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Founded in 2024, the *Studying the History of Higher Education (SHHE) Journal* offers students and emerging scholars of the history of higher education a venue to publish their historical research and to promote dialogue in the academic community. Through mentorship, peer collaboration, and a commitment to academic excellence, our editorial team aims to foster a supportive environment where students and other rising historians can refine their research skills, disseminate their findings, and make meaningful contributions to the field of higher education history.

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Editorial Introduction

The Creative Power of Historical Artifacts

Snejana Slantcheva-Durst

We are excited to share with you the second issue of the *Studying the History of Higher Education Journal (SHHEJ)*, published under the auspices of the Russel Center for the Study of Higher Education of the University of Toledo's Higher Education program! The *SHHEJ* offers students and emerging scholars of the history of higher education a venue to publish their historical research and to promote dialogue in the academic community. Through mentorship, peer collaboration, and a commitment to academic excellence, our editorial team aims to foster a supportive environment where students and other rising historians can refine their research skills, disseminate their findings, and make meaningful contributions to the field of higher education history.

The historical essays in this second issue of *SHHEJ* share a common thread: they were all triggered by a chance encounter, whether with an email message, a plaque in the college hallway, a yard-sale discussion and a document signature, a photo, or even a challenging question. Historians have often lauded the creative power of historical artifacts both for research and for teaching. Historical artifacts do not just help confirm facts; they evoke sensory and emotional responses; they activate the past, provoke new stories, challenge assumptions, and spark imaginative inquiry. They are active springboards for thought (Prown, 1982).

The authors in this issue were all sent on a journey of discovery after a chance encounter with such artifacts or events in their college or university. These chance encounters triggered questions for them and pushed them into the archival records in a search for answers. These chance encounters served as springboards for thought. The authors' stories come to life in our issue.

An administrative email related to a student-planned "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" at Dartmouth College in May of 2024 triggered Nora Cai's curiosity and her article, "Historicizing the Freedom of Expression and Dissent at Dartmouth College." This first article in the issue is rooted in the student activism of the 1960s and the 1980s when many student-led movements brought

political and cultural change across the country. Across many college campuses, administrative responses to student-led protests yielded a web of permissible speech and conduct policies that were refined with each subsequent event. Cai traces the development of speech and conduct policies at Dartmouth College, specifically the Freedom of Expression and Dissent (FED) policy and its associated conduct regulations. Her study follows Dartmouth's policies' evolution through three crucial protest periods: the George Wallace protests of the early to mid-1960s, the anti-Vietnam war movement in the late 1960s, and the anti-apartheid protests of the mid- to late 1980s. For Cai, Dartmouth's FED policy and conduct regulations emerged and evolved more out of desire to control, rather than protect, free expression and dissent at the College.

An encounter with a plaque in a hallway at Vassar College inspired the second article in this issue, titled "Education for the Race: The History of Euthenics and Eugenics at Vassar College." Anna Philippe's historical inquiry provides glimpses in the critical role of academic institutions in the eugenics movement of early 20th century United States. In this context, Philippe focusses her sights on a unique program at Vassar College designed around the idea of "euthenics," or the science of improving human living conditions. As Philippe demonstrates, Vassar's euthenics program, established in 1924, in essence aimed to legitimize eugenics as a field of study and to train eugenics field workers. The program received support from administrators, faculty, students, and important individuals in the eugenics movements such as Margaret Sanger and Charles Davenport. The euthenics initiatives at Vassar lasted for about a decade but the awareness of their role and the institutional discourse on the eugenics' history of the College have remained limited. Philippe's article calls for increased institutional accountability in grappling with its past.

The third article in the issue centers on Edward Janak's research journey prompted by a chance discussion with an acquaintance at a yard sale and an encounter with a signature. His article, titled "I Decline to Play the Part of the Fish Dangling on the End of Your Line": How a Blind Politician Led the Way to a Historical Dissertation Topic," tackles the relationship between biographer and biographical subject while simultaneously offering us insights into the life of John E. Swearingen. Swearingen served as State Superintendent of Public Instruction in South Carolina in the period 1909–1922, a period marked by progressivism and its widespread social activism and political reform. He was

the first blind person elected to public office in the state. Janak discovered Swearingen as a biographical subject while researching the archived correspondence between the General Education Board (GEB) and the South Carolina State Department of Education. Founded and supported by the Rockefeller family, the GEB focused on two specific issues: Southern education and general education. As superintendent, Swearingen had a complex and contentious relationship with the GEB. His bluntness and support for marginalized populations ran against the general philosophy of the GEB and characterized his life and his educational career.

The subjectivity inherent in biographical writing is also at the heart of the fourth article in this issue: "Biographical Writing through the Lens of Lawrence A. Cremin's Leadership and Presidency at Teachers College." Travis Brown's encounter with a photo of Lawrence Cremin, taken during Cremin's first inaugural address as president of Teachers College, portrayed a specific image of an inspirational leader whose style Brown set to uncover. Cremin was president of Teachers College in the period 1974–1984 and a prolific author best known for his three-volume work *American Education* (published between 1970 and 1988). However, the intensive archival research influenced Brown's perceptions of Cremin and his leadership style. Cremin's presidency took place during a challenging time for higher education. As an institutional leader, Cremin struggled with shared governance and consistently opted for isolated and authoritarian administrative decisions. Throughout the article, Brown describes his gradual discoveries of Cremin's leadership experiences and complex beliefs, and emphasizes the uncertainty inherent in life-writing.

Finally, Matthew Hazelton's article, "The Road Less Travelled: L.L. Nunn and the Birth of the Nunnian Microcollege," reflects the author's encounter with a challenging question: How can today's colleges and universities address diminishing enrollments and plummeting public appreciation of higher education? How can they re-engage students? Hazelton's search for an answer directed him towards the microcollege movement of the late 19th–early 20th century. The first microcollege-type institutions, the Telluride Institute (1891), the Telluride Association (1910), and the Deep Springs College (1917), were founded by the eccentric Gilded Age energy tycoon L.L. Nunn. While Nunn's educational ventures often reflected broad trends in higher education at the time, his core educational principles evolved over his career.

For Hazelton, Nunn's philosophy of education, employing the principles of self-government, intellectual and academic rigor, physical work, and societal isolation, not only stands out as unique, but also provides many lessons for today's leaders of higher education.

The thoughtful and appealing historical essays in this second journal issue uncover neglected stories in the history of higher education and engage with the art of historical writing from diverse perspectives. We believe they will open up a wealth of ideas for you as well!

Snejana Slantcheva-Durst, PhD
Editor-in-Chief

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Historicizing the Freedom of Expression and Dissent at Dartmouth College

Nora Cai[1]

Abstract

For decades since the 1960s, student-led movements on college campuses have spearheaded political change across the nation. At the same time, college administrations have developed a web of speech and conduct policies, adorned with increasingly hefty specifications for permissible campus protest. This article studies the origins and developments of one such set of policies at Dartmouth College, including the Freedom of Expression and Dissent (FED) policy and its associated conduct regulations. These policies found their genesis in three pivotal periods of protest at Dartmouth: the George Wallace protests of the early to mid-1960s, the anti-Vietnam war movement in the late 1960s, and the anti-apartheid protests of the mid- to late 1980s. Through analyzing the historical causes, revisions, and applications of the FED policy and its associated conduct regulations, I argue that these policies were developed not to protect free expression and dissent, but to prevent such expression from disrupting the college administration's desired social order. The FED policy serves the counterinsurgent function of symbolically affirming free expression and dissent, while its accompanying conduct regulations work in conjunction to control dissent's impactfulness.

Keywords: freedom of expression, dissent, campus protests, college policies, Dartmouth College, student activism, free speech, disciplinary power

On May 1, 2024, the Dartmouth College administration sent a campus-wide email addressing students' planned "Gaza Solidarity Encampment." Citing the

[1] Nora Cai is an undergraduate American History student at Dartmouth College. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to noraxcai@gmail.com

From Nora Cai: "I would like to thank professors Bench Ansfield, Annelise Orleck, Julia Rabig, and Edward Miller, as well as my innumerable supportive peers and mentors at Dartmouth College for their influential ideas, feedback, and counsel throughout this project. Special gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers who provided meticulous comments for an early draft of this paper."

College's Freedom of Expression and Dissent (FED) Policy, Provost David F. Kotz wrote:

> Dartmouth prizes and defends the right of freedom of expression and dissent, and engaging in nonviolent resistance has a long, proud history at our institution…. At the same time, Dartmouth's policy explicitly states that we "may place limitations on the time, place, and manner of any speaker event, protest, or demonstration" if it interferes with core educational or administrative functions of the institution. (The Dartmouth Senior Staff, 2024)

This statement reaffirmed the administration's long-standing stance on campus protests, claiming an apolitical balance between protecting free expression and preserving institutional core functions. Yet this balance was question-begging; how would the administration determine what functions were demonstrably "core," thereby sufficient to override protesters' right to free expression? As students, faculty, and community members proceeded to stage the encampment, Kotz' letter attempted to provide a partial answer to this question. The Provost warned that a series of conduct regulations qualified students' right to free expression and dissent, such as the College's Usage of the Green Policy and the Overnight Use of Campus Grounds and Facilities Policy (Kotz, 2024). As the encampment persisted in the following hours, dozens of state troopers dressed in riot gear (Sharma, 2024) arrested over 80 of its participants (The Dartmouth Senior Staff, 2024).

This militarized response by the College constitutes a revealing test case for the scope and sanctity of the administration's "core functions." In effect, Dartmouth had determined that these functions—which at least included particular uses of the Green,[2] campus grounds, and campus facilities—trumped the competing imperative to protest the College's Israel-tied investments (The Dartmouth Senior Staff, 2024). While enforcing these policies were "core" to the College, protests calling for divestment from genocide (Amnesty International, 2024; Dartmouth Divest for Palestine, 2025) were not.

The tension between the FED policy's "prized" commitment to free expression and dissent and its "core functions" stipulation enforced by other conduct regulations necessitates a deeper historical understanding of these

[2] The Dartmouth Green is a grass-covered field at the center of the Dartmouth College campus.

policies' origins and developments. What catalyzed the creation of Dartmouth's FED policy and conduct regulations, including the aforementioned Usage of the Green policy that "prohibits…tents and encampments" (Kotz, 2024)? How has the College drawn the line between dissent as a "right" and dissent as interference with its core functions? While the ambiguous nature of Dartmouth's policy statements welcomes a range of interpretations, this essay offers a qualifying historical lens. I trace three pivotal periods of Dartmouth's FED and conduct-related policy development, marked by the George Wallace protests of 1963 and 1967, anti-ROTC protests in the late 1960s, and protests for divestment from South African apartheid in the 1980s at Dartmouth College.

These three periods of protest were deeply influenced by national debates over free speech on college campuses at the time. The Free Speech Movement (FSM) of the 1964–1965 academic year represented the first act of mass civil disobedience on college campuses, as civil rights organizers protested the University of California, Berkeley's sweeping "campus political advocacy" prohibition (Cohen, 1985, p. 17). The victories of the FSM freed up the restraints on student dissent born of the McCarthyism era, generating a national constituency around campus free speech by the mid-1960s' dawn (Cohen, 1985). At the same time, in response to the growing student-led antiwar movement, the Nixon administration released the 1970 *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, which aggressively criminalized student activists as agents of "disorder" (Ferguson, 2017, p. 18; Scranton et al., 1970). The report's "law and order" rhetoric triggered the nationwide buildup of on-campus police departments, with the eerily familiar purpose of preventing "interference" to "rightful business" (Ferguson, 2017). The earlier Supreme Court cases *Blackwell v. Issaquena County Board of Education* (1965) and *Burnside v. Byars* (1966) set the prohibitive threshold of interference at "material disruption," but universities' subsequent applications "abandoned any effort" to define what "disruption" meant (Ross, 2015, p. 154).

The national context of this time reveals that policies prohibiting "disruption" and "interference" drew deeply unstable boundaries around free expression and dissent, inseparable from the politics of those who wrote them. Drawing upon archival and institutional material from the 1960s to present, I argue that Dartmouth's FED and conduct-related policies developed during this period not as an indiscriminate protection of the right to protest, but as a

counterinsurgent tool to legitimize the College's desired social order. The "[prized] and [defended] right" and the "core…functions" that constrain it are not oppositional but work in concert. While the former feigns benevolence by symbolically affirming students' right to free expression and dissent, the latter leverages the institution's disciplinary power to blunt dissent's sharp edges.

A Cause for Control: The Wallace Incident of 1967

The impetus for a formal FED policy arose not from Dartmouth's proclaimed mission to "[prize] and [defend] the right of free speech" (Trustees of Dartmouth College, n.d.), but as a risk-management tool in response to student-led civil disobedience on campus. In particular, it was students' intense opposition to the 1967 visit of George Wallace, a notoriously pro-segregationist presidential candidate, that triggered initial concerns over unconstrained free expression. Students had previously protested Wallace in an "orderly fashion" during his 1963 visit. Thus, Wallace's re-invitation to campus was a clear indication that their demands had not been heard (Thomas, 2019). Dartmouth's brazen negligence, fused with the growing momentum of the civil rights movement, prompted an escalated set of protest actions in 1967.

The atmosphere preceding Wallace's second visit was noticeably distinct. In preparation for Wallace's speech, the Dean ordered that campus police be stationed at every door of Webster Hall, and that approximately 36 town and state police remain on hand in case of "emergency" (Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts, 1967). As Wallace rose to the podium, around ten protesters of the College's Afro-American Society (AAm) interrupted Wallace in unison each time he attempted to speak, and five other students unfurled anti-Wallace banners. According to Robert Bennett '96, an organizer of the protest and active member of the AAm:

> Our agreed-upon objective was to create enough disruption and chaos during the speech to compel the national news media (which we knew would be at the speech) to report on our protest nationwide, so that Black people nationwide would know that we, too, were committed to the then fierce struggle being waged across America against the racism and fascism that George Wallace advocated. (Thomas, 2019)

Meanwhile, campus staff and police were ordered to obstruct the protesters, including the confiscation of student placards and restraint of hecklers (Bennett, 2021; Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts, 1967). As the protest gained momentum amongst the general student body, dozens of students rushed towards Wallace down the center aisle of Webster Hall. Wallace fled the building into his car, and a crowd of protesting students swarmed the vehicle (Figure 1). It took a total of 15 minutes for Wallace and his bodyguards to maneuver away from the scene (Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts, 1967; Thomas, 2019). Later that night, Dean Thaddeus Seymour privately apologized to Wallace for the students' "misguided, undemocratic… offense against academic freedom" (Office of Communications, 1955–1990). That the Dartmouth administration's conception of "academic freedom" included the freedom to advocate for racial segregation exposes how political their boundaries of "freedom" could be.

Figure 1
George Wallace Incident, 1967

Note. Students surround the car of George Wallace (Foss, 1967).

The College was at a loss, though, for how to administer punishment to its offenders. The event was, according to Dartmouth Vice President George R. Colton, the "first time Dartmouth has had such a disorder" (Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts, 1967). Lacking a formal disciplinary procedure, the administration simply requested that the demonstration's "overt participants" step forward and accept a penalty of "conditional suspension" (Heitzman, 1967). Needless to say, these participants were not eager to answer the College's request. None turned themselves in (Japikse, 1967).

Two weeks later, on May 15, College President John Sloan Dickey summoned a private meeting of the faculty to discuss a resolution endorsing statements related to the "Wallace Incident." One of these statements read as follows:

> 5. that the line between acts of protest and threats of violence is so narrow, that guidelines need to be drawn up which will safeguard freedom of dissent without condoning the violation of public order nor suggesting that violence should not be held accountable; and that the Faculty Committee on Nominations this day be directed to convene an ad hoc committee as early as possible to prepare a report… on the rights and responsibilities of all those involved in campus demonstrations…. (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968)

The formal resolution was defeated by a voice vote; however, a week later, on May 22, the faculty agreed to establish the aforementioned ad hoc committee, named the Student-Faculty Dissent Committee (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968). The purpose of this committee would be to "[identify the] problems associated with freedom of speech and expression of dissent" and recommend appropriate "guidelines for conduct" (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968). Foreshadowing the language of the 1970 Nixon report, the committee framed protest as the source of the "problems" rather than the College's invitation of a pro-segregationist speaker. Their recommendations, deemed by Dean Seymour "urgently needed" (Heitzman, 1967), would be due six months later at the end of the 1967 fall quarter (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968).

By the conclusion of the Wallace Incident, an FED policy had yet to be formulated. Nevertheless, Dartmouth's response to its students' protests foreshadowed many of the rhetorical tactics that would frame the FED policy's development. The weaponization of "academic freedom" to protect those with power, the depoliticizing regulatory focus on "campus demonstrations" (rather than their causes), the unquestioned invocation of a "public order" to be safeguarded—all would be teased out in the following decades, as protests against the Vietnam War and South African apartheid soared powerfully across the nation.

Birth of the Dartmouth FED Policy: Anti-War Protests in the Late 1960s

As the student-faculty committee set out to develop appropriate policy recommendations, opposition to the U.S.'s involvement in the Vietnam War mounted on campus. In particular, students directed their opposition at the

Dartmouth College's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program, which, as phrased by antiwar students and faculty, constituted an institutional and material allegiance to the "life-destroying" Vietnam War (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968). By 1967, military recruiting visits were synonymous with days of protest, as demonstrators relentlessly picketed, petitioned, and held peace vigils for the antiwar cause (Office of Communications, 1969; Singler, 1968). The presence of these protests was visible and impactful (Figure 2). As Dean Seymour recalled in a 2015 oral history interview, "being scared to death all the time about riots and building occupations and Armed Forces Day…became…a fact of life" (Seymour, 2015, p. 34).

Figure 2
ROTC Protests, 1968

Note. Dartmouth students protest ROTC members (Bouchard, 1968).

Debates over the desirability of the ROTC triggered scrutiny over the core functions of the College. For example, Peter C. Sorlien '71, an ROTC resignee who joined the antiwar cause, called the program "totally antithetical to everything Dartmouth stands for,... namely, academic freedom, freedom of speech, and individual responsibility" (Thegze, 1968). Meanwhile, the Executive Committee of the Faculty refused a public stance on the issue, arguing that the function of the "corporate faculty" was "educational…, not political" (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968). Dissenting from this decision included Professor John W. Lamperti, who argued that the ROTC program was necessarily political; the College was "[enlisting itself]...as a partizan [sic] on one side of the conflict" (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968).

Did the College's core functions include preserving or foreclosing the presence of the ROTC? What qualified as an activity that was "educational" versus "political"? It is difficult to take the Executive Committee's claims to neutrality as commitments in good faith. In the 1960s, university administrators and faculty bore a clear financial and political interest in preserving the ROTC. The program appeased a staunchly pro-ROTC cohort of influential alumni,

trustees, and state legislators, while strengthening the university's rapport with the military, a source of lucrative research contracts (Neiberg, 2001). The ROTC question invariably entailed non-neutral determinations of the College's priorities, which bore significant stakes for forthcoming developments of the FED.

It was amidst these debates that, in December 1967, the Student-Faculty Dissent Committee released its long-awaited report: "Guidelines for Dissent." After an introductory paragraph affirming Dartmouth's belief that "academic freedom [could] best be guarded by the college itself," the guidelines proceeded with section one (irrelevant sections omitted):

> I. Speakers:
>
> 1. …
> 2. There shall be no prior limitation or restraint upon the speakers who may be invited to campus, or upon the views they may express.
> 3. The responsibilities of the host individual or group include the following:
>
> a. …
> b. Assuring public order will be maintained, including, if necessary, obtaining police protection;
> c. Ensuring that the speaker will be permitted to express his views in an orderly fashion, including, if necessary, requesting police officers… (Office of Communications, 1955–1990)

Returning to the committee's original trigger—the Wallace Incident six months earlier—the committee's "findings" appeared to rebut the demonstrators' actions play-by-play, retroactively justifying the deployment of a police force to protect visiting "speakers" from disruption. Beneath the abstractions of its bureaucratic language, the College effectively sided with George Wallace's right to voice his pro-segregationist opinions, while constraining protesters' expressions of dissent to the boundaries of "public order."

Subsequently, the section offered "appropriate" forms of free expression and dissent for its faculty and students:

4. All members of the Dartmouth community have rights and responsibilities…
    a. Those who may object to a speaker…may express their views…by means of discussion or statements following the speech, by distributing leaflets, or by non-disruptive protest. (See section on Written Expressions of Dissent, concerning leaflets.)
    b. In an academic community, the most effective method of rebuttal to a controversial point of view is the presentation of competing viewpoints through other scheduled meetings or discussions. (Office of Communications, 1955–1990)

While there was "no prior limitation" imposed on "speakers" invited to campus, there were numerous limitations on *speaking* by demonstrators. In other words, the permissibility of "free" expression and dissent was circumscribed by its degree of institutional endorsement, begging the invariably political question of who the College's podium chose to feature.

The subsequent recommendations offered by the College provided no further resolution. These encouraged protest only insofar as dissenters were separated from the object of their dissent; disagreement should only occur in "other…meetings" or "following the speech." This was the purportedly "most effective" method of rebuttal, yet when the AAm protested outside the auditorium in 1963, they were confronted with nothing more than Wallace's subsequent re-invitation (Thomas, 2019).

Six sections later, after concordant guidelines for other mediums of expressing dissent, the committee authored one of the most pivotal texts in Dartmouth's history of FED policy development: "VII. Interviewing and Recruiting."[3] It is through this section that the College wrote the language that would be reused and recycled for the subsequent decades of FED policy enforcement. The relevant portion of the section reads:

> Dartmouth College prizes and defends the right of free speech, and the freedom of the individual to make his own decisions, while at the same time recognizing that such freedom exists in the context of law of

[3] "Interviewing and Recruiting" refers to on-campus interviewing and recruiting by the representatives of the U.S. military.

> responsibility for one's actions. The exercise of these rights must not deny the same rights to any other individual. The College therefore both fosters and protects the rights of individuals to express their dissent against representatives of controversial ideas or policies. Protest or demonstration shall not be discouraged, so long as neither force nor the threat of force is used to restrain an interviewer or any person desiring access to him, and so long as the orderly processes of the College are not deliberately obstructed. (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968)

The College, departing from its traditional practice of neutrality, specifies the "interviewer"[4] as the object of protection, and "protest" as the proximate threat to the College's "orderly processes." This frame, while couched in bureaucratically mundane language, was political. An alternative frame could have been, say, "Because military recruiters have brought disorder to Dartmouth's campus, protest is necessary to restore the orderly processes of the college." Nevertheless, the College chose to embody the subjecthood of the interviewer, enshrining the military mission in Dartmouth's "academic" commitment to "prize and defend free speech."

Eerily, the exact wording of the College's 1968 recommendation deviates only slightly from the College's present-day FED policy statement:[5]

> Freedom of expression and dissent is protected by Dartmouth regulations. Dartmouth prizes and defends the right of free speech and the freedom of the individual to make their own disclosures, while at the same time recognizing that such freedom exists in the context of the law and in responsibility for one's own actions. The exercise of these rights must not deny the same rights to any other individual. The institution therefore both fosters and protects the rights of individuals to express dissent.
>
> Protest or demonstration shall not be discouraged so long as neither force nor the threat of force is used, and so long as the orderly processes of the institution are not deliberately obstructed. Membership in the Dartmouth community carries with it, as a necessary condition, the agreement to honor and abide by this policy. (Trustees of Dartmouth College, n.d.)

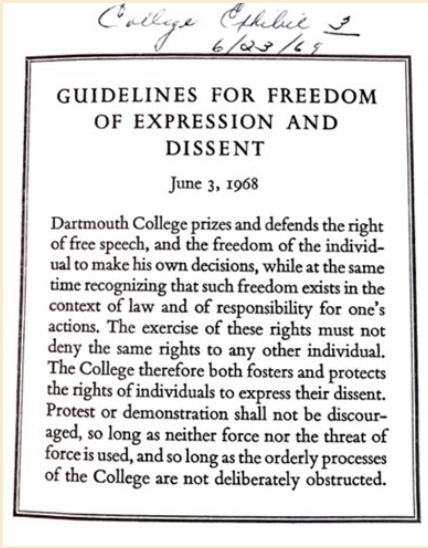
[4] An umbrella term that included military recruiters.

