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Title: Report of the President to the Board of Trustees (May 1786)

Date: May 10, 1786

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Dear Hon^{ble} the Board of Trustees of Dickinson College,
from their very hble Serv^t

Rob^t Davidson

There are at present, (10th May 1786) in Dickinson College,
60 Students, - 23 of whom are taught in the Mathematical
department, and the rest are under M^r Prop^r. - Of those
who are studying Mathematics, some are unacquainted
with the Latin & Greek classics; the rest are young men,
who have, for the most part, nearly completed their classical
studies, - have made considerably proficiency in some of
the sciences, - and seem eager to acquire, as soon as possi-
ble, an acquaintance with the other sciences to be taught
in the college, in order to the attainment of a degree. -

Agreeably to the plan of education, there are to be
four classes in the college: - As M^r Prop^r is one of the
professors, the highest class in his school may be pro-
perly considered as one of the four: - all those, who are
removed from his school, may be thrown into ^{the other} 3 classes.

They are not however formed into regular classes
as yet; for as there have been but two professors in the
institution, (appointed and qualified as the charter di-
rects,) since the last meeting of the board; and as the
forming of regular and standing classes seems to be the

How to Dickinson Coll

the business, either of the board of Trustees, or of a duly organized and full faculty; and it was expected that some new professors would be now chosen; it was thought best to leave these and some other matters to be determined at, or soon after, the present meeting.

Some of these ^{young men} have been very carefully instructed by Mr. Johnston in the following parts of the Mathematics; — common arithmetic; — six books of Euclid's Elements; — plane & spherical Trigonometry; — mensuration; — gauging; — surveying; — navigation; — logarithms; — and, if. use of g. globes. These they have been taught from first principles, and appear to be well acquainted with: They have also, as well as most of the other students in the mathematical school, been taught, in a compendious way, an entire system of Geography, and have had occasional Lectures on history. But this latter, together with chronology, they have yet to learn in a systematic manner.

Mr. Johnston is preparing to instruct them soon in ^{astro}astronomy — a science of which he is extremely fond, & which he has been for some time past applying himself to with great assiduity. He is very solicitous to know, what parts of the Mathematics of Board will consider as indispensibly necessary in order to a degree; as some are ready to imagine that they are detained too long in this part of their course.

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Those students, who are farthest advanced, seem fully prepared for entering on the important science of Natural Philosophy, as soon as the Board will please to appoint one to teach it. They may also enter as soon the Principal pleases, on the study of Logic, Metaphysics, Moral Philosophy &c.

If a Clap could be instructed in these sciences, and be prepared to take a degree, about this time next year, at the farthest, it would be greatly for the encouragement of the students, and the reputation of the college.

As it appeared impossible to maintain any order in the institution, or carry on education to any good purpose, without some necessary regulations, — a few laws were therefore passed by the faculty, in concurrence with the Trustees of the Boxrough — which it will be necessary for the Board now to take up, and either to confirm or alter, as may seem ~~most~~ most expedient.

To encourage parents to send their children here for a compleat english education, it seems absolutely necessary, that the Board should pay attention to this matter; — as we have lost some four best boys from Baltimore, because their progress in English and arithmetic was not so apparent as in Latin.

With respect to the Library,—it seems proper that all the Professors should have access to it, at any time—as they may have occasion very often to look into books, for a few minutes, which it would be troublesome to take out in the usual way. Very considerable difficulties & have arisen, from the Professors and pupils being put on the same footing, in applying for, and returning books.

It is desired by many parents that there might be but one long vacation, every year, and that in the Spring:—it may be objected, that it is a pity to lose the pleasantest season, in play; and to be confined to rooms and close study, during all the warm and sickly months.—Perhaps the Philosophy classes would require more vacant time, than the Grammar boys, & could improve it better.—

Mr. Johnston fully expects, to be now chosen a Professor,—He is a man of a very good character,—is very ingenious,—extremely diligent,—has a good method of teaching,—will be more respected and better obeyed by the higher classes,—can serve the institution better by having a vote in Faculty, than if he is only considered as a Tutor,—is as well qualified ^{in my opinion} to be a Professor of Math^s, as Mr. Prop^r of languages,—and, if encouraged a little, can even (with the help of a very valuable work lately rec^d in the college) instruct a class in the most useful parts of Natural Philosophy.—But these things are entirely submitted to the wisdom of the hon^{ble}. Board.

The Hon.^{ble} the Board of Trustees of Dickinson College,

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Rob^t Davidson

There are at present, (10th May 1786) in Dickinson College, 60 Students, - 23 of whom are taught in the Mathematics department, and the rest are under M^r Ross. - Of those who are studying Mathematics, some are unacquainted with the Latin & Greek classics; the rest are young men, who have, for the most part, nearly completed their classical studies, - have made considerably proficiency in some of the sciences, - and seem eager to acquire, as soon as possible, an acquaintance with the other sciences to be taught in the college, in order to the attainment of a degree. -

Agreeably to the plan of education, there are to be four classes in the college. As M^r Ross is one of the professors, the highest class in his school may be properly considered as one of the four: all those, who are removed from his school, may be thrown into the other 3 classes.

They are not however formed into regular classes as yet; for as there have been but two professors in the institution, (appointed and qualified as the charter directs,) since the last meeting of the board; and as the forming of regular and standing classes seems to be the business, either of the board of Trustees, or of a duly organized and full faculty; and it was expected that some new professors would be now chosen; it was thought best to leave these and some other matters to be determined at, or soon after, the present meeting.

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