



SWARTHMORE COLLEGE black students stage sit-in in the office of college president Dr. Robert Cross.

# *Black cultural center demand marked by Swarthmore sit-in*

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SWARTHMORE — Black students at Swarthmore College began an around-the-clock sit-in in the college president's office Friday morning to emphasize their demand for an autonomous black cultural center.

The students, members of the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society (SASS), remained in the office overnight and were still peacefully occupying the office this morning. According to one member, approximately 60 of Swarthmore's 65 black students belong to the society. About 15 are occupying the office at a time.

In a press conference Friday SASS spokesman Don Mizell said the students would remain in the office until the school administration either offers them an autonomous facility or threatens them with "legal forcible removal."

President Dr. Robert Cross, who also spoke at the conference, indicated that he might be willing to use police or an injunction to oust the students "if the operation of the college were seriously obstructed."

He said he does not now consider college life to be so impaired. The students were sitting-in, not sealing off the office, he said.

SASS members had been boycotting classes since Wednesday in support of their request.

Cross offered Thursday to make Robinson House, a small women's dormitory, as a black cultural center next fall. SASS rejected his offer, however, because while providing for student determination of courses to be offered, the college would have control over who the program would be open to and its funding.

"The concepts of self determination are crucial components of our position."

SASS asserted in a letter to Dr. Cross dated Friday.

Cross agreed that the central question was whether "a building on the college campus should be given complete autonomy."

He mentioned guidelines of the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare concerning segregated groups on campuses, implying that an autonomous black cultural center might conflict with such guidelines.

Dr. Edward Cratsley, college

vice president, said the college could not easily maintain ownership of a center building and its financial responsibility yet relinquish the right to review center's operation.

Eight black administrators and other college employees Thursday wrote a letter of support for the SASS position to black parents.

Signing the letter were William Cline, assistant dean of admissions, and his wife; Edwin Collins, director of the Upward Bound, program, and his wife;

Harold Hoffman, assistant director of the physical plant; Lee Williams, of the McCabe Library circulation department, and her husband Robert; and Rachel Williams, supervisor of Parish dormitory.

Reaction among the more than 1,000 white students is varied. About a dozen whites began a sit-in Friday in the corridor outside the president's office in support of SASS, but were gone this morning.

One of the white vigilists said he hopes immediately to aid SASS and, ultimately, to awaken all students to the issue of power within the college.

Other students, however, indicated that they approve of SASS demands but not of its tactics. As to the question of a college wide discussion of institutional organization, one boy responded, "Are you kidding? I've got exams."

Several students said that they were tentatively planning an all-college meeting for this afternoon.