

FOOTHILL COLLEGE

PLANNING THE CAMPUS

(Material prepared for use of the District Architects
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Visits to many junior colleges in California have demonstrated that numerous styles of architecture have been used. For reasons which may be so intangible that descriptive words are inadequate, some campuses gave a pleasing or "satisfying" effect and others failed to have this important touch.

It is this satisfying effect, this atmosphere of being an institution of higher learning, that is the responsibility of the architect.

But the architect cannot proceed with his creative development of a college until he has had pictured, in a manner which he can interpret, the general objectives of those responsible for directing the college. With this thought in mind, an attempt is being made to "picture" for the District architects of Foothill College those things which the Board and administration believe are important in this very special institution. (It should be made clear in the beginning that trite pedagogical and cliché terms and phrases will intentionally be avoided. The semantical complications in a project of this nature are sufficiently difficult without multiplying them with narrow professional terms.)

Possibly a good jumping off point is to indicate that there is a desire to have this college become a truly distinct and special institution. There is no desire to have it copy in any way the characteristics of existing colleges. Yet, in equal force, there is no desire to have an institution which is so startling in its design that the college will be known primarily for its "peculiarity" of construction.

The District architects were selected to a large degree because of their ability to interpret into facilities the "feeling" of the environment in which the buildings are located, and it is anticipated that there will be translated into the new campus the "feel" of the area in which the college is to be constructed. The campus must be attractive--not because it is to be a "lavish memorial to President Flint's aesthetic tastes"--but because it is believed that an attractive campus offers an ideal setting for individual development and learning.

The architects should not feel that they are to develop monumental structures--too often such structures become errors immortalized in cement. However, it is to be clearly understood that all facilities are to be of a quality and nature which will reduce maintenance needs to a minimum.

There are two last points which should be clarified relative to over-all styling. First, as the original Citizens Committee expressed it, "Foothill College should not be just a king-size high school." They could easily have added that they do not wish a college campus which gives the impression of modular buildings. Second, the campus must have a quiet dignity--a formality which will give it the tone of an institution of higher learning.

The above are quite general instructions to the architects, and the following is an attempt to explain the objectives--the purposes (and, to a degree, the philosophy) of the College.

Foothill College is a community college which has as its objective the offering to all the people of this area those functions which would normally be attributed to an institution responsible for educational and cultural development beyond high school. Therefore, the campus of the college should appeal to all adults as well as older youth, and it should be so developed that it lends itself to the community needs. Its assembly area, planetarium (if one), physical education facilities, and other units should be so arranged that they can be used by the community of the District when not required for college use.

The College will be, for many of those using it, the only institution of education beyond high school which they will attend. Therefore, it must incorporate those facilities which will meet the needs of this great number of people--day and evening, short term or long term.

Equally important for those students who will never attend another institution of higher learning, the campus must have an atmosphere which gives the impression that it is what one expects a college to be--the traditional atmosphere associated with a college or university. Impressions are hard to define, but certainly the "traditional" college is not normally garish nor of severe lines. Young people today have been subjected to "scientific" classroom coloring in the kindergarten, elementary school, junior and senior high schools and they now want something which is comfortable--something to which they can tie themselves. The world we are in offers

enough tensions; we should offer an atmosphere of peace and quiet. The young person leaving Foothill College should have something in the way of a memory which he will cherish--he must be proud to be an alumnus.

The college must convey an atmosphere of its being friendly, personalized and informal. Each student must feel that each faculty member is a friend and is available readily to cooperate by giving counsel and assistance. Facilities which require the passing of barriers and clerks to get to counsellors and faculty members do not lend to this friendly helpful feeling.

The peaceful and informal atmosphere which lends itself to good study habits is not, it is the belief of the college authorities, attained in modular, rigid, and cold buildings or straight paths with right angle corners which would have been the glory of Hitler's goose-stepping Jugend.

An atmosphere which is comfortable, in which the buildings do not give the impression of having been fabricated on conveyor lines and in which the pathways do not appear to have been laid out on a grid, and in which the planting is not so formal that it is untouchable, is one in which discipline needs disappear and in which the individual student reflectively makes his own decisions.

The authorities believe that the entire program of a community college must be personalized. It must be a program which contrasts markedly with the impersonal approach where the instructor walks into a classroom, has a robot take roll, gives a lecture, and then walks out as the last bell rings. The personalized approach can be best fostered in an atmosphere of informality. Faculty offices should be so planned that they are inviting to students. Counsellors must be so situated physically that they are readily available to all students. The President must have an office which literally breathes an "open door policy" for both faculty and students.

All of this does not mean that dignity need be sacrificed. To the contrary, it appears to the authorities that dignity is probably more embodied in an atmosphere of calm and serenity than it is one of rigid lines and massive forms.