

THE MONTEITH PROBLEM
A Brief Chronicle of Signal Events,
May 7 to November 14, 1975

by Yates Hafner, Dean

And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about. . . .

--Horatio

Offered here is a convenient synopsis of some of the most remarkable events in 1975 leading to the vote of the University Council on November 12 to recommend that Monteith College be excised from Wayne State University. Each event is documented in the footnotes, but no further comment is offered. Materials available for deeper study of the events are cited also in the footnotes and are available, unless otherwise noted, from the office of the dean of Monteith.

May 7 (or earlier?)--Without consulting the University Council, the faculty of Monteith, or any dean of the University beforehand, President Gullen proposed to the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors (which is composed of all eight governors and meets in closed session) that Monteith College be phased out over a three- or four-year period because it is alleged to be too expensive and to duplicate the programs of other colleges of the University. Though no votes were taken in the Executive Committee, seven governors appeared to be in favor of the president's proposal; one was opposed. The president expected ratification at the June 13th public meeting of the Board.¹

June 13--Upon the recommendation of its Budget and Finance Committee, which had granted Monteith a hearing on June 11, the Board of Governors voted 5-3 to permit Monteith to continue, to be reviewed during the 1975-76 fiscal year, and to share in the budget cuts that will be necessary throughout the University.²

June 18--After suspending itself in protest against President Gullen's failure to consult, the University Council reconvened and, at the President's request, formed an ad hoc committee to examine Monteith in comparison with other programs in the University and in the context of the University's budget.³

¹Source: President Gullen's conversation with Dean Hafner of Monteith in the presence of Executive Vice President Cushman and Provost Bohm in the president's office on the morning of May 8.

²Official Proceedings, Board of Governors, Wayne State University, June 13, 1975. For a fuller narration of the events of May and June, 1975, see "The Struggle for Survival" in the Self-Study Report of Monteith College, August, 1975.

³Minutes of the University Council, June 18, 1975.

July 1 to September 22--Monteith accepted a budget reduction of \$91,418 (11%) and offered to accept an additional \$16,307. Applications and admissions had increased in the spring by some 20% over the preceding year, but the no-show rate (the number of persons who declined to register in Monteith or to attend Wayne) reached a record-breaking 50%, which is double the average rate in previous years. Consequently, headcount declined to 751 (2.8% lower than in Fall, 1974). Nonetheless, the number of persons enrolled in Monteith's core curricula increased by 11% to more than 1,000. Production of student credit hours in Monteith in 1975-76 is estimated to be about 15% higher than in the preceding year, and cost per credit hour is expected to decline by at least 13% even after monies for compensation improvement are added to the College's budget.⁴

September 18--Having received about 1,000 pages of documents from Monteith during the summer, the ad hoc committee of the University Council met with representatives of Monteith to ask questions. During the meeting the committee members were asked whether they had any negative criticisms of Monteith or whether they had received any negative criticisms of Monteith from anyone else. They answered that, with the possible exception of an expression of disappointment with the combined program between Monteith and the Law School (which had been initiated by the Law School and which the committee admitted did not reflect badly on Monteith), they had no criticisms to offer nor had they received any. The chairman said that of course it was inevitable that one would pick up comments from "the man on the street"--that would happen about any college, he said, but he and the committee did not take casual anecdotes seriously.⁵

October 10--For the second time, at the committee's request, representatives of Monteith met with the committee to answer questions. Again the committee was asked whether they had any negative criticisms of their own for Monteith or whether they had received any from any other source. And again they answered no to both questions. In fact, they expressed several compliments for Monteith. We mentioned a few problems that we have in Monteith (all of which are discussed in our Self-Study Report) and described what we are doing about the problems. The only comment offered by the committee on the problems we identified was that such problems (as how to help students write better and how to reduce the amount of time that faculty must spend in meetings) are shared generally throughout Wayne State University and in American higher education. We asked that our next meeting with the committee be devoted to a consideration of budgetary aspects of Monteith. We were not told

⁴Data sources: University comptroller's office; Office of Institutional Research; Office of the Registrar; Admissions Office; Monteith Advising Office and Business Office. (Here the term "core curricula" includes the four basic sequences and senior requirements, alternatives to general education for engineering and transfer students, and several ancillary courses.)

