Redefining the Collegiate Way: The Rise of State Colleges and the Expanding Conception of the College Experience, 1890-1930

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Abstract

For over two hundred years, the college experience in the United States was defined by the traditions of historic eastern college, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. This model of the college experience came to be seen as elite, private, and eastern. Representations of college life in popular novels reflected this idea and served to subtly reinforce the position of these colleges as the torchbearers for American higher education. However, as public higher education proliferated in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the dominance of such a narrative began to be challenged. With the passage of the Morrill Land–Grant College Act in 1862, the college experience was now open to reinterpretation because of the markedly different missions of state colleges as well as the new types of students who attended them. The expanding conception of the college experience was reflected in the changing popular representations of college life, specifically in the films of the 1910s and 1920s, ultimately providing the American public with an alternative view of higher education. In practice, students at emerging state colleges created social worlds that had elements of the traditions of the historic eastern colleges, but were also reflective of new ways of experiencing college. For example, Greek fraternities and big-time football became hallmarks of the state college experience, while such activities never had the same level of support at older institutions. The presence of women also distinguished life at state colleges, as most public institutions were coeducational from their creation. This study argues that the rise of state colleges fundamentally altered the conception of the college experience in America, as students from a wider range of social backgrounds entered college with a variety of goals.
in mind.
Dedication

I dedicate this project to my friend, Ryan James Kieffe. Sadly, he left his friends and family too soon; but his life, intellect, and memory echo throughout this entire project. Our late night talks while roaming the empty streets of San Luis Obispo helped shape my thoughts, manners, and perspectives of the world. We talked about everything from the nature of a properly functioning democracy to how to best care for a lawn. He left an imprint on my life that manifests itself in every single moment of every single day. I wish that he was here to see the culmination of this project and to tell me that it is muddled, worthless, and crappy. I know, despite his assuredly brutal appraisal, that he would have been proud.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

“The collegiate way,” a term coined by Frederick Rudolph in the early 1960s, is one of the oldest and most fundamental traditions of the American college. The collegiate way, according to Rudolph, has been an enduring philosophy that espouses that a faculty, a library, and curriculum are by themselves insufficient to make a college. The collegiate way is dependent on a certain way of life outside of the watchful eyes of college authorities. In early American colleges, tranquil rural settings, dormitories, and communal dining halls defined the collegiate way. Fundamentally, this outlook promoted “the beneficial influence which classmates exerted on one another,” as well as “the superiority of the college community as an agency of education over mere studies.”¹ As such, the collegiate way encompassed not only an intangible spirit and energy of American youth, but a full range of extracurricular and social life as well. The philosophy of the collegiate way, in short, meant that the classroom was only part of the learning experience, and as Rudolph notes, it provided “the nonintellectual purposes of the American college.”²

The collegiate way began as an idea based in the histories and legacies of the historic eastern colleges. Colleges such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, began as close, communal institutions out of necessity. The intimacy of student life, fostered by rural living and common purpose, created a setting where youthful customs and cultures were


² Rudolph, The American College and University, 108.
made possible. Extracurricular-oriented culture also developed at the historic eastern colleges as a way for students to carve out space for themselves in what was an overbearing and paternalistic environment. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this pattern of social life, along with the traditions and rituals that sustained it, became crystallized as *the traditional college experience* in American thought. The fundamental attributes of the traditional college experience were: the close association of young men who were sequestered from their families for an extended period of time; a communal lifestyle of dining, sleeping, praying, and attending classes together; a paternalistic institutional outlook led by a group of campus authority figures, namely, the college president and the faculty that oversaw student behavior; and, most importantly, a social system that existed outside of the “official” college hierarchy.

Just as significant, the traditional college experience came to be associated with institutions in the eastern United States that were populated by the sons of wealthy. Marcia Graham Synott observed that in addition to their famous alumni, “Harvard, Yale, and Princeton educated the solid, if less illustrious, members of America’s upper-middle and upper classes…With the tremendous business and industrial expansion occurring from the Civil War through the 1920s, affluent Americans sent their children to these elite colleges in the expectation that such training would provide them with the appropriate culture, learning, and social contacts.”3 As such, the historic eastern colleges had by the end of the nineteenth century become important and influential institutions in

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the social and academic training of American leaders. Shaping this reality was the idea of that the traditional college experience, underwritten by the philosophy of the collegiate way, was central to the grooming of the next generation of America’s elite class.

The association between the historic eastern colleges and the traditional college experience was also bolstered by representations of these institutions in popular culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These representations reinforced the idea that the traditional college experience was most perfectly realized at elite eastern colleges. For example, the college life novel, which had become a moderately popular genre of literature at the end of the nineteenth century, mostly portrayed life at the historic eastern colleges. Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were popular settings in these novels and brought readers inside of the social systems of these schools. Novels such as Charles Macomb Flandrau’s 1897 *Harvard Episodes*, Owen Johnson’s 1912 *Stover at Yale*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1920 *This Side of Paradise* all detailed the intricacies of the elite social worlds that were hallmarks of these colleges. In turn, the American reading public, especially young boys who were the target audience of these kinds of novels, were provided with an image of college life that was primarily elite, eastern, and exclusive.

However, the emergence of widespread public education in the last decades of the nineteenth century began to challenge the centuries old conception of the traditional college experience. Beginning with the slow creation of state chartered public colleges in the early nineteenth century, and the subsequent rapid expansion of state colleges following the passage of the Morrill Land–Grant College Act in 1862, higher education
spread geographically into the American west and south, as well as to the lower and middle classes. The Morrill Act also greatly expanded the opportunities for women to receive a college degree, as most Land–Grant colleges were coeducational from their creation. Between 1862 and 1900, thirty-two Land–Grant colleges were founded in addition to the twenty-one state colleges that were created before the Morrill Act. Thus, by 1900, higher education had become a nationwide trend as state colleges were now operating in almost every state.  

As college became more accessible to a wider range of American youth, the collegiate way was conceived and expressed in a variety of different ways through the experiences of new types of students at new types of institutions. Consequently, extracurricular life at public colleges expanded upon the notions of social life at the historic eastern colleges in important ways. For example, college societies, a historic tradition of Yale and Harvard, were never as popular as Greek fraternities at state colleges. Another example was intercollegiate athletics, specifically the rise of major college football, which became a central aspect of the state college experience, while, after the turn of the twentieth century, the historic eastern colleges began to shun such activities. Finally, while men at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton always had opportunities to interact with women, men and women at state colleges engaged one another in a very different way. Because of their close proximity, men and women were able to see one

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5 Alaska and Hawaii did not establish a public Land–Grant college until after the turn of the century. The University of Hawaii, Honolulu was founded in 1907, and the University of Alaska, Fairbanks was established in 1917.
another with great frequency, making dating and the formation of close friendships possible.

By the 1910s more college students attended state colleges than older private schools on the eastern seaboard. As state colleges began to emerge as influential and popular institutions in the early twentieth century, images of college life in popular culture became more diverse as well. With the development of college life films in the mid-1910s, openness of access and the virtue of public higher education became prominent themes. In portrayals such as Victor Schertzinger’s 1917 silent film *The Pinch Hitter*, social background was no longer the measure of one’s status in the democratic setting of “State U.” The main character, a rural son of a farmer, overcame social deficiencies by proving his prowess on the baseball field. In college life films of the 1920s and the early 1930s, such as Walter Lang’s 1927 *The College Hero* and Gregory LaCava’s 1932 *Age of Consent*, the relationship between male and female students became another typical plotline, reflecting the realities of coeducation. As reflections of the changes to higher education in the early twentieth century, films perpetuated the idea that state colleges were places of inclusion in contrast to the images of the traditional college experience found in novels.

A telling sign for how the conception college experience expanded after the rise of state colleges is found in popular literature dealing with college life. In the 1910s and 1920s, authors writing of historic eastern colleges often took a wistful, reminiscent tone,

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6 *The Pinch Hitter*, Directed by Victor Schertzinger (1917; Phoenix, AZ: Grapevine Video, 2010), DVD.
with a deep affection for the “good old days” of the traditional college experience. Authors such as Cornelius Patton and Walter Field lamented that state colleges had become diploma mills and were allowing undeserving students to pursue college degrees.\textsuperscript{7} In other works, such as Edwin Slosson’s \textit{Great American Universities}, the historic eastern colleges were treated as the torchbearers for American higher education in light of the emergence of state colleges.\textsuperscript{8} While Slosson did not lament the rise of public higher education, he showed concern over the possible dilution of the meaning of a college degree as more and more Americans were now pursuing one.

The evolution of representations of college life during the early twentieth century reflected the realities of the proliferation of higher education. Yet, the traditional college experience, associated with life at the historic eastern colleges, did not disappear; indeed, the specific customs and traditions that informed this type of experience were celebrated as points of distinction, and prestige, for colleges like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton as state colleges became more numerous. The emergence of public higher education, and the concomitant influx of new types of students, however, expanded the conceptions of the college experience. The traditional college experience now existed on a spectrum, which included the experiences of students of various class backgrounds attending institutions in every region of the U.S.

The principal question guiding this work is: How did the college experience expand, change, and stay the same with the emergence of mass higher education at the

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{7} Cornelius Patton and Walter Field, \textit{Eight O’Clock Chapel} (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1927).

end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century? The worlds that students at state colleges created for themselves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did not develop in a vacuum, of course. The traditions and customs associated with the traditional college experience often seeped into the student experiences at public institutions. However, as with all cultural borrowing, nothing was taken whole cloth. Even as higher education became a national trend, state colleges were very much a product of their own regional values and sensibilities. The continuities, innovations, and omissions between the life at the historic eastern colleges and their newer public counterparts are the focus of this study.

To examine this question, I have studied student life at various institutions across the United States: North Carolina State University and Meredith College, both located in Raleigh, North Carolina; Ohio University, in Athens, Ohio; Ohio State University, in Columbus, Ohio; the University of Oregon, in Eugene, Oregon; and Oregon State University, in Corvallis, Oregon. I have examined a wide range of sources related to student life at these institutions, including: student handbooks, yearbooks, scrapbooks, journals, diaries, student ephemera, student-run newspapers and magazines, photographs, and a range of relevant administrative documents such as annual reports and reports dealing with student life. While these institutions were ultimately selected for study based on ease of access and the availability of sources for review, they represent a revealing geographic cross section of student life during the period from 1890 to 1940. Student life at North Carolina State was representative of the fledgling Southern Land-Grant colleges in the decades following the Civil War, for example; Ohio University, the first state
college established west of the Alleghenies in 1804, was by the 1890s a mature institution dealing with the issues associated with increased enrollments at public colleges; Oregon State was reflective of the agricultural character of the northwest during this period, as was the University of Oregon.

The outlier to this set of colleges is, of course, Meredith College, a private women’s-only college. During the last half of nineteenth century, women began to attend higher education in increasingly higher numbers, such that by 1900, women represented approximately thirty-seven percent of all college students at eighty-five thousand. The experiences of Meredith students serve as revealing counter points to the larger trends affecting student life at state colleges, but also illustrate similarities to life at coeducational institutions. Most, importantly, however, student life at Meredith reflected the expanding set of experiences defined by gender during this period in important ways.

The period from 1890 to 1930 was significant in the long history of American higher education. This era, defined by professionalization, the remaking of colleges into

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9 Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2. In the years following the Civil War, higher education for women advanced beyond the standards set by smaller women’s academies first established in the 1830s. With the founding of Vassar College in 1865, the first college for women was established to rival the education of young men. Seen as a courageous experiment at the time, Vassar offered a curriculum similar to men’s colleges providing a rigorous course in not only the classics, but in natural sciences as well. As higher education began to shift in purpose and meaning during the last decades of the nineteenth century, women’s educational training also moved away from basic teacher training because of the experiments at Vassar. Most notably, Bryn Mawr College, established in 1885 outside of Philadelphia, modeled itself after German universities in terms of organization of classes, course offerings, and providing opportunities for graduate work to promising young female students. As a result, by the end of the century, women became a noticeable presence on college campuses, and their admission into the world of higher education was all but cemented.
complex universities, the broad adoption of the elective system, subject specialization (and fragmentation), a growing bureaucracy within higher education to deal with increasing enrollments, and the influx of a more diverse group of students, fundamentally expanded the nature of the college experience. Additionally, after the turn of the twentieth century, the American college, especially Land-Grant institutions charged with providing practical education to the laboring classes, grew closer to American business and industry.\textsuperscript{10} With the increasing need for educated managers and skilled workers, state colleges represented opportunity for farmers, women, African Americans, and children of the working classes to pursue degrees at regional institutions that were designed for such benefit. Consequently, this enabled the working classes to make very real material and economic improvements in their lives. The changing perceptions of higher education, and the introduction of practical training as a rationale for college organization, meant also that enrollments at colleges increased dramatically during this period. In 1890, there were only one hundred and fifty-seven thousand students enrolled at colleges; in 1930 there were over one million, representing a nearly six-hundred percent increase.\textsuperscript{11}

This study contributes to the historiography on college life in the U.S. by examining the relationship between college expansion and the nature of the college experience. Very few works exist on the nature of the American college experience. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz’s \textit{Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the}


\textsuperscript{11} U.S. Department of Education, \textit{120 Years}, 76. These figures include both public and private colleges.
Eighteenth Century to the Present is the seminal work on the topic of student experience, in which she presents a categorical approach to the study of college students. Horowitz identifies three main groups, college men and women, outsiders, and rebels, to provide a nuanced analysis of the various types of students that have experienced college life. Furthermore, Horowitz uses her categories to identify such students at institutions of all kinds, drawing comparisons between them. I extend this comparative approach to show how, specifically, the experiences of students at the historic eastern colleges powerfully influenced the meaning of the college experience, such that elements of elite student life invariably crept into the developing student cultures of state colleges.

However, this study departs from Horowitz’s analysis in several key regards. First, Horowitz focuses on the subcultures of rebels, college men, and outsiders to present a kind of rationale for student life over a long period time. To be sure, these groups exist in this study, however they are not the focus. The students here are reflective of the broader changes in higher education around them, specifically the cleaving of the college experience along class and regional lines. Second, Horowitz’s work covers a long period, from the late eighteenth century all the way to the 1980s. This study, while more modest, focuses on a very specific era of change within American higher education to illustrate how rise of public education expanded the experience of college going. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, this study purposely examines state colleges that have been historically viewed as “non–elite.” Conversely, Horowitz’s work focuses on institutions

12 Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
such as Harvard, Princeton, Wellesley, Stanford, Duke, Chicago, and Wisconsin. While this approach is useful in determining the contours of student life at well-known and highly regarded institutions, it unfortunately misses the broad range of experiences of students at the emerging public institutions.

Throughout this study, I have used the term “historic eastern colleges” to refer to a set of private, elite, affluent, historically Protestant, and mostly white, colleges situated on the eastern seaboard. Specifically, I am using this term to refer to three of the oldest, and most prestigious, institutions in the United States: Harvard (established in 1636), Yale (established in 1701), and Princeton (established in 1746). These historic eastern colleges, had, by the end of the nineteenth century, achieved a high degree of prestige in the realm of American higher education due to their colonial origins, boarding-school-trained clientele, their vast institutional wealth, their primarily white student bodies, and a host of prominent graduates. Students of these schools were often the children of important regional or national figures, whether in business or politics, which further enhanced the reputation of the schools.

For the sake of clarity I have referred to all colleges by their current names, unless otherwise noted. Institutions such as North Carolina State and Oregon State, for example, changed their name several times throughout the period examined here, thus potentially causing confusion for the reader.

This study begins in earnest in Chapter 2 with an analysis of higher education in the nineteenth century as a way to situate and emphasize the significant changes brought about by the development of state institutions in the years following the Morrill Land–
Grant College Act of 1862. Chapter 3 examines popular representations of college life in novels, popular literature, and film. The popular images of college life during this period reflected the dominant narratives of higher education at this time, as well as illustrated the changes to the conceptions of the college experience with the rise of state colleges. In Chapter 4, student customs and traditions are explored to trace the continuities between the traditional college experience associated with the historic eastern colleges and the student experiences at state colleges. Chapter 5 addresses the ways in which unique student cultures began to develop at public colleges, highlighting the experiential differences between the historic eastern colleges and the newer state institutions. Chapter 6 assesses how football became a distinctive feature of student life at state colleges, as regional colleges began to surpass Harvard, Yale, and Princeton for supremacy on the gridiron. Lastly, Chapter 7 examines the relationship between student life at state colleges and the administrative mechanisms that were created to control the legions of new students streaming to public colleges.
Chapter 2
American Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century

At the turn of the nineteenth century, there were just twenty-five degree-granting institutions in the United States; by comparison, in 1900, there were more than one thousand.¹ Colleges in the early nineteenth century were small, typically underfunded enterprises. After a brief period of notable interest in higher education following the American Revolution, the first two decades of nineteenth century were marked by disorganization and indifference.² A college education was costly for the time, with the greatest expense being housing and living expenses for students.³ Consequently, very few families could afford to send their sons off to college in the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, in a society that was still very much rural and agrarian, a college education was viewed by many as an unnecessary venture, with little application to their daily


³ Tuition, surprisingly, was only a small fraction of the overall expense of sending a promising young man to college around the turn of the nineteenth century. As Geiger points out, room and board alone represented roughly 80% of the total cost of attendance at the College of New Jersey (Which would become Princeton University) in 1790. Few families could afford this annual expense as well as the associated economic loss of household production from an able adult.
lives.\textsuperscript{4} Thus, in the post-revolutionary era, higher education in the United States was a small, fledgling, and uncertain enterprise.

The purpose of higher education in the early nineteenth century was far different from the mission of colleges at the end of the century. One of the main features at most institutions in the early 1800s was religion. Religion and higher education had been intimately connected, of course, since the founding of Harvard in 1636. Even though Harvard had never had an official sectarian affiliation, it was closely connected to the Congregationalists and most students during the seventeenth century took up positions within the Church upon graduation.\textsuperscript{5} Following the religious trends of New England during the eighteenth century, Harvard became the center of the Unitarian movement and by the early nineteenth century, the newly organized Divinity School was led by prominent Unitarian thinkers.\textsuperscript{6} While Harvard was officially nonsectarian, religion was a significant aspect of daily life. Students were required to attend daily chapel service, observe religious holidays, and generally abide by a Protestant worldview. Failure to meet religious conventions would have meant social ostracism, or worse—expulsion.

If Harvard self-consciously attempted to avoid the appearance of sectarianism in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Burton J. Bledstein, \textit{The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America} (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1976), 212.
\item Morrison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 242. Andrews Norton, known as the “Unitarian Pope,” for example, became a lecturer on Biblical Literature in 1813. It is important to note that during the early history of Harvard College, the corporate overseers were keen on avoiding sectarian affiliation, however. Even though Unitarian ministers founded the Divinity School, the purpose of the school was to ostensibly train clergy for any Protestant sect.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the early nineteenth century, Yale College fought to maintain its religious identity.

During the eighteenth century, Yale overseers struggled to maintain an orthodox outlook as competing movements, such as the Unitarians at Harvard and Anglicans within their own ranks, began to challenge the Congregationalist hold on Connecticut. In 1744, two students were expelled from Yale for attending a revival with their parents during vacation, and in 1748 college officials required all students and faculty to observe the Westminster Confession of Faith. By the early nineteenth century, however, President Timothy Dwight (1795-1817) sought to refashion the outlook of the college that fell in line with the religious revivalism of the early nineteenth century. Alongside upgrades to the curriculum to contain advanced courses in mathematics and chemistry, Dwight created an institution that brought together academics and Christianity. Under his leadership, Yale continued to be a religiously conservative institution in the early 1800s, especially compared to the liberal inclinations of Harvard during the same period.

Similar to Yale, the conservative trustees of Princeton sought to maintain a close relationship to the Presbyterian Church during the early years of the republic. A series of student disorders in the first decade of the nineteenth century and the burning of Nassau Hall in 1802 signaled to the Princeton authorities that a stronger relationship with religion was needed. With the ouster of the more moderate Presbyterian president, Samuel

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Stanhope Smith, in 1812, and the installation of Reverend Ashbel Green, Princeton openly denounced science as the enemy of religion.\textsuperscript{10} In the same year, the Princeton Theological Seminary was created to bring back a vital sense of religiosity to the campus-which many of its overseers viewed as adrift in the wake of the student riots-as well as to prepare ministers for the church. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the trustees of Princeton (most of whom were orthodox Presbyterian ministers) controlled almost every aspect of the college. They sought to purge the irreligious from the faculty, reinvigorate stern discipline, and to take heresy seriously. As a repudiation of Enlightenment ideals, these pursuits by a zealous board ultimately had the effect of stifling Princeton’s development.\textsuperscript{11}

Because religion dominated higher education in the early nineteenth century, curriculum was tailored toward the unity of truth model.\textsuperscript{12} Historian Julie Reuben has suggested that the unity of truth model assumed two intersecting ideas: first, that all beliefs converged and agreed with one another and truth could be discovered through proper Christian teaching, and second, that all knowledge had a moral element.\textsuperscript{13} In this model, all knowledge, whether study of the classics or natural sciences, was aimed at

\textsuperscript{10} Geiger, \textit{The History of American Higher Education}, 139-40.


\textsuperscript{12} This was most true of Harvard and Yale, which accepted the usefulness of science in understanding God’s worldly creations; Princeton, however, remained steadfastly opposed to such an approach until at least the mid-nineteenth century.

discovering the divinity working in the world. In the early nineteenth century, moral philosophy became the disciplinary foundation on which higher learning was built. Typically taught by the university president in the senior year, courses in moral philosophy were the capstone experience of the college years. They brought together all of the knowledge acquired through four years and unified it together within the Christian tradition. As a culminating course, moral philosophy was the last chance for college faculty to impart Christian morality to their students, who would then be sent out into the community with a sense of how all knowledge fit together and a firm understanding of mental discipline. Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the historic eastern colleges were still firmly aligned with the Protestant traditions associated with their beginnings.

Yet, by the mid-nineteenth century, student life at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton had become somewhat liberated from the older, more severe disciplinary regime. Roger Geiger notes that by the 1850s, extracurricular life had transformed college life at the historic eastern colleges. One can find traces of this partial liberation in B. H. Hall’s 1856 glossary, *A Collection of College Words and Customs*. Hall compiled the work while a student at Harvard, documenting the mundane, interesting, and humorous aspects of his college world. For example, a “Barney,” was the title given to a student who performed poorly during a recitation; a “barring-out spree,” occurred about once a year at Princeton, when students would find the North Hall absent of tutors and would bar up the entrance

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and incessantly ring the college bell; “Jack Knife” was the award given to the “ugliest member of the senior class” at Harvard; and “skinning,” referred to act of cheating or plagiarizing at Yale. Students have always created words and idioms to describe their college life; but Hall’s definitions provide interesting detail to what might otherwise have been characterized as a drab existence.

The emergence of a pronounced extracurricular life at the historic eastern schools by the mid-nineteenth century distilled several key ideas that Frederick Rudolph has noted as part of the “collegiate way”: that a great deal of learning at a college occurs outside of the classroom, and that oftentimes students learn the most from one another. On the eve of the Civil War, the historic eastern colleges, while still moderately religious in expectation and outlook, were places with varying degrees of lively student life. Yet, these institutions primarily catered to the wealthy and influential. It was not until the expansion of higher education following the Civil War that many more American youth were able to experience college life.

Historians of higher education have mostly agreed that the post–Civil War era was a time of great transformation at American colleges. As historian Laurence Veysey wrote in his seminal work, The Emergence of the American University: “the fact remains that the American university of 1900 was all but unrecognizable in comparison with the college of 1860. Judged by almost any index, the very nature of the higher learning in the

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United States had been transformed.”

The most significant change to occur during this period was a uniform system of federal support for the establishment of public colleges in every state, through an act of Congress. On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed “An Act Donating Public Lands to the several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.” Also known as the Morrill Land–Grant College Act, the bill hastened the creation of institutions that would provide vocational and practical training to scores of previously underserved citizens.

The Morrill Act did not, however, establish the idea, or even the precedent, for federal support of public colleges. The first federal grants to establish colleges were authorized by the Northwest Territory Ordinance of 1787, which set aside lands near the center of each state for a “literary institution.” For example, Ohio University, founded at Athens, Ohio in 1804, was a beneficiary of this provision and became the first college established west of the Alleghenies. Later, in 1836, Congress modified the original system of land grants by setting aside land for two colleges in each state, one for “seminary learning” and another for a “state university.” Because of the 1836 alteration, institutions such as the University of Michigan (1841) and the University of Wisconsin (1848) were founded as each state’s respective state university. Between 1796 and 1861,

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Congress had granted hundreds of thousands of acres in seventeen states before the Morrill Act was signed into law.\textsuperscript{19} States also charted public colleges well before the Morrill Act of 1862. The University of North Carolina, which began operating in 1795, was created through a provision in the state’s first constitution drafted in 1776. Similarly, the University of Georgia (1785) and the University of Vermont (1791) were founded through state charter before the turn of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, the federal government had been involved in the creation public higher education for almost a half century before the signing of the Morrill Act in 1862. Yet, the land grants provided to states and territories before 1862 were often the results of lobbying by specific states to aid in the establishment of an institution of higher learning or to help extant institutions avoid financial ruin. This piecemeal approach also gave states and college officials a free hand in determining the nature of instruction and the character of their state colleges. For example, University of Michigan chose to offer no agricultural courses, which ultimately led to the founding of Michigan State University at Lansing in 1857. Conversely, the University of Wisconsin embraced a multi-purpose philosophy and incorporated agriculture and mechanic arts into their institutional

\textsuperscript{19} Thelin, \textit{A History of American Higher Education}, 75-76. Tennessee received the largest allotment of land, 100,000 acres, while Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, Alabama, Missouri, Arkansas, Michigan, Iowa, California, Oregon, and Kansas each received approximately 46,000 acres. Ohio, Florida, Wisconsin, and Minnesota all received grants ranging from 70,000 acres to 92,000 acres.

\textsuperscript{20} Rudolph, \textit{The American College and University}, 36.
offerings from its beginning.\textsuperscript{21}

As such, federal support for higher education before 1862 was unsystematic. The significance of the Morrill Land–Grant College Act was that it formally established guidelines for the creation of federally funded public colleges in all parts of the United States. In passing the Morrill Act, Congress defined a uniform methodology, by which land gifts would be appropriated to each state, specified the general aim of Land–Grant colleges, and declared to whom they envisioned the colleges serving.

Through the Morrill Act, Congress established a uniform policy for the allocation of federal lands to each state, which were then obliged to sell the land and use the proceeds to establish an endowment for the creation and maintenance of the state college. The Act specified, “That there be granted to the several States, for the purposes hereinafter mentioned, an amount of public land, to be apportioned to each State a quantity equal to thirty thousand acres for each senator and representative in Congress…”\textsuperscript{22} Consequently, some states fared better than others in terms of allotment. New York, for example, obtained nearly nine hundred ninety thousand acres, while

\textsuperscript{21} Williams, \textit{The Origins of Federal Support for Higher Education}, 32. The system of establishing separate state institutions for agriculture and liberal arts became known as the “Michigan Plan,” while the creation of one multi-purpose college that offered a wide array of degrees became known as the “Wisconsin Plan.” States such as Illinois, Minnesota, and California adhered to the Wisconsin plan, while Iowa followed the Michigan plan.

\textsuperscript{22} “Federal Land Grant Legislation: The Morrill Act of 1862,” in \textit{Essential Documents in the History of American Higher Education} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 76. Section 5 of the Act also specified that “No state while in a condition of rebellion or insurrection against the government of the United States shall be entitled to the benefit of this act,” effectively limiting land grants to states siding with the Union during the Civil War.
Oregon received only one hundred twenty thousand acres. Additionally, the sale of land within each state varied. Officials in Rhode Island, for example, simply chose to sell their allotment of land to a single investor for $50,000, instead of dealing with complex sales negotiations. Conversely, the state of New York sold the majority of its allotment to state senator and philanthropist Ezra Cornell for $300,000, who then doubled the endowment from his own fortune giving the college a sizeable starting fund. After the founding of Cornell University in 1868, Ezra Cornell sold all of the grants lands he had purchased to a private party and gave the profits to the university.

Most importantly, however, were the stated aims for the institutions that would be created from the land sale proceeds. Section four of the legislation prescribed:

> Each State which may take and claim the benefit of this act, to the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are relation to agriculture and mechanic arts...in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.

This passage reveals several underlying motivations of the bill’s author, Congressman

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23 In 1862, New York had 35 members of Congress based on the 1860 census. The maximum allotment allowed by the Morrill Act was 1,000,000 acres.

24 Williams, *The Origins of Federal Support for Higher Education*, 47. The standard government rate for an acre of land at that time was $1.25; yet, Rhode Island sold their land grants for .40 cents per acre.

25 Williams, *The Origins of Federal Support for Higher Education*, 47. The 1862 Morrill Act provided nearly 17.5 million acres of land to states in order to establish colleges. From these grants, $7.5 million dollars were raised through land sales.

Justin S. Morrill of Vermont, as well as a group of educational reformers who sought to refashion American higher education to serve the practical needs of an industrializing society. By stating that the primary objective of the Land–Grant college should be “agriculture and mechanic arts,” Morrill was expressing a widespread view during the middle of the nineteenth century that American vocational training in agriculture science was inferior to that offered in Europe. Furthermore, reformers such as Jonathan B. Turner, a professor at Illinois College, agitated throughout the 1850s for industrial higher education that would benefit classes of Americans for whom a liberal arts education had no use: farmers, mechanics, and laborers.27

Morrill shared Turner’s belief that the laboring classes in the United States could benefit from agricultural and mechanic arts higher education, but he also heartily believed in the role of “other scientific and classical studies.” In fact, Morrill later told educators that he had never meant for the Land–Grant Act to focus solely on the creation of agricultural colleges, but envisioned science, liberal arts, agriculture, and mechanic arts curriculum coalescing in a single institution.28 Thus, it is significant that while the provisions of the Morrill Act specifically stated that the “leading objective” for colleges benefitting from the legislation must be agriculture and mechanic arts, the clause “without excluding other scientific and classical studies” reflected Morrill’s intention to


create a multi-purpose college.\textsuperscript{29}

Fundamentally, however, Morrill’s hope for the Land–Grant college was to create opportunity and access to higher education for \textit{all} Americans. Central to this vision was Morrill’s belief that American democracy could only be perpetuated if people from all classes could pursue occupations at the highest levels without being hampered by lack of access to education. Indeed, Morrill and other educational reformers of the mid-nineteenth century were articulating the long-standing American belief in the “self-made man.” This ideal depended, at least in part, on equal access to higher education. By 1860, this was increasingly viewed as a right, regardless of social or economic background.\textsuperscript{30} The Morrill Act accelerated the expansion of public higher education in the late nineteenth century. Besides Land–Grant institutions, colleges were also being established by way of state charter, especially in the West. The founding of non–Land–Grant institutions such as the University of Kansas (1865), the University of Colorado (1875), the University of Oregon (1876), and the University of Montana (1893) reflected the desires of state legislatures to solidify higher education in their states through the establishment of traditional liberal arts oriented institutions.

\textsuperscript{29} Nevins, \textit{State Universities and Democracy}, 15. Because of this clause states did have some flexibility in the type of college that was created through the Morrill Act. For example, states such as Georgia, Tennessee, Delaware, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Florida, and Louisiana chose to designate an extant state university as the beneficiary of the Land–Grant proceeds. Most of these institutions provided a liberal arts education, to which agriculture and mechanic arts would be appended. In other states, such as Ohio, California, West Virginia, Nebraska, Arkansas, and Nevada, colleges were constructed after the Morrill Act with the main purpose of providing agricultural and mechanic arts training.

\textsuperscript{30} Nevins, \textit{State Universities and Democracy}, 16-19.
Yet, the opening of public colleges in nearly every state by the late 1880s did not mean that higher education was available to anyone who wished to apply. Following the Civil War, endemic poverty and the lack of prepared students made opportunities for advanced education for African Americans meager at best. In 1890, only 808 black students were enrolled at colleges or universities in the entire United States. Higher education was possible for black students, but severely limited in Northern states, while higher education in the South was largely left to Northern philanthropic groups. In 1865, the American Baptist Home Mission Society helped in the founding of Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, as well as the Augusta Institute (later to become Morehouse College) in Augusta, Georgia, in 1867. Several hundred schools were organized by various Northern agencies in the last decades of the nineteenth century, however most had become defunct by 1900 due to lack of funding. Further, only nine Land–Grant colleges were founded in the South before 1890, with Alcorn College in Lorman, Mississippi, becoming the first federally subsidized, all-black college in the nation. But behind these modest efforts, higher education for African Americans was out of reach for

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31 Before the 1920s, admissions policies varied greatly from institution to institution. Students at public colleges were typically admitted either by certificate, which was infrequent unless a college had a specific arrangement with a local high school, or an entrance examination. Entrance examinations often measured whether a student could perform basic math, read at a modest level, and could write. However, some colleges would accept a letter from a local dignitary or merchant as evidence for a student’s worthiness for admission. If a student was unable to gain acceptance, many colleges offered preparatory training with the aim of attracting students who might otherwise decide they were incapable.


most. It was not until the passage of the second Morrill Act of 1890 that federal law mandated funding for all-black colleges. Under the second act, states were now required to share all funds equally between white and black institutions.

