

SCRIPPS

Pulls Out All The Stops As New Enrollment Exceeds Goal

by Steven K. Wagner

AS DEAN OF ADMISSION, Patricia F. Goldsmith noticed it first—a sharp uptick in the number of deposits mailed in by students hoping to enroll at Scripps College for the 2005–2006 school year. In fact, by late April 2005, deposits were running well ahead of 2004. She took notice.

“We were pretty sure we were going to at least meet our enrollment goal,” Goldsmith said. “We were actually quite shocked to exceed it as we did.”

By the time classes had begun on August 30, the numbers had settled somewhat. Still, 234 first years—19 above the target of 215—and 17 transfer students were occupying seats. Thanks to early planning, all 36 extra incoming students had beds to occupy as well.

“Our fate is in the hands of all these teenage girls,” President Nancy Y. Bekavac said in partially explaining the surprise numbers. “Logic dictated that because this class was more qualified, and therefore these women would have other college choices, we should have had about the same yield as last year or even a lower one.” Not so.

Bekavac and Goldsmith, both longtime administrators, had seen similar early high numbers before—most recently in 1998. Over the previous two years, the number of applications for admission increased by a whopping 33%, and although the acceptance rate had dropped from more than 70% a decade ago to just 46%, 19 first years beyond what was anticipated signed letters of intent to enroll. Eight others agreed to defer their admission until next fall.

Indeed, the class is impressive. The median SAT score of about 1350 was equivalent to or better than that of the entering classes at many top colleges last year, including Wellesley, Smith, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, and Barnard. And, during the previous two years, Scripps has enrolled more National Merit Scholars than any other women’s college. This year, the numbers are expected to be equally impressive.

Still, the first years confounded...

Debra Carlson Wood, dean of students, also saw the 1998 numbers. She attributed the rush of new students this year to several factors, including a highly successful recruitment effort; the school’s growing national reputation, based in part on satisfaction among current students; and recent positive publicity. In fact, in August, *U.S. News & World Report* named Scripps the 27th top liberal arts college in the country, and the *Newsweek-Kaplan College Guide* named it the “hottest women’s college” in the country a week later.

“We have seen increases in retention, a decrease in student requests to live off campus, and an increasing level of energy combined with institutional enthusiasm,” Wood said, adding, “President Bekavac and others, both on campus and nationwide, have helped put the spotlight on the value of women’s education and obtaining it at a women’s college.”

PHOTOS BY BILL YOUNGBLOOD



CENTER: Core I lecture in Garrison Theater. New Core sections have been added to accommodate the upsurge in enrollment this fall. **BELOW:** First years Susana Lopez and Sarah Wootton meet outside the Malott Commons.



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Up Close and Personal...

"I think the housing people did such a good job of matching people up that it doesn't matter to me that it's a little cramped in our room. When we were asked if we wanted to de-triple, none of us jumped at the chance. In fact it is now a running joke that whenever any of us does anything stupid, we say 'That's it, we're de-tripling. You're out.' Plus the rooms are rather large for dorms so it is merely cozy, not overcrowded, in our room."

