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Charting A New Course

By Harriet Jackson Scarupa

“Evening Exchange” read the stylized letters on the television screen. What follows are poignant images of Martin Luther King, Jr. peering through the bars of a Birmingham jail, leading a civil rights march through Mississippi, receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, sharing a warm moment with his family. These images are juxtaposed with still others: a flickering candle placed against a red background, children in a nursery school singing a joyous rendition of “Happy Birthday to Ya,” a panorama of the intense faces of those who have come to Washington this January 15 to demand that the lawmakers declare King’s birthday a national holiday.

The focus shifts back to the studio where host Ann Sawyer interviews one of King’s footsoldiers, the Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker, who speaks of the “systemic racism” that is still crippling American society and of the enduring legacy of King’s dream. Then the scene moves back to the march as participants explain why they have come out on this cold snowy day. “I came to prove that we are about unity,” says one. “George Washington and all of them have a legal holiday. Why not King?” asks another.

Focusing back on the march, the camera lingers on Martin Luther King, III as he calls out, “Daddy used to say we’ve got to live as brothers or [we’ll] perish as fools,” to the Rev. Jesse Jackson as he once again leads a crowd in a rhythmic “I am somebody” chant, to Stevie Wonder, organizer of the march, as he describes King as a “man for all seasons,” a man whose vibrant message was of “peace, love, basic human freedom.”

More studio interviews follow, more vignettes of the march and then the host reads a statement about Howard University endorsing the movement to make King’s birthday a national holiday, adding “the struggle goes beyond a birthday celebration.” With that, the program signs off. But not before projecting one final image: Marchers, bundled up against the cold and bedecked in snowflakes, singing “We Shall Overcome.”

First Anniversary

“Evening Exchange” is the nightly public affairs program of WHMM, the Howard University television station which will celebrate its first anniversary this November 17. WHMM, a member of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), is the first non-commercial public television station in the continental United States licensed to a predominantly Black college or university. It broadcasts daily from 3:30 p.m. to midnight over Channel 32 on the UHF dial and can be picked up as far as Baltimore and parts of West Virginia.

Last January 15’s “Evening Exchange” program illustrates the unique role WHMM has carved out for itself since it came on the air. “Uppermost in our minds at all times,” says general manager Arnold Wallace, “is addressing the problems and interests and needs of our largely minority viewership—not only locally but nationally.” Illustrative of this mission: portions of WHMM’s in-depth coverage of the King birthday march were picked up by the PBS and transmitted by satellite to stations across the country.

In addition to “Evening Exchange,” WHMM airs three other Howard-produced programs: “Howard Perspectives,” “Common Cents” and “Student Video Profile.” The balance of its programming comes from a wide range of sources, among them educational television distributors, independent producers and the PBS.

In general, the station’s programming reflects “our awesome responsibility to provide insight into the Black experience,” says director of programming Avon Killion. “But we’re also here to provide information and stimulus to all the people in our coverage area, and they are very diverse.”


Its exploration of the Black heritage comes through (or has come through) in such programs as “From Jumpstreet,” “Afro-American Perspectives,” “Africa File” and “With Ossie and Ruby” as well as through an array of specials, among them: “Divine Drumbeats: Katherine Dunham and Her People,” a look at the pioneering dancer/choreographer/anthropologist; “The Black Frontier,” an examination of the Black involvement in settling the West; “Only the Ball was White,” a retrospective on the men who played baseball in the old Negro leagues; and “A Bayou Legend,” William Grant Still’s romantic opera set in the Deep South in the 1800s.

Under the title “Reel One,” a two-hour slot twice weekly is devoted to the works of independent producers, especially Black ones who have trouble getting exposure for their works on the major networks. “Real One” is also a showcase for a package of some 50 historic Black films acquired by the station and considered one of the gems of its library. These films include westerns, musicals, documentaries and melodramas and number amongst their stars three of the giants of Black theatrical history: Canada Lee, Paul Robeson and Lena Horne. “The thing that’s fascinating to me,” Killion remarks, “is that Black people were doing films in the ’30s and ’40s and they’re not being shown on television. Showing them is a service we can provide, a piece of history people will not be able to get anywhere else.”

