

## History of WGDR

Written by station staff over the years, this narrative was originally published in the WGDR Training Manual.

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1970 - Goddard hosted the first Alternative Media Conference for four days, bringing in over 2000 media personalities and students from around the country. Many flew in from California where "free form" small scale broadcasting was occurring, made possible with the introduction of portable video and audio transmitting gear. At this time, Goddard's radio station was carrier current available only to listeners wired on campus.

1972 - A proposal by Kirk Gardner and Bruce Litvin for a ten watt educational radio station was submitted to Goddard's Board of Trustees. The station would be mostly student operated with several hours each weekend set aside for school children. The proposal was given a five thousand dollar budget to begin the licensing process by the board of trustees.

1973 - WGDR went on air as an FCC licensed 10 watt station June 20th, 1973 using 1950's mono transmitting equipment and a two bay horizontal only antenna mounted on a 12 foot pole located on top of the Eliot Pratt roof. The coverage was planned for the campus population of Greatwood and Northwood plus the village of Plainfield.

1974 - A plan using HEW grant funding to upgrade the station to 1000 watts from facilities proposed for Tylor pastures to make available "high quality, non-commercial programming to North central Vermont" failed approval from Federal guidelines and the project was abandoned. Interested members of Pacifica's station WBAI in NY, some of whom attended the alternative media conference of 1970, began providing news programs to WGDR on a regular basis. One WBAI member, Paul Mclsaac, soon became instrumental in the community aspect of WGDR and later wrote his Goddard senior study on developing WGDR as a community focused radio station.

1975 - Goddard began a new "Program in Integral Education" (P.I.E.) that had many radical components structured in a summer residency and year round work experience. One area of P.I.E. became the "Community Media Project" developed under the guidance of Paul Mclsaac who was attending the Institute of Social Ecology at Goddard. Paul eventually became the Station Manager of WGDR until 1980. Under his influence, WGDR was transformed from a part-time college station to a full time community service station shared by students and community volunteers utilizing a free format design.

1976 - Many offshoots developed over the next several years from Goddard's Community Media Project. Four major areas were: (1.) V.A.M.P. Vermont alternative media project, (2.) St. Johnsbury's TV Co-op Community based cable TV, (3.) New England Radio Alliance covering the construction of Seabrook Nuclear, (4.) The Image Co-op in Montpelier.

1979 - Through the pressures of "Public" radio entities upon the FM dial, the FCC changed its policies on small 10 watt educational stations, forcing stations to upgrade their power to 100 watts or more. From community financial support and fundraising, WGDR was able to upgrade its power to 800 watts with the purchase of a 1956 1000 watt transmitter. Utilizing the same antenna structure used for its 10 watt equipment, this upgrade was hoping to cover Washington county with community based alternative programming.

1980 - Efforts were made to establish a Community Advisory Board (CAB) for WGDR. This diminished after the P.I.E. program was canceled in May of 1980, causing Paul Mclsaac's dismissal as director. John Codman becomes General Manager of WGDR using CETA funds and VAMP monies. John Codman left after funding expired in the summer of '80 and took a job with WDEV-AM in Waterbury. Tom Laffan, WGDR's chief engineer also left for WDEV when station funding and energy was exhausted. Under fiscal duress, the College eliminated all funding support for the station. Late in 1980, Goddard entered into a discussion with a community group - the Center for the Arts and Public Issues, (CAPI) for

drawing community support and energy into the station, and to safeguard the license of the station should the college fold in bankruptcy. These discussions between CAPI and Goddard was later abandoned by the college.

1981 - Goddard College nearly vanished during the summer of '81 due to fiscal crisis, causing the continued loss of budgetary support to the station. Fear spread through the community station members of having the station sold out from under them by Goddard's creditors. In an effort to prevent this, a community group organized to operate and raise funds at the station through the summer of '81, assuming expenses and receiving a \$1,600.00 Haymarket grant. In the Fall, the station staff pushed a proposal to have the college provide limited funding for WGDR and to install a part-time radio coordinator. Less than \$1,800 was provided by the college to operate the station, but the funding for the coordinator was denied and remained a volunteer position until the hiring of Patty McGill in the Fall of 1984 as a part-time station manager.