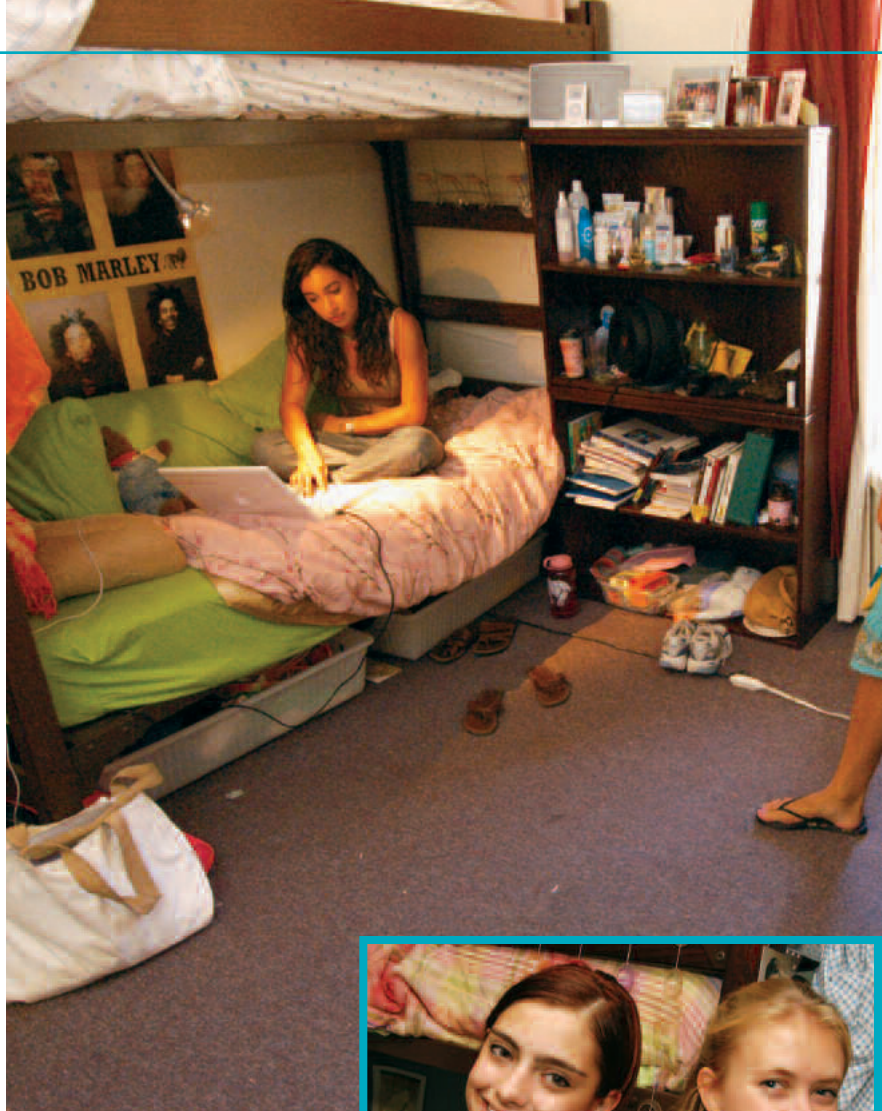
Rachel Mitchell '09, Clark triple

"I live in Clark. The bunk bed takes up a lot of vertical space, making the room seem smaller. There are only two closets, meaning that we have had to buy our own shelves, which take up further storage space. I feel that this room would do much better as a double."

Eva Smith '09, Clark triple

"I'm thrilled more and more women are interested in Scripps. Our housing situation is great. As a senior, it's a good transition from living in the dorms to having an apartment or a house."

Alison Omens '06, Off-campus house



"Growth in the endowment (which helps to fund student aid), our new buildings, and the atmosphere of planning and growth all send the message that Scripps is a powerful place to be, and it makes students want to come and stay."

While most administrators agreed that the higher-than-anticipated first-years' enrollment is a good thing, significant planning was required to hold that notion. That planning began before graduation when Bekavac assembled a team that included Goldsmith, Wood, Dean of Faculty Michael Deane Lamkin, Vice President of Business Affairs James Manifold, and Staci Buchwald, the associate dean of students/residential life. The group, along with others, met weekly for more than a month, ultimately identifying housing for the increased number of new students as a top priority.

"We promised beds to first years and a certain number of transfer students," Manifold said. "We had to provide them."

DID YOU KNOW?

First-year students come from such towns as Lee's Summit, Missouri; Shaftsbury, Vermont; Lanai City, Hawaii; and Jardines Lookout, Hong Kong.

The first-year class brings with them a total of 399 Scripps College credits through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate courses, and college work taken during high school. This is the equivalent of close to 50 years of college work.