The Morrill Act thus created the conditions in which higher education would be transformed. Because the Land–Grant Act primarily focused on practical education with specific social applications, higher education became associated with the broader changes taking place in American society, namely industrialization and professionalization. A college education was now becoming both a mode of professional credentialing and a path to social and economic mobility. While the notion of social prestige had long been connected to the classes fortunate enough to earn a college diploma, the functional aspects of a college education forged the link between certification and status as a trait of higher education that endures to the present.34

Of the many trends in American society that helped shape the new purpose of higher education at the end of the nineteenth century, professionalization is significant. According to Burton Bledstein, “Americans after 1870, but beginning after 1840, committed themselves to a culture of professionalism which over the years has established the thoughts, habits, and responses most modern Americans have taken for granted, a culture which has admirably served individuals who aspire to think very well of themselves.”35 Bledstein argues that professionalism, and the professionalization of


fields of study, enabled Americans to construct visible social distinctions in the form of accreditation and the titles it conferred. For example, accounting, architecture, medicine, and law all became state-licensed fields in the 1890s, with many requiring college degrees in order to receive certification. The professionalization of a wide variety of disciplines at the turn of the century (illustrated by the rise of professional organizations in almost two hundred fields) signaled the official transition of higher education from merely training young men for polite society, to a path for young people to attain social rank through specialization. Indeed, the mark of the professional was an implied expertise in their field, legitimized by a four-year course in practical training from a university. Thus, higher education came to symbolize not only social prestige, but also social power in the form of specialized knowledge that enabled college graduates to apply their training in specific social contexts: the dentist’s office, the courtroom, or the college classroom. The promise of economic mobility led many to pursue higher education as a means of improving social position, reinforcing the a trend referred to by David Levine as an emerging “culture of aspiration.”

As higher education expanded geographically and to new classes of citizens, a culture of social striving developed, and was underwritten by these new educational opportunities. As Levine has noted, the period between the two world wars was a nexus of rapidly expanding business with new modes of management, along with a burgeoning

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36 Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, 84.


service sector that required a new generation of professionally trained employees. Universities and business became inextricably linked during this era, as rising enrollments promised wave after wave of freshly minted graduates to fill specialized positions. Elite institutions were keenly aware that mass education could dilute the value of a college degree, and lessen their own prestige. In response, historic eastern colleges began to implement rigid requirements for entrance, while students coming from the lower ranks of society found opportunities at state universities as well as urban institutions that catered to ethnic groups. 39 Significantly, the public junior college system emerged in the 1920s as a means for students to obtain remedial training on their way to a full four-year university, or to complete semi-skilled vocational–training programs. Many states enacted laws to provide funding for these two-year institutions, especially in sparsely populated areas, to offer some level of higher education to rural populations. 40

The expansion of higher education in the first decades of the twentieth century, then, had the effect of providing advanced learning to broader and more diverse set of the Americans.

The primary effect of the Land–Grant Act was that it significantly increased the

39 Levine notes that before World War I, most colleges ostensibly matriculated students from all backgrounds as long as they were able to pass certain entrance exams. Yet, in most cases, prestigious colleges remained bastions of upper middle-class white Protestants. And as the demand for higher education became greater in the 1920s, elite colleges such as Columbia, Harvard, and Dartmouth instituted an application process that enabled them to remain the realm of the affluent. In response to growing restrictions, and in some instances outright discrimination, at private elite institutions, public universities began to embrace a democratic philosophy. As an example, during the 1920s, Harry Chase, president of the University of North Carolina criticized the state legislature for attempting to limit enrollments.

40 Levine, The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 175-176.
access of higher education to a far larger group of Americans, for whom attending a historic eastern college was either geographically impractical or economically prohibitive. An equally important effect of the Act was that it expanded the range of experiences associated with college life. At the historic eastern colleges, the college experience was primarily a rite of passage for the already affluent and influential classes in America. With public institutions opening across the United States for the express purpose of training a wider range of Americans, the customs and traditions associated with college life necessarily expanded with them. For the sons and daughters of the laboring classes, life at a state college afforded them an opportunity to learn and potentially improve economic status. Public colleges also offered students an opportunity to socialize with people around their same age in an environment away from their parents, thus transferring the collegiate way into a new realm.
Chapter 3

Popular Images of College Life

However exaggerated or farcical popular images of college life may be, they have shaped general understandings of the college experience for more than a century. Whether in novels, films, or popular literature, representations of the collegiate experience have provided mental frameworks for the American public to understand, and to draw conclusions about, the meaning of college. Most important, popular representations reflected the changing experiences of college students as higher education expanded to allow access to new groups of Americans through the creation of state colleges. Fed by the fascination of the American public beginning in the late nineteenth century, popular representations of college life evolved from depictions primarily of life at exclusive historic eastern colleges to portrayals of the college experience at open access public institutions. Portrayals of college life from 1890 to 1930 fell into three categories: depictions of the “traditional” college experience at the historic eastern colleges in novels; romanticized accounts of life at the historic eastern colleges found in popular literature during the expansion of higher education; and portrayals of college life at state colleges in film. Changes in the subject matter of popular representations of college life during this period corresponded with expanding conceptions of college life: in the college life novels published between 1890 and 1920, student life at institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton is portrayed as the typical college experience, which reflected the status of these colleges as the oldest and most prestigious in the country; in popular literature written in the 1910s and 1920s, authors reminisced about
the “good old days” at the historic eastern colleges, acknowledging—and also lamenting—the expansion of the college experience as a result of the rise of state colleges; and in film, beginning in the 1910s, and lasting through the 1920s, the depictions of college life expanded to capture the experiences of a wider range of students at state colleges in regions across the country, echoing the proliferation of public higher education. While there was overlap between these phases of popular representations, the image of college life as eastern, private, and elite, gave way over the course of the early decades of the twentieth century to a broader set of depictions that began to incorporate the experiences of students at public colleges.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fictionalized accounts often reflected the character of student life at historic eastern colleges. It is difficult to precisely distill the cultures of the older elite colleges in the United States, but the general contours included: a student body composed disproportionately of white men from the wealthier classes and the social elite of the eastern states, administrators who were keenly aware of the need to please influential alumni and their children, and an extracurricular system that fostered class divisions as well as promoted the advancement of only the most socially
connected men. The authors of the first wave of accounts were often former students of these institutions and based their novels on their own experiences. Because of this, the portrayals of college life as eastern, elite, and private reinforced the prevailing notion that these schools represented the traditional college experience.

The college life novel dates back to at least the early nineteenth century. In 1828, Nathaniel Hawthorne published *Fanshawe*, his first novel, which describes college life in pre-revolutionary America. *Fanshawe* is generally accepted as America’s first college novel, even though the portrayal of early college life in the United States was quaint and

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1 I am borrowing from Marcia Graham Synnott’s work, *The Half-Opened Door* for this definition. Synnott observes that the “prep school crowd” dominated social life at the Big Three during the early twentieth century “as few public high school graduates had any presumption of social success in college.” (20) Access to the most important societies and clubs were reserved for students with the right social credentials. Synnott notes that at Princeton in the early twentieth century, the upper-class eating clubs tended to attract “snobs, literary men like Fitzgerald, social register members, noble Christians, and football players.” (21) Between 1920 and 1923 at Princeton, roughly 85% of members of the most prestigious clubs came from private schools. Furthermore, during the early twentieth century college administrations began to institute harsher entrance requirements to ensure that only the most desirable students-those who paid full-freight and could be counted on in later years for generous donations as alumni-be admitted.

2 It is speculated that *Fanshawe* is based, in part, on Hawthorne’s own experiences as a student at Bowdoin College, where he graduated in 1825. Later in his career, Hawthorne revisited *Fanshawe* and found it lacking, after which he attempted to purchase all known copies to destroy.
antiquated by early nineteenth-century standards. Throughout the nineteenth century, fictionalized accounts of college life were published sporadically and tended to focus on historic eastern colleges. Novels such as *Nelly Brown: Or, The Trials, Temptations and Pleasures of College* (1845), *The Belle of Boston: Or, The Rival Students of Cambridge* (1849), *Yale College “Scrapes”* (1852), *Fair Harvard: A Story of American College Life* (1869), and *His Majesty, Myself* (1880) all used Harvard, Yale, and Princeton either explicitly or implicitly as the locations for their tales.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the college life novel had become a modestly popular genre in American literature. From 1890 to 1900 alone, eleven books

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3 John E. Kramer, *The American College Novel: An Annotated Bibliography* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 1. Set at fictional Harley College, a small seminary institution in rural New England, the novel follows Edward Fanshawe, a bright, yet socially awkward, young adult torn between his attraction to the college president’s ward, Miss Ellen Langton, and the serious business of academic life. Fanshawe is obsessed with becoming famous, and spends most of days cloistered in his room at the college. While Fanshawe does not explore the daily routines of college life as much as later works, it does offer some insights into the experiences of college students. First, Hawthorne presents various types of students and their differing perspectives on the meaning of higher education. On the one hand, Fanshawe represented the overachieving, responsible student looking to advance through hard work, and the other hand, Edward Walcott, who seems to savor the freedoms that college life has to offer. Both students, however, are also interested in romance and are fully engrossed in chasing young Ellen Langton, the ward of college president, Dr. Melmoth. Second, Hawthorne describes a social dynamic in which the strict morality of the era is blurred by underlying circumstances. Ellen goes against good conscience and social norms to flee with a male stranger to an unknown future. Edward Walcott also challenges the accepted behavior of a gentleman scholar by frequenting the inn to get drunk. Yet, one does not find the preoccupation with the social and rebellious side of college life in Fanshawe that it is present in later works. College, for the students at Harley, is still a solemn endeavor with strict rules of obedience enforced by Dr. Melmoth.

were published that centered on the college student experience.\textsuperscript{5} From 1900 to 1930 there were fifty-seven books dealing with aspects of college life published, not including memoirs written by alumni and works that focused on staff and faculty.\textsuperscript{6} The vast majority of these novels were set at historic eastern colleges, but some also took place at prominent midwestern institutions such as Northwestern and Wisconsin. The increasing popularity of works dealing with college life reflected a growing fascination among the reading public, especially young adults, with the collegiate experience and underscored an increasing importance of the university in American life. Furthermore, the images that Americans were consuming through these works were mostly those of elite institutions geographically set in the Northeast. Consequently, these novels reinforced the association between the historic eastern colleges and the traditional college experience.

In 1897, Charles Macomb Flandrau published *Harvard Episodes*, a series of short stories told from the perspective of a variety of students at the elite institution. As an 1895 graduate of Harvard, Flandrau was in a special position to comment on the inner workings of social life and the campus hierarchy that existed during his time there as a student. Having grown up in Minnesota and traveled east to attend college, just as F. Scott Fitzgerald did later, Flandrau was an outsider to the circles of Boston social elite.

\textsuperscript{5} Kramer, *The American College Novel*, 7-9.

\textsuperscript{6} There were 28 staff-centered novels written from 1890 to 1930.
that occupied Harvard’s campus. Flandrau’s novel was different from previous college life works, which often presented elite colleges in a hagiographic light, because of his outsider status. In *Harvard Episodes* Flandrau expressed the antipathy that he felt in response to the arrogance and contempt that many of his blue-blooded classmates exhibited toward other students, especially those from outside of the New England social elite. For Flandrau, Harvard was an undemocratic microcosm of American society, where the sons of the wealthy replicated and reinforced class divisions to ensure their own positions of power.

While *Harvard Episodes* was officially published as a work of fiction, Flandrau later confirmed that the stories were indeed true. Reminiscing on the production and reception of the novel in the preface to his 1935 *Sophomores Abroad*, Flandrau observed “writers could not very well say that the book was untrue because as far as the stories went—to the limited extent to which they went at all—they undeniably and no doubt regrettably were true…” Following its publication, “there was hell to pay at once,” as a number of Harvard alumni wrote opinion letters to newspapers expressing their anger with Flandrau’s honest appraisal. *Harvard Episodes* had, from Flandrau’s perspective, broken with the template of the college life novel up to that point, in which the principal

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7 Larry Haeg, *In Gatsby’s Shadow: The Story of Charles Macomb Flandrau* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 52-54. According to his biographer, Larry Haeg, Flandrau grew up in a wealthy household, travelled extensively as a child, but was rumored to be a closeted homosexual. Haeg suggests that his possible homosexuality led him to be a social outcast, especially during his years at Harvard.

ingredients were “athletics, young love and what the Boston papers were accustomed to describing as ‘College Boys’ Pranks.’ Instead, Flandrau presented Harvard as a bastion for the rich and snobbish, where club and drinking men dominated social life.”

Illustrative of Flandrau’s attempt to show the reality of life at Harvard was his portrayal of the practice of slacking. In the story, “A Dead Issue,” Flandrau showed how students got away with doing minimal work and how Harvard faculty perpetuated such behavior. Flandrau presented a Harvard alumnus, Marcus Thorn, who returned from receiving a Ph.D. in Germany to teach at his alma mater. Once back at Harvard, Thorn encountered Prescott, a legacy student, who was altogether uninterested in his course. Flandrau remarked “He went to Thorn’s lectures only after intervals of absence that made his going at all a farce. He ignored the written work of the course, and the reports on outside reading, with magnificent completeness.” Thorn knew Prescott’s family from his undergraduate days at Harvard and was unsure about what to do with the problem student. Prescott, understanding that the young professor might be lenient because of his personal connection, exploited Thorn’s vulnerability. Thorn grasped that “his attitude was not an unusual one among college ‘men,’ who have not outgrown the school idea,” yet

9 “Rich Man’s Harvard,” The Literary World: a Monthly Review of Current Literature, January 22, 1898, 19. This review observed that Flandrau’s portrayal of Harvard was so unflattering that “some members of the Harvard Faculty are dreading the injurious influence of this gaily bound, clever little volume” and “President Elliot would do well perhaps not to make any general distribution of it on his Western trips.”

was uncertain what to do. Prescott continued to cut classes and miss assignments throughout the course, such that by the time the final exam arrived, he would have to be flunked. However, Thorn was caught in a personal struggle. Without even looking inside the test booklet, Thorn entered a “C” as Prescott’s mark. Thorn later learned from another student that Prescott’s exam was blank. Realizing that his personal feelings and anxieties had obstructed his duties to the college, Thorn retreated into himself, embarrassed by what he had done.

*Harvard Episodes* presents slacking off as a way of life at a prestigious institution populated by privileged students. But Flandrau also touched upon the exclusivity of the social system and how outsiders were often left out. In “The Chance,” Flandrau depicted the quintessential Harvard outsider, Horace Hewitt. Hewitt is described as a lonesome sophomore from Kansas who enjoyed none of the predestined privileges that prep school students from New England had upon entering Harvard. Depressed and isolated, Hewitt remarked to his landlord that “If I had only been given a chance—he broke out with sudden vehemence—a good, square chance, the kind a man has a right to expect when he enters college—to meet my equals equally—to make myself felt and liked if I had the power to…” For Hewitt, Harvard’s social system was surrounded by an impenetrable wall because he had not made the right friends or joined the right clubs. Yet, the underlying commentary is that Hewitt never really had a chance at breaking into such circles because of his background. As a student from a distant state, Hewitt is portrayed

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as bearing the mark of an unrefined outcast with no social capital. Flandrau suggests that the pedigreed students from wealthy and influential eastern families controlled life at Harvard, and students like Hewitt, from modest and rural backgrounds, found it difficult to fit in. This observation was undoubtedly a phenomenon that Flandrau witnessed first-hand. Under the guidance of President Charles Eliot, and his successor Lawrence Lowell, Harvard sought to reinforce the idea that the college was primarily composed of elites.  

Flandrau’s novel was unique because it sought to reveal elite higher education as it really was. The novel suggests that college life was an exercise in social negotiation and the pursuit of influence and power; for one to succeed on the college campus, background and connections mattered. Owen Johnson’s famous 1912 novel, *Stover at Yale*, presents similar images. Johnson, a 1901 graduate of Yale, sought to reveal in his novel the cutthroat business of society life and its impact on students’ perceptions of the meaning of higher education. Much like *Harvard Episodes*, Johnson’s *Stover at Yale* is a criticism of, as one reviewer put it, “this over-organization of college life and the mumbo-jumbo of the secret societies.”  

Perhaps because he himself had not been chosen for a senior society, Johnson’s underlying argument in the book is that Yale, like other elite institutions, allowed extracurricular life and the striving for social prestige to cloud the main purpose of the college: education. For Johnson, students’ disproportionate efforts to make the right friends and enter the best society took away from raison d’être of the college, which was to earn an education. These conclusions are expressed through

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Dink Stover, a character that Johnson developed in a series of short stories for the *Saturday Evening Post* between 1909 and 1911, and the many different types of men that character met during his time at Yale.\(^\text{15}\)

Dink Stover, a graduate of prestigious Lawrenceville Prep, arrived ready to embrace the social world of Yale, filled with romanticized notions of hard work as the sole measurement of character and a democratic ethos of college life; “Four glorious years, good times, good fellows, and a free and open fight among the leaders and leave a name on the roll of fame.”\(^\text{16}\) Indeed, his preconceived notions appear to be confirmed by a wise sophomore, and social climber, Le Baron. As they chatted on Stover’s first day on campus, Le Baron advised Stover:

> You’ll hear a good deal of talk inside the college, and out of it too, about the system. It has its faults. But it’s the best system there is, and it makes Yale what it is to-day. It makes fellows get out and work; it gives them ambitions, stops loafing and going to seed, and keeps a pretty good, clean temperate atmosphere about the place…You’re going to be judged by your friends, and it is just as easy to know the right crowd as the wrong.\(^\text{17}\)

What Le Baron was imparting to Stover was that if he expected to be selected to one of

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\(^\text{15}\)“Owen Johnson Attacks His Critics,” *The New York Times*, May 19, 1912. Much like the critical reception of Flandrau’s *Harvard Episodes*, Johnson was assailed by negative reviews and criticism from Yale students and administrators. A poll taken of Yale students in 1912 found that 80% of the students thought Stover at Yale grossly exaggerated the social system at the college, to which Johnson responded, “I wonder if that was a secret poll.” Johnson insisted that the novel was a true depiction of Yale as he knew it and that he was unsurprised by the reluctance of current Yale students to affirm his criticisms out of fear over their own social status.


three senior societies, Skull and Bones, Keys, or Wolf’s-Head, he needed to take care with whom he associated and understand the system. Being accepted into a senior society was viewed as the defining event of any Yalie, and the process began with choosing one’s friends wisely in order to not fall into a “digging” or “grinding” bunch.\textsuperscript{18} For Stover to be accepted into one of the elite societies, he needed to impress the right upperclassmen, make the right connections, and join the right clubs from the start.

However, Stover had the advantage of being a superior football player, which instantly made him a campus hero. His spectacular play during the football season elevated him to a special status on the campus, which placed him on the inside track to a senior society, which began with membership in a sophomore society. Yet, by the end of his freshman year, Stover began to question the highly stratified world of Yale. During this period, Stover befriended several students who represented the counter culture of the elite college. One such student was Tom Regan, an older freshmen from a working-class family in the West who was steadfast in studies and committed to earning an education. Regan, like Hewitt in \textit{Harvard Episodes}, came from outside of the elite prep school universe of New England, but unlike Hewitt showed no interest in Yale’s social system. Stover also befriended Ray Gimbel, a social dissenter who had attempted to disband the sophomore societies, as well as Sidney Brockhurst, a poet, writer, and loner. After forming a discussion group with these, and other, unconventional students, Stover realized that the democratic ideals that he held when he entered as a freshman were an

\textsuperscript{18} Both terms, “digging” and “grinding” are referred to in many novels to identify students who were more interested in academic success than socializing with their classmates.
“Good Lord!” he said, almost aloud, “in one whole year what have I done? I haven’t made one single friend, known what one real man was doing or thinking, done anything I wanted to do, talked about what I wanted to talk about, read what I wanted to read, or had time to make the friends I wanted to make. I’ve been nothing but material—varsity material—society material; I’ve lost all the imagination I had, and know less than when I came; and I’m the popular man—‘the big man’—in the class! Great! Is it my fault or the fault of things up here?”

The constant calculations and diligence required of a social climber in the Yale system had, for Stover, obscured most of the educational opportunities available to him. The striving that was required by characters such as Le Baron, fed the undemocratic nature of life at the elite college, something that Stover ultimately finds revolting.

The controversy that accompanied the publication of Stover at Yale, similar to Flandrau’s Harvard Episodes fifteen years earlier, reflected Johnson’s desire to critique the Yale system as snobbish and ultimately undemocratic. Like Flandrau, Johnson revealed the seedy business of connection making and power-brokering at colleges like Yale, which, if one were successful, would translate into advantages once in the “real world.” However, the audience reading such novels could have easily missed this point. On the surface, Stover at Yale is a typical coming-of-age novel, as Dink Stover suffered a youthful identity crisis and ends up wiser for it. Yet, the novel also conveys the suffocating conformity of a historic eastern college and the aristocratic tendencies of its

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19 Johnson, Stover at Yale, 231-232.

20 John R. Thelin, A History of American Higher Education, 166-167. This is poignant criticism given that the “Yale System” prided itself on strident individualism as the basis for merit, all the while being reconciled with the understanding that individual acts were for the greater good of the university.
students.

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s declarative novel for the jazz age, *This Side of Paradise*, touches on some of the same themes as both *Harvard Episodes* and *Stover at Yale*. Published in 1920, Fitzgerald’s first major novel describes the serious business of Princeton social life, the snobbishness of the student body, as well as the excess and hedonism of youth at the elite college. As an undergraduate at Princeton from 1913 to 1917, Fitzgerald had plenty of experience to draw upon when describing the novel’s main character, Amory Blaine. Similar to Flandrau’s account of life at Harvard and Johnson’s criticisms of Yale, Fitzgerald’s work was not well received by officials at Princeton.²¹

Blaine was raised in Minnesota and attended prep school at St. Regis in Connecticut, arriving at Princeton as an outsider. By contrast, most boys at Princeton came from premier eastern prep schools like Lawrenceville or Andover. “Gradually he realized he was walking up University Place, self-conscious about his suitcase, developing a new tendency to glare straight ahead when he passed any one….He wondered vaguely if there was something the matter with his clothes, and wished he had shaved that morning on the train.”²² Yet, the young protagonist was undeterred by his initial embarrassment and was quickly swept up by the eminence and tradition of his new

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²¹ “Youth Will Be Served.” *The Independent*, July 10, 1920, 53-54. The university’s chief objection was the novels depiction of Princeton as “the pleasantest country club in America,” a label that had been associated with the university since at least the turn of the new century, and Fitzgerald’s use of his friends and acquaintances as models for his characters. In terms of the former complaint, Woodrow Wilson had made it his mission upon taking over as President of Princeton in 1906 to cleanse the university of this informal title.

surroundings. “From the first he loved Princeton—it’s lazy beauty, its half-grasped significance, the wild moonlight revel of the rushes, the handsome, prosperous big-game crowds, and under it all the air of struggle that pervaded his class.” With the true spirit of Princeton only “half-grasped,” Blaine was quickly ensnared in social climbing “having decided to be one of the gods of the class.” At first, he tried out for the freshman twelve, the junior football team to the varsity squad, but after injuring his knee decided that the most expedient way to make a name for himself was by going out for the Princetonian as well as the Triangle Drama Club. As with Dink Stover at Yale, the ultimate goal and mark of social success was to be invited into a social club such as Ivy, Cottage, or Tiger Inn at the end of sophomore year. With this goal in mind, Blaine scraped along during his freshman year, eventually landing a coveted spot writing for the student daily newspaper, which provided him the social status that he had been longing for.

Fitzgerald’s novel also conveyed the predominant attitudes of students at elite colleges during his time. To be sure, Blaine was clever and intelligent with a keen eye for literature and ostensibly prepared for the academics of the prestigious college, however, these attributes were overshadowed by his desire to achieve social success. This reflected the accepted outlook of the influential crowd, which prized social striving over academic excellence. As a result, Blaine spent an inordinate amount of time playing pranks on housemates, lounging at cafes, and loafing with his pals at the social club. Like his peers, Blaine gauged his success at Princeton in terms of activity outside of the classroom, which ultimately led to his downfall. Having sailed through his first two years of school,

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23 Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 41.
Blaine had grown deeply indifferent to his studies. After failing a math examination, he was kicked off the *Princetonian* staff and ineligible to remain a member of his social club. Blaine had grown so lazy during his pursuit of the social life at Princeton that he had ignored a fundamental tenet of conformity: do only as much in the classroom to get by, but do not fail.

*This Side of Paradise* was a marked departure from other realistic accounts of life at the historic eastern colleges because of its openness about romance and sex.

Revelations of “petting” parties attended by “baby vamps” and “lounge lizards” caused Fitzgerald’s work to be labeled by some contemporary readers as scandalous, even though he claimed to be simply recounting what he had observed youth doing since 1915.<sup>24</sup> Of the petting party, Amory Blaine noted:

> None of the Victorian mothers—and most of the mothers were Victorian—had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to being kissed…But he never realized how wide-spread it was until he saw the cities between New York and Chicago as one vast juvenile intrigue. The “belle” had become the “flirt,” and the “flirt” had become “baby vamp.” The “belle” had five or six callers every afternoon. If the P.D. (Popular Daughter), by some strange accident, has two, it is made pretty uncomfortable for the one who hasn’t a date with her. The “belle” is surrounded by a dozen men in the intermissions between dances. Try to find the P.D. between dances, just *try* to find her…<sup>25</sup>

The characters that Fitzgerald describes were part of the generation of youth growing up during a period of cultural and social transformation. Indeed, the mores and values that framed Victorian America were being obsessively assaulted by youth who were more

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<sup>25</sup> Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 55-56.
interested in flirting and necking than they were with finding husbands and wives. This nonchalant attitude toward sexuality was channeled through Amory Blaine as he navigated the social scene at Princeton in the mid-1910s: “The same girl…deep in an atmosphere of jungle music and the questioning of moral codes. Amory found it rather fascinating to feel that any popular girl he met before eight he might quite possibly kiss before twelve.”26 While social interactions with women were included in Harvard Episodes and Stover at Yale (almost always presented in appropriate settings such as a supervised parlor or chaperoned dance), Fitzgerald placed men and women together in intimate environments outside of the view of “adults.” As a precursor of the era to come, This Side of Paradise went beyond the boundaries of appropriate sexualized behavior associated with earlier accounts of college life and presented sexual desire as a symbol of youthfulness.

The importance of popular representations of college life during this period was their ability to convey the sensibilities of a time and a place. In the late nineteenth century, attending college was still reserved for the upper-middle class and the thoroughly affluent in American society. While state colleges were ascendant, the college experience was still very much associated with the historic eastern colleges. As higher education became more accessible to the working classes, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton began to glorify their traditions, their history, and their role in the creation of world leaders as evidence of their superiority. To be sure, colleges such as Michigan, Stanford, Chicago, and Wisconsin were, by the turn of the century, important and respected

26 Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, 56.
institutions; but the historic eastern colleges had the credibility of age, geography, and myth, all of which added to their prestige. During the early twentieth century, as state colleges increased in size and importance in their own right, popular histories of the old colleges helped to reinforce their myths and legends, and projected their claim to be the originators and guardians of the true college experience.

In 1910, Edwin Slosson published *Great American Universities*, a tome examining the most prestigious colleges in the United States. The institutions covered (in order of their discussion in the book) were: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, California, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Cornell, Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins, Chicago, and Columbia. It is no coincidence that Slosson chose to headline Harvard, given its status at the turn of the twentieth century, as the exemplar of American higher education. Yet, the work was meant to be accessible to a wide audience; Slosson was careful to avoid academic jargon and included charts, graphs, and photos in each chapter as a way to draw readers in. As a primarily journalistic pursuit to “catch something of that most important and most intangible thing called ‘the college spirit,’” Slosson spent a week on each campus speaking with students and faculty and attending classes. In publishing such a work, Slosson indirectly (and perhaps inadvertently) added to the legitimacy of the mythology and status of historic eastern colleges like Yale, Pennsylvania, Columbia, and especially Harvard.

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27 Slosson, *Great American Universities*. Slosson was a chemist by training, receiving a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1902. However, he held a wide range of interests, such as literature, journalism, education, food safety, and coal mining. In 1904, he began writing for *The Independent* in New York at which time he began publishing articles on “Great American Universities,” which were compiled and published in 1910.
“The story is told that one of President Eliot’s predecessors was accustomed to conclude his chapel prayers by asking the Lord to ‘bless Harvard College and all the inferior institutions.’ Whether there is any documentary evidence for the anecdote I do not know, but this is unnecessary because its authenticity is sufficiently proved by the fact that the prayer has been answered.”

Thus began Slosson’s examination of Harvard. Universities such as Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, and Michigan had all eclipsed Harvard in enrollment, but for Slosson, Harvard was still the most prestigious institution in the United States. While state colleges were increasingly competing with the historic eastern colleges for students, Harvard had developed an international outlook attracting students from across the world. In addition, according to Slosson, Harvard in 1910 offered more courses of greater variety and had largest and most eminent faculty. “It is the chief glory of Harvard that it has never underestimated the importance and value of men, has never succumbed to the temptation to cut salaries in order to put up splendid buildings. Some other universities have found that there are many things which show off better than brains.”

Harvard employed nineteen scientists who were labeled as “Men of the First Rank,” more than double than the next university, Columbia, which had seven. To be sure, Slosson was less enthralled with certain aspects of Harvard, such as its implementation of the elective system, which he saw as a detriment to students, and the


30 The list Slosson used for his statement came from a 1906 article published in *Science* magazine that was based on a national query of American scientists and their ranking of colleagues.
treatment of women at Radcliffe by Harvard men, whom the men viewed as “just teachers.” However, from the perspective of the reader, it is clear from Slosson’s remarks that Harvard was the zenith of higher education in the early twentieth century and an institution that others should model themselves after.

By the late 1920s, there was a clear sense that the power of the historic eastern colleges was gone forever. In 1927, Brown University Professor Ben Clough summed up this feeling:

The American college is, this year, at the turning of the ways. The large utilitarian university has come to stay on the American scene; by the same token the small liberal college is fast disappearing…it may be well that mass production of university degrees is desirable (though that remains to be demonstrated), but no intelligent middle-aged American who will reflect on the matter can doubt that something unique, precious, and American is going to join the stage-coach and the Sagamore.31

For alumni of institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, degree mills and “mass production” had diluted the “genuine” college spirit that they had experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century into something generic. Popular accounts of college life by those who had graduated from the historic eastern colleges a generation before are heavy with nostalgia for a time when, in their view, college life was authentic. In their 1927 monograph, *Eight O’Clock Chapel: A Study of New England College Life in the Eighties*, Cornelius Patton and Walter Field offered a comparison, perhaps shaded by the distance of forty years, between college life in the 1880s and the late 1920s. According to the authors, the culture of learning that radiated outward from the colleges

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of New England in the late nineteenth century, marked by a philosophy of learning for
the sake of learning, had been lost by the diffusion of higher education to a variety of
institutions. Modern students at state colleges, for example, viewed higher education as a
pathway to a successful career, and sought out a college degree that would enable them to
excel in a vocation. This, in their view, had led to an increase in “purposeless” and
undesirable students that ultimately attenuated the original purpose of the American
college. Furthermore, students of the late 1920s were more interested in the reputation
of being educated, the lure of college athletics, and the possibility of making professional
contacts for life after graduation, than they were in broadening their worldview.

According to Patton and Field, higher education had become a mechanism by
which students were merely being certified for jobs, instead of being educated as citizens
first and foremost. As a legacy of the Morrill Land-Grant Act, practical and socially
beneficial education had replaced the ancient ethos of knowledge acquisition as a noble
endeavor in and of itself, a philosophy that the historic eastern colleges continued to
promote in the twentieth century as part of their self-image.

Patton and Field also lamented the growing complexity of the American
university and the new demands that were laid upon faculty. In the time before
institutional bureaucratization, Patton and Field noted the close relationship between
professor and student, which was akin to a father and a son. In this “simpler” time,
faculty had a personal stake in the education of their pupils, something that was enabled

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32 Patton and Field, *Eight O’Clock Chapel*, 304-305.
by smaller student bodies and fewer responsibilities outside of teaching. By contrast, students of the 1920s had less contact with their professors and, in turn, faculties were being asked to perform many more tasks as deans, committee members, and researchers: “And in the old chair which each of these men once efficiently occupied, sits a subordinate instructor whose chief qualification for his position is his willingness to work his whole life long for small wages.”\textsuperscript{33} The overall effect of bureaucratization was the diminishment of the paternal ideal, according to Patton and Field, which was central to the college experience.