1984 - WGDR continued to struggle through the 80's as an orphan on campus. There were periodic attempts to help fund short term workshops in media, but the station went on without a paid station manager and engineer. At best as some were able to do, keeping the station on the air became impossible due to the lack of funds for repairs and expenses. The volunteer staff dropped off to seven members and programming stood still for months at a time while repairs went unattended, forcing the station off the air and static replaced music and voices at 91.1 fm. Eventually, through political maneuvering on campus, a part time radio coordinator position was funded by the college as Patty McGill became the next mover of WGDR's resurgence in community radio. A number of students became involved again with the station, as well as new community volunteer programmers.

1985 - With the fortunes of Goddard's Title 3 grant proposal, WGDR was able to refit its inadequate air studio with much needed new equipment, some of which still exist today.

1986 - Goddard student Michael Deacon becomes involved with WGDR and re-established the news department respected throughout and beyond New England. Michael also becomes studio engineer and trainer with the station workshops along with Patty McGill. Chief engineer Tom Laffan returned from WDEV to help maintain the station's 1956 transmitter on a weekly basis. Due to a lack of sufficient funding (\$3,000 a year), the station continued to face many technical and operational problems that took the station off the air regularly, sometimes weeks and months at a time.

1988 - Patty McGill stepped down as station manager after four years of revitalizing WGDR within the limits of an unrealistic budget. Cindy Marsha became the next station manager.

1989 - Goddard College struggled once again politically and financially, causing a very non supportive environment for the new station manager. Times became turbulent for both the college and WGDR. The station was shut down for several weeks by the station manager from the lack of control over programming that was in violation to Federal regulations. The volunteer station staff dropped from 32 to 12 following the two week shutdown. Once the station returned to the air, turbulence continued throughout the year, resulting in the resignation of the station manager. The chief engineer Tom Laffan also left the station following the hiring process that brought in the next station manager Stu Bautz. Station had a total budget of \$13,800.00 from Goddard College (\$10,000 for the part-time manager, and \$3,800 for operations).

1990 - The station outreached to students again, drawing over 20 each semester for radio shows and work program activities, along with several students taking independent studies in radio production. Community volunteers rebound to over 25 members, including H.S. and Jr. H.S. students. Funding for the station remains inadequate (\$3,800 for operations from Goddard per year) causing the station to have frequent break-downs from worn out equipment. A Spring on-air fund drive was organized to help with the station's budget, bringing in \$1,500.00 in listener support. These funds helped begin the rebuilding of the 1956 transmitter to prevent regular breakdowns, and re-established Pacifica news service to WGDR's airwaves since it was abandoned in 1980 - making WGDR the only Pacifica affiliate for Vermont.

1991 - A new broadcast engineer Brian Justin Jr. joined the station to assist in the repairs of badly neglected equipment. Several thousand more community dollars went into repairs to get the transmitter to operate consistently and safely. The antenna harness was replaced, helping to greatly improve our limited reception range. The station's news department came back to life, focusing on local community issues and national alternative feeds from the NPR satellite system, made possible with the installation of a downlink dish using homeowners equipment. The '91 Spring fund drive nearly doubled in donations given to the station from listener's responses. Volunteer programming staff reached 65 members, 1/3 students and 2/3 community. Many of the station departments, music, PSA, news, etc., operated under both community and student staffing. Goddard College was lobbied by students and the community to make the station manager's position full time, and is granted by the president, Jackson Kytle. A Community Advisory board was organized by the station to begin research into signal and funding development. Total station budget reached \$23,000.00, including underwriting support (\$3,500) and gift giving (\$2,500) to Goddard's funds of \$17,470.00 for operations and new full time manager position.