Newsweek-Kaplan names Scripps "Hottest Women's College" as one of America's 25 Hottest Colleges for 2006.



ABOVE: Three first years share a room that was once a double, in Clark Hall. From left, Reina Zelonky, Sonja Welch, and Liza Schwartzwald. **LEFT:** To help the housing crunch, several new spaces had to be found for the influx of students. Sophomores Valerie Whitacre, left, and Mia Johnson, are roommates in what was once a human resources office. (Human Resources is now located in Vita Nova Hall.)

To that end, a number of options were put into play as part of the College's "over capacity" housing plan, which was outlined to the families of new Scripps students in correspondence sent out in June:

A Scripps-owned cottage at 1030 N. Dartmouth Avenue, the former Intercollegiate Women's Studies Center, was converted to student office space for the College's multicultural student groups, which formerly were housed in the residence halls. With Scripps Communities of Resources Empowerment (SCORE), Wanawake Weusi, Café Con Leche, FAMILY, and the Asian American Student Union all relocated, space for nine students was created in the residence halls. While some organizations were not happy about being moved, all will benefit from the rise in the student activity fee from \$70 per semester last year to \$84 this year and the increased number of first years who will pay it.

A second house at 1060 College Avenue was taken off the market, and now houses five senior women.

The College rented four units at the Brighton Park Apartments in Claremont, where eight upperclass students are living.

A house at 240 11th Street, which formerly accommodated Human Resources and other offices, was converted into a residence hall housing 12 upperclass students.

Two miscellaneous units in the residence halls were expanded to accommodate an additional student each.

The grand total? Thirty-six new beds.

As the housing issue was being settled, the focus also turned to classes, where roughly \$50,000 was budgeted to fund the hiring of faculty and pay for existing teaching staff to cover the program additions that needed to be made. Because all first years must take Writing 50 and the first semester of their Core Curriculum when they begin the school year, additional classes had to be added. Two sections of Writing 50 were added, bringing the total number of beginning composition sections to 16; the number of Core I sections was increased from 12 to 14.

According to Lamkin, one writing, one Core instructor, and a visiting lecturer were added as a result of the larger-than-expected freshman class. Existing staff were stretched to meet the need everywhere else.

"We managed to put all the sections in classrooms," said Carol Entler, the registrar. "During the Core teaching day, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., I don't have classrooms available to do a lot of room changes."

Additionally, a high number of first years have expressed interest in pre-medicine, pre-dentistry and pre-veterinary medicine. Each must take the same lower-division science courses as prerequisites—Biology 43, Chemistry 14, and Physics 30—beginning their freshman year. In the Joint Science Department, comprised of representatives from Scripps, Claremont McKenna, and Pitzer colleges, new sections were added in biology, chemistry, and physics.

"The Joint Science faculty and dean have been working to figure out a way to accommodate all these students," Entler said. "At this point I don't know how everything will be resolved."

The College's admit rate drops to 46% in 2005; only 13% of the nations' colleges and universities accept fewer than 50% of their applicants.

The Office of Admission responded to 19,102 requests for information last year.

For the past two years, Scripps has enrolled more National Merit Scholars than any women's college in the country; this year we have 17.

Finally, one section of Spanish 22, an intensive introductory course, and a section of third-semester Spanish (Spanish 33) were added.

Housing and classes aside, congestion—both on campus and in student rooms—also required attention. To draw first years out of their rooms, the dean of students was allotted \$20,000 to add programs of likely interest to students. These may include beach trips, museum outings, picnics, and other activities.

Relieving lunch-hour congestion in the Elizabeth Hubert Malott Commons—the Scripps dining hall—also was problematic. One of the first steps involved restricting staff from using the dining hall between noon and 12:30 p.m.; the dining area also was placed off-limits to non-students—except for faculty who are eating with students—during those hours. The staff lunch hour was changed from noon-1 p.m. to 12:30-1:30, allowing those who were precluded from dining between noon and 12:30 the half hour they would have lost.

