

STUDYING THE HISTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION JOURNAL

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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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Studying the History of Higher Education Journal

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Editorial Introduction

Balancing Tradition and Rising Demands in Higher Education

Snejana Slantcheva-Durst¹

We are pleased to present the third issue of the *Studying the History of Higher Education Journal* (*SHHE Journal*), published by The University of Toledo's Higher Education Program under the auspices of the Russel Center for the Study of Higher Education. The *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.

Although the historical essays in this third issue of *SHHE Journal* cover a range of topics and time periods, they all examine the ways in which American higher education has sought to balance traditional assumptions with emerging demands for access, relevance, professional preparation, and social purpose. The four essay topics in this issue—namely, audio cassette-based distance learning at Canisius College, the delayed establishment of the Yale School of Management, the long struggle to integrate experiential learning in American legal education, and John D. Rockefeller's shifting educational philanthropy—illustrate the ways in which colleges and universities have grappled with technological innovation, workforce expectations, philanthropic influence, and changing ideas about public service. Each essay demonstrates that institutional change is rarely a matter of simply adopting a new program or taking a new direction; rather, each change involves balancing traditional values with

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pressing new demands related to academic integrity and legitimacy, institutional prestige, professional identity, and the proper mission of higher education. Together, these essays offer a historical perspective on contemporary debates about online education, professional and business education, hands-on learning, and the role of private wealth in shaping higher education.

The first historical essay in this issue, Baah and Creps' "Technological Innovation for Mission and Status: Access, Exclusivity, and the Evolution of Cassette Programs at Canisius College," examines the development of audio cassette-based distance learning at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, between 1973 and 1994, highlighting an early effort to expand access to higher education through audio and video technologies. Grounded in the college's Jesuit mission to serve underserved populations, Canisius's novel distance program culminated in a proposal for an accredited degree program. However, the program encountered resistance from some Canisius students who feared that such a program would devalue their degrees and diminish the status associated with attending a private college. In their historical essay, Baah and Creps illustrate the recurring tension in higher education between democratizing access through technological innovation and preserving institutional exclusivity and prestige.

Matthew Neissen's "SOM: Scholars or Managers? A History of Business Education at Yale," the second essay in the issue, traces the 15-year-long effort to establish the Yale School of Management (SOM), which opened in 1976. The essay addresses the broader debate over the place of professional business education within an elite liberal arts university and argues that Yale's prolonged reluctance to create a business school reflects deep concerns about preserving the institution's academic identity and educational mission. In this essay, Neissen provides a historical perspective on the ongoing tension between business schools and the universities that house them; namely, whether an institution devoted to the liberal arts can successfully educate students in professional management without straying from its founding ideals and mission.

Next, Ashli Tomisich's essay, "A Floor, Not a Ceiling: The ABA's 2016 Experiential Learning Standard and the Unfinished Reform of American Legal Education," points to an enduring disconnect between the training provided by traditional legal education and the professional competencies necessary for

effective legal practice. Tomisich argues that the traditional model of legal training, which emphasizes doctrinal analysis, neglects the practical experience and reflection needed for professional competence. The essay traces legal education's reform efforts over the last several decades, culminating in the American Bar Association's (ABA) 2016 requirement that students complete at least six credit hours of experiential learning, and shows that legal education has long recognized deficiencies in practical training but has been slow to address them meaningfully.

Finally, Dennis Read's "Chasing Mr. Rockefeller's Dollars: Denison University, the University of Chicago, and Educational Philanthropy," examines the significant shift in John D. Rockefeller's educational philanthropy from primarily Baptist and religious motivations toward a more secular approach centered on research, efficiency, and social progress. Using Rockefeller's relationships with Denison University and the University of Chicago as case studies, Read shows how the philanthropist shifted his support from a denominational liberal arts college to a large research university. The shift in Rockefeller's philosophy of giving marked a major turning point in the evolution of higher education, as large-scale philanthropy emerged to support modern research universities.

Taken together, the engaging historical essays in this third journal issue offer thoughtful analyses of significant developments in higher education and provide interesting historical perspectives on questions that continue to shape the field. We trust that readers will find these essays both informative and thought-provoking.

Snejana Slantcheva-Durst, PhD
Editor-in-Chief

Technological Innovation for Mission and Status: Access, Exclusivity, and the Evolution of Cassette Programs at Canisius College

Kelvin Baah¹ and Ryan Creps²

Abstract

Before online learning became commonplace, audio- and videocassette courses offered an early form of asynchronous distance education. This archival study examines the emergence and evolution of cassette-based distance learning at Canisius College from 1973 to 1994. Initially launched as an innovative audiovisual extension program to expand access to higher education for nontraditional students, the initiative culminated in a 1980 proposal for an accredited associate degree program. Framed within Canisius's Jesuit tradition of service and educational access, this programmatic expansion prompted sharp criticism in student newspaper editorials and raised students' concern regarding academic quality and institutional prestige. Through the analysis of student newspaper reports alongside socioeconomic and political factors, this article uncovers a persistent tension in higher education: the friction between leveraging technology to democratize access and maintaining the institutional exclusivity that confers prestige and status. The historical analysis offers valuable lessons for contemporary discussions on remote and digital education and provides critical insights into the institutional challenges of integrating nontraditional educational technologies within established, traditional academic frameworks.

Keywords: cassette program, educational access, distance learning, educational technology, technological innovations in education, nontraditional students, higher education history, Jesuit education

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Founded in Buffalo, New York, in 1870 by German Jesuits, Canisius College was established to serve the sons of the city's German Catholic immigrant community (Canisius University, n.d.-a). Today, as a coeducational university, Canisius serves 1,728 undergraduate and 688 graduate students through the College of Arts and Sciences, the Wehle School of Business, and the School of Education and Human Services (Canisius University, 2025). Canisius's Jesuit mission emphasizes service to others and engagement with the wider community. Across its history, the institution has continually adapted its traditional and extension programs in response to changing community needs and technological developments (Canisius University, n.d.-b). Its School of Continuing, Advanced, and Professional Studies has long offered continuing education, professional certificates, and flexible learning pathways designed for working adults seeking to advance or pivot in their careers (Canisius University, n.d.-e). In 2020, the university launched the New Buffalo Institute with Dr. Mary Rockwell as its first director, to foster community and civic engagement in surrounding neighborhoods, demonstrating its continuing commitment to service, social justice, and the common good in the Ignatian tradition (Hurley, 2020).

The primary goal of this article is to recount Canisius's history of extension education, particularly the development of its cassette-based learning program, as a case that demonstrates the persistent tension in higher education between expanding access through technology and preserving institutional exclusivity that confers high status on its students and graduates. In 1973, Canisius began offering audio cassette courses through its extension program, expanding to video cassette courses in 1980 (Cornell, 1973; Ratke, 1980). This innovative Cassette Studies Program offered a novel form of distance education that allowed Canisius to extend its educational reach to nontraditional students in the community. In 1980, the college attempted to develop these courses into an accredited associate degree program designed to expand educational opportunities for underserved Buffalo residents. This objective can be understood as consistent with Canisius's Jesuit commitment to serving those at the margins. However, commentary in *The Griffin* expressed concern that the program might devalue Canisius degrees and diminish the status associated with attending a private college. This historical case study examines how

technology shaped nontraditional college education and how stakeholders resisted institutional efforts to expand access.

The first section of this article situates the Canisius cassette initiative within the broader history of extension and distance education, highlighting how technological innovations have long been leveraged to widen access for nontraditional students. The subsequent section traces the development of extension education at Canisius and the origins of the cassette initiative, examining how local demographic and institutional contexts shaped its design. The article then analyzes opposition expressed in student newspaper coverage of the proposed associate degree program, focusing on the rhetoric concerning institutional identity, quality, status, and prestige. The article concludes by considering the implications of this case for the current debates over educational technology, equity, and the enduring tension between access and exclusivity in higher education.

A Brief History of Extension Education

The history of extension education begins with the public lecture movement in 19th-century England and encompasses several different distance education modalities in the United States. Its development in the United States was anchored in the Wisconsin Idea and its commitment to public service and the democratization of academic knowledge (Hoeveler, 2016). Through correspondence study, radio and television broadcasts, and eventually audio and video recordings, extension education expanded access for women, working adults, and geographically isolated students (Davidson, 2006; Hoeveler, 2016). This section provides a backdrop for analyzing Canisius's effort to transform its cassette-based extension education into a formal associate degree program.

From European Public Lectures to the Wisconsin Idea (1850s–1900s)

University extension began in England in the 1850s, with Cambridge University pioneering the use of lecture-based courses offered to the general public that included syllabi, reading assignments, and written examinations (Reber, 1916). These lectures, such as those given by James Stuart on the history

of astronomy in 1867, were intended to spark public interest in and support for science while broadening the reach of academic knowledge beyond university students (Wade, 1976). These early public lectures established a model for later university extension programs in the United States that aimed to make higher education accessible to wider audiences.

Extension education in the United States emerged alongside early innovative forms of distance education. One of the first forms of distance education was correspondence courses, where students received instructional materials by mail and completed their coursework independently. In 1873, the Boston Society to Encourage Studies at Home began as the first correspondence school founded to provide women with access to higher education (Fraczek, 2019). The Chautauqua Correspondence College, established in 1881, became the first institution authorized to grant diplomas through correspondence (Fraczek, 2019). The founder of Chautauqua, William Rainey Harper, became president of the University of Chicago, where he introduced the first university-based correspondence courses in 1892 (University of Chicago Graham School, 2021). Harper integrated extension education into the university's core activities, establishing 54 extension centers that targeted working adults and extended beyond Chicago (University of Chicago Graham School, 2021; Wade, 1976). The legitimacy of these correspondence programs depended on universities' ability to uphold established academic standards and their willingness to confer recognized credentials.

The expansion of credentialing in distance education programs did not diminish the spread of extension education in the United States. The university extension movement grew from the English public lecture model, leading to the founding of the American Society for Extension of University Teaching in 1891 and the University Lecture Association in 1909 (Extension of University Teaching, 1891; Wade, 1976). Both the public lecture model and these newly established organizations reflected a shared effort to democratize higher education, extending university-level instruction beyond the traditional campus.

The philosophical foundation for the expansion of extension education in the United States can be traced to the Wisconsin Idea, developed at the University of Wisconsin–Madison during the presidency of John Bascom (1874–1887). Bascom argued that universities should serve the broader public and

apply academic knowledge to social and economic problems. The principle was later popularized in 1904 when the Wisconsin governor, Robert M. La Follette, declared that “the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state” (Hoeveler, 2016, p. 4). This philosophy encouraged universities to extend their research, teaching, and expertise beyond campus to inform public policy and expand educational opportunities across the state (Hoeveler, 2016). The Wisconsin Idea became a foundational influence on the growth of extension education and public outreach initiatives in American higher education during the early 20th century.

Live Broadcasting on Radio and Television (1910s–1950s)

The growth of correspondence courses was enabled by the size and efficiency of the U.S. Postal Service, but advances in communication technologies transformed extension education in the 20th century. The first university radio stations appeared as experimental initiatives around 1907 and expanded rapidly during the 1910s and early 1920s as universities obtained broadcast licenses (Pittman, 1986). By the 1920s, several institutions were offering college-level instruction through radio broadcasts, bringing higher education directly into homes across the country (Slotten, 2009).

In 1922, Pennsylvania State College began broadcasting courses on regional radio networks (Dawson, 2017). Three years later, the University of Iowa introduced for-credit courses by radio with similar programs developed at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, University of Minnesota, Oregon State University, and the University of Illinois (Dousay & Janak, 2018; Saettler, 2004). These early radio courses set the stage for the broader extension mission and university outreach beyond campus boundaries and into local communities (Blakely, 1979; Janak & Dousay, 2020).

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, educational broadcasting had grown into a national movement. Programs such as NBC’s *RCA Educational Hour* (1928), the *Ohio School of the Air* (1929), and CBS’s *American School of the Air* (1930) demonstrated radio’s ability to reach thousands of students in real time (Saettler, 2004).

By the mid-20th century, radio courses were widely used in colleges and extension education had expanded into live television broadcasts. In 1956,

Chicago City College's *TV College* offered tuition-free associate degrees through open-circuit broadcasts accessible to anybody in the city with a television (Zigerell, 1967). As Dousay and Janak (2018) observed, educational radio and television functioned as early forms of mass distance learning, sharing similarities with modern online courses in their capacity to distribute instructional content synchronously to large audiences beyond the physical classroom.

The Use of Multimedia Recordings for On-Demand Education (1960s–1970s)

By the 1960s and 1970s, extension schools had become laboratories of educational experimentation, employing a range of multimedia modalities designed to broaden access to higher education (Kentnor, 2015). These programs focused on student-centered learning, responded to growing public demand for college education, and capitalized on the increase in federal and state funding in the postwar higher education expansion in the United States. Increasingly, institutions were starting to integrate multiple delivery systems to meet the needs of a more diverse student population. For instance, the State University of Nebraska, an early open university, offered courses through a variety of media, including television, textbooks, newspapers, correspondence, video cassettes, audio cassettes, and regional learning centers (Wang, 1975). Similarly, the State University of New York founded Empire State College, a non-residential, decentralized institution that utilized technological innovation and a network of regional learning centers (Lefor et al., 2001; Wang, 1975). At Empire State, students pursued an individualized learning program with guidance from a faculty mentor instead of attending traditional classes, illustrating how technology created a shift toward flexible, student-directed education (Coughlan, 1980; Keller, 1973).

During this period, the higher education system in the United States was ripe for expansion and open to new forms of education. The introduction of compact, reproducible media, like audio cassettes, which became commercially available for the music industry in 1966 (Cross, 2013), and video cassettes, which entered the movie market in 1977 (Ganapati, 2010), offered promising opportunities for broadening access to higher education with asynchronous and on-demand learning. These technologies allowed institutions to extend

instruction beyond scheduled class sessions and live broadcasts, enabling students to access lectures and course materials at their convenience. Colleges and universities willing to integrate these technologies could position their institutions at the forefront of educational innovation and take the next step in extension education.

Extension Education at Canisius College Prior to the 1970s

Canisius began educating nontraditional students early in the 20th century. This section examines the development of Canisius's extension programs within the context of its Jesuit tradition with its emphasis on moral responsibility and service to the wider community, and its position within Buffalo's expanding higher education landscape. It then traces the history of nontraditional education at Canisius, from evening classes for working adults and live television broadcasts to the eventual development of the cassette program.

A Jesuit Tradition and Higher Education in Buffalo

As a Jesuit institution, Canisius was shaped by a long tradition of educational engagement rooted in service and social responsibility. The Society of Jesus, founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola, developed an educational mission centered on helping others and serving the broader society. The first Jesuit school opened in Messina (Italy) in 1548. By 1773, the Jesuits operated over 800 schools worldwide, earning a reputation as the "schoolmasters of Europe" (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, 2011, p. 7). Their commitment to community service drew on the pedagogical principles codified in the 1599 *Ratio Studiorum*, which emphasized liberal learning, active engagement, and moral responsibility (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, 2011). Within this framework, Canisius's extension education can be interpreted as an expression of its Jesuit mission, particularly its emphasis on treating the extension of educational opportunities as a moral responsibility.

In the mid-1950s, Canisius was one of a growing number of higher education institutions in Buffalo, New York. The University at Buffalo, originally a private professional school, joined the State University of New York system in 1962, receiving substantial state funding and triggering enrollment

growth as it planned for a large, new suburban campus in Amherst (University at Buffalo, n.d.). At the same time, Buffalo State College evolved from a teacher's college into a comprehensive institution, adding liberal arts and professional programs, expanding facilities, and launching educational opportunity initiatives that brought more underrepresented students into higher education (Buffalo State University, n.d.). Nearby Catholic colleges, D'Youville and Rosary Hill (now Daemen), were also growing their enrollments, constructing new residence halls and academic buildings, expanding their academic programs to include professional programs, and transitioning from single-sex to coeducational institutions during this period (Bradley, 2022; D'Youville University–Montante Family Library, n.d.). Given the growth of the higher education sector in Buffalo, Canisius sought innovative ways to attract and serve a broader segment of nontraditional students, including through initiatives such as the cassette program.

Early History of Nontraditional Students at Canisius

Less than 50 years after its founding in 1870, Canisius began to offer courses to nontraditional students by introducing noncredit afternoon and evening programs for working adults in 1919 (“Night Session,” 1941). In 1941, the college announced that students in these extension programs would be eligible for bachelor’s degrees in business administration (“Night Session,” 1941). A decade later, Canisius established an Adult Education Center within its Evening Division, offering 19 courses that had no prerequisites, homework, or examinations (“College Initiate Adult Education,” 1953). These courses, held once a week for eight weeks and costing \$10, quickly gained popularity (“College Initiate Adult Education,” 1953). By 1955, despite a \$50 increase in tuition from the previous year, enrollment ballooned to 300 students (“Adult courses,” 1955). That same year, the Department of Sociology launched a television series based on a Canisius course, *Marriage and the Family*, which featured six male and six female students and aired on Sunday afternoons in Buffalo (“Adult courses,” 1955). This course offered another form of public access to a Canisius education.

By 1968, the Civil Rights Movement had strongly influenced the campus, prompting the college to consider its role and the impact of its extension

education programs in serving the increasingly diverse Buffalo community. The Community Action Organization hosted a conference on campus to “give residents of Buffalo ghetto areas an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding various recreation, job opportunity, and adult education programs aimed at community development” (“CAO Designs,” 1968, p. 9). Later that spring, the Independent Catholic Action Now (I CAN) expressed interest in “developing programs of study and action which will assist the Negro ghetto” (Maryniak & Brady, 1968, p. 2), specifically identifying the college’s adult education program as a tool for positive change. I CAN envisioned Canisius as a pivotal community institution capable of bridging divides between Catholics and Protestants, Black and White residents, and middle-class and low-income communities in addressing poverty (Maryniak & Brady, 1968). However, our review of *The Griffin* and the other archival materials found no evidence that Canisius implemented targeted changes to the Adult Education Center in response to calls to address the needs of the Black residents of Buffalo.

The Canisius College Cassette Program

The expansion of nontraditional education at Canisius from 1919 through the 1960s highlights the institution’s willingness to experiment with new forms of technology and educational modalities to meet community needs. The increase in government funding for colleges and universities and public demand for access to higher education in the 1960s, especially for nontraditional students, demonstrated the need for new educational opportunities in Buffalo (Kisker et al., 2023; Thelin, 2019). This environment opened the door for the cassette program at Canisius. Audio cassettes, a product of the 1960s, offered a novel approach to distance education, capable of delivering instructional content flexibly and efficiently (Kentnor, 2015). Canisius saw this technology as an opportunity to enhance its extension education offerings and provide a valuable resource for Buffalo residents, although some faculty members, student representatives, and student newspaper editorialists questioned the program’s quality and institutional implications. The next sections recount the origins of the cassette program and the opposition that the college faced in implementing an associate degree program based on the cassette courses.

