Ask the Archivist:
How Wide Was the Horizon?

A question for Melissa Mead, the John M. and Barbara Keil
University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian.

As a high school student at Eastridge in
Irondequoit in the early 1960s, I participated
in a program called Wide Horizons at the U
of R. In it, high school seniors from schools
around Monroe County were selected to come
to the University after school once a month
during part of the school year to attend talks
by professors describing their academic fields.
I remember the names of only two: the talk
on history was done by Dexter Perkins, and I
believe science was done by a professor named
Vishniac. There was also a talk on psychology,
but I do not recall the professor. We met in
the Cutler Union building, now part of the
Memorial Art Gallery.

Although when I attended Wide Horizons I
already knew that I wanted to attend college,
this exposure to the University increased my
motivation and made me all the more in love
with learning. I eventually returned to the U
of R campus for graduate school, having first
attended MCC and then receiving my BA at
Nazareth College of Rochester. Later, I went
on to SUNY Geneseo for my master of library
science degree and a career in librarianship.

Can you tell me more about Wide Horizons?
Does it continue, perhaps in some other form?
It was a memorable and valuable experience
for me.—Nancy Salzer ‘73 (MA), Rochester

Your experience in the Wide Horizons Program
beautifully captures its stated goals: “To develop
enthusiasm for intellectual pursuits; to provide
opportunities for high school students to acquire
new ideas through contacts with recognized schol-
ars; to provide a setting in which exceptionally able
high school students may think, question, discuss
and exchange ideas with others.”

Although similar programs had been launched
elsewhere, as far as was known at the time, ours
was a unique initiative for involving a college or
university.

Led by Byron Williams, then the Earl B. Taylor
Professor of Education, Wide Horizons had its first
“class” in 1957. The target audience was students in
the local high schools, especially those in more rural
areas. Planning for the program involved teachers
and principals from the public schools in Rochester,
and in Monroe and Wyoming counties along with
faculty and staff from the University.

Wide Horizons students engaged with a veritable
Who’s Who of University faculty, including profes-
sors of English Kathrine Koller and Hyam Plutzik,
Glyndon Van Deusen (history), Vera Michele Dean

FULL ENGAGEMENT: An early member of the
former department of education, the multilingual
Frances Horler helped establish ties between the
College and Rochester schools as well as the Wide
Horizons Program, which was designed to engage
area young people with the University.

(political science), J. Edward Hoffmeister (geology),
Glenn Witsey (political science), Frances Horler
(education), and Colin Turbayne (philosophy).

According to a 1962 press release, you and 174
other students and teachers from 34 schools had
a dinner event in September in Cutler Union, then
were divided into five groups and met there for
seven monthly sessions; faculty traveled to sessions
with students in Wyoming County.

Professor Vishniac joined the University in 1961
and had yet to perfect his “Wolf Trap,” a device
to obtain soil samples on the surface of Mars; the
session you recall with him was entitled “Space
Microbiology and Life on Other Planets.”

A pioneer in the study of moods, Professor
Vincent Nowlis led “Common Sense Psychology vs.
Scientific Psychology.”

Professor Perkins retired in 1954, but perhaps
he filled in on “Leadership and Its Problems” for
Van Deusen. You can test your memory for their
voices—Perkins’s distinctive New England accent,
especially—on the Living History website.

Professor Williams retired in 1967 and the
Wide Horizons program ran through 1968; other
programs were started at that time to engage
high school students in the city especially, and
continue today in the form of Upward Bound and
other initiatives.

Thanks for the Answers
Many thanks to those who wrote in with the words (and
corrections) to your class yells and songs in response to ques-
tions I posed in the September-October issue. They have been
added to http://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/yells.

And an extra chorus of
to John Tobin ’64 who
telephoned to sing me a bit of
“Rex” and shared a source for
the music: Songs for Swinging
Housemothers will be added
to the collection. John’s mem-
ories of swimming for “Speed”
have been added to http://
livinghistory.lib.rochester.edu.

The mystery of the mug
remains, but thanks to
Michael Garfield ’58 for some
insight and the offer of his
Kappa Nu mug—it seems as if
“Jane” might be the name of a
Theta Chi girlfriend.

Need History?
Do you have a question about
University history? Email it
to rochrev@rochester.edu.
Please put “Ask the Archivist”
in the subject line.