

Student rolls peril expansion at Wirths

Upsala College has unveiled a \$6 million proposal to expand its Wirths Campus in Sussex County but claims it cannot afford to break ground because a "college without walls" run by the county is providing fewer students than promised.

Officials of Upsala, an East Orange-based institution, envision a two-floor complex to house 16 classrooms, a library, art and music studios, an auditorium, basic skills center, computer center and administrative offices on a bucolic 245-acre tract donated by Wantage civic leader Wallace Wirths.

Upsala will build the facilities, college President Rodney Felder said yesterday, "if and when Upsala College in actuality becomes the main supplier of educational programs as originally agreed upon."

Upsala's immediate concern, spokeswoman Lillie Anderson said, is that the Sussex County Community College (SCCC) agreed to send 400 students

tax rate by 1985 unless contracts with Upsala and three other institutions that accept public students full-time are renegotiated.

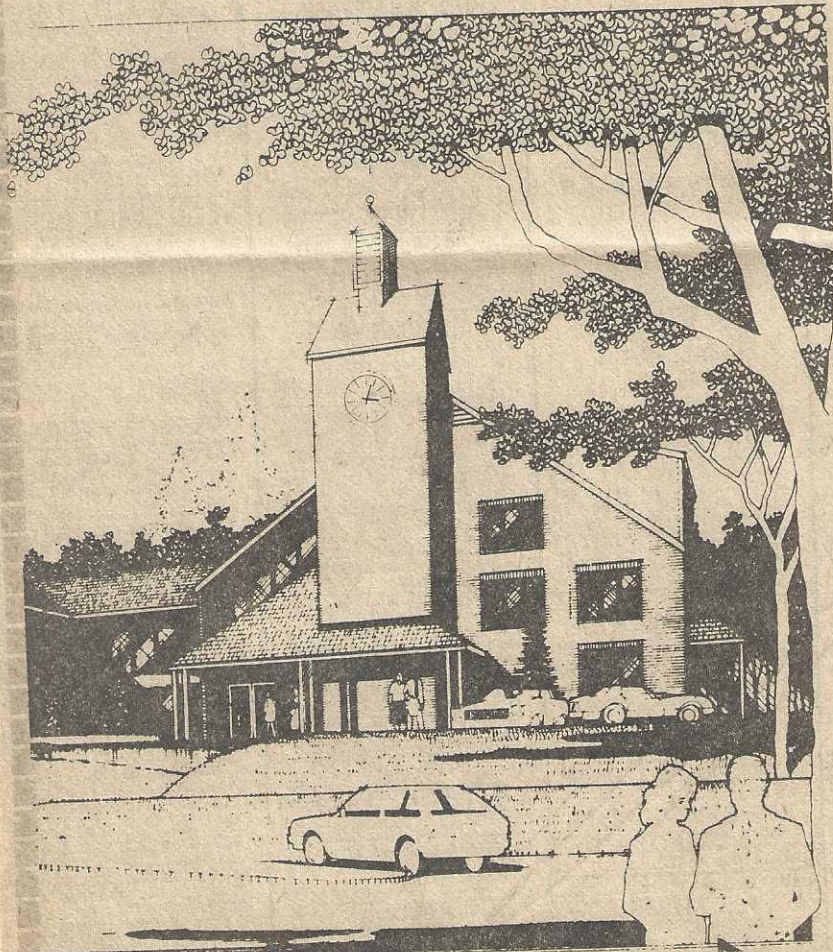
Greater-than-expected attendance at the SCCC during the 1982-1983 school year cost the county an extra \$700,000, since contracts with Upsala and County College of Morris (CCM) in Randolph tied payment with enrollment.

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In response, Upsala has maintained it can significantly reduce expenses if the county provides the Wirths campus with more students.

In figures released yesterday, Upsala estimated its average per credit charge would drop to \$79—less than the average of all county colleges in the state—if the county provided 1,000 students.

Upsala now charges \$98 per cred-



An artist's rendering of the library-administration building at Upsala College's Wirths Campus in Sussex County

to the campus this fall, but only 336 were enrolled.

Upsala last year was designated the "main provider" among eight institutions that offer full- and part-time curricula to students enrolled through the SCCC, which opened in January 1982.

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The SCCC interprets the agreement to mean that any of the 1,100 full-time Sussex County students wishing to enroll in a program offered by Upsala and other colleges will automatically be sent to the Wirths Campus, SCCC President William Apetz said.

"But Upsala has limited offerings" he added.

While Apetz said he "is very much in favor" of an expanded Wirths campus, he added Upsala officials are unrealistic in expecting greater volume from the young public college.

The crux of the dispute, Apetz said, is over the nearly 400 part-time SCCC students who take courses taught by instructors from five institutions and held at 13 sites in the county.

Apetz said this system of "education centers" is "more convenient" for the students and "much more economical" for the county.

As for the number of full-time students sent this fall to Upsala, Apetz said the SCCC had not guaranteed a set figure. "It was never stated officially nor put in writing," he said.

The dispute follows several months of concern by the Sussex County freeholders that the arrangement with Upsala is too costly. Freeholder Director Edmund Zukowski has predicted a rise of six points in the county

it. Students and the state each pay about \$25 of that amount and the county pays \$48. With 1,000 students, Upsala could reduce the county share to \$29, the college estimated.

As the primary provider, Upsala provides courses for full-time students in the humanities, business management, accounting, math, science, parks and recreation, and computer science.

Nearly "everything else" is offered by CCM, with some students also attending Passaic County Community College and Ramapo State College in Bergen County, Apetz said.

CCM has 520 full-time students this semester from Sussex County. That the figure is 30 short of projections is "absolutely not" an issue for CCM, spokesman David Fine said.

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When asked how an Upsala expansion in Sussex County would cut into CCM's market, Fine declined to comment. CCM President Sherman Masten is vacationing and unavailable for comment, Fine said.

Upsala houses its Wirths campus administration in a renovated barn near a knoll where the new 80,000-square-foot building would be located. Classes this semester are held in a bank building in nearby Sussex Borough and at High Point Regional High School in Wantage.

The creation of the SCCC followed 15 years of studies that eventually recommended separate institutions for Sussex and Warren counties. The counties were the last in New Jersey to provide college courses.