

STUDENT HOUSING  
AND THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION  
OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CHICAGO



“THE KIND OF UNIVERSITY  
THAT WE DESIRE  
TO BECOME”



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**T**he first edition of this little book on the history of housing at the University of Chicago was published in October 2008, a key moment in the history of the College.<sup>1</sup> The University had opened one new residential complex in 2001 (the Max Palevsky Residential Commons, designed by Ricardo Legorreta), and preliminary but not final plans were in play for a second hall, but the leaders of the College felt great urgency that the Board of Trustees and Central Administration needed to continue to invest in a systematic program of modern residential facilities.<sup>2</sup> To make this case I decided to present this report as a special symbolic speech to

1. John W. Boyer, “*The Kind of University that We Desire to Become*”: *Student Housing and the Educational Mission of the University of Chicago*, Occasional Papers on Higher Education, vol. 18 (Chicago: University of Chicago, Oct. 28, 2008).

2. See the evaluation presented by KieranTimberlake Associates, “The University of Chicago: Undergraduate Residential Policy Study, 2 volumes, July 2008,” College Archive of the University of Chicago. I am very grateful to Dan Koehler, Naomi Vaughan, Peter Simons, and John V. Bowlus for research assistance for this project and to Thomas Christensen for bringing relevant materials to my attention.

the College Council, not in our usual venue of Harper Library, but in one of the large common rooms of Burton Judson Court. Now, fifteen years later, the University has constructed three new residential complexes, with a fourth complex in planning stages and scheduled to open in 2027. Taken together, and assuming a steady-state size for the College of about seven thousand students annually, the College will be able to house all students in the first three years of their membership in our community, while also providing on-campus housing to those seniors who wish to stay in the system as well.

The history of residential housing at the University had strong parallels to the general demographic and financial history of the institution and has also served as a barometer for the way in which University leaders conceived of their responsibilities toward the undergraduate student body. The College suffered a reversal of fortune in the early 1950s, and the ill effects of this lasted for over forty years. The crisis was most visible in light of our enrollment. We were a College of substantial size and presence on campus before the World War II (when we were also as large or larger than our academic peers), but by 1953 we had lost half our enrollment and had fewer than 1,400 students by 1954. We did not return to our pre-1940 size until the early 1990s. In conjunction with the enrollment crisis, and accelerating in its wake, came a crisis of resources. A small and often embattled College became a kind of de facto self-fulfilling prophecy, and as a result, it was all too easy to ignore the kinds of investments that would have allowed the College to return to robust health.

The College's demographic collapse occurred exactly at the time that other top private universities began to expand in the 1950s and 1960s. This collapse disadvantaged the College, creating a campus culture marked by high attrition rates, low graduation rates, and a milieu that

many students found unsupportive, especially in the world beyond the classroom. This cultural situation hurt the University badly, because of loss of tuition income and alumni support and also because of a loss of national visibility in undergraduate admissions.

The College began to overcome the dual challenges of demography and disinvestment during the 1980s and 1990s. Over the last two decades a new student culture has emerged that is very positive about the University. The admissions situation of the College is vastly improved, not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Current students are talented as well as strongly loyal and happy, and prospective students see this immediately when they visit campus and meet them.

Current figures on admissions speak clearly in support of these claims: applications to the College have increased from 4,128 in 1992 to 39,000 in 2023. Our acceptance rate has declined from 71 percent in 1992 to 4 percent in 2023. The number of students enrolled in the College has increased from 3,425 in 1992 to just over 7,000 in Autumn Quarter 2023. As to student satisfaction, we can point to the fact that our six-year graduation rate has increased from 81 percent in 1992 to 96 percent in 2022. In addition, first-year student retention rates in the College have increased dramatically, from 87 percent in 1992 to 99 percent in 2022.

Our students are more successful and more at home in the College for many reasons. First and foremost, of course, is the education we offer. Chicago offers a form and structure of liberal education that is both challenging and deeply satisfying to our students and faculty alike. The Core curriculum provides a crucial realm of general learning that is not beholden to strict disciplinary interests but is designed to stimulate lifelong skills of self-education among our students. We must and will do all that we can to sustain and strengthen faculty teaching in the Core. But our majors also provide critical places of intellectual growth and scholarly training,



introducing our College students to the passions and the pleasures, the risks and frustrations, the courage and, ultimately, the fearlessness of original research. One natural advantage of being a college at the heart of a great research university is that our students can learn research methods and skills from an internationally distinguished faculty. Over the last decades, the College has increased its support for collaborative research between College students and faculty on several fronts. For example, our new Straetz International Undergraduate Research Scholars Program supports up to twenty students each year with grants of \$6,000 to do BA research overseas during the summer in contexts that require a language other than English. We also support summer research grants in specific departments and programs, including art history, biological chemistry, biological sciences, chemistry, classical studies, comparative human development, English language and literature, history, mathematics, philosophy, physics, psychology, and public policy studies. We have created most of these programs in the last twenty years with funds from College alumni or parents for the specific purpose of providing research support directly to our students and thereby encouraging both student creativity and student-faculty collaboration.

If we combine our support for research with the support that the College provides for internships, through the Metcalf Program (four thousand paid internships annually in both nonprofit and for-profit settings), along with more than one hundred summer Foreign Language Acquisition Grants (FLAGs) annually and several volunteer opportunities managed through the University Community Service Center, we fund approximately five thousand summer learning, research, and internship positions.

In the aggregate, these programs make it possible for virtually every student to graduate with at least one of these experiences. On other fronts, we have seen considerable progress in the development of programs

organized and managed by UChicago Career Advancement that are designed to help College students prepare for careers in the health professions, in law, in business, in journalism, in science and technology, and in several other fields. Student find these initiatives to be deeply positive and broadly efficacious.

The guiding principles of all these efforts are twofold. First, we believe that the rigorous liberal education provided by the College is excellent preparation for any career, but that the University should help students help themselves to create successful linkages between that education and professional achievement after the College. Second, we want to engage not only faculty and staff but also College and University alumni in these efforts; such engagement is good for our students, involves alumni in volunteer activities, and encourages deeper and even more philanthropic connections with the institution. What all these efforts have in common is that they are a part of larger, broad-based effort to construct *enabling structures* around and linked with our distinguished academic programs—structures that can help our students negotiate for themselves successful transitions from the world of the College to the world of academic and professional careers.

Enabling structures are just as important for the faculty colleagues teaching our College students, and we have invested in the faculty this year as well. In 2019 we inaugurated a program of grants from the College Innovation Fund to support faculty innovation in teaching in and beyond the Core. Most faculty members got into the business of higher education because they found teaching to be intellectually stimulating. We need to support faculty so that they continue to find intellectual stimulation and personal enjoyment in their teaching. To this end, we have created a program of competitive grants to support teaching innovations at all levels of College instruction.

As faculty we educate our students in the Core and in the more advanced programs that follow from the Core, but we also want to do all that we can to ensure that each student is empowered to use her or his educational achievements to achieve a high level of professional and personal success. This is why we teach and why we are determined to build and nourish the kinds of enabling structures that I have highlighted today. These commitments follow from the strongly democratic and meritocratic nature of our academic culture, but these commitments also serve us well as a practical matter because they help create a body of loyal and successful alumni. All of our students will have a fair chance to benefit from the full range of these opportunities only if we can offer each student equal membership in our College. That requires financial aid and a community life in which all can participate. Therefore, our ability to provide generous financial support for students in the College who come from families with low or moderate incomes is an essential one, both for the character of our community and for the competitive position of the College on the national scene.

The current arms race in financial aid is not a race we are going to win with dollars alone, but it is a competition in which we must engage because we want talented students from low- and moderate-income families to enroll in the College. As we move forward on this front, both internally by making decisions about admissions, aid programs, and programmatic budgets and externally in our fundraising, it is important to keep in mind that financial aid is not simply a device for social equity. It is also an essential component of our ability to create and sustain a truly democratic educational community of merit. Financial aid policies and resources allow us to make sure that all students, regardless of their family financial circumstances, are able to participate fully and effectively in all of the resources and all of the opportunities of our campus culture and

our academic community. Reductions in loan and work requirements are particularly effective in this regard because they afford students the day-to-day freedom that students from affluent families can take for granted.

The Odyssey Scholarship Program remains essential to our success in the competition for talented students from less advantaged families. We owe a great deal to our anonymous donor for the imaginative generosity of this program, and over the last fifteen years we have raised over \$300 million in new endowed matching funds for the Odyssey Scholarship Challenge to bring us all of the benefits that our donor has offered. At the same time, Chicago still has one of lowest percentages of endowment for need-based aid in our peer group, and it will be essential that the University raise at least one billion new dollars in Odyssey scholarships over the coming decade.

Chicago is one of the nation's most important centers for many cultural heritages, particularly African American and Latino. We have made great strides recently in making our campus a more welcoming place for students from these groups, but we can do more; and central to that effort will be competitive financial aid policies. We have already benefited from the Odyssey Scholarship Program in recruiting low-income students and students of color. The competition on this front will only get more intense in the future. And we cannot forget that retention and student success, which are as important as recruitment, also require resources. This is only one place where financial aid and student services and residential life intersect.

The opportunities, services, and programs of financial aid that I have sketched here will be effective in the long run only if supported by a physical infrastructure large enough and diverse enough to accommodate the energy and variety of a College of approximately seven thousand

full-time undergraduate students. Such a College deserves a vibrant, densely integrated campus culture—one that pays special attention to encouraging students to live within walking distance of campus and to become deeply involved in an array of academic, para-academic, and extracurricular activities. The magnificent Arley D. Cathey Learning Center in Harper and Stuart is part of that infrastructure. By merging the existing Stuart and Harper Libraries, restoring their historic architectural luster, and developing exciting new support facilities, the Cathey Learning Center has become a key central destination for students living north and south of the Midway. The Harper/Stuart renewal was timed to open with the creation of the Reva and David Logan Center for Creative and Performing Arts in 2010—another vital center for undergraduate explorations.

Student residential life presents us with an extraordinary opportunity to enhance the work of the College, and I believe that the historical remarks to which I now turn will justify the urgency of current plans to enable the College to house at least 75 percent of its students in high-quality College housing within easy walking distance of campus by 2027. All of the initiatives that I have mentioned today, and many more as well, raise questions about strategy and priorities—questions that are even more important in challenging economic times. The question of priorities in turn raises the question of what we are trying to accomplish as a college and as a university. To quote the title of this lecture, which comes from a presentation made by President Lawrence A. Kimpton to the Board of Trustees in 1958, “What kind of university do we want to become?”

The example of student housing, to which I just alluded, provides a fascinating case study of the intersection of our values, our self-understanding, and our institutional practices. The case of student housing

illustrates the complex way that strategy and tactics can be mobilized, either to defend those values and strengthen our identity and core mission or to compromise our values and weaken our ability to accomplish our mission as a university.

The social and political history of undergraduate housing at the University of Chicago is a complex narrative. It is fascinating not only because of the insights that it provides about the history of the College as an educational and social community, but also because it affords a helpful window to the wider world of our University’s attitudes toward and policies relating to the College over the past century.

#### THE EARLY STUDENT BODY OF THE COLLEGE

**G**iven the complex interrelationships between family background and residential choice that informed and helped to define the quality of student life at the early University—including the decision to leave home and seek residence in a University dormitory, a rooming house, or a fraternity house—it is important to gain some insights about the student body of the University of Chicago in the first several decades of its existence. Unfortunately, the University kept rather fragmentary and often disorganized records about the social backgrounds of our students, and often these extant records do not answer the questions that we wish to bring to them. Still, enough information does survive to present a general social portrait of the early undergraduate student body at Chicago.

The University typically expected students seeking admission to Chicago to have graduated from a high school. Many students were transfer students from other universities and colleges, and the same condition

likely held in their cases as well. As George Counts demonstrated in his classic study of selective secondary school admissions in the United States, although enrollments at the secondary school level increased dramatically between 1870 and 1910, the odds that a young boy or girl of high school age in the United States would attend high school in 1920 were not more than about 25 percent. Counts found that students attending high schools of any kind were much more likely to come from families with significant cultural and financial resources. (For example, students in high schools were more than two and a half times likely to come from a home that had a telephone, and their parents were much more likely to be employed in a white-collar professional or commercial career as opposed to having a working-class job.) Once students were enrolled in high school their family backgrounds continued to influence whether they would undertake a college preparatory course or a more commercially and industrially oriented vocational curriculum.<sup>3</sup> The population of private high schools in 1920, slightly over 158,000 in the whole of the United States, tended to come from even more affluent and propertied classes.<sup>4</sup>

The size of the undergraduate student population at Chicago (Autumn Quarter enrollments) increased from 1,488 students in 1908 to 3,401 students in 1929. Chicago was coeducational from the beginning, with the number of first-year men and women undergraduates ranging from a ratio of 54 percent to 46 percent in 1908 to 57 percent to 43 percent in 1929 to 56 percent to 44 percent in 1940. Until 1911, admission to the University on the junior college level required students taking an entrance examination that presumed four years (fifteen yearlong courses)

3. George S. Counts, *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1922), 72–73, 141–48.

4. *Ibid.*, 135–40.

of full-time coursework at the high school level. Beginning in 1911–12, the University accepted students who had graduated from a four-year high school accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (or, in other parts of the country, by similar accrediting bodies), subject to the student's record meeting certain quantitative and qualitative requirements.<sup>5</sup> Academic achievement at the University tended to correlate strongly with prior success in high school and with parental occupation. Reeves and Russell found, for example, that 84 percent of the students in 1926 whose fathers were employed in professional careers attained a satisfactory academic record during their freshman year, but that this value fell to 57 percent for children of fathers who worked in the trades.<sup>6</sup>

Financing an undergraduate education at the University of Chicago required significant financial commitments. In spite of the extraordinary endowment support provided by John D. Rockefeller and later from the Rockefeller boards, University officials from the very beginning were forced to rely on student tuition fees as a significant source of operational revenue, a form of dependence that would grow far greater of over the *longue durée* of the twentieth century. By the mid-1920s income from student tuition fees covered fully one-third of the annual budget of the University. Eliminating the expenses and revenues associated with the medical school and University clinics, student fees (42 percent) by the

5. In 1930 the University required that a student "shall have an average in high-school non-vocational subjects higher than the passing mark of the school by at least 25 per cent of the difference between the passing mark and 100. For example, if the passing mark is 75, the average of at least 81.25 is required." See Floyd W. Reeves and John Dale Russell, *Admission and Retention of University Students*, vol. 5, *The University of Chicago Survey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 16–17.

6. *Ibid.*, 44.

later 1930s exceeded endowment income (36 percent) as the single largest source of revenue for the general budget of the arts and sciences.<sup>7</sup> Student enrollments at the University grew by 59 percent between 1918 and 1930, but the institution's annual operational and educational expenditures increased by 323 percent.<sup>8</sup> Given the financial pressures experienced by the University after World War I, when our student population surged and when the faculty argued for a massive expansion of instructional and research resources, it was understandable that the cost of attendance increased by over 100 percent between 1917 and 1926, with annual tuition charges (full time and for three quarters) increasing from \$150 in 1917 to \$300 in 1926. Annual tuition increased to \$306 by 1933; it increased still further to \$325 by 1939. If a student did not live at home, additional expenses would be incurred by room and board costs on or off campus. Within our residential system, room and board charges varied depending on the quality and location of the dorm. The lowest cost for room and board in Burton Judson Courts in 1931 was about \$445 for a full academic year. In older residence halls, like Snell and Hitchcock, room and board might be obtained for slightly less than \$300 per academic year. (These are minimums, and wealthier students could gain better rooms for higher fees.) Students living off campus might reduce living expenses still further by cooking for themselves, although it seems very unlikely that one could rent a room, feed oneself,

7. "Sources of Support for the General Budget, 1938–39," box 9, folder 26, Office of the Vice President Papers. Unless otherwise noted, all of the archival materials used for this report are located in the Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.

8. Floyd W. Reeves, Ernest C. Miller, and John Dale Russell, *Trends in University Growth*, vol. 1, *The University of Chicago Survey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 176–77.

and buy books in Hyde Park for less than \$250 a year. Thus, assuming that a student did not live at home, the real cost of attendance at the University of Chicago at the onset of the Depression was probably somewhere between \$550 and \$800 a year.<sup>9</sup> To put this latter figure in the social context of the times, the average salary of a full-time associate professor at the University of Chicago in 1930–31 was about \$4,000 to \$4,500 a year. A male high school teacher with a degree from a land grant college would have earned about \$2,900 after ten years of service. Professions like law and medicine did considerably better: average salaries in law, medicine, and engineering for graduates of a land grant college after ten years were about \$6,000, \$5,700, and \$4,200 respectively.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, a skilled worker employed in a manufacturing industry in 1929 might have earned about \$1,700 a year.

The University offered scholarship assistance to undergraduates from the very beginning of its history, but in very modest amounts and almost always on a competitive merit basis. Scholarships were offered on the basis of competitive evaluations of student achievement within specific fields (prize or competition scholarships) and on the basis of a student's academic record in high school or at the College (honor scholarships). About ninety partial tuition grants were also available to students from the La Verne Noyes Foundation for veterans of the armed forces during World War I or for their descendants. In 1930 the University awarded scholarship aid to 167 freshmen (19 percent of all new matriculants) and to 517 upper-class

9. W. H. Harrell to W. J. Mather, February 27, 1933, box 70, folder 7, Hutchins Administration.

10. Earl W. Anderson, "Salaries in Certain Professions," *Educational Research Bulletin* 12, no. 1 (January 11, 1933): 1–9. Most of Anderson's data came from the years 1926 to 1930.



undergraduates (14 percent of all full-time upper-classmen).<sup>11</sup> Many of the freshmen awards covered full tuition, but a large majority of the upper-class scholarships covered only partial tuition. Even students with aid encountered increasing financial pressures after their first year. Many students therefore had to earn part or all of their tuition and living expenses by working. Based on a survey of 2,065 College students in 1920, Harold Lasswell and Theodore Soares estimated that 42.5 percent of male undergraduate students and 31 percent of female undergraduates worked part- or full-time jobs.<sup>12</sup> A team led by H. A. Millis surveyed 1,786 undergraduates in early 1924 and came to roughly similar conclusions: 36.6 percent of the students carrying a full load of four courses per quarter had gainful employment, while 46.7 percent of those taking two courses a quarter had outside jobs.<sup>13</sup> In addition, almost one-third of those polled reported that they were living under stress because of the pressures of combining their studies with work. Reeves and Russell also found in 1930 that a very large number of students with full or partial scholarship assistance (who were, in turn, a distinct minority of the total Chicago college population) had to work on a part-time basis. Since many scholarship winners came from outside the

11. Floyd W. Reeves and John Dale Russell, *Some University Student Problems*, vol. 10, *The University of Chicago Survey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 15, 18, 30–32, 65.

12. Harold D. Lasswell and Theodore G. Soares, “Social Survey of the Undergraduates of the University of Chicago,” [1920], box 78, folder 1, Harper, Judson, and Burton Administrations. Records. Hereafter, HJB Administration.

13. H. A. Millis et al., *Report of the Faculty-Student Committee on the Distribution of Students’ Time, January 1925* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 84. Millis also found that the fact of being a commuter was directly related to the course load that a student could carry. Students carrying a two- or three-course load (per quarter) were much more likely to be commuters than students carrying a four-course load (24).

Chicago area, they often experienced higher living costs than did local students.<sup>14</sup> The onset of the Depression further complicated the situation. In 1939 over 56 percent of undergraduate men and 30 percent of undergraduate women reported that they expected to be either fully or partially self-supporting during their tenure at Chicago. Equally important, 54 percent of the men and 18 percent of the women reported that they had contributed to their own support while in high school.

Perhaps the most difficult factor to analyze with precision is the class and economic status of Chicago undergraduate students. George Counts suggested in 1922 that most high school graduates who had taken college preparatory programs came ipso facto from relatively advantaged social and cultural backgrounds, and since most matriculants at Chicago were highly intelligent students who had attained strong academic records in their (predominantly) public high schools, one might expect that Chicago undergraduates, as a rule, came from solidly middle-class to upper-middle-class and occasionally even upper-class social backgrounds. The median score attained by Chicago freshmen on the American Council of Education’s Psychological Examination, an early examination of intelligence, revealed that Chicago undergraduates ranked fourth in the nation out of a group of 151 colleges and universities in 1931.<sup>15</sup>

14. Reeves and Russell, *Some University Student Problems*, 65–68. Using representative samples, John Kennan found in 1933 that 61 percent of entering freshmen on scholarship aid were commuters, whereas 75 percent of non-scholarship students were commuters, presumably living at home. John C. Kennan, “A Comparison of the Two-Year Honor Scholars Winners with a Non-Scholarship Group in Respect to Finances, Study, Recreation, and Sleep,” February 1933, box 15, folder 7, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

15. Reeves and Russell, *The Admission and Retention of University Students*, 68–69.

However, we have a number of other data points that suggest a more complex story. First, we have reasonably good data about parental occupation and education from the 1920s and 1930s. Reeves and Russell found, based on a representative sample of 3,769 undergraduate alumni from 1893 to 1930, that a substantial majority (almost 70 percent) came from families in which the father owned a proprietary business of some kind or worked in professional or commercial services. Only 13 percent came from families in which the father was employed as an artisan or worked in transportation, public service, building trades, or printing trades. However, these occupational designations covered a wide diversity of compensation levels and jobs within each category (for example, "professional services" encompassed social workers, librarians, and public school teachers, as well as physicians, engineers, and pharmacists).<sup>16</sup> Data from the 1930s also revealed that, in terms of parental education, fathers of approximately 35 percent of Chicago undergraduates had not graduated from high school, while fathers of another 21 percent had graduated only from high school. Such data, together with the parallel data on the large numbers of students who needed to work, may suggest that the majority of the undergraduate population of the College came in fact from families who were more lower-middle to middle-class in terms of income status, along with a smaller number of working-class students and a still smaller number of students from wealthier families. The financial impact of the Depression after 1930 on the lives of our students and their families has never been studied, but it is noteworthy that undergraduate enrollments slowly declined at Chicago between 1929 and

16. Floyd W. Reeves and John Dale Russell, *The Alumni of the Colleges*, vol. 6, *The University of Chicago Survey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 8.