The Black perspective also comes through, of course, in the programs WHMM produces “in house.” It is these programs that perhaps most clearly show the mark of the station’s budding personality.

Local Programs

“Evening Exchange,” a nightly half-hour public affairs program, is considered the station’s flagship. The host, Ann Sawyer, was already familiar to Washington area audiences through her work as a WRC-TV reporter and weekend anchor.
"Telecommunications is the single most important instrument for reaching and influencing a mass audience—for helping billions of people in the world to understand the lessons of the past, to cope with the challenges and difficulties of the present, and to contemplate what kind of future they and generations to come will inherit."

James E. Cheek.
"The program reflects the concerns, issues and feelings that are prevalent in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan community," explains Francis Ward, "Evening Exchange" acting executive producer. "I don't know of any other UHF or public stations which do a show like this which is aimed predominantly at a Black audience."

Some programs have featured news-makers discussing topical subjects: e.g., Congressman Walter Fauntroy on the Reagan election; D.C. City Council member David Clarke on the District of Columbia's gun control law; Deborah Marshall of the Prince Georges (Md.) County Council on the growing political power of Blacks in the county; Ali Houderi, spokesman for the Libyan government, on his country's relations with the U.S. and its Arab neighbors; Bishop Desmond Tutu, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, on South Africa's race policies. Other programs have provided a forum for a wide range of people — some well-known, some not — who have important interests or concerns to share whether they have to do with the arts or welfare, crime or sports, careers or religion.

One of its most appealing programs was its February 3 interview with Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee on the inauguration of "With Ossie and Ruby" over the PBS network. Relaxing on the gold sofa on the "Evening Exchange" set, the two spoke with Sawyer about their lives and work. At one point, the conversation paused for Ruby Dee to read Langston Hughes' prophetic poem about "a dream deferred." At another point, a videotaped scene from the PBS series was shown featuring her and Kevin Hooks in a dramatization of a Langston Hughes short story, one with a still-compelling message about the need for bonds of love and respect between generations. And, near the end of the interview, Ossie Davis brought home another message, a message that has a lot to do with the why of WHMM: "We [Black people] have to be in control of our media."

"Howard Perspectives" is a weekly half-hour videotaped interview program which serves as a showcase for the talent and expertise of the Howard faculty. It is hosted by Edward Hawthorne, dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and associate dean Johnetta Davis.

Typical programs have included artist Starmanda Bullock speaking on "Blacks in the Arts," astrophysicist Benjamin Peery on "Elements and the Stars," economists Cleveland Chandler and Frank Davis on "The Economics of Poverty," religious scholar Lawrence Jones on "Plato and the Modern World," sports historian Marshall Banks on "History of the Black Athlete in America," and Africanists Robert Cuming-Munroes and Bereket Hable Selassie on "Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa."

Educating the public

Explains Hawthorne, "We're trying to educate the public about what goes on in a major university and to give people some understanding that Howard is a major university — with professors, students and staff who cover a broad spectrum of subject matter areas and with a major corporate type of structure."

In addition to communicating to the public that Howard is far more than a few individual academic stars, "Howard Perspectives" aims to do just what its name says: to provide the perspective of faculty members on a wide range of subjects. "While we don't come out and say we're Black," Hawthorne observes, "it's clear that our perspective encompasses all those things that Black people are concerned with. We would likely concentrate in economics, say, on the economics of poverty as opposed to what the Kemp-Roth bill would do to the rate of income tax. Yet we can talk about that, too." [The bill, co-sponsored by Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) and Rep. William Roth (R-Del.) put forth a 10 percent tax cut over three successive years.]

The program also serves as an outlet for the specific academic concerns of individual faculty members. Two of its most well-received shows, for instance, featured Peery talking about the birth of stars and atoms. In such a program, Hawthorne readily admits, there's also a "subliminal message." It shows Black youngsters that there's no reason Black people can't be astrophysicists too.

