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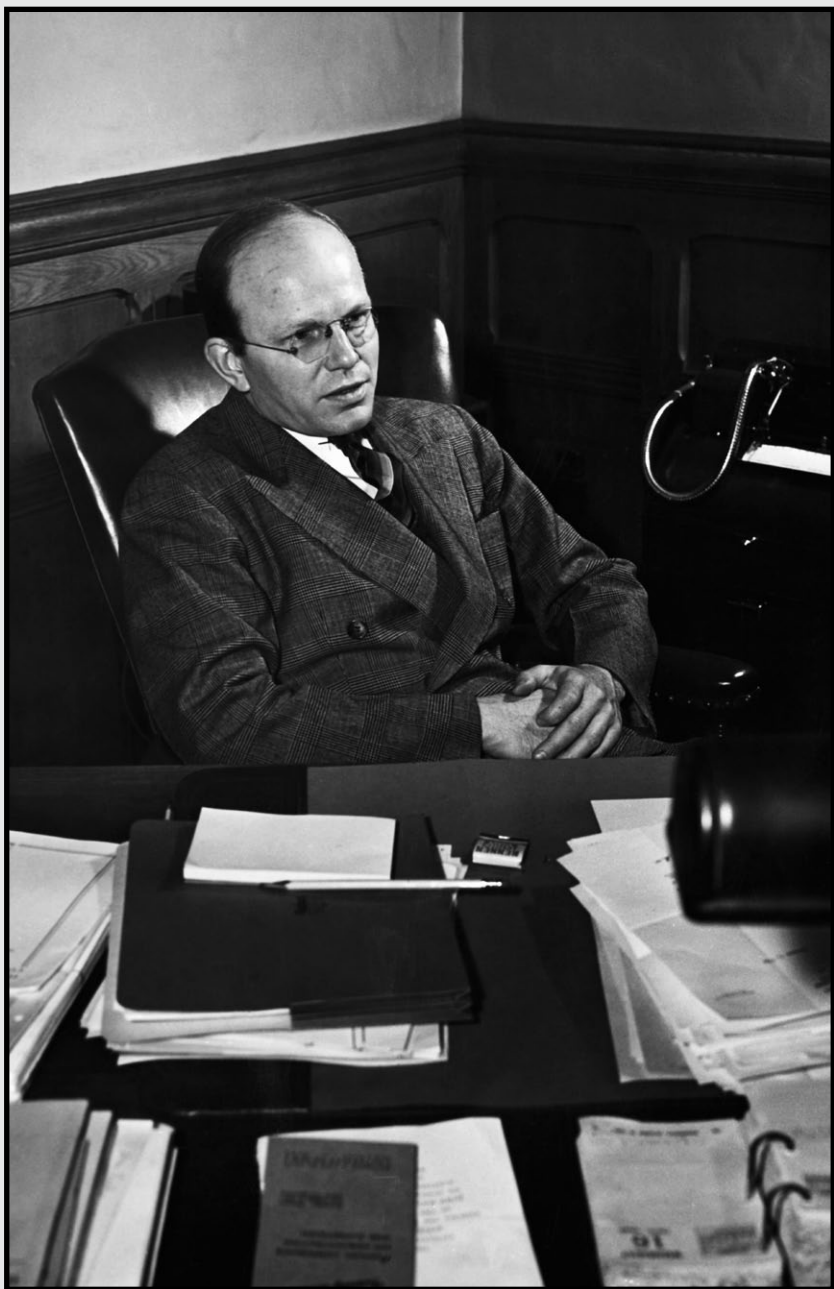
“TEACHING AT
A UNIVERSITY OF
A CERTAIN SORT”

EDUCATION AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
OVER THE PAST CENTURY

JOHN W. BOYER

XXI
OCCASIONAL PAPERS
ON HIGHER
EDUCATION XXI

THE COLLEGE
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

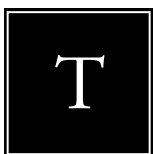


Ralph W. Tyler, Chief Examiner, Board of Examinations, 1938–1953

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

*Education at the University of Chicago
over the Past Century*

I N T R O D U C T I O N

he College begins this academic year with slightly more than 5,300 students. Our first-year class of 1,416 students plus 42 transfer students will sustain the College at its current size. The talent, creativity, and ambition of our students; the extraordinary pool of applicants from which they were chosen; and their eagerness to participate with all of us in the enterprise of learning at the College should make us confident that the academic year that is just underway will be stimulating and rewarding.

The Admissions data we have heard today are one of several ways to measure the achievements of our students. We might also cite the scholarships and fellowships they have won in the past decade—including 14 Rhodes Scholarships, 117 Fulbrights, and 36 Goldwaters. Less familiar names are also on the list: In 2011 two students won Woodrow Wilson–Rockefeller Brothers Fund Fellowships for Aspiring Teachers of Color, supporting enrollment in graduate education programs that lead to a master’s degree and teaching certification; and a third student won a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Graduate Arts Award, supporting three years of

This essay was originally presented as the Annual Report to the Faculty of the College on October 18, 2011. John W. Boyer is the Martin A. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of History and the College, and Dean of the College.

study at an accredited graduate institution by a student with exceptional artistic or creative promise and significant financial need.

Less public measures of the excellence of our students and the quality of the education we offer them might include the more than 100 students who competed successfully for Foreign Language Acquisition Grants to support intermediate and advanced study of languages other than English in summer 2011 or the many more who undertook B.A. research, won departmental honors, or participated in faculty research laboratories as independent inquirers or as co-authors of papers.

How we describe and how we measure the quality of a Chicago education is a complex question. How we settle that question, and even how and why we raise it to begin with, is a matter of intense internal debate and significant public debate as well. These issues have a history, of course, and it is a history that bears upon the very identity of our university as a teaching and research institution. I want to speak about several important elements of that history today. Before turning to that I want to mention another very current and very public way in which some claim to take the measure of our university.

Perhaps you have heard that we began this academic year in a tie for fifth place in the *U.S. News* rankings. We are in worthy company in the top five, although we ought to be higher than some, and while we do not manage the College for the sake of these rankings we can allow ourselves to be gratified to have the University of Chicago publicly acknowledged in this way.

You might have noticed two additional rankings this year—the *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings published in London at the beginning of this month, and the Academic Ranking of World Universities published in Shanghai last spring. We are number nine in Shanghai and also number nine in London. The American universities



ahead of us are Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Caltech, Princeton, Columbia, and Berkeley according to Shanghai; and Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Caltech, and Princeton, according to London. You will not be surprised to learn that Oxford and Cambridge rank ahead of us in London, as does the Imperial College London. But only Cambridge is ahead of us in Shanghai, where Oxford is tenth. Now compare the list in *U.S. News*: ahead of us are Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Columbia; sharing fifth place are Caltech, MIT, Stanford, Penn, and Chicago.

These lists are remarkably uniform, remarkably familiar, and remarkably American. There are some local favorites, of course, but Chicago is no one's local favorite, and I think we need not (at least among ourselves) resist our midwestern impulse to claim that Chicago at least is highly ranked around the world on its merits and not on mere fame. We know very well that if some editor somewhere created a method for ranking universities and Harvard did not come out near the top, that editor would not celebrate a new discovery but would instead throw out his method and start again. So let us conclude that around the world, according to more than one unscientific and perhaps somewhat arbitrary set of measurements, we number among the best. We are having, as the *Washington Post's* higher education columnist Daniel de Vise has said, "a banner year in the rankings."

How shall we understand our "banner year"? The *U.S. News* rankings depend on a wide variety of measures. Among these are selectivity, financial resources, class size, graduation and retention rates, alumni giving, and reputation among high school counselors. By all of those measures we are well ahead of where we were a decade ago, when we ranked as low as 17th in the *U.S. News* poll. The investments made in the College in recent years have had sound academic motives; happily they have also benefitted us in the *U.S. News* rankings.

For example, the extraordinary work of the Office of College Admissions, making a persuasive case for a Chicago education to the best students at the best high schools in the nation and internationally, has increased, as we well know, both the number and the academic quality of our applicants and matriculants. There is no good reason to value selectivity by itself, but the College becomes more selective when we attempt to reach out to the best students and persuade them to apply and then to attend. Over the same period we have seen our first-year retention rates and our graduation rates rise to levels equal to those of our Ivy League peers—powerful evidence that we have the right students and that they are getting what they came for. The editors at *U.S. News* are assiduous counters; while they count applicants, matriculants, and graduates, they also count students in classrooms, and we have a substantial number of small classes and a high ratio of faculty to students—expensive practices, but practices that are essential to our academic mission.

Behind the numbers are both venerable traditions and newer initiatives: The rigor of our Core, the intellectual integrity of our majors, the intelligence and the attractiveness of our Study Abroad programs, the growing number of research opportunities for students in all fields, the careful advising offered by the Dean of Students in the College, the hundreds of Metcalf Internships and the many other services offered by Career Advising and Placement Services—each of these counts for the College as an element that makes the quality of what we do evident to the students who apply, to the alumni who give gifts, and to the high school counselors who advise our applicants and also plays a role in the public rankings created by *U.S. News*.

The *U.S. News* rankings are embedded in the American undergraduate context. They are a commercial enterprise, and a very successful one



for the magazine, designed to persuade consumers that it is worth their money to buy the publication and use it to guide the very complex and very costly decision that students and their families make about a college education. The international rankings are somewhat different. They are less interested in undergraduate admissions or in the undergraduate education that is so vital to the cultural and financial well-being of American universities. Their methods are more focused on research productivity among the faculty. There can be no doubt of our faculty's status in the global academic world as a body of research scholars, and we need not be surprised by our place in the academic world as measured from London and Shanghai.

The Shanghai poll uses Nobel Prizes, Fields Medals, highly cited research, and a few other measures to create its list. The London poll is quite similar, but adds ratios of faculty size to student body and other measures to stand as proxy for the "quality of education." The London group is explicit about the mutually reinforcing relationship among graduate education, the quality of the faculty, the rigor and quality of the undergraduate experience, and the overall quality of a university. In other words, in its methodology London makes an effort to look beyond research productivity to the graduate and undergraduate educational enterprises.

Undergraduate education, graduate education, research and scholarship are all, of course, important parts of what we do. And we claim rightly that our efforts to do each of them well are mutually reinforcing. At the same time we know that there is also always tension and competition between these aspects of our work as a university. They have animated the work of this university from its founding, and from the beginning we have also been concerned about our public reputation. As I shall have occasion to say later today, we ranked very highly in 1925

on one of the first efforts to measure the quality of American higher education. Then as now we were proud to be recognized, we believed we were rightly recognized, and we were concerned that the measures employed possibly oversimplified our achievements and failed to capture the full range of both our work and the challenges we faced in our effort to understand and sustain it for the future.

In our era, the published rankings no less than the marketplace for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty demand that we account for ourselves in intelligible ways. Because our students at all levels are here to be educated, it is as educators, as teachers, that we must account for what we do. Even as a research university we are still essentially an educational enterprise, training our students from first-years to advanced graduate students in the intellectual virtues of careful and thoughtful, yet also daring and courageous, inquiry. And as we teach our students, they teach us, because they challenge us to maintain the high standards that we advocate. Over its history, the University community has made several determined efforts to understand itself as a teaching institution. I propose to turn today to a part of that history of self-understanding and self-criticism. The narrative of my essay will bring some distinct and arresting stories about graduate teaching and college teaching at the University of Chicago together in a way that has relevance for our immediate future. It is worth noting, moreover, that these seemingly separate elements of the story will come together in an important way, and the reader should anticipate that conjunction at the conclusion of the essay.

PART I: 1892 TO 1918

THE AUTHORITY OF GRADUATE
TEACHING

Early accounts of the University have a plentitude of stories about the faculty and their distinguished research activities, including the support the University gave to research, the freedom to teach, and the early sabbatical system that was part of the logic of the quarter system. William Rainey Harper's dynamic personality lent itself very effectively to playing the role of totemic spokesman in favor of a new, research-based graduate education. However, Harper himself was more interested in touting the research accomplishments of his faculty than he was in analyzing the particular professional accomplishments of his graduate students. "Graduate education" thus became, rhetorically speaking, defined more through the activities and interests of the early faculty than by accounts of the actual, pragmatic experiences of their graduate students.¹

Hence, much less is actually known about the operations of the graduate programs themselves, about the students who enrolled in these

1. A good example is W. Carson Ryan, *Studies in Early Graduate Education. The Johns Hopkins, Clark University, the University of Chicago* (New York, 1939), pp. 106–138, which contains very little information on the actual operations of the graduate programs, but a great deal of historical background on the distinguished nature of the faculty. I am grateful to Daniel Koehler and Rachel Feinmark for their research support, and to Michael Jones, Martha Merritt, Lorna Straus, Dennis Hutchinson, Katy Weintraub, and Emile Karafiol for advice on various aspects of the subjects considered in this essay. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Barry D. Karl, a fellow scholar of the history of the University of Chicago and a staunch defender of its ideals and its values.

programs, and about how effectively or ineffectively the graduate students were taught.

The first years of the University's existence were start-up in nature, but by the late 1890s, most departments were awarding both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. The dividing line between M.A. work and doctoral work was fluid. M.A. degrees were often viewed as a kind of junior Ph.D., and most had a thesis requirement attached to them. For many students, the M.A. was thus a legitimate terminal degree that would prove valuable in their professional aspirations. The majority of students who came for what amounted to terminal M.A. degrees were very likely interested in teaching careers, and some faculty regretted the lack of coordination between their students' substantive training and their career goals. The chair of the Department of History, Andrew McLaughlin, complained to Dean Albion Small in 1917, "I have long been convinced that the Master's degree is practically altogether a teachers' degree, and I think that the departments of the Graduate School ought to cooperate with the faculty of the School of Education in every possible way."²

Some Ph.D. students entered the University with M.A. degrees from other institutions, and some had previous teaching experience as regular faculty at various colleges and even universities. These graduate students were often selected to serve as "assistants" in their departments and given responsibility for helping the regular faculty teach elementary undergraduate courses, usually meriting a tuition waiver and a stipend of \$600 annually.

The idea of the German *Seminar* as a conventicle in which current scholarship would be discussed and ongoing work debated, which was

2. McLaughlin to Small, January 9, 1917, *Department of History Records*, Box 1, folder 3. All archival collections cited in this essay are in the Special Collections Research Center, Joseph Regenstein Library.



seen to be the exalted pinnacle of the German doctoral system and which faculty at Johns Hopkins had made famous in the 1880s, was also adopted in many departments at the young University of Chicago, especially in the humanities and social sciences, with some departments developing private, departmental libraries in which their research classes might be held.³ Among the science departments, the most advanced courses tended to be research-driven colloquia that required considerable hands-on laboratory work with group discussions of current literature (which were often described as “conferences”).

Harper claimed that his primary goal for his new graduate school was to train researchers: “[T]he chief purpose of graduate work is not to stock the student’s mind with knowledge of what has already been accomplished in a given field, but rather so to train him that he himself may be able to push out along new lines of investigation. Such work is of course of the most expensive character. Laboratories and libraries and apparatus must be lavishly provided in order to offer the necessary opportunities. . . . Here also is to be found the question of the effort to secure the best available men in the country as the head and director of each department. It is only the man who has made investigation who may teach others to investigate. Without this spirit in the instructor and

3. “The Seminar is sharply distinguished from ordinary class exercises. The method of instruction is that of individual investigation or immediate preparation for investigation by the student.” *The Regulations of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1903), p. 33. Andrew Abbott has recently explored the history of these early libraries in his essay, “Library Research Infrastructure for Humanistic and Social Scientific Scholarship in the Twentieth Century,” in Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont, eds., *Social Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, 2011), pp. 49–53, 56–59.

without his example, students will never be led to undertake the work."⁴ Harper also wanted each department to establish a scholarly journal "which shall . . . embody the results of the work of the instructors in that department." The quarter system provided for sabbaticals from lecture work "in order that they [the regular faculty] may thus be able to give their entire time to the work of investigation."

Unlike undergraduate admissions at the early University, which was rigorous and selective, graduate admissions at Chicago did not require objective evidence of individual intellectual or scholarly accomplishment from applicants until well into the 1930s.⁵ If a prospective graduate student had attended a four-year institution that was recognized/approved as legitimate by the University of Chicago, his or her admission was virtually automatic, assuming that the student could provide proof of graduation and had the financial resources to attend.⁶ Given the often uncertain academic training that many of these early graduate students had had at their undergraduate colleges and the fact that many of the students only aspired to M.A. degrees to enable them to teach in high schools and smaller colleges, it was understandable that the early departments created a host of lecture or lecture-and-discussion courses that they then stipulated as requirements. The graduate model at Chicago was thus similar to that of other early research universities in America, namely, a fusion of hands-on training in the techniques of original

4. William Rainey Harper, *First Annual Report* [September, 1892], pp. 148–149. This document was never published, but exists in draft form from 1898 in the Special Collections Research Center, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

5. See Floyd W. Reeves and John Dale Russell, *Admission and Retention of University Students* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 133–135.

6. See *The Regulations of the University of Chicago*, pp. 19–20.



research, usually undertaken with the advice of a faculty sponsor or mentor, together with a large number of “coverage” or “introductory” courses in a wide variety of scholarly subfields, courses that were in some respects modeled on undergraduate variants, only set on a higher plane and laced with more challenging reading and writing assignments. Hence could one commentator argue in 1903 that, ironically, instead of being “centers of research,” the new American graduate schools of the 1890s and early 1900s were becoming “schools for professional training,” based on an elaborate credit system of formal course work.⁷ As late as 1928, a prominent dean would complain that far too many graduate courses at Chicago still had an “apparently collegiate character,” insisting that “many of these so-called ‘300’ courses are excellent of their kind, but they lack the amount of constructive work that must be required from graduate students.”⁸ Well into the 1930s, faculty struggled with the fact that graduate students arrived at Chicago with very uneven training and differential abilities and with divergent career goals.⁹ When a proposal was raised in the mid-1920s that graduate programs should emphasize more centrally the ability to conduct independent research, Carl F. Huth replied on behalf of the Department of History, “Our students are not

7. H. Foster Bain, “Some Changes in Graduate Studies,” *The Dial*, August 6, 1903, p. 84.

8. Gordon J. Laing, “The Graduate School of Arts and Literature,” in *The President’s Report, Covering the Academic Year July 1, 1927, to June 30, 1928* (Chicago, 1929), p. 3.

9. This fact may explain the fact that what passed for *Wissenschaft* in the “seminars” in American research universities before the 1920s was often quite different from the rigorous and intense intellectual ambience that obtained in the best German and Austrian university institutes. See Anthony T. Grafton, “In Clio’s American Atelier,” in Camie, Gross, and Lamont, eds., *Social Knowledge in the Making*, pp. 93–97.

members of a research institute, but a large part of them expect to go into more or less advanced teaching. Preparation for this latter cannot adequately be provided by merely research courses, even if the student body offering itself in the graduate school were of a sufficiently even preparation and equality of capacity to assume that they are sufficiently informed on the general aspects of their specialty to permit them to spend all their time in research proper."¹⁰

Faculty seem to have had considerable freedom to decide what courses they wished to teach, even younger faculty. Robert Herrick reported in 1896, "Each instructor has a wide liberty in conducting his courses, and I believe that no other college in America leaves her instructors so free to grow in the prosecution of their special studies. The maximum number of students in each class is fixed by regulation at thirty, and the day will never come when the herding of students into courses of three or four hundred members will be tolerated. An instructor, if he is any way human, gets to know his students even in the space of twelve weeks."¹¹

Teaching was a fundamental activity of the University from the very beginning, although Harper danced around between public statements about the superiority of research and urgent pleas that the necessary

10. Carl F. Huth to Norman Beck, August 26, 1924, *Department of History Records*, Box 1, folder 4. Huth was pessimistic about getting graduate students to engage in more discussion: "As far as I understand the system in our department, no lecture course is supposed to be given without perfectly free discussion. Some courses I know are carried on very largely by discussion. The amount of discussion gotten out of the course depends much more on the student than on the teacher. . . . I think you will agree with me that not a very large percentage of students is either willing or capable of participating in discussion."

11. Robert Herrick, "The University of Chicago," *Scribner's Magazine*, 18 (1895): 410-411.



teaching be done and be done well. In 1892 he proposed, "It is expected that professors and other instructors will, at intervals, be excused entirely for a period from lecture work, in order that they may thus be able to give their entire time to the work of investigation. . . . In other words, it is proposed in this institution to make the work of investigation primary, the work of giving instruction secondary."¹² But in other statements Harper flatly contradicted himself by urging that teaching was not only a moral responsibility, but also a way to make sure that faculty remained fresh and current in their own work. In April 1897, Harper asked rhetorically if "it be wise to establish chairs simply for investigation and research, without requirement in the way of instruction," to which he forcefully answered, "In general that investigator will accomplish most who is closely associated with a group of students. . . . [I]t is best to include at least a minimum of instruction with every chair of investigation."¹³ A year later he was even more forceful about teaching as a professional obligation, insisting that his deans must also teach: "I cannot conceive that a man worthy to hold the place of Dean would accept the position without the privilege of giving instruction. A man who was a Dean and who gave no instruction would be merely a clerk, and would be so regarded by the students. So strongly do I feel this principle myself that I do the work of a professor, and shall continue to do so as long as I am President."¹⁴ When the chair of Mathematics, E. H. Moore, tried in 1899 to privilege graduate as opposed to undergraduate

12. Thomas W. Goodspeed, *The Story of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1925), pp. 60–61.

13. *University of Chicago Record*, April 10, 1897, p. 11.

14. Harper to Boyd [no first name], July 20, 1898, *William Rainey Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 10.

teaching as a responsibility of his faculty, Harper pushed back immediately: “The undergraduate work is essential and as important as the graduate work. I would not say that the undergraduate work is primary and the graduate work secondary, nor, on the other hand, would I say that the graduate work is primary and the undergraduate work secondary. They are of equal importance.”¹⁵ Harper himself was a brilliant and charismatic teacher, and his former students remembered his impact on their lives long after they had encountered him in the classroom. J. Powis Smith, who knew Harper at Yale, remembered especially “his abounding enthusiasm. It was so deep-seated and over-powering that it became contagious and students quickly found themselves fired with a similar zeal. Consequently they became willing to work to the limit for him.”¹⁶

Harper set the standard teaching load for a regular faculty member at six quarter courses a year, two per quarter for three quarters. Classes on both undergraduate and graduate levels were limited to 30 students, and most classes had significantly fewer. As late as 1927, one-third of all classes taught at the University had less than 10 students enrolled.¹⁷

The individual departments quickly created sets of courses and then planned a curriculum built around them. Lecturing was the standard

15. Harper to E. H. Moore, March 1, 1899, *William Rainey Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 24.

16. Smith to Goodspeed, undated [1915], *Thomas W. Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

17. Floyd W. Reeves, Nelson B. Henry, and John Dale Russell, *Class Size and University Costs* (Chicago, 1933), p. 38. Harper was sensitive, however, to the costs of carrying a large number of extremely small classes and made it a point to investigate the circumstances of each class that enrolled less than two students in a given quarter. See Harper to J. P. Iddings, April 21, 1897, *William Rainey Harper Papers*, Box 3, folder 13.



format in many courses, but evidence suggests that the early faculty were enterprising in deploying different kinds of teaching formats, especially those which assumed that the study of original documents was more educationally valuable than reading textbooks. An essay by Albert Tolman on the early operations of the Department of English in 1894 insisted, "It seems desirable that the pupil be introduced promptly to the treasures of his own literature; it is well that he should learn early that the condensed milk of text-books cannot suffice for his mental nutriment,—that all the fact-books and reasoning tools, taken together, cannot accomplish his intellectual salvation, cannot give him a liberal education."¹⁸ In describing the mode of teaching at Chicago to a prospective faculty member, Andrew C. McLaughlin, the chair of the Department of History, observed in 1918, "[T]he graduate course . . . should be made up, I think, of lectures and reports in the classroom. Discussions on subjects of all kinds are not only entirely appropriate but are desirable." But he then added about traditions of undergraduate teaching, "Even in the undergraduate course it is desirable to have a certain amount of give and take in the lecture room. . . . The formal lecture is much less in vogue here than at Ann Arbor or I think than in most universities. We try to avoid informational lectures or perhaps I should say narrative lectures by using the text and giving more opportunity for interpretation and emphasis and for exchange of views in the classroom where the size of the class makes that possible."¹⁹

18. Albert H. Tolman, "English at the University of Chicago," in *The Dial. A Semi-Monthly Journal of Literary Criticism, Discussion, and Information*, June 16, 1894, p. 356.

19. McLaughlin to Boucher, January 25, 1918, *Department of History Records*, Box 5, folder 1.

The early doctoral dissertations that resulted from this system were often modest affairs, but as Professor Percy Gardner of Oxford University, a contemporary English observer of the academic scene in the United States, pointed out in 1899, “Many of them, both in Germany and in America, are slight, and many are perverse. But it is most unfair to judge them merely in the light of additions to the sum of knowledge. Their great value is to those who produce them. Until a man has grappled individually with some serious scientific or historic problem, he can have no experience in the use of authorities, in the weighing of evidence, or in the methods of research.”²⁰

Harper had conventional, 19th-century ideas about how graduate students could best prepare themselves for teaching careers on the college level. In a lecture before a group of graduate students in 1904, Harper advised them to marry and have three to four children. Apparently, the state of marriage and fatherhood would provide a seasoning of character that would make the students more attractive on the academic market: “A married instructor with three or four children is worth three times as much as an unmarried one, and he is a stronger man and a better teacher.” In addition, the Ph.D. degree was essential, as was a commitment to work in the summer months on research. Finally, graduate students should also be publicly identified with a religious denomination: “I don’t see how a college education can be separated from Christian work. . . . I know of six or eight capable men who cannot secure positions

20. Percy Gardner, “Impressions of American Universities,” *The Living Age*, February 25, 1899, pp. 470–471. Gardner also observed that “the new University of Chicago claims to have an even larger number of graduate students than Yale and Harvard, though probably the [undergraduate] degree which some of them have taken in the less developed colleges of the west is not of great value.”

in colleges because their attitude toward religion is—not hostile—but merely indifferent.”²¹

Two broad strata of graduate students came to Chicago. The first were graduate students who matriculated in one of the regular academic terms, especially autumn quarter, and who intended to study for an M.A. degree or, less frequently, a Ph.D. degree. The great majority of students who achieved a doctorate tended to come from midwestern, western, or southern baccalaureate institutions, not from the prestigious private universities in the East. A survey of institutions that sent five or more graduate students to Chicago between 1920 and 1930 (for a total of 801 students) found that 227 students came from the undergraduate programs of the University of Chicago itself, while Toronto sent 33, Missouri 21, Kansas 20, Texas 19, Indiana 19, Wisconsin 19, Illinois 18, Northwestern 16, McMaster 15, Nebraska 13, Ohio State 11, California 11, Ohio Wesleyan 10, Manitoba 10, Michigan 10, Minnesota 10, and Queens University 10 (to cite only institutions that sent 10 or more). In contrast, Harvard University sent only 11 students, Brown 8, Cornell 7, Yale 7, Columbia 6, and Dartmouth 6.²²

The number of doctorates produced at Chicago by 1910 was the largest among universities in the United States: 448 Ph.D.s were granted between 1898 and 1910, with an average of 37 annually. This number grew substantially after World War I, with the annual rate of doctorates between 1920 and 1930 increasing to 123. Departments in the physical sciences accounted for 30 percent of all doctorates granted between

21. “Wife Part of Ideal. Dr. Harper Says Professors Should Be Married and Fathers,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 1904, p. 1.

22. Reeves and Russell, *Admission and Retention*, pp. 141–142.

1918 and 1931, with the biological sciences having 25 percent, the social sciences 20 percent, and the humanities 16 percent (the fledgling professional schools accounted for the remaining 9 percent). The largest single doctoral program was Chemistry with 183 doctorates, followed by Botany and Mathematics with 112 and 104 respectively. Together these three doctoral programs encompassed almost 30 percent of the total doctorates awarded between 1918 and 1930.²³ The largest M.A. program was in the Department of Education, which gave the social sciences the largest total share of M.A. degrees (36 percent).