The Origins of the Cassette Program (1973)

The idea for the cassette program was first reported in the student newspaper in March of 1973 as Canisius explored new extension centers in the Buffalo suburbs to target what was described as “a huge, untapped market, the suburban housewife” (Cornell, 1973, p. 9). This demographic differed from the urban Black community that I CAN had earlier urged the adult education program to serve.

Reporting in *The Griffin*, Cornell (1973) noted that the proposed program included at least five credit-bearing humanities courses delivered via audio and video cassettes, none of which led to a Canisius degree. Students would be required to meet with a faculty mentor at least three times a semester at the center in Eastern Hills Mall, which would be open from noon to 9 p.m. five days a week to accommodate nontraditional students. Tuition was planned to be \$75 per course, half the rate for traditional students, with eligibility restricted to those 25 and older to prevent traditional students from accessing the discounted rate. Dr. Joseph Bieron, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, believed this new extension program would address challenges faced by evening classes on campus, such as security and parking issues, while potentially “increas[ing] the income of both the College and the faculty” (Cornell, 1973, p. 9). He also saw it as an opportunity for “Canisius to get into the field of video cassette courses on a trial basis” and to compete with external degree programs and credit-by-examination options available at other New York institutions (p. 9).

The initiative was expected to cost at least \$40,000 and would require budget cuts in less productive areas of the college (Cornell, 1973). By 1975, a revised and reduced version of the cassette program was initiated under the Advanced Institute Development Program, a college-wide program supported by \$1.5 million in federal funds (Heimback, 1976). In an advertisement in *Courier Express* in 1978 (see Figure 1), Canisius promoted its adult education programs, including the new cassette classes, as “custom-tailored to meet your needs ... from a highly respected institution” (“Canisius College offers you a new opportunity,” 1978, p. 38). The advertisement promoted its cassette program as “Take the First Step in Continuing Your Education. Scan our program list below, review our cassette studies innovation” (p. 38).

Figure 1

Canisius College Advertisement for Adult Education in 1978

CANISIUS COLLEGE OFFERS YOU A NEW OPPORTUNITY

WE KNOW ADULT EDUCATION NEEDS...

Since your high school days, you've probably realized that acquiring additional education is almost a matter of necessity. Perhaps you are now considering college studies for the first time, or you may already have some previous college experience... or graduate school may be your next goal. Whatever the case, you want your education to be custom-tailored to meet your needs, and to come from a highly respected institution.

Even with all your responsibilities, you intend setting aside time to review college program brochures. A busy schedule, however, delays you from writing, telephoning, or visiting the college to obtain information.

Today, by way of this circular, Canisius College is offering you an education reply card to assist you in receiving information.

YOUR SUCCESS IS OUR SUCCESS. Consider our programs.

Choose a career from over 50 different undergraduate programs. Specialize in any area which excites your imagination and is consistent with your capabilities, e.g., Management, Biology, Art History, Accounting, among others. With regular study, you can be a success in your program at Canisius. We understand your career education needs.

In addition, opportunities to gain knowledge and power from the liberal arts are available for every Canisius student, regardless of career program choice. The liberal arts courses span all areas of human interest from Psychology to History, from Literature to the Sciences, and more. Knowledge from the arts can increase your power to understand other people, evaluate new ideas, communicate your thoughts, recognize social and political responsibility, and can add greater meaning to your personal existence.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION. Scan our program list below, review our cassette studies (see reverse) and then mail in reply card for further information and brochures.

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS (Bachelors)

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ☐ Accounting ☐ Economics ☐ Fashion Institute of Technology ☐ Finance ☐ Management ☐ Marketing NATURAL SCIENCES ☐ Bio-Chemistry ☐ Chemistry ☐ Pre Dental ☐ Pre Engineering ☐ Pre Medical ☐ Pre Veterinary ☐ Medical Technology	HUMANITIES ☐ Art History ☐ Bio-Chemistry ☐ Biology ☐ Communication ☐ Education - Secondary ☐ Biology ☐ Chemistry ☐ Commerce ☐ English ☐ History ☐ International Relations ☐ Mathematics	☐ Modern Languages ☐ French ☐ German ☐ Italian ☐ Philosophy ☐ Physical Education ☐ Physics ☐ Political Science ☐ Pre Law ☐ Psychology ☐ Sociology and Anthropology ☐ Religious Studies ☐ Urban Studies
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SPECIAL INTEREST COURSES/PROGRAMS

☐ CLEBS ☐ Computer Science ☐ Criminal Justice ☐ Military Science ☐ INSTITUTE FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT ☐ Essentials of Finance for Non-Financial Managers ☐ Management Skills for Women ☐ M.A. M.B.A. ☐ Supervisory Development and Application	GRADUATE PROGRAMS (Masters) <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> ☐ Education ☐ Administration and Supervision ☐ Teacher Education ☐ Educational Research ☐ Counselor Education ☐ Special Education (Deaf) ☐ English ☐ Religious Studies </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> M.S. M.A. M.A. </td> </tr> </table>	☐ Education ☐ Administration and Supervision ☐ Teacher Education ☐ Educational Research ☐ Counselor Education ☐ Special Education (Deaf) ☐ English ☐ Religious Studies	M.S. M.A. M.A.
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Director of Career Services

Please send information for the programs checked

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Telephone _____ Occupation or profession _____

☐ Cassette Studies
☐ Financial Aid Information
☐ Veterans Benefit Information
☐ Evening Division
☐ Summer Session

Note. Advertisement for adult education and cassette studies published in the Courier Express, August 1, 1978, p. 38.

To provide deeper context regarding this innovation, the advertisement prompted readers to turn the page (see Figure 2), asking, "Have You Ever Considered Continuing Your Education?" (1978, p. 37). The reverse side expanded on the program's logistics and urged readers to take immediate action

Figure 2*Canisius College Advertisement for Adult Education in 1978, Reverse side*

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION?

It's not too late – persons of **all ages** are returning to school. Listed below are some reasons why CANISIUS COLLEGE adult students are pursuing additional education.



- Career Advancement
- Greater job security
- Improved job performance
- Knowledge to keep ahead of business competition
- Obsolescence of current job skills

- Reentry into the labor market
- New career preparation
- Realization of missed educational opportunities
- Fulfillment of a lifelong ambition to be a college graduate

- A second career
- Personal enrichment
- Desire to learn a particular subject
- Recognition of learning as a lifelong process

CANISIUS COLLEGE MAY BE FOR YOU

Consider the workstyles of current Canisius adult students: managers and aspiring managers in the business community, secretaries, housewives, industrial workers, sales personnel, government employees, scientists and technicians, returning veterans, professional persons, and many more.

Yes, our adult students have varied backgrounds, but generally they share a common ambition – a desire to learn something new in order to increase their success in life and career. You may share the same ambition with our adult students. Canisius College is expanding its enrollment opportunities and invites you to review its programs.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP

Mail in the reply card today, and we will send you a free brochure for the programs you request. The Career Services Office at the college can provide counseling for those persons who are unsure of which career or course to pursue.

Many of our adult students begin studies with just a single course and later enroll in additional courses, after they become familiar with the requirements of academic life. Students may enroll part time or full time, in the Day Division or Evening Division. Courses begin in the Summer, Fall or Spring semesters.

CASSETTE STUDIES

Persons who are not able to attend campus classes because of family or work commitments may now earn college credit through the Cassette Studies program.

Cassette Studies is unique: cassette tapes are substituted for the conventional classroom lecture, therefore classroom attendance is not a requirement. Using the tapes along with the traditional textbooks and other materials, the student accomplishes study and examination independently, generally at home, but under the guidance of the college faculty. All Cassette Studies courses carry appropriate Canisius College credit. If you wish further information, please check the Cassette Studies box.



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

No Postage Stamp Necessary If Mailed In The United States

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY

Canisius College
 Career Services Office
 2001 Main Street
 Buffalo, New York 14208, U.S.A.

First Class
 Permit No. 1415
 Buffalo, NY



Note. Reverse side of the advertisement published in the Courier Express, August 1, 1978, p. 37.

by mailing back an enclosed reply card. This intentional combination of broad educational access and logistical innovation captured both the flexibility and the quality Canisius sought to market. Interestingly, the ads emphasized the value of taking courses, specifically in the liberal arts, for personal development and fulfillment as a primary focus, with career benefits as secondary.

The program was also promoted through advertisements in rural newspapers, such as *The Journal-Register*, *Tri-County Times*, *Wellsville Daily Reporter*, and *Westfield Republican*, signaling an effort to recruit students from small towns and rural communities beyond the city of Buffalo ("Canisius College Offers Cassette Studies Program," 1976; "Canisius Offers Cassette Studies Program," 1976; "Earn College Credit," 1977; "Residents May Take Cassette Courses," 1976). The outward-facing strategy contrasted with I CAN's earlier calls for Canisius to direct its adult education resources toward predominantly Black neighborhoods adjacent to campus. The strategy arguably conflicted with Canisius's commitment to serving the educational needs of its immediate community because it directed outreach toward more distant rural areas.

A Proposal for an Associate Degree via Cassette (Spring 1979)

In March of 1979, the student newspaper featured a front-page story breaking the news that Canisius was considering offering an associate degree through the cassette program (Jarzembek, 1979). As Jarzembek (1979) reported for *The Griffin*, the Academic Council had recently rejected a proposal to seek state board approval for associate degrees in humanities and social sciences, but was continuing to explore the option. The chairman of the council's committee, Mel Schroeder, had voiced concerns about the efficacy of audiovisual education and questioned the value of an associate degree compared to a traditional bachelor's degree. Fr. Anthony Brozoska, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences, had opposed the proposal, fearing that adding an associate degree might dilute the college's academic standards. A student on the committee had echoed those concerns, arguing that the lack of interactive engagement might compromise academic quality and claiming the cassette courses "will not result in the same type of education from a lecture. There is no give and take. The quality of education will not be the same" (Jarzembek, 1979, p. 1).

Jarzembek (1979) provided several further details on these developments. Dr. David Valaik, head of the continuing studies program, countered these objections by noting that he had received no complaints about the quality of the cassette courses over the past three years. He clarified that the proposed associate degree would not rely solely on cassette courses; instead, he estimated that about 90% of students would complete their degrees through a mix of cassette and traditional classes. Valaik emphasized that the program was designed to serve students who lived far from campus or had demanding work schedules. Its goal was to address the issue that evening students took an average of seven years to complete a bachelor's degree and that over 80% did not graduate. The associate degree aimed to provide a credential for significant progress and motivate students to continue toward a bachelor's degree.

In his article, Jarzembek (1979) also reminded readers that the college had been planning the associate degree since the inception of cassette courses three years prior. This initiative was intended to offer tangible proof of academic achievement while providing flexibility in instruction to accommodate the varied schedules and challenges of nontraditional students. Not even Empire State College—Jarzembek emphasized—a public institution founded to offer flexible learning opportunities for nontraditional students, had developed a cassette program. Although the innovative approach could allow Canisius to secure a larger share of the nontraditional-student market, the college was entering a period of fiscal contraction, and the Academic Council saw the program as an unnecessary risk. Valaik assured the council that the program would be economically viable as long as it enrolled 100 students (Jarzembek, 1979).

A student editorial in the same newspaper issue, titled “Dubious Degree” (1979), mocked the proposal, likening it to a late-night television advertisement for a cheap and useless product. The editorial argued that declining enrollments and revenue drove the initiative and expressed concerns about the program's impact on the college's academic reputation. The editorial contended that emphasizing traditional lectures would improve academic standards: “If the school is truly serious about its academic responsibility and is serious about offering an associate degree program, the traditional lecture type of instruction should be emphasized instead” (“Dubious Degree,” 1979, p. 2). The editorial questioned whether introducing a two-year degree might tarnish Canisius's

image, suggesting it could shift the perception of the college closer to that of a community college rather than an elite institution. The editorial questioned, “how will the institution of such a program affect the school’s academic image” noting that “this is not an Ivy League school, but then neither is it a two-year community college” (“Dubious Degree,” 1979, p. 2).

A Renewed Proposal for an Associate Degree via Cassette (1979–1980)

Although the Academic Council’s vote appeared to halt the development of the associate degree program, the cassette program continued to grow. In November 1979, the college opened the Main-Eastwood Building, a former Catholic elementary school on campus, to support various initiatives, including the cassette program (Morey, 1979). Thus, although originally intended to be offered off-campus in the surrounding suburbs, the cassette courses found a home on the Canisius campus.

The program’s increasing prominence and impact on the student body were evident. In January 1980, a student suggested, perhaps in jest, that the college acquire the vacant Sears building adjacent to campus to establish Canisius Community College (Phalen, 1980). The student argued, “For a school that gives credit for cassette courses, this is a natural” and claimed, “a good college-level technical education program isn’t widely available in the city” (Phalen, 1980, p. 3). The proposed use of the Sears automotive facility for an automotive technology major, combined with liberal arts core courses, was seen as a way to address the college’s financial challenges by attracting new students and counteracting declining enrollment, “this influx of students ... would certainly retard contraction of college programs caused by the drop in prospective college student population” (Phalen, 1980, p. 3). The following week, just under a year after the Academic Council rejected the associate degree proposal, the student newspaper’s top headline read, “Associate Degree Via Cassettes Pending” (Ratke, 1980). The proposal was submitted to the Academic Council and the state for approval (Ratke, 1980).

An article in *The Griffin* by Ratke (1980) detailed how the proposed program would position Canisius to become the first four-year college in New York to offer an associate degree entirely via distance education. The program was designed for students such as “the swing-shift worker, the shut-in, the severely

handicapped, and those who must travel” (Ratke, 1980, p. 1). Unlike Empire State College, which required part-time adult learners to meet with a faculty mentor occasionally, Canisius’s proposed program allowed students to complete their degree entirely remotely and without faculty meetings. The article further reported that Dr. Charles Schmidtke, acting dean of the Office of Continuing Studies, was inspired by Azusa Pacific College students who created a sense of community by watching videos together. His anecdote offered a counterpoint to some of the program’s concerns, but perhaps it was an exception and not the rule based on the targeted population. The proposal indicated that credits earned would be transferable toward a bachelor’s degree at Canisius.

The article also reported that the program would utilize cassettes developed through a consortium of colleges that included Notre Dame, University of Southern California, University of Miami, and Azusa Pacific. Canisius consulted with Azusa Pacific faculty in the design of the cassette courses and adopted key elements of its instructional model that combined video cassettes, printed materials, and independent assignments, allowing students to complete coursework outside the traditional classroom. Students also worked with contracted faculty mentors who guided their progress and evaluated assignments.

The college began collaborating with local businesses to establish pilot extension sites for employees, with plans to launch classes in the spring of 1980 and anticipated enrollment of between 125 and 180 students by the summer of 1981 (Ratke, 1980). Tuition for the new program was set at the same rate as the evening program. Canisius planned for a full evaluation of the program after four years (Ratke, 1980).

Student Newspaper Opposition to the Associate Degree Proposal and Further Evolution of the Cassette Program

The announcement of the proposed cassette-based associate degree provoked sharp criticism of the administration in an editorial titled “‘Can’ the Cassettes,” published in *The Griffin* on February 1, 1980. The editorial argued that, despite the Academic Council’s rejection of the proposal the previous spring, the administration seemed intent on moving forward with the program:

"The administration also has gone ahead with plans to implement the program in an attempt to convince people that the cassette program is inevitable and fighting it is useless" (p. 2). The editorial revisited early questions, "Is Canisius the kind of school that should offer a two-year degree? Are cassettes an effective learning tool?" (p. 2). It urged the Academic Council to reject the proposal again.

In response to the editorial, Keith Burich, Assistant to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, penned a letter to the editor addressing the criticism and calling the editorial "confused and factually erroneous" (Burich, 1980, p. 3). Burich explained that the Academic Council had not actually voted on the merits of the proposed associate degree program in March of 1979 but had instead declined to forward it to the state for approval at that time. This decision was later reversed in April 1979, which went unreported in the student newspaper. He clarified that the initial vote was influenced by concerns that state approval would require the college to implement the program. Burich made the point that regardless of state or council approval, Canisius intended to continue offering non-degree video cassette courses in addition to its audio cassette courses. Burich went on to assuage concerns about the funding of the program, emphasizing that the program was designed to generate revenue that would enable the program to support itself as well as the development of new and innovative programs for traditional students (Burich, 1980).

A few months later, the newspaper featured a front-page story titled "Diversity Essential in Continuing Studies" (Tirone, 1980). This article followed the appointment of Schmidtke as Dean of Continuing Studies in March. Schmidtke emphasized the need to align the educational needs of other communities with the resources of Canisius, stating the goal of his office "is to find out what the educational needs of the community are and what the resources of Canisius are, and then match them" (Tirone, 1980, p. 1).

Although the evening divisions awarded bachelor's degrees, Schmidtke clarified that the cassette program was not intended to lead directly to a bachelor's degree. Schmidtke stated that "it will never lead to a baccalaureate degree because our whole view is that this program is in no way substitute for the classroom" (Tirone, 1980, p. 1). His statement seemed to contradict the earlier proposal that suggested credits earned through the associate degree could transfer toward a bachelor's degree at Canisius.

This article also announced the launch of an 18-month pilot video cassette

program at the downtown branch of Marine Midland Bank, designed to bring Canisius courses directly to the worksite for bank employees as well as to capitalize on its location to attract other business professionals. The program started with an initial enrollment of 10 students. If successful, Schmidtke envisioned expanding the program to several locations throughout the Buffalo area. He acknowledged concerns about the lack of student-faculty interaction, stating, “We have to learn how to personalize media course instruction ... but isn’t it better to have good alternative than no alternative?” (Tirone, 1980, p. 1).

Tirone (1980) further explained that Continuing Studies included professional development for business professionals, bridge programs offering alternative entry for students who did not initially meet admission requirements, and a program that granted college credit for life experiences. These initiatives were part of a broader effort to address educational needs in the Buffalo community. Despite Schmidtke’s optimism that these diverse opportunities would increase nontraditional enrollment during an economic recession, projections indicated a decline in traditional student enrollment over the next decade. Canisius enrolled 2,539 traditional students in 1979, but anticipated only 1,995 by 1990 (Tirone, 1980).

While Schmidtke’s praise for the continuing studies program dominated the newspaper’s front page on April 25, 1980, a shorter, less prominent article addressed the status of the associate degree program. While awaiting the Board of Regents’ decision, expected by summer 1980, the Academic Council preemptively approved an audiovisual pilot program—not an associate degree—on April 10 (Nichols, 1980). The pilot program was promoted through newspaper advertisements similar to the one featured in Figure 3. The advertisement specified that the pilot program would establish three or four off-campus sites in business and industrial settings over the next 18 months, with the possibility of developing a learning center similar to the one proposed for the Eastern Hills Mall in 1973. The program would cater to employees at host sites. A special committee of the Academic Council was scheduled to review the program’s effectiveness in winter 1982 to assess its long-term viability (Nichols, 1980).

Figure 3

Canisius College Advertisement for Adult Education in 1980

If you think Canisius College is only for students just out of high school, you're wrong

Experts predict that by the end of the 1980's sixty percent of college services will be aimed at the "non-traditional" student. That's anyone other than the 18-21 year-old with a fresh high school diploma. That's the homemaker, businessman, military veteran, technical worker, doctor, secretary, government worker, retiree, who for his or her own reasons, decides to go back to school. It could be you.