⁵Notes taken by Monteith representatives Bluemle, Hafner, Hartley, Herman, De la Isla, Leopold, Maier, Maley, and Waters at the September 18th meeting.

that the October 10th meeting was to be our last one with the committee.⁶

October 20--The ad hoc committee made an oral report to the Policy Committee of the University Council and, after brief debate, the Policy Committee endorsed the recommendation that Monteith "be phased out."⁷

October 27--The ad hoc committee released its two-page "Summary Report," which states that "The quality of the basic Monteith program is not in question. The problem reduces to a university-wide financial one." It comments briefly on costs per credit hour and the financial situation of the University, then states: "Given the current and continuing financial plight of the University and the duplicative and costly nature of Monteith, the Committee regretfully recommends that Monteith be phased out." The nature of the duplication, the length and practicability of the phase-out, the 11% to 15% savings already realized by Monteith, the savings that might (or might not) accrue from eliminating the College, the concrete circumstances that bear upon the feasibility of financial savings, the fate of the programs and of the students, a comparative evaluation of Monteith in relation to other colleges and to the goals of the University, and the educational consequences for Wayne are not indicated. The emphasis in the report is on severe financial exigency; no deprecation of Monteith's programs, students, faculty or alumni is mentioned or implied. No evidence is presented to justify the proposition that the elimination of Monteith would redound to the greater good of the University.⁸

October 28--The secretary of the University Council, Professor Milton D. Glick, wrote Dean Hafner: "The University Council will consider the adoption of the enclosed Summary Report of the ad hoc Monteith Committee at its meeting of November 5, 1975."⁹

⁶Notes taken by Monteith representatives Albers (Monteith Student Board president), Bluemle, Hafner, Hartley, Herman, Leopold, Maier, Maley, Torres, and Waters at the October 10th meeting.

⁷Source: Telephone conversation between Dean Hafner and Provost Haenicke, heard by Associate Provost Stewart, October 21, 1975. Confirmed also by Provost Haenicke, who chairs the Policy Committee and the University Council, at the meeting of the Council on November 5, 1975. Presumably, the minutes of that meeting will mention this.

⁸Memorandum "Summary Report of ad hoc Monteith Committee" from Sol Rossman, Chairman, to Milton D. Glick, Secretary, University Council, 27 October 1975. For a discussion of the report, see "The Continuing Story to Date," a memorandum by Yates Hafner, Dean, Monteith College, to Concerned Parties, October 29, 1975, which states twelve objections to the proposed abolition of the College and invites debate.

⁹Memorandum from Glick to Hafner, 28 October 1975.

November 4--Representatives of the WSU chapter of the AAUP met with three representatives of the University Council to discuss the question of protecting the rights of Monteith faculty members who might be affected by the proposed dismantling of the College. AAUP representatives had prepared a document for the University Council, which included a statement of AAUP policy on terminating programs on account of financial exigency. The document is reputed to have warned that if "extraordinary financial exigency" is declared as the reason for abolishing Monteith, the University administration could use that fact to reduce other programs as well and to lay off faculty in other schools and colleges of the University. It urged that a "program termination" should be based on educational reasons and that, in either case, national AAUP policies should be followed when dealing with the problem of what to do with Monteith faculty members. A compromise was reached: The AAUP would not distribute its document if representatives of the University Council would give assurance that an amendment would be made from the floor with respect to the AAUP policies on faculty reassignments.¹⁰

November 5--The University Council met. A statement from President Gullen supporting the proposed abolition of Monteith strictly on financial grounds was distributed. Introducing Professor Rossman, chairman of the ad hoc committee, Provost Haenicke emphasized that the oral report Mr. Rossman was about to give--and not the "Summary Report" that had been distributed earlier to Council members--would be "the official report of the committee." Referring to Monteith, Mr. Haenicke also said (his approximate words), "As everybody knows, this is a fine program." Mr. Rossman's oral report of November 5 (he was assisted by Professor N. LeBel, a member of the ad hoc committee) differed from the "Summary Report" of October 27 in several respects, the most conspicuous of which were:

1. The November 5th report included a presentation of some broad features of the 1975-76 University budget in comparison with 1974-75, some figures on costs per credit hour, and a calculation of how much money could be saved by phasing out Monteith if all the Monteith students are retained and taught in WSU at a cost of \$15 per credit hour, which was alleged to be the average expenditure on most lower-division courses in the College of Liberal Arts.

2. Many adverse effects of the University's financial plight on the quality of programs and on the ability of the University to accommodate students were recited.

3. The November 5th report omitted the statement that "The quality of the basic Monteith program is not in question." Nor did the November 5th report state that "The problem reduces to a university-wide financial one." Rather it emphasized that "first priority must be given to students who cannot

¹⁰Source: Oral report from Dr. Ernst Benjamin, president of the WSU chapter of the AAUP. Persons said to be at the meeting: Benjamin and Wehmer from AAUP; Glick, Kaplan and Rossman from University Council. Cf. American Association of University Professors, "On Institutional Problems Resulting from Financial Exigency: Some Operating Guidelines," Policy Documents and Reports (February, 1973), pp. 43-44.

be served elsewhere in the University and that the widespread problem of the decline of quality of education must take precedence over the interest of a small group." The November 5th report did not conclude that the Monteith program was costly, but it did assert, without documentation or explanation, that it was "duplicative." And instead of the October 27 words "the Committee regretfully recommends that Monteith be phased out," the November 5th report said, ". . . the Committee recommends a program discontinuance of Monteith College to be accomplished by a phase out."