[5] As of June 2024.

Written exchanges between the Policy Advisory Committee and President reveal that in the spring of 1968, the policy writers simply hand-crossed out the phrases "against representatives…" and "to restrain an interviewer…" (along with miscellaneous changes to verbiage and syntax) to formulate the College's overarching FED policy (Office of Communications, 1955–1990). That only a few technical alterations were necessary to convert the institution from a protector of military recruitment to a protector of "[members] in the Dartmouth community" raises foreboding questions surrounding what the College believed "community" was. These questions would be continually unpackaged, obscured, and reopened into the next decade, as the College confronted an unrelenting, student-led anti-war movement.

On June 3, 1968, the Freedom of Expression and Dissent policy was formally adopted by the Board of Trustees (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968), promulgated in the following academic year's student handbook as an enforceable "regulation" rather than "guideline" (Committee Advisory to the President [CAP], 1966–1970; Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1968–1969; Figure 3).

Figure 3
Guidelines for Freedom of Expression and Dissent, 1968



College Bulletin 3
6/23/68

GUIDELINES FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND DISSENT

June 3, 1968

Dartmouth College prizes and defends the right of free speech, and the freedom of the individual to make his own decisions, while at the same time recognizing that such freedom exists in the context of law and of responsibility for one's actions. The exercise of these rights must not deny the same rights to any other individual. The College therefore both fosters and protects the rights of individuals to express their dissent. Protest or demonstration shall not be discouraged, so long as neither force nor the threat of force is used, and so long as the orderly processes of the College are not deliberately obstructed.

Note. First student handbook (1968–1969) to include guidelines for the freedom of expression and dissent (Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1968–1969).

Up to the end of the 1968 academic year, internal administrative meetings had dedicated minimal airtime to considering the substantive demands of student activists. The College had occupied itself with discussing *how* students protested the ROTC, while losing sight of *why* the students demonstrated with such fervor. The January 1968 Tet Offensive issued over 12,000 casualties to U.S. and South Vietnamese troops and civilians, with tens of thousands to follow in

the subsequent six months (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025; Tucker et al., 2011). As U.S. troop and casualty levels approached the Vietnam War's peak (Tucker et al., 2011), students observed how Dartmouth's ROTC participants became frequent candidates for deployment. The war converted the ROTC into a matter of life or death, unifying anti-ROTC, antiwar, and anti-draft movements towards an urgent call for the ROTC's immediate abolition (Betzer et al., 2023; Seymour, 2015). Still, the disorder caused by the ROTC program had fallen to the administration's wayside, not in the least incompatible with Dartmouth's "public order."

The "public order"—a phrase enduring from the 1967 guidelines to Dartmouth's 2024 FED language—unleashes another central question surrounding Dartmouth's FED policy enforcement: what constitutes the administration's invocation of "order" versus disruption? While the College sought to cling onto the term's discretionary flexibility, the next year of anti-ROTC demonstrations would pull back the curtains, forcing institutional specifications of what exactly "order" meant.

Boredom as a Tactic: Administrative Slog in Response to Free Expression

Throughout 1968, the administration expended substantial resources to ensure the compliance of anti-ROTC demonstrations with FED guidelines. Most significantly, in anticipation of protests against the Armed Forces Day ceremony on May 15, the College formed an ad hoc student-faculty committee to mediate demonstrations on site, announced to students that "campus police [would] be present," and preached that "a "personal commitment for…any particular issue [would] not abrogate one's responsibility to abide by the common restraints inherent in social order" (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968).

Despite the College's steadfast commitment to the right to free expression, Dartmouth would spend the following year disregarding the demands of its FED-abiding students. On October 31, 1968, an ad hoc subcommittee of the Committee on Organization and Policy (COP)—formed on May 9 to "study ROTC questions"—returned to the Executive Committee of the Faculty with the following findings:

1. ROTC considered an *important* and *justifiable* source of officer procurement for the services.

2. As a *method of recruiting*, ROTC not compatible with the purposes of liberal education at Dartmouth nor with the responsibilities of higher learning in a democratic society.
3. Questioned the presence of military units as academic departments granting degree credits for courses and the appointment of officers as members of the faculty.
4. Urged that ROTC be changed to *extra-curricular status* over a period of three years.
5. Because such a relationship was not permitted by law, urged that Dartmouth collaborate with other institutions to *work with the Defense Department* toward a change in regulation making extracurricular ROTC permissible.
6. Meanwhile, recommended that degree credits be given only to two ROTC courses per student and faculty status be limited only to the commanding officer of each ROTC unit during the three-year period proposed for negotiation.
7. Recommended an ad hoc committee to be formed to implement the recommendations. (Office of Communications, 1969, emphasis added by author)

By opposing the ROTC's recruiting function but affirming its fundamental militaristic mission, the report decoupled students' anti-recruiter demonstrations from their broader ideological opposition to the ROTC as an immoral, war-embracing program. Rather than heeding to student demands for complete abolition, the report called for the ROTC's shift to extracurricular status. This shift would generate justification for renewed relationships with the Department of Defense (DOD)—now tactfully distanced from the College's "liberal education" mission.

Months of student protest followed the COP report, including continued attempts to physically block visiting military recruiters, mass refusals to register for the 1969 winter term, and speeches for abolition at open faculty meeting sessions (Office of Communications, 1969; Figure 4). At the same time, antiwar faculty members voiced their dissent in internal faculty debates. In a written letter read to the Executive Committee on November 26, 1968, Professor of History and Chinese Jonathan Mirsky mocked the report as a call "[to] get rid of the ROTC, but not quite!" (CAP, 1966–1970). Mirsky questioned the extensive

lengths the College took to preserve the scraps of the ROTC program, including developing a relationship with the ROTC currently "not permitted by law." He continued:

> [The] Army wants…to assist in deforming, bending, and twisting young men until they are willing to commit acts unnatural to their inclinations and upbringing. Where then is "defense"? Where lie "the needs of our society"? How can we not "make judgements"? (CAP, 1966–1970)

Figure 4
Anti-ROTC protest on the steps of Parkhurst Hall

Note. Banners expressing student-faculty opposition to the ROTC (Dartmouth Library, 2017).

Meanwhile, the COP's recommendations squeezed through the cogs of the administration's slow-moving bureaucratic structure. One month after the report's release, on December 2, 1968, the Executive Committee recommended the formation of an ad hoc committee on ROTC affairs to enact its findings. Subsequent faculty meetings deferred further action until almost two months later, when on January 31, 1969, the faculty rejected a watershed motion to "end [the] ROTC as soon as possible" but voted to form the Committee on ROTC affairs to, once again, "study the issue." Finally, after forty days of deliberation, on March 10, the Committee on ROTC affairs released its culminating statement, calling for the "gradual reduction of ROTC course credits" until their complete elimination by 1972 and the transfer of "all military instruction to summer camps" (Ad Hoc Committee on ROTC, 1969–1975; CAP, 1966–1970). In other words, half a year after the COP's initial report, the College managed to develop a mere reiteration of its 1968 rendition, depoliticizing the ROTC as an issue of invalid course credit.

It was against this unsatisfying deliberative backdrop that student activists chose to escalate their methods of anti-ROTC protest. At every turn, the College had converted student dissent into motions for delegation and deferral—subcommittee after subcommittee, study after study—all while refusing to even discuss immediate ROTC abolition. As abolitionist Dylan

Rodriguez keenly commented at a 2024 teach-in, "boredom is a tactic…. They get paid to negotiate, we don't" (D. Rodriguez, personal communication, May 24, 2024).

But if the administration's aim was to trap student momentum in the unsexy entanglements of bureaucratic procedure, their months-long neglect for student demands achieved the exact opposite. An April 7 student-led forum featured widespread criticism of the committee's resolution, which had failed to acknowledge the "political issue" of the ROTC's complicity in the Vietnam War (CAP, 1966–1970). Six days later, on April 13, 1969, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) announced their intentions to conduct a sit-in at Dartmouth's Parkhurst Hall on April 22 to increase pressure on the College for the complete, immediate termination of the ROTC program (Office of Communications, 1969).

FED as Riot Control: The 1969 Parkhurst Uprisings

In response to the SDS' announcement, the Executive Committee of the Faculty convened to discuss potential tactics for "[maintaining] the planned demonstration…within the boundary of the guidelines on dissent and to otherwise maintain order" (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968). At this juncture, the faculty consulted the Committee on Freedom of Expression and Dissent (CFED) for guidance, which had incubated alongside the FED policy to "help in the communication and interpretation of this policy" (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968). Within four days, the CFED returned to the Executive Committee with a written memorandum of FED policy clarifications, who promptly disseminated the memorandum to the Dartmouth community thereafter (Faculty Executive Committee, 1968–1970). The memorandum formalized two updates to the permissibility of "non-obstructive sit-ins": they should not prevent "a clear passage into and to any part of the building" nor interfere with the "normal activities or movements in a building" (Office of Communications, 1955–1990). To minimize room for misinterpretation of these clarifications during the April 22 sit-in, the Committee on Dissent[6] moved to station a small group of its members on-site to make "spot interpretations of

[6] A larger student-faculty committee formed in the fall of 1967 (Dean of the Faculty Records, 1958–1968).

guidelines where necessary" (Office of Communications, 1969). In contrast to the years-long deferral of action on the anti-ROTC protesters' demands, the College had managed to respond to the SDS' announcement unprecedentedly expeditiously. The robust policy and administrative infrastructure that enabled this response reveals how their slow-moving procession of calls for ROTC abolition was a choice, not a procedural obligation.

Amidst this series of policy updates, the Committee on ROTC Affairs took a drastic step backwards in negotiations to phase-out the ROTC. In an open hearing on April 17, the committee clarified that they had called for an "end (by 1972) to all military training on campus but *did not intend to phase out ROTC*" (CAP, 1966–1970, emphasis added by author). This sudden and arbitrary distortion of the committee's March affirmation of the "gradual reduction of ROTC course credits" only further emboldened the SDS as they planned the forthcoming sit-in.

On April 22, as promised, the SDS led a three-hour sit-in on Parkhurst Lawn, protesting the College's refusal to dissolve the ROTC program. The sit-in was appropriately "non-obstructive" as delineated by the College's newly brandished guidelines. However, during the sit-in, the SDS published another statement directed towards the administration: "[If]... demands are not met by…Monday April 28, 1969, we shall return to Parkhurst Hall… to engage in an act of civil disobedience" (CAP, 1966–1970).

Swiftly after receiving the SDS' statement, the President convened an "emergency" faculty meeting to cement the FED policy as a "civilized and responsible statement of 'how to play the game'" (CAP, 1966–1970). That the College considered the students' revolutionary cause a "game" (a playful activity amongst opponents), offers a useful frame for understanding its responses to the following weeks of protests.

Throughout the next month, the College commenced a series of policy revisions that would expand the FED's enforceability and reach. First, based on the April 18 "experience" of the committee members sent to "interpret" the permissibility of the sit-in, the Committee on Dissent determined that the FED guidelines should be further clarified to prohibit "unauthorized entry into, or occupation of, a private office" (Office of Communications, 1955–1990). At the same time, the faculty published a resolution to all undergraduates of the following: "While the faculty is sensitive to…the College's place in society, it is

clear that the interests of the College as a whole are best met through *orderly processes*, no matter how cumbersome and inefficient they may appear to be" (CAP, 1966–1970, emphasis added by author). The College and its faculty had, once again, upheld the sanctity of its "orderly processes" while debasing students' political, anti-war praxis into a mere impatience for the "cumbersome" work of administrative deliberation. It is with the institutional memory of 1968, though, that we might come to understand administrative inaction as more than just "cumbersome."

As the cherry on top to this FED renovation, on April 26, President Dickey commenced communications with a local judge to render the policy enforceable by law. As reported by the Committee Advisory to the President (1966–1970), Dickey requested that the court "make its rules the rule of the land" such that the College could issue an injunction against the next "invasion [of Parkhurst]." The judge informed the President and faculty that the institution could request a restraining order upon valid grounds, which would enable an individual's arrest and a court hearing "if compliance does not result." The President was enthusiastic to receive such information. "If it had been available" to him during the earlier April 22 sit-in, he mourned, he would have initiated a restraining order (CAP, 1966–1970). However, when Dickey requested the faculty's endorsement—such that the College could feign a "positive posture" towards its students —the faculty expressed strong opposition and voted down the relevant motion. After rounds of bureaucratic back-and-forth, though, the faculty's dissent was transmogrified into the following resolution: "The Faculty of Dartmouth College expresses its confidence in…the President…to preserve its institution as a place for free and open discussion…committed to orderly processes" (CAP, 1966–1970).

What was said of the ROTC during this time? Two weeks after the sit-in, in accordance with the results of a student referendum on the desirability of the program, the Committee on ROTC Affairs released a new set of recommendations. The May 2 report conceded the termination of all ROTC units by June 1973, but recommended renewed "relationships with the DOD" to convert the ROTC into a "peacekeeping program" (CAP, 1966–1970; Dean of the College, 1972–1986). While this revised report partially appeased students' anger at the committee's reversal of ROTC phase-out, the four-year plan did little to address the SDS' call for immediate abolition. According to the SDS, the

difference between phased and immediate abolition was existentially stark: 1973 meant four more years of enabling slaughter in Vietnam, and four more years of risking the lives of fellow Dartmouth students (Office of Communications, 1969).

Alongside these recommendations, the report revealed for the first time since the start of ROTC protests that there were no legal obstacles to the termination of the ROTC by June 1970. This pivotal finding, inconveniently released after the referendum, nullified one of the primary speculative concerns regarding immediate abolition: that the College could not legally interfere with the contracts of existing ROTC students. A massive student-led campaign picked up in the following weekend, collecting over nine hundred signatures in support of a 1970 deadline for termination (CAP, 1966–1970). Nevertheless, a faculty meeting on May 5 reaffirmed the committee's original decision, voting down 1970, 1971, and 1972 propositions (CAP, 1966–1970).

On May 6, in response to the "complete inadequacy of the faculty action," around 80 students united to orchestrate the 1969 Parkhurst Hall Occupation (Figure 5). As the group filed into Parkhurst Hall, leaders announced into a bull horn that "all college personnel inside the building were to leave immediately" (CAP, 1966–1970). One of these hailed upon personnel was Dean Seymour, who exited his office and defiantly announced that the protesters were "in violation of the College Policy on freedom of expression and dissent" (including the now convenient clause that prohibited interference with a building's "normal…activities") (CAP, 1966–1970). The SDS proceeded with the sit-in regardless, and within 45 minutes, all personnel inside Parkhurst were ushered outside the building (CAP, 1966–1970). According to Jeff Eagan '70, a member of the SDS, this eviction was done so "in a nonviolent way, despite the dean's efforts [Dean

Figure 5
Parkhurst Hall Seizure, 1969

Note. Participants of the 1969 Parkhurst Hall Occupation hold up peace signs against the Vietnam War (Keral, 1969a).

Carroll W. Brewster] to portray himself as somehow being violently pushed by students" (Eagan, 2017).

A few hours later, as rehearsed, the College obtained an injunction from the Grafton County Superior Court against its students, which restated the guidelines for non-obstructive sit-ins of Dartmouth's freshly updated policy (CAP, 1966–1970). Following students' refusal to remove themselves from Parkhurst, nearly 90 riot-equipped New Hampshire and Vermont State police descended upon the occupiers. Protesters were sprayed with mace, violently removed from the building, and promptly arrested (CAP, 1966–1970; Miller et al., 2024; Figure 6).

Figure 6
Parkhurst Hall Seizure Arrests, 1969

Note. Student upholds peace sign as they are arrested by the police during the Parkhurst Hall Occupation (Keral, 1969b).

In the aftermath of the Parkhurst Hall Occupation, 56 students received thirty-day sentences to jail time, while two faculty members, Professors Dona Strauss and Paul Knapp, faced two-year suspensions. The charges against these students did not in the least contain accusations of inflicted violence; they merely cited "contempt of court" for initially resisting the President's FED injunction (CAP, 1966–1970; Miller et al., 2024). Further, while Professors Strauss and Knapp were not held liable to the Grafton County injunction, having "left Parkhurst before the forcible eviction of its occupiers," the College charged them internally with violating the "unwritten principle of academic freedom" (CAP, 1966–1970). When a crowd of 800 protesters interrogated Dean Seymour on this subject, the Dean merely recited to his students an all-too-familiar mantra: "this college will continue to remain loyal to order" (CAP, 1966–1970). The arbitrary, "unwritten" nature of these charges debunks the College's claim to have prioritized "safety" above all. Instead, the institution committed an act of defensive retaliation, as the mere presence of uncompromising student and faculty demonstrators threatened its monopoly over permissible free expression. As best

contextualized by class of 1971 anti-war activist David Aylward, "[The president and governor] were so offended, morally…by that behavior…. [The charge] was the biggest sham job legally" (Aylward, 2020).

While the 1960s student-led Free Speech Movement invoked the first amendment as the protector of civil disobedience across public institutions of higher education, the university sought to build its own vocabulary surrounding free expression and dissent. From protecting military recruiters to criminalizing "contempt," the FED policy was warped and twisted to counter student movements at every site of protest.

So, what say Dartmouth College about the meaning of "public order"? As anti-war and anti-segregationist movements probed the institution's politics, the administration was forced to reveal that the "public order" was a messy concept. Interpretable on-site, contested by its students, and built to enable suppressive responses to protest, the historical instability of the College's "orderly processes" should draw scrutiny towards their valorization in the present political environment.

Resolving the FED Legitimacy Crisis: The Obfuscation of Disciplinary Power

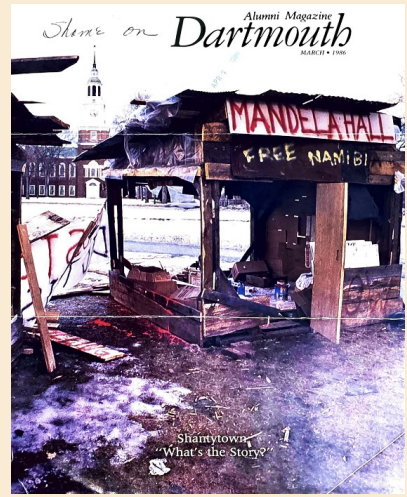
Two decades later, as the oppressive conditions of South African apartheid came to the forefront of political consciousness, students voiced immense criticism of Dartmouth's apartheid-dipped financial investments. At the climax of their protests, on November 15, 1985, a coalition of 30–50 students, faculty, and townspeople erected two shanties on the Green to illustrate the living conditions of Black South Africans and demand immediate divestment from apartheid-complicit corporations (Office of Communications, 1970–1990).

On November 17, Dean Edward Shanahan wrote a private letter to the group, now known as the Dartmouth Committee on Divestment (DCD), assuring the DCD that the Board of Trustees was "cognizant of [their] protest" and "[shared their] deep concern." However, "[the DCD would] receive no specific response from the Trustees" and should remove the shanties by the end of the day, lest they be eliminated by the College (Office of Communications, 1970–1990). Unaltered by this threat, the DCD added two more shanties to the Green in the following days, and 90 faculty members signed a statement of

solidarity (Office of the President, 1985–1986; Figure 7).

Following this response, the administration appeared to reverse their position on the DCD's protest. Four days later, on November 21, President David McLaughlin issued a statement that while "[he] would prefer that the structures not be on the Green,... [as] long as [the shantytown] is maintained as a center of honest dialogue, then [the community] should, if not encouraging them, at least be participating in the spirit of their activities" (Office of Communications, 1970–1990). The President's endorsement of the shanties was, at least, a positive deviation from the administration's historical disapproval of "obstructive" forms of protest.

Figure 7
"Shantytown, 'What's the Story?'"

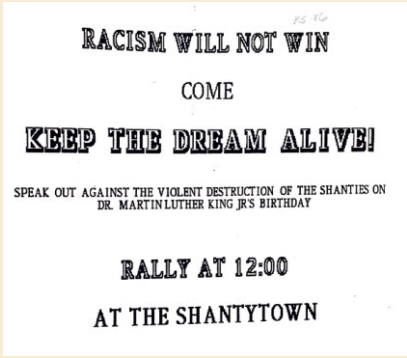


Note. Shantytown by the DCD on the cover of the March 1986 issue of the Dartmouth Alumni Magazine (Office of the President, 1985–1986).

At the same time, though, behind the scenes, his disdain for their location on the Green manifested in far more than a mere "preference." Earlier that month, the President had privately requested that the College develop a policy regarding "the use of College property for the purpose of demonstrations." As a result, the administration set to work in formulating a policy that granted the College, as described by Dean Shanahan, the "type of control [it was] looking for" (Dean of the College, 1985–1986b).

As the College's policy rearticulations churned in the background, intra-student tensions produced an FED legitimacy crisis. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day of January 21, 1986, 17 students approached the Green with sledgehammers and destroyed three of the four shanties (the fourth spared only because it was occupied with two sleeping students). Referring to themselves as the "Committee to Beautify the Green Before Winter Carnival," the goal of these students was to restore the "pride and sparkle of the college [they loved]" (Hornblower, 1986). Of course, this unprecedentedly violent assault on a

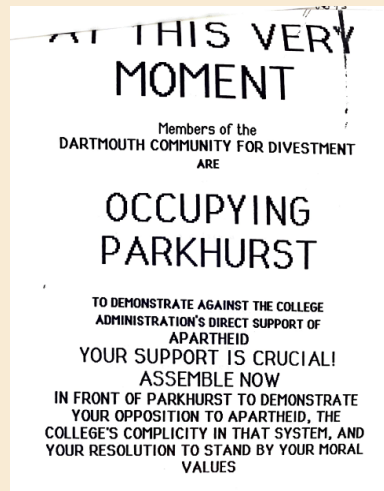
Figure 8
Rally Flyer for the Shantytowns, 1986



Note: Flyer for impromptu rally in reaction the January 21 attack on the shantytowns (Office of the President, 1985-1986).

The College's insensitive reticence to condemn the shantytown attackers contrasted its eagerness to vilify the Wallace protesters of 1967 as "misguided" and "undemocratic." With the history of FED policy enforcement in mind, the destruction of the shantytown could surely have been considered a rules violation by the Dean. The College had affirmed the shantytown as an "encouraged" form of free expression, and the use of sledgehammers was certainly more violent than the students' heckling in 1967. On January 22, the day after the Dean's response, over 200 students conducted a Parkhurst Hall sit-in to express their dissatisfaction (Figure 9). The students' demands were two-fold: that the 17 students be immediately suspended and that the College hold a College-endorsed structure drew mass outrage from the student body and surrounding community. In an impromptu rally only nine hours later, up to 350 people gathered on the Green to condemn the act as "racist, and offensive to the entire community" (Office of Communications, 1970–1990; Figure 8). Meanwhile, the Dean conveyed the College's "grave concern" over the act, but announced that there remained "no decision about whether the students would be disciplined" (Office of the President, 1985–1986).

Figure 9
Parkhurst Sit-In, January 22, 1986



Note. Flyer for the January 22 Parkhurst sit-in in reaction to the January 21 attack on the shantytown (Office of the President, 1985–1986).

moratorium on classes to reflect on the event (Office of the President, 1985–1986). Finally, the College surrendered to a partial compromise with the students' demands. While the College could not guarantee immediate suspension, the Committee on Standards (COS) would hold a hearing for the shantytown attackers in accordance with due process. The College warned, though, that the students conducting the January 22 sit-in may have made themselves similarly eligible for suspension. The sit-in extended overnight to January 23, until the faculty held an emergency meeting to receive the students second demand: a class moratorium. Finally, the protesters vacated the building and gathered in self-organized committees to plan their next course of action (Office of Communications, 1970–1990; Office of the President, 1985–1986).