We'll tailor an educational program to your needs

We live in a fast-paced world. Career and educational needs of adults change constantly. New jobs are created and others disappear.

Canisius has an extensive selection of programs for adult needs - programs that can update job skills or develop new ones, courses to broaden personal knowledge or lead toward a degree. We can develop a specialized curriculum tailored to your personal goals, and we can offer it to you in a personal learning environment featuring small classes and teachers genuinely interested in you.

Choose a subject that excites you from our 50 undergraduate fields of study - anything from art history to urban studies. Business men and women - consider boosting your career with a degree in accounting, economics, finance, marketing or management through our nationally accredited business school.

INVESTIGATE OUR SPECIAL INTEREST PROGRAMS. Adult students have found them very useful.

Gerontology Certificate - gives background perspective and develops particular skills necessary for anyone who wants to gain a better understanding of, or intends to work with our rapidly expanding senior citizen population.

Non-Collegiate Learning Assessment - analyzes prior work experience and credits that experience whenever possible toward an academic degree at Canisius College.

Cassette Studies - provides cassette tapes of selected courses to be used along with textbooks for persons whose schedules do not allow them to attend regular classroom lectures on campus. Courses are available in both audio and video.

Technical and Liberal Studies Degree - certain programs at local community colleges have been approved for acceptance as part of a baccalaureate degree in Technical and Liberal Studies. Please check the appropriate box and we will provide you with information.

SEE WHAT WE CAN DO FOR YOU - call the Adult Student Recruitment Office at Canisius or mail the attached card today for more information.
CANISIUS COLLEGE • 2001 Main Street • Buffalo, N.Y. 14208
716-883-7000, Ext. 224 or 341.

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS ☐ BACHELOR OF ARTS ☐ Art History ☐ Biochemistry ☐ Biology ☐ Communication ☐ Education - Secondary ☐ English ☐ History ☐ International Relations ☐ Mathematics ☐ Modern Languages ☐ Political Science ☐ Psychology ☐ Religious Studies ☐ Sociology & Anthropology ☐ Urban Studies ☐ Visual Arts	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE ☐ BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ☐ Accounting ☐ Economics ☐ Finance ☐ Management ☐ Marketing ☐ Business Education ☐ Chemistry ☐ Medical Technology ☐ Physical Education ☐ Physics ☐ CONTINUING STUDIES PROGRAMS ☐ Cassette Studies Audio & Video ☐ Criminal Justice ☐ Gerontology ☐ Non-Collegiate Learning Assessment ☐ Perspectives on Women	DEGREE PROGRAMS ☐ Humanities, B.A. ☐ Social Science, B.S. ☐ Technical & Liberal Studies, B.S. SPECIAL INTEREST PROGRAMS ☐ Computer Science ☐ Fashion Institute of Technology ☐ Military Science ☐ Nursing ☐ Pre-Dent, □ Pre-Med, □ Pre-Vet ☐ Pre-Engineering, □ Pre-Law ☐ Pre-Forestry ☐ Student Development GRADUATE PROGRAMS ☐ BUSINESS ☐ ADMINISTRATION, M.B.A. ☐ Accounting ☐ Finance ☐ Management ☐ Marketing ☐ EDUCATION, M.S. ☐ Administration & Supervision ☐ Counselor Education ☐ Special Education (Deaf/Hearing Impaired) ☐ Teacher Education ☐ PHYSICAL EDUCATION, M.S. ☐ RELIGIOUS STUDIES, M.A. ☐ Please provide information for the programs checked.	ATTENTION VETERANS Canisius College programs are approved for veterans payments. Veterans discharged within the past 10 years may still be eligible for benefits. ATTENTION HANDICAPPED PERSONS Canisius College with its system of tunnels connecting most major campus buildings is particularly accessible for persons with physical handicaps. FINANCIAL AID Canisius College can assist you in acquiring all the financial aid you are eligible to receive. Canisius College does not discriminate in its admissions policies on the basis of sex, race, color, age, national or ethnic origin or handicap. Supplement to the Buffalo Courier Express
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Note. Advertisement published in the Courier Express, May 11, 1980.

The pilot cassette study program, prominently featured in the *Courier Express* advertisement (see Figure 3), stood out as a key innovation in Canisius College's outreach to adult learners. The career-focused shift in adult education can be seen in contrasting language between the advertisements over time (Figures 1, 2, and 3). The *Courier Express* advertisement in August of 1978, depicted in Figures 1 and 2, presented adult education and cassette programs as personal enrichment opportunities that could improve career outcomes. However, the *Courier Express* advertisement in May 1980, depicted in Figure 3, presented the Canisius adult education program as a solution for working professionals attempting to advance in a fast-paced, constantly changing economy where new jobs are created and others disappear. The advertisement goes on to highlight the flexibility of its cassette courses and assessment of work experience for course credit. The advertisement omits references to personal development and focuses instead on the value that these courses bring to career advancement.

By the following fall, the cassette program had enrolled 113 students, with 30 students participating in video courses and 83 in audio courses (Myers, 1980). Myers (1980) reported for *The Griffin* that the video students were all employees from four local businesses—Marine Midland Bank, Erie County Savings Bank, Rich Products, and Father Bell Computer Center—that paid their tuition. Canisius provided the video playback equipment at these business locations. In addition to standard admission requirements, applicants for the video program had to complete an interview to assess their maturity, motivation, and self-discipline (Myers, 1980).

Myers (1980) further clarified in the article that although the state had approved the program to award associate degrees, the Academic Council had yet to approve it as of October 1980. The program offered 40 courses across various disciplines, including macroeconomics, general science, literary arts, philosophy, management, and government. Students were assigned to a faculty mentor who provided guidance and evaluated their work. This mentorship approach, Myers clarified, was similar to the model used by Empire State College, a key competitor for nontraditional two-year students.

Finally, Myers (1980) noted that quality concerns persisted, with Dr. Duane Kofahl, the program coordinator, acknowledging that while the program offered high-quality content, it could not fully replace the classroom experience:

"The program offers quality content, but there is no substitute better than being in the classroom" (Myers, 1980, p. 4). Similar to Schmidtke's sentiment that a good alternative was better than no alternative, Kofahl attested to both the high quality of the traditional Canisius education that was not diminished by the existence of this program and the importance of offering this program to nontraditional students.

A New Associate Degree Program and the Expansion of the Cassette Program (Spring 1981)

The February 6, 1981, issue of the student newspaper featured two significant front-page stories that marked a pivotal break in the proposed associate degree program. The top-of-the-fold headline, "Associates Degree to Be Considered," implied further discussions about the original proposal. However, the article revealed a major change: the associate degree program would now be tailored for evening program students attending on-campus classes rather than the students in the cassette program (Arnone, 1981).

Below the fold, the other feature article discussed expanding the cassette program to include students with disabilities (Hirsch, 1981a). In the newspaper report, Arnone (1981) documented debates surrounding Canisius College's proposed associate degree program for evening students. The proposal, which had passed a preliminary vote and was scheduled for final consideration on February 11, was designed for students who had been out of high school for at least two years and aimed to improve retention by providing an intermediate credential on the path to a bachelor's degree. Supporters argued that the program would expand educational opportunities for adult learners and increase degree completion rates among evening students. Survey data from the Office of Continuing Studies also indicated strong support among responding evening students, although the response rate was relatively low (Arnone, 1981).

The proposal, the article clarified, generated concerns about both institutional reputation and academic quality. Some faculty and student representatives questioned projections regarding improved graduation rates and worried that an associate degree might discourage students from completing bachelor's degrees. Others expressed concern that the credential could be perceived as vocational and inconsistent with Canisius's liberal arts

mission. As Lauffenburger asked, “how will it be perceived, not by people at Canisius, but by people outside of Canisius?” (Arnone, 1981, p. 1). Questions were also raised about the transferability of credits earned through cassette-based courses.

Arnone (1981) further reported that supporters countered these criticisms by noting that numerous four-year institutions, including local four-year colleges such as the University of Buffalo, Niagara University, Buffalo State College, as well as some of the most prestigious universities in the country such as Cornell University, Columbia University, Johns Hopkins University, and Harvard University, already offered associate degree programs. Schmidtke maintained that the proposed degree would provide a stronger academic experience than comparable area community college programs and argued that Canisius faculty would benefit from educating students throughout the entirety of their academic pathway (p. 1).

An editorial in that week’s newspaper applauded the proposed curriculum for maintaining “a solid core of liberal arts studies” and “some academic quality,” marking a notable shift in *The Griffin’s* editorial treatment of the associate degree proposal (“Success of Degree,” 1981, p. 2). Nevertheless, according to the editorial, concerns persisted about how the program might affect the perceived quality of the institution: “The danger ... is in how this program is perceived by the community ... once it starts to move in one direction, it is hard to stop” (“Success of Degree,” 1981, p. 2). The editorial called for further research into strategies for ensuring the community understood that “a Canisius associate degree will maintain a higher academic standard than a community college degree” (“Success of Degree,” 1981, p. 2). Additionally, there were worries about accepting cassette course credits in the associate degree program and their potential impact on students transferring to Canisius for a bachelor’s degree, as these credits might not be recognized (“Success of Degree,” 1981).

While the new associate degree option was a significant benefit for evening students, it meant that the cassette program would not lead to a degree. Nonetheless, Canisius remained committed to growing the program. In a second front-page article published on February 6, 1981, Hirsch (1981a) reported that the college planned to expand the cassette program to “severely handicapped” students beginning in the summer of 1981 (p. 1). The article

reported that Canisius would collaborate with St. Mary's School for the Deaf, the Western New York Blind Association, and the Western New York Kidney Foundation. The article pointed to a county-wide survey, which revealed that the educational needs of students with disabilities were largely unmet, with existing programs focusing predominantly on manual and dexterity skills and none that offered access to liberal arts or general education opportunities. The program intended to provide a bridge for these students to a traditional college experience. The video cassettes would include sign language for the "deaf," and all courses would include Braille workbooks for the "blind" (p. 1). This initiative positioned Canisius as an unofficial coordinator of county services, engaging with several volunteer groups to improve educational opportunities for students with disabilities (Hirsch, 1981a, p. 1).

Hirsch (1981b) further clarified that the following fall, Canisius increased its new adult student enrollment to 267 compared to 200 in the fall of 1980 and 175 in the spring of 1981. At the time, Canisius was the only institution in Western New York with a dedicated recruitment office for adult students. The article mentioned Schmidtke's comments that the Continuing Studies program was not only a significant revenue generator for the college but also met a significant unmet educational need in the community. Schmidtke attributed the success of the program to Canisius's reputation for delivering rigorous evening classes. Additionally, the increase in adult students returning to school because of the recession, which hit Rust Belt cities such as Buffalo particularly hard, likely contributed to this growth. However, the recession may have had a negative impact on enrollment in the cassette program as employers were cautious about discretionary spending amid economic uncertainty (Hirsch, 1981b).

Integration of Cassette Courses Into the Traditional Student Curriculum (1984–1994)

Coverage of the cassette and associate degree programs in the student newspaper faded after the early 1980s. In 1984, the growth of the cassette program was highlighted in an article noting an increase from 60 cassette program students in 1978–79 to 266 students in 1983–84 (Arth, 1984). The article reported that up to 15 cassette courses, which were mostly introductory, could now be counted toward a bachelor's degree, reducing the typical completion

time for nontraditional students from 6–8 years to four years. The article acknowledged previous concerns about the program but did not mention any ongoing criticisms. It seems that the debate over whether cassette credits should count toward a bachelor's degree was quietly resolved, with little discussion or opposition.

While the discussion of the cassette program quietly faded from the student newspaper, the cassette program was reappropriated by traditional students as a flexible option for fulfilling credit requirements. A February 1986 article highlighted how courses had become a viable alternative for traditional students seeking to complete their degree (Feuerstein, 1986). At that time, the article noted, the program offered 13 video and 26 audio cassette courses. Harold Harden, director of lifelong learning and the directed studies program, emphasized that while the cassette courses continued to serve the broader Western New York community, they had also become a practical solution for traditional students: "Folks on campus use it for electives, or if they're shy on credit hours before graduation" (Feuerstein, 1986, p. 9). With 103 students enrolled in cassette courses that semester—primarily traditional students with only 10% in the Directed Studies Program—Harden explained, "Under the Directive studies Program you can obtain an associate's degree on just cassette courses," adding, "there are students who take only cassette courses. And then there are other students on campus day and evening division, who are taking regular courses in addition to cassette courses" (Feuerstein, 1986, p. 9).

In January 1992, leading up to the Super Bowl between the Washington Redskins and the Buffalo Bills, the student newspaper highlighted how 30 Bills players over the years had taken classes at Canisius, primarily through the cassette and evening programs, to meet their degree requirements (Smith, 1992). It was not until the Academic Council reviewed the program in 1994 that the cassette program was mentioned again in the paper. According to the student reporter, in addition to serving nontraditional students, "Students who are already enrolled in classes on campus may utilize the program with good reason ... seniors needing one more class to graduate, those withdrawing from a course but not wanting to fall behind or those who are at risk of losing financial aid for not keeping the minimum number of credits" (Karcher, 1994, p. 2).

After 1994, no further evidence of the cassette-based courses appeared in the college's newspapers or archival records. However, oral history from an

alumnus, now the university's Director of Accessibility Services, indicated that the final cassette course, Career Decision Making, continued as a core requirement for all students until 2010 (S. Bonerb, personal communication, September 26, 2024).

Implications and Conclusion

The innovative use of cassettes in 1973 at Canisius is more than an interesting chapter in the college's history. It offers a broader perspective on how educational technology is adopted and contested. This case demonstrates both the potential of new technologies to expand access and how opposition may emerge among some traditional students and institutional stakeholders when they perceive threats to institutional quality, culture, and identity.

This case also shows how emerging technologies can improve educational delivery in postsecondary programs while simultaneously revealing how institutional priorities can limit which students have access to the opportunities. The value of educational technology lies partly in its capacity to extend learning beyond the physical campus. However, that potential can only be realized when institutional stakeholders recognize such programs as academically sound and beneficial to the institution's reputation. Many of the arguments raised against the cassette program—including concerns about rigor, faculty workload, and institutional prestige—echo current debates over online and asynchronous education.

The Digital Expansion of Educational Technology

Today, technologies such as learning management systems (LMS), AI-driven tutoring, and open educational resources (OER) are helping to bridge educational gaps, offering flexible learning opportunities to those who might otherwise be excluded (Luckin et al., 2016; Watson & Watson, 2007; Wiley et al., 2012). Canisius has continued its commitment to innovation and serving students beyond its on-campus programs, launching its first fully online degree in 2006 with the support of Faculty Technology Services (FacTS) and Information Technology Services (ITS), now the Center for Online Learning and Innovation (COLI) (Canisius University, n.d.-c). The online graduate program

in Physical Education, for example, meets the needs of students who could not attend in-person classes due to their professional commitments (Sawicki, 2016). This program laid the groundwork for the current Desire2Learn (D2L) system, which supports flexible course designs for online, hybrid, and in-person learning. As of August 14, 2026, Canisius listed 19 graduate program offerings with an online format option; 13 included a master's degree option and 11 included an advanced certificate option, with five program listings offering both credentials (Canisius University, n.d.-d).

Nontraditional Students, Educational Equity, and Enrollment-Driven Programs

In offering flexible programs, whether hybrid or fully remote, enrollment-driven institutions like Canisius can extend their reach to nontraditional and working adults while also securing new revenue streams. The cassette programs and other early forms of extension education served the dual purpose of meeting the needs of nontraditional students while offering income to the institution. They offered the convenience of on-demand education that fit the scheduling needs of working professionals while generating income that supported institutional operations. These alternative revenue streams are becoming more important for enrollment-driven institutions as the number of traditional-aged college students is projected to decline over the next decade.

Revenue-generating motives can also have negative effects for some groups within the nontraditional student population. For instance, despite calls to use Canisius's adult education programs to serve African American residents in neighborhoods surrounding the institution, recruitment for its cassette programs focused on middle-class working adults and suburban housewives who had disposable income or employer-sponsored tuition support. The programs therefore risked reproducing racial and class inequalities even as they were framed as efforts to broaden access.

An Enduring Tension in Expanding Access

The commitment to educational access is not only a historical concern but an ongoing endeavor at Canisius and across higher education. Modern

educational practices should draw on these lessons to ensure that technological advancements democratize education rather than widen existing divides. The history of extension education at Canisius should not be reduced to a historical footnote; it offers important lessons about identifying target student populations and navigating institutional resistance. Institutional leaders can build support for new academic programs by demonstrating that they are rigorous, mission-consistent, and responsive to community needs.

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SOM: Scholars or Managers? A History of Business Education at Yale

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Abstract

Why did it take Yale until 1976 to establish a business school, nearly a century later than many of its peers? This paper argues that the protracted founding of the Yale School of Management (SOM) reflects a long-standing tension between management education and the academic ideals of America's elite liberal arts universities. Drawing on archival documents, university records, and original interviews, it reconstructs the savvy 15-year campaign under President Kingman Brewster to normalize the idea of a business school operating alongside Yale's existing, storied institutions. Rather than compete with a crowded field of prestigious MBA offerings, Yale developed a new and unconventional degree intended to prepare leaders at the intersection of the public and private sectors—though external pressures soon forced SOM to abandon much of its original distinctiveness. The history of SOM's founding provides insight into how institutional identity and cultural politics collided during the transition from “Old Yale” to “New Yale.” Ultimately, this paper illustrates that the same contending ideologies that defined the mid-century debate over SOM continue to shape the university's relationship with business and entrepreneurship in the present day.

Keywords: Yale University, Yale School of Management, business education, liberal arts education, institutional identity, university governance

The Yale School of Management's history webpage begins by stating that in 1971, “The University received a bequest from the estate of Frederick W. Beinecke, PhB 1909, for the creation of a program in management. Two years later, the Yale Corporation approved the creation of a School of Organization and Management” (Yale School of Management, n.d., “1971” section, para. 1).

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Bequest received, school created. It sounds rather neat and tidy. In reality, the creation of a business school at Yale was anything but simple—the true seeds of the business school had been planted decades earlier. While proposals for a business school were raised repeatedly in the early 20th century, the planning effort that finally succeeded came under the tenure of President Kingman Brewster, Jr. (1963–77). When all was said and done, the birth of the School of Management (SOM; see Figure 1) in 1976 took nearly 15 years. The vigorous

Figure 1

School of Management Building



Note. Exterior of the Yale School of Management building. From *Teaching Social Entrepreneurship*, by Yale University, 2018, For Humanity (<https://forhumanity.yale.edu/news/teaching-social-entrepreneurship>)

debates that caused such a delay, and defined the school's mission, are rich with insight into how Yale perceived itself at the time. Through this lens, the School of Management can be seen as exemplary of the root-and-branch changes embroiling the campus as the university transitioned from "Old Yale" to "New Yale."