Preparation for "Howard Perspectives" adds up to "a formidable amount of work," Hawthorne has found. Yet he has few regrets. "I guess we get the most out of it [working on the program] because we get to read so much and meet so many people and learn so much. It's fantastic!" As his enthusiasm reveals, he certainly does not count himself amongst those intellectuals who look down their noses at television. "I think it's our responsibility to use the mass media for intellectual purposes and become acquainted with it because our job of education is becoming so vast that we're really not going to be able to deal with it any other way."

Reggie Wright, "Howard Perspectives" producer, says he picked Hawthorne and Davis to co-host the show because of "their knowledge of the university and because they had the time and energy to devote to the program." But there may be more to his decision than that. Television, of course, is a visual medium and the image Hawthorne projects, as he sits in his wheelchair and shares his intellectual curiosity of a wealth of subjects, seems to hold a special symbolism. He seems to be reminding us all that there need be no felters on the power and range of the mind.

If, in one sense, "Howard Perspectives" can be said to deal with the realm of the mind, "Common Cents" can be seen to deal with the realm of the pocketbook. A weekly half-hour consumerism show, "Common Cents" seeks to respond to economics in a very personal and practical way. Its format consists of in-studio interviews with host Maggie Linton mixed with occasional film clips, skits and graphic aids.

Defining consumerism in broad terms, it offers tips on everything from prenatal care to investment strategies. Specific pro-
Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee with "Evening Exchange" host.
grams have covered how to plan a budget, get and use credit, fill out income tax forms, obtain student financial aid, start a small business, prolong a car's life, stretch the food dollar, weatherize a house.

Observe "Common Cents" producer Tiedessa Dalton, "I try to gear the show to the specific needs of Black people because even in something as cut-and-dried as consumerism there are special things Black people have to consider. The infant mortality rate in D.C. is a Black problem. People not using their money wisely is a universal problem but it hits Black people especially hard. Most Black parents don't have enough money to say, 'Here, go to school,' so trying to get financial aid is a special concern for Black families. Not having enough businesses is a special problem of Black communities."

Consumerism and money management are topics that hold personal as well as professional interest for her. "Things relating to spending money just burn me up," she admits. "I see how Black people get ripped off. I see how you go into a supermarket in a Black community and there's less available and the store even looks less appealing than in that same brand of supermarket in a white community. That's the kind of thing I really want to look at here (in "Common Cents"). "Common Cents," "Howard Perspectives" and "Evening Exchange" all utilize student interns in various capacities but they are produced by experienced broadcast professionals. "Student Video Profile," in contrast, is entirely a student venture. For most students, working on the program constitutes an independent study class of -

Roving Camera

A program aired last spring, for instance, opened with a pulsating jazz score and a bright hello from host Robin Harmon (who was later named Miss Maryland, the first Black woman ever chosen to represent the state in the Miss America pageant). The program's first sequence was a regular feature: interviews with Howard students. The question asked this time: What are the major problems facing the Black community and what are your solutions for solving these problems? Some of those answering were assured, others self-conscious. But the overall impression left with the viewer was that Howard was a place that attracted bright young people who cared, cared deeply, about the future of Black folk in this country.

The program then moved to a colloquium at Folger Shakespeare Library on education in segregated Washington, D.C. in which old-timers talked about the dedication shown by so many teachers in the city's all-Black schools in the past. For a change of pace, it ended with a story on a sports award dinner at Howard.

Overall, as the station carves out its own niche, it looks to the day when it will be covering local community meetings, theatrical productions, sports, even breaking news. It looks to the day when it can send a crew to Africa or the Caribbean to provide the type of coverage of people - not just governments - that is often lacking on the major networks. It looks to the day when it can produce specials regularly instead of occasionally. It looks to the day when it can provide graduate courses (for credit) taught by Howard faculty - via television - and beam them across the country and in other parts of the world.

But all that is in the future.

Positive Image

The debut of WHMM last November was warmly welcomed by a public starved for comprehensive, relevant, realistic and positive television fare about the Black experience, a public fed up with seeing the richness of a people reduced to the likenesses projected in a "Good Times" or a "Sanford and Son." Editorialized The Hilltop, the Howard University student newspaper: "For years we have complained that we have had inadequate representation in the media. At last, here is our chance to let the world know that Black people are more than clowns and buffoons. Black people are thinking, well-rounded individuals ... they can even mastermind the development of a television station."

