

Our opinion/

The new college plan

Someone at the College of Staten Island is getting greedy.

Last summer, the college first expressed interest in moving to the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook. There were no definite plans, but it did seem like a good idea in principle.

As time went by, the plans became more firm and more precise. The college said it wanted 187 of the campus' 300 acres. Despite the clamor of many other groups for a piece of the soon-to-be-vacated campus, that request did not seem unreasonable. It's a big campus and there seemed to be room enough for nearly every interest group.

Now, we're not so sure. It's not that the campus has shrunk. Rather, the college's plans have gotten bigger.

The college released its master plan for the new campus last week. It lays out such important details as which buildings will be saved, which buildings will be demolished, and which areas will be rebuilt for new purposes. It also makes one major new request:

Instead of the 187 acres it initially wanted, the college is now requesting 220 acres. That's an increase of 33 acres. Or, put another way, the college initially wanted less than two-third of the campus; it now wants about three-fourths of the campus.

At a time when planners are doing their best to accommodate many diverse groups at this one location, the college's new request is not a positive sign. It is a sign of arrogant greed.

We have always believed — and we still believe — that the Willowbrook property is the best site for consolidation of the college. It is better than the present two-campus setup, it is better than the Ocean Breeze site, and it is better than expanding at Sunnyside. But we have never

believed that the college should be given wholesale rights to whichever parts of the developmental center it craves.

A year ago, when the college was still struggling for the right to move to Willowbrook, we urged advocates for the handicapped to compromise, in the spirit of accommodation. We said there was room at the developmental center for nearly everyone.

Now, we offer the same advice to the college itself. Accommodations must be made for *everyone*. The college cannot expand indefinitely. It cannot build an empire at Willowbrook without also leaving room for others.

And speaking of leaving room, we *still* wonder what will become of the campuses the college will leave behind once it moves to Willowbrook. What will be done with the Sunnyside and the St. George campuses? The college, unfortunately, does not seem to care very much. It is far more concerned with grabbing as much land as it can get in Willowbrook.

That may be a fine attitude for the college, but it is not so fine for Staten Island as a whole. The future of the Sunnyside campus, with its mass of buildings and fields, is of great concern to Staten Island, as is the future of the office building in St. George. They cannot simply be discarded like worn-out clothes. The college cannot build up one community while leaving two others to rot.

Perhaps, as we have suggested earlier, some of the groups that expressed interest in Willowbrook would be interested in Sunnyside or St. George. It's worth exploring. Meanwhile, the college cannot just assume that someone, somewhere will take them. That's not responsible planning. That's just greed.

We've seen enough of that elsewhere on Staten Island. We don't need to see it in our own public college as well.