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School of Human Ecology

New Opportunities for Study and Career

By Cecile H. Edwards

26 A new academic unit, the School of Human Ecology, was launched at Howard University on July 1, 1974. Its base is the programs in home economics which have existed at the University for many years. Two new programs—Macroenvironmental and Population Studies, and International Studies in Human Ecology—will provide new opportunities for study and careers.

Human ecology is defined as the interaction of man with his near environment. The new School is an interdisciplinary academic unit of the University which seeks to train individuals who are skilled in techniques for coping with problems associated with the near environment and motivated to work with families to help them solve their problems. Its mission is improvement of the quality of life.

Greater population density, unrest, riot and rebellion, the groping for identity by our youth, mounting environmental pollution, the merging roles of women and men in both family and community settings, and increased physical and mental stress caused by noise, crowding, and emotional strain are problems associated with living in the third trimester of the 20th Century.

Changing community composition and dilemmas created by diversity in economic, educational and cultural backgrounds equally tax ability to withstand stress. The problems of the inner city bind individuals in a vicious cycle which submerges their potential for contributing fully to society.

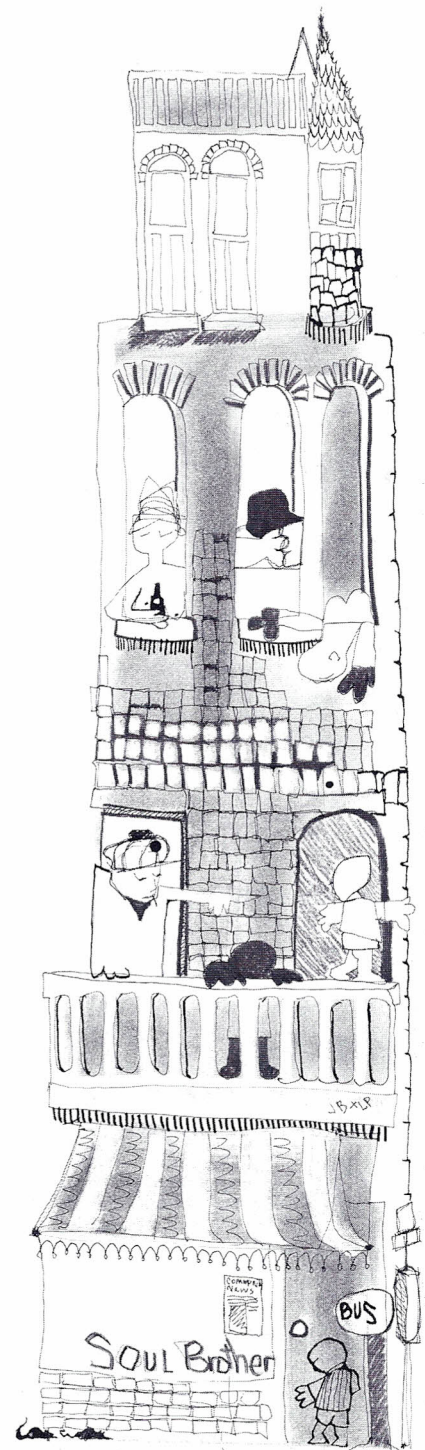
Hunger, malnutrition, inadequate housing, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, and the energy crisis are formidable adversaries which have created crises in family life. One must face the reality that disadvantaged groups must find success in coping with these and other problems in the home before they can serve as meaningful human resources in community development. It is in this area that the new School will concentrate its efforts using multi and interdisciplinary approaches.

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The School will place emphasis upon the family as a viable entity in the enhancement of the quality of living. It will focus on helping people to help themselves. Through research by its faculty and students, distinct and innovative approaches to problems of the disadvantaged will be sought.