It's been a development marked by difficulties on many fronts, by never-ending challenges and, ultimately, by a glow of optimism about what the station is doing, can do and will do. To begin:

"When Dr. [James E.] Cheek came to Howard in 1969 one of the things he felt this university most needed was a program in mass media communications," recalls Owen Nichols, the Howard vice president whose office is responsible for overseeing WHMM's operation. "So he set out to develop a program to give our students opportunities to learn the skills they would need to work in the mass media."

In February 1972, the School of Communications opened, offering courses of study in journalism; radio, television and film; and communications arts and sciences. The school was just one part of the communications package envisioned by President Cheek. Also planned were a radio station and a television station. The aims of the two were (and are) similar: 1) to serve as broadcast training laboratories for Howard students and 2) to meet the needs of the community, especially the Black community, by providing education, information, entertainment and - most importantly - a far more balanced view of the Black experience than that usually prevalent over the airwaves.
Studio supervisor Dottie Green instructing students.
In December 1971, WHUR-FM, a gift from the Washington Post-Newsweek Company, went on the air. This, the university’s commercial radio station, has evolved into one of the most successful in the Washington metropolitan area. And in January 1974, the university applied to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for a license to operate an educational (non-commercial) television station. On June 25, 1974, the FCC granted the university permission to construct the station and the next fall President Cheek appointed a task force to work out details of the venture. The task force was chaired by Nichols and included representatives from President Cheek’s office, the School of Communications and WHUR. There were to be six extensions of the FCC permit before WHMM finally went on the air.

The reasons for the long wait were various. A suitable tower site had to be found for the station’s antenna. Once it was located (on River Road in Bethesda, Md.), leases had to be negotiated. A structural analysis had to be conducted to ensure that the tower was strong enough to support the antenna. A transmitter room had to be built near the tower. A new on-campus building to house the station had to be constructed. Its first home, however, was in a space in the WHUR building—a space that first had to be cleaned out and outfitted with equipment.

Most remarkable to many: all the wiring, connectors and equipment installation was done by Howard students working under the supervision of Jim Watkins, formerly chief engineer for WHUR and now WHMM’s director of operations and engineering. Recalls Ronald Wauls, one of the students involved, “No one believed, number one, that we were really going to have a TV station and, number two, that that TV station was going to be built by a ‘bunch of kids.’ But we proved the doubters wrong.”

Meanwhile, planning was underway for the new four-studio headquarters for the station to be built in the Freedman’s Square Complex (again with student involvement). The $4 million facility (not including equipment), which will be shared with the School of Communications, is tentatively slated to open this month. According to Watkins, the facility reflects President Cheek’s mandate that the university have a “state of the art” television station. “State of the art,” he explains, “means the very latest in technology and that’s good engineering judgment because we’re not going to be buying new equipment every year. You buy something that’s obsolete today and 10 years down the road it’s going to be antique.”

In addition to the sheer magnitude of the task of building a station from scratch, WHMM’s debut was delayed by problems with the delivery of equipment and, most importantly, by what Nichols describes as “setbacks in the availability of funds. As a result, we were not able to staff the station by the time we wanted.”

Even on the eve of the station’s anticipated debut, there seemed difficulties aplenty. WHMM’s first general manager, George Foster, was let go at the end of September, less than two months before the station went on the air, and his dismissal raised more than a few questions around town. As the November 17 deadline approached, some staff members worried that the station still wasn’t ready. But the station went on the air as planned and a congratulatory crowd of Howardites and others gathered in the Armour J. Blackburn University Center to witness its birth.

Before the exhilaration of November 17 had died down, though, the station was hit with an unexpected crisis. On December 5, it began to lose power when a design flaw caused its prototype antenna to burn up, forcing WHMM to go off the air for 10 days. The antenna was sent back to the factory in California for examination and replacement, a temporary antenna installed in its place. But whereas the original antenna provided the station with five million watts of power, its temporary replacement could carry a mere fraction of that, reducing the station’s coverage area to just inside the Capital beltway. On August 14, the station returned to full power following the installation of a new permanent antenna.