1992 - The station's 1950 10 watt exciter expires, and the college provided \$5,000.00 of funds for a new replacement. Community fundraising money helped buy the necessary \$5,000.00 of studio equipment for the station to go stereo for the first time. Community issues programming and morning talk shows took off with listeners calling in on a regular basis. Additional community interest programming was funded by the new underwriting department. In the Spring of '92 the station again doubled its fundraising donations to over \$5,000.00 in pledges. Station volunteer staff climbed to over 70 members.

1994 - WGDR received a grant from NPR to install a broadcast quality downlink center for receiving satellite feeds of news and special interest programs at a cost of \$30,000.00 making the station's ability to provide alternative news much more reliable and of higher quality. The Spring fundraiser passed the \$6,000.00 mark for the first time.

1995 - Station budgets for its first computer system for the music department, replacing its 8088 machines.

1996 - The Spring fundraiser passed the \$8,000.00 pledge mark for the first time. Total station budget including fundraising and underwriting support reached \$52,628.00 including gift giving (\$6,500.00) and underwriting support (\$4,000.00).

1997 - After five years of special fundraising for phase one of the signal development project, including a \$1,000 grant from the Haymarket fund, \$12,000 was raised from listener support to complete the construction of our new 80 foot antenna tower and the new 4 bay antenna system installed outside WGDR's studio. This project replaced the original antenna system installed on the roof of the Eliot Pratt building in 1973, and greatly improved the reliability and integrity of the transmission system. WGDR experiments with broadcasting live on the internet, but with limited results due to the college's restricted bandwidth to the net. Late in the year, once the college's bandwidth is increased and the station complies to additional music licensing fees for cybercasting, the station began regular internet broadcasting.

1998 - WGDR received a grant from Pacifica foundation for the installation of their new KU satellite downlink system at a cost of \$3,000.00 in order to continue to provide Pacifica news services and other independently produced news programs. The College grants a proposal to add a part-time assistant to the station to help handle the increased workload of the station manager.

1999 - The Spring fundraising drive passed the \$11,000.00 mark in pledges for the first time. Total station budget including fundraising and underwriting support reaches \$77,000 which includes one and one half staff (\$40,000 total) and \$37,000 for operations and development. Plans are set to fund a computer system for the air studio in the Fall, along with upgrading the control board. Development funds are secured to begin steps for proposing a translator project in the Hardwick vicinity once a host site is designated.

2000 - After twelve years of service, Stu Bautz announces his departure as station manager. Goddard graduate Carlos Haase is appointed by the College as the new station manager. The transitional period between managers forced the station to go for a year without a fundraiser.

2001 - After a thorough selection process, Amanda Gustafson joins the station as the new part-time Assistant Manager. Spring fundraising returns and doubles in dollar amount, as the fundraising for the last phase of the primary signal expansion is to be completed with fundraised monies.

2002 - Goddard's Board of Trustees meet on campus in June to address longstanding financial, academic and accreditation problems that were severe enough to close the college and sell the assets. Instead, the Board narrowly agreed to keep Goddard open, but to close the Residential Undergraduate Program, aka RUP. Goddard became a predominately "at-a-distance" college, with students and faculty visiting the campus one week per semester. The Goddard BOT was exploring viable options to sell or transfer the FCC WGDR license. VPR and a community organization known as the Friends of WGDR were interested in the license. Mark Schulman, a candidate in Goddard's Presidential Search, continued these negotiations to transfer the license, but in the end recommended that the Board keep the WGDR license. The board voted to keep the license, and WGDR filled the vacant student air slots and other station work-related positions with community volunteers. The college replaced GM Charles Haase with Amanda Gustafson as General Manager, and Goddard alum Bert Klunder began as half-time Assistant Manager. Also in 2002, several programmers were removed from their shows and banned from the station. Personality and procedural problems worsened as Goddard's willingness to support the station, (i.e. supporting the GM in administrating conflict), deteriorated and finally disappeared during 2002. As the year ended, programmers and listeners were grateful to have the station continue, but also believed the banned programmers were treated unfairly and should be returned to their shows.