By exploring Yale SOM's 15-year struggle, this paper unveils the historic tension between business schools and the universities that house them—namely, whether an institution devoted to the liberal arts

can successfully educate students in professional management without straying from its founding ideals. While existing literature has explored this dilemma in the context of the nation's first business schools at the turn of the 20th century, this paper argues that the contentious founding of Yale's business school eight decades later speaks to the lasting nature of this debate at elite American universities. President Brewster's championing of SOM is a master class in political maneuvering, revealing a patient and peacekeeping leader who, thinking years ahead, introduced the university's first interdisciplinary centers as a stepping stone on the path to a school of management. Even so, Yale's eventual solution to the question of training scholars or managers—a deliberately unconventional, interdisciplinary "anti-business business school"—aroused significant controversy that no amount of political finesse

could fully dispel, and the school would spend its early decades pivoting, searching for a satisfactory resolution. That Yale's compromise caused broad displeasure is, in retrospect, unsurprising: the difficulty of establishing SOM reveals the persistent tension between traditional academic values and the world of commerce—a tension evident not only in the nation's earliest business schools, but also at Yale in the 1970s and, arguably, into the present day.

American Business Education Before Yale

The earliest schools of management in the United States sprouted alongside the burgeoning white-collar workforce of the mid-19th century. Proprietary and for-profit, these “commercial colleges” operated both locally and as franchises, seeking to supplement young men's apprenticeships with theory-oriented coursework (Conn, 2019, pp. 16–17). They were not regarded as particularly prestigious, and as such, their model of business education was more readily adopted by midwestern state schools than by the genteel universities of the Ivy League, which devised their own approach to management pedagogy (Khurana, 2007, p. 113).

The first modern business school, the Wharton School, was founded at the University of Pennsylvania in 1881 (Johnson, 1931). It was followed in 1900 by Dartmouth's Amos Tuck School, the first graduate school of business, and in 1908 by Harvard's Graduate School of Business Administration, which introduced the MBA degree (Wren, 2005, p. 231). From the outset, these schools were confronted with the same dilemma that stymied Yale. Many members of Penn's faculty at the time viewed Wharton as an unnecessary and unfitting addition to the university (Conn, 2019, p. 8). A trade school had no place among the liberal arts, they argued. Yet, buoyed by substantial alumni pressure and funding, the three schools were established with a shared mission: to transform business leadership into a learned profession “alongside that of ministry, law, and medicine” (Khurana, 2007, p. 114).

Whereas Penn, Dartmouth, and Harvard grew to embrace their role as leaders in the field of professional business education, Yale remained steadfast in its disapproval. Under a long succession of presidents devoted to a humanist undergraduate education, Yale's business school found no footing until nearly a century after Wharton. The throughline tracing this debate—that Yale, 88

years later, found itself still confronting the same controversy its peers had earlier faced—provides a lens through which to evaluate the evolving role and perception of business education at elite universities in the United States. Because the idealist objection to a business school was most entrenched at Yale, the university's eventual compromise reveals, in heightened form, the terms on which the liberal arts university could finally make room for the study of management.

A Zero-Sum Game: Griswold and the Rejection of a Business School

While Yale initially authorized a limited array of business courses, the era spanning the 1930s through the presidency of A. Whitney Griswold (1950–1963; see Figure 2) was defined by a refusal to institutionalize these offerings. Yale's leadership considered a "trade school for businessmen" antithetical to the university's celebrated liberal arts tradition and pointed to the corporate accomplishments of its undergraduate alumni as proof that no such school was needed.

Business education has existed at Yale since the early 20th century. In his account of the early management courses at Yale, John Perry Miller (1986) reported that by 1930, the Sheffield Scientific School ("Sheff") offered programs in Applied Economics and Industrial Administration, equipped with practical syllabi that prepared students for "business or law or industry" (p. 4). They were organized jointly by the Economics Department and the Engineering

Figure 2

Yale President A. Whitney Griswold, 1951



Note. Yale president A. Whitney Griswold on the June 11, 1951, cover of *Time*. Cover illustration by Ernest Hamlin Baker (Baker, 1951).

School. After Sheff was discontinued as a teaching institution in 1945, the programs continued under the banner of Yale College until Applied Economics was dissolved in 1954 and Industrial Administration grew into a proper, research-oriented Department of Administrative Sciences in the 1960s. The department, with a growing emphasis on theory, “would prove to be both an asset and a liability in the launching of SOM” (Miller, 1986, p. 6).

Miller (1986) further noted that the earliest known proposal for a business school at Yale dated back to the 1930s (p. 2). Professor O. Glenn Saxon, head of the Applied Economics program, petitioned the Corporation for approval, presumably noting the popularity of his courses on “federal regulation of business, corporation organization and finance, business organizations and operations and international trade” (“O. Glenn Saxon,” 1962, p. 82). As Miller (1986) recounted, though Saxon assured the Corporation he could solicit enough funding, his efforts were unsuccessful (p. 2). Before long, World War II engulfed Yale along with the rest of the nation. Exploratory expenditures, while always difficult to secure, were now completely off the table. This was the environment that A. Whitney Griswold inherited upon his appointment to the presidency in 1949. As Corporation trustee and philanthropist William S. Beinecke remarked in his 1983 address to the Charter Class of 1978, “it was inevitable that President Griswold viewed Yale’s finances as what we today would call a zero-sum game. That is, any funds required for new educational programs would have to be withdrawn from current programs” (Beinecke, 1983, p. 3).

Griswold dedicated his presidency to ensuring that a Yale diploma would denote the highest tier of humanist education in the world. Anything that did not directly contribute to this mission, such as what he referred to as “a trade school for businessmen,” would be kept on the sidelines (Beinecke, 1983, p. 2). Indeed, at least two formal proposals for a business school were shot down during his tenure. Henry “Sam” Chauncey, Jr. (see Figure 3), an assistant dean under Griswold and later special assistant to Kingman Brewster, noted that he once floated the idea of Yale following MIT’s model of schooling, but inverted to fit Yale’s principles (S. Chauncey, personal communication, April 21, 2025). As Chauncey shared, Griswold was receptive to building Yale into “the greatest humanists in the world, with a core of great scientists,” but they soon realized

Figure 3*Henry "Sam" Chauncey Jr.*

Note. Photograph of Henry "Sam" Chauncey Jr. From *Meet the Author of "May Day at Yale, 1970"* Henry Sam Chauncey, by Pequot Library, 2015, Patch.

that a university had to be either "second rate in the sciences or you have to go all out. There is no middle ground."

In this decision, Griswold had the support of both the Yale Corporation and influential benefactors, including individuals such as Irving Olds, Brewster Jennings, Juan Trippe, John Hay Whitney, and Paul Mellon (Beinecke, 1983, p. 3). Other alumni, however, penned letters to the alumni magazine or the president and complained about Yale's lack of a business school—and Harvard's thriving one (S. Chauncey, personal communication, April 21, 2025). As Chauncey elaborated, they correctly observed that the Harvard Business School (established decades earlier, in 1908) was instrumental in

dethroning Yale with regard to the number of graduates in top executive positions. By 1973, a Standard & Poor's study (Lyons, 1974) found that Harvard had 770 leaders of Fortune 500 companies, of which 610 earned diplomas from the graduate schools. Yale, meanwhile, had only 441 leaders, of which 399 graduated from Yale College. The only other university to crack 200 total executives was Princeton. The study noted that its findings corroborated George W. Pierson's 1952 findings (Lyons, 1974). Despite its runner-up position overall, by this yardstick, Yale's undergraduate program produced the most titans of business by a wide margin in the mid-20th century (Lyons, 1974). That, Griswold argued, said all anyone needed to know about the value of a liberal arts education (S. Chauncey, personal communication, April 21, 2025).

Brewster Carefully Lays the Groundwork

Under Kingman Brewster, Jr. (1963–1977; see Figure 4), a methodical string of committees and reports would provide a growing corpus of recommendations that could justify steps toward a school of management. Brewster pursued this goal indirectly, first normalizing interdisciplinary study at Yale via the Institution for Social and Policy Studies, before casting a business school as the natural extension of these studies. By focusing on problems of both public and private leadership, plans for the burgeoning school sought to position it as a clearly distinguished alternative—not a competitor—to Harvard and Wharton.

Chauncey's interview offered striking insight into Brewster's early years as president (S. Chauncey, personal communication, April 21, 2025). By 1960, Griswold was secretly battling severe colon cancer.

He brought on Brewster from Harvard Law School to serve as Yale's provost and help handle the responsibilities of the presidency. Unbeknownst to the Yale community, Brewster effectively served as president in the year and a half leading up to Griswold's untimely passing in 1963. Even so, Brewster had to endure a five-month search for a formal successor to Griswold, as some on the Corporation had reservations about installing a liberal Republican to the university's highest seat. From an outside perspective, Brewster did not yet command a mandate powerful enough to enact sweeping change at the start of his tenure. Nor was that his intention, since Brewster idolized the witty and affable Griswold; they had sailed together and summered jointly at Martha's

Figure 4

Yale President Kingman Brewster Jr., 1967



Note. Yale president Kingman Brewster Jr. on the June 23, 1967, cover of *Time*. Cover illustration by Robert Vickrey (Vickrey, 1967).

Vineyard. Though he was more amenable to a business school, Brewster was reluctant to push forward with anything that Griswold would have opposed. Moreover, as Chauncey clarified (personal communication, April 21, 2025), he first needed to spend time familiarizing himself with Yale's inner workings from this new vantage point.

In the course of this exploration, Brewster sought to understand the landscape for a potential business school. Under the directive of Brewster and John Perry Miller, dean of the Graduate School, a University Council Report of the Committee on the Graduate School was compiled in December 1964 (Young, 1964). Chaired by George B. Young, BA and PhD in History at Yale and CEO of Field Enterprises, Inc., the report evaluated the existing Department of Industrial Administration as a starting point. The report stated that the committee was impressed with evidence of Yale's many "doers," and suggested that Yale explore a program similar to Oxford's Ethics, Politics & Economics (which the College did eventually adopt). However, for the following reasons, they did not believe Yale should establish a graduate business school:

(a) the fact that Yale would start far behind many leading universities having well-developed business schools, (b) the very large expenditures that would be required to set up such a school *de novo*, and (c) more fundamentally, our serious doubt whether the typical business school curriculum, with its emphasis on "practical" business courses, is really most relevant to the problem in hand. We believe that it would be far better for Yale to write on a fresh slate and work out an entirely new approach to the problem. (Young, 1964, p. 1)

This recommendation, as Miller (1986) detailed, became the guiding principle behind the eventual creation of SOM (p. 8). Rather than compete directly with HBS and Wharton, Yale adopted what might be described as an "if you can't beat them, play another game" strategy. The belief shared by Brewster and the committee was that the most effective training for business should address a broad range of large organizations, both public and private. To make such an institution more palatable at Yale, interdisciplinary studies first had to be normalized. As Chauncey (personal communication, April 21, 2025) explained, "That alone was pushing the envelope. It was not seen as a pure, 'Old Yale' institution."

When Griswold took the helm after World War II, he set about dismantling

the practical and interdisciplinary initiatives that had popped up in the course of Yale's contribution to the war effort (S. Chauncey, personal communication, April 21, 2025). By trimming the university down to discrete departments, Griswold often said he was "purifying the place" (S. Chauncey, personal communication, April 21, 2025). Brewster, an expansionist, tasked himself with reorienting Yale toward growth. Proposals for interdisciplinary centers began taking shape from multiple directions, including one to bolster Yale's secondary and public education research and another to focus on New Haven and urban studies (Miller, 1986, p. 11). Miller (1986) further detailed that funding for these initiatives would come from the deluge of federal subsidies for the social sciences under the Johnson administration's Great Society legislation and a massive influx of alumni donations during the postwar boom of the mid-1960s (p. 12). In Brewster's 1965–66 annual report (as cited in Miller, 1986), he framed the push for interdisciplinary programs in terms of Yale's grander mission:

There is a need to ask a question most fundamental to Yale's origin and tradition, its ambition and its promise. Are we doing everything we should be doing in order to continue to make a disproportionately large impact not only on the arts and the sciences ... but also upon its direction, on its public and private executive leadership? (p. 12)

While a business school was not the answer—the tools taught by a vocational school would quickly grow outdated, he explained—centers for the social sciences would be established in the coming years.

In his 1966–67 annual report, Brewster envisioned the beginnings of a Center for Educational Studies, a Center for Urban Studies, and a Center for the Study of Management (as cited in "A Proposal for the Creation," 1968). Setting the stage for a formal announcement the following year, Brewster argued:

If Yale is to contribute to the leadership of the nation in the next generations by the same measure as it has in the past, ways must be found to apply the new learning in the social sciences to the pressing needs of government and business at the international, national, and community level." (as cited in "A Proposal for the Creation," 1968, p. 9)

In 1968, this official proposal took the form of an Institute of Social Science ("A Proposal for the Creation," 1968), later renamed "by Presidential sleight of hand" the Institution for Social and Policy Studies (ISPS) (Miller, 1986, p. 15). In purpose, ISPS combined the application of the social sciences to human

problems with the education of future leaders in the public and private sectors.

Brewster and the committee behind the proposal anticipated numerous objections to ISPS and addressed them head-on. Explicitly, the report stated that ISPS “is in no sense to replace the important disciplinary work of the departments but to complement and strengthen it by providing new opportunities for cooperation by scholars in a variety of disciplines” (“A Proposal for the Creation,” 1968, p. vii). Similarly, it reiterated that “Yale College is the heart of Yale University” and the liberal arts education it provided would always take precedence over professional education (“A Proposal for the Creation,” 1968, p. 15). The proposal went on to argue that undergraduates already possessed an interest in these societal challenges and that by showing students how pure fields of study applied to these interests, the departments would be strengthened (“A Proposal for the Creation,” 1968, p. 16). In making this argument, the proposal simultaneously linked social science courses to “important contemporary human problems,” aligning ISPS with Yale’s humanist approach to education (“A Proposal for the Creation,” 1968, p. 5). Most importantly, while the proposal did outline a one-year fellowship at ISPS for mid-career leaders, the report emphasized that “what is being suggested is not a management development program similar to that which now exists on many other campuses” (“A Proposal for the Creation,” 1968, p. 12).

While it is true that ISPS was not a business school, unacknowledged in the report was the fact that many alumni proponents of such a school viewed ISPS as a stepping stone toward this eventual goal. “Yale was responding to the urgings of numerous alumni,” explained ISPS’s inaugural director, John Perry Miller; most notably, William S. Beinecke and Milton Steinbach (Miller, 1986, p. 17). Not coincidentally, ISPS itself was the culmination of a deliberately planned sequence of bureaucratic reports. At SOM Alumni Weekend, Beinecke (1983) explained that Miller and Brewster together had sought “to appoint a sequence of committees on the social studies at Yale” (p. 5). Over the years, these had the effect of building upon one another, using the previous committee’s recommendations as evidence that expansion into leadership education and the social sciences was desirable (Beinecke, 1983). As Miller (1986) cynically—and cryptically—stated in his 1986 account of the SOM’s creation, the people involved “did not always articulate their objectives with clarity or complete candor. While we in academia are committed to the pursuit of truth, like other

people we often conduct our daily affairs with calculated ambiguity and dissimulation, if not deceit” (p. 3).

From Chauncey’s perspective, “Brewster’s sole goal was to have an interdisciplinary program and show it could work, and he didn’t know where it would go from there” (S. Chauncey, personal communication, April 21, 2025). By many measures, ISPS was a success. Humanities faculty were unruffled by it, and the social scientists generally appreciated it. The Centers for Educational and Urban Studies were operating by 1969; however, Chauncey further recalled, to the disappointment of many involved with ISPS’s creation, Management Studies was delayed. At first, the delay resulted from insufficient faculty recruitment. But by 1970, nationwide antiwar protests were in full swing across college campuses. At Yale, they culminated in the May Day rally on the New Haven Green, attended by thousands. According to Chauncey (personal communication, April 21, 2025) and Beinecke (1983, p. 7), Brewster navigated the crisis deftly, with empathy and diplomacy. However, he could not push his luck by announcing a management program and risk Yale being seen as a “lackey of corporate America” (Beinecke, 1983, p. 8). ISPS itself was briefly a point of objection by the protesters; Miller was unsure why, but Chauncey (personal communication, April 21, 2025) believed it was due to their concerns about establishing an independent African American Studies Department, rather than one subsumed under the social sciences or ISPS.

Finally, Funding: SOM Takes Shape

To parlay ISPS’s success into the creation of a business school, the administration had to secure three essentials: funding, faculty, and a founding philosophy. A pivotal bequest supplied the funds; the repurposing of the Department of Administrative Sciences supplied the faculty; and the appointment of William Donaldson as dean supplied the school with a model for the leaders they sought to develop. SOM defined itself as a training ground for changemakers working at the intersection of government and business—a risky and ambitious attempt at a new kind of institution.

By the start of 1971, campus unrest had passed, but the delays had significantly hampered efforts toward a management studies center and eventual business school. As Beinecke put it,

with no faculty, no financing, not even any housing at hand for one, the long-sought goal remained remote. As the boom times and expansionist outlook of the 1960s faded into the distance, the prospect of reaching it *ever* became more bleak with each passing month. (Beinecke, 1983, p. 8)

Alumni donations that had been optimistically intended for management training were starting to be used for ISPS's other centers of study. Salvation came in the form of a \$15 million bequest from Frederick W. Beinecke, father of William and an outspoken business school advocate, who passed away in 1971 (Beinecke, 1983, pp. 8–9). With the promise of enough funds to start a school of management on the horizon, Miller received approval in 1972 for a terminal master's program housed under ISPS (Miller, 1986, p. 20), again deriving his justification from passages in the earlier report establishing ISPS ("Institution for Social and Policy Studies," 1972, p. 1). Still, it was neither an MBA nor a business school, but rather "an attractive alternative to existing programs in ... business administration or public administration" ("Institution for Social and Policy Studies," 1972, p. 2).

Thus, funds had been secured and a degree authorized. The only missing components were faculty and a separate institution to house the program. A year earlier, it had been recommended that the Department of Administrative Sciences be terminated, but it survived with only budget cuts (Miller, 1986, p. 19). It was now to be subsumed by this new "Educational Unit," and the faculty aired their concerns through Victor Vroom, chairman of the department and consolidation committee (Vroom, 1973, para. 3). In a letter to Brewster, he expressed "a fear that the high quality doctoral program(s) ... will be lost or drastically changed" and that "the demands of a professional program will reduce Yale's commitment to standards of scholarship and basic research" (Vroom, 1973, para. 2). Although their concerns that a business school would be less academically rigorous remained, the department acquiesced, primarily because its members feared the department would otherwise be shut down entirely (Miller, 1986, p. 24). Miller reported that, after a protracted series of votes and debates, it was decided the program would branch off from ISPS and officially be known as the School of Organization and Management, offering a Master of Public and Private Management (MPPM).