Over the course of the next four months, the COS issued a series of rulings that generated a "perception on part of many that the College's disciplinary system dispenses justice with an uneven hand," as observed by McLaughlin (Office of the President, 1985–1986). First, 121 of the students involved in the January 22 sit-in were found guilty of "violating the College's orderly processes" and given reprimands[7] by the Dean's office. Later, when 22 students occupied the Baker Library bell tower to continue their push for divestment, all but one were charged with an FED policy violation, which brought withholden diplomas for one year and $100 fines (Office of the President, 1985–1986). Meanwhile, the highly anticipated ruling for the shantytown-attacking students resulted in suspensions of less than two terms, "softened" relative to the standard penalty due to the "significant hardship as a result of national publicity surrounding the incident" (Office of Communications, 1970–1990; Office of the President, 1985–1986).

The College's inconsistent enforcement of the FED policy drew criticism from both anti- and pro- shantytown constituents, as each side argued that the College had insufficiently imposed charges upon the other (Office of the President, 1985–1986). The irony that the students' sit-in violated "orderly processes" when they were demanding that the College apply its "orderly process" of discipline to the shantytown attackers was not lost on the campus. At the same time, the College's decision to "soften" penalties for the shantytown

[7] A written notice to a student for a "more serious" violation of the Standards of Conduct, which is not recorded on the transcript but may be considered in any future disciplinary proceedings (Committee on Standards, 2021).

attackers followed unprecedented and unwritten principles of evaluation. The Parkhurst Occupation of 1969 certainly also received national attention (Special to *The New York Times*, 1969), yet no discussion of amnesty for its participants ever came to fore. The two-day-long moratorium that followed dramatized the issue, as students and faculty spent hours discussing the question: "What constitutes an appropriate expression of dissent?" (Jones Media Center, 1986a).

It was in the midst of this FED legitimacy crisis that, in March 1986, the College bombarded the student body with a new web of academic regulations under the College's Standards of Conduct. These regulations restated the FED policy guidelines almost verbatim. The central clause, titled "Disruption of the Orderly Processes of the College," parroted the 1969 FED clarifications, prohibiting "unauthorized entry into, or occupation of a private office [or] work area…" (Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1986–1987; Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1987–1988). The FED policy itself, meanwhile, was stripped bare of its 1969 clarifications and reverted to its 1968 two-paragraph form. As explained by Assistant College Counsel Sean M. Gorman in an internal memo, the purpose of these developments was to "make clear that a disruptive student [was] violating the Code of Conduct, not the Principle of Freedom of Expression and Dissent" (Dean of the College, 1987–1988). Exactly why the administration initiated this regulatory relocation is unclear, but we might infer its relevance to the intense politicization of FED preceding the College's announcement. By decoupling the requirements of "conduct" from the guidelines to FED, the College might police students' methods of protest without tainting its "prized" commitment to free expression and dissent.

In addition to the Standards of Conduct, the College proliferated a slew of other regulations that obscured the FED's disciplinary power. The "Events Planning and Facilities Use" section was amended to mandate permit applications for any outside activity in Hanover "anticipated to attract 50+ people." Further, for unaffiliated organizations, there could be "no signs, banners, posters, handouts, sound speakers, or other materials relating to the event…placed on College property…" (Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1986–1987; Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1987–1988). Most critically, it was at this time that the administration fulfilled President McLaughlin's request to regulate the "use of College property for the purpose of demonstrations." In 1986, the College promulgated the Usage of the Green policy, which prohibited

"[temporary] structures," on the Green, "including tents" (Dean of the College, 1985–1986b).

These regulations were rhetorically abstract—no "interviewer," no "protest"—yet each new specification seemed to target the tactics and principles embraced by the past decades of free expression. Furthermore, as protest-pertinent restrictions proliferated across clauses, it became just as likely a protester was violating policy as an act of civil disobedience as it was that they had done so by accident. In effect, the College had laid out a network of regulatory tripwires, capable of "rationally" funneling protesters from dissent into discipline. In a private letter to Dean Shanahan, Dartmouth's legal counsel Cary Clark described the schema best:

> While "disruption of the orderly processes of the College" may be the most likely violation to result from protest activity, it may not be the only one. Among those that could well be triggered are "disorderly conduct," "display of objects from College buildings…," "harassment, violence" etc., "projectiles" and—lest we forget—"use of the College Green and College Grounds!" (Dean of the College, 1987–1988)

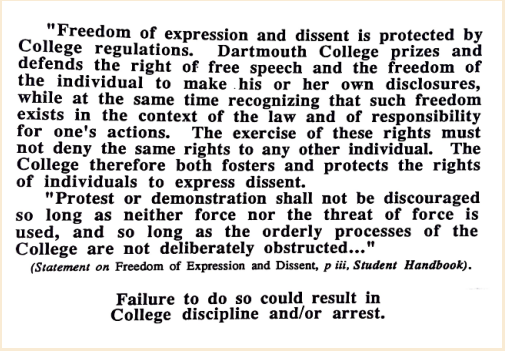
Alongside the creation of the Code of Conduct, the College developed a robust infrastructure of protocols to enforce it. On May 19, 1986, in a letter to the Board of Trustees, Dean Shanahan outlined the administration's elaborately developed "readiness profile" for "managing" "disruptive demonstrations." The report began with a section titled "Distant Early Warning," which affirmed that all staff had been trained to remain "vigilant" for "indices of trouble." These included "congregations of small groups of students during the late night hours in closed meetings, posters on campus, [and]...various kinds of 'preparations' for events." The following section, titled "Bases for Action," reassured the Trustees that they had "systematically tidied up…written policies," including the expansion of the Code of Conduct and the production of a distributable version of the FED (Dean of the College, 1985–1986a; Figure 10).

Upon violations of these policies, the report discussed, the College would "mobilize" all of the preparations necessary for implementation, including contacting at least the College President, town police, College Proctor, Dean of the College, College Counsel, the COP, and the Director of News Service. The Director of News Service in particular was responsible for "[managing] members of the media" to prevent the "escalation" of the

demonstration (Dean of the College, 1985–1986a).

This report, couched in profuse military rhetoric ("readiness," "early warning," "bases," "mobilization," "escalation") provides an apt summary of the culminating product of the FED policy after decades of its refinement. Along with relevant conduct regulations, the FED policy generated not only the legal foundations for regulating protest but also the ideological and material infrastructure necessary to naturalize it. Regulations were fruitless without the means to enforce them; so came the unending stream of personnel contacts, trainings, committees, surveillance tactics, and protocols—which were also long-term relationships, paid work contracts, technological and financial investments, and codified documents. All greased the wheels for Dartmouth's decades-long "public order" mission, though simultaneously challenged by students' relentless demands to change it.

Figure 10
Freedom of Expression and Dissent Flyer



"Freedom of expression and dissent is protected by College regulations. Dartmouth College prizes and defends the right of free speech and the freedom of the individual to make his or her own disclosures, while at the same time recognizing that such freedom exists in the context of the law and of responsibility for one's actions. The exercise of these rights must not deny the same rights to any other individual. The College therefore both fosters and protects the rights of individuals to express dissent.

"Protest or demonstration shall not be discouraged so long as neither force nor the threat of force is used, and so long as the orderly processes of the College are not deliberately obstructed..."

(Statement on Freedom of Expression and Dissent, *p iii, Student Handbook).*

Failure to do so could result in College discipline and/or arrest.

Note. Distributable version of the FED policy included in Dean Shanahan's "Demonstration Protocols" report to the Board of Trustees (Dean of the College, 1985–1986).

Policies as Politics

Given the historical lineage of the FED and conduct policies' development, it's no coincidence that meaningful protest today triggers a slew of policy violations. First codified to defend the pro-segregationist views George Wallace, now invoked to protect Dartmouth's Israel-tied financial investments, the FED policy and other disciplinary levers persist to enforce the "public order" deemed sacrosanct by the College. At the same time, by symbolically "prizing" the freedom of expression and dissent and claiming "pride" for the "nonviolent resistance…at [their] institution" (The Dartmouth Senior Staff, 2024), the College deflects scrutiny over their capital and political allegiances.

The archival account reveals that Dartmouth's FED stipulations and conduct regulations are political choices rather than neutral indicators of permissible behavior. These policies were crafted in real-time to restrict undesirable protest, an ever-evolving substitute for receiving criticism of the College's "core functions." Today, colleges across the nation continue to "play the game," as students' pro-Palestine encampments prompt mass revisions to free speech rules (The Associated Press, 2024). While Dartmouth has not divested from U.S. weapons manufacturers tied to the genocide in Israel, the College has commenced a "Freedom of Expression Advisory Program" to "respond as needed to events on campus" (Azrin, 2024). As the next wave of policy reforms sweeps higher education, a vigilant focus on systemic transformation remains ever so important. As incisively stated by one member of the DCD at the 1986 campus-wide moratorium,

> Organization is necessary, but let's not organize an elite to fight racism and oppression. Let's not commiticize this thing. President McLaughlin talked about the need for "institutionalized" change. I think that should be changed: we have the need for "institutional" change, not institutionalized change. (Jones Media Center, 1986b)

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Education for the Race: The History of Euthenics and Eugenics at Vassar College

Anna L. Philippe[1]

Abstract

What happened to higher education when eugenics swept the nation? This paper answers this question through a case study of Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, one of the first women's colleges in the United States. It reveals how Vassar's unique euthenics program, established in 1924, advanced eugenic political goals that were deliberately supported by administrators, faculty, students, alumnae, and prominent eugenicist figures such as Margaret Sanger and Charles Davenport. This paper explores the important role of academia between the late-19th and mid-20th centuries, demonstrating how the College was used to legitimize eugenics as a field of study and to train eugenics researchers. While examining student exploitation and objectification, along with pronatalist and antinatalist rhetoric, this paper contextualizes eugenics at Vassar within the broader Hudson Valley and national eugenics movements. Archival materials, including College newspaper columns and articles from the *Eugenics Review*, *Journal of Heredity*, *Birth Control Review*, and others, are closely analyzed to provide a primary-source-driven analysis of Vassar's eugenic history. Finally, the romanticization of Vassar's past is challenged with a call for increased institutional accountability.

Keywords: Vassar College, euthenics, eugenics, eugenics record office, revisionist history

Introduction

I was walking through Vassar College's Blodgett Hall archway when I noticed, for the first time, the word "euthenics." The word was inscribed on a plaque dedicated to Ellen H. S. Richards, Vassar class of 1870, who coined the term and pioneered its eventual implementation as a field of study at Vassar

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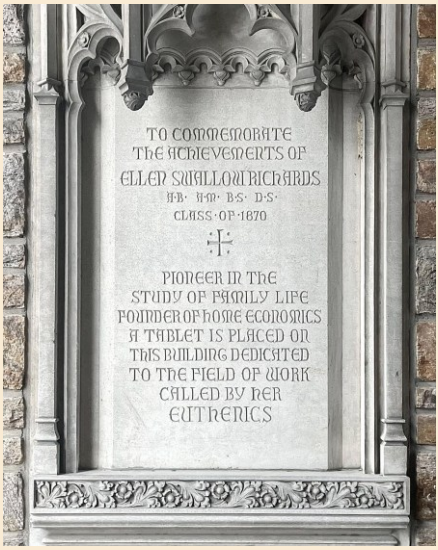
Figure 1
Blodgett Hall Euthenics Plaque



Note. Photograph by the author.

(Figure 1). Ignorant of what the unfamiliar word meant, I only recognized its similarity to the word "eugenics." "But it must not actually be similar," I thought. "Surely, there wouldn't be a plaque commemorating that."

A few months later, over winter break, I was bored and streaming YouTube. I clicked on a video about the history of eugenics titled "The Eugenics Crusade" from PBS' *American Experience* documentary series (Ferrari, 2018). In under two hours, Vassar was mentioned twice. "Why?" When I googled "Vassar eugenics" in search of answers, "euthenics" was the first word I saw. It was then that I realized that the plaque I had encountered months earlier may have had something to do, really, with eugenics. This paper is a culmination of my research since that Google search.

I discovered that between the late-19th and mid-20th centuries, Vassar was a site for legitimizing eugenic ideology, not just through intellectual discourse but also through embodied practice. The College's support–exercised within and beyond its ostensibly progressive euthenics program–rendered emerging eugenic objectives feasible, revealing the power of academia to advance major political change. Today, when the political position of elite academic institutions continues to be challenged, recognizing the legacy of such involvements is a step toward accountability for how the ivory tower constructs and may help deconstruct systems of oppression.

Ongoing institutional complicity is sustained, in part, by innocuous language. Unfamiliar terms such as "euthenics" mask the relevance of historical practices and their equivalence with today's familiar terms, obscuring red flags in archival records. Yet, the obfuscated distinction between euthenics and

eugenics is hardly new. For example, $75,000 of support for the Vassar Summer Institute of Euthenics would be mistakenly referred to as a "eugenic fund" in a 1926 volume of the *Journal of Heredity* ("News and Notes," 1926, p. 110). Later, the institute itself was misidentified as the "Institute of Eugenics" in a 1941 volume of the *Eugenics Review* (Grant Duff, 1941, p. 22). As this paper reveals, these mistakes reflect not only the typographical similarity between eugenics and euthenics but also their ideological congruence. The division between the two fields is, at best, ambiguous and, at worst, entirely untenable.

The first section of this paper reviews the broader American eugenics movement as context for the analysis. The second section explains the connection between eugenics and euthenics, as it was presented in discourse at Vassar. The third section expands upon the College's endorsement of eugenics, specifically as it relates to the work of Margaret Sanger. The fourth section reports on the presence of eugenics in Vassar's classrooms, including how students were taught eugenics and how eugenics permitted the routine objectification of their bodies. The fifth section explores the career pipeline that encouraged Vassar alumnae to conduct nationwide eugenics research. The sixth section highlights the impact of eugenics on the reproductive independence of Vassar students. Finally, the seventh section demands increased institutional acknowledgment and collective awareness of Vassar's eugenic history.

The American Eugenics Movement

The term eugenics was coined in 1883 by English statistician, demographer, and anthropologist Francis Galton, half-cousin of Charles Darwin (NHGRI, 2022). The term first appeared in Galton's 1883 *Inquiries into Human Faculties and its Development,* where, inspired by the Darwinian theory of natural selection, he defined it as the

> Science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable. (Galton, 2004, p. 17; Ferrari, 2018)

Inquiries into Human Faculties and its Development, along with several of Galton's

supporting works, created the basis for the eugenic ideology that soon took hold in the United States as a popular movement, led primarily by Harvard-educated biologist Charles Davenport (Ferrari, 2018). After meeting for dinner with Galton on a scientific pilgrimage, Davenport returned to the United States in 1902 with a mission to conduct experimental–rather than merely observational–research on selective heredity for the first time (Ferrari, 2018). By the following year, he had set up shop at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory on Long Island, New York, where he would later found the Eugenics Record Office (ERO). Through both organizations, Davenport eventually produced immense amounts of eugenics research, for which he has become notorious as "the most influential and powerful eugenicist and propagandist for eugenics in the United States" (University of Missouri Libraries, n.d., para. 1).

Quickly, scholarly groups coalesced around developing the new pseudoscience of eugenics; the Eugenics Education Society (later renamed the Eugenics Society, Galton Institute, and now the Adelphi Genetics Forum) was founded in Britain in 1907, and began publishing its quarterly journal, *The Eugenics Review*, in 1909 until 1968 (Hodson, 1968; Wellcome Society, n.d.). In the U.S., the quarterly *Breeders' Magazine* (now *Journal of Heredity*) was first released in 1910 in Washington D.C., with its early issues publishing extensively on the proliferation of eugenic thought in academia and among the public (Cornell University Library Digital Collections, n.d.). Such publications came alive during International Eugenics Congresses held in 1912, 1921, and 1932, which drew in hundreds of scholars from North America, South America, and Europe (Hoff, 2021).

Beyond its scholarly uptake, eugenics gained traction as a popular movement. As historian and author of *Long Island and the Legacy of Eugenics: Station of Intolerance* Mark Torres highlights, "Eugenics was not a fringe, small, marginalized movement. It was what I call the 'rage of the age'" (Long Beach Public Library, 2025, 9:05). As Torres continues, eugenics was taught in almost 300 American colleges, embraced in medical and religious practice alike, and supported by former presidents Herbert Hoover and Theodore Roosevelt (Long Beach Public Library, 2025). Starting in 1908, "better babies" contests were held at state fairs across the country, where parents entered their babies to be ranked like livestock for their eugenical fitness (Ferrari, 2018). Beyond such almost humorous events, eugenics had a disastrous political impact. Eugenics inspired

and validated legislation on forced sterilization and institutionalization, on immigration and so-called "miscegenation" control, and even policies on housing and education segregation, many of which remain calcified in American politics today (Lee, 2019; Pietila, 2010). The pseudoscience has also been used to validate mass atrocities, including the Nazi Holocaust and the Rwandan and Namibian genocides (Longman, 2001; Onishi, 2016; Vidnes, 2009).

The Connection between Eugenics and Euthenics at Vassar

To fully understand the relationship between eugenics and euthenics requires an examination of the very foundation of euthenics. Euthenics is a term coined originally by Vassar alumnae Ellen Richards, defined broadly as the science of improving human living conditions (Richards, 1910). The euthenics program was established at Vassar in 1924 by Minnie Cumnock Blodgett, Vassar class of 1884 (after whom the former euthenics building is named), Julia Clifford Lathrop, Vassar class of 1880, and Henry Noble MacCracken, then president of the College (Daniels, 1994; Figure 2). Richards was already deceased by the time of its official implementation (L. M., 2005a).

Figure 2
Dedication of Blodgett Hall, 1929

Note. Minnie Cumnock Blodgett and President MacCracken at the dedication. Source: Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library.

The connection between euthenics and eugenics took the College stage during the very first year of the euthenics program at Vassar, 1924 (Daniels, 1994). In October, Roswell Johnson, creator of the eugenics program at the University of Pittsburgh and assistant to Charles Davenport, delivered a lecture at Vassar titled "The Relation Between Euthenics and Eugenics" ("Lecture notes," 1924). In his lecture, delivered "under the auspices of the Ellen Richards' endowment fund," Johnson framed the connection by stating: "Eugenics… deals with race improvement through heredity

whereas Euthenics deals with race improvement through environment" ("Lecture notes," 1924, p. 3). In short, whereas eugenics was "hygiene for the future generations… euthenics is hygiene for the present generation" (Richards, 1910, p. 1). The two fields, Johnson described, were compatible in the overarching goal of "race improvement," and, by going "hand in hand," as Ellen Richards asserted, "it will inevitably create a better race of men" ("Lecture notes," 1924, p. 3).

Lecture notes published in the *Vassar Miscellany News*, however, also alluded to the gruesome price that would soon be paid in the name of this vocation: "The production of the very inferior should be prohibited in order to create Euthenically and Eugenically a better civilization" (p. 3). From the start, it was explicit that taking on so-called race improvement necessitated the eradication of an "other," and both euthenics and eugenics were implicated. Remarks from then President MacCracken were soon also published in the *Vassar Miscellany News*:

> The lecture of Professor Johnson on the subject of euthenics and eugenics was of very great interest to me; and coming, as it did, from an acknowledged authority in the field of eugenics, I was particularly impressed with the spirit of good will and generosity which this scientist showed toward workers in a related field. (MacCracken, 1924, p. 2)

He continued by emphasizing the necessity of Vassar to strengthen its academic program in euthenics for eugenic goals to be achieved.

> The educative process, which is a part of euthenics, must precede the establishment of eugenics as a scientific basis of life. Not ideally nor philosophically, but practically, euthenics must pave the way for the adoption of eugenics… In this sense, then, euthenics may be said to be the base and origin of eugenics. (MacCracken, 1924, p. 2)

The explicit sentiment that it was Vassar's educative responsibility to support eugenic goals was not, at the time, new to the College. Years prior, the exact sentiment had been expressed by Elizabeth Thelberg, professor of physiology and hygiene, in a 1913 lecture titled "On Eugenics" (J. M. G., 1913, p. 752). Notably, this was over a decade before the establishment of euthenics at the College. A student contributor to the *Vassar Miscellany News*, in her notes on the lecture, stated that "All education should have as its ultimate object–not the

comparatively narrow and selfish aim of self-development but the eugenic aim of race improvement. The individual perishes but the race survives" (J. M. G., 1913, p. 753). The student later quoted the conclusion of Thelberg's "well attended" lecture, which included a series of recommendations to students:

> Be alive to the subject… Obtain and read pamphlets and proceedings of the Eugenic and allied societies. After you get out of College become members, and interested members, of your best Eugenic local societies… Ascertain the eugenic or anti-eugenic conditions of your local industries, and of those in which your money is invested… Uphold the single standard of morality and the eugenic marriage… Guard your own personal life with high racial ends in view. (J. M. G., 1913, p. 753)

In addition to urging students to adopt a wholly eugenic lifestyle, Thelberg also explained to the Faculty Club the hope to improve educational methods with respect to eugenics, spreading her pedagogical philosophy around the College ("College news," 1913a). Years later, as euthenics gained a curricular foothold, Thelberg spoke before Vassar's Conference on Euthenics on "Saving the Race from Mental Defectives," as reported by the *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News* (1925).

The eugenic aims of Vassar that emerged preceding and alongside euthenics endured for decades. In 1939, former President MacCracken wrote, "The time is ripe for a eugenic group to give the educator a eugenic philosophy which can, without obtruding itself, permeate all aspects of education" (MacCracken, 1939, p. 416). The euthenics program effectively enabled this permeation. Conceived as an *alternative* to a formal eugenics program, it was explicitly designed to accelerate eugenic objectives. According to an Alumnae Department report, Ellen Richards' last effort working with college-educated women was to encourage the formation of "a committee on Euthenics *rather than on Eugenics*, claiming 'that improved environment would… bring quicker results in race development'" (Barus, 1912, p. 115; emphasis added by author).

Reproduction and Margaret Sanger

On August 5, 1926, Margaret Sanger, founder of the American Birth Control League (ABCL) and Planned Parenthood, delivered the keynote address to the first annual Vassar College Summer Institute of Euthenics, a

graduate program intended to supplement undergraduate offerings in euthenics (E. M. S., 2007; Ferrari, 2018). The address "marked the official arrival of the birth control movement in the Hudson Valley," a movement that was, at the time, defined largely by the eugenic desire to systematically control reproduction (Rosen, 2009, p. 193). Titled "The Function of Sterilization" (1926), Sanger's address argued for the sterilization of people deemed unfit along the lines of real or suspected (dis)ability, class, race, and ethnicity. That this was the Institute of Euthenics' *first* keynote underscores the extent to which the program was deeply influenced by and supportive of eugenics from the outset.

Sanger began with an appreciation for recent federal immigration restrictions such as the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924, which set discriminatory quotas for international arrivals. "But," she argued,

> While we close our gates to the so-called 'undesirables' from other countries, we make no attempt to discourage or cut down the rapid multiplication of the unfit and undesirable at home… These types are being multiplied with breakneck rapidity and increasing far out of proportion to the normal and intelligent classes… The American public is taxed, heavily taxed, to maintain an increasing race of morons, which threatens the very foundations of our civilization… It now remains for the United States government to set a sensible example to the world by offering a bonus or yearly pension to all obviously unfit parents who allow themselves to be sterilized by harmless and scientific means. In this way the moron and the diseased would have no posterity to inherit their unhappy condition. The number of the feeble-minded would decrease and a heavy burden would be lifted from the shoulders of the fit. ("The Function of," 1926, p. 299)

The speech was reprinted in full in the *Birth Control Review*, reported in the *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, and even made the front page of the *Poughkeepsie Evening Star* (Rosen, 2009). Speaking at Vassar, however, was not just a path toward media publicity but a strategic effort to gain an academic license for her cause. Vassar's support for eugenics would soon create a pipeline for students to produce research that supported the proliferation of sterilization and immigration laws. Sanger's political vision required Vassar's support, and the euthenics program was a fitting entryway. As Marist University historian Robyn Rosen (2009) explained, eugenicists used academic "concerns to help

them legitimize their cause. The evidence that it was working can be found in Sanger's invitation to speak at the Vassar Institute… No longer morally suspect, embarrassing, or prurient, at least in the halls of academe," Sanger's mission had gained campus credibility (p. 194). "Just being asked by the Vassar College institute coordinators to speak," Rosen adds, "was a victory" (p. 195).