The attrition rate in graduate education was high. Of the 3,969 graduate students registered at the University between 1892 and 1902, only 1,659 (41 percent) had been registered for three quarters or more. Floyd Reeves estimated in 1932 that of those graduate students who matriculated in the autumn quarters of 1920 and 1925, less than 30 percent completed more than six quarters of residence and only 15 percent completed nine or more quarters of residence, the usual standard for doctoral degrees.²⁴ Some doctoral students studied year round, but others were forced to struggle in the summer quarter, piecing together course work over a series of years to try to attain a degree. Doctorates specified various levels of course requirements, but generally at least three years of residence, plus the presentation of a doctoral dissertation, subject to a final defense. Students coming from other graduate programs could often have one or even two years discounted, so their residential requirements were shorter. Master's degrees were of considerable currency before 1918 and generally required one year of residence plus a short thesis.

23. Floyd W. Reeves, Ernest C. Miller, and John Dale Russell, *Trends in University Growth* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 96, 104.

24. Reeves and Russell, *Admission and Retention*, p. 158.



Issues of academic supply and demand also worried the early faculty in thinking about the proper size of their doctoral programs. Writing to William Dodd in October 1913 about the size of his department's graduate program and the employment prospects for its students, Professor Andrew C. McLaughlin commented, "The registration in the undergraduate department is very large, that of the graduate department appears to be about the same as last year. The number of graduate students in history is not very threatening in its dimensions; I mean there is no evidence of any great increase. We appear to be about holding our own although of course we should be glad to see the Department grow. However why departments in graduate work should increase when one considers the small number of places open for graduate students, I am sure I don't know; and especially when one takes into consideration the number of colleges that are doing or trying to do advanced work." Dodd responded with the casual observation, "One difference in view I notice between us: you feel the burden of finding places for each graduate student. I do not. I assure them that they get value received from their stay at the university, and, though I try to do what I can to help students to jobs, so they have a proper 'niche,' my feeling is that our students must love history and find their rewards in broader knowledge. Whether they even become college professors depends on a number of contingencies."²⁵ In spite of Dodd's indifference on the issue, it seems likely that most faculty believed that they had a responsibility to try to place their doctoral students in suitable jobs. The kinds of positions varied widely. A minority of Chicago Ph.D.s ended up at leading private

25. McLaughlin to William Dodd, October 3, 1913; Dodd to McLaughlin, October 18, 1913, *Department of History Records*, Box 1, folder 1.

and public universities, but most populated the faculties of small colleges and regional universities.²⁶

The second category of graduate students attending the University of Chicago were part-time students who journeyed to Chicago for the summer quarter only. M.A. students were particularly prevalent during the summer. In fact, before World War I the summer quarter was the largest quarter in terms of graduate enrollments at the University, bringing older graduate students back to campus, many of them teachers hoping to achieve an M.A. degree. Edwin E. Slosson reported that in the West "it is not uncommon to find colleges in which half or two-thirds of the faculty have studied at Chicago [during the summer]. The state of Texas alone sends 150 students. Every year the Texas students charter a special train for the University of Chicago. I should explain for the benefit of Eastern readers that this is the same geographically as if 150 Italian students came every year to Oxford."²⁷

Many of these students were older, having taken considerable time off from their studies to start their teaching careers. Reeves and his

26. Some evidence remains that graduate students were concerned with the indifference of departments relating to their professional placement, especially as other graduate schools began to produce increasing numbers of doctorates. The leader of a graduate student club in the Department of Sociology, H. Warren Dunham, wrote to William F. Ogburn in 1939 urging, "The past few years have shown a marked increase in the number of universities granting doctorates in sociology. Concomitantly, the vocational opportunities have not increased in proportion. In view of the more rigorous requirements at the University of Chicago, we recommend that the department become more positive in securing vocational placements for graduate students." Dunham to Ogburn, December 19, 1939, *Ernest W. Burgess Papers*, Box 33, folder 5.

27. Edwin E. Slosson, "University of Chicago," in *Great American Universities* (New York 1910), p. 432.



colleagues found in 1929–1932 that summer quarter students were significantly less well prepared than their counterparts and that, contrary to the public view at the time, the summer quarter did not serve as a feeder for the academic programs that began in autumn quarter.²⁸ Slosson optimistically believed that the faculty at Chicago found it challenging and interesting to teach these summer students since they brought “into the classroom an independence of judgment, a skeptical spirit, and a realization of the practical requirements of life, that is sometimes disconcerting and sometimes stimulating to the instructor.” But given the often uncertain training of these students, this may not have always been the case. More accurate, however, may have been Slosson’s other postulate that “the University of Chicago has perceptibly raised the educational standards of the West and South. The effect is most noticeable in the South, because until the University of Chicago was opened Southern teachers had not been going to the great universities in large numbers, and Southern colleges and secondary schools, through an excessive local pride, had not drawn upon the Eastern universities for their instructors as freely as had the Northwestern institutions. I think it is safe to say that no other university has exerted such an uplifting influence over so large a part of the country in so short a time.”²⁹

By the second decade of the University’s existence, the fact that it had a reasonably large clutch of graduate students was seen as a competitive advantage in responding to outside offers. When Frank Abbott was offered a professorship in classics at Princeton, Harry Pratt Judson observed to the chairman of the board of trustees, Martin A. Ryerson,

28. Reeves and Russell, *Admission and Retention*, pp. 157–167.

29. Slosson, “The University of Chicago,” pp. 410–411, 433.

that whereas Abbott might find the East Coast more attractive in residential and broader cultural terms, it would cost him the chance to do serious graduate teaching: "I have not heard from Mr. Abbott although he seems inclined to look at the Princeton offer favorably. The two alternatives of which we spoke I offered him so that he can act in the light of all the circumstances. It may easily be that the Princeton matter will be attractive as offering rather an easy line of life and one not far also from New York and his Connecticut home. Graduate work at Princeton is as yet rather humorous."³⁰

Judson himself was an early advocate in 1905 of the vital importance of graduate education and a defender of its costliness. He insisted, "It has from the first been planned to do work of this character in all departments of instruction. . . . Such work necessarily implies the use of high priced instructors, small registrations in the classes, and a considerable variety in the work offered. . . . It is obvious that all this is necessarily expensive to a high degree; in fact, the most expensive part of the University work."³¹ Judson's assertions were confirmed by a later study by Floyd Reeves and his colleagues published in 1933, who discovered that the average salary costs for teaching graduate-level classes were between three and six times higher than teaching undergraduate courses.³²

Coming from Harvard, Robert Herrick was impressed with the instantaneous graduate program that Harper had managed to set in place, and he rightly viewed that as a function of a kind of ground-up management

30. Judson to Ryerson, February 11, 1908, *Office of the President. Harper, Judson, and Burton Administrations*, Box 82, folder 23. Hereafter cited as *HJB Administrations*.

31. Statement drafted by Judson in 1905, *ibid.*, Box 61, folder 10.

32. Reeves, Henry, and Russell, *Class Size and University Costs*, p. 134.

on the part of the individual departments.³³ As late as 1923, Dean of Graduate School Albion Small would complain of his powerlessness as dean over departmental programs run by “amorphous groups of autonomous departments” and in the face of the tradition of “the autonomy of the Departments”: “At present, if one of the Graduate Deans were to inquire of the officer representing a given department as to the wisdom of a certain schedule of courses, as to the most effective distribution of duties within the staff, as to the quality of work performed by certain members of the staff, and similar subjects, that department would be within its constitutional rights if it regarded the Dean as an intruder and an interloper.”³⁴ From the very first, therefore, graduate education at Chicago was a local, departmental enterprise, and this cultural norm would define the limits of coordination and reform that would-be revolutionaries like Robert Maynard Hutchins would confront throughout the 20th century. Herrick reported that “the entire independence of separate departments, each like a small college in itself, the emphasis placed upon the doctor’s degree, investigation, research, etc. and the activity of the graduate schools—all point to the German university influence. The graduates in residence this year—in all over three hundred—form more than one-third of the entire body of students, a larger number than at any other American university. This preponderance of graduate students has been brought about by several reasons: the emphasis placed upon the advanced courses under the leadership of such heads of departments as Professors Dewey, Hale, von Holst, Laughlin,

33. On early regulations for the doctorate, see Richard J. Storr, *Harper’s University: The Beginnings* (Chicago, 1966), pp. 154–159.

34. Albion W. Small, “The Graduate School of Arts and Literature,” *The President’s Report, Covering the Academic Year July 1, 1922, to June 30, 1923* (Chicago, 1924), pp. 4–5.

Michelson, and Nef, not to mention others; the special privileges and distinctions granted to graduates (for example, in my departments only graduate students are allowed in the special departmental libraries); the \$30,000 annually offered in fellowships and scholarships; and the equal privileges offered to women. It is a truism that the most distinctive move in American college life in the last decade has been in the sudden interest in post-graduate study. But hitherto no Western institution, whether college or so-called university, has had the means to provide liberally for advanced studies. This open field, therefore, it has been the ambition of the University of Chicago, situated in the centre of a vast inland constituency of small colleges, to develop."³⁵

The quality of teaching on the graduate and undergraduate levels seems to have been generally high, and many former students looked back on their association with various senior faculty with pleasure and nostalgia. Writing to Oskar Bolza, a German-born professor of mathematics who was one of the founders of our Department of Mathematics and who taught at Chicago from 1892 to 1910, one former M.A. student, Clara Latimer Bacon, recalled, "Your zest for the subject and your careful preparation for each class and the clearness and elegance of your lectures as well as your personal interest in your students have been an inspiration to me as a teacher ever since. Among the pleasantest memories of my life at the University of Chicago are the Sunday evenings in your home where you and Mrs. Bolza made your students so welcome."³⁶ A former undergraduate student remembered of Herbert Ellsworth Slaught, another faculty member in Mathematics who had a reputation

35. Herrick, "The University of Chicago," p. 409.

36. Bacon to Bolza, April 23, 1936, *Department of Mathematics Records*, Box 12, folder 1.



for superb teaching on both collegiate and graduate levels, “Everyone in his courses understood and enjoyed his work, and came to have an abiding affection for Professor Slaught. Even those who were not so fortunate as to be among his students were likely to be drawn into the charmed circle created by his friendliness, fine human qualities, chattiness and good humor; this happened to me soon after my first arrival in Chicago at the University. Ever since then I have felt that he was one of my deeply valued friends.”³⁷ Similar tributes could easily be identified for many of the other early faculty at the University. As time passed, some early senior faculty accumulated lists of successful Ph.D. students who were proud of their mentorship.³⁸

P A T H W A Y S T O U N D E R G R A D U A T E T E A C H I N G

In his essay on the early University published in 1896, Robert Herrick alluded to the modest educational preparation of many of the new graduate students and suggested that “in the meantime it may be questioned whether the graduate school can maintain its integrity without a strong undergraduate student body.”³⁹ Such statements signaled that the undergraduate programs at Chicago had from the first a strong residual functionality as training grounds for future graduate or professional

37. George D. Birkhoff to E. J. Moulton, July 5, 1937, *ibid.*, folder 11.

38. J. Laurence Laughlin’s *Twenty Five Years of the Department of Political Economy at the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1916) contains a list of Ph.D. holders from 1892 to 1916.

39. Herrick, “The University of Chicago,” p. 409.

school students. Indeed, William Rainey Harper saw the undergraduate programs in the new University as feeding well-trained students into his new graduate and professional programs, and he thus insisted upon very high admissions requirements for freshmen: "The chief reason, however, is that we may better prepare students for the graduate work which we wish to develop. The student who comes from nine out of ten [college] institutions is in no sense fitted for graduate work."⁴⁰ But Harper also acknowledged that the baccalaureate programs were useful in training professional leaders who would make an impact outside of the academic world, and his goal for undergraduates was to teach them "how to take hold of a subject in the way in which during his entire future life he will be able to take hold of things which from time to time present themselves."⁴¹ Harper was also convinced that the University was a place where young college students should begin to develop lifelong moral and cultural goals. He later commented to a group of undergraduates, "You have come here in the hope of furthering your education. If you are to do this, it would be well for you to have some idea what an educated human being is. Then you will know what to aim at here. An educated

40. Harper, *First Annual Report*, p. 138. Fifteen years later, Albion W. Small, in his role as the dean of the Graduate School, raised similar concern about the quality of the training that newly matriculated graduate students had received in various colleges in the United States: Small complained that "[i]t is a serious misfortune if students are permitted to imagine that they are doing graduate work when they are merely prolonging the period of undergraduate absorption" and that "it is quite important that the colleges should organize their work in a way to promote, as far as possible, the interests of those students who might profitably continue preparation for scientific careers. . . . Too many students in the colleges are left without adequate instruction that there is an intellectual horizon entirely beyond their experience." See "The Graduate School of Arts and Literature," *President's Report, July, 1904–July, 1905* (Chicago, 1906), pp. 13–14.

41. Harper, *First Annual Report*, p. 134.

man is a man who by the time he is twenty-five has a clear theory, formed in light of human experience down through the ages, of what constitutes a satisfying, a significant life, and who by the age of thirty has a moral philosophy. . . . If a man reaches these ages without having arrived at such a theory, such a philosophy, then no matter how many facts he has learned or how many processes he has mastered, that man is an ignoramus and a fool, unhappy, probably dangerous!”⁴²

Harper was insistent from the first that only the most able students would be admitted to undergraduate work at Chicago, even if this ruffled the feathers of contributors who thought they had bought their sons or daughters a place in the class. Students applying to the University’s collegiate programs were required to take an entrance examination that would demonstrate the effectiveness of their high school studies in English, mathematics, Latin, Greek, history, the natural sciences, and a modern language (either French or German). Harper and his colleagues were constantly adjusting which and how many of these subjects had to be presented for successful admission, showing how seriously they took the process.⁴³ A slight modification occurred in 1895, when the University agreed to allow well-qualified teachers in various high schools to serve as “advisory examiners” who would supervise the preparation of special test units for students in their schools and who would then forward these test papers to the relevant departments at the University for grading. A major change to the University’s admissions procedure came

42. See the letter of William A. Nitze to Richard J. Storr, undated, *Richard J. Storr Papers*, Box 6, folder 11.

43. See Storr, “College Program to 1906,” pp. 12–18, *Richard J. Storr Papers*, Box 4, folder 24; and Reeves and Russell, *Admission and Retention*, pp. 13–15. For an early commentary by Harper himself, see “Dr. Harper Talks of Admissions,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 7, 1895, p. 3.

in 1911 when the University agreed to admit graduates of secondary schools accredited by the new North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, subject to a review of their high school transcripts and on the basis of minimum quantitative and qualitative achievement standards. After 1923, applicants to the University also had to submit detailed information on their family background, their academic goals and plans, and their extracurricular achievements. In addition, in the same year the University began to require two letters of recommendation from high school teachers.

Harper's fear that the new institution would be flooded with undergraduates led him to insist that entrance standards be set at a very high level. In his unpublished first annual report, he attributed this partly to an instrumental desire to hold down college enrollments so that graduate work might be emphasized. But the “chief reason” was his hope that “we may better prepare students for the graduate work we wish to emphasize here,” again emphasizing the systemic connection between advanced undergraduate and graduate work that, Harper hoped, would become a hallmark of the new institution and that would raise academic standards across the West.⁴⁴ To Frederick Gates and others, Harper argued that upholding high standards was also vital for the reputation of the University and thus a good thing in and of itself. He wrote to Gates in September 1892:

People are beginning to realize that we are aiming to establish a high grade Institution. Certainly over two hundred men had been turned away because we would not receive their certificates. . . . The number of undergraduate students might easily have

44. Harper, *First Annual Report*, p. 138.

been tripled. We are all more than satisfied. We shall certainly have a magnificent set of men and women. There has been a great temptation, of course, to admit students unprepared, according to our standards, but we have constantly held ourselves in restraint, and while many men doubtless have been disgruntled, because of our refusal to admit their sons, we have felt that it was the only wise thing to do.

You have no idea of the pressure which has been brought to bear to admit the sons of certain men, but I have determined that we shall be as impartial or as heartless if you will, as Harvard or Yale. Most of the Board of Trustees uphold me in this policy. Some, I am inclined to think, would rather have seen the bars let down. The fruitage will appear another year.⁴⁵

Essentially, as Richard Storr has argued, Harper wanted to accomplish two ideals simultaneously: The University “had to serve the West, which meant that it had to receive students educated in the high schools of the West; and it had to raise the level of education, which it would fail to do if it lost touch with the men and women to be educated. . . . The University also of course had its self-interest to consider. It wanted large enrollments to support the budget and also to stand as evidence of its success . . . but the University in the very name of its mission as a standard institution could not automatically concede to the wishes of all students and high school principals, whose self interests it might be to beat down high admission requirements.”⁴⁶

45. Harper to Gates, September 26, 1892, *John D. Rockefeller and Associates*, Box 2, folder 7.

46. Storr, “College Program to 1906,” p. 18.

Harper told the first meeting of the arts and sciences faculty at Chicago on October 1, 1892, that he hoped the time would soon come when the first two years of Academic College work would be done elsewhere, off campus.⁴⁷ A year later, however, in his convocation address in December 1893, Harper backtracked and publicly defended the existence of academic programs for young college students, arguing that they were essential to the mission of the University: "It has been feared by some that in the large emphasis laid upon the University work, the interests of the younger students in the earlier college years might be overlooked. Indeed, many think that higher work and lower work may not be carried on at the same time to the same advantage. The specific charge, for it has assumed the definiteness of a charge, and the general principle are alike wrong. . . . It is of the greatest advantage to the younger student to move in an atmosphere the characteristics of which are determined by men who have reached a more serious age. A stimulus is furnished in this way for thorough work which nothing else can furnish. The friends of the University may rest secure in mind in reference to this matter. Not only is this work of the Academic Colleges not overlooked, but a consideration will be given it which within no long time will show conclusively that the policy of the University is one sufficiently broad to include college work as well as university work, and that the resources of the University are directed to both alike."⁴⁸ Thus, in spite of musings about displacing younger students, Harper ended up presiding over a large undergraduate program, significantly larger than the arts and sciences graduate program. This is clear from the student enrollment and graduation statistics of the University over its first 10 years. Each year

47. *Minutes of the Faculty of Arts, Literature, and Science, 1892-1896*, pp. 1-2.

48. *University of Chicago Weekly*, January 11, 1894, pp. 2-3.

the number of undergraduate students increased at a rate more rapidly than that of their graduate counterparts. In autumn quarter of the 1893–94 academic year, the University had 232 graduate students and 357 undergraduates enrolled in arts and sciences programs. By autumn quarter of the 1901–02 academic year, the number of graduate students had increased modestly to 346, but the number of undergraduates had mushroomed to 1,522, much of it deriving from strong annual increases in matriculants to the Junior College. In the enrollments in individual departments this trend was equally notable. In 1893–94, the Department of Political Economy had 149 graduate registrations as opposed to 123 collegiate registrations, but by 1914–15 the ratios had changed profoundly—343 graduate registrations as opposed to 1,194 undergraduate registrations.⁴⁹ Clearly, a revolution was taking place, and in his Decennial Report in 1902 Harper himself openly predicted that “on any reasonable calculation it seems certain that the number of undergraduate students, and especially of Junior College students, coming to the University in the next ten years will be largely increased.”⁵⁰ In addition, because of the flexibility provided by the division of the undergraduate program between junior and senior levels, the University began to attract a large number of transfer students from other colleges as more advanced matriculants, further driving total undergraduate enrollments upward.

The undergraduate programs were divided into Academic (Junior) and University (Senior) Colleges, and then according to three broad faculty domains of the arts, literature, and sciences, each of which had

49. Laughlin, *Twenty Five Years of the Department of Political Economy at the University of Chicago*, p. 20.

50. *The President's Report. July, 1892–July 1902. Administration. The Decennial Publications. First Series, Volume I* (Chicago, 1903), pp. cv, 11.

its own baccalaureate degree (B.A. for the arts, Ph.B. for philosophy, and S.B. for the sciences). Students had to complete at least 18 “majors” in the Junior College (of which at least 15 were required and three were free electives) before proceeding to the Senior College, a “major” being the contemporary term for a quarter long course that met for at least 30 hours. Students normally took three majors each quarter. In order to receive a baccalaureate degree, students then needed another 18 majors in the Senior College. From 1892 to 1902, Senior College students were permitted considerable freedom in choosing their courses, with the stipulation that no more than nine courses could be from any single department. Beginning in 1905 the faculty decided to encourage greater specialization, by first insisting that each student take a minimum of six courses from one department and by increasing the amount of work allowed from a single department from nine to 15 courses. In 1912, the curriculum was further shaped by the requirement that each Junior College student had to take at least four departmental courses from four large subject areas—philosophy, history, and social science; modern languages other than English; mathematics; and natural science—and by the stipulation that Senior College students now had to take nine courses in one disciplinary area (which could be a single department or a set of related departments) and six courses in another. In all cases the courses that were offered were departmentally based and sanctioned, so that on both junior and senior levels the students ended up taking a variety of courses designed exclusively by the several departments.

In his first annual report, Harper claimed, “A large number of the professors have been selected with the understanding that their work is to be exclusively in the Graduate School. . . . It has been the desire to establish an institution which should not be a rival with the many colleges already in existence, but an institution which should help these

colleges.”⁵¹ But, as often happened with Harper’s plans, the reality proved to be very different, and the early course catalogues indicate that many senior faculty, and often men of considerable research distinction, regularly taught beginning and intermediate undergraduate courses. In fact, teaching in the Junior College was done by a mix of regular faculty and graduate students, whereas the great majority of Senior College classes were taught by the professorial faculty.⁵² As Richard Storr has wisely noted, “[T]he University was pulled two ways, first by its dedication to higher studies and second by a desire to supply the wants of Junior College students. As the University became deeply engaged in the education of underclassmen, it felt the stresses created by the characteristically American conjunction of collegiate and higher learning.”⁵³ Nor was there a strict dividing line between the populations of graduate and undergraduate students. For example, in most departments some graduate courses were open to advanced college students. In fact, the boundary lines between all levels were fluid, and the Decennial Report of 1902 observed, “Many Graduate courses are electives for Seniors who have had the proper preliminary work, and many graduates find it desirable to take courses normally listed for Seniors. The same considerations apply to some degree as between Senior and Junior courses.”⁵⁴ As early as 1894, Harper confessed that “the work of the junior and senior years is, however, so closely connected with graduate work that the two are

51. Harper, *First Annual Report*, p. 147.

52. *The President’s Report. Administration. The Decennial Publications*, pp. 92, 117.

53. Storr, *Harper’s University*, p. 127.

54. *The President’s Report. Administration. The Decennial Publications*, p. 13.

inseparable."⁵⁵ Such sentiments reflected Harper's larger convictions about the unity of the new University and the fact that its students would profit from a variety of new instructional and intellectual opportunities set in the various disciplines. Harper never failed to emphasize that Chicago was a university, not a college, and that students who came here would profit from an entirely different experience than if they attended a hermetic collegiate program. To one prospective student he wrote in 1898, "I am quite sure. . . that life in connection with a great University will be of real and marked profit to you. The atmosphere of a University is different from the atmosphere of a college."⁵⁶

Harper's early designation of the first two years of undergraduate study as the "Academic College" was a direct bow to the tradition of secondary education undertaken in 19th-century academies. Students in these years would complete the preparatory work begun in the high schools.⁵⁷ The second two years logically became the "University College," so named to signify that students had completed all preparatory learning and had gained the skills and maturity necessary to do university-level work, that is, work conducted on an advanced level and undertaken with the exercise of the most advanced scholarly standards. On paper this division seemed shrewd and novel, but in practice the boundary line between the first two years and the second became more and more fluid as the years passed. Some students arrived at Chicago with sufficient credits to begin higher-level work immediately, and others

55. *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1894, p. 3.

56. Harper to E. C. Herrick, February 23, 1898, *William Rainey Harper Papers*, Box 4, folder 2.

57. *President's Report July, 1897–July, 1898, with Summaries for 1891–7* (Chicago, 1899), pp. 77, 85.

who transferred to Chicago still needed to undertake subjects taught only in the Junior College. As James H. Tufts subsequently recalled, "In actual practice it was not possible to conduct work for the two colleges in separate buildings because there was but one building. And the general policy of flexibility tended to weaken the other barriers set between the two. . . . The distinction between the colleges tended to become what John Locke called a 'nominal essence'."⁵⁸

Occupationally, undergraduate alumni tended to move into a wide spectrum of professions. In the first decade of the University, teaching was the most popular occupational choice for both men and women, amounting to 31 percent for men and 75 percent for women, which was understandable since many students had undertaken some kind of teaching experience before enrolling in the University.⁵⁹ Even in the earliest days, the colleges attracted many students who wished careers in higher education: For the cohorts who graduated between 1893 and 1900, 17 percent of the male graduates and 20 percent of the female graduates pursued such careers. By the 1920s, the distribution of careers for men became more varied: Thirty-five percent of the male graduates pursued careers in business, with law (10 percent), medicine (10 percent), and higher education (9 percent) also continuing as popular choices. Between 1920 and 1929, women continued overwhelmingly to choose education (62 percent), including higher education (5 percent), but 18 percent of women graduates also opted for business careers, as

58. James H. Tufts, "A University with a New Plan," p. 23, *James H. Tufts Papers*, Box 3.

59. *The President's Report. Administration. The Decennial Publications*, p. 84; Floyd W. Reeves and John Dale Russell, *The Alumni of the Colleges* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 65–66.

opposed to only 5 percent between 1893 and 1900.⁶⁰ The presence of a large number of transfer students among the undergraduate population (55 percent of the graduates between 1893 and 1930 had attended another baccalaureate institution for some period of time) meant that the University was recruiting older students who often had clearer career goals than their younger counterparts and who “are of a serious sort, and are anxious to make the most of their opportunities for study.”⁶¹ A high percentage of undergraduates (62 percent) had to work part time or full time to finance their educations between 1893 and 1930, another indicator that might suggest the seriousness with which students viewed their educational investments.

Aside from the quarter system and the division between Junior and Senior Colleges, the undergraduate curriculum under Harper’s leadership was similar to that of other leading American universities, and thus it cannot be considered to have been particularly innovative. Amid the confusion of rival departmental programs, efforts did emerge to coordinate and enrich undergraduate studies across departmental lines. Between 1895 and 1902, structural pathways were constructed which allowed students to complete medical and law degrees within six years of matriculation in the Junior College, by double counting the senior year and using it as a site of the introductory professional school instruction.⁶² In 1898, faculty from the various social sciences departments also collaborated in creating a separate undergraduate Senior College of

60. Reeves and Russell, *The Alumni of the Colleges*, p. 65.

61. *The President’s Report. Administration. The Decennial Publications*, p. 68; see also Reeves and Russell, *Admission and Retention*, pp. 129–130.

62. *The President’s Report. Administration. The Decennial Publications*, pp. 85–87; Storr, *Harper’s University*, pp. 141, 303–304.

Commerce and Administration for students interested in careers in business, drawing largely from courses offered by Economics, History, Political Science, and Sociology.⁶³ The collegiate program of the College of Commerce lasted until the early 1950s and proved quite popular with Chicago undergraduates.⁶⁴ By the autumn of 1916, 18 percent of all registered undergraduate students at the University of Chicago were enrolled in such joint programs in law, medicine, and business. Richard Storr has aptly described this trend: “[T]he University was indeed working to soften or even to abolish the distinction—by making the professions truly liberal and the content of liberal education in part frankly professional.”⁶⁵ The creation of the new College of Commerce spurred further thinking about other forms of coordination within the Social Sciences, a process encouraged by Albion W. Small, who worried that “our programs in the social sciences involve wasteful failures of coordination and disproportionate degrees of attention to less and more important aspects of social relations” and who praised the “movement in the departments of the social science group toward correlation of elementary instruction that will afford a much more definite and secure basis for graduate work than has heretofore been secured.”⁶⁶ In February

63. Storr, *Harper's University*, pp. 134–141, 304–306.

64. Reeves et al. commented in 1933, “Two of the professional schools, Business and Law, attract relatively large numbers [of undergraduates] for specialization by reason of the flexible curriculum requirements permitting a combination of liberal arts and professional work for the bachelor's degree.” Floyd W. Reeves, W. E. Peik, and John Dale Russell, *Instructional Problems in the University* (Chicago, 1933), p. 35.