An arduous two-year search thus began for the inaugural dean of SOM. As Victor Vroom (1974) warned, "I am sorry to have to report that some of the

excitement has been lost ... the decision to postpone the introduction of the MPPM program ... [has] been costly to faculty identification with the School and its mission” (para. 4). There was considerable pressure to conclude the search. The two leading contenders were faculty members at the Harvard and Stanford business schools, William Massy and Joseph Bower (Miller, 1974, p. 1). Brewster rejected them due to worries that they would be insufficiently innovative and revert to their previous employers as models for SOM, which, of course, was not a “business” school (Miller, 1986, p. 30).

The magnitude of this concern stemmed from the fact that the mission statement of SOM was unfinished and somewhat unoriginal; without a guiding principle, those candidates might drift back to the familiar. As Henry B. Schacht, a Yale graduate and committee member, wrote to Miller, “our current mission definition is very close to [those] for Harvard and Stanford” (Schacht, 1974, p. 3). The primary reasons for Yale to build SOM, as he saw it, were Yale’s historical role in preparing leaders (who were now seeking graduate degrees in management) and that Yale overall would be “a better and broader, more interesting, diverse and lively place” for it (Schacht, 1974, pp. 1–2). This alone—or even supplemented by arguments that SOM would be smaller, care more for its students, or be values-based—would be insufficient to distinguish the school. The committee needed to find a niche in organizational leadership training that not only addressed an unfilled need but was also distinctive enough that Harvard and Stanford could not easily pursue it. In a June 1975 *New Haven Register* article titled “Yale Business School Far Behind Schedule,” the search committee described kinds of problems SOM graduates might be prepared to address, including relationships between federal agencies and private industries, Federal Reserve decisions affecting bank mortgages, and the delivery of health care (Hemming, 1975).

Although articulating this vision remained an open question, time was running short, and William “Bill” Donaldson was appointed to the role in 1975. A self-described “academic entrepreneur” with an action-oriented approach, Donaldson had experience in both the public and private sectors, including as undersecretary of state for Henry Kissinger, an advisor to Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, and a founding partner of the investment banking firm Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette (“Remembering Founding Dean,” 2024). His vision was of an SOM graduate who could seamlessly transition between government and

business, and he immersed himself in every aspect of the developing school. Donaldson was confident this new type of school was necessary:

There was a terrible breakdown in American society [in the tumult of the 1960s] and within that breakdown there was increasing conflict between business and government ... [There was a need for] businessmen who were more cognizant about what government is all about. (Hsieh, 1986)

In *The New York Times*, Donaldson reiterated, “People on the left tend to regard business with suspicion and people on the right are suspicious of government. We need more people who can see the varying shades of grey in between” (Phalon, 1976, p. 53). On September 14, 1976, the School of Organization and Management opened its doors to just such people:

a student body as diverse as the curriculum its members will be asked to absorb ... The class roster includes a partner in a commodities trading firm who already has a doctorate from Oxford, an assistant professor in Japanese history, a theater manager with a master’s degree in fine arts from Columbia University, a network television administrator, and a West Point graduate fresh from armored training at Fort Knox. (Phalon, 1976, p. 53)

As Phalon (1976) reported, the composition of the incoming student body was meticulously planned by Donaldson and his team. Though students were aware there was a risk in committing to an unproven MPPM degree, many were optimistic about the prospect of helping to shape this new institution. Others were proud that SOM was unique in how it packaged and taught management principles (Phalon, 1976).

The “Anti-Business Business School”

Thanks to Donaldson’s efforts, the first cadre of students was one that relished contributing to the school’s unconventional culture. Yet the very distinctiveness that gave SOM its character also left it vulnerable to criticism. As employers puzzled over the MPPM and graduates drifted toward the lucrative private sector, the school spent the 1980s and 1990s rethinking its relationship with conventional business education—that is, how to enhance its reputation without surrendering the mission that justified its existence in the first place.

The eclectic and energetic students of the inaugural class created an environment rich with levity. According to Michelle Spinelli, SOM’s resident

historian (personal communication, April 21, 2025), like the rest of Yale, “it was a very intense place, but there was also a feeling like they weren’t taking themselves too seriously,” a sentiment echoed by many alumni of the Charter Class. Consider the following cartoon from *The New Yorker*, which appeared prominently in the SOM’s weekly bulletin on October 2, 1978 (see Figure 5):

Figure 5

Cartoon About Management Consultants



Note. Cartoon by Edward Koren, reproduced in *Week of 10.2 Bulletin* (October 2, 1978), School of Management, Yale University, Records (RU 486, Box 1), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

It is this spirit of lighthearted, slightly self-deprecating humor about their part in the “anti-business business school” that defined the infant SOM.

In the spring of SOM’s first year, student Jeffrey Yudkoff organized The SOM Follies of 1977, “a skit-based variety show that parodied the nascent school’s faculty, staff, and academic culture” (Spinelli, 2025, para. 1). During one skit, when the student parodying John Perry Miller was asked how an MPPM differed from an MBA, he stood on a chair and sang, “You know we’re not like them, so hard and cruel, those other business schools” (Spinelli, 2025, para. 8). The production became a unifying event for the school: 35 of the 49 initial SOM

students participated, and the Follies evolved into an annual tradition. SOM's embrace of stories, jokes, and performances illustrates just how "Yale" the school became (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

SOM Follies, 1978–1984



Note. Stills from "SOM Follies" performances from 1978 to 1984. From *The First SOM Follies*, by M. Spinelli, 2025, Yale School of Management (<https://som.yale.edu/story/2025/first-som-follies>).

For all its success in fostering an attractive *esprit de corps*, SOM could not—as Hanna Gray, president pro tempore after Brewster, explained—"create a great school overnight, especially in a universe of already-existing and successful programs" (Gray, 2018, p. 225). The School of Management was no exception, encountering significant hurdles to its mission in the following years. By the 1990s, external pressures were forcing SOM to reevaluate its commitment to both public and private management. Employers were confused by the MPPM degree, and outside scholarships often applied only to actual MBAs (M.

Spinelli, personal communication, April 21, 2025). Further, as one 1981 alumnus recalled, “Instead of the half-and-half mix of graduates taking jobs in government and business, nearly all the graduates took jobs in business” (Perry, 1996, para. 3). This was a deep disappointment to Donaldson, whose vision of “tearing down the academic walls and artificial limitations that were put up between business and public administration” seemed increasingly idealistic (Phalon, 1976, p. 53). Miller’s worries from 1986 were beginning to prove prescient: “is [SOM] destined to become just one more of the schools of business administration, struggling to establish its parity with those whose preeminence was well-established before Yale entered the field?” (Miller, 1986, p. 2).

According to *BusinessWeek* rankings reported by Fellman (2002), SOM ranked 22nd when Jeffrey Garten became dean in 1995 (Yale School of Management, n.d.). Its graduates “were often seen as too businesslike for the nonprofit world, but not tough enough for corporate America” (Fellman, 2002). The following three years were marked by the turbulent restructuring of SOM under Michael Levine, culminating in disgruntled alumni hiring an airplane to fly a protest banner over the Harvard-Yale game (Cheong, 1995). Simultaneously, community members worried that turning Yale into a regular business school would further weaken it, because—echoing discussions from 30 years prior—it was years behind other top business schools. The situation deteriorated to the point that, in 1996, President Richard Levin stated, “I believe SOM should be first-rate or it shouldn’t be prolonged” (Fellman, 2002, para. 8). Jeffrey Garten took over as the eighth dean of SOM, overseeing its transformation into what he described as “unabashedly a hard-edged business school,” while maintaining that SOM remained distinct because “most schools are little more than glorified employment agencies, but our mandate is to educate leaders for both business and society” (Fellman, 2002, para. 17). Its name was shortened to School of Management in 1994, and its degree changed from MPPM to MBA in 1999 (Fellman, 2002). Following its shift toward more traditional areas of study, Yale SOM was ranked first in the nonprofit specialization and 10th overall among U.S. business schools by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2025 (Ethier, 2025).

Business Education at Yale Today

Born at the inflection point of Old Yale and New Yale, the school had the opportunity to redefine what it meant to pursue an interest in business at Yale. In the old days, one alumnus remarked, “half the class expected to wind up in the family business” (Phalon, 1976, p. 53). This was not lost on the wave of new arrivals at Yale in the 1960s and 1970s. At the start of Brewster and Chauncey’s tenures, faculty were vocally protesting that the antiquated admissions process “was biased against intellectuals, artists, scientists, and scholars, and brought in too many conformist future businessmen” (Kabaservice, 1999, para. 16). This put SOM in a precarious position and contributed substantially to its delays: Old Yale viewed SOM as too interdisciplinary and too closely aligned with New Yale, while New Yale viewed SOM as too corporate and too closely aligned with Old Yale. Donaldson and Miller sought to navigate the divide in the SOM they ultimately created, teaching management skills to a diverse group of students—an entirely new type of business school, and a compromise that could have been born nowhere else.

Through the process of its creation, SOM has irrevocably altered Yale’s perception of itself as solely for traditional academia. The school and many entrepreneurial resources created in the wake of its founding align with Yale’s stated mission: “Yale educates aspiring leaders worldwide who serve all sectors of society” (Yale University, 2019, Standard 1, p. 2). As Josh Geballe, senior associate provost for entrepreneurship and innovation, put it, “business is very compatible with Yale’s liberal arts education. We have no debates that it’s a good idea to teach science and engineering, and entrepreneurship is the application of those domains” (J. Geballe, personal communication, April 21, 2025). As the head of Yale Ventures since 2022, Geballe has worked to centralize entrepreneurial resources for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. Just as Yale’s humanist mission fundamentally shaped SOM’s mission, Geballe viewed Yale Ventures as enabling the university to apply its research toward “solving the problems of the real world that people care about” (J. Geballe, personal communication, April 21, 2025). Geballe and Clare Leinweber, executive director of the Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale (Tsai CITY), observed that more students were interested in business now than 20 years earlier. Leinweber explained that before the dot-com bubble, business was

perceived as stifling and corporate; today, entrepreneurship has made business a far more attractive and attainable pursuit to Yale students (C. Leinweber, personal communication, April 24, 2025).

According to C. Leinweber (personal communication, April 24, 2025), Yale has never been completely sure of its approach to business education, and the internal tensions that defined SOM's founding still exist. Even today, the question remains how extensively Yale should invest in student startups and maximize their growth, at the risk of distracting them from their studies, which would arguably be antithetical to Yale's purpose. Leinweber observed that at Tsai CITY's creation, the prevailing outlook was that "incorporating a startup, generating revenue, raising capital, and then working out of Tsai CITY was crossing a line between the educational and actually doing real-world business" (C. Leinweber, personal communication, April 24, 2025). In Leinweber's view, this philosophy now puts Tsai CITY—whose goal is to support learning and creative innovation broadly—into tension with more business-oriented organizations such as Yale Ventures, which quietly absorbed Tsai CITY in 2024 (C. Leinweber, personal communication, April 24, 2025). Both types of groups, though similar in purpose, represent different manifestations of the entrepreneurial spirit at Yale. For now, that traditionally "Yale" concern—isolating its liberal arts education from business—has faded, as the pendulum swings toward an administrative embrace of student engagement with business. As the ongoing push and pull in Yale's entrepreneurial ecosystem shows, the competing ideologies that framed years of debate on the eventual SOM still shape Yale's perception of itself. The university must heed the voices of students, faculty, and alumni, as business education's role in New Yale continues to adapt to a changing world.

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A Floor, Not a Ceiling: The ABA's 2016 Experiential Learning Standard and the Unfinished Reform of American Legal Education

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Abstract

American legal education has undergone a significant transformation since the colonial era, when apprenticeship served as the primary means of professional preparation. As higher education faces increasing pressure to produce workforce-ready graduates, legal education offers an instructive case study of the effects of prioritizing academic rigor over applied preparation—effects evident in client services, access to justice, and ongoing debates over professional competence. Drawing on Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle and Dewey's (1938/2015) foundational argument that structured reflection transforms experience into knowledge, this paper argues that the dominant Langdellian model, established at Harvard in the 1870s, structurally underdeveloped the conditions that professional competence requires. Landmark reform efforts, including the 1979 Cramton Report, the 1992 MacCrate Report, the 2007 Carnegie Report, and the American Bar Association's (ABA) 2014 adoption of Standard 303(a)(3), implemented beginning in the 2016–2017 academic year, demonstrate a pattern of institutional acknowledgment without institutional resolve. This article argues that the six-credit-hour experiential requirement, implemented beginning in the 2016–2017 academic year, while a meaningful threshold, represents a floor rather than a full commitment to experiential education. The article calls for continued examination of how law schools, particularly those serving rural and underserved populations, can move beyond minimum compliance toward substantive reform.

Keywords: legal education, experiential learning, clinical legal education, case method, law school reform

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The practice of law, long held in high esteem, is fundamentally a public profession (Barrington et al., 2024; Sullivan et al., 2007). Through their important work, lawyers help advocate, uphold, and craft the law, which serves as the bedrock of a functioning society (Sullivan et al., 2007). However, there is growing evidence of a fundamental disconnect between lawyer training and professional ideals and the real-world practice and application of law during and after law school (Kuehn, 2016; Sullivan et al., 2007). Robert Gordon (2019) observed that "in no profession is the gulf greater between ideals and practice than it is for lawyers" (p. 177). This observation captures the persistent challenge at the center of legal education: preparing graduates who are equipped not only to analyze doctrine but to translate that knowledge into effective, ethical, and independent practice (Kuehn, 2016). Some legal scholars advocate for an increased emphasis on hands-on training via experiential learning while students are in law school as a way to bridge this gulf and provide students with opportunities to develop an ethical professional identity before entering the legal profession (Joy, 2018; Thomson, 2015).

Experiential learning is a formal educational theory, not simply a synonym for hands-on activity. Kolb (2015) defined learning as the process by which "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 49) and theorized that meaningful learning requires completing a four-stage cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Kolb built this framework on the foundational contributions of John Dewey, who argued that all genuine education comes through experience and that experience without structured reflection can miseducate as readily as it can teach (Dewey, 1938/2015). Reflection is not incidental to this model; it is the mechanism through which raw experience becomes transferable professional knowledge. Learners must connect what they encounter in practice to broader frameworks, test those frameworks in new situations, and revise their understanding through repeated cycles of doing and thinking (Dewey, 1938/2015; Kolb, 2015).

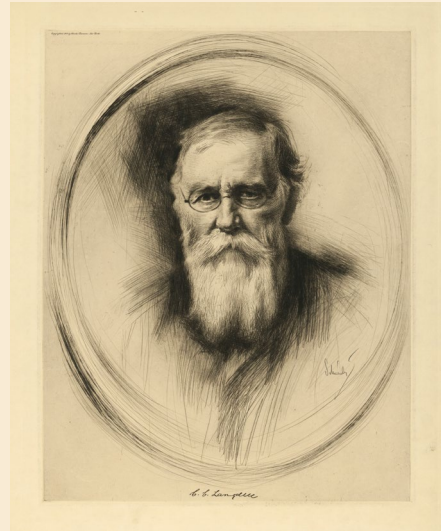
Applied to legal education, these theoretical frameworks reveal the deficiency of the pedagogical model that dominates legal training today: the Langdellian model. The Langdellian model, which emerged in the 1870s at Harvard Law School, centers on the combination of case study analysis and Socratic pedagogy (Kimball, 2014). The Socratic method in the classroom

engages students primarily in abstract conceptualization, the third stage of Kolb's cycle, while systematically omitting the concrete experience and structured reflection that the cycle requires to produce durable professional judgment. As Sullivan et al. (2007) observed, "because new learning must always be grafted onto existing understanding, the pedagogy must somehow make the connections between what the learner knows and believes and the kinds of thinking needed for professional success" (p. 59). Yet legal education has historically resisted the integration of experiential learning and reflection (Leering, 2017). Students and employers report that law school is too theoretical and lacks the practical application needed to enter practice upon graduation (Casey, 2021; Darian-Smith, 2016; Maranville et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2007). This critique is not new, but its urgency has grown as the costs of inadequate preparation fall hardest on clients, communities, and rural populations with the least access to legal support (Tomisich, 2024). The story of how legal education both created and failed to close this gap unfolds across more than a century of institutional reform.

The arc of this history is short to state but long in the making. Beginning with the 2016–2017 academic year, the American Bar Association's (ABA) Standard 303(a)(3), adopted in 2014, required every law student to complete at least six credit hours of experiential coursework before graduation (ABA, 2022). The mandate did not emerge from sudden insight. It was the delayed answer to a structural problem built into legal education more than a century earlier, when Christopher Columbus Langdell (see Figure 1) installed the case

Figure 1

Etching of Christopher Columbus Langdell



Note. From Christopher Columbus Langdell [Etching on paper], by O. J. Schneider, 1906, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, United States (Object No. NPG.77.87). CC0 1.0.

method and the Socratic classroom as the defining pedagogy of the American law school (Kimball, 2014). That model professionalized legal training and secured its place within the university, but it did so by elevating doctrinal analysis above practice, a choice whose consequences compounded across generations of graduates (Stevens, 1983). The reforms that followed, from the 1979 Cramton Report through the 1992 MacCrate Report to the 2007 Carnegie Report, each named the same deficiency, and each fell short of resolving it. Read in sequence, this history reveals more than a slow institutional awakening. It demonstrates that advanced professional learning cannot rest on abstraction alone, and that a system that severs knowledge from its application will reproduce the same preparation gap no matter how often it acknowledges the flaw (Joy, 2018; Kuehn, 2016).

This paper examines how American legal education arrived at the ABA experiential learning requirement in Standard 303(a)(3), tracing the structural and cultural forces that delayed meaningful reform, and argues that the six-credit-hour standard, while a significant threshold, reflects a pattern of institutional acknowledgment without institutional resolve. The analysis draws on foundational scholarship in legal education, landmark professional reports, and the regulatory frameworks that have shaped curriculum development over time. Understanding this history is essential for educators and policymakers committed to equipping future practitioners for the full demands of professional life. The preparation gap in legal education is not a historical accident but a structural consequence of the Langdellian model's systematic exclusion of key components of the experiential learning cycle, particularly concrete experience and reflective observation (Kolb, 2015).

Historical Foundations: The Apprenticeship Era and the Origins of Practical Training

Prior to the rise of university-based legal education, the preparation of American lawyers occurred primarily through apprenticeship, commonly referred to as reading law (Joy, 2018; Stevens, 1983). Under this model, aspiring practitioners entered the offices of established attorneys and acquired professional knowledge through direct observation, document preparation, client contact, and mentored practice (McManis, 1981). The system was

inherently experiential. Legal knowledge was gained in context through continuous, iterative engagement with real legal problems, forming the foundation of lasting professional learning, as Kolb (2015) later theorized. Apprenticeship, at its best, engaged all four stages of the experiential cycle: students encountered concrete legal problems, observed and reflected under supervision, built conceptual frameworks from recurring patterns, and experimented through progressively independent practice.

Reading law typically spanned two to three years, during which a student might spend mornings copying deeds and pleadings by hand to internalize the forms of legal documents, afternoons sitting with the supervising attorney through client meetings, and evenings working through assigned texts (McManis, 1981; Stevens, 1983). The range of experience depended entirely on the supervising attorney's practice. A student placed with a generalist in a rural county might observe land disputes, criminal proceedings, probate matters, and contract negotiations in a single month; a student in a narrow specialty practice might not (Joy, 2018). There was no set curriculum, no formative or summative assessment, and no guarantee of competency by the supervising attorney (McManis, 1981; Stevens, 1983).

