Some Notes on the Early History of the Robert B. Gordon Natural Area for Environmental Studies

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I read in the school newspaper that there were plans to develop the south campus area. I was immediately concerned about the biological field station area so I viewed the plans for development. I was alarmed when I saw that most of the wooded area was going to be removed for dormitories. Brad Gottfried and I were old dorm mates and also members of the Biology Club. I told him about it and we decided try to meet with Dr. Rossey who was the president at the time. When we met, we voiced our concern over developing the wooded area, and tried to explain the uniqueness of the climax forest. He said that there was no alternative and offered no compromise at all. I met with Dr. Overlease and asked for his support, but he did not want to get involved for fear of repercussions. I am not an architect, but I did have some ideas about how things could be rearranged. I just happened to mention it to Mrs. Webster, who was a biology instructor at the time, and she said she would support us in any way she could. She also said that her husband was an architect. I asked if he could draw up an alternative plan. I gave her a copy of the proposed development and she said that she would ask her husband. He agreed to do it for $100.00, so Brad and I managed to scrap up $100(not easy for a college student in the 70's). Somewhere in the midst of all this the school newspaper got wind of what was going on, so they called me for an interview. It was published in the next edition and caused quite a stir. We got great support from students and faculty alike in the form of petitions and phone calls. We presented Dr. Rossey with the petitions and alternative plans at a second meeting. He was very irritated that we had done this. Once again he did not offer up much hope, but we continued to pursue it and the college finally relented and accepted our plan to save the forested area. I'm not sure how it was all finally resolved. I would like to say that I believe that Mrs. Webster should be recognized for this. She was the only one who supported us at the time and I think I can say that, had she not done what she did, we probably would have been unsuccessful.