1938: from a historic high point of 4,097 in 1929 to 3,976 in 1931; 3,532 in 1934; 3,382 in 1936; and 3,341 in 1938.<sup>17</sup>

If the early student body of the University was socioeconomically diverse, it was distinctly less diverse in its geographical distribution. From the beginnings of the University until well into the 1940s the majority of undergraduates came from Chicago and its close-in suburbs. In 1902, 56 percent of first-year undergraduates came from city of Chicago and another 15 percent from the state of Illinois outside of Chicago. Since some portion of the latter group were probably residents of one of Chicago's suburbs, the Chicago metropolitan area figure was likely slightly higher.<sup>18</sup> Over the next thirty-five years the University's dependence on Chicago students increased rather than decreased: by the later 1930s almost 70 percent of our first-year College students came from the Chicago metropolitan area, with only 5 percent from the rest of Illinois and 25 percent from the rest of the country.<sup>19</sup> Until the 1950s, therefore, an early prediction of William Rainey Harper about the University's undergraduate student admissions pool remained truer than ever: "After due discount, it is evident that the great work of the Colleges is being done in Chicago and Illinois, and that the institutions

17. These data reflect the total number of different undergraduate students who registered during these academic years and not merely Autumn Quarter matriculations. See *The Registrar's Report to the President, 1938-39* (Chicago: Office of the Registrar, University of Chicago, [1939]), Table 6, p. 10.

18. *The President's Report, July 1902-July 1904* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1905), 3.

19. "Statistics on the Freshman Class Entering Autumn Quarter, 1940," box 204, folder 8, Hutchins Administration.

outside of Chicago have little to fear in the way of competition for undergraduate students."<sup>20</sup>

Given the College's heavy dependence on the local Chicago market for the majority of its students, it is interesting to compare the religious and/or confessional identities of the student population with the religious structure of the general Chicago population. In 1937, 72 percent of the entering undergraduate students at Chicago classified themselves as Gentiles and almost 27 percent reported that they were Jews. Of the undergraduate alumni who graduated between 1920 and 1930, 16 percent were Presbyterian, 16 percent were Methodist, 15 percent were Jewish, 8 percent were Baptist, 9 percent were Congregational, 8 percent were Episcopalian, 7 percent were Roman Catholic, 7 percent were Lutheran, and 7 percent belonged to other smaller denominations, with the remainder expressing no religious preference.<sup>21</sup> In the city as a whole in the 1930s it is estimated that approximately 50 percent of the citizens with a religious affiliation were Roman Catholics, with Jews making up about 8 percent and various Protestant denominations making up the rest.<sup>22</sup> This meant that Roman Catholics were seriously underrepresented

20. *The President's Report, July 1902–July 1904*, 3.

21. Reeves and Russell, *The Alumni of the Colleges*, 15; "Statistics of the Freshman Class Entering Autumn 1937," 4, box 204, folder 8, Hutchins Administration.

22. Harold F. Gosnell estimated that in 1937 Catholics constituted slightly more than half of the population of Chicago over thirteen years of age who had a religious affiliation, with Protestants and Jews making up the rest. Cardinal George Mundelein also put the figure at over 50 percent. See Harold F. Gosnell, *Machine Politics: Chicago Model*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 104; and James W. Sanders, *The Education of an Urban Minority: Catholics in Chicago, 1833–1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977),

and Protestants and Jews were overrepresented in the College, compared to the city population as a whole.

All of these variables may have influenced and helped to shape the market for residential facilities on our campus.<sup>23</sup> Given the predominance of Chicago-based students at the College and given the absence of attractive (and affordable) on-campus alternatives, it is not surprising that for decades a huge number of undergraduate students lived at home, with their parents or with other relatives, or in rooming houses in the neighborhood. Only 8.3 percent of our undergraduates lived in University residence halls in Autumn Quarter 1928. Of the remaining, 59 percent lived at home and 18 percent lived in rooms or apartments in the neighborhood. In addition, 14.5 percent (all men) lived in fraternity houses.<sup>24</sup> The fact that almost 60 percent of our students thus lived at home in 1928 paralleled the substantially local nature of the University's undergraduate admissions pool. Twelve years later the statistics were strikingly similar: over 60 percent of entering College students opted to

249, note 15. See also Edward R. Kantowicz, "The Ethnic Church," in *Catholicism, Chicago Style*, ed. Ellen Skerrett, Edward R. Kantowicz, and Steven M. Avella (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993), 12; Marvin R. Schafer, "The Catholic Church in Chicago: Its Growth and Administration," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1929), 11–15; and Stephen J. Shaw, *The Catholic Parish as a Way-Station of Ethnicity and Americanization: Chicago's Germans and Italians, 1903–1939* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1991), 16–17, 25, 27.

23. My colleague Bertram J. Cohler has also suggested that ethnicity may have played a role in the decision not to live on campus, since students coming from specific ethnic backgrounds may have felt more comfortable continuing to live with their families, instead of making the (semi-)clean cultural break that moving into on-campus housing would have involved.

24. "Student Housing—Autumn Quarter 1928," box 8, folder 3, Mason Administration.

(or were compelled to) live at home in Autumn Quarter 1940.<sup>25</sup> Student motivations for living at home were doubtless complex, and not in all cases related to finances. H. A. Millis found in 1924 that of 662 undergraduate students who lived more than thirty-minutes travel time to the University, two-thirds had a preference for living at home, but one-third reported that they would have preferred living on or near the University's campus, had they been able to find affordable and inexpensive housing.<sup>26</sup>

**RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES:  
PROPOSALS FOR EXPANSION AND  
REORIENTATION**



hen the University of Chicago opened its doors in 1892, among the first buildings constructed on campus were two residence halls for Divinity School students (Middle and South Divinity Halls) along Ellis Avenue and a hall for male graduate students (North Hall or Graduate Hall). Middle and South Divinity Halls were constructed with money from John D. Rockefeller as part of the agreement under which the Baptist seminary in Morgan Park, Illinois, agreed to merge with the new University and become the Divinity School. North Hall, also constructed with Rockefeller support, was dedicated to male graduate students in the arts and sciences. The total capacity of these three halls was 184 beds. North, Middle, and South Halls were renamed in honor of Frederick Gates,

25. "Statistics on the Freshman Class Entering Autumn Quarter, 1940," box 204, folder 8, Hutchins Administration.

26. *Report of the Faculty-Student Committee on the Distribution of Students' Time*, 86.

Nelson Blake, and Thomas Goodspeed in early 1924, when the construction of Swift Hall was announced. The latter was named in honor of Anna M. Swift and was to function as the new home of the Divinity School.

The University's first dormitory for undergraduate men was constructed with a gift of \$50,000 from Henrietta Snell in honor of her late husband, Amos J. Snell. Snell Hall was opened in April 1893 and provided accommodations for sixty students. One additional men's hall, Charles Hitchcock Hall, was added in 1901. It cost \$150,000 and became our largest dorm with a capacity of ninety-two students. Hitchcock Hall was a gift from Mrs. Annie Hitchcock. She insisted that the University use this building as residence hall in perpetuity and that it function not merely as a place to sleep but rather as a "college home" for men, creating more family-like conditions and providing social and cultural support for its residents. The hall was equipped with, for the time, an impressive array of public spaces and clubrooms, as well as a cloister that ran along its south front and united the five residential wings of the hall. So attractive did Hitchcock Hall prove that William Rainey Harper was forced to rule that requests from unmarried faculty members for rooms should be limited so as not to disadvantage students.<sup>27</sup>

Harper was equally interested in providing suitable accommodations for women students, and securing funds for women's dormitories became

27. "One problem that perplexes me is just how far we should permit instructors to occupy rooms in the hall. They are of course desirable tenants. They are quiet and keep their rooms attractive. On the other hand Dr. Parker feels, as I think we all must, that after all the University dormitories are designed for the use of students and that inasmuch as the number of rooms is not adequate to meet the demands, we ought not to keep students out of the few at our disposal. For the present therefore, a policy has been adopted of giving to students the preference, if not altogether excluding instructors in the assignment of rooms in Hitchcock." Harper to J. M. Thompson, November 9, 1904, box 41, folder 7, HJB Administration.



a key component of the early fundraising campaign to establish the University in 1891–92.<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth G. Kelly provided \$50,000 to construct our first women's dormitory in May 1892. Kelly Hall, which housed forty-two students, opened in July 1893. A second hall for women was made possible by a gift of \$50,000 from Mary Beecher. Sited along University Avenue, just south of Kelly Hall, Beecher Hall also housed forty-two students and opened in the summer of 1893. A third hall for women, which was made possible by a gift from Nancy S. Foster, was constructed on the corner of University Avenue and 59th Street. Foster Hall, which opened in October 1893, cost a total of \$83,000 and was slightly more elaborate than its mates. After more rooms were added in 1900, it housed sixty-eight students. The final structure of the University Avenue complex, which soon came to have the name of the C Group, was Green Hall. Opened in January 1899, it was made possible by another gift from Elizabeth Kelly in honor of her parents. Constructed at a cost of \$72,000, Green Hall linked Kelly and Beecher Halls. It was slightly larger, providing housing for sixty-seven students.

Together these early residence halls, and several smaller off-campus buildings, offered accommodation to about six hundred students, the majority of them graduate or professional school students.<sup>29</sup> An increasingly large number of undergraduate men resided in fraternity houses, which began to be organized in the mid-1890s. But the great majority

28. *An Appeal on Behalf of Women Students by the Women of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892). Filed in box 85, folder 42, HJB Administration.

29. In 1928 approximately 39 percent of the available rooms were occupied by undergraduates and 61 percent were assigned to graduate and professional students. See "Student Housing—Autumn Quarter 1928," box 8, folder 3, Mason Administration.

of our undergraduate students lived off campus, with over 50 percent of our undergraduates living at home with their parents or other relatives in 1910.<sup>30</sup> Thus, from the beginning of our history, most of our undergraduate students were not accommodated in campus housing. Too many other needs loomed on the horizon, and the University managed to build only a few residential halls, which had to be shared among the graduate, undergraduate, and professional school students.

Still, President William Rainey Harper had a clear sense of the value of residential living for undergraduates. In October 1896, he argued:

The term "residence in The University" ought in reality to be restricted to residence within the walls of The University, or more definitely to residence in University Houses. The student who lives in a private family does not enjoy the full advantages of university life. The student who lives at home, though enjoying for this reason special privileges, nevertheless loses many of the important privileges of university life. Although I appreciate the fact that many entertain a different opinion, I do not hesitate to say that *ideal* college and university life will be attained only in those cases in which the life of the individual is brought into closest contact with the lives of many other individuals, and this is impossible when students isolate themselves and maintain associations in large measure with those who have no connection with The University. The

30. A small number of Chicago-based students—varying between 10 and 25 percent—also opted to live in the University dorms. Their habit of going home on weekends led to a request from the heads of the women's houses in 1920 that priority be given to students who "signify their intention of not absenting themselves frequently." Letter to Judson, January 3, 1920, box 41, folder 8, HJB Administration.

time will come when every student will be a member of a University House. This time, however, cannot come until more University Houses have been built, and until provision is made for residence at The University during the day of those who from necessity must live at home or with friends in the city. The development of University life is largely dependent upon the growth of The University Houses, and the increase in the number of students who live upon The University grounds.<sup>31</sup>

On the eve of his death, Harper presented a proposal that undergraduate students in the first two years at Chicago be divided into eight administrative and curricular groups (four for men; four for women) to be called "colleges" within the larger framework of the University's junior college that would be no larger than 175 students. Harper's plan also assumed the future construction of a series of residence halls in which each group of students would be housed, or, if commuters, to which they would be attached: "The students of each college should ultimately form a residential community with an assignment to each college of a building for class rooms and offices, and likewise buildings for dormitories. The latter should include special suites for groups of students whose homes are in the city."<sup>32</sup> Richard Storr has suggested that Harper's plan must be seen in the context of a fascination for Oxford and the English collegiate system that intrigued the trustees after 1900 (e.g., the design of

31. William Rainey Harper, "Sixteenth Quarterly Statement of the President of the University, October 1, 1896," *University Record* 1, no. 28 (October 9, 1896): 381–82.

32. William Rainey Harper, "To the Trustees of the University of Chicago," 1905, box 28, folder 11, HJB Administration.

Hutchinson Commons and the construction of the Reynolds Club).<sup>33</sup> But it also demonstrated Harper's interest in expanding the University's residential system for undergraduates and his intense engagement with undergraduate life on the campus of the University in the last stages of his presidency.

A number of early faculty members pressed this issue of strengthening residential facilities, including Dean of Women Marion Talbot and Professor James Westfall Thompson of the Department of History. Talbot was a long-standing advocate of the view that suitable housing was a critical variable in making women students feel comfortable and safe at the University. She believed that, while young men might feel comfortable obtaining rooms in the neighborhood, young women found such transactions more awkward and uncomfortable, and they thus needed more support than strange boarding houses could provide.<sup>34</sup> Thompson was a young medievalist who served as the director of University houses and openly admired the Oxford system of residential colleges. In 1902 he drafted a report for Harper that stressed the importance of a well-organized and coherent social life for students in a residential context as

33. Richard J. Storr, *Harper's University: The Beginnings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 320–27. Storr notes that Dean George E. Vincent brought the new book by John Corbin, *An American at Oxford* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1902), to Harper's attention in February 1903. Corbin called for the American universities to combine English residential colleges with the German university spirit and thus to produce "the most perfect educational instruction in the history of civilization," (309). See also the comments about Harper's devotion to residential colleges in John Seiler Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition: An American History, 1636–1956* (New York: Harper, 1958), 324.

34. See Talbot to C. E. Parmenter, February 21, 1924, box 41, folder 9, and "The New Women's Building," n.d., box 41, folder 12, HJB Administration.

a part of the broader educational mission of the University.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the faculty member who most influenced Harper's notions about Chicago as a residential community was Ernest DeWitt Burton, a New Testament scholar who was one of Harper's closest collaborators. Burton visited Oxford for a month in the fall of 1902. Over the next year he discussed the advantages of the Oxford model before several public audiences. To James Taylor, president of Vassar College, he wrote: "The most interesting thing that I did while I was abroad was to spend a month at Oxford in a leisurely study of the University and Colleges, and especially its methods of education. I had facilities beyond those of ordinary visitors to Oxford for seeing the inside, and had many talks with members of the teaching staffs of the Colleges. On my return I prepared a talk on the subject for our students here, and am to repeat it at Dr. Strong's request at Rochester next week."<sup>36</sup> Although Harper's death in early 1906 closed down any immediate action on Burton's schemes, these ideas were to be of great moment after 1922, when Burton himself assumed the presidency of the University of Chicago.<sup>37</sup>

Harper's successor, Harry Pratt Judson, affirmed his predecessor's support for residential housing, but did little to try to implement it. Judson believed that residence halls should not be constructed with general University funds, but rather should only be built upon the receipt

35. James W. Thompson, *The House System at the University*, included in the *President's Report 1892-1902* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1902), 387-95.

36. Burton to Taylor, February 12, 1903, box 69, folder 5, Ernest DeWitt Burton Papers.

37. Burton himself later explicitly linked his ideas from 1902 and those that he developed in the 1920s. See his "The Relation of the Colleges and the Graduate Schools," 1923, 2, box 144, folder 7, Harold S. Swift Papers.

of special gifts from donors. He also believed that the residence halls should show a modest profit for the larger operations of the University (at least 3 percent).<sup>38</sup> During Judson's presidency, a number of new buildings opened on our campus—Classics, Rosenwald, Ida Noyes, and Harper Library—but no additional residence halls.

Vigorous residential communities developed in the halls that did exist. Students developed charters for the halls and exercised self-governance. Particularly in the women's halls, one encountered a fabric of traditions and customs, as well as patterns of deep friendship formation and sociability that must have had a formative impact on the feelings of those students toward the University.<sup>39</sup> An early statement of the rules governing the various houses for men and women made it clear that the University viewed the halls as more than mere bedroom communities: "Each House will have a certain permanence, independence, and individuality, being ruled by its own representatives and laws, advised by its own elected Councillor in the faculty, and its self-chosen members being united by friendliness and common interests. It is hoped in this way to secure something of the dignified social life, and the habits of self-guidance and self-control which the American College Dormitory often lacks ... and more warmly to attach the alumni to the University through pleasant memories of their old Houses."<sup>40</sup> Early students also complained about room rates, which many felt were high compared with outside

38. See Judson to Frank Strong, February 10, 1916, box 41, folder 8, HJB Administration.

39. For examples of the traditions of these halls, see Charles Burroughs Anderson and Earle W. English, *The Cap and Gown 1925*, vol. 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1925), 372-74.

40. "Regulations for Dormitories," n.d., box 41, folder 7, HJB Administration.

rooms in the neighborhood, and there were the usual complaints about the selection and quality of food served in the halls.<sup>41</sup>

An early solicitation of prospective students, urging them to consider entering a hall, insisted:

The University believes that the benefit of college life is necessarily greater to the students living together in a House on the campus than to those scattered about in neighborhood boarding places. For the University House is in the midst of the college atmosphere; in touch with every college interest. And besides this advantage of situation, there is another far greater advantage of association to the student—membership implies acquaintance with all his fellow members, and it offers the best chance for acquaintance with the members of other Houses. This is an opportunity which, in a large university, the detached student often seeks in vain. To put it in a word, then, the whole aim and object of the University House is —Fellowship.<sup>42</sup>

The early halls were also the sites of racial contestation and rank prejudice, however, with instances of white residents refusing to allow African American students to accept housing in their dorms.<sup>43</sup>

41. In 1898 the quarterly charge for a room in Foster Hall was \$31, or \$93 for a full year. In 1938 the cost of a room in the same hall ranged from \$126 to \$222, with board set at \$246.

42. Handwritten solicitation, n.d., box 41, folder 7, HJB Administration.

43. See the case of D. W. Woodward, in T. H. Sanderson to H. P. Judson, October 3, 1906; David A. Robertson to Joseph E. Raycroft, October 5, 1906, box 41, folder 7, HJB Administration, as well as the handwritten memoir by Sophonisba Breckinridge concerning her attempt to mediate a controversy

Student experiences in housing were thus laced with and framed by late-nineteenth and early twentieth century normative values and social forms. Younger women were housed with older graduate students, creating a mixed-age community, but also one that was important for role modeling. As late as 1924 Marion Talbot would emphasize the socializing force of residential life on young women who came without proper social skills or with bad habits (such as smoking): the resident heads “are quite amazed at the social standards some girls bring from their homes and the frequent disregard on the part of parents of what the University tries to do... We will endeavor to do even more to train our students to examine very carefully the new conditions in which they find themselves and to act with deliberate judgment rather than impulse.”<sup>44</sup> Still, President Ernest Burton took pride in the fact that “from the beginning, over thirty years ago, the University has made it its policy to allow the largest practicable measure of freedom, and to trust to discussion and suggestion rather than rules to maintain high standards of conduct.”<sup>45</sup>

The early residential halls also incorporated a system of faculty participation, with each house—the residence halls were officially called houses since 1893—having a faculty member or full-time staff member as a head. These offices provided free rooms in the house. By the 1920s,

among white students from the South when an African American graduate student tried to reside in Kelly Hall during a summer quarter. Breckinridge was summoned to the office of Harry Pratt Judson, who informed her that “the halls were for white students.” “Autobiography,” n.d., box 1, folder 8, Sophonisba Breckinridge Papers. See also Breckinridge to David Stevens, August 9, 1928, box 6, folder 9, Mason Administration.

