

HOOD ♀

Women's College Stays Just That, But Shifts Image

By Bart Barnes

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FREDERICK, Md.—At a time when many educators are becoming convinced that the non-coeducational women's college is heading the way of the nickel coffee and the dime beer, tiny Hood College here has taken a hard look at itself, rejected the idea of going coed and is in the process of riding the women's movement toward record enrollments.

While the number of women's colleges in the United States has fallen from 300 in 1960 to 96 now—with many of those 96 in deep

trouble—Hood has arrested a seven-year decline in freshman enrollments. When the class of 1978 arrives on campus later this month, there will be at least 468 members—more than double the 115 members of the class of 1977 that showed up a year ago.

What has happened, says Hood's President Ross Pritchard, is that Hood has deliberately shed its traditional image as a genteel, slightly Southern institution that trained nice girls to be housewives and leaders in the garden club. Instead, in the two years that Pritchard has headed Hood, the curricu-

lum has been overhauled to emphasize professional and career training. New courses and departments were added to the curriculum such as one in business management.

"It's essentially a course in how women can survive at the management level in business in what is still a man's world," said Alan J. Stone, Hood's new director of admissions.

"We are becoming a school where women can think in professional terms of a career. We have made a conscious decision to project that

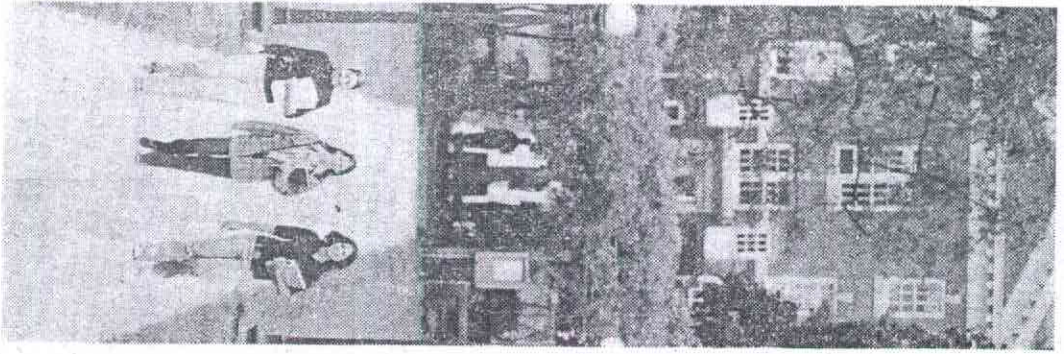
image rather than the liberal arts image," Stone said.

"For two or three years, this school danced around with the idea of going coed," President Pritchard said. "But we didn't come down hard on the idea that we would be a women's college."

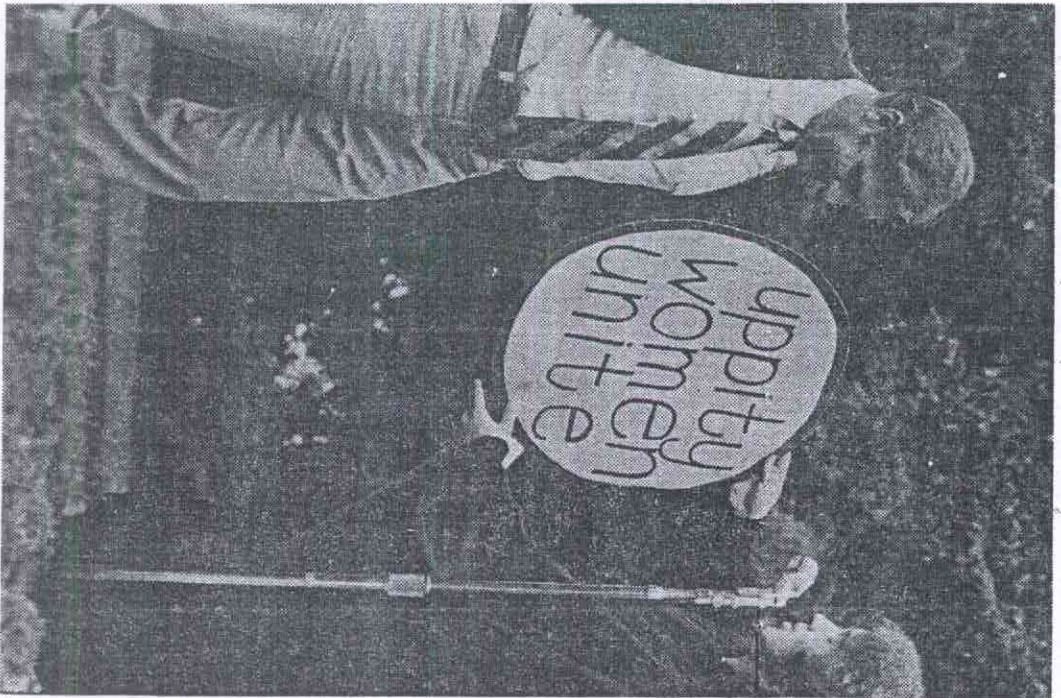
"Now we have committed ourselves to women's education. We are going to be a women's college."