2003 - GM Amanda Gustafson changed the annual two-week Pledge Drive to two one-week Pledge Drives, in Spring and Fall respectively. Pledge Drive giving levels off at about \$11,000 per Pledge Drive. Amanda creates the Programmer Council to represent Programmer's interests to station management. The advisory council is modeled after Goddard's constituent advisory councils. The Programmer Council was also charged with hearing and recommending and resolution to the banned programmer issue, and the banned programmers were eventually returned to their shows.

2005 - With funds from Goddard and fundraising, the Air Studio is updated and relocated to the former manager's office near the lobby. The new studio has a full complement of new equipment, including a new board. Soon after, Amanda Gustafson resigns and Bert Klunder fills in as Interim GM. Bon Kelly, Manager of KZMU Community Radio in Moab, UT is hired as WGDR General Manager. Bert was interim GM for two Pledge Drives. The Programmer Council changes its name to Policy Advisory Council, PAC.

2006 - GM Bon Kelly begins the protracted process of obtaining a Community Service Grant from the Corporation of Public Broadcasting. In addition and to support new fundraising initiatives, Bon hires programmer Christine Farren as Special Events and Volunteer Coordinator. The new position also provided material support to the GM. Bon and Bert upgraded the Assistant to the Manager position to Operations Manager, sharing overall management of the station. Bon also aggressively pursued expansion of WGDR's broadcast range with a plan to use a vacant Montpelier radio tower (the former WNCS tower). This project involved much negotiation with WRMC at Middlebury College, who's FCC contours presented a legal obstacle to that site, remedied by an expensive reconfiguration of their smokestack antenna. Negotiations eventually failed, with Bon resigning and leaving Bert Klunder once again as interim GM. During the GM search, the CSG grant from the CPB was approved and WGDR received its first check from CPB. The grant, contingent on a variety of community service components, was established at about \$65,000, renewed annually. During this time Bert designed and implemented a comprehensive outreach effort to area high schools, giving direct broadcast experience to interested high school students. WGDR also began to air live Cabot and Twinfield high school varsity basketball games. In

December, long time WNCS (The Point), announcer and Program Director Greg Hooker is hire as WGDR's new GM. The annual community contributions via Pledge Drives level off at about \$30,000.

2007 - Bert resigns as Operations Manager, and is replaced by David Ferland, a long time programmer. In October, Greg Hooker applied for a new full power FCC non-commercial FM license. The FCC subsequently granted a construction permit for the new transmitter and antenna to be located on a high hill in Wolcott, VT. When completed, the second tower will have it's own frequency and call letters:

WGDR PLAINFIELD 91.1 FM

WGDH HARDWICK 91.7 FM

Part of the construction plans are to connect the Plainfield antenna and the new antenna in Wolcott with a high speed data line. This will facilitate one wide-coverage station, instead of two isolated stations. The FCC construction permit will expire in April of 2011. Funds and plans are in place to begin constructing the new tower and transmitter building in April of 2010.

2009 - Goddard President Mark Schulman announces he will retire and leave the college end of June 2010, and Goddard begins a presidential search. Consequently, Goddard initiates a formal and public discussion of WGDR's relationship with it's licensee. Two meetings were held with college and station task forces. Recordings of both meetings are available on the station website at [wgdr.org](http://wgdr.org).

2010 - Ginny Berson, a VP at the National Federation of Community Broadcasters NFCB, delivers the Keynote Address at the WGDR Annual Meeting in early February. Her address was "Community Radio in the 21st Century –How it Will Survive and Thrive." Ginny also met with college administrators, station management and programmers, and others to help Goddard and the station make a plan to go forward together. One focus area is the WGDR Mission Statement, which still says WGDR serves the students of the college (who have been predominately at distance since 2002). Pledge Drive amounts have leveled off at just under \$30,000 annually.