44. Talbot to Burton, March 13, 1924, box 58, folder 14, HJB Administration.

45. Burton to Mrs. Ira M. Price, March 20, 1924, box 58, folder 14, HJB Administration.



most of the heads were junior faculty or advanced doctoral students who found the free accommodations appealing. The heads were not so much disciplinary authorities (although they could play that role) as they were conveners of the residents to establish house rules and customs, as well as to organize social and educational activities for the members of the house. President Max Mason's chief administrative assistant, David Stevens, (who later went on to become vice president of the General Education Board and director of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation) thought that the presence of faculty in the dorms was so important that it should figure in evaluations for promotion: "Social leadership through hall living must always be a strong secondary ground for retention and promotion," because of the value to the University.<sup>46</sup>

Intense systems of self-governance developed in some halls, including a rule that members of a given hall had to vote to accept new residents or they could not remain in the hall after their initial quarter of residence. The halls were also considered to be sites where proper moral behavior should be enforced—hence the charming correspondence between Marion Talbot and President Burton as to how to respond to a request from students to allow card playing in the dorms. Although card playing was traditionally prohibited, in the mid-1920s Talbot came to have doubts about the wisdom of trying to prohibit a leisure activity that more and more students wanted to pursue. She now concluded: "It is quite possible that the time has come to change our position although I wish it might have been at the initiative of the Houses rather than of a group of students.... The chief difficulty, perhaps I may say the only one, which I really see, is that of excluding playing for money, or, in plain words, gambling. I am told it is so prevalent that it would be very difficult to enforce any

46. Stevens to Edith Foster Flint, February 1, 1929, box 6, folder 9, Mason Administration.

prohibition. Even prizes introduce an element of chance which some would consider objectionable. I shall be glad to have your opinion at your early convenience." Burton responded: "Personally I feel about card playing (not gambling) much as I do about smoking. It is a matter of taste rather than of morals, and I think that our houses should cultivate good taste, but not as a rule undertake to prescribe it. Gambling is quite another matter. The moral effect of a game in which money is won or lost by chance has long been recognized as distinctly bad." That said, much like Emperor Trajan writing to Pliny about how Pliny should deal with early Christians whom he might come upon, Burton urged Talbot not to issue general statements about a prohibition of gambling "unless the general practice is such as to necessitate it." Burton was confident that if a discussion about gambling in the halls did prove necessary, the resident heads would be able to modulate it: "I should be fairly sure that a discussion participated in and reasonably guided by the Heads of the Houses would come out somewhere near right."<sup>47</sup>

Demand for suitable off-campus housing outpaced resources, and almost no one was happy with this situation. In the face of burgeoning student enrollments after World War I, students who did not live at home complained increasingly of high rents and ill-kept housing off campus. John Moulds informed Burton in 1923 that

since we have rooms for only about one third of those who would like to live in the Women's Halls, it seems entirely logical to me that we ought to give the protection of the halls to the younger girls who need it most. The isolated and rather depressing type of

47. Talbot to Burton, March 17, 1924, and Burton to Talbot, March 24, 1924, box 58, folder 14, HJB Administration.

rooms available in the neighborhood are very much less desirable for young girls who need the group life than they are for older students whose ideals and standards have become settled. Under our present system it is almost impossible for a freshman girl to obtain a room in the Halls unless she has made application more than a year in advance.<sup>48</sup>

The shortage of appropriate residential facilities soon became the subject of political maneuvering among the academic deans. Dean of the Undergraduate Colleges Ernest Wilkins complained in March 1926 that "the tenants of the residence halls are largely graduate students."<sup>49</sup> A year earlier Wilkins had tried unsuccessfully to garner more residential resources for undergraduates. He wrote to President Burton in April 1925 arguing that Hitchcock Hall had too many diverse constituencies—forty-four graduate students, seven junior and twenty-five senior College students, one student from Education, six from Commerce, and ten from the Law School. He also insisted that "social life in the men's residence halls now suffers from the heterogeneity of the constituency in each case" and that "so long as such conditions persist the residence halls cannot play in either graduate or undergraduate life the constructive educational and social part which they ought to play." Wilkins wanted Hitchcock to evolve into a completely undergraduate dorm, a proposition to which Burton apparently agreed, as a preliminary step toward the creation of a set of exclusively undergraduate dorms on the South Campus. Gordon Laing, the dean of the Graduate School, took

48. Moulds to Burton, March 29, 1923, box 41, folder 8, HJB Administration.

49. Wilkins to Nathaniel Butler, March 6, 1926, box 6, folder 10, Mason Administration. This is in the context of Wilkins not wanting to recommend resident heads, since the residence halls did not involve undergraduates.

umbrage at Wilkins's suggestion, however, and instead wanted Hitchcock and Green Hall to be given over completely to graduate students. In the end, Wilkins was forced to agree instead to a plan in June 1925 to divide Hitchcock Hall into five sections, three of which were primarily for graduate students.<sup>50</sup> Dean Shailer Mathews viewed Goodspeed and Gates Halls as belonging to the patrimony of the Divinity School, and when he learned in 1928 that the then current head of Gates seemed uninterested in organizing house activities, he insisted that "in the future the Divinity School [should] be permitted to nominate the Head for both of its dormitories."<sup>51</sup>

#### FRATERNITIES

**F**raternities played a crucial role in housing undergraduate men. For many years before 1945 more men lived in fraternity houses than lived in undergraduate residence halls. According to Harold Lasswell, social life on campus in the early 1920s was dominated by the older and wealthier fraternities, with members who lived close to campus and "who monopolize the strategic social positions on the campus. The selection of leaders of the university dances and the selection of personnel of the honorary fraternities is governed by them." In contrast, a student who lived at home was "cut off from participation in full campus life, since he must

50. Wilkins to Burton, April 24, 1925; Laing to Butler, May 5, 1925; Wilkins to Laing, May 12, 1925; Wilkins to Butler, June 4, 1925, box 6, folder 10, Mason Administration. Wilkins agreed to this compromise because he was confident in 1925 that the University would build large undergraduate dorms for men on the South Campus, so in effect he was actually conceding very little.

51. Mathews to D. H. Stevens, July 3, 1928, box 6, folder 8, Mason Administration.

leave the campus early in the day and carry on his part in family life [at home],” a situation that many students who lived in rooms beyond walking distance of the quadrangles also probably endured. In his 1924 survey of student time allocations, H. A. Millis found a minority of students “who are addicted to a ‘social life’” on campus, set against “a considerable percentage of the men and women participate little or not at all in college affairs.” The general portrait that emerges from data collected by Lasswell and Soares was a student culture bounded by two extremes: a minority of students with more financial resources living in fraternities or residence halls who dominated campus social culture set against another minority who had almost nothing to do with student life outside the classroom, and with the majority of students having more occasional interactions in campus social events. The many students who found themselves forced to spend valuable time commuting to and from home, all the while trying to balance their studies with the burden of work obligations, were likely to have little time for campus student life.<sup>52</sup>

When more fraternities in the mid-1920s sought to buy houses on Woodlawn Avenue between 56th and 58th Streets, the Board of Trustees did not intervene, even though George Fairweather, the assistant business manager, brought the issue to their attention. When Fairweather suggested that the University might consider acquiring some or all of these properties, the board decided to take no action.<sup>53</sup> The gingerly attitude of the University toward the fraternities was starkly revealed when L. R. Steere, the business manager, proposed in March 1929 that

52. Lasswell and Soares, “Social Survey of the Undergraduates of the University of Chicago,” 14; Millis et al., *Report of the Faculty-Student Committee on the Distribution of Students’ Time, January 1925*, 88–90.

53. “Minutes of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds,” June 10, 1926, box 6, folder 10, Swift Papers.

all freshmen men be required to live in dormitories if they did not reside at home. Steere’s position was supported by Dean of the College Chauncey Boucher, who also believed that deferred pledging would be better for freshmen, both academically and culturally.<sup>54</sup> Vice President Frederic Woodward rejected Steere’s proposal, however: “To require freshmen to live in dormitories would immediately antagonize the fraternities and their alumni at a time when we are using every effort to increase the goodwill of everyone toward the undergraduate college.”<sup>55</sup>

As valuable as the fraternities may have been in their ability to provide a parallel system of on-campus housing and to foster campus-based friendship groupings, the impact of fraternity membership on the academic success of the students was a matter of concern to the faculty. College officials included a comparison of the academic performance of students living in fraternity houses with students living in rooming houses or at home as part of another survey of a student housing conditions in 1926. Of the 198 male students who pledged a fraternity in 1925–26, 36.9 percent failed to assemble a satisfactory academic record and were not in good standing at the end of the year. Within a parallel group of 213 men who did not pledge a fraternity, only 25.4 percent were found to have a deficient academic record. The authors of the report then

54. See Chauncey Boucher’s appeal to Frederic Woodward, May 29, 1929, box 71, folder 4, Hutchins Administration.

55. Woodward to L. R. Steere, March 6, 1929, box 70, folder 10, Hutchins Administration. Harold Swift too was against a radical change. He wrote to Hutchins and Woodward, “Some time, too, I hope there will be less fraternities at the University than at present, but this, too, I hope to be a gradual development. After all, we owe the fraternities a lot. They have done our job in supplying housing accommodations for a good many men for a long time and I believe that we can’t chuck them overboard by precipitate action.” Letter, November 4, 1929, box 71, folder 4, Hutchins Administration.

examined psychological achievement test results for both groups, finding that the fraternity and non-fraternity men had relatively similar median test scores: "These facts indicate clearly that the fraternity group was easily the equal of the non-fraternity group in ability, and that the greater failure rate [of the fraternity men] was due to other factors, and may possibly be connected with the fact of fraternity membership."<sup>56</sup> The University of Chicago Survey Project undertaken by Floyd Reeves, John Dale Russell, and others during 1930–32 also investigated the relationships between housing and student academic achievement more broadly, using two cohorts of freshmen students entering in 1929–30 and 1930–31. This survey found that students who were most likely to achieve high grades lived in University residence halls but were not members of a fraternity. Interestingly, non-fraternity-affiliated students who lived at home, as opposed to those living in a dormitory, also achieved significantly higher grades: "The results indicate that, for men, the type of living environment associated with the highest average grade points for the Spring Quarter of the freshman year was residence in dormitories combined with the absence of fraternity connections."<sup>57</sup>

56. *Preliminary Report of a Survey of Housing Conditions for Students of the University of Chicago*, May 19, 1930, box 106, folder 7, Hutchins Administration.

57. Reeves and Russell, *Some University Student Problems*, 136.

#### BURTON'S DREAM OF THE COLLEGES



When he became president of the University in 1923, Ernest DeWitt Burton was "considerably troubled" with local housing conditions in Hyde Park for both students and faculty, including the "extremely unfavorable" housing conditions experienced by students.<sup>58</sup> Soon after taking office Burton recuperated Harper's themes about the importance of residential life and articulated a comprehensive vision for the undergraduate programs, which he called his "Dream of the Colleges" plan. Resisting the opposition from key faculty and pressure from the University's traditional funding sources at the Rockefeller boards, early in his tenure Burton met with Abraham Flexner, secretary of the Rockefeller-funded General Education Board. Burton also felt compelled to write a defense of the value of undergraduate education to a research university in response to Flexner's evident (and increasing well-known) prejudice against the undergraduate programs of leading US universities. Burton articulated an integrated vision for the College that made it a central part of the educational work of the University, but that also accorded it a separate residential location.<sup>59</sup>

Burton's initial idea was to develop the area south of the Midway into a separate campus for a college of three thousand students, consisting of residential facilities, offices, and classrooms to be laid out in a series of quadrangles. As Burton put it in May 1923, "I am thinking of a time

58. Burton to Wallace Heckman, July 25, 1923, box 50, folder 18, HJB Administration.

59. Ernest DeWitt Burton, "The Relation of the Colleges and the Graduate Schools," 1923, 2, box 144, folder 7, Harold S. Swift Papers.



when on our quadrangles there will be a group of colleges, perhaps eight or ten or twelve, each with its own buildings, each with its own distinctive character, but all with this common characteristic that each will afford opportunity for closer contact of student with student, and of student with teacher than is possible in a college of three thousand students ungrouped except in classes that are organized for three months and then reorganized." Burton then added, "It will not be a medieval Oxford; modern Oxford has moved far beyond that."<sup>60</sup> Such a new residential structure would enforce and solidify the educational mission of the College, which Burton took to be both broadly cultural as well as narrowly intellectual. He insisted that "life is more than lore, that character is more than facts; that college life is the period of the formation of habits, even more than of the acquisition of knowledge, and that the making of men and women with habits and character that will insure their being in after life men and women of power, achievement, and helpful influence in the world, is the great task of the college." Burton further argued that the new residence buildings "should not be mere dormitories, but places of humane educational residence. They should provide opportunity on one hand for personal contacts, under the most favorable conditions, with older persons and fellow-students, and for the silent influences of good books and art.... All should be planned with a view to uniting, as far as

60. "An Address Delivered by Acting President Ernest DeWitt Burton before the Chicago Alumni Club, May 31, 1923," 13, box 5, folder 3, University Development Campaigns. In July 1923 Burton repeated the Oxford motif in a letter to Wilfred C. Kierstead: "The colleges so organized on the basis of the interests of the students would be made more after the fashion of the Oxford colleges.... What I feel to be in any case desirable is the creation of smaller groups, say three hundred at the outside, of students whose relation to one another are closer than is possible in a body of three thousand students." Letter, July 3, 1923, box 34, folder 10, HJB Administration.

possible, the two lines of influence which in our American colleges have been unfortunately separated in large measure as numbers have increased, namely, intellectual activity on the one hand and friendly contact with persons on the other."<sup>61</sup>

Ironically, the idea of developing a separate campus for undergraduates on the south side of the Midway won an ally in Wallace Buttrick, the president of the General Education Board, who came to view this spatial segregation of undergraduates as a way to resolve the issues raised by his colleague Flexner about defending graduate education while also strengthening Chicago's undergraduate programs. Buttrick's concurrence may have encouraged Burton all the more to pursue his plans.<sup>62</sup>

Burton's vision met with the approbation of a committee of faculty whom he appointed in September 1923 to consider the future curriculum of the undergraduate colleges in light of the idea of creating a separate set of residential units on the South Campus. Chaired by Henry W. Prescott of the Department of Latin, this committee presented a plan in April 1924 to divide collegiate work into two parts, the first of which was primarily devoted to general education and encompassing the first two years of

61. Ernest DeWitt Burton, *The University of Chicago in 1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1925), 30. See also Burton's notes for speeches in the Reynolds Club on April 5, 1923, and at the Chicago-Denison dinner on March 16, 1923, stressing the importance that colleges should play in the formation of character and personality in their students. Speech notes, box 82, folder 6, Burton Papers.

62. Burton reported to Swift that Buttrick was "almost enthusiastic" about this plan. Burton to Swift, January 31, 1923, box 144, folder 7, Swift Papers. A week earlier, Burton had written to Buttrick asking for this appointment and asserting, "As I have told you more than once before, for more than forty years you have been the one man to whom in any time of perplexity or adversity I should turn most quickly with most confidence that you would give me your help." Burton to Buttrick, January 20, 1923, box 82, folder 2, Burton Papers.

traditional baccalaureate curriculum.<sup>63</sup> Students wishing a traditional BA would continue on at the University, undertaking more advanced work in the several departments. This "College" of freshmen and sophomores would consist of 1,500 students, of whom 1,200 would be expected to live in new residence halls built on the South Campus in the three blocks between 60th and 61st Streets and Woodlawn and Ellis Avenues. Only three hundred students would be permitted to live off campus (presumably at home). The committee further recommended that the University construct four new residence halls with separate entrances to house not less than 1,200 undergraduates, divided equally between men and women, in groups of three hundred students each. Students in the new College would not join or live in fraternities until after completing their two-year program, and the recruitment base of the fraternities would thus shift to older undergraduates and to graduate students.

Prescott's concerns were also supported by Ernest Wilkins, dean of the Colleges, who in October 1924 prepared a report called *A Theory of Education* in which he too argued for a more radical distinction between the first two and last two years of undergraduate life and urged an enhanced level of residential life, particularly for undergraduate students in the first two years of college:

There comes a time in the lives of most young people, generally at about the age of seventeen, when they may properly be advised to leave home and become part of a larger social unit so planned as to meet the needs of maturing youth. We therefore recommend that for students who may be expected to finish their general

63. "Preliminary Draft of the Report of the Commission on the Future of the Colleges," April 22, 1924, box 34, folder 10, HJB Administration.

education within two years, residence halls be provided, and that all students who possibly do so be urged to live therein." Wilkins further insisted that residential life should be structured so as to "promote the adaptability of the individual to the community in which he lives, a simple but varied social life, a sense of social capacity, a democratic recognition of the rights of others and of social obligations. The whole effect of life in these residential halls should be distinctly democratic rather than aristocratic."<sup>64</sup>

Prescott's plan was forwarded to the Board of Trustees, but no further action was taken on its curricular ideas until later in the decade, when Chauncey Boucher and others would revive the idea of a separate "College" devoted to general education. The plan was not made public at the time, since the University did not yet own all of the land on the South Campus which Prescott's committee designated as the future home the new residential college buildings.<sup>65</sup> When Ernest Burton presented a general overview of the plan in his famous fundraising brochure, *The University of Chicago in 1940*, he dispensed with the idea of specifying which undergraduate cohorts should live in the new residential quadrangles and simply noted that he wanted to provide space for 1,600 undergraduates on the South Campus.<sup>66</sup>

These ideas met with strong support from the new chairman of the board, Harold H. Swift. An undergraduate alumnus of the University,

64. Ernest H. Wilkins, *A Theory of Education*, 15–16, October 23, 1924, box 34, folder 2, HJB Administration.

65. See Prescott to Burton, April 3, 1924, box 34, folder 10, HJB Administration.

66. Burton, *The University of Chicago in 1940*, 29.

Swift wanted Chicago to move in a direction more friendly to undergraduates, arguing that "we want a different tone about the place—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 the real development of boys and girls into fine men and women rather than exclusively on the academic interests of the University field."<sup>67</sup>

The logic of the plan was driven by the need to provide improved housing for the students who were then living off campus, but in the neighborhood, as well as some who were living at home.<sup>68</sup> A blueprint from February 1925 reveals the basic features of the plan. Burton imagined a new South Campus fronting on the Midway from Ellis Avenue to Woodlawn Avenue. The whole block would be developed, with the central axis given to classrooms, laboratories, and libraries and with the western edge devoted to men's housing and the eastern side to women's housing. Had the University executed this plan, we would have had residence halls on the South Campus approximately four times larger

67. Swift to Charles W. Gilkey, August 28, 1923, box 144, folder 7, Swift Papers. Two years earlier, Swift complained to Edgar Goodspeed that "the undergraduates and graduates [alumni] of our College Department frequently feel that we are trying to stifle rather than to encourage that Department." Swift to Goodspeed, January 7, 1921, box 156, folder 25, Swift Papers.

68. "Problem of Housing for the (Junior) Colleges," 1924, box 50, folder 18, HJB Administration. In 1923, 133 men and 251 women lived in University houses, with 526 men and 409 women living in rooms. Another 811 men and 705 women lived at home, and 478 men lived in fraternities.

than the present Burton Judson Courts, capable of housing 1,400 to 1,600 undergraduates.<sup>69</sup>

Burton's vision of making the undergraduate program at Chicago more thoroughly residential and the subsequent faculty report that tried to implement this ideal by restructuring the first two years of undergraduate education into a coherent whole were revolutionary, and they have to be seen in the context of developments at one of our leading competitors, Yale University. The Anna M. Harkness family had given Yale \$3 million in 1916 to construct the Memorial Quadrangle, including Harkness Tower and a large residence hall for 630 students designed in a series of eight courtyards (which were divided into two separate residential colleges in 1932—Saybrook College and Branford College—when Yale instituted its Quadrangle Plan).<sup>70</sup> References to the original Harkness gift, and to its later and much larger supplement in 1929–30, were common in later Chicago correspondence about our residential problems, suggesting that the Yale model was unusually attractive to Chicago planners of the interwar period. Yale's influence was reinforced after 1921, when James R. Angell assumed the presidency of Yale.<sup>71</sup> A faculty member at Chicago since 1894, Angell had served as dean of the Faculty at Chicago since 1911 and as acting president during 1918; he was clearly interested in becoming the University's permanent president.

69. L. P. J., "Study for Plot Plan—The Colleges—The University of Chicago," February 1, 1925, file drawer 38, folder 14, Architectural Drawings Collection.

70. Robert Dudley French, ed., *The Memorial Quadrangle: A Book About Yale* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929).

71. On Angell's presidency, see Mary Ann Dzuback, *Robert M. Hutchins: Portrait of an Educator* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 38–42.

He also had strong support on the part of the senior faculty.<sup>72</sup> Harry Pratt Judson refused to resign to make way for the younger man, however, and the Board of Trustees was unwilling to force the issue, so Angell left Chicago for the Carnegie Corporation and then for Yale University.<sup>73</sup>

72. When word got out that Angell was considering leaving, a group of sixty-one senior faculty sent an extraordinary petition, urging that "it is of the most vital importance to the future of the University of Chicago that a way be found whereby Vice-President Angell may continue to be associated with its development" and asking for "some plan whereby Mr. Angell's services may, if possible, be permanently retained." Petition, March 27, 1919, box 8, folder 13, HJB Administration. The petition was signed by many local luminaries, including Albion Small, James Breasted, Shailer Mathews, John Coulter, Albert Michelson, Frederic Woodward, and Ernest DeWitt Burton.

73. In an autobiographical memoir, Angell later recalled: "To accept the post [the presidency of the Carnegie Corporation] meant giving up my lifelong connection with university work, it meant breaking up my friendships of more than a quarter of a century at Chicago, and it meant undertaking a kind of responsibility which I had never before faced. In making my decision, I was inevitably and crucially affected by conditions at the University of Chicago. There I had served as Acting President on several occasions. I had received a good many invitations to university presidencies, that of my own Alma Mater among them, and during the discussions of these calls influential members of the Board of Trustees had more than once expressed the wish that I should remain and, on the retirement of the President, accept the Presidency there—always provided that the clause in the University of Chicago charter, which required the President to be a Baptist, could be abrogated. In any case, however, promotion there was, for the time being at least, blocked and my frequent invitations to other positions of consequence kept my status more or less an active subject of comment and discussion in the University community. All this created a situation which I felt to be a little uncomfortable. Whether President Judson was sensitive to the same situation or not, I have no means of knowing. After painful deliberation, I decided to burn my bridges behind me." Carl Murchison, ed., *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*, vol. 3 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961 [1930]), 18–19.

Intent on modernizing Yale and making it into a real research university, Angell worked to create a culture of respect for scholarship and intellectual achievement at Yale University.<sup>74</sup> But he proved equally inclined to revolutionary interventions on the collegiate level as well.

In January 1925 Angell articulated a visionary plan for constructing a series of residential colleges, based on Oxford and Cambridge models, in order to create a strong residential culture on the Yale campus. Angell argued that "ultimately it might be possible to try out in the College a plan of dividing the student body into a number of groups 'somewhat resembling the English colleges'. Each 'quadrangle' would have its own eating facilities as well as dormitories. Such a plan could be a solution to the social problems resulting from the large undergraduate registration. He further believed that Yale offered an opportunity better than any other college for such an experiment."<sup>75</sup> Through a series of intense, complicated, and often rocky negotiations between 1926 and 1929, Angell was able to persuade Edward S. Harkness to donate an additional \$15.7 million for the construction of another eight residential halls as part of Yale's Quadrangle Plan.<sup>76</sup> Having spent almost two decades as a faculty member and senior administrator at Chicago, Angell was well known to Ernest Burton, Harold Swift, and Frederic Woodward, and it

74. See Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 66–68, 96–97; G. W. Pierson, *Yale: The University College, 1921–1937* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), 64–89.