To further ameliorate traffic, private dining rooms off the courtyard were improved to draw additional faculty, students, and student organizations away from the main dining room; lunch tables that had been pushed together in those rooms to create longer (and ultimately underused) tables were separated, enhancing table occupancy. And, the staff lounge was rededicated for use by students.

“We think that with those moves we created about 40 new spaces in the dining room,” Manifold said. “To us, a 14% increase in seating is a big deal.”

“Lunch for faculty and students ran from 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m., however we extended that until 1:30,” Manifold said. “That overtime will cost us \$70,000, but it gives us

First-year students, from left, Sonja Weich, Reina Zelonky, Meridith Bradley, and Liza Schwartzwald, became fast friends in the first weeks of fall semester.



PHOTOS: BILL YOUNGBLOOD

15 additional minutes every day throughout the school year when people can be served. That should greatly reduce congestion.”

While housing, classes, classrooms, and dining were major issues that needed to be addressed, the influx of new students had—and may yet have—other implications. The Office of Admission hired two part-time readers to scrutinize applications, and the application deadline was cut by two weeks to provide additional reading time this year. Bekavac spent dozens of hours meeting with staff and preparing to meet the new demand. Staff had to create and process the correspondence that eventually was sent out to staff, faculty, students, and their families, notifying them of the upcoming crunch and likely crowding. Budgets had to be redrawn. Tired staffs had to be kept motivated.

On top of that, additional food service and other personnel may yet be needed. As the fall term progresses and unforeseen needs arise, other departments are expected to petition for assistance as well.

One of those doing budgeting was Manifold, who estimated that approximately half a million dollars might be spent accommodating the overage. That was offset by net tuition revenues that the College will realize from the additional students.

Still, there were losses, albeit minor ones. One father withdrew his daughter, claiming the school misrepresented the housing situation. And, a small number of alumnae have expressed concern that Scripps may be losing its small-college feel. All in all, however, the situation appears to have turned into a positive one, though reaction among administrators has been mixed.

“This is the kind of thing that makes the dean of admission’s hair fall out,” Goldsmith laughed. “The admission process is much more an art than a science. You never know what the response from prospective students is going to be.”

She added, “This is a great thing for Scripps. It’s a terrible thing for the dean of students, who had to figure out how to house all these students, but it’s a great thing for Scripps. It says something about the popularity of the College and how it’s being taken much more seriously as an institution than it was 10 years ago.”

Manifold was less effusive.

“On balance, it’s a bad thing,” he said. “If a college grows, it should be by design.”

Bekavac, whose office is where the buck stops, had the final word. That word was “cozy”—not crowded.

“Certainly, our faculty and staff took the large number of students as a reflection of our strength and the attractiveness of our college,” she said. “Overall, it will have a positive effect on the bottom line, but we won’t know how positive for some time. Given how great this class is, given their academic strengths, this is the class we want. There’s always room for another good student.” ■



With a Batchelder fireplace for décor, Courtney Creley '07 checks e-mail in her double room, once a conference room in a small College office building, converted this fall to house 12 students.

“It says something about the popularity of Scripps College and how it’s being taken much more seriously as an institution than it was 10 years ago.”

DID YOU KNOW?

The Class of 2009 includes an experienced fly fisherwoman, an Oregon State champion baker, a Tae Kwon Do first-degree black belt holder, the co-president of a non-profit dog-washing business, and a young woman who swam a 45-minute race from Alcatraz to the beach in 57-degree water. Also, one who has slept on the beach of the Galapagos Islands to monitor the nesting habits of Green Sea Turtles, and the Bedrocks’ Bowling Alley reigning hula hoop contest champion.

“Every so often a magazine profiles some up-and-coming young woman who is changing the face of politics, business, her occupation...these women come from Scripps.” From the *Students’ Guide to Colleges: the Definitive Guide to America’s Top 100 Schools*, 2006 edition.