

THE
ORGANIZATION OF
THE COLLEGE AND
THE DIVISIONS

IN THE 1920S AND 1930S

JOHN W. BOYER

OCCASIONAL PAPERS
ON HIGHER
EDUCATION VIII

THE COLLEGE
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO



Trevor Arnett, AB1898, 1871–1955.

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*“A Generation More Educated Than Our Own and
Individuals Better Educated Than Ourselves”*

INTRODUCTION



warm welcome to the new academic year. In remembering the year just past, let me begin with a brief record of the some of the many accomplishments of our students. Among the students graduating in the Class of 2001 were two members of the inaugural class of Gates-Cambridge Scholars. Our students also won a Rhodes Scholarship, a Truman Scholarship, three Medical Science Training Program Fellowships, four Goldwater Scholarships, thirteen National Science Foundation Scholarships, and two Fulbright Fellowships for graduate study in Mexico and France.

Students continuing in the College this year have worked in dozens of faculty laboratories as research assistants, and they volunteered at over 300 community organizations from local Chicago public schools to the Woodlawn Adult Health Center. I am particularly pleased to report that the Foreign Language Acquisition Grant (FLAG) program has grown again, attracting 150 applicants for the summer of 2001. From that pool

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of applicants, we awarded seventy-five FLAGS to students representing concentrations in all five Collegiate Divisions. They studied fourteen different languages in twenty-one countries. Language instruction continues to grow as well. For example, an increasing number of students are electing to study Spanish and French well beyond the levels set by our one-year general-education requirement.

During the Summer of 2001, Career and Placement Services coordinated College Internship opportunities for 108 students, placing them in positions located throughout the city of Chicago, the nation, and the world. Our internships were distributed among a wide range of career fields in the for-profit and not-for-profit arenas. Summer 2001 internship participants represent concentrations in twenty-two different disciplines, ranging from Anthropology to Biological Sciences to General Studies in the Humanities to Statistics.

This fall, the incoming Class of 2005 brings to the College 1,080 first-year students with a range of achievements and abilities that promise to make them worthy members of our community. They were chosen from a distinguished group of applicants. In fact, we were only able to admit 44 percent of the applicants from a very strong pool. Of the total incoming class, 51 percent are women, and 61 percent come to us from public schools. By all accounts, they are a highly motivated and worthy group of young scholars, and they join our returning students, who are also extremely high in calibre. Two weeks ago I happened to meet a colleague who has just joined our faculty, having come to Chicago as a tenured full professor from a distinguished research university on the East Coast. Upon my asking how things were going, he launched into a detailed description of the quality of the College students he had in a 200-level course that he was teaching this quarter, arguing (without any prompting on my part) that their sophistication, their capacity for thoughtful argument and

expression, and their tolerance of large work loads far surpassed the students whom he had taught at his previous university, not to mention the many undergraduate students he had taught at a distinguished private university in the northern California area before that.

The point of this simple and, happily, oft-repeated story is just this: our new and returning students in the College are an important source of the University's intellectual vitality and of its cultural prosperity. As faculty we owe a great debt to their dedication to the education we offer, and we have a similar debt to the parents and families whose savings and sacrifices make every student career at the University of Chicago possible. Our students and their families rightly expect to encounter at Chicago an institution dedicated to the special kind of interdisciplinary liberal education that the University has proudly articulated and defended for the past seventy years. Our responsibilities as educators are considerable, and it has been a privilege to serve as Dean of a College as fiercely devoted to those values as ours has traditionally been. Our task over the next few years will be to maintain that devotion, to pass it on to the new colleagues and new students who join our ranks, and to be certain that the resources available to us are marshaled in the service of the educational enterprise which is our central purpose.

This past year saw some significant comings and goings which deserve recognition. Two noteworthy supporters of the College, Art Sussman and Glenn Steele, resigned from the University last year, and after thirty years of distinguished service Edward Turkington retired from the Deanship of Student Services, effective October 1, 2001. Ed has been a tireless advocate of the interests of our students, and on behalf of the faculty I want to pay tribute to his remarkable and selfless work over these many years. At the same time, we extend a very warm welcome to Margo Marshak, who joins the University as our new University Dean

of Students and as Vice-President for Student Affairs. Closer to home, in November 2000 Katie Nash announced that she would be retiring from the University in July 2001, concluding ten years of devoted service as the Dean of Students in the College. I am grateful to the faculty and student search committees, ably coordinated by Danielle Allen and Bill Michel, who conducted a national search for Katie's successor, and who recommended Susan Art as the new Dean of Students in the College. Susan has already articulated some of her ambitious goals this afternoon, and I am sure that all of us will want to offer her as much support and encouragement as possible.

The new Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts, under the leadership of David Bevington, Bert Cohler, and the other Senior Fellows, continues to contribute significantly to strengthening our Harper-Schmidt postdoctoral Fellowship program. The society has sponsored a number of formal events for the Junior Fellows, including a very congenial dinner for the Fellows and their guests that was held at the Smart Museum last December. Perhaps more importantly, it has also initiated a program of lunches and workshops that bring the Senior and Junior Fellows together for stimulating conversations and discussions about scholarly and pedagogical matters. I believe that the new support structures that we put in place last year are having the positive, forward-looking effects we hoped for. Given the crucial role that the Fellows play in the College's general-education programs, this kind of growing collegiality is all the more important.

The Dickson Instructors, who hold postdoctoral positions analogous to the Harper and Schmidt Fellows, continue to make very valuable contributions to the Department of Mathematics and its undergraduate teaching programs. Unlike the Harper and Schmidt Fellows, however, the Dickson Instructors have traditionally been viewed as regular, if untenured, members of the Department of Mathematics, so that the

issue of professional and collegial support within the institutional and cultural milieu of the arts and sciences at Chicago has not been a problem for the Dicksons.

The College Curriculum Committee undertook a study of the concentrations during the last two academic years. Its report, completed late last year, will be distributed shortly to the full College Council and the directors of departmental and non-departmental concentrations. From one perspective, the concentrations are the orphans of the administrative structures, dating back to the early 1930s, under which Chicago is organized. True, in constitutional terms, the concentrations would seem to belong to the College, because they are part of the baccalaureate degree programs of all College students and because those degree programs fall, in turn, under the jurisdiction of the College. But most concentrations have their actual, political, and intellectual homes in one of the departments, and the departments, as statutory agencies of the University, are parts of the Graduate Divisions, not the College. These administrative arrangements mean that the College has few formal ways of motivating, rewarding, or supporting in concrete financial and other professional terms either departments as collectivities or individual departmental members who provide exemplary leadership in running a concentration program. This is not to deny that many of our concentrations are extraordinarily well run, but such success is often achieved against the predominant cultural grain in which graduate and especially Ph.D.-level education is still seen to be the primary coin of the realm in many of our departments in the arts and sciences.

At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge the structural problems created for our concentrations by our general-education Core. The Core dominates the academic experience of many College students for nearly two years. In fact, that is precisely the historic role of the Core,

namely, to introduce beginning students to a wide arc of different domains of knowledge and to bring them into direct contact with the intellectual customs and professional work of the University faculty more generally, but in cultural modes and with pedagogical structures that are not directly controlled by the various individual disciplinary domains. As a result of Chicago's historic prioritization of general education in the first two years of our students' academic programs, Chicago faculty who have had teaching experience at other universities often wonder where their majors are. That is, at Chicago the "majors" often seem to appear from nowhere as third-year students, leaving little time for the kind of intellectual and social experiences in a department that are possible in a college or university where identifying a major to belong to, and recruiting majors, are primary tasks both of students and of faculty during the students' freshman year. This is not an argument against the Core, for we have many powerful and independent reasons for our devotion to it. But it is an argument for paying closer attention to the management of our concentrations and to the important transition that our students must make from general education to concentration at the end of the second year of the College.

The Curriculum Committee's report approaches these issues by focusing on the importance of building connections between students and faculty as early and as often as possible in the career of College students and by recommending that the College find ways to encourage successful concentrations to share with others how they are able to bring faculty and students together. Successful concentrations usually have an active Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies (the title is not uniform across the departments), and this is a position that we expect to recommend to all departments. Ultimately, the concentrations will only reach their full potential if we as a research faculty embrace the proposition that third- and fourth-year College students are our students in the same way that we

view graduate students as our students. Given the high academic quality of our College students, the departments have real opportunities to undertake stimulating and innovative teaching programs that are worthy of their own high professional expectations. At the same time, we also need to create more mentorship opportunities, more academic internships, and more focus on junior and senior capstone experiences that bring faculty members and third- and fourth-year College students together in a variety of organized settings.

In order to continue our public conversations about the future of the concentrations, I intend to ask the College Council to discuss these matters at its November 2001 meeting, a meeting to which we will invite the four Divisional Deans and a selected number of department chairs.

The Center for Teaching and Learning is now entering the third year of its operations. I believe that with modest resources the center has already established a viable and important program of activities on our campus, filling long-standing needs and helping many graduate students and junior faculty members gain needed information and skills about teaching successfully at Chicago. Not only does the Center provide regular orientation to the work of the College for new faculty members and for advanced graduate students who are beginning their teaching careers with assignments in the College, but it also offers a vital, and still underutilized, focal point for discussions of pedagogy on all levels at the University. Among the most successful of the Center's activities was a conference it sponsored in May 2001 entitled "Lessons from New Faculty," which brought back to campus a number of recent University of Chicago Ph.D.s to discuss their experiences as beginning assistant professors at other colleges and universities.

For this coming year I have asked the Center to create an on-line Faculty Handbook as a way of expanding its orientation work for new

faculty to the entire faculty. I expect that the Center can also play a role in the kind of sharing of information and best practices that will be helpful for our concentrations.

Finally, our initiatives on the front of international and second-language education continue to flourish. I have already mentioned the continued growth in our FLAG program. That these language study fellowships provide important, even life-changing, experiences for our students is apparent in the many testimonials we have received from students. To quote only one of many comments, Christopher Brown (Class of 2002), who studied Chinese in Beijing in the summer of 2000, wrote

I attracted a small crowd while writing characters in Beihai Park; when I finished they all applauded. I had little girls ask to take pictures with me. I spent a drive across Beijing trying to convince a taxi driver that China's economy has a lot of potential; he listened politely but I could tell he thought I was nuts. I became the center of attention dancing at a nightclub in Wuxi. In one of the more bizarre experiences of my stay, I appeared in a liquor commercial and in a documentary on Mr. Asia 1999 (a model named "Jerry," whose English was atrocious but, I insisted to the camera, was one of my closest friends). These were all incredible experiences that I would never have expected when I arrived in China, but whose mark will remain for years to come. And none of them were experiences I could otherwise have had, without learning the language.

Other College international programs are also strong. Last year we sponsored seven Civilization Studies programs abroad, including a new

program in African Civilization in Cape Town, South Africa. We look forward to the equal success of our new South Asian Civilizations program, which will be organized in Mumbai (Bombay) in the 2001–02 academic year. The growth of our Civilization Studies programs, and their popularity with our students, presents us with some new challenges. In particular, since we now have many applicants for the available spaces in our one-quarter civilization abroad programs, we must think carefully about the procedures by which we select the students who are offered positions. If admission to these programs is going to continue to be highly competitive in academic terms (which it will), then that fact needs to be clearly communicated to students. At the same time, it will also be important for our students to know that the College offers several one-quarter intermediate foreign language programs abroad that focus on intensive language acquisition on the 201–02–03 level (intensive Spanish in Toledo, Spain; intensive German in Freiburg, Germany; intensive Italian in Pisa, Italy; intensive French in Paris, France; and intensive Chinese in Beijing, China). Since these programs are also attractive and educationally valuable, we intend to make their existence more widely known among the general applicant pool of students interested in a one-quarter study abroad experience. Ideally, by jointly advertising both sets of programs, we should be able to offer all students interested in an international study experience one that is most appropriate to their educational goals and interests.

All of these programs signify the College's interest in strengthening cross-cultural educational opportunities and foreign language programs for our students, reflecting a long-standing conviction on the part of the University that a knowledge of cultures and civilizations other than our own is a key component of a true liberal education. As the great Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield argued in 1947,

[t]o describe this process of getting acquainted with people with a culture different from our own is to recognize the experience as liberalizing. We are all limited in our understanding of our own conduct and that of our neighbors because we see everything by the preconceptions offered by our own culture. It is a task of education to provide a viewpoint from which the educated person may free himself from the limitations of these preconceptions. We are all islanders to begin with. An acquaintance with another culture, a real and deep acquaintance, is a release of the mind and the spirit from that isolation. It is to learn a universal language.¹

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE DIVISIONS AND THE COLLEGE
IN 1930: A SEVENTY-YEAR
PERSPECTIVE

*Administrative Change at the University of Chicago
in the 1920s and 1930s*



In my brief preceding discussion of the state of the concentrations, I alluded to issues of structure and jurisdiction that date back to the reforms of 1930. Given the continued relevance of these structures for our present-day University and especially for the College, I thought that it might be helpful if I devoted the remainder of my remarks today to a review of their origins and their continued significance.

1. Margaret Park Redfield, ed., *The Social Uses of Social Science: The Papers of Robert Redfield*. Volume 2 (Chicago, 1963), p. 113.

Last year I spoke to you about our traditions of Trustee governance and about early philanthropy at the University, suggesting that, early on in our history, patterns of intelligent interaction and mutual respect between the Trustees and the faculty were established that have continued to mark Trustee-faculty relations over time. The current exhibit on the early donors to the University, which will remain up in Regenstein Library until the end of this calendar year, proposes a similar set of continuities in the history of our relationships with our philanthropic patrons, although ones that suffered considerably under the disruptions of the Great Depression after 1930.

This past year was the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the current administrative and curricular structure in the arts and sciences at the University of Chicago. On November 13, 1930, the Board of Trustees voted to create the four Divisions and the College, the changes to go into effect immediately. Among our peer institutions in American higher education, this five-headed structure—which deliberately avoids a central nexus of curricular authority and administrative power such as one usually finds in the office of a dean of the arts and sciences or a dean of the faculties—remains unique, and we routinely celebrate it for its many virtues. Of course, virtues are often accompanied by vices, and our diversified, confederated system has also given rise to problems and tensions over the decades.