65. Storr, *Harper's University*, p. 306.

66. Albion W. Small, “The Graduate School of Arts and Literature,” *The President's Report, Covering the Academic Year Ending June 30, 1913* (Chicago, 1914), p. 47.

1914, six of the departments in the social sciences put a proposal forward to President Harry Pratt Judson calling for more instructional resources and more curricular coordination to provide better and more relevant teaching and thus to recruit and support more undergraduate students who would choose a professional career in areas of public policy and politics that were relevant to the social sciences.⁶⁷ Among their goals were to “prepare such a program of undergraduate work as would make a reasonable contribution to the development of good citizenship,” “to prepare men fitted to occupy positions of usefulness and leadership in the social research which is unmistakably destined to have a rapid development,” “to provide professional training for the college man expecting to enter business life,” “to prepare trained workers for the various municipal, state and federal services, and to aid in the development of a demand for the increasing utilization of such trained workers,” and “to prepare scientific workers in the various philanthropic and charitable enterprises of the day.” The authorship of the plan is uncertain, but it reads as if it were the brainchild of Charles Merriam, reflecting as it did Merriam’s Progressive convictions about the importance of training students in modern social science methodologies to confront the pragmatic problems of American society.⁶⁸ Judson did nothing, and the University’s involvement in the World War I in 1917 temporarily shut down all possibilities for further reforms in the curriculum, but such ideas for greater interdisciplinary coordination would reemerge with considerable force in the mid and late 1920s.

67. See the Declaration from Faculty of Psychology, Philosophy, Political Economy, Political Science, History, Sociology, and Geography to President Judson, dated February 2, 1914, in *Department of History Records*, Box 1, folder 1.

68. See Barry D. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago, 1974), pp. 21–22, 45–46.

In contrast to the graduate student population, the early demography of the colleges was very much Chicago- and Illinois-based. Seventy percent of all Junior College students in 1902 came from Chicago and the state of Illinois. In the Senior College almost 60 percent came from Chicago and Illinois, with another 23 percent from six midwestern states (Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Kansas, Iowa, and Wisconsin). Of the 1,297 undergraduates who received baccalaureate degrees from Chicago between 1893 and 1902, 699 were men and 598 were women. In the Junior College, however, the gender ratio was closer to parity (in 1902, for example, there were 373 men and 399 women registered as full-time students).

The impact of the early University on both levels of students was remarkable, and Edwin Slosson may well have been correct in arguing, "I think that it is safe to say that no other university has exerted such an uplifting influence over so large a part of the country in so short a time."⁶⁹ Certainly Harper was deeply proud of the exemplary impact of his new programs. He wrote to Trustee Charles Hutchinson on February 19, 1894, about a recent visit to the University of Nebraska, "We found an intense interest in all that the University of Chicago is doing. It is indeed marvelous the influence that has been exerted. No detail of our work is unfamiliar to the people at a distance. Indeed, I think that they know more about our inside plans and experiments than some of our own gentlemen." Later in the same letter, Harper discussed the tensions among the junior and mid-level faculty who complained about their salaries, hoping that the allure of the fame of the new University might compensate for meager wages: "In the making out of the budget . . . a deal of time has been spent in conferring with the various departments concerning the reappointments for next year. I wish you could have been in the office

69. Slosson, "University of Chicago," p. 433.

during some of the days. We are, of course, carrying a good many people at a rate which is just above that of starvation. Naturally enough these good people feel that they [should] earn more and deserve more. It has been my function during these days to persuade these people that they are advancing the cause of science and serving the University. I have succeeded in most cases in showing them the utter absurdity of being mercenary; the sublimity of self-sacrifice. I endeavor to send them away from the interview feeling that it is a high privilege that we grant them. The struggle has been a severe one. I think I have come out ahead every time, but one always asks, How long will this thing last?”⁷⁰

Class attendance for students was mandatory on all levels of instruction, and the student academic culture on both the graduate and undergraduate levels was earnest and strongly goal oriented. Oskar Bolza remembered about his graduate students in mathematics, “without exception they were hard working, which was related to the fact that most of them were not supported by their parents and had to support themselves either from savings—many of them were formerly teachers in high schools—or they earned money by picking up various forms of part-time work.”⁷¹ As an eyewitness to the undergraduate culture of the early campus, Edwin Slosson, who received his Ph.D. from Chicago in 1908, argued that college students worked harder at Chicago than at unnamed Eastern universities and that the grading schemes were correspondingly more rigorous. He also insisted that “the University of Chicago was fortunate in starting unencumbered with the student customs of our boyish grandfathers. There has been practically no hazing, class-fighting, face

70. Harper to Charles Hutchinson, February 19, 1894, *HJB Administrations*, Box 82, folder 12.

71. Oskar Bolza, *Aus meinem Leben* (Munich, 1936), p. 27.

painting, hair cutting, kidnapping, stealing of the chapel bell clapper, mobbing of professors, or similar student activities, and there are, I believe, no organized associations for the cultivation of hard drinking and the promotion of vice. Nevertheless the students seem to be as contented and happy as anywhere, so perhaps these things are not so essential to collegiate life as they are elsewhere supposed to be.”⁷² Similarly, the young English instructor from Harvard, Robert Herrick, recounted in 1896 of his undergraduate students that “the student is unprejudiced in scholarship, accepting no traditions of what is really excellent to know He is untrained; even the ambitious candidate for a higher degree in the graduate schools is often lamentably unprejudiced about his foundation of knowledge, but he is eager, sensitive, industrious. College means for him work, and I am sure that the faculty rejoice in the fact that an industrious poverty will for a long time prevent any other conception from becoming universal.”⁷³ The dean of the Senior College in 1898, Benjamin S. Terry, took pride in the “uniformly serious character of our students”: “Cases of rowdy outbreak are unknown. Flagrant breaches of discipline are also unknown. Cheating at examination, plagiarism, or other forms of dishonest practices are scarcely less rare. The sensitiveness of our students to a high code of honor is proverbial. The prevailing spirit of loyalty to the University and to its high ideals is also marked and is felt as a constant factor in the administration.”⁷⁴

In sum, the early decades of the University established the strong authority of the departments over their graduate programs, and, like its predecessor institution on 34th and Cottage Grove, the new University

72. Slosson, “University of Chicago,” pp. 425–426.

73. Herrick, “The University of Chicago,” p. 415.

74. *President’s Report July, 1897–July, 1898, with Summaries for 1891–7*, p. 75.

also manifested a serious student culture on the undergraduate level, one whose educational ambitions were met by a variety of different pathways, none of which were particularly unusual within the broader milieu of American higher education.⁷⁵ The early history of Chicago involved attempts to insert undergraduate education all over the new University, including bridge programs in business, law, and medicine. As a major research university set in a large urban metropolis and serving the personal and professional needs of a diversity of students, the majority of whom were commuters who lived at home or elsewhere in the city, a “collegiate” tradition of tightly circumscribed boundaries cordoning off undergraduates from and against the rest of the University never took hold. And this integrative tradition would prove sturdy enough to survive attempts to wall off the college from the rest of the University in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Still, Chicago’s curricular distinctiveness on the collegiate level would only come after 1930, and when it came, it came with a vengeance.

75. James Angell commented to Thomas Goodspeed that many of Harper’s educational ideas were not, in fact, all that revolutionary, but that “he was distinctly responsible for attracting public attention to them in this part of the world.” Angell to Goodspeed, April 14, 1915, *Thomas W. Goodspeed Papers*, Box 4, folder 12.

PART II: 1918 TO 1942

GROWTH AND UNCERTAINTY

The years following the conclusion of World War I were decisive for the University, in several ways. During the decade that followed the war, many of the senior faculty leaders whom Harper had brought to the University in the 1890s began to retire or pass away. A new generation of senior faculty emerged who would help to define the University's prestige and mission up to 1945. The postwar years also brought into prominence new administrative leaders who would take the University in directions quite different from those advocated by Harry Pratt Judson, who had succeeded Harper as president in 1906. Because of the hesitation of the board of trustees to nudge Judson into retirement, the University lost the services of the popular dean of the faculties James R. Angell, who was the in-house favorite of most faculty to succeed Judson in the years prior to the war, but who became impatient with Judson's stodgy leadership and the board of trustees' sufferance of his continuation as president.⁷⁶ Instead, Angell left Chicago and went to Yale University where, in a distinguished presidency that lasted 16 years (1921–37), he helped to transform Yale into a modern research university, increasing its endowment by 400 percent, adding many new academic and research programs, and implementing

76. The former chairman of the board of trustees, Harold Swift, later recounted to historian Richard Storr in 1953 that "toward the end of his Presidency Judson did not do more than he had too, as he was tired out. . . . The Trustees should have retired Judson much before the actual end of his regime." "Conversation with Mr. Harold Swift, October 30, 1953," *Richard J. Storr Papers*, Box 6, folder 8. See also Daniel Meyer, "The Chicago Faculty and the University Ideal, 1891–1929." Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1994, p. 393.

the Yale residential college system that has so powerfully defined the campus culture of Yale ever since.⁷⁷ When Judson was finally persuaded to retire in 1922, he was succeeded by Professor Ernest DeWitt Burton, a close confidant of Harper and a man of great imagination and determination. Unfortunately, Burton only served two years as president, before dying of colon cancer at the age of 69, but his presidency marked a clear shift in University priorities about undergraduate education and, with that, in the institution's general educational priorities as well.

The war brought about enormous demographic changes, as former students clamored to return to the University's degree programs and new students sought admission to colleges and graduate schools. University of Chicago enrollments took a decisive upward turn during and after the 1918–19 academic year. In 1913–14, the University had 1,766 undergraduate students, whereas by 1918–19 the number had increased to 1,996 and in 1919–20 to 2,382. By 1929–30, the undergraduate population stood at 2,970, an increase over prewar levels of almost 60 percent. Graduate enrollments followed the same pattern of robust growth, increasing from 500 students in 1913–14 to 696 in 1919–20 and 1,513 in 1929–30.⁷⁸ Many of these students were aided by grants from a new \$2.5-million scholarship endowment established by LaVerne Noyes in

77. "Even more important, nearly every department (excluding the sciences) had risen to a position among the best in the land. The college, which had been aided enormously by the new residential system, had become a true university college, benefitting from all the schools of the university while they in turn benefitted from it. The locus of power in the university had shifted to the central administration. The faculty had been improved all along the line. Intellectually, Yale was a far better place than when Angell had come to it...He made Yale a great university." Brooks Mather Kelley, *Yale. A History* (New Haven, 1974), p. 392.

78. Reeves, Miller, and Russell, *Trends in University Growth*, p. 212.

1918, with the express purpose of aiding veterans or family members of veterans who had fought in World War I.

For some faculty, the war had been the most exciting time of their personal lives, and when it ended they felt disappointed by the return to normalcy. But other faculty members returned from war service with still greater ambitions and with more determination to make or remake their mark in their respective scholarly fields. The extraordinary national excellence that the University achieved in many fields in the 1920s and 1930s cannot be explained apart from the high expectations that the war unleashed. Barry Karl has cogently argued that Charles Merriam's scholarly and personal sensibilities were profoundly affected by his wartime experiences, and Merriam was not alone in this regard.⁷⁹

The war thus had a broader, more secular impact by fueling expectations on the part of senior faculty who had been deeply involved in war work about ambitious new research programs. Roger Geiger has noted that the experience of the war set off "an even more rapid transformation in the general perception of science."⁸⁰ The creation of the National Research Council in 1916, led by former Chicago faculty member George Hale, was a visible symbol of the power of the collaboration between science and the national government, as well as a portent of the powerful achievements that could be made by cooperation among the universities, the big foundations, and big business. Writing in *Science* magazine in September 1919, Robert Millikan, who had served as a senior official on the National Research Council during the war, argued that "for the first time in history the world has been waked up by the war to an appreciation

79. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp. 98–99.

80. Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge. The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900–1940* (New York, 1986), pp. 94–95.

of what science can do.” Millikan felt that American scientists now stood on the threshold of promising breakthroughs marked by enhanced scientific literacy in the schools, by fruitful cooperation of research scientists with industry, and by “the development of the possibilities of cooperative research among themselves.” Millikan aspired to establish America as “a center of the world’s scientific life and progress,” which necessitated the creation of a series of great research institutes in the natural sciences, attached to universities but with key researchers released from mundane instructional responsibilities.⁸¹

Under pressure from Millikan and other top scientists like Julius Stieglitz, Albert Michelson, and E. H. Moore to create new institute-based organizations for scientific research, Harry Pratt Judson announced in mid-1920 the creation of four new research institutes “devoted to conducting such research and such training in pure science as has an immediate bearing on the application of the sciences to the industries.” Daniel Meyer has rightly noted that the Chicago initiative was part of a national movement toward the autonomous research institute that was given greater impetus in the 1920s as a result of the demographic changes caused by the infusion of undergraduates after the war.⁸²

These heightened ambitions and expectations on the part of faculty researchers came at the same moment that financial and demographic challenges appeared on the postwar horizon. The inflation of the war led

81. Robert Millikan, “The New Opportunity in Science,” *Science*, 50 (1919): 285–297, here 292–293, 297.

82. Daniel Meyer, “The Chicago Faculty and the University Ideal, 1891–1929,” pp. 395–396.

to a reduction of the value of tuition, and competition from other universities displaced the University's dominant prewar position on senior faculty salaries. By 1923, Chicago had fallen seriously behind Harvard and Columbia in the average value of full professorial salaries. Moreover, the crush of students who returned to the University after 1918, both undergraduate and graduate, put great pressure on instructional staff and on facilities, and led to discontent among the senior faculty and a renewed movement to limit or even abolish the first two years of the undergraduate program. In December 1922, a report of the Committee on Research of the University Senate, the governing body of the University filled only with full professors, urged that Chicago should prioritize graduate education and research as the highest obligation of the University and impose limits on the numbers of undergraduates it would admit, since "the State Universities are able and obliged to provide for the great mass of college students."⁸³ Responding to an invitation in early 1923 to comment about the future structure of undergraduate instruction, the faculty of the Department of History listed as a plausible option "the elimination of the Junior College, either by a gradual process, beginning with the Freshman year and after a period, if the step seems to have justified itself, discarding the Sophomore year also, or by a direct striking of the whole Junior College."⁸⁴ Such rhetoric, which was both financially naïve and corrosive to sensible planning about the future of the under-

83. "Report of the Senate Committee on Research," December 18, 1922, *HJB Administrations*, Box 70, folder 19.

84. Carl F. Huth to David Robertson, January 29, 1923, *Department of History Records*, Box 1, folder 4.

graduate college, failed to recognize the simple fact that tuition profits from the undergraduate colleges were already by the 1920s a significant support for faculty salaries and faculty research. As Robert Hutchins put it simply in 1935, "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."⁸⁵

The influx of undergraduates and graduate students after World War I seeking baccalaureate and M.A. degrees after 1918 stressed the system, particularly in the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences. Faculty instructional resources failed to keep pace, forcing the departments to hire more non-faculty teachers. For example, between 1908 and 1928, courses offered in departments in fields of the humanities increased by 50 percent, whereas the size of the faculty grew by 32 percent.⁸⁶

The decade of the 1920s would see a searching and occasionally acrimonious debate about what the University was and in what directions it should move. The most important figures in this debate were Ernest Dewitt Burton and Burton's successor as president, Max Mason, who also served a short tenure of less than three years (1925 to 1928), but other faculty leaders played significant roles. And at the end of the decade a series of events and interventions took place that would redefine the very nature of teaching at the University, particularly on the undergraduate level.

85. Hutchins to William Dodd, April 12, 1935, *Office of the President. Hutchins Administration*, Box 103, folder 1. Hereafter cited as *Hutchins Administration*.

86. Reeves, Miller, and Russell, *Trends in University Growth*, p. 122.

THE REVOLUTION IN
UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION:
HUTCHINS, BOUCHER, AND
GENERAL EDUCATION

The debate about the future of the University in the 1920s was conducted on two broad levels—graduate and undergraduate—with intense discussions about the educational priorities made possible by President Ernest Dewitt Burton’s ambitious goals for the University and in the context of the University’s first big capital campaign, which Burton launched in 1923. Burton took a position directly contradicting Judson on the future of the colleges, and he supported Dean of the Colleges Ernest Wilkins in his attempts to bring more coherence to the curriculum. But he also advocated responsible teaching and massive investment in undergraduate life and residential facilities. Burton died unexpectedly in April 1925, but he was succeeded by Max Mason, who essentially continued Burton’s ideas. Mason in turn appointed Chauncey Boucher as dean of the Colleges (Wilkins left the University in 1926 to become President of Oberlin College), who was soon proved himself to be a radical curricular revolutionary. Boucher was able to broker sufficient senior faculty support to propose a separate undergraduate curriculum for the first two years of the undergraduate college outside of the control of the departments and a new form of examining as well.

In response, graduate forces rallied under Dean Gordon Laing, urging more investments in the graduate schools and a prioritization of graduate education over undergraduate teaching. Max Mason’s sudden resignation in May 1928 left all of these political forces circling each other, and it was left to a new president, Robert Maynard Hutchins, who

took office in the summer of 1929, to sort them out and to begin to try to sequence a set of powerful interventions.

Once Hutchins took power in the summer of 1929 he canvassed faculty opinion and eventually decided to support Boucher's educational ideas. Boucher was able to resist departmental pressures and intrafaculty feuding over what a curriculum for first- and second-year college students should look like in 1929 and 1930, and in early 1931 he launched the so-called New Plan, a radically new kind of undergraduate educational plan.

The most powerful features of Boucher's plan were the new general education survey courses themselves and the comprehensive examination system that supported them. Over time the internal structures of these courses changed, but their logic and educational impact was powerful, and they established Chicago as a leader in forms of interdisciplinary general education not controlled by the special interests of the individual academic departments.

In January 1923, in one of his final letters to chairman of the board of trustees Harold Swift before leaving the presidency, Harry Pratt Judson asserted, “As I look at it the University is at the parting of the ways. Either it is to be primarily a University in the highest sense, with distinct emphasis on its graduate work and its graduate professional work, or it is to be essentially a College with the higher work incidental.” Judson left no doubts about which option he favored: “My own view is that the University idea ought to be made very prominent; that we should frankly recognize the College as of secondary importance.”⁸⁷ Judson concluded his swan song with the enjoinder, “The time should come also in the not distant future when the number of college students whom the University

87. Judson to Swift, January 30, 1923, *HJB Administrations*, Box 56, folder 2.



Chauncey Boucher, Dean of the Colleges, 1926–1930
Dean of the College, 1930–1936

will receive should be limited.”⁸⁸ Then, in early February 1923, before Burton could take effective control, Trustee Howard G. Grey submitted a resolution to the board of trustees asking for the creation of a commission on future educational policy. Invoking Harper’s earliest sentiments in favor of Senior College and graduate students, Grey complained about the lack of resources for faculty salaries and the retirement or death of prominent early faculty, and asked if the University had not “drifted from these ideals.” Grey then urged that a trustee-led commission investigate these questions, but also proposed the conclusions that he wanted the commission to come to, namely, reprioritization of the University’s values in favor of graduate education and against collegiate education. At the same time, Grey raised an interesting correlative issue, by asking, “What proportion of our men and women who take doctor’s degrees consist of teachers whose object is less the acquisition of additional knowledge or culture than to add to their standing or their salaries, and what proportion belongs to that able, earnest type of mind and character that become the real leaders of society through whom only we can render the highest service to our land, and how may the proportion of these latter be stimulated.”⁸⁹ Judson was at the board meeting when Grey offered his resolution and moved its adoption. In fact, it is likely that Judson was the real author of the resolution, or at least its inspiration.

Judson’s letter and Grey’s motion were classic examples of a lame duck trying to influence the agenda of his successor, and in Ernest DeWitt Burton’s case this proved fundamentally unsuccessful. Burton appreciated the value of research, but as Harper’s closest personal friend on the faculty he also knew that Harper had become more and more

88. Ibid.

89. *Minutes of the Board of Trustees*, February 13, 1923, pp. 53–54.

enthusiastic about undergraduates over the course of his presidency.⁹⁰ Hence Burton struck out in a very different direction from that suggested in the Grey and Judson missives. James H. Tufts, a senior member of the Department of Philosophy who served as Burton's vice president from 1923 to 1925, later remembered, "Under President Burton's administration an opinion was held and expressed by some, although the matter never came to a formal vote, that as a feature in the forward movement it would be wise to drop the college in order to concentrate on the more peculiar task of a university. The college exists to inform and train the immature; the university exists to discover new facts, law, and truth over every sort. Its business is with a different class; it is bad for both college and university to combine the two functions. President Burton met the proposal with a single reference to the purpose of a university. 'A university', he remarked, 'is supposed to be established to search for truth. Among the various fields that present themselves for study and exploration education itself is certainly one, and one that is fully as important as any other. If we build observatories and laboratories to study the stars and the atom it would seem at least as appropriate to observe and study the educational process, and the college is one of the important stages in this process'."⁹¹

Upon assuming the presidency in February 1923, Burton took exactly the opposite approach to that suggested by Judson, advocating new investments to support college teaching and residential life. In a letter to Harold Swift in February 1924, Burton argued that the construction of

90. Harper's widow, Ella Harper, called Burton the "spiritual brother" of her husband. See Richard J. Storr to Margaret Burton, June 11, 1958, *Richard J. Storr Papers*, Box 6, folder 12.

91. "American College," II, *James H. Tufts Papers*, Box 3, pp. 1-2

a new college instructional building on the south campus should be given very high priority, since it “appeal[s] to me very strongly” and would “serve as a rallying point and unifying center for all Undergraduate life. . . . In my judgment such a building is an indispensable means of bringing about that unity of undergraduate life as distinguished from the life of the graduates which is desirable and which is entirely consistent with that measure of undergraduate participation in the life of the whole University which is itself also highly desirable.”⁹² Burton juggled his priorities repeatedly over the next two years, as he sought to fund a new medical center and to cover rising faculty salaries, but his commitment to a large-scale investment in the University’s undergraduate program was consistent, and in one proposal submitted to the board of trustees he allocated almost \$2 million, out of a total to be raised of \$10.7 million, to improving undergraduate education and new residence halls.⁹³ Many years later, Harold Swift recalled about Burton’s support for undergraduate education that some senior faculty “reproached and reviled him for his emphasis upon the College. Mr. Burton won the battle but only after great difficulty.”⁹⁴

What problems faced the colleges? First, rapid growth of undergraduate and graduate enrollments stressed the faculty after 1918 and in the Junior College level led to the appointment of a greater number of graduate-student teachers and other temporary instructors, whose performance in the classroom was often sub par. Second, student opinion

92. Burton to Swift, February 9, 1924, *HJB Administrations*, Box 60, folder 12.

93. “Needs of the University,” Sheet 3, February 9, 1924, *ibid*.

94. “Eighth Session,” p. 54, Lakeside Planning Conference, March 4–7, 1954, *Office of the President. Kimpton Administration*, Box 252, folder 1. Hereafter cited as *Kimpton Administration*.



about the quality of the education that they were receiving in the colleges became more problematic. A survey of student opinion in 1919 by the young Harold Lasswell found that “[t]he prevailing complaint of serious undergraduates is the impersonality of their classes and the few opportunities they have for direct contact with either their own instructors or with men of prominence in their departments. This is largely due to the preoccupation of the instructor with the research work upon which his advancement depends.” Student interactions with faculty outside of class were equally barren: “The student who desires to establish contacts has to overcome many handicaps. When the Instructor appears before a World Problems Forum or a Y.M.C.A. discussion group, the individual cannot hope to absorb enough time individually to test out his ideas completely. The student who attempts to talk with the instructor after hours is subject to the taunt of wishing to ‘get in on the ground floor.’ The student cannot hope to absorb a large proportion of the stated class hour without incurring the displeasure of the class. There is, in short, no organized channel whereby an earnest undergraduate can take his special problems to men of conspicuous ability on the faculty without feeling that he is making a decided imposition upon them.” Lasswell also mentioned that “many of the [undergraduate] courses were taught by graduate assistants with little experience and buried beneath the load of graduate work.”⁹⁵ Chauncey Boucher later remembered, “[F]or ten years, to my personal knowledge, there has been grave uncertainty in the minds of many faculty members, alumni, students and the public, regarding the policy of the University of Chicago in the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science. When I first came to Chicago [in 1919], to teach during

95. Theodore G. Soares and Harold D. Lasswell, “Social Survey of the Undergraduates of the University of Chicago,” pp. 19–20, 1920, *HJB Administrations*, Box 78, folder 1.

Summer Quarters, under the administration of President Judson, I encountered the opinion among representatives of all the groups mentioned above, that the University was deliberately submerging the Colleges, was gradually but surely killing off the Colleges by maltreatment, so that it might become a Graduate institution—that it would retain the Undergraduate divisions only so long as they were needed as a milk cow to contribute to the financial support of the Graduate work.”⁹⁶

The increase in enrollments after 1918 brought many undergraduate students to the University who were unprepared for the rigors of University work. A study of the records of 762 students who entered the University in the fall of 1919 revealed that only 308 had graduated by the spring of 1925, for a six-year graduation rate of only 41 percent. Moreover, almost 25 percent of these students had been dismissed for poor performance or were on academic probation.⁹⁷ Another study done in 1927 concluded that “in spite of the work of the Examiner’s Office, there are a good many students who seem intellectually unable to meet the scholastic requirements. The greatest single cause of poor work, however, seems to be the student’s own attitude, a desire to ‘get-by’ with the least possible effort.”⁹⁸

The most difficult issue facing students and faculty were the rumors that the University intended, in the spirit of Judson, to abolish the

96. Chauncey S. Boucher, “Report on the Conditions in the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science, December 21, 1928,” p. 1, *Office of the President. Mason Administration*, Box 3, folder 7.

97. Edward Potthoff and George R. Moon, “A Statistical Study of the Records of 762 Students Who Entered the University of Chicago as Freshmen in the Autumn Quarter of 1919,” *College Archive*, Box 15, folder 1.

98. George R. Moon, “A Study of Students Reported Doing Unsatisfactory Work,” 1927–28, *ibid.*

colleges. Chauncey Boucher, who became dean of the Colleges in late 1926, recalled that in spite of forceful public statements by President Burton and his successor, Max Mason, to the contrary, “the idea which has had currency for ten years to my knowledge, still persists among many faculty members, students, and alumni, and among the public at large, that the University of Chicago is deliberately endeavoring to kill its Colleges slowly but surely by maltreatment and become a graduate institution with only such senior college work as is necessary to supplement the graduate work.”⁹⁹

Compounding these rumors was an increased disregard for undergraduate teaching on the part of key senior faculty who functioned as faculty opinion leaders. Boucher also remembered in 1928 the “widely spread impression that only research and graduate instruction receive recognition in the form of promotion in rank and advance in salary. This impression dates back to a time not so long ago when so much of the Junior College instruction was in the hands of graduate-student assistants and inferior instructors—when the Colleges seemed to be regarded and treated as a stepchild or a misbegotten brat not worth raising. At the present time there are some departmental chairmen who are frankly not at all interested in the undergraduate work and who neglect it shamefully in framing the departmental program of course offerings and the provision of instruction therefore. There are many faculty members, both young and old, who consider it a mark of social and professional inferiority to be identified with the administration of, curriculum building for, or the instruction of, undergraduate students. . . . In our case,

99. Chauncey S. Boucher, “Thoughts and Suggestions regarding an Educational Policy, and Its Successful Administration, in the Colleges of Arts, Literature and Science, of the University of Chicago,” pp. 3–4, December 1928, *Office of the President. Mason Administration*, Box 3, folder 7.

many faculty members take their cues from the statements of men identified solely with the Graduate Schools and from the widespread rumor—which has become almost a tradition—that the Colleges are to be distinctly submerged or abandoned.”¹⁰⁰

Boucher also reported, “Until you have encountered it as often as I have—in literally dozens of instances—you will not realize the extent to which the opinion is widespread among our faculty members, particularly in the lower ranks, that though the Administration may occasionally give public lip service to our undergraduate work, in order to satisfy the Alumni and to prevent our income from undergraduate tuition from falling off, the main and only vital interest of the Administration is in graduate and research work; that there are but minor rewards and no significant prospects for preferment for the man who is even outstandingly successful in undergraduate work; that it actually improves the standing and prospects of a man to boast of distaste for, and neglect of, the undergraduate work he may be doing; that to win promotions he must be able to boast of the number of Master’s degree or Doctor’s degree candidates he has working under him, or he must, by research productivity, secure a call from another institution, to use as a ‘club’.”¹⁰¹

According to Boucher, the formal turning point against this trend came with Ernest Burton: “During President Burton’s administration it seemed to be settled that the Colleges were not [to] be abandoned,” citing the importance that Burton accorded to undergraduate education in his fundraising essay, *The University of Chicago in 1940*. But even Burton’s assurances were not enough, for Boucher admitted that “by

100. Boucher, “Report on the Conditions in the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science, December 21, 1928,” p. 14, *ibid*.