Hence, while there was still considerable emphasis on the financial plight of the University, the November 5th report avoided the invoking of extraordinary financial exigency, leaving the impression that a "program discontinuance" was recommended on the basis of Monteith's "duplicative nature" and a conception that the first priority of the University is to respond to the demands of the student marketplace. The nature of the duplication, the length and practicability of the phase-out, the savings already realized by the College, the concrete circumstances that bear upon the feasibility of financial savings, the fate of the programs, and a comparative evaluation of Monteith in relation to other colleges are not indicated. The connection between eliminating Monteith and meeting the educational needs of students in the other schools and colleges listed was not made explicit.

There were other changes and elaborations, but the obvious tendency was to play down the financial aspect somewhat and to make it appear that the decision was made on "educational considerations" and on a recommended change in educational priorities for the University.

After this report was given, representatives of Monteith (three students, the dean, and a professor) were allowed altogether a half hour to address the Council (but took slightly over thirty minutes). After some discussion, Professor Herman of Monteith, a member of the Council, introduced a substitute motion that would permit Monteith to continue but at a cost comparable to that of other undergraduate programs. Debate continued, and the meeting was recessed late in the afternoon.¹¹

November 12--The meeting of the Council resumed. President Gullen addressed the Council briefly on his task force to identify budget reduction alternatives, or "targets of opportunity." He also mentioned progress on the University's Self-Study. Then the chairman of the Council, after complimenting the Monteith students and faculty for their behavior at the November 5th meeting and reviewing what had happened parliamentarily on November 5, said that the committee wished to respond to the debate. He called on committee chairman Rossman, who, with the help of committee member Bernice Kaplan, substantially augmented the earlier reports addressing the issues of uniqueness and duplication and the quality of Monteith College. They represented the committee as being of the opinion that the

¹¹Presumably, these facts may be confirmed by consulting the minutes of the University Council's meeting of November 5, 1975, when they are published.

only real uniqueness of Monteith is in its small discussion sections. They doubted Monteith's national reputation. They criticized the programs of Monteith. They cast aspersions on the competence of the faculty. They disparaged the accomplishments of Monteith alumni. They disagreed with the conclusions of outside evaluators of Monteith from Harvard, Columbia, Michigan, Illinois, Cal Tech, CCNY, Antioch, Kalamazoo, and the University of California, Berkeley. They concluded that Monteith was a luxury in terms of small classes and that there was no support either for the contention that Monteith is bad or for the contention that it is excellent. They did not comment on the quality of any other school or college. They professed to be speaking for the entire committee.

Some members of the Council urged that, since the committee had introduced, in effect, an entirely new report, changing radically the grounds for the recommendation, Monteith should be allowed an opportunity to respond. The chairman of the Council replied that the dean of Monteith had already been given a hearing at the beginning of the debate. A request by Professor Herman to have the new report in writing was ignored. A written commentary by the dean on the substitute motion was ignored. One council member declared he could not imagine that any manner of response from Monteith could change his mind at this point.

The Council declined to have roll call votes. The substitute motion was voted upon and defeated. The ad hoc committee's recommendation to abolish Monteith, with two amendments, one related to treatment of the faculty in accordance with AAUP guidelines, the other calling for the allocation of monies saved to academic units, was adopted by a vote of 37-20-1.¹²

November 13--Dean Hafner formally requested several documents of the University Council pertinent to the Monteith problem: the complete verbatim text of the committee's report on November 12, a transcript (if one exists) of the meetings of November 5 and 12, the materials that Monteith had furnished the committee, and a copy of all other materials considered by the committee. Secretary Glick offered to send only the minutes (when they are ready) he would forward the request for the other materials to Mr. Rossman.¹³

November 14--Dean Hafner sent a second request for the documents and asked the provost to use his good office to help obtain the above-mentioned documents, especially the November 12th presentation by the committee. The provost explained that the meetings are not tape-recorded. He did not agree to help obtain any documents.¹⁴

THIS CHRONICLE TO BE CONTINUED.

¹² Presumably, these facts will be confirmed by the minutes of the University Council's meeting on November 12, 1975, when published. Since the committee spokesmen were reading much of the time from prepared statements, presumably the committee does have the text of their presentation. An extensive response to the several points made by them, as nearly as can be recalled, has been prepared by members of the Monteith staff.

¹³ Memorandum "Request for Documents" from Hafner to Glick, November 13, 1975 and Secretary Glick's written reply that day.

¹⁴ Memorandum "Second Request for Documents" from Hafner to Glick, November 14, 1975, and conversation of Hafner and Haenicke in the presence of President Gullen and Professor Maier of Monteith.