The relationship between Sanger and the College continued. Just two months after her keynote, Sanger hosted a speech by James F. Cooper, then medical director of the Clinical Research Department at the ABCL at her nearby home in Fishkill, New York ("News notes," 1926). Among the 30 invited guests were several Vassar faculty members and students. Years later, Sanger's ABCL hosted the 1934 Conference on Birth Control at Vassar ("Conference on Birth Control," 1934). Among the event speakers was Henry Pratt Fairchild, former president of both the Population Association and the American Eugenics Society. One student noted the conference in the *Vassar Miscellany News*, reiterating the eugenic rhetoric of the birth control movement:

> Unfortunately up to this time birth control has been exercised by the upper classes more extensively than the classes that are less well equipped to bear socially useful children. This must be reversed… It would help eliminate wars and many other social evils. ("We must control," 1934, p. 5)

Beyond her direct influence on Vassar students, the growth of Sanger's ABCL supported events that platformed other eugenicists, further shaping the College's academic discourse. In 1932, a similar event, to which Vassar students were invited, was hosted at Wesleyan College ("Symposium at Wesleyan," 1932). Sanger was the lead speaker, and the concluding address was delivered by Clarence G. Campbell, then president of the Eugenics Research Association.

Eugenic Classrooms

In comparison to College events, the limited documentation of curricula renders it particularly challenging to understand the routine presence of eugenics in Vassar's classrooms. Tracking this history is further complicated by the fact that because Vassar had no eugenics department, the subject was woven into coursework through other departments, sometimes in sly ways to attract more students. For example, at the 1937 Conference on Education and Eugenics,

MacCracken "described a popular eugenics course *marketed* to students simply as 'marriage and the family'" (Baker, 2014, p. 300; emphasis added by author). By title alone, the eugenic underpinnings of the class were obscured, revealing this "marketing" as strategic. The overall level of transparency about the College's eugenic teachings remains unclear.

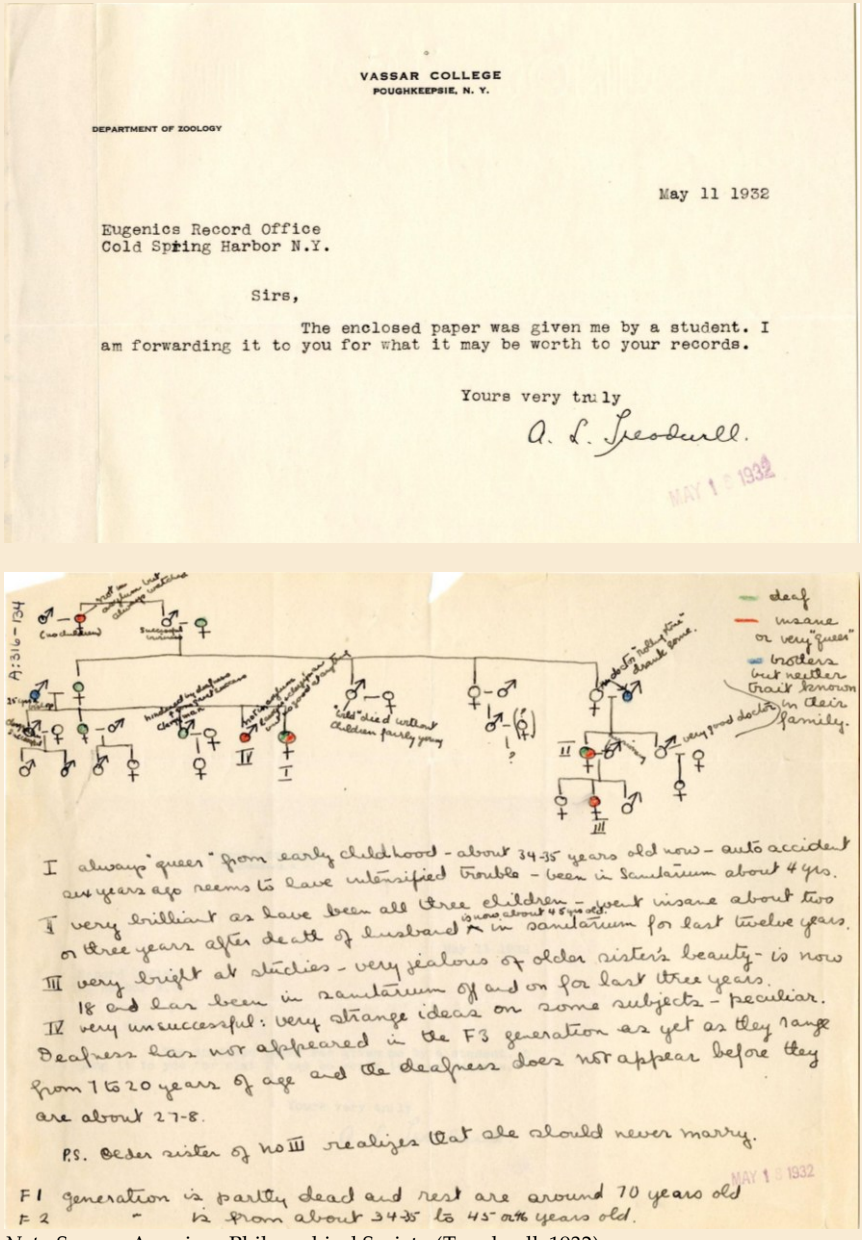
In 1919, Charles Davenport was invited by Professor Aaron Treadwell to deliver an open lecture to his class in Heredity ("Calendar," 1919). Treadwell was a professor of Biology and Zoology. The Vassar Encyclopedia describes him as a "progressive teacher" and "modernizing force on campus" in a profile that celebrates his affiliations with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Museum of Natural History, and New York Zoological Society, never mind his membership to the Eugenics Society (C. B. C., 2005a, paras. 1, 6; "Heads of two departments," 1937).

One month before Davenport's lecture to his class, Treadwell delivered a lecture of his own. Though it was ostensibly, as per its title, a lecture on *Biology*, it left a student notetaker with distinctly eugenic takeaways: "The students of eugenics are hoping, in years to come, to be able to control the race, for its strengthening and perfecting" (J. C., 1911, p. 630). Further, his Heredity course itself, despite its similarly innocuous title, was described in subtext as "a study of heredity… and results of recent investigations and their application to Eugenics" (Leonard et al., 2020, para. 23). It is hardly surprising, then, that Treadwell would invite Davenport to the Heredity class to lecture on the work of the ERO. More than a one-off academic exchange, this lecture exemplifies a significant relationship between Vassar and the ERO that continued for years to come. Indeed, as Figure 3 attests, Treadwell (1932) sent the Office a letter in 1932 containing a "student pedigree of deafness and insanity" that he thought might be worthy for its recordkeeping.

Beyond the classroom, several texts on eugenics even appeared on Vassar's summer reading lists. Davenport's *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (1911) made the list for several years and was also donated as a gift to the library in 1913 ("College news," 1913b; "Book lists," 1913; "Book lists," 1914; "Summer reading," 1915). By the mid-1940s, the book was regarded as a notable resource for forced sterilization legislation in the United States as well as Nazi race policies (Vidnes, 2009).

Figure 3

Letter Sent from Aaron Treadwell to the ERO Containing Student Work



VASSAR COLLEGE
POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y.

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY

May 11 1932

Eugenics Record Office
Cold Spring Harbor N.Y.

Sirs,

The enclosed paper was given me by a student. I am forwarding it to you for what it may be worth to your records.

Yours very truly

A. L. Treadwell.

MAY 1 0 1932

deaf
insane or very "queer"
brothers but neither trait known in their family.

I always "queer" from early childhood - about 34-35 years old now - auto accident six years ago seems to have intensified trouble - been in sanitarium about 4 yrs.
II very brilliant as have been all three children - went insane about two or three years after death of husband is now about 45 yrs old in sanitarium for last twelve years.
III very bright at studies - very jealous of older sister's beauty - is now 18 and has been in sanitarium off and on for last three years.
IV very unsuccessful: very strange ideas on some subjects - peculiar.
Deafness has not appeared in the F3 generation as yet as they range from 7 to 20 years of age and the deafness does not appear before they are about 27-8.

P.S. Older sister of No III realizes that she should never marry.

F1 generation is partly dead and rest are around 70 years old
F2 " is from about 34-35 to 45-50 years old.

MAY 1 0 1932

Note. Source: American Philosophical Society (Treadwell, 1932).

While summer reading and classes such as Heredity were elective, eugenic ideology was incorporated into compulsory coursework. One example is Freshman Hygiene, a mandatory course for all first-year students until 1934 ("Compulsory courses," 1934). As late as 1939, Professor Kate Frankenthal delivered an open lecture on eugenics to the Freshman Hygiene class ("College calendar," 1939). Even after Freshman Hygiene was made optional, it was effectively replaced with another mandatory freshman class called Fundamentals, colloquially known as "Fundies" (Reisman, 1995, p. 6). This class would later become notorious in the Ivy League (and Seven Sisters) nude posture photo scandal, which gained significant media attention during the 1990s. While the exact year is unclear, the Vassar Encyclopedia reports that nude photos were taken as early as the 1920s (C. B. C., 2005b). By the time Fundies came around, nude photos, taken in masses in the Kenyon Hall gymnasium, were a routine element of the freshman-year experience (Reisman, 1995).

The nude posture photo scandal exploded when it was reported that students at Yale University (Vassar's then brother school) had stolen and sold the photos "for a healthy profit as soft-core pornography" (Belden-Adams, 2022, p. 11). "$100 for a pack of hot prospects at Vassar?" a Yale alum recounts. "Maybe grade the beauties and non-beauties 'ABC' and charge accordingly" (p. 11). Yet, while the photo-selling scandal was disparaging and objectifying enough, it overshadowed the equally insidious use of the photos to support Davenport's eugenic work. As historian of photography Kris Belden-Adams (2022) describes,

> The images were reported to the college's state government and to the [ERO]... [which] helped the ERO create a set of aspirant pre-World War II 'norms' by which students (and society as a whole) were measured and scrutinized: that of the New England, WASP/Protestant-descended gentry. It also helped identify students with physical disabilities, who were deemed incompatible with the eugenics movement's goal of 'good breeding', while encouraging young women (eugenics' primarily mute actors) to have children to drown out the genes of '[t]he morally worst, the most deformed.' (Lavater, 1878, as cited in Belden-Adams, 2022, pp. 17–18)

While the record of the ERO's use of these photos is limited, Vassar students at the time already suspected the association. According to a 1995 *Vassar Miscellany*

News reporter, theories had spread "that the pictures were not exactly kosher, that there was a sinister hidden agenda on the part of certain scientists to discover which students should breed and which should be kept from reproducing, based on their physical characteristics" (Reisman, 1995, p. 6). More specific allegations also emerged that eugenicist William H. Sheldon had collected Vassar's nude photos as material for the *Atlas of Woman* (C. B. C., 2005b). The book was intended as a sister volume to his *Atlas of Men*, a pseudoscientific somatotyping of male bodies (Vertinsky, 2007). However, Sheldon's collection of female nude photos was seized and burned in 1950, and the *Atlas of Woman* was never released (C. B. C., 2005b). The College administration denied the allegation that Vassar photos were among his collection and insisted that the photos have had "only one purpose throughout their existence: to assess students' postures" (C. B. C., 2005b, para. 10).

To be sure, if eugenic suspicions are true, Vassar would be among many institutions during the period to use photos for such purposes. As Rachel Somerstein, Professor of Journalism at SUNY New Paltz explained, "Such was a typical use of photography at the time, as a tool to visualize 'normal' and 'abnormal,'" and to categorize people into hierarchies (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, as cited in Somerstein, 2024, p. 84). While Somerstein was referring specifically to nude photos taken of women post-sterilization, the theme may ring true for Vassar's use of nude photos in its institutional context.

Notably, nude photos were not the only bodily data Vassar freshmen were forced to submit to the College. According to a 1934 description of the *Health Guide for Vassar Students*, a booklet provided to the class,

> The hygiene-conscious Freshman will give information as well as receive it. In return for learning the secrets of the epitrochlear gland and the three great plexuses, she will surrender such valuable knowledge as the height-weight ratio of her familial background, the amount of ice cream she consumes daily, and the length of time she spends just doing nothing. ("Health booklet," 1934, p. 4)

The tone suggests it was a privilege to be treated like a lab rat. And still, there was more to the data collection. In 1963, the *Vassar Miscellany News* reported that starting in 1936, freshman chest and hip measurements were also collected, and that, starting in 1905, even lung capacity had been evaluated; the Vassar Encyclopedia states that bodily measurements date as far back as 1884 (C. B. C.,

2005b; Messerly, 1963). Exactly what these data were used for is unknown. It is reasonable to question, however, whether they were used as supplemental material analyzed in conjunction with nude photos to contextualize physical observations and potentially increase their value to external eugenics researchers. If this were happening without disclosure and informed consent, it raises serious ethical concerns about Vassar's treatment of its own students. In summation, not only did Vassar's classes promote lessons in eugenics, they also may have taken advantage of students' bodies to practice eugenics. Further, the use of Vassar students to support eugenics extended beyond freshman year, and even beyond graduation into students' careers.

Eugenic Careers

One of the most nefarious results of this period at Vassar was its success in producing active eugenicist field workers and scholars. Charles Davenport and his ERO were primary facilitators for these post-Vassar career trajectories. The pipeline between Vassar and the ERO was formed in the ERO's early days. Davenport established the ERO in 1910 with the goal of gathering "enormous quantities of human hereditary data [and] recording them in a central bureau of study" for the first time (Kelves, 1985, as cited in Hubbard, 1985, p. 569). For necessary assistance, Davenport promptly "recruited a staff of young graduates" from Vassar, along with several other Seven Sisters and Ivy League institutions (p. 569). These fieldworkers were responsible for conducting interviews and collecting physical data "on vast numbers of so-called mental and social defectives" that would soon become the "backbone of U.S. eugenics" and legislation on sterilization and immigration control (p. 569).

Most early ERO staff "took their new jobs very seriously, striving to produce top quality research" (Bix, 1997, p. 645). In hopes of making a significant professional impact, the field workers sought more formal organization than Davenport originally afforded them. Vassar alumnae Ruth Lawton, class of 1910, eventually "told Davenport that they felt 'the need of some means of keeping in touch with each other's work'" (as cited in Bix, 1997, p. 645). In compliance, Davenport introduced regular field worker meetings and annual conferences, which increased efficiency and facilitated methodological

refinement. As field workers became more organized, eugenics gained more power (Bix, 1997; Figure 4).

Figure 4
Second Eugenics Fieldworker's Conference, 1913

Note. Source: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Archives, New York.

By 1923, approximately 200 field workers had been trained at the ERO to collect data nationally (Davenport, 1923). At times, field workers were even delegated to assist with research conducted by fellow Vassar alumnae. For example, when Katherine Bement Davis, class of 1892, was researching "the genetic basis of criminal behavior," Davenport supplied her with ERO field workers to collect data on the lineages of inmates with disabilities (L. L., 2021).

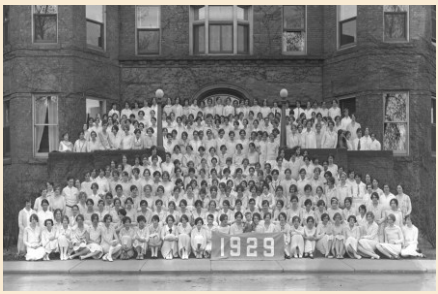
However, not all Vassar alumnae who engaged in eugenics research worked for Davenport's ERO or relied on its support for data collection. The zeal for eugenics research had inspired even solo projects. For example, Lucien Howe, class of 1882, "celebrated the 50th anniversary of her graduation" by independently conducting eugenics research on 39 of her fellow Vassar alumnae ("Vassar '82," 1933, para. 1). According to a 1933 publication of the study in the *Eugenical News*, Howe's primary research questions included: "What sort of antecedents had they? What racial stock?… Whom did they marry? How many children did they produce? And so forth" ("Vassar '82," 1933, para. 1). She concluded that "Eugenically it is clear that the class of '82 were made out of good hereditary stuff" but that they unfortunately had not "perpetuated their own numbers or talents" via reproduction (para. 2).

More Vassar Girls

A chief purpose of the eugenics mission was not only to study and sterilize populations deemed "inferior" (antinatalism) but to encourage reproduction among "superior" populations (pronatalism) to methodically shift demographics in purportedly favorable directions. Alumnae of Vassar as well

as of other elite women's colleges were regarded, generally, as women who should be reproducing prolifically (Figure 5). "Since college graduates represented the best the 'American race' had to offer," as geneticist Charles Vigue declared, they were expected to "not only maintain the purity and character of the race but to improve it" (1987, p. 52). In the early 20th century, when these expectations were not met, women's alma maters were held responsible.

Figure 5
Freshman Portrait of the Vassar Class of 1929 Taken in 1926



Note. Source: Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library.

A 1915 publication in the *Journal of Heredity* titled "Education and Race Suicide" revealed that Vassar alumnae in the classes of 1867–1892 married only at a proportion of 53%, and, on average, had only one child (Sprague, 1915). This data included the class of 1882 about which Lucien Howe had indeed soon reached the same conclusion: Vassar girls were not reproducing enough.

To eugenicists, this posed a significant problem to solve. As a piece co-written by Roswell Johnson explained, "The extraordinary inadequacy of the reproductivity of these college graduates can hardly be taken too seriously. These women are… from a eugenic point of view, clearly of superior quality" (Johnson & Stutzmann, 1915, p. 251). The piece posits that excessive limitations on students' social lives and lack of coeducation (not changed at Vassar until 1969) were to blame for the low birth rates. Essentially, women's colleges were failing to facilitate sex.

The authors also postulated the failure of colleges to instill in alumnae the desire to become homemakers (Johnson & Stutzmann, 1915). "Instead of education for motherhood," eugenicist Samuel J. Holmes later agreed, "the fine young ladies attending these excellent institutions are being educated for race suicide and career" (1928, p. iv). The euthenics program, then, may be regarded in part as a rehabilitative project in response to low birth rates, called by the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* "the most pathetic spectacle of all" (Phillips, 1916, as cited in "Harvard and Yale," 1916, p. 569). As a *New York Times* article

reported, "Vassar Girls" were to begin "to study home-making as a career" through the "new course in euthenics," said to "adjust women to meet the needs of today" (Feld, 1926, p. 220). Those needs were mothers and homemakers, women whose express purpose was to raise a eugenic generation.

The Fate of Euthenics at Vassar

While this paper has explored a time when eugenics was accepted on Vassar's campus, it would be remiss to ignore the significant progress that has been made in revising curricular offerings, enacting nondiscrimination policies aimed at fostering an increasingly inclusive campus environment, and selecting faculty members and speakers reflective of this progress. It is safe to say that Sanger's 1926 speech would not make Vassar's cut today.

The *Vassar Miscellany News*, which has been referenced extensively throughout this paper, did not fail to document the turn of the tide. To start, Sanger's legacy was taken up in the periodical by a class of 1993 history major (Steinberg, 1992). The contributor, Alex Steinberg, stated, "This year at Vassar College… rapt audiences adorning Sanger quotation T-shirts welcomed two lecturers on Sanger's life" (p. 6). Steinberg continued by interrogating Sanger's eugenic perspective, arguing that "Only when students de-romanticize their approach to studying Margaret Sanger will they come properly, soberly, and faithfully to reassess her historical legacy" (p. 6). This is a clear call for revisionist history.

Eugenics was taken up once more in the *Vassar Miscellany News* in 1999, when an "academic couple" posted an advertisement searching for egg donors ("Advertisements," 1999, p. 7). Their laundry list of criteria was "Caucasian, dark-hair and complexion, over 5'7", even-featured face, minimum SATs 1300, lean/athletic build, excellent health/skin/eyesight" (p. 7). In the next week's paper, a student contributor critically responded to the posting:

> It bothers me that the couple's search goes far beyond simply looking for a woman whose physical traits are similar to those of the future mother… They want their child to meet societal standards of perfection. I cannot help but think of eugenics and Adolph Hitler's desire to further the Aryan race. (Rosen, 1999, p. 14)

While the campus discourse has changed over the years, inviting these critical

perspectives, it is questionable that the *Vassar Miscellany News* ran the egg donor advertisement to begin with. The practice continued until the aughts, with the last posting still seeking so-called "good genes" ("Advertisements," 2003, p. 4).

Many Vassar students have become alive to the horrors of the global eugenics project, following national trends. Widespread open acceptance of eugenics declined in the States during the Second World War as "the Nazi holocaust gave eugenics a bad name" (Hartmann, 2017, p. 188; Taylor, 2016). This shift is curious given that Nazi race policies were "based in part" on American data conducted through the ERO, which closed down in 1939, as if distancing itself from the very ideology it helped construct (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, n.d.; Hartmann, 2017, p. 188). Vassar lectures and events supportive of eugenics gradually faded away, and the Summer Institute of Euthenics was renamed the Summer Institute for Family and Childcare Services in Wartime in 1942, though it later resumed its previous title before it was finally discontinued in 1959, much too late (Daniels, 1994).

As for the school year program, euthenics only remained a viable academic major for roughly a decade following its 1924 beginning, and its only lasting component was child study, which remained a major until 1965 when it was absorbed into the psychology and education departments (Cruz, 2002; Daniels, 1994). Several factors contributed to the termination of euthenics. To start, the program was already rejected by some faculty members during meetings regarding its initial implementation; indeed, it only ever "squeaked through the faculty vote by a narrow margin" (Daniels, 1994, para. 27). Faculty opponents believed the program to be "vague," "not scholarly," and a threat "to return women to domesticity, and again shut women's doors to the outside world, which had only just been pried open" (para. 25).

Early criticism was echoed by Margaret Floy Washburn, one of several faculty members who refused to move to larger, newer laboratory spaces in Blodgett Hall in opposition to their association with euthenics. Washburn, who resented MacCracken for his embrace of euthenics, once stated, "You are driving women back into the home, from the slavery of which education has helped us escape, Dr. MacCracken" (Daniels, 1994, para. 28). Moreover, as a 2002 *Vassar Miscellany News* article reported, in the early 1930s, two-thirds of departments that intended to collaborate with euthenics opted out in hopes of distancing themselves from patriarchal tradition (Cruz, 2002). Along with

faculty rejection, euthenics courses were unpopular among students, and it became increasingly clear that the academic program "did not jell into the initial mold planned" (Daniels, 1994, para. 35).

Reckoning with Institutional Amnesia

Recent discourse on Vassar's eugenic history has been sparse and narrow in scope. Importantly, there has been no institutional address of the history of eugenics at Vassar. The eugenic engagements of former President MacCracken along with several prominent faculty members and alumnae have been excluded from their profiles on Vassar's Encyclopedia website. MacCracken, in particular, has been revered as a "modernizing force" who "successfully guided Vassar into a modern era of enfranchised women and new global perspectives" (L. M., 2005b, paras. 1, 7). To be sure, these descriptions are not altogether untrue, but it is biased to offer these praises without acknowledging MacCracken's belief that a "eugenic philosophy" should "permeate all aspects of education" or the role of his presidency in supporting eugenics research that helped justify global disaster (MacCracken, 1939, p. 416).

Critical pieces of the history summarized here have been documented in two *Vassar Miscellany News* articles: one written by a class of 2005 alumnae in 2023, and the other by a student in 2020 (Lawson, 2023; Leonard et al., 2020). The 2020 article was met with criticism in the comments section; one comment reads, concisely, "Euthenics and eugenics are two different things" (Taylor, 2020). The Vassar community, it seems, does not understand the connection.

The link between eugenics and euthenics has even been taken up almost jokingly. In an article titled "Euthenics: It's not What you Think," one 2015 author describes the eventual failure of euthenics, remarking, "It didn't help that some even confused it [euthenics] with the racist 'eugenics' movement" (O., 2015, para. 2). In the same year, another author remarked that "Euthenics, *of course*, is not to be confused with eugenics" (Museum of Motherhood, 2015, para. 4; emphasis added by author). While they do acknowledge that eugenics "seems to have reared its ugly head within the walls of Vassar College, too," they reference only an isolated event–nude photographs–ignoring the well-documented institutional endorsement of a national eugenics mission, much of which was directly upheld by the euthenics program (para. 4).