Patton and Field’s nostalgia for the college life of the 1880s, of course, overlooked many of the patterns of student life that had been ingrained at the historic eastern colleges since at least that time. Flandrau’s account of life at Harvard in the 1890s is evidence enough that students had been slacking off and shirking their studies for some time. Yet, in the process of lamenting the status of higher education as it was in the late 1920s, both authors were reinforcing a mythicized view of the historic eastern colleges as the bearers of traditional college culture. On the opposite end of this spectrum lay the large state universities with massive bureaucracies, large student bodies, and an ever-expanding curriculum. Institutions such as Harvard and Yale, while not immune to the forces of change in the 1920s, were seen as the keepers of the traditional college spirit that Patton and Field prized.

Representations of college life in novels and popular literature from the turn of the twentieth century were a sign of the American public’s growing fascination with

\textsuperscript{33} Patton and Field, \textit{Eight O’Clock Chapel}, 309.
higher education. These representations also reflected the increasing interaction of colleges and American society, most notably in the relationship between universities and business. With the production of college-life films beginning in the mid-1910s, Americans were now also able to see the Hollywood version of the college experience. Scenes of stately campuses, classrooms with stodgy professors, and gargantuan football stadiums, provided visual clues and brought to life for moviegoers a sense of what college life might be like.\textsuperscript{34} The development of this film genre in the 1910s led to a wave of films focusing on the collegiate experience in the 1920s and the 1930s. Between 1920 and 1940, Hollywood studios produced 119 films with college-oriented themes, with the 1930s seeing the largest output of this era.\textsuperscript{35} Both dramatic and comedic treatments of the college experience can be found in the films spanning this twenty-six–year period; however, the social aspects of college life were consistent plot lines.

Unlike novels and popular literature that concentrated on the historic eastern colleges and their students, college life films provided a much wider variety of depictions. There were several reasons for this. First, by 1910, the ranks of college students had swelled to 355,000, diffusing the college experience across regional

\textsuperscript{34} Wiley Umphlett, \textit{The Movies Go to College: Hollywood and the World of the College-Life Film} (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 10. I have borrowed Wiley Umphlett’s definition of college life films in order to distinguish this type of movie from other genres. Umphlett defines the college life film as productions that are “based entirely or partly on the collegiate experience as one in which the lead character or characters are socially motivated or conditioned by their immediate relationship with the environment of an American institution of higher learning to act or respond in a way that helps to develop and/or resolve the film’s dramatic conflict.”

\textsuperscript{35} Umphlett, \textit{The Movies Go to College}, 186-89.
cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and by race, and gender. Second, state colleges surpassed private institutions as the largest providers of higher education in the United States in the early twentieth century. Simply put, more students were experiencing college culture at state colleges as opposed to private liberal arts schools or elite eastern colleges. Because of the opening up of access to people of average means, state colleges became spaces of inclusivity rather than exclusivity. They became pluralistic centers where both men and women could pursue an education on equal footing. This inclusivity turn was represented in film storylines about college life. For example, working-class virtues like grit and resilience were embodied in stories of athletic heroism and success on the playing field, allowing even the poorest of students to be socially accepted.

One of the first films to focus on the collegiate experience was Victor Schertzinger’s 1917 The Pinch Hitter. This silent-era film provided a formula that other cinematic depictions of college life would later follow: the path to social acceptance for outsiders was through pure athletic ability and not necessarily social background or rank. The Pinch Hitter followed Joel Parker (played by Charles Ray), a country bumpkin and the son of an unaffectionate single father, as he attempted to fit into a campus culture that he did not understand. From the beginning of the film, Parker was cast as a loner with few redemptive qualities; he did not appear to be especially bright, nor did he seem to have any social skills. Parker’s father did not support his decision to leave the family

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36 According to Umphlett, there were only three films produced before Schertzinger’s that focused on college life: Classmates (Biograph, 1914), Strongheart (Biograph, 1914), and The College Widow (Lubin, 1915).

37 The Pinch Hitter, Directed by Victor Schertzinger, DVD.
farm to attend college, but obliged because it was the dying wish of Joel’s mother. Once on campus, Parker was ridiculed by his classmates for his backward ways and saw his only chance for acceptance in making the varsity baseball team. Parker eventually earned a spot on the team as the mascot, rather than as a player. Determined to actually play, Parker harassed the manager of the team, only to be rebuffed each time. However, during the final game of the season (a common trope in this type of film is to emphasize the importance of the “big game”) Parker was put in the game to bat for another player. When he hit the game–winning home run, Parker’s classmates finally accepted him as a peer and his father, who attended the game, took pride in his son’s newfound glory as a campus baseball hero. As Wiley Umphlett notes, “In such a dramatic situation—the pattern of the innocent boldly confronting the system, being put down by it on occasion, yet winning out in the long run, no matter what the odds—we recognize something archetypal in the American experience.”38 Indeed, The Pinch Hitter, as well as many films that followed after, suggests that the American university at its core is a democratic institution where one only needs to work hard (albeit within an existing social structure) to be accepted. The theme of athletic prowess as a way of fitting into this social system is repeated in films throughout the 1920s and the 1930s.

The outsider in the college-life film typically enters college with an idea that he or she will be instantaneously accepted into the social system. For fictional students like Harold “Speedy” Lamb in Harold Lloyd’s 1925 silent film The Freshman, the anticipated

38 Umphlett, The Movies Go to College, 40.
The collegiate experience turned out to be much different in practice. Even before Lamb (played by Lloyd himself) arrived at fictional Tate College, he daydreamed about being popular and playing for the varsity football squad. Yet, once Speedy arrived at Tate he occupied his own mental world, searching for popularity at every turn. His self-perception as a “Big Man on Campus” led him into comedic run-ins with the actual big men on campus, all the while seemingly oblivious to his own outsider status. In a telling scene, Speedy proudly, and naively, wore a varsity sweater that he obtained while still in high school not knowing that this was a significant social faux pas. He was accosted by varsity-letter holders and told to remove the sweater at once. Even after this episode, Speedy proceeded undeterred by the social realities of the college system he entered as he attempted to live out his dream of playing football. With unabashed determination, Speedy tried out for the team in some of the most memorable scenes in the film. Speedy’s lack of athletic talent was apparent as he was torn apart by the more physically gifted members of the team. Eventually, Speedy was named the team manager and allowed to hang around the team during practices and games. Speedy saw himself in the same self-important way he had from the beginning, imagining himself to be an integral part of the team.

In the end, his persistence paid off. In the final game of the season, the coach of the football team was forced to put Speedy into the game after all of the replacements were injured. With time winding down, Speedy displayed his one true athletic virtue, his

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39 *The Freshman*, Directed by Fred Newmeyer (1925; New York: Criterion Collection, 2014), DVD.
speed, and scored the winning touchdown, which made him the hero that he has always
was in his own mind. On the one hand, *The Freshman* contains messages about the
constraints and limitations of American society. Speedy is small, ungifted athletically,
and worse of all, does not see his own limitations in a system where he obviously is set
up to fail. On the other hand, the film highlights the successes that determination and
self-confidence can produce.

The plot model of outsider becoming accepted through athletics is consistent. In
another comedic representation of college life, *College* (1927), Buster Keaton plays a
loner named Ronald seeking the affection of an attractive classmate, Mary. Unlike
Speedy Lamb in *The Freshman*, all of Ronald’s intentions and motivation in this film are
meant to endear him to the object of his love, another recurring theme in college genre
films, romance. Ronald is bookish, shy, and uninterested in sports, yet Mary makes it
clear that she can only be with an athletic hero. Once Ronald understood that the only
way to win Mary’s love was by becoming a varsity athlete, he tried out for every sport at
fictional Clayton College. In one memorable scene, Ronald tried out for the baseball
team, but did not understand the rules of the game. After a comical series of errors while
running the bases, both the coach and the team chased Ronald off the field. Yet,
throughout the film, Ronald’s inherent athleticism is underscored. In the same scene, he
was able to elude the baseball team by outrunning them.

At the climax of the film, Ronald’s athleticism was put to a practical use after

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40 *College*, Directed by James Horne and Buster Keaton (1927; Seattle, WA: Amazon, 2006),
another one of Mary’s suitors took her hostage in order to make an ostensible sexual advance. After Ronald discovered that Mary was in danger, he sprinted across campus (with the help of cinematic fast-forwarding) and pole-vaulted into a second-story window to save her. Once inside, he summoned the strength to fight off her attacker finally winning her approval. In the end, they married, had children, and, upon death, were buried in adjoining plots. In contrast to The Freshman, and other films that glorify college athletics, Wiley Umphlett has noted that College was the first to comment on the social system of the higher education that was dominated at that point by athletes. While on the surface Ronald appears to exalt athletes because they are the ones who are able to win the affection of beautiful women like Mary, underneath there is a loathing of those same people based on his own perception of higher education as a means of cultivating the mind. It is no coincidence that Ronald captures the attention of the dean for his athletic pursuits, for the dean viewed him as an exemplary student with strong intellectual convictions. Thus, an opaque message found in College is that college athletics were ruining the fundamental purposes of college and universities by elevating athletes to superhuman status.

Reflecting the changes spread by the state colleges, coeducational institutions became the standard setting of the college life film. Such films were able to treat the relationship between men and women differently from the novels or popular literature of the previous generation. Significantly, the themes of love, romance, and sex began to show up in the plotlines of some of the most memorable college life films of the 1920s at the same time that the post–World War I “flaming youth” were challenging the dominant
social norms and mores of their parent’s generation. Films of the 1920s and the 1930s, then, reflected this generational tension through depictions of men and women on college campuses.

The relationship between men and women was treated in several ways in college-life films. For example, winning the beautiful “co-ed” could be achieved through athletic performance, making women the “prize” of competition between male students. Additionally, the “triangular affair,” a plotline where the film’s protagonist and antagonist compete for the affection of a female classmate, is another way in which men and women are presented in the campus context.41 The triangular-affair plotline was used in Walter Lang’s 1927 The College Hero, in which “Carver College” freshman, and football star, Bob Cantfield (played by Bob Agnew) fell immediately for Vivian Saunders (played by Pauline Garon).42 However, Bob’s roommate, Jim Halloran, also had designs for winning over Vivian by sabotaging his roommate and teammate on the football team. At practice, Jim purposely tripped Bob, giving him a serious injury that forced him off the team. With Bob out, Jim had the spotlight to impress Vivian on the football field. However, in a plot twist, Jim became conscience-stricken and began drinking heavily because of what he had done to his friend. In the big game of the season, Bob overcame his injury to score the winning touchdown for Carver College. Following the game, Jim admitted to his indiscretion and Bob graciously forgave him. In the end, Vivian and Bob

41 Umphlett, The Movies Go to College, 41.

decided to get married.

William Wellman’s 1930 Eleven Men and a Girl modifies the triangular-affair plot model. Instead of two men chasing a single woman, one female student, Nan (played by Joan Bennett) devised a plan to trick eleven football players from different colleges to fall in love with her so that they would transfer to play for her school, Upton College.\(^{43}\) The college president, Sheffield (played by George Irving), who also happened to be Nan’s father, was pressured by the college’s trustees to field a better football team to fetch more ticket sales and beat rival Parsons College. President Sheffield was repulsed by the idea that football should dictate college policy, but was told that he could lose his job if the team did not start winning. Fearing that her father had been put in an untenable position, Nan took it upon herself to “recruit” players from other colleges using her feminine wiles. Thus, Nan embarked on a nationwide recruitment campaign to dupe the best college football players into transferring to Upton.\(^{44}\) Once Nan beguiled all eleven players into competing for Upton, they discovered her deceit and turned against her, calling her an “expert petter.” More important, however, all the men decided to stay at Upton so that they could try to beat their rivals. At the film’s conclusion, Nan was forgiven after Upton beat Parsons, making her the unlikely heroine of the film.

*Eleven Men and a Girl* flipped the triangular-affair plot model so that the lead female character was presented as smart and conniving, whereas the men appeared as the

\(^{43}\) *Eleven Men and a Girl* a.k.a. *Maybe Love*, Directed by William Wellman (1930; Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Home Video, 2010), DVD.

\(^{44}\) The men that Nan convinces to transfer to her college were actual college football players from programs such as Northwestern and USC.
dopes (and objects) in her scheme. Nan was a strong and independent woman who decided to take the matters of her father, and the college, into her own hands. Unlike other films that depicted women as docile objects of men’s designs to win them over, Nan was the one who was doing the manipulating; and even though her dishonesty was eventually discovered, her plan ultimately succeeded.

Not all depictions of male/female relationships in college life films during the 1920s and 1930s were as simple as the ones described above. The emergence of new youthful behavior and perspectives, especially attitudes toward sex, created tensions between adults who valued traditional relations between men and women, and young people who sought independence and freedom of expression. This tension is illustrated in Gregory La Cava’s 1932 film, *The Age of Consent.*\(^45\) Set at fictional “State College,” the film focused on issues of love, marriage, and premarital sex. The main character, Michael Harvey (played by Richard Cromwell) was deeply in love with his girlfriend, Betty Cameron (played by Dorothy Wilson) but was scorned after she gallivanted around campus with another man. Sullen, Michael was counseled by a sympathetic biology professor, David Matthews (played by John Halliday), who saw much of himself in Michael. The professor suggested that Michael not miss his chance at love and that he make amends to Betty.\(^46\) In the following scene, Betty confronted Michael in the men’s room of the café (another expression of breaking social boundaries) and Michael asked


\(^{46}\) As a form of visual symbolism, Harvey first meets Professor Matthews on a bench with the words “In Loco Parentis” etched onto it. Throughout *Age of Consent,* the professor serves as a mentor to the young, love-struck student.
her to marry him. Conflict arose, however, after Michael suggested that they drop out of college and get married immediately, to which both Professor Matthews and Betty objected.

Confused and frustrated, Michael was comforted by a young café worker, Dora Swale (played by Arline Judge). Dora, with her own love interests in mind, coaxed Michael back to her home where they engaged in drunken sex. The following morning, Dora’s father arrived home from his nightshift and found Michael in bed with his daughter. In a fury, Dora’s father demanded that Michael marry his teenage daughter, to protect her virtue, or he would turn Michael over to the police for “solicitation of a minor.” Begrudgingly, Michael accepted this offer and broke off his engagement to Betty. In the face of all of this, Professor Matthews approached Dora’s father and pleaded with him to not force Michael to marry Dora. As the most rational and reasonable character in the film, Matthews posited, “the social system ignores the natural impulses of the young!” Clearly on the side of progressive-minded youth, Matthews represented the counterpoint to Dora’s father, who supported Victorian values.

In the final scenes, a distraught Betty left campus with her earlier suitor and got into a car accident with him. At the hospital, Dora persuaded her father to call off the marriage, after he was able to see that his values clashed with the younger generation and that it caused physical harm. Michael and Betty got married and left school. In a way that was much more complex than other “rah-rah” films, Age of Consent provides commentary on the problems of modern youth, significantly the meaning of love, sexual freedom, and youthful independence. That Age of Consent reflected the evolving
acceptability of youthful sexuality, something that older films and novels only hinted at.\footnote{Throughout the film, both Betty and Dora appear quite sexualized. In one scene, Dora flirts with Michael while pulling up her dress to expose her bare thighs illustrating the emergence of suggestive materials found in films during this period.}

Popular representations of college life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were important because they reveled the prevailing narrative of higher education to the American public. In novels such as *Harvard Episodes*, *Stover at Yale*, and *This Side of Paradise*, readers were introduced to cultures that were marked by elitism, wealth, and snobbery that influenced how higher education was imagined in the late nineteenth century. In these works, the college experience was about affluent socializing, more than actual learning. At these institutions status and social rank mattered. For the working class reader, these novels represented a world they would never be able to join. However, as higher education began to be accessible to a broader group of Americans, representations of college life also began to change. In popular literature the mythologizing of America’s elite colleges reflected the growing democratization of a college education, while those longing for the “good old days” deplored a dilution of “college spirit.” In the age of films, however, representations of college life reflected early twentieth century developments in higher education. Openness of access and the virtue of public higher education were common themes in films that depicted students aspiring to make it in college. Social background did not matter for students at “State U”; as long as you were determined, you would succeed. In this regard, the films of the 1910s and 1920s reinforced the ostensible democratic nature of public institutions where all students engaged one another on a level playing field, as opposed to
the rigid social structure of the historic eastern colleges.

Popular representations of college life reflected the expanding conception of the college experience in the early twentieth century. The shift in subject matter was significant because it reinforced the changing perceptions of higher education from a primarily elite activity, to an experience that was now accessible to a much wider group of young people. Since American youth were the main consumers of the burgeoning film industry, fictional images of state colleges in films like The Pinch Hitter and The Freshman presented social worlds that were obtainable to most, rather than the rarified cultures of the historic eastern colleges. Furthermore, by the 1910s and 1920s, accounts of life at the elite colleges hinted at the growing presence and popularity of state colleges. In Eight O’Clock Chapel, Cornelius Patton and Walter Field lamented the rise of public institutions as a sign of the commodification of higher education and the dilution of the meaning of a college degree. Yet, as a historical source, Eight O’Clock Chapel provides important insight into how the conception of the college experience had changed, even if such changes were met with dissatisfaction. In this way, popular accounts of college life are useful in charting the actual changes occurring in higher education during this period.
In 1890, most state colleges had been in existence for only several decades or less. Even though the Morrill Land–Grant Act was signed into law in 1862, it took states several years, sometimes decades, to establish public colleges. North Carolina State, for example, did not open until 1890 because of a twenty-year battle between the University of North Carolina, the original beneficiary of the state’s land–grant, and agricultural interests that desired a separate institution dedicated to the study of “practical arts.”

Before the Morrill Act became law, twenty-one state-chartered colleges were spread across twenty states, most of which had been founded between 1820 and 1860. Besides state colleges such as the University of Georgia or the University of Tennessee, which were both founded in the late eighteenth century, public colleges were founded primarily in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Thus, by the last decade of the nineteenth century, many state colleges were still developing traditions and a sense of their place in American higher education.

The traditions of the historic eastern colleges, and the image of the traditional college experience associated with them, served as a model for emerging student cultures at state colleges. The customs and traditions of the older colleges were brought to state colleges by faculty and administrators who were alumni of those institutions, as well as

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through popular culture. What ensued was a process of amalgamation: traditions such as dividing the student body into units by class year and freshman subordination were commonly mimicked by students at state colleges, but these traditions were always co-opted within the context of the local conditions of the college. In 1936, Henry Seidel Canby wrote as a side note to his memoir of college life at Yale in the 1890s:

…The younger colleges, whether they were ‘state’ or ‘privately endowed’ institutions, modeled their life and aspirations upon the older colleges, which were usually in the East, and which drew heavily from the best schools and the wealthiest or most cultivated classes. Fashions began there and spread, so that a new twist to a hat brim or a new method of teaching traveled in a few years from ocean to ocean, and gave unity to college life.³

Canby was, of course, biased in his assessment, but his judgment was still on the mark. John Thelin, a noted historian of American higher education, has noted that, “Often as not, emerging universities (of the late nineteenth century) imitated the forms of the supposedly archaic colleges. The ‘university builders’ underestimated the appeal that the traditional college held for rural youth who were eager to leave the farm, or to the newly wealthy families who sought a patina of ‘respectability’ for their sons.”⁴ Indeed, an effect of co-opting traditions from the older colleges was to lend an air of credibility to emerging institutions. However, as Allan Nevins remarked in his 1962 work, The State Universities and Democracy, “One of the more difficult obligations of these new institutions has been the creation of an atmosphere, a tradition, a sense of the past, which


might play as important a role in the education of sensitive students as any other influence. This requires time, sustained attention to cultural values, and the special beauties of landscape and architecture. In this sense, traditions from the historic eastern colleges could be mimicked, but the character of state colleges was also dependent on something that could not be brought forth from the past: its students.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, state colleges were noticeably stratified. By this time, division of students by class year was an accepted custom, both for academic purposes and social organization. During the colonial period of American higher education, class divisions were created out of necessity since efficiency dictated that students move through a uniform set of recitations demarcated by a standard academic calendar. However, by at least 1725 at Harvard, and 1745 at Yale, class differentiation was also being used as a tool for social organization. Along with academic requirements associated with a given class, certain privileges were granted as students moved through college. As state colleges developed over the nineteenth century, campus societies were organized around this seemingly naturalized system, with students arranged into units composed of the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. Within this social order, freshmen occupied the lowest position, and were often subjected

5 Nevins, State Universities and Democracy, 104.

6 “Class” in this chapter refers to the social and academic demarcations that referred to the stage to which a student had progressed based on the prescribed courses for each class.

7 Henry D. Sheldon, Student Life and Customs (New York: Arno Press, 1969, Reprint edition of 1901 original), 84. This system of ranking was modeled after English universities, where the terms freshman and sophister (sophomore) were used. Sheldon defined classes as “all those students who, in the natural course of events, will graduate in a given year. The class is known by the year of its graduation.”
to forms of submission and obedience that reinforced their place. Traditions such as freshmen rules, hazing, class competitions, and clothing requirements were the modern articulations of class identification, which began at eastern colleges in the eighteenth century.

The social hierarchy of a campus was typically supported by a series of rules that freshman were expected to follow. Beginning at Harvard in the eighteenth century, freshman were required to engage in the practice of “fagging,” a reference to the system of freshman servitude found in English public schools at this time. Central to this practice was running errands for their adoptive upper class “master,” such as fetching beer and bread, washing clothes, and carrying notes from one building to another. In return, upperclassmen were expected to mentor their freshman in the manners of the college. Segregating freshmen at the beginning of their college life also helped to produce a strong association with one’s class, which ostensibly lasted throughout their four years on campus, and beyond. However, over time, the system of tutorship deteriorated into sets of byzantine rules and hazing practices.

By the end of the nineteenth century, students at state colleges had also taken on the tradition of freshman subordination. In October 1903, Ohio State upperclassmen

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8 Morrison, *Three Centuries of Harvard*, 105-106. This practice officially lasted until 1798, after which seniors took on underclassmen in an advisory capacity. Morrison notes that the President and faculty also made use of freshman for their own clerical activities and personal errands; Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs*, 86. Sheldon notes that Princeton was the first of the established eastern colleges to abolish freshman laws in 1767, but they persisted at Yale until 1804.

9 Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs*, 87. Sheldon remarked, “The Freshman Laws contained in germ all the abuse to which first-year men have since been subjected.”
proposed rules for freshman including bans on smoking, wearing of hats, and loitering on the steps of University Hall. According to The Lantern, “The enforcement of such rules still undoubtedly generate more class and college spirit than has been extant at O.S.U. for many years.”

Backlash from freshman and faculty ensued, with several professors cautioning that such rules ran counter to the American spirit of democratic inclusion.

Despite resistance, upperclassmen began harassing freshman rule breakers and justified their despotism by noting that the tradition was simply being adopted from other universities: “There is coming a time at Ohio State when her students will be akin to the students of other universities and the action taken by the upper classes is merely an expression of the beginning of that time…Harvard, Cornell, Case, Princeton, Kenyon, Yale, Brown and many others of our prominent institutions have such rules and are strictly adhered to.”

Illustrative of the appeal of the traditional college experience, Ohio State students viewed the implementation of freshman rules as a way of creating a traditional collegiate atmosphere on their campus. Freshman subordination, a custom that first began at the historic eastern colleges, was a self-conscious way for Ohio State students (and implicitly the faculty and administrators) to produce a sense of tradition that was connected to the ideals of the traditional college experience. By mimicking such a custom, students were also tapping into the mythical ethos of prestige that the historic eastern colleges had come to promote.

10 “Freshmen Rules,” The Lantern, October 7, 1903.

11 “A Protest from Several of the Faculty on Freshmen Rules,” The Lantern, October 21, 1903.

12 “Another View,” The Lantern, October 21, 1903.
Around the turn of the century, the tradition of freshman subordination also took the form of behavioral instructions. At Oregon State, the 1901 YMCA handbook offered a list “Things to Remember,” such as, “The student that is too popular in the freshmen year generally plays out before he is a senior,” or “During the first few weeks of school, you are being sized up by many college organizations as a possible candidate for membership.”

Ohio University upperclassman provided similar suggestions for new students:

- Join the Christian Association.
- Be on Time.
- Write home often.
- Don’t “cut” class.
- Full credit for all work done in “Campus-ology.”
- For a pleasant walk go to North Hill.
- Join a Literary Society.
- Blessed are the “fudge-makers.”
- If you’re looking for trailing arbutus, go to the caves.
- Fill all engagements promptly.
- “Hurry!” “Hurry!”
- Get your lessons every day and you won’t have to “cram” for “exams.”
- All new students should attend chapel.
- Learn the college songs and yells.
- Join a Bible class.
- Attend the ball games and always do your stunt rooting for O.U. It will help win the game.
- “Treat every person as if he were a gentleman, not because he is, but because you are.”
- Student, spare the campus.
- “Gay birds of a feather all flunk together.”
- Patronize those who advertise in the Hand-Book.

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13 Student Handbook OAC, 1901-1902, 32, Student Handbooks 1901-1997 Publications Collection, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

14 Student's Handbook, 1907-1908, 49-50. Young Men's Christian Association Records, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.
The messages contained in pre-1920s handbooks were often friendly but reinforced the social structure of the campus. However, the tone turned toward commands, rather than reminders or suggestions, in the rules established for freshmen later on.

By the 1920s, social rules had become quite specific. A common thread in these rules were prohibitions on social space. The act of defining “territory” that symbolically belonged to upperclassmen was another way that subordination was performed publicly. At Ohio State, prohibitions were placed on where freshmen were allowed to walk in the 1920 student handbook. “No freshman shall be allowed on the long walk leading from the eastern end of the oval to the east entrance of the Library, except when necessary to cross on intersecting walks.”\textsuperscript{15} In 1923, freshmen at Ohio University were instructed to “not loiter on the steps of Ewing or Sorority Halls.”\textsuperscript{16} At Oregon State, the 1919 “Rook Bible,” published by the “'21 Vigilance Committee,” admonished underclassmen from standing under a large cottonwood tree in front of the administration building because it was deemed “hallow.”\textsuperscript{17}

Above all, freshmen were expected to show deference to upperclassmen in social

\textsuperscript{15}The Ohio State University Archives, Student Organizations: YMCA, YWCA (44/3), Box 2, \textit{The Ohio State Handbook, 1920-1921}.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{O Book of the Ohio University, 1923}, Young Men's Christian Association Records, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Rook Bible, 1919}, 6, Student Handbooks 1901-1997 Publications Collection, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, Series 1, Box 1. The term “Rook” most likely is shorthand for “Rookie.”
situations. At North Carolina State, the 1922 student handbook specified that “all Freshman shall greet respectfully all upper classmen and faculty members,” as well as all “Freshmen shall have matches on their person at all times for the benefit of upperclassmen.”\(^\text{18}\) At Oregon State, a simple, but austere, warning to “respect upperclassmen” was given to freshmen in the 1929 “Rook Bible.” At the University of Oregon, the 1922 edition of the student handbook offered a similarly stern warning: “There is a firm established belief prevalent on the campus that a freshman can say nothing clever. No matter how sure you are that this is a fallacy, it would not be wise to try to disprove it, because hell hath no fury like an upperclassman offended.”\(^\text{19}\) The messages in these rules were clear: a freshmen had to show deference to upperclassmen in all social interactions. During the 1920s, then, campus hierarchy was a significant and visible element of college life. Having experienced the humility of once occupying the lowest rank in campus society, upperclassmen reinforced their position of authority through stern warnings such as these.

At Meredith College, freshmen were also subject to rules meant to subordinate them. Similar to coeducational state universities, women at Meredith were expected to

\(^{18}\) *The N.C. State College Students’ Handbook, 1922*, 71, in Division of Student Affairs Publications, 1889-2013, “Student Affairs, Religious Affairs: Student Handbooks, 1922-1923” Folder, UA 016.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC. Interestingly, many campuses such as Ohio University, University of Oregon, and Oregon State explicitly prohibited smoking on campus for all students over fears of fire.

\(^{19}\) *Hello! Book, 1922*, 17, University Archives Publications, Associated Students of the University of Oregon, UA Ref 4, Box 94, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR.
show deference to upperclassmen. In 1926, for example, freshmen were told how to dress by sophomores, and noncompliant students might find their rooms turned upside down while they were at class.  

Freshmen were also obliged to sing for sophomores at a moment’s notice, forcing them to have a variety of songs memorized so that any request could be fulfilled. Officially, Meredith granted “privileges” instead of enforcing rules. In the first student handbook published in 1906, privileges were assigned to members of the honor division only. Walking in groups of four, shopping once a week, and “visiting places approved by parents,” were several of the rights that these students enjoyed.

However, student privileges began to be defined by class beginning in 1920. For example, freshmen girls were not allowed to shop in town during their first semester, nor go home whenever they pleased. Meredith freshmen were also required to walk with an “old girl” at all times during the first six weeks of the semester. They were allowed, however, to go to town to dine once a week, attend a movie one Monday a month (with a chaperone, of course), and receive visitors on specific days. As students ascended the social, and academic, ladder at Meredith, more privileges were awarded and the college gave more independence.

By the 1930s, the tone toward freshmen shifted once again, at least officially. At

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20 “A Students Opinion,” The Twig, October 8, 1926.


the University of Oregon, for example, the severe demands given in the 1922 student handbook changed to friendlier reminders. Freshmen “rules” became freshmen “traditions,” highlighting a softer approach to the assimilation of new students.

According the 1931 edition of Hello!, freshmen “traditions” were “the basis of the Oregon Spirit; the foundation of our democratic government.” Furthermore, new students were encouraged to do their part in upholding these traditions and to be proud of their lowly status. Thus, while the fundamental message remained the same, that of knowing your place, the tone of behavioral suggestions changed from outright hostility to an appeal to honor the college’s “spirit.” This may have been the result of pressures from campus authorities to tone down the rhetoric of class division and subordination, or may have been a sign that freshman obedience was a fading tradition.

Along with the implementation of freshman rules, hazing was another incorporative practice that began at the historic eastern colleges and was later adopted by state colleges. Hazing developed out of freshmen laws at the historic colleges, which had fallen out of favor with college administrators by the beginning of nineteenth century. Often taking the form of a practical joke, the custom of hazing was a public act of freshmen persecution, usually at the hands of sophomores who had earned the privilege to do so. During the mid-nineteenth century, “borrowing” a freshman’s possessions was a common form of hazing at Yale. Rooms were raided at all hours of the day and night and items ranging from pipes to neckties were procured by upperclassmen for their own use.

— 23 Hello! Book, 1931, 27, University Archives Publications, Associated Students of the University of Oregon, UA Ref 4, Box 99, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR.
Expensive items were typically returned at the end of the term, but other items such as umbrellas, books, and course catalogs often became the property of the thief. Later, the practice of “smoking out” became prevalent at Yale, whereby a group of sophomores would break into a freshman’s room, close the windows, and attempt to sicken the neophyte with the smoke puffed from many pipes. During the harassment, the freshman would be required to recite poetry, sing songs, or dance. If the freshman refused to cooperate, or was not performing to the liking of the invading sophomores, more smoke would be produced until the new student became physically ill. Unlike freshman rules, which moderated everyday behavior, hazing was typically the consequence of an offended upperclassman or a broken social regulation.

During the nineteenth century hazing grew into an important activity and was eventually taken on by students at state colleges. By the early twentieth century, hazing was making national news. *The New York Times* carried stories of hazing incidents from around the country exposing the American public to some of the more severe initiation tactics being carried out on college campuses. One such piece from 1903 tells of a University of Maryland student who was beaten to death during a fraternity initiation ceremony, resulting in the arrest of twenty-six students. In another case in 1904, four members of the sophomore class at Columbia were suspended for kidnapping two freshmen, forcing the university administration to enact rules governing initiation

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24 Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs*, 98.

practices there. Hazing was indeed rampant, and often violent. An incident at the University of North Carolina in 1905 foretold of the official regulations established at many colleges during this time to address hazing. “Freshman Hatch,” as he was referred to in the local newspaper, was walking back to his room at the university when “three or four” older men confronted him. As the students accosted Hatch, he drew his pistol and shot one of them. According to Hatch, the group of upperclassmen had been threatening him for some time, which led him to defend himself against being hazed. In a letter home to his mother, North Carolina State student Azariah Thompson described “a good deal of trouble here,” surrounding the incident at U.N.C., as well as an incident at his own college, when eight sophomores were sent home for hazing freshmen at the railroad station. Shortly thereafter the sophomore class of North Carolina State signed a pledge to cease all hazing of freshmen.


27 News articles found in The New York Times in the 1900s indicate that violence was widespread. In 1901, a freshmen at Morgan Park Military Academy in Chicago, was stabbed six times during a hazing incident. At Ohio State University in 1907, a freshman was kidnapped following the annual Cane Rush event, gagged, beaten, and driven by wagon to an abandoned barn in the country. He was able to free himself and walk back to Columbus, but was critically injured during the attack and taken to the hospital.

28 “On Hazing,” The Robesonian, Lumberton, NC, October 1, 1906. Following the incident, Hatch was arrested and discharged the next day. The sophomore who was shot eventually recovered from his injuries. Hatch was never prosecuted because none of the men who had been harassing him came forward as witnesses.