The origins of the reorganization of 1930–31 are the story of extraordinary administrative and intellectual innovation, infused with a large dose of curricular passion—an altogether Chicago-like tale. At the beginning of the story lies a complex matrix of concerns about money, prestige, and research prowess, combined with a quest for scientific efficiency and intellectual innovation. I would like to try to tell this story this afternoon, concluding my remarks with some reflections on the

significance of the reforms of seventy years ago for our time and for our future as well.

In the first decades after the University of Chicago was founded in 1892, the institution's administrative organization reflected the genially autocratic propensities of our first President, William Rainey Harper, and his urgent focus on recruiting top-ranked scholars who would, in turn, establish distinguished scholarly departments.² For academic purposes, the faculty and students of the arts and sciences were grouped into several complementary units—three undergraduate Colleges of (respectively) Arts, Literature, and Science, and two graduate schools, the Graduate School of Arts and Literature and the Ogden School of Science.³ The regular faculty members of each department in the arts and sciences were simultaneously assigned to the Colleges and to one of the Graduate Schools.

After 1920, the various curricular constituencies of the Colleges were united under a single Dean, whose formal title was Dean of the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science, parallel to the governance structure of the two Graduate Schools, which were also directed by a Dean. The functions of these executive officers of the Colleges and Graduate

2. For Harper's desire to create a strong, presidentially controlled administrative regime that would preempt vigorous traditions of faculty autonomy above the department level, see Daniel Meyer, "The Chicago Faculty and the University Ideal: 1891–1929." Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1994, pp. 197–98, 504–5.

3. Originally, students matriculated in the Junior (Academic) Colleges of Arts, Literature, Philosophy, and Science, and then proceeded to the Senior (University) Colleges of the same titles. In 1908, a unified faculty structure was created for all of these units, the Faculty of the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science. For the early administrative history of the University, see Floyd W. Reeves, W. E. Peik, and John Dale Russell, *Instructional Problems in the University* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 3–22; and Meyer, "The Chicago Faculty," pp. 214–38.

Schools did not focus on faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion issues, however, for their primary responsibility was the supervision of the academic affairs of their respective student bodies. Under Harper's administration, the core administrative unit of the new University was the department, and the early departments were ruled by "heads" who until 1910 exercised almost autocratic authority, virtual petty presidents in their own right. Even after department "heads" were replaced with more democratically selected chairmen, real financial and political authority relating to the hiring, retention, and promotion of faculty remained a subject of direct negotiations between the individual departments and the Office of the President.⁴

Robert Hutchins would later describe the peculiarities of this system:

Since the departments were largely independent of each other, faculty meetings have been . . . few in number and limited in effectiveness. Deans in arts, literature, and science had little to do with the personnel or curriculum of the departments. They were principally concerned with student problems. The task of coordinating the departments fell, therefore, on the President. As the

4. "Until December, 1930, not only the deans of the professional schools and colleges, but also department heads or chairmen in the Colleges and Graduate Schools in Arts, Literature, and Science continued to deal directly with the President's Office when faculty appointments or budgets were under consideration. All the numerous executives of boards and committees dealing with student problems, health, housing, sports, and the like dealt directly with the President's Office. Altogether seventy-two regularly constituted executive officers reported directly to the President's Office. Budget recommendations were made to the President by each officer without previous co-ordination among related offices. All budget consolidations were made in the President's Office." Floyd W. Reeves, Frederick J. Kelly, John Dale Russell, and George A. Works, *The Organization and Administration of the University* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 45-46.

departments increased in size and number, this task became more and more difficult. The President's office was enlarged from time to time; but the burden of detail inflicted upon it in the operation of seventy-three independent budgets became intolerable.⁵

The University was thus administratively both top and bottom heavy, with few intermediary structures of financial or budgetary mediation and control in between. Each expense—large or small—had to be approved by the President's Office, via an administrative Committee on Expenditures, the work of which was superintended by a young graduate of the Colleges, Trevor Arnett, who served as Auditor of the University from 1902 until 1920.⁶ Arnett proved so capable at his task of managing the University's accounting systems that he soon began to consult with other colleges and universities about best practices in higher education finance, gaining a national reputation in this field. A citation read in 1941 at the University's annual alumni assembly, where Arnett received an award, suggested that he had such "an uncanny clairvoyance in figures he was able to point out the way to balanced budgets, or if the case were hopeless, could demonstrate the inevitability of ruin with such clearness, such tact, such charm that the officers of the institution

5. Robert M. Hutchins, "Upper Divisions of the University of Chicago," in William S. Gray, ed., *Recent Trends in American College Education* (Chicago, 1931), pp. 143–44.

6. The title of Auditor was changed to Comptroller in the late 1920s. Arnett's unpublished autobiographical memoir from 1955 has a charming description of his attempts to bring some order to the unpredictability of Harper's management style. See "Trevor Arnett. An Autobiography," *Trevor Arnett Papers*, Box 1. Unless otherwise noted, all archival materials cited in this report are located in the Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library.

saw bankruptcy as a blessing.”⁷ This kind of acumen also brought him to the attention of Wallace Buttrick, the Secretary and Executive Officer of the Rockefeller-financed General Education Board in New York, who often recommended Arnett to various college presidents as the best man to help them reorganize the finances of their institutions.

Over time, as the University grew and as the numbers of students and faculty increased, this dualistic system of extreme centralism in financial control and extreme decentralization in personnel decision-making became unwieldy. Hence, the budgetary and administrative systems of the University became the subjects of considerable scrutiny in the 1920s. The initial agent of this scrutiny was Harper’s former Auditor, Trevor Arnett. Arnett had resigned from the University in 1920 to go to New York City to work as the Secretary of the General Education Board, having been invited by Wallace Buttrick and Abraham Flexner to assist them in spending a new grant of \$50 million that John D. Rockefeller gave to the GEB in December 1919 to help American colleges and universities improve their teachers’ salaries. While at the GEB, Arnett solidified his national reputation in matters of university finance by publishing a classic book on the subject in 1922, *College and University Finance*, thousands of copies of which were distributed gratis by the GEB.

Upon Harry Pratt Judson’s resignation as President of the University of Chicago in 1923, Judson’s earnest and energetic successor, Ernest Dewitt Burton, was able to persuade Arnett to return to Chicago to become the chief financial officer of the University—his titles included both Vice-President and Business Manager. Arnett later described Burton as “one of my long time friends,” and he was clearly intrigued with Bur-

7. See Gordon J. Laing (as Alumni Dean) to Mrs. Trevor Arnett, October 2, 1941, *ibid.*

ton's capacious vision for renewing the University by launching a major development campaign. With Charles Judd's support, Trevor Arnett was also appointed as a part-time Professor of Educational Administration.⁸

The University to which Arnett returned in early 1924 was in some respects no longer the same institution that he had grown accustomed to before World War I. First, like many other American institutions of higher education, Chicago experienced in the years after 1918 a crushing increase of student matriculations, both on the collegiate and graduate levels. Total Autumn Quarter undergraduate matriculations in the arts and sciences increased from 998 in 1903–04 to 1,766 in 1913–14 to 2,522 in 1923–24 to 2,970 in 1929–30. On the graduate level, similar increases were also evident (464 in 1903–04, 500 in 1913–14, 1,024 in 1923–24, and 1,513 in 1929–30), especially for students studying for terminal M.A. degrees.⁹ The inevitable pressures resulting from these additional students led to crowded classes and to many more administrative and financial transactions, but they also engendered debates among the faculty about the basic mission of the University, and, among a distinct but influential minority, they led to concerns about whether Chicago should be involved in collegiate work

8. See *University of Chicago Newsletter*, Volume 16, December 31, 1923, pp. 1–2; and Woodie Thomas White, "The Study of Education at the University of Chicago, 1892–1958." Dissertation. University of Chicago, 1977, pp. 266–67.

9. See Floyd W. Reeves, Ernest C. Miller, and John Dale Russell, *Trends in University Growth* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 13–22, 212. Between 1918 and 1931, the University awarded 1,467 Ph.D. degrees and 3,689 master's degrees in the arts and sciences. Of the latter, five departments (Education, History, English, Chemistry, and Mathematics) accounted for 1,967 M.A. degrees, or 58 percent. Given the heavy orientation of University alumni toward school teaching and education before World War II, this distribution is hardly surprising.

at all.¹⁰ Such questions—which were not new to the discourse of senior faculty at the University even in Harper’s time—became all the more urgent because of two other, related developments. The last years of Harry Pratt Judson’s presidency were viewed by many as uninspired, given that Judson’s propensity to prioritize financial controls over initiatives to strengthen the University’s research enterprise had left many senior faculty demoralized.¹¹ Ernest Burton presented a more optimistic and, from the faculty’s perspective, welcome and forward-looking approach, given his willingness to try to raise and then spend substantial new resources on faculty development and research.¹² Thus, for those who wished to imagine the University as being in a position to be primarily preoccupied with research and graduate education, riding the

10. Much of the increased growth on the undergraduate level in the early and mid-1920s came at the senior-college level (or, in modern terms, at the junior/senior level), suggesting that large numbers of students were matriculating at Chicago as transfers from junior colleges or from other four-year colleges and universities. This might help to explain the perception among the faculty in the 1920s that some of these students were not familiar with or not even sympathetic with the fiercely academic orientation of the University’s culture. See *Trends in University Growth*, p. 18.

11. On Judson see Meyer, “The Chicago Faculty.” Meyer observes of Judson’s later years that “[f]or many, it was the University’s president, Harry Pratt Judson, who most acutely symbolized the frustrations of the postwar era. Approaching his fifteenth year in office, the aging president had become the embodiment of a once-promising institution that now appeared to be in danger of succumbing to administrative fatigue and complacency” (p. 389).

12. One of Burton’s first actions was to circularize department chairs, alerting them to the possibility of increased budgetary allowances based on an increase in tuition rates and suggesting that this might result in “some moderate increase in the salaries of the present staff, and a few additional appointments where these are necessary.” Memorandum of March 20, 1923, *Charles Merriam Papers*, Box 26.

crest of the aggressive research professionalism that came into its own in the 1920s, the Burton era was a veritable godsend. At the same time, the buoyant economy of the mid- and later 1920s, with its impressive economic good times, gave credence to the energy and confidence that were associated with Burton's plans. Burton's famous Development Campaign of 1924–26 was the poster child of this era of optimism and good feelings. Was it therefore totally surprising when some senior faculty members began to hope—however illusory this was in real financial terms¹³—that the University might do without some or all of the income it derived from undergraduate tuition fees, in favor of raising still more sums from friendly donors and foundations to support its research enterprise?

In any event, Trevor Arnett returned to a campus in 1924 that was caught up in several simultaneous and serious transitions. No longer merely the Auditor, but now responsible for the whole economy of the University, Arnett soon became convinced that his job bordered on the impossible. In January 1925, Arnett prepared a memorandum for the Board of Trustees describing his frustrations with the then-current system of University financial organization. He reported that “[t]he University of Chicago has grown so rapidly, practically doubling its size every ten years, and has nearly doubled its expenditures in the past five years and is now setting as its goal the duplication of its resources in the next fifteen years. . . . I know of nothing more important than that it should immediately make an intensive study of its organization and functions.”

13. The value of undergraduate tuition revenue generated from students in the first two years of the Colleges in 1927–28 was \$520,000, out of a total University operating budget of \$6 million. Compare N. C. Plimpton to Frederic Woodward, June 5, 1928, *Harold Swift Papers*, Box 144; and *Trends in University Growth*, p. 187.

The solution was thus, in Arnett's mind, a scientific study. He urged the Board of Trustees to add some additional support personnel to his office, so that he, as Business Manager, would be free to conduct a systematic study of operations of the University:

It is hoped that the Board will approve the organization of the Business Manager's office as outlined so that it may be made effective as early as possible in order that, the Board approving, the Business Manager may be given time to organize, supervise, and carry out a complete and systematic survey of the operation and administration of all departments of the University, financial, academic, and administrative.¹⁴

To undertake his survey, so Arnett informed the board, he had procured a generous grant of \$25,000 (almost \$250,000 in 2001 dollars) from his colleagues on the General Education Board: "It is extremely fortunate that the General Education Board stands ready to pay the expenses of a competent staff to make the survey. The findings of such a survey might well have a profoundly beneficial effect upon the campaign for funds." In fact, Arnett's survey was to be part of a larger effort by the GEB to help colleges and universities come to terms with the problems of modern budgetary management (as the annual report of the GEB put it in 1924) "in the hope of thus working out a procedure that would aid college and university authorities generally in obtaining a clearer understanding of their problems."¹⁵

14. *Minutes of the Board of Trustees*, January 8, 1925, pp. 29–30.

15. *Annual Report of the General Education Board, 1923–1924* (New York, 1925), p. 11.

The Board of Trustees approved Arnett's proposal for a large-scale systematic survey with alacrity, but unfortunately Arnett's health was unsteady, and the sudden and unexpected death of President Burton in May 1925 removed the primary personal attachment keeping Arnett at Chicago. He soon began exploring the possibility of returning to Rockefeller's service on a permanent basis, and in mid-1926 formally accepted reappointment to the staff of the GEB, of which he became President in 1928. Still, Trevor Arnett left Chicago with extremely warm feelings about the University, which will be of critical import in the next stage of my story.

Trevor Arnett's departure from the University in mid-1926 eliminated the immediate impulse for a comprehensive survey of our administrative and financial practices. But Arnett's sometime sponsor and friend Charles Judd did not lose sight of the idea, and it is to the ambitious plans of Charles Judd that we must now turn.