The apprenticeship model was not without significant limitations. Quality of preparation varied considerably depending on the supervising attorney's capacity and commitment, and access was shaped by social networks and economic resources (McManis, 1981; Stevens, 1983). As the legal profession grew in complexity, the inconsistency of the apprenticeship system became increasingly untenable because it could not assure the public of consistent legal training (Joy, 2018). The stage was set for a more fundamental reorganization of legal education.

The Langdellian Shift: How the Case Method Displaced Practice and Shaped a Century of Legal Education

The transformation of American legal education accelerated with the appointment of Christopher Columbus Langdell as Dean of Harvard Law School in 1870 (Joy, 2018; Kimball, 2014). Langdell and the Harvard administration were drawn to the idealized German model of the university, shaped by academic intellectuals and driven by the scientific method (Stevens,

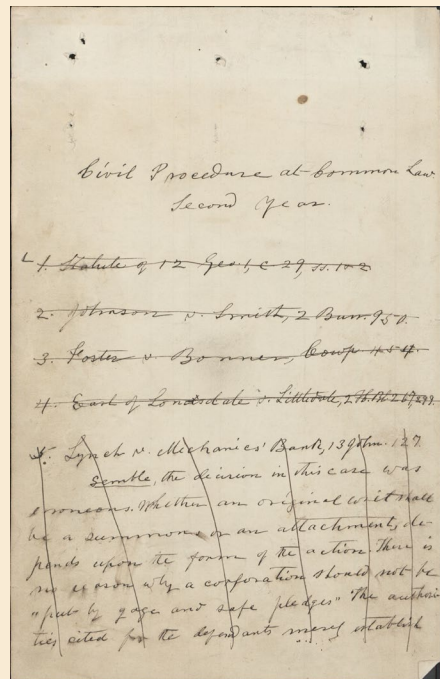
1983; Sullivan et al., 2007). This model prioritized advanced epistemology, emphasizing formal and observable knowledge, and applied the scientific method to the analysis of law. Within this framework, the case method was adopted and Socratic pedagogy emerged, training students to "think like a lawyer" by directing focus away from what a student knows and toward what a student can do through structured analytical reasoning (Kimball, 2014; McManis, 1981; Stevens, 1983; Sullivan et al., 2007, p. 6).

In practice, the Socratic method required students to read assigned appellate opinions before arrival (see Figure 2) knowing they might be called on without warning to recite the facts, identify the legal issue, describe the court's reasoning, and then defend their analysis as the professor asked questions designed to test their reasoning (Joy, 2018; Weissbrodt, 2005). The method was deliberately uncomfortable. Its logic was that pressure produced precision: a student who could reason clearly under interrogation in a lecture hall could do so anywhere (Dillon, 1980; Weissbrodt, 2005). Law lent itself to this approach because its raw material, appellate opinions, was already organized around argument and counterargument, and because the ability to read precedent and apply it to novel facts was genuinely central to what lawyers did (Joy, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2007).

The Langdellian model spread rapidly through elite law schools and became the dominant

Figure 2

Langdell's Handwritten Civil Procedure Syllabus, 1870s



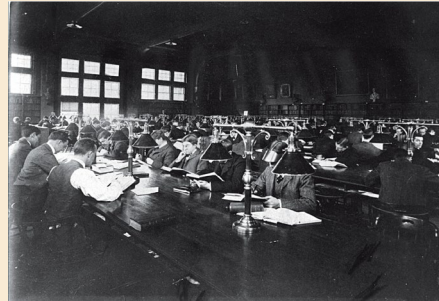
Note. C. C. Langdell's handwritten syllabus for Civil Procedure at Common Law: Second Year. From C. C. Langdell research notes and correspondence (LAW.MMC.168, Box 12, Folder 16), Harvard Law School Library, Historical & Special Collections.

pedagogical approach in American legal education by the early twentieth century (Appleman, 2005; Joy, 2018; Kimball, 2014). Its appeal was considerable. The case method was intellectually demanding, scalable to large enrollments, and lent academic legitimacy to legal education at a moment when universities were consolidating professional degree programs under the banner of scholarly rigor. However, a central and lasting consequence followed. Law schools came to define teaching excellence in terms of doctrinal mastery, and faculty culture came to treat practice experience as largely irrelevant to scholarly qualification (Joy, 2018; Ponoroff, 2019). Ponoroff (2019) argued that this foundational tension between practice and research has never been fully resolved, and that the blend between the two has always been "uneven and fraught" (p. 323).

An unintended effect of the case method was a delayed emphasis on practical skills training and limited development of an ethical professional identity while in law school (Sullivan et al., 2007). Traditional legal education proved effective in delivering structured doctrinal knowledge through intensive study and reading (see Figure 3), but fell short in preparing students for substantive engagement with real-world application and the formation of professional values (Maranville et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2007). This gap between classroom preparation and professional readiness has been a persistent feature of legal education that reformers have spent decades trying to address.

Figure 3

Students Studying in Austin Hall's Reading Room



Note. Students studying in Austin Hall's Reading Room, which housed the Harvard Law School Library for almost 50 years. From *Hitting the Books in Austin Hall's Reading Room* [Photograph], by Harvard Law School Historical & Special Collections, n.d., Harvard Law School.

Early Advocacy and the Emergence of Clinical Legal Education

Early critiques of the Langdellian model emerged quickly. Legal scholars

and practitioners recognized almost immediately that preparing lawyers solely through appellate case analysis left graduates without the tools they would need on the first day of practice (Joy, 2018; McManis, 1981; Walker, 2014). Early scholars pushed back, observing that law schools “lagged behind all other professions ... in this matter of providing systematic and experienced clinical and practical instruction” (Rowe, 1917, p. 596). In response to this growing tension, the 1960s saw law schools’ gradual introduction of clinical education as a way to address the growing need for social purpose (Sullivan et al., 2007). Clinical legal education aimed to engage students directly in active legal work under the supervision of practicing lawyers or clinical faculty (Wilson, 2018). These early clinical programs were typically small, underfunded, and treated as ancillary to the primary case method work of legal education (Joy, 2019; Stevens, 1983; Wilson, 2018). Nevertheless, they represented the first sustained institutional recognition that law students required structured exposure to practice before entering the profession (Joy, 2018). Clinical programs engaged in Kolb’s (2015) full learning cycle, providing students with concrete client experience, structured supervisory reflection, and the opportunity to apply and revise their legal reasoning in real practice contexts (Thomas & Johnson, 2020).

Clinical legal education placed students in the role of practicing attorneys under faculty supervision. In a law school clinic, a student would interview a client, assess the legal problem, research applicable law, draft correspondence or pleadings, appear in court or before administrative bodies, and receive structured feedback from a supervising faculty member throughout (Chemerinsky, 2009; Thomas & Johnson, 2020; Wilson, 2018). The experience was deliberately cumulative: unlike a doctrinal course where each class was largely independent, a clinic required a student to carry a matter forward, managing relationships, deadlines, and professional judgment over weeks or months (Chemerinsky, 2009; Clinical Legal Education Association, 2013; Kuehn, 2017; Sullivan et al., 2007; Wilson, 2018). Students frequently reported that time in the clinic was the first time law school felt connected to the real work of being a lawyer (The NALP Foundation & National Association for Law Placement, 2022; Tomisich, 2024). Although clinical legal education evolved to become a permanent feature in legal training, it provided only narrow exposure to active work, thus failing to integrate practice with reflection, ethics, theory, and professional judgment (Joy, 2019; Leering, 2017; Moliterno, 1996).

The legal education community's formal engagement with the question of practical legal training deepened in the late 20th century, as a series of task forces and commissioned reports began documenting the scope of the preparation gap. The American Bar Association, the most influential professional organization in U.S. legal education, commissioned two seminal reports that became central to later discussions of professional preparation in legal education (American Bar Association, 2022; Clinical Legal Education Association, 2013): the 1979 *Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on Lawyer Competency: The Role of Law Schools*, commonly known as the Cramton Report (American Bar Association, Task Force on Lawyer Competency, 1979), and the 1992 *Legal Education and Professional Development: An Educational Continuum*, commonly known as the MacCrate Report (American Bar Association, Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession: Narrowing the Gap [ABA Task Force], 1992). Both reports identified law school training as predominantly theoretical, lacking in ethical professional identity development, and deficient in practical skill training. Steele (2003) noted that the MacCrate Report initiated a broad national dialogue about how legal education could better align with professional demands, though its implementation recommendations were met with significant resistance from some sectors of the academy.

Building the Case for Reform: Landmark Reports and the Limits of Voluntary Change

The late 20th and early 21st centuries produced a concentrated body of national reform advocacy that brought the preparation gap into sharp institutional focus and set the conditions for the ABA's eventual, if limited, accreditation response. These conditions were primed by the 2007 publication of *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law*, commonly known as the Carnegie Report, which represented a significant escalation of the reform conversation (Sullivan et al., 2007). The Carnegie Report synthesized decades of critique and concluded that "a law degree requires no experience beyond honing legal analysis in the classroom and taking tests" and that "in most schools, direct preparation for practice is entirely up to student initiative" (as cited in Foxhoven, 2010, p. 337). The Carnegie framework described the ideal

legal professional education as three apprenticeships: a first in cognitive and analytical training, a second in practical skill development, and a third in professional identity formation (Sullivan et al., 2007). The report argued that American law schools were systematically underdeveloped in the second and third apprenticeships, producing graduates who were analytically capable but often unprepared to translate that capability into the complex, judgment-intensive demands of actual legal practice (Kuehn, 2016; Sullivan et al., 2007).

One influential publication in this reform movement was Stuckey's (2007) *Best Practices for Legal Education: A Vision and a Road Map*. A subsequent edited collection, *Building on Best Practices: Transforming Legal Education in a Changing World* (Maranville et al., 2015), developed reform guidance concerning law school missions, curricular balance, pathways, integration, and sequencing. The collection thus offered a substantial resource for law schools seeking to implement curricular change. The related apprenticeship framework—under which professional education should cultivate cognitive understanding, practical performance, and ethical professional identity—was articulated most prominently in the Carnegie Report (Sullivan et al., 2007). The Carnegie Report argued that legal education had privileged the first of these dimensions while leaving professional formation comparatively underdeveloped (Sullivan et al., 2007). Tokarz et al. (2014) similarly argued that legal education stood at a crossroads, requiring innovation, integration, and pluralism to meet the evolving demands of both the profession and the communities lawyers serve. Together, these reports and scholars contributed to a scholarly and professional consensus that legal education required structural reorientation.

The Clinical Legal Education Association (CLEA) gave institutional voice to this consensus in a July 2013 comment submitted to the ABA during its revision of the accreditation standards. CLEA, then representing more than 1,000 clinical and other law teachers, urged the ABA to require at least 15 credits of experiential coursework within the minimum 83-credit JD curriculum (Clinical Legal Education Association, 2013). The proposal argued that law schools lagged behind other professional schools in the extent to which their curricula required experiential education. CLEA compared legal education with medicine, where more than half of students' educational credits were devoted to clinical coursework, and social work, where field education constituted approximately one-third of required credits (Clinical Legal Education

Association, 2013). At the time of CLEA's proposal, however, the ABA Standards did not impose a freestanding, credit-based experiential-learning requirement. Instead, the pre-2014 standards required schools to provide "substantial opportunities" for live-client or other real-life practice experiences and required students to receive instruction in professional skills, but they did not require every student to complete a specified number of experiential credits. In 2014, the ABA adopted Standard 303(a)(3), which appeared in the 2014–2015 Standards and required each JD student to complete at least six credits of qualifying experiential coursework. Because the ABA required a minimum of 83 credits for the JD, the new six-credit minimum represented approximately 7.2% of the minimum JD curriculum—not less than 1%. The 15-credit requirement proposed by CLEA would have represented approximately 18.1% of that same 83-credit minimum (Clinical Legal Education Association, 2013; American Bar Association, 2014).

ABA Standard 303: A Necessary but Insufficient Response

Despite the growing weight of scholarly and professional advocacy, the integration of experiential learning into law school curricula faced persistent and multilayered barriers. At the curricular level, critics argued that expanded experiential requirements would be too expensive or too subjective, would stifle curricular flexibility, and could pose a risk to bar passage rates (Joy, 2018; Vande Lune, 2015). Clinical programs are more resource-intensive than traditional doctrinal courses, requiring lower student-to-faculty ratios and more full-time clinical faculty (Vande Lune, 2015). Some faculty and administrators (Foxhoven, 2010) framed the expansion of experiential requirements as incompatible with the time needed to prepare students for the bar examination, which remained the primary external accountability measure for law school accreditation.

The concern that expanded experiential requirements would reduce academic rigor reflected a deeper structural resistance embedded in legal academia's culture. Sullivan et al. (2007) observed that separating learning from practice had produced far-reaching consequences, and that "learning the law loses a key dimension when it fails to provide grounding in an understanding of legal practice from the inside" (p. 8). Students and employers consistently reported the consequences of this separation: graduates who could analyze

doctrine effectively but were unable to perform the practical tasks of lawyering on day one of employment (Casey, 2021; Darian-Smith, 2016; Joy, 2018). Nicholson (2020) argued that the perceived value of a law degree was diminishing in part because graduates entered the workforce lacking foundational professional skills, a perception with direct consequences for law school enrollment and the profession's public standing.

Beginning with the 2016–2017 academic year, ABA Standard 303(a)(3) required law students to complete at least six credit hours of experiential coursework—defined as simulation courses, law clinics, or field placements—as a condition of graduation (ABA, 2022; Vande Lune, 2015). In guidance originally issued in 2015 and revised in 2023, the ABA's Managing Director clarified that inserting skills components into otherwise doctrinal courses would not satisfy the standard and that qualifying courses must be primarily experiential in nature (ABA, 2023). The guidance further specifies that experiential courses should integrate doctrine, theory, skills, and legal ethics; develop the concepts underlying professional skills; and provide multiple opportunities for performance and self-evaluation. The updated standard made experiential coursework a graduation requirement at ABA-accredited law schools.

While this requirement represented the ABA's first substantive step to incorporate practical skills training into required law school credits, it fell considerably short of what CLEA and other advocates had proposed (Tomisich, 2024). At six of the minimum 83 credits required for graduation, the experiential requirement constituted approximately 7% of the minimum credits required for a JD (ABA, 2022). Bess (2022) noted that professional identity formation, one of the core purposes of experiential education, requires sustained and iterative engagement that a minimal credit requirement alone cannot reliably produce. Kuehn and Moss (2019) further observed that the relationship between law school coursework structure and bar exam outcomes is more complex than critics of experiential education often acknowledged, and that well-designed clinical courses did not demonstrably diminish bar preparation.

The six-credit experiential learning mandate did not resolve the preparation gap so much as expose how much work remained. Standard 303 has since been revised beyond the experiential-credit requirement, with the ABA's 2022 revisions adding requirements that law schools provide substantial

opportunities for professional identity development and deliver education on bias, cross-cultural competency, and racism (Bender, 2024; Jones, 2024). These additions signal a broader reconceptualization of what legal education owes its students, moving from doctrinal mastery alone toward the formation of ethical, reflective, and resilient practitioners. Yet the same pattern of institutional acknowledgment without institutional resolve persists. The ABA left schools without detailed implementation guidance, producing a patchwork of programs that vary widely in rigor and make meaningful outcome measurement difficult (Jones, 2024). Compliance approaches range from minimalist check-the-box gestures to robust, critically informed curricula, and the depth of any school's response often depends on institutional will rather than the regulatory floor (Bender, 2024). This unfinished quality points to the work ahead. Scholars now debate not whether experiential and formative learning belong in the curriculum, but how to define, deliver, and assess them, and how to do so in ways that address persistent failures in student well-being, professional formation, and equitable access without simply layering new mandates atop the same Langdellian foundation (Bender, 2024; Jones, 2024).

Conclusion

This paper has argued that legal education's preparation gap is structural, not incidental. It is rooted in a century-long institutional preference for doctrinal abstraction over the full experiential learning cycle that professional competence requires. When Christopher Columbus Langdell installed the case method at Harvard in the 1870s, he did more than introduce a teaching technique. He defined law as a science to be studied through appellate opinions in a library, and he built the institutional architecture that carried that definition into the 20th century (Kimball, 2014; Stevens, 1983). The model professionalized legal training and secured its place in the university, but it did so by treating practice experience as extraneous to real legal learning and, in time, as a mark against scholarly qualification (Joy, 2018; Sullivan et al., 2007).

The effort to rebalance that model was long, uneven, and driven by repeated diagnosis. Scholars asked why there was no clinical lawyer-school as early as 1933, but clinical education did not gain real curricular footing until the 1960s and 1970s (Chemerinsky, 2009; Frank, 1933). The 1992 MacCrate Report named

the gap between law school and practice and catalogued the skills and values that graduates lacked (ABA Task Force, 1992). The 2007 Carnegie Report went further, arguing that legal education overdeveloped the first apprenticeship of doctrinal knowledge while neglecting the second and third, the apprenticeships of practice and of professional identity (Sullivan et al., 2007). The Clinical Legal Education Association pressed these arguments into the accreditation process across the following decade (Clinical Legal Education Association, 2013). Each of these interventions identified the same deficiency with growing precision, and each fell short of compelling structural change.

That pattern is the larger lesson the history yields. The six-credit experiential requirement in ABA Standard 303(a)(3), implemented beginning in the 2016–2017 academic year, was the culmination of more than eighty years of advocacy, and it remains a floor rather than a ceiling. Requiring roughly 7% of the minimum credits required for a law degree to be experiential is not a structural commitment to experiential education (Bender, 2024; Clinical Legal Education Association, 2013; Foxhoven, 2010; Jones, 2024). It is a minimum viable acknowledgment that the prior standard had failed. Kolb's experiential learning cycle produces durable professional judgment only when concrete experience and structured reflection complete the loop that doctrinal instruction leaves open (Dewey, 1938/2015; Kolb, 2015; Leering, 2017). Six isolated credits cannot supply that completion, nor can they produce the second and third apprenticeships that Carnegie identified as essential to professional identity formation (Clinical Legal Education Association, 2013; Sullivan et al., 2007; Thomson, 2015; Vande Lune, 2015). The transition from student to practitioner requires the structured, ongoing support for professional identity development that most curricula still do not provide (Bess, 2022; Thomson, 2015). The persistence of employer and graduate dissatisfaction reflects that same unfinished work (Casey, 2021; Darian-Smith, 2016).

For legal educators and higher education scholars, this record is both cautionary and instructive. It shows how institutional inertia can delay reform for generations, and it shows how sustained scholarly and professional advocacy can eventually reshape accreditation and curriculum. The implications reach beyond urban law markets. Rural communities, which depend disproportionately on generalist solo and small-firm practitioners, bear a particular cost when graduates arrive underprepared (Tomisich, 2024). How

law schools implement experiential requirements, how graduates evaluate their preparation across diverse practice contexts, and how rural and underserved populations experience the consequences of the preparation gap all represent pressing questions (Bender, 2024; Jones, 2024; Kuehn, 2016). Tracing this history to its present helps clarify these questions and points to important areas for future research.