29 Azariah Graves Thompson to Mother, September 28, 1906, Azariah Graves Thompson Papers 1905-1909, #MC 00249, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.
For Azariah Thompson the social hierarchy at the North Carolina State was rigid, and at times, overwhelming. During his freshman year in 1905, Thompson witnessed the variety of ways in which upperclassmen, particularly sophomores, let the “newishes” know where they stood in the pecking order of college society. Freshmen were required to clean the rooms of sophomores and perform other chores without warning. “Blacking,” the act of dousing iodine on the clothing of a freshman effectively ruining them, was also a popular way for upperclassmen to not only visibly mark a student as a freshman, but also signify to that newish that he was the lowest in the campus hierarchy. Minor indiscretions, such as a spot of shoe polish accidentally wiped about the neck, would serve as a reason to pester a freshman. Thompson wrote his mother “I have seen some of the most disgusting things around here, such as drunken fools and every other kind of thing. They had a little more blacking down in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Dormitories (sic) last night. I am glad that I was not there. They blacked every freshman down there. They got John with a little Iodine. You know that it is awfully hard to get off.” As an older freshman (he was 20 at the time) Thompson was repulsed by these types of rituals, especially because they caused damage to one’s clothing. Thompson was so worried about being “blacked” that he left campus early for the Christmas holiday to lessen the chances that he would be targeted before the end of the semester.

News of hazing from campuses across the United States during the first decade of

30 Azariah Graves Thompson to Mother, November 26, 1905.
31 Azariah Graves Thompson to Mother, November 26, 1905.
32 Azariah Graves Thompson to Mother, December 12, 1905.
the twentieth century attests to its prominent place in the traditions of freshman subordination. In 1908 and 1909, several instances of hazing at the University of Oregon created such a controversy that college administrators were forced to intervene. In December 1908, five sophomores forced freshman Ralph Bristol into a tub of ice water and held him there until he passed out due to shock. Bristol was targeted by upperclassmen for punishment because he had been late in arriving to breakfast. Because of the incident, Bristol became “violently and hopelessly insane,” and was sent to an asylum for care, while the students responsible for the hazing stood trial and were ultimately found guilty. Following the incident, President Lucien Campbell testified during a faculty inquiry that “bathtubbing” was not considered hazing and that there were signs that the freshman was insane before the incident took place. It was not until another high profile case of hazing during the fall of 1909 that college administrators had finally seen enough. In September, approximately thirty sophomores hazed a group of freshmen, resulting in the expulsion of four students. Perhaps because of the Ralph Bristol from the year before and other acts of hazing, the administrators at Oregon chose to inflict a strong punishment of expulsion to deter further acts of freshman initiation. The student government was also instructed to create alternate forms of freshmen control.


35 “Four Sophs Expelled For Hazing at U. of O.,” *East Oregonian*, October 6, 1909. Interestingly, the hazing appears to be a much milder form than the kinds witnessed before. Freshmen were “put through a number of stunts, such as singing, dancing and giving their high school yells.” Following the incident, even the freshman class pled with the administration for a lenient punishment, indicating that they had deserved it.
since all forms of hazing had become strictly forbidden.

Freshmen were also hazed at colleges typically not thought to have the same rough and tumble kind of harassment found at coeducational colleges. At Meredith College, freshmen were often the subject of ridicule, especially directed at their naiveté about campus life. In the 1907 edition of the *Oak Leaves*, the “Jokes” section is filled with anecdotes about incompetent freshman: “Not in the far distant past a Newish went to the room of an old girl after light bell and said in most touching tones ‘Please come see what’s the matter with my light. I have been blowing for the last half hour and it just won’t go out.’”\(^{36}\) In this joke the freshman does not realize that the light is electric, of course. Or, “Freshman, watching an art student paint: ‘I didn’t know you were a poet,’” and “Newish: ‘I am going to join the class of *naught* ten.’”\(^{37}\) While these jabs were much lighter and more cordial than the harassment occurring at other colleges, the simple act of making the joke contributed the campus hierarchy at Meredith. Upperclassmen, having undoubtedly experienced the same indiscretions and social miscues as their targets, reinforced the social structure of the campus for women. As at larger coeducational institutions this was based on knowledge of the inner workings of academic and social life. Creating the language of class distinction, as illustrated in the “Jokes” section of the annual, manifested a campus pecking order. This, in turn, led students as they rose through the class ranks to perform the same rituals on their subordinates.

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\(^{36}\) *Oak Leaves*, 1907, 98, Oak Leaves Collection, Meredith College Digital Archives, The Carlyle Campbell Library, Raleigh, NC, https://goo.gl/K0Tcra.

\(^{37}\) *Oak Leaves*, 1907, 99.
Because of these kinds of social trends at colleges across the United States, hazing became a widespread topic of conversation around the country in the first decade of the twentieth century. At many institutions, formal policies banning hazing were enacted in the wake of national news stories in publications like *The New York Times*. At North Carolina State, for example, an official policy prohibiting any form of hazing appeared in the 1909 course catalog.\(^38\) At Oregon State, President William Jasper Kerr used the first convocation of the year in 1909 to denounce hazing, reminding students that it was both unmanly and against school rules.\(^39\) Neither formal policies nor bad publicity could stop all forms of hazing, however. At Ohio State, a notable tradition involving throwing freshmen into Mirror Lake was publicized in the 1910 student handbook, even though official university policy forbade it. “Freshmen—you must learn to swim; you take your first lesson in the pond—afterwards in the gymnasium pool.”\(^40\) Following an unusually disorderly freshmen initiation session at the lake in the fall of that year, Ohio State President William Oxley Thompson declared that hazing would be subject to legal action, including fines or even jail time.\(^41\)

\(^38\) *The North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts Catalog of Courses, 1909-1910*, 17, in Division of Student Affairs Publications, 1889-2013, “Course Catalogs 1900-1910” Folder, UA #016.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.

\(^39\) “Will Not Tolerate Hazing,” *The Daily Gazette Times*, Corvallis, Oregon, September 29, 1909. President Kerr delivered his warning on the heels of the hazing incidents at the University of Oregon, of which he undoubtedly was well aware.

\(^40\) The Ohio State University Archives, Student Organizations: YMCA, YWCA (44/3), Box 2, *Students’ Handbook, 1910-1911*, 16.

\(^41\) “Hazing Must Stop,” *The Ohio State Lantern*, September 21, 1910.
at least the 1930s.

At the University of Oregon, freshmen hazing persisted into the 1920s; even after official school policies banned such activities in 1909. In a scrapbook from his years as an Oregon undergraduate from 1920 to 1924, Raymond Porter documented many instances of freshmen hazing. Photographs show a seemingly endless barrage of harassment for new students, from throwing neophytes into the Millrace, to late-night floggings. Flyers warning freshmen to be on the lookout for sophomore attackers were also collected by Porter and kept in his scrapbook.  

Even as the Oregon administration sought to curtail hazing activities a decade earlier, students were obstinate. In the 1912 *Oregana*, the editors noted that “with the negative precedent once established it seems probable that all class action in the future will be limited to the milder substitute now in the process of silent evolution.”  

“Negative precedent” referred to the administrative rules prohibiting hazing, a sign that college officials were beginning to oversee the more violent forms of socializing on campus. Yet, the photographs taken of such activities in the 1920s make it clear that the upperclassmen did not intend to abandon hazing rituals as a rite of passage. While hazing persisted at least into the 1930s, college administrators were forced to look for official and organized ways to channel class feeling. The spirit of rivalry, as well as the importance of the tradition of subordination, caused presidents and

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42 “Raymond Porter Scrapbook, 1920-1924,” UA 28, Box 39, University Scrapbooks Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR.

43 Oregana 1912, 241, Oregana Collection, University of Oregon Digital Collections, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR, https://goo.gl/b5CkFZ.
faculty to search for activities that would still promote these ideals, but in a controlled manner.

Class competitions, such as football games and rushes, were viewed as a middle ground between the more pernicious forms of hazing and the abandonment of harsh initiation rituals altogether. Competitions could be organized and, importantly, supervised by college administrators so that clear boundaries of civility could be observed. In the late eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century, college administrators attempted to combat the more violent forms of hazing, which ultimately tarnished the respectability of their institutions. At Harvard in 1796, for example, the practice of freshman-sophomore wrestling matches was replaced by an annual football game. A century later, administrators at the University of Oregon took a similar approach to the suppression of hazing. In the fall of 1911 sophomores at the University of Oregon issued a challenge to a football game with the freshmen class, ostensibly due to college regulations prohibiting hazing. If the freshmen accepted, according to the student daily newspaper, the challenge “would be accompanied by, of course, the spilling of gore and the cruel crunching of craniums.”

44 Morrison, *Three Centuries of Harvard*, 311. In 1860, the Harvard faculty successfully suppressed the annual football “fights” as they had become known as, and allowed a rush to take its place. Significantly, Morrison notes that the 1860s were the height of hazing at Harvard when violence directed toward freshmen had reached levels never witnessed before. Because of the raucous state of affairs, the administration had largely stamped out the worst of the violence, but allowed the annual freshman-sophomore rush to continue until after the beginning of the twentieth century. The annual tradition became known as “Bloody Monday,” and was eventually abandoned in 1904.

45 “Sophs Organize Team,” *The Oregon Daily Emerald*, October 11, 1911.
and bragging rights, with the sophomores having much more to lose should they fail in battle. Class competitions such as this one at Oregon pitted freshmen against sophomores in a ritual that reinforced class loyalty, and freshman subordination (assuming the sophomore class was victorious). Physical competitions literally revealed the relative strength of one class to another, with the expectation that the upperclassmen would prevail given their experiences with such competitions during their time on campus.

Rushes were common at many colleges in the early twentieth century and were the legacy of organized battles at the historic eastern colleges. For the same reasons listed above, rushes were viewed as an acceptable alternative to outright hazing. During the eighteenth century at Princeton, the “cane spree” occurred each year when sophomores would steal canes from freshmen. During the first full moon in September, the two classes would come together and fight for possession of the canes. The group that came away from the scrap with the most canes would be pronounced the winner.⁴⁶

Rushes were typically carried out in an open field and centered on the battle for a

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⁴⁶ Sheldon, Student Life and Customs, 105. During the “cane spree” season, juniors would council freshmen, and seniors would coach sophomores. If the freshmen were victorious, they were allowed to carry their canes for the rest of year, to the shame of the sophomore class. In 1915, the class rush was called off for a period after Stockton Wells, a freshman, died of heart failure during the battle. (“Princeton Student Dies in Class Rush,” The New York Times, September 25, 1915.) Coincidentally, a student was killed in a class rush at Stanford University two weeks prior, the second such death at the university since it opened in 1891. (“Class Rush at Stanford Fatal,” The New York Times, September 24, 1915.)
common object, such as the canes at Princeton. At the end of the nineteenth century, the cane rush at Ohio State became an important annual event that pitted freshmen against sophomores. As described in the 1910 students’ handbook, the sophomore class would “attempt to push the cane through the freshmen and gain the other side of the field.” These contests would last twenty minutes with each side violently attacking one another for control of the cane walking stick. In 1910, a record number two thousand spectators, many of whom arrived several hours early to get the best seats, watched the match unfold. Led by “Big” Joe Wilkoff of Youngstown, the freshmen class outnumbered the sophomores by 250 to 175, giving them a decided advantage. The Ohio State Lantern noted that, “before the contest had continued long, many began to drop off to the side to regain their wind or survey the extent of injuries received by stiff jolts, but some were so severely hurt that they could not leave the field unassisted at the end of the contest.” Besides physical injuries, clothing had been ripped into shreds and left dotting the field once the competition was complete. In the end, the freshmen prevailed in capturing the

47 In his expansive work, Campus Traditions: Folklore from Old-Time College to the Modern Mega-University, Simon Bronner notes that unlike upperclassmen, sophomores were still low in the pecking order of campus society and physical altercations with freshmen were another way for them to prove their merit. Sophomores were still unaccomplished in the eyes of juniors and seniors; therefore, conquest over the freshman class was a way to show that they had learned something during their first year on campus. Campus Traditions: Folklore from the Old-Time College to the Modern Mega-University (Oxford, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 121.


49 The Cane Rush at Ohio State was reintroduced in 1910 after being banned for several years due to its violence. President Thompson allowed the Freshman-Sophomore rush to resume as a compromise with students in return for the abolishment of other forms of student hazing.

50 “Freshmen Win,” The Ohio State Lantern, September 21, 1910.
cane and President William Oxley Thompson commended all on their efforts:

The contest just witnessed was the most closely contested in 10 years; never was there such a rush in which the decision was not clear until the bugle sounded. The losers put up the sharpest contest ever witnessed and I congratulate the losers on their good fight. Everybody will congratulate the Freshmen…This rush was conducted in a good natured manner and now you can ask your fathers to buy you new clothes for having fought such a good fight.51

Class competitions did not always take the form of violent, open-field battles. At Meredith College, the annual hunt for the crook took place at the beginning of the school year. Seniors would hide the object somewhere on campus and the juniors would search for it during the year. The tradition began in 1906 when Miss Caroline Berry Phelps presented a shepherd cane adorned with a bow of the class colors to the senior class. The graduating seniors presented the crook to the incoming senior class with instructions to hide it on campus so that no other class could confiscate it. Because of its mysterious whereabouts, the junior class had to search for it throughout the year. If they found it, they placed their own bow of class colors on it. If the crook remained hidden for the entire year, the senior class would triumphantly present it at Class Day. Over the next seven years, the annual hunt for the hidden crook took on a level of seriousness that saw junior classes go to great lengths to recover the object. Midnight searches, breaking into locked buildings and rooms, vandalism, and the hardening of feelings between the two classes eventually led to the abandonment of the ritual in 1913.52

51 “Freshmen Win,” The Ohio State Lantern, September 21, 1910.

A common tradition for differentiating the various classes at state colleges was prescribed dress. This practice began at Harvard in the late eighteenth century when college officials implemented a standard dress code in response to the increasingly ostentatious clothing worn by some students. The laws of 1790 required all undergraduates to wear blue-gray coats, waistcoats, and trousers. Freshmen were required to wear coats with plain buttonholes and no cuff buttons, while sophomores were allowed to wear plain cuff buttons. Juniors were allowed to wear cheap frogs in their buttonholes, but not cuffs, and seniors were permitted to wear cheap frogs in their buttonholes and cuffs.\(^53\) The most noticeable twentieth century manifestation of this earlier practice was the wearing of freshman caps by men at state colleges. Freshmen caps (also referred to as lids, beanies, skull caps, or dinks) appeared in the 1910s and became a standard marker by the 1920s. Caps were designed to look like a hat a child would wear, thus conveying immaturity and naiveté. The 1920 Ohio State student handbook imposed the requirement that all freshmen wear the prescribed freshmen cap “at all times, except on formal occasions, in the University district during the fall season and the spring season.”\(^54\) Beginning in 1902 at the University of Oregon, new male students were required to wear the “frosh cap” as a response to “an audacious freshmen class [who] persisted in claiming

\(^{53}\) Hall, *A Collection of College Words and Customs*, 167. Soon after these requirements were instituted, they fell out of favor with the students who promptly ignored them.

\(^{54}\) *The Ohio State Handbook, 1920-1921.*
distinction beyond its due.”\(^{55}\) By 1922, freshmen were told that green caps were “Your badge, and an inseparable part of you. It is tradition that you wear it. Perhaps, if you are unknown and keep out of all activities, you can get by without wearing it. But it only shows your lack of pride.”\(^{56}\)

Freshmen who chose not to abide by the custom were often targeted for impromptu hazing. Indeed, not all freshmen chose to accept this rule of dress. For example, in the 1911 class photo of freshmen at the University of Oregon, many male students can be seen without the required cap.\(^{57}\) At North Carolina State, freshman caps debuted in 1916 and became required in 1922. The “Court of Customs” was charged with overseeing all campus traditions and could penalize violators of the freshman cap rule as they saw fit.\(^{58}\) An unsuccessful petition questioned this requirement in 1929, but in 1930 the board of regents officially abolished the practice at North Carolina State. The fad of freshmen caps appears to have fizzled out by the 1930s, however, as fewer and fewer


\(^{56}\) *Hello! Book, 1922*, 62.

\(^{57}\) Because new students varied in age, a possible explanation for this dismissal of tradition was that older freshmen simply refused to partake in the infantilizing practice.

\(^{58}\) *N.C. State College Students’ Handbook, 1922*, 71. The student “Court of Customs” at NC State was established in 1921, as part of the formation of the student government. The court’s stated mission was to “promote a better spirit between students,” and warned upperclassmen from enforcing the rules themselves. The student government noted in the same handbook “we have found out from experience that, when there are no regular rules for freshmen, the sophomores take the law into their own hands.” p. 72.
student handbooks listed caps as a freshmen requirement.\footnote{At many institutions, freshmen were prohibited from wearing anything associated with their high school. At Ohio University, for example, new students were warned in the 1923 student handbook that they “shall not wear any preparatory school insignia,” or risk trial by the school’s vigilance committee. At Ohio State, new students were banned from wearing high school pins or emblems of any kind as early as 1907.}

Freshman cap burning celebrations marked the end of college initiation. The burning of caps was both a literal act of freeing oneself from the obligations of a being a freshman, since the student no longer had to wear the cap, but also a symbolic exercise of the ascendance to the sophomore class. The 1924 Ohio State yearbook \textit{Makio} described the ritual at their college:

\begin{quote}
Just before crossing the border of the Freshman year into the unknown realm of the Sophomore comes one of the most popular traditions of the first year men. It is Cap Burning Night sponsored by members of Men’s Student Council.

On this occasion, a huge bonfire is built at the Stadium and the “Frosh” caps, the insignia worn throughout the year, are cast into the blaze and with them the stigma of being a newcomer.\footnote{The Ohio State University Digital Archives, Makio Archives, https://goo.gl/1m5yuI, \textit{Makio}, 1924, 56.}
\end{quote}

At Ohio State, Cap Burning night took on a festive atmosphere. In 1923 the ritual started with a parade from University Hall (the first building constructed at Ohio State) through campus, stopping at Oxley Hall to serenade the girls there, and then ended at Ohio Stadium. After the lighting of the bonfire, the sophomore president read an oath of loyalty to the university, which all freshmen, both men and women, were expected to
recite, and then led the group down the “Long Walk.” This part of the procession was especially meaningful, as the freshmen rules had prohibited new students from walking on the “Long Walk all year long.” Summing up the evening, The Ohio State Lantern noted, “This ceremony ends the year of subordination of the freshmen. They do not have to wear distinctive caps any longer or be in fear of Bucket and Dipper.” Interestingly, the same student news article noted that out of one hundred participants, only twelve students ended up burning their caps. All other students saved them as souvenirs reflecting the pride that many freshmen undoubtedly felt because they survived their first year of college.

During the 1920s and 1930s at the University of Oregon and Oregon State each class had a “look,” where an item of apparel or style was added from the previous year. At the University of Oregon in the early 1920s, freshmen were required to “adorn their domes with the verdant lid,” but were forbidden from wearing corduroy pants, a dress suit, or growing a mustache. Juniors were encouraged to wear corduroys, while seniors were prescribed the most items of decor: corduroy pants, cane, mustache, and the senior sombrero. Students at Oregon State were similarly obliged to wear specific clothing to


62 “Few Frosh Throw Caps Into Flames at Stadium Event,” The Ohio State Lantern, May 28, 1923. The “Bucket and Dipper” was founded in 1908 as the men’s junior honorary society at Ohio State. More than just an honorary group, they were also vigorous in their harassment of underclassmen.

63 Hello! Book, 1922, 16. The sombrero, of course, was meant to convey manliness, as opposed to the required juvenile freshman caps.
denote their class position. These traditions, as well as other class-based customs, included seniors wearing mustaches, puttees, and hats; juniors wearing corduroys; sophomores wearing sweaters; and freshmen obligated to wear the freshmen lid. Freshmen women at Oregon State were required to wear a green ribbon at all times to identify themselves as neophytes.

By the 1920s, class affiliation had declined as an organizing model on most state college campuses. With increasing class sizes and an expanding elective system that provided multiple routes to a degree, class traditions became less important in the social organization of the campus. The proliferation of clubs, fraternities, and major college athletics also lessened the focus on class spirit by the 1920s. Early signs of this decline were evident at the historic eastern colleges before the turn of the twentieth century: “By 1880 the Harvard class ceased to be the preponderating social unit, and ten years later it was said that even for administrative purposes class lines were tending to disappear.” Yet, class traditions persisted at state colleges well into the twentieth century, illustrating the persistence of the mystique of the traditional collegiate experience. If the historic eastern colleges were always on the vanguard of college life, as Henry Seidel Canby

64 Student Handbook: Hello, 1929, 11, Student Handbooks Collection, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.3.

65 Campus Traditions, 121. Simon Bronner notes that women students at co-ed colleges also used hairpieces, pins, sweaters, handkerchiefs, and neckties as signs of their subordinate status.


67 Sheldon, Student Life and Customs, 196. Sheldon notes that two students entering Harvard in the same year may never meet again in the course of their academic career and may even belong to different graduating classes depending on their course of study.
suggested, it is apparent that certain traditions took longer to die out at state colleges. But, traditions such as freshman rules, hazing, class competitions, and dress requirements, illustrate a clear connection between the social worlds of the historic eastern college and state colleges.

The endurance of such traditions at state colleges also highlights the difference in purposes to which they were used. The imitative quality of some of the practices reflected an ambition to create a college atmosphere along the lines of the historic eastern colleges. To be sure, state colleges from their beginnings had unique characters, such as military discipline at North Carolina State, for example; but aspirational administrators, faculty, and students sought to recreate the feeling of life at the older colleges that could give a campus a sense of *history*. By reaching into the past and appropriating aspects of the traditional college experience, state colleges were also drawing upon the corresponding symbols and messages that those traditions conveyed about the meaning of college life. This was significant because it produced a sense of affiliation between students and their college, an idea that had defined the experience of students at historic eastern colleges for centuries. Additionally, by co-opting traditions that began the older colleges, state colleges were given a framework of student life that could then be expanded to reflect the regional characteristics of the institution.
Chapter 5
Creating a New Collegiate Way

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, state colleges were relatively small communities. In 1890, North Carolina State had only fifty-two students, Ohio University had eighty-two, and there were only eighty-five at Oregon State. In contrast, Harvard had a student body of 2,445 students, Columbia had 1,756, and Yale enrolled 1,645 during the same year. Unlike the historic eastern colleges, many state institutions, Land-Grant colleges in particular, were still in the process of developing into functional organizations and student life was inchoate. Students typically came from rural areas where primary education was uneven, leaving many students underprepared for college-level work. In many regards, state colleges in the late nineteenth century resembled preparatory schools more than institutions of higher education.

Yet, over time students at state colleges began to create unique social worlds of their own. The extracurricular life they developed was a combination of the traditional college experience passed down by the historic eastern colleges and as well as phenomena particular to the expansion of public institutions. Benjamin Ide Wheeler, president of the University of California from 1899 to 1919, laid out the principle distinctions between the old and the new, which contributed to a “marked difference in atmosphere”: coeducation, the presence of technical and agricultural disciplines, the nonexistence of mandatory chapel or required religious training, required military drill,

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1 Slosson, *Great American Universities*, 1910. The figure provided for Harvard University includes 174 women students at Radcliffe College annex.
the absence of “robust tuition” fees, and a general feeling of “What can I get out of my university?” instead of “What can I do for my university?” To his last point of peculiarity, Wheeler observed that the atmosphere of a public college had to match the mission of the institution and the culture of the state. But Wheeler also desired what he viewed as the essential spirit of pride and institutional attachment that he found prevalent at historic eastern colleges. Yet, Wheeler’s ambitions reflected a process that was already underway: the creation of an alternate collegiate way based on the specific character of student life at state colleges.

Student organizations have been part of extracurricular life from the colonial era of American higher education. Literary societies were the earliest manifestations of students’ desires to form social groups outside of the formal authoritative structure of the colleges and were among the first student organizations founded at state colleges. As precursors to the Greek fraternity system, their origins can be traced to informal meetings of students who met to discuss contemporary and classical literature, religion, and

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2 Benjamin Ide Wheeler, “The American State University” (1915), in *The Abundant Life: Benjamin Ide Wheeler*, ed. Monroe E. Deutsch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1926), 124-125. Wheeler’s final note is accompanied by commentary that reflects his wishes for a university culture closer to that of Eastern colleges. Wheeler noted that students, faculty, and administrators all needed to share in a “spirit of unselfish service…without which that training is a dry and hollow shell.”

morality during their leisure time. By the middle of the eighteenth century, literary societies had been organized at most Northeastern colleges including Yale, College of New Jersey (Princeton), Dartmouth, the College of William and Mary, King’s College (Columbia), Brown, and Pennsylvania. Early literary societies gave students opportunities to sharpen their oratory and debate skills, talents that most students destined for the ministry, law, or public life would require. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, membership in literary societies became a highly sought after mark of social distinction and campus status.

At Ohio University, the Athenian Literary Society, originally founded as a secret society known as the Polemic Society, was organized in 1819, followed by the Philomathean Literary Society in 1821. The organizations were founded at the same time that literary societies were flourishing at historic eastern colleges, and Athenian and

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4 Because of the prescribed and regulated nature of college life in the early colleges, students were limited in the types of activities that they were able to engage in. Often the only freedom they enjoyed was time with their fellow students. During the eighteenth century, literary societies developed into formal student groups that focused on self-improvement and gave young men the opportunity to develop oratorical, legal, and composition skills. According to an official history of college societies written by Phi Beta Kappa, these societies “adopted and observed rules for the reception of members and the conduct of their meetings developed a fine spirit of loyalty…and were recognized by faculty as well as students as a definite part of college life.” (Oscar M. Voorhees, “College Societies That Antedate Phi Beta Kappa,” The Phi Beta Kappa Key 5, no. 11 (March 1925), 672.) For college faculty and administrators, literary societies were an important aspect of a student’s education, for which colleges happily supplied well-appointed meeting rooms and, in some cases, gave students credit for rhetorical performances. (David R. Russell, Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 2002), 45.)

5 Harding, Literary Societies, 21.

6 Harding, Literary Societies, 24.
Philomathean were noted as the first of their kind “west of the Alleghenies.”\(^7\) Under the tutelage of graduates from Northeastern colleges, the two literary societies competed against each another, a tradition borrowed from institutions such as Harvard and Yale, and it was hoped that they would foster a collegiate atmosphere in Athens.\(^8\) Indeed, “In its infancy the Ohio University was guarded and guided by graduates of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Dartmouth.”\(^9\) These faculty members were undoubtedly mindful of the status and influence that competitive literary societies could bring to a college campus, giving them good reason to promote such organizations at Ohio University. The Athenian and Philomathean societies vied for members and engaged in public exercises, offering cash prizes. Both societies played a key role in the creation of the university library, each amassing vast collections by the mid-nineteenth century.\(^10\)

The creation of literary societies was beneficial for faculty as well. This form of

\(^7\) *Athena, 1908*, 104, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Yearbooks, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/EihX1U.

\(^8\) Betty Hollow, *Ohio University 1804-2004: The Spirit of a Singular Place* (Athens, OH: The Ohio University Press, 2003), 16-18. As literary societies grew in popularity in the mid-eighteenth century so too did the tradition of societies competing against one another; Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs*, 93. At Yale, for example, the rivalry between The Linonian Society (1753) and The Brothers of Unity (1768) included the exchange of “scurrilous pamphlets,” and the annual commencement week debate, which, if won, gave the prevailing society bragging rights for the year to come. The American Whig and Cliosophic Societies at Princeton became the two leading debating clubs in the United States.

\(^9\) *Athena Yearbook, 1893*, 8, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Yearbooks, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/cQzjts.

\(^10\) *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Ohio University, At Athens, 1843*, 14-15, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Course Catalogs/Bulletins, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/0U1vV9.
extracurricular life lent credibility to the institution in their search for financial backing from the state government. The more Ohio University felt like a historic eastern college, the better its chances were of receiving support from prominent benefactors. Literary societies were also viewed as desirable additions to extracurricular life because of their scholarly pursuits and their moral outlook. The Athenian and Philomathean were important organizations for more than a century, before declining in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{11}

In the 1890s, officials at Oregon State were also in search of campus groups along the lines of historic eastern colleges and took it upon themselves to install literary societies. “President Bloss, conceiving the idea that the students in the Oregon State should be capable of delivering stump speeches and impromptu orations, laid a plan before the faculty, which they adopted about the first of October, 1892. The plan was this: That the students, both male and female, be divided into two divisions, forming two literary societies, which were to meet every Monday afternoon and render programs consisting of readings, recitations, essays, and debates.”\textsuperscript{12} The first societies, Ciceronian and Websterian, each created three subchapters that were responsible for specific exercises: reading, recitation, or debate, and included both men and women. To foster a sense of rivalry between the societies, Bloss purchased, at his own expense, medals that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Hollow, \textit{Ohio University 1804-2004}, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{The Hayseed, 1894}, 34, Historical Publications Digital Repository, Oregon State University Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, https://goo.gl/2PBYaE.
\end{itemize}
were awarded during contests held twice a year.\textsuperscript{13} In the administrator’s view, the Ciceronian and Websterian societies were seen as a way to “supply the need of organized effort toward culture,” something that was apparently lacking at Oregon’s Land–Grant college.\textsuperscript{14}

However, unlike the evolution of extracurricular life at historic eastern colleges, literary societies at Oregon State emerged simultaneously alongside other clubs. For example, the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity (1882) and the Cauthorn Hall Reading Association (1891) were both founded before the first literary societies.\textsuperscript{15} During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century literary societies were competing against the rising popularity of fraternities, athletics, and other campus clubs, which explains why neither of the two original literary societies achieved the same status and longevity as literary societies at historic eastern colleges. The origins of literary societies at Oregon State, then, differ from the societies at older institutions in that they were created from the top-down, and not from students’ own desires for “self-improvement.” Ciceronian and Websterian illustrate an aspirational attempt by the college to strive for a more intellectual campus environment, but one that the students themselves seemed indifferent

\textsuperscript{13} The Hayseed, 1894, 34.

\textsuperscript{14} The Orange, 1908, Historical Publications Digital Repository, Oregon State University Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, https://goo.gl/b6ruPD.

\textsuperscript{15} According to the official university chronology, the first social fraternity (Alpha Tau Omega) was experimented with 1882 and was disbanded after six months. Fraternities were not established again until 1905.
toward.\textsuperscript{16}

Literary societies began to wane in popularity by the 1920s.\textsuperscript{17} Greek fraternity and sorority organizations, along with a bevy of other social and academic clubs, supplanted literary societies at state colleges. Another important factor that lessened the influence of literary societies was the development of official intercollegiate debating teams. Ohio University created an oratory department in 1909, “in order that college men and women may be fitted to fill larger places in life by being able to express themselves and to impart to others from their store of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{18} An outgrowth of this department was the establishment of university debating teams for both men and women. The organization of official varsity debating teams that travelled to compete with other colleges became the norm at most colleges by the 1920s, further devaluing literary societies on campus.

During the early twentieth century, fraternities began to emerge as influential organizations on college campuses. This trend was particular to state colleges, however, as fraternities never reached a significant level of importance at historic eastern colleges.

\textsuperscript{16} By 1900, the work of the societies was focused on the state and interstate oratorical contests and they appear to have waned in popularity. By 1920, there is no mention of literary societies in the annual \textit{Beaver} yearbook, but intercollegiate debating teams were listed.

\textsuperscript{17} Rudolph, \textit{The American College and University}, 144. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, literary societies began to wane in popularity for several reasons. First, the emergence of fraternities in the 1820s had the effect of siphoning off students who may have been uninterested in the academic focus of the literary society. Second, the societies declined because colleges began to amass their own collections of books housed in newly constructed libraries. Rudolph observed, “In the East by 1870 the literary societies were remnants of their former selves. Where fraternities were later being introduced, literary societies were later in declining.”

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Athena}, 1912, 10, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Yearbooks, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/VzcfRm.
This was due, in part, to the social standing of clubs and societies, such as Princeton’s famous eating clubs, which were far more desirable associations for aristocratically inclined students. As such, fraternities became, during the course of the first decades of the twentieth century, some of the most visible social groups at state colleges. Fraternities offered a degree of autonomy from faculty and administrators, as well as a level of resistance to the paternalistic rules students were forced to live by. They also served as a respite from the daily doldrums of college academics and were places where members could share meals and companionship. Most important, however, fraternities offered a loyal brotherhood that could offer support in the years after college, in professional life. The ability for young men to meet with other like-minded, and class-situated students gave fraternities an exclusive sensibility, which in turn gave members campus status. Lastly, fraternities offered a way for male students to take control of their extracurricular activities.

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19 Another reason for the lack of Greek letter organizations at the historic eastern colleges was the opposition of their respective administrations toward their creation. Societies and clubs were viewed as more gentlemanly alternatives to the perceived rough-and-tumble nature of fraternities. At Princeton, for example, President James McCosh considered fraternities very harmful because they divided students into factions. Under his leadership, fraternities were officially suppressed beginning in 1875.