Charles Judd was one of most influential, if now almost forgotten, figures in the history of the University of Chicago between the two world wars, so much so that upon his death in 1946 a major building on our campus was named in his honor. First appointed to the faculty in 1909, Judd's forceful leadership as Chairman of the Department of Education between 1909 and 1938 shaped the patterns of two generations of senior faculty appointments in Education at Chicago. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann has rightly characterized Judd as a leader of the national movement to professionalize educational research before World War II by basing it on "controlled experimentation and precise quantitative measurements" and by developing research agendas that "fit well with the slowly growing belief that the university study of education should be aligned with the social and behavioral sciences, rather than

philosophy.”¹⁶ Equally important, Judd had an unimpeachable scholarly stature and a deep knowledge of the University of Chicago itself, both of which enabled him to impress and persuade University presidents and acting presidents, as well as private foundations. Robert Hutchins would later observe in 1948 that

Mr. Judd was a great teacher. He could teach even a University president. And he was not easily dismayed by the difficulty of a task. I was willing to learn, because he made an enormous impression on me. He began to teach me about the organization of education, the relation of public and private education, and the relation of the Federal government to education. When he got tired, he got George Works and Floyd Reeves to help him. He and these two assistants not only did all they could with their pupil; they also played a great part in the reorganization of the University that went on in 1930 and 1931; the creation of the College and the Divisions, the establishment of the Board of Examinations and the Dean of Student’s office, and the ultimate formation of the four-year college.¹⁷

But Hutchins’s comments take us a bit ahead of our story.

16. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *An Elusive Science. The Troubling History of Education Research* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 67, 69; White, “The Study of Education at the University of Chicago,” pp. 124–179.

17. Quoted in Richard O. Niehoff, *Floyd W. Reeves, Innovative Educator and Distinguished Practitioner of the Art of Public Administration* (Lanham, Maryland, 1991), p. 39.

In the fall of 1928, Charles Judd was offered a well endowed professorship at the Teachers College of Columbia University. To keep Judd at Chicago, Frederic Woodward, who had become Acting President of the University upon Max Mason's resignation in May 1928, persuaded the Board of Trustees in mid-December 1928 to agree to a substantial increase in the Department of Education's resources.¹⁸ The position paper that Judd submitted to Woodward to explain his expectations outlined an expansive (and expensive) plan for his department: not only did Judd want a new research building, more research assistants, better faculty salary support, and more discretionary research funds, but he also urged that Chicago expand the ranks of its Education faculty to include specialists in the "study of pre-school children, study of defective children, study of college administration, study of general school administration, and study of higher mental processes."¹⁹ Judd was especially interested in making Chicago a national laboratory for the study of school and university administration: "[t]he colleges of the University of Chicago and the general administrative organization of the University constitute a laboratory for the solution of the problems of higher education. If proper investigators were provided to make extended studies in the field of higher

18. The handwritten notes of Woodward's presentation to the board are in *Presidents' Papers, 1925-1945*, Box 111. Hereafter cited as *PP*. Judd also subsequently received one of the newly created Distinguished Service Professorships, which enabled Woodward to increase his salary from \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year. See Woodward to Judd, October 29, 1929, *PP, Appointments and Budgets, 1925-1940*, Box 26.

19. See the memorandum in *PP, 1925-1945*, Box 102. In October 1929, Judd submitted a second and similar memo to Hutchins himself. See Judd to Hutchins, October 1, 1929, *ibid.* Judd's negotiations came at a time when the department had lost several senior faculty members to other institutions, which raised fears that Chicago might no longer be competitive in faculty salaries.

education, there can be no doubt that benefit would accrue to the University of Chicago and to all the colleges in this region.”

Given Judd’s earlier contacts with Trevor Arnett and, equally important, his long-standing professional relationships with the General Education Board, it was perhaps natural that Judd would decide that the time was ripe to make it the mission of his department to undertake a comprehensive administrative survey of the University of Chicago, as originally articulated by Trevor Arnett. But this time Judd would clothe the survey in the regal garments of social scientific analysis and empirical investigation. Within weeks of turning Columbia down to remain at Chicago, Judd wrote again to Woodward in February 1929 that

the time is rapidly approaching when college problems are going to be solved on the basis of careful and complete studies. I hope to persuade you and the University of the soundness of this conviction. The concrete proposal which I am anxious to have you consider is that we appoint Reeves to do survey work now with a promise that this arrangement will be continued or converted into a professional appointment in the field of higher education in 1930. . . .²⁰

20. Undated letter [February 1929], Judd to Woodward, *PP*, 1925–1945, Box 111. The fact that Arnett succeed Wickliffe Rose in 1928 as president of the GEB was a fortuitous turn of events for the University of Chicago, given its heavy dependence on the beneficence of the various Rockefeller-funded boards. In fact, between its creation in 1902 and 1932 the General Education Board contributed almost \$18 million to Chicago, the largest single source of gift revenue in our history apart from the personal benefactions of John D. Rockefeller, Sr., himself. Between 1890 and 1932, the University of Chicago received approximately \$122 million in gifts. Total Rockefeller contributions (personal or board/fund driven) to endowment, plant, and general operating funds amounted to slightly over \$76 million, with the additional \$45.5 million in gifts coming from other sources. See the list of Rockefeller-associated gifts to the University of Chicago from 1890 to 1932 in the *Swift Papers*, Box 85.

Judd further urged that Woodward use his close connections with Trevor Arnett, now the powerful president of the GEB, and Arnett's presumed interest in the completion of a survey of the University of Chicago, to advance his broader plan: "There is time for you to see Arnett before the date when Reeves has promised Ohio a decision. I do not think that we should prejudice the larger possibilities by asking Arnett to back us up in this enterprise [i.e., paying for Reeves's appointment], but I wish you would have the matter in mind and would consider making a special effort with Arnett when you see him this week."²¹

The Reeves mentioned in Charles Judd's letter was Floyd W. Reeves, a recent Ph.D. (1925) from Chicago who had studied under Judd and who was presently a professor at the University of Kentucky, where he had participated in a number of school surveys. Later in the 1930s, Reeves gained a national reputation as an educational reformer and governmental adviser, but in 1929 he was a relative unknown.²² Still, in Judd's mind Reeves was the perfect agent to execute his plans for research on the administration of higher education. Anxious to accommodate Judd,

21. Judd to Woodward, undated letter [February 1929], *PP, 1925-1945*, Box 111. Woodward had already alerted Arnett about Judd's plan for the future of the department as a whole in early January 1929. He wrote to Arnett, enclosing a copy of Judd's plan, and commented that "[t]he Board of Trustees has recently committed itself to a vigorous effort to finance the development of the School [of Education] along the lines indicated by Dr. Judd, and I am sure the members of the Board will appreciate the assistance of the General Education Board. I feel that the program is sound in conception and of first rate importance. Furthermore, I have great confidence in Dr. Judd's ability to carry out the program effectively." Woodward to Arnett, January 2, 1929, *PP, 1925-1945*, Box 111.

22. On Reeves see Niehoff, *Floyd W. Reeves*, esp. Chapters 2-5; and White, "The Study of Education at the University of Chicago," pp. 361-68.

who wished that Woodward “have a personal judgment as to the man himself,” Woodward interviewed Reeves and quickly decided to support the plan. He telegraphed Judd: “Favorably impressed by Reeves stop. Telephone me at home this evening after dinner. Frederic Woodward.”²³

With the appointment of Floyd Reeves to the faculty of the Department of Education, Trevor Arnett’s earlier hope for a systematic study of the University of Chicago came to fulfillment, but at a level of ambition and professionalism that Arnett never anticipated.²⁴ Arnett supported the idea of reviving his earlier proposal for a comprehensive survey, since as president of the General Education Board he not only sanctioned the use of the funds that the GEB had previously committed to the first, unexecuted survey in 1924, but he then increased the total allocation by an additional \$25,000.²⁵

23. Judd to Woodward, undated letter [February 1929], and telegram, Woodward to Judd, February 25, 1929, *PP, 1925–1945*, Box 111.

24. Harold Swift wrote to Arnett in July 1930 informing him of the Reeves project and the commission to Leonard Ayres, and associating both of them with Arnett’s own efforts: “[y]ou will remember that largely due to your own efforts there has been a plan on foot for several years to make a survey of the University. The hope was that you could undertake this work yourself, and when circumstances prevented, this was much delayed, pending securing the proper person to carry it on.” Swift to Arnett, July 10, 1930, *Swift Papers*, Box 53.

25. “Additional help has been provided as well toward a project begun at the University of Chicago several years ago. In 1924 the University began an analytical study of its financial and educational organization, toward the cost of which the General Education Board contributed \$25,000. During the past two years this study has proceeded more rapidly than hitherto, and in some respects has become of larger scope. . . . To enable the University to complete the study and to make the conclusions available in book form for the benefit of institutions having problems of a similar nature, the Board during the past year authorized an additional grant of \$25,000.” *Annual Report of the General Education Board, 1930–1931* (New York, 1932), pp. 7–8.

Scientific surveys of schools and colleges were much in vogue in the 1920s, reflecting a deep contemporary belief in the power of scientific management theories and their transferability from the world of business to the multiple worlds of education.²⁶ Between 1910 and 1933, no less than 500 surveys were undertaken of U.S. colleges and universities, and if one adds to that number the surveys of public school systems on the primary and secondary level, the number could easily jump to the thousands. Our own Department of Education was very active in the school survey movement; the University's quarter system enhanced the flexibility of faculty members to do this kind of educational consulting, and the additional income that was easily generated by this work made such consultations highly lucrative.²⁷ So widespread were the ideas of efficiency and scientific management that they even found practitioners in the world of the ministry on our campus. In 1912, the Dean of our Divinity School, Shailer Mathews, published a widely discussed booklet called *Scientific Management in the Churches*, applying the ideas of Frederick Taylor to the churches and suggesting the need to develop "genuine efficiency through the adoption of general principles of scientific management."²⁸

Floyd Reeves joined the faculty of the University of Chicago in the fall of 1929. His first assignment was to launch the long-awaited University

26. See Raymond E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency. A Study of the Social Forces That Have Shaped the Administration of the Public Schools* (Chicago, 1962); Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893–1958* (New York, 1987).

27. White, "The Study of Education at the University of Chicago," pp. 196, 200–201.

28. Shailer Mathews, *Scientific Management in the Churches* (Chicago, 1912), p. 66.

survey, now reanimated by Judd's lobbying and imperial vision for his department. Hiring a staff of talented collaborators that included John Dale Russell and George A. Works, Reeves soon expanded his plan for the survey into an elaborate project, commissioning book-length studies of the University library, of student admissions and retention, of faculty recruitment and teaching patterns, of the University press, of University extension services, of class size and University costs, and other such major issues.²⁹ In an analysis published in 1937 of 230 surveys of American colleges and universities undertaken since 1910, Walter Eells of Stanford described the Reeves project as among the best organized and most expensive ever undertaken. In fact, when Eells conducted an informal poll of thirty-six experts in higher education about the relative merits of the surveys he had analyzed, he found that the Chicago survey was rated number one in terms of its method, significance, and importance to higher education.³⁰ Finally published in twelve volumes in 1933 and encompassing 3,157 pages, the Chicago survey was perhaps the single most ambitious undertaking of its kind before World War II.

Following Judd's guidance, Reeves immediately determined that a key element of his survey should be a serious investigation of the University's administrative and budgetary practices. Specifically, Judd suggested to Reeves in October 1929 that

29. By early 1931, Reeves was contemplating a survey that would extend to sixteen separate volumes, including studies of the University hospitals and of the Laboratory Schools. See "Tentative Outline of the Survey of the University of Chicago, February 20, 1931." The various drafts of Reeves's original outline can be found in *PP, 1925-1945*, Addenda, Box 4.

30. Walter Crosby Eells, *Surveys of American Higher Education* (New York, 1937), pp. 102, 143, 153, and especially 219-223.

[o]ne point in the University organization which, in my judgment, needs a good deal of attention is the organization of the administrative offices. It is my judgment that these offices are on the whole under-staffed and that the administrative energy in different divisions of the University is very badly distributed. . . . [T]he general administrative machinery of the University ought to be taken up and dealt with adequately. I do not know how to secure a basis of judgment in this field, but perhaps you could get some interesting comparisons from business houses. At any rate the trustees would understand that sort of comparison if you succeeded in getting it.³¹

How the name of Leonard Ayres emerged as an outside consultant to assist Floyd Reeves in the required analysis of the University's administrative structure is not certain. Judd, along with his colleagues and former students John Franklin Bobbitt, William Gray, and George Counts, had participated in a large survey of the Cleveland Public Schools that Ayres had directed in 1915–16, so it is likely that the idea of using Ayres came from Judd himself. Colonel Leonard Ayres is today an almost forgotten name, but in the second and third decades of this century he was one of the leaders of a broad and powerful movement to bring efficiency to American schools via the application of scientific management principles.³² Trained as a statistician, Ayres had a varied

31. Judd to Reeves, October 4, 1929, *Charles Judd Papers*, Box 12.

32. On Ayres, see Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, pp. 15–18, 153–56, 165–69; Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, pp. 102–4; Lagemann, *An Elusive Science*, pp. 80–83; and Mary B. Stavish, “Leonard Porter Ayres,” *American National Biography*, vol. 1, pp. 800–1.

career as a school administrator, an educational researcher on the principles of effective learning, a foundation officer with the Russell Sage Foundation, a senior Army officer attached to the General Staff who authored a famous statistical report on the American participation in the First World War with Germany (popularly known as “The Ayres Report”), a vice-president at the Cleveland Trust Company, a commentator on business trends, and sometime critic of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Ayres first made a name for himself with his book *Laggards in Our Schools* (1909), which portrayed the school as a cultural institution to which commercial management principles should be applied in order to achieve maximal levels of efficiency. Walter Eells described him in 1937 as “one of the pioneers both in the social survey movement and in the educational survey movement.”³³ When he visited Chicago in 1930, Ayres did so in the role of an outside consultant with a strong propensity toward evaluating educational institutions in relation to the efficiency of their operations.