Something else the station has found irksome is the fact that its programs are not listed (as of this writing) in the daily television grid published in The Washington Post (though they are listed in the TV guide inserted in the Sunday paper). Nor were WHMM’s programs included in the daily grid of The Washington Star before the paper folded last August. The two newspapers claimed there was no way they could fit another station into the design of the grids. They also raised questions about WHMM’s eligibility for a listing anyway because they said the station had been on the air too short a time, offered too few hours of programming a day (though it has expanded from 4 to 8½ hours), had too small an audience (though they hadn’t measured it) and was too duplicative of other PBS stations in the Washington area (though WHMM’s studies refute this).

When informed over the phone that some speculated racism might have something to do with WHMM’s omission from the grid, a Washington television columnist bristled, “That’s ridiculous. The major fact was that the grid was in place and designed before you [WHMM] were on the air. I resent any suggestion that racism is behind it.” Then he added a rejoinder that seemed more illuminating than any of his previous words: “If you’re going to talk racism, why not talk about all that anti-white stuff in some of the programming? But that’s something else. I don’t want to go into it.”

That a writer on one of the nation’s major newspapers, and a self-consciously liberal one at that, can equate WHMM’s commitment to exploring the nuances of the Black experience with being “anti-white” says much about the hard battle ahead for Howard’s infant television station.

**WHMM Achievements**

A recital of the woes that have befallen the station — both before and since it went on
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the air — can present a false picture. The fact is that in its brief history, WHMM can point to some very measurable achievements. Some samples:

• Several programs originally aired on WHMM's "Evening Exchange" program were broadcast nationally via the PBS Daily Exchange Feed (DEF). In addition to the King birthday march, these included coverage of Vernon Jordan's "State of Black America" speech at Howard, the eleventh Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Weekend and interviews with Tyrone Brown, former FCC commissioner, and Attilio Vieytez, minister of planning in El Salvador.

• At the end of January, the station acquired a satellite earth station — a 12-foot dish antenna — which enabled it to pick up programs, including live broadcasts, emanating from PBS Westar satellite. Previously, WHMM could only use prerecorded programs from the PBS.

• In mid-March, the station expanded its broadcast day from four to eight hours and by June it added still another half hour, making it eligible for a PBS Community Services Grant.

• Also, in March, WHMM broadcast exclusive live coverage via satellite, of the Howard-Wyoming NCAA basketball playoff from Los Angeles. Other firsts of special interest to members of the Howard community were the station's live coverage of the Charter Day Convocation on March 2, of Commencement on May 9 and of the opening Convocation on September 25.

• A student crew journeyed to Atlanta last spring to shoot extensive footage on the impact the child murders were having on the Black community. Some of this footage was incorporated into an hour-long special aired on "Evening Exchange" May 20. "Who is Killing the Black Children of Atlanta?"

• Reaching beyond the national boundaries, on July 28, the station sponsored its first international teleconference. Howard doctors Roland Scott and Carl Reindorf of the Center for Sickle Cell Disease and Dean Russell Miller of the College of Medicine sat in WHMM's studio and responded to questions about sickle cell anemia posed by doctors and academics in Nairobi, Kenya. A special satellite hookup enabled the exchange to be broadcast in Nairobi and on WHMM. The telecast was used to demonstrate the type of academic linkages made possible through current telecommunications technology and was featured at a World Congress on Black Communication held in Nairobi July 26-31 co-sponsored by the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism and Howard's School of Communications. Also telecast that night: a more generalized panel discussion at the conference on mass media technology led by WHMM general manager Arnold Wallace.

• Among still other developments in WHMM's first year (as of this mid-summer writing):

• The station received an award from the Washington Association for Television and Children (WATCH) for its "service to the young people of the Washington area."

• It formed a Community Advisory Board, as required by the Public Telecommunications Financing Act of 1978, to review programming, policies and service in order to help the station best meet community needs.