21 This led to a widespread view of fraternities as elitist campus organizations at both private and public institutions. College faculty and non-Greek students alike saw the emergence of all-male, secret societies as a hindrance to collegial spirit and campus community.
time and socialize however they saw fit.\textsuperscript{22}

At Ohio State University, fraternities emerged shortly after its founding in 1873. Similar to Oregon State, social fraternities emerged alongside other campus clubs and organizations, departing from the historic eastern college model where literary societies were the primary campus organizations for many decades. The main campus literary societies at Ohio State, the Alcyone and the Horton, were established in 1874, followed by the university’s first social fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta, founded in 1878.\textsuperscript{23} From the beginning, fraternities were popular and influential organizations on campus. Along with the only other fraternity on campus, Phi Kappa Psi (1880), Phi Gamma Delta published the university’s first yearbook \textit{The Makio or The Magic Mirror} beginning in 1880. From the opening remarks of the \textit{The Makio} it is clear that fraternities considered themselves the pinnacle of campus social life:

\begin{quote}
First in position by reason of their importance, come Fraternities. Although we may shudder at the remembrance of some idle tales of their doings, and marvel at their mystic symbolism, shall we draw ourselves up, and say that they are men bound together for no other ostensible purpose than to emulate the example of the order of Rosicrucians, and to make their college life pleasanter…is there not beneath that dread exterior,\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22} Clyde S. Johnson, \textit{Fraternities In Our Colleges} (New York: National Interfraternity Council, 1972), 23. The first college fraternity, Kappa Alpha, was founded at Union College in 1825, when five members of the senior class established a secret social club after their military company had been dissolved. From there, fraternities began to spread throughout Eastern, Midwestern, and Southern colleges during the 1830s and 1840s. On the eve of the Civil War, there were twenty-two fraternities with 299 chapters at seventy-one colleges in the United States.

\textsuperscript{23} Raimund E. Goerler, \textit{The Ohio State University: An Illustrated History} (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2011), 141; John Robson, ed., \textit{Baird’s Manual of American College Fraternities} (Mensha, WI: George Banta, Co.). 158.
something to be well weighed before casting it aside as mere mummery?  

Members of fraternities saw their organizations as a necessary escape from the “routine of reading, recitation, and physical investigation,” from which “comes the reactionary desire for sports, joviality and general good times.”  

Thus, there was an almost immediate gravitation toward extracurricular life at Ohio State, with fraternities emphasizing the need to create a balanced collegiate experience. Social fraternities became very popular at Ohio State: By 1891, there were seven Greek letter societies; increasing to thirteen by 1902; twenty-two in 1911; and forty-one by 1932.  

At North Carolina State military discipline and gentlemanly conduct were important components of college life for faculty and administrators keen to keep students in line. Consequently, fraternities developed later due to the sensitivity toward student behavior, which was connected to college administrators’ worries over obtaining badly needed state appropriations to remain solvent. Biennial reports prepared by the college administration bear this out. In his 1890 report, President Alex Holladay noted, “The students now with us furnish ample evidence that, in energy, zeal, and general morale, they are in satisfactory condition….I venture that no college ever gathered within its  

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24 The Ohio State University Digital Archives, Makio Archives, https://goo.gl/1m5yu1, Makio, 1880, 3.  

25 The Makio, 1880, 3.  

26 Robson, Baird’s Manual of American College Fraternities, 158. Student enrollments also grew significantly during this period adding to the growth in popularity of fraternities at Ohio State. In 1891 there were 664 students; 1,735 in 1902; 3,928 in 1911; 8,850 in 1922; and 10,237 students in 1932.
walls a larger percentage of exemplary young men.”

For these early administrators anything that distracted students from their main purpose of obtaining a practical education was to be avoided. The issue of fraternities at North Carolina State was first raised when the Sigma Nu was chartered on the campus in 1895. Besides administrative concern over public image, the two literary societies, Leazar and Pullen, petitioned the college to ban fraternities because they posed a challenge to the societies’ influence. The college administration granted the petition, forcing Sigma Nu to operate underground until after the turn of the century.

Between 1895 and 1903 students at North Carolina State tried several times to officially establish secret societies, but the board of trustees rebuffed them at each turn. President Dr. George T. Winston (1899 to 1908) instituted military discipline for all students, and fostered a view that fraternities were antithetical to the specific college environment in Raleigh. Additionally, faculty such as Captain Frederick Phelps, a professor of military science and tactics, led the opposition to fraternities in support of gentlemanly clubs such as the two literary societies already established on campus. A growing antipathy within the student body toward Winston developed simultaneously with the implementation of stronger administrative controls. A series of showdowns between students and the administration between 1900 and 1904 highlighted the growing

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27 Report of the North Carolina College, 1890, in Office of the Chancellor Annual Reports, “President” Folder, UA #002.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.


resentment among students toward exercises such as mandatory drill and the highly unpopular demerit system. A 1904 senior class rebellion forced Winston to make certain concessions to appease the restive student body, one of which was his support for officially sanctioned fraternities. At the board of trustees meeting on May 25, 1904, Winston supported the approval of secret societies, but only under certain conditions. These conditions included: no fraternity members be excused from any college duties, that no fraternity events could be held during commencement week, that the college uniform be worn during all fraternity events, and that all fraternity members be required to pledge an oath to these rules.

The founding of fraternities at the University of Oregon stands in contrast to the contentious beginnings of the same organizations at North Carolina State. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the city of Eugene experienced a tremendous growth in population, which created housing shortages for students of the university and prompted administrators to promote fraternities as alternatives. The first fraternity organized at Oregon was Sigma Nu in 1900 and more would follow. Administrators at Oregon, who had, by 1900, learned of the pitfalls that such organizations could create, closely supervised fraternity life, which enabled new chapters to form quickly. So close were the

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30 The student rebellion of 1904 will be discussed below.

31 Minutes of the Board of Trustees of North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, May 25, 1904, in Division of Student Affairs, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Records, “Greek Life, Trustee Action Relative to Fraternities, 1895-1904” Folder, UA #016.001, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.

32 Henry D. Sheldon, History of University of Oregon (Portland: Binford and Mort, 1940), 220.
ties between the fraternities and the college administration that officials regularly consulted with their leaders to gauge student opinion and often used the organizations as surrogates to gain consensus for new student policies. Unlike the adversarial relationship between fraternities and college administrators that existed at a host of other institutions in the United States, fraternities at Oregon were welcomed because the administration saw their value. With the support of the college administration, then, fraternities flourished at Oregon. By 1940, seventeen national fraternity chapters had been established and nearly half of the male students were members.

The growth of fraternities distinguished extracurricular life at state colleges from historic eastern colleges. However, there were many common threads in college life across all institutions, most notably in the ways students experienced freedom and independence away from their families.

In 1928, Robert Cooley Angell, sociology professor at the University of Michigan, noted, “The most casual observation of student life will reveal, as it has to so many foreigners visiting our universities, that the general level of intellectual interest among undergraduates is low.” Angell further laments the general lack of intellectual curiosity among students by observing, “As a general rule undergraduate life is

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33 Sheldon, *History of University of Oregon*, 221. By 1915, there were 8 national fraternity organizations at Oregon.

34 *Oregana, 1940*, Oregana Collection, University of Oregon Digital Collections, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR, https://goo.gl/YiFY6r.

pleasurable, even at times gay. House parties, ‘proms,’ and ‘bonfire nights’ are the most obvious indicators of a joyous - I had almost said holiday -spirit.” What Angell was describing (whether he knew it or not) was a social system that had been developing for more than a century. By the early twentieth century extracurricular life at colleges in the United States had become the defining feature of college life itself, an idea that emphasized the importance of maintaining a thriving social life in spite of having to attend to educational matters. But, what he observed at the end of the 1920s was markedly different from the independence experienced by students for most of the nineteenth century. During the early twentieth century administrators had relaxed the strict disciplinary regime that defined colleges in the nineteenth century and instead gave their students a high degree of autonomy. An increased level of freedom allowed students to socialize on their own terms, for better or worse. Student independence often took the form of testing the official boundaries of college authorities through activities such as publishing off-color magazines, performing pranks, continuing the tradition of rebelling against campus authorities, and drinking alcohol.

Student-run publications, especially off-color magazines, embodied the independent spirit of college life by giving students opportunities to creatively satirize the campus cultures around them. Modeled after magazines such as Harvard’s Lampoon, Ohio University students began The Green Goat in earnest in January 1913. The Green Goat editors noted in the inaugural edition: “We believe there is a place for a bi-monthly

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36 Angell, The Campus, 6.

37 The Harvard Lampoon was first published in 1876.
magazine, of humor and kindly pessimism, among students at old O.U. Many battles have been won by sarcasm, and if you are the one to be hit, remember it was done for the O.U.’s sake, not yours.”\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, no one on campus was immune from being “hit” by the magazine contributors. In the first edition, it was suggested that fraternity and sorority members were afflicted “with brain trouble” because they were unable to acknowledge any campus organization other than their own. In another humorously provocative article, \textit{The Green Goat} pointed out that Ewing Hall, one of the oldest buildings on campus at the time, was not yet paid for and that the Trustees were hoping that the deed holders would get tired of asking for the money and give up. Even the renowned first graduate of the university, Thomas Ewing (for whom Ewing Hall was named) was posthumously razzed: “He was a great man and ought to be proud of having a building named after him. Mr. Ewing was the first graduate of Ohio University. He probably couldn’t help it if no one else went to the school.”\textsuperscript{39} As the magazine matured, the editorial staff began publishing annual “Bonehead” issues dedicated to poking fun at freshmen, as well as typical Ohio students. During the 1920s, the magazine soared in popularity on campus and even captured advertising revenue from national brands, such as Lucky Strike and Camel cigarettes.

Student-produced humor publications were popular at the University of Oregon also. The long-running \textit{Lemon Punch} followed a similar, yet less severe, template to \textit{The Green Goat}, January 13, 1913, 6, Collection of “The Green Goat” Magazines 1913-1986, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Green Goat}, January 13, 1913, 11.
Green Goat, and was officially authorized to operate by Oregon administrators. In the opening number the staff noted, “Lemon Punch is the written answer to the University’s demand for a humorous publication. Practically every large University of any consequence in the country today boasts of a humorous magazine and experience had found that it is a valuable means of preserving and unifying college spirit as well as a valuable advertising medium for the University throughout the country.” The magazine featured short stories, anecdotes from around campus, and humorous poetry, all of which promoted the college experience at Oregon, but was much tamer than other student produced publications at the university.

During the late 1910s and early 1920s, several subversive newspapers circulated on the Oregon campus that drew the ire of college administrators because of their content. In March 1919, a group of students known as the “Scarlet Sheet” remained at the university during spring break and published a single issue of the Left-Over Yellow Journal. The single edition contained sensational and scandalous stories written about students and faculty that the official student newspaper would not dare to run. For example, a salacious article titled “Indiscretion Charged Against Young Girl,” claimed that thirty sorority members were being investigated for inappropriate behavior: “Each of the girls so far implicated, the Scarlet Sheet is informed, are from the ranks of the younger pretty sorority set. Coming at this particular time when the fact that immorality is rampant at the University has been disproved in the courts, the matter is regarded as

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40 Lemon Punch, December 1920, 10, University Archives Publications, Associated Students of the University of Oregon, UA Ref 4, Box 55, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR. Lemon Punch ran from 1920 to 1956.
particularly grave in its relation to the ultimate good of the university.”

Another article, “Incidents up the Mill Race is Exposed,” (sic) recounted a rumor that members of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority and Beta Theta Pi fraternity engaged in sexual activities on the banks of the Millrace waterway. As word spread to college administrators that the paper was being delivered to Eugene residents in the middle of the night, a task force was established to hunt down all of the copies and have them destroyed. In 1921, another yellow newspaper, Fizz Bang, took particular aim at Oregon faculty and administrators. In a satirical article, “Booze Party,” the newspaper claimed that members of the faculty and local police officers held a “beer bust,” at which the dean of women sang several risqué songs and the faculty discussed allowing students to use the administration building for gambling. In all of these cases, student-produced humor magazines and newspapers highlighted an independent spirit that became the hallmark of college life at the beginning of the twentieth century. Independence, however, was also expressed through action. Students regularly tested the official boundaries of their institutions through protests, outright rebellion, and harmless pranks.

Testing the boundaries of administrative control was certainly not a new phenomenon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Numerous forms of mild

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41 “Indiscretion Charged Against Young Girl,” Left-Over Yellow Journal, March 1919, 1, University Archives Publications, Associated Students of the University of Oregon, UA Ref 4, Box 55, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR.

42 “Booze Party,” Fizz Bang, October 14, 1921, University Archives Publications, Associated Students of the University of Oregon, UA Ref 4, Box 54, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR.
harassment and rebellion have occurred on U.S. college campuses from their colonial foundations. In the eighteenth century, students at South Carolina College defiled the chapel pulpit to display their opposition to mandatory prayer, and students at Harvard staged the famous “Bread Riot” in 1766 because of the poor quality of food being served in the commons. The nature of student rebellion changed, however, by the late nineteenth century. Students had become more “even tempered” and were less prone to acts of violence toward college authorities because higher education came to be seen as a pathway to a career that had to be taken (somewhat) seriously. This was especially the case at state colleges, where students were often the first members of their families to pursue higher education, a circumstance that fostered a sense of obligation and responsibility. Yet, student pranks and acts of rebellion continued into the twentieth century, even at state colleges. Acts of violence still occurred, though infrequently. What had changed by the late nineteenth century was administrators’ views on student life outside of the classroom. Administrators and faculty began to accept that rebellion was a fact of collegiate life (although officially disapproved of), and they created a more liberal environment allowing more freedom for students to express themselves. To be sure, students were still punished, and in some cases expelled for their actions, but overall the disciplinary system that emerged in the late nineteenth century was far more lenient than in earlier phases of higher education.


44 Kett, Rites of Passage, 175. This idea of student life stood in contrast to the antebellum period when students were unsure of the value or purpose of receiving a college degree.
In 1904, students at North Carolina State staged a rebellion against campus authorities over what they perceived to be onerous rules and regulations. With the election of George Winston as college president in 1899, the student body was forced to abide by strict military discipline as mentioned earlier. Winston sought to rein in “rowdyism” on campus in response to a decade of what he viewed as uneven discipline under his predecessor, Alexander Holladay.\footnote{Student Rebellion and Rules Governing Student Conduct, 1905, in Student and Other Organizations, Student Government Records, Administrative Papers, “Student Rebellion and Rules Governing Student Conduct, 1905” Folder, UA #021.502, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC. This became known as the “Thug Revolt” of 1904.} Under Winston’s directive, students were required to wear military uniforms at all times and drill into the cafeteria and chapel. Rooms were to be inspected for cleanliness, tabs were kept on students during study hours, and a mandatory lights out time was instituted. Seniors were the only students given the liberty to leave campus as they wished as long as it did not interfere with any school-related activity. However, in September 1904, Winston rescinded these modest liberties, which resulted in the senior class issuing an appeal to the faculty to restore the rights that they had looked forward to receiving for three years. After the appeal failed, Winston met with the senior class and “said that unless the matter was closed at once and for all time the committee appointed by the class would have to leave college.”\footnote{Student Rebellion and Rules Governing Student Conduct, 1905.}

Winston labeled committee members “thugs” and ordered that they disband. This became a rallying point for the entire class. In response to Winston’s demand, the students decided that their only course of action was to “withdraw in a body from the
college that was depriving us of our every privilege.” On September 7, members of the senior class began leaving campus and by September 10, “the class of ’05 was badly scattered. Some were at home, at work, some were at other colleges, and some working in different states.” Ultimately, the faculty voted to reinstate the senior class committee, but did not reinstitute the liberties that the students had revolted over. It was not until the following year that Winston relaxed his views and allowed the new senior class to visit Raleigh “two evenings in the week.” This, however, was not the last disturbance at North Carolina State as students in subsequent years would rebel against other campus rules.

Sometime during the school year of 1911 and 1912, a group of students took on the issue of mandatory chapel. The students captured a bear and left it in the chapel in protest. Charles Brickhouse, a member of the class of 1914, recalled in an oral history that a janitor entered a room in Pullen Hall and found a large bear lying on the windowsill. Frantically, the janitor ran out of the room and informed college Vice President Dr. Wallace Riddick of what he had stumbled across in the chapel. At first, Riddick did not believe the man, but soon found out for himself that indeed a bear was in the room. According to Brickhouse, Riddick immediately understood the point of the prank, and gathered all of the students to identify the perpetrators. Unable to identify the students who transported the animal, Riddick told the students that they needed to coax the animal back outside, otherwise chapel would go on as planned with the bear in the

47 Student Rebellion and Rules Governing Student Conduct, 1905.

48 Student Rebellion and Rules Governing Student Conduct, 1905.
room.\(^{49}\) It is unclear from the records whether the students who placed the bear in the chapel were ever caught or punished. However, the 1914 edition of the *Agromeck* yearbook holds some clues. Accompanying each senior portrait was a drawing completed by each graduate to capture a specific memory of his time in college. Alongside several students’ portraits were sketches of a bear inside a cage. It is believed that these were the students behind the prank.

Not all student pranks were as dangerous, or potentially life threatening, as the one pulled off by the seniors at North Carolina State in 1911. During the same year, two male students at the University of Oregon were caught dressed as women in order to crash the “April Frolic.”\(^{50}\) According to the Oregon Daily Emerald, juniors John Kelly and Carl Grayson “disguised themselves as women and mingled for a few minutes with the coeds before the dance.”\(^{51}\) Once found out, the two men were reported to a campus investigating committee and suspended from the university. The stunt was treated with good humor by the newspaper staff and the event was even mentioned in the annual yearbook. However, when practical jokes involved vandalism, the responses were not as

\(^{49}\) The Bear Incident in Pullen Hall, in University Archives Reference Collection, General Records, “Pranks” Folder, UA #050.001, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC; Charles Brickhouse Oral History, in University Archives Reference Collection, General Records, “Pranks” Folder, UA #050.001, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC; Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Princeton, 1746-1896* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946), 105. There appears to have been a long established precedent for this kind of prank. In 1790, a group of Princeton students tethered a calf to the pulpit in Prayer Hall after a night of heavy drinking at a village tavern. For their offense, all of the students were expelled.

\(^{50}\) The “April Frolic” was a women’s only dance.

good-humored. When a group of students of Oregon State students stole a set of railroad safety lights in 1916, the editors of the Barometer commented, “This act borders neither on the humorous nor is it an act of a representative man.”\textsuperscript{52} In response to the scattering of “Kwepies tissue” (toilet paper) in the trees in front of a dormitory at North Carolina State in 1928, an editorial in The Technician likened the perpetrators to people who “were either possessed of a brain becoming a moron or else they were the victims of that malady that makes persons rob filling stations and shoot defenseless persons in the back.”\textsuperscript{53}

Drinking alcohol has been associated with U.S. college life almost from the beginning. As early as the 1660s, students at Harvard drank beer and smoked tobacco in the commons, often during lunch and dinner.\textsuperscript{54} By the late nineteenth century, most state colleges frowned upon drinking and, in some cases helped to pass local laws that prohibited the sale of alcohol. Formal rules did not stop some students from indulging in liquor, but not all students treated drinking in the same manner.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, student drinking became enveloped in the broader national discussion of temperance. In 1901, the Intercollegiate Prohibition Association was formed, and local chapters were formed at many colleges. At Ohio State, the O.S.U. Prohibition Club was organized in March 1901; however, drinking

\textsuperscript{52} “Ruffianism,” \textit{O.A.C. Barometer}, October 6, 1916, 2.

\textsuperscript{53} “Wise and Otherwise,” \textit{The Technician}, February 11, 1928, 4.

\textsuperscript{54} Morrison, \textit{Three Centuries of Harvard}, 28. Morrison notes that in the beginning, a doctor’s note was needed in order to smoke tobacco, but by the 1660s the practice had become so widespread that formal permission was abandoned.
seems to have been an accepted fact of college life. In 1912, the *Lantern* reported that students were seen at a dance hall “rolling about the floor, kicking empty beer bottles around in their drunken condition, under the supervision of a policeman who stood at the door …”55 The dance, which was held every Wednesday night by a social dancing club, served alcohol of all varieties to both men and women and the events often lasted until the early morning hours. While the report in the student newspaper notes the shock of some students who attended, the account is strikingly matter-of-fact, suggesting that student drinking was to be expected. In late 1925, a scandal involving a graduate student, Dabney Horton, erupted when a 10-gallon still was discovered in his home. Horton was arrested and Ohio Governor Vic Donahey ordered an investigation into reports of drinking at fraternity parties, university dances, and social gatherings, as well as accounts that faculty commonly drank Horton’s liquor.56 Interestingly, the investigation turned up no other violations. In a private letter to the governor, Ohio State President George W. Rightmire requested all of the reports that Donahey had received, but none was ever furnished.57 This episode suggests that student drinking was still a central feature of student life at Ohio State, even during federal prohibition.

At other colleges, however, temperance was taken much more seriously. At Ohio


56 “Graduate Student Pleads Not Guilty On Whiskey Charge,” *The Ohio State Lantern*, December 9, 1925, 1. Horton was also accused of being a communist sympathizer and was subsequently dismissed from the university.

57 “Probe Investigation Plans Not Yet Complete,” *The Ohio State Lantern*, January 11, 1926, 1. The fact that no reports were ever provided to Rightmire suggests that Donahey may have posturing for political gain with constituents who were anti-liquor.
University in 1911, for example, students overwhelmingly favored a proposed local law banning liquor from the city of Athens. In the run-up to the special election held to determine whether Athens would remain wet or go dry, the Green and White asked, “Do we want to see the women of Athens crowded from the streets by drunken sots and beer kegs? Do we want the O.U. girls to be subjects of vulgar remarks by a gang of rowdy rowdies?” Following the vote, it was reported that every student had voted for the dry side. Yet, the representation of student consensus can be deceiving. During the same year, Oregon State students voted to ban all students from drinking liquor, but the drinking continued. In May 1911, three students were placed on probation after drinking while on the senior class excursion to Newport, Oregon. Even on conservative campuses such as North Carolina State, where gentlemanly conduct was expected always, students still managed to obtain alcohol. In January 1929, T. K. Harvin and two other students were expelled after it was discovered that they had produced still liquor and sold it to other students. In an editorial published in The Technician following the Harvin incident, the writer poses the question of whether or not the student body actually wanted to remain dry. “If such indulgence is against the morals of the group as a whole, then why not take steps to enforce the rulings made to protect the morals? If it is not the attitude of the group, then there should be a change in the regulations.”


59 “Student Council Names Punishment,” The O.A.C. Barometer, May 19, 1911.

60 “Harvin is Again Barred from College by the Student Council,” The Technician, January 26, 1929, 1.
Perhaps one of the most exciting (and anxious) aspects of student independence during this period was the opportunity to freely interact with students of the opposite sex. Unlike historic eastern colleges, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, which were all male, state colleges were coeducational. In this democratic atmosphere, men and women had the chance to experience college life together on an equal footing, even if their social lives differed. As a part of their collegiate experience, men and women at state colleges engaged one another in a variety of ways, such as at dances and on dates. Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the phenomenon of dating and courtship also changed in terms of both the experience and the expectations. Yet, college officials took measures to separate men and women and to control their social interactions. Administrators were careful to reinforce a sense of contemporary morality by limiting the ways in which students of the opposite sex interacted with one another.

The separation of men and women occurred several ways during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The clearest form of separation was seen at colleges such as North Carolina State, where administrators prohibited women from enrolling until the late 1920s. But at state colleges, separating men and women into

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61 Canby, *Alma Mater: The Gothic Age of the American College*, 40. Henry Seidel Canby observed of Yale in the 1890s “there were no women in our society except the prostitutes, who were hearty barbarians like ourselves, giving and expecting nothing but temporary companionship.”

62 Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education*, 405. The nationwide backlash that attended the coeducation movement in last decades of the 1800s also resulted in the creation of coordinate schools within the most prestigious institutions in the country: Harvard’s women “annex” school Radcliffe, Columbia’s Barnard, and Women’s College of Brown.
distinct colleges was financially impractical and could potentially jeopardize state and federal funding. An efficient way to keep male and female students apart was the creation of separate campus buildings for men and women. In 1890 at Ohio University, for example, dormitories were offered to men, forcing women to find housing in private residences in Athens. Similarly, women were excluded from dormitories at Ohio State until the first female residence hall was built in 1908. At the University of Oregon, a men’s gymnasium was built in 1909 with “the best apparatus, an indoor running track, a swimming pool, shower baths, lockers, etc.,” transitioning the old gymnasium to an all-women’s “brick building well fitted with suitable apparatus.” As of 1920, Oregon State men and women were not only given separate gymnasiums, but separate athletic fields as well. Yet, despite the care taken to isolate men and women from each other in intimate places like dormitories and physical education buildings, there were many opportunities for students of the opposite sex to interact with one another.

Receptions, such as fraternity and sorority welcoming parties, offered men and women opportunities to mix company. These social events were common at most

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63 Catalogue of the Ohio University for 1890-1891, 25, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Course Catalogs/Bulletins, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/lKrEZR.

64 Goerler, Ohio State: An Illustrated History, 154. Since no dormitories were available to women at Ohio State until after the turn of the century, they were forced to find rooms at university approved boarding homes, which was more expensive than the male dormitories, some of which were free of charge.

colleges and ranged from informal dances to elegant evening suppers. At Ohio State in 1890, the men of the Chi Phi fraternity held a reception to honor their newest pledges, and to “to relieve the somewhat monotonous course of college life.” At this event, men and women danced, ate, and played cards with “each feeling that the evening’s enjoyment had been all that could be wished.” At the University of Oregon, the Beth Reah sorority “entertained a number of its friends to an informal dancing party” in May 1913, in an elegant affair decorated with pink and white carnations and entwined wild blackberry vines. Receptions undoubtedly offered men and women a chance to get to know one another, and perhaps find someone to date regularly. Bernice Forest, a junior at Oregon State and president of the Y.W.C.A. in 1916, discussed many such events in her diary. After a reception given by the residents of Cauthorn Hall, an all-women’s dormitory, Forest remarked, “I didn’t meet any nice men at the reception because I had to be behind the scenes. Eric Englund shadowed me and I tried not to be so very rude to him, but I do wish he wouldn’t be so friendly.”

At Meredith College and North Carolina State, receptions were some of the only opportunities afforded to students to mingle with the opposite sex. At the annual reception given by the students of North Carolina State in 1922, Meredith students, as

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66 “The Chi Phi Reception,” *The Ohio State Lantern*, Friday, January 10, 1890, 6.


68 “Bernice Forest Diary,” October 15, 1916, Various MSS Collections, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, MSS Bernice Forest Diary. Forest was raised in Portland before going to Corvallis to enroll at O.A.C. at the age of 23. As with most other women in her class, she chose to major in Home Economics (the other women majored in Domestic Science) and was active in field hockey, the Y.W.C.A., and her church.
well as women from other women’s colleges in Raleigh, were invited to an evening of punch and dessert in the agriculture building. Members of the faculty of North Carolina State attended as chaperones, and to encourage interaction, “a booklet was given to each girl in which to write the names of all the boys she met.”69 The woman who obtained the most names in her booklet won a box of chocolates. The annual reception, however, featured no dancing, something that most state colleges had accepted by the 1920s.

At the end of the nineteenth century, official student body dances were rare. At Ohio State, official policy forbade dancing at college events held in buildings on campus. But, students found other venues for their parties. Informal dances were held in private homes, such as one in 1890, when Ohio State student May Hatcher organized a dancing party at her parents’ home near the college.70 Dances were also frequently held at fraternity and sorority houses, as well as dance halls and hotels throughout Columbus. Campus newspapers often commented on such events, noting the food, the decorations, and the attendees. At a dance held by the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity of Ohio State in 1893, The Ohio State Lantern observed, “The usual beauty of the large and commodious suite of rooms was heightene[d] if possible, by decorations in the way of palms and potted plants tastefully displayed throughout the halls. These brilliant apartments, animated as they were, by a score or more of the most intimate lady friends of the fraternities, attired

69 “Two Upper Classes Are Guests of N.C.S. Agricultural Boys,” The Twig, February 17, 1922, 1.

70 “Dancing Party,” The Ohio State Lantern, March 21, 1890, 10. During 1890 and 1891, The Lantern contains many such announcements indicating that dances in private homes were tacitly accepted by the college administration even though they were unwilling to allow such events to be held in campus buildings. This contradiction implies that administrators could not tolerate mixed sex dances on campus grounds, but were reluctant to police private gatherings.
in their most lovely evening gowns and winsome smiles, presented an appearance very charming indeed.” Yet, these events were exclusive and many students were not able to attend. By 1899, support for school-approved dances was gaining momentum, and in 1900 the college established a social committee to manage campus social events under the guidance of the administration.

Leap Year dances were popular events at which gender roles were reversed; Women asked men to dance, while men kept dance cards. At Ohio State in 1896, the idea for a role-reversal dance was developed out of the tradition at the university that gave women “full privileges” once every four years on Leap Day: “After getting their heads together, for many heads are better than one even if they are all level, the fair co-eds decided to give a dance. They were tired of hearing of a party and then waiting till the last moment in anxious doubt as to who would invite them to go.” At this event women asked men to go as dates, decided with whom to dance and when, could cut in as they liked, and the men were responsible for submitting their dance cards to potential dance partners for consideration. According to the Daily Lantern, the dance was a success “without any of the tendencies toward the ‘new woman,’” overshadowing the proceedings. The University of Oregon held a similar dance in 1912, at which “the men were peculiarly docile and nervous about their programs as the girls strode manfully

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71 “Pan-Hellenic Tendered By Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity,” The Ohio State Lantern, Wednesday, January 25, 1893, 1.

72 “Turn About,” The Ohio State Lantern, February 5, 1896, 1.
about the room.” At this event, unlike the one at Ohio State in 1896, some of the women dressed as men, adding to the carnivalesque atmosphere, and to the discomfort of some of the male gatherers. However, all of the women, it was noted, “behaved in a beautifully modest fashion,” and won the commendation of the men in attendance. This implies that male students were the ultimate arbiters of appropriate female conduct.

Student body dances were often met with great excitement, as announcements in student newspapers suggest, but in some cases, they were met with disappointment. For men and women alike, dances were opportunities to not only meet someone new, but an occasion offering a level of intimacy rarely found at other gatherings. As such, expectations were often high. In the spring of 1917, Bernice Forest confessed in her diary following the Oregon State Spring Party “I sat out every dance I could.” Besides feeling awkward about dancing with men (she had not been to a co-ed dance since her freshmen year), Forest did not know how to fill out her dance card and only began after observing other girls filling out theirs. “I didn’t get a dance with any of the boys I would have liked to dance with, and had some perfectly awful ones with the others.” Later in her entry, Forest declared that she wished she had not gone at all. As Forest’s experience suggests, opportunities to mingle with the opposite sex were always guided by the moral strictures of the participants, as well as a social pecking order that she did not quite understand. Indeed, Forest’s reserved nature left her unaware that the filling out of dance cards was an exercise of campus popularity and perhaps a bit of moral flexibility. Similar rules


74 “Forest Diary,” May 13, 1917.
governed the practice of dating.

Forest wrote about her feelings on dating and men in her diary during the 1916-1917 school year. Forest, who was twenty-four years old at the time she began her diary, was president of the Y.W.C.A., president of the women’s dormitory club, and a devout churchgoer and Christian (this last attribute played a critical role in her perspectives on dating). From her first entries in October 1916, Forest declared that she hoped to find a boy that she liked, possibly at a reception. “I hope to meet someone nice. I won’t get a chance if Al hangs around all evening like he did at the M.E. (Mechanical Engineering) reception last week.”75 “Al,” was Al O. Meier, a junior, with whom Forest spent a lot of time over the course of the school year, but someone she was ultimately ambivalent toward. Forest believed that Meier was crude and immature, and most important, lax about attending church or taking his responsibilities with Y.M.C.A. seriously. Still, over the course the school year, Forest went for walks with Meier and frequently attended church socials with him, unable to decide whether she liked him or not. “I fussed with Al more than I have in any month lately. Its (sic) the funniest thing the way I treat him. Some times I just can’t stand to talk to him and when he asks me to go somewhere I won’t do it…Then at other times when he asks, I think-‘oh, what’s the use of being so particular-even if he isn’t up to your standard.”76 Forest’s “standard” seemed to include being a devout Christian, romantic, and socially respectable. Furthermore, Forest was sensitive to how other people saw her, and worried over possible moral qualms such as


76 “Forest Diary,” February 12, 1917.
attending dances with men, or hanging around with the wrong type of guy.\textsuperscript{77} It was not until she met another man, whom she only refers to as Mr. Hauffman, at a church dinner that she finally exclaimed in her notes that “he is big-handsome athletic, and jolly. I hope I have chance to know him.”\textsuperscript{78} Several days after meeting Hauffman, Forest states emphatically, “I like him. He’s a real man.”\textsuperscript{79}

Forest’s devotion to religion and its manifestation in her social conduct, however, were not universally accepted by all of her female classmates. For example, her roommate, Amy Niblin, often dismayed Forest by her different moral standards. In Forest’s mind, Niblin dated around, eschewed church obligations, and disregarded social regulations. For example, the two got into an extended argument when Forest returned home from church to find Niblin sewing on a Sunday afternoon.\textsuperscript{80} In another entry, Forest noted that it made her “sick” that Niblin and another student, Katherine Howells, went to shows on Sunday: “She (Amy) has permission from her folks and doesn’t seem to see any wrong with it. As a Catholic, Katherine naturally doesn’t see any wrong either. How I wish I knew how to let Amy see what she is missing!”\textsuperscript{81} Forest’s roommate broke social protocols in other ways as well. During the summer of 1917, Forest and Niblin met Jack

\textsuperscript{77}“Forest Diary,” January 27, 1917. In this entry, Forest expressed her concern about dancing with men, something she had not done since her freshmen year and the possible negative implications it may have on her standing with the Y.W.C.A.

