding was completed.

Acting on the premise that the best way to gain support for any change is to involve as many of the affected groups as possible in the planning process, we began by carefully identifying the affected groups.

Current students, Alumnae, Trustees, Faculty, Administration, Staff, and selected donors and community leaders who had demonstrated an interest in the college. President Brown sent letters to the members of each of these groups in January of 1968 inviting them to submit written opinions on the possibility of men in Lindenwood's future. Many thoughtful comments were received representing a broad spectrum of opinion. Most of the alumnae favored the development of a coordinate college for men. It seemed that the older the alumna, the more likely she would be to favor the addition of men to the campus. Current students were divided in their opinions, with the "anti-men" faction being the most vocal. These statements were reproduced without editing and distributed to the faculty, administration, trustees and alumnae and student leaders.

The faculty met in the early Spring of 1968 to discuss the issues involved and to examine alternatives for the future. A straw vote was taken on three possible alternatives to guide further study. No one on the faculty voted to remain as we were, a college for women. Approximately 25% of the faculty present indicated a preference for outright coeducation, while the rest favored some form of coordination.

The study on the future of the college from that day on had been given a direction, and the time for more formal analysis and planning was at hand. But how do you study the involvement of young men in the life of the college when you have no young men? Especially in this last third of the twentieth century?

The answer came with the admission of a carefully selected group of young men as special resident students to participate in the planning process. Our Admissions Director flew to Chicago and analyzed the records of hundreds of young men on file at the College Admissions

Center. He came up with a group of men whom he felt had the academic qualities we were looking for, and whose records indicated they might be interested in the challenge of helping plan something new. We quickly transformed one of our smallest residence halls into a hall for men and opened last September with a student body of nearly 600 women and 16 men. Some of the furnishings were out of character for a men's residence hall - like the bright pink rug in the main lounge - but the men survived.

At the beginning of the fall term (October 1968) three planning committees were formed. A faculty committee, a women's student committee, and a men's student committee. Some of the young women, including those on the study committee, were not happy at the prospect of men invading their campus for other than invitational social events. A small group even held a torchlight parade one warm fall evening and burned a man in effigy in front of the men's residence hall.

As the studies progressed, however, the members of the women's study committee who had full access to information on the state of the college and its future prospects, recognized the need for some kind of planned change. The mood rapidly grew from one of resignation about the inevitable, to enthusiasm in planning something exciting for the future. At a joint two-day meeting of the three committees in early December, a series of recommendations were adopted unanimously recommending the establishment of a coordinate college for men. The coordinate approach was selected over the very much simpler method of coeducation for a number of reasons:

- 1) The historic concern of the college for the education of young women and for the role of women in our society could best be preserved by maintaining the autonomy of the women's college. This step also helps preserve the interest and support of the alumnae, and maintains the integrity of gifts which were dedicated to the education of women.

- 2) A separate college with its own Board of Trustees and separate academic leadership could pioneer in the development of new programs while relying on the coordinate institution for basic support in the broad areas of the liberal arts and sciences.

- 3) A coordinate college, by contracting with the existing women's college, could make efficient use of the same faculty and facilities, but provide a separate identity for the new unit that would be attractive and responsive to men students.

- 4) The availability of academic and resident facilities on the existing Lindenwood campus, and the existence of small classes with room for more students especially at the upper division, made expansion possible without major capital outlay.

5) The coordinate approach opened up the possibility of developing future colleges within the cluster of The Lindenwood Colleges.

6) The legal barriers in the charter of the college and in the deed of land from the college's founders, and the terms of these documents which are most favorable to the institution, made it undesirable to enter into litigation to have them changed.

These were only a few of the issues presented in the study, but they led to the third phase: implementation and communication.

The report was presented to a combined convocation of students and faculty members by the members of the study committees. The students present unanimously endorsed the recommendations, and at a faculty meeting immediately following, the proposal was endorsed by the faculty. The proposal was then printed in the Alumnae Newsletter and mailed to all alumnae with the news of student and faculty approval. Copies were also sent to the members of the Executive Council of the Fathers Club requesting their comments before action by the Board.

The proposal for the establishment of a separate coordinate college on the Lindenwood campus was presented to the Board of Directors on January 6, 1969, and the Board agreed to enter into a contractual arrangement with a new men's college. Articles of Incorporation were drafted and signed by the incorporators which included the President of Lindenwood College, the President Emeritus of the College, a faculty member, a male student who had participated in the planning, and a civic leader who later became chairman of the new Board of Trustees.

Prior to the actual incorporation, a major public relations decision was bouncing between my office and the president's. What would the new college be called? We had no major donor in hand and it was doubtful that one could be interested in the project in the short time available. We needed a name that could be changed later, if a major donor became interested, without offending anyone who might be associated with an interim name.

Our Admissions Director was anxious for materials to promote the new college if he was going to be able to admit a class of men for September, 1969. During the Fall Term, we had sent a brochure to both men and women students receiving recognition from the National Merit Scholarship program indicating that Lindenwood was developing some kind of program for men. To our surprise, we received more response from men than we did from women. This influenced our decision on naming the new college. The Lindenwood name was obviously acceptable to men.

After prolonged discussion, we incorporated the coordinate college as LINDENWOOD COLLEGE II, and decided to promote both colleges jointly under the title of THE LINDENWOOD COLLEGES. A design firm was retained to develop printed materials to announce the establishment of the new college, and the formation of THE LINDENWOOD COLLEGES.

The first piece prepared was a poster for the Admissions Office with attached business reply cards to meet the first priority: student recruitment. Other priorities were developed and a checklist was drawn up to make sure that no vital steps were overlooked. An announcement folder that could be mailed to the academic community, professional groups, other colleges and universities, and every donor in our constituency was prepared and mailed. A symbol was developed and a press conference was held on campus to announce the decision. By mutual agreement between the two Boards of Trustees, John Anthony Brown was elected president of both colleges to ensure close coordination. However, separate academic deans have been appointed to ensure distinctive differences between the two colleges. The women's college will emphasize the humanities, while the men's college will emphasize the sciences, mathematics, and the rapidly expanding field of communications.

In September, we will begin our new coordinate college for men, with a shared faculty, and shared academic facilities. Most classwork will be in common. Each college, however, will maintain its own student government and establish its own life style. The women will not be limited to service as the secretaries of all student organizations as so frequently happens on coeducational campuses. We will begin with 75 men in a program closely integrated with the existing college and gradually grow apart in some areas as each college develops its own distinctive qualities. But this single college has at last found a mate. Lindenwood, a lady of 142 years, decided to "marry a young man and bring him up right."

The final step in the process is evaluation. A step we have just begun, and one which never ends.

In anticipating change on our own campus, we learned from the experience of others. The guidelines we followed may be helpful to you.

1. Involve every group which will be affected as early in the planning process as possible.
2. Provide your planning groups with as many facts as possible, not only on your own situation, but about the context in which you must function and information on what similar institutions have experienced in similar circumstances.

3. Arrange for the participants in the planning process to present the conclusions of the study to their own constituents. This procedure helps assure credibility and win acceptance for the planners' recommendations.

4. Implement the program and publicize it well among all your constituents, taking care to inform your official family first.

5. Develop a continuing program of information and evaluation about the progress of change and its impact on the campus, maintaining communication not only with those who were involved in the planning, but with every constituency which is affected.

In times of change, of crisis and conflict, we must exert even greater efforts to educate and inform our publics - for timely accurate information is the key to understanding, and understanding is the key to support.