Located on a 46-acre campus on the outskirts of Frederick, about 45 miles northwest of Washington, Hood's history over the last 15

See HOOD, D16, Col. 1



Denim-clad students stroll in front of Hood administration building, left. College President Dr. Ross Pritchard, center, is shown at right receiving a poster from Sue Whaley, student president, at last fall's campus day festivities.



Women's College Stays That

HOOD, From D15

years reflects much of what has happened in American higher education.

Founded as a women's seminary in 1893, Hood had developed by 1960 into a school with a respectable academic reputation and a modest endowment. As the postwar baby boom hit college campuses, Hood, like many other institutions, expanded. Two new dormitories were built in that decade.

But it continued, said Pritchard, "to be that place where nice girls went, isolated from the hurly-burly of the outside world."

By the late 1960s, the glut of students from the baby boom was beginning to slacken, costs were rising fast, private colleges in particular were finding it harder and harder to make ends meet, and single-sex schools were becoming increasingly unpopular.

Many, like Dunbarton College in Washington, were simply unable to find enough students and closed. Others decided to go coed. Vasaar is one example.

Hood was no exception to the national pattern. Applications fell from 677 in 1968 to 368 in 1973 and freshman enrollment dropped from 203 to 115 in the same period.

"Sixty per cent of our income comes from tuition and fees. That was the sort of decline that the college could not have sustained another two or three years without seriously curtailing our academic program," said Stone.

In August, 1972, Pritch-

ard, 49, a former Peace Corps executive under Sargent Shriver, was signed on with a mandate from the trustees, he says, "to get things straightened out."

Immediately he set about redirecting the curriculum toward gearing women for professional roles. A course in home economics, which previously had been little more than "how to be a good housewife" was changed to include consumer affairs and the type of nutrition studies that could lead to a career as a dietitian.

Internships, ranging from work on Capitol Hill to cancer research at nearby Ft. Detrick, were added to the curriculum.

Then Pritchard began casting about for an admissions director who could spread the word and boost enrollment. He hired Stone a year ago with a mandate to boost applications by 44 per cent.

Stone turned to Interpreting Institutions, a Baltimore consulting firm, for help in reshaping the college's image and in drumming up recruits. Among other things, they rewrote most of the college publications, emphasizing the commitment to women's professional education. In addition, said Stone, they launched a "low-keyed attack" on coeducation in the Hood literature.

"... In the coed college, women still have second-class status, regardless of any token equality extended them. Almost all courses have been designed by men for men."

Instead of a 44 per cent boost in applications, they rose by 106 per cent this year and the new students to enroll this fall include 24 National Merit scholars. Next year's enrollment of 870 will be the highest in Hood's history and inquiries for admission to Hood in the fall of 1975 are already running ahead of the pace a year ago.

"We have been," said Stone, "quite surprised by the response."