\textsuperscript{78}“Forest Diary,” October 15, 1916.

\textsuperscript{79}“Forest Diary,” October 18, 1916.

\textsuperscript{80}“Forest Diary,” February 12, 1917.

\textsuperscript{81}“Forest Diary,” March 13, 1917.
Eakins and agreed to go to the river with him to swim. When the two roommates arrived, Forest discovered that Eakins had invited his friend, Palmer Patton, a black student, to join them. “At first I was mad. To think he’d ask Pat (Palmer) to go- when he knew no girl would want to go with him.” But, to Forest’s shock, Niblin seemed to take a liking to Patton, even walking to and from the river with him. Forest remarked that this act was highly egregious and against college regulation. Yet, Niblin, and others, seemed unfazed by the social codes that Forest lived by, illustrating the breadth of attitudes that women students at Oregon State held.

It is clear from her diary that Forest was very conscious of her public appearance in the context of religion and her standing as the Y.W.C.A. president. She was also careful to observe moral boundaries when it came to dating. Helen Lepper’s experience at Oregon State in the late 1920s and early 1930s was far different from Forest’s. Lepper, a freshman from Portland in 1928, epitomized the sensibilities of modern dating, and followed a different set of social norms. In one of the first entries in a diary that she maintained throughout her first years at Oregon State, Lepper laid out her perspectives on dating. “Women have a power and influence over men greater than they realize. They can have anything they desire from men—men, sorrow to say, will take all they can get.”

82 “Forest Diary,” June 27, 1917.
83 “Forest Diary,” June 27, 1917.
84 “Helen Lepper Diary,” January 24, 1928, Various MSS Collections, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, MSS Lepper. Lepper was 20 years old when she began at Oregon State. She only stayed at the college for two years before leaving in 1930 due to a self-described nervous breakdown.
Indeed, Lepper used her womanly “power” and dated around. During her freshmen year, Lepper dated several men, including junior Bryan “Spurs” Gordon, after meeting him on a blind date. Lepper seemed to have been reluctant to settle down with just one man; her diary shows that she enjoyed going to a variety of social functions like dances and fraternity parties with different dates. And unlike Forest’s demure interactions with male classmates, Lepper enjoyed going to shows, dinner, and dance halls. She was daring as well. After attending a show and dancing, Lepper and her date heisted a Chesterfield cigarette sign, which she hung up in her room. While Lepper’s dating practices and behavior would have been considered unladylike by Forest’s standards, Lepper occupied a social reality that was directed by new sensibilities and expectations. Dating for Lepper was about thrill seeking and amusement, rather than a practiced exercise of finding a suitable man to marry—something that Forest very much desired.

85 “Lepper Diary,” January 11, 1929.

86 There is ample secondary literature on the changing patterns of dating in America in the twentieth century. Ellen Rothman examined courtship practices from 1770 to 1920 in her work, Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987). Rothman focuses on the dating practices of white, Protestant, middle-class Americans primarily in the nineteenth century, noting that courtship practices before the Civil War were less restrained than is commonly believed. Physical expressions of love such as public kissing, spooning, and sleeping together fully-clothed, were common practices. Additionally, Rothman, by way of over 350 diaries, journals, and memoirs, observes that women were typically more ambivalent toward marriage than men in the 19th century. Women were fearful of losing their freedom and their friends, while men viewed marriage as the natural progression of a successful life. Beth Bailey has argued in her work, From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), that beginning in the 1920s the concept of transformed from act that was highly controlled in the home and the community and into a private act “conducted in the public world.” (3) Bailey notes also that the concomitant patterns of consumption and commercialism played a key role in this transformation as “dining, dancing, Coke dates, movies, and ‘parking,’” replaced the family parlor as key elements of the new model.
At Meredith College, opportunities for interacting with men were limited. Indeed, college policy expressly stated “students do not carry on a conversation with young men on the campus, at the library, in stores, or on the street.” Yet, this rule does not seem to have deterred students from attempting interaction with male students from nearby North Carolina State. On Sunday afternoons in 1923, women from Meredith would commonly stroll past the governor’s mansion in downtown Raleigh where men from State College would sit on the lawn and engage in conversations as they passed by. According to the Meredith *Twig*, the men from State College would launch catcalls such as “don’t smile, your paint will crack,” and “you are the cutest girl in seven states!” But, according to the NC State *Technician*, the girls from Meredith purposely walked past “when there are several other courses open from uninterrupted travel.” In both cases, newspaper staff insinuated that all of the students involved were behaving immorally. However, it is clear that this ritual offered each group an opportunity to interact with each other outside of the formal rules set by each institution.

The experiences of men and women at state colleges, then, were markedly different from those of students at single-sex historic eastern colleges. To be sure, men at

87 *Students’ Hand Book of Meredith College, 1923-1924*, 26, Student Handbook Collection, Meredith College Digital Archives, The Carlyle Campbell Library, Raleigh, NC, https://goo.gl/MdsnHN. This was the first regulation listed under “Student Standards” in the student handbook.


90 In 1922 at North Carolina State, the by-laws of the student government stated: “The bringing of women on the campus for the purpose of illicit sex relationship is strictly forbidden and is an offense the penalty for which shall be expulsion.”
Harvard, Yale, and Princeton attended proms and dated, however, their interactions were always at a distance. For men and women at coeducational colleges, the close proximity to one another, whether walking to and from class or sharing a meal in the dining hall, created much closer relationships with the opposite sex than any student at the historic eastern colleges could hope for.

The social worlds of state colleges were shaped only in part by the long shadow of the traditional college experience. Important aspects of college life, such as the development of extracurricular organizations and the emphasis placed on a level of student autonomy, undoubtedly have their origins at the older colleges. But students at state colleges developed their own patterns of life based on their own interests and desires. The fraternity system was one such outcome of these emerging student cultures, but was considered uncouth at more prestigious schools. This reveals important class divisions between the mostly wealthy students of prominent eastern colleges and the predominantly middle and lower class state colleges where the rough and tumble image of fraternity life was valued. Furthermore, coeducation provided men and women an opportunity to interact socially that was not possible at the historical colleges. Indeed, as the annex system shows, men at prestigious eastern schools were worried about the invasion of women into higher education at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. While women were certainly not truly the equals of men at state colleges, coeducation was a formidable principle that enabled women to pursue degrees alongside men. Thus, the combination of institutional inclusiveness and class attitudes helped to shape the distinctive student cultures of state colleges, which ultimately set
them apart from historic eastern colleges.

Yet, the emphasis placed on extracurricular life by students at state colleges reflected the power and appeal of the traditional college experience. Since student autonomy had been an aspect of college life since the beginning of American colleges, the creation of student-run organizations was a way for state college students to continue this legacy on their own campuses. Furthermore, because popular representations of life at the historic eastern colleges were numerous and accessible, the centrality of extracurricular life to the overall college experience would have been easily recognized by new generations of college students. At the same time, however, students at state colleges also expanded upon the traditional college experience in new and significant ways. The development of fraternities suggests a desire by state college students to form organizations in the image of the secret societies at historic eastern colleges, but fraternities were far different in that they were essentially nationwide networks of likeminded male students, instead of small elite groups. Furthermore, coeducation distinguished student life at state colleges from historic eastern schools because it promulgated a far different campus dynamic. At coeducational colleges, men and women could interact with one another, under certain conditions, creating a more diverse institutional environment than ones found at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Thus, while students at both older and newer institutions embraced the principle of extracurricular life, the practice of student life was inherently different, and reflective of the inclusion of new groups of students at state colleges.
Chapter 6
Athletics and the College Experience at State Colleges

On October 15, 1916, the Oregon State football squad travelled to Pullman, Washington, to play a game against Washington State. The reigning champions of the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, Washington State players were by most accounts bigger, stronger, and more experienced than the team from Corvallis. The College Barometer, Oregon State’s student newspaper, noted a few weeks before the game that injuries to several key players and ineligibility issues had devastated the Oregon State team. Prior to their game with the University of Idaho two weeks before, the paper observed, “the team as it will line up tomorrow, will be one of the weakest that has ever represented this institution.”¹ Thus, players and fans had very low expectations for the outcome of the game against Washington State. In what was referred to as “one of the most spectacular games ever played in the Northwest,” Oregon State defeated Washington State 13-10, in part through the use of fake plays.²

The reaction to the victory among students in Corvallis was jubilant. Sophomore Bernice Forest noted in her diary, “everyone is most awfully hilarious over it. We didn’t

¹“Beavers Off for Moscow, Idaho, Coach Pipal’s Team Crippled,” The Barometer, October 6, 1916.

²The Beaver, 1917, 358, Historical Publications Digital Repository, Oregon State University Yearbooks Digital Collection, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, https://goo.gl/qKYrSl. The yearbook also notes that fake plays were first developed and used by football teams in the Northwest and were a hallmark of Coach Pipal’s game plans.
think it could be done.” Joyful students took to the streets and held an impromptu rally downtown to the chagrin of townsfolk and storekeepers. At one point, the celebration became so raucous that the owner of the movie house had to throw out revelers and close his theater. Adding to the air of excitement, the college administration announced that all classes would be canceled the following Monday afternoon so students could listen to the band, sing the school songs, and dance. The victory over Washington State College was heralded as a remarkable achievement, bolstering students’ pride for their college. Such was the contagious power of college athletics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Athletic victory could whip up feelings of institutional pride among students and unite them together. College athletics fostered a sense of community on campus through shared experience and cultivated a sense of school spirit and loyalty. Individual athletes, especially the football star, embodied the strength and vigor of the college community as a whole. However, the rise of intercollegiate athletic teams also inspired opposition and controversy as administrators, faculty, and college trustees struggled to define the place of extracurricular sport in higher education.

The tradition of college athletics began at the historic eastern colleges. The intercollegiate sporting tradition dates to at least 1852, when rowing crews from Yale and Harvard met on New Hampshire’s Winnipesaukee River for the first-ever intercollegiate contest in the United States. The event organizers did not have much in mind beyond a simple, good-natured athletic competition between the schools, but it turned into a spectacle as thousands of onlookers made the trip from Massachusetts and Connecticut to

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watch.\textsuperscript{4} To be sure, athletic games had been played on college campuses before the Harvard–Yale rowing competition, such as impromptu rugby-style football, but the intercollegiate nature of athletics changed after 1852. With the introduction of events between colleges, such as the rowing event in New Hampshire, colleges began to organize official teams, which became symbols of the relative strength of institutions, an idea that would ultimately lead to the emergence of serious intercollegiate athletics at the end of the century.

Not long after the first intercollegiate rowing meet, Amherst and Williams colleges played the first-ever collegiate baseball game in 1859. Baseball had been played in the United States, in varying fashions, for more than one hundred years by the time Amherst and Williams met and agreed to play by “New York” rules.\textsuperscript{5} In the post-Civil War years, baseball teams were organized at almost every college, with teams like Harvard making annual cross-country trips playing both amateur and professional teams. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, baseball was the most popular sport at American colleges. Yet, a series of controversies ultimately led to its decline. First, colleges greedy for championships often doctored records of games won. Next, athlete eligibility rules did

\textsuperscript{4} Ronald A. Smith, \textit{Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4. The main purpose of the event was the attract visitors to the resort on Lake Winnipesaukee, with the resort owner paying all of the expenses to bring the two crew teams to New Hampshire. By use of this example, Smith illustrates that college athletics were, from the beginning, commercial events.

\textsuperscript{5} Smith, \textit{Sports and Freedom}, 53. New York rules are very similar to the rules that govern modern baseball, with the game being played on a diamond-shaped field over nine-innings and each side having three outs per inning. New England rules allowed only one out per side, per inning, and the game was played on a rectangular field.
not exist, making it possible for college teams to recruit former players, including professionals. These hired “ringers” often gave their teams an unfair advantage, as was the case at Harvard in 1879. Humbled by a series of defeats, the team captain solicited the help of two former players, one a doctor, the other a lawyer, to help his team. As other colleges saw what was happening, they began to recruit outsiders themselves, resulting in college teams that were, in some cases, made up of entirely non-college students. In the early 1880s, a national collegiate governing board was established to correct these issues, but the issue of professionalism, and pay for play, continued to dog the sport.⁶

By the 1890s, football emerged as the dominant collegiate sport. The first intercollegiate football game between Rutgers and Princeton was played in 1869, kicking off an American obsession that resonates to this day. The sport was played intermittently over the next two decades, but was popularized by the success of Yale and its coach, Walter Camp, during the late 1870s and 1880s. Camp, an alumnus of Yale, devised the rules of the game and supported rivalries with Princeton and Harvard. Unlike baseball, most Americans were not familiar with football at this time. Camp sought to popularize the game when he established an annual Thanksgiving Day game in 1876 at the Polo Grounds in New York.⁷ College football was also afflicted with controversies such as the use of “tramp athletes,” and inconsistent rules being enforced in different parts of the country, which Camp sought to remedy. The brutality of the game (which was one of its selling points) also came under scrutiny after student deaths began to increase around the


⁷ Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 78. The inaugural game was played between Princeton and Yale.
turn of the century, something that Camp was never able to (or willing) to address directly.\textsuperscript{8}

Despite these issues, collegiate football had become a national phenomenon by the turn of the twentieth century. Colleges officially sponsored teams with an eye toward institutional status and revenue. The game was also seen as a healthy way for men to display their masculinity, which in turn reflected positively–or negatively–on the institution. However, state colleges began to compete with the historic eastern colleges for national dominance. This occurred, in part, because of the emergence of state colleges in nearly every state, which siphoned off talented athletes. Another factor was the growing regional pride in local teams by governors, mayors, and influential boosters. As John Thelin notes in \textit{A History of American Higher Education}, politicians often cited the success of their public college football teams as a sign of the greatness of their states.\textsuperscript{9}

Whereas during the last decades of the nineteenth century when Yale football, America’s preeminent football powerhouse, attracted fans from across the U.S., the rise of state institutions offered fans a chance to support their local teams. Furthermore, as “big-time” collegiate athletics spread to state colleges across the country, it also added to the collegiate experience for students of these institutions. Illustrative of this transition is that after 1900, Yale, Princeton, and Harvard won only ten football championships combined (the last being won by Yale in 1927) while one of the three schools had captured the

\textsuperscript{8} Geiger, \textit{The History of American Higher Education}, 374-375.

\textsuperscript{9} Thelin, \textit{A History of American Higher Education}, 209.
national title during the previous thirty out of thirty-two years.\textsuperscript{10}

Over the course of the first few decades of the twentieth century the historic eastern colleges were eclipsed by athletic programs of state colleges in terms of prominence and institutional backing. At Harvard, the relationship between the faculty and the athletic teams had always been a tenuous one, often mediated by the influential college president, Charles Eliot. When collegiate football began to increase in popularity among at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton in the 1880s, Eliot initially embraced the sport as healthy for both the mind and the body.\textsuperscript{11} Eliot very much believed in the Victorian conception of manliness defined by a strong sense of character, morality, and strength. Because of his outlook, Eliot eventually soured on football because its brutality, and in 1895 sought to expel the game from his institution.\textsuperscript{12} However, through an intervention of notable alumni such as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, the football program remained.

By the 1910s it had become increasing clear that the dominance of the historic eastern colleges in football was ending. In 1913, the national All-American football team, a list composed of the best players in the country at their respective positions, contained

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\textsuperscript{10} “Football Championship History,” \textit{NCAA}, accessed March 11, 2017, https://goo.gl/GV4xHG. Between 1869, the first year that a national champion in collegiate football was named, and 1900, Yale won or shared the title 15 times, Princeton 11 times and Harvard 4 times. Pennsylvania won the championship twice during this period. In 1901, Michigan won the national championship, marking the first time that a non-Eastern school had won the title.


\textsuperscript{12} Karabel, \textit{The Chosen}, 42-43.
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more players from outside of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton for the first time ever.\textsuperscript{13} Another sign of the slow decline were games played between the historic schools and state colleges. In 1916, the University of Pennsylvania travelled west to play in the annual Rose Bowl against the University of Oregon. In what many on the east coast considered a lopsided matchup in favor of the Pennsylvania Quakers, the Oregon squad displayed speed and agility, winning the game 14-0.\textsuperscript{14} To the athletic organizers at other historic eastern schools the loss by the University of Pennsylvania to Oregon proved the ascendancy of football programs in other states.

Over the course of the 1920s and 1930s, football at the historic eastern colleges continued to trend downward, as colleges like Michigan, Notre Dame, and the University of Southern California began to overtake the sport. Unsurprisingly, as the dominance of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton football faded, so too did the institutional support. In 1952, the presidents of the eight Ivy League colleges (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale) voted to abolish all spring football training and post-season games. The streamlining of football activities was meant to keep football “in the proper academic perspective,” reflecting the final verdict of elite college administrators on the place of athletics at their institutions.\textsuperscript{15} In 1957, the Ivy League Conference was organized, in part, to insulate the formerly dominant colleges from the


\textsuperscript{14} Bernstein, \textit{Football}, 110. The coach of the Quakers later told newspaper reporters that his team had not taken the game seriously, expecting to blow out a state college team from Oregon.

outside world of major college athletics—a trend that continues to this day.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, athletics were becoming a central aspect of the state college experience. Going to a football game on a fall afternoon, or a baseball game on a warm spring day, gave students an opportunity to mingle with one another and root for a common cause. The growth in popularity of college sports during the early century came to define the identity of some institutions, such as Ohio State; but they also contributed to a sense of campus community. While traditions such as class distinctions and freshmen hazing still played an important role in the campus social system, athletics transcended such differences and coalesced the student body around their sports teams. It was through shared experiences such as attending pep rallies, rooting at football games, and learning the college yells that all students were brought into what John Thelin has described as the “campus tribe.”

During the 1890s, student assemblies at Ohio State were mandatory events where sermons were read, prayers made, and inspirational lectures given. In 1899, Ohio State President William Oxley Thompson established a weekly convocation in lieu of daily chapel exercises that all students were expected to attend. In fall 1905, however, a weekly convocation unexpectedly turned into a pep rally for the upcoming football game against Ohio State’s rival, the University of Michigan. The Ohio State Lantern noted, “Last Wednesday morning’s convocation was given over to a football rally to arouse enthusiasm for the Michigan game and to practice a number of new songs and yells. After

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the opening exercises, Dr. Thompson said that he had been asked to give up a part of the hour for a rally and that he was disposed to give it all.”\(^{18}\) To the thrill of all students in attendance, President Thompson then gave an impassioned speech on the virtues of athletics and manliness, followed by speeches from several other professors rooting the team on. For the unsuspecting student body that arrived to listen to the weekly presidential address, the impromptu rally for the Ohio State football team was a pleasant surprise.

Pep rallies were joyful celebrations that inspired students to embrace the college spirit. At the University of Oregon in 1916, the first rally of the football season was kicked off by newly elected yell leader, Jack Dolph, and his “trusty lieutenants ‘Skinny’ Scaife and ‘Tootsie’ Crandal.” They led a long march of students to Kincaid Field, where they practiced songs and yells. As the students wound their way through town, musicians spontaneously formed an impromptu band and led the march the rest of the way. According to the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, once the boisterous student body arrived “the stands reverberated to the tunes of the older days and the football teams seemed to have a bit more dash and vim to their practice.”\(^{19}\) Pep rallies like this highlight the ways that students were pulled into a broader campus community and inspired to feel a part of a common effort. Athletic inspired a unified student body through public performances of

\(^{18}\)“Foot Ball Rally Consumes Convocation Hour Generating Enthusiasm,” *The Ohio State Lantern*, November 15, 1905. This was the first instance noted in *The Lantern* of a convocation turning into a pep rally.

\(^{19}\)“Studes Rally This Afternoon in Zip Bang Pepfest on Kincaid,” *The Oregon Daily Emerald*, September 28, 1916.
loyalty to and respect for the institution.

Intercollegiate games afforded students a break from the routine existence of college life. Importantly, games were a venue at which exuberant spectators could publicly share their college spirit and institutional loyalty. Higher-stakes competitions, such as championships or rivalry games, elevated student feelings of investment in their teams. As Laurence Veysey observed “the ‘big game’ directly appealed to the student’s strong yearning for loyalty, a desire which permitted him unthinkingly to submerge his own identity in that of the team.”\(^{20}\) Furthermore, college football was a means of unifying the student body, an increasingly difficult thing to do in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Frederick Rudolph has noted that college football “was also helping to restore the old collegiate unity which had been broken by enrollment increases and the development of elective curriculum: if every man did not take the same courses, at least he had an opportunity to cheer for the same team.”\(^{21}\)

In 1905, Charles Thwing, president of Western Reserve University, observed that baseball “has become the American game, as football, in turn, has become the great game of the college.”\(^{22}\) Thwing’s observation was indeed true. By 1890, collegiate football had eclipsed baseball as the most popular sport on college campuses, where games on autumn

\(^{20}\) Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 276.

\(^{21}\) Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 379.

afternoons became a beloved ritual for college students. Students often scrimped and saved in order to buy tickets, as was the case with Azariah Graves Thompson in 1905. Graves, then a sophomore at North Carolina State, wrote in a letter to his mother that he had worked several hours just so he could buy a ticket to the football game as everyone else was going. He also put off buying a new set of trousers after his old pair had worn thin. Graves so badly wanted to attend the game that he also attempted to get out of drill activities by seeking a doctor’s note for his bad feet. Graves’s actions highlight the importance of going along with the group, which in his case were all avid supporters of the North Carolina State football team. In this instance, the game was of secondary importance to the excitement of the communal experience. Significantly, for Graves the actual outcome of the game seemed unimportant; rather it was the feeling of community and supporting of a common cause that pushed him to attend.

In 1916, Bernice Forest traveled to Portland (her hometown) to watch Oregon State play the University of Nebraska, a game that was highly publicized and anticipated. Alongside her friends Mildred and Harriet, Forest noted in her diary “I never had a more exciting time at any game. ‘Tuffy’ Conn made himself the hero by making a 101 yard dash for a touch down.” Later in her entry, her school pride shone through: “The final score was 17-7 in favor of Nebraska, but it was such a splendid game that I wasn’t a bit

23 During the late 1880s, a series of scandals in collegiate baseball over the murky definition of amateurism and the payment of players during the summer months led some college administrators to disband official teams. Into this void stepped college football.

24 Azariah Graves Thompson to Mother, October 12, 1906.
ashamed of the result.” About a month later came “the big game” versus the University of Oregon, which was played on the Aggies’ home field in Corvallis. As with most rivalry games, games versus University of Oregon were highly anticipated by Oregon State students because victory meant state bragging rights. Additionally, Oregon State was viewed as the lesser institution in the state of Oregon, making any victory over the Webfoots that much more meaningful. Unfortunately for Forest, and the rest of the Oregon State fans, the game ended in defeat (the final score was 27-0 in favor of Oregon) but Forest found some solace: “OAC never showed so much spirit before. It was a grand sight to see the whole bleachers one sea of Orange rooters caps and orange banners. The girls came in for their share of the rooting too-perhaps that is why it seemed to me to have more spirit than usual….I wasn’t the only one who appreciated the girls being allowed to join in the rooters songs.” Such a sight clearly touched an emotional nerve for Forest, highlighting the power of mass events to foster a shared sense of loyalty.

Forest’s experience rooting for the team underscores the gendered nature of athletic support at coeducational state colleges. As she expressed, “the girls were allowed to join in the rooter’s songs,” suggesting that women students were to otherwise remain quiet while only male students verbally cheered on the team. Because women were allowed to join in on the songs at this specific game, it changed the experience for Forest and her friends, perhaps making it more entertaining. Furthermore, Forest hints that the


typical, less exciting game, may have lacked “spirit” since women were expected to remain quiet. On this day, the importance of the game between Oregon and Oregon State meant that social norms could be suspended, allowing women to fully participate in the event. Additionally, men and women were expected to sit in separate bleachers, reflecting the dominant social codes of conduct. In a later diary entry, Forest noted that she sat “with the girls” while at basketball game she attended with Al Meier. Al sat in the “rooters section” along with the other male students in attendance. Thus, women students were arms-length supporters of the team since they could not fully engage in the sporting event, unless the male students obliged.

There was no single occasion better able to unite the student body than a big win on the gridiron. Roger Geiger has observed “the euphoric effect of winning—on classmates as much as athletes—inspired [football] teams to improve skills, training, personnel and strategy. In this process, the several class teams were superseded by a ‘university club’ thus rallying the support of the entire student body.” Euphoria was intensified at colleges that had little previous success on the field, such as Ohio University. Established only in 1894, Ohio’s football team went through a period of tumult in the late 1890s and early 1900s when it struggled to finance itself as well as fend off opposition from faculty and administrators. By 1908, athletics at Ohio was in a crippled state, as the basketball and football teams failed to field competitive teams and

27 “Bernice Forest Diary,” February 12, 1917.


student interested waned. It was in this context that the Ohio football team played their rival, Marietta College, on Thanksgiving Day 1911. As the first team that Ohio football had ever played in 1894, Marietta had been accused of recruiting “ringers” to play for their team over the years, causing the editorial staff of the 1908 *Athena* yearbook to refer to the school as the “Marietta Correspondence School Ringers.” To the surprise of many, Ohio achieved victory by a final score of 6-5, beating Marietta for the first time in a decade. *The Green and White*, Ohio’s student newspaper, observed, “Think of it! Six to five and the first time, we have walloped Marietta in these ten years. No wonder the famous halls of old classic Athens echoed cries, and yells, and songs of praise when the glad tiding came ticking in.” Reporting of the victory filled every corner of the front page of the student newspaper, which noted the details of the victory on the field as well as the festive atmosphere that ensued including a parade through town to a celebratory bonfire. The Thanksgiving Day victory over their rivals reinvigorated interest in the football team at Ohio University and served as a rallying point for the entire student body.

College football also fostered loyalty through songs and yells created by students to cheer their team on. In his work, *When Colleges Sang: The Story of Singing in American College Life*, J. Lloyd Winstead has observed that by the early twentieth century, college songs were common. Fight songs, athletic yells, and even formal orchestrated songs were devised, and in many cases, published by colleges around the

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30 *Athena*, 1908, 121.

Illustrating their importance to the creation of campus community, most student handbooks of this era suggested that all students learn the college songs and yells. The North Carolina State handbook of 1932 noted to students that, “State college men know the School yells and songs; freshmen learn them before the first athletic contest.” As early as 1891, Ohio State University college handbook reminded students to learn the college yell, “Wahoo! Wahoo! Rip, Zip, Bazoo! I Yell! I Yell! For O.S.U.!” as soon as possible. The creation of college songs reflected another way for campus spirit to be shared among students. The fact that it was common for handbooks across all of these institutions to print the cheers suggests that students needed to be nudged into learning them so that they could “properly” support the team. On the one hand, this illustrates how a minority of students, such as the official athletic managers or yell leaders, sought to shape the way that students rooted at sporting events. On the other hand, it reflects the idea that some students may have been uninterested in sporting events, but were pressured to learn and recite the campus cheers anyway.

While college songs and yells were primarily devised as a way to organize student cheering at traditional athletic events such as football games, they were not limited to such events. In 1907 the “O.A.C. Rooters Club” published a pamphlet of yells for many

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34 The Ohio State University Archives, Student Organizations: YMCA, YWCA (44/3), Box 2, *Student’s Hand-Book, 1891*, 14.
occasions, including even yells for intercollegiate debates:

Or a tory! Or a to!
Or a rat o! Tartar oh!
We are peaches at good speeches!
Or a tory! o rio!
Or a tory! or a ti!
H.V. Tartar! See him fly! \(^{35}\)

Yells such as this illustrate that any extracurricular event could be a place to show school spirit—even if the debaters may have found such an activity uncouth. College songs and yells also signified allegiance and loyalty to the college, and when shared by a large group of the student body publically, they emphasized the importance of community and belonging. This discourse of loyalty, pride, and allegiance was also reinforced through other, less public, means.

Showing support for teams and players by cheering at games, attending pep rallies, and learning the schools songs and yells were all public displays of allegiance to the college. School spirit and loyalty were also cultivated through discursive means as well: Encouragement from fellow students to support teams and attend big games, the elevation of football heroes, and the display of school colors were all messages found in student newspapers and handbooks. Taken together, these suggestions reinforced the expectation that every student should do his or her part to support the team and the college.

In October 1904, the Oregon State College Barometer remarked “Now that

\(^{35}\) O.A.C. Rooter’s Club, 1907, Oregon State University Memorabilia Collection, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, MSS MC, Box 139.24. Similar to football yells, this debate yell included the name of the star O.A.C. debater, H.V. Tartar.
football season is on, every student should be on the campus every evening. Even if you cannot play, you can encourage the players by your presence on the ground, and encouragement is what they need. Do not be afraid to yell when you feel like, for there is nothing like yelling to make a man grit his teeth and “buck” the line like a snow plow going into a ten foot drift of snow."³⁶ This editorial plea highlights an effective way that student bodies were encouraged to display loyalty and school spirit through their support of their sports teams. College newspapers and handbooks frequently instructed students that attendance at games and practices was a way to help their school achieve victory. In the same edition of the College Barometer, another editorial reminded students to pay their “athletic tax” so that the sports teams could pay for equipment.³⁷

Students were also cajoled to pay train fares to cheer on their teams at other institutions. In November 1910, Ohio State Lantern asked students to buy their reduced-fare train tickets to watch their Buckeyes play Case Western in Cleveland: “The support of a large number of rooters will help the team greatly, so let everyone go who can whip up the coin!”³⁸ In a similar manner, The Technician, the student newspaper of North Carolina State, noted in 1920, “Just one more word, fellows, this football team is yours. It cannot win games without your support. If you are called upon to back the team financially do it….Put your whole soul behind the team.”³⁹ Likewise, the 1920 University

³⁶ “Editorial,” The College Barometer, October 1901.
³⁷ “Editorial,” The College Barometer, October 1901.
³⁸ “No Case Excursion,” The Ohio State Lantern, November 2, 1910.
of Oregon student handbook defined the “Oregon Spirit” as “a deep, reverent love, coupled with an unswerving loyalty to the alma mater,” and “Life, fire, energy, ardor, courage, animation, cheerfulness, vivacity, and enterprise are small but essential parts of that spirit. The spirit that puts Oregon to the fore in all intercollegiate competition.”

By articulating exactly what loyalty and school spirit entailed, newspaper editorials and handbooks such as these provided unambiguous expectations for students. These obligations included loyalty and support (often financially) for their teams, which were portrayed as different appendages of the same student body. The messages were clear: without the support of the entire student body, teams would fail.

Campus pride and school spirit was also reinforced through the introduction of team colors and mascots. Beginning in the 1890s, colleges across the country began to adopt color schemes and mascots as institutional symbols for their sports teams. What is referred to in contemporary times as “creating a brand,” was then a way for colleges to create a visual sense of unity, and uniformity, among student bodies. This was a significant development in the construction of broader campus identity because it was common for classes, student clubs, and fraternities all to adopt their own color schemes. In this sense, the team and school colors superseded those of individual clubs, reinforcing the theme of common allegiance. In 1896, Ohio University officially selected green and

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40 Hello! 1920, 22, University Archives Publications, Associated Students of the University of Oregon, UA Ref 4, Box 94, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR.

white as their school’s colors by way of a student vote. In 1925, students selected the bobcat as their official mascot because of its ferocity and fighting spirit, a common element found in college mascots. At Ohio State, scarlet and grey were adopted as the athletic colors in 1883, apparently in ad hoc fashion. According to the 1899 _Makio_ yearbook, students were trying to find ways to “beautify their appearance,” and subsequently fashioned ribbons of red and grey about themselves, creating the tradition of wearing the school colors from one’s lapel. As with other institutional symbols, the Ohio State colors soon became a point of pride, loyalty, and unity, as a verse from the 1910 poem “Ohio” highlights:

‘Tis with pride we claim allegiance  
To the Scarlet and the Grey.  
Let us bear those stately colors,  
To the thickest of the fray.  
Let the loyal legions gather,  
Bravest, fairest, tried, and true.  
At thy feet, Oh, mighty Mother,  
Where the shouts of victory hover,  
Let the echoes ring anew.