Similarly, Vassar's Encyclopedia published an adaptation of a 1994 book chapter titled "The disappointing first thrust of euthenics," which makes no mention of the simultaneous thrust of eugenics that the institution deliberately supported for decades (Daniels). The article speaks romantically of a grossly misrepresented euthenics program entirely divorced from its eugenic orientation. By hosting this misrepresentation, Vassar continues to ignore the scope and impact of euthenics, as well as its utter incompatibility with the College's current mission. The failure of euthenics to survive as a permanent program should be remembered not as a disappointment but as a necessary step towards important institutional progress. And with that, the symbolic function of the plaque in the Blodgett Hall archway should be reconsidered.

Vassar has already begun problematizing its legacy through the Inclusive History initiative, launched in 2023. This public history initiative seeks to unearth the College's past "with respect to justice, equity, and fairness" (Vassar College, n.d., para. 1). Inclusive History has already published projects on slavery, blackface, and Founder's Day, among others, and invites students to submit their own research. Eugenics and euthenics should be embraced by the initiative. By interrogating Vassar's endorsement of eugenics and the position of elite academic institutions within the eugenic framework, we can imagine a fundamentally transformative vision of what education in the service of "the race" really is. We can complicate our understanding of what these institutions represent in American society and ultimately realize a more egalitarian function of higher education in departure from eugenic thinking.

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"I Decline to Play the Part of the Fish Dangling on the End of Your Line"[1]: How a Blind Politician Led the Way to a Dissertation Topic in Educational History

Edward Janak[2]

Abstract

This article traces the author's personal and academic journey to a dissertation topic in educational history, catalyzed by a chance encounter at a garage sale and a provocative letter from a blind South Carolina politician, John E. Swearingen. Initially struggling to identify a viable dissertation topic, the author discovered Swearingen while searching through archival microfilm of the correspondence between the General Education Board (GEB), a Rockefeller-funded philanthropic organization, and the South Carolina State Department. The discovery launched a biographical project that explored Swearingen's life and career. The article blends autoethnography, historiography, and biography, chronicling Swearingen's tenure as State Superintendent of Education and his advocacy for marginalized communities, despite operating within a segregated and racially oppressive system. It examines the methodological process of constructing a historical life from fragmented records and personal interviews—including with Swearingen's son—and the broader implications for understanding masculinity, disability, and resistance in Progressive Era education reform. Ultimately, this narrative underscores how unexpected moments and overlooked figures can shape a career, illuminate injustices, and expand the field of educational history.

Keywords: educational biography, dissertation journey, John E. Swearingen, General Education Board, Progressive Era, blindness, educational philanthropy, archival research, Southern education

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[1] From a letter by John E. Swearingen to Wallace Buttrick, January 29, 1921 (Swearingen, 1921a).

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May of 2002 was a tumultuous time for me: I had resigned from my career as a high school teacher, was moving halfway across the country with no job, had recently passed my comprehensive exam for my doctoral degree in Educational Foundations, and had ten dissertation topic ideas rejected by my committee. However, sometimes one comes across an artifact—a piece of art or architecture, a work of literature, a piece of journalism, or an archival document—that can become life changing. Such was my case: a conversation at a garage sale led to scrolling through microfilm during which a scrawled signature on the bottom of a very short piece of correspondence caught my eye. This in turn led to a deeper dive in historical material, an oral history that took me from a small tourist town in Wyoming to the top floor of Chicago's Aon Center, and fed a project that would become my dissertation and my first book.

This article explores the relationship between biographer and biographical subject as a lens through which to explore one writer's journey through the dissertation phase in hopes of providing some guidance to doctoral students. It frames this discussion in an examination of John E. Swearingen, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in South Carolina who happened to be the first blind person elected to public office in the state, beginning with his contentious relationship with the General Education Board, a philanthropic group founded and funded by John D. Rockefeller. The article begins on an autobiographical note, describing the convoluted path to my discovery of a dissertation topic. It shifts into a historic exploration of the General Education Board, then to a study of the methods used to craft Swearingen's biography before presenting a biographical sketch of Swearingen's fascinating life and career. The article concludes with a return to an autoethnographic discussion of how Swearingen's letter to the GEB still impacts my research agenda.

Struggles with a Dissertation Topic

Many doctoral students find themselves in a similar situation to what I was going through at the end of my coursework back in 2002: after years of writing around prescriptive topics and themes in my classes, how do I choose a topic for my dissertation? Some students work with a chair who encourages them to build upon the chair's line of research; however, my chair's work lay half a world away, in South Africa, so this was not an option for me. Other

students have a clear notion of their dissertation topic by the end of their coursework. While I had a concept, by the end of my coursework I realized it made for an interesting class paper but would not cut it as a major dissertation research study in the field of educational history.

Still other students have a committee with whom they can meet, individually or collectively, and who can help move them forward towards a topic. Committee composition is critically important to the dissertation process: a large part of it is what the committee member can bring to the student's project? However, interpersonal dynamics and internecine politics are also significant factors students should consider. My committee was comprised of faculty in whom I had the utmost respect and trust; however, they came from opposite ends of the sociopolitical and academic spectrum. This brought about some challenges when selecting a topic.

Before starting their full dissertation proposals, most doctoral students are encouraged to work up a small version of it, sometimes referred to as concept paper or mini proposal. I wrote several of these before finding one that could go to the full committee for discussion and review. Some topics were just not "dissertation worthy" (though I still have notes on a few for future projects). Others were greeted with acceptance by one or two committee members but rejected by the rest. My chair was able to preempt some potential conflict-causing topics before I went too far down the scholarly road with them. Finally, one committee member sat me down and gave extensive advice on how I might find a topic: "Go to the library. Find the old State Superintendent reports. Go to the oldest and begin skimming them. You will find something there."

All doctoral students are on a timeline; mine was particularly sensitive. These conversations were taking place in May; in July, I was moving over a thousand miles away to begin the next phase of my career. There were a small group of doctoral students counted as friends who were graduating or moving on; we decided to hold a group garage sale to purge old furniture and raise some money for our move. When the word of our sale got out, a handful of other students asked to set up tables and join in. On the day of the sale, during a break in the action, I was lamenting my lack of topic with this group. One of them worked in the South Caroliniana Library, the main archival library of the University of South Carolina. He mentioned that the archive had just received a large shipment of microfilm; nobody there ordered it or had an idea of what it

was. He knew it had something to do with education and suggested I give it a skim; I might get a topic, and he would learn what was going on with this mystery box. I agreed to see him Monday morning to begin; little did I know this passing conversation in my front yard at a garage sale would introduce me to the man who would change my life.

A Brief History of the General Education Board

The boxes of microfilm contained correspondence from the General Education Board (GEB) pertaining to South Carolina, including correspondence with schools, colleges and universities, and the State Department of Education. The Rockefeller family were the impetus behind the GEB; John Rockefeller, Jr. was the one who created the Board and laid out its mission; his father, John D. Rockefeller, contributed more than $129 million of his own money, equivalent to a staggering $2.26 billion in 2024 dollars,[3] between the years 1902 and 1921 (Fosdick, 1962, p. 327). Upon its creation in 1902, the GEB dedicated itself to two fields: Southern education and general education:

> *Southern education*. Currently this tenet is observed in assisting state governments and higher institutions to undertake studies, experiments and demonstrations in public education designed to adapt school programs to the life interests and opportunities of the students; studies dealing with significant southern interests and problems; qualitative development of selected institutions, more especially in the physical and social sciences; and the improvement of personnel. Special programs in Negro education relate to supervision and promotion of public schools, basic development of selected higher institutions, and the training of staffs.
>
> *General education*. The other major interest of the Board is in the field of general education at the high school and junior college levels. This program, which was begun in 1933, is concerned with research and experimentation looking toward the improvement of education at the secondary level to meet the conditions that social change has imposed upon the schools and colleges…the Board has also provided aid for a

[3] Calculations based by relative value in real wage or real wealth comparing the years 1921 to 2024 by Measuring Worth, https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/

> limited number of research projects in the study of adolescence. (General Education Board)

Between the years 1902 and 1960, the Board spent more than $324 million across more than a dozen states and two foreign countries (Fosdick, 1962, p. 335). The GEB served multiple functions targeted toward improving education: funding positions in state departments of education, providing funds for faculty positions in universities, overhauling medical school education, funding schools serving marginalized populations, providing scholarships for graduate students to study in established universities, providing scholarships for teachers to attend summer institutes, using the public schools to spread agrarianism, and conducting and publishing research on contemporary educational trends (Fosdick, 1962, pp. 333–335). According to Peter Collier and David Horowitz (1976), while Rockefeller made multiple contributions to the fund, he specified that his 1905 contribution was to produce "a comprehensive system of higher education in the United States" (p. 62). As Board member Frederick T. Gates later described, the purpose was "to reduce our higher education to something like an orderly and comprehensive system, to discourage unnecessary duplication and waste, and to encourage economy and efficiency" (Collier & Horowitz, p. 62).

The historian of the GEB, Fosdick (1962), has provided further details on the organization. The GEB had extensive partnerships with a handful of universities, such as the University of Chicago (p. 16). Rockefeller Jr. would lead the GEB to help fund the nascent field of audio-visual education in US schools: the GEB funded studies of the effectiveness of radio in education and launched the pioneering studies of Ohio State University and the University of Wisconsin at the time (p. 254). The GEB contributed to providing educational broadcasts on the radio, particularly effective in rural schools and universities. The GEB was critical in the creation of other universities such as Texas Christian University (TCU). They targeted support to many Historically Black Colleges and Universities, primarily Tuskegee and Hampton (pp. 329–331), as well as Tribal Colleges such as Bacone College.

One of GEB's most successful accomplishments was the funding of Abraham Flexner's scathing indictment of the American system of medical schools which became known as the Flexner Report. The GEB's medical education program provided millions of dollars funding an overhauled,

upgraded approach that matched the European model and established the model still influencing medical education today, considered "perhaps the single most dramatic achievement in the history of American philanthropy" (Fosdick, p. 328; Nielsen, 1996, p. 29).

The GEB correspondence archival records (Early Southern Program, n.d.) offer many insights into the funding policies of the organization. The GEB helped a variety of higher education institutions in South Carolina. Religious schools such as Furman received funding; Winthrop University was another early recipient of GEB funds. Schools that served White students (the University of South Carolina; Clemson University; Presbyterian; Wofford; and Converse, among others) and African American students (Voorhees; Claflin University; Benedict College; Allen University; Limestone College; and South Carolina State, among others) received endowments to be matched locally or loans from the GEB (Early Southern Program, n.d.). The GEB also paid for summer teacher academies held at colleges across the state (Summer School 1918–1936).

The GEB correspondence also demonstrates that the State Department of Education benefitted greatly from the infusion of GEB money. The GEB funded two Supervisors of Rural Schools, one for White schools and one for schools serving the African American population. It also funded a State Agent for Secondary Education, a Director of Schoolhouse Planning, and a Director of Research and Information. GEB funds were used to hire draftsmen and stenographers to assist with these offices (Early Southern Program, n.d.). In 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, the South Carolina National Bank failed; it was the institution in which the State Department of Education kept its accounts. The GEB covered the entirety of the missing funds, allowing the state department to continue its work (Brierley, 1933). The GEB repeated this when Chase National Bank failed in 1934 (Brierley, 1934).

The GEB also helped the public schools of the state. It awarded a grant to Columbia Public Schools for a building program that substantively increased both White and Black classrooms, though not in equal numbers (Buttrick, 1923). Sumter Public Schools were awarded funds dedicated to adding an industrial school for African American students which would hire specifically African American teachers, doubling their teaching force in the city (Davis, 1927). Likewise, in 1927 Rock Hill Schools received a grant to provide school facilities

for its African American students; these funds were dedicated to building classrooms for woodwork, bricklaying, and agriculture (Brierley, 1927).

The more time I spent reviewing the GEB's correspondence records, the more obvious the trend in the funding: the GEB would only fund vocational-industrial schools, particularly when it came to African American education. For example, Voorhees College wrote frequently requesting funds for its academic programs, all of which were rebuffed by the GEB. At one point Rufus Stinson, a field agent for the GEB, wrote to Jesse Thomas, principal of Voorhees, "I think you will find the home projects of girls, indoors, and boys, outdoors, will be among your most effective demonstrations of the methods advocated by your school for farm and community betterment" (Stinson, 1917). Once Voorhees agreed, they were awarded funds to expand their offerings to include agriculture. The funding continued until the Great Depression caused Voorhees to shutter many of its vocational programs; despite frequent requests from the school after that, the GEB refused (Voorhees Normal & Industrial School, n.d.).

It was clear the GEB only funded schools that engaged in what historians such as James Anderson refer to as the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education (Anderson, 1988, p. 33). The model was rooted in the work of Booker T. Washington who, in his 1895 address to the Atlanta Exposition, argued that the "greatest danger" for African Americans of the time was

> that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour and put brains and skill into common occupations of life…No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. (Washington, 1995, p. 107)

Washington argued that a gradual approach was best when it came to improving race relations, noting that "[t]he wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly"; he argued that "the progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing" (Washington, 108).

Washington's words were taken as gospel by Northern White philanthropists such as members of the GEB. Anderson describes the GEB's Southern program as spending "most of their time systematizing industrial education where it was practiced; and advocating systematizing industrial education where it was not installed" (1978, p. 383). The personnel of the GEB in and of itself demonstrates this opinion; key board members and contributors, such as Robert C. Ogden and George Foster Peabody, also served as board members and/or contributors to Tuskegee University and stated publicly that the Hampton-Tuskegee model was "the solution to the southern race problem" (Anderson, 1978, p. 373). In his Atlanta Exposition Address, Washington noted that his vision of vocational education for gradualism received "constant help…especially from Northern philanthropists, who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement" (p. 108).

Anderson describes the GEB's funding pattern in the Southeast directly: "Any black institution emphasizing classical liberal education was regarded…as impractical and not geared to prepare black youth for useful citizenship and productive efficiency" (1988, p. 133). South Carolina's teacher academies reinforced this model. Those serving African American teachers included less training in the "literary subjects" (English, math, U.S. history and civics, physiology and hygiene, and geography) and more in "domestic arts" (cooking, canning, "using wheat substitutes to replace fats and oils", and sewing) as well as "handcrafts" (basketry, chain carving, mat making, paper objects, picture framing, and woodworking). Even the "literary" academic subjects were "endeavored to make these subjects plain and practical" (Brannon, 1918).

As Charles Biebel (1976) pointed out, the GEB sought to assist education in the South by "infiltrating Southern universities and government agencies with its own paid evangelists" in order "to promote a reorganization of 'general education' through a coordinated national effort" (pp. 3–4). Reading Raymond Fosdick's (1962) insider history of the GEB supports the evangelical bent to such criticisms: He describes the Southern program as moving "forward with the spirit of a revival movement" with the professors of secondary education hired through GEB funds as "missionary professors" (p. 20) evangelizing the gospel of gradualism.

What did they evangelize? What was the revival movement that the GEB trumpeted so loudly? According to Anderson (1988), the concept is "the

ideological antithesis of the educational and social movement begun by ex-slaves" (p. 33). The model initially focused on the training of teachers; however, it "employed a unique manual labor routine and an ideology of 'self-help' as the practical and moral foundation of their teacher training process" (p. 33). The point of the program was not necessarily to instill skill in industry, but rather "to work the prospective teachers long and hard so that they would embody, accept, and preach an ethic of hard toil or the 'dignity of labor'" that would allow graduates to "teach the children of the South's distinctive black laboring class" (p. 34). Biebel (1976) asks

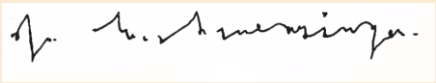
> whether the Board's contribution to the survival and success of particular organizations…and to the demise of others was in the long run in the best interests of the country…It is hard to escape the conviction that the officers and trustees, representing a foundation which by its nature was private, elitist, and paternalistic, could not transcend their collective vested interest in sustaining a social and economic order largely created by their class—all in the name of democracy and the public interest. (pp. 22–23)

Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss (1999) take up a similar critical lens in *Dangerous Donations*, explaining that because the GEB "acquired immense prestige" (p. 5) its agenda for Southern education was adopted by many other philanthropic organizations. For Anderson and Moss, this development was highly problematic as the GEB favored the vocational-only model as opposed to a more classical curriculum and favored White governance of Black schools, in spite of the fact that the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education had gone out of favor by the 1930s. Anderson and Moss criticize the GEB for its pattern of funding the existing, deficient public schools serving African American students in the South rather than devoting their funding towards developing a more effective, independent system that bucked White supremacy in the region or funding already established private schools.

My anger grew as I sat scrolling through reel after reel of microfilm in the South Caroliniana Library. The condescending, paternalistic tone set by the Board in its correspondence with school officials initially felt cloying; however, as the hours and reels went by, the GEB's tone was metaphorically sticking in my craw. The racist nature of the pattern of funding deeply disturbed me. The correspondence was very much of its time: lengthy, with extensive salutations

and substantive prose filling pages. Which is why, when I was scanning through correspondence, one particular letter made me stop. It caught my eye for two reasons: first, the signature at the bottom of the page looked more like a seismograph printout than a signature, nearly filling the bottom of the page in a spikey, almost angry handwriting (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Signature of John E. Swearingen



Note. Figure from title page of Mary Hough Swearingen's memoir of her husband, A Gallant Journey (1950, n.p.).

Second, the letter was brief. It had all of two short paragraphs, four sentences in its entirety. It was a letter from then State Superintendent of Education John E. Swearingen to Wallace Buttrick, Chair of the GEB. Dated January 29, 1921, it read (almost in its entirety):

> Up to this writing the quarterly contribution of the General Education Board…has not come to my desk, You have the absolute right to do as you choose with your own fund. I decline, however, to play the part of the fish dangling at the end your line. Yours Respectfully. (Swearingen, 1921a)

The correspondence was almost shocking. As I would learn, it was not a unique pattern. Just a few days later, February 2, 1921, Swearingen followed up with Buttrick (again, in its entirety) "My letter to you was to protect myself against any misunderstanding of figures when settlement time comes June 30th. If the situation is satisfactory to you, it is perfectly plain to me" (Swearingen, 1921b). Swearingen's ire was not just directed towards Buttrick; in April of that year Swearingen wrote to Abraham Flexner (the same Flexner of the Flexner report, one of the nation's most respected educators):

> If you attach conditions to your donations, such conditions ought to be stipulated at the time the donation is made and ought to accompany the record…I have received three letters from your office that I do not relish, and it is high time for a clear understanding to be arrived at between all parties. The use of your contribution means nothing to me individually, and I cannot afford to be harassed and bedeviled by meddlesome dictation and afterthoughts. (Swearingen, 1921c)

Two things became obvious to me when reviewing this correspondence: first, I

really liked this man. Second, I had to learn more about him. Thus, I launched my major dissertation—a historical biography.

Methodology: Constructing a Life

As Paul Marinari (1986) explains, biographers are tasked with "reassembling the dust" of a person's life (p. 104); they must grapple with "[w]hat strategies shall the biographer use by which to reassemble the dust and reveal the pattern the biographer believes is somewhere in the midst of all that?" (p. 109). Historians and biographers must gather this dust, the raw materials which are similar to pieces of a jigsaw, with an eye of putting them together into a coherent picture. However, while the biographer may have an idea of what the final picture will be, often the reality is markedly different.

Louis M. Smith (1998) suggests that when beginning an archival biography, the writer must address two questions in order: first, is there enough material to write the biography? If the answer to that is yes, then the second question: Where to start (1998, p.159)? As a doctoral student with fewer than three months to gather the bulk of the material, I became an academic scavenger, collecting all the scraps and pieces of the puzzle that might or might not make it into the final analysis.

Answering the first question became something of a mixed bag as I proceeded; my biographical journey started with mixed results. I was successful in the fact that the university library had copies of all state superintendent reports; I was able to spend my nights in the library typing notes and making photocopies, filling binder after binder. There was one unpublished book about Swearingen in the library, focused exclusively on his time in office, that I was able to copy pages from (Dreyfus, 1997). I further purchased a copy of the memoir written by Swearingen's wife that focused more on his personal life and early days in office (Swearingen, M.H., 1950). I, however, was not so successful in my next step when I approached the State Department of Education to request access to their archives. They welcomed me, greeted me in the John Swearingen conference room (with a portrait of him hanging on the wall, Figure 2), and informed me that all correspondence before the 1970s had been destroyed in a flood.

I was able to recreate some of what would have been in the State Department archives, the official correspondence of Swearingen while in office, by going to the State Archive and working my way through the papers of the governors in office during Swearingen's tenure. This proved more time consuming than I anticipated; while some of the governors' papers had been sorted and classified, others were completely jumbled in boxes, thrown in by year. I had to go through hundreds of linear feet of material seeking those needles in the haystack that were correspondence with Swearingen; luckily, I had his signature (and the letterhead of the State Department) to serve as flags. My binders continued to fill; my answer to question one became more and more a resolute "Yes!"

Figure 2
Portrait of John E. Swearingen

Note. Photo courtesy of the author.

I was most successful where it all began: in the South Caroliniana library. When I mentioned my new focus to the friend who started me off on the journey, he was quick to tell me that the family papers were on file there. Another archivist took me on, and I spent my days going through the family papers. Fortunately, these were quite extensive, particularly those around my biographical subject; unfortunately, very little about any of his campaigns or political dealings were included. As the summer went by and my binders filled, my moving date approached. On one of my final days in the archive, I struck up a conversation with the archivist about how the collection came to be. The son of my subject was the one who donated and helped lead the collection. Amazingly, the archivist asked: "Do you want his address?" One emphatic "Yes" later, I was home sending John E. Swearingen, Jr. a letter detailing my project and providing both my current and new addresses and phone numbers. As I would learn, Swearingen Jr.'s success exceeded his father's (Figure 3). He became an engineer and was a co-inventor of the catalytic converter. He became president of Standard Oil (another Rockefeller connection, now part of BP), and often was seen as the "face of big oil" during the gas crisis of the 1970s. After retirement, he was appointed to head the US National Bank by Ronald Reagan. The Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing at the University of

South Carolina is housed in the Swearingen Engineering Center, named after Swearingen Jr.

In July 2002 I moved from South Carolina to Wyoming and was still in the process of unpacking the house and purchasing new furniture when our new home phone rang: an unfamiliar voice asked for me and then asked if I would be interested in meeting with Mr. Swearingen to talk about his father. As it turned out, Mr. Swearingen summered in Saratoga, Wyoming…a short drive from my new address. The next day I got a map and made my first drive over the Snowy Range Mountains to Saratoga, where I was fortunate to conduct the first of two interviews. We spent hours reflecting on his life and what he knew of his father; at times he grew deeply emotional, moved to tears as he told some stories. He also provided the answer to a question that I had not been able to answer: Why did Swearingen decide to abort his gubernatorial race? It was Swearingen Jr. who told me of the Klan connection, a fact I was able to assert through triangulation of data.

Figure 3
John E. Swearingen, Jr.

Note. Photo courtesy of and with permission from estate of John E. Swearingen, Jr.

During our first interview, Swearingen Jr. kept referring to a family photo album that was at his Chicago residence, wishing I could see it. After transcribing the interview, I performed a member check and sent him the transcript; shortly, he returned it with some revisions and a suggestion that I meet him in Chicago for pictures. A few weeks later, I received a phone call from his secretary making arrangements for me to meet with him again and look at the family album. I found an inexpensive hotel near to his office building, the Aon Center, booked a budget flight to the Windy City, packed my recording equipment and a suit and tie, and flew out for our second interview. I was able to pose some follow-up questions and get photographs of the photos in the family album. After another couple of hours, he invited me to lunch—in the executive dining room at the top of the building. Sadly, it was my last contact with him; he passed away soon after our meeting.

I had my material; it then became time to move into Smith's second question, where to start? Throughout that year I blocked out three days a week

on my schedule to focus on writing my dissertation. As I got to know Swearingen more, I experienced much the same level of relationship building with my subject as described by Lynda Anderson Smith (1998) …though I would not go so far as to compare it to falling in love. However, I did experience "exhilaration, excitement, attraction, and then the joy of discovering the two of you agree on many important matters," that we shared some beliefs, ideas, and interests. Over time, I truly began to "identify with your subject, when trust, commitment, and even ownership begin to develop and grow" (L.A. Smith, 1998, pp. 195–196).

