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Friday is last day

Yankton College will close

By NOEL HAMIEL
P&D Editor

A million-dollar debt, a depleted endowment and no prospect of additional loans, Yankton College will close its doors Friday after 103 years of liberal arts education.

A. Edward Couch, Yankton College's 12th president, said today the college would retain a skeleton staff in coming weeks to allow the school to pursue all options, including sale of grounds and buildings or reopening with a different educational mission.

"The grand old lady of the prairie is being closed, and whether we can bring something out of that rich history is doubtful at this time," Couch said. "But maybe she would want us to open to new things, such as a school of college. Or to be sponsored by a new organization."

The decision was made by the YC Board of Trustees Saturday afternoon at a meeting in Sioux Falls,

called by Couch after the college's critical financial picture finally became known after weeks of analysis.

The closing will put 118 full- and part-time faculty and other employees out of work, force 220 students to seek their education elsewhere, and mean a loss of \$1.4 million in annual payroll in the Yankton community.

Other colleges have been contacted to see what arrangements can be worked out for seniors.

At the end, it was a crushing debt — more than \$526,000 carried over from last year — that brought Yankton College to its knees. Add to that figure the projected deficit this fiscal year of \$424,000. Today, YC has only \$37,000 in its checking account, and that amount represents cash on hand, not unobligated funds. It was doubtful that the college could meet its December payroll of \$120,000.

In order to continue to operate, Yankton College would need a

million dollars to wipe out its current debt and would need another \$250,000 for renovation, \$200,000 for new programs to attract more students and \$500,000 for cash flow, Couch said.

A federal audit has also charged that the college in recent years had been improperly dispensing federal Pell Grants to students. That could cost YC up to \$300,000, but no decision has yet been reached.

Total funds needed to continue operations: \$2.3 million.

When Couch took over Sept. 1 as president, he did not know the extent of YC's financial difficulties. Nor did, apparently, anyone else, although Frank Thieman, newly named interim vice president of business affairs, was then in the process of unearthing various unpaid bills. He alerted Couch that a crisis was imminent.

YC had experienced problems for years, and in 1974, President Alfred Gibbens announced that a huge infusion of funds was needed if the col-

lege was to survive. At that time, the United Church of Christ-Congregational, which retained an association with YC, committed itself to raising \$150,000.

Deficits over the past five years looked like this: 1979-80, \$219,000; 1980-81, \$234,000; 1981-82, \$89,000; 1982-83, \$163,000; 1983-84, \$526,000; and 1984-85, \$424,000.

"It was gradual," Couch said, referring to the growing debt. "I had questions even in late September — real legitimate concerns by the latter part of October and I called a meeting of the executive committee. They said they needed more information and didn't have the final audit."

The audit, completed in late November, said that "the college may be unable to continue in existence." The executive committee on Nov. 26 declared that the college was in state of financial exigency, and Couch then called the board of

trustees meeting that occurred Friday and Saturday.

The board decided to close the school, but not file for bankruptcy because it wanted to keep its options open, Couch said. The executive committee was empowered to file for bankruptcy if that option becomes preferable.

The college may decide to sell Crane-Youngworth Field and Durand Hall to raise cash "to help us to continue in operation for awhile to try to put things in order," Couch said.

Reaction from students and faculty ranged from shock and sadness to bitterness.

"I've been deeply impressed and even moved by what they've said. One came up and thanked me for trying to keep it open," Couch said. "Some are very understanding. Everyone is so deeply disappointed and shocked that the school is going to close Dec. 21."

College Profile	
Location:	Yankton, S.D.
Year founded:	1881
Type of institution:	Liberal arts
Enrollment:	240
Employee numbers:	87 full time (31 faculty), 31 part time (27 faculty)
Annual budget:	\$2.4 million
Annual payroll:	\$1.4 million
Presidents:	Joseph Ward 1883-1889 Albert Tallman Free 1892-1895 Henry Kimball Warren 1895-1925 George Williston Nash 1925-1940 Joseph Lyle McCorsion Jr., 1940-1943 James Clark Graham 1945-1954 Adrian Rondileau 1954-1962 Donald B. Ward 1962-1970 Fred S. Honkala 1970-1972 Alfred M. Gibbens 1973-1977 Orlan E. Mitchell 1977-1984 A. Edward Couch 1984-
Local trustees:	Frank Brady, Harrison Brosz (Tripp), Don Peterson, Dr. Willis Stange, Charles Levinger, Charles Kaufman (Vermillion), Alta Kussman, Kay Means, Bob Winter, Bill Blount, Don Kortan, Dr. Brooks Ranney, Don Modereger, Wes Neufeld (life trustee), and Mrs. Charles Danforth (honorary trustee).

Official expects drop in service

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — There may be a drop in services as one water conservancy sub-district is replaced by another, according to an official of the Dakota Water Conservancy District.

Gregory Siegel, manager-treasurer of the 2000-to-fold East Dakota Water Conservancy Sub-District, said the newly elected board is coming with no manager and no money to hire anyone.

"I don't think there's going to be a lapse in service until the new district is able to find the money to operate," he said, adding that it may be a couple of months before property tax revenues begin to come in.

"There's a little of the frustration we're experiencing here," Siegel said, although he remains optimistic for the district.

State lawmakers last May voted to create the state's nine water conservancy districts and replace them by the end of 1984 with six water conservancy districts that were more closely around specific basins.

Siegel is completing his thirteenth year as manager-treasurer of the district board, and was the planning engineer for three years before he became manager.