In this verse the connection between allegiance, school colors, and victory on the field are

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42 Hollow, _Ohio University, 1804-2004_, 75. Before 1896, the teams of Ohio University wore blue and white. The head football coach, Samuel McMillen, suggested the color scheme of green and white based on Dartmouth’s colors, his alma mater.

43 Hollow, _Ohio University, 1804-2004_, 75.

44 The Ohio State University Digital Archives, Makio Archives, https://goo.gl/1m5yuI, _Makio, 1899_, 28. The pairing of scarlet and grey may also have its origins as a reference to the robin bird.

45 The Ohio State University Digital Archives, Makio Archives, https://goo.gl/1m5yuI, _Makio, 1910_, 12.
made, which reiterated the relationship among students, the university, and the athletic teams. “The loyal legions” must gather, again reaffirming the obligation of all students to support their teams so that their shouts will ensure the victory of their side.

The strength and vigor of college athletes were traits that came to represent the virtues of colleges themselves. Athletic fields became war fields where opposing sides waged battle against one another not only for victory, but also institutional pride. Victories on the football field or baseball diamond reinforced the image of the college as a vital and powerful force, an idea that was conveyed to students through newspaper articles and other reporting. Ohio University’s *Green and White* described their football team of 1911 in forceful terms “The battle was hard fought but our men finally solved the Marshall defense…so, naturally, this gave Ohio’s warriors an added zest.” Referencing another conquest, the student newspaper noted “After a week of hard work Exendines Otterbein camp was invaded and after a well fought contest against our bunch left the field with the score standing even.”

References to war and battle were commonly used in student newspapers to drum up support for the campus teams as well as create a sense of courage and bravery around the athletic competition. Athletes were depicted as giving their bodies for the sake of the institution; therefore, it was up to the student body to do all that they could to support them. Mimicking the wartime rhetoric of the day, and also invoking themes of combat, *The College Barometer* of Oregon State noted in April 1917 that “Preparedness is the rule.

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at present on the campus and Monday afternoon the football squad will begin active work to get ready for the battles of next fall.”

In another reference to war, *The College Barometer* remarked in 1921 that “An aerial battle was staged by the varsity,” when quarterback “Joe” Kasberger hurled the ball “time after time to either McFadden, right end, or ‘Stan’ Summers, right half.”

Descriptions of the North Carolina State football squad during the 1930s were no less inspiring. During the 1937 campaign it was noted that the “Wolfpack invaded” the North beating Boston College for the first time, while they “tangled” with Davidson College in another game, and played like a “snarling” pack against Duke.

The imagery of battle, ferocity, and manliness supplemented the broader discourse on college campuses of allegiance and loyalty. As representatives of their institutions, and as members of the student body, athletes were depicted as fierce warriors reinforcing a robust image of the college for public consumption. At another level, the expression of strength and vigor worked to coalesce all students into a “campus tribe,” which idealized the notion of “us versus them.”

Institutional loyalty was also produced through physical edifices on campus. As discussed in chapter four, statues, walkways, and buildings were often emblematic of specific traditions ascribed with certain meanings. During the period from 1900 to 1920,

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48 “Beavers Defeat Yearlings 68 to 7,” *College Barometer*, September 27, 1921.


football increased in appeal and importance not only on campuses of state colleges, but in the American consciousness as well. Football programs like those at the University of Michigan and Ohio State University exploited their on-the-field success and massive followings to erect mammoth structures to house their legions of fans. In 1922, Ohio Stadium was constructed on the campus of Ohio State at a cost of $1.7 million dollars (about $24 million today), and was seen as a signal that the university was on equal footing with some of the best institutions in the United States.\textsuperscript{51} The stadium, modeled after Princeton’s Palmer Memorial Stadium with its two lofty towers, was to be the largest football stadium in the United States, followed by the Yale Bowl.\textsuperscript{52} The new stadium was instantly an icon on the campus. Celebratory songs were created and sung by students in honor of its opening and it was used as inspiration for paintings by art students. A contest was even held to elect an honorary “Stadium Girl” from the student body.

At smaller, rural, institutions like Ohio University, building a modern stadium was viewed as a way of keeping up with other athletic programs as well as a monument to inspire student loyalty (and, of course, alumni donations).\textsuperscript{53} During the mid-1920s, President Elmer Burritt Bryant embarked on a mission to bolster the scope and reputation

\begin{footnotes}
\item[51] James E. Pollard, \textit{History of The Ohio State University: The Story of Its First Seventy-Five Years, 1873-1948} (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1952), 251.

\item[52] “Ohio Stadium Compares Favorably With Structures of Other Schools,” \textit{The Ohio State Lantern}, November 18, 1921. Once built, Ohio Stadium could hold 63,000 spectators in the two-tier structure. The Yale Bowl had a maximum capacity of 61,000.

\end{footnotes}
of Ohio athletics, which had languished for the first two decades of the twentieth century. On November 2, 1929, Ohio’s new 14,000-seat football stadium was dedicated during homecoming weekend. In a telling tribute, the 1930 *Athena* yearbook was dedicated to the football team and new stadium as a sign of revival and rebirth of athletics on their campus. Although modest in comparison to the gargantuan structure built in Columbus, Ohio University’s football stadium marked the beginning of great athletic interest in Athens. Bryant’s vision for Ohio sports had ultimately paid off. With a new, modern football facility, the university was able to lure Don Peden, the famous running back from the University of Illinois, to Athens jump-starting a flagging football program. As a result, between 1927 and 1937, Ohio never lost a home football game and won several conference championships during that stretch.\(^\text{54}\)

With the growth of college athletics at the end of the nineteenth century athletes became a distinct and highly visible social group on campus. Star football players were raised to heroic levels and lauded in student newspapers for their exploits on the field. Furthermore, the growing importance of college athletics after the turn of the century propelled athletes into the spotlight of campus society. Male athletes were celebrated as symbols of strength and virtue by the institutions they represented, a central element of which was the notion of manly courage. Roger Geiger has noted that “In the last decades of the [nineteenth] century, the popular image of a college student as an effete, studious character, memorizing Greek and Latin to prepare for teaching or the ministry, was

\(^{54}\) Hoover, *The History of Ohio University*, 213.
displaced by one explicitly joining manliness, athletic prowess, Christian character, and worldly success.” These qualities, which were bestowed upon football stars in publications such as newspapers and yearbooks, elevated the status of players. For example, in 1911 The Green and White of Ohio University lauded their first-year end, Ralph “Lewey” Lewis, “Now this man Lewis was no common end, as the records of the past show, for combining speed with his 180 pounds of avoirdupois, he proved a terror to opposing backs and earned for himself the nickname ‘Hackenschmidt.’” At Oregon State in 1916, The College Barometer similarly praised the new football captain Lee “Busy” Bissett as “an aggressive player, a hard and sure tackler, and a reliable ground gainer, fighting for every inch of ground.”

Even though state colleges had embraced athletics and athletes as signs of success by the early twentieth century, the development of intercollegiate sports was marked by controversy. From the beginning of organized college athletics, colleges across the United States dealt with scandals surrounding their athletic programs, as well as opposition to the sanctioning of team sports from faculty and administrators. But the opposition and controversy surrounding college athletics around the turn of the century

55 Geiger, The History of American Higher Education, 379. Several works have explored the relationship between religion and sport, such as Clifford Putney’s Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). Putney observes that following the Civil War Protestants adopted a view of sports as a way to express godliness by equipping men with the tools necessary to operate in an increasingly chaotic and mechanized world. Sport was also seen as a way to reverse what some viewed as the feminization of religion.

56 “Athletics,” The Green and White, December 9, 1911.

57 “Football Star is New Captain,” The College Barometer, October 6, 1916.
sheds light on the complex relationship between an important part of the collegiate experience for students and the academic mission of the college. For faculty, specifically, the issue of extracurricular sports stood in opposition to the only purpose of the college: to teach students. These issues also reflected some of the larger social issues that were raised by the rise of major college athletics during this period such as the brutality of physical sport, cheating, immorality, and the possible comprising effects these posed to students and institutions.

Ambivalence and outright hostility toward organized physical activity at colleges has a long history. In the late eighteenth century, the faculty at Princeton forbade students from playing an early form of hockey because it “was low and unbecoming gentlemen and scholars.”58 The emergence of student–constructed outdoor gymnasiums at Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth in the 1820s raised questions of the utility of such activity based on centuries-old attitudes. According to Frederick Rudolph, “The puritan ethic objected to the kind of frivolity and play suggested by an outdoor gymnasium…. Young men did not need to be reminded that Americans judged their neighbors by their industry, not by their capacity for enjoyment.”59 By the 1850s, college officials in eastern states began to begrudgingly accept gymnasiums and physical activity as a part of extracurricular life and authorities began purchasing equipment for student use. A common justification for

58 Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 150.

59 Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 151-152.
such expenditures was that the health of students was critical to keeping the mind pure.\textsuperscript{60} Organized sports continued to gain popularity throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, however, not all college officials were convinced of the benefits of formal intercollegiate athletics. By the end of the century, many serious issues surfaced bolstering widespread resistance to the role of organized sport in higher education.

In 1895, just three years after the formation of a football team, the North Carolina State administration banned the team from playing any intercollegiate games. At the urging of the faculty, who viewed athletics as a distraction for students from their studies, the Board of Trustees voted on December 4, 1895, “that after this session intercollegiate games between the students of this college and other colleges or clubs in or out of the State be prohibited.”\textsuperscript{61} For the next two years, the only physical activities allowed on the campus were informal games, such as pick-up baseball, as well as mandatory military drill. But students continued to agitate for organized intercollegiate athletics sending several petitions to the Board of Trustees in 1896 and 1897. In spring 1897, following a formal petition from the student-run Athletic Association, the board reinstated intercollegiate athletics but only for matches within the state. In June 1899, the board voted again, and decided to expand athletics to allow for interstate play, but under strict

\textsuperscript{60} Rudolph, \textit{The American College and University}, 152. Rudolph notes that officials at Amherst viewed physical activities as a way to “Keep thyself pure,” in mind and body. In order to control and direct such activities, the college created the Department of Hygiene and Physical Education in 1860. Other colleges followed a similar model of creating official departments for physical education reflecting a need to control the students’ extracurricular time.

\textsuperscript{61} Development of Intercollegiate Athletics, in Office of the Chancellor Annual Reports, “Athletics Department” Folder, UA #002.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.
regulations. These regulations stated that no athletic activities could interfere with players’ studies, that football and baseball team members could miss no more than six days of classes, any faculty member could decide whether a student was able to play or not, and the military commandant had to excuse any athlete from drill exercises.\textsuperscript{62} Lastly, the Board of Trustees clarified that any athlete representing the university had to be an enrolled student in attempt to end the practice of recruiting “ringers” to play in competitions.

The issue of intercollegiate athletics was also taken up at Oregon State in 1900. On July 18 of that year, college trustees passed a resolution banning all athletic games, noting:

Intercollegiate athletic games have passed the bounds of reason and developed into a form of mania that is demoralizing to the moral, mental, and physical well being of College students, And whereas the records of all educational institutions show that the standing of those students engaged in athletics compares in nearly all cases unfavorably with the standing of other students...And whereas the doings of the few athletes absorbs the attention and demoralizes the studies of the whole body of students for long periods to utter prostitution of the purposes for which Colleges of Agriculture and Mechanics were beneficently endowed.\textsuperscript{63}

Instead of intercollegiate competitions, which led, in the trustees’ view, to the perversion of the college’s mission, they instead suggested, “healthful athletic or

\textsuperscript{62} Development of Intercollegiate Athletics, in Office of the Chancellor Annual Reports, “Athletics Department” Folder, UA #002.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.

\textsuperscript{63} “Athletics Abolished,” Oregon State University Memorabilia Collections, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, MSS MC, Box 13.7.
other athletics upon the grounds of the College.” It is clear that Oregon State administrators were concerned about the distractions that athletics represented for the entire student body. However, there was also an issue of control and regulation at stake. In the early years of many athletic programs, students ran the teams with very little institutional oversight. When Oregon State trustees made their decision in 1900, they took into account such issues as the misuse of appropriations, inconsistent rules, and the payment of non-university students to play for official teams. In the trustees’ view, athletics had spiraled out of control. In July of the following year, however, the trustees voted to re-establish intercollegiate athletics. Similar to North Carolina State, administrators took far more control under the new regulations. The trustees ruled that all athletes must be Oregon State students, that athletes may not have played for other schools, and may not ever have received payment for their engagement in sports.

Controversy over college athletics was not limited to issues of control and professionalism. By the turn of the century, the brutality of football became a widespread topic of public debate. In a 1905 letter to the editor of The Outlook magazine, the Reverend Edward Owen of Paruna, Oklahoma, a former college football player, assessed the sport in no uncertain terms: “Christ would condemn this game from beginning to end.”

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64 “Athletics Abolished,” Oregon State University Memorabilia Collections, Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries, MSS MC, Box 13.7.

65 “Athletics,” The College Barometer, October, 1901.
end.” After describing many of his physical ailments caused by football, Owen listed the many evils of college football as he saw it. In terms of physical violence, Owen noted that coaches would actively teach their players how to injure opposing players, which reduced players to animals and resulted in a brutish mentality. The game had moral implications for players as well. According to Owen, football did not impart self-control to its players as it taught them to swear profusely and drink liquor (he claims to have seen coaches give players whiskey during games to treat pain). Owen also noted that football authorized men to perform acts on other men that would be deemed criminal in any other setting. By using both physical and moral examples to demonstrate the corrupting nature of football, Owen attempted to reveal the darker side of the sport. Additionally, the issues that Owen publicly expressed in 1905 became a focal point of discussion in the United States as college football became the most popular sport at institutions across the country.

The brutality of football was one of the leading criticisms of the sport. Many players were badly injured during games, and in rare cases, some players died. On October 26, 1901, John Sigrist, center for the Ohio State football team, broke his neck in a game against Western Reserve University. The *New York Times* reported that Sigrist had fractured the third cervical vertebra and was paralyzed from the shoulders down. Significantly, the story of Sigrist’s injury made the front page of *The New York Times*’ Sunday paper. Sigrist died the following day, becoming the first Ohio State football fatality. On Tuesday, October 29, a funeral was held for Sigrist on the campus of Ohio


State where President William Oxley Thompson delivered the eulogy. Thompson observed that “He gave up his life on the athletic field, where he went with the same persistent tenacity and honest determination to succeed which he evidenced in every moment of his private and of his student life.”68 Tellingly, Sigrist’s virtue as a football player was highlighted, despite the nature of his death and the arena in which it occurred.

Sigrist’s death highlighted the dangers of playing intercollegiate football at a time when the nation was focused on the brutality of the sport. Common football plays, such as the “flying wedge,” and “mass play” were pointed to as sanctioned violence under the guise of a competitive sport.69 The outcry over the ferocity and the growing number of injuries led U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt to convene a summit in 1905 of the major football programs in an attempt to revamp the rules of play.70 Defenders of the game, many of whom were presidents of colleges, pointed to the virtuous aspects of college football, such as the development of strong male character, to justify the continuance of the game. In 1910, almost ten years after John Sigrist’s death, the Department of Physical Education at Ohio State University surveyed former football players to gauge the overall

68 “The University Mourns,” *The Ohio State Lantern*, October 30, 1901.

69 John S. Watterson, “Political Football: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and the Gridiron Reform Movement,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1995): 558. The “flying wedge” was outlawed in 1893 because it left the ball carrier unguarded between two “wedges” of players at midfield. “Mass play” referred to the pushing and pulling of the ball carrier in a scrum where violence could be executed without notice of the referee.

70 Watterson, “Political Football: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and the Gridiron Reform Movement,” 560. Watterson notes that representatives from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were summoned to the White House with the goal of drafting a pledge of fair play and sportsmanship. The pledge, while signed by all parties, had little effect on violence.
effects that football had on them. As *The Ohio State Lantern* observed, “An attempt was made to determine the opinion of this body of men as to the relative usefulness of football as an instrument of character building and as a training fitting or unfitting a man for the business world.”71 Unsurprisingly, the survey found that the “overwhelming majority” of former football players “are in excellent health today.” However unscientific this survey may have been, it served the college’s purposes, providing evidence that the crowing over its most important sport was unwarranted.

During this period, college athletics persistently rallied the campus community around one common cause. With the growth of all types of social clubs on college campuses, sports transcended fraternity affiliation, literary society membership, and social hierarchy. Furthermore, athletics was both a shared and constructed experience; students felt the thrill of pep rallies and the euphoria of winning a big game. Victory on the playing field was not just for the athletes, it was a victory for the students as well. But loyalty and college spirit had to be fostered through repeated calls for students to “support the team,” making each student obligated to the larger goal of athletic virtue.

Chapter 7
Policing Morality and Student Behavior

From their colonial beginnings, the historic eastern colleges had to devise ways to control student conduct. At Harvard in 1656, a “Law Authorizing Fines and Corporeal Punishment in College,” was enacted that allowed the president and the college overseers to “punish all misdemeanors of the youth in their society, either by fine, or whipping in the Hall openly.” However, the 1656 law did little to stop rowdy behavior at the college and the town watchmen of Cambridge were empowered in 1659 to, among other things, inspect rooms, round up belligerent students, and investigate incidents of disorder. At Yale in the 1740s, unruly behavior, such as “mischievously ringing the bell,” was punished with fines, while more severe acts resulted in “boxing or cuffing.” In this form of corporeal punishment, the offender was brought before the faculty and the president slapped the student “in quick succession upon either ear.” At Princeton in the early nineteenth century, discipline was often the responsibility of indelicate tutors who tended to mete out overly severe punishments. In 1807, following the suspension of three students for various minor offenses, a rebellion ensued. Students destroyed Nassau Hall,

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2 Josiah Quincy, *The History of Harvard University, Volume 1*, 514.

the college dormitory, and threatened college administrators with physical violence.\textsuperscript{4}

Once the riot calmed down, the president of the college expelled the leaders of the revolt and wrote to the presidents of Harvard and Yale requesting that they not admit the perpetrators.

For most of the nineteenth century, administrators at the historic eastern colleges dealt with varying degrees of poor behavior, from card playing and foul language to riots like the one at Princeton in 1807. Severe forms of punishment and strict control over students’ time and extracurricular activities sought to curb youthful impulses. Underlying this disciplinary approach, however, was a sense of paternalism that was concerned with not only the education of students, but also their moral well-being. Roger Geiger notes that under the old disciplinary regime, morality was sought through rote learning, compulsory chapel, and structured campus life. Administrators of the historic eastern colleges believed that it was their special responsibility to personally ensure that students in their care abided by the rules of civilized society, and, most important, the rules of God. However, as enrollments at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton increased toward the end of the century, administrators found it more difficult to intercede in daily student life. The growing size of the student body meant that it was possible for students to become “invisible” to the authorities of the college. Furthermore, the elective system at Harvard, for example, gave students a new sense of freedom over their lives; and the expansion of student organizations at many colleges allowed students to decide how to structure their free time. At state colleges, college regulations were subject to the same types of forces

\textsuperscript{4}Wertenbaker, Princeton, 1746-1896, 140-41.
as at the historic eastern colleges, forcing administrators to change the way that they oversaw the student body.

Between 1890 and 1940 state college rules reflected a shift from moral paternalism to structured bureaucracy. This shift occurred, in part, because of the huge increase in student enrollments during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which forced administrators to articulate a more specific set of rules. With so many more students, faculty and administrators could no longer maintain close ties with all of their students. Yet, underlying the various iterations of student rules was the sense that the student body must be controlled – an acknowledgement of the long shadow that student revolts and violence of the nineteenth century had cast. Thus, despite the increase in size of student bodies, college administrators still sought to define the boundaries of acceptable academic and social behavior. What changed over the first decades of the twentieth century, however, was the administrative infrastructure built to deal with student behavior, as well as a notion that students should attempt to police themselves.

During the 1890s, college rules were often general and, in most cases, aimed at prohibiting immoral behavior. Rules of this kind were based on the time-honored paternal outlook held by administrators who saw the development of a student’s sound character as part of the job. At Ohio University, a general message regarding student conduct in the 1890 course bulletin was the only articulation of behavioral expectations provided at the time: “Entering the University will be considered a pledge to obey its rules and regulations. These are few and simple, appealing to the student’s self-respect and sense of
personal responsibility. Using similar language, the 1890 North Carolina State course
catalog observed “There must be order and family decorum throughout the College,
though the methods of securing both, will appeal to the self-respect of the student, rather
than to the dread of penalties.” The appeal to students’ sense of morality distinguished
the new disciplinary model of the late nineteenth century from older, more puritanical,
codes of conduct because it assumed that students could control their behavior if allowed
to do so. Strict rules and punishments, such as the demerit system or public chastisement
at chapel exercises, gave way to disciplinary policies that sought to deal with behaviors
that were deemed beyond the moral pale. For example, in 1890, the University of Oregon
catalog “forbade” students to “enter a brewery or saloon,” “drink any intoxicating liquor
while in attendance at the University (except on the prescription of a physician),” “to use
tobacco,” “to carry concealed weapons,” and “to use profane or indecent language.”

Oregon officials also prohibited students from attending skating rinks, dances, or dancing

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5 Catalogue of the Ohio University, 1890, 28.

6 The 1890 catalog was the first published by NC State College and it also contained several
general rules, including the expectation that students were “to demean themselves in a quiet,
gentlemanly manner,” as well as the requirement that all students attend morning chapel and
church on Sundays.

7 Geiger, The History of American Higher Education, 368. The new approach to student conduct
emphasized student freedoms, but was still concerned with issues of morality and behavior.

8 Fifteenth Annual Catalogue of the University of Oregon, 1890-1891, 27-28, General Catalogs
Collection, University of Oregon Digital Collections, Special Collections and University
Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR, https://goo.gl/A64Awx; Sheldon, History
of the University of Oregon, 69. Henry Sheldon noted that the problem of student drinking
occupied a great deal of attention from the faculty and officers in the 1880s and 1890s. According
to Sheldon, the faculty responded by creating the “Ten Commandments,” from which several of
the rules listed above are quoted. Saloons were officially outlawed by vote in the city of Eugene
in 1906.
clubs at any point during the academic year. During the same year, Oregon State noted in its catalog that students were barred from entering drinking or gambling establishments. The Oregon State catalog also warned students against any kind of “contempt of authority by disobedience, insolence, or other ways,” as well as causing damage to college buildings, leaving town without permission, or creating disturbances around classrooms. Thus, it is clear that before the turn of the century, many college officials were preoccupied with questionable behavior and the morality of students. During the early decades of the twentieth century, however, rules began to lose their paternalistic tone, reflecting the changing relationship between students and college officials, as well as the bureaucratization taking effect at the institutions themselves. College overseers were still concerned with immorality, but the rise of student enrollments required a more substantial set of regulations.

The growing number, and specificity, of rules illustrate the shift from the paternalistic care for morality and behavior to a bureaucratic and standardized oversight scheme. Underlying this shift was a new emphasis among administrators that their main role was primarily to matriculate students through an increasingly complex organization, suggesting that the shaping of moral character had become a secondary concern. A useful example of this transition can be found at the University of Oregon between 1890 and 1910. As mentioned above, Oregon outlined a list of thirteen rules aimed at immoral or

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insubordinate behavior. By 1910, the catalog contained no mention of these rules but did contain a section titled “University Regulations Concerning Undergraduate Students” that covered topics such as enrollment, change of studies, grading, and dismissal from courses.\(^\text{10}\) Similarly, at North Carolina State, the 1890 catalog outlined “General Rules” including attending morning prayers and attending church on Sundays. However, by 1910, the list of rules grew to include rules for study hours, regulations for leaving campus and keeping rooms clean and orderly, as well as prohibitions against “hazing new students, cigarette-smoking, drinking, gambling, card playing, visiting pool-rooms and all improper places, loafing on the streets, and other like vicious, idle, unhealthy and unprofitable performances…”\(^\text{11}\) It is important to note that North Carolina State continued to focus on behavioral issues in their official campus publications into the 1910s, well after other schools delegated this task to student governments or specific administrators. This can, in part, be attributed to the relaxing of military discipline on that campus in the 1900s, which suggests that students may have reverted to rowdy behavior under a more lenient rules structure.

\(^\text{10}\) *Catalogue 1909-1910*, 71-76, General Catalogs Collection, University of Oregon Digital Collections, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR, https://goo.gl/8k4Klm. This suggests that administrators at Oregon were shifting from a paternal form oversight to a bureaucratic one. It is significant that the college catalog had become focused on matriculation rather than behavior. This shift coincides, however, with the emergence of deans of men and women at many colleges, reflecting an approach to institutional bureaucratization that was still concerned with student behavior.

\(^\text{11}\) *North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts Catalogue, 1910-1911*, 16-17, in North Carolina State University Libraries’ Rare and Unique Digital Collections, Undergraduate Catalog Collection, https://goo.gl/kfrk0E, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.
By the 1920s, college rules focused heavily on controlling student social life. The development of rules controlling the extracurricular world of students was a response to the liberties that most students, by that time, took for granted, as well as growing concerns over the level of socializing occurring between men and women. Regulations such as those issued by the University of Oregon in 1922 are reflective of this new focus. For example, dances required the approval of the dean of women and were to be properly supervised, picnics required chaperones, and calling hours were established during the week. In 1929, Ohio University administrators enumerated “Social Regulations,” which stated that all social events had to be held on either Friday evening or Saturday afternoon or evening; that all student functions where both men and women would be attending must have university-approved hostesses; and that all formal dances could continue until 12:50 a.m., but that all women guests had to be in their homes by one o’clock in the morning. Other common social regulations included rules prohibiting smoking on campus, such as at Oregon, Ohio State, and Oregon State; bans on alcohol; rules governing the use of automobiles on campus; and rules on leaving town without permission of campus authorities. The number of official college rules increased during the early twentieth century suggesting that student morality was still a concern for administrators, but the rules also expanded to include formal admissions policies, matriculation timelines, payment of fees, and social regulations. Taken together, these rules highlight the bureaucratic complexity that had been reached in which many

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13 Student Handbook, 1929-1930, 25-26, Collection of Student Handbooks, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.
different aspects of student life had to be explicitly regulated.

It is important to note that throughout this period published rules and regulations were implicitly aimed at controlling both male and female students (at coeducational institutions), but women were often held to much more rigorous standards. In the early years of coeducational state colleges there was little distinction made between rules for men and women in official college publications. For example, regulations regarding room and board at Ohio State in 1896 made no reference to where women should find housing, only noting the various dormitories and boarding homes where rooms were available.\(^\text{14}\) It was not until the 1910s that rules specifically designed for women began to appear in catalogs and handbooks. Housing was a typical form of regulation. At Ohio University, all women students were required to live in one of the women’s dormitories or with family. Justifying this rule, the administration noted in the 1911 course bulletin “this regulation has been adopted with a view solely to the best interests of the young women themselves, and not with any purpose to restrict them in the enjoyment of every legitimate privilege.”\(^\text{15}\) At Oregon State, rules specified that all women students who

\(^{14}\) The Ohio State University Archives, Bulletins (8/n-5), Organization Requirements for Admission, Rules and Regulations, Advanced Degrees, 1896, 32-33. It is clear, however, that most of the specific rules outlined, such as at those at University of Oregon and Oregon Agricultural College in the 1890s, were primarily meant for men. For example, it would have gone without mention that proper young women would not enter a saloon hall or use tobacco in the first place.

\(^{15}\) Catalogue of Ohio University, 1910-1911, 30, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Course Catalogs/Bulletins, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/QKYf52. The resident rule suggests that women who were residents of Athens most likely lived with their parents, and as such, were adequately supervised outside of campus.
enrolled in the college were expected to reside in the dormitory unless their parents or relatives lived in Corvallis and could “assume responsibility for their care.”\textsuperscript{16} Ohio State administrators, under the direction of the dean of women (a position that emerged during the 1910s), mandated that all women students find housing from an approved list maintained by the university. These lists contained homes where “only women are taken as roomers and where a parlor is available for callers,” and were operated by women of “good moral character.”\textsuperscript{17} No such caveats appeared for male students in these announcements suggesting that they could live wherever they pleased.

By the 1920s, rules for women students had become quite specific. In the 1923 Ohio University student handbook, an entire section was devoted to issues pertaining specifically to women such as the Y.W.C.A., sororities, and social regulations. Drawing on rules for women in the 1910s, emphasis was given to living arrangements; but rules controlling women’s use of time and movement were now also outlined. For example, all women were expected to be in their dormitories by a quarter past eight in the evening, and lights out at ten o’clock. Women students were also prohibited from visiting fraternity houses except for scheduled social events and were not allowed to entertain


\textsuperscript{17} The Ohio State University Digital Archives, Course Bulletins Collection, https://goo.gl/nQptX2, Course Bulletin, 1915, 56.
callers more than three nights a week. In 1929, university officials went one step further in their governance of women students by issuing “The Standards of Living for Ohio University Women.” This list of regulations outlined an hour-by-hour schedule for each evening, including lights out, quiet hours, the amount of time a resident could be absent from her home, telephone use, and bathing hours. Significantly, administrators created no such regulations for male students.

The notion that women students must be protected was even more pronounced at Meredith College. From its inception, Meredith College enforced a strict set of rules aimed at preserving the virtue and morality of women. In the introductory note to the 1899 catalog this point is made clear, “No small part of young lady’s (sic) education if derived from the people with whom she comes in contact. Of course, proper restrictions are put upon the student body, and contact with the general life of the city is so guarded that it may occur only under most desirable conditions.” To this end, Meredith College officials created a rigorous set of rules around the turn of the century that controlled almost every aspect of students’ lives. In 1906, a list of twenty-four regulations was published in the student handbook. These rules governed where students could go in town, such as “students will not leave the University grounds without notifying the lady

18 O Book of the Ohio University, 1923, 28, Collection of Student Handbooks, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. This edition of the student handbook also contained a “Men’s Section,” but did not specify regulations for male students.


principle,” and “Students are requested not to walk in East Raleigh, on Fayetteville or Hillsboro Streets, in the near vicinity of the railroad shops or the depot.”

Officials were worried about women walking in and around East Raleigh because it was a primarily African-American neighborhood, and near the train depot because of the possibility of encountering transients. College authorities were also concerned about any appearance of impropriety, requiring: “All shades and blinds must be closed upon lighting the rooms at night,” and warning that “any student found communicating by word or sign, beyond simple recognition, from any part of the buildings or grounds or making clandestine engagements with any man, will be publically reprimanded, suspended or expelled at the discretion of the faculty.”

By 1916, the number of regulations expanded to forty-two, including new rules prohibiting women from sitting next to men at dining tables, requiring women to always walk in groups of two, and banning students from inviting “colored women” into dormitory rooms or hallways.

Unlike the state institutions covered here, Meredith College went to great lengths to guard and protect its students from the outside world, reflecting its varying mission and guiding principles. However, the basic assumption that women needed additional safeguards was a near-universal idea present in the rules and regulations of colleges during the early twentieth century. Fueling the concerns over women’s sanctity on college campuses was the dramatic increase in the number of women attending college during this period, which, according to the dominant paradigm of gender relations,

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necessitated that administrators take extra precautions with their female charges.\textsuperscript{22}

Beyond rules that had become more articulated and specific, student oversight was also changing. With the influx of new types of students, a system of student life management developed in response to these changes.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the job of disciplining students fell personally to the college president. In 1891, Oregon State President Benjamin Lee Arnold received reports of absences and of misconduct each evening. Students were required to meet with Arnold the following day when he would decide their punishment.\textsuperscript{23} In 1900, Ohio State President William Oxley Thompson often received letters from residents of Columbus requesting his assistance in taking action against unruly students. For example, an irritated homeowner wrote to Thompson in mid-1900 that several students living across the street had “been conducting themselves in a somewhat disgraceful manner of late,” when he observed “last night or early this morning they had two empty beer kegs resting in the front windows.”\textsuperscript{24} The resident provided the names of the students living in the house and asked Thompson to address the issue with them.

A standard form of presidential discipline at the turn of the century was reporting

\textsuperscript{22} Gordon, \textit{Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era}, 7. In 1890, there were 56,000 women enrolled in institutions of higher education; in 1920, 283,000 women were enrolled; in 1940, the number doubled to 601,000.

\textsuperscript{23} Annual Catalogue of the State Agricultural College of the State of Oregon for 1890-1891, 27.

\textsuperscript{24} The Ohio State University Archives, William Oxley Thompson Papers, 1899-1926 (RG: 3/e) “Letter from J.S. Bradford to President William Oxley Thompson,” June 5, 1900.
student issues directly to parents. At North Carolina State, reports were sent to parents at the end of every term with the intention “that parents will inquire into the cause of such evidences of demerit, and hold their sons to strict account for them.” In 1898, reports of “deportment and absence” began to be sent monthly. Similarly, at Ohio University in 1900 records were kept on academic and behavioral issues of students that would then be sent to parents. These forms of oversight reflect the changing conditions of student life during late nineteenth century. Many colleges were still small communities with fewer than one thousand students making it possible for the president to manage all disciplinary issues. However, as student enrollments grew in the early twentieth century and colleges became increasingly complex institutions, the task of monitoring student behavior was delegated to a new set of professionals: deans of students.