I set out to portray what Leon Edel (1986) describes as "the figure under the carpet, the evidence in the reverse of the tapestry, the life-myth of a given mask" (p. 24). As Edel explains, archival research allows us to "wade simply and securely through paper and photocopies and related concrete material"; however, "in our quest of the life-myth we read on dangerous speculative and inferential ground, ground that requires all of our attention, all of our accumulated resources" (p. 24). My quest to discover Swearingen's figure under the carpet led me to set aside my anger towards the GEB. Doing so allowed me to focus on exploring of the tapestry of Southern history in the early 20th century; Swearingen's life definitely proved to be the Edel's reverse of this tapestry.

Biography: John Eldred Swearingen

The biographical sketch that follows is the result of my in-depth archival research and discussions. Swearingen was one of the most influential educators in South Carolina's history, crafting and shepherding through more pieces of educational legislation than any other individual serving in his office before or since. Serving as State Superintendent of Education from 1909 through 1922, Swearingen directly oversaw major reform efforts on both state and national levels; he tried to raise South Carolina's schools to at or above average regional standards; he made education an ongoing priority for the State Legislature; and, most remarkably, he actively campaigned for equal educational opportunities for disenfranchised populations such as millworkers, their children, and African Americans (Janak, 2009; Janak, 2014; Janak & Moran, 2010). The fact that he worked towards these amazing personal and academic goals while adventitiously blind (someone who becomes blind during their life

as opposed to being born blind) makes his story all the more remarkable (Janak, 2010; Janak, 2014). He remained blunt and direct in his communication throughout his career, something that earned him both staunch supporters and bitter enemies. As his wife would later recount in her memoir, "I am not sure that the word 'tact' was a part of Mr. Swearingen's vocabulary. 'At best,' he said, 'tact is usually a method of evasion and confusion—not far removed from lying'" (M.H. Swearingen, p. 112).

Swearingen's life proved a fascinating study for many reasons. First, it provides an analysis of how society treated people with disabilities—and what can happen when someone does not subscribe to these societal definitions of disability. Second, Swearingen was reforming the public schools during one of the most interesting, oversimplified, and overlooked periods in their history: the Progressive Era. Indeed, Swearingen proved that progressivism did not just take place in Chicago and New York, and that the definition of progressive was not just bound to temporality but also to regionalism. Third, Swearingen's political career is both a model and cautionary tale. Never one to let politics get in the way of doing his job, yet ultimately undone by opposing machinations, Swearingen's career proves particularly poignant in today's political climate. Fourth, in addition to his contribution to the field of education in South Carolina, Swearingen's life can serve as an exemplar of progressive masculinity.

Swearingen was born January 9, 1875, near the town of Trenton located in Edgefield County, South Carolina. The Swearingen family were among landowning elites in the state. He was the son of John Cloud Swearingen, a confederate veteran and Red Shirt Rider, and Anna Tillman Swearingen, sister of U.S. Senator Benjamin "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman, another who waved the Red Shirt. Red Shirt Riders were similar to members of the Ku Klux Klan in their actions directed at suppressing the African American population of the state. However, they did not wear white robes or hoods, opting instead for red shirts representing the bloodshed during the Civil War. They focused more on political purposes, leading the charge to expunge the Reconstruction-era state legislature at the end of pistols and bayonets.

By contrast Anna was widely recognized for her exceptional intellect, hosting a private day school for her and her neighbor's children. The family farm grew cotton and hosted a variety of domesticated animals, including goats,

pigs, cows, horses, mules, chickens, turkeys, and hunting dogs. Swearingen grew up equal parts avid outdoorsman and student. Possessed with an athletic physique, he would hunt and fish, as well as play sports with his younger brother. However, this love of the outdoors significantly altered his life. He was blinded in a hunting accident in 1888, when he was trying out a new shotgun that was a thirteenth birthday gift. Swearingen tripped over a log; the shotgun accidentally discharged through his hand and spread buckshot throughout his face. At the time, doctors could not remove most of the buckshot; he endured occasional pain from these facial injuries the rest of his life.

Swearingen never allowed himself the luxury of self-pity or doubt. His mother, ever the educator, would not stand to see her son go on helplessly. She began a strict program of re-education for him, beginning with having him re-learn to perform simple household chores such as lighting stove fires, bringing in firewood, fetching water, and tending the extensive family garden. She advanced his training to include proper table manners, the techniques of which Swearingen would later use as a teacher of the blind. Swearingen was always athletically inclined, so next she had him re-learn activities such as basic exercises, acrobatics, wrestling, and horseback riding. As Swearingen was re-mastering household duties and activities, his mother continued his education by reading to him.

His academic life outside the home began with one year spent in the Georgia Academy for the Blind where Swearingen mastered a set of coping skills. He moved on to the Cedar Springs Institute for the Deaf and Blind of South Carolina, which he attended from 1890 through 1893. Swearingen wanted to attend college, particularly the South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina), but his application was rejected due to his blindness. In an effort to overcome the college's perception that he was intellectually incapable, Swearingen made a formal appeal to the president and board of trustees of the college, who granted him provisional admission in 1895: Swearingen had to provide his own guide and readers for his textbooks, and any sign that he could not keep up with the other students would result in his being asked to withdraw from the college.

Much to the surprise of everyone involved (except Swearingen), he excelled in all of his coursework; records of his academic achievements and awards stood unbroken from his graduation in 1899 through becoming the

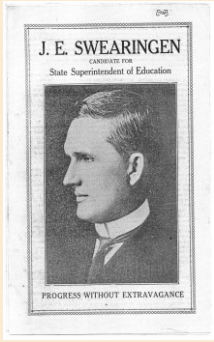
University of South Carolina into the 1950s (M.H. Swearingen, pp. 13 & 48). By the time Swearingen graduated from the college in 1899 he was amazing his fellow students with his feats (Figure 4). He could walk unassisted anywhere on campus with no difficulty and could identify all 200 students on campus by voice. He was so skilled in mathematics that he performed math recitations in front of the whole faculty and college president. Students volunteered to study with him to improve their own grades. He was honored by the president of the institution at graduation for his academic excellence (M.H. Swearingen, p. 45).

Figure 4
John E. Swearingen, Graduate of the South Carolina College

Note. Photo courtesy of and with permission from estate of John E. Swearingen, Jr.

Upon graduation, Swearingen returned to the Cedar Springs Institute for the Deaf and Blind as a teacher. However, the school did not appeal to the college graduate; he frequently complained in letters home about the low expectations of the students by faculty, and the rural location not allowing students life experiences. However, Swearingen developed a skill for public speaking during these years, addressing educational topics with a variety of civic groups in the area. He became a passionate teacher with a reputation for being tough and compassionate with students. As is typical in education when the best teachers are plucked to become administrators, Swearingen rose to become principal of the blind department, then superintendent of the entire school.

Figure 5
Swearingen State Superintendent Campaign Flyer



Note. Photo courtesy of the Swearingen Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

After eight years in Cedar Springs, persuaded by friends and family, Swearingen ran for the office of State Superintendent of Education (Figure 5). Writing to a friend, Swearingen wrote that some of his friends and family members had requested him to make a run for the office. He believed himself qualified by taste and training and wrote that even if he was to lose the

election, he didn't "think I shall have occasion to regret the work put into the campaign" (Swearingen, 1908). The campaign was long and grueling, occurring in the heat of the summer, and expensive, far beyond the means of a normal teacher; fortunately, Swearingen was the son of privilege. Swearingen balanced the populist politics of the time (championed by his uncle, "Pitchfork Ben," who took Swearingen under his wing), while being gender and race inclusive. He won his first race and held office from 1909 to 1922.

While in office, Swearingen advanced education more than any other superintendent in the state's history. He fought to increase funding for schools, set a minimum length for the school year with compulsory attendance, and created teacher certification standards. He focused on opportunities for millworkers and their children, partnering with advocate Wil Lou Gray to advance adult literacy; they coauthored the tract *Midsummer Drive Against Illiteracy for White Schools* which was subtitled "Let South Carolina Secede from Illiteracy" (Gray & Swearingen, 1920). However, the most powerful contradiction of Swearingen's career is observed in his attitude toward race. A social traditionalist, Swearingen was raised in a racist state, the son and nephew of slave owners; however, he also encouraged the colored schools of South Carolina more so than any previous State Superintendent. Swearingen was described to GEB Board member Wallace Buttrick as "quite a progressive person in favor of education for the negro and he much encourages the idea" (Dana, 1916). Even though Swearingen was working in the era of *Plessy vs Ferguson* (1896), he fought hard for educational opportunities for both races (Dreyfus, 2). In part, Swearingen was successful due to the infusion of money from the GEB; despite his almost disrespectful correspondence with the Board, they funded several positions in the state department and at the University of South Carolina that helped Swearingen move education in the Palmetto State into the 20th Century.

Swearingen held office with little opposition; he was so successful, few tried to run against him, despite the urging of Swearingen's political nemesis Governor Coleman Blease. Blease was the exact opposite of Swearingen in every way; the two men were natural enemies. Their animosity was made worse by Blease's hatred of Swearingen's uncle, who used his own popularity in the state to campaign against Blease. In 1922, Swearingen was persuaded to run for

governor. However, as the campaign continued Swearingen was the victim of several unethical political dealings (including false scandals about textbook purchasing and his religion). Ultimately a friend informed Swearingen that were the campaign to continue, the Ku Klux Klan would threaten Swearingen. Fearing for the safety of his family, Swearingen left the race and tried to re-enroll as superintendent. However, the voters were not appreciative of this maneuver and Swearingen never held public office again.

The Long-Term Impact of a Chance Encounter

My time spent with two generations of Swearingens launched my academic career. The biography became the lens through which I examined the development of high schools in South Carolina for my dissertation—a topic that appealed to all the disparate members of my committee. As I transitioned from being a high school teacher to an academic, Swearingen's life provided my first peer-reviewed journal publications, launching my career. I was even able to engage in a bit of speculative history, wondering what might have been if South Carolina had Swearingen stayed in office in one journal article (Janak & Moran, 2010). However, there were two unresolved issues that arose during my dissertation that would follow me.

The first issue was the question of why, or what Edel describes as "psycholological evidence" that "enable us to understand what people are really saying behind the faces they put on, behind the utterances they allow themselves to make before the world" (Edel, 24). What was the reason Swearingen so staunchly advocated for marginalized populations? When I began presenting aspects of Swearingen's life at academic conferences, this was the question that came up in every session, and one that I was never able to address satisfactorily. Finally, after one unusually intense grilling session, my interrogator just said, "It's masculinity. You need to look at masculinity." They were correct; masculinity was completely infused throughout Southern culture.

Even though a blind man could not perform traditional masculinity, Swearingen found ways to prove himself as a masculine figure: If he could not take up arms to defend his country, he could use his intellect and wits to improve his society. This included paternalistic attitudes towards the marginalized—which addressed the immediate question as I completed the

book. This masculine lens also was at least part the "why" behind his boldness with the GEB; he was proving his masculinity among other men, even via correspondence. Considering the legacy of northern "carpetbaggers" in the state was still fresh during Swearingen's tenure, his resistance to Northern intrusion was just another mark of Southern masculinity. I had a new framework as I revised the dissertation into what would become my first book, expanding the focus to more national in scope and including critical lenses of masculinity and disability into my examination (Janak, 2014).

The brief encounter at a garage sale led me to the GEB. While the GEB was what led me to Swearingen, it was tertiary in his story. I wanted to go back and do a deeper dive; I wanted a scholarly outlet to vent the anger that still emerged when I thought about them. I told myself that someday I would go back and write a scathing indictment of the Board, showing the racism and pecuniarism that dominated the thinking of the wealthy White men on the Board. Achieving tenure and promotion afforded me the opportunity to finally pursue this line of research. At my university at that time, faculty were entitled to a sabbatical semester the year after achieving tenure and promotion. Of course, the first step in research is the literature review; I found an extensive body of literature that essentially justified the anger I felt going through those microfilm reels all those years ago, arguing in various ways that yes, the men who served on the Board were arguably racist and pecuniary in their funding, particularly when analyzed with a presentist lens. Step two of a literature review is finding the research gap: in this case, the literature focused almost exclusively on the African American funding of schools in the Southeast. I was living in the Rocky Mountain West at the time; why not focus my research accordingly?

I developed a broad research question: Did the GEB funding pattern from the Southeast carry over when looking at the Southwest? Were they just as racist when looking at the indigenous of Oklahoma or the Hispanic of New Mexico as they were with African Americans in South Carolina? I submitted my application to the university to pursue an ambitious research agenda, which was successful. I submitted a pair of grants to help defray the costs of my research, which were not successful. I knew I had to start at the Rockefeller Archive; my application was reflective of my anger. Thanks to their policy on allowing anyone in with a genuine research interest (from academics to conspiracy

theorists from all over the globe), the Rockefeller Archive approved my visit, and the next phase of my research trajectory launched.

I spent a month in the Rockefeller Archives engaging in what Paul Murray Kendall (1986) would describe as mapping boundaries—seeing what was there and what was not. Every week that went by I was able to narrow my boundaries more—from the West as a whole to the rocky mountain West, eliminating the Pacific and Midwest regions. I chose three states which had significant people whose lives, personally and professionally, benefitted greatly from GEB funding: Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. I then spent two more months on what I later called my "research road trip," visiting state and university archives in all three states. My positionality changed throughout my research, then shifted back to approaching my original stance (Janak, 2018). My scavenging approach developed in my hectic time researching Swearingen served me well; I was able to collect reams of data, documents, photographs, and stories.

Just as Swearingen led to the launch of my career as an academic—and I arguably would not have earned tenure and promotion without him in my life—so too was he instrumental in my promotion to full professor. My archival work has led to several peer reviewed publications and presentations, enough to warrant my promotion. I continue to mine my data, finalizing a collective biography. It is not hyperbole to say that throughout my scholarly career, I have been led by a man who was blind that helped me see stories that are worth telling.

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Biographical Writing through the Lens of Lawrence A. Cremin's Leadership and Presidency at Teachers College

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Abstract
This article examines the complexities of biographical writing through the lens of Lawrence Cremin's (1925–1990) leadership and presidency at Teachers College, Columbia University. Cremin was president of Teachers College in the period 1974-1984 and a prolific author best known for his three-volume work *American Education* (published between 1970 and 1988). He was also a Professor of Education at Teachers College until his death in 1990. This article explores the subjectivity inherent in biographical writing, focusing on the ways in which archival research and personal reflection influenced the author's evolving perceptions of Cremin. The article begins with a discussion of Cremin's belief in the importance of educational thought that extended beyond formal schooling–an aspect that triggered the author's initial interest in Cremin's life and career. The narrative then focuses on Cremin's presidency during a challenging time for higher education. Analysis revealed that as an institutional leader, Cremin struggled with shared governance approaches and consistently opted for isolated and autonomous administrative decisions rendered with the power of his position as president of the College. Throughout the article, the author describes his gradual discoveries of Cremin's leadership experiences and complex beliefs, and emphasizes the uncertainty inherent in life-writing.

Keywords: Lawrence A. Cremin, Teachers College, higher education leadership, biographical writing, shared governance, presidential power, educational history, archival research

The subjective nature of biographical writing straddles the processes of reconstructing facts about a person's life and those of making complicated choices to highlight actions or traits of the biographical subject within the context of local, national, or international events. My own interest in biographical writing sparked from my desire to author a dissertation about

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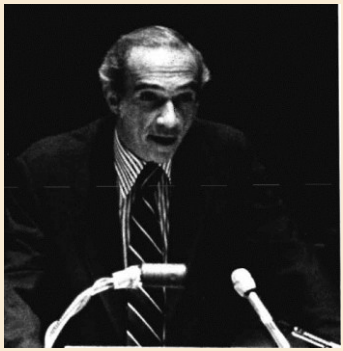
Lawrence Cremin, an educational scholar who also held the presidency at Teachers College in New York City. Cremin started his career as an instructor at Teachers College in 1951. He won the 1962 Bancroft Prize in American History for his book *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957*, published in 1961. The prestigious Bancroft altered his career and gave him a national audience of educators and historians. This led to other prominent works such as his three-volume account of America's educational history: *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607–1783* (1970); *American Education: The National Experience, 1783–1876* (1980); and *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876–1980* (1988). In 1981, he won a Pulitzer Prize for the second entry in the collection. Educational historians and scholars frequently recognize Cremin as a foremost historian of American education.

Cremin's scholarship typically called for a broader view of education by emphasizing that agencies beyond formal schooling, such as families, churches, libraries, museums, publishers, benevolent societies, youth groups, agricultural fairs, radio networks, military organizations, and research institutes, also provide education and are "present in society… at points in time" (Cremin, 1965, p. 48). Cremin's thoughts about other agencies that educate had often piqued my professional interest and fed my wish to learn more about him as I believed his ideas to be practical and relevant. Setting out to chronicle his career, I discovered a digital archive and a special collection at Teachers College, Columbia University that provided a wealth of information about his personal and professional life.

I initially scoured the archives seeking a historical anecdote or artifact that would allow me to construct a captivating narrative about Cremin and his career. I recalled continuously asking myself, "As biographies commemorated athletes, military leaders, musical artists, politicians, and other historical figures then why can't there be more biographies about great educators?" I saw Cremin as one of those great educators. I wanted to find information about Cremin that supported my preconceived belief that he was a great educational thinker. One of the first artifacts I discovered during my initial archival search, an image of him speaking at his first presidential convocation in 1974 (Figure 1), aligned well with the image of Cremin as the great educator that I had in my mind.

The image captures Cremin confidently speaking to an audience of students, faculty, and staff at the all-college convocation. This convocation address marked his first occasion speaking as president of Teachers College, a position he held from 1974 to 1984. After opening his talk with words of appreciation for the opportunity to serve as president, Cremin transitioned to sharing his belief that Teachers College was a supportive and enriching environment. His words also revealed his vision for the College to the attentive crowd:

Figure 1
Cremin Speaking at Convocation, September 12, 1974



Note. Source: Teachers College, Columbia University, Gottesman Libraries Special Collections (Convocation Address, 1974).

> I myself have found Teachers College a superb context in which to do my work. The College has been a source of immense sustenance to me—in colleagueship, in scholarly stimulus, in spiritual support. I have always enjoyed coming here and I have always been proud of being here. And I would hope that everyone at the College would have reason to think and feel the same way. If we are going to lead most or part of our lives here, I would hope we might lead them together with dignity and decency and zest, and with a sense of serving together in a truly great cause. (Convocation Address, 1974)

Cremin's vision was founded on the ideas of serving together and these ideas set the expectation for how the institution would operate during his presidency.

The image of Cremin speaking to his audience, in conjunction with his convocation message, appealed to my interests as a researcher and biographer. The image sparked a strong desire to learn more about Cremin. However, as Cremin's career encompassed a multiplicity of roles and achievements, including those of scholar, educator, and leader, my initial intent to complete a dissertation that covered the entirety of his career increasingly appeared not realistic. The image of his convocation speech helped me refocus my research by narrowing it to the exploration of his leadership and presidency at Teachers College.

I would argue now that as I dug deeper into Cremin's achievements, I increasingly developed a degree of reflexivity into my role of researcher that I brought to the archival search process. As my journey in the archives continued, I recognized that Cremin had a complex, and even flawed, career at times. Cremin's journals provided a valuable source of insights into his experiences and visions. During his 40-year-long career at Teachers College, he journaled well over 1,000 pages. Admittedly, while reading his journal, I had moments where I often felt shocked by his thoughts as they clashed with my own initial image of him as a great educator that I had crafted initially. In an early conversation with my dissertation committee chair about my findings, he quipped, "Perhaps you could title your work *Never Meet Your Heroes*." The comment evoked Thomas Carlyle's Great Man Theory argument, developed in his *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841). Carlyle's theory asserts that history is shaped by exceptional individuals whose actions and leadership influence events that shape society. Although Carlyle's (1840) work has not been widely accepted as rigorous scholarly theory and research and contains obvious gender bias (Spector, 2016, pp. 250–251), his ideas have spread amongst biographers. Biographers often value Carlyle's framework because it emphasizes the impact of how individuals are perceived as extraordinary for shaping history. Thus, with his comment, my dissertation chair evoked an awareness within me that I was still building Cremin as a heroic figure in educational history. In a seminal work on biographical writing, Edel (1959) referred to the biographical subject as the researcher's hero or heroine but cautioned that the biographer had to exercise proper impartiality when conducting research and writing about the subject (pp. 66, 99).

Had I embraced Carlyle (1840) by hero-worshiping Cremin and ignored Edel's (1959) reminder to exercise "proper impartiality" (p. 99), I likely would have provided a simplified understanding of Cremin's multifaceted career that was shaped by the unique circumstances of the historical context influencing his presidency. My first find in the Cremin archives, the image, provided a windowed glimpse into the confidence and ambition he exhibited throughout his life; however, his thoughts, provided in his journals, illuminated how daily financial challenges, that started in the 1970s and continued into the early 1980s, and internal struggles underlined his presidency, effectively reducing his initial pronouncements of shared governance to an uncompromising use of legitimate

power while also rendering his leadership approach to that of an institutional caretaker.

Cremin's Leadership and Presidency at Teachers College

Cremin's presidency occurred during a period of transition for colleges and universities in the United States: the end of higher education's "Golden Age" and the advent of the "age of hardship" (Thelin, 2019, pp. 260–362). In the 1970s, a poor economy strained higher education; reduced government funding, limited financial aid, and rising tuition fees increasingly made it harder for many students to afford college and forced institutional leaders to cut programs and resources. Gerber (2014) argued that the mid-1970s marked a shift in higher education as the rise of a "market model" had eroded faculty governance and empowered administrators to lead with authority (p. 120). This shift clashed with long-standing faculty-driven perspective, championed by organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), that advocated for shared governance as the ideal leadership model in higher education. As early as 1915, AAUP-recommended governance norms established that academics needed autonomy in a shared governance model to conduct their mission; these norms received reinforcement in both the 1940s and the 1970s (Gerber, 2014).

During his own college presidency, Cremin struggled to thrive in a shared governance model and year-after-year preferred to make isolated and autonomous decisions to overcome declining enrollments and decreased operating budgets. He increasingly thought of himself as a president who needed to lead through power as he worked to keep Teachers College operational through annual economic struggles. The institution faced financial difficulties throughout the 1970s and 1980s. From 1977 to 1981, Cremin consistently reported to the board the ever-present and dire financial situation facing Teachers College. He reported that the 1976–1977 budget had "estimated deficit of $1.4–$1.5 million" and "$1.8–$1.9 million for 1977–78" ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1975a, p. 2). Cremin also shared with the trustees that a "strain" had overtaken Teachers College causing an "inevitable concomitant of decremental budgeting" ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1977b, p. 3). In addition, Cremin remained committed to his scholarly

work, and often wished he could assume a president-scholar role to combine his passion for scholarship with leadership. Often, his desire to pursue his academic research projects clashed with his efforts to fulfill his obligations as Teachers College's president.

In my exploration of Cremin's leadership and presidency of Teachers College, I decided to follow Cremin's own description of his leadership journey. In his journal, Cremin discussed his presidency under three formative periods: a "honeymoon period" that started in 1974 and ended in 1976; "the real presidency" period that started in 1977 and ended in 1981; and a "leaving the presidency" period that started in 1982 and ended in 1984 (Cremin 1972–1978; Cremin, 1978–1985). Cremin's ten-year presidency revealed that he viewed himself as only answerable to himself and his scholarly interests.

1974 to 1976: "The Honeymoon Period"

Cremin's presidency during the "honeymoon period" was shaped by economic challenges, labor strikes, and a rift with the board and faculty, all of which solidified his view that strong and decisive leadership was necessary. Cremin's decision-making approach soon emphasized his belief in exercising presidential power without extensive consultation from colleagues. His early efforts to occupy two leadership positions at the College simultaneously–that of the president and that of the academic dean–signaled his inherent desire for centralized authority. In addition, his handling of labor negotiations between the board and faculty highlighted his preference for authoritative leadership and reflected his own evolving understanding of the presidency as one that required solitary decisions.

