

Whom CMC serves: the question of access

The delay starting CMC served the College well. When Pomona president James Blaisdell and some Pomona College trustees started Scripps College in the 1920s, all of them expected to found a balancing college for men within a few years. Two colleges, even with an accompanying graduate school, did not fully comprise the cluster of Blaisdell's vision. But the Great Depression, and then World War II, slowed implementation. During this interstice, the colleges' leaders refined their vision of what this new college should be—and fell into good fortune.

Refining the vision led to the Claremont McKenna we know today: liberal arts redefined to focus on educating leaders for business, the professions, and public affairs, without ignoring the other forces that create human experience.

The good fortune was the GI Bill. Passed by Congress in June, 1944, the GI Bill paid college expenses for millions of returning servicemen, guaranteeing access to those eligible to enter the nation's colleges and universities. Knowing that the cost of access was not a problem, CMC's first trustees hurried to ensure that the College could begin operations in September, 1946—and the rest of the story, from Coconut Grove and Story House on, we know well.

CMC could not, however, guarantee access even to the fully-qualified for many years thereafter. Gradually, generous donors have opened CMC's doors wider—as exemplified this last year by generous infusions from the Gates Foundation and the Seaver Trust.

Even after the GI Bill wave had passed through the College, access was not a major question. Colleges like CMC, Scripps, and Pomona of course cost more than public institutions. But in those early years, the differential was not so daunting as it later became, and a much smaller percentage of the nation's high school graduates headed

for college in the '50s and '60s. Providing financial assistance for all had not yet become a national mandate.

In those early years Claremont McKenna could not have afforded a need-blind admission policy, and in fact the term had not yet been invented. Colleges admitted those who qualified and could pay the bills, and scholarships were sometimes available for exceptional students whom a college or university wanted to assist. The idea of admitting *all* who qualified, regardless of their ability to pay, arose in the late 1960s, and by the 1970s the federal government was providing grants that paid a substantial portion of college costs for those who needed help.

Emery Walker became CMC's dean of admission in 1957. President Benson persuaded him to leave Brown University, where he had been dean of admissions since 1946, to raise SAT scores of entering students; but as one of the leading admission professionals in the nation, he had other goals too. He wanted to make CMC more open to more students—in the words of the admissions profession, to become “need-blind” in admitting students and, ultimately, to meet the full need of all admitted students. It took many years to get there—and these policies were not fully implemented until after Richard Vos became Dean of Admission some 20 years ago.

More than any other single thing, what made this possible was philanthropic investment. Gifts from generous donors gradually expanded the endowment, and with increased endowment income the College was able to direct more of its annual revenues to financial aid. Some of these endowment gifts were directed specifically for creating scholarships, but others covered other needs. No matter what their specific goal, all these endowment gifts helped by enlarging the

size of the revenue stream.

Scholarships can do more than guarantee access, of course. They can reinforce a college's mission, and since part of CMC's mission is to educate tomorrow's leaders, we want to attract those with the capacity to lead. Donald McKenna saw that and established the McKenna Scholars program. Frank Roger Seaver, who greatly strengthened his alma mater Pomona College, befriended Claremont McKenna in its early days and left funds to help the college in its leadership mission. The Seaver Trust has now released the corpus generating those funds, and we are now able to create the Seaver Scholars program as a permanent companion to the McKenna Scholars.

The gift from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recognizes both merit and need, with a goal of educating leaders whose knowledge of science gives them tools needed in tomorrow's world. Interdisciplinary Science Scholars will come to CMC with two special qualifications: they will major both in science (biology, chemistry, physics, neuroscience) *and* in another CMC field; and they have serious financial need. The Gates Foundation gift will have created some 170 Interdisciplinary Science Scholars by the time its funds have been expended.

Claremont McKenna College has a responsibility to educate the best of the best, regardless of their family circumstances, and it must also bring together men and women who have the capacity to teach each other through their own leadership. The continued philanthropic support of alumni, parents, and friends of CMC will make that possible. Nothing is more important for the College's success.



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