101. Boucher to Woodward, October 11, 1929, *ibid*.

some of our faculty members the statements of policy by Presidents Burton and Mason were accepted in good faith, but by others these statements were regarded either as personal statements of opinion which did not settle the matter, or as merely lip service for purposes of temporary expediency. . . . If something similar to the Burton statement regarding the Colleges is to be the officially accepted policy of the University, this policy must not only be forcefully and definitively announced by the President and the Board of Trustees as settled and no longer open to question, but the policy must be dramatized by deeds.”¹⁰²

In addition to establishing fundraising goals to strengthen undergraduate education, Burton initiated or supported several other responses. One important step was to acknowledge teaching as a central professional activity of the University. In a circular to department chairs in October 1923 on criteria for appointment and promotion of faculty, Burton noted that serious problems had emerged in the quality of teaching in beginning undergraduate courses by graduate students: “Assistants are on the lowest rung of the ladder and their appointments are largely temporary, but in many cases they give classroom instruction and in such cases at least it is very important that wherever possible they should have had some teaching, particularly if they are teaching beginning classes in a subject. Considerable criticism, some of it probably deserved, has been made upon the teaching of some of these Assistants. It is especially important that their work be carefully scrutinized in order that there may be a sound basis for judgment as to their reappointment.” Burton then elaborated criteria for regular faculty appointments,

102. Boucher, “Thoughts and Suggestions regarding an Educational Policy, and Its Successful Administration, in the Colleges of Arts, Literature and Science, of the University of Chicago,” pp. 3–4, December 1928, *ibid.*

insisting that different sets of skills were legitimately appropriate for appointments involving undergraduate teaching: "The qualities requisite for membership in our faculty are various. Classification of them is difficult, but they should obviously include thorough scholarship, ability to teach, attractive personality, high character. In the graduate schools we properly emphasize ability for research and for inspiring and training advanced students to become productive investigators and scholars. In the colleges we are concerned not simply or primarily in impersonal investigations but rather in the development of men and women of character, cultivation and effectiveness. In the latter case scholarship is a very important means to an end, but not the inclusive end sought. To scholarship, itself indispensable, it is not less indispensable to add the other three qualities. This fact needs to be constantly borne in mind, both in respect to first appointments and in respect to reappointments."¹⁰³

Burton also sought to improve the leadership of the colleges by appointing Ernest Wilkins, a distinguished scholar of early Italian Renaissance literature, as dean of the Colleges in the autumn of 1923. Wilkins sought to create more coherence in the undergraduate curriculum by encouraging the development of new introductory courses. One such course, "The Nature of the World and Man," was a two-quarter sequence launched in the autumn quarter of 1924 that proved quite popular with students and served as a prototype for the kinds of courses that Chauncey Boucher developed in the early 1930s. But one course did not make a revolution, and Wilkins's efforts to secure the creation of parallel courses in the humanities and social sciences went nowhere. Wilkins also secured more advising support for students, and he also

103. Circular to Department Chairs, October 26, 1923, *Department of History Records*, Box 1, folder 4.



Ernest Wilkins, Dean of the Colleges, 1923–1926

proposed a general plan to improve teaching by hiring more postdoctoral teaching fellows and asking the departments to be more attentive to quality in teaching.¹⁰⁴ Yet ultimately Wilkins did not like the job of dean and in early 1925 he wrote to Burton asking to be relieved of the deanship in favor of a more esoteric position as a new associate dean of the faculties, where he might devote his time to studying the theoretical problems afflicting undergraduate education. Burton clearly disliked the idea and persuaded Wilkins to stay on until the spring of 1926, cautioning him that developing new theories of higher education without the pragmatic support of whoever succeeded him as dean of the Colleges would be a dubious proposition.¹⁰⁵ In a word, Burton was telling Wilkins that he already had the job in which he might lead significant change, if only he would set his mind to it. Wilkins's impact as dean was thus limited by the structural constraints in which he found himself, namely the resistance of the departments who continued to exercise a stranglehold over most of the introductory courses taken by freshmen and sophomores, preventing any serious quality control initiatives. Once Burton died and the prospect of becoming a new associate dean of the faculties for higher educational theory evaporated, Wilkins was sorely tempted to leave Chicago, which he did in late 1926 when he was offered the presidency of Oberlin College.

The lack of clear and courageous leadership to improve undergraduate education was evident in a report commissioned by Burton on the future of the colleges. Henry Prescott of the Department of Latin was

104. See the memorandum “Improvement of Instruction,” in Wilkins to Burton, December 6, 1923, *HJB Administrations*, Box 85, folder 31.

105. See Wilkins to Burton, February 18, 1925, and Burton to Wilkins, February 28, 1925, *HJB Administrations*, Box 85, folder 31.



asked to chair a planning committee in September 1923 on the undergraduate program, as part of Burton's general review of all units of the University. Prescott submitted his report in April 1924. His committee seemed particularly interested in where collegiate instruction would take place and recommended that the south campus be reserved for a separate undergraduate campus. As for the curriculum, Prescott argued for a sharp separation between the first and last two years of undergraduate experience, but against providing an academic degree at the end of two years—students would have to do more advanced work in a department to merit a B.A. Prescott also prescribed no new innovative evaluation mechanisms of the effectiveness of the curriculum—student progress would be charted by individual instructors' reports only. Presciently, Prescott called for the creation of a board of examiners, but only for the administration of admissions tests.¹⁰⁶ Some discussion ensued about Prescott's proposals, but no real action was taken to implement them. Burton died in May 1925. With Wilkins's imminent departure for Oberlin, Prescott's report was filed away, to face the kind of oblivion that most such reports inevitably endure.

Upon Wilkins's resignation taking effect, President Max Mason appointed Chauncey Boucher as dean of the Colleges. An unlikely candidate for curricular revolutionary, Boucher was trained as a historian of the antebellum South, having received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1914. In contrast to Wilkins, who aspired to be a theorist of higher education, Boucher proved willing to engage in the "strong and slow boring of hard boards" that Max Weber defined as crucial to successful political action in general and that is certainly necessary for

106. "Preliminary Draft of the Report of the Commission on the Future of the Colleges," April 22, 1924, *HJB Administrations*, Box 34, folder 10.

curricular politics in higher education. Boucher set about to provide the necessary “deeds” that would fundamentally reshape undergraduate education and in so doing protect it against the hostile forces that he believed to be arrayed against it. Boucher began planning large scale changes soon after he took over as dean: “A trick of fate put me into the Dean’s office where I soon began to get a much broader and entirely new perspective. At first I thought that a dean must necessarily spend most of his time and efforts quibbling with students over one or another of the numerous book-keeping regulations for the attainment of a degree, and on disciplinary problems—in fact I thought that a dean must be primarily a petty police officer, spending his time catching and torturing flies. I had no stomach for such activities any longer than was necessary to allow the President’s office time enough to enlist a man to take the place. Very soon, however, I learned that President Mason and Vice President Woodward were anxious to do something really significant with the Colleges and were ready to entertain any constructive suggestions which the Dean might have to offer. I then began in earnest to study the biggest problems of college education, particularly our own problems, and, by spending as little time as possible on the petty affairs of the office, I soon became deeply interested in the major problem.”¹⁰⁷

In response to the problems that he encountered, Boucher urged the University to adopt more rigorous entrance requirements, and he increased the number of prize scholarships from 35 to 95 per year. He also deployed stronger and more interventionist advising resources to help

107. Chauncey S. Boucher, “Suggestions for a Reorganization of Our Work in the College, and a Restatement of Our Requirements for the Bachelor’s Degree,” pp. 53–54, December 1927, *College Archive*, Box 27, folder 6. Boucher gave this long appeal to Max Mason in January 1928 and sent it to his colleagues in the University Senate on March 12, 1928.

struggling students, and abolished mandatory attendance at chapel.¹⁰⁸ But his real ambition, articulated in many position papers that he wrote between 1927 and 1930, was to begin to recruit much more motivated and academically gifted students to the college and then to put them in a more coherent and rigorous instructional program that was not controlled by the departments and that would be protected by an independent office of the examiner. His final goal was a curriculum that would challenge college students and develop their intellectual skills in a positive way. This became a cardinal motivation for the idea of the New Plan of 1930–31.

Having been inspired by a talk that Max Mason gave to the Institute for Administrative Offices of Institutions of Higher Education in July 1927, Boucher began to survey the state of collegiate education nationally and to consult with experts who would speak with him: “I read more widely whatever literature would give me the current practice and progressive thought of men in other institutions; I talked with about thirty individuals in various departments and schools of the University of Chicago; in January 1928 I made a trip to learn first hand what is going on at Princeton, Columbia, and Harvard. I talked with many of the leading constructive thinkers at each of these institutions. My object was first of all to see what features of the practice at each of these institutions could be adapted to our conditions; secondly, I was anxious, if given any encouragement, to tell the main features of the plan on which I was to work, in order to get the constructive and corrective suggestion

108. See Chauncey S. Boucher, “The College of Arts, Literature, and Science,” *The President’s Report, Covering the Academic Year July 1, 1927, to June 30, 1928* (Chicago, 1929), pp. 24–31.

of these men whose training and experiences would make their opinions valuable. At each institution the men with whom I talked expressed great interest in what we were doing and planning for the future at the University of Chicago; they gave me much encouragement for continuance in the line of thought I was pursuing and they confirmed my fears of some part of the plan most likely to cause greatest difficulties in successful administration and operation. In each place they expressed the earnest hope that we would go ahead with the plan, because our action would serve to strengthen their hands for changes in the same direction."¹⁰⁹

A critical turning point seems to have been Boucher's visit in New York City in mid-February 1928 with William S. Learned, the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

In view of the number of years he has spent in critical and objective study, observation and investigation of the educational process in the United States and in Europe, attached to no college or university in this country, but working for an institution which has for one of its main objectives the encouragement and promotion of the best performance, with the most possibilities for best results, in any and all the colleges in this country, he seems to me to be the one man in the country, if there is any such one man, best prepared and best qualified to give a critical judgment on any such plan as the one proposed. I felt that I could not safely propose such a plan for adoption here without having his constructive and corrective suggestions and his judgment on the plan as a whole. I spent six hours with him and we went over every detail very carefully. He expressed the greatest

109. Boucher, "Thoughts and Suggestions," pp. 51–52.

interest and said that he sincerely hoped the University of Chicago would adopt the plan and carry it into successful operation in the immediate future, because there was great need of just such leadership and example at the present time, and because if the University of Chicago were to inaugurate such a system of work and requirements, it would be more significant in its effects on both secondary and college education in this country than if it were done by any other institution.”¹¹⁰

The plan to which Boucher made reference was a scheme to transform collegiate instruction by defining the first two years of undergraduate instruction as primarily given over to general education. Four large interdisciplinary survey courses were created, one by the faculty of each of the divisions, plus a parallel course in English composition. Great stress was put on the fact that these were not departmentally controlled courses, but were developed to introduce young students to a vast area of knowledge and skills, across the disciplines. At the same time, Boucher was also emphatic that the new courses should be taught by faculty with regular departmental appointments. He was particularly interested in recruiting research scholars who had a “maturity of scholarship and experience,” but who would devote considerable effort to a new kind of general education for college students.¹¹¹

Boucher’s plans were delayed by the resignation of Mason. During the interim presidency of Frederic Woodward from June 1928 until August 1929, little progress was made, and it was not until Robert Hutchins assumed the presidency in the summer of 1929 that Boucher

110. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

gained a powerful ally who, as a new man with the sovereign force of the University presidency behind him, had the credibility to force the plan through the faculty. As it happened, the implementation of Boucher's ideas took place coterminously with Hutchins's decision to restructure the governance of the arts and sciences by creating four graduate divisions and a separate undergraduate College, each as an official faculty ruling body and each with an executive dean. Boucher henceforth was no longer dean of the Colleges, but dean of the College, and it was this new “College,” created with the explicit mission of “doing the work of general education in the University,” that became the operational site of the new curriculum.

The final stages of the implementation of Boucher's New Plan took place in January 1931, during weeks of intense debate as to what exact curricular elements would be presented to the faculty for a formal vote. We know from a stream of private letters from Mortimer Adler to Robert Hutchins in early 1931 about the rearguard action fought by several key faculty members to keep department-controlled courses in the first two years of the new curriculum, a form of opposition that Adler viewed as a sign of their general disdain about anything other than their own fields: The department advocates were “all greedily protecting their private diggings and what gets me sorest is that they are doing [so] under the false banner of educational theory.”¹¹² Still, the curricular maneuvers generated much local attention. Adler reported to Hutchins that “the place is still bubbling. The volcanic quality is still discernible in the many round table discussions at the [Quadrangle] Club. On all sides you hear discussion of ‘the plan’, or ‘a plan’, or ‘our plan’ or ‘their plan’. The

112. Adler to Hutchins, January 1931 [marked “Saturday”]. *Mortimer Adler Papers*, Box 56.

opposition has grown confident. They feel as if they had won the first battle, and are now marshaling their forces for the second, and perhaps, final victory. There is a nasty tone to many of the letters which have been sent in to Boucher; Gideonse and Works, and even Thurstone are somewhat fearful of consequences unless we compromise. You can imagine Boucher's state of mind."¹¹³

From Adler's reports, it is clear that two important figures from the Department of Education and the Department of Psychology, George Works and Louis Thurstone, played major roles in the behind-the-scenes politics to push through the new general education curriculum, which helps to explain the prominence of those departments' shadowy, but all-too-real role in the College over the next twenty years. Adler noted, "[M]y only consolation is the pleasure I have found in knowing Works and Thurstone. Both of them sound fellows, with clear minds and vision. They are educated themselves, and they want more education for others. But what a glaring minority they are! As Works put it, the whole trouble is that the faculty are not a group of educated men, and what is worse, they don't want to be, and they really don't care about education."

The results of the final negotiations were, however, a victory for Boucher and his fellow revolutionaries in that the new curriculum put into effect in the spring of 1931, called the New Plan, created a powerful component of curricular space not controlled by the departments, based on five large and common courses (Biological Sciences, English Composition, Humanities, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences) to be taken by all students and subject to end-of-the-year examinations that were not

113. Adler to Hutchins, January 1931 [marked "Saturday afternoon"], *ibid.* Charles Judd reported to William Gray as early as 1928 about Boucher's plans that "there is going to be a good deal of opposition to this report." Judd to Gray, May 9, 1928, *Charles H. Judd Papers*, Box 10, folder 11.

designed by or graded by the individual faculty teachers who taught the courses. The New Plan called for students in the first two years to be registered in the College. Upon completing all of their general education requirements, they would register in a division for the final two years of collegiate study. The divisions thus became the sites for undergraduate teaching in the junior and senior years, and until 1942 the baccalaureate degrees were awarded by the divisions, not the College. The College was established as an equal ruling body along with the divisions, with the right to hire its own faculty, if this was deemed necessary. For the first 12 years of the New Plan, however, most faculty teaching in the general education courses had regular departmental appointments, and it was not until after 1942 that the College began to accumulate a separate body of faculty who had no connections with the departments.

Along with the five new interdisciplinary general education courses came a totally new system of grading and credit allocation. Henceforth, students would not receive quarterly course grades, and courses themselves ceased to count for the graduation requirement. Instead, each student would be obligated to sit for a six-hour “comprehensive” examination that would test his or her knowledge of the fields covered in the survey courses. These examinations would be developed by a set of full-time professionals in a new board of examinations, who would attend the lectures given by the faculty in the survey courses and develop sets of questions for the exams, working in consultation with faculty teaching the courses. The board was headed by a new University examiner and gained statutory force by the fact that the University Statutes were revised to give the board an official, University-wide legal status. Nor were the comprehensives restricted to the first two years, for the New Plan called for senior College students to sit for three additional comprehensives, one in his or her major field and in two other fields. A

crucial feature of the New Plan was that class attendance was made voluntary. Students could attend the lectures and discussion sessions, but they could also study the syllabus and its recommended readings by themselves on their own time and take the six-hour examination whenever they felt sufficiently prepared.

Boucher thought that the comprehensive system and the new freedom given to students to self-pace themselves through the curriculum would accomplish several important objectives at one and the same time. First, he wanted to make students more self-responsible, more autonomous, and more flexible, and facing such year-end comprehensive examinations would impose, he believed, a discipline, an orderliness, and a seriousness on the behavior of undergraduate students that was heretofore lacking in American higher education. Second, the comprehensives and the new yearlong survey courses would create patterns of intellectual coherence instead of the jumble of random course credits, which Boucher derisively called the “book-keeping” mentality that dominated colleges up to then. Boucher averred, “I sometimes think that it is a cause for wonder that even as many of our students, few as they are relatively, do achieve as much as they do and develop their powers as far as they do, in spite of the obstacles and positive inducements to do otherwise which are inherent in our present system in which bookkeeping in terms of numerous small course units is the only common denominator.”¹¹⁴

The new comprehensive examinations were, in Boucher’s mind, absolutely critical to the logic of the New Plan and great care would need to be taken in designing them: “One of the most important and most

114. Chauncey S. Boucher, “Supplementary Statement by the Chairman of the Committee,” p. 2, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 51, folder 13. This statement is an appendix to the “Report of the Senate Committee on the Undergraduate Colleges, May 7, 1928.”

NAME _____
 Last name First name

Check your discussion group leader:

____ Bailey ____ Cate ____ Friedman
 ____ Kerby-Miller ____ Pletz
 ____ Thomas ____ Scott

HUMANITIES GENERAL COURSE
 Autumn Quarter 1937

This examination is divided into two parts. The first part consists of questions on the material of the course of a simple and basic character. Inability to answer a large majority of them will be regarded as evidence that a student has not a passable grasp of the subject matter of the course to date. Those who pass the preliminary part of the examination will be graded primarily on their performance on the second and more difficult part of the paper. You should allow not over half an hour to the first section.

PART I

Indicate the chronological order in which we have discussed the following periods by numbering the first (oldest) 1, the next 2, and so on.

- ____ Hellenistic
 ____ Aegean
 ____ Roman
 ____ Egyptian-Mesopotamian
 ____ Hellenic

Number the following five books read this quarter to indicate the order in which they were written, marking the oldest 1, and so on.

- ____ Art of Poetry
 ____ Gospel according to Luke
 ____ Odyssey
 ____ Oedipus
 ____ On the Nature of Things

The Odyssey begins with: (check one)

- ____ Incidents immediately after the fall of Troy.
 ____ A council of the gods.
 ____ Telemachus' departure to seek his father.
 ____ Odysseus relating to Calypso his previous adventures.

Between this scene and the end of the book, the time elapsing is about:

- ____ Ten years. ____ Six weeks.
 ____ Two years. ____ The time required to travel, with numerous detours, from Troy to Ithaca.

-10-

The following statements, attributed to various persons, were written in order for this examination. Some of them are fairly plausible. Others are either (1) impossible on grounds of chronology or (2) definitely inconsistent with the given character as revealed in our readings.

In the blanks at the left, mark each statement plus (+) if it is a plausible (or characteristic) utterance of the person named and zero (0) if it is not. Then in the column at the right opposite each item you have marked zero write (1) if you reject it as chronologically impossible; write (2) if you reject it as "out of character."

- | | | |
|-------|--|-------|
| _____ | Then Odysseus of many wiles said to his comrades, "Too often have I led you into danger and death through my eagerness, and now it would be just if you cast me bound into the wine-dark sea to turn Poseidon's anger from your ships." | _____ |
| _____ | Then Job bowed his head and said:
"My children have sinned against the Almighty.
And he has cast them away for their transgressions.
If I were pure and upright,
Surely he would make my habitation prosperous." | _____ |
| _____ | Oedipus: Ye priests and elders, I myself have sent
Across the sea to Alexandria to inquire
From that most famed Egyptian oracle
The reason for our city's dire distress. | _____ |
| _____ | And Jesus said unto them, "It is better to suffer injustice than to do it unto others." | _____ |
| _____ | And how can you answer that,
O Socrates? he said.
Hippias, I replied, A philosopher like myself cannot waste his time
debating with a quibbler like you. | _____ |
| _____ | Breasted, <u>Ancient Times</u> , preface to new edition: "Interesting as are the achievements of the ancient Egyptians, it must be admitted that in most important aspects of culture and inventions the inhabitants of the Fertile Crescent anticipated and surpassed them." | _____ |
| _____ | Gardner, <u>Art Through the Ages</u> , (edition of 1939): "The classic period of architecture in Tahiti carries on the tradition established in the archaic, with modifications which reflect the greater prosperity and security under the Hula dynasty. The chief surviving building, the temple of Lulu-taboo, (Plate XL) shows a remarkably effective combination of functional and decorative elements. Notice, in particular the rhythmic verticals of the columns." | _____ |

difficult features of the administration and successful operation of this proposed plan would be the examinations at the two levels. A considerable amount of time, careful effort, critical judgment and evaluation would be required on the part of a number of individuals. Each field examination at each of the two levels should be set by a committee of two or more persons and not by a single individual. . . . Each of the three main groups of departments—natural science, social science, and humanities—should select one person whose particular responsibility it should be to study continuously all of the examinations set by his group in order that the general administrative officers might have some assurance that each part of each set of examinations . . . was being kept at the proper level (neither above nor below where it should be) and that there was an appropriate degree of uniformity in the standards of achievement demanded to pass the various parts of each set of examinations.”¹¹⁵

The leader of the new board of examinations from 1931 to 1938 was Louis L. Thurstone of the Department of Psychology. If Boucher was the original architect of the idea of comprehensive exams in place of course credits, in the critical work of implementation he was influenced by the ideas of Thurstone and George Works of the Department of Education. A student of James Angell who had received his Ph.D. in psychology at Chicago in 1917, Louis Thurstone was a distinguished psychometrician who pioneered fundamental contributions in the analysis of intelligence and aptitude testing in the 1930s and 1940s. Thurstone reported in a subsequent autobiographical statement, “When it was proposed to introduce comprehensive examinations for the determination of grades, I wrote a memorandum to Dean [George] Works, in which I suggested certain principles that should be adopted in writing

115. Boucher, “Suggestions for a Reorganization of Our Work,” pp. 41–42.



those examinations. I was asked if I would help start the new examination procedure as chief examiner for the College. . . . I proposed some new principles to be used in the construction of College examinations, and these were accepted. One principle was that examinations should become the public property as soon as they had been given. The purpose of this system was to eliminate bootlegging of examinations in fraternity houses and elsewhere. One of the consequences was that a new examination had to be written each time, and here several novel ideas were introduced. No question was used in a comprehensive examination if the instructors did not know the answer. If the instructors started to argue about the answer to a question, it was either eliminated or revised until the instructors agreed about the answer. The identity of the student was not known by the person who assigned the grades. The grades were determined by the distribution of scores before the identities of the students were known. Some Departments objected that new examinations could not be written each time that a course was given. Our response was that if a new examination could not be written at the end of each course, then there was no justification for the course.”¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, the self-confident style of Thurstone’s rhetoric betrayed what might easily be viewed as a kind of haughtiness toward the teachers of the new survey courses, and, as we will see below, this became an acute political problem in the new system as time wore on.

116. L. L. Thurstone, entry in Edwin G. Boring et al., *A History of Psychology in Autobiography, Volume 4* (Worcester, MA, 1952), p. 318. Dael Wolfe later remembered that Thurstone “took particular pride” in his establishment of the board of examinations. See his tribute in “Louis Leon Thurstone: 1887–1955,” *American Journal of Psychology*, 69 (1956): 131, as well as Dorothy A. Wood, *Louis Leon Thurstone. Creative Thinker, Dedicated Teacher, Eminent Psychologist* (Chapel Hill, 1962).

The new board began as a modest affair, and in its initial staffing drew heavily on younger men who were either graduate students or post-docs from the Department of Education and the Department of Psychology. Thurstone also began to develop research protocols based on the huge amount of data that the new examination system generated about student performance.¹¹⁷ When Louis Thurstone resigned from the position of chief examiner of the board of examinations in 1938, he was replaced with a young educational psychologist from Ohio State University, Ralph W. Tyler, a former doctoral student of Charles Judd who was appointed as a professor in the Department of Education.

Chauncey Boucher was confident that his plan for a new general education curriculum would vault the University of Chicago into a top leadership position in undergraduate education reform in the United States: "Harvard has already set an example in the East which is having its effect in that section and will have a much greater effect there in the near future. But what Harvard does or may do will have little effect in the West, from the Alleghenies to the Pacific, as compared to the effect which a move by Chicago would have. For Chicago to take such a step would be more significant because it would very soon affect more institutions and a larger student population, than if such a step were taken by any other institution in the United States. Chicago has long been looked to as a pace-setter in education."¹¹⁸ Boucher also argued,

117. Details of the methodology used in creating the comprehensive examinations can be found in *Manual of Examination Methods by the Technical Staff, The Board of Examinations*, The University of Chicago, 2nd ed., 1937. See also Louis L. Thurstone, *The Reliability and Validity of Tests* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1931).

118. Boucher, "Suggestions for a Reorganization of Our Work," p. 46.

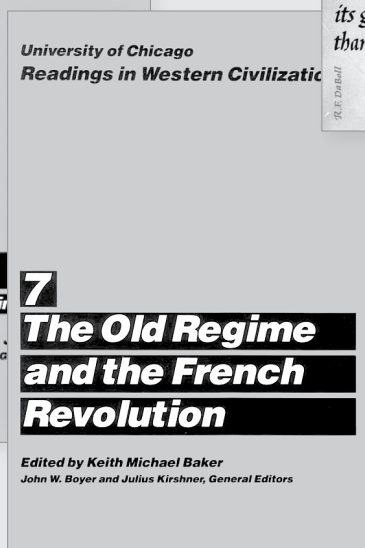
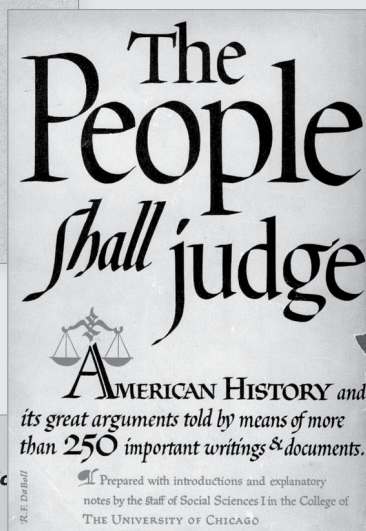
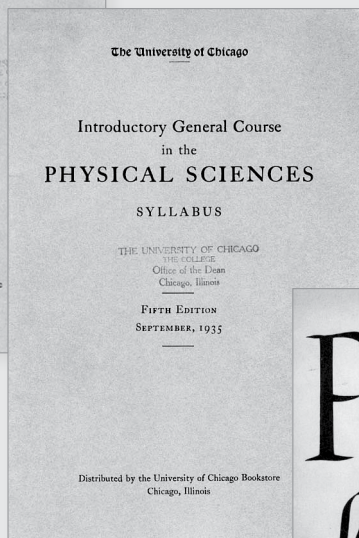
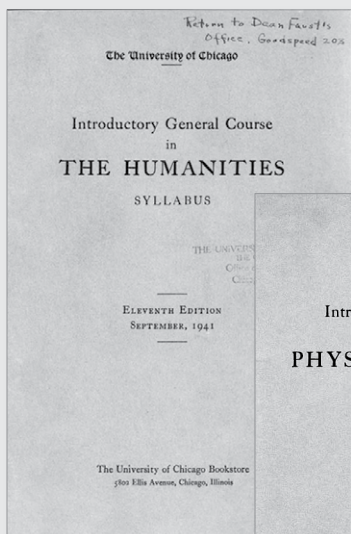
“We boast that at the University of Chicago we are able to do what may be demanded by sound judgment and wise educational policy more freely than can the faculty of any other institution; we are more free because we have nothing to fear from state politics or a state legislature, and because our alumni and our trustees are not inclined to exert an unwarranted, an unwise, a disheartening and a discouraging pressure. What value, this freedom, unless we use it?”¹¹⁹

After securing the approval of the new curriculum by a vote of 65 to 24 at a general meeting of the faculty of the College in early March 1931, and after conferring with the newly appointed divisional deans and with key department chairmen, Boucher set out to organize five planning groups to create the new survey courses.¹²⁰ The groups worked quickly and assembled necessary course materials, which Boucher found the funds to purchase. Each course produced a detailed syllabus, which included a prose outline of the major arguments and material of the course together with detailed bibliographical citations for further reading. Substantial investments in books and equipment had to be made. Boucher also held several meetings in the spring of 1931 where all staff leaders met jointly to work out logistical and scheduling issues. Slowly, the appearance of a unified curriculum emerged.