When Cremin became president of Teachers College in 1974, the previous dean had just left his position. That created an opportunity for Cremin to either hire a new dean or consolidate authority. As president, Cremin provided leadership for the entire College whereas the dean held responsibility over decisions for the College's academic divisions (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 87). While publicly advocating for collaborative leadership among campus constituents, Cremin privately believed that holding both positions would enable him to implement his educational vision more effectively and find time

to continue with his writing and publishing efforts. As a result, he also stepped into the dean's position on an interim basis right at the onset of his presidency.

His interim role as dean quickly reinforced his belief that he could best lead the College's academic initiatives if he continued serving as both president and dean. From his perspective, he had "been doing it de facto" or, covering the responsibilities of both roles since becoming president; the combined dual responsibilities would "help get things done" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 88). Cremin actively politicked with faculty to garner support for his plan to officially, through board approval, assume the permanent deanship of Teachers College (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 88). Building on his rationale for holding both positions, Cremin also began to leverage his authority to implement changes with the College's structure. As the "de facto" dean, Cremin (1972–1978) noted that he appointed "a younger professor to a leadership responsibility with pre-service programs" (p. 98), a move that exemplified his use of legitimate power. He then candidly offered his thoughts about the decision: "THAT'S THE GOOD USE OF PRESEDENTIAL POWER–to get good things going" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 89; capitals in original). His emphasis on the use of presidential power, noted in his journal in all capital letters, indicated early on how he would lead Teachers College throughout his presidency.

Cremin might have seen himself as a president who valued teamwork and shared power, but he believed that strong leadership meant having the authority to produce results. In February 1975, he used a board meeting to formally propose that his role be expanded to officially include the deanship, which he had been holding on an interim basis for several months. He felt the leadership structure was too complicated, with too many layers between the professors, chairs, directors, dean, and president ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1975a, p. 2). When speaking to the board, Cremin brushed aside concerns from the faculty that he would "end up with too little challenge to his views" as other institutional leaders could "feel free to express their views" ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1975a, p. 3). He also suggested that if permanently appointed dean, Provost Kenneth Toepfer would take on the administrative leadership over the College, thereby balancing Cremin's own power as president and dean ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1975a, p. 4). The board agreed, passing a resolution that officially gave Cremin both the presidency and the deanship.

Cremin's desire to hold the dean's responsibility over the College's academic side, alongside his role as president, linked to his scholarship aspirations. The scholar Cremin valued academic freedom, intellectual growth, and the advancement of knowledge, particularly in his field of education. He wanted to establish and exemplify his own scholarly success for faculty and students to follow. He saw himself as a president-scholar. Publicly, Cremin embraced an educational vision for Teachers College as a campus where partners worked together; privately, however, Cremin enacted a leadership style in which he served in two senior leadership positions. Cremin acknowledged that prior leadership had handed him "a strong and vigorous institution… that has drawn the strength from the courage and integrity of its leadership" (Convocation Address, 1974, p. 2). At the end of his "first hundred days" as president, he concluded that the strong institutional leadership he inherited should fall under his authority (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 87). The economic pitfalls that plagued Teachers College in his early presidency pushed Cremin to constantly make decisions for the College's financial viability that further distanced him from shared leadership practices. He recognized the economic despair early with his "first hundred days" report to the trustees at the December board meeting in 1974. He anticipated that the approaching budgetary constraints dictated a "need for 100 to 150 additional full-time students in the 1975–1976 academic year" ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1974, p. 10). The stagnant economy and looming labor strikes narrowed Cremin's decision-making to mostly himself. The economic challenges, and his desire to focus on his own scholarship, quickly stretched him thin. With so much time spent managing the College's financial crises he found himself unable to dedicate enough time to his research and writing, which made holding both the president and dean positions untenable. Faced with this reality, Cremin decided to relinquish the deanship after only a few months of combining the position with his presidency.

Labor challenges also played a key role in his decision to give up the deanship. Throughout 1975, economic challenges sparked a potential strike for the Teachers College Employees Association (TCEA). The College petitioned to end TCEA's attempts to align with a local Distributive Workers of America (DWA) affiliate that the National Labor Relations Board (NRLB) sanctioned ("TCEA, District 65 Affiliation Vote Upheld," 1975). Cremin (1972–1978)

observed that "the union situation has heated up" (p. 90). In addition to the TCEA, The Teachers College Maintenance Employee Association (TCMEA) threatened to strike if "their negotiations did not come soon" ("TCEA, District 65 Affiliation Vote Upheld," 1975). Cremin initially refused to enter contract talks but agreed to enter negotiations with the NLRB decision ("TCEA, District 65 Affiliation Vote Upheld," 1975).

Cremin embraced his presidential authority when entering negotiations with each labor association. He "ordered" College officials to not "openly discuss the negotiations" when questioned by media ("TC Union Fails to Vote on Strike as Talks Continue," 1975). He worked with the College's legal counsel but failed to provide details to the trustees on his agreement with TCMEA. The trustees' subsequent reaction to his admission "astounded" Cremin (1972–1978); they "gave us hell," he journaled (p. 92). He believed the trustees' disapproval he received was linked to "a whopping $12 tuition increase" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 92). He failed to consider that not keeping the board informed about the TCMEA agreement bothered the trustees. Cremin (1972–1978) dismissed their perspective: "It was all very decent in style, I guess, but they and I were a million miles apart in view" (p. 92).

With the TCEA strike a real possibility, Cremin operated with a belief that his presidential responsibility dictated that he resolves the situation to "keep the college open and solvent" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 95). However, throughout the negotiations with the unions, especially at times when they became rather taxing, he placed his own personal reputation as a scholar above his presidential and deanship duties. He worried that if he settled with TCEA, then "the propaganda may be put out to the effect that the president of TC came begging for settlement" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 95). As a result, he chose to avoid speaking publicly to the media, fearing that any public statements could further damage his credibility, especially as TCEA members "voted overwhelmingly to strike March 17, 1975, if agreement on a new pact… not reached" ("Clerical Workers Could Walk Out," 1975).

Cremin also made other decisions single-handedly. He initially agreed to by-pass a federal mediator and discuss the union's demands ("Union Leaders, TC President Meet to Negotiate New Pact," 1975). A week later, however, Cremin publicly communicated to the board that "the Association and the College were still far apart on terms" and he decided upon federal mediation

("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1975b, p. 2). At the final board meeting on May 8, 1975, he did not discuss the negotiations and instead focused on educational happenings at the College. Cremin admitted a rare moment of humility, acknowledging that he struggled to balance his dual roles: "I failed on organized research and field education," he confessed, suggesting that his attempt to juggle both the presidency and the deanship had undermined his focus on academic priorities (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 100). The board laughed when Cremin used the word "failure" as a concept applicable to him (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 100). Their laughter signaled their awareness of Cremin's typical lack of ability to admit professional faults. He then informed the trustees of his decision to officially relinquish the deanship and hire a new dean although he kept his true motivation of wanting to focus more on his own scholarship a secret.

Cremin's approach to hiring a new dean further illustrated his belief in centralized decision-making power. Although he was required throughout 1975 to meet with a "committee elected by the faculty to consult on the deanship" (Cremin, 1972–1978, pp. 113–114), his collaboration with this committee was flawed from the outset. Rather than work with the committee on the search, Cremin ultimately canceled all scheduled meetings with them (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 114) and single-handedly decided on the new dean appointee. By February 18, 1976, news that Harold Noah secured the deanship spread ("TC Professor Named School's Dean," 1976). Despite selecting a candidate while mostly bypassing the committee process, Cremin believed that the committee gave him "enthusiastic" support for hiring Noah (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 116).

On February 19, 1976, College constituents questioned Cremin's use of presidential authority. Cremin felt he operated within his presidential purview and decided on February 29 "to face the issue of the Deanship head on" by reviewing the procedure with faculty that allowed him to nominate Noah to the trustees (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 118). The institution's College Policy Council (CPC) and budget council, as the *Spectator* reported, criticized Cremin's use of power and decision to select Noah from within the College as a result of a less-than-optimal search procedure ("TC Policy Council Assails Dean Selection Process," 1976). Cremin did not shy from the criticism: When asked outright for his own opinion on what consultation should entail, Cremin declared that the "initiative" to choose the new dean "is mine… and consultation is to see if my

opinion is shared" ("TC Policy Council Assails Dean Selection Process," 1976). Cremin's remarks countered prevailing sentiment that leadership in higher education was focused on "collaborating with others and sharing power" (Kezar et al., 2006). He clarified that as president, he held the authority to make the decision at the expense of an inclusive committee search process.

Cremin realized that the "Spectator, the Columbia student newspaper" had "got wind of it" regarding his decision to hire a dean without the committee's involvement (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 117; underlining in original). He also noted in his private journal that the concerns raised by campus groups and the student senate, regarding "views on inflation" and tuition increases, and questioning whether Noah had the necessary qualifications for deanship, as bothersome to him (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 117). The criticism seriously bothered Cremin and sparked pensive self-reflection about his leadership and presidency. He (1972–1978) noted: "it could have been anything" but "it was the consultation on the deanship that did it" (p.116); for him "The 'honeymoon' period of the presidency was put behind" him (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 117). At that point, Cremin (1972–1978) was now clear on how he intended to lead: "One might proceed thoughtfully, without haste, and according to certain principles and goals–and then so be it… And that's what the presidency has been and… shaping up to be" (p. 132). He realized the presidency often entailed prioritizing administrative work over scholarship. In his words, "the real presidency began" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 116).

1977 to 1981: "The Real Presidency"

During "the real presidency" years, Cremin faced continuous financial challenges and dire budget deficits. As the College grappled with financial struggles, Cremin's leadership approach continued to reflect a more authoritarian stance and prioritized executive decisions over collaboration. He abandoned his leadership responsibilities during the summer months to complete scholarly work. He recognized discontent existed among the faculty and staff, but he remained resolute in his decision to lead on his own terms even if it meant disregarding shared power. Cremin's "real presidency" was marked by tension between financial challenges, his personal scholarly goals, and his increasing preference for unilateral leadership.

From 1977 to 1981, Cremin consistently reported to the board the ever-present and dire financial situation facing Teachers College. He reported that the 1976–1977 budget had "estimated deficit of $1.4–$1.5 million" and "$1.8–$1.9 million for 1977–78" ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1977a, p. 2). Cremin informed the trustees that a "strain" had overtaken Teachers College that caused an "inevitable concomitant of decremental budgeting in an institution where creative individuals honestly disagree on the best ways to solve problems" ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1977b, p. 3). The gloomy financial situation further affected Cremin's approach to leading.

The persistent financial struggles and demands on the College underlined his "real presidency" period. Cremin (1978–1985a) frequently developed plans to deal with projected deficits: cut expenditures, decrease employee raises, and ask the trustees to accept operating deficits "all the while increasing tuition" (p. 100). He recognized the administrative doldrums of budget management to the point where he described it as an "almost novel situation" when only managing the budget controlled his workday (Cremin, 1978–1985a, p. 78). Cremin described his presidency and leadership for the College during this period of budgetary constraints as "to be a steadying, encouraging influence amidst much gloom" (Cremin, 1978–1985a, p. 67). However, amidst the economic uncertainties afflicting Teachers College, Cremin did not always exhibit characteristics attributed to a "steadying, encouraging" leader. He routinely vacated Teachers College during the summer months of his "real presidency" period to focus on completing his *American Education* trilogy. In 1979, he even documented spending "16 hours a day" to finish *The National Experience* (Cremin, 1978–1985a, p. 54).

Cremin was keenly aware that his colleagues often disagreed with his decisions and frequent absences from Teachers College. He acknowledged that some faculty members considered his actions "foolhardy" and felt he "wasn't really consulting, or rather… wasn't consulting seriously enough with the faculty" (Cremin, 1972–1978, pp. 140, 143). Even after negotiating pay raises for faculty with the board, Cremin struggled to understand his colleagues' concerns, especially since he had successfully negotiated on their behalf. In his journal, he questioned, "If not the President, then by whom?" (p. 147). This rhetorical question underscored his frustration, implying that if he, as president, was not making the hard decision, no one else would. His journal entries

indicated that he viewed himself as the ultimate authority in such matters. This sense of isolation in decision-making led to frustrations with leadership: "I am forcefully turned to other people's agenda" (Cremin, 1972–1978, pp. 150). As he navigated the "real presidency" period between 1977 and 1981, Cremin resolved to lead on his own terms, prioritizing his vision over the input of others.

In January 1978, an ordinary circumstance solidified Cremin's resolution. A call to serve on jury duty required him to spend a month away from Teachers College. The way in which the judge managed the courtroom during the civic obligation gave him an example of effective conduct and helped him justify his own approach to leadership (Cremin 1972–1978, p. 159). Reflecting on the experience, Cremin (1972–1978) wrote, "I don't know why it happened, but I suddenly realized, more clearly than I have at any time since 1974, that, like that judge, I'm in charge" (p. 160). The courtroom setting encouraged him to be honest with himself about his leadership style: he preferred to lead with confidence and power.

Observing the judge evoked a realization that he did not think about leadership as an inclusive process. The moment affirmed to him that he wanted to lead on his terms: "I can go at my own pace; I can do the things I want to do and not be programmed by every subordinate" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 160). He purposed to "listen and then deny or uphold–quietly… and decisively" and to worry "much much less… about what anybody and everybody thinks" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 160). He grew tired of listening to suggestions from peers and the administrative politics he felt the trustees, faculty, or other constituents had prioritized over his own presidential goals. Cremin (1972–1978) described the way in which a leader should make decisions in the following way: "one doesn't need to listen to every harebrained idea and try to give some satisfaction on it" (pp. 160–161).

Cremin's leadership insights during his jury duty experience also accommodated his long-held ambition, first developed in 1974, to blend the roles of president and scholar. As Cremin explained, "those lawyers and that judge would think a person an idiot who did not hold onto the power he had and make the most of it" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 161). He affirmed to himself, "And at this point, that's precisely what I plan to do–and write my books and continue with my scholarship–my way" (p. 161). Cremin knew he wanted to

balance his administrative responsibilities with a commitment to his scholarly pursuits and keep contributing to the academic mission of Teacher's College. Cremin put his resolve into action during a February 1978 board meeting.

Cremin reported to the trustees that he intended to lead with increased authority. He invoked the Teachers College statutes from 1972 that required him, as president, to uphold "inclusive, consensual policymaking," in which the "entire TC community participates" ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1978, p. 3), to be antiquated. He informed the board that he planned to use the statutory powers of administration that had "long gone unused" and that as a result "a measure of conflict within the College" would ensue ("Executive Committee Meeting Minutes," 1978, p. 4). Subsequent "conflict within the College" did not matter to Cremin. He never intended to appease faculty, staff, or students with an "inclusive, consensual" leadership conduct; he would rather manage the College authoritatively in order to open his own time to author books. He did not report to the trustees that his scholarly goals shaped his intentions to lead using statutory powers. In many ways, he was not looking to merge his administrative and academic responsibilities; instead, he sought more time to reconnect with his passion for writing and scholarship.

Cremin admittedly feigned inclusivity when navigating decision-making at Teachers College. He did not mind if his authoritative approach caused him "to take some brickbats" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 162). When faculty had needs, he contrived an inclusive decision-making scenario: "I told the faculty… to bring forward a proposal to get such a group" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 163). While doing so, Cremin dismissed "fury from those who thought I should have consulted them" about his directives (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 163). He did not concern himself with any challenges to his presidential power: "My style <u>is</u> one of belief in certain ideals at the heart of what this college means, so I might but stay true to my style" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 164; underlining in original). He convinced himself that his leadership style best suited Teachers College. In his journal, he outright rejected leadership as an inclusive process:

> It's a favorite trick–to 'involve' everyone. And it does work. But it is <u>not</u> my style. And when one sets it in motion one can only 'accept' the ideas that come out of it and one is then stuck those ideas, whether or not one wants to lead in those particular directions. (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 164)

His reflections confirmed his intentions to use statutory powers developed from

a need to sway from "the fairly Byzantine consultative arrangements at the College" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 165). He used "Byzantine" to exemplify that he did not want his leadership and presidency to comprise excessively complicated and administrative detail as guided by inclusive and shared leadership practices.

In late 1978, Cremin reflected on his presidency in his journals, revealing a lack of awareness regarding how others perceived his leadership. He noted with a touch of frustration: "No one… freely comes out and expresses any kind of appreciation for leadership… To write the words seems foolish on the face of it–appreciation for leadership, ha!" (Cremin, 1978–1985a, p. 27). He seemed disconnected from the tension within the College. He overlooked the fact that his authoritative leadership style likely fueled dissent. Instead of recognizing that his colleagues did not oppose leadership itself as a concept, he failed to recognize that their concerns were more personal and directed at his specific approach to leadership and decision-making.

1982 to 1984: "Leaving the Presidency"

Cremin always knew that his post-presidency plans would include research and writing. He referred to a continued interest in scholarly work without presidential obligations stating that he was "quite prepared to go back to being plain vanilla" (Cremin, 1978–1985a, p. 160). He also remained open to staying in leadership after the presidency: "I do think about the possibility for 1984 or 1985, after the TC presidency" (Cremin, 1978–1985a, p. 173). His interest in scholarly work and a potential leadership role branched from his original intent to lead Teachers College as a president-scholar. He never wanted to stop researching, writing, and publishing. In August 1982, his choice to leave the presidency became more concrete: "I announce my intention to step down from the presidency at the end of the 1983–1984 academic year" (Cremin, 1978–1985b, p. 1). By December 1982, he privately told many board members that he planned to resign (Cremin, 1978–1985b, p. 22).

Once Cremin (1978–1985b) finalized the decision, he formulated how the process would work: inform the trustees… and give faculty time "for whatever business it will need to transact in connection with the search" (p. 24). He informed the trustees about his resignation and retirement at the February

1983 board meeting and journaled on February 9, 1983, that they "approved the plan" to "step down from the presidency at the end of the 1984 summer session" (Cremin, 1978–1985b, p. 45). On February 14, the greater community learned about Cremin's plans: "he would retire from his post in September 1984 to resume teaching on a full-time basis" ("Cremin to Retire from TC Presidency," 1983). He eagerly wanted to return to teaching, and mostly his scholarship.

Cremin often viewed leadership throughout his presidency as inextricably linked to power, yet his resignation revealed a more complex set of motivations that contradicted his earlier desire to maintain that power. In a written statement to the trustees, he explained his decision to step down stating: "I have long held firm convictions about the advantages of frequent changes in officeholders and feel strongly that too many college presidents who survive beyond the usual half-life of four or five years end up remaining in the job too long" ("Cremin to Retire from TC Presidency," 1983). This reasoning presented a general belief about leadership term limits, but Cremin's journals revealed a deeper, more personal reason for staying in the position longer than he possibly intended. In one atypical journal entry, he reflected on his father's expectations, noting that he stayed in the presidency not just out of ambition for power but also out of a desire for his father's approval. After informing his father of his decision to resign, Cremin wrote, "I never thought he'd acquiesce for a moment in me… stepping down from any position of power or authority" (Cremin, 1978–1985b, p. 52). While he espoused the belief that presidents should not remain in office beyond five years, this "firm conviction" did not prevent him from holding the presidency for a decade. His decision to stay longer was influenced not only by his own drive for power, but also by his belief that his father wanted him to remain in the role.

Over a year after his official resignation, Cremin began to settle into the feeling that his presidency would be ending. On April 9, 1984, he penned in his journal: "Today is… a beautifully sunny spring day and the college is delightfully calm… I have the feeling that I'm really getting out of the TC presidency" (Cremin, 1978–1985b, p. 143). By May 23, he "cleaned off" his desk and observed: "It doesn't take long really to get back into the delights of thinking and writing" (Cremin, 1978–1985b, p. 149). August 1984 marked his final month as president of Teachers College after serving in the position for a decade.

Cremin's Presidential Leadership and Biographical Writing: Concluding Remarks

From 1974 to 1984, Cremin presented himself publicly as an intellectual leading Teachers College "in a truly great cause" to influence educational scholarship and practices (Convocation Address, 1974). He ascended to the presidency as an academic who compiled an impressive scholarly reputation while bypassing other leadership posts such as provost or dean. It made sense that he remained interested in scholarship and wanted it to guide his presidency, but as an institutional leader, he had to give more attention to budgetary challenges that shaped his leadership decisions. His leadership and presidency did not transcend beyond functional duties because Cremin did not lead with agency, creativity, or vision. His award-winning scholarship did not mirror his rather myopic presidency. Cremin's ten-year presidency revealed that he exercised a caretaker approach to attend to presidential formalities.

Cremin believed that he had an unequivocal and legitimate power as president of Teachers College. He exercised pragmatism in thinking that his legitimate power attached to the formal authority given to him. Cremin "internalized values about legitimate power… in which the power is very similar to the notion of… authority" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 159). By way of holding the presidency, Cremin believed that he should have legitimate power even if not aligning with the prescribed behavior of shared governance in higher education.

Cremin's actions in his early presidency started his detachment from shared-leadership governance. He failed to keep the trustees apprised when handling strikes between different Teachers College constituent groups. He also failed to keep the board informed when he wanted to increase tuition and he bypassed the College traditional practices and Policy Council, comprising staff, faculty, and students, in the appointment of Harold Noah as dean. He increasingly became absent from presidential duties during this period as exemplified by spending summers working on his *American Education* trilogy.

The criticisms Cremin received related to a struggling budget, potential strikes, and the Noah deanship appointment solidified how he wanted to practice leadership. He ascertained that he no longer needed "universal approval" to "please everyone" which marked his commitment to legitimate

power as authoritative. Cremin described his changing leadership thoughts as the start of the "real presidency" (Cremin, 1972–1978, p. 116). What Cremin identified as his "real presidency" was the exercise of legitimate power as "not only as a basis for the power of an agent, but also to describe the general behaviors of a person" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 161). His actions affirmed that he behaved within his perceived purview for using legitimate power as the president of Teachers College.

It is crucial to consider the context of the decade for which Cremin's presidency occurred in order to understand his resolve to conduct an authoritative presidential leadership style based on legitimate power. His presidency exemplified the changing landscape of declining enrollments prevalent in higher education throughout the 1970s. The stagnant U.S. economy and lower enrollment numbers resulted in a diminished budget for Teacher College. This historical context meant that Cremin had to increasingly focus on the financial bottom line and administratively make decisions based on budgetary constraints.

My approach to this study attempted to honor Edel's (1959) call to "search for the figure under the carpet" when reconstructing Cremin's leadership in the context of the economic challenges that he faced (p. 29). As an educational biographer, I had to "discover certain keys to the deeper truths" about Cremin as the subject (Edel, 1959, p. 29). The tapestry about his life and educational career had been known even before his death in 1990: a lauded author, Cremin achieved scholarly success when writing about educational history in America and successfully leading Teachers College through economic challenges. At his memorial service, Harold Noah spoke about Cremin's presidency:

> By 1976 a severe downturn in enrollments and external funding hit the College, as it hit every other school of education… and lasted for virtually the entire… year of Larry's presidency. The debt College owes to Larry… is that his leadership pulled us through that bad patch, and secured our future not just in terms of bare, meager survival but in splendidly good order, with a College ready to prosper. (Noah, 1990)

Noah captured the context for Cremin's leadership and presidency from 1974 to 1984, but failed to capture Cremin's tendency to lead with positional power.

When writing my dissertation, I initially hoped to use the first image I found to craft a biography that celebrated Cremin's educational achievements. I also envisioned concluding his career narrative on a positive note by focusing on a successful milestone or event from his presidency. Cremin certainly played a key role in keeping Teachers College operational during financial struggle, but I ultimately realized that no single defining moment from his career emerged as an ideal conclusion for his story. Oates (1991) cautioned that life-writing was not that simple. He believed that when a biographer undertakes life-writing, "we offer the people of history… understanding… and then if all goes well, they (biographical subjects) step forward, out of the mist" (Oates, 1991, p. 33). Bringing Cremin "out of the mist" meant that I made interpretations that might negatively reflect on him as a leader or person. I, however, did so while accounting for how the historical context of 1970s economic challenges shaped his leadership choices and presidency. My read of Cremin's presidential leadership was part of the life-writing journey, and, in Kridel's (2020) words on biographical writing, a "high adventure" (p. 11). Adventure, after all, is also part of a life lived.