75. Quoted in Thomas G. Bergin, *Yale's Residential Colleges: The First Fifty Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 18–19.

76. Pierson, *Yale: The University College, 1921–1937*, 207–52.



is likely that Angell's activities were followed closely by his former colleagues in Chicago.<sup>77</sup>

It is also important to remember that Burton's proposed initiatives came in the mid-1920s in the context of the hoped-for success of the first major fundraising campaign organized by the University and in a booming national economy that made it all too easy to believe that the financial future of the University was endlessly bright and that the University would easily be able to raise large additional sums of money to cover the sizable costs of new buildings. The optimism of the time found expression in small, but noteworthy calculations, such as a presentation to the trustees in July 1927 by the business manager, Lloyd R. Steere, on the future operations for the power plant of the University. Steere estimated that demands for heating would almost double between 1926 and 1944, reflecting the in-construction or planned new buildings, and that the University's annual coal requirements would increase from 34,300 tons in 1926–27 to 69,000 tons in 1944.<sup>78</sup> Even the fundraising materials developed at the time were larger than life: the University issued a lavishly illustrated, hard-cover book in 1925 on the University's various building projects, entitled *Great University Memorials*, which sought to connect investments in the University of Chicago's spatial expansion to projects undertaken at other distinguished private British and US universities (Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, among others), and which informed potential donors, "One of the perplexing problems of our time is the effective disposal of great wealth. For not only has the number of great fortunes

77. See Angell to Burton, July 7, 1919, box 79, folder 6, Burton Papers; and Angell's invitation to Burton to accept an honorary degree from Yale in 1925, Angell to Burton, March 17, 1925, box 82, folder 8, Burton Papers.

78. "Minutes of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds," July 28, 1927, box 6, folder 11, Swift Papers.

enormously increased in recent times, but the sense of responsibility to the public has grown with them."<sup>79</sup> A full-page picture of the Harkness Tower and residential quadrangle at Yale was one of the illustrations afforded a prominent place among examples of ambitious building projects undertaken by peer universities.

Ernest D. Burton died suddenly in May 1925, but his ideas of a new residential college continued to percolate during the regime of his successor, Max Mason. Prescott's idea of limiting new residential resources to students in the first two years of work never took hold, but the idea of building a new South Campus for undergraduates did continue to take shape. Frederic C. Woodward, vice president and dean of Faculties, published a report in 1927 that called for a radical expansion of the residential system. Woodward's report, who was a long-standing collaborator of Burton's, is still worth reading today:

We frequently speak of the University as a large 'family'. We like to believe that a spirit of friendliness and mutual interest pervades the Quadrangles. We recognize the fundamental importance, in the educational process, of habitual discussion outside the classroom, of wholesome companionship in work and play. We know that a university ought to provide for every student a splendid opportunity to develop the qualities which will make him a good neighbor and a useful citizen. These are our ideas—but they are far from realization.

Only a small minority of our students live in University dormitories.

79. *Great University Memorials, with a Reference to the Plans for the Development of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Lakeview Press, 1925), 5. The book includes a dedication by US President Calvin Coolidge.

Many live in homes distant from the Quadrangles. The majority are scattered over the Hyde Park and Woodlawn districts, some in fraternity houses, some in privately owned rooming-houses, some in small apartments, some in the spare rooms of resident families. The University, through its housing bureau, has tried to secure at reasonable rent, for all who seek its assistance, quarters which are at least decent and respectable. Even this is yearly becoming more difficult. But the point I now wish to make is that as a result of this dispersion of our students—steadily increasing—we have far too little community life. Too many of our students, when they leave the classroom, the library, or the laboratory, leave the real atmosphere of the University. Too many of them escape almost entirely the stimulating associations and wholesome influences which should play an important part in their education.

There is only one effective way of dealing with this serious condition. We must bring together the great majority of our students, graduate and undergraduate, in comfortable and attractive residence halls, with common rooms, dining-halls, recreation space, and headquarters for student organizations. Until this is done it will be impossible to achieve the social solidarity and *esprit de corps* which are essential to the carrying out of a well-rounded educational program. When it is done our faculties and administrative officers, if they seize the opportunity, can immensely increase their effectiveness. The University will be in a far better position to attract the more promising students and to make their University experience wholesome, happy, and fruitful.<sup>80</sup>

80. *The President's Report Covering the Academic Year July 1, 1926, to June 30, 1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1928), 3–4.

Woodward's slightly arcane, late-Victorian concern with "wholesomeness" notwithstanding, these remarks, published in the official *President's Report*, signaled a serious of purpose that was to prove both constant and deliberative. Woodward was sufficiently shrewd to couple his plea for housing reform with a parallel plea for more money to increase faculty salaries, thus anticipating head-on possible objections that he seemed more interested in investing in students than in faculty. But Woodward's remarks on student housing would soon prove to be the truly radical and controversial part of his report.

Woodward's commitment to a radical expansion of residential life was shared by Harold H. Swift. In August 1927 Swift took the initiative by writing to fellow trustee, Julius Rosenwald, arguing that the "University needs a great series of dormitories and the setting is ideal to establish them there in architectural sympathy with the north side of the Midway, so splendidly improved by the new Chapel and the medical buildings." Swift continued: "Many of us believe that the University of Chicago is destined to be the great University of America. If this is accomplished, it depends on three things—money for salaries, wise leadership, and coordinating of the student body, both graduate and undergraduate, which means extensive dormitories. Fortunately, a gift for dormitories is a continually living gift to the University because of the revenue it brings in, which can be used for any purpose most needed." Swift then mentioned the source of his inspiration: "Yale has done the most beautiful and outstanding thing so far in dormitories, but it can be surpassed in Chicago with our setting. Open competition among architects to plan the most beautiful group of buildings would result in an artistic triumph and a great civic asset. I think you told me that you had never seen the Harkness Quadrangles at Yale. I wish you could see them, and think, while doing so, in terms of the University of Chicago

south of the Midway,” and he attached a picture of the Harkness Quadrangle at Yale for Rosenwald’s inspection.<sup>81</sup>

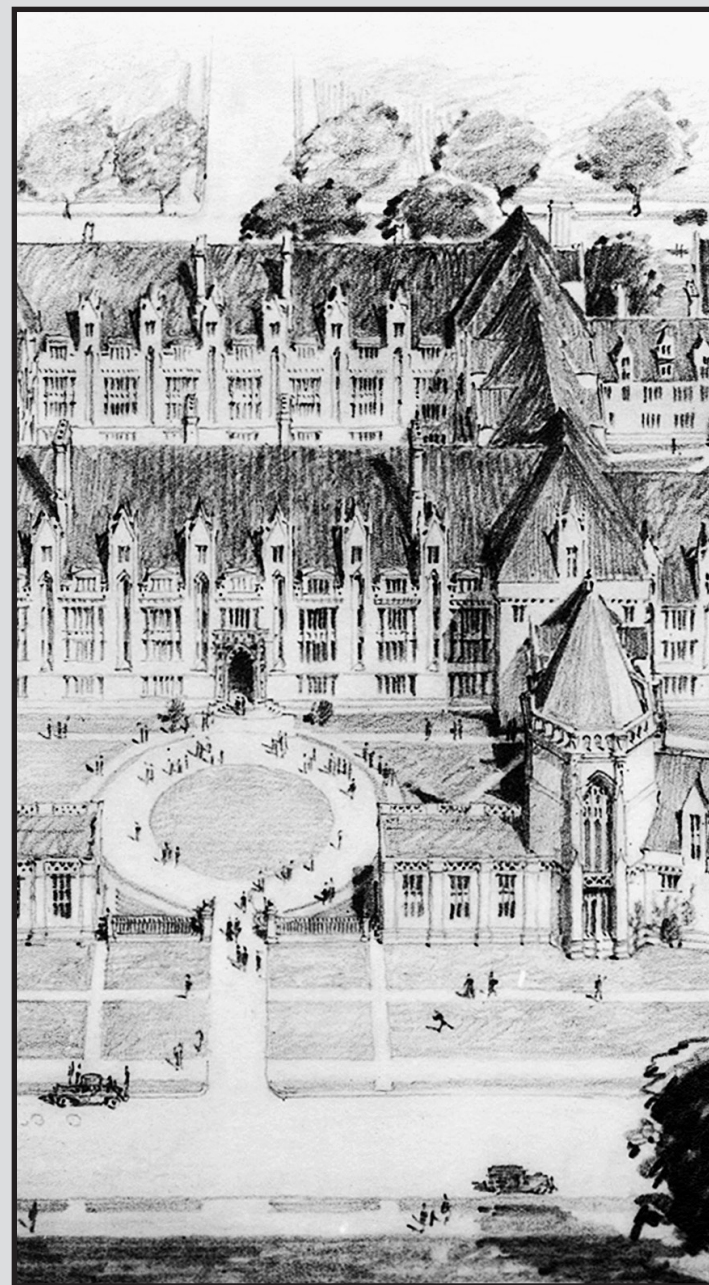
Rosenwald asked Swift for a more detailed proposal on paper and, with the agreement of Max Mason and Frederic Woodward, Swift commissioned a distinguished Philadelphia architect, Charles Z. Klauder, to undertake a provisional plan to create a South Campus plan.<sup>82</sup> Klauder had a distinguished reputation in collegiate architecture, having designed residence halls at Princeton, Cornell, and Pennsylvania. In October 1927 Klauder submitted to Swift a set of drawings and a plan that imagined a new South Campus designed in French Gothic style on the site between Ellis and University Avenues and 60th and 61st Streets (eliminating Greenwood Avenue). It consisted of a three hundred foot tower, a central office and classroom building with one hundred rooms, a library with forty-four thousand square feet of space, and a series of residence halls surrounding the tower—those on the eastern side of the block for women and those on the west for men. Klauder proposed that the University accommodate two thousand students on the South Campus. Klauder also explicitly modeled the size and layout of the quadrangles he proposed on those of the Harkness Quadrangle at Yale. Klauder estimated the cost of his proposal at \$12.5 million.<sup>83</sup>

Klauder’s initial plans were radically revised over the next year, with Woodward indicating that the Board of Trustees was especially

81. Swift to Rosenwald, August 30, 1927, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration.

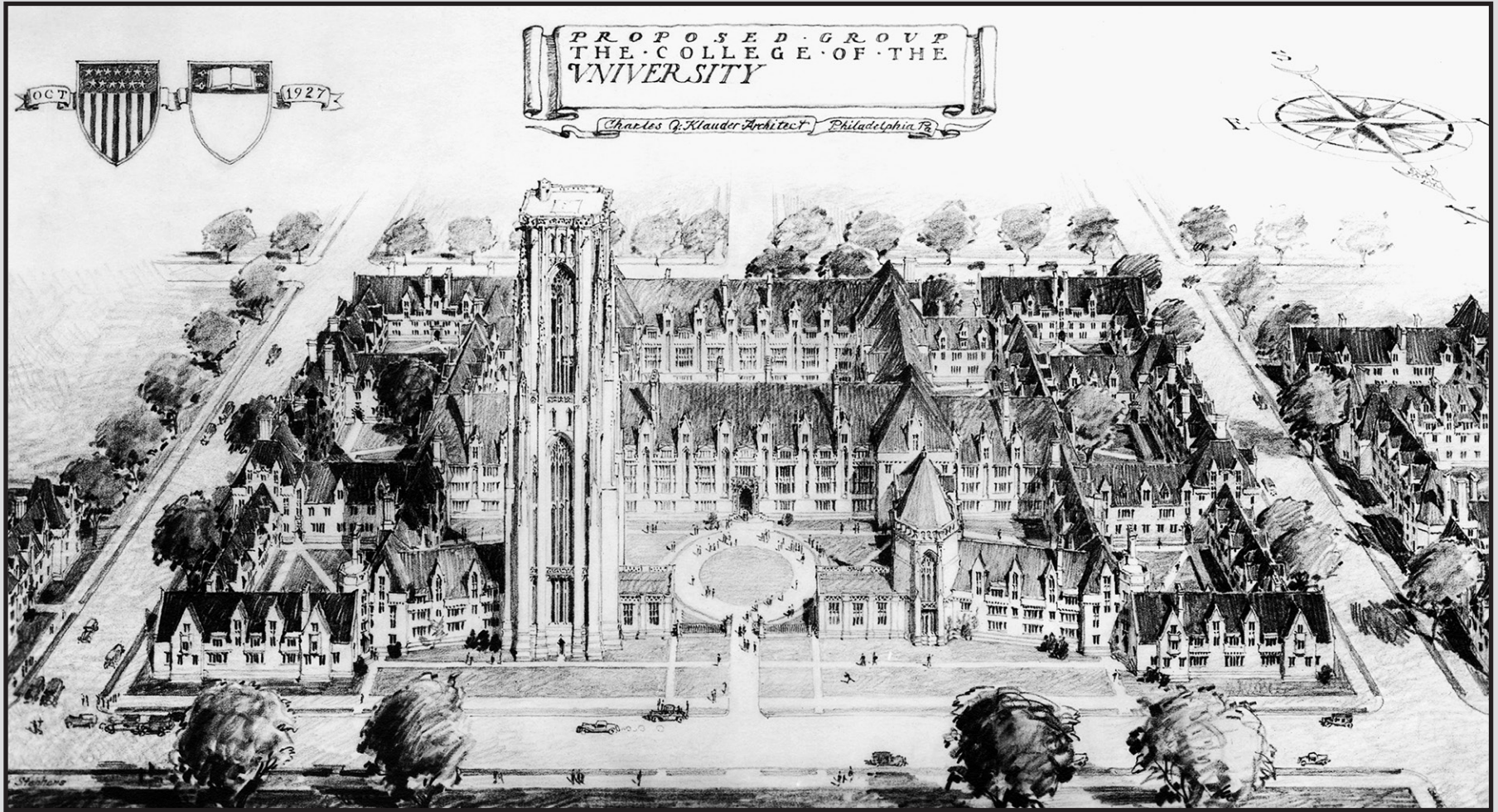
82. Rosenwald to Swift, September 6, 1927; Swift to Charles Z. Klauder, October 8, 1927, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration.

83. See Woodward to Swift, October 18, 1927, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration; Charles Z. Klauder, architectural drawings, October 15, 1927, drawer 40, Architectural Drawings Collection.



*South Campus Plan for the College (detail)*





*South Campus Plan for the College  
Charles Z. Klauder, Architect, October 1927*

concerned with ensuring the financial profitability of the new halls and that they had decided to focus exclusively on dormitories and not a classroom and library building.<sup>84</sup> Max Mason's resignation as president in the spring of 1928 delayed a final decision. But with the strong support of Frederic Woodward (who became acting president of the University), Swift continued his lobbying campaign, urging Rosenwald in May 1928 to agree to support the plan: "It would be a feather in Mr. Woodward's cap if he could put the plan over, and would be a very great factor in building up his morale and that of faculty people when we have no President. Also it would greatly reassure the public to have them know that they University does not stop even if there is no incumbent in the President's chair."<sup>85</sup>

The maneuvering of Swift and Woodward paid off by the autumn of 1928 when Woodward announced that the Board of Trustees had approved a plan that deferred the idea of an office building and library but committed \$5 million to the development of four new residence halls, two for men and two for women, which in total would accommodate about 1,400 undergraduate students on south side of the Midway.<sup>86</sup> Julius Rosenwald agreed to provide \$2 million of these funds,

84. Woodward to Klauder, December 20, 1927; Klauder to Woodward, January 12, 1928; Woodward to Klauder, September 20, 1928; Klauder to Woodward, October 22, 1928, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration.

85. Swift to Rosenwald, May 31, 1928; Woodward to Swift, September 14, 1928, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration.

86. The plan was approved by the trustees on November 6, 1928. See "Minutes of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds and the Committee on Finance and Investment," November 6, 1928, box 6, folder 12, Swift Papers. The initial authorization was for two halls, but the minutes and schematic plans suggest that the board expected to proceed with the additional two buildings as part of the future program: "It has also been assumed that each dormitory group

with the University investing \$3 million from its endowment reserves to cover the balance.<sup>87</sup> Woodward insisted that

the implications of this program of dormitory construction and its meaning to the future of the University of Chicago are far-reaching, and will be gratifying to the alumni and friends of the University. At present only a small minority of our students live in University dormitories. Many live at home, a considerable number of men live in fraternity houses, but too many of our students are scattered over the Hyde Park and Woodlawn districts. Though the University, through its housing bureau, has tried to secure at reasonable rents comfortable quarters for all, this has year by year become more difficult. The new dormitories will not only in large measure solve the housing problem, but will make it possible to provide, for a large proportion of the student body, those stimulating associations and wholesome influences outside the class-room which are essential to a well-rounded educational program.<sup>88</sup>

Woodward also used his announcement to publicly squash rumors that the University was planning on abolishing its undergraduate college. But in arguing so forcefully and publicly for an expansion of residential

would be placed on a separate block, giving the opportunity for expansion to cover the entire block if the later experience should justify." The board assumed that the University's investment of the \$3 million loan from the endowment would be amortized over thirty years, at an annual return rate of not less than 5 percent based on student rental fees.

87. Woodward to Rosenwald, November 9, 1928, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration.

88. Announcement, December 11, 1928, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration.



halls for undergraduate students, Woodward generated enormous enmity on the part of senior faculty members like William Dodd and Charles Merriam, both of whom had been elected to the presidential search committee charged with finding a successor to Max Mason. As Barry Karl and Benjamin MacArthur have demonstrated, the controversy over Woodward's support of college residential expansion quickly became a key variable in the politics of the search to choose the new president. Woodward was the favored inside candidate of many of the University faculty and a majority of the trustees; yet the faculty advisory committee to the presidential search process—dominated by William Dodd, Gordon Laing, Henry Gale, and Charles Merriam—rebelled against his nomination, largely because of Woodward's support for Burton's college residential plan (as well as for Chauncey Boucher's plan for a new general-education curriculum for the College).<sup>89</sup> William E. Dodd, a distinguished historian of the American South, had already complained to Ernest Burton in 1924 that the University, with its rising undergraduate enrollments in the aftermath of World War I, faced the danger of alumni meddling to create a much more collegiate atmosphere on campus: "There arises a powerful alumni interest that overwhelms us with their demands for grandstand performances, after the manner of the eastern universities and to satisfy that longing of hearts like that which underlies, if there can be such a thing, the management of *The Tribune*.... The way the world is now made up, it seems useless to

89. Dodd was deeply worried that the trustees were solidly behind Woodward's ideas for the College: "This morning speech of F. C. Woodward, before a group of men brought together by Trustees, declared himself candidate for the presidency of the University. All his speech had to do with the Undergraduate Colleges—my interpretation of that is: Trustees mean to put Woodward into the presidency and then carry their programme [out]." Private diary, entry of July 27, 1928, box 61, William E. Dodd Papers, Library of Congress.

struggle against the tide. 'After us the deluge' is the inner answer to all of us who endeavor to make our case with the public that ought to understand."<sup>90</sup> In 1928 Dodd insisted to Harold Swift that the board's decision to build the South Campus project amounted to a huge mistake in the allocation of resources, and that "if we are to embark upon a building program for a 'Harvard or Yale' in Chicago and therefore a campaign of endowments, the real work of the University is doomed for the next fifteen or twenty years. It would have the same effect on us that the dilemma of the Medical School has brought upon us—a situation which has caused the failure of every recommendation in the History Department for increase of salaries this year, except one, and that only half of what seemed to me a minimum necessity." A long-standing opponent of moneyed wealth, Dodd feared that the new dorms would attract indifferent students "whose last purpose is to study."<sup>91</sup> As late as 1934 Dodd would derisively warn against any plans to bring more (what he feared would be) lazy undergraduates to campus and insisted on the priority of more graduate students: "Let 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]."<sup>92</sup>

In May 1928 Charles E. Merriam, chair of the Department of Political Science, warned Dodd, "We are in a Hell of a fix; if we seek to do our duty, we shall have to fight [the] Board of Trustees and perhaps be

90. Dodd to Burton, December 1, 1924, box 41, folder 4, HJB Administration.

91. Dodd to Swift, September 1, 1928, box 144, folder 8, Swift Papers.

92. Dodd to Bessie Louise Pierce, February 3, 1934, box 9, folder 10, Bessie Louise Pierce Papers.

beaten and then have our departments suffer under [the] new regime." But Dodd remained stubbornly convinced that the stark alternative facing the University of Chicago was either to become a "graduate research place" or an institution that appealed to "athletics, frats, and the like," and he closely associated the latter option with Frederic Woodward's plan to build residential colleges.<sup>93</sup> In July 1928 Dodd returned to the attack, insisting to Merriam that "the scheme for a great undergraduate college is still the positive object of the group which seeks to perpetuate the Mason policy," and in September he again complained that the "great attention and great expenditures upon a new 'Harvard' in the West" still defined the goals of many of the trustees.<sup>94</sup>

Dodd's prejudices were not shared by all of the faculty. In April 1929 Professor Edith Foster Flint of the Department of English wrote to a nervous group of College alumni who were worried that the University was not properly supporting undergraduate education, asserting that what the University needed, in addition to better (and better-paid) College teachers who would inspire their students, was "more and better residence halls, that the influence of the University may exercise itself

93. Private diary, entry of May 10, 1928, box 61, Dodd Papers, Library of Congress. See also Barry Dean Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 157–58. See also Fred Arthur Bailey, *William Edward Dodd: The South's Yeoman Scholar* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1997), 142–43. Dodd also believed that Burton's successor, Max Mason, was too sympathetic toward undergraduate education. Robert Dallek reports that "Mason's attention to undergraduate study in the university alienated and angered Dodd, who, by the spring of 1928, described the president as 'arbitrary and offensive in relations with the faculty,' and, consequently, unfit for this post." Robert Dallek, *Democrat and Diplomat: The Life of William E. Dodd* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 164.