Declaration of Generative AI Use in Scientific Writing

During the preparation of this work, I used Consensus and Perplexity AI search tools to locate relevant peer-reviewed articles for reading and analysis. I also used Claude and Grammarly to enhance the readability and language of the manuscript. All content in this publication is my own, and I take full responsibility for it. I reviewed all sources and evaluated and edited all AI-generated suggestions.

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Chasing Mr. Rockefeller's Dollars: Denison University, the University of Chicago, and Educational Philanthropy

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Abstract

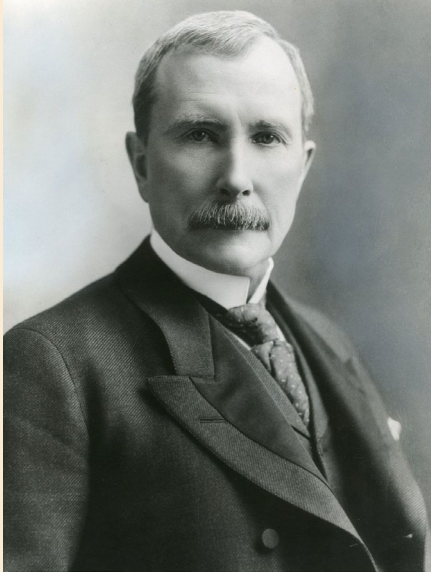
This article details the late 19th century shift in Rockefeller's educational philanthropy that reflected a blending of his initial Baptist motivations for giving with increasingly secular intentions. His giving patterns to Denison University and the University of Chicago illustrate that evolution. Beginning in 1868, he gave generously to Denison University in Granville, Ohio, increased his involvement over subsequent years, becoming a trustee and making larger gifts to the institution. Over time, however, competing appeals drew Rockefeller's attention away from Denison. Beginning in 1890, he became the major benefactor of the reestablished University of Chicago, as his involvement with Denison waned. The shift in Rockefeller's philosophy of giving marked a major turning point in higher education as large-scale philanthropy increasingly supported universities committed to research. The article traces this shift through original correspondence and archival materials.

Keywords: educational philanthropy, John D. Rockefeller, Denison University, University of Chicago, Baptist higher education, research universities

A substantial body of scholarship examines John Davison Rockefeller (see Figure 1; 1839–1937) and his philanthropy. In his biography of Rockefeller, Ron Chernow states that he “must rank as the greatest philanthropist in American history” (Chernow, 1998, p. 566). Olivier Zunz, John Harr, and Peter Johnson indicate how his giving increased proportionately as his fortune grew (Zunz, 2012, p. 8; Harr & Johnson, 1988, pp. 15–16). In a 1906 statement, Rockefeller asserted that “the power to make money is a gift from God...Having been endowed with the gift I possess, I believe it is my duty to make money and still more money and to use the money I make for the good of my fellowman

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Figure 1*John D. Rockefeller, 1884*

Note. From *John D. Rockefeller, 1884*
[Photograph], Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.

according to the dictates of my conscience" (as cited in Abels, 1965, p. 280). Many scholars critically examined what they characterize as racist and hegemonic intentions in his giving and their relationship to his ruthless business practices (Anderson & Moss, 1999; Davis, 2006; Janak & Helmsing, 2017). Near the end of the 19th century, however, those dictates evolved as his initial religious motivations for giving blended with increasingly secular aims that reflected the rise of Progressive era thought. The evolution of Rockefeller's giving philosophy was consequential and had profound implications for educational philanthropy. His educational philanthropy shifted from advancing secular morality to

promoting social and scientific studies. His initial support of Baptist catechism diminished as he shifted toward promoting capitalistic principles and practices. This shift can be traced through Rockefeller's involvement with two institutions of higher education, Denison University and the University of Chicago. Their subsequent development diverged: Denison remained an undergraduate liberal arts college, whereas Chicago became a major research university with extensive graduate education.

The shift in Rockefeller's philosophy of giving marked a major turning point in the evolution of higher education as large-scale philanthropy increasingly supported universities committed to research. The late 19th century saw the confluence of large-scale philanthropic giving and the emergence of the modern research university driven by rapid industrialization and the rise of immense private fortunes (Geiger, 2014). Although the University of Chicago was among the early institutions to emphasize research,

several universities preceded it, each established with substantial support from a major benefactor. Cornell University was established in 1865 with a \$500,000 grant from Ezra Cornell; Johns Hopkins University was established in 1876 with a \$7 million grant from its namesake; and Stanford University was established in 1885 with a \$5 million grant from Leland and Jane Stanford (Zunz, 2012, p. 9). According to Zunz (2012),

Philanthropists found in educators and scientists grantees who could put the new money to work for both credible and important goals. The idea was not simply to expand the number or size of academic institutions, but to create an educational establishment that was ecumenical and open to science rather than denominational in outlook. (p. 23)

These universities formed the vanguard of modern higher education, with other public and private universities following suit. Harvard president Charles William Eliot acknowledged this pattern when he stated in 1901 that “the graduate school of Harvard University, started feebly in 1870 and 1871, did not thrive until the example of Johns Hopkins forced our faculty to put their strength into the development of our instruction for graduates” (as cited in Curti & Nash, 1965, p. 118).

Rockefeller's Early Philanthropy

Rockefeller was charitable from an early age. Chernow (1998, p. 50) notes that at age 20 he was giving more than 10% of his earnings to good causes. According to Chernow, by the time Rockefeller rose to financial success, he was giving away both small and large portions of his wealth to individuals and institutions he considered worthy. He received unending solicitations and considered them carefully. Chernow further notes that Rockefeller's deeply rooted Baptist faith caused him to favor applicants and causes associated with that denomination, but he also supported causes for Native Americans and Black Americans. Most notable was his support for the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary beginning in 1882 and continuing for many years. The institution was renamed Spelman Seminary, later Spelman College, in honor of Rockefeller's wife, Laura Spelman Rockefeller (pp. 240–242).²

²Rockefeller also gave \$59,200 to Tuskegee Institute between 1896 and 1903 and \$460,907 to Vassar College between 1880 and 1902 (Rose, 1998).

When Denison University (see Figure 2) was founded in 1831 in Granville, Ohio, as the Granville Literary and Theological Institution, it became the second Baptist college west of the Allegheny Mountains (Dunphy, 2019).³ Chessman and Southgate (1981) state that in 1853, a Muskingum County farmer, William S. Denison, promised the college \$10,000 in exchange for naming rights. He came through with only \$2,000, but the name had already stuck (pp. 21–22).

Denison University had better luck with Rockefeller. The institution's historians Chessman and Southgate (1981) traced Rockefeller's early involvement with the institution and his reasons for supporting it. Denison president Samson Talbot first secured Rockefeller's support in 1868, when Rockefeller was 29. He gave Denison \$500, equivalent to approximately \$11,700 in 2025 dollars based on historical U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from MeasuringWorth (Officer & Williamson, n.d.). Rockefeller's wife, Laura Celestia Spelman (1839–1915), had family ties to both Granville and Denison. Her grandfather, Samuel Buel Spelman (1786–1873), arrived in Granville in 1811, seven years after his uncle, Timothy Spelman (1756–1828), came with four others to establish the village. Timothy Spelman's daughter, Hannah Spelman Granger (1796–1855), witnessed the college's conception in her home, and after it was established in 1831, her uncles, Thomas Herrick Spelman (1787–1864) and Sylvester Spelman (1789–1873), were early trustees.

Six years later, in 1874, Rockefeller's connection with Denison was firmly established when he became a trustee (Chessman & Southgate, 1981, p. 25). By then, Rockefeller had already accumulated considerable wealth and had

Figure 2

Denison University Campus, 1905–1906



Note. Courtesy of Denison University Archives & Special Collections, Granville, Ohio.

³ The first Baptist institution was Shurtleff College, originally Rock Springs Seminary, established in 1827 in Alton, Illinois. Rockefeller made a cash donation to it in the 1890s. The college closed in 1957, and the campus was acquired by Southern Illinois University (Dunphy, 2019).

become a devoted benefactor to Baptist causes, though hardly a freewheeling one. He carefully studied the many appeals made to him, required detailed explanations of the need, and set firm conditions before writing a check (Nielsen, 1996, pp. 30–31).

One such appeal came from fellow trustee Henry F. Colby, who wrote to Rockefeller on February 3, 1880: “may I not venture to express the hope that one of the largest gifts of your life will be made at no distant day to [Denison]?” (Colby, 1880, para. 3). He elaborated:

It has a good foundation and a wide field; is doing excellent work and is the only college which the Baptists have in the great state of Ohio. But it is imperatively in need of money for the better support of its faculty and the enlargement of all its facilities. It cannot expect much, if any, help from outside the State; and the number of Baptists within Ohio who have large means is very small. (Colby, 1880, para. 3)

Colby’s solicitation was strengthened shortly thereafter by a report from George O. King, pastor of the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church in Cleveland, where the Rockefeller family worshipped. On March 31, 1880, after a two-week teaching residence at Denison, King (1880) wrote to Rockefeller:

While there associated with the professors and students I had a good opportunity of judging of the work done in the institution and was very much pleased and interested. ...

I am convinced that so far as it goes the work done there is good work. It is not superficial. So far as my knowledge goes I think that there is not an Institution in O. that does better work. (paras. 1–2)

Later in the letter, King continued:

I remember a conversation we once had with reference to Cleveland being a better location for a College than Granville and your offer to donate the land for the purpose at Forest Hill if a change could be made in location. So that when I was in Granville I mentally made some comparisons between the two locations and I confess my views were modified very much. ...

There are not so many things in Granville to distract the attention of the students from their studies.

There are not the same temptations to dissipation.

The atmosphere of city social life is unfavorable to correct habits of study to those who inhale it and especially such as inhale it freely. (King,

1880, paras. 10–13)

King added that Denison had begun a campaign to raise an endowment of \$100,000 but noted that “it could make good use of an endowment of \$200,000” (King, 1880, para. 15). Rockefeller ultimately contributed \$20,000 in two installments, more than twice the amount he had previously given to Denison. He withheld the second \$10,000 payment, however, until he learned that the institution had raised \$90,000 (Shepardson, 1931, p. 163).

Other Baptist colleges vied with Denison for Rockefeller’s largesse. Among them was the original University of Chicago, now known as the Old University of Chicago. In a letter dated March 5, 1883, Mary Eleanor Anderson (1883), wife of University of Chicago president Galusha Anderson, wrote to Rockefeller that the strain her husband was experiencing from the college’s severe financial duress could be fatal. “I fear he will die if help does not come from some quarter,” she stated (para. 5). She added:

The gentlemen outside of our denomination who have helped us hitherto this year have failed to assist us. They, many of them at least, say that they will see what the Baptists do and then decide whether they will help. As these gentlemen have been our main support, this action leaves us in distress (Anderson, 1883, para. 4).

Her letter expressed a desperate plea near its end: “The only way out will be either for some large-hearted man to interfere and straighten things up, or for us all to give up the ship” (Anderson, 1883, para. 7). Her appeal underscored both the university’s financial desperation and the hope that Rockefeller might intervene.

The following year, on February 19, 1884, President Anderson wrote to Rockefeller requesting a donation of several thousand dollars to reach a goal of \$10,000 for immediate expenses. Anderson (1884a) wrote, “If you cannot, in view of what you are doing for other objects, do as much as you would, perhaps you can help me some. Help must come from some source” (para. 1). Rockefeller, however, replied that he was unable to contribute at that time (Anderson, 1884b).

Rockefeller continued to support Denison. On October 27, 1884, Denison president Alfred Owen wrote Rockefeller requesting funds to support advanced work in natural history (Owen, 1884a). By November 5, Owen had received Rockefeller’s \$100 contribution (Owen, 1884b). Owen thanked him, writing: “I

have a faint conception of the pressure put upon you & felt exceeding reluctance to add to your burden. But I remembered that you already have such a stake in the prosperity & power of our college as to bind you to its interests, & I felt the need of progress here if we are to hold our place" (Owen, 1884b, para. 1).

On February 21, 1885, President Anderson of the Old University of Chicago again approached Rockefeller for financial assistance. In his letter, Anderson described the university's precarious financial condition, including debts amounting to \$300,000. Anderson (1885) wrote, "If some man would come forward and give to this University \$500,000, pay its debt, and begin the endowment of it, he would do a better and grander thing than men are often permitted to do" (para. 1).

The Old University of Chicago closed in 1886 amid its continuing financial difficulties (Boyer, 2024, pp. 29–36). The following year, Anderson succeeded Owen as president of Denison University (Shepardson, 1931, p. 172). He immediately began a campaign to raise \$100,000 for the Denison endowment. In a letter dated May 18, 1887, Anderson (1887) approached Rockefeller about the campaign, inquiring "what each trustee can and will do towards it" (para. 1). He asserted, "We must enlarge and strengthen the departments of this University in order to make it most largely efficient" (Anderson, 1887, para. 1).

Trustee Colby pressed Denison's case more forcefully several months later in a September 27, 1887, letter to Rockefeller. "Denison is beyond comparison the best established Baptist college west of the Alleghanies," he boasted (Colby, 1887, para. 1). Yet, he continued, "there is much needed to bring Denison up to all the demands of the age. It is the centre at which Baptist young people, in all this central section of our country, must be educated in increasing numbers" (para. 1). Colby (1887) then invoked Rockefeller's ties to Ohio: "As Ohio has been your home & the scene of many of your religious associations and business activities I wish we might have a building at Granville which in years to come might be associated with your memory" (para. 1). In seeking support for the fundraising campaign, Colby added, "we trust that you will not wish to be left out" (para. 1).

Colby emphasized Rockefeller's Ohio connection, but Rockefeller had moved to New York City four years earlier, placing him considerably farther from Granville (Chernow, 1998, p. 218). His attendance at Denison trustee meetings had never been regular, a point Colby raised near the end of his letter:

“We have regretted that your many engagements have prevented our having the benefit of your counsel in our trustees’ meetings” (Colby, 1887, para. 3).

A year later, Anderson was still negotiating with Rockefeller over his contribution. Before committing himself, Rockefeller asked Anderson to outline the fundraising goals. In a November 12, 1888, letter to Rockefeller, Anderson (1888) explained that the funds would support additional professors in history, economics, and modern languages; a science laboratory; a new building for the college preparatory program; and an expanded library budget. The fundraising goal had increased to \$200,000, with a deadline of January 1, 1890. Emphasizing Denison’s importance to Ohio Baptists, Anderson (1888) stated, “This is the only college that the Baptists have in this great State” (p. 2). He then appealed directly to Rockefeller: “I don’t want the Baptists here behind everybody else in matters of Education, do you?” (p. 2). Underscoring his determination to secure Rockefeller’s support for Denison, two months later, on January 31, 1889, Anderson added in a subsequent letter, “I don’t just like to see any money go past Granville further westward” (Anderson, 1889, p. 2).

Colby and Anderson’s efforts finally paid off. Rockefeller gave \$25,000 toward a \$100,000 pledge, half the fundraising goal. The remainder was not raised until a decade later in 1900. By then, Anderson had left Denison and Daniel B. Purinton was president (Chessman & Southgate, 1981, p. 61).

Throughout these years of Rockefeller’s strong involvement with Denison, its presidents and trustees based their appeals to him on the college’s Baptist affiliation and its bucolic location. They sought to strengthen an established college in modest and incremental ways, rather than to enlarge its size or expand its curricula. Rockefeller clearly shared this approach, serving as a trustee and contributing more money to Denison than to any other institution of higher education during this period.

Changing Philanthropic Directions

By the mid-1880s, the influence of Rockefeller’s Baptist faith—previously a major driving force in his philanthropy—began to diminish. This shift occurred in part because other Baptists, especially Frederick T. Gates and William Rainey Harper, convinced him that higher education should focus on measurable societal improvements through scientific methods and pursue such efforts on a

large scale. Gates took over Rockefeller's philanthropic work—Chernow (1998) calls him “the tutelary spirit of the Rockefeller philanthropies” (p. 470)—and Harper became the first president of the resurrected University of Chicago.

The revival of the University of Chicago resulted largely from the efforts of Thomas W. Goodspeed, secretary of the University of Chicago Seminary. Rockefeller respected Goodspeed, who recognized that Rockefeller's support was critical to building a new University of Chicago (Boyer, 2024, pp. 36–38). On January 7, 1887, he wrote Rockefeller:

To found this institution, in this place, will, it seems to me, be the glory of a man's life. Its manifest destiny is to become one of the foremost seats of learning in the land. I cannot believe that a nobler opportunity can ever be presented to you to do a great and noble thing for strengthening the denomination, blessing the youth of the future generations and building up the kingdom of God. (Goodspeed, 1887, p. 4)

Four days later, William Rainey Harper, a Yale professor, wrote to Rockefeller:

there is no greater work to be done on this continent than the work of establishing a University in or near Chicago. ... It is safe to make the prediction that in ten years such a University would have more students, if rightly conducted, than Yale or Harvard has today. (Harper, 1887, p. 1)

Two years later, on March 28, 1889, E. Benjamin Andrews (1889) went even further, telling Rockefeller of his conviction “that the rearing of a noble institution of learning in that city was [of] the very foremost educational interest of our denomination in this age” (p. 1). Warming to the idea, Andrews (1889) fervently added:

Any Christian man who is aware, as I happen to be, of the efforts made in recent years by unbelievers to capture the State Universities in the West, will tremble, almost, to think that so important a centre as Chicago has remained thus long open to occupation by them. We ought to take possession at the earliest possible moment, and to do it in such a triumphant way that no one would ever think of contesting our title. It is my firm belief that no other chance so clear and certain as this to effect a work of towering grandeur for Christian education was ever placed before any man or set of men since the gospel was first preached. ... The erection of the University suggested would indeed be in the religious history of America an event, a

turning-point, not less vital than the Louisiana Purchase in our political history. (pp. 1–2)

This resounding call is even more remarkable when one remembers that Andrews had been president of Denison from 1875 to 1879 and was, in fact, interred in the campus cemetery upon his death in 1917. At the time he wrote his letter to Rockefeller, Andrews was professor of political economy and finance at Cornell University (University of Nebraska–Lincoln, n.d.).

Such high-flying rhetoric was necessary to break Rockefeller's resistance. At the end of 1886, Rockefeller (1886) had written Goodspeed, "There is hardly a chance that I could give the least encouragement for assistance in respect to the university" (p. 1). On February 6, 1888, Rockefeller (1888) wrote to George C. Lorimer, "The report was incorrect about my being connected with the effort to establish a university at Chicago, and I am so heavily weighted with other undertakings that I cannot give any encouragement in this direction" (p. 1).