Two days prior to the heart attack that ended his life, Cremin journaled for the final time, on Sunday, September 2, 1990. He discussed personal exchanges with peers about publishing opportunities and recorded his research efforts for a book about Dewey. Cremin (1985–1990b) noted the hiring of Thomas Bailey in 1990 as "a new young economist" and "nice addition to the college" (p. 75). Bailey, inaugurated in 2018, is the current president of Teachers College (as of 2025). After Bailey joined Teachers College, Cremin agreed to do a write-up about him for the American Educational Research Association (AERA) convention in April 1991. Cremin (1985–1990b) penned the final three words in his journals about the opportunity to do the write-up: "Might be fun" (p. 75).

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The Road Less Travelled: L.L. Nunn and the Birth of the Nunnian Microcollege

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Abstract
This paper examines the historical roots of the microcollege movement focusing on the establishment of the first microcollege institutions: the Telluride Institute (1891), the Telluride Association (1910), and the Deep Springs College (1917). These microcollege-type institutions were founded by the eccentric Gilded Age energy tycoon L.L. Nunn. While Nunn's educational ventures often reflected broad trends in higher education at the time, his core educational principles evolved over his career. This paper argues that the concurrent application of Nunn's four primary principles of education (self-government, intellectual and academic rigor, physical work, and societal isolation), which evolved gradually to receive full expression at Deep Springs College, represents not only a divergence from higher education trends of the time, but also provides an opportunity for scholars of higher education today to reconsider the fundamental principles of higher education in a modern democratic setting.

Keywords: Microcollege movement, L.L. Nunn, Deep Springs College, Telluride Institute, Telluride Association, alternative higher education, Progressive Era education, educational innovation

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I–
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
–Robert Frost, 1916

Since the turn of the 20th century, there has been a general movement towards the organizational and curricular homogenization of colleges and

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universities in the United States. Writing over 40 years ago, Birnbaum (1983) noted that "[it] appears that the higher education system has used the vast increases in resources [diverted towards higher education following the Second World War] primarily to replicate existing forms...rather than to create new ones" (p. 144). As higher education faces a looming "enrollment cliff," due to declining national fertility rates, institutions around the county are desperate to differentiate themselves from the masses as they fight for survival (Copley & Douthett, 2020, p. 22). Many education leaders have turned to the future for a solution, looking to leverage innovative technology and eschewing traditional standards to appeal to the modern college student. This paper turns instead to the past, to examine a road less travelled in the field of higher education. The history and theoretical underpinnings of the Nunnian microcollege movement provide a rarely studied example of an alternative approach to higher education, with roots in both traditional American liberal arts education and Progressive Era teaching philosophies. This paper argues that L.L. Nunn's early institutes in the developing American West and his "magnum opus" Deep Springs College in rural California represent a series of successful experiments in higher education worth examining for their modern applications. This historically-grounded analysis suggests that the Nunnian microcollege movement holds valuable insights for niche groups and investors willing to participate in the rejuvenation of modern American higher education.

Figure 1
L.L. Nunn, Circa 1900.

Note. Source: Deep Springs College Archive. https://archive.deepsprings.edu/items/show/587

Lucien Lucius Nunn, better known as L.L. Nunn, was a leading innovator during the American Gilded Age (Figure 1). Following a rigorous education in the classical liberal curriculum of Oberlin College and a brief stint dabbling in the study of law at Harvard University, Nunn became a significant investor and market leader in hydroelectric power in the developing West–especially in Utah, Colorado, and Idaho (Bailey, 1933, p. 23; Lovin, 2008, pp. 138–142). A doggedly energetic man, Nunn fully embodied the spirit of entrepreneurial success that characterized the

last quarter of the 19th century often known in America as the "Gilded Age." Nunn leveraged his experience in hydroelectric power and business acumen to eventually found the Telluride Power Company, one of the primary drivers of the advent of the "Electricity Age" in the American West (Anderson & Diehl, 2004, pp. 12–13; Lovin, 2008, p. 139). Whether one considers him a savvy businessman or a robber baron, Nunn was a shrewd industrialist who sought to monopolistically corner various energy markets to ensure stability in his enterprises.

While most of his eclectic energy went into expanding his hydroelectric empire, Nunn showed interest in education for the modern leader from an early age. Throughout his life, he experimented with several forms of managerial training and educational sponsorship. He eventually sold most of his hydroelectric empire for nearly $2 million dollars in 1912 (Bailey, 1933, pp. 94–95; Lovin, 2008; "The Life of L.L. Nunn," 2003). Though he continued to dabble in electrical companies for a few more years, Nunn turned most of "his energy and financial resources to establishing unique educational institutions in which to train people for the electrical industry" (Lovin, 2008, p. 147). While many of these efforts were short-lived, Nunn's educational legacy endured throughout the 20th century and reemerges in the 21st century as an inspiration for those disenchanted with current trends in American higher education.

Nunn's first foray into education was something of a fusion of managerial and technical training. The school, initially referred to as the Telluride Institute, opened first at the Bear Creek Mill, one of Nunn's mining sites just outside of Telluride, Colorado, in 1891 (Britton, 1972; "The Life of L.L. Nunn," 2003). As part of this experimental institute, Nunn's mining company organized a course "to provide training in shop work, wiring, and insulation" for local young men who were interested in working as operators, or "pinheads", at one of the company's power plants (Bailey, 1933, p. vi; Britton, 1972, pp. 190–191). As Britton (1972) further describes, to support the students in this course, the Institute assembled a technical library and test room in the first days of the school. While the institute initially focused almost exclusively on technical training, Nunn soon promoted the inclusion of a more traditional liberal arts curriculum. This curricular development contributed to the growth of the Institute in 1904, when Nunn moved most of the educational operations to one of his hydroelectric facilities, the Olmstead Power Station just outside of

Provo, Utah. This structure of the institute in Utah resembled more closely the traditional colleges of the day, complete with classrooms, laboratories, a library, and living quarters for the students. The institute closed in 1912 by the new management after Nunn sold his stake in the Telluride Power Company (Bailey, 1933, p. 101; Britton, 1972).

As Nunn's involvement in his power companies began to diminish, the depth of his interest in education increased. His early educational investments, such as the Telluride Institute, were directly tied to his interest in having well-trained men of character to work at his hydroelectric facilities (Bailey, 1933, pp. 28–29). Nunn's early efforts reflect a broader trend in American higher education in the latter half of the 20th century of investing in what Geiger (2000) calls "multipurpose colleges" (p. 128). Geiger notes that "even as classical colleges of the traditional type continued to be founded," these new "multipurpose colleges...adapted their degree courses in the face of an expanding academic knowledge base, eclectic student constituencies, and emerging markets for practical, vocational skills" (Geiger, 2000, p. 128). While Progressive educators such as John Dewey and David Snedden debated the appropriate application of the scientific method in the sphere of education, colleges responded to the scientific trends of the late Gilded Age and early Progressive Era by emphasizing vocational education and an increasingly granular specialization of study (Labaree, 2010, pp. 163–165). As Labaree notes, the dominant Progressive Era view of education, the so-called "social efficiency" view, held that education is primarily a "social investment in the social and human capital needed for a healthy and productive society" (p. 169). Nunn's elevation of managerial training to the level of a formal college venture well reflected the spirit of the Progressive Era.

If Nunn's first foray into education reflected the dominant trends of higher education of the day with its emphasis on specialized technical training, Nunn's educational ventures in the latter years of his life returned to a version of the classical liberal arts education of his youth. An example of this turn materialized in 1910, when Nunn founded and began constructing a residential house at Cornell University as part of a broader initiative to invest in potential future leaders at some of the nation's most influential universities (Lovin, 2008). In sponsoring a house on the campus of a prominent university, Nunn hoped

to give his more advanced students from the Telluride Institute the "advantages of residence and study at a university" (Bailey, 1933, p. 98).

The following year, in 1911, Nunn committed most of his fortune to a perpetual trust to help fund the establishment and ongoing operation of the Telluride Association, an organization that formalized a social program for the residents of the house at Cornell that supported young people who desired to "pursue their ideals with practical and responsible action" ("About Us," 2009). In part founded by Nunn to showcase his unique educational philosophy in action, the house and associated programming was intended to give its residents a "release from all material concern, a background of culture, the responsibility of managing their own household, and the opportunity to live and learn from resident faculty members and eminent visitors" (Morris, 1962, p. 410). Still active today, the Association's mission is "to prepare and inspire promising students to lead and serve through free, transformative educational experiences rooted in critical thinking and democratic community" ("About Us," 2024). This move back toward the established liberal arts tradition of the East Coast was a notable shift away from the so-called "multipurpose college" movement that was especially prevalent in the West. As Harper (1905) argued, around the turn of the 20th century, the colleges of the American West were generally of a decidedly more "modern" spirit than their Eastern counterparts, due to their rejection of particularly "medieval" constructs that still held many traditional universities captive (pp. 142–143). Having experienced both educational traditions, Nunn sought to delicately navigate the ideological divide to draw the best from each world.

While Nunn was initially inspired to support higher education to develop more capable managers, his passionate study of the nature of academic inquiry gradually shifted his utilitarian view of education over the course of his life. This change in emphasis, from a technically oriented managerial training purpose to a broader investment in developing cultural leaders through a classical liberal arts education, was gradual but intentional. As longtime scholar of Nunn and his educational experiments L. Jackson Newell notes (2015), following the establishment of his first institutes, Nunn's "educational vision evolved into a passion for developing societal leaders and furthering what he termed 'the moral order of the universe' through a rigorous combination of liberal arts and practical training" (p. 35). As seen in the growth and expansion

of the initial Telluride Institute and in the increasing complexity of his educational ventures, Nunn's perception of what it took to properly educate young leaders advanced as his own understanding of learning progressed.

By the late 1910s, as Nunn grew increasingly fascinated with higher education, his apprehensions for the existing higher education approaches grew as well. His "overriding concern was with the [perceived lack of] development of courageous leadership in American society. He saw in the traditional American colleges and universities deplorable academic standards, lopsided curricula, and frivolous activities" (Newell, 1982, p. 122). For Nunn, college should address the whole of a man and not just his intellect. Thus, by the founding of Deep Springs College in 1917, Nunn's educational philosophy ultimately boiled down to an idealistic preparation for social participation and leadership. He felt that "education…must be dedicated to developing in a young man what the world needs in him, namely, responsibility, initiative, and leadership. Learning and intellectual training are of great value, but only when they are the tools of these characteristics" (Kimpton, 1937, p. 533).

Nunn's first attempt at founding a formal "microcollege" on these principles occurred in Virginia in 1916. Within a short time, however, the institution floundered as almost the entirety of the prospective class pursued military service due to the impending threat of World War I (Bailey, 1933, pp. 102–103). Undeterred by this failure, Nunn purchased a working ranch in remote east-central California and founded Deep Springs Collegiate and Preparatory (Bailey, 1933, p. 103; Newell, 1982, p. 122). Inspired by ideals of a meritocratic society, Nunn crafted a unique educational institution where student's "character would [be] strengthened not only by reading great literature, but also by real struggles with ethical issues and economic necessities" (Newell, 1982, p. 122). Launched as a two-year program with approximately 20 students, the College quietly established itself as one of the most unique experiments in American higher education (Newell, 1982, p. 122; Figure 2). Today, over a century later, the College's enrollment remains around two dozen, admitting a tiny fraction of hundreds of interested applicants (Samuels, 2023). From its inception, Nunn wanted students from any background or social class to be able to attend Deep Springs, and tuition has always been fully covered by his generous founding endowment and later gifts (Newell et al., 1993, p. 24).

The continuation of founding principles and methods is a defining element of Deep Springs College. Speaking 20 years after the initial founding of Deep Springs, President Lawrence A. Kimpton extensively reflected on Nunn's founding principles, highlighting his driving educational ideals of self-government, intellectual and academic rigor, physical work, and societal isolation as catalysts for serious education (Kimpton, 1937, p. 533). As President Kimpton noted,

Figure 2
Deep Springs College, Class of 1920

Note. Source: Deep Springs College Archive. https://archive.deepsprings.edu/items/show/1533

> First, [Nunn] realized that self-government among a group of young men did more than anything else to develop leadership and a feeling of responsibility... Second, he had found that …classes must be small, the standards must be set very high, and the boys must be encouraged in … wide reading and independent thought. Third, he discovered that physical work of some kind … made the boy a better-balanced person, it gave him a genuine respect for work… And lastly Mr. Nunn had found that almost complete isolation from the distractions of modern civilization … allowed a boy to accomplish a great deal by way of self-development and self-analysis. (p. 533)

The combination of and dedication to these four principles of education are Nunn's unique contribution to the world of higher education and are worth examining in detail, especially in their application at Deep Springs College.

For Nunn, student self-government was the heart and soul of education. Throughout his life, he espoused the idea that young men had to learn to govern themselves so they might live a life of service to humanity (Bailey, 1933, p. 113). A key factor in the establishment and maintenance of Nunn's conception of student self-government was the institution's size. While modern colleges and universities had pushed for exponential growth, Nunn's ideal institution was and continues to be intentionally kept very small and intimate (Newell, 1982, pp. 125–126; Samuels, 2023). L. Jackson Newell, a 1958 graduate of Deep Springs

College who served as the institution's President during the 1990s and into the early 2000s, described Deep Springs commitment to an intimate student body:

> In an era when institutions are increasingly large, complex, and immobile, students (and other citizens) frequently experience feelings of impotence or alienation. The literature about college students is rich in the analysis of this phenomenon. Due to the small size of Deep Springs, however, and the prominent role that its founder assigned to students in every phase of the institution's life, students come to assume that they can make a difference. They do make a difference. (Newell, 1982, p. 127)

This dedication to a small, deeply involved student body is in many ways the defining feature of Nunn's educational philosophy, especially as it lives on today in the idea of the Nunnian microcollege. As political philosophers from ancient Greece to the modern West have argued for millennia, direct democratic rule is best-suited for small, intimate communities that maintain a high degree of interpersonal trust. Since its inception in 1917, Deep Springs College has kept its student body at approximately 25 students. By intentionally crafting a self-governing community where anonymity is impossible, Nunn sought to develop a college experience that did more than just instruct a student's intellect. At Deep Springs students gained the opportunity to take meaningful responsibility as Nunn aimed to "educate the 'whole man'" through immersion in an intense environment (Newell, 1982, p. 122). Newell argues that Nunn believed that "students would acquire a sense of duty only if they were granted responsibility," especially in the daily management of their affairs (Breiseth, 1983, pp. 32–33; Newell, 1982, p. 122).

The ultimate beneficiary of the system of immersive self-government went beyond the students themselves to include the society at large. While Nunn's entire educational philosophy promoted the notion of self-improvement in service to the advancement of society itself, this premise took root in the idea that students had to learn to govern themselves to live in a free society. As President Kimpton noted in 1937, "the obligation which a [Deep Springs] student incurs by his attendance is to devote himself to the service and betterment of humanity throughout his life" (p. 535). He continued, noting how this obligation typically played out in students pursuing service-oriented careers, specifically "the professions of engineering, law, medicine, government

service, and education" (Kimpton, 1937, p. 535). While the "service-oriented graduate" has in many ways become an academic platitude, it was a central tenet to Nunn's educational philosophy.

The second pillar of Nunn's educational philosophy was his fervent commitment to intellectual and academic rigor. Nunn was critical of the path of American higher education in the early 20th century, which Roger Geiger described as "a time of disorganization and meager accomplishments for American colleges" (Geiger, 2015, p. 124). As an alumnus of Oberlin College and Harvard Law School, Nunn was no stranger to the rigorous curriculum seen in the traditional American liberal arts education. However, Nunn originally took a far more utilitarian approach to education, with his initial managerial programs far more closely resembling vocational programs than a traditional liberal arts college education. While his later programs featured some sort of blend between vocational training and liberal education, Nunn formed Deep Springs College as a traditional liberal arts institution that emphasized rigor through small class sizes and intense student responsibility for their own success. As Kimpton (1973) noted, this approach to education began first with a "carefully selected" faculty, "made up for the most part of men with the Ph.D. degree" (p. 534). This unusual commitment to faculty of the highest degree, even at a tiny college of two dozen, was again a defining feature of the early Nunnian microcollege.

As Newell and contemporaries described, Deep Springs "faculty members were expected to offer traditional instruction in the liberal arts, based especially on the biographies of great men" (Newell, 1982, p. 122). This inspiration to exceptional living has been historically taken very seriously at Deep Springs, where students who could not "measure up to the standards set by the educational plan" would be expected to drop from the program (Kimpton, 1937, p. 534). Today, this rigor is seen not only in the unique curricular offerings, but in the class structures themselves. Classes depend "heavily on student participation; thorough preparation and robust engagement is seen as a student's responsibility to the entire class" (Deep Springs College, 2024). Additionally, students are expected to take the lead in classroom conversations and are heavily involved in course improvements and curricular development. Similar to his commitment to an environment of self-government, Nunn viewed academic rigor as a critical component of a holistic

education. Rather than leaning on rote consumption of knowledge to shape individual character, the rigor of the Nunnian educational experience shaped the whole person through intense personal challenge and discipline in the classroom and study hall" (Deep Springs College, 2024).

This intellectual toughness was paired with intense physical work, the third pillar of Nunnian philosophy. Inspired by Nunn's experience in training engineering managers who would be tasked with running power plants in remote Western locations, Deep Springs sought to develop and nurture an "intellectual toughness" through "severe physical challenge," often found in the daily work students engaged in on the College's active ranch (Newell, 1982, p. 122). Throughout the College's history, students have prided themselves on a grit atypical of elite academic institutions. President Kimpton attributed this sentiment to a sincerity not usually found in traditional higher education. In his discussions of the value of hard work, he suggested that the young men who underwent this training were best described as:

> An adequately grounded and trained, well-balanced and responsible young man, rather mature and serious-minded for his years, but neither a pedant nor a prig. He knows the value of hard work, and he can be trusted to do and do well what should be done. He is an excellent student, but not in the usual "grade-grabbing" sense. He has a sincere and earnest desire to learn and to improve himself. (Kimpton, 1937, p. 534)

This earnest sincerity was a key outcome of the Nunnian approach to higher education and remains a pillar of Deep Springs and other Nunnian programs today. For Nunn and those who have carried on his academic legacy, this desired "intellectual toughness" has been shaped only "by severe physical challenge" that has allowed student's "inner man" to "grow where solitude can foster introspection" (Newell, 1982, p. 122).

The final pillar of Nunnian education was also the most unique. With his intentions to locate Deep Springs College in the remote California wilderness, Nunn aimed to create an educational environment that would not only physically test the students, but also physically isolate them from the rest of society. This intentional separation from the distractions of modern society has proven to be especially prescient in recent years, given the rapid decline of interpersonal interactions with the almost universal adoption of smartphones

and other technological distractions. As modern advocates of the microcollege argue, this intentional "limiting of technology in favor of face-to-face interactions" is a fundamental component of meaningful education that is quickly being lost in traditional higher education (Thoreau College, 2023). There is little doubt that one of the key reasons Deep Springs has been able to successfully maintain its identity and commitment to Nunn's founding principles for so long has been its geographical isolation.

Under these four guiding principles, Nunn launched Deep Springs with an initial class of 20 young men. Unaccredited for its first 40 years, the College remained committed to its founding principles even as higher education changed dramatically around it. As President and Deep Springs alumnus L.J. Newell noted in 1982, little had changed about the school over the first 65 years of existence and yet its impact on the select few students that attended was notable (p. 122). While Nunn died in 1925, his founding trust provided the financial stability for Deep Springs to survive the Great Depression and the subsequent second World War. A half of century of consistency in the Board of Trustees during this era provided an additional key stabilizing factor that contributed to lasting success (Newell, 1982, p. 123). While the College became coeducational in 2018, much of the curriculum and day-to-day work still strongly resembles what Nunn established in 1917 (Deep Springs College, 2024). In shaping Deep Springs College's commitment to appeal to students' need to meaningful contribute to the life and work of the institution, Nunn created something special with lasting influence–truly a road less followed.

How then do these principles of an eccentric energy tycoon and the niche movement that still advocates for them fit into the "big picture" of 21st century higher education? While Deep Springs College remains the primary example of Nunnian education in the higher education space, there is a growing movement that seeks to expand the influence of Nunn's core educational principles. Known simply as the "microcollege movement," this unofficial collection of institutions and programs collectively aim "to re-create post-secondary education as a place where, as Nunn wrote of Deep Springs, students go not "to find either absolute truth or absolute wisdom, but to think, to read, to grow, and above all, to securely establish the one and only purpose which can justify man's existence" (Thoreau College, 2023). The movement comprises approximately a dozen institutions across the United States, many of which are

located in remote or rural areas. While the details of each institution vary, they all reflect a "significant inquiry into what and how [people] should learn" (Thoreau College, 2023).

This reimaging of the ethos and telos of higher education reflects the seriousness of the movement. Microcollege programs are not merely offering quirky alternatives for a small group of societal outcasts. Rather, they are proposing a fundamental shift in higher education. The legacy of Deep Springs College is perhaps the clearest example of this shift. While success for colleges and universities today is typically defined in endowment and enrollment size, Deep Springs and other Nunnian-inspired programs intentionally focus on small, intimate, hands-on, work-infused, relationally-based programming to foster in-depth personal development. Proponents of the microcollege movement argue that this programming is a critical piece in countering what they deem the "meaning crisis" in higher education (Springboard Foundation, 2024, p. 3). Citing cognitive science John Vervaeke, they describe a generation of college and university students "disconnected from themselves, each other, and the world" (Springboard Foundation, 2024, p. 3). For many of the institutions in the microcollege movement, the four collective principles of Nunn, as put into practice at Deep Springs College, represent a path for higher education to address the alienation, anxiety, and absurdity that defines modern society (Springboard Foundation, 2024, pp. 16, 21, 26).

In a 2016 magazine article, Dr. Marcus Ford, co-founder of microcollege Flagstaff College, offered a broad critique of the modern university system while advocating for the proliferation of what he called "tiny colleges." He critiqued the modern higher educational system for its abstract claims to craft students into "better people," while solely focusing on education in economic terms (Ford, 2016). He noted the cultural shift in society's expectations for college, arguing that "we have come to think of higher education as a means to making a living rather than making a life" (Ford, 2016). The comment parallels Nunn's philosophy of education that very much focused on the holistic development of the individual, in the context of service to and a life within a larger community. For Ford and other proponents of the Nunnian microcollege, these small and intentionally crafted institutions offer a unique opportunity to regain something that has been lost in the commercialization and commodification of the university.

While Nunnian institutions create distinction from the modern university in part through programmatic differences, the primary alterations in the educational experience rests in the intentionality of education as a collective social experience in a unique place. As Ford states, "the ultimate justification for a tiny college is the conviction that each of us comes into our full humanity by close interaction with those who know and care for us, and that one of the basic purposes of higher education is social" (2016). This is a serious claim that goes far beyond the platitudes of higher education marketing collateral. For Nunn and his disciples, the moral element of education is inherent in the college experience. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape young people for a life of service to others–itself perhaps a remnant of a "noblisse oblige" of days past by reminding them in the most intentional way "of the fact that we are individuals in community with others" (Breiseth, 1983, p. 33; Ford, 2016).

In conclusion, while four individual principles of education (self-government, intellectual and academic rigor, physical work, and societal isolation) make up the core of Nunn's unique contribution to the world of higher education, it is the combined application of these principles in the microcollege setting that leads to a uniquely complete education that stands decidedly apart from increasingly homogenous mainstream institutions. This complete education makes a claim to a moral advancement of humanity through the experientially-driven development of a few dedicated leaders–a claim that still animates the life and work of Deep Springs College today. While a microcollege education may not be feasible or accessible for most of the population, it remains a fascinating sliver of the history of higher education. The continued success of Deep Springs College and the establishment of other Nunnian microcollege-inspired programs across the world challenges the increasingly homogenous status quo of modern higher education and demands a careful re-examination of the purpose and place of higher education in society.

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