Commissioned to undertake a study of the budgetary and organizational problems that Trevor Arnett had identified several years earlier, Leonard Ayres visited our campus on several occasions in the winter and early spring of 1930.³⁴ He then prepared a long memorandum that outlined the problems he had encountered and suggested a few simple solutions. Reviewing the knotty system of budgetary responsibility and administrative organization that had perplexed Arnett, Leonard Ayres found serious inadequacies. First, the University’s budgetary structure itself reflected an earlier and simpler time, since the annual budget was

33. Eells, *Surveys of American Higher Education*, p. 57.

34. See Swift to Arnett, July 10, 1930, *Swift Papers*, Box 53.

not based on definite appropriations specifically earmarked for each unit, but rather consisted of a series of provisional estimates, expenditures against which had to be approved via a requisitional process by the central Committee on Expenditures. In effect, this meant that department chairs had no accurate sense of the amount of money they had available to spend each year, and, in turn, the University had no way to hold them accountable to living within a specified and clearly allocated budget. Second, too many units reported for financial purposes directly to the Office of the President, overwhelming the central administration with far too many routine and unimportant transactions based on “an enormous volume of petty detail.” Moreover, because the existing system had already been overwhelmed by the volume of transactions, some units had already made “reciprocal accords” with the Committee on Expenditures which gave them virtually blanket authority to make expenditures, thus moving from one extreme—extreme centralism—to another—extreme decentralism. Nor was the way in which the annual budget of the University was prepared any more satisfactory. Because the budget was based on what were inevitably fragmentary negotiations between the President’s Office and seventy-odd units, it put a “tremendous burden of budget preparation” on central authorities, who were not in a position to make appropriate and timely choices about the possible academic options and opportunities implied by these numerous transactions. As Ayres insightfully put it, the University was giving “preference to the business activities of the University over the academic activities because the day-to-day functioning of the Committee [on Expenditures] is carried forward in the business office where all the facts of income and expenditure are on record and because the estimates for expenditures are revised three times during the year by the Comptroller without consultation with the academic heads who made up the original sub-budgets.”

Ayres's proposals for reform were simple as well as concise. Perhaps his most crucial recommendation involved the University's basic administrative structure itself. Rejecting the ponderous process under which so many units reported directly to the Office of the President with their budgetary requests, Ayres recommended a more decentralized system with the departments in the arts and sciences grouped "under the administrative directorship of some four, or five, or six carefully selected officers. . . . Such a change, together with appropriate grouping of service departments, should reduce the number of sub-budgets to about twenty. Each officer responsible for the budget of one of these groups would assume primary responsibility for the co-ordinating and combining of the sub-budgets of his group, so that the burden of consultation in the offices of the President and academic Vice-President of the University would be greatly reduced." Ayres also urged that the University abandon its budget of provisional estimates and move to an appropriational budget which would provide the chair of each unit with a definite appropriation that he "could count upon with confidence so long as his expenditures remained within the limits of their figures." Not only would such a system be more efficient, but it would also give all units "equality of freedom and maximum freedom, within the limits of their budget appropriations, and . . . hold them all rigorously within those limits save as unforeseeable new developments within the year might render revisions necessary."³⁵

Upon receiving Ayres's memo in early May 1930, Reeves forwarded it to Harold Swift and to Robert Hutchins, who had become President of the University in July 1929. Within a month, Hutchins responded to

35. Leonard P. Ayres, "Some Aspects of the Financial Organization and Administration of the University of Chicago. A Report Prepared by Leonard P. Ayres, and Presented May 10, 1930," reprinted as an appendix in *The Organization and Administration of the University*, pp. 134–42.

Ayres, thanking him for his work and reporting that “[s]ince I know how busy you are and with how many important things, I am very deeply grateful for your kindness to us. I hope it will be some compensation to you to know that the principles of the report have been accepted by the officers of the University.”³⁶ In a private letter to Swift several months later, Hutchins pithily summarized what he saw as the main virtue of reform proposals: “We are too much organized for safety and not enough for action. I think we can get safety without so many checks and balances.”³⁷

Moreover, even before Ayres had filed his report, signs of significant changes were in the wind. As early as January 1930, Hutchins was discussing a possible restructuring of the University in personal interviews in New York City with both Trevor Arnett of the GEB and with Hutchins’s predecessor, Max Mason, who had recently become the President of the Rockefeller Foundation.³⁸ In summary notes to Harold Swift, Hutchins

36. Hutchins to Ayres, June 9, 1930, *PP*, 1925–1945, Addenda, Box 4.

37. Hutchins to Swift, August 1, 1930, Swift Papers, Box 53.

38. These meetings came on the heels of an interview that Hutchins had had with Arnett in late October 1929, in which he supported a request that was already before the General Education Board for \$3 million to implement Judd’s plans, and were in preparation for the University submitting yet another major appeal to the Rockefeller boards, this one involving a request for an additional \$6.5 million in unrestricted support in early March 1930. See Hutchins’s application of March 5, 1930, for \$4.5 million from the Rockefeller Foundation and \$2.5 million from the General Education Board, *Swift Papers*, Box 175. In addition, the University planned on asking Edward S. Harkness for \$5.5 million to support the “first stage of the Collegiate Development” and Julius Rosenwald for \$5 million for salary support. The plan to approach Harkness, whose name was taboo with the anti-College faction led by Dodd and Merriam because of his major gifts to Harvard College, shows how quickly Hutchins was prepared to ignore the agenda that the local anti-College barons tried to foist upon him. For more on this story, see below.

reported that Arnett had “great enthusiasm” about the idea of “a quadruple division of the University above the junior college.” Mason was even more candid: “He thought the deans at Chicago [were] the worst problem and applauded [the idea of creating] a dean of the junior college plus four divisional deans.”³⁹

Clearly, as early as the beginning of 1930, Hutchins was contemplating bold administrative and structural changes on par with his self-styled reform ideas about restructuring graduate education. But it took an external report to force the issue and to lend public and official credibility—scientific credibility—to the move that Hutchins was eventually to push for. Hence, the report by Leonard Ayres was of great political importance, since it provided an official, external justification to the Board of Trustees for ideas with which, in general terms, Hutchins was already sympathetic. Hutchins would recall several years later to Walter Eells that “[t]he work of the survey staff largely contributed to the academic reorganization of 1930 which abolished almost all the existing categories and substituted a new administrative scheme for them.”⁴⁰ Nor was Judd unaware of the influence that Reeves’s investigations might have on the fledgling Hutchins administration. His friend Henry Suzzallo, who was the president of the Carnegie Fund for the Advancement of Teaching and a failed candidate for the Chicago presidency, urged Judd to remember that “[i]f the new president gets occupied with this fact-finding effort [i.e., the Reeves survey] he is won to you, particularly if *you* help him interpret the facts. And you ought to do this to the fullest extent needed

39. “Memorandum of Conversation with M. Mason,” January 16, 1930, and “Memorandum of Conversation with Arnett,” January 17, 1930, *Swift Papers*, Box 175.

40. Hutchins to Eells, January 17, 1935, *PP, 1925–1945*, Addenda, Box 4.

to help the whole general situation. . . . The by-products of seeing university problems in a definite scientific way will be the best evidence that education as a study needs help.”⁴¹

The idea of vertically segmented administrative units like the future Divisions, as opposed to more horizontal units like the then-existing Schools and Faculties, also fit well with emergent trends toward interdisciplinary work at Chicago, particularly in the social sciences, in the physical sciences, and in the biological sciences. The 1920s had seen remarkable outgrowth of vigorous new research projects on our campus, a trend which reflected the general enthusiasm, financial prosperity, and increasing self-confident professionalism which re-enveloped the University and its faculty after 1923 under the leadership of Ernest Dewitt Burton. The massive investments undertaken to create the new University Medical Center between 1926 and 1930 resulted in a powerful locus of scientific authority and research investment in the biological sciences, one that was holistic and interdisciplinary by virtue of its concentration both on clinical-medical and basic scientific teaching and research.⁴² Moreover, Burton explicitly sought to encourage senior faculty of various departments to learn more about the material needs and intellectual ambitions

41. Suzzallo to Judd, April 30, 1930, *Judd Papers*, Box 12.

42. For the creation of the Medical Center, see Ilza Veith and Franklin C. McLean, *The University of Chicago Clinics and Clinical Departments, 1927–1952: A Brief Outline of the Origins, the Formative Years, and the Present State of Medicine at the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1952), esp. 14–15; and Cornelius W. Vermeulen, *For the Greatest Good to the Largest Number: A History of the Medical Center, the University of Chicago, 1927–1977* (Chicago, 1977). As early as 1920, leading scholars in Chemistry and Physics had also recommended the creation of interdisciplinary research institutes, but their establishment was delayed both by the absence of necessary funding and by President Judson’s indecisiveness. See Meyer, “The Chicago Faculty,” pp. 399–404.

of their neighboring units, as a way of mobilizing the faculty's support for his Development Campaign of 1924–26. Although Burton's untimely death in May 1925 resulted in an abridgment of the campaign, these broader horizons may have had a subtle impact on the views of senior faculty about their relationships to other colleagues and other disciplines.⁴³ For example, the series of pamphlets on the humanities, the *Humanities Research Series*, that was published by John Dollard in 1928, is emblematic of a public understanding and a self-presentation of the humanities that was problem driven and not beholden to conventional departmental jurisdictions.⁴⁴ Similarly, the creation in the same year of a "University of Chicago Humanities Committee," consisting of over sixty prominent Chicago business and civic leaders who heard regular lectures on various subjects in the humanities, reflected the representation of humanistic scholarship as a general category of knowledge beyond strict departmental or disciplinary perspectives.⁴⁵

Several new buildings constructed in the late 1920s also demonstrated the propensity of departmentally based faculties with broadly common

43. See Burton to Merriam, October 6, 1924, inviting Merriam as a senior faculty member in the social sciences to a presentation by Charles Judd on the future of the Department of Education, so as to make sure that "all of us shall understand and, if possible, approve all parts of the [development] program." *Merriam Papers*, Box 26.

44. The pamphlets, printed in 1,500 copies each, were intended as fund-raising and public relations pieces for Chicago area alumni/ae and for other wealthy supporters. See "Distribution of the Humanities Pamphlets," *PP, 1925-1945*, Box 25. In 1928, the young Dollard was an assistant to Max Mason, so one must presume these publications had the support of the President's Office. Dollard was soon to leave the University for a distinguished career as a social psychologist at Yale.

45. The records of this committee are in *PP, 1925-1945*, Box 25.

professional interests to cohabit new spaces designated for research and graduate teaching.⁴⁶ Both Wieboldt Hall, which was constructed for the modern language departments (including English), and Eckhart Hall, which was designed to serve Physics, Mathematics, and Astronomy, were planned with the help of faculty committees whose members were drawn from a variety of departments. These cohabitational tendencies were most pronounced in the social sciences, where they found firm footing on a wave of new interdisciplinary research projects. During the years between the end of World War I and the onset of the Great Depression, a number of distinguished scholars like Charles E. Merriam, Ernest W. Burgess, and Robert E. Park all contributed mightily to the creation of what subsequently became known as the Chicago Schools of Sociology and of Political Science.⁴⁷ Such scholarly leaders also found a strong patron in the person of Beardsley Ruml, the director of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, one of the smaller of the Rockefeller charities in the 1920s. Ruml was instrumental in granting Chicago over \$3 million in research support by 1930 from the Memorial, one million of which was allocated in 1927 for the creation of a Social Science Research Building, itself a symbol of the hoped-for possibilities of interdisciplinary collaborative work. Strong local leadership by Merriam, Burgess, and others had led

46. On the growth of scholarly professionalism after World War I and its effects on an increasingly distant undergraduate student culture, see Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge. The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900–1940* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 120–21, 140–42, 197, 214–15, and *passim*.

47. On this huge subject, see especially Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology. Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago, 1984), especially pp. 129–50, 190–224; Barry D. Karl, *Charles Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago, 1974); and Andrew Abbott, *Department and Discipline. Chicago Sociology at One Hundred* (Chicago, 1999).

to the creation of a Local Community Research Committee in 1923, which expended over \$600,000 in Rockefeller-financed grants to support collaborative research projects and which helped to create a unique “feeling of solidarity” among local social scientists at Chicago.⁴⁸

It was hardly surprising that the scholars who were housed in the new Social Science Research Building when it opened in December 1929 represented a set of departments that, in turn, constituted a natural and obvious grouping for the “Division of Social Sciences” created in November 1930. Yet, equally noteworthy was the fact that while the new building housed individual scholars and their research workshops and seminars, it did not house their departments as administrative entities per se. The point is a fine one but significant nonetheless, and it contributed to the aura of innovation and experimentation that may have suggested that new administrative entities beyond the traditional departments might not only be possible but also desirable as real scholarly, collegial, and intellectual collectivities.⁴⁹

Moreover, it is also important to remember that Robert Hutchins came to the University of Chicago from the deanship of Yale Law School already predisposed to supporting interdisciplinary research and teaching.

48. See the excellent discussion of these developments in Martin Bulmer, “The Early Institutional Establishment of Social Science Research: The Local Community Research Committee at the University of Chicago, 1923–1930,” *Minerva*, 18 (1980): 51–110, here 99.

49. “The Social Science Building is in fact a workshop where perhaps two hundred scholars and workers combine their efforts in a comprehensive research program. The layout of the rooms suggests the workshop spirit. . . . The building and its equipment are tools in the hands of an earnest group of social scientists who are patiently seeking better ways of life for the city and for the state.” Leonard D. White, “The Local Community Research Committee and the Social Science Research Building,” in T. V. Smith and Leonard D. White, eds., *Chicago. An Experiment in Social Science Research* (Chicago, 1929), pp. 27–28, 32.

Hutchins's appointment of Beardsley Ruml, the patron of the new social science building and of its collaborative spirit, as the first full-time Dean of the Division of Social Sciences in 1931 was an appropriate coming full circle of these enterprises of entrepreneurial interdisciplinarity, even though Ruml soon departed from the University to become the treasurer of Macy's Department Store in New York City, and, according to Martin Bulmer, the research impulses toward creative interdisciplinarity in the social sciences soon began to suffer on our campus as the financial stringencies of the 1930s took full force.⁵⁰

Another front of interdisciplinarity was, however, about to emerge in the history of the University, one that has continued down to the present to privilege non-departmental activities. This was the College, and the emergence of the modern College was perhaps the last of the major impulses that pushed the administrative reforms of late 1930 to maturation and implementation.

