DEAN OF COLUMBIA COMMITTED TO COEDUCATION

As Columbia College prepares to admit women next fall after 228 years as an all-male institution, its new dean, Robert E. Pollack, says he is optimistic about the change and committed to making the transition to coeducation as painless and profitable as possible.

Dr. Pollack, a 41-year-old molecular biologist known for his work with cancer-causing viruses, succeeded the economist Arnold Collery as the 11th dean of the college last July.

"Single-sex education goes counter to my intention of always having the best possible students in my class," said Dr. Pollack, who fought to open the college to undergraduate women while a professor of biological sciences. Making the Environment Normal

Dr. Pollack, who began teaching at Columbia in 1978, has called the admission of women to Columbia College a "normalization" of the campus environment. In a recent interview, however, he said he felt "an obligation to protect the psyches of competitive men who will suddenly find themselves surrounded by bright women."

"It is irrational to be teaching for a living and not have access to half the smart people in the country," Dr. Pollack said. Columbia College, which had a freshman class of 713 this fall, plans to admit 780 students in 1983, the largest entering class in its history. Women will be admitted "without regard to any quota or preconceived male-female ratio," according to a faculty admissions committee.

"I intend for this to be an integrated community of intelligent people, and not a group of ghettos," Dr. Pollack said. "I don't intend women to be in a ghetto, any more than I intend to see blacks or Chinese or anyone else in a ghetto." Coordinator to Be Appointed

At the recommendation of Michael Rosenthal, director of the Committee on Coeducational Planning at the college, a full-time coeducation coordinator will be chosen by Dr. Pollack to handle any difficulties in the transition.

The college, which has been actively recruiting qualified women since spring, is assessing housing, health, security, counseling and athletic facilities at the Morningside campus in
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anticipation of the new arrivals.

A 1961 Columbia graduate in physics, Dr. Pollack said he was committed to a marriage of the sciences and the humanities through the undergraduate core curriculum, and was working to make Columbia students "numerate" as well as literate.

"The problem is that C.P. Snow is wrong," Dr. Pollack said. "The two cultures are not science and humanities - the two cultures are the ability to think on your feet or the passive acceptance of what someone else says." Doctorate From Brandeis

Dr. Pollack, who was born and grew up in Brooklyn, received his doctorate in biology from Brandeis University in 1966. He has taught at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and New York University's Medical Center. Dr. Pollack, who has written more than 85 articles on the malignant transformation of cells, is the editor of "Readings in Mammalian Cell Culture."

Dr. Pollack, who said his secret wish was to be an architect, maintains a research laboratory on campus and teaches a course on "The Theory and Practice of Science." He said that he would continue to be a scientist "at least until cancer is not a problem."

" I am now much purer a scientist than I was before I was here," Dr. Pollack said. "The science I do now I do because I want to, because I like it."

Dr. Pollack described his new job as a gift, a chance "to have those people who care about ideas and about a precision of expression get to know each other and work with each other through this core curriculum, whether they are scientists, or experts in Horace or in Shakespeare." A Student of Yiddish

With his wife, Amy Steinberg, an artist, Dr. Pollack attends a Yiddish class every Monday night, regardless of other commitments, because "it's the language of my grandfather."

"The other language I speak is science," Dr. Pollack said. "I never thought I could use that intelligently until I came to Columbia."

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