The idea for specific college administrators to oversee student life was a response to many changes in higher education around the turn of the century: growth of student bodies, secularization, an increase in student liberties and extracurricular life, and the formidable increase of women students. As mentioned, college presidents and faculty could no longer maintain close relationships with every student, which created a need for a specific person within the campus leadership to serve as an intermediary between

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25 First Annual Catalogue of the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, 1890, 39, in Division of Student Affairs Publications, 1889-2013, “Course Catalogs 1889-1900” Folder, UA #016.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.
students and administrators and faculty.\textsuperscript{26} Chronologically, deans of women developed into full-time administrative positions before deans of men.\textsuperscript{27} Ohio University’s first dean of women, Dr. Irma E. Voigt, is illustrative of both the haphazard establishment of the role on college campuses, as well as the nature of the job as it developed in the early twentieth century. In September 1913, Voigt arrived in Athens where she received only a tepid welcome from the president of the university. As she recalled in her memoir, “I reported immediately to the office of Doctor Alston Ellis, who was president of the institution, but hardly expected the response which I got. After my first rather timid suggestion, ‘I’m here for work. I’m ready to receive instructions from you,’ he cleared his throat in his characteristic way and deliberately looked me over, as it were. ‘Well, I’m sure I don’t know what a Dean of Women’s for, or why Ohio University has to have one, and I suspect you don’t know what a Dean of Women’s duties are any more than I do, so

\textsuperscript{26}Robert Schwartz, \textit{Deans of Men and the Shaping of Modern College Culture} (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 3. The first official dean of students, LeBaron Russell Briggs, was installed at Harvard by Charles Eliot in 1890. Briggs served as dean of students at Harvard until 1930.

\textsuperscript{27}Jana Nidiffer, \textit{Pioneering Deans of Women: More Than Pious Matrons} (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000), 3-4. The first dean of women to carry such title was Marion Talbot at the University of Chicago in 1892. Nidiffer identifies five phases of development of deans of women: “historical backdrop,” from 1833-1892, which includes the first lady principles of the antebellum years who were little more than dormitory matrons; the “pre-professionalization” period, from 1892-1901, in which college administrators began to sense that female students had unmet needs; the “collective activity” period, from 1901-1906 when deans of women across the United States formed the Conference of Deans and Advisors of Women in State Universities in 1903; the “becoming an expert” period, from 1906-1911, in which a distinct “intellectual rationale for the work of the deans was developed, based on their beliefs about women’s nature”; and finally the “attributes of a profession” phase, from 1911-1918, in which the National Association of Deans of Women was formed in 1916 and courses began to be taught on “how to be a dean of women” at Columbia and Wisconsin. This last phase coincided also with the publication of Lois Mathews’ \textit{The Dean of Women} in 1915. (12-14)
the sooner you find out, the better.” To further complicate her arrival, the administration had not arranged an office or living quarters for Voigt to occupy.

As she stumbled through her first experiences as a dean (prior to being appointed to the position at Ohio University, Voigt was a high school teacher and principal in Illinois, and received a Ph.D. in German from the University of Illinois) it was clear that the female students at Ohio University had long been underserved. During her first year of service, Voigt helped to establish a Women’s League based on her own experiences in such an organization at the University of Illinois. The Women’s League essentially brought together all university women, both faculty and students, into a unified body that organized social events, and perhaps more importantly, facilitated the creation of a loan fund for women students. Thus, the dean of women served as an advocate and adviser for women students, but was also in charge of overseeing student conduct.

In 1912, a year before Ohio University hired Voigt, Ohio State University appointed Dr. Caroline Breyfogle, an alumna of the university, as the first dean of women. During her first few years on the job, Breyfogle was embroiled with the president and the board of trustees in a controversy over women’s housing. At the center of this dispute was Lela Albright, a student who had been residing in the home of a family friend who had a son. Breyfogle, seeking to establish herself in the new role, used the situation to shore up the university’s female housing policy. Breyfogle confronted both the homeowner and Albright, demanding that they both conform to the university

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28 “Irma Voigt, University of Ohio Dean of Women Memoir,” 1950, Irma Voigt Collection, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.
requirement that all boarding homes where women reside be single sex. In response, the homeowner, Mrs. M.E. Wiltberger, notified Breyfogle that she had no intention of making her home a single sex boarding house and that she refused to observe Breyfogle’s authority on the matter.\(^{29}\) This issue dragged on for more than two years with Breyfogle eventually prevailing.

Breyfogle also encountered more benign issues during her first years, such as a spate of cigarette smoking by women at dances (evidenced by the remnants found by the night watchman) and the use of hotplates in dangerous ways that could lead to fire.\(^{30}\)

Unlike Voigt at Ohio University, however, Breyfogle appeared to have earned the full support of the university president. In many cases, Thompson deferred to her judgment, as was the case in the Lela Albright incident, as well as others. The emergence of specific administrators tasked with overseeing student life reflected the continuing need to control the student body, but now in a bureaucratic manner. In the 1920s, deans of men began to appear in college administrations, further advancing the organizational complexity of

\(^{29}\) The Ohio State University Archives, William Oxley Thompson Papers (RG: 3/e/20), “Letter from Ralph Wright to President W.O. Thompson,” September 12, 1912. This episode created a firestorm for Breyfogle. Shortly after the issue became known, Ralph Wright, the prosecuting attorney for Tuscarawas County, sent a scathing letter to President Thompson criticizing Breyfogle for her handling of this case, noting, “I believe that Miss Breyfogle has failed to display tact, and that she lacks good judgment. She has been a disturbing element in the university ever since she came.” In another letter sent directly to Dean Breyfogle, dated September 1, 1914, Wright condemns her even further, “I am personally familiar, Miss Breyfogle, with the hostile treatment you have accorded Miss Albright in the past and I know the reasons for this disrespectful treatment by you. Miss Albright withdrew from one of your classes last year on account of your insulting attitude toward her and since then you have harassed the girl until she has been at times unable to cope with your intrigues.”

universities while seeking to insure an orderly male student population. Thus, through rules and specific oversight agents, colleges were able to transition into an era of mass higher education without reverting to the campus chaos of earlier periods in American higher education.

However, rules and regulations were not the only mechanisms of controlling the student body. Even as secularization had become an institutional standard by the turn of the twentieth century, religion still played a role in shaping attitudes and behavior of students. By the 1890s, religion as an official mechanism of control was in decline. The concomitant trends of academic specialization, the growth of student bodies, and, important to this discussion, the rise of practical education at Land-Grant state colleges, diminished the old regime of piety and character building on most campuses. However, religion did not disappear entirely from college life. Students, instead of faculty or administrators, became the primary organizing agents of religious life. Students stepped into the vacuum created by institutional secularization to meet spiritual needs that colleges no longer addressed. This transition coincided also with the growth of extracurricular activities, such as athletics, and provided at least a degree of control over students, by students, through appeals to Christian teachings. Well into the twentieth century.

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31 Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education*, 368. Geiger notes that the “disciplinary regime” of previous generations began to crumble in the postbellum period. At colleges with stronger religious ties, the regime lasted longer, but as colleges sought monies from a wider group of alumni and non-religious organizations, the overall system of religion in higher education lost its power.

32 I am borrowing this term from Frederick Rudolph, which he used to discuss the transfer of spiritual guidance from college officials to students.
century, college overseers continued to suggest strongly that students abide by religious rules, even if they were no longer in charge of monitoring whether students were actually doing so.

The most visible agency of religious life during the late nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century was the Young Men’s Christian Association. Historian David Setran has observed that student branches of Y.M.C.A. located the “core of Christianity in ethical living rather than doctrinal reflection,” and consequently “found itself quite at home within a university culture that also wished to distinguish between inappropriate theologizing and more palatable emphases on service and religious living.”

As such, the Y.M.C.A. fit neatly into the emerging moral paradigm of higher education that focused on character development instead of a rigorous Christian lifestyle. Unofficial Y.M.C.A. chapters emerged sporadically on college campuses in the 1860s and received official endorsement from the parent association in the 1870s. During the 1880s, chapters were consolidated so that by the 1890s the Y.M.C.A. had turned into a large-scale college movement. By 1900, the Y.M.C.A. had chapters on 559 campuses with nearly 32,000 college student members nationwide. From 1900 and 1920 between twenty-five percent and thirty percent of all male college students were members of the organization.

Consequently, the Y.M.C.A. was in a special position to frame the moral outlook of a campus, something that it tried to pursue

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through student engagement.

Much of the work of campus Y.M.C.A.’s during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was directed toward practical matters of student life. Before colleges created official departments dedicated to “student services,” the college “Y” often served this purpose. This principle was aided by a movement in the 1900s and 1910s to construct Y.M.C.A. buildings on campuses that would serve as centers of student social life in the absence of student unions.35 At North Carolina State in 1912, the student handbook, the primary vehicle through which the Y.M.C.A. promoted itself in the early twentieth century noted, “The association exists to help the students, especially new students. Service is one of the great principles from which it (the Y.M.C.A.) stands.”36 The organization provided instructions on where to pick up mail, where to have laundry cleaned, lists of textbooks for each course, fire safety (a major concern at colleges during this period), college traditions and rules, and much more.

The Y.M.C.A. also helped students find housing. At Oregon State, the 1901 student handbook noted that “members of the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A. wearing ribbon badges will meet all trains during the opening days of the term, and will be glad to aid you in any way possible…they will gladly aid you in securing board and furnish an escort to assist in

35 For example, the Oregon State branch of the Y.M.C.A. undertook a fundraising drive in 1905 to construct a building that would offer spaces to the literary societies and other campus clubs to hold social gatherings and house offices.

36 The Student’s Hand-Book of the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, 1912-1913, in Division of Student Affairs Publications, 1889-2013, “Student Affairs, Religious Affairs: Student Handbook, 1912-1913” Folder, #UA 016.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.
getting your baggage from the train and in getting located in your new home.”

One of the most significant services that the Y.M.C.A. provided was an employment bureau that helped students find work. At Ohio State University in 1920, the Y.M.C.A. maintained such an office noting that most students were “self-supporting.”

The association served as a go-between for townspeople looking for workers for odd jobs as well as employers looking for permanent employees. Even as the influence of the Y.M.C.A. began to fade in the 1920s, the employment bureaus persisted as an important service on campus.

Notably, the Y.W.C.A. did not offer a similar service for women students, which suggests that they were either forced to find work themselves, or were encouraged not to work while in college.

The Y.M.C.A. student handbook was an important tool used by the association to ingratiate the organization with new students. The handbook phenomenon appears to have started in the 1890s, just as the Y.M.C.A. began ramping up efforts to solidify its place in campus culture. The handbooks, purposely designed to be small so that students could carry them wherever they went, provided information mostly on personal and social aspects of campus life, but certainly emphasized the significance of the campus ‘Y.’ In addition to the practical resources that they offered students, Y.M.C.A organizations sought to inculcate a culture of morality on campuses, something administrators could no longer explicitly pursue.

College leaders did, however, continue to emphasize the positive influences of

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37 Student Handbook OAC, 1901-1902, 7.

38 The Ohio State Handbook, 1920-1921.
leading a Christian lifestyle without descending into doctrinism. Latin professor David Evans of Ohio University commented in 1907, “the Bible is the crown jewel of all literature. This age requires us to be thorough students of the book, not merely careless readers. No man is well educated without a knowledge of God’s word.”39 Furthermore, an entire section of the university’s official course bulletin had been devoted to “Religious Influence” since at least 1890. An interesting change occurred in the 1901-1902 bulletin, however, when the language of this section was modified to include a statement indicating that university did not endorse a specific Protestant sect. Several years later, administrators at Ohio University further clarified “religious influence” on their campus by stating, “The University is not sectarian, and no effort is made to inculcate the doctrines of any particular creed or denomination; but the utmost care is take to promote sound and healthy religious sentiments.”40 Interestingly, church attendance continued to be mandatory throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, until it was officially abolished by 1911.

Similar language can be found in catalogs around the turn of the century at Oregon State. The 1901 course offerings bulletin stated, “Established by a government that recognizes no distinction of religious belief, the Oregon Agricultural College seeks neither to promote any creed nor to exclude any; but it will always do everything in its


40 Catalogue of Ohio University, 1910-1911, 33.
power to promote the religious spirit and life.’” University of Oregon officials interestingly made no claim of neutrality when discussing religion in their 1900 catalogue, stating, “every endeavor is made to surround students with the best influences of refinement and Christian culture.”

At Ohio State, officials encouraged students to join the Y.M.C.A. as a means of promoting Christian culture on their campus. Its 1906 course bulletin noted under the heading “Religious and Moral Culture,”: “The Young Men’s Christian Association endeavors to cultivate a healthy religious atmosphere in the University by holding weekly meetings, by promoting the study of the Bible and the progress of Christianity.” In this way, officials at Ohio State and elsewhere continued to acknowledge the importance of Christianity to student life, but withdrew the institution from an explicit obligation to be the agent in control of this practice. In general, college administrations around the nation continued to emphasize the significant role of religion by tacitly approving of Y.M.C.A. organizations and the promotion of religious sentiment on their campuses.

Colleges continued to offer religious curricula as well. At Ohio University, along with the establishment of the university pastorate, a school of religion was also founded

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42 Catalogue for the Year 1899-1900, 24, General Catalogs Collection, University of Oregon Digital Collections, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, OR, https://goo.gl/upjN3A.

43 The Ohio State University Archives, Bulletins (8/n-5), Course Offerings, 1906, 69.
“in accordance with the deep seated conviction that university centers must be centers of religious education as well.”

The stated purpose of the new school was to train students as lay preachers for their local churches and to provide general religious education to any student. As a sign of the university’s approval of such courses, elective credit was granted to students, which could be used for the completion of a degree. College officials did note, however, “notwithstanding this apparent close relationship between the University and the School of Religion, there is no organic connection between the two.” In the same year, the University of Oregon began offering courses in a newly created School of Religious Education under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A. Similar to the School of Religion at Ohio University, the program at Oregon was headed by a student pastor with local pastors serving as faculty. The curriculum offered in the religious education program varied from devotional discussion groups to a study of the relationship between science and the Bible. Unlike the program at Ohio University, officials at Oregon made no disclaimer regarding the connection between religious courses and regular university curriculum suggesting that the administration fully believed in the value of mixing Christian and secular education.

Religion, however, declined in importance to both students and administrators as

\[44\] *O Book of the Ohio University*, 1923, 17.

\[45\] College officials did note, however, “Notwithstanding this apparent close relationship between the University and the School of Religion, there is no organic connection between the two.”

Religious education was only offered at 10 state universities, nationwide, as of 1926. Yet, in 1928, North Carolina State began offering a religious education program, in which university credit could be earned toward a degree. This reflected the conservative outlook of the college’s administrators who saw value in emphasizing on religion.
the twentieth century wore on. From a student perspective, the growing importance of extracurricular activities, the pull of social life, and the excitement of athletics all played a role in the lessening of religious fervor on college campuses. For administrators, religion had become secondary to a host of new realities informing higher education: increased enrollments, specialization, the growing demands of more complex institutions, and, perhaps most important, the growing relationship between higher education and capitalist society.47 The outward signs of the growing irrelevance of religion within higher education included shifts such as the abolition of mandatory chapel services at most colleges at the beginning of the twentieth century, the decline of Christian associations’ significance on campus, and the disappearance of religious-oriented materials from official university publications.

The decline of compulsory chapel and church attendance, which were legacies of the old disciplinary regime, was one of the first signs of a broader move away from religion within student life. At some institutions such as North Carolina State, mandatory chapel exercises lasted until the 1920s, but most colleges abandoned such requirements in the early 1900s. Ohio State University abolished mandatory chapel much earlier. During the late 1880s, the administration debated the merits of continuing mandatory chapel as the board of trustees firmly opposed its discontinuation while college President William

47 Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 270. Marsden notes that rapid university expansion made religious matters less of a concern for college leaders. Because universities were becoming dependent on American corporations for funding, and in return business was becoming dependent on a technically perceptive workforce, religion simply lost its reason for existence within higher education.
Henry Scott was dubious as to its practicality.\footnote{Pollard, *History of the Ohio State University*, 87.} The growth of the student body presented a logistical challenge as the lecture room where chapel services were held was no longer adequate. Additionally, keeping track of absences proved to be another dilemma since faculty rarely attended the services and taking attendance at the beginning of each session was a long and arduous process for the president alone. Perhaps most significant was that Scott knew that students only begrudgingly took part in the activity and saw this as counterproductive to the cultivation of morality within the student body. As the *Daily Lantern* put it in 1889, “There can be little doubt that the majority of college students attend chapel merely to prevent the revivification of the Demerit System. Anything like religious motives or desire to obtain any good from the exercises are, we may be sure, the incentives of a few.”\footnote{“Observations,” *The Fortnightly Lantern*, January 11, 1889.} The matter of mandatory chapel was finally settled in 1900, when the board of trustees approved a plan by the faculty to replace chapel exercises with a voluntary weekly convocation, much to the delight of the student body.\footnote{Pollard, *History of the Ohio State University*, 89. Pollard notes that during the 1890s the issue of chapel services waxed and waned according to the temperament and willingness of the student body.}

At other colleges, compulsory chapel exercises began to fade in the early 1900s. Oregon State abolished such a requirement in 1901 and implemented voluntary convocation, like Ohio State, in 1912. At Ohio University, a 1901 regulation stated “students are required to be present at roll-call and prayers in the chapel every morning, unless excused by the faculty, and to attend public worship on the Sabbath; but the choice
of the place of attendance is left with the student or his parents.”

In 1908, university officials revised this regulation by removing the chapel requirement and stating, “Students are encouraged to attend with regularity the churches of their choice.” The move to disband mandatory religious exercises was part of the broader trend of institutional secularization in higher education, but student–organized religious life persisted into the 1920s. This too, however, eventually began to dissipate.

According to David Setran, between the late 1880s and 1920 the Y.M.C.A. “was a functional participant in the campus mainstream, enjoying the prestige of centrality within both student culture and the larger administrative functions of the schools.” Yet, by the 1920s the significance of the organization had eroded. Its decline was due to the extracurricular–oriented campus societies that had developed in the early twentieth century, especially the emergence of fraternities and sororities. Put simply, students had become far more interested in dances, fraternities, club “spreads,” and dating than they were in religious life. Furthermore, with the emergence of official deans of students, the

51 Catalogue of the Ohio University Athens, for 1900-1901, 15, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Course Catalogs/Bulletins, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/j1Pgv2.

52 Catalogue of Ohio University, 1908-1909, 25, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Course Catalogs/Bulletins, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/Cvyoys.


54 Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful, 141. Fass notes that by the 1920s, students with strong religious convictions composed a small percentage of the overall student body on many campuses and had developed their own standards and ethics. These social norms were often at odds with the attitudes of the broader campus world. Consequently, campus Y’s lost their power because they were no longer the center of social activity.
responsibility for shaping behavior shifted back to administrators and away from religious organizations.

The waning influence Y.M.C.A. is reflected in the decline of membership by the 1920s, as well as the explosive growth of other campus organizations. For example, in 1910 the Ohio University branch of the Y.M.C.A. had 290 members, roughly ninety-five percent of all male students. In 1926, the association was reorganized as the “Fellowship Council Y.M.C.A” and claimed only twelve members. At the University of Oregon, the Y.M.C.A. claimed roughly two hundred students, but due to flagging interest in the early 1920s, officially dissolved in 1922. The increase of campus clubs catering to specific groups of students also led to the decline of the Y.M.C.A. A useful illustration for this was the enormous growth of organizations at Ohio State University. In 1910, Ohio State had approximately forty distinct campus organizations including fraternities, sororities, musical, literary, debating, and political societies. The Y.M.C.A. was the most popular organization, however, with nearly four hundred members. By 1925, there were

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55 *Athena, 1910*, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Yearbooks, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/dWZVa9.

56 *The 1926 Athena*, 246, Ohio University Digital Collections, Ohio University Yearbooks, Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, https://goo.gl/OQgiKb. The organization continued to offer employment services, as it had for many decades, however their focus turned to community projects, such as playground improvements and Sunday school teaching. By 1935, the Y.M.C.A. branch at Ohio University had been dissolved.


nearly 190 different clubs, societies, fraternities, and sororities represented on the campus in Columbus.59

At the end of 1920s, religion’s moralizing influence had all but disappeared from state colleges. An illustrative example of this can be seen in the 1927 Ohio State “Freshman Manual.” In previous decades, the Y.M.C.A. had played a significant role acclimatizing new students to college life such as finding housing and being a friendly resource to ask for advice. The underlying rationale was always that the Y.M.C.A. was seeking to expand its network of members. By ingratiating themselves to new students from the start, they bettered their chances of succeeding in this goal. It is telling, then, that the 1927 Ohio State Freshman Manual made no mention of the Y.M.C.A., churches, or religious expectations. Instead, it promised, “The University has no other end in view than your welfare—physically, intellectually, morally. It is here for you. It is here to help you become a critical, independent and original thinker, to think for yourself.”60 In fact, administrators made a decision earlier in 1927 that the university would have only one official new student manual, and it was to be prepared by the institution. In a letter to the faculty adviser to the Y.M.C.A., President George W. Rightmire noted that “it would be well to mark the freshmen handbook ‘Collated and issued by the Freshmen Week Council, Official’ or in some other way which would identify it as the book behind which

59 The Ohio State University Digital Archives, Makio Archives, https://goo.gl/1m5yuI, Makio. 1925. Interestingly, The Grange agricultural club boasted several hundred members, making it one of the most popular student groups in the mid-1920s.

the university stands.” In addition to signaling that the administration was now in total control of freshmen acclimation and orientation, the move by Ohio State leaders to publish an institutional manual reflected the decreasing status of the once-dominant organization.

At other universities, student handbooks were also transitioning from Y.M.C.A.-published to either institutionally published documents, or documents supplied by student governments. Such was the case at the University of Oregon, where the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) took over control of handbook printing in 1922. At Oregon State, handbook publication duties transferred from the Y.M.C.A. First, the “Vigilance Committee,” in the early 1920s, and then to the student government, Associated Students of Oregon State, several years later, took over producing the handbook. At North Carolina State, a more conservative institution, the publication of student handbooks remained in the hands of the Y.M.C.A. into the mid-1930s.

As late as the 1930s, college officials understood that students on their campus required a certain measure of oversight. Administrators still maintained official university rules, however, they no longer focused on morality and character building as a way to maintain social order on their campuses. The realities of larger student bodies and ever increasing bureaucratic institutional structure forced presidents, faculty, and deans to

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62 The “Vigilance Committee,” at Oregon State was composed of 30 sophomores charged with making sure that freshmen complied with the formal and informal rules of the college. According to the 1920 Beaver yearbook, “It is the purpose of the committee not to seek trouble but to prevent it.”
create a new oversight model. Their guiding principles focused less on creating respectable adults and more on designing an efficient system that was capable of moving students through the university en masse. As a result, the responsibility of monitoring student life was thrust upon new agents, namely deans of students, as well as student-led organizations that took on the role of self-policing. In short, official university regulations created the standards of student conduct, but it was now up to students to negotiate acceptable attitudes and behavior.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

The tradition of the collegiate way, or the idea that extracurricular life is just as important to a student’s education as formal study, originated in the communal settings of the earliest American colleges. The collegiate way was expressed in the development of the social worlds of students at institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, and over time these patterns of living came to be viewed as the *traditional college experience*. The central aspects of the traditional college experience were: a close association of men of the same age group; communal residences and dining halls; common daily schedules and classes; and a degree of autonomy from the college overseers that allowed students to organize extracurricular clubs and societies. During the early nineteenth century, most students experienced college life on these terms primarily because there were few other options. In 1800, only twenty-five degree granting colleges existed in the U.S., all of which were clustered in the east, ascribing the traditional college experience with a geographical component as well.¹ Thus, the historic eastern colleges were the arbiters of the traditional college experience for over two hundred years. Representations of college life in the late nineteenth century attest to the predominance of historic eastern college experience in popular culture. Novels such as Charles Macomb Flandrau’s *Harvard Episodes* and Owen Johnson’s *Stover at Yale* were both characteristic of the college life novel, which gave readers an inside view of life at America’s best colleges. During the

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¹ Donald G. Tewksbury, *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities Before the Civil War* (New York: Teachers College Bureau of Publications, 1932), 32-35. The founding of colleges primarily in the eastern U.S. before 1800 was unsurprising, of course, since substantial westward expansion had not yet occurred.
late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, were by far
the most popular settings for fictional accounts of student life, which ultimately
perpetuated the image of the college experience as geographically eastern and socially
elite.

As a fundamental tradition of the American college, extracurricular activities
were the basis on which students created bonds with one another and formed campus
cultures outside of the official institutional boundaries. As public higher education
emerged in the nineteenth century, extracurricular student life began to be transformed by
new types of institutions being established in recently annexed regions of the country, as
well as by the enrollment of students coming from varied class backgrounds. Critical to
this expansion of higher education was the Morrill Land–Grant College Act, which was
signed into law in 1862. Besides creating a framework for the systematic proliferation of
public higher education, the Act was implemented to provide the “industrial classes” with
the education necessary to compete in an increasingly professionalized society. The
institutions that were created to meet such a need were distinct from the historic eastern
colleges in several respects. First, they provided access to a much wider group of
Americans who would otherwise have been unable to enter higher education. Entrance
requirements for state colleges were typically lenient, especially in the late nineteenth
century and the early decades of the twentieth century, which allowed students to enter
who had not graduated from high school as long as they could prove their proficiency in
reading and math. Second, the Land–Grant colleges were mostly coeducational, which
stood in stark contrast to the history of male-only colleges in the east. The mixing of the
sexes affected the ways that students interacted with one another in extracurricular life, as well as it forced administrators to design rules to deal with this reality. Lastly, Land–Grant state colleges were explicitly founded to provide practical training for citizens that would, in theory, ultimately benefit the state. The emphasis placed on “practical and useful arts” was a response by the federal government to increasingly mechanized and industrialized society. This focus had the greatest impact on people in the lower and middle classes who now had an opportunity to improve their economic position through vocational training.

Thus, the diffusion of higher education geographically, and along class lines, expanded the meaning and the purpose of higher education in America. A consequence of this was the creation of student cultures that reflected the character, sensibilities, and values of the regions in which they were located. North Carolina State, for example, held a conservative outlook throughout the period of this study, which was illustrated by a strict adherence to a military lifestyle, a refusal to allow women students to enroll, a reluctance to establish fraternities, and a visible observance of religion not found at other state colleges. Conversely, students at Ohio State and the University of Oregon had much autonomy relative to students at North Carolina State, which is evident in the types social life found at each campus. For example, fraternities were extremely popular at Ohio State from the 1890s onward, expanding from seven in 1891 to forty-one by 1932. At the University of Oregon, student independence was illustrated in the many unauthorized student newspapers, in which faculty and administrators were often the target of fictional stories that cast them in a negative light. In this way, the practice of extracurricular
student life at regional state colleges was never monolithic or uniform. Yet, there were similarities between student life at the emerging state colleges of the late nineteenth century and the historic eastern college that cannot be ignored.

As Chapter 4 has shown, elements of the traditional college experience could be found in the developing customs and traditions of emerging public institutions. Freshmen rules, hazing, class competitions, and dress requirements were all customs that began at the historic eastern colleges and were adopted by students at state colleges. In the implementation of freshmen rules at Ohio State in 1903, for example, we find explicit evidence that students were mimicking existing facets of student life. In this example, Ohio State upperclassmen were consciously attempting to replicate the “prominent institutions [that] have such rules,” highlighting the power of the traditional college experience to inform student life at non-elite colleges. The fact that students specifically stated that they wished to implement such rules to replicate the traditions of elite colleges suggests that wanted their college experience to “feel” more like the eastern elite experience. Furthermore, the fact that administrators ultimately allowed Ohio State upperclassmen to implement such rules shows that college officials saw value in the practice because students at more prestigious institutions had already adopted it.

In other instances, the connection between the traditional college experience and the developing social life of state colleges is less clear. For example, the requirement that freshmen at state colleges wear a prescribed cap followed a long abandoned tradition at Harvard of students wearing different styles of coats and trousers according the class affiliation. However, the freshmen cap appeared as a phenomenon particular to state
colleges after the turn of the twentieth century, while Harvard, Yale, and Princeton did not enforce such a rule during same period.

Student life at the state colleges differed from the historic eastern colleges in other ways as well. Greek fraternities, for example, were popular organizations at state colleges like Ohio State, the University of Oregon, and Oregon State, while they never reached the same level of importance at the historic eastern colleges. In fact, college presidents such Princeton’s James McCosh actively suppressed fraternities in the 1870s, suggesting instead that students form more civilized eating clubs. Harvard’s Charles Eliot also campaigned against Greek fraternities in the early twentieth century because he associated them with the students of state colleges. Both of these men’s attitude toward fraternities highlight the class divide that emerged between the older private colleges and the state colleges. During the 1910s and 1920s, the historic eastern colleges began to filter applicants by way of entrance requirements as way to solidify their status as the most prestigious institutions in the country.

Perhaps the most pronounced difference in student life between the historic eastern colleges and public institutions was the presence of women. The University of Oregon, Oregon State, and Ohio State, all began as coeducational colleges, with Ohio University admitting women beginning in 1873. In this environment, men and women engaged one another in a variety of ways, such as at dances and on dates. After the turn of the twentieth century, student dances and proms became more acceptable at state

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2 North Carolina State did not admit women until the late 1920s, reflecting its conservative outlook shaped by the strict gender norms of the South.
colleges—with the proper supervision of faculty, of course. Events such as Leap Year dances at Ohio State and the University of Oregon were highly anticipated. Dating also became a feature of student life, as illustrated by the experiences of Bernice Forest and Helen Lepper at Oregon State. For these women, dating was an important part of their college experience, as Forest sought out a man who was compatible with her strict sense of morality, while Lepper chose to “date around.” The presence of women, then, created a campus dynamic that was unique to these state institutions. While men at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton had opportunities to meet women, these interactions were typically circumscribed by distance.

As the college-going experience became accessible to a more diverse group of people, representations of college life in popular culture also became more diverse. College life films of the 1910s and 1920s often depicted life at state colleges and students from humble backgrounds, highlighting the growing spectrum of experiences associated with student life. For example, in *The Pinch Hitter*, Victor Schertzinger’s portrayal of a country bumpkin leaving his family’s farm to attend college reflected a common reality of students attending Land-Grant colleges. In these types of illustrations, the public college was depicted as an institution where people from the lower classes could obtain a practical education that could serve to improve their economic position. Furthermore, college movies often focused on the male-female dynamic found at coeducational schools. In *Age of Consent*, Gregory LaCava explored themes such as love, sex, dating, and generational norms that were challenged because of coeducation. Thus, popular representations during this period revealed to viewers, many of whom were teenagers
perhaps considering going to college, the types of student life found at state colleges.

Within the historiography of higher education, there is a noticeable absence of works dealing with the history of college life. Comprehensive works are rare, with Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz’s *Campus Life* standing out as the primary monograph considering questions of student cultures. Her work, however, has limitations that I sought to address in this study. Horowitz argues that extracurricular life came into existence primarily in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, as discrete subcultures of students began to form. As my study shows, extracurricular life is a tradition that originated with the oldest colleges in the U.S., where, from the beginning, students found ways to create social worlds outside of the classroom. In Horowitz’s accounting, the historic American colleges were serious and austere places, at which students were given no autonomy. While other scholars, such as Roger Geiger, have examined the various disciplinary regimes that have existed at the historic eastern colleges over the past three centuries, it is clear from works such B. H. Hall’s *College Words and Customs* that students were still able to find ways to have fun.

Furthermore, Horowitz overlooked key groups of students found at the emerging state colleges, instead focusing on more prominent colleges such as Princeton, Harvard, Wisconsin, Michigan, Duke, Chicago, UNC Chapel Hill, Radcliffe, and Stanford. Horowitz based her conclusions on the experiences of students at elite traditionally elite colleges, making the claim that they somehow represented the main categories of students who could be found at colleges nationwide. This, however, is problematic. As I have shown, the expansion of state colleges provided access to a variety of new types of
students who broadened the conception of the college-going experience. This is
significant because it reconsiders the development of student life at American colleges by
focusing on the histories of students at non-elite colleges whose stories have gone
unnoticed. I have also put forth a new formulation of the emergence of student life at
state colleges. By highlighting the ways in which the historic eastern colleges informed
the student cultures of state colleges, as well as the ways in which new patterns of social
life developed, I have attempted to create a framework for a new understanding of the
connection between the two types of institutions.

The history of college life is an important and timely subject in the broader
historiography of American higher education. As administrators of traditional brick and
mortar colleges attempt to reassert themselves in an era of growing online degree
programs, knowledge of the history of student life will be invaluable. Indeed, scholarship
from a wide variety of fields, including sociology, psychology, educational leadership,
and anthropology could benefit from a more robust accounting of the long history of
college students and the worlds that they have created over time. As such, historians will
be critical to this endeavor by articulating the many ways that students have understood
the meaning and purpose of the college experience, and how they have historically
organized their lives.
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