Chauncey Boucher and the Problem of the Colleges



While these internal discussions about administrative design options were proceeding apace, another area of University policy and politics was percolating as well, an extraordinarily controversial one that Hutchins inherited and with which he performed brilliantly.

This was the challenge Hutchins faced from Dean of the Colleges Chauncey Boucher and other proponents of improvements in the quality

50. Bulmer, "The Early Institutional Establishment of Social Science Research," p. 109. On Ruml, see Martin Bulmer and Joan Bulmer, "Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s: Beardsley Ruml and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1922–29," *Minerva*, 19 (1981): 347–407.

of undergraduate education at Chicago. The Dean of the Colleges of Art, Literature, and Science since 1926 and a Professor in the Department of History, Boucher faced an extraordinary situation in 1928–29. As I previously mentioned, the 1920s were a time of great questioning about the future of undergraduate education at the University. The pressures caused by the rapid rise in collegiate enrollments left some senior faculty puzzled and frustrated. Voices were not uncommon among members of the senior faculty urging that the first two years of undergraduate education simply be abandoned or given away.⁵¹ As late as 1934, William Dodd, a

51. See Meyer, “The Chicago Faculty,” pp. 445–50, 474–76. One of the most notable proponents of this view was an influential outsider, Abraham Flexner, who was the secretary of the General Education Board. In 1923, he argued that “[a] real university—a university free of undergraduate students, free of the distractions that the college involves, free of the routine that the college needs—would attract investigators, teachers and students for whom a congenial home does not now exist in America.” After acknowledging that Harvard, Yale, and Columbia could not divorce themselves from their undergraduates because “the college tradition is too strong to permit any such experimentation at this time,” Flexner then suggested that “[t]his step—the suppression of the undergraduate department and concentration upon real university work—might conceivably be taken at the University of Chicago or the Johns Hopkins. There are at Chicago two obstacles—(1) the strength and numbers of the undergraduate body, (2) the limitation upon the choice of the President.” See Flexner, “A Proposal to Establish an American University,” pp. 8–9, *Swift Papers*, Box 144. In one of his final letters to Harold Swift before leaving the presidency, Harry Pratt Judson also allowed that “[a]s I look at it the University is at the parting of the ways. Either it is to be primarily a University in the highest sense, with distinct emphasis on its graduate work and its graduate professional work, or it is to be essentially a College with the higher work incidental.” Judson left no doubts about which option he favored: “My own view is that the University idea ought to be made very prominent; that we should frankly recognize the College as of secondary importance.” See Judson to Swift, January 20, 1923, *PP*, 1889–1925, Box 43. Neither of Judson’s successors were willing (or at least in a position) to acknowledge this draconian, either-or proposition.

senior historian who played a critical role in the search committee that selected Robert Hutchins for the presidency in April 1929, would derisively warn against any plans to bring more undergraduates to campus by suggesting his distinct preference for graduate students: “[L]et undergraduate loafers go anywhere else, especially to Yale and Harvard where swaggy manners and curious accents can be learned easily. Real students should be appealed to and then genuine offerings be easily available. This would mean many graduate students [on the campus].”⁵² During the planning for the new modern languages building in 1925, English Professor John Matthews Manly would write to Vice-President James H. Tufts, assenting to the creation of a new library reading room for the humanities that would be connected to the main Harper Library, but making it clear that undergraduates would not be welcome in the new facility: “It was with some difficulty that some members of the departments were brought to agree that the Modern Language Reading Room should be placed on the third floor, the reason for this attitude being their fear that this Reading Room would be invaded by an overflow of undergraduates from Harper. I believe that this can be prevented, but we all wish to insist that this Reading Room must be protected against such an invasion.”⁵³ Moreover, a rather incoherent undergraduate curriculum, dominated by particularistic departmental interests and substantially staffed by graduate-student teaching assistants, offered little intellectual distinctiveness.⁵⁴

52. Dodd to Bessie Louise Pierce, February 3, 1934, *Bessie Louise Pierce Papers*, Box 9.

53. Manly to Tufts, July 1, 1925, *Records of the Department of Buildings and Grounds, 1892–1932*, Box 34.

54. One exception would be the early efforts to create an interdisciplinary survey course on “The Nature of the World and of Man,” which was first launched in 1924.

Nor were some of the departments particularly thoughtful in what they chose to offer on the undergraduate level. As Boucher described the situation in 1928, “Departmental autonomy has been carried to the nth degree. Each department frames its own program of course offerings as it may see fit, and the Dean of the Colleges never knows what is to be our program for any quarter until the time schedule is in print. Resulting inadequacies and inconsistencies in departmental Undergraduate offerings, considered individually and as a whole, are frequently due to ignorance or bad judgment, but in some instances are due to deliberate intent to slight the Undergraduate work.”⁵⁵

During their abbreviated presidencies, Ernest Burton (1923–25) and Max Mason (1925–28) had sought to steer a middle course through this hugely controversial issue, offering public reassurances about the preeminence of the University’s graduate distinction, but insisting that undergraduate education would continue to play a critical role in the University’s future.⁵⁶ James Tufts, a long-time member of the Philosophy Department and, for a time, a Vice-President under Burton, characterized the latter’s views in the following way:

Under President Burton’s administration an opinion was held and expressed by some, although the matter never came to a formal

55. Boucher, “Report on the Conditions in the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science,” December 21, 1928, p. 18, *PP, 1925–1945*, Box 18.

56. See the reports of Burton’s delicate attempts to maneuver through this issue in his conversations with leading officials of the General Education Board in early 1923 in *Swift Papers*, Box 144. Support for the Colleges was a critical rhetorical element in many of Burton’s speeches for the Development Campaign of 1924–26, as was the solicitation of thousands of undergraduate alumni. See also Meyer, “The Chicago Faculty,” pp. 421–22. For Mason’s views, see Philip Kinsley, “Mason Visions Making College Fun, Not Chore,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1927, pp. 1, 16.

vote, that as a feature of the forward movement [of the University] it would be wise to drop the college in order to concentrate upon the more peculiar task of a university. The college exists to inform and train the immature; the university exists to discover new facts, laws, and truth of every sort. Its business is with a different class; it is bad for both college and university to combine the two dissimilar functions.

President Burton met the proposal with a single reference to the purpose of a university. "A university," he remarked, "is supposed to be established to search for truth. Among the various fields that present themselves for study and exploration education itself is certainly one, and one that is fully as important as any other. If we build observatories and laboratories to study the stars and the atom it would seem at least as important to observe and study the educational process, and the college is one of the most important stages in this process."⁵⁷

Undergraduate education also found a notable supporter in the new Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Harold H. Swift, who had succeeded Martin A. Ryerson in 1922. An alumnus of the Colleges (Class of 1907) himself, Swift seemed puzzled that others did not see the merit of his view that the Colleges needed "a different tone," namely "one of distinct interest in young men and women and their problems, one where scholarship is neither to be taken lightly nor to be considered the all essential; in other words, we want a College Department which will put emphasis on real development of boys and girls into fine men and women rather

57. James Tufts, Unpublished Autobiographical Memoirs, *James Tufts Papers*, Box 3.

than exclusively on the academic interests of the University field.”⁵⁸

Commissioned by President Max Mason to explore various reform possibilities for undergraduate education in late 1927, Chauncey Boucher led a faculty committee that formulated a reform program in March and April 1928 and presented it to the University Senate on May 7, 1928. The committee included a notable group of senior scholars who, in contrast to the research-only advocates like Dodd, were sympathetic to the cause of improving undergraduate education. They included Julius Stieglitz of Chemistry, Anton J. Carlson of Biology, L. C. Marshall of Economics, and, perhaps most notably, Charles Judd of Education. Boucher’s plan called for radical reforms—the establishment of a junior college program that would have its own curricular structure distinct from the control of the departments; the revision of the curriculum for the first two years of the undergraduate work centered around the development of broad survey courses in place of ad hoc departmental offerings (an idea that built upon an earlier experiment in the natural sciences in the mid-1920s); the use of five general-education competency examinations to evaluate student progress, which students might take whenever they felt ready; and the abolition of mandatory quarterly course examinations.⁵⁹ Nor did

58. Swift to Charles W. Gilkey, August 28, 1923, *Swift Papers*, Box 144; Swift to Stevens, March 15, 1927, *ibid.*

59. “Report of the Senate Committee on the Undergraduate Colleges (presented to the University Senate, May 7, 1928),” *PP, 1925–1945*, Box 19. This report contains as well a “Supplementary Statement” by Boucher. The May 1928 report was based on a long document that Boucher prepared in December 1927, “Suggestions for a Reorganization of Our Work in the Colleges, and a Restatement of Our Requirements for the Bachelor’s Degree.” Boucher sent copies of this draft to Mason and Swift in January 1928 and then to the members of the committee that he led in mid-March 1928.

Boucher restrict himself to imagining bold educational changes, for his plan also presumed that several million new dollars would be invested in new residence halls, in additional endowment to take care of the upkeep of these halls, and in the construction of new instructional facilities and the expansion of undergraduate library resources as well.⁶⁰ Finally, although he insisted on new resources for the College, Boucher wished to keep most of the actual instruction on the main Quadrangles, so as to avoid creating an undergraduate ghetto. For those who sought to minimize or ignore undergraduate education at the University of Chicago, these proposals, taken in their entirety, were little less than a declaration of war.

Chauncey Boucher was conscious of the negative descriptions of the undergraduates that colleagues like William Dodd deployed to discredit collegiate work—implying as they did that the undergraduate students were not serious in their studies, that they lacked a true “University spirit,” and that they thus detracted from the real work of the University—and he was convinced that a more rigorous and systematic academic program would attract even better students who would find

60. “Suggestions for a Reorganization of Our Work,” pp. 53–58; as well as “Bait, cut by C. S. Boucher,” January 7, 1930, pp. 18–19, *PP, 1925–1945*, Box 19. The University had announced in mid-December 1928 a \$2 million gift from Julius Rosenwald for the construction of new undergraduate dormitories for men and women that would have housed almost 800 College students. Since Rosenwald’s gift required the simultaneous commitment of an additional \$3 million from internal University resources, this gift made the anxiety of the anti-college group all the stronger. See Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp. 157–58; and “Proposal for a Dormitory Development on a 40% Gift and 60% Investment Basis,” [1928], *Records of the Department of Buildings and Grounds, 1892–1932*, Box 12. Boucher became the chair of the faculty committee charged with designing the new halls.

the general culture of the University more congenial.⁶¹ Among his original recommendations in May 1928 was the idea that the College should make it possible “to save time for the better students, who are able to develop themselves both faster and more thoroughly than the average student, by awarding the [bachelor’s] degree on the basis of demonstrated accomplishment, rather than on a required number of course credits, and thus break up the lock-step system. . . .” He also argued that “[e]ach student should be made to realize as early as possible that he is the person whose business it is to be most interested in, most vitally concerned with, his own education.”⁶²

For Boucher, the result would be an elevation of student quality and commitment. Even though Chicago might lose a significant share of its weaker and less committed students, they would soon be replaced by

a better type of student; the young people of the United States are keen enough to recognize the best to be had in education

61. Roger Geiger has argued (*To Advance Knowledge*, pp. 137–38) that efforts by several elite colleges and universities in America in the 1920s to use more selective admissions practices resulted in an improved level of the quality of students admitted, and this also seems to have been the case for the University of Chicago, even before the reforms of 1930. After an extensive investigation of retention and attrition in the 1920s, as part of the general University survey, Floyd Reeves and John Dale Russell concluded that the quality of students had improved in that decade and that the continuing high attrition rates might be owing to the fact that “year after year certain instructors and certain departments have followed the same curve of grading, irrespective of the increased ability of the entering classes. . . . There is some question whether it is desirable for the University to continue to raise its standards and at the same time to continue to fail from one-fourth to one-third of those whom it admits.” See their *Admission and Retention of University Students* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 25–26, 55.

62. “Supplementary Statement,” May 7, 1928, pp. 1, 11.

quite as quickly or even more quickly than in any other line, and are interested enough in their own welfare and development to seek the best wherever it is to be found; therefore, these Eastern men [scholars with whom Boucher had consulted] predicted, if Chicago were to adopt such a plan as here outlined, it would at once be recognized the country over as a performance superior to the old stereotyped and almost universal plan, and in a short time Chicago would have more applicants of better quality than ever before.⁶³

This was an important insight, and one that may be Boucher's most lasting contribution to our University's history. Boucher believed that a more rigorous and coordinated system of liberal education would attract more serious and more intellectually independent students, and this would not only be good for the students but for the University as well. Not surprisingly, the publicity announcing his reforms (when finally implemented in 1931) highlighted the University's explicit appreciation of intellectual seriousness and academic motivation on the part of prospective College students. Boucher wrote to high school principals in early 1931 that

[w]ith our plan in operation, high school teachers and principals can easily convince their students, who may be planning to enter the University of Chicago, that their high school work has more significance than the acquisition of enough credits with grades barely high enough to meet our entrance requirements, because the more progress a student makes in the development of his

63. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

intellectual resources and powers in high school, the more quickly and more surely will he be able to demonstrate in the College that he is adequately prepared for the advanced work in the division of his choice.⁶⁴

Max Mason's unexpected resignation in May 1928 and the resulting interregnum put Boucher's ambitious scheme in political limbo. Attempts to implement the reforms in a piecemeal fashion in later 1928 inevitably stalled, and Boucher felt isolated and unsupported, beset by powerful forces intent on thwarting his attempts to strengthen undergraduate education.⁶⁵ To Woodward he sent in 1929 what he described as a "long tale of woe"

64. *The New College Plan of the University of Chicago. A Statement for High School Principals and Teachers*, December 1, 1930, p. 15.

