

College receives another unfavorable rating

by Caren Schweidel

The Oct. 15 issue of *The Lafayette* ran an article noting Lafayette College as dropping two spots from 25th to 27th place on the *U.S. News & World Report* magazine's "Top 25 Liberal Arts Colleges" list. Now to add to the college's decreasing ratings, Villard Books has published their annual *Princeton Review Student Access Guide -- The Best 286 Colleges*, offering another unfavorable review.

Princeton Review, the nation's top test preparatory company, has formed the largest national opinion poll of students. At least 100 students at each individual college were polled randomly. Representatives from Princeton Review visited the college campuses and distributed the polls at the most highly trafficked areas throughout the school. This

past spring, students at schools with over a 1,000 students, responded anonymously to questionnaires that scoped the areas of dormitory conditions, academic quality, campus life, campus food, etc. to compile the publication's 1994 edition. A five point grid was implemented as a means of answering the questions. In this manner, students rated their own schools from a low to high standpoint in the respective categories. Consequently, 61 categories were formed from these student evaluations.

Holding the number one spot out of 286 schools, for the school in which "Gay Students are Ostracized" is Lafayette College. In the categories of "Major Frat and Sorority Scene" and "Lots of Beer," Lafayette maintains the

number 6 position. Additionally, the college ranked eighth in "Bad Town Gown Relations," ninth in "Providing Lots of Hard Liquor," twelfth in "Being Trapped on Campus," thirteenth in "Strained or Nonexistent Race/class Relations," and fourteenth in "Party School." The college's long standing rival Lehigh University, received worse rankings in the areas in the fraternity and sorority scene, beer, town college relations and being trapped on campus.

The students in this poll believe that Lafayette is a good liberal arts school with a solid engineering program yet simultaneously believe, "The student's real enthusiasm is for social life."

The students cited the school as maintaining a party school reputation Thursday through Sunday night

with drinking and pot smoking as the most desired activities. "I wish I could give beer a higher mark than an A," stated one student. In accordance with this primarily social atmosphere, one student advises all those who have problems with the Greek system to avoid attending Lafayette because "social life begins and ends in Greek houses." Additionally, the low quality in food goes for a high price among a "homogeneous, white conservative, and preppie student body."

What is most interesting about this publication is that the categories and the respective college's ratings are based on the student's opinions of their own schools. It appears that many of the students and faculty can relate to the poor ratings given to the college. Mara

Weinstein '94, agrees with many of the statistics slated on the college. She maintains, "Too many students are more concerned about the social aspects rather than the academic arena." Robert Weiner, professor and head of the history department, feels that "generally, freshman are more interested to teach and more curious about the wider world around them before they are socialized by the 'Lafayette System'." Additionally, he believes that it is unfortunate that many students are "exam-driven rather than learn-driven." Students may lose their priorities when their work does not require a grade, and consequently, come exam time, they will cram in all of the semester's work. Although Weiner finds truth

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in the Princeton Review survey, he maintains that "Lafayette is a fine school and lots of exciting things do happen here."

USA Today sees the guide as one that "doesn't follow a textbook approach to college life." This appears to have been the main purpose of Princeton Review. They seek to present a broad picture of the schools, one which prospective students would discover if they personally visited the schools and spoke to the students themselves. Although the guide portrays a

negative image of Lafayette College, it does allot us 86 points in the areas of academics and admission competitiveness on a 60-100 point scale. Leesa Fuhrman '94 maintains that, "It is up to the individual student whether they choose academia or alcohol." She finds that there are a number of students who will prioritize their academics over their social life. Conversely, Katrina Zafiriadis '95, believes that many students at Lafayette are driven by a "what can this get me" attitude. Students may strive to achieve a particular grade point

average solely on the basis that it will get them the top job.

The Student Access Guide is authored by Tom Meltzer, Zachary Krower, Edward T. Custard, and John Katzman. All are experienced in the areas of education and admissions consulting. This publication is one popular among highschool students considering entrance into college. Although current students may find that the opinions expressed in the survey are valid, there will always remain a small population to provide a contradictory viewpoint.