The New Plan was implemented against the fears of many traditionalists on our campus. One such critic was Henry C. Morrison, a senior

119. Boucher believed (or wanted to believe) that Max Mason was the right person in the right place at the right time who would support his reforms. Boucher insisted Mason wanted “fundamental change in the spirit, temper, and practice of our educational process and performance at the undergraduate level.” *Ibid.*, p. 47.

120. I have discussed the institutional and policy development of the New Plan in detail in my monograph, *A Twentieth-Century Cosmos: The New Plan and the Origins of General Education at Chicago* (Chicago, 2007).



*General Education Syllabi:
Humanities 1941,
Physical Sciences 1935,
Social Sciences 1948,
Western Civilization 1948,
revised 1987*



member of the Department of Education. In contrast to his colleagues Works and Thurstone, Morrison was unsympathetic to the New Plan, and he particularly disliked the new Social Sciences Core course developed by Harry Gideonse and Louis Wirth. Morrison was so disturbed by the syllabus of the new course that he sent Emery Filbey, a high-ranking aide to Robert Hutchins, a five-page, single-spaced letter criticizing the enterprise and denouncing the course's "unscientific point of view," by which he meant that the instructors made no effort to teach the students a set of formal principles by which they might comprehend the social world. Morrison gamely insisted that if the Division of the Social Sciences "has no principles to teach, it should release the freshmen to the other science divisions, which do have principles." According to Morrison, allowing students to discuss original documents cold, with no set principles to guide them, was pedagogically irresponsible. This was the equivalent of "setting people to expressing opinions about pneumonia, typhoid fever, infantile paralysis and sleeping sickness, who are quite innocent of any comprehension whatever of the underlying medical sciences." Finally, Morrison predicted that the course would be a waste of time for the majority of students, whom he dismissed as being mere "confirmed lesson learners." Still other students would be confused, bewildered, and discouraged. A final and larger group of students, who were "cocky and opinionated," would end by becoming "mere intellectual and moral anarchists," suffering from "distinct neurotic degeneration."¹²¹

In spite of the fears of such traditionalist critics, the new survey courses provided a level of coherence and systemic curricular planning totally lacking beforehand, and they generated a number of instructional innovations. Inevitably, the operation of these new courses in a simultaneous

121. Morrison to Filbey, August 20, 1931, *College Archive*, Box 8, folder 2.

framework gave rise to interactions and consultations across traditional departmental boundaries. The faculty responsible for the new English Composition sequence reported, “It will be noted that the work in Composition not only has been planned cooperatively but demands cooperation in the carrying out. Not long ago it would have been regarded as utopian for English instructors to count on the collaboration of chemists and political economists. So vigorous an attack, however, has been leveled in the past year upon departmental walls, so firmly has the faculty been compelled to take counsel, group with group, that a united effort has become more than a dream; it is a strong hope.”¹²² This sounds like a small consequence, but over time these “attacks” on traditional “departmental walls” had an enormous significance in the culture of the College and in the broader culture of the faculty of the arts and sciences.

One of the most important innovations of these courses was not part of Boucher’s original scheme, namely, the functionality of the reading lists/syllabi and the assignments in the discussion sessions. Because the new courses were designed for a student to pass the comprehensive exams without regular or sustained class attendance, their architects had to assemble extensive reading lists, and it was not surprising that they tended to stress what we would call today great books or primary source readings at the expense of standard textbooks. That is, the original designers implemented the model in 1931 in the social sciences and the humanities by developing syllabi consisting of large number of original documents or texts, along with recommended secondary readings. Moreover, these documents then became the subjects for the discussion sections that accompanied the weekly lectures and that gradually proved

122. “English Composition in the College,” July 1931, pp. 18–19, *ibid.*, Box 6, folder 8.



to be crucial to the operation of the courses. Students were expected to read original documents or papers as complements to the lectures, and it was crucial that the documentary method soon dominated many of the discussions. Eugene Anderson, who was a discussion leader for the Humanities Core sequence in the 1930s and went on to have a distinguished career as a professor of history at UCLA, commented, "We think it is better for students to read a rather small body of the text[book] and more source material, more great pieces of literature; therefore, since last year we have greatly reduced the amount of pure textual requirement [in the sense of textbook requirements]. . . . It is important for them to get acquainted with the works of art in themselves." But Anderson also noted the challenge of leading discussions: "A discussion leader has almost to be a dean. I mean he has to be acquainted with his students in more ways than an intellectual one. You have to hold your students and interest them. There is much greater frankness between students and instructors than there ever was under the old system. The discussion-leader has to be a propagandist for the material of the course; he has to appeal to the human rather than the intellectual side and then has to get the students started. The only way he can maintain discipline is through the stimulating of interest."¹²³

Two ideas converged here—that the discussions attached to the new survey courses should be discussions about original texts, and that the discussion leader would become a teacher in his or her own right and not simply a teaching assistant who regurgitated material already given in the

123. Anderson to Boucher, May 22, 1933, *ibid.*, Box 7, folder 2. Similarly, James L. Cate reported, "We further improved on this by pointing the discussion as often as possible to one particular piece of literature, a definite school of painters, a specific architectural monument, etc." Cate to Boucher, June 7, 1933, *ibid.*



Louis L. Thurstone, Chief Examiner, Board of Examinations, 1931-1938



general lectures. So successful was the discussion format in the individual discussion sessions that by the late 1930s the leaders of the Humanities Core course proposed to reduce the number of general lectures and increase the number of discussions, a movement that happened in the Social Sciences Core course as well.¹²⁴ As early as 1934, Ferdinand Schevill, the founding chair of the Humanities Core course, had argued in favor of this change, suggesting that this would enable a revamped course to emphasize “restriction, precision, and definiteness in place of the loose, illogical encyclopedism now in practice.”¹²⁵ Such a change also fit in well with what another leading member of the Humanities Core staff, Arthur Scott, characterized as the real goal of the course: “[E]ach course is concerned, to the limit of its collective ingenuity, in illustrating, encouraging, and giving practice in straight and independent habits of thinking, as by-products of which it may be fondly hoped that a more critical, rational, tolerant, and broad-minded attitude may be fostered.”¹²⁶ Thus in a set of instructions to their students from 1938, the Humanities Core staff compared possible background textbooks to the original readings that they had selected in a rather invidious way: “We expect you to approach these classics with a very different purpose from that with which you address yourselves to your texts. From the texts you are to acquire information. . . . We ask you to read the indispensable readings other than the syllabus and the texts with a view of forming judgments as to *how good each book is of its kind, and why*. Such questions as the following are relevant: What is the purpose of the book? How successfully

124. Brumbaugh to Scott, April 29, 1938, *ibid*. This referred initially to Humanities II, but the trend was across the board.

125. Schevill to Scott, May 12, 1934, *ibid*.

126. Scott to Boucher, November 1, 1933, *ibid*.

is that purpose carried out? And by what means? In addition one may always inquire: By what standards may that kind of a work be judged worth attempting at all?” The statement then devoted almost four pages of detailed space to suggestions for reading the individual sources, making it clear that this exercise was in fact the real heart of the educational experience in the Humanities Core course.¹²⁷

Similar innovations took place in the natural sciences, moving away from standard textbooks to more varied and more creative reading assignments. The chair of the Biology Core course, Merle Coulter, reported that the general course in Biology developed a series of locally written books to accompany their course, together with a series of educational movies, coproduced with Erpi Classroom Films, Inc. in New York. They did not want to use a single textbook, but rather a diversity of readings from different authorial/research perspectives: “At the start we were obliged to do the best that we could with an admittedly unsatisfactory group of books, and hoped that somehow the situation would be improved in the future. The book situation was substantially improved in the course of time. . . . One by one the more unsatisfactory of the books in the original group are being replaced by new books, produced locally by those who know the needs of the course and write with these special needs in mind.”¹²⁸ For the Social Sciences Harry Gideonse was particularly proud of the fact that “[o]ur syllabus deliberately avoids being a textbook. It is a topical outline which the student can use as a guide

127. “The Humanities General Course. Memorandum to Students,” pp. 3–4, *ibid.*

128. Merle Coulter, “Report on Ten Years Experience with the Introductory General Course in the Biological Sciences,” pp. 1–14, October 24, 1941, *ibid.*, Box 5, folder 8.

in his study. The staff has not only avoided the textbook approach in the syllabus, it has also given scant consideration to various publisher's offers to write textbooks for such courses. Our entire approach is away from the textbook, toward as much study of the sources as can be economically fitted into one year of elementary work. The statistics of library use, and the 'attitude' of our students in advanced courses demonstrate that a not inconsiderable measure of success has been achieved in this respect."¹²⁹

The results of the New Plan curriculum and its various technical innovations were astonishing and impactful after 1931. The College began to recruit better students, more motivated to serious academic work and capable of higher academic achievement. Boucher might be well satisfied. And not only students profited from the new system. Harry Gideonse argued that the excitement of the courses had also given the faculty associated with the courses a new enthusiasm about the impact of their teaching: "During the last two years we have a remarkable change in the personnel teaching the college courses in the Social Sciences. That is at least as worthy of stress as the change in the methods of instruction."¹³⁰

But forces lurked on the horizon that would fundamentally reshape the New Plan revolution. Over the course of the 1930s, criticisms began to emerge about the comprehensive examination system. In contrast to Boucher's optimism and Thurstone's scientism, several of the faculty leaders of the general education courses came to be deeply skeptical of the utility and broader rationale of comprehensive exams. For example,

129. Gideonse to Brumbaugh, October 31, 1935, p. 6, on the Social Science survey course, *ibid.*, Box 8, folder 2.

130. Gideonse to Boucher, June 9, 1933, *ibid.*, Box 6, folder 3.

Harry Gideonse of the Social Science course argued that the comprehensives encouraged cramming and a focus on memorizing the right answers instead of forcing students to think through more fundamental questions behind the answers. Also the annual preparation of the examinations had become a serious, time-consuming burden to the staff. Finally, Gideonse raised an even more formidable objection: “The real difficulty, however, does not lie in our own difficulties with the questions. It lies in our questioning of the reliability of such tests. It lies in our doubts of the type of intellectual interest which these questions provoke in the students. . . . [I]t might be wise to stress these doubts and to bear on the point of the relative unimportance of the type of examining, to the great improvements that have been made. The significant achievements lie in the integration of subject-matter, in requiring all students to take *all* of the basic requirements, in having them all do these things at the same time, which builds up a significant universe of discourse in our student body. The examinations should be a mere technical detail, experimental in character, increasingly questioned in their present form on the basis of the results of the experiment as they accumulate.”¹³¹

Gideonse’s views were increasingly shared by other faculty leaders, who came to see comprehensive examinations as having taken control of the New Plan, as having hijacked the ethos of the reforms, and even as working against the other, more fundamental intellectual goals and purposes of the New Plan. Harvey Lemon of the Physical Sciences course complained that “[s]tudents of a certain type are very alert to discover

131. Ibid., p. 3.

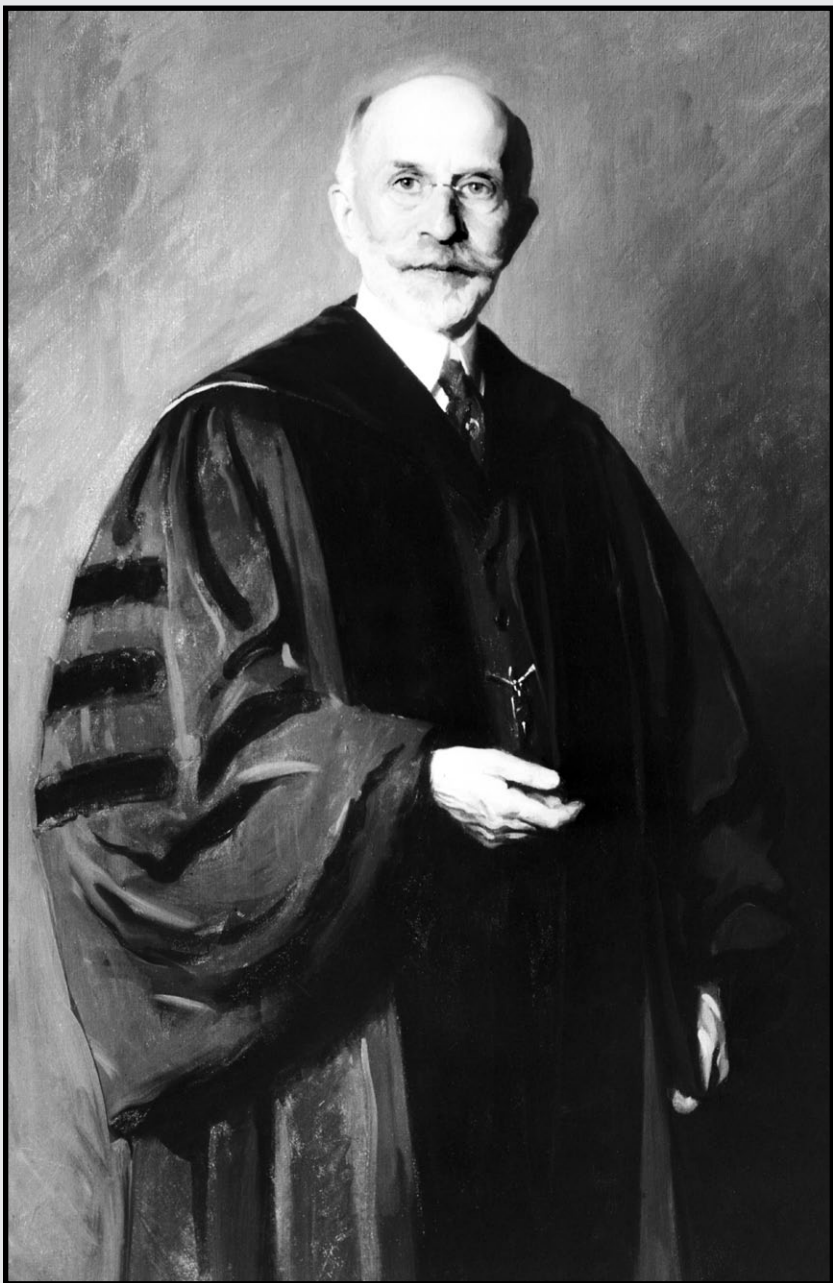


ways and means of 'beating' any system. We have corroborative testimony from the Social Science Division to support our experience, that not a few students each year deliberately totally neglect certain aspects of the year's work because they feel certain that they thereby do not jeopardize a passing grade in the comprehensive examination. . . . Since in some cases, notably in the second-year sequences, an entire quarter's work can be largely neglected, still without jeopardy to a passing grade on the year's comprehensive, it appears that a return to a modification of the old quarterly or similar examinations for record, as well as for the student's information, should be made."¹³² Similarly, Merle Coulter complained that the past comprehensive exams were available and that students made far too much of them: "It is regrettable, of course, that a good many students put too much of their effort upon the study of the old comprehensives and too little upon study of the course itself in the form in which it is offered."¹³³

Still, by the late 1930s the New Plan system of survey courses coupled with comprehensive examinations had achieved a functional equilibrium, and if no additional changes in the broader College curriculum had taken place to disturb that equilibrium, the comprehensives might still be an operative part of our curricular environment today. But radical changes in the wider curriculum were in the offing, and they would have a profound impact on the revolution that Boucher, Thurstone, and the other educational leaders of the early 1930s had put in place.

132. Lemon to Brumbaugh, June 22, 1936, *ibid.*, Box 8 folder 1.

133. Merle Coulter, "Report on Ten Years Experience with the Introductory General Course in the Biological Sciences," p. 19.



Albion W. Small, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Literature, 1905–1923

A REVOLUTION MANQUÉ:
ROBERT HUTCHINS, HARLAN
BARROWS, AND
GRADUATE EDUCATION

In January 1925, the University of Chicago was the beneficiary of extravagant praise relating to the quality of its graduate programs. One of the first modern attempts to evaluate and rank modern American research universities, developed by President Raymond M. Hughes of Miami University, gave positive and encouraging news about Chicago's relative prestige among peer research universities, praising the graduate programs in the natural sciences and mathematics, but also ranking Economics, History, Sociology, Political Science, Classics, English, and Philosophy among the top five departments in their respective disciplines in the United States.¹³⁴ But all was not well in the minds of key insiders. After 1910 and especially after 1918, several prominent senior faculty offered criticisms about aspects of graduate education at Chicago. One of the most notable critics was Albion W. Small, the founder of the Department of Sociology at Chicago and one of the most distinguished of Harper's original group of new full professors hired in the early 1890s. In addition to his activities as a scholar, editor, and teacher, Small was also deeply knowledgeable about the University's early graduate programs, since he served as the dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Literature from 1905 to 1923. During his deanship, Small encountered diverse problems related to individual graduate students, but he occasionally stood back and formulated more general critiques of the

134. Raymond M. Hughes, *A Study of the Graduate Schools of America* (Oxford, Ohio, 1925).

system itself. Thus in December 1914, Small complained to Harry Pratt Judson, "I am convinced that for the last ten years or so there has been a distinct tendency among graduate students in Arts and Literature away from zeal for knowledge itself and toward mere interest in getting a degree. Of course I am at the clearing house of this tendency. Students are coming to me almost daily with the question: Is it going to be necessary for me to get another half minor credit in order to get my degree? I very seldom have interviews with graduate students who ask the question: How can I go more thoroughly and comprehensively into the field of my subject? I do not think that any single factor is chargeable with this situation. Of course I do not think that any single move that we might make could remedy it. I think, however, that a tremendous stimulus might be brought to bear, especially upon our social science students, if one or two rather young and correspondingly enthusiastic men of fine equipment might be enlisted in the Political Science Department. It seems to me that they might galvanize the rest of the group into more stimulating action. . . . I wish we could get hold of one or two or three thoroughly stimulating young men in Political Science, and I believe that they could do more than additions at any other point in our faculty at the present to give us all a new lease of life."¹³⁵

Shortly before retiring from the graduate deanship, Small composed a valedictory memorandum in late February 1923 arguing that much that passed for graduate education at Chicago was simple positivism, that students were being required to learn more about less, and that most disciplines had barricaded themselves against allied domains, so that graduate students in History knew nothing about Political Science or Sociology and the reverse. Small had a long list of grievances and

135. Small to Judson, December 16, 1914, *HJB Administrations*, Box 47, folder 6.



complaints, from the narrow preparation of candidates admitted to graduate school to the narrow ways in which they were trained once they arrived: "We flatter ourselves that the dullest student could not get a college and divinity degree today with as little agitation of the surface of his stupidity as was actual in any case. But I *know* it is true that for thirty years men have taken Doctor's degrees in each of our departments, some of whom had no more adequate conception of the ranges of specialization involved in adequate investigation of the human process than I had forty-five years ago of what a decently educated man should know about the history of the human race." But Small was concerned with larger structural and ideological issues as well. He was convinced that the departments had evolved into silos with no common understanding of the largest and most interesting intellectual issues that they needed to confront: "It is possible for a man to take his Doctor's degree in any one of our five departments without enough understanding of the technique of any other department in the group to inform him when and where his competence as a specialist ends and where floundering as an amateur begins. To the extent that our students allow themselves to be misled by this possibility we are guilty of putting our stamp of approval upon men who are intellectual abortions from the standpoint of modern standards of methodology. To express it in a comparative way—we assume that our Doctor's Degree in either of the departments of our group represents ability to conduct independent research into human relations on the level of the most sophisticated social science methods that have been developed. In actual fact, our training at present compares unfavorably with that now given for the practice of medicine at Johns Hopkins and Harvard and in our own, undeveloped Medical School. . . . Under our present procedure it is only the exceptional student who gets an equally effective consciousness that in the incomparably more complex matter

of social diagnosis, a parallel cooperation of research techniques is necessary. Not only that, but we have as yet in our social science graduate school nothing comparable with interns' opportunities to supplement the lower degree grades of training by actual experience in observing concentration of the actual techniques of diagnosis upon real cases.”

Small also worried that the curriculum offered to graduate students in such departments was too heavy with regurgitated information in formal classroom settings and too little training in interdisciplinary research skills: “I would call for prayerful reconsideration of the fundamental principle that a graduate school is primarily not for spreading information, but for teaching methods. We waste a ruinous proportion of our time feeding graduate students with ‘spoon-vittles’. We deal out predigested food of information which they might better go without till they have grown the guts to find out the facts for themselves. It should be a crime against academic law and order to tell a graduate student anything that he is capable of discovering. It should be another crime to leave a graduate student under the illusion of innocence if he didn’t get busy and find out the next thing that he needs to know. . . . We should hold students responsible for getting out of their own reading much that we now try to stamp down into their brains by class room drill.”

Small belonged to a generation of scholars, born in the second and third quarters of the 19th century, who as young men had been trained in the classical canon of the 19th-century college, but who had then moved beyond that canon to embrace modern scientific research and to institutionalize the professionalizing tendencies associated with the emergence of *Wissenschaft* as the new identity for the modern university, based on powerful disciplinary units. But having accomplished this transformation, they were dissatisfied with the field-based particularism that they had wrought.



Nowhere in the memorandum did Small give attention to the kind of future employment prospects that the graduate students might obtain as a valid issue in thinking about the kinds of educational practices that should define programs of graduate education. Small's most profound hope was that if graduate study trained gifted and talented researchers and that if such research confronted timely and important social issues, it was bound to be for the good of society: "It is misappropriation of public funds and prostitution of personal powers to pose as a scholar unless one hopes and believes that one's work will at last contribute to knowledge of how to live. Truth for truth's sake is as ghastly a lie as eating for eating's sake. Our colleague Breasted isn't studying mummies because his interest ends in mummies. His last thought is of live folks, and he hopes to find in the remains of live folks of three-thousand years ago something that will help live folks to be wiser to themselves in all future time."¹³⁶

As Martin Bulmer has noted, Small's intervention came at a time when other Chicago social scientists like Charles Merriam, Robert Park, and Leon C. Marshall were also proposing more collaborative research structures and interdisciplinary approaches, which would have an impact on the way in which doctoral education was both conducted and experienced. Inevitably, changes in graduate education would be encouraged or discouraged in the face of strong leadership on the part of the president and the various deans, and the different perspectives of Harry Pratt Judson and Ernest Dewitt Burton about undergraduate education

136. Albion Small, "What Should Be the Ideal of Our Own Graduate School of Social Science?" February 28, 1923, *HJB Administrations*, Box 47, folder 6. For the background to this memo, see Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology*, pp. 130–134. Small himself insisted that the ideas in his memorandum dated to before World War I, having been the subject of a series of lectures to graduate students in sociology and published in his *The Meaning of Social Science* (Chicago, 1910).



Gordon L. Laing, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Literature, 1923–1930

were bound to have an impact on local campus thinking on graduate education, defining two poles around which much intense discussion was to play out.

Among the faction of senior faculty who believed that Judson was right and Burton was wrong was Gordon Laing, an influential and vocal senior classicist who was originally hired as a junior professor of Latin in 1899 and promoted to full professor in 1913. Laing also served as the general editor of the University of Chicago Press from 1908 to 1940. In mid 1923, Laing succeeded Small as dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Literature. Sensing Burton's inclinations to support substantial investments in undergraduate education, Gordon Laing lobbied for the appointment of a Committee on Graduate Education in January 1924, whose mandate it was to survey the condition of graduate student education and propose possible new investments.¹³⁷ Laing was worried about a possible decline in Chicago's research luster, given the retirements of leading scholars of the first generation. Laing also wanted the committee to address the financing of graduate schools and the priorities to be given for the hiring of future faculty appointees. He also hoped that his committee would propose "such changes in the present system as will differentiate the Graduate Schools more sharply from the Colleges in methods, curriculum, standards and staff and result in the development of Schools more exclusively devoted to scholarship and research."¹³⁸

137. Laing explicitly mentioned his concern that graduate education not be left behind as the University debated ideas for strengthening the undergraduate program: "It seems to me important that this study of the Graduate School should be carried on at the same time as the study of the undergraduate situation by the Commission which is already at work." Laing to Burton, January 15, 1924, *HJB Administrations*, Box 47, folder 6.

138. Laing to Burton, March 5, 1924, *ibid.*

The result of the committee's deliberations was a long, rather sprawling document lacking both the logic and the passion of Small's memorandum and including everything from subtle attacks on the current population of undergraduate students to pleas to build a special clubhouse for graduate students and to reduce faculty teaching obligations. Its principal recommendations involved both a proposed diminishment of the role of undergraduate education at the University of Chicago and a recommitment by the faculty to a form of graduate education that was primarily, if not exclusively to be directed by the ideal of training researchers (as opposed to teachers). Laing's committee also proposed restricting graduate training to one department, and not allowing students to pursue secondary interests. The master's degree was to be maintained as a research degree, with a thesis, even though Laing admitted that the great majority of the students who took the degree would become secondary school teachers (to do otherwise would be "a frank admission that in the Graduate School of the University of Chicago vocational aims take precedence over training in the technique and ideals of scholarship.") In the future graduate courses should be evaluated with Passed or Failed, rather than letter grades, as a way of differentiating them from undergraduate courses. Graduate student programs for doctoral students would be highly individualized, with no standard curriculum for all students, but focused on their specific research interests: "The curriculum for each student shall be arranged by the department with the approval of the Dean." In essence, a student's research topic would drive his or her selection of courses, not the reverse. Instruction and thus formal classroom teaching would be subordinated to the job of training students in research methods. Faculty too would profit in that the committee recommended that "accomplishment in research" would become "the primary qualification for appointments and promotions"

and that “productive [faculty] members” should be relieved of “[teaching] duties which interfere with their research activities.” Laing’s report specifically recommended that “an enlargement of the University’s policy, so that research may in certain cases be officially recognized as the major duty and teaching as voluntary or subordinate.”¹³⁹

Laing’s logic was not driven by any new substantive conception of interdisciplinary work such as Albion Small’s and Charles Merriam’s. It was an appeal for more resources and more time off for senior faculty to pursue research at the expense of teaching, however the word “research” might be defined.¹⁴⁰ Other than passing suggestions about restructuring Ph.D. exams, the memo actually headed in a direction opposed to Albion Small’s concerns by playing down the value of courses that graduate students might take outside their research area and by urging that they should avoid courses not directly relevant to their dissertation project. Nor did Laing’s ambivalence toward undergraduate education at Chicago change much over time. In his annual report on the Graduate School of Arts and Literature in 1930, Laing was intractable on this issue:

139. “Report on the Graduate Schools,” pp. 4–6, 7–8, 48–49, 53, *ibid.*, folders 7–8. Although Laing personally believed that it would actually be best if younger College students were removed from campus, the final version of the report settled on the idea of moving the first two years of the College into a totally separate budget operation, one that would have to be financially self-sustaining on its own income resources. This showed the committee’s naiveté about University finances, since such a move would have reduced, rather than enhanced the funds available to support faculty research, given the low costs of providing such instruction and the steady tuition income paid by the undergraduates.