94. Dodd to Merriam, July 27, 1928, and September 1, 1928, box 31, Dodd Papers, Library of Congress.

through all the hours instead of through only a quarter or a third of them, and that thus we may not be a day school but a community."<sup>95</sup> Still, William Dodd and his fellow cabalists had an impact and, as we know, Frederic Woodward did not get the presidency of the University of Chicago. Instead, the board opted for a young and relatively unknown outsider, Robert Maynard Hutchins, who with his radical ideas about undergraduate education would soon challenge many of the same senior faculty who had subverted Woodward's candidacy. The first and only building built under the Woodward plan was Burton Judson Courts, which opened in Autumn Quarter 1931. Designed by Zantzinger, Borie and Medary with Harvard and Yale models explicitly in mind, this hall offered a high-quality, well-constructed home to 390 men. In advertising the new hall to the headmasters of eastern preparatory schools, a University representative noted that "the so-called 'House Plan' at Harvard and Yale has created much favorable comment. The 'New Plan' at the University of Chicago has received wide publicity. Few realize, however, that the University of Chicago will have ready for occupancy next fall, as an integral part of the 'New Plan', College Residence Halls for Men, which will closely resemble those at Yale and Harvard."<sup>96</sup>

The same architectural firm was to design the women's residence hall. Initially, plans called for it to be located on the Midway between 60th and 61st Streets, just to the east of the men's hall, but various disputants intervened. Amos Alonzo Stagg insisted that the hall should be shifted to the east of Woodlawn Avenue, directly across the Midway from Ida Noyes

95. Flint to the Alumni Council Committee, April 29, 1929, box 1, folder 6, Mason Administration.

96. W. G. Preston Jr. to W. F. Taylor, May 8, 1931, box 70, folder 14, Hutchins Administration. Taylor was the headmaster of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts.

Hall, in order to preserve a varsity baseball field that was located on the original site. Stagg alleged that placing the women’s hall next to the men’s might result in a the “grave danger of sissifying the men at the University” and that “we ought to do everything possible to prevent it.” Stagg also allowed that the women would profit from being separated form the men, since this would give them “a chance to develop their lives without having men constantly near at hand.”<sup>97</sup> Other administrators favored locating the hall in a field just north of Ida Noyes Hall, thus abandoning Burton’s original conception of a unified collegiate campus. Finally, in April 1930 the trustees decided to ignore Stagg and the other objectors and to place the women’s hall on a site next to the men’s hall on the south side of the Midway.<sup>98</sup> The site that Stagg had favored was eventually allocated to a new Arts Building, to be built with a \$1 million gift promised by Max Epstein, which the trustees decided to locate on 60th Street, fronting on the Midway, between Woodlawn and Kimbark Avenues.<sup>99</sup>

The trustees approved preliminary drawings for the women’s hall on June 24, 1930, and authorized the architects to proceed with working plans, hoping to have the women’s hall open by December 1, 1931. But on July 9, 1931, the trustees voted to defer construction of the women’s

97. Stagg to T. E. Donnelley, August 24, 1929, cited in “Minutes of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds,” November 25, 1929, box 6a, folder 13a, Swift Papers.

98. “Minutes of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds,” August 20, 1929, September 24, 1929, November 25, 1929, and April 9, 1930, box 6a, folder 13a, Swift Papers.

99. “Minutes of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds,” February 2, 1931, and March 25, 1931, box 7, folder 1, Swift Papers. On March 10, 1931, the committee decided that Paul Cret would get the commission for the Arts Building. Its site was officially confirmed on March 25, 1931. The building was to cost \$800,000, with an endowment of \$200,000.



*Julius Rosenwald, 1862–1932, Trustee of the University  
Walinger Studio, December 2, 1924*

hall for a period of one year, setting a new completion date of October 1, 1933.<sup>100</sup> This delay was fatal, given the ravages of the Depression; in July 1933, the University settled its accounts with the architects and engineers for their preliminary work (a sum of \$109,488).<sup>101</sup> Like Max Epstein's Arts Building on the Midway, which would never be built, the plan for a women's residence hall on the South Campus was dead, and with its demise went any interest in additional investments in undergraduate housing. Burton's dream of the colleges was abandoned, until a different version was revived two generations later by the Blum Committee in the mid-1960s.

#### THE DEPRESSION

**T**he student housing situation on the eve of the Depression was grim. Harold Swift admitted candidly to Julius Rosenwald that "we house only 700 students, less than 10 percent of our whole student body. I know of no other University or College with so bad a record. We all feel there is unequalled opportunity for great work at the University of Chicago, but, without dormitories, we do not take anywhere nearly full advantage of the situation."<sup>102</sup> The housing problem was further complicated by the

100. "Minutes of the Committee on Buildings and Grounds," October 8, 1931, box 7, folder 1, Swift Papers.

101. "Minutes of the Committee on Business Affairs," July 27, 1933, box 7, folder 6, Swift Papers. The financial ravages of the Depression quickly affected Burton Judson Courts as well. In January 1930 the trustees reduced many original details, including eliminating many fireplaces and substituting a roof of wood instead of steel in order to reduce the cost from \$1,671,000 to \$1,360,000.

102. Swift to Rosenwald, May 31, 1928, box 6, folder 12, Mason Administration.

fact that, unlike Yale, Chicago had a large population of women students, as well as a relatively large population of graduate and professional school students, most of whom did not come from Chicago and preferred housing on or near the campus.

Several problems loomed large as the scope of the economic collapse after October 24, 1929, became evident. First, the rental housing stock in Hyde Park and Woodlawn had grown older and often less attractive. A survey of junior faculty views of the local rental market in 1930 elicited a chorus of complaints about small, unattractive rentals, many of them unclean and badly appointed. The situation was particularly bad for women faculty members and unmarried faculty of both sexes. One woman wrote that "housing is a real problem for unmarried faculty woman. In many cases the salary is not adequate for the maintenance of an apartment, and one does not want to live in one furnished room in the home of a family." Married faculty with families also found serious constraints. One faculty member complained that "the housing conditions are terrible, especially lacking in apartments of good quality, large enough for a family containing two or more children. Newer places are nearly all of four rooms or less," while another observed that "rent on this apartment is almost ½ my salary, and it is too small. In neighborhood west of the University buildings are inferior and playmates for children undesirable. A study for myself is out of the question." A fourth reported, curtly: "Could not live in the neighborhood—unsanitary conditions, poor neighbors, dark rooms, and high prices. Moved to Flossmoor."<sup>103</sup>

Second, as the Depression ensued, housing rental rates dropped in the neighborhood, which lowered demand for the older residence halls.

103. "Final Summary of Replies to Housing Questionnaire Sent to Instructors and Assistant Professors, Winter 1929–30," box 106, folder 7, Hutchins Administration.



L. R. Steere reported in 1934 that the "Women's Dormitories have suffered ... from the competition of the ridiculously low rates offered by neighborhood householders, and to some degree, from the more attractive accommodations available at International House."<sup>104</sup> After Burton Judson opened in 1931, Gates Hall and Blake Hall were opened to women and were somewhat preferred since they did not require a board contract and charged lower rental rates.<sup>105</sup> The older men's dorms built before 1910 also faced serious maintenance and upkeep issues. A comprehensive report in 1930 on University housing stock found that Snell Hall ranked last in cleanliness.<sup>106</sup>

Unlike his predecessors, William Rainey Harper and Ernest Burton, Robert Hutchins had little interest in the residential housing issue and in the broader concerns about the quality of life experienced by students beyond the classroom. Hutchins was willing, even eager, to challenge and rebut the anti-undergraduate sentiments of senior faculty like Dodd and Merriam on issues of faculty appointments and curricular reform, but he had no interest in refighting Burton's and Woodward's battles over building more residence halls.<sup>107</sup> Hutchins, too, had a courageous

104. Steere to Harold H. Swift, April 27, 1934, box 70, folder 7, Hutchins Administration.

105. "Minutes of the Committee on Business Affairs," April 12, 1933, box 7, folder 6, Swift Papers.

106. *Preliminary Report of a Survey of Housing Conditions for Students of the University of Chicago*, May 19, 1930, box 106, folder 7, Hutchins Administration.

107. For example, Hutchins had no hesitation in challenging Dodd's dreams of a solely graduate university. In March 1935 Dodd wrote to Hutchins complaining, "I think it unwise for a large endowed institution to continue to offer undergraduate work, especially in a region where there are four State universities not far away.... The one thing which modern civilization needs is absolutely free university work on a research level." Dodd then urged that the University "slowly but

dream of the College, but it was more *geistlich* and intellectual, and not particularly concerned with the adverse social circumstances in which many of students found themselves or, ironically, how such circumstances might undercut the actual impact of the radical educational reforms that Hutchins and his allies sought to implement. As a later faculty report on student housing in 1961 would observe, the Hutchins years were marked by a kind of "extreme laissez-faire" in respect to class attendance and the absence of course grades—students had only to pass an end-of-the-year comprehensive exam to get a full year of credit for a Core course, with class attendance neither required nor enforced—and this "extreme laissez-faire" in the classroom found its logical parallel in the University's benign indifference as to where or how students lived or to how they related to each other.<sup>108</sup>

What Robert Hutchins did accomplish was to set the College on the path of a much stronger intellectual culture and much more academically oriented student body, such that the kinds of fears that William Dodd had manifested would soon prove to be without foundation. In fact, this was precisely the aim of the architect of the College's first Core

certainly abandon undergraduate work and make every effort to obtain the first scholars in the world as writers and teachers." Hutchins replied, "I agree entirely with you that Chicago has the opportunity to become the leading university in the world. I believe, however, that if it fails to become the leading university the reason will be financial and not the one that you advance. At present undergraduate work, by which I mean the first two years, more than pays for itself. Actually, research at the University of Chicago is supported by the undergraduate college. The New Plan has reduced and ought to further reduce the cost of undergraduate instruction. Solely from the point of view of research, therefore, the College is indispensable at the present time." Letters of March 1, 1935, and April 12, 1935, box 104, folder 5, Presidents' Papers, 1925–1945.

108. Donald Meiklejohn et al., *The College: Committee on Residential Policy*, June 5, 1961, College Archive of the University of Chicago.



curriculum, Dean of the College Chauncey Boucher, who was convinced that a more rigorous educational program would attract much stronger and more academically inclined college students. Even though Chicago might lose a significant share of its weaker and less committed students, Boucher was confident that 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 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.<sup>109</sup>

But the social environment that these brighter and more ambitious students encountered slowly seemed to grow more and more at odds with their educational growth, with the University's indifference towards students' life issues seeming to accelerate in the years immediately during and after World War II. A later dean of the College, Donald N. Levine, would highlight the profound disjunction between curricular innovation and disregard for student life that marked these years when he observed:

The Hutchins College finally secured the primacy of the intellectual ideal in the College culture, but in a way that subjected young—

109. Chauncey S. Boucher, "Supplementary Statement," May 1, 1928, 16, box 27, folder 7, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

often very young—and emotionally dependent students to an intensely demanding and sometimes perversely abstract curricular structure in a setting that seemed to depreciate *any* kind of student achievement other than the strictly academic. Consequently, what many regard as the curricular high point of the Hutchins era—the perfection of the Faust-Ward curriculum in the late 1940s and early 1950s—was also a period of enormous discomfort and distress for a substantial proportion of students in the College.<sup>110</sup>

The Hutchins years thus made no progress on the problems that Burton and Woodward had identified. Moreover, the more demanding standards and time-consuming work loads that marked the educational programs of the College in the 1930s and 1940s led to a slow erosion of student interest in joining fraternities. The University contributed to this process of devolution by dictating that, as of Autumn Quarter 1932, fraternities would be forced to defer the pledging of freshmen until the seventh week of Spring Quarter.<sup>111</sup> Finally, between 1943 and 1951, only graduate students were in the membership pool of fraternities because the University prohibited undergraduates from joining. The upshot of such trends and policies was that many of the fraternities eventually abandoned their houses and disappeared. The educational innovations of the Hutchins College thus had a secondary negative impact in further reducing the on-campus or near-campus housing resources available to undergraduate students.

110. Donald N. Levine, "On Upgrading the 'Quality of Life' in the College," October 1, 1984, 4, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

111. Gilbert Fowler White et al., *The Cap and Gown 1932*, vol 32 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1930), 273; "Fraternities and Clubs in the University of Chicago," [1930], box 71, folder 4, Hutchins Administration.

In fact, the only significant move on the student housing front resulted in a net loss of resources, since Hutchins agreed in 1937 to decommission Goodspeed Hall as a dormitory for Divinity School students and recycle it as a new home for the Department of Art. Max Epstein, who had earlier promised a gift of \$1 million for a new Arts Building on the Midway, now agreed to cover the cost of the renovation, which came to about \$137,000. The whole transaction revealed the limitations of money and imagination under which the University now worked: instead of a magnificent building for the arts on the Midway, designed by Paul Cret to complement a new residential South Campus for the College, the University was forced to cannibalize a perfectly acceptable dormitory and convert it into an ersatz home for the arts, for one-ninth of the cost of the originally planned structure.<sup>112</sup>

The interwar period did see its share of inflated dreams and dashed hopes, however. In 1938, one enterprising administrator obtained an estimate of what it would cost to demolish Foster Hall and replace it with a newer and better designed hall for classrooms. The estimate—over \$725,000—simply proved that defenders of the existing dormitory had little to fear for, since the idea went nowhere.<sup>113</sup> When the University did bother to think about housing, its plans were modest and uninspiring. One example of this minimalism was the idea, touted during the fiftieth anniversary of the University campaign in 1941–42, that donors be invited to give old single-family houses to the University, which would

112. The Divinity students were transferred to Snell Hall, thus putting more pressure on the University's capacity to house male students from other units, including the College. See W. B. Harrell to Emery Filbey, March 17, 1937, box 39, folder 17, Hutchins Administration.

113. W. B. Harrell to Hutchins, June 14, 1938, box 39, folder 16, Hutchins Administration.

then convert them into twelve to twenty bed mini-dorms.<sup>114</sup> This scheme was sufficiently implausible to die of its own weight, but it does suggest that lack of a coherent housing plan that marked the Hutchins era. The new Four-Year College curriculum adopted in 1942 that encouraged the matriculation of high school-aged students in the College brought more pressures. The University gave first choice of rooms in Foster and Kelly Halls to very young girls admitted under the new curriculum, which resulted in some upper-class undergraduate students being forced to move off campus. Hence began a pattern and a precedent that has continued down to the present.<sup>115</sup>

#### THE POSTWAR PERIOD

**T**he distribution of student housing preferences at the University of Chicago had been relatively stable between 1900 and 1940, with one exception. In 1902, 40 percent of our undergraduate students lived at home; another 40 percent lived in rooms in the neighborhoods of Hyde Park and Woodlawn (including students living in fraternity houses); and approximately 20 percent lived in University dorms. In 1940, the parallel statistics were 55 percent of undergraduates living at home; 23 percent living in the

114. Memorandum, August 21, 1941, box 41, folder 3, Hutchins Administration.

115. Hutchins to Clyde M. Joice, June 22, 1944, box 70, folder 16, Hutchins Administration. Hutchins responded to Joice's complaints that his daughter had been evicted from Kelly Hall. Joice had argued: "In the language of business, the first obligation of any institution is to take care of the customers it has before it takes care of new customers."

neighborhood; and 22 percent in University facilities.<sup>116</sup> The most significant single change in the first four decades of the twentieth century was that more undergraduate students lived at home in 1940 than in 1900, which may have reflected the city's increasingly dense and efficient transportation network as well as the growing reliance of the University on the local Chicago admissions pool. The impact of the Depression on family and student financial resources may also have played a serious role in this shift. In spite of the dreams of Harper, Burton, and Woodward for a strongly residential campus, we had become even more of a commuter school in 1940 than we had been in 1900. These numbers would change radically after 1945 with a rapid and significant decline of students living at home.

The University faced serious short-term and longer-term challenges. Given the poor condition of much of the neighborhood housing available for faculty, many junior faculty ended up living in the wartime prefab units built between 1941 and 1944 that were scattered around the central campus.<sup>117</sup> The initial postwar construction undertaken by the University included the Administration Building, the Nathan Goldblatt Memorial Hospital, the Ion Accelerator, and the Research Institutes. As an ensemble this group was hardly distinguished in architectural stylishness. The Administration Building, built at a cost of \$1.6 million, generated considerable criticism for its move away from the traditional English Neo-Gothic style. Joseph Hudnut, dean of the Graduate School of

116. "The Students Themselves—Where They Live" and "Analysis of Student Housing, Autumn Quarter 1940," box 108, folder 9, Hutchins Administration.

117. "Non-Veteran Members of Faculty Now Occupying Prefab Apartments," April 24, 1947, box 106, folder 11, Hutchins Administration.

Design at Harvard University, described the building as a "somewhat run of the mine design and probably a little dull."<sup>118</sup> The Research Institutes were built for \$4.8 million as sturdy but rather nondescript structures. The only housing project authorized after 1945 was a modest faculty-staff housing building on 60th Street and Ingleside Avenue, providing forty-seven apartments and costing \$1 million. The campus planning surrounding these structures was ad hoc and rushed. Robert Hutchins admitted as much when confronted with criticism by Samuel K. Allison, director of the Institute for Nuclear Studies, about the stodgy design of the new Research Institutes: Allison is reported to have told Hutchins that "the facade of the building looked like the State Insane Asylum in Oswego, Wisconsin," to which Hutchins commented tartly to his staff: "It seems to me that the time has come to inaugurate a new and better system for the approval of plans for buildings."<sup>119</sup>

In such an environment, planning for student housing was bound to assume a very low priority. Like all US universities, Chicago was inundated with large numbers of returning veterans between 1946 and 1950, many of whom had severe difficulties finding decent, affordable housing. One report noted that "the return of over 500 veterans to our campus, and the receipt of an average of 75 applications per day from veterans desirous of matriculating in the University, has brought a serious housing shortage at the University."<sup>120</sup> This short-term feast—too many students,

118. Hudnut to Cowell, October 14, 1948, box 39, folder 4, Hutchins Administration.

119. Hutchins to James A. Cunningham, September 21, 1949, box 39, folder 1, Hutchins Administration.

120. Howard B. Matthews to Army Service Forces, attn. Captain M. L. Rockwell, December 8, 1945, box 70, folder 8, Hutchins Administration.

who overwhelmed the University's meager housing resources—was then followed after 1950 by a much more serious famine: the collapse of undergraduate enrollments that paralyzed the College and the University beginning in 1952–53. From a pre-1940 undergraduate College of over 3,000 students, the University's undergraduate population plunged to below 1,400 students by 1954. The freshman class entering the College in the fall of 1953 consisted of only 275 students, a stunning decline compared with the typical entering classes of the 1930s, which numbered between 600 and 700 students (642 freshmen matriculated in 1939; 653 freshmen matriculated in 1940). This collapse of enrollments had several causes, among the most important of which was that the University had alienated many high school teachers, principals, and parents with its attempts to recruit their best sophomores and juniors under Robert Hutchins's Early Admissions Program before 1953. George Watkins, the vice president for Development in the 1950s, later recalled:

No program instituted by Robert Maynard Hutchins was more controversial than the Early Admission Program as it developed—and it finally became a disaster. Many of those attending these alumni meetings around the country were teachers, a lot of them high school teachers. Early admission as such was not new in colleges... The University had it, as well as acceleration, based upon what was generally referred to as "testing out" of courses—demonstrating academic proficiency. But Robert Maynard Hutchins inaugurated an Early Admissions Program that went far beyond that in asserting, in effect, that the last two years of high school were a waste and that qualified students should be allowed to enter the College after two years of high school and be awarded an undergraduate degree—the conventional Bachelor's degree—after what

was generally regarded as the end of the sophomore year of college. As with so many other of Robert Maynard Hutchins's innovations, this may have made excellent educational sense. But as Lawrence Kimpton often said at staff meetings, it "monkeyed with the coin of the realm", and violent criticism erupted in all directions, nowhere more vehemently than from other academic institutions and faculties. Also, many parents of prospective students certainly weren't enthusiastic about sending their children two years earlier to a great city university, where "it is assumed students are adults". High school teachers among our alumni—and those attending these [alumni] meetings—were outraged at the notion that the last two years of high school were a waste. And a sizable proportion of our alumni were in education—the University had long been known as "the teacher of teachers". They had long been encouraging their students to come to the University of Chicago... Well, that source of undergraduate students tended to dry up dramatically. And College enrollment continued to decline.<sup>121</sup>

This collapse of loyalty and trust among high school officials, alumni, and parents in our traditional admissions markets meant perforce that we had to work much harder to recruit more College students from outside the Chicago and to try to expand the applicant base by recruiting

121. "Interview of Christopher Kimball with George H. Watkins," August 25, 1987, 25, Oral History Program, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.

more students from distant areas.<sup>122</sup> By 1960 the number of undergraduate students from the Chicago area had declined to 46 percent, compared with 70 percent in 1940; by 1970, it had declined still further to 26 percent. A more aggressive national admissions strategy in turn meant that the College would have to devote more attention to on-campus housing resources for out-of-town students.

