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[Message from Esther Raushenbush to the Students, April 4, 1969]

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April 4, 1969

To the Students
From Esther Raushenbush

In the next few years much more radical change will take place in education in this country than most people are yet ready to expect, much of it long overdue; and students will have had a large share in bringing it about. The critical issue for every institution, including this one, is to discover what it is doing that must be preserved, and what must change.

In the weeks before vacation the students put great pressure on the faculty and administration to convey their sense of urgency for changes in the College. This was dramatized in many ways: by the sit-in in Westlands; by the Black Students Association; by the long, large meetings in Bates and the meetings in Tweed; by Student Council meetings; by the stream of students through the President's House; and by many private conversations. I have never witnessed this sense of urgency before. It is important; it can help the College find its future; and it should not be allowed to fade.

There are nine weeks of College left to this term. I will give my best energy during that time to the issues that have become so sharply lighted in the past weeks. Dr. DeCarlo will also work on all matters affecting the coming year. In your mail you will find an agenda for the open Task Force meeting next Wednesday, April 9, covering actions to be taken, information to be given, and decisions to be made in the next few weeks. Every interested person in the College should take part.

One final, but critical, matter:

The sit-in in Westlands seriously disrupted the life of the College for ten days and caused important work to be delayed. Some students have said that the sit-in was an important experience for them, intellectually and personally; I can believe it was. But it was experience gained by damaging the work of the College and by causing discomfort and dismay to many people.

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I think it fair to tell you what kind of activities can be tolerated on the campus and what cannot. Students have the right to discuss, dissent, protest, and demonstrate against conditions they object to; and they have the right to be heard, to participate in decisions, and to help carry them out. But no student or group is free to disrupt the work or activities of other students, the faculty, the administration or the staff, whether in classes, offices, or in any other part of the campus. If this should happen I have the responsibility to act in the interest of the College.

No action will be taken on the March sit-in; but such interferences with the business of the College are so serious that a student so engaged from now on will no longer be considered a student in good standing and procedures will be established to review and act on all cases.

I hope very much there will be no occasion requiring such serious action. There is important work to do.