140. Laing’s real goal, about which he was publicly vocal, was to reduce senior faculty teaching loads by 50 percent, from six courses a year to three per year. See “The Graduate School of Arts and Literature,” *The President’s Report, Covering the Academic Year July 1, 1923, to June 30, 1924* (Chicago, 1925), p. 9.

"Perhaps the unsatisfactory condition of graduate schools in this country today is ultimately due to the fact that the original plan, which has been followed ever since, of attaching a German system of advanced work to the American college is fundamentally unsound and constitutes an educational hybrid that can never prosper."¹⁴¹

The death of Ernest DeWitt Burton and the short intermission of Max Mason's presidency resulted in little institutional reaction to Gordon Laing's report. Just as Walter Prescott's musings about the future of the colleges were filed away, so too were Laing's recommendations about the graduate programs. Sometime after Burton's death, a report was prepared for the board of trustees trying to reconcile both the Prescott and Laing reports, and it had difficulty in doing so with any plausible consistency.¹⁴² Ironically, Burton had proved much more sympathetic toward Small's and Merriam's ideas of collaborative empirical research than had Judson, and it was during Burton's presidency that the University solicited support from the Rockefeller charities to create the Local Community Research Committee, which was to have a powerful transformational impact on graduate education in the social sciences at Chicago in the late 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, it was Burton who intervened forcefully to keep Charles Merriam at Chicago in the spring of 1923, in the face of an attractive offer from Columbia University, thus repudiating the personal jealousy and professional hostility that Judson had manifested toward Merriam

141. *The President's Report. Covering the Academic Year July 1, 1929 to June 30, 1930* (Chicago, 1931), p. 5.

142. "Recapitulation of Outstanding Points in the Report of the Commission on the Colleges and in the Report of the Commission on the Graduate Schools," *College Archive*, Box 1, folder 14.

since Merriam's appointment to Chicago in 1909.¹⁴³

The question of reforming graduate education reemerged in 1929 at the University of Chicago when Robert Hutchins appeared on campus. Just as he was interested in improving collegiate instruction, Hutchins also took an early interest in the quality of the education received by graduate students and particularly the training (or lack of training) that they received to be capable, if not excellent teachers. Hence in early December 1929, the young president wrote a stunningly candid memorandum to the deans advocating radical changes in graduate education, including greater preparation for college teaching, the awarding of the existing Ph.D. only to graduate students who would go on to teaching careers, and the creation of a new doctoral degree for those who wished to become "productive scholars." Using the presidential "we" in a highly directive fashion, Hutchins insisted, "We are agreed that we wish to provide better education for college teachers and better opportunities for men who are qualified and interested in becoming creative scholars. We are agreed that the present curriculum looking toward the Ph.D. is unsatisfactory for both groups. It does not sufficiently differentiate between them; it does not give much understanding of teaching problems to those who plan to teach; it does not give enough chance at independent work to those who plan to make their chief contribution through independent work. These two groups are not good and bad, superior and inferior, desirable and undesirable. They are simply different. The public recognition given them should indicate that they are different; otherwise we do an injustice to both groups. If we give each the same degree, the research man is passed off as prepared for college teaching and is given no insignia of his peculiar training; and the

143. See Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp. 140–143.

prospective teacher is passed off as a research man and receives no indication that he is prepared for college teaching. Furthermore, we must make it plain to our colleagues, our students, and the academic world that we propose to do two things on the graduate level. I know of no other way in which this can be effectively done than through the granting of different degrees for different types of effort."

Hutchins then suggested that "that we award the Ph.D. to qualified students who plan to become college teachers, and different degrees, for instance the Sc.D. and the L.H.D., to qualified students who plan to become productive scholars."¹⁴⁴ In essence, Hutchins was suggesting that the departments should take training of college *teachers* far more seriously than they had heretofore imagined, so much so that he was prepared to challenge the fundamental structures of academic achievement established over the course of the 19th century.

Hutchins's radical probing on the issue of college teacher preparation took place after several public interventions by various college and university leaders in the 1920s urging that American graduate schools pay more attention to the effective training of college teachers.¹⁴⁵ The Hughes Report of 1925, although it is now remembered as one of the first vehicles for assessing the prestige of the American research

144. Letter of December 9, 1929, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 96, folder 2.

145. See F. J. Kelly, "The Training of College Teachers," *Journal of Educational Research*, 16 (1927): 332–341; Melvin E. Haggerty, "The Improvement of College Instruction," *School and Society*, 27 (1928): 25–36; Floyd W. Reeves, "A Critical Summary and Analysis of Current Efforts to Improve College Teaching," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 11 (1928): 65–71; Michael Chiappetta, "A Recurrent Problem: The Professional Preparation of College Teachers," *History of Education Journal*, 4 (1952): 18–24; and Carter V. Good, *Teaching in College and University. A Survey of the Problems and Literature in Higher Education* (Baltimore, 1929).



universities, in fact offered a stunning critique of the lack of interest that graduate programs in the United States had shown in preparing their students to be effective teachers. Speaking from the perspective of a small college president, Hughes argued, "I feel that there has been entirely too much of a tendency toward highly specialized study in the graduate schools. We in the colleges are looking for men of broad, sound training in their fields, with enthusiasm for the general subject and a wide, generous interest in related subjects, rather than for men of a highly specialized training who express a lack of interest or even contempt for other phases of their own subject, to say nothing of the related fields of knowledge. I believe that the graduate schools should place more emphasis on thoroughness and breadth of training for the majority of their graduate students who are planning to teach, rather than such great emphasis on a detailed mastery of a highly specialized field." Hughes also decried the fact that "not a few [Ph.D.s] are coming somewhat imbued with the idea that students are a nuisance and interfere with work, that teaching methods are unworthy of serious thought, that anybody who knows can teach, and a good many other ideas which are only half-truths or are wrong."¹⁴⁶

In response to such concerns, the Association of American Colleges, representing over 400 teaching colleges in the United States, created in 1927 a Commission on Enlistment and Training of College Teachers, which issued a report in 1928 urging that graduate schools pay more attention to training for students who aspired to teaching careers, arguing, "[W]e have discovered that a great many college officials are under the impression that the methods of training adopted by graduate schools and schools of education of graduate rank are unsatisfactory and inadequate so far as they apply to the training of prospective college teachers"

146. Hughes, *A Study of the Graduate Schools of America*, pp. 7–8.

and urging that "the graduate schools . . . face the seriousness of the problem of efficient teaching in the colleges in the hope that they may recast some of their methods and some of their ideals, and put forth their best efforts toward a study of effective college teaching in the various departments."¹⁴⁷ The University of Chicago had a direct connection to this effort, since the former dean of the Colleges and current president of Oberlin College, Ernest H. Wilkins was one of its central leaders.¹⁴⁸ The commission developed a long and detailed critique of existing practices, called *Educating the Educators*, and recommended that graduate schools pay serious and focused attention to the problem of preparing doctoral students to be effective college-level teachers.¹⁴⁹

The responses of the deans to Robert Hutchins's intervention to reform graduate education at Chicago were all over the map. Gordon Laing of the Humanities predictably was the most conservative, arguing against the creation of a new degree and proposing instead that Ph.D. candidates simply take a couple of education courses and that they also be allowed to have more teaching experience in the undergraduate College. Given Laing's previously expressed desire to release regular

147. See O. E. Randall, "Enlistment and Training of College Teachers," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, 14 (1928): 329–337, here 335, 337; *Bulletin of Association of American Colleges*, 10 (1929): 41–42; Walter Crosby Eells, "A University Course on 'The American College,'" *Journal of Higher Education*, 9 (1938): 141–144.

148. See Ernest Hatch Wilkins, "College Teaching," *School and Society*, 26 (1927): 567–571.

149. These interventions were part of a broader critique of teaching in the research universities that emerged in the 1920s. See Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University. Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago, 1996), pp. 202–206, 250–252.



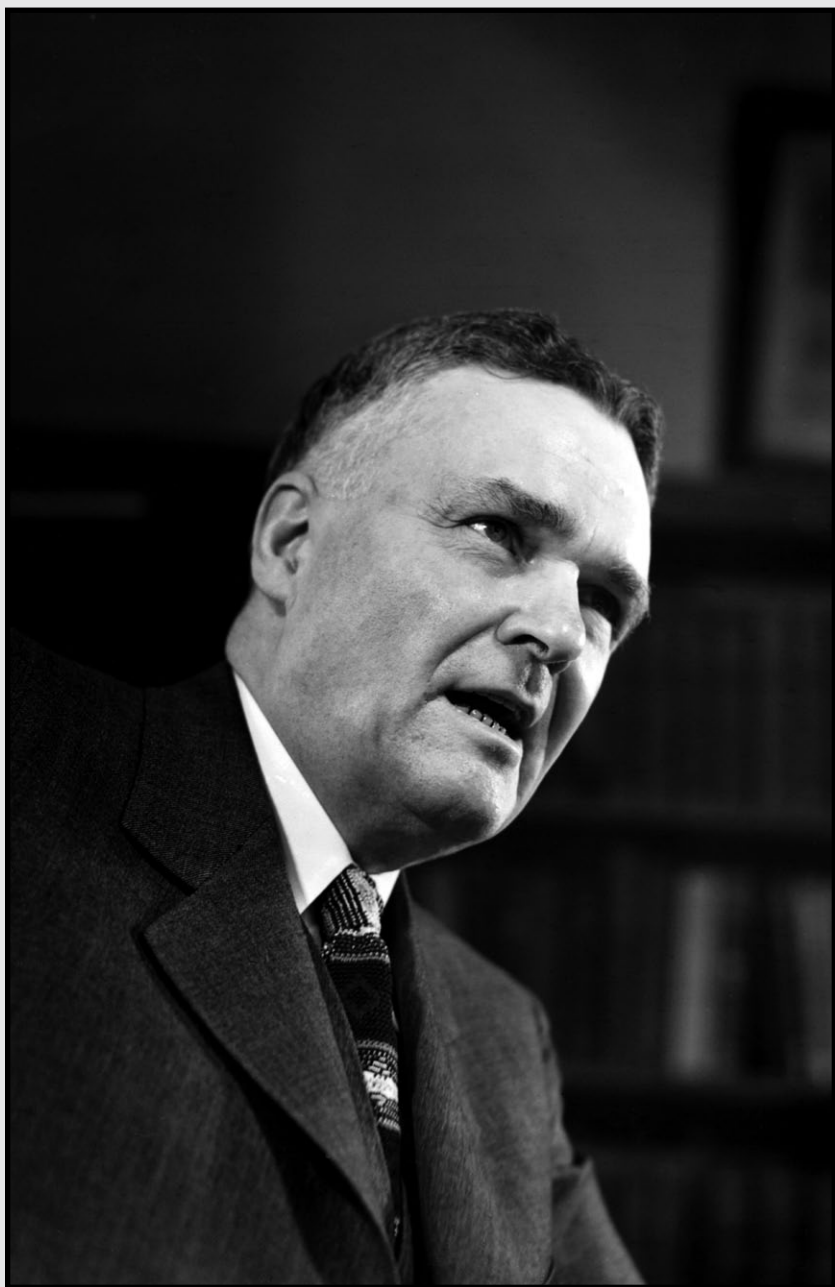
faculty from their teaching obligations, this was a clever way to pacify Hutchins while also achieving his real goals. Henry Gale of the Physical Sciences reacted in a more radical fashion, suggesting that course requirements and research expectations for the Ph.D. be reduced to seven or eight quarters of residence, that doctorates be awarded on the basis of shorter and less ambitious research exercises, and that graduate students interested in teaching careers then be required to take an additional year of disciplinary-based and educational theory courses that would result in their being certified as college teachers. Graduate students interested in research careers would be appointed as postdoctoral fellows and given support to undertake and write up more ambitious research projects. Essentially, Gale was proposing a move toward a soft version of the two-stage system employed in German universities, differentiating between the Ph.D. and the Habilitation.

Charles Judd, the dean of the School of Education, wrote the most provocative response. Judd agreed with Gale that one fundamental issue facing Chicago was structural, in that the Americans had imported the idea of the German doctorate without the subsequent screening and evaluation process associated with the Habilitation. In Germany, individuals who received Ph.D.s were hired as assistant teachers, but were not considered to be regular faculty members until they had completed a major research project and had already assembled a record of successful teaching. No one became a regular faculty member in Germany who had not proven himself on both fronts, but in the United States faculty positions were given to “immature and untried men” who were “rushed into positions where intellectual leadership is expected, and because of narrow specialization and pressure to attempt the teaching of many subjects, these immature men fail, and their students come to graduate schools without scholarly equipment.” But Judd was also deeply critical

of the quality of many of the graduate students admitted to Chicago, arguing that “many of our graduate students are wholly incompetent to carry on high grade work. I am clear that we should use our resources as soon as it is at all possible to do so to select drastically from those who apply for admission to the graduate school.” Instead, Judd proposed a complex process of introducing more rigorous admissions standards, to be followed by the creation of a system of postdoctoral fellowships to reward graduate students who were especially talented at research.

Finally, on behalf of the College, Chauncey Boucher responded that he was not opposed to Hutchins’s scheme of creating two different doctoral degrees and that “such a step would give us a strategic advantage in placing our candidates in attractive college positions, since college administrators, whether in independent colleges or in colleges organized within universities, are giving an increasing amount of attention to the interest, training, and capacity of applicants in regard to teaching.” But Boucher also argued that Hutchins might accomplish the same result and still retain the single Ph.D. degree if the departments were willing to revise their curricula so as to build into them a serious component dedicated to training in the methods and objectives of undergraduate teaching.¹⁵⁰ In a subsequent memo, Boucher repeated his willingness to support Hutchins’s initiative, but with one key proviso, namely, that local graduate students should not be given an additional role in undergraduate teaching on campus without the approval of the faculty of the College. Given Boucher’s previous concerns with badly trained graduate students being given extensive teaching responsibilities in the early

150. Judd to Hutchins, December 12, 1929; Gale to Hutchins, December 16, 1929; Laing to Hutchins, December 16, 1929; and Boucher to Hutchins, December 18, 1929, and February 1, 1930, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 96, folder 2.



Harlan H. Barrows, Professor, Department of Geography

1920s, his major adversary here was not Hutchins but Gordon Laing.¹⁵¹

Hutchins continued to probe, however, and in mid-January 1930 he pushed the deans to agree to a set of general principles to the effect that "we shall graduate nobody with a higher degree whom we cannot unqualifiedly endorse either as a research worker or a college teacher or both; we should devise different curricula for the two groups, in the expectation that a few students might pursue both; we should give different designations to those who are prepared for college teaching."¹⁵² In spite of warnings from Henry Gale that he should first discuss his ideas with the chairs of the departments, in February 1930 Hutchins asked the University Senate to create a high-level committee to explore basic questions involving the future of graduate education, including the preparation for teaching, in hopes that his general principles would be codified in legislation.¹⁵³ The committee was headed by Harlan H. Barrows, a professor in and chair of the Department of Geography. Its other members, all of whom were also full professors, were Anton J. Carlson of Physiology, Harry A. Millis of Economics, William H. Taliaferro of Biology, Algernon Coleman of French, Frank N. Freeman of Education, and James R. Hulbert of English. Barrows brought three great advantages to his position of chair. Having taken both his undergraduate and doctoral degrees at Chicago, Barrows was a distinguished scholar of American geography, one whose research credentials were both impeccable and unimpeachable. He was also a highly successful and much sought after teacher on both graduate and undergraduate levels, and had developed a famous introductory course that became a national model

151. Boucher to Hutchins, February 1, 1930, *ibid.*

152. Hutchins to Gale, Laing, Judd, and Boucher, January 30, 1930, *ibid.*

153. Gale to Hutchins, February 8, 1930, *ibid.*



for the teaching of the geography of the United States. Finally, Barrows had made an effort to improve the training of graduate students for teaching in his own department, so, in contrast to the jaundiced views of men like Gordon Laing, his bona fides and sincerity were clear and evident.¹⁵⁴ In a word, Barrows was someone whom Hutchins might have seen as an ally, not as an opponent or as an obfuscator. One of Hutchins's perennial political problems over the course of his presidency was that, in his propensity to overreach himself on issues about which he cared deeply, he alienated not only extremists like Laing and Dodd, but more centrist faculty who did like teaching undergraduates but who were uneasy about Hutchins's increasingly radical views of undergraduate education and whose alienation on that topic tended to bleed over into a more general unease with Hutchins's institutional leadership in other domains.

Barrows was a man of energy and initiative, and his committee launched three surveys to inform their work that were quite remarkable. The first was a questionnaire sent to all departments, asking a detailed inventory of 23 questions about curricular arrangements, teaching practices, and learning outcomes relating to graduate students. The second was a survey of 1,300 former graduate students who had received their doctorates from the University between 1900 and 1929. A third survey

154. See Harlan H. Barrows, "The Specific Professional Training at the University of Chicago of Prospective Teachers of Geography in Colleges, Universities, and Teacher-Training Institutions," in William S. Gray, ed., *The Training of College Teachers Including Their Preliminary Preparation and In-Service Improvement* (Chicago, 1930), pp. 113–119. On Barrows, see William A. Koelsch, "The Historical Geography of Harlan H. Barrows," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 59 (1969): 632–651; Robert S. Platt, "Harlan H. Barrows," *Geographical Review*, 51 (1961): 139–141; and Charles C. Colby and Gilbert F. White, "Harlan H. Barrows, 1877–1960," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 51 (1961): 395–400.

was sent to university and college presidents who employed about 400 graduates in academic positions, the students having graduated between 1920 and 1928.

The committee assembled a mass of information from all of these sources and many individual commentaries submitted by individual members of the faculty as well. In sum, this was the most detailed and exhaustive inventory of the education of graduate students that the University of Chicago has ever conducted, then or since. The committee found that few presidents had any concerns about the scholarly training and credentials of the graduate students whom they had hired, but many noted problems of teaching preparation or performance. The committee concluded that “their reports on personal defects and specific weaknesses in teaching again raise questions (1) as to whether some students have not been recommended for teaching position in higher institutions who were clearly unsuited by their personalities for the work involved; and (2) as to whether more attention should not be given, in training prospective teachers, to the technical problems of university and college instruction.”¹⁵⁵ As for the survey of individual graduates, the committee found that the great majority of respondents had jobs that required either research and teaching (39 percent) or teaching exclusively (29 percent) and only 10 percent were engaged in research activities with no teaching responsibilities. The data demonstrated that more than two-thirds of graduates had a very positive view of the University and the research training that they had received, but that a significant minority wished that they had more formal training in teaching (“no other

155. “Senate Committee on Graduate Study and Graduate Degrees: Responses of Presidents of Universities and Colleges,” [1931], pp. 4–5, *College Archive*, Box 15, folder 5.



suggestion was made by so many graduates as the one that ‘more attention be given to the problems of teaching’”).¹⁵⁶

Finally, the responses of the individual departments revealed vast differences in actual course work requirements and in other key policy areas, so much so that the committee commented that “to be sure, the subjects of graduate study are so diversified in character that uniform, or even similar, practices in all departments are neither feasible nor desirable, at least in matters of detail. Nevertheless, the extent to which current practices differ among departments in closely related fields is surprisingly great.”¹⁵⁷

Using these materials, the Barrows committee then crafted a judicious report that proposed a range of recommendations. The first and most prominent suggestion was that admissions criteria and standards for the admission of graduate students should be both increased and made more systematic (this in spite of the fact that departmental opinion was, in fact, quite diverse concerning the desirability of selective admission on the graduate level, with 22 departments in favor but ten opposed and three either noncommittal or divided). The committee also recommended that graduate programs be made more flexible and individualized, so that graduate students might opt for different ways to prepare themselves for their desired careers, assuming that all students would receive a minimum of necessary training in research skills and

156. “Report to the President and Senate of the University of Chicago, May 16, 1931,” p. 6, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 96, folder 3.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 4. A detailed, 100-page summary of the responses of the departments was submitted by the committee to the University Senate on November 5, 1930. Barrows also prepared a separate report on the responses of the departments about teacher preparation (or the lack thereof), which he sent to Frederic Woodward on June 25, 1930.

substantive knowledge. Essentially, Barrows had accepted Boucher's idea that departments might allow students within the same doctoral program to develop differential training tracks, based on considerations of future career outcomes. On the issue of preparation for teaching, the committee declined to support Hutchins's proposal for the creation of new doctoral degrees, assuming that its call for greater flexibility and individuality in the articulation of the existing programs for the Ph.D. would respond to the problems that Hutchins and the college presidents had identified. They also pointed out that the majority of graduate students aimed at careers that combined teaching and research, and creating two separate degrees would logically result in the absurd situation that such students would have to pass the requirements of both: "Doubtless in the future, just as in the past, many doctoral students, if indeed not most of them, will want to prepare for both types of work and to earn the support of the University in securing positions involving both. In order to accomplish these things under a two-degree system, it apparently would be necessary for them to take both degrees."¹⁵⁸ The committee did suggest that it would be desirable if each Department hired at least one faculty member who was both interested in and competent to provide teaching training to the graduate students in his or her department, and it also recommended that the Department of Education be asked to create a course on the contemporary system of American higher education which would "orient the prospective university or college teacher in the *general field* of his future work. It should prove of value to all departments in preparing students for careers in universities and colleges." At the same time, the committee offered a mild rebuke to Laing's idea of increasing the number of graduate students teaching in

158. Ibid., p. 12–13.

the College, insisting that “undergraduates should be protected from an undue amount of practice teaching by graduate students; they, too, are entitled to the best training that the University can provide.”¹⁵⁹

In the end, apart from their call for more rigorous admissions criteria and scrutiny, Barrows and his colleagues thus came down firmly in favor of strong departmental autonomy over the individual graduate programs, while urging that the departments actually use the freedom that they had to assemble more flexible programs: “A standardized curriculum for prospective research workers and another for prospective university or college teachers would not suffice, in the opinion of the committee, whether planned for the University as a whole, for Divisions as units, or even for individual departments. The requisite programs of study, so elastic as to be suited both to individual needs and to different objectives, can be planned effectively only by each department for its own doctoral students, or by the latter with the advice of the department.”¹⁶⁰

With the completion of the Barrows Report the saga of possible reforms on the graduate side of the University of Chicago came temporarily to a halt. Robert Hutchins’s intervention to reform graduate education had come out of the blue, with no prior precedents on our campus, unlike the New Plan reforms, for which Boucher had been lobbying since 1927 and which had substantial (although not universal) faculty support. Hence, this initiative was a strike in the dark, and its chances of success were bound to be minimal. Hutchins had other political fish to fry in the early 1930s, and confronted with the massive database and careful procedures of the Barrows Committee, it was probably clear to him that his chances of pushing the departments into such

159. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 20–21.

160. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

a radical reform of their graduate programs were next to nil. Moreover, by 1931–32 Hutchins was basking in the early successes of the new College program, and his political attention continued to focus on the College for the rest of the decade, as he began to push at those features of the New Plan that he wanted to (still further) reform. In the end, Hutchins did succeed in pushing through the truly radical reforms of 1942 that I will describe in the next section of this paper.

Still, did the departments follow Barrows’ prescriptions about encouraging greater individuality and autonomy within their doctoral programs, especially for students interested in careers in teaching? It seems unlikely that any such change was implemented. A. J. Brumbaugh, the acting dean of the College after Boucher left Chicago to become president of the University of West Virginia in 1936, complained in late 1937 that the departments had done little to prepare doctoral students for new forms of general education teaching opportunities that were emerging in the 1930s. He reported to Hutchins that “one of the serious problems with which institutions that have ventured into this new type of general education are confronted is the securing of adequately trained faculty members. I have been impressed with the repeated requests from administrators of these colleges for the names of candidates who have a broad enough background in the social science field to teach an introductory course at the college level. Similar requests have been made for candidates in the sciences and the humanities. The University of Chicago is one of the first institutions to which they look for teachers well prepared for this new type of instruction. It seems to me that we are confronted with the alternatives of either declaring to the public that we are making no effort to prepare teachers in the field of general education at the college level, or reorganizing our programs, particularly at the Master’s degree level, so as to provide the breadth of



training that such teachers need.”¹⁶¹ Interestingly, one of the few innovations in this domain came from the College, where proposals emerged in the fall of 1936 to the effect that half-time teaching apprentices should be hired among local graduate students who would be able to succeed existing discussion leaders in the general education survey courses and have a year to learn the course: “Since our introductory courses are unique, the new instructors added to the staff have been without previous experience in courses of a similar nature. A year or two of local experience is then usually necessary to bring the instructor’s teaching efficiency up to the level desired. During this ‘break in’ period the [College] students are suffering from inferior teaching. . . . To be effective the breaking-in process should include some actual practice teaching.”¹⁶²

The 1920s and 1930s also saw the emergence of intellectual traditions and cultural-pedagogical practices in graduate education among several prominent Chicago departments that demonstrated revolutionary changes on the scholarly front, but that also made it all the more difficult for any administrator to impugn the professional effectiveness of the individual graduate programs. This was particularly evident in the Social Sciences. The professional impact of the Field Studies seminar and of strong ethnographic training programs in the Department of Sociology, led by Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess; the emergence of a disciplined program of graduate training in Economics, centered on Economics 301 taught by Jacob Viner and Frank Knight; the self-conscious strategy of Charles E. Merriam in Political Science to expand doctoral production (between 1920 and 1940 the

161. Brumbaugh to Hutchins, October 6, 1937, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 53, folder 3.

162. Memo dated November, 1936, *College Archive*, Box 6, folder 9.

department awarded 80 doctorates, a vast increase over its record of 13 doctorates between 1892 and 1920) under the aegis of a new science of urban politics—these and similar innovations contributed to the emergence of the so-called Chicago Schools, at the heart of which lay not only the scholarly innovations of leading senior faculty, but also the cultivation of what Melvin W. Reder has variously called (for Economics) “a particular intellectual style among Chicago Ph.D.’s” and “the Chicago style of thought” among several generations of Chicago doctoral students.¹⁶³ Slowly, an autonomous graduate student academic culture also emerged, with many doctoral students coming to interact with each other and rely on each other, often during their course-based training or in the context of organizations like the Society for Social Research in Sociology (founded in 1920 by Robert Park) and in shared residential

163. Melvin W. Reder, “Chicago Economics: Permanence and Change,” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 20 (1982): 5, 9; Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology. Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 95–96, 117, 130–131; 172, 215; Mary Jo Deegan, “The Chicago School of Ethnography,” in Paul Atkinson et al., *Handbook of Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2001), pp. 12–14; Barry D. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp. 147–156. Deegan portrays Robert E. Park as having been particularly influential in constituting a dense (“durable and effective”) network of intellectual-social interactions with and among his doctoral students (p. 19). To the extent that similar networks evolved elsewhere in the Social Sciences, it is arguable that such pedagogical innovations had a lasting imprint in creating corporate identity within selected graduate programs that was not present before 1920. The various interviews assembled by James T. Carey in 1972 with senior sociologists who had studied with Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess in the 1920s and early 1930s often stressed the collegial and collaborative nature of their interactions with other graduate students. See James T. Carey, *Sociology and Public Affairs. The Chicago School* (Beverly Hills, CA, 1975), pp. 153–159, and the actual transcripts of his interviews in *University of Chicago. Department of Sociology. Interviews 1972*, Special Collections Research Center.



experiences at the International House (which opened in September 1932).¹⁶⁴ One former graduate student from Sociology who went on to a distinguished career at the University of Chicago and later at the University of California at Berkeley, Herbert Blumer, later recalled that “those who were engaged in that type of work in the late twenties particularly, in the very beginning of the thirties were constituted a group of graduate students with a tremendous amount of camaraderie and a tremendous amount of close contact with one another, due in large measure to their actual working setting. I would say there was a special set of rooms that has been set aside for this work and the students were all, that’s where there was depository, so to speak; where all the material was that had been collected. The students used to assemble together there. This plus the fact that the Institute for Social Research which you probably have heard of in the course of your investigations was an arrangement that had been brought into being primarily, of course, by [Robert] Park and as such tended to devote a great deal of its activity, particularly its meetings to consideration of these various types of field work which were being undertaken in the department.”¹⁶⁵

The dedication of the Social Science Research Building in December 1929, financed by the Rockefeller boards, was emblematic of the new authority, legitimacy, and prestige enjoyed by these programs. When Charles Merriam in his remarks at the dedication ceremony

164. Charles E. Merriam reported in 1934, “The International House continues to be a very important center for interchange of ideas among students, particularly on the graduate level. A considerable proportion of our students have made their residence in the House and have found this of very great value to them.” *Annual Report of the Political Science Department* (Chicago, 1934), p. 2.