Equally noteworthy, the deterioration of the surrounding neighborhood and the massive increase in crime rates in Hyde Park and Woodlawn between 1945 and 1955 forced College authorities to argue for a more secure, on-campus residential environment for our students. The neighborhood housing option, virtually taken for granted by the University in the decades before 1940, now proved somewhat problematic. As a subcommittee of the Council of University Senate observed in 1952: "Progressive deterioration of the University neighborhood, with the accompanying increase in lawlessness, has beyond doubt made residence at the University less attractive to prospective students."<sup>123</sup>

122. Dean of Students Robert M. Strozier characterized the opposition of high school officials well when he reported in a March 1950 memorandum on public opinion of the College: "It may be true that the unique features of the College Program do cause some misunderstanding among the high school people, whose sympathy and cooperation are vital to the Program... A very competent counselor of East High School in Rockford, Illinois articulated this feeling most clearly. In a thoughtful and friendly mood, she said: 'The College, in a way, is a threat to us. We know that we ought to do a better job. You are doing it. We can't, although some of us break our hearts working at it. And knowing we can't do it, we fear what you are doing. For this reason, we are restless and uneasy when you call on us.'" Memorandum, March 30, 1950, box 2, folder 7, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

123. R. T. Bruère et al., *Report of the Council Subcommittee on Enrollment*, 1952, 1, box 4, folder 10, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

Before 1945 the University had been able to rely on parental homes, neighborhood housing, and the city's then excellent public transportation system to care for the great majority of undergraduates. The situation in the early 1950s would be starkly different. As early as 1951 William C. Bradbury, a sociologist in the College who was commissioned to write a major report on the acute problems of student life that had emerged under the Hutchins College curriculum, argued that the University needed to devote serious attention to expanding and strengthening the College's housing system as part of a total approach to supporting student educational growth: "As a result of the war and the post-war boom all the Houses have become badly overcrowded and none is a place for civilized living; room assignments are controlled by a bureau whose primary concern is dollar economy. The administrative decision to try to make Houses social units was a good one, but the imagination and especially the funds that have gone into effort to date have been pathetically inadequate." Bradbury was unapologetic about the fact that an improved College housing system would cost "millions": "As I have said, I make no apologies for this... It is fruitless to hope to foster an effective student community without creating its 'material' (as well as its ideal) preconditions."<sup>124</sup> Yet Bradbury's pleas faced the stark financial realities of the University in the early 1950s: when undergraduate matriculations and undergraduate tuition revenues plunged drastically, the University was left with an arts and sciences faculty much

124. William C. Bradbury, *Education and Other Aspects of Personal Growth in the College Community: A Report to the College Committee on Policy and Personnel*, October 1951, 76, 103, College Archive of the University of Chicago.



larger than it could plausibly afford and left little wiggle room for new dorm construction.<sup>125</sup>

Bradbury's ideas led to the development of a residential plan for the College that the faculty debated and approved in the spring of 1952. This plan called for the creation of a series of new residential colleges of approximately 150 to 200 students each, with each college having a faculty master of the College and a resident faculty fellow, both of whom would have apartments in these colleges.<sup>126</sup> F. Champion Ward, dean of the College in the early 1950s, urged the Central Administration to move quickly to develop new on-campus housing, arguing that "the College is not the private hobby of its Dean, and neither Mr. Northrop nor I feel that there is much prospect that without a constructive program, including investment in the financing of the proposed [residential] colleges by the Board, we will be enabled by our own spare-time efforts to remove the serious material obstacles to stabilizing and increasing the enrollment in the College."<sup>127</sup> Facing bleak budgetary conditions in the early 1950s, Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton was understandably reluctant to build new on-campus housing. Kimpton tried to assuage Ward:

125. It is noteworthy that even as late as the early 1970s the University had a student-faculty ratio in respect to the number of College students compared with the size of the arts and sciences faculty of almost four to one (for the year 1969–70, 527 divisional faculty and 56 College faculty compared with 2,378 undergraduate students), revealing how fragile the University's broader financial situation was. See "Statistical Study of the College," 29 and Appendix A; "Faculty Teaching Undergraduates," 2, box 6, series 97–60, Presidents' Papers.

126. "A Residential Plan for the College," *Minutes of the Faculty of the College*, 1952, 77–78, 125. Eugene Northrop was a professor of mathematics in the College who was tasked with helping improve the admissions situation.

127. Ward to Kimpton, August 20, 1953, box 78, folder 1, Kimpton Administration.

"All we lack is money and students. As soon as we get our budget into decent shape and as soon as we can convince a few more students to enroll, let's roll up our sleeves and build more stately mansions." Ward replied that this decision was "a severe blow to the Faculty's hopes."<sup>128</sup>

The College's residential situation was further complicated by the slow collapse of what had formerly been a vigorous and extensive fraternity culture on or near campus. As noted above, in the 1920s the fraternities were numerous enough to provide housing for a significant number of College men. Yet the revision of the College's curriculum in 1931, which created the much more academically challenging Common Core curriculum, led the University to prohibit fraternities from recruiting entering first-year students until Spring Quarter of their freshman year. This change in pledging practices, together with the more academically oriented interests manifested by many of the new matriculants, created a more challenging recruitment environment for the fraternities. After 1942—especially after 1946, when the College began to recruit large number of very young students, many of whom were not appropriate recruits—the fraternities faced new challenges, and the subsequent collapse of the College's enrollments in the 1950s proved to be the final death knell for many of these groups. Whereas the University of Chicago had twenty-nine fraternities in 1929, that number declined to seventeen by 1939, to nine by 1959, and only seven by 1965.<sup>129</sup> Having

128. Kimpton to Ward, September 11, 1953; Ward to Kimpton and R. W. Harrison, October 30, 1953, box 78, folder 1, Kimpton Administration.

129. "Undergraduate Fraternities, Spring Quarter 1929," box 1, folder 6, Mason Administration; "Students at the University of Chicago," 1940–1941, box 15, folder 2, College Archive of the University of Chicago; James E. Newman to Robert M. Wulff, August 18, 1965, box 76, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

depended upon the fraternities to generate strong social solidarities among their members and to provide residential living resources that the College could not or would not build itself, the University now lost on both fronts.<sup>130</sup>

Given Lawrence Kimpton's ardent desire to rebuild the College's enrollments (he suggested to the Board of Trustees a goal of five thousand undergraduates by 1960!), Kimpton eventually persuaded the board to take action in the later 1950s by authorizing the construction of two new residence halls: Woodward Court (initially for women), opened in 1958, and Pierce Tower, opened in 1960. Woodward in particular was a *sine qua non* for any attempt to rebuild the College's population of women students, which had dropped precipitously since World War II. University Dean of Students Robert Strozier warned Kimpton in 1955 that "the enrollment of women students has been consistently low since the war. Other colleges and universities have, during this time, been building attractive residence halls for women and making an appeal which we are unable to make to prospective women students. In fact, the neighborhood and the age of the women's residence halls combine to make our appeal very difficult for women students. We shall not be

130. In 1962 Dean of Students Warner Wick cleverly sought to co-opt the fraternities into helping him build what essentially amounted to University-controlled undergraduate student housing by proposing that the University dedicate part of the block of land just to the west of Pierce Tower for a Fraternity Quadrangle of nine houses, which would be built as a joint venture between the fraternities and the University. The University would provide a forty-year loan to each fraternity and secure exemption for them from local real estate taxes, since the new houses would be "treated as a University housing facility" for undergraduates. The scheme never materialized, but it did show how concerned Wick was with the chronic shortage of student housing. See "A New Fraternity Quadrangle," June 7, 1962, box 78, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

able to reach our totals either in 1956 or in the future unless we have a sharp increase in the enrolment of women and men students."<sup>131</sup> Ironically, in the planning for this new hall, the ghosts of the Harkness model at Yale continued to reappear. The architect for Woodward Courts, Eero Saarinen, reprised Harold Swift's admiration for Yale's collegiate housing from the late 1920s by invoking the Harkness colleges at Yale and Harvard as a model for Chicago: Saarinen argued: "It seems to me that there is much to be learned from the Harkness projects at Yale and Harvard. Their Gothicized architecture demanded picturesque arrangements which in turn brought about un-standardized solutions. It seems to me that our problem is to siphon out the healthy human results and to arrive at a solution within modern architectural terms with these positive qualities built into the architectural concept."<sup>132</sup>

Kimpton in his plea to the board in September 1958 on behalf of the new residence hall on 55th Street, which was eventually named in honor of Stanley R. Pierce (a College alumnus, Class of 1914, who had died in late 1959 and left the University a bequest of nearly \$1 million), was ruthlessly candid about the stakes involved:

Mr. Kimpton pointed out that this facility, which we need desperately, is closely related to the kind of University that we desire to become. He stated that he is not seriously concerned about our graduate work and that we will be able to maintain our strength there. Our real problem relates to the undergraduate side of the University and, possibly because we began with a strong emphasis

131. Strozier to Kimpton, November 18, 1955, box 240, folder 6, Kimpton Administration.

132. Eero Saarinen, "Preliminary Concept Considerations for the University of Chicago," November 29, 1954, box 131, folder 11, Beadle Administration.

on graduate study, we have never quite worked out the kind of undergraduate institution that we want to become.

Mr. Kimpton indicated that in shaping and developing the undergraduate part of the University we can follow any one of the following patterns:

1. The large urban university pattern as typified by New York University and the College of the City of New York. Here there is a large commuting group of students and the University makes no provision for student housing.
2. The State University pattern as typified by the large midwest state universities. Here large numbers of students are enrolled without any high degree of selectivity and without any particular attention being given to student housing.
3. The third pattern, which he believes we should follow, is that followed by Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, and others. Here there is a rather small, highly selective student body with most students living on campus. This type of university operation has enormous educational advantages.

The Chancellor noted that there are bleak facts which we must face. We must again increase our tuition charge. Princeton, for example, is going to \$1,450 in 1959. If we are to attract undergraduate students we must give them something that they cannot obtain at schools like Roosevelt University or at the University of Illinois in Chicago. The fact that our academic standing is high is not enough. We need more social prestige than we now have, for that is an important factor in attracting students at the undergraduate level. At this time roughly 50 per cent of our students

come from the greater Chicago area, and 40 per cent of this number come from the City of Chicago. This pattern is similar to that of other large urban universities. Thirty-four per cent of our undergraduate men live in University residences and about 45 per cent of our undergraduate women live on the campus. We do not like to have our undergraduate students living outside the University. The providing of appropriate student housing not only would stimulate undergraduate enrolment, but it also would greatly assist our undergraduate program.<sup>133</sup>

It says much about the urgency felt by Kimpton, and his effective communications with the Board of Trustees, that Chairman of the Board Glen Lloyd persuaded twenty-four trustees to pledge \$675,000 to complete funding of the new hall, which would amount to about \$7 million in today's dollars.

Woodward Court and Pierce Tower proved to be serviceable but not well-constructed buildings, and both soon showed signs of wear and tear that grew more acute over the decades. Moreover, their real impact in increasing our housing stock for College students was reduced soon after their opening when the University decommissioned Foster, Kelly-Beecher-Green, and Gates-Blake Halls as residence halls, turning them instead into offices and classrooms. In spite of Kimpton's statement to the board about the importance of undergraduate housing, it was the clear intention of University planners to transfer a significant part of Burton Judson Courts to the Law School and other professional schools as soon as the Pierce Tower complex opened. One official wrote that "Burton-Judson is admirably suited for use for graduate men, perhaps

133. *Minutes of the Board of Trustees*, vol 48 (Chicago: University of Chicago, September 11, 1958), 244–45.

better suited for graduates than undergraduates."<sup>134</sup> Nor were Woodward and Pierce part of a well-thought-out plan that would integrate residential living with the educational ideals of the College, such as William Bradbury had called for in 1951. As Dean Donald N. Levine would later put it, "Developments in the 1950s and early 1960s did almost nothing to institutionalize concerns of the sort expressed in the Bradbury Report. . . . The heart of Bradbury's reform proposals—making the residential system socially central to a broadly conceived program of growth for College students—was ignored."<sup>135</sup>

Although the Admissions Office in 1958 sought to advertise the College as "largely a residential College," such a claim in fact applied mainly to entering freshman and sophomores.<sup>136</sup> Such slogans were possible only because the size of the entering class had collapsed drastically since the 1930s and because many upper-class students were in fact not part of the residential system, preferring to live off campus, even in the face of disconcerting public safety issues.

Woodward and Pierce were the last new residential buildings constructed by the University until the opening of the Max Palevsky Residential Commons in 2002. The original design of Pierce called for a second tower to be constructed immediately to the west (and the project

134. "New Residence Halls for Undergraduate Men," [1958], box 51, folder 10, Kimpton Administration.

135. Levine, "On Upgrading the 'Quality of Life' in the College," 8.

136. *A Report to Secondary Schools: A Biographical Sketch of the Class of 1962*, box 4, folder 5, Kimpton Administration. In 1960, out of a College population of 2,168 students, only 1,242 students lived in University residences, and the latter figure included both International House and University married-student housing. Thirty years earlier the College had had a population of over 3,300 full-time students.

was announced to the press as a two-tower project), but this never happened. As the University entered the 1960s, the housing problem—and strategies to engage it—remained an ongoing source of concern. In June 1961 a faculty committee chaired by Donald Meiklejohn suggested that "in our judgment the residence halls do not now provide living facilities consistent with the aspirations of the College. The crowding, noise, meager student-faculty contacts, relatively drab uniformity, and tone of management which prevail in much of the dormitory space contrasts with the independence, imagination, and communication which the College cultivates in the classroom. . . . We doubt that the University can long maintain a College of the kind and size it now contemplates unless both physical facilities and management policy are changed."<sup>137</sup>

The Meiklejohn Report was bolstered by a series of internal and confidential communications by James E. Newman, who as assistant dean of students in the College in the 1960s was responsible for the College's housing system. A historian by training, Newman was given to writing thoughtful commentaries about student life as he encountered it. Commenting on Meiklejohn's Report, Newman added, "I would hope that future residences would be more spacious, have more single rooms, and include the proper amount of those facilities that are not extras but rather essentials—lounges, practice rooms, study rooms, libraries. Such residences would require both ample funds and ample land." Newman also questioned the prudence of Lawrence Kimpton's commitment of two to four of the Burton Judson Houses to the Law School and to the impending decision to turn the C Group (Kelly-Beecher-Green) on University Avenue into faculty offices. But he did so with a general university view

137. Meiklejohn et al., *The College: Committee on Residential Policy*, 8–9, June 5, 1961, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

in mind, noting that every unit was short of space and that the Business School and Divinity School would also like to have on-campus residences for their students as well.<sup>138</sup>

One of Newman's most important interventions was a second long report entitled *The House System and Student Life*, which was prepared and distributed on a confidential basis in August 1963. This report focused less on specific technical desiderata than on larger, macro-campus social climate issues. Although Newman's purpose was to lobby for a strengthening of the residential system, he did so via a circuitous survey of the state of the mores of student life on campus. Newman found much to admire in the culture of the College in the early 1960s—the independence of the students, their capacity for critical thinking, and their dedication to academic values. But he also found perplexing and even debilitating problems. Foremost was the lack of communitarian groups and institutions that would ease the loneliness and isolation experienced by many students. Newman argued that “the lack of community social interaction leaves students feeling lonely, bored, thrown back completely on their own resources. The most commonly heard complaint from students is that there is no social life on campus.” Newman believed that the residential system, properly supported and expanded, could help break down this kind of anomie. He concluded with the plea that

by all the means that are available to us, we must develop an atmosphere that cultivates in the student sensitivity and thoughtfulness to others, a sense of creative social responsibility, and that largeness and generosity of spirit which is the mark of the cultivated man. I

138. James E. Newman to Alan Simpson, June 26, 1961, box 100, folder 6, Beadle Administration.

have said above that the Chicago graduate at his best is the “autonomous man.” His sturdy independence is splendid, but it carries with a certain indifference to social responsibility and a kind of careful measuring out of emotion. If our graduates could maintain their autonomy but add to it a freer, more responsible attitude toward their society, we could be very proud indeed.<sup>139</sup>

On a more pragmatic level, complaints about the poor quality of housing resources continued to be voiced in the early 1960s. These complaints were accentuated by the decision of the leaders of the College to declare formally in 1960 that it had a goal of becoming a largely residential College, requiring that undergraduate women live all four years on campus and that undergraduate men spend at least the first two years on campus. This decision was strongly advocated by Alan Simpson, an Oxford-trained historian who had become dean of the College in 1959 and who valued the ideal of a strongly residential campus as part of a wider effort to make the College more socially supportive of students and to help them profit from the intense intellectual rigors of the formal curriculum.<sup>140</sup> Simpson's educational ideal was influenced by his studies of European humanism: the humanists, he argued,

139. James E. Newman, *The House System and Student Life*, August 1963, 9, 28, box 73, folder 7, Beadle Administration.

140. At the time, Alan Simpson's advocacy of a more “well rounded” approach to liberal education was seen as being opposed to Hutchins's educational philosophy. In response to a request for an evaluation of Simpson, James L. Cate of the Department of History wrote: “Alan is an intellectual without making a fetish of it. He has high standards of scholarship, but he thinks in terms of the rounded man (or woman) as our ultimate goal. This cost him some loss of popularity with the die-hard Hutchins' crew here, but that is not too important.” Cate to J. B. Ross, January 25, 1963, box 2, James Lea Cate Papers.



understood the possibilities of the whole man and wanted an educational system that would give the many sides of his nature some chance to develop in harmony. They thought it a good idea to mix the wisdom of the world with the learning of the cloister, to develop the body as well as the mind, to pay a great deal of attention to character, and to neglect no art which could add to the enjoyment of living. It was a spacious idea which offered every hospitality to creative energy. Anyone who is seriously interested in a liberal education must begin by rediscovering it.<sup>141</sup>

Alan Simpson was harshly critical of the laissez-faire attitudes of the past, especially of the "sprawling apartment culture, in which students swam in isolated little schools, or sank as the case might be. The result was a highly atomized social life, with characteristic virtues and vices; a forcing house for individualism and for enterprising coteries, but also a source of casualties, wasted opportunities, and squalor. Though small, the College was often thought to be impersonal, and the drop-out [rate] was heavy."<sup>142</sup> Simpson urged the University to "commit ourselves to the principle of a residential college both for its own sake and for the security it offers in our urban situation."<sup>143</sup>

Simpson's hopes for stronger residential life were soon disappointed, since both of the new housing requirements provided easy escape clauses via petitions. He was forced to admit:

141. Alan Simpson, "The Marks of an Educated Man," n.d., 5, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

142. Simpson to Vice President L. T. Coggeshall, January 8, 1962, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

143. Alan Simpson, "Speech to the Visiting Committee of the College, September 22, 1960," 3, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

I accept my share of the responsibility for heartily endorsing a policy which was not properly defined or announced with proper notice and which has been dogged from the start by a grotesque failure to remove the legitimate objections to the present residences. To cite a solitary example, the architect, who suspended a bunch of balloons from the ceiling of a penthouse in Pierce, approved a stick or two of furniture, ignored the acoustical horrors of the melancholy chamber, and then washed his hands of the whole business except for announcing that any alteration would need his approval, ought to be invited to sit and suffer in it.<sup>144</sup>

Frustrated administrators and faculty leaders tried for four years to close the gap between the College's stated aspirations and its messy realities, finding themselves forced to tolerate and even encourage petitions from students who wished to opt out of the housing system. In the spring of 1964 the University was forced to acknowledge that it had overreached itself, and it rescinded the requirement that second-year men and third- and fourth-year women had to live on campus.

