THREE YEARS EXPERIENCE WITH FARM WORK-PROGRAMS AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE
1942 - 1944

Brooklyn College began its venture into the field of farm work-experience in 1942 when some 100 students were enrolled in three work camp groups near Roe Hook, N.Y. Undertaken merely as an aid to the U.S. Employment Service recruiting program, we found ourselves pulled into active camp management and field supervision. Five staff members were involved in the organization and maintenance of these groups; three were in residence for most of the summer. From the improvisations necessary that summer, a plan emerged for the operation of possible future work-camp programs under College auspices. This plan called for the setting up of a country summer session; the students to work in the fields during the day, and to take regular college courses during the evening. Instruction and supervision, field and dormitory, were to be provided by the college teaching staff. This program was proposed to the College authorities, and also presented to various state and federal farm labor agencies.

For 1943, Brooklyn College was invited to carry out the proposed plan in cooperation with the State Agricultural Institute at Morrisville, N.Y., as a special unit of the Farm Cadet Victory Corps. With the approval of the Board of Higher Education, the first country summer session was instituted at Morrisville with a student enrollment of over 150, and with a College staff of eight. The 1943 session extended over 11 weeks, 10 in Morrisville. During 1944, a second Morrisville summer session was carried on for 12 weeks with a total list of 125 of whom 100 were enrolled in courses. The courses presented have included English literature (3 courses), English composition, biology, geology, rural sociology, political science (2 courses), mathematics (4 courses), hygiene, first aid. Close correlation with the rural environment has given special values to most of these courses.

Our basic objectives have been the following: (1) To enlist city youth for the emergency farm labor need; (2) To provide them with an over-all program designed to make the experience as educationally valuable as possible; both for the work, and for the country experience; (3) To establish a Brooklyn College program which might have continuing value for the institution and for successive generations of its students; (4) To carry on and to publicize a program of educational research which might have wide applicability for city school systems, high school as well as college.

During the first three summers, over 350 different students have engaged in farm work under Brooklyn College auspices. Their efforts have proved valuable from the standpoint of farmer employers and of farm labor services. A 1945 Project with 200 student workers has been requested. Nearly all the students have found the experience of these summers most stimulating and valuable. None of these young food consumers from the city can have failed to gain some real appreciation and insight into the problems of country living and food production. By most of them, highest ratings have been given to the independence and individual responsibilities involved, and to the necessities of cooperation and adjustment enforced by group living and working.
Our two Morrisville programs have been cooperative ventures by the College and the Morrisville Institute. Basic administration of the school plant including cafeteria service at cost were provided by the Institute, together with additional essential services by their staff members. In our second summer, these included instruction in sociology and biology.

It is the firm conviction of those who have participated, students and staff alike, that these two Brooklyn-Morrisville projects have afforded ample demonstration of the values of such cooperative programs by urban and rural public educational institutions. The extension of such cooperation to include additional city and country schools, of high school as well as college grade, is advocated. The initiative and much if not all the management might, in some cases, be provided by the rural institutions.

New York State, in its present and proposed program for vocational institutes is particularly well-equipped to provide superior facilities for the promotion of such city-country work-experience projects. While during the war years of food shortage, chief emphasis on harvesting work by the city students, especially in the fruit and vegetable areas, is called for, for postwar years the farms and surrounding woodlands, the dormitories and home economics classrooms provide plants well adapted to offer diversified work programs in farming, conservation, and all the tasks of housekeeping, commissary, canning, and the like.

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Note: Copies of longer reports are available for the 1942 and 1943 Projects, together with recruiting circulars used in 1943 and 1944.