165. Interview of James Carey with Herbert Blumer, May 22, 1972, p. 16, *University of Chicago. Department of Sociology. Interviews 1972.*

urged, "We are left with the solemn responsibility of realizing the high purposes to which this edifice is dedicated...we do not underestimate the task of advancing the social studies to a higher level of scientific attainment and human usefulness," he deliberately combined the themes of theoretical prowess and practical utility that gave graduate programs in the Social Sciences at Chicago an ever growing legitimacy in the period between 1918 and 1945.¹⁶⁶ As the scholarly impact of these doctoral programs at Chicago became more nationally recognized over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, it would prove even more difficult for a president to try to force changes upon them that they refused to willingly accept.

Local discussions about teaching and graduate education did not altogether die, for William S. Gray, a prominent member of the Department of Education, took up the cause of improving the preparation for college teaching by graduate students. Yet a conference that Gray organized in 1930 devoted to the training of graduate students to teach on the collegiate level revealed the hurdles that stood in the way of any serious reform. Gray invited both Gordon Laing and Henry Gale to speak, and both were theoretically sympathetic to improving teaching, but also made it clear that research had to remain the highest priority. In his truculent, but humorous way, Laing was also brutally candid about the basic norms and value structures of the research universities, even in the face of dismal teaching:

A colleague happened to have one of his students in a seminar and was going over his term paper with him. "This paper of yours," he said to the hapless youth, "is simply impossible. It

166. Charles E. Merriam, "A Word in Conclusion," *Charles E. Merriam Papers*, Box 120, folder 4.

would be a disgrace to a Sophomore. You had a four-year college course. Didn't you ever write a paper for any of your professors?" "Not one," said the student. "What were you doing all those years then?" asked the professor. "Attending recitations, listening to lectures, and getting up assigned readings," was the reply. "But you have been in this institution for more than a year. Haven't you ever made reports in any of the seminars?" "Only one, and that was in Professor Blank's seminar, and he went to sleep on me while I was reading it" (Please note the student's phrase "on me." It is the best example in the English language of what we Latinists call "the dative of disadvantage.") But it may be asked: Were the administrative officers of the department and of the university aware of this professor's method of conducting his classes? They were perfectly well aware of it. Did they reprimand him or seek his removal? They did not; they promoted him and increased his salary. And they were right in doing so; for while his system—if in a burst of optimism I may use the word—while his system of teaching was for the most part atrocious, yet he was so outstanding in research, wrote so much that redounded to the credit of the university, and through his reputation as a scholar attracted so many students to the department, that in spite of his pedagogical delinquencies he was a distinct asset to the institution."¹⁶⁷

In the face of such irony what more could be said?

167. Gordon J. Laing, "The Newer Educational Program and the Training of Teachers," in William S. Gray, ed., *The Training of College Teachers*, pp. 52–53.

Barrows's reasonable suggestions thus had little discernible impact. The constraints of the Depression became particularly acute after 1931, with budget reductions and hiring freezes, and this sense of growing constraint may have played a role in the lack of new initiatives and innovations. The lack of institutional movement should not necessarily be read as a general indifference toward the importance of quality teaching, for the University had many outstanding researchers on its faculty in the 1930s who were also highly effective teachers. Harlan Barrows's own career, in which influential teaching played a prominent role, suggested that the University had profited, as it would continue to profit, from the remarkable intellectual insights that are often experienced by students who are privileged to attend influential courses taught by highly motivated and even charismatic teachers. Barrows's course *The Historical Geography of the United States*, taught twice each year to graduate and advanced undergraduate students over 38 years until his retirement in 1942, became the model for other such courses at over 150 institutions of higher education throughout the United States.¹⁶⁸ In each generation of its history the University has had many such courses, most of them now sadly forgotten. Yet the traces of these courses in the lives of hundreds and hundreds of individual students were powerful.

Perhaps as a way of supporting Hutchins's concerns about improving the quality of teaching on campus, but in a less aggressive way, a prominent trustee, Ernest Quantrell, offered Hutchins an endowed fund of \$75,000 in May 1937 to provide for several teaching awards for

168. See Harlan H. Barrows, *Lectures on Historical Geography of the United States As Given in 1933*, ed. William A. Koelsch (Chicago, 1962); as well as Koelsch, "The Historical Geography of Harlan H. Barrows," p. 648.



faculty who did an outstanding job in collegiate instruction. For Quantrell, “[t]he purpose of the award is to interest teachers in training not only scholars and research workers, but also young men and women for intelligent and public spirited participation and leadership in business, civic, and professional life. I hope the award will result in constantly improving our faculty who teach undergraduates.”¹⁶⁹ Quantrell was not one of those alumni (and there were many) who were skeptical of Hutchins’s educational and institutional innovations. Rather, he was enlightened enough to take a chance on new ideas and to understand that universities are dynamic instruments of change. At the same time, Quantrell believed that it was possible for the University to be both intensely academic *and* supportive of the lives of our students in and beyond the classroom. Hence the hybridic quality of Quantrell’s commendation—he wanted to honor teachers who were great scholars and who produced skilled students, but also to honor teachers who in their persons would offer (to use a rather old-fashioned word) noble ideals and role models, and who would inspire our students to be more enlightened and more effective citizens of their communities and of our nation.

From 1938 to 1952, the awards were given anonymously, but in the latter year Ernest Quantrell agreed to the public disclosure of his name as the patron of the awards. Although Ernest Quantrell created the teaching awards, they bear the names of his father and mother. Since 1954, their official title has been the Llewellyn John and Harriet Manchester Quantrell Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Most of the early winners of the Quantrell Award were faculty who had strong teaching records in the Core curriculum, and most used their money to support research projects. They were very grateful for the

169. *Hutchins Administration*, Box 217, folder 4; Box 175, folder 2.

recognition and material support. Although the award honored past service, most winners took it as a commendation to do even more in the future. As Ralph Buchsbaum, a distinguished invertebrate biologist whose 1938 book *Animals without Backbones* was a pioneering text in the study of invertebrate animals, wrote to Robert Hutchins in June 1939, “[S]uch recognition serves as a challenge to do more in the future.”¹⁷⁰ Yet the Quantrell Awards were but a humble start, and meaningful reforms that would raise the visibility of teaching among the faculty came slowly and with considerable hesitance. It was not altogether surprising when Robert Hutchins decided to return to this subject in the mid-1940s.

170. Ibid., Box 217, folder 4.

PART III: 1942 TO THE PRESENT

THE HUTCHINS COLLEGE
AND THE REBELLION AGAINST
THE EMPIRE OF TESTS

In previous reports I have described the fact that over the course of the 1930s Robert Hutchins became dissatisfied with what he perceived to be the political and intellectual limitations of the New Plan curriculum. By the mid-1930s, he had come to believe that the New Plan was flawed in that it accorded the natural sciences near parity with the humanities and social sciences, a pedagogical balance that Hutchins felt to be unwise; moreover, the New Plan left the divisions in their role as proxies for the departments with too much intellectual and political influence over the College's general education curriculum for Hutchins's taste. This meant that the general education survey courses, while a vast improvement over undergraduate education in the 1920s, functioned not only as devices to encourage intellectual skills and analytical competencies and thus as means to "train the mind for intelligent action"—which Hutchins viewed as the fundamental purpose of general education—but also as introductions to the substantive research work of the departments, which in Hutchins's view smacked too much of professional education. To the board of trustees he wrote in 1935: "I had hoped that the general courses would deal with the leading ideas in the various fields of knowledge. Although some progress has been made in this direction, the great weakness of the curriculum is still its emphasis on current information."¹⁷¹

171. *Report of the President, 1930–1934*, February 1, 1935, p. 21, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 52, folder 3.

In fact, Hutchins aspired to a much more radical plan for the College. The College might be the beginning of a university education that would be completed by the specialized work of the divisions, but it also might be the end of a university education, depending upon the social efficacy and intellectual significance one accorded to the idea of general education. From the very first days of his presidency, Hutchins was explicit in suggesting that some students would probably opt to finish their university work at the end of their general education program at the conclusion of the conventional second year. In his hugely influential tract *The Higher Learning in America*, published in 1936, he took it for granted that many students would not progress beyond the second year of college: “[I]t is highly important that we should develop ourselves and encourage the junior colleges to develop an intelligible scheme of general education under which the student may either terminate his formal education at the end of the sophomore year or go on to university work.”¹⁷² Perhaps general education should not merely be viewed as the natural and logical academic terminus for some students; perhaps it should rather be viewed as the proper and justified end of a four-year educational process for *all* students, a process that would begin in the third year of high school and terminate in the second year of college. When Hutchins persuaded the University Senate in mid-November 1932 to authorize a four-year program that combined the last two years of the University High School and the first two years of the College for local Laboratory Schools students, he launched a small but important precedent that, within a decade, would mushroom to transform the academic landscape of the University. Equally momentous and at the same meeting, Hutchins was also able to secure for the College the legal right to hire its own faculty apart from the departments. If the

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

College made only a very modest use of this proviso in the 1930s, the 1940s and 1950s were to prove very different indeed.

Hutchins's long-term solutions to the perceived shortcomings of the New Plan were to create a real faculty for the College, staffed with men and women who did not have departmental appointments, and to encourage that faculty to develop a fully required curriculum in general education that would span grades 11 to 14 for all of its students. The final and most radical revisions of the 1930 arrangements, as they related to the relationship between the divisions and the College, took place in January 1942. I have described these changes in detail elsewhere, but let me briefly recall their basic features. Since Hutchins had decided that the real work of the College should begin at the end of the second year of high school and conclude with the second year of the College, he became convinced that the College should exercise its right to hire a separate faculty and that it should gain sole control of the award of the B.A. degree, eliminating the departments from any formal role in the undergraduate curriculum. The crisis occasioned by the coming of the Second World War in late 1941 provided the final impetus for the implementation of these ideas, and by a divided vote (63 to 48) in the University Senate on January 22, 1942, the College was authorized to grant the B.A. degree at the end of the conventional second year of college, with the responsibility for graduate education now becoming the sole educational task of the divisions. A last-ditch effort in early April 1942 by senior faculty led by George G. Bogert, Ernst W. Puttkammer, Bernadotte Schmitt, and several others to rescind the Senate's acquiescence to the transfer of the B.A. degree from the divisions to the College failed by a 58 to 58 vote, with Hutchins himself breaking the tie. In a sense, what Hutchins did in 1942 was a kind of political "pay back" to the departments who had so hamstrung his efforts to radically transform graduate student training in

teaching in the early 1930s. Since Hutchins became increasingly convinced that the majority of departmental faculties were either indifferent to or even hostile to truly high quality undergraduate teaching, his response was essentially to drive the departments out of the business of offering any undergraduate teaching whatsoever. It was as if Hutchins was giving Gordon Laing all that Laing had wished for, and then some, and daring Laing's ghost to challenge the forced expulsions.

The College of the late 1940s and early 1950s was a remarkable place, with high hopes and serious morale problems as well. By the early 1950s the College employed over 130 full-time instructors, most of whom had faculty rank. This new faculty immediately found itself under attack from without, with many senior faculty in the departments resentful of their loss of faculty lines and the expulsion of their departments from any role in the undergraduate curriculum. But the College also faced serious dissensions from within, many of which came to focus on the comprehensive examination system. Most important about these years was the simultaneous and deeply interconnected transformation of the structures of the general education courses *and* the creation of a large, complex faculty, independent of the divisions. The new curriculum put in place in 1942 expanded the number of general education sequences from five to 14, with an attendant growth in the number of comprehensive examinations that had to be offered on an annual basis.

The examiner's office increased substantially after 1940 to cope with its increased responsibilities. As the number of comprehensives grew after 1942, the size of the office expanded substantially.¹⁷³ In the mid-1940s, each major staff received a dedicated staff examiner, who was

173. This is apparent in the lists of employees of the office, filed as Appendix A of the "Report of the Council Subcommittee on the Examiner's Office," *Minutes of the Council of the University Senate, 1954-1955*, pp. 276-278.



charged with coordination between College courses and the office.¹⁷⁴ In addition, several full-time colleagues coordinated all exam preparation. At the height of its influence and hegemony the office had a full- or part-time staff of over 30 people and shared salaries of many faculty who worked on a part-time basis developing exams, mainly in the Department of Education or in the College.¹⁷⁵

The new College program adopted in 1942 not only created a system of 14 comprehensives but also brought a whole host of new tests, especially placement tests designed to put new students in exactly the right combination of learning experience/courses of study. As Ralph W. Tyler asserted proudly in 1950, placement tests were given to every student entering the College “to assess his degree of attainment of the knowledge and skills that form the solid framework of each field. . . . The experience of the past eight years shows that more than three-fourths of the incoming students can be better placed by using Placement Tests than by depending on their previous school or college records for placement. . . . The results of the Comprehensive Examinations together with the Placement Tests are the sole criteria in the College for awarding the Bachelor’s Degree. At the time of entrance, the student’s performance on the Placement Tests determines what Comprehensive Examinations he must pass in order to receive his degree. Thus, his program of study in the College is specified in terms of the Comprehensive

174. The actual work of the office is described in several memos that Paul B. Diederich sent to Ralph Tyler in May and June 1946 in *Ralph W. Tyler Papers*, Box 5 folder 13. On Diederich, see Norbert Elliot, *On a Scale. A Social History of Writing Assessment in America* (New York, 2005), pp. 186–193.

175. Budgets for the office are filed in *Kimpton Administration*, Box 300, folder 2. Even while serving as dean of the Social Sciences Division, one-third of Tyler’s salary was covered by the Office of the Examiner.

Examinations he is to take."¹⁷⁶

By the late 1940s, the examiner's office was preparing entrance tests, scholarship tests, placement tests, advisory examinations, comprehensive examinations, and various other evaluation tests. Entrance tests were required of all applicants to the College, including a psychological test, a test of reading comprehension, and a test of writing skills, all meant to "give a good prediction of the candidate's degree of success in the academic work of the College." Thus, by the early 1950s, the examiner's office had become a veritable empire of testing. By 1950 Robert Woellner, an official involved in the testing program, could brag that "the University of Chicago uses standardized tests to a greater extent than any other institution of higher education in the country. Students are admitted, classified, counseled, evaluated in foreign language reading ability for advanced degrees, given scholarships, and awarded baccalaureate degrees upon the basis of standard tests. Except for standardized tests used in some aspects of the counseling of students, the tests used are devised, in the main, by the board of examinations of the University."¹⁷⁷

Woellner's views certainly reflected those of Ralph Tyler, who served as the University examiner from 1938 to 1953, and who assembled a large and powerful staff in running his organization.¹⁷⁸ Tyler was a strong

176. Ralph W. Tyler, "The Construction and Use of Examinations in the College of the University of Chicago. A Statement by the University Examiner," pp. 2-3, February 9, 1950, *College Archive*, Box 99.

177. Robert C. Woellner, "Administration of Tests, January through December 1951," *Kimpton Administration*, Box 108, folder 11.

178. See Woodie T. White, "The Study of Education at the University of Chicago 1892-1958." Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1977, pp. 385-429, 482. On Tyler, see Morris Finder, *Educating America: How Ralph W. Tyler Taught America to Teach* (Westport, Conn., 2004), esp. pp. 9-10, 149-152.



and articulate defender of the centralized system. In a statement from February 1950 giving a detailed overview of the 11 different steps taken in the construction of the comprehensive examinations, Tyler portrayed the examination system as widely accepted and approved by faculty in the College. Tyler justified the comprehensives on several grounds: Degrees were granted on the basis of demonstrated and proven competence as opposed to time served or teacher's sympathies; tests were developed by independent staff to free teachers from "apple polishing relations" with students, to "encourage learning outside of class," and to "encourage the development of tests that are not restricted to particular materials and illustrations used by an individual instructor but require broader understanding by the student"; the system discouraged piecemeal learning by developing units larger than a single course; tests were described, constructed, and scheduled to encourage learning at the student's optimum rate; and the comprehensives would "provide a clear definition of the meaning of a degree." In contrast to a course credit system, which only justified the B.A. degree by the assemblage of specific courses, the comprehensives tested for "clearly defined competencies which in turn represent a definition of the attainments for which the degree is awarded."¹⁷⁹

Moreover, Tyler approved of exactly what many faculty who taught in the Core objected to: "Many students are guided more in their study by their conception of the examinations they are to take than by [the] course assignment. The time spent in developing 'good examinations' pays dividends both to the staff and the students."¹⁸⁰ Yet this feature was

179. Ralph W. Tyler, "The Construction and Use of Examinations in the College of the University of Chicago. A Statement by the University Examiner," pp. 4–5, February 9, 1950, *College Archive*, Box 99.

180. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

precisely what many faculty in the College found objectionable about the system, namely, that students were memorizing answers to material that might be on the exam, instead of devoting themselves to the larger pedagogical purposes of the course itself. This was a fundamental cleavage, made worse by the fact that the faculty slowly came to see the examiner's office as having substantial discretionary powers, perhaps too substantial.

Ralph Tyler's authority was enhanced still further when he succeeded Robert Redfield as dean of the Division of the Social Sciences in 1946, while retaining his position as examiner. As both dean of a major division and head of the board of examinations, Tyler had the prestige and local power to protect his office during the curricular controversies of the late 1940s and early 1950s, when serious rumblings emerged from faculty in the departments and divisions over the curriculum of the Hutchins College. But in 1953, Tyler decided to leave the University for a position at Stanford, and immediately thereafter the forces of opposition began to circle in for the kill. When Tyler left for Stanford in 1953, a powerful voice in favor of the comprehensive examination system was lost.

As examiner, Ralph Tyler had a huge stake in the new all-general education baccalaureate program, since the comprehensives that he administered were the core of these general education courses. He also admired Robert Hutchins greatly, and later recounted that Hutchins had been a major influence in his career.¹⁸¹ Hence Tyler was careful to avoid taking too partisan a position in the civil wars between the College and divisional faculty in the late 1940s over the elimination of departmental majors from the College's curriculum, trying to stand above the fray, urging compromise, and insisting that the problem was smaller than often viewed. These were noble sentiments, although they did not

181. Finder, *Educating America*, p. 151.



address the fear, even paranoia, felt in many divisional circles. But at least temporarily they kept the examiner's office out of the jurisdictional clashes that took place in the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹⁸²

It was one of the great ironies of the history of the University that the two central components of the 1930 New Plan revolution—the Core courses and the examiner's office—came to serious collisions after 1950, leading to the ultimate death of the latter. The growing size of the College faculty after 1946 and the increase in the number of general education courses had profound effects on the style and substance of teaching. The “Core” before 1940 was structured in a large lecture format, taught by a small number of regular faculty with departmental appointments, with discussion sessions added on to supplement the weekly lectures. But over the course of the 1940s most general education courses in the College shifted to become largely or primarily discussion-based, and taught in the format of small, seminar classes. As the number of discussion sections grew and the number of Core sequences increased, the need for more faculty increased, resulting by the late 1940s in a College faculty with over 130 positions. This substantial increase not only raised deep concerns in the departments about faculty lines that were lost to them, but also created a serious and politically complicated faculty constituency in the College, filled with dedicated men and women who were deeply proud of their teaching and who saw the mission of the College as squarely aligned with their own professional identities.

It was completely natural that as more College faculty were hired to teach in the Core in these small seminar-style sections, and as discussion

182. See Tyler to E. C. Colwell, March 27, 1946, *Ralph W. Tyler Papers*, Box 6, folder 4.

methods became more and more hegemonic, a commitment to a wider set of skills than the acquiring of mere “factual information” became more and more central to the Chicago project. Over time, this led to an even greater disregard for what the general education staffs derisively termed “factual information” and a shift away from viewing their courses as vehicles for comprehensive examination preparation (which was the central rationale of the 1930s survey courses) to a more diverse and less predictable set of teaching strategies that still conformed to general models developed in staff meetings, but that gave each individual teacher a powerful sense of the importance of his or her own sections and the authority that he or she should be able to exercise in such sections, including the right to design exams and to grade one’s own students.

The new History of Western Civilization Core course, which emerged in 1948, became a classic example of this shift in emphasis and in method, having been designed from the very first to emphasize original documents and seminar-style discussions as the primary structure of the new Core course. The resulting format was a point of enormous pride on the part of the faculty who participated in the new course, and they were quick to explain the ways in which their approach to teaching differed from most other colleges in the United States. Thus, when as an experiment students from our College took a history test in 1949 given to students at other colleges, the Western Civ faculty took pains to explain that “the Chicago group [of students] was handicapped in the following respects: (1) [T]he College curriculum does not orient its students toward the acquisition of traditional kinds of factual information. (2) The group took the test about seven weeks after their own History Comprehensive, without advance notice or opportunity to review. . . . The History course did not prepare the students for this kind of test, which presupposes thorough study and discussion of a



textbook, and approximately equal coverage of the chronological range. On the contrary, our students gave only cursory attention to a textbook and chronological tables, assigned as background reading, and devoted their major efforts, in and out of class, to three large volumes of readings, mainly from the sources, covering a narrowly limited chronological range.”¹⁸³

A similar evolution occurred in the science Core courses. In the early 1940s, the Physical Sciences course switched from three lectures and one discussion to two and two. In 1949, the chair of the course, Thornton Page, then proposed an even more radical shift to three discussions and only one lecture a week, which was intended to elevate “the discussion section to a dominant role in the course.”¹⁸⁴ By the early 1950s, Benson Ginsburg, the chair of the new Natural Sciences staff, reported, “We have largely abandoned the overly simplified textbook, the laboratory demonstration, and the mass lecture in favor of small sections, each meeting five hours a week in the laboratory for intensive study of biological materials at first hand, and for a more or less seminar approach to review articles and reports of original investigations in each area under study. In addition, we are trying to choose (and write) necessary background materials that distort as little as possible in the name of ‘simplification’.”¹⁸⁵

Thus, over the course of the 1940s, the blend of more lectures and fewer discussions—the classic general education model of the 1930s—shifted significantly, in favor of the discussions. By 1947, the format of

183. “Performance of College History Students on a ‘Content’ or ‘Factual’ Type History Examination,” *College Archive*, Box 7, folder 1.

184. Thornton Page to F. C. Ward, April 22, 1949, *ibid.*, Box 7, folder 11.

185. Ginsburg to John O. Hutchens, August 26, 1951, *ibid.*, folder 7.

Social Sciences teaching had also switched from three lectures and one discussion to three discussions and one lecture for Social Sciences 1 and two lectures and two discussions for Social Sciences 2 and 3. And as discussions became more prominent, faculty became unhappy with the practice of the 1930s that allowed students to skip class and prepare for the comprehensives by themselves, without attending class. This movement led to the birth of the current structure of our Core curriculum today, under which general education sequences consist of individualized seminar courses, under the general aegis of a staff.¹⁸⁶

With these trends came an even more emphatic denunciation of textbooks as being contrary to the very spirit of a Chicago education. In 1947, the Chair of the Social Sciences staff, Milton Singer, commented with contempt about textbooks:

[T]here are few textbooks covering the ground in question. But even if there were a plethora of textbooks available we would still prefer to use original materials. Most textbooks deprive the student of the opportunity to exercise just those habits of thought which it is the end of a general education to develop. They present him with highly simplified summaries of results and practically no insight into the methods and processes by which these results were arrived at. They seldom communicate to the student any of that passionate sincerity or integrity to be found in the original works. They do not really contain knowledge but a kind of

186. See Milton Singer, "The Social Sciences Program at the College of the University of Chicago," [1947], *ibid.*, Box 8, folder 3. Discussion sessions were capped at 25 students per class. Each staff still gave general lectures and students were expected to attend them, but they slowly ceased to be the primary organizational feature of the Core courses.

conventionalized gossip about knowledge which is thought to be sufficient for beginners. . . . In reading originals, on the other hand, the student has an opportunity to watch first-rate minds at work and to retrace the development of a significant idea of theory. The objection that this leads to a neglect of later revisions and corrections of the original statement is easily met by adding some of these revisions and corrections to the original work. The student is thus given the added opportunity to participate in the living growth of scientific thought. He can then see where an original formulation was obscure or over-generalized. Then he can also see how, despite defects of this character, original formulations sometimes possess a fruitfulness and suggestive power that is far superior to the later refinements.¹⁸⁷

A high point of the attack on textbooks came in 1948 when the staff of Social Sciences I published their documents in the famous edition of *The People Shall Judge. Readings in the Formation of American Policy*. The editors of these volumes insisted that their documents would accomplish three primary aims: "The first is to enable the student to acquire some basic historical knowledge about American ideas and institutions. The second is to develop competence in the analysis of social issues by giving special prominence to the process of deliberation and decision through which policy is formulated. The third is to encourage the student to acquire a sense of responsibility about public issues and to examine his own standards in an atmosphere of free inquiry and discussion." *The University of Chicago Readings in the History of Western*

187. Singer, "The Social Sciences Program at the College of the University of Chicago," pp. 7–8.

Civilization project emerged from same curricular trajectory in the early 1950s, and the nine-volume set of the Western Civ readings, published by the University of Chicago Press, is still in print today.

The dean of the College in these years, F. Champion Ward, praised the power of the documentary approach, arguing that "it is not enough to show students how the judgments of their forefathers helped to make their nation's history. The students must themselves practice judgment. This is why the course is conducted by means of discussion classes in which the readings this volume contains and the historical decisions they illumine are subjected to critical examination. In these discussions 'learning' and 'thinking' advance together in so close an alliance that, in the end, what the student 'knows' is not what he has been told to learn but what his own active analysis of the problems of the course has led him to believe or to doubt. He and his fellow students have been engaged not only in claiming a heritage of wisdom and achievement in the American past but in forming habits of open discussion and independent judgment which will lead to wise decisions and new achievements in the American future."¹⁸⁸

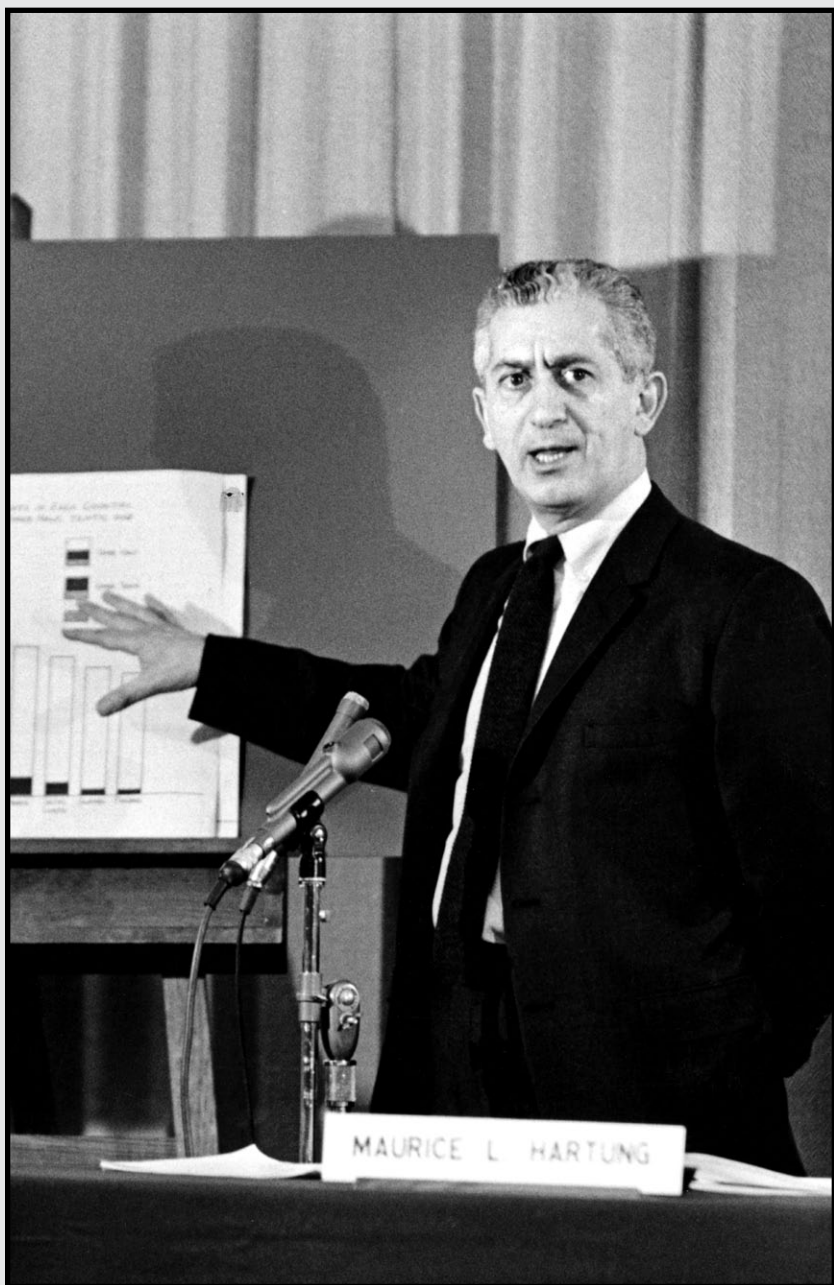
Parallel to these structural, procedural, and ideological changes came a rising tide of criticism of the operations of the Office of the Examiner and the whole system of year-end comprehensive examinations. Not only did many within the College have growing reservations about these exams, but from the perspective of the departments, the comprehensives were a superb target that encapsulated much that many divisional faculty disliked about the Hutchins College.

