Nick Foster

Holy Cross’s campus certainly has a variety of unique qualities, due in most part to it being situated on Mount St. James. Building a college campus on such a severe slope has a variety of challenges, as the natural lay-out of the land does not necessarily lend its self to easy construction. However, the design of the campus succeeds brilliantly in utilizing the natural terrain and a few artificial features to overcome these obstacles.

The campus is not really a natural space. Just the fact that man-made buildings exist on campus prevents it from completely natural. A truly natural space is one that has not been affected by human hands. To be “natural”, an area has to be what the name suggests, entirely formed by nature. While Holy Cross’s landscape is covered by natural occurrences, like grass, trees, and the hill itself, almost all of it is altered by human beings. Most of the plants here have been planted by humans, thee hedges are all trimmed, the grass is always cut. Nothing is truly allowed to run wild, it is all checked by humans. Even the land itself has been rearranged for human purposes. Most of the buildings sit on terraced ground; the hill was flattened in order to make building the foundations easier. Even as Father Kuzniewski said, the athletic fields sit on land that was at one point a marsh. The land has been severely altered for our own means, and would no doubt be severely different if it had been left solely in the hands of nature.

The campus itself was designed I feel with more of classic feel to it. The buildings don’t have too much excessive ornamentation or extreme designs. As Father Kuzniewski stated, the original architect wanted to avoid the decorative style of the Victorian Era in America, so he designed Fenwick with a relatively plain and classic design. The other buildings followed suit. The brick construction and the fairly rectangular designs make the campus have an old, almost Ivy League feel to it. Certainly the ivy climbing up the sides of the buildings adds to that feeling as well. Even the newer buildings, like Mulledy and Stein still have an aged feeling to them, despite them being over a century younger than Fenwick. The only building that’s out of place is the Hart Center, but being as it is, separated from the rest of the campus at the top of the hill, it doesn’t conflict with the other classic designs on the campus.

*Nick,*

*Your writing here is excellent – forceful and to the point. Plus I think you have “hit the nail on the head” regarding the ways the campus reflects human activity and human concerns more than nature. At the same time, though, with the campus arboretum and the extensive groudskeeping work done here, there is an effort to introduce aspects of a natural landscape into the campus landscape. Did you think about why that would be a priority for the college? It certainly makes for an attractive campus to show off to prospective students. But is there more to it?*