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# [Memo from Alice Ilchman to the Community, September 5, 1989]

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*Sarah Lawrence College*

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September 5, 1989

To: The College Community  
From: Alice Ilchman *AI*

Welcome back! I hope the summer was sufficiently long, productive and refreshing for you all.

I am writing to let you know about various changes and plans that we hope will add a good deal to the life of the community in the coming months. First, you will be pleased to learn that we are making progress on our commitment to achieve greater racial and cultural diversity in our community, our curriculum, and in campus life. We are hard at work as well on ways to create more understanding and awareness so that our community can live most productively together. We have also made considerable progress in resolving some of our needs for additional housing and social space.

Faculty -- The faculty and administration have made increasing the number of faculty of color one of our highest priorities. Faculty search committees and the Advisory Committee on Appointments have worked diligently toward our announced goal of increasing the number of faculty of color on tenure-track appointments by six over the next five years, with the first two to be appointed by the fall of 1989. I am pleased to report that we exceeded our expectations for 1989 and that three black scholars have been appointed to the regular faculty, in literature, music and political science. In addition, the 1989-90 guest faculty will include seven new black teachers, in American history, music, studio arts, theater, and writing. *psit*

In 1988-89, the total faculty of 152 included 12 faculty of color, six black, four Asian-American, and two Hispanic. In 1989-90, the total faculty of 149 will include 20 faculty of color, 14 black, four Asian-American, and two Hispanic. *-Rutella, Parz*

Curriculum -- Many of the new faculty will strengthen our international offerings and multicultural program, contributing new courses in Afro-American history, Latin American and Afro-American literature, the politics of black Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, and a study of black female writers. In addition, several returning faculty have modified their courses to include a multicultural perspective, and others have initiated regular meetings to discuss multicultural issues and their impact on the curriculum. *Benjamins  
Olinburg  
Rouse*

Educational Programs -- With the assistance of Dr. Jean Wu, associate dean of Bryn Mawr College, and Dr. Cathy Obear of Amherst, Massachusetts, we are developing a program of workshops to educate the College community to the issues of living in a diverse society. Programs will address issues of race and ethnicity, sexual orientation,

and gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, assault and acquaintance rape. The first of these programs was held for all new students this past Sunday. The workshops were led by a small group of faculty, the deans, the admissions and student affairs staffs, the president, and students. All of us were trained in workshop facilitation by Dr. Wu, who has strong credentials in this field from her work at Brown University and Bryn Mawr. Dr. Wu was among those experts who impressed students favorably when she met with them last spring, and Dr. Obear offered highly successful workshops for students and R.A.'s this past spring and summer. Returning students and interested faculty and staff will be included in the follow-up programs throughout the year.

We view these programs as experimental and will be evaluating them as the year progresses. We look to faculty and students for help in ways to make them more effective in years to come.

Counseling and Support Systems -- We are committed to ensuring that our counseling and support systems better meet the varied needs of all students. In response to student and faculty concern, two black therapists have been appointed to the Health Services staff. In addition, a weekly support/education group for black women will be led by [REDACTED] '85, who is a doctoral candidate in psychology at New York University. A therapy group for students who have experienced sexual abuse will be offered again this year by Health Services. We are also starting a support/education group for students with eating disorders (as well as an educational program for the entire campus). The group will be led by [REDACTED] '89, who has worked on the hotline for the Wilkins Center for Eating Disorders. [REDACTED]'s work will be supervised by a Health Services therapist.

Administrator for Multicultural Affairs -- We have been giving serious consideration to the appointment of an assistant or associate dean for multicultural affairs, whose responsibilities would include working closely with students of color and arranging educational and enrichment programs focusing on multicultural issues. A number of potential candidates were interviewed during July. We will hold further discussions on this position with faculty and students and plan to conduct additional interviews this fall.

Committee on Diversity -- Before leaving for the summer, the General Committee appointed six faculty and administrators to serve on the Committee on Diversity for the coming year. The committee, convened by Dean of the College Barbara Kaplan, will also include two students, and will be responsible for ensuring that the progress of the summer continues.

Disciplinary Procedures -- Working with the student members of last year's Judicial Review Board, we have revised and simplified the procedures for accessing the JRB, the student/faculty group that deals with cases of social discipline. The group will now meet biweekly to hear cases. Detailed procedures are available in the Student Affairs Office.

A new committee of faculty, students, and a rape crisis consultant is being formed to discuss and recommend a policy, procedure, and counseling program that will strengthen our capacity to deal with specific incidents of sexism, sexual harassment, and assault/rape. We hope to receive the committee's report by the spring. For the present, we have strengthened our policy statement on these issues in the Student Handbook. Until we receive the recommendations of the new committee, our Sexual Harassment Panel will continue to deal with specific cases. The panel may be reached through the Student Affairs Office.

Housing -- We are pleased to report that we have made good progress toward resolving our troubling "housing crisis" that has worsened over the years and caused particular anxiety for students last year. All students who petitioned on time and met their financial commitments were offered college housing this year. Tamara Floyd, our assistant dean for residential life, found that she was even able to house most students who had petitioned late. This remarkable turnaround from last year has been possible because of the retention of 39 beds for off-campus college housing, the conversion of 10 singles into doubles in existing dormitories, the decision to plan for a slightly smaller college and, of course, the addition of the 28 new beds in Andrews Court. The handsome new Andrews Court apartments will be available for occupancy on September 15, and temporary housing arrangements have been made for all prospective residents until then. We are delighted that the June 1988 enactment of the College-University Zone agreement with the City of Yonkers and the neighborhood associations permitted us to move so swiftly to undertake the new construction.

Social Space -- We continue to work toward making our limited gathering spaces more effective. Within the next few weeks, we will be building a new insulated room for band practice -- a need expressed by an increasingly large number of students -- in the old student publications office in the basement of Dudley Lawrence. The student publications office is now located in the former TV rooms in the pub. This space became available when the Student Life Committee voted to move the television sets from the TV rooms, one to the pub balcony, and one to the lounge in Rothschild B. In another change, the pillow room in the Library has been redesigned and refurbished. While the comfortable lounge pillows and relaxed atmosphere remain, the room can now be used as well for more formal meetings.

Faculty Space -- The faculty guest house at 161 Hampshire Road has been completely refurbished. Guest rooms, a meeting room, and a conference room are now being furnished and will be ready in time for the party after the first faculty meeting of the year.

Again, welcome back to you all. We are happy to have you with us as we continue to work to make Sarah Lawrence a better and stronger community.