• It held its first fundraiser, an on-air art auction with art works donated by Washington artists, earning $11,000 in a 14-hour period last June. Then on August 31, it concluded its first week-long on-air membership drive, resulting in 1,700 membership pledges totalling $47,176.

• It announced that several cable companies in the Washington area, among them Colonial Cablevision, serving Anne Arundel (Md.) County, and Washington Cable System, serving southwest D.C., plan to carry WHMM over their systems. Four other cable companies in the station's general coverage area may also carry WHMM's programs in the future.

• It let the National Spanish Television Network use its facilities to produce live, half-hour newscasts five nights a week. The pioneering telecasts, which premiered on June 1, are linked from Howard's studio via satellite to the network's 100 affiliates throughout the U.S.

Such are some of the landmarks in WHMM's first year of operation. During this period, the station has seen its share of controversy as well.

Its opening night schedule included a travelogue about Barbados that seemed so deferential to the Queen of England that some viewers complained that it seemed to be promoting the "grand" old days of the British Empire. (The film, which had been provided by the Embassy of Barbados, was a last-minute choice when other anticipated Caribbean films failed to materialize, Killion explains.)

Then there was the matter of adding William F. Buckley's "Firing Line" to the WHMM programming schedule (in April). "I thought it might bring some balance to the programming," Wallace says. "I thought it would be interesting to do that. Buckley has some things to say and I think we can see all sides of the coin."

But the fact that WHMM has voluntarily provided additional exposure for Buckley's conservative views is anathema to some. Observes Ronald Walters, the often-outspoken Howard political scientist, "What Buckley adds to the destination of Black people I fail to see. Yeah, you could say it ["Firing Line"] adds balance to the programming. But airing it raises questions about what the goal of the station is. Is it simply to copy what exists on other stations or is it to strive for Black excellence?"

Questions of another sort were raised by the station's coverage of commencement last May. For about two hours, cameras focused on commencement speaker George Bush, on students and dignitaries in the audience, on the choir, on the professional, on the bestowal of degrees. But they never focused on a small but vocal group of demonstrators protesting the selection of Bush as commencement speaker and the general policies of the Reagan administration.
According to Wallace, there was no conscious decision to ignore the demonstrators. "Our shots were preset to a certain extent," he says. "We didn't have the equipment to cover the demonstration. Logistically, it just wasn't possible. As for offering another side to the Bush point of view," he adds, "I think we did very well with Professor Cummings who spent a lengthy time responding to Bush." [This was a reference to an in-studio interview with Robert Cummings, director of Howard's African Studies and Research Program.]

There have been other controversies in the station's early life. And undoubtedly there will be others. That doesn't bother the station's director of programming one iota. "I am in favor of controversy," Killion declares. "I hope some of the things we air will anger our viewers to the point they will call or will write nasty letters because I think one of the things we can do for people is provoke thinking on issues."

And to those who might wonder if the whole television station isn't just an expensive frill the university can ill afford at this time, Owen Nichols, giving the administration's viewpoint, offers a resounding "not so."

"What we're spending now is really not very much," he says. [About $3 million a year, according to Wallace.] "A great deal of money was spent in the development of the station. But within a very short period of time the television station will be self-sustaining. We eventually will produce materials that can be sold to other stations, networks, institutions, what have you. We'll even have our own professional recording studio as part of our new facilities and this will bring in revenue. There's also a great deal of money available to us from various government sources and from foundations."

Nor does Nichols feel other parts of the university will be neglected because of the station. "As a matter of fact," he argues, "it is my firm belief that there are many programs that will benefit directly from our establishment of the television station—e.g., fine arts, business, communications. In
fact, the entire educational programs of the institution will be enhanced. We envision so-called electronic teaching originating in our television station where we would eventually syndicate such teaching materials to cable networks, to various cities across this country — if not across the world."

Nichols offers another reason why WHMM should never be considered a frill: "The opportunities in mass media communications are so great that it is a travesty for Black people and other minorities not to be able to take advantage of them. Certainly television at Howard University opens doors to our people that were heretofore closed."

And that's where another side of WHMM's mission comes in: providing opportunities for students, particularly Black students, to gain the skills necessary to move into the influential, demanding, competitive, often exhilarating world of telecommunications.

