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## LA Times Article on The Cluster Colleges

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## RAYMOND'S WAY

# The Cluster Colleges: Islands of Tranquility

BY WILLIAM TROMBLEY  
Times Education Writer

While most of California higher education is characterized by size and bustle—thousands of students competing for class openings or parking spaces—there are islands of small-college tranquility scattered around the state.

One of the most attractive is Raymond College, a small unit (217 students last semester) of the University of the Pacific in Stockton.

Raymond stresses small classes and close student-faculty relationships. The student-faculty ratio is about 10 to one, while on most of the state's campuses it runs 20 or 30 to one.

An increasing amount of instruction is in interdisciplinary courses which seek to integrate several academic subjects.

There also is an emphasis on independent study, in which a student pursues an individual project under the tutorial guidance of a single professor.

There are no required courses or majors but students are encouraged to seek a balance among natural science, social science and humanities courses. Grading is on a pass, no-pass basis.

Students must successfully complete 21 courses to graduate and the curriculum is designed to enable them to accomplish this in three years, though many elect to remain for a fourth.

In addition to formal courses, tutorials and independent study projects, many Raymond students leave the campus for a semester or more to work in field internships.

### Internship Credits

Last semester interns worked for the Democratic National Committee in Washington, the California Rural Legal Assistance and a San Francisco advertising agency, among others. They received academic credit for this work.

Through the internships, as well as in the campus academic work, the college seeks to keep its program "relevant," but Provost Berndt Kolker insists it is also "rigorous and demanding."

"We do not subscribe to the 'Oh, wow!' school of intellectual development," said Kolker, "but we'll do everything we can to tailor-make our program to meet student interests."

Raymond is the oldest of three "cluster colleges" opened on the UOP campus in the last 10 years to complement the university's basic liberal arts unit, the College of the Pacific.

The other cluster colleges are Callison, which stresses non-Western studies and includes a year's study and work in India, and Elbert Covell, in which all courses are taught in Spanish.

Raymond started out with "a carefully balanced and totally prescribed curriculum," according to Kolker.

The atmosphere in the early years "can best be compared to a holy order," Kolker said. "Students were supposed to live and breathe Raymond College. No credit was given for work done elsewhere. Everyone believed in the 'Raymond way,' though it was never defined."

Students even wore Raymond College blazers, in the Oxford-Cambridge tradition. They dined at "high table."

Many students apparently found this atmosphere stifling, for the dropout rate was high.

"There was tremendous inbreeding," Kolker said. "Students became bored with each other. They knew their teachers too well. People began to get on each other's nerves."

After taking over as provost in 1966, Kolker, a German-born economist, sought to create a more relaxed atmosphere by easing strict dormitory regulations and urging older students to move off campus.

The college now gives transfer credit and there is less talk about the "Raymond way." The blazers and "high table" have disappeared.

### Course Requirements Dropped

But the most important change was made last year, when course requirements were dropped and each student was encouraged to plan his own course of study, in Kolker's words, to "satisfy his intellectual predilections as he perceived them."

Students seem to like the new curriculum, especially the small seminars which are a feature of many courses.

"In the seminars you are respected," said third-year student Jackie Davis. "There's a level of equality here that is a rather rare thing."

Raymond is a "strong place for strong people," said Sandy Laufer, another third-year student from Costa Mesa. "So much of the responsibility is placed on the student."

Greg Acciaoli, a second-year student described as brilliant by his Raymond professors, said, "There is an atmosphere in which students are interested in engaging in intellectual discussions outside the classroom."

This was also noted by Roy Eugene Rice, an associate professor of religion and sociology who has been spending a sabbatical year at UC Berkeley.

"In the halls over there (Berkeley) students talk about grades or how they did on examinations. They are all playing the academic game but there is very little discussion of intellectual questions," Rice said.

The intellectual discussions at Raymond leave little room for career-oriented education, which Kolker calls "a lot of hogwash."

Raymond seems to attract bright young people from wealthy white families.

"Our students are an interested, kind of free-wheeling, exciting bunch who won't conform to any patterns," said Preceptor Andrew F. Key. "They tend to be antiestablishment types who see a liberal arts

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education as something that is infinitely impractical and therefore highly desirable."

Key believes the new curriculum has helped students personally as well as academically.

"There was no room to breathe or move" in the old program of required courses, he said. "When you free up the academic program you relieve some of that pressure."

However, the new course of study troubles some of Raymond's 21 faculty members, who fear they are spreading themselves too thin in their attempts to meet the intellectual interests of more than 200 students on an individual basis.

And they are concerned about the heavy workload.

The faculty also has different opinions about the legitimacy of the traditional academic training almost all of them have received.

Some Raymond professors say they no longer attempt to keep up with the journals in their academic disciplines. Instead, they teach and write entirely in interdisciplinary areas.

### Some Dangers

But Robert R. Orpinela, who teaches philosophy and religion, thinks it is dangerous to move completely away from traditional academic fields.

"The disciplines should be looked at from a different angle of vision but they should not be discarded," Orpinela said. "Too much now being written is impressionistic, not based on careful work. It's ephemeral stuff, it won't last."

A more important problem for Raymond College may turn out to be its high cost.

Cluster colleges "tend to be a costly way of educating people," Provost Kolker conceded.

UOP administrators, noting that cluster college costs run 10% to 20% higher than those in the more traditional College of the Pacific, have trimmed some of the Raymond program.

For instance, free lunches were provided for faculty members so they could eat with their students. These were eliminated, triggering a sharp response from students and professors.

### Threat Revealed

"We feel threatened by the rest of the university," said student Jackie Davis.

"There is a lot of paranoia among all the undergraduate colleges," said Pat Schedler, assistant professor of social science. "The central administration seems to be more interested in graduate and professional schools."

In addition to the four undergraduate units, UOP operates a graduate division, a music conservatory and schools of education, engineering and pharmacy at Stockton, a law school in Sacramento and a school of dentistry in San Francisco.

Pacific's new president, Stanley E. McCaffrey, must decide whether the educational and public relations values of Raymond and the other cluster colleges are worth their high cost. So far he seems to have concluded, tentatively, that they are.