65. The plan that Boucher brought before the University Senate was not a formal legislative proposal for that body, but rather a series of recommendations that would have to be considered first by the Faculty of the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science. This Faculty met on May 15, 1928, and agreed to create two boards—one for the junior college curriculum and one for the senior college curriculum—to evaluate Boucher's proposals and then report back to the full Faculty. The boards began to meet in the fall quarter of 1928, but it soon became apparent that, lacking the presence of the new (and, as of yet, unnamed) President, it would be difficult to establish sufficient political consensus as to how to proceed. Whether the University Senate itself would have had the jurisdiction to make a final determination about these proposals was unclear, since most of them dealt with curricular matters pertaining to already existing degrees in the arts and sciences. During the controversy over the 1942 proposals relating to the relocation of the B.A. degree, Harold Swift explained to David Stevens of the Rockefeller Foundation that the Senate had "general legislative and administrative powers over all matters not specifically reserved to a Faculty. In effect, the Senate has veto power over the actions of a School, Division, or College, but is not empowered to take affirmative or constructive action." Swift to Stevens, May 28, 1942, *Swift Papers*, Box 144.

about the lack of legitimacy associated with undergraduate education at the University of Chicago:

Until you have encountered it as often as I have—in literally dozens of instances—you will not realize the extent to which the opinion is widespread among our faculty members, particularly in the lower ranks, that though the Administration may occasionally give public lip service to our undergraduate work, in order to satisfy Alumni and to prevent our income from undergraduate tuition from falling off, the main and only vital interest of the Administration is in graduate and research work; that there are but minor rewards and not significant prospects for preferment for the man who is even outstandingly successful in undergraduate work; that it actually improves the standing and prospects of a man to boast of distaste for, and neglect of, the undergraduate work he may be doing; that to win promotions he must be able to boast of the number of Master's degree or Doctor's degree candidates he has working under him, or he must, by research productivity, secure a call from another institution, to use as a "club."⁶⁶

But if he was privately discouraged, Chauncey Boucher remained the eager public advocate. In fact, Boucher was willing to play what might be called the alumni/trustee card. Knowing that many College alumni were uneasy about the rumors circulating in the later 1920s about the disinterest of the University in its Colleges, in December 1928 Boucher wrote a trenchant critique of the situation which he prepared

66. Boucher to Woodward, October 11, 1929, p. 8, *PP, 1925–1945*, Box 18.

for a joint meeting of Trustee Committees on Alumni Relations and Alumni Contributions. Albert W. Sherer, an influential Trustee who was also an alumnus of the Colleges, sent it to Board Chairman Harold Swift, observing that he was in “heartly sympathy with most of it.”⁶⁷ Boucher’s text was a direct blast at the positions assumed by colleagues like Dodd and his fellow research-only compatriots, arguing that

the idea which has had currency for ten years to my knowledge, still persists among many faculty members, students, and alumni, and among the public at large, that the University of Chicago is deliberately endeavoring to kill its Colleges slowly but surely by maltreatment and become a graduate institution with only such senior college work as is necessary to supplement the graduate work.⁶⁸

In an extended version of the same remarks, Boucher added that

[f]or ten years, to my personal knowledge, there has been grave uncertainty in the minds of many faculty members, alumni, students, and the public, regarding the policy of the University of Chicago in the Colleges. . . . When I first came to Chicago . . . I encountered the opinion among representatives of all the groups mentioned above, that the University was deliberately submerging the Colleges, was gradually but surely killing the

67. Sherer to Swift, December 20, 1928, *Swift Papers*, Box 144.

68. Boucher, “Thoughts and Suggestions Regarding an Educational Policy and its Successful Administration, in the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science, of the University of Chicago,” p. 3, December 1928, *ibid.*

Colleges by maltreatment, so that it might become a Graduate institution—that it would retain the Undergraduate divisions only so long as they were needed as a milch cow to contribute to the financial support of the Graduate work.⁶⁹

In contrast to his fellow historian William Dodd, Boucher thus believed the Colleges needed new investments and resources, but in so doing the University could raise the level of academic achievement of undergraduates and make its undergraduate programs fully consonant with the University spirit. He concluded his plea to the Trustees with the assertion that “[l]eadership seems to be our destiny, and to neglect our opportunities in such an important field of education as college education, and particularly at the Junior College level, and at a time when thoughtful and wise leadership is more needed and more anxiously awaited than at any previous time in the history of our Colleges, would seem to convict us of cowardice or criminal negligence.”⁷⁰

The fact that Max Mason’s resignation was announced just one day before Boucher presented his reform proposals to the University Senate was also bound to influence the shape of the search for Mason’s successor. The inside candidate favored by the majority of the board and, according to Charles Judd, by the majority of the faculty as well, was Frederic Woodward, the current Vice-President and Dean of Faculties. But the faculty search committee chosen to advise the Trustees was dominated by senior research scholars like William Dodd and Charles Merriam who soon expressed serious reservations about Woodward because of his sympathetic

69. Boucher, “Report on the Conditions in the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science,” p. 1.

70. Boucher, “Thoughts and Suggestions,” pp. 13–14.

views towards Boucher's scheme to improve undergraduate education. Indeed, it is clear that Woodward was stymied in his candidacy for the presidency by a group of senior faculty members who felt "terror" (in Judd's words) over the prospect that the University might make major investments in undergraduate education, a strategy that, for Dodd, not only meant a disastrous shift in material resources away from research, but also a symbolic affront to the desired cultural hegemony of the graduate programs.⁷¹ In September 1928, Dodd wrote to Harold Swift urging that any attempt to expand undergraduate resources would mean that "the real work of the University is doomed for the next fifteen or twenty years" and left no doubt that by "real work" he meant graduate education and research. Moreover, unlike the often indifferent and undisciplined

71. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp. 157–161.



College students in front of Cobb Hall, late 1920s

undergraduates, the graduate students were studious and generated no discipline problems: "One only has to come in to contact with graduate students who come here to see that there rarely ever arises any problem of discipline and it is very rare that any instructor finds that he has to prod his students; they work too hard already. Here is ambition, aspiration, and hope, people whom it is a joy to help and people who have already shown by the work they have done all over the United States that as they go out they mean something to the country."⁷² That Dodd was himself a Wilsonian Democrat who viewed elite undergraduate colleges as being necessarily the preserve of indolent and undeservedly wealthy youth might help to explain both his stubbornness and his anxieties, but it also showed his inability to

72. Dodd to Swift, September 1, 1928, *Swift Papers*, Box 144. Dodd emerges from this correspondence as obsessed with an ideal of the University as a pure, graduate-level research institute that bordered on the financially unreal, being almost a caricature of a late nineteenth-century German research university that he remembered from his student days in Leipzig. His later, troubled stint as ambassador to Germany from 1933 to 1936 was marked by similar problems in understanding the political and economic context in which he found himself. Franklin Ford has suggested about Dodd's problems as ambassador that "[h]e could not fully understand the forces underlying Nazism because he could not think in terms of either the industrialized, urban society or the kind of farming community which had combined to produce the Third Reich. His nostalgia for a loosely organized polity of self-reliant freeholders, like his nostalgia for pre-1914 German university life, was profoundly misleading." Franklin L. Ford, "Three Observers in Berlin: Rumbold, Dodd, and François-Poncet," in Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, eds., *The Diplomats, 1919–1939* (Princeton, 1953), p. 460. For a more sympathetic view, see Robert Dallek, *Democrat and Diplomat. The Life of William E. Dodd* (New York, 1968). Harold Swift refused to engage in written correspondence with Dodd about his fears, arguing that such matters should be reserved for personal meetings: "The questions raised and the problems presented in the letters are difficult in the extreme and I don't believe we would get very far by correspondence. I shall be glad to talk them over some time at a favorable opportunity." Swift to Dodd, January 9, 1929, *Swift Papers*, Box 144.

imagine the University of Chicago being able to construct a radically different kind of undergraduate program than those of its Eastern peers.⁷³

As Acting President and, at the same time, as the leading internal candidate for the permanent job, Fritz Woodward found himself in an impossible situation. Faced with alumni and Trustee grumbling about the bad press caused by the anti-undergraduate rhetoric of some senior faculty members, Woodward was forced to write to Graduate Deans Gordon Laing and Henry Gale in mid-January 1929, urging them (in a tone that bordered on that of a reprimand) to reaffirm publicly the necessity of Chicago maintaining its undergraduate college and pointing to the growing unease that was manifest in influential alumni circles. In response, he received perfunctory reassurances of Laing's and Gale's support, but this exchange and others like it drove a knife through the heart of Woodward's chances to succeed Mason.⁷⁴ It was hardly surprising that Gale and Laing eagerly joined the opposition against Boucher's proposed reforms.⁷⁵

73. See the insightful comments on this point in Fred Arthur Bailey, *William Edward Dodd. The South's Yeoman Scholar* (Charlottesville, 1997), pp. 142–43.

74. See Woodward to Gale and Laing, January 11, 1929, and their guarded responses of January 15, 1929, and January 14, 1929, *Swift Papers*, Box 144. More generally, see the excellent analysis offered by Benjamin McArthur in his "A Gamble on Youth: Robert M. Hutchins, the University of Chicago, and the Politics of Presidential Selection," *History of Education Quarterly*, 30 (1990): 161–86, especially 166–73.

75. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, p.158. In his annual report on the Graduate School of Arts and Literature in 1930, Laing was completely unrepentant on this issue: "Perhaps the unsatisfactory condition of graduate schools in this country today is ultimately due to the fact that the original plan, which has been followed ever since, of attaching a German system of advanced work to the American college is fundamentally unsound and constitutes an educational hybrid that can never prosper." *The President's Report. Covering the Academic Year July 1, 1929 to June 30, 1930* (Chicago, 1931), p. 5.

Even though Woodward was respected by many other senior faculty members, the anti-Woodward forces were able to muddy the waters, and by early 1929 Woodward's candidacy was doomed, opening the way for the young, brash outsider, Robert Maynard Hutchins.⁷⁶

Barry Karl has rightly observed of this battle that it was ultimately one in which neither side could be permanently victorious—the University needed undergraduates for its financial welfare if not also for its long-term institutional survival, and it also needed the research luster with which Harper had originally endowed it—but the fact remains that the fight was bitter, intractable, and damaging of faculty morale, and it makes Robert Hutchins's subsequent support for even more radical investments and reforms in undergraduate education all the more remarkable.⁷⁷

In sum, the University that Robert Hutchins took over in the summer of 1929 was deeply conflicted over the future of the Colleges, and if this was a great challenge, it was also a huge opportunity for the young President to make his own mark and to do so quickly. Charles Judd had complained to Charles Gilkey in January 1929 that “[o]ur greatest need just now is for an educational leader rather than a money-raiser, and the faculty com. are all wrong in seeking the latter first.”⁷⁸ Like many anxious search committees intent on re-fighting yesterday's wars, the committee that chose

76. In contrast to some other descriptions of the search process, Meyer rightly observes that many senior faculty with respected research credentials favored Woodward's candidacy. Dodd and his colleagues may have been outliers, but they were in a key position to influence the outcome. See Meyer, “The Chicago Faculty,” pp. 482, 486–88.

77. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp. 156, 162.

78. See Gilkey to Swift, January 18, 1929, p. 1, *Charles Gilkey Papers*, Box 1.

Robert Hutchins misjudged their candidate's capacity for radical and certainly unpredictable educational leadership.

Immediately after Robert Hutchins's appointment to the presidency was announced in April 1929, Chauncey Boucher wrote two back-to-back letters to him, duly praising his appointment but also informing and lobbying Hutchins about his (Boucher's) plans. Boucher noted that "[a]fter a year of uncertainty, with the consideration of important questions of basic policy necessarily postponed, the election of anybody as president at this time would have given us a feeling of relief. But, your acceptance of the presidency has given us genuine satisfaction and has inspired us anew with enthusiasm and confidence." For Boucher "[t]he most important project in educational policy which was before us for consideration when President Mason's resignation was announced is set forth in the report of the Senate Committee on the Undergraduate Colleges, dated May 1, 1928."⁷⁹

Boucher proved to be an able advocate, and Hutchins slowly came to embrace the basic substance of Boucher's plan. Even before he officially took office, Hutchins had written to Swift arguing that "we must do something about undergraduate education" and asked Swift to investigate how much additional money would be required to implement Boucher's plans, in the hopes that this might be put before the General Education Board for support.⁸⁰ At first, Hutchins seems to have considered other options as well, such as creating an dual-track program under which departments would offer "honors" classes for students most interested in their subjects,

79. Boucher to Hutchins, April 27, 1929, and May 3, 1929, *Archive of the Dean of the College*, Box 1.

80. Hutchins to Swift, July 3, 1929, *Swift Papers*, Box 49. For Boucher's response, see Boucher to Stevens and Woodward, October 9, 1929, *PP 1925-1945*, Box 18.

along with parallel classes for students who had merely passing interests, both spanning the then-existing junior and senior colleges.⁸¹ This plan was paralleled by an equally bold proposal to reform graduate education that Hutchins put before the Deans of the Graduate Schools in December 1929, in which he suggested that the existing Ph.D. degree be reserved for graduate students who would go on to teaching careers and that a new degree should be fashioned for those who wished to become “productive scholars.” In essence, Hutchins was suggesting that the departments should take training of college teaching far more seriously than they had heretofore imagined. Deans Henry Gale and Gordon Laing reacted with polite skepticism, and in a subsequent exchange Gale urged the young President to at least consult the chairs of the departments before taking his ideas before the University Senate.⁸² Like many of Hutchins’s more radical ideas, the notion of creating a doctoral degree for college teachers was an idea that would not easily disappear, as the organizers of the 1944 faculty memorial to the Board of Trustees against Hutchins would later discover.⁸³

81. Hutchins mentioned the idea in his inaugural address in November 1929. See *University of Chicago Magazine*, 22 (1929): 81–82; and Mortimer Adler, *Philosopher at Large. An Intellectual Autobiography* (New York, 1977), pp. 131–32. There are many references to these plans in the correspondence between Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins in 1929 and 1930 in the *Robert Hutchins Papers*, Box 4. For the larger context, see Mary Ann Dzuback, *Robert M. Hutchins. Portrait of an Educator* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 93–94, 100–104.