He said he worries for the farmers and landowners who look to the office for information on water quality and quantity, and guidance when they sink a well or plan irrigation systems, as well as the property owners on lakes who want to know the water level before building a cabin or placing a cess pool. Siegel said the office is also used by those who want to preserve or restore their lake, or stop the river banks in the Big Sioux River Basin from eroding.

Before counties and cities build or redesign bridges, roads or buildings, they must consult subdistrict records on high-water levels during the 1969 flood, Siegel said.

Siegel said he is proud of the role he and the subdistrict played in initiating a study of the quality and quantity of water in the Big Sioux Aquifer, which covers 1,000 square miles. The intensive project should continue for at least another decade, and is the largest undertaking of its kind in the United States.

Although the upheaval that will follow the switch to the new water development districts worries him, Siegel says he remains optimistic about the future.

"Positive things can come out of this," he said.



Unaware of the turmoil taking place on the Yankton College campus behind them, these Beedle Elementary School students spend a leisurely Sunday afternoon sledding down YC's Observatory Hill on Douglas Avenue. Over the weekend the community learned of the 103-year-old liberal arts college's plans to close its doors on Friday because of financial problems.

Colonel tackles security problem

By ELLEN TOBIN
P&D Staff Writer

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Marlin L. Logan, who was recently promoted to full colonel in the United States Air Force, says he won't be home for Christmas this year, but his thoughts certainly will include people in Yankton.

"My mother sends me the Christmas cards from the Dakotas, so I keep in touch with everything. I was used to see the Bucks are doing so well. I did pretty good on my team back in my day," Logan said.

The problem that he is currently tackling in the Air Force is getting all slots filled for the security program. The work is currently taking him to the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Last month, he flew to Berlin where he spent two weeks on a site assignment. He saw the Berlin Wall for the first time and was impressed by its structure.

Logan, 43, the son of Leslie and Katherine M. Logan of Yankton is commander of the 6906th Electronic Security Squadron at Brooks Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

After graduation from Yankton Senior High School in 1969, he earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from South Dakota State University in 1963 and a master's degree in personal counseling and counseling from Troy State University in Alabama in



MARLIN L. LOGAN
LOGAN
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Shutdown shocks, surprises campus

Students grieve:

By KAREN FORRESTER
P&D Staff Writer

It should have been a joyous occasion. But the hugs shared by many in the hallway outside Forbes Hall Auditorium Sunday afternoon were of condolence, not congratulations.

The mood of most of the teachers, alumni and students entering the auditorium for the Yankton College Christmas concert was subdued, and their faces were set in somber lines.

Most still were in shock from hearing the news that South Dakota's oldest private college is closing its doors on Friday.

The students shared the common feelings of shock and disbelief. But the most common sentiment expressed by several Sunday afternoon was incredulity that the college was closing so soon.

"I just can't believe they're closing at semester," said Kerri Ray, a senior history and English major. "That's the big thing. They canceled at semester instead of the end of the year to let seniors graduate. It's so quick. We had no warning. Now I have three and a half weeks to pack up, move, transfer to another college and get financial aid."

According to Ray, word spread quickly through the dormitories Saturday night that the YC board of trustees had decided Saturday afternoon to shut down the college. President A. Edward Couch announced the decision at an all-college assembly Sunday afternoon, "but everybody knew" by then, she said.

Faculty mum:

By MARY DUFFY
P&D Staff Writer

Reaction was guarded among faculty and staff at Yankton College to the news that most will find themselves unemployed a few days before Christmas as the state's oldest private institution of higher education closes its doors on Friday.

Faculty and students gathered for the annual Christmas concert in Forbes Hall Sunday afternoon amid rumors of the closing. The Hallelujah Chorus of Handel's "Messiah" was followed by a lengthy ovation where the applause mixed openly with tears. A spontaneous encore of the alma mater, "Hail to Yankton College," brought a tearful end to the final concert by the YC Conservatory of Music.

Teachers at the small, liberal arts college were reluctant to discuss the impending closure until after the monthly faculty meeting that was scheduled for 10:45 a.m. today. They expect that President A. Edward Couch will offer the reasons why the YC Board of Trustees voted overwhelmingly Saturday in favor of closing the 103-year old institution. Most faculty members said they wouldn't comment until they had a chance to "hear the trustees' side of the story."

Several faculty members expressed surprise, shock and bitterness about the news, which began spreading by word of mouth late Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

"I think we all suffer from the

same reaction — just being a little numb right now — and we don't want to say anything until we know a little more," said one teacher who did not want to be identified.

Many suspected the school's worsening financial condition would be discussed when Couch called for an executive session of the board of trustees late in November. The agenda for that meeting, held Friday and Saturday in Sioux Falls, included "financial matters," according to Arnold Preussner, a YC English teacher who serves as faculty representative to the board. But Preussner was completely surprised by the drastic action that closed the school.

"It was the worst possible scenario, and it came true," said Nancy Reddy, who is on leave from the YC education department while working on a doctoral degree at the University of South Dakota.

"It's going to be a time of grief around here," said Dwight Snesrud, pastor of the United Church of Christ-Congregational in Yankton.

"It's a terrible disappointment when a college has to close its doors," he said. "We're not the first and we won't be the last. It's the story of America. The little guy is not making it anymore."

While all of the faculty knew the school was financially strapped, most had no idea of the extent of the problem until Saturday, Preussner

Students

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We are proud to be part of Yankton & to share in the growth of this fine community. ALL construction, including wind turbine, was done by LOCAL BUSINESSES.