

TARGET !!



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TARGET is a feature of the Arrow which aims to present faculty views on a variety of subjects.

Address all comments or replies to: The Arrow,
Mattatuck Community College,
Waterbury, Conn.

This months contribution is by Mr. Richard Nolan, Instructor of History and Philosophy.

"STUDENT-CENTERED": AN INTERPRETATION

From great research universities to permissive, "anything goes" colleges "student-centered" has become a common and welcomed adjective. However, when scrutinized carefully, this description seems to acquire a variety of meanings, depending upon a given institution. A danger for any school employing "student-centered" is not its own peculiar emphasis, but the risk of losing the essence of the root meaning.

My understanding of "student-centered" includes at its very heart the notion that each person admitted is enrolled **primarily** as a student (i.e., one who studies) and that the courses focus upon student (as opposed to strictly faculty) interests and needs. Some implications of this interpretation include: (1) a college's **primary** concern with those admitted is scholastic, in the best sense of the word, (2) the curricular offerings must strive to be truly in line with the student body's objectives, and (3) evaluation of each student's academic performance must take seriously his quality of scholarship.

It seems to me that many colleges are running the risk of trying to be all things to all people, or at least, too many things to too many people. If a college is basically a "society of scholars," students and faculty, assembled for teaching and learning within curricular offerings, the often desirable non-essentials may be kept within perspective. (If certain non-essentials become paramount, why not include them within the curriculum?)

It is my hope that every college claiming student-centeredness will resist the temptation to lose its essential identity first and foremost as a college with the primary function of implementing the curriculum. If a college idolizes extra-curricular activities of all sorts, including many worthwhile concerns, it could easily lose its **student-centeredness** and perhaps its very right to be called a college. If, on the other hand, professors and students simply place "first things first," assuming we can recognize the "first" things, AND participate in additional activities, each to his own liking, colleges will remain what I think they were created to be, with the focus on **student**.