82. See Hutchins, “Memorandum on Graduate Study,” December 9, 1929; and Gale to Hutchins, February 8, 1930, *Judd Papers*, Box 11.

83. Hutchins reintroduced the idea in his controversial speech on restructuring the University, presented to the Trustee-Faculty Dinner on January 12, 1944, at the South Shore Country Club. See *Hutchins Papers*, Box 26. For Hutchins’s several conflicts with key members of the senior faculty in the later 1930s and 1940s, see Dzuback, *Robert M. Hutchins*, pp. 192–200.

Boucher's initial meetings in the autumn of 1929 with Hutchins inspired sufficient confidence on Boucher's part that he could write to Hutchins in late November that

[a]s Dean of the Colleges I feel that I can vindicate existence only when there is opportunity to work with enthusiasm, and with an earnest attempt at effectiveness, on a constructive and ever on-going educational program. After I had my first talk with you in September I felt assured that the dark and dreary days, which began when President Mason's resignation was announced, would soon be over. Now I am thoroughly convinced. Whenever the initial flood of demands upon your time for outside contact making may abate enough to give you an opportunity to discuss ways and means to carry into effect policies for the Colleges, on which we are already in thorough agreement, I shall be glad to talk with you. . . .⁸⁴

A full and exact chronology of what happened between January and September 1930 is difficult to reconstruct based on the surviving sources, but it seems likely that after wide consultation with Reeves, Judd, Boucher, Swift, and others, Hutchins realized that the new organizational plan suggested by Ayres could be used to create an independent organizational and jurisdictional space to solve College problems as well. Judd's

84. Boucher to Hutchins, November 21, 1929, *Archive of the Dean of the College*, Box 1. By June 1930, Hutchins was writing to Boucher with approval about the possible design of the new comprehensive examinations, but was slightly critical that they still seemed "pretty well departmentalized." This was a theme to which Hutchins would return again. See Hutchins to Boucher, June 5, 1930, *PP, 1925-1945*, Box 18.

role in the final decisions—to which Hutchins later alluded—is fully plausible by virtue of the fact that, unlike Dodd and Merriam, Judd was a distinguished scholar who was on record as favoring both the retention of the first two years of college work on campus *and* strengthening the research resources of the University.⁸⁵ The final structure also followed from Hutchins's own conviction—to which he was nudged by Boucher—that general education needed special and different kinds of organizational controls and that the Divisions would be best left with the custody of “specialized” knowledge. He would later assert in 1931 that “[t]he more we considered the matter in the light of the University’s history and of the needs of American education, the more we were convinced that a sharp break should be made at the end of Sophomore year. The problems of general education and the problems of specialization seemed to us different, requiring different attention and separate organization.”⁸⁶ Certainly, several of Hutchins’s public speeches at other colleges and universities in the spring of 1930 suggested that he was well on his way to adopting Boucher’s basic ideas, but with a public rhetorical flair that the sober Dean could not possibly match. For example, at a conference in Ohio in April 1930 Hutchins defended the idea of a junior college as a

85. See Charles Gilkey’s report to Harold Swift about Judd’s views on the college versus research conundrum in January, 1929, offered in the midst of the tension-filled presidential search. According to Gilkey, Judd was “sharply critical of those who would abolish the junior colleges on the one hand or ape the eastern colleges on the other. Says we cannot amputate or starve anything without weakness and unreality.” Instead, Judd told Gilkey that the new President would inevitably have to pursue an “inclusive *both . . . and* policy for the University” of supporting undergraduate education and research. See Gilkey to Swift, January 18, 1929,” p. 1, *Gilkey Papers*, Box 1.

86. “Upper Divisions at Chicago,” p. 144.

necessary and permanent part of a research university, and insisted that all that was needed was “an intelligent faculty, a flexible course of study, and a system of general examinations for which the student may present himself when in his opinion he is ready for them. This means, of course, the abolition of credits, grades and attendance records, and the substitution for them of an intimate knowledge of the individual and an enlightened program of examinations.”⁸⁷

The Reforms of November 1930 and Their Aftermath

The outcome of these tactical interventions and strategic opportunities—Ayres’s proposal for a new administrative structure in May 1930; the success of some of our most distinguished colleagues in collaborative research enterprises that went beyond conventional departmental boundaries in the mid- and later 1920s; and Boucher’s urgent pleas for more curricular coherence and for additional investments in undergraduate education—congealed in the master plan that Robert Hutchins took to the University Senate on October 22, 1930, and that was subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees on November 13, 1930.

Under Hutchins’s plan, the arts and sciences were divided into five jurisdictional units, four Divisions and a College that was mandated “to do the work of higher, general education at the University.” Each of the existing departments was assigned to one of four Divisions, which were authorized to recommend candidates for the baccalaureate as well as for graduate degrees in their fields, whereas the College, which became

87. “The University and the Individual,” address given at the Ohio Teachers’ Conference, April 3, 1930, *Hutchins Papers*, Box 19.

responsible for the equivalent of the first two years of undergraduate education, would draw upon departmental faculty to staff its general-education courses, but do so as an autonomous faculty Ruling Body. Undergraduate students could not enter a Division until they had fully met the curricular requirements of the College. By grouping the heretofore semi-sovereign departments under the leadership of a Division, Hutchins hoped that real Divisional cultures of research cooperation and interdisciplinary educational work would emerge. Moreover, he also hoped that the Divisions would become curricular units for at least the upper level of undergraduate education (and possibly for some areas of graduate education as well), a realm of authority that would curb what Hutchins felt to be the parochialism and narrowness of the departments: "The aim will be to develop a divisional, rather than a departmental curriculum. Departments will not institute or maintain work duplicating that of other departments in the same division. Through a divisional curriculum the student will have opportunities denied him hitherto. Many departments have insisted on narrow specialization in departmental fields. A divisional course of study means that departmental requirements will have to have the approval of the divisions, thus guaranteeing to the student the opportunities offered by all departments in the division, and the consequent breadth of training that many of them now lack."⁸⁸ An equally vital impulse behind the reforms was the expectation that it would eliminate the many financial transactions, often on petty issues, between department chairs and the President's Office, and force them to negotiate with their Divisional Deans for financial resources. Hutchins thought that this would result in strong rather than weak Deans who would be able to bring departments into coherent regimes of resource

88. Speech of November 20, 1930, pp. 5–6, *Hutchins Papers*, Box 19.

allocation and common planning. As he put it in 1931, “The deans are held responsible for the wise administration of the funds allotted to them in their budgets and for staying within those budgets. They are, I repeat, vice-presidents in charge of their divisions.”⁸⁹

Still, subsequent reality in the 1930s proved more complex, for the extremely negative financial impact of the Great Depression on the University as a whole tended to challenge these regionalist ambitions, giving Hutchins in his presidential role more discretionary power than his predecessors had either claimed or tried to exercise. Nor was Hutchins content with allowing the departmental faculties under the new structures to make either important curricular decisions or senior appointment decisions in a political vacuum. Hutchins would later recall to George Dell that

[t]he divisional organization helped us enormously, the Depression helped us enormously. We got rid of all kinds of extraneous things, that had simply grown up. A professor would be appointed, he would have a hobby, he would teach that hobby, then the department would recommend that somebody be appointed to succeed him, even though the hobby was obviously a hobby and nothing more. In a depression, the greatest handicap of a university president in a place like Chicago is the obvious overwhelming confidence of the recommending faculty, and for me to sit there and tell Breasted that he—that the man he was presenting to me for appointment as full professor was just no damn good on the basis of my reading the dossier and fifteen minutes conversation with the man, was really an outrage. I think most of these decisions were correct, nevertheless, because the object that these people had in view was

89. “Upper Divisions at Chicago,” p. 145.

not an object, it seemed to me, suitable to the University of Chicago. The standard view of departments is what I call without disrespect the Harvard attitude. You simply get the “best” man. We weren’t trying to be a collection of the “best” men, we were trying to be a collection of the best people to do what we thought ought to be done, which is a different thing in some respects.⁹⁰

The ironic result was that the 1930s and early 1940s became as much a “presidential regime” as a confederate decanal regime, especially in the case of selection of senior appointments and approval of promotions to tenure. A number of scholars have commented on Hutchins’s personal distrust of empirical social science and the negative impact of this animus on the future fate of several departments in the 1930s and 1940s. But it is also true that the era of deep financial stringency after 1931 may have enhanced Hutchins’s own autocratic tendencies, leading as it did to even greater frustration on his part about the resistance he met from faculties who were (he insisted) “notoriously hostile to change.”⁹¹

For the College, the new curriculum—based on interdisciplinary general-education survey courses and on comprehensive examinations as well as on new governance arrangements that protected the College from direct meddling by the departments—was the beginning of an extraordinary historical odyssey. With its boldness and self-styled combination of intellectual rigor and scientific efficiency, the “New Plan” (as the new curriculum quickly came to be called) garnered hugely favor-

90. Interview with George Dell, May 29, 1973, pp. 16–17, *Robert M. Hutchins and Associates, George Dell Interviews*, Box 1, Department of Special Collections.

91. “Annual Confidential Statement to the Board of Trustees,” September 30, 1938, p. 42.

able publicity for the University, most of it relating to the bold and rigorous changes in the first two years of the undergraduate program. Hutchins was touted as the young, visionary president of a young, revolutionary university, and the only fears vouchsafed were that the new programs might be too difficult and too challenging for average students. The *Literary Digest* proclaimed that “[t]hose who go to college for a good time, for social advantages, and for a meaningless diploma will not select Chicago University, when the proposed reorganization takes place.” The *Chicago Tribune* quoted Boucher with approval to the effect that “[w]e desire to give meaning to the bachelor’s degree—that the student has passed through a stage of real educational development, and has really achieved intellectually.” For the *New York Times*, the reforms embodied a bold arrangement “that goes the whole way in throwing on the student responsibility for his own education. Where some universities are trying tidbits and spurs in the way of honors systems and house plans, Chicago has begun to treat the undergraduate as though he really desired an education and needed only the sign-posts to help him get it.”⁹²

Moreover, by folding a solution to the problem of the College into a broader reorganization of the arts and sciences, Hutchins (temporarily, at least) avoided being typecast as overtly “pro-undergraduate,” a stance that Harold Swift, for all the latter’s love of his undergraduate ties, warned him against as early as May 1929, given what had happened when Ernest Burton tried to provide support to the Colleges.⁹³ Interestingly, among

92. *Literary Digest*, December 27, 1930, p. 16; *New York Times*, September 27, 1931, p. E7.

93. See the curious notes that Swift made for himself in the briefings he needed to give to Hutchins in May 1929: “[Tell Hutchins to] Watch his step at start on research. Tell Burton’s experience after Dream of Colleges.” *Swift Papers*, Box 49.

Hutchins's first public commentaries on the new system was a speech in March 1931 to an alumni meeting in which he used the phrase "Upper Divisions" to describe the new units, reflecting his initial understanding that the Divisions would take responsibility for upper-level undergraduate work as well as graduate work.⁹⁴

However, this state of affairs was to prove transitional, as Hutchins quickly became dissatisfied with the political and intellectual limitations of the New Plan curriculum. By the mid-1930s, he had come to believe that the New Plan was seriously flawed in that it accorded the natural sciences near parity with the humanities and social sciences, a pedagogical balance that Hutchins felt to be both unnecessary and unwise; moreover, the New Plan left the Divisions in their role as proxies for the departments with too much intellectual and political influence over the College's general-education curriculum for Hutchins's taste. This meant that the general-education survey courses, while a significant improvement over undergraduate education in the 1920s, functioned not only as devices to encourage intellectual skills and analytical competencies and thus as means to "train the mind for intelligent action"—which Hutchins viewed as the fundamental purpose of general education—but also as introductions to the substantive research work of the departments, which in Hutchins's view smacked too much of professional or para-professional education. To the Board of Trustees he wrote in 1935: "I had hoped that the general courses would deal with the leading ideas in the various fields of knowledge. Although some progress has

94. Hutchins, "The University in 1931," *University of Chicago Magazine*, 24 (1931): 270–74. The phrase was also included in the original memorandum on University reorganization that Hutchins submitted to the University Senate in October 1930. See the *Minutes of the University Senate*, October 22, 1930.

been made in this direction, the great weakness of the curriculum is still its emphasis on current information.”⁹⁵

Hence, Hutchins aspired to a much more radical plan. The College might be the beginning of a university education that would be completed by the specialized work of the Divisions, but it also might be the end of a university education, depending upon the social efficacy and intellectual significance one accorded to the idea of general education. From the very first days of his presidency, Hutchins was explicit in suggesting that some students would probably opt to finish their university work at the end of their general-educational program at the conclusion of the conventional second year.⁹⁶ In his hugely influential tract *The Higher Learning in America*, published in 1936, he took it for granted that many students would not progress beyond the second year of college: “[I]t is highly important that we should develop ourselves and encourage the junior colleges to develop an intelligible scheme of general education under which the student may either terminate his formal education at the end of the sophomore year or go on to university work.”⁹⁷ Perhaps, general education should not merely be viewed as the natural and logical academic terminus for some students; perhaps, it should rather be viewed as the proper and

95. “Report of the President on the Academic Years, 1930–34,” February 1, 1935, p. 21. He also argued that “[t]he curriculum is seriously over-weighted on the side of the natural sciences.” Just because “[t]wo divisions of natural science are necessary for administrative purposes, it does not follow that two natural science courses are necessary for a general education.”

96. See “The University and the Individual,” April 3, 1930, p. 3; and the untitled speeches dated November 20, 1930, p. 3 and December 5, 1930, p. 10, in *Hutchins Papers*, Box 19.

97. *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven, 1936), p. 18.

justified end of a four-year educational process for *all* students, a process that would begin in the third year of high school and terminate in the second year of college. When Hutchins persuaded the University Senate in mid-November 1932 to authorize a four-year program that combined the last two years of the University High School and the first two years of the College for local Lab Schools students, he launched a small but important precedent that, within a decade, would mushroom to transform the academic landscape of the University.⁹⁸ Equally momentous and at the same meeting, Hutchins was also able to secure for the College the legal right to hire its own faculty apart from the departments.⁹⁹ If the College made only a very modest use of this proviso in the 1930s, the 1940s and 1950s were to prove very different indeed.