As President Cheek remarked on "Evening Exchange" during the station's inaugural, "Telecommunications is the single most important instrument for reaching and influencing a mass audience — for helping billions of people in the world to understand the lessons of the past, to cope with the challenges and difficulties of the present, and to contemplate what kind of future they and generations to come will inherit."

### Training Program

About 50 students work at the station each semester. Thirty of them are interns who earn academic credit and receive a stipend for their labors. The remainder are volunteers.

"Students are involved in just about every area of the station's operation," explains Jim Brown, director of student/staff affairs for WHMM. "That includes management, programming, production, engineering, public relations, community relations, traffic — everything there is that makes the station work." In fact, he admits, without students, "we would be under strain."
"The principal purpose of our training program," he goes on, "is to give the student the opportunity to combine theory with practice in order to prepare him to move from here into the industry. Whether the student decides to form his own company or form a support unit to a station or just try to get a job in a station, he'll have skills that have been tested and developed."

Most of the students who work at WHMM are enrolled in the School of Communications; others are in the School of Engineering; a few others came from other divisions of the university.

Communications student Charmayne Cooke, for instance, worked at the station last spring but has been interested in a television career ever since she recognized that "radio and television were reaching more people than books and magazines." She's especially interested in "the visual aspects of production," she says, because she wants to be able to "put out positive images about various people and various events that have to deal with us."

Engineering student Ronald Wauls had never thought of broadcast engineering as a possible career until he learned about a TV club Jim Watkins had organized. He joined the club, was involved in constructing WHMM's first facilities and now works part-time for the station. "I've found broadcast engineering to be an interesting field, one that's allowed me a lot of room to expand in any direction," he observes.

"Another thing: there are very few Black engineers in broadcasting. That's another reason that made me stick with it as long. It wasn't until December that I finally received a salary. All the time I put in before was because I wanted to help."

Generally, student interns first attend Saturday afternoon orientation sessions which give them an overview of the operation of the station and familiarize them with the equipment and terminology it uses. They are then instructed in specific operations such as videotape, camera, lighting, audio, master control, telecine. Before they can operate any piece of equipment, though, they must be certified, i.e., they must attend classes on the theory and operation of that piece of equipment and pass a written and demonstrative test.

"Our training program discourages students from narrow specialization," explains Brown. "If a student wants to be a producer, for example, before he would actually work with a producer, he would work with the production manager learning everything that needs to be done in putting together a program. In other words, he must understand all the immediate things that impact the work he wants to do. Part of our whole thing is that students must get broad training. We're not just teaching them how to do a job, but how to develop a career."

Discipline is an essential component of WHMM's training. "We don't treat students like 'students,'" insists Jim Watkins, "and the reason is that we're supposed to offer them a real world experience. In my department, if a student doesn't show up twice, he's no longer allowed to work in the station. He's shown he lacks the dedication that is necessary to make this business run."

Learning to cope with stress is another essential. "We can't babysit here," says Dottie Green, a studio supervisor for WHMM who was one of the first Black women licensed as a broadcast engineer by the FCC. "To make it in this business you have to have more than skills. You've got to have the backbone to handle stress. I'm hoping students here will have the whole package to survive."

Green is speaking from personal experience. She is a former broadcast engineer for the CBS affiliate in Philadelphia and also has worked for television stations in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Hartford. Along the way, she learned to survive in the stressful world of television, a world that was (and still is) dominated by white image makers. Now she's come back to Howard to share what she's learned with young Black people who will be fanning out across the country to make their own impacts on the industry. And it feels good. "When I was at CBS I never said 'we,'" she remarks. "Ever since I've been here I've felt part of the whole."

Her experience and viewpoint is similar to that of others on the WHMM staff. They number about 40 altogether. They're young (generally in their thirties), but experienced. Describing his colleagues, Jim Brown says, "They got in the field young and they were able to deal with a lot of the indignities that the industry places on a Black person and understand what that means. So when they come here they're not only coming with skills but also with a deep sense of commitment to what we [at WHMM] are all about."