The problems were several. First, both of the new buildings—Pierce and Woodward—had been designed with many small, undersized rooms that, when deployed as doubles, quickly became seriously overcrowded. This fact was brought home to Provost Edward Levi when Eugene Rostow, dean of Yale Law School, wrote to him about his son's experiences in Pierce Tower: "My son was housed in a well-designed modern dormitory at Chicago, Pierce Tower, which I regard as an educational abomination. He and a roommate shared a room about the size of my Yale bedroom, or a steerage stateroom on an old Cunard liner. They were

144. Alan Simpson to J. P. Netherton, March 3, 1961, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

expected to sleep, study and entertain in that room. Of course, they couldn't."<sup>145</sup> Second, housing staff struggled to manage a system in which graduate and professional schools also laid claim to key on-campus resources, thus shrinking other residential options for the College at the same time that Pierce and Woodward were brought on line and undergraduate enrollments continued to grow. In April 1963 the *Chicago Maroon* published a negative evaluation of the decision to close down the women's dorms in the C Group. Behind the scenes, the article prompted a stunningly candid assessment from Mary Alice Newman, another College administrator (and the spouse of James Newman). In May 1963 she wrote to Warner Wick, University dean of students:

The *Maroon* (for once) has accurately delineated the seeming irrationality of current decisions with regard to housing: the abandonment of the C Group as a residence without adequate replacement, the decision to use Harper Surf for women, the dining room changes of the last year. All of these decisions bespeak a pragmatic, expedient, ill-thought-out business rather than decisions made in a rational way for purposes of educational policy. As one of the original proponents of a "residential college" I presumed that it would be supported by a minimum standard of living of the kind to make residential living preferable to independent living. However, three years later not only have positive gains not materialized, but we have actually lost ground.<sup>146</sup>

Wick in turn forwarded Newman's letter to the Central Administration,

145. Rostow to Levi, December 20, 1965, box 16, folder 5, Walter Blum Papers.

146. Newman to Wick, May 1, 1963, box 73, folder 7, Beadle Administration.

adding his own caustic commentary: "We are in trouble, chiefly because of the decisions made long ago, but whose consequences were hard to anticipate in their full strength. Mary Alice exaggerates only slightly, and you should be aware of the sour atmosphere... In any case, we are not competitive with the colleges we like to think of ourselves as competing with. Talk of our 'residential college' is a big laugh, and the world is hearing about it."<sup>147</sup> Frustrated staff members, asked to deal with angry parents of young women who were assigned to the Harper Surf building at 54th Street and Harper Avenue, vented their discontent as well: James W. Sheldon Jr., a young staff member, wrote to George Beadle that "if this is the best housing that we can provide for a female, junior undergraduate, it looks as though our claim to being a 'resident college' is no longer true. If we can't do any better, maybe we should completely eliminate the co-educational feature of the College, as we certainly won't attract many of the kinds of girls we want with this type of housing offering."<sup>148</sup>

Even junior faculty members became concerned. Robert Haselkorn, a young associate professor in Biophysics and Chemistry who had degrees from Princeton and Harvard, complained to Edward Levi about the conditions in Woodward Court: "I was surprised to learn that nearly all the residents were freshmen, and that the few second year students would certainly be off-campus next year. Lack of popularity of the dormitory was attributed to the rooms primarily, with no mention made of the parietal rules. In response to detailed questions about the rooms, I was invited to visit them. Compared to my undergraduate and graduate housing, they were terrible."<sup>149</sup>

147. Wick to Beadle et al., May 2, 1963, box 73, folder 7, Beadle Administration.

148. Sheldon to Beadle et al., May 1, 1963, box 73, folder 7, Beadle Administration.

149. Haselkorn to Levi, October 5, 1966, box 132, folder 1, Beadle Administration.

Among the most agitated was University Dean of Students Warner Wick himself, who became increasingly frustrated over the gap between the University's lofty goal of a fully residential college and the disoriented realities that he was forced to administer. Wick was convinced that the high dropout rate that afflicted the College's student body was linked directly to the "failure of so many students to become identified with the community," and this in turn was deeply connected to the College's poor residential facilities.<sup>150</sup> In an unusually harsh memo, he complained in February 1964 that

the "residential college" we spoke of so proudly five years ago has become a rather bitter joke. During the intervening years we have taken six humanely designed houses for women out of circulation (Gates, Blake, Foster, Kelly, Green, and Beecher). In their places we have substituted Blackstone Hall and the Harper Surf. Unless we evict graduate students from the buildings they now inhabit, despite our promises to the Law School and to Jerry Brauer [of the Divinity School], we cannot now house even two of the four undergraduate classes in dormitories. We have been forced to pretend that the privilege of "living out" is an exception to the rule,

150. Wick to Beadle, Levi, and James J. Ritterskamp Jr., July 26, 1965, box 15, folder 4, Blum Papers. Later in the same year Wick argued: "It is shocking that a college known to be 'most selective', and that draws more than half of its students from the top five per cent of their high school classes, should be able to graduate barely 57 percent of an entering class after five years; and it is especially shocking to discover that the drop-outs are as able, according to all objective tests for ability, as those who stick it out. The conclusion is inescapable that something must be wrong with our [university] society." Warner A. Wick, "Reasons for Higher Quality in the University Houses," December 20, 1965, 3, box 16, folder 5, Beadle Administration.

permitted only by petition. But if the vast majority of upper-class students did not petition to live out, we would be in trouble. In short, we can get by only because a sufficient number of students would rather be tenants of Bernie Wayne or of 6106 Ellis than live in the house system, and this situation subverts everything I think we stand for. Can we move this problem off dead-center?<sup>151</sup>

In response to these concerns and in an effort to gain control over the inchoate process of student residential development that had marked the later 1950s and early 1960s, Provost Edward Levi commissioned a major faculty report in 1964 to chart the future of the housing system. As an alumnus of the College Levi had a clear understanding of its educational mission. During the later 1960s, he often used dorms as venues to meet students and engage in personal conversations with them. Students seem to appreciate his candor and courage in doing so, and one student leader wrote in 1968, "As you may, or may not, be aware, it is rather difficult to reach past the red-tape and frowns of secretaries to talk with you or Mr. O'Connell or Mr. Booth. And many students stand in a certain amount of awe of your positions, and are too shy to make an attempt at all [to meet with Levi]. For this reason, your excursion 'into the field' was quite valuable, and helped to restore the image of Administration accessibility to the student at-large."<sup>152</sup> Levi was also proud of the long-standing social and economic diversity of the College which, as we have seen, marked our enrollment demographics from the earliest days of the University,

151. Wick to Beadle et al., February 24, 1964, box 131, folder 11, Beadle Administration.

152. Leo Moldaver to Levi, October 22, 1968, box 131, folder 11, Beadle Administration.

and he noted proudly in the submission that he prepared for the Ford Foundation in 1965 that "Chicago has many more children from families with incomes of \$7,500 or less than are indicated on the samples from the "High Quality Private [Colleges]" and "Ultra Ivy [Colleges] and many less from families of \$15,000 or more."<sup>153</sup>

The faculty committee appointed by Edward Levi was chaired by Law professor Walter J. Blum, an avuncular campus loyalist given to telling the truth to the American people in no-nonsense language. Blum's committee deliberated from September 1964 to May 1965, soliciting a wide variety of opinions from faculty, students, and administrative staff. The final report forcefully argued in favor of the construction of new student housing on campus—focusing especially on the land between 55th and 56th Streets between Ingleside and Cottage Grove Avenues to create a student village for unmarried and married students and including athletic facilities and space for shops and commercial services. Blum also supported the construction of a second, better-designed tower on the Pierce site. Instead of a bevy of small double rooms, Blum argued that each two-story house in the new tower should have about forty-five single rooms, together with ten suites designed for two students each. Blum also noted the possibility of expanding Burton Judson Courts on the South Campus, and he emphasized the importance of high-quality construction: "It is of the utmost importance that the University at least keep pace with the quality of housing for unmarried students which has been (and is being) built at other schools of the highest quality... Unfortunately, the last two residences built by the University—Pierce Tower and Woodward Court—suffer badly in

153. Ford Foundation submission, 1965, box 271, folder 1, Beadle Administration.

comparison with housing built by other schools with which the University competes for students."<sup>154</sup>

In transmitting the final version of the report, Blum insisted that

it is, of course possible to meet an increase in demand for housing by a number of "temporary" or "emergency" steps. Apartment hotels in the neighborhood could be converted into residence halls; or students could be housed in small groups in flat buildings; or conceivably special permission could be obtained to throw up "pre-fabs" around the campus once again. These expedients would be most unsatisfactory. One of the great needs of the College is to attract and hold undergraduate students who have the qualifications demanded by the academic program which is being developed. Almost all of the schools with which the College competes for students are now in a position to offer attractive housing. It stands to reason that the pulling power of the College is bound to suffer if, during the next few critical years, entrants can look forward to nothing better than make-shift sleeping quarters on the fringes of campus or beyond... It must be recognized that in recent years the University has failed to develop a way of life which is congenial to a large segment of the undergraduate population... The University, if it is to achieve its aspirations, must create the supportive facilities and the atmosphere in which a wide variety of students can feel comfortable, develop sustaining associations, and "settle down" while undertaking their studies. Housing conditions, needless to say, can play a vital role in this respect. Properly

154. *Report of the Faculty Advisory Committee on Student Residences and Facilities*, May 1965, 3–4, box 16, folder 1, Blum Papers.

planned residence units can contribute much to the orderly and sound maturation of students; poor residence units are most likely to be a serious detriment.<sup>155</sup>

Much like Ernest D. Burton's bold Dream of the Colleges scheme in the 1920s, Walter Blum believed that his conception of a new student village filled with graduate and undergraduate housing would engender greater sociability and community among the students and help to break down the bleakness of the campus, insisting that "housing for unmarried students [should] be located so as to produce flows of student traffic through the campus, including the evening hours. The campus should be rescued from being a ghost town after sunset. Appearances often generate reality and a campus with students walking back and forth throughout the day and evening will assist in developing a livelier student community."<sup>156</sup>

In thanking Walter Blum for his report, President George Beadle acknowledged the force of Blum's arguments: "Despite the rather frightening costs involved, I fully agree we must move ahead as rapidly as possible in building high quality dorms and doing the other things that must be done. The only consolation I know for being so far behind is that we *ought* to be able to do much better today than we could have several years ago."<sup>157</sup> Blum's proposals were also warmly endorsed by College administrators, who hoped that action would be taken to implement them. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. In 1966 the

155. Blum to Levi, Memorandum of Transmission, June 1, 1965, box 16, folder 6, Blum Papers.

156. *Report of the Faculty Advisory Committee on Student Residences and Facilities*, May 1965, 4, box 16, folder 1, Blum Papers.

157. Beadle to Blum, June 14, 1965, box 15, folder 4, Blum Papers.

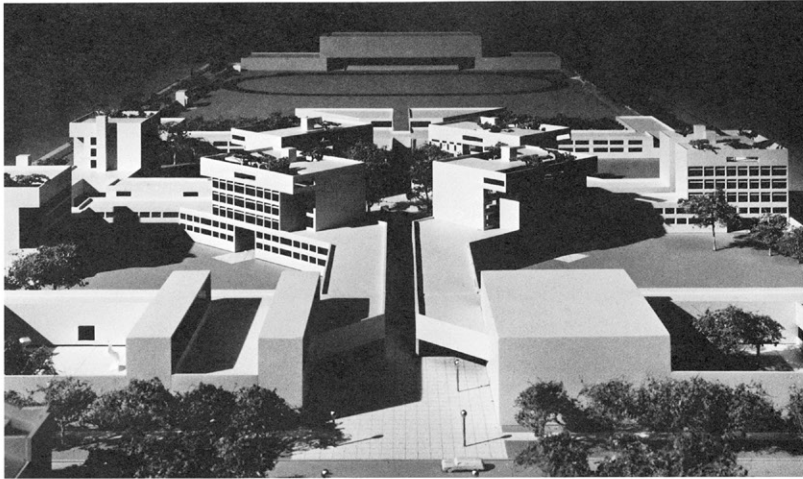
University engaged Edward Larrabee Barnes to develop the student village plan. In 1967 the University proudly announced a plan for a student complex, now called "the North Quadrangle," for a total cost of \$23.8 million. It included housing for nine hundred students in a student village; art, music, and drama buildings; and an athletics center with a swimming pool.<sup>158</sup>

Like the fate of the Burton-Woodward initiatives of the late 1920s for a new South Campus residential plan, the Blum Committee's bold vision of the mid-1960s for a new North Campus residential plan was soon swallowed up by a combination of other urgent needs, budget crises, and planning inertia. The years that followed Blum's plan saw the University move to implement major initiatives to construct new research buildings and to build a magnificent new research library, but new student housing never materialized.<sup>159</sup> The divisive political and cultural turmoil of the 1969 sit-in that rocked our campus resulted in the College being asked to reduce undergraduate admissions by one-third in the fall of 1969, thus further delaying efforts to rebuild the size of the College's student population. Instead of expanding, the College again began to

158. See "The North Quadrangle," *University of Chicago Magazine*, November 1967, 2–9. Barnes's final proposals met with some opposition from the student body, since they increased the number of double rooms substantially and reduced the number of suites. Students also objected to the fact that the complex was to be isolated by a wall.

159. Blum informed the members of his committee that the plans for a student village had met with the fact that "the Administration had just about decided to change the assumptions on which planning for the New Area was to rest. Specifically, the Administration was moving in the direction of including within the New Area a music building[,] a fine arts building, and a repertory theater and drama building. To accommodate such structures the amount of student housing in the Area would be reduced." Blum to members of the committee, March 4, 1966, box 16, folder 5, Blum Papers.



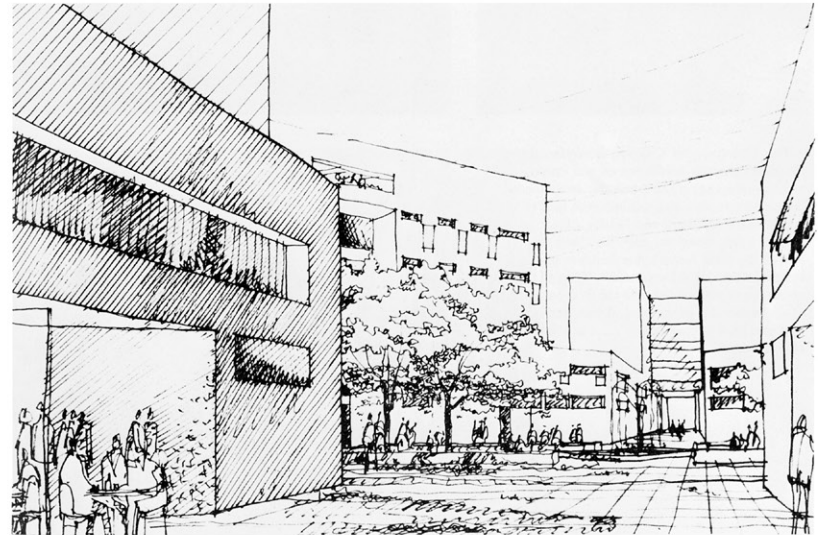


Student Village  
John Siefert

Will the Student Village be a myth or reality? With the location selected between 55th and 56th, Cottage Grove and University Ave., architectural design nearly completed, the job left for the University is to find donors for its \$24,000,000 enterprise.

The Student Village will consist of an athletic complex — gymnasium, fields, swimming pool, track and tennis courts; a Center for the Arts — theater, music, art; and housing units included dining, recreation and study facilities. Also surrounding the old-style courtyard will be a bookstore, snack bar, and post office.

The residence halls will accommodate approximately 900 students. There will be nine undergraduate towers: four overlooking the central courtyard, two on 56th and one on 55th. The graduate students will be housed in townhouses: two facing the new Stagg Field and eight bordering the courtyard.



shrink, and this fact, together with the miserable state of the University budget throughout the 1970s (a sad, semi-parallel to the 1930s), led the University to ignore the major thrust of the Blum Report. Instead of relaunching a coordinated plan to build new campus housing, the University continued to acquire and convert older properties in the neighborhood for student housing—in part because financial circumstances made unfeasible a systematic investment in new residence halls of the scale that Blum outlined, in part because of the perceived need to stabilize our environs—which essentially meant that we were using undergraduates to help protect the neighborhood (i.e., the acquisition of Broadview Hall in 1967; George Williams College in 1966; Max Mason Hall in 1961; the Eleanor Club in 1967; and, most importantly, Shoreland Hall in 1975).<sup>160</sup>

In fact, this “neighborhood strategy” was less a consistent strategy than a series of ad hoc attempts to stay ahead of student demand by incrementally purchasing old buildings that had fallen upon hard times and converting them to student use.<sup>161</sup> Often the pressure to buy and

160. The University also acquired the Piccadilly Hotel for married student housing.

161. The idea of using rooms in the Shoreland seems to have first emerged in 1966, having been recommended by the University’s manager of commercial real estate, Winston Kennedy. See “Minutes of the Administrative Campus Facilities Planning Committee,” May 24, 1966, box 16, folder 5, Blum Papers. The purchase of the Broadview Hotel was also discussed at this meeting. A subsequent survey of planning at the University explicitly connected the neighborhood stabilization strategy with the logic of College residential needs: “The University had stepped into the Hyde Park real estate market to purchase several properties that were not receiving adequate care and management and were therefore beginning to create concern among neighbors in the community as they began to deteriorate. One of the properties purchased, the Shoreland Hotel, soon filled an urgent need for additional student housing.”

convert these old buildings came from the same colleagues who were also advocating new housing, as an expression of their supreme frustrations at their lack of plausible short-term alternatives.<sup>162</sup> In recommending to the Board of Trustees that the University undertake a major renovation of the Shoreland Hotel in 1977, Vice President for Business and Finance William B. Cannon acknowledged University Dean of Students Charles O’Connell’s reservations to the effect that “the Vice President and Dean of Students believes that a new residence hall in a main campus location would have distinct advantages—out-of-the-classroom education, easy interchange with faculty and other students, etc.—over other alternatives.”<sup>163</sup> But Cannon also noted that the cost of building a new residence hall would be at least twice, and perhaps three times, as

Calvert W. Audrain, William B. Cannon, and Harold T. Wolff, “A Review of Planning at the University of Chicago, 1891–1978,” *University of Chicago Record* 12, no. 4 (April 28, 1978): 75.

162. This was clearly the case presented by Warner Wick. In February 1966 he wrote to James Ritterskamp, the vice president for administration, to urge that the University buy the Eleanor Club “in time for Autumn 1966.” Wick confessed that “we will need to rely on makeshift housing for a good many years to come, with little chance of any new construction being ready before 1968. The Eleanor Club is an ideal ‘permanent makeshift’, especially for women, where our need for decent space is most acute.” In the same memo, Wick told Ritterskamp that he would not allow first-year students “to be assigned to the George Williams building as Winston Kennedy has proposed,” since Wick insisted that the latter building, located as it was near 53rd Street, could not be regarded as an “on-campus” University dorm. Wick to Ritterskamp, February 8, 1966, box 16, folder 5, Blum Papers.

163. “Background—Shoreland Hall Renovation,” July 18, 1977, 8, box 77, folder 1, Wilson Administration. Shoreland became a particularly attractive option after the University sold the old building formerly occupied by George Williams College, which had been renamed Boucher Hall and used as temporary dormitory space in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

much as the cost of renovating Shoreland, and, citing the variable of "neighborhood benefit," Cannon insisted that "with respect to the beneficial impact, the judgment is that the Shoreland clearly outranks all other alternatives in the context of the University's economic situation and of the present neighborhood housing situation."<sup>164</sup>

Over the decades, these "beneficial impact" property acquisitions left us with the challenge of coping with the major foibles of older buildings that were, not surprisingly, in need of substantial capital investments. We were also forced to bus students between several of these halls and the central campus, a practice conducive neither to creating a strong sense of on-campus community nor to providing a critical mass of students on the central campus on weekends and evenings that would help dispel the perception of its being a ghost town after 5 p.m. In a 1969 report Henry Field observed about the University housing policy in the late 1960s that "while the University has several dormitories, it has not developed anything like the system of residential facilities that has characterized many similar institutions and which many consider to be an important component of the intellectual and cultural traditions fostered by those other institutions. The most striking single change in student housing is the increase in the University's portfolio of apartment buildings purchased in the neighborhood."<sup>165</sup>

The years after 1970 did see strong and lasting improvements in the organization and management of the existing residential system. The sit-in of January 1969 focused attention on the growing gap between

164. "Background—Shoreland Hall Renovation," July 18, 1977, 5, 7, box 77, folder 1, Wilson Administration.

165. Henry Field, "Student Housing History," *University of Chicago Record* 3, no. 1 (January 29, 1969): 5.

faculty and student cultures on our campus, and sensible leaders at the University looked for ways to strengthen the role of faculty in the operations of the residential system as one plausible way of confronting this problem. Under the leadership of Edward Turkington, the director of Student Housing since 1966, the University created the institution of faculty resident masters, who have provided strong and effective leadership for our larger residence halls.<sup>166</sup> Turkington also argued for expanding the resources accorded to the resident heads of each house by providing them with well-furnished apartments with kitchens and private baths, as well as other material support that would encourage multiyear service and thus lead to greater staff stability.<sup>167</sup> The extraordinary dedication of resident masters (e.g., Isaac and Mary Ann Abella at Shoreland Hall; Izaak and Pera Wirszup at Woodward Court) revealed the enormously positive impact that senior faculty and senior staff families could have on anchoring the residential system. We are extremely grateful for their dedication. Owing to the addition of various neighborhood buildings, which did give us additional capacity, and the still relatively small size of the College's population in the 1970s and 1980s, the College did become strongly residential, with almost 70 percent of our students living in our own residential system by the mid-1980s (a figure which then slowly declined as the College continued to grow in

166. Turkington's proposal specifically invoked the masters of the Harvard house system as a model. See Edward Turkington to Charles D. O'Connell, March 3, 1969, College Archive of the University of Chicago. Woodward and Pierce both received a substantial infusion of money to create capacious apartments for the new masters, with \$137,000 spent on Woodward and \$158,000 on Pierce. See Naphtali H. Knox to Walter V. Leen, October 9, 1969, box 72, folder 4, Levi Administration.

167. Edward Turkington to Charles D. O'Connell, March 5, 1969, College Archive of the University of Chicago.





*Pera and Izaak Wirszup, Woodward Court, 1980*



*Mary Ann and Isaac Abella, 1988*

size after 1987).<sup>168</sup> The University House System—now encompassing thirty-eight houses of approximately eighty College students each—has also become an extremely effective sponsor of vibrant micro-communities on our campus and is one of the most successful anchor points of loyalty and affection of current students and recent alumni.

Still, subsequent administrative leaders and committees who administered and reviewed the University's housing policies never totally abandoned the importance of the centralized and coordinated on-campus housing that was embedded in the Blum Report. This became clear in 1976 when Charles D. O'Connell, University dean of students, ferociously defended the College's housing system against a proposal to convert part of Burton Judson Courts into office space for the Law School. O'Connell wrote to Norval R. Morris, dean of the Law School, that

I would be wrong, I think, to oppose these projects one by one on the grounds of what each particular step would involve in the way of losses to the House system, although obviously the physical losses themselves would be significant. Instead, I have to make it clear that I oppose not only the individual steps but the entire idea. And I shall be glad to elaborate on my reasons. Let me say for now only that the University (and the Law School) continue to face a major problem in attracting students. A major part of this problem is the perception that prospective students have about the neighborhood and about the amenities that the University offers to its students outside the classroom. If we are to overcome this problem

168. The University also responded to complaints about Woodward and Pierce by un-doubling 123 rooms in the fall of 1969 and an additional number in 1970. See "Minutes of the Committee on Campus Planning," May 13, 1969, box 72, folder 9, Levi Administration.

a strong, attractive House System is essential. The University indeed must improve its current housing facilities, especially those for single graduate students, and eventually replace some of the more dilapidated structures. Yet the Law School's proposal goes directly counter to this need. It proposes to take away facilities from what may well be the best and most successful set of Houses in our system. I think this is very short-sighted. The success of the House System in recent years has resulted largely from the faculty and staff we have in the Houses—the Masters and Resident Heads. We have succeeded in spite of and not because of our facilities. I hope that we learned a lesson after the conversion of Kelly, Green, and Foster Halls; Gates-Blake; and the almost but not quite successful effort to turn Snell-Hitchcock into classrooms and offices when the state of that unit became so deplorable that it had to be renovated. A healthy vitality goes out of campus life when we move student residences off the central Quadrangles to the edges of the community, even though that has sometimes worked better than we dreamed it would. The trend would have been accelerated, if we had lost Snell-Hitchcock. Campus life and our ability to attract students will be dealt a severe blow if we permit what is a central and perhaps our most attractive residence hall, Burton-Judson, to be eroded and eventually reduced substantially in size. I sympathize with the problems of the Law School. I think that it must solve them in some other way.<sup>169</sup>

169. O'Connell to Morris, March 22, 1976, box 23, folder 10, Wilson Administration. President Wilson added his two cents, writing to Morris that, "at a time when the University is attempting to build up its undergraduate and graduate student population, I find the notion of converting one of the primary student facilities into office space counter-productive in the extreme." Wilson to Morris, March 31, 1976, box 23, folder 10, Wilson Administration.