Hutchins's long-term solutions to the perceived shortcomings of the New Plan were thus to create a real faculty for the College and to encourage that faculty to develop a full-time, fully required curriculum in general education that would span grades eleven to fourteen for all of its students. The final and most radical revisions of the 1930 arrangements, as they related to the relationship between the "Upper" Divisions and the College, took place in January 1942. These constitutional changes, even though they, in turn, were modified in the 1950s, have marked our history ever since.

98. Robert M. Hutchins, "Statement on the Recommendations of the Senate," December 9, 1932, *PP*, 1925-1945, Box 19.

99. The proposal, adopted by the Senate on November 19, 1932, was the following: "That the requirement that all members of the College faculty be members of departments and divisional faculties be abrogated, and that Dean of the College be empowered, in consultation with the chairmen of the departments and the deans of the divisions concerned, to recommend to the President members of the College faculty who may or may not have departmental or divisional affiliations."

I have described these changes in detail elsewhere, but let me briefly recapitulate their most essential features.¹⁰⁰ Since Hutchins had decided that the real work of the College should begin at the end of the second year of high school and conclude with the second year of the College, he became convinced that the College should exercise its right to hire a separate faculty and that it should gain sole control of the award of the B.A. degree. He wrote confidentially to the Board of Trustees in February 1935 that

[a]s the reorganization of the University proceeded it became clear that the two-year organization of the College would not be satisfactory. When fifty percent of the student body leave every year it is hard to work out a coherent program. The junior colleges of the country have a notoriously weak course of study. One of the things we hoped to do in the organization of our College was to frame a curriculum that might assist them. The last two years of high school seem to have a separate standing and separate needs from the earlier secondary years. It seemed to us that we might, by putting the four years together, form an educational unit that would be superior to the high school or the junior college in isolation.

As for the question of the credential that students in this four-year program should receive, Hutchins had no doubts:

Many, probably most, students should not stay in college after they have completed their general education. The university

100. See *Three Views of Continuity and Change at the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1999), chapter 2.

should be reserved for those of scholarly interests and abilities. But American students come to college for a degree and will not leave until they get one. The first one that is respectable is the Bachelors. I am in favor of awarding it at the end of the sophomore year.¹⁰¹

The crisis occasioned by the coming of the Second World War in late 1941 provided the final impetus for the implementation of these ideas, and by a divided vote (63 to 48) in the University Senate on January 22, 1942, the College was authorized to grant the B.A. degree at the end of the conventional second year of college, with the responsibility for graduate education now becoming the sole educational task of the Divisions. A last-ditch effort in early April 1942 by senior faculty led by George G. Bogert, Ernst W. Puttkammer, Bernadotte Schmitt, and several others to rescind the Senate's acquiescence to the transfer of the B.A. degree from the Divisions to the College failed by a 58 to 58 vote, with Hutchins himself breaking the tie.

These curricular and structural changes created what has come to be called the Hutchins College, the name usually invoked to characterize its extraordinary pedagogical innovations, including a required general-education curriculum constituted by a number of year-long sequences that transformed the Divisional survey courses of the New Plan into something much closer to the small-seminar "honors" courses that Hutchins, under Mortimer Adler's influence, had really favored in the 1930s. But no less significant were the political implications of 1942, for Hutchins had clearly come to believe that a graduate research faculty

101. "Report of the President on the Academic Years, 1930-34," February 1, 1935, pp. 4, 25.

could not be trusted to undertake a serious program of undergraduate teaching (defined in the context of an educational program for students aged sixteen to nineteen) and that such teaching should be given to those who would take it seriously. Again to the Board of Trustees, he commented in 1935 that “[t]he only answer to this problem is the gradual building up of a faculty interested and competent in the study of education at this highly important level.”¹⁰² In a private, unpublished interview with George Dell in 1973, he offered a much harsher version of these views: “[N]o matter what you do, if the place is sprinkled with Nobel Prize winners, and the value system of the public and the institution itself is to have as many Nobel Prize winners on the campus as possible, then no matter what you do, the teachers and the college faculty are second-class citizens on their own campus.”¹⁰³ Hutchins was clearly willing to put University resources behind these controversial assertions, for at the high point of the Hutchins era (1950–51) the College employed 136 faculty members in a separate faculty apart from the Divisions.¹⁰⁴

The changes of 1942 led, in turn, to a radical revision of the relationships between the Divisions and the College. Whereas before 1942 the award of the baccalaureate degree had remained a clear Divisional prerogative and all members of the College faculty also held membership in the faculty of a Division, now the College assembled a faculty larger (on paper at least) than three of the four Divisions and it gained control of

102. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

103. Interview with George Dell, May 29, 1973, p. 15.

104. “Trend in Faculty,” 1951, *Archive of the Dean of the College*. In the same year the Humanities Division had 69 faculty members, the Social Sciences Division had 135 members, the Physical Sciences Division had 103 members, and the Biological Sciences Division (including clinical appointees) had 207 members.

the baccalaureate degree, creating educational programs that afforded no place for the specialized research knowledge represented by the departments. What had been the “Upper” Divisions between 1930 and 1942 now became the “Graduate” Divisions that continue to mark the mental and political map of our local academic world. Instead of the B.A. degree that included specialized work, the first degree offered by the Divisions would now be the M.A., with the College’s program focusing exclusively on general education.

Some of these controversial achievements proved short-lived, however. Hutchins’s resignation as Chancellor in 1951 and the profound concerns both of the new central administration led by Lawrence Kimpton and of the Board of Trustees about the collapse of undergraduate enrollments in the early 1950s enabled senior faculty in several of the Divisions to mobilize what amounted to a curricular and structural counter-revolution between 1952 and 1965. In the aftermath of the Filbey Report of April 1953—which created curricular space for specialized, departmentally based studies within the baccalaureate degree programs of undergraduate students—and of the Report of the Executive Committee on Undergraduate Education of April 1958, which modified the autonomy of the existing College-only faculty by infusing its numbers with dozens of faculty colleagues whose primary appointments were located in one of the Graduate Divisions—key elements of Hutchins’s revolution were summarily curtailed. Kimpton was also eager to nudge the College back into a more conventional, grades thirteen to sixteen demographic profile by curbing the admission of students who lacked high-school diplomas.

As the University entered the 1960s, several of the structural preconditions behind the revolutionary curricular ideas and practices of the Hutchins College had thus been modified. But the fundamental constitutional change of 1942—the relocation of the baccalaureate degree

from the Divisions to the College—was never successfully revoked, so that control of that vital degree and responsibility for all student academic and para-academic programs associated with that degree still remained under the aegis of the autonomous College after 1960.

Epilogue

F

For seventy years the five-pronged structure created in November 1930, with all of its opportunities and problems, has defined who we are and how we relate to one another. How has this structure fared over the past seventy years?

Certainly, since World War II the Graduate Divisions have come to play crucial roles in resource allocation and personnel coordination, fostering opportunities for interdisciplinary research collaboration among their faculties that have, in turn, helped to ensure the mutual strength, distinction, and effectiveness of their member departments. That the Divisions did not become the kind of independent educational and curricular entities over and above their member departments that Hutchins seems to have hoped for—which would have made them true structural analogues to the College—suggests that Hutchins seriously underestimated the residual power of the discipline-based departments, at least on the graduate level. Still, the Divisional Deans as the executive officers of their units have had substantial and meaningful opportunities to influence, if only quietly and indirectly, the future scholarly directions and the general quality of their departmentally based faculties. And, to speak candidly, in the decades following 1958 the offices of the Deans of the Graduate Divisions also gradually assembled unto themselves most of the professionalizing functions and incentive mechanisms relating to the faculty of the arts

and sciences in general that many College loyalists hoped might be shared between the College and the Divisions, via the concept of joint appointments that was first articulated in the late 1950s.

This turn of events was nearly inevitable, once the College lost the right to appoint and promote its own faculty and came to depend, as it had between 1930 and 1942, on the departments to identify and recruit future appointees to the College faculty. Because the departments have remained administratively situated solely within the Graduate Divisions for the past seventy years and had (and, to my knowledge, still have) no formal constitutional relationships with the College, possibilities for meaningful and sustained cooperation between the College and the departments on key issues relating to the professional development of the faculty have proven challenging, to say the least. This is all the more ironic, given that the present system of individual joint appointments between the College and the various departments would seem to presume the prior existence of such relationships. The implications of these simple cultural and legal facts for the capacity of the College to sustain its long-standing traditions of faculty-taught, interdisciplinary teaching and learning and to defend its special programs in general education have long been obvious to informed observers. The question today might be put in the following way: How crucial to the future work of the College is the legitimacy of the idea of joint appointments that was originally conceived in the later 1950s as a permanent modification of the basis for an independent College faculty? Was this a theoretically (and politically) valid concept in 1958, and, if so, should it remain so in our time as well? Moreover, was Robert Hutchins correct in arguing that it is a basic purpose of the University to be not merely a collection of the best men and best women, but rather “to be a collection of the best people to do what we thought ought to be done”? If this fundamental norm still has value and

meaning, does the mandate of what we as a faculty think “ought to be done” still comprehend the College’s traditions of non-departmentally based, interdisciplinary liberal education?

Paradoxically, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the truce-like settlements between the Divisions and the College that ended the curricular civil wars of the 1950s, the Faculty of the College, now consisting largely of individual members who are jointly appointed with the individual departments, is still formally responsible for the B.A. degree and, at least in statutory terms, remains a Ruling Body of equivalent standing with the other Ruling Bodies of the University. That is, the College retains the authority and the responsibility to determine the structure of and to monitor the effectiveness of the whole of the undergraduate curriculum, to staff that curriculum as best as it is able with the most dedicated teachers, to determine a broad range of other policies influencing and supporting undergraduate life, to establish admissions and aid guidelines, and, in the last two decades or so, to develop a coherent program of alumni/ae relations and of fund-raising as well.

This wonderfully idiosyncratic system remains relatively unique in American higher education. What should we make of it? Are these now seventy-year-old traditions of confederative governance worth sustaining? Ultimately, such questions can only be answered by the faculty itself, and especially by the senior, tenured faculty of the arts and sciences. But in considering these questions, we might wish to keep in mind that since the early 1930s the independent and autonomous Divisions, as corporate assemblages of proudly semi-independent departments, have evolved in deeply interactive ways with the independent College. If the College were to cease to function as a meaningful Ruling Body, such a turn of events would impact, in a host of unintended ways, the characteristic identities of the Graduate Divisions and their semi-sovereign departments

as well. Put slightly differently, we live within a system of interlocking structural relationships, and to disregard one element might have consequences for the ways in which the remaining elements would live together in the world. Indeed, one of the most distinctive features of our University over the past seventy years has been this diversified and competitive confederacy, at the center of which is the College with its vigorous traditions of general and interdisciplinary liberal education, seeking always to protect a style and form of liberal education that respects and draws from but, at the same time, is not limited to the disciplinary knowledge of the individual departments and of the University's other clusters of specialized research knowledge.

But such constitutional considerations are not the most important features of the lives we lead, for constitutions can and often do change. After all, the French have had thirteen different constitutions in the last 210 years, and yet the cheese, the bread, the wine, and the sheer beauty of France is no less or more for the one or the other constitutional adjustment. From the depths of the Old Regime to the cohabitational world of Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin, Paris still rules France. No, in the world of the universities, the measure of a constitution can best be taken in reference to the kind of civic or intellectual culture that it helps to empower, to enrich, and to protect. On this score, the College has served the University well, not only because of its capacity for interdisciplinary curricular innovation and because of the excellence of its educational programs, but because of the quality of the gifted and committed students whom those programs attract to the University. Chauncey Boucher got it right when he argued that Chicago was destined to have a special kind of undergraduate education that would invite unto itself a special kind of student.

Moreover, at its best the College has helped to foster the larger culture of interdisciplinary work that is one of the most distinctive educational

norms of this University. Clearly, other units have contributed to that norm, including the Divisions themselves as well as the many distinguished research institutes and interdisciplinary committees on the graduate level. But the College has, in quiet but powerful ways, played a role in these great cultural constructions, and to fail to acknowledge and to protect those traditions would be a mistake for our common futures.

When the reforms of November 1930 were adopted, Robert Hutchins presented them to the alumni and to the world at large as an experiment, suggesting that “[i]f after a period of trial and error we conclude that we have been mistaken in beginning it, we shall have the courage to end it.” But Hutchins also insisted that much was at stake and that many good things would come of success: “By attempting it now we lay ourselves open to the attack as dreamers and fanatics. But we also commend ourselves, I hope, to the sympathy of those interested in earnest efforts to improve education and advance knowledge. For though our attempt may be futile, you may be sure that it is earnest. Upon it we have staked the next five years at least of our institutional life. . . . And to . . . all of you interested in the development of leadership in America, we submit our program, not for your congratulation but for your criticism in the belief that only by experiment constantly criticized and revised shall we produce in this country a generation more educated than our own and individuals better educated than ourselves.”¹⁰⁵

In a way, the last seventy years of our history have encompassed exactly that process of an “experiment constantly criticized and revised.” Our basic constitutional structures have proven sturdy and resilient, but

105. Speech given to the Cleveland Phi Beta Kappa Society, Alumni of Western Reserve University, and Alumni of the University of Chicago on December 5, 1930, pp. 13–14, *Hutchins Papers*, Box 19.

they have also been part of and at times even the agents for a hotly dynamic history, a history often marked by serious conflicts, but also by productive and illuminating forward movement. Perhaps this is what makes our history worthy of a great University. It has certainly led us to fulfill Robert Hutchins's hope that we would always aspire to produce generations more educated than our own and individuals better educated than ourselves.

I wish you a productive and stimulating year in teaching our wonderful students. And, as always, I thank you for your support for and dedication to the work of the College. ■

T H E C O L L E G E
O F T H E
U N I V E R S I T Y O F
C H I C A G O