Later that year, however, he engaged in long and detailed discussions with Harper about a new University of Chicago. On November 5, 1888, Harper (1888) wrote to Goodspeed an optimistic report:

It is absolutely certain that the thing is to be done; it is now only a question as to what scale. I have every time claimed that nothing less than four millions would be satisfactory to begin with, and have expressed my desire for five. Just what he wants to do and what his definite ideas are I cannot yet tell. I have never known him to be so interested in anything, and this promises much. (para. 3)

A major question was who would be at the helm of the resurrected university. On January 4, 1889, Henry L. Morehouse, field secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, wrote to Harper, "I believe that if the right man can be found to be at the head of the institution it would greatly expedite Mr. Rockefeller's decision; but the presidential timber is so scarce I hardly know where to look for the man" (Morehouse, 1889, para. 2). The "right man" turned out to be Harper himself. On September 26, 1890, Andrews (1890) wrote Rockefeller, "I have urged Harper to accept at Chicago and I rejoice as much as you or anyone in the outlook of the new University" (p. 1). Andrews had by then become president of Brown University and would lead its

transformation into a full-fledged university (Chernow, 1998, p. 348).⁴ Harper assumed the presidency the following July and, over the next 15 years, led the institution toward realizing the vision of Andrews and others (Boyer, 2024, pp. 73–131). Rockefeller’s initial gift of \$600,000 in 1890—equivalent to approximately \$21.9 million in 2025 dollars based on historical U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from MeasuringWorth (Officer & Williamson, n.d.)—was substantially less than Harper’s \$4 million target. Rockefeller’s subsequent contributions, totaling \$35 million, further fueled the university’s growth (Chernow, 1998, p. 497).

Rockefeller’s decision to make such a large contribution to an institution of higher learning in a major and expanding city was at odds with George King’s earlier advice to Rockefeller not to move Denison to Cleveland because the temptations of a city to young men would strain their moral and intellectual fiber. Granville, with 1,366 residents in 1890, was, to King’s mind, relatively monastic (U.S. Census Office, 1892). By comparison, Cleveland had 261,353 residents and ranked as the 10th-largest city in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Chicago was larger still: its population more than doubled from 503,185 in 1880 to 1,099,850 in 1890, when it ranked behind only New York and Philadelphia (Gauthier, 2021).

In 1888, Frederick T. Gates, the first executive secretary of the American Baptist Education Society, prepared a study titled *The Need of a Baptist University in Chicago, as Illustrated by a Study of Baptist Collegiate Education in the West* that became an important part of the effort to secure support for a Baptist institution in Chicago (Rose, 1995). Gates examined 11 Baptist colleges in the West and concluded that their locations limited both their reach and their financial prospects. With the exception of the institution in Des Moines, he described the colleges as situated in small towns, removed from the region’s centers of population and wealth, and “out of the sight and interest of our wealthy men” (Gates, 1888, as cited in Rose, 1995, p. 34). Gates further argued that Chicago offered a fundamentally different environment, contending that the city would “lift so far aloft a Baptist college as an intellectual and religious luminary, that its light would illumine every state and penetrate every home from Lake Erie to

⁴ Chernow (1998) notes that Rockefeller vowed never to contribute to Brown University because Andrews supported free silver coinage, even though Rockefeller’s son, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was a Brown University student (p. 348).

the Rocky Mountains” (Gates, 1888, as cited in Rose, 1995, p. 34). Gates later extended this argument to higher education nationally, contending that institutions located in rural communities struggled for financial support and students. He observed that more than two-thirds of the 34 colleges and universities with endowments of at least \$500,000 had achieved financial “success because they [were] located in cities of more than ten thousand people” (Gates, 1906, as cited in Hewa, 1998, p. 155).

Rockefeller met Gates (1853–1929) on January 21, 1889, and just over two years later, in March 1891, Gates became Rockefeller’s philanthropic and business advisor. A graduate of the University of Rochester and the Rochester Theological Seminary, Gates was a Baptist clergyman who soon assumed responsibility for much of Rockefeller’s philanthropy, much to Rockefeller’s relief (Chernow, 1998, pp. 361–367). Gates viewed Rockefeller’s rapidly growing fortune as an opportunity to make his philanthropy “wholesale” rather than “retail”—directing large sums to institutions capable of producing broad and lasting changes (Harr & Johnson, 1988, p. 27). The University of Chicago soon emerged as one such opportunity. Why, then, not Denison University?

The answer lies largely with Harper. Rockefeller’s association with Harper went back to 1876, when Harper was a faculty member at Denison and Andrews was president. Harper stayed for only two years, moving to a position at the University of Chicago Seminary (Boyer, 2024, pp. 68–69; Chessman, 1957, p. 123). When the University of Chicago was teetering on the brink, he had been offered the presidency but declined (Boyer, 2024, pp. 36–37; Chernow, 1998, pp. 307–308). Goodspeed (1886) wrote Rockefeller that “Dr. Harper does not feel that he can afford to risk so doubtful an experiment” (para. 2). Harper instead accepted the professorship at Yale. Five years later, Rockefeller’s munificent gift and promise of further support changed the situation. But, as a letter of February 2, 1891, from Henry L. Morehouse, field secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, to Harper makes clear, Rockefeller’s gift was contingent on Harper’s becoming president. If Harper declined the presidency, Rockefeller would withdraw his gift. “The two stand or fall together,” he wrote (Morehouse, 1891, p. 1).

Gates later wrote that the pair complemented each other. While Rockefeller was “temperamentally cool, reserved, cautious, circumspect, deliberate, amazingly patient, but in the end inflexible, adapting means to ends with long

and accurate prevision," Harper was "ardent, highly imaginative, with limitless capacity and insatiable eagerness for work, an undaunted optimist, minimizing difficulties, magnifying opportunities, rapid in conception, confiding, unsuspecting, bent on immediate results, willful, and impatient of opposition or delay" (Gates, 1977, p. 193).

As Boyer (2024, pp. 38–40) and Chernow (1998, pp. 302–303) report, competing with Harper for Rockefeller's attention was Augustus H. Strong, a Baptist minister who had been closely associated with Rockefeller in Cleveland. After Strong had assumed the presidency of the Rochester Theological Seminary in 1872, Rockefeller had contributed \$500,000 to it over several years. Like Harper, Strong dreamed of establishing a major Baptist university. His university would be located in New York City and he would be its president. Beginning in the 1880s, he badgered Rockefeller with solicitations for a contribution. He asked for an initial gift of \$20 million, far exceeding Harper's request. He was also adamant about branding the institution as Baptist, a bulwark against godless progressive thought. Rockefeller never gave Strong's campaign serious consideration.⁵

Harper's idea about higher education had won over Rockefeller. In his view, the promulgation of the Baptist faith was less important than the pursuit of all knowledge through open inquiry. Harper imagined a comprehensive university including schools of law, medicine, and engineering alongside traditional disciplines (Boyer, 2024, p. 74). He envisioned a national research university, and he wanted it to come into being as quickly as possible. That required the best minds and the right tools—laboratories, libraries, technical equipment. He needed Rockefeller to bankroll this audacious venture.

Harper's enthusiasm, however, risked repeating Strong's mistake of overreaching, and in 1889 Rockefeller backed off his support. Gates intervened to reassure Rockefeller, promising a gradual building plan. Tension between Harper's ambitious schedule and Rockefeller's caution never eased during the University of Chicago's years of growth (Chernow, 1998, pp. 311–315).

While Rockefeller disagreed with Harper's rapid pace, he admired his results. Waldemar A. Nielsen (1996) points out that Rockefeller's philanthropic goal was to achieve something more than "human uplift." Rockefeller, he wrote,

⁵ Strong's son, Charles, married Rockefeller's daughter, Bessie, in 1889 (Chernow, 1998, p. 306).

“believed that work and productivity were the basic source of human well-being and that the task of philanthropy was to attack the root causes of distress, not merely to alleviate symptoms, and to nurture those qualities that enabled people to help themselves” (Nielsen, 1996, p. 31). For Rockefeller, the rational means of pursuing this task was the scientific method. Rockefeller later wrote of his preference for “scientific men” who “arrive at some helpful contribution to the sum of human knowledge” rather than for a faculty whose teaching was fundamentally religious (Rockefeller, 1909, p. 148). When the General Education Board (GEB) was incorporated in 1903 with Rockefeller funding (Iacobelli & Shubinski, 2022), Rockefeller wrote that its purpose was “working out, in an orderly and rather scientific way, the problem of helping to stimulate and improve education in all parts of the country” (as cited in Sears, 1922/1990, p. 93). Rockefeller contributed \$53 million during the first decade of the GEB. Harper, with Rockefeller’s millions, was able to realize that progressive goal quickly. At the quinquennial commemoration of the University of Chicago in 1897, Rockefeller said of his gift, “It is the best investment I ever made in my life” (Chernow, 1998, p. 325).

Harper formally assumed the presidency on July 1, 1891, and the new University of Chicago opened its doors on October 1, 1892. Over the next decade and a half, he rapidly built the university into a major research institution by recruiting distinguished scholars and offering them higher salaries, reduced teaching loads, research support, and new laboratory facilities (Boyer, 2024, pp. 73–80). According to Judith Sealander (1997), the University of Chicago quickly developed into an important center for academic research and “within a decade Chicago was known internationally as a leader in many new disciplines—particularly those of sociology, anthropology, and psychology” (p. 82).

Harper also expanded the university’s professional offerings, establishing the College of Commerce and Politics in 1898, the predecessor of the Booth School of Business, and the Law School in 1902. Both reflected his interest in connecting advanced study with contemporary professional and social problems (Boyer, 2024, pp. 99–100). This emphasis also aligned with Rockefeller’s preference for philanthropy that produced tangible results.

Harper’s vision of a university was consistent with Rockefeller’s business principles, and his efforts produced an ambitious enterprise yielding notable achievements. In his recent history of the University of Chicago, John W. Boyer

(2024) states, “Harper’s university was to be, in the broadest sense, an instrument for the perfection of human reason, searching for social and ethical truth in a society that would become ever more Christian, more providential” (p. 72). For Harper, however, the university’s quest remained fundamentally religious. “There is but one thing in the Universe sacred aside from God,” he wrote in 1891; “that thing is truth. Searching for truth is searching for God” (as cited in Boyer, 2024, p. 114).

This lofty declaration can be understood as an effort to improve the status quo rather than revolutionize the beliefs and practices of society. The central assumptions that were embedded in capitalism, government, and law were largely left unchallenged, allowing hegemonic values and norms to continue (Fisher, 1983; Slaughter & Silva, 1980). Faith in such a system can limit free inquiry and leave unquestioned the ways that Rockefeller’s fortune was acquired. Rockefeller always maintained that he played no part in the design and operation of the University of Chicago. But he did not need to. Implicit in Harper’s decisions and actions was an endorsement of Rockefeller’s fundamental values.

In the last pages of his biography, Chernow states that Rockefeller left “a contradictory legacy,” one of “godliness and greed, compassion and fiendish cunning... The fiercest robber baron had turned out to be the foremost philanthropist” (Chernow, 1998, pp. 675–676). The University of Chicago is a monument to his philanthropy, a colossus of higher education that rose quickly over several decades. While embodying Harper’s vision, it carries the imprimatur of Rockefeller, whose support Harper carefully cultivated throughout the university’s accelerated growth.

While in practice the University of Chicago (see Figure 3) became a

Figure 3

*The University of Chicago Main
Quadrangles, 1915*



*Note. From General Campus Views: Main
Quadrangles, 1911–1920 12 [Photograph],
1915. University of Chicago Photographic
Archive, apf2-02756, Hanna Holborn Gray
Special Collections Research Center,
University of Chicago Library.*

nonsectarian institution, it remained nominally Baptist. Its charter states that two-thirds of the trustees and the university president “shall be members of regular Baptist churches” and “in this particular this charter shall be forever unalterable” (as cited in Sears, 1922/1990, p. 93). These stipulations remained in place until 1923, when the Northern Baptist Convention voted to change the composition of the board to three-fifths Baptist members, increase its membership to 25, and drop the requirement that the president be a Baptist. When the point was raised that Baptist money built the university with the understanding that the church would have control forever, it was countered by the fact that of the \$36 million contributed by Baptists, \$34 million came from Rockefeller (“Chicago University Freed by Baptists,” 1923, p. 10).

On the heels of his generous gift to the University of Chicago, Rockefeller received a fervent plea from University of Rochester trustee Myron G. Peck on May 11, 1892:

The University of Rochester appears to be practically at a stand-still, and its Board of Trustees seem moribund, as to resources for progressive movement. ... By the death of some of its benefactors, and the new demands on others, this institution is deprived of some of its former support. It needs to enlist the interest and support of new friends. It ought to secure both of these in Rochester, where prosperous industries, manufacturies and commercial enterprise are creating considerable wealth. (Peck, 1892, p. 1-2)⁶

Peck did not ask for monetary support from Rockefeller, but he certainly was asking for help. His approach was to make the University of Rochester less closely identified with the Baptist church to attract a greater number of benefactors. He shared that opinion with Harper, but his powers of persuasion were far less effective than Harper's. Moral support, much less financial support, would have to come from elsewhere. A deep-pocketed benefactor did not appear until 1899, when George Eastman's philanthropic relationship with the University of Rochester began with the gift of a Kodak camera to a geology professor (University of Rochester, n.d.-a). Although Eastman's grandfather had been a Baptist minister, Eastman himself belonged to no faith. By the time of his death in 1932, Eastman's gifts to the university totaled more than \$50 million (University of Rochester, n.d.-b).

⁶ For a full treatment of the Baptist affiliation of the University of Rochester, see Aubrey Parkman, “President Hill and the Sectarian Challenge at the U. of R.,” *Rochester History* (1971), [1]-24.1–24.

After his largest donation to Denison, Rockefeller remained a trustee for another two years but had little further involvement and kept his checkbook closed. He resigned in June 1892, after having served 18 years (Rose, 1998). Rose suggests that one reason for Rockefeller's withdrawal from Denison was that he had not been involved in selecting its new president in 1890. Rockefeller wrote King in December 1889:

I suppose the Mr. Peters you refer to is the new President of Denison. I have not the pleasure of knowing him, and had no knowledge whatever in respect to his being chosen for the position, until I chanced to hear of his appointment. The choice of a President for such an important educational institution brings with it a great responsibility, and I sincerely hope those who took this responsibility, as well as others equally interested in the affairs of the University, will see as time goes on, that he is in every way the best man for the place. (as cited in Rose, 1995, p. 32)⁷

There were other reasons for Rockefeller's withdrawal. While Denison initiated a master's program in the sciences in 1887 and considered starting other graduate programs, those plans did not come to fruition and the institution remained strictly an undergraduate college (Chessman, 1957, p. 131). Denison remained affiliated with the Baptist church until the 1960s (Denison University, n.d.-c). In 1931, Denison installed a Centennial Plaque at the university's main entrance identifying the institution as a "Christian College of Liberal Arts," a phrase reflecting its Baptist heritage (Reed, 2024). During Denison's 175th-anniversary celebration in 2006, the plaque was replaced and later moved to Swasey Chapel (Reed, 2024).

Although no college or university received support from Rockefeller approaching the amount he gave to the University of Chicago, Rose (1998) noted that during the 1890s the American Baptist Education Society channeled \$539,069.24 of Rockefeller's contributions to 34 institutions. The breadth of this distribution demonstrates that Rockefeller's support for higher education reached well beyond Chicago, even though the University of Chicago remained unmatched in the scale of his giving.

Rockefeller's philanthropy also enabled the founding of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in 1901 "for the purpose of discovering the

⁷ The new Denison president was actually Daniel B. Purinton. Rose does not identify "Mr. Peters," and I have likewise been unable to do so. See Rose and Stapleton (1992).

causes, manner of prevention, and the cure of disease” (Rockefeller Archive Center, n.d., “The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research” section, para. 1). The institute was renamed The Rockefeller University in 1965 (Rockefeller University, n.d.). Rockefeller established the General Education Board in 1902, further institutionalizing his approach to philanthropy (Rockefeller Archive Center, n.d.). Over the course of its existence, “the GEB distributed \$325 million to improve education at all levels, with emphasis upon higher education, including medical schools” (Rockefeller Archive Center, n.d., “The General Education Board (1902–1965)” section, para. 1).

Conclusion

The history of Rockefeller’s relationships with Denison University and the University of Chicago demonstrates how a religious commitment could lead to different philanthropic outcomes depending on the historical circumstances, institutional ambitions, and the influence of key individuals. Rockefeller’s Baptist faith remained important to him, but his thinking about how best to distribute his growing wealth evolved. Influenced by figures such as Gates and Harper, he increasingly directed his major educational philanthropy toward the research-oriented University of Chicago rather than Denison. Nor did he embrace Strong’s competing vision for a new Baptist university in New York City. Rockefeller’s experience illustrates how philanthropists build institutions according to their convictions, even as those convictions—and their understanding of how wealth might best be used—change over time.

One final effort by Denison to secure Rockefeller’s financial support came in 1914. Denison president Clark W. Chamberlain wrote to Edward Judson, pastor of the Memorial Baptist Church in New York City, asking him to appeal to Rockefeller on Denison’s behalf. Judson responded on May 16, expressing hope that an appeal might succeed because of Rockefeller’s interest in education and his connection to Granville, while acknowledging that his own influence with Rockefeller had diminished considerably (Judson, 1914).

Rockefeller had supported Judson’s ministry since the early 1880s and contributed \$40,000 toward the construction of Judson Memorial Church at Washington Square (Chernow, 1998). Their longstanding relationship helps explain why Chamberlain turned to Judson to advocate for Denison. Even

Judson, however, acknowledged that his influence with Rockefeller had diminished. The 1914 correspondence represents one of Denison's final documented efforts to renew Rockefeller's personal financial support.

During the 20th century and into the 21st century, Denison University and the University of Chicago followed markedly different institutional paths. Denison remained an undergraduate liberal arts institution, and as of fall 2025, it enrolled 2,458 undergraduate students (Denison University, n.d.-a). Chicago developed into a major research institution and reported 10,968 graduate students and 7,569 undergraduates in fall 2024 (University of Chicago, n.d.). Their financial scale likewise differs considerably. Denison's endowment exceeds \$1 billion (Denison University, n.d.-b), while the University of Chicago's endowment ended FY2025 at \$10.9 billion (University of Chicago, 2025). In the ranking of endowment per student among colleges and universities, however, the University of Chicago is 47th and Denison is 74th, not far behind, with endowments per student of \$548,074 and \$403,345 respectively (College Raptor, n.d.).

Private philanthropy helped shape both institutions, but Rockefeller's support gave Harper the resources to realize his ambitious vision for the University of Chicago. Yet Harper retained an affection for Denison and the community he had left behind. In 1899, Harper wrote to his former Denison colleague, Professor Richard Steele Colwell, "How often I long for the quiet pleasant days of old Granville!" (as cited in Boyer, 2024, p. 146). His remark provides a fitting reminder that the divergent paths of Denison and Chicago were not inevitable. They emerged from a particular convergence of institutional ambition, personal relationships, geography, religious commitments, and evolving ideas about what philanthropy could accomplish. Had Harper remained at Denison, Rockefeller's philanthropy might have flowed differently, altering the trajectories of both institutions.

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