The School, therefore, will address to the utilization of human and material resources to meet human needs. It will share the obligation of all institutions of higher education in providing a broad knowledge for living in close harmony with the environment. More importantly, it will focus on enhancing the capacity of the individual and the family unit to improve the environment and the quality of life. This will be done through an interdisciplinary approach, working cooperatively with other units of the University. In these respects, the School of Human Ecology is unique. Its objectives are to:

- Provide knowledge and skills leading to the development of the capacity for effective human service and creative contributions in fields related to family interaction with the near environment.
- Search for and apply knowledge relating to human development in the fulfillment of human potential throughout the life span.
- Maximize understanding, management, and utilization of human and material resources as a base for programs for improvement in the quality of life—with particular emphasis on energy and consumer products, including shelter, interior furnishings and equipment, clothing, and food.
- Prepare for positions of leadership in family problem-solving, particularly in the inner city, but also in urban and suburban communities.
- Marshall the resources of the University and the community in transdisciplinary approaches to improvement of the quality of life of all people.
- Serve as a national and international center in family resource development



where training is provided at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

■ Search for innovative and effective approaches to the improvement of the quality of the near environment and motivation of people toward more satisfying relationships within the home and the community.

Degrees Offered in Six Areas

The mission of the new School will be accomplished through programs leading to the Bachelor of Science degree in the following six areas:

1. *Community Service Education*, with majors in home economics, community service and home economics teaching.
2. *Human Development*, with majors in human development, early childhood education (infancy through preschool), and family studies.
3. *Human Nutrition and Food*, with majors in human nutrition and food, food promotion and testing, institution food service administration, and dietetics.
4. *International Studies in Human Ecology* (a minor is offered).
5. *Macroenvironmental and Population Studies*, with majors in population studies and macroenvironmental studies.
6. *Microenvironmental Studies and Design*, with majors in fashion fundamentals, textiles, environmental design, and interior design.

Graduate programs are being planned in each of these areas, including new doctoral programs in human development and human ecology. At present, the Doctor of Philosophy degree in nutrition is being offered.

The new program in Macroenvironmental Studies will focus on the physical environment, both urban and rural. The program will be concerned with air, noise, and water pollution and factors which control the degradation, maintenance, and enhancement of environmental quality.

The Population Studies program will include population dynamics, demography, and a consideration of problems, resulting from the population explosion.

The program in International Studies will give emphasis to world food, social, and economic problems, international law, cultural studies, and ecological relationships.

The curricula of human ecology will provide strong orientation to techniques for modifying behavior, new emphasis on the critical early years of development—physical and mental—and factors influencing ideal patterns of social interactions between members of the family: the infant, the preschool child, the adolescent, and the elderly.

The curricula will be supported by research which seeks to provide new and constructive approaches to problems of the urban and rural environment, and those associated with family life—to uncover ways to enable each member of the family to reach his full potential through his food, his immediate physical environment, and his interactions and experiences within the home. It will delve into the critical periods of development to identify the multiplicity of factors which shape the moral and spiritual values which affect the behavior of individuals.

The challenge to education today, to identify important human needs and to search for solutions to problems related to these needs, is even more pressing than in decades past.

Before 1974

The new School is a continuation of a program that was started many years ago. Around 1912, a new curriculum in home economics was added to the University's program of instruction. In 1920, the Department of Home Economics was moved to new quarters and ample space was allotted for the proper development of its work. Courses were offered with the specific aim of equipping students for scientific living—from a physical, nutritional

and sanitary standpoint—under the direction of Dr. Mary Alida Fitch.

Later, Dr. Madeleine Wand Kirkland, a graduate of the Department, joined the faculty. She was designated Department head in 1938, after serving as acting head. In 1943, Dr. Flemmie P. Kittrell, was appointed professor and chairman of the Department. Dr. Kittrell served for 28 years and was instrumental in expanding the Department's curriculum to six major areas: General Home Economics, Foods and Nutrition, Child Development, Clothing and Textiles, Home Economics Extension in Rural and Urban Areas, and Teaching of Home Economics.

The School's present building was dedicated in 1963 for the purpose of serving adequately the growing student body and the expanding program. □

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