In November 1983 a faculty committee chaired by Lloyd Rudolph reviewed the range of University housing policies and recommended greater campus consolidation and a greater proportion of students living in quadrangle residence halls: "In our view, the long-term interests of the University and the neighborhood are best served if we adopt the principle of campus consolidation" and "we believe that it is advisable to accommodate undergraduates who choose to live in University housing in residence halls located in the campus area and to increase the proportion living in the Quadrangles." The committee also argued that "our deliberations have led us to favor the principle of consolidating student campus residence on or near the main campus. When *ceteris paribus* choices are made between investments on- or off-campus, we recommend on-campus decisions" and further urged that the impending capital campaign to celebrate the University's centenary in 1992 "include a proposal to fund the creation of a Quadrangles residence hall."<sup>170</sup>

The University commissioned yet another report in 1997, this one prepared by a committee of faculty and senior staff chaired by Vice President Arthur M. Sussman. This committee recommended that the University repudiate the neighborhood strategy and, explicitly acknowledging its debt to the Blum Report, urged that the University add one thousand new beds by constructing residence halls on campus. Since the committee assumed that Woodward Court would still remain in service, it also explicitly argued that the University should make an effort to take the residential level of the College to 72 percent of all matriculating students.<sup>171</sup>

170. Lloyd Rudolph et al., *Report of the Faculty Committee on Student Housing*, November 1983, 20–21, 24, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

171. "This committee has reached conclusions concerning undergraduate housing and life that are remarkably similar to those of Professor Blum and his colleagues." Arthur M. Sussman et al., *Report on Undergraduate Student Housing*, April 1997, 2–3, 37, College Archive of the University of Chicago.



The Sussman inquiry was followed four years later by a further investigation of student housing by another faculty committee, this one chaired by Richard Taub. The Taub Committee also endorsed Sussman’s recommendation that new residence halls be built on or near campus: “The current wide dispersal is perceived to undermine efforts to strengthen the university community as a community and to militate against participation in the growing and rich array of centralized non-academic student programming symbolized by developments in the Reynolds Club and the proposed conversion of Bartlett into a student center.”<sup>172</sup>

These reports were valuable, but the University had not yet resolved the fundamental dilemma that Barry D. Karl in 2001 shrewdly (and soberly) characterized in an essay on John D. Rockefeller. Karl commented on the “basic defects” of the University to develop a vibrant community of alumni supporters of the early University, in large part because of the University’s historic failure to develop strong residential life communities for undergraduates on our campus:

Rockefeller did not want a University dependent on him and his name for fear that it would not attract that local support he felt necessary. From the perspective of his business practices, that meant that Harper and conceivably his successors would continue

172. Richard Taub et al., *Report of the Committee on the Future of the University House System*, June 27, 1997, 5–6, College Archive of the University of Chicago. Herman Sinaiko, who was a member of this committee, argued explicitly: “Given our present housing stock—scattered all over the neighborhood and largely acquired piecemeal and for reasons extraneous to our College housing needs—why not develop a long term plan/policy to gradually get rid of those outlying properties and move the bulk of our undergrads back either onto campus or much closer to it.”

to come to the Rockefellers for support. When Rockefeller finally cut the University’s endowment out of his support and that of all of his family thereafter, it was the failure of the University to create a Chicago community that would follow that of other universities. Students would come to the institution, earn its degrees, serve on future development committees and in time become donors. What both he and Harper failed to foresee, apparently, was that the University would be a streetcar college for many years, its small number of dormitories home to a minority of its student body. Even today, built into the University of Chicago’s basic defects is the failure of the University to develop that pattern, something each president has struggled with but with what could at best be considered very limited success. It may be worth noting that the career of the University’s most recent administration was brought under attack over the battle such effort of community creation generated in its faculty and its alumni as well.<sup>173</sup>

The “streetcar” nature of the College also bolstered the distorted image of the University as an on-campus community having primarily a graduate student clientele. This myth—which has had (and unfortunately continues to have) a remarkable resilience in the face of dubious evidence and conflicting facts—was given constant new life by having the undergraduate population of the University disappear each evening

173. Barry D. Karl, “The Rockefeller Method,” unpublished essay, 2001, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

and on weekends from the campus community.<sup>174</sup> Another way to put this observation is to imagine how the historical self-conception of the University would have evolved if most graduate students had been as disbursed across the metropolitan area as were the undergraduates.

The complex debates that informed the residential issue on our campus often circled around the challenges first posed by William E. Dodd in the late 1920s. Dodd feared that a "Harkness across the Midway" would create a College filled with affluent slackers who would undermine the research mission of the University.<sup>175</sup> Given Dodd's strong Jeffersonian roots and his deep hatred for the social prestige that attached to any kind of aristocracy, his anxieties were as much personal as professional.<sup>176</sup> Dodd believed strongly that an investment in College residential

174. Before World War II the University had a relatively large undergraduate College and a smaller graduate student population. In Autumn Quarter 1929, for example, the University enrolled 2,970 undergraduates as opposed to 1,513 graduate students in the arts and sciences. Owing to the collapse of the College's enrollments after World War II, the image of a "substantially larger" graduate population gained currency in the 1960s and 1970s. Nowadays this descriptor is quite flawed, if one compares the population of College students (4,894) to that of the arts and sciences doctoral graduate students in their first four years of residence (1,595). Both data points coming from Autumn Quarter 2007. Moreover, if one compares the number of College students needing classroom instruction with that of the arts and sciences graduate student population (including terminal MA programs) also involved in for-credit courses, the ratio is even more striking: approximately 80 percent of all the students in the arts and sciences on the quadrangles at any given time who need to be taught in classroom based courses are College students. College Archive of the University of Chicago.

175. See Dodd to Merriam, July 27, 1928, box 31, Dodd Papers, Library of Congress; and Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics*, 160.

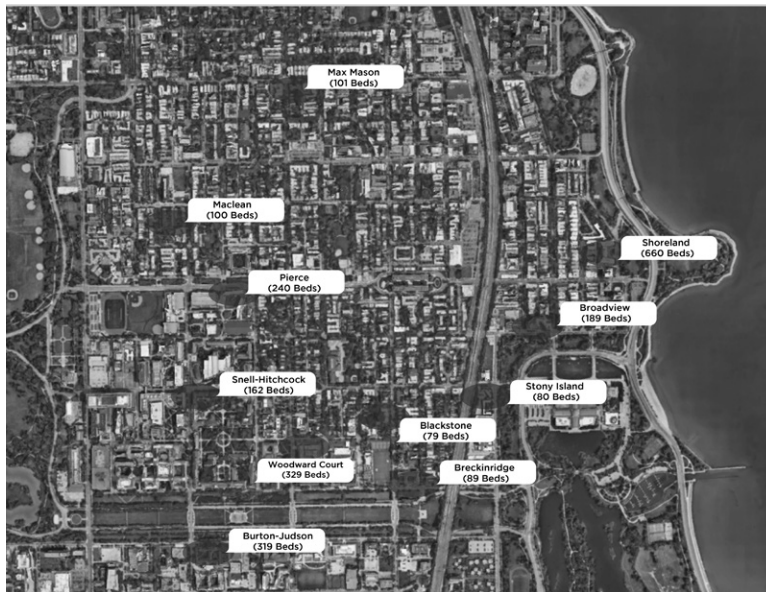
176. "Dodd worked from a powerful intellectual model that was rooted in the class assumptions of his impoverished southern youth and had flourished

halls was antithetical to the best interests of the wider University, even though, ironically, the great majority of our College students did not come from privileged social backgrounds.<sup>177</sup> After 1945 such formal or ideological opposition to the construction of new residence halls as a part of a broader dissent against investments in the work of the College was less evident. But faced with competing priorities, the University was never able to assemble the resources to implement an aggressive on-campus residential strategy for the College that was called for by so many different faculty colleagues and committees.

The subsequent history of the University's undergraduate student body proved that William Dodd's concerns were both misplaced and wrongheaded. The history of the College after 1930 was in fact defined by our success in recruiting smart, disciplined, and academically serious undergraduate students who bring great credit to the University, and the profound concerns voiced by men like William Bradbury in the early 1950s reflected their belief that serious academic students needed a strong residential system to be able to flourish. Reacting to fears that a stronger residential system would encourage too much "college spirit" on the part of our students and that it "would sap our high devotion to the works of the mind," Dean of the College Alan Simpson responded in 1960: "I can only say that this fear argues a curious lack of confidence in the Chicago traditions and a melancholy ignorance of the better

during his turbulent career as a historian and a political activist. His intense class consciousness guided his diplomatic behavior, for the democratic pronouncements of this respected intellectual masked a profound bitterness towards those elite groups whose interests conflicted with the rights of the masses." Bailey, *William Edward Dodd*, 142.

177. This made the subsequent decision of the University to name one of the houses in Burton Judson Courts in honor of William Dodd delightfully ironic.



Chicago Housing Nodes 1992

possibilities of community living. The imagination of some of the critics, when they contemplate a residential college, seems to rise no higher than the halls of old Podunk.<sup>178</sup> The Rudolph Committee reaffirmed this argument in the 1980s, when they insisted: “Our concept of residence goes beyond the utilitarian meaning of housing to address the quality of campus life. The well-being that a satisfactory quality of life engenders is an essential component of effective higher education and of the University’s standing and competitive edge.”<sup>179</sup> In a sense, William Dodd got things backward: rather than dorms attracting lazy students and making

178. Alan Simpson, “A Comment on the Residential Policy by the Dean of the College,” September 16, 1960, 2, College Archive of the University of Chicago.

179. *Report of the Faculty Committee on Student Housing*, 1984, 2, College Archive of the University of Chicago.



Chicago Housing Nodes 2023

them lazier, the College attracted smart students who would have profited enormously from the social and cultural support of a coherent and comprehensive residential system.

From a pragmatic perspective, William Dodd’s challenge might also be answered with a competitive, market-oriented response, to the effect that nowadays parents and students expect high-quality residential resources and any university that fails to provide these resources will not be fully competitive in the new century. But a better and wiser response would return us to Frederic Woodward’s notion that to be fully successful in its mission as an educational community the University needs to encourage strong patterns of friendship, sociability, and intellectual collaboration among our College students and to do so in the context of residential communities. Such a response recalls the sentiment often

mentioned by faculty in the 1950s and 1960s that a College with a highly demanding curriculum needs to create supportive social structures outside the classroom so as to enable students to profit from the rigorous educational programs of the institution and to encounter and come to know fellow students of many different perspectives, backgrounds, and values. It also confirms the arguments of our own colleague Bertram J. Cohler who, in an important study of the psychological and emotional advantages of an effective university residential system, argued in 1993 that "it is time to reconsider the traditional tension between classroom and residence and to more effectively integrate the college residence within the milieu of the college as a whole. This more effective integration promises increased value of the undergraduate education and increased effectiveness of the college in realizing its mission of fostering personal and intellectual development across the college years. If the most significant learning takes place outside the classroom, as the study of higher education has suggested, then it is time to take advantage of the milieu as a whole in order to foster student development."<sup>180</sup>

180. Bertram J. Cohler and Susan E. Taber, "Residential College as Milieu: Person and Environment in the Transition to Young Adulthood," *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth* 10, no. 3 (1993): 69–110.

TO THE PRESENT,  
1996–2023

**B**eginning in the mid-1990s, massive change in the University's approaches to residential life slowly began to happen as a result of a larger determination that the size of the College was far too small for the larger welfare of the University as a whole. In 1996 President Hugo Sonnenschein set as an initial goal the expansion of the College by one thousand additional students (to 4,500), but College leaders then argued Sonnenschein's goals were in fact too modest and that over the long run the College should assume a size similar to our leading peers like Stanford, Harvard, and Columbia. This meant that the final goal of the expansion would be a College of approximately seven thousand students. This decision then overdetermined all others, and had profound consequences, enabling the leaders of the College to take up and intensify the all-too justified refrains of the critics of the past, namely, that the existing housing system was wholly inadequate, indeed embarrassing, and not worthy of a great university college. Ramshackle old buildings strung together with a few poorly designed and badly constructed new buildings (Pierce Tower, 1960) did not create a vibrant, community-enriching whole, the kind of whole that President Ernest Burton had wanted our University to create as early as 1925. College leaders now believed that a more strongly residential campus would be a significant asset for the University. It would encourage deeper and more supportive cultural and intellectual communities among our students; it would reinforce the excellent educational work of the faculty, but do so in more informal settings outside of the classroom; in the long run, it would encourage still greater satisfaction among our alumni based on their positive experiences when they



were at the University; and, perhaps most important, lacking such facilities the larger strategic expansion of the College was bound to fail, with severe consequences for the long-term welfare of the University as a whole. This meant that it would be a serious mistake to continue the piecemeal decisions of the past. Instead, we needed a coherent vision of high-quality collegiate housing located on our campus.

Such a policy had several consequences. First, we needed to sell or otherwise dispose of most of the existing older structures (with the exception of Burton Judson and Snell-Hitchcock) and to construct at least four new residence complexes on our campus with a total capacity of approximately three thousand new beds. These halls had to be of high-quality construction, worthy of joining the other classic buildings that enhance the beauty of our campus. Second, this strategy meant that it was critical that we not return to our former practice of buying old buildings in the neighborhood. The system of disbursed housing using old buildings was developed helter-skelter, showing no logic other than the fact that it reflected the routes of through streets that accommodated the large ugly buses that plagued our neighborhood. Third, it was extremely important to create capacious, well-planned dining facilities for the new residential complexes, given the tradition of house tables and the potential of dining venues to empower and fortify cohesive community formations.

The breakthrough came in 1998 with a decision by the trustees to build the major new residential complex adjacent Regenstein Library that opened in 2001. This new residential commons was followed in 2010 by a second large complex on the South Campus, adjoining the Law School and Burton Judson Courts, and by a third complex in 2016 replacing the old Pierce Tower on the North Campus. The latter cluster of buildings, designed by Jeanne Gang, not only proved to be stunningly



*View of Campus North Residential Commons from the Northeast.*

beautiful in and of themselves, but enabled the creation of a new quadrangle framed by the Henry Crown Field House, the Smart Museum of Art, the Department of Art History, and the Campus North Residential Commons, along with new French-style birch-tree gardens and seating areas. Via the generosity of the Crown family, we installed new windows and façade lighting in the field house, restoring that venerable building to the quiet dignity that it enjoyed when it first opened.

Additionally, International House, which was struggling to maintain graduate residents and was under severe financial constraints, was converted into a fourth dedicated College residential facility with three houses, along with tens of millions of dollars of needed mechanical and structural upgrades. Most recently, the University has opened a fifth new residential complex, Woodlawn Residential Commons, on 61st and Woodlawn, which housed an additional 1,254 students beginning in the



fall of 2020, plus twenty-two spaces for undergraduate resident assistants. This building was the University's first foray into working with a private developer, a relationship that has so far proven to be a successful approach to financing large-scale communities.

These interventions have made it possible to house slightly over 60 percent of current College students in our new housing system. The decision of the University to move forward with the construction of at least one more major residential facility, currently slated to start construction in 2024 and to house approximately 1,200 students by 2027, will enable the College to reach its long-term goal of providing high quality, on-campus housing to no less than 75 percent of our students.

The system of housing and residential life is now foundational to our vision of student support and academic development. Since the mid-1990s College leaders have placed this system at the center of efforts to foster solidarity, affinity, and cohesion within class cohorts and support for current students, beginning at the point of matriculation and continuing through graduation. Houses are sites for academic and personal development, where students form intellectual and social bonds, build their scholarly confidence and test new ideas, and consider ways to apply their education to the world beyond campus. The work of resident deans, senior faculty and their families who reside in and encourage the residential life of a hall, generally comprised of four to five houses, has been critical to this vision since the 1960s, but the re-centering of the housing system on campus has greatly expanded the opportunities for the integration of academic and residential life. Resident deans have continued to welcome students into their homes and foster community through creative programming, but now, in close proximity to the University's distinguished faculty, libraries, and campus activities, they can sponsor more dynamic connections between faculty, the student body, and the resources of the city.

In recent years the College has implemented several initiatives to capitalize on the diverse benefits of a campus-based residential system. Common spaces in the halls and the apartments of resident deans regularly host a wide range of activities to create informal access to features of campus life, from faculty research talks and roundtables to academic informational sessions, career and fellowship advising, and arts programming. Since 2017 houses and resident deans have played a critical role in the University Convocation Exercises by way of the College diploma-distribution ceremonies. Where the diploma ceremony had previously taken place as one event in the Main Quad, the new system created several smaller, concurrent ceremonies organized by residence hall and presided over by resident deans. This more intimate format has allowed our graduating students to celebrate their achievement with the same community that welcomed them into the College and to be recognized in an affectionate way by the University officials and staff who know them best. The residence halls in this way have become immediate points of contact as our undergraduate students become our newest alumni.

Essentially, all of this activity over the last twenty years has allowed the University to recapitalize its undergraduate residential system, creating contemporary student-centered facilities that have transformed undergraduate student life and thus achieved and modernized the vision that Ernest Burton first articulated in 1925. The scale of these investments has been massive and unprecedented in the Ivy Plus universities, and it has been a key goal of our philanthropic efforts. As with other domains, like aid and scholarships, career support, and student research initiatives, the alumni have stepped up to the challenge: Max Palevsky (Class of 1948) provided \$20 million to name the complex next to the Regenstein Library, while a bequest of \$44 million from Renee Granville-Grossman (Class of 1963) named the new South Campus facility. In addition, alumni families

have named and endowed almost all of the individual houses in these complexes. More than twenty gifts of \$1 million or more have been generated for this purpose, while many dozens of gifts at smaller levels have arrived to designate and support individual rooms, suites, common areas, and study spaces. Substantial principal-level gifts from Arley D. Cathey (Class of 1950) and Frank Baker (Class of 1994) and his wife, Laura Day, named the dining facilities of Granville-Grossman and Campus North, respectively. Through gifts of this kind, our alumni have mobilized to literally rebuild the living and learning environment for current students, renewing our physical campus in ways that can be seen in the map of buildings that are either new or under construction.

The creation of a new housing system in a relatively short time has had enormous implications for the life of our campus and the vitality of our student culture, a fact one witnesses daily by looking across the quadrangles or at the accumulation of flyers and placards on the signboards in Cobb Hall, Harper Library, and the Reynolds Club. Joining our student community with our campus in this way has raised both opportunities and challenges that must be addressed in the next twenty years and that will require similarly creative planning and bridge building with our friends and alumni. First, as campus housing becomes more attractive and rental prices continue to increase in Hyde Park, we must prepare for more third- and fourth-year students to remain on campus. This means complementing our robust programing for first years, largely focused on the transition to adulthood, with programing and services that speak to the needs and aspirations of older students who are preparing for life after college. To a much greater degree, residential halls should become sites where our students prepare for the kinds of social ties and commitments to service that characterize global citizenship today, which they have already begun through events like receptions with visiting scholars,

special-occasion dinners, and the work of student diploma ceremony committees. Second, because of this shifting balance, our residence halls must provide forums for older students to give back and foster a deeper communal experience for younger residents. Creating positions of honor and service for our advanced students to mentor their peers and consolidate traditions will allow them to participate in the work of enriching the communal life of their houses and the institution. Third, the expansion of the housing system has created a need for a talented professional and paraprofessional staff, including resident assistants, that reflects the increasing diversity and life experiences of the student body. To complement this staff the College must seek to recruit a larger corps of resident deans and resident heads who enhance the reputation of these positions and are motivated by the prestige and opportunities for growth and personal development that they offer. Lastly, we must continually upgrade and renovate our housing stock to ensure that it supports both the quality of life and the range of programming that can be imagined for these spaces. Our residence halls and houses must be preserved to foster the memories of future generations of College alumni.

Our residential system now has the facilities and the structures to nurture webs of sociability that will last throughout the lives of our alumni and will transform the rest of our campus. Much of this happens naturally in the life of a residence hall, but we have the unique opportunity to forge these connections purposively with systematic investment in the programs and people that animate our housing system. It is my hope that future historical reflections will characterize our residential system as the place that solidified the intellectual and personal ambitions of our alumni and gave them a lifelong sense of membership in our great University.

Ernest Burton and Frederic Woodward got the issue right a century ago—a more strongly residential campus is an essential asset for our

University. In today's College, the residence hall gives the first impression of our campus to the parents and students who have become the newest members of our historic community. They rightly expect that hall to be a place of extraordinary personal growth, challenge, and deep friendships, with unique support structures to enable this progress to intellectual and social independence. Because our residential facilities are located at the heart of campus, and further within this dynamic city, they have the distinctive opportunity to engage students in a world of intellectual excitement, cultural exploration, field-defining research, and often playful traditions, from the eccentricities of Scav Hunt to the stimulation of dinners with faculty. Our proud alumni will remember these vibrant communities as places that foster enduring relationships, where all questions are open, challenges are welcome, and lifelong aspirations are formed by interactions with fellow Maroons and mentors. ○

**IMAGE CREDITS**

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