

Tech Hall Occupied By Students

BLACKSBURG – Virginia Tech students took over a building on the campus Tuesday night, minutes after school officials said that classes would continue but that students could take this quarter's exams just before the start of the fall term.

It was the second time within 18 hours that students had taken over a building.

About 80 students locked themselves inside Williams Hall – an English and mathematics building – about 10 p.m. They had taken food and other supplies with them.

Williams Hall is adjacent to Burruss Hall, the school's administration building.

A large crowd of students were outside Williams Hall. There was some exchange of remarks between the students on the inside and outside of the building.

Campus police had blocked off traffic on the road leading around Tech's Drill Field late

Tuesday but no attempt had been made to remove the students from the building.

The building occupation came only minutes after Tech President T. Marshall Hahn Jr. had informed the student body of a decision made by Tech's University Council.

Dr. Hahn, who approved the council's decision, made the announcement over a campus radio station.

The council allowed students to defer exams but stuck by an earlier recommendation of the Commission on Undergraduate Studies to keep classes and other school activities on schedule.

The council is composed of administrators, faculty members and students.

Another Tech building – Cowgill Hall – had been occupied by students early Tuesday morning. They had threatened to again occupy a building unless liberal policies were adopted on deferring exams.

Attending the six-and-a-half hour session of the council were some of the 23 students who had occupied Cowgill Hall—Tech’s architecture building. They left peacefully about 11 a.m. after a 7-hour occupation.

Dr. Hahn had said earlier Tuesday the students who occupied the building would be disciplined. He did not detail what measures he had in mind.

Hahn had allowed the students to attend the council meeting on the condition that they would identify themselves, realizing they would be subject to disciplinary action.

Sandy Hawthorne, president of the Tech student government, read the decision to about 900 students gathered outside Burruss Hall—the Tech administration building.

The council’s decision was basically the same as that recommended by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies.

The students who occupied Cowgill Hall said they were protesting the “watered-down” recommendation of the commission. They had threatened to occupy it again.

The council allowed students to defer exams for “reasons of conscience” as long as written notice is provided to the appropriate dean by Monday.

The council said, however, that “deferring grades in all courses constitutes resignation from the university.” This stipulation was not included in the commission recommendation.

Among other policies set by the council were:

- All classes and other university activities will continue as scheduled.
- Professors should not raise or lower grades strictly on the basis of class attendance.
- Any student may resign from the university “for reasons of conscience” by Monday.
- No university fees will be refunded to students.

The early morning occupation of Cowgill Hall by the 23 students began about 4 a.m.

There was no attempt by Tech officials to force the students to leave the building.

The students said they were occupying the building to protest a recommendation made Monday by the Tech Commission on Undergraduate Studies.

That commission recommended that students be allowed to defer examinations until next fall or to resign from school by Monday.

The students in the architecture building said the commission's recommendation was "watered-down."

The Student Government Association and the Graduate Assembly had earlier recommended broader policy statements for students who wished to go on strike in protest of the Indochina war and the death of four students at Kent State University in Ohio.

The student proposals would give students the option to take the grade presently held in a course with a pledge to complete the work this fall; to take a pass-fail mark; to take an incomplete grade; or to resign from the school without penalty.

The students who had taken over Cowgill Hall said they would again occupy the building unless the council approved more liberal student strike plans.

In a statement issued after they took over the building, the students said they felt Tech officials had been unresponsive to student desires for an equitable student strike.

Tech officials made no attempt to enter the occupied building until 9:50 a.m. when two school vice presidents and the dean of the architecture school were admitted.

Charles Burchard, dean of the College of Architecture, said "we agreed that they

could be represented at the University Council meeting.

At 11:10 a.m. the 23 students left the building and invited the 100 other students waiting outside to come into the building.

Tuesday afternoon, the campus was calm. The word "Strike" had been painted in red letters on a number of buildings at the school.

State troopers were patrolling the town of Blacksburg, although they remained off the campus. A spokesman at the state police division headquarters in Salem said 10 extra troopers were on duty in the Blacksburg area.

¹Article written by Fred Hilton
Times Staff Writer
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