188. F. Champion Ward, "Preface," in *The People Shall Judge. Readings in the Formation of American Policy. Volume 1. Selected and Edited by the Staff, Social Sciences I* (Chicago, 1949), pp. vii-viii.



The seminar-style discussion methods that emerged within the Core now became an inveterate enemy of Boucher's comprehensive exam system. Beginning in the early 1940s, criticism of the comprehensive system and the examiner's office became a constant refrain among a significant minority of the College faculty. Anticipating many of the complaints that would emerge over the course of the late 1940s, Walter Laves, the chair of the Social Sciences staff, denounced the system in 1941, arguing that the original rationale for this system—to completely separate the teacher and the examiner, so that the student would not feel that he was working "for the professor" but rather to master the subject matter of the course—may have been plausible in theory, but that the practice left much to be desired. Further, the construction of the comprehensive exams required enormous time, and most faculty felt they were not competent to participate in the theoretical discussions that lay behind the system. Faculty often had to reject the questions developed by the examiners as inappropriate, and this too took great deal of time. Finally, Laves found the tests themselves to be questionable, given that they were based on objective style questions: "Our experience during the past year has not enhanced our confidence in this type of examination as an exclusive test of students' progress in our field." According to Laves, his faculty much preferred essay tests, which tested for active knowledge: "[T]he essay question can bring out the point of view of the student, the insight he has acquired with regard to interrelations, his ability to make inferences, his ability to assimilate, organize and present material and his ability to originate ideas. The student's ability to originate is of greater significance to us than his ability to classify or identify. . . . We are not primarily interested in *teaching* 'facts,' and we are therefore not primarily interested in *testing* 'facts'."

Laves also believed that the office cost too much money for what it



Benjamin Bloom, 1967, Board of Examiners, 1943–1957, Chief Examiner, 1953–1957



accomplished: "It is too obvious that expenditure of somewhat similar amounts as are now spent in the examiner's office, on examination questions drafted by our own staff, would produce more abundant returns. The examiners must be first of all experts in subject matter, and only secondarily adepts at testing. The present procedure is wasteful of University funds."

Finally, and this was perhaps the most sensitive issue, Laves believed that the examiners had too much authority, given that faculty believed that they were not qualified to undertake these jobs: "It is difficult for an inexperienced group like the Board of Examiners to realize just how much work and time the faculty has to put into such a task. . . . There might be an element of poetic justice in asking the Board of Examiners to live up to the fiction of the New Plan—in other words to ask it to prepare this examination itself independently of the faculty in accordance with the original announcement. Since the fiction has broken down in practice, would it not warrant consideration to transfer authority for the giving of the examinations to the same group that has to do the work if they are offered? Is it good academic policy to make the fundamental decisions like the retention of the old A, B, C, D, E, grading scheme without full consultation of the faculty, especially when the faculty spent the entire first year trying to wean the students away from these high-school notions? . . . It serves no useful purpose to hide the facts. . . . The examination plan is not the essential feature of the New Plan at all, it is merely incidental. The New Plan in its original presentation to the faculty was defended in part on the ground that it would free the teacher from the examining function; in fact our experience warrants the statement that we are so much absorbed by examinations that our teaching suffers in comparison. The whole business warrants serious and critical consideration in the light of experience by those who have had

the experience, lest it endanger the future of the entire scheme of innovations by a grinding and continuous process of wear on individual members of the faculty."¹⁸⁹

A second critical voice emerged from within the examiner's office itself. In 1950 Joseph Axelrod, who had served both as an assistant professor in the College and on the staff of the examiner's office, complained to Ralph Tyler, "I came to the conclusion, as a result of my work at the Board and in the College, that an independent Board of Examinations, however convincing the arguments for it may appear on paper (and I for one was persuaded) creates problems as great as the ones its establishment is intended to solve; that, in a word, it has been bad for the College not to have been given responsibility for the College examinations. I have always looked upon the Board, insofar as its work on College examinations went, as merely a hand-maiden to the College; but the Board has not been willing to see itself in that role. It seems to be pained by the fact that instruction without examining remains a significant activity whereas examining without instruction loses its *raison d'être*. I do not mean to belittle the job the Board has done and is doing; that has been of a very high caliber. I mean merely to point out that I believe I have seen the work of the Board in what I think is the proper perspective; and I believe that the Board's 'independence' has led it to see itself in a kind of glorified perspective."¹⁹⁰

The growing tensions between the faculty and the office can be best illustrated by the work of Benjamin Bloom, who worked as a junior

189. Laves's report is contained in Brumbaugh to Hutchins, March 13, 1941, pp. 5–7, 9–10, *College Archive*, Box 8, folder 2.

190. Axelrod to Tyler, October 12, 1950, *Kimpton Administration*, Box 108, folder 11.



colleague with Ralph Tyler (who was his intellectual mentor) in the examiner's office in the 1940s. Having received his Ph.D. in education from the University of Chicago in 1942, Bloom was a young scholar at the time, not the famous educational psychologist of later years, but his investigations of techniques of discussion teaching were part of an ambitious cluster of research activities that were to have an important impact on his later scholarly reputation, particularly the book that he authored with George Stern and Morris Stein, *Methods in Personality Assessment*.¹⁹¹ Eager to examine and develop formal procedures for analyzing the new prominence of discussion in the Core courses, Bloom proposed to Dean F. Champion Ward in 1947 that he undertake a study of discussion techniques at a cost of \$1,500.¹⁹² Bloom believed that it was essential that teaching by discussion be examined in order to determine the extent to which this instructional method was capable of attaining the educational ends that the College had established. Bloom proposed a study based on a four-part scheme for understanding the nature of discussion teaching, focusing on what Bloom called the lecturette method, the recitation method, the group conversation method, and the group discussion method. Bloom's working hypothesis was that many teachers made use of some or all of these methods in their teaching, depending upon the needs and goals of the course in question.¹⁹³

The project was an excellent example of the examiner's office trying

191. See Bloom's statement "Changing Conceptions of Examining. An Extract Describing Personality Research," 1955, in *Minutes of the Council of the University Senate, 1954-1955*, pp. 285-288.

192. Bloom to Ward, August 25, 1947, *College Archive*, Box 4, folder 6.

193. Benjamin Bloom, "A Proposed Exploratory Investigation of Discussion Techniques," August 1947, *ibid.*

to adapt to and facilitate the evolution of new structures in the Core after 1942 and to develop new research in strategies of teaching. Based on a series of in-class participant observations, Bloom and several other collaborators put together a pamphlet entitled "Teaching by Discussion in the College Program."¹⁹⁴ Yet when the dean of the College, F. Champion Ward, distributed copies to his colleagues and asked whether Bloom's essay should be published, he received a clutch of negative, even incendiary letters. Joseph J. Schwab of Biology critiqued Bloom for his seeming indifference about the subject matter that was actually being taught: "The notion of the existence of potentialities in students and their realization through [the] practice of arts in discussion is, however, an extremely primitive and inadequate statement of a problem or an aim of education; and the U---D distinctions are similarly primitive and inadequate. Their principal weakness lies in the ease with which they lend themselves to a concern for discussion almost entirely in terms of quantity of participation by the student, and to the extent to which they focus attention on good discussion as the only aim of discussion, and fail to take hold of discussion as a means to other and quite different ends."

Herman Meyer of Mathematics denounced Bloom's work as badly written and having a "pseudo-scientific procedure" and added that "[a]ll disavowals notwithstanding, the booklet tends to give College faculty people the impression that 'discussion' has ceased to be a means subject to criticism and adaptation, and has become another dogma about the College. People on the outside would gain from the booklet a variety of impressions about the College. Departments of Education probably will be enthusiastic (discussion means smaller classes, more teachers and another required course in teacher-training) and hail the College as a

194. Filed in *College Archive*, Box 15, folder 6.



progressive school. People concerned to extend education and raise educational standards in America may be troubled (What is the role of discussion in mass education? Why is it better? Is it really the panacea that booklet takes it to be?) and perhaps provoked with the College for ignoring their problems. Critical readers may simply be unhappy (because the booklet isn't as good as it could and should be) and may think less of the College for sponsoring such a thing." Meyer confessed, "I read the booklet when it first came out. It left me in a vile humor. . . . The College embodies a conscious philosophy of ends and means. This is an excellent thing. But the philosophy needs wider comprehension among the faculty. It is correct—but not helpful—to tell the inquiring soul that the College philosophy *is* the College curriculum. What the College philosophy lacks is systematic exposition, systematic dissemination, systematic interpretation and criticism at the course level. I hope we do not wait too long for this lack to be filled. Some inquiring souls may begin to feel a spiritual kinship with the bandy-legged dispossessed Thersites, whom Odysseus slapped across the puss and warned not to strive singly against kings."

Russell Thomas from Humanities found that the pamphlet "does a great deal of talking down to a public many of whose members have already considered these problems. My most serious criticism is that in its present form, it tends to reduce the problem of how to conduct good class discussion to formula." And Alfred Putnam of Mathematics averred, "What had seemed an inquiry on *how* teaching by discussion is instrumental to the purposes of the College appears rather to be a statement that it *is*. The professed objectivity is largely illusory. This is not to say that the authors could not demonstrate their thesis, but that they have not done so."¹⁹⁵

195. Ibid., Box 15, folder 6.

Bloom's noble goal had backfired. Bloom thought that he was offering a helpful mirror of new forms of teaching in the College, but those who looked in the mirror did not like the image that he was offering of them. One gains a sense of at least some College faculty not wanting to be intellectually bounded by educational theories developed in the Department of Education and in the examiner's office about which they had low regard. As active protagonists involved in a revolution, they did not want to be instantly historicized into a dead past. Yet these exchanges came before the great demographic crisis of the early 1950s, which saw College enrollments collapse and which forced all of these men onto the defensive, putting the very existence of their all-general-education curriculum into question.

Bloom in turn was deeply unsympathetic with faculty complaints, blaming their unhappiness with a kind of professional narcissism and unwillingness to face scientifically demonstrable facts. In 1952, he argued that the original purpose of the New Plan was to avoid the need for monitoring student class attendance, but that “there is evidently much feeling on the part of the faculty about cutting classes and absenteeism from quarterly examinations. I attribute much of this to the lack of orientation of the faculty to the basic philosophy of the College program as well as to their own insecurity as a result from the non-attendance of students in their classes. This insecurity is rationalized with such clichés as ‘There is something students get out of class which they can get in no other way’, ‘Examinations cannot measure everything’, ‘There are certain intangible values resulting from the interaction between an instructor and his students’, ‘Students must be disciplined’, ‘Students are irresponsible and corrupt’, ‘There are many playboys among our students’, etc. The large question which bothers me over and over again is whether the attempts to discipline and coerce some students will, over a



period of time and by a series of relatively small steps, reduce us to the usual pattern of discipline—required attendance, required work, and all the other types of control over students. We still do not have clear-cut evidence that our students do become mature and independent as the result of the methods we have used to date, but it does seem to me that what we have been doing is quite sound from both a pedagogical and philosophic viewpoint. . . . The restriction of the freedom now enjoyed and properly used by these students because others do not make as creative use of this freedom would appear to have undesirable consequences both on the faculty and the students.”¹⁹⁶

Bloom’s own career showed the strains. In June 1952 when a significant minority of the College faculty proposed curbs on the freedom of students not to attend class, Bloom strongly defended Boucher’s original vision, asserting that compelling students to attend classes would be “a complete denial of one of the major principles on which this college has been based for the past twenty years.” Speaking against the view that was becoming more and more present in the faculty—that class attendance was essential to the mission of the College—Bloom then insisted, “The studies of thought processes which have been carried on here and elsewhere yield ample evidence that the physical presence of students in class does not guarantee relevant thinking or active learning.” Bloom may or may not have been correct in such assertions, but they simply highlighted the disjunction between his views as an educational theorist from the examiner’s office and a large body of the faculty who were doing the day-to-day teaching of the College.¹⁹⁷

196. Benjamin Bloom, “Examination Performance of Absentee Students,” February 19, 1952, pp. 1, 6, *ibid.*, Box 100.

197. *Minutes of the College Faculty*, June 11, 1952, pp. 131–132.

Having been appointed to succeed Ralph Tyler as examiner in 1953, by 1955 Bloom tried to resign his position and return full time to the Department of Education. Lawrence Kimpton talked him out of leaving in the near term, but in 1956–57 he was given permission to absent himself from campus for five months to serve as a consultant to the Ford Foundation in assisting the Indian government in developing a new system of national tests for primary and secondary education.¹⁹⁸ Ironically, the Ford administrator who hired Bloom was none other than F. Champion Ward, the former dean of the College from 1947 to 1953 under Robert Hutchins, who had resigned in 1953 out of despondency with the success of the departments in fighting their way back into control of a significant part of the undergraduate curriculum at Chicago.

The issue of the continuing existence of the examiner's office finally came to a head in early 1955. In November 1954, Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton, who soon after his appointment as the University's chief executive emerged as a trenchant critic of the all-general education curriculum of the Hutchins College, decided to appoint a committee of divisional and College representatives to recommend what to do with the board of examinations. Perhaps not by accident, the committee was dominated by faculty who were generally unsympathetic with the comprehensive examination system as run and managed by Tyler's office. Predictably the committee reported back in early 1955 with a massively critical evaluation of the empire of testing.¹⁹⁹ The committee was chaired by Alan Simpson, an Oxford-trained historian who as subsequent dean of the College between 1959 and 1964 tried (unsuccessfully) to alleviate

198. "Notes on B. S. Bloom's Work in India," *Office of the President. Beadle Administration*, Box 139, folder 3.

199. *Minutes of the Council of the University Senate*, January 20, 1955.

the fratricidal tensions caused by the attempts of the various general education staffs to cram all of their existing Core courses into a four-year baccalaureate curriculum that now had to be shared equally with the departments.

The real issues faced by Simpson's committee were all the more thorny, since they involved both the future of the examiner's office and the very existence of the College comprehensive system itself. One prominent divisional faculty member who served on the committee, Sherwood L. Washburn, shrewdly noted that in contrast to the examiner's office, about which feelings were not so passionate, "feelings run very high with regard to the College examinations. This is a matter of great concern to the whole University. The central question seems to be whether any examination, one single examination, whether objective or essay, is adequate to appraise a student. A student who does excellent work in the laboratory and writes excellent essays when he has time, may receive a poor letter grade solely because of the examination. Extreme cases show students doing better on the objective examination before taking the course than after, or students passing without doing any of the reading. If all the mark depends on is an examination, students greatly over-emphasize study for the examination, at the expense of reading, writing, and discussion during the course of the term. In this way, the examination system distorts the educational system."

The outcome of the committee's recommendation was that on April 19, 1955, the Council of the Senate voted that the board of examinations would be abolished in its status as an independent University office defined in the Statutes and would instead become a smaller committee chaired by the University dean of students.²⁰⁰ The position of University

200. See *Minutes of the Council of the University Senate, 1954–1955*, p. 316.

examiner was left formally existent, but in fact the examiner now became a minor official reporting to the dean of students. Soon, faculty were no longer given permanent appointments in the examiner's office, and its budget declined from year to year. The examiner's office survived as a paper placeholder into the 1960s, with the function of administering foreign language exams to graduate students in departments where such exams were a requirement. But even here their work was not without frictions, with individual language departments sometimes second-guessing their testing and evaluation methods.²⁰¹

Once the centrally chartered board of examinations was out of the way, a serious degradation of mandatory comprehensives was bound to follow, since the legislation passed in April 1955 gave full authority back to the College to design whatever forms of testing it found suitable. Many faculty now began to administer quarterly exams. As early as 1952 a significant minority of faculty had tried to require mandatory class attendance, another direct challenge to the original logic of Boucher's system, and faculty pressures on students to attend classes continued unabated.

As the College was forced to give up ground to the departments over the course of the 1950s, re-creating significant curricular space for departmental concentrations (or majors), divisional voices became more and more evident in both demanding more curricular room and in objecting to the centralism of the examiner's office. Negotiations between the various departments and the College in 1953 over how much curricular space the departments would be allowed in the design of students'

201. See the long and convoluted memo of David Williams to the dean of the Humanities, Napier Wilt, seeking to justify his staff's testing procedures in German against the will of the German Department. Memo of June 26, 1962, *Office of the President. Beadle Administration*, Box 139, folder 3.



degree programs—the College faculty wanted to retain a full three years of general education and only allot one year of course work to the departments, whereas the departments demanded a return to the pre-1942 status quo under which students would spend two years in the Core and two years in more specialized education under the aegis of the departments—manifested a series of tensions and fundamental lack of agreement. In a report on the negotiations with the Department of English, the departmental representatives objected to “the disastrous policy of offending high school graduates and high school teachers by implying that the last two years of high school study is practically worthless when compared with the work of the first two years in the ‘four-year College’. We doubt the wisdom of alienating teachers who might send students here and students who might come here.” One of the principal faculty negotiators from English, James H. Sledd, then lashed out against the (in his mind) hegemonic claims of the College by attacking the credibility of the examiner’s office as well: “I do know that extremely improbable claims have emanated from the College Examiners’ Office, which cannot possibly be considered impartial or unbiased, and that in my own experience, both in the College and in the Division, graduates of the College seem pretty much on a level with good students in their junior year at universities like Emory, Texas, and Duke. Indeed, the College sometimes cultivates an arrogance (Mr. Bloom and Mr. Grodzins may be cited) and a contempt for factual knowledge (the constant opposition of facts to ideas is relevant), which are *not* cultivated elsewhere; and I was surprised to find, when I spent some hours gathering my own statistics, that my personal impression is more favorable than the figures. I found graduates of the College pretty much on a level, statistically, with students who had spent two years at Mundelein, Vanderbilt, the Academy of the New Church, or the

Central Michigan College of Education."²⁰²

It was predictable that more divisionally oriented faculty like Sledd would oppose the comprehensive examinations, given that they viewed the comprehensives as protecting the legitimacy of the yearlong Core sequences that in their mind occupied too prominent a place in the undergraduate curriculum, but parallel currents of opposition emerged with the College faculty themselves. Albert Hayes's report from November 1953 to the College Faculty made this clear. In a report entitled "Valedictory Remarks of Subcommittees on Examinations," Hayes argued that the new full-time faculty of the College of the 1940s had much more investment in their individual students and their courses were much better planned and integrated than the general survey courses of the 1930s. Because the new faculty had greater investment in their courses, they were more inclined to value individual course examinations than the comprehensives, and they did not need to depend upon the examiner's office to give their courses a systematic and uniform perspective. Even yearlong course exams were viewed explicitly as coming from the courses, rather than from some general body of knowledge culled together by the examiners: "[T]here has developed a College-wide habit of regarding the comprehensive examinations as merely course examinations."²⁰³ Clearly such a view seriously downgraded the need or even desirability of having an independent examiner's office, since it was the first logical step to the faculty simply taking back full responsibility for developing, administering, and grading their own exams on a course-

202. "The Sub-Committee on English," [1953], pp. 2, 7, *College Archive*, Box 9, folder 2.

203. Albert M. Hayes et al., "Valedictory Remarks of Subcommittee on Examinations," *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel*, November 4, 1953.

by-course basis. And, over the course of the late 1950s and early 1960s, this was exactly what began to happen.

The issue of the legitimacy of the comprehensive examination system was compounded by a perceived decline in academic performance in the mid-1950s as the College struggled to fill its classes. From a pre-1940 undergraduate College of almost 3,500 students, the University's undergraduate population plunged to below 1,400 students by 1955. As early as 1952, complaints emerged about what many faculty felt to be the overly draconian grading standards deployed by the examiner's office to grade the comprehensive exams. John Mayfield chaired an investigation in the College in 1953 and concluded, "The facts presented in the report of the subcommittee have convinced members of the Policy and Personnel Committee that . . . we have been doing many good students an injustice by giving a markedly lower proportion of B's than do other colleges which maintain satisfactory standards of accomplishment."²⁰⁴ A researcher in the examiner's office, Hugh Lane, reported in July 1957 that over 20 percent of students had failed their comprehensives and were unable to graduate ("[E]ach time that we offer comprehensive examinations in the spring, more than one-fifth of the students will fail to satisfy requirements for graduation.") Although part of the problem may have been student preparation, many faculty blamed the existing testing and grading system as being too severe. A faculty member in the Humanities who served as the interim examiner after Benjamin Bloom's resignation, Knox Hill, argued in 1957 that "the grading standards used by the College Faculty did not fairly reflect the accomplishments of our students." Hill also pointed out that the comprehensive exams were inherently more challenging since they tested for

204. *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel*, May 22, 1953, p. 232.

general achievement in a broad field, and not for particular course content on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis. The situation was made still worse by a general sense that grading in courses taught by the departments was more generous, creating yet another invidious comparison.²⁰⁵ The departments were also seen as offering attractive one-quarter courses, which met students' interests. Sylvia Thrupp noted frankly in February 1958, "Our work is being driven to the wall by uneven competition with aggressive Divisional courses."²⁰⁶ Grading thus became an issue that hurt both the comprehensive system and the larger College curriculum, since many faculty came to believe that the anonymity of the comprehensives and the fact that they were divorced from the particular course content of individual sections of the Core sequences contributed to a fundamentally unjust grading system.

Slowly, the comprehensive system thus was hollowed out from within. As new courses were created in the College in the late 1950s, many opted out of the comprehensives in favor of traditional quarterly tests and grades. The new non-Western Civilization sequences were excellent examples of this process: In developing the new History of Indian Civilization Core course, Milton Singer stipulated quarterly grades and a term paper for his students. Soon the option of changing formats became widespread. Faculty in Biology also led the way, arguing that the system of voluntary attendance was destructive of learning and that "for

205. Knox Hill, "Annual Report of the College Examiner," October 1957, pp. 3–4, filed in *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel, 1957–1958*; Lane to Hill, July 23, 1957, *ibid.*

206. Thrupp to Streeter, *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel*, February 17, 1958.



the great majority of students an adequate understanding of biology requires laboratory experience with [the] teacher, the role of the teacher being guidance in, and illumination, of the study of laboratory materials and course readings.” They therefore proposed that students be given the option of either attending regularly and receiving quarterly grades, or registering but not attending and taking an end-of-the-year comprehensive. Clearly, their favored option was the first.²⁰⁷

Concurrently, the system of general education and placement tests came under deep scrutiny, with many faculty of the opinion that they were out of date and that the rapidly changing curricular environment in the 1950s had created “so many changes in undergraduate education since 1946 that these tests are of dubious effectiveness.”²⁰⁸

In the spring of 1955, a faculty committee reviewing the whole landscape of maneuvering and counter-maneuvering commented, “[I]t seems worthwhile to point out that one characteristic of the existing College program which has become firmly established—the three-quarter unit issuing in a comprehensive examination—is entirely a matter of convenience and has now, perhaps, become positively *inconvenient*. In the curricular negotiations of the recent past, the fact that College curricular elements came in such relatively large and unbreakable units was a positive impediment to the development of rational joint programs, and in the operation of the new programs serious difficulties arising in connection with

207. The Natural Sciences Staff to Robert Streeter, *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel*, February 13, 1958.

208. Hill, “Annual Report of the College Examiner,” October 1957, p. 8.

student loads and examination conflicts exist merely in anticipation."²⁰⁹

All of these issues set in the larger framework of grueling adjustments to try to salvage the general education curriculum in the face of divisional probes and attacks that culminated in the report of the Executive Committee on Undergraduate Education in April 1958. With Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton pushing major reforms to reinstitute a more conventional baccalaureate program, based on students admitted with high school diplomas (thus recentering the demographic basis of the College from grades 11 through 14 to grades 13 through 16), College loyalists felt themselves painfully on the defensive. As Howard Stein of Philosophy put it in 1957, the idea of a hegemonic general education B.A. program as imagined by Hutchins in 1942 had become "withered as the grass and faded as the flower."²¹⁰ The sociologist William Bradbury agreed, arguing that "the concept of a faculty charged with doing the work of the University in general education—doing all of it and nothing else—is already dead as the basis of personnel decisions."²¹¹ When a friend asked David Riesman in April 1955 why the College did not resist

209. *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel, 1954–1955*, p. 126. It is worth noting, however, that the comprehensives in combination with the placement exams were an educational method that has great currency today in the assessment movement. This kind of educational technology—the measurement of inputs and outputs in ways that are independent of whatever is happening in the classroom—might seem quaintly outmoded in our College, but is in fact rising in political influence in the educational world. Our experience with the comprehensives ought to be an important case study of the limitations of output testing as a measure of education.

210. Howard Stein to the Committee, *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel*, October 21, 1957.

211. W. C. Bradbury to Robert E. Streeter, *Minutes of the Committee on Policy and Personnel*, September 25, 1957, p. 1.



more aggressively the incursions of Kimpton and the departments, Riesman replied, "I tried to explain that it was hard to expect a beaten group to fight very hard." The stunning debates and discussions over the College's examination system were thus a crucial part of a larger set of debates in the 1950s over what would be taught in the College's curriculum, who would do this teaching, and who would define the boundary between general education and more specialized liberal arts education offered in the departments. When the Executive Committee on Undergraduate Education stipulated in its final report issued in April 1958 to the Council of the University Senate that the general education courses of the College be entitled to exactly half of the total undergraduate curriculum, the final die had been cast against the all-general education curriculum of the Hutchins College. The executive committee also authorized that departmental faculty members would be given appointments in the new College faculty so as to allow the departments to reclaim some control of the undergraduate curriculum from the autonomous College faculty, and it strongly recommended that quarterly grades be established as grades of record in all undergraduate courses and that the number and scope of the comprehensives be reduced.²¹² The end result was a defensible system that integrated the faculty of the departments into the Faculty of the College, via a system of joint appointments, and created a four-year College degree program. The Faculty of the College was still constituted as an official University ruling body, enjoying equal status with the graduate divisions, but that ruling body was increasingly filled with faculty drawn from the departments, which

212. "Executive Committee on Undergraduate Education. Draft of April 7, 1958," p. 21, *Minutes of the Council of the Senate, 1957-1958*. The Report of the Executive Committee was approved, with minor modifications, by the Council of the Senate on June 3, 1958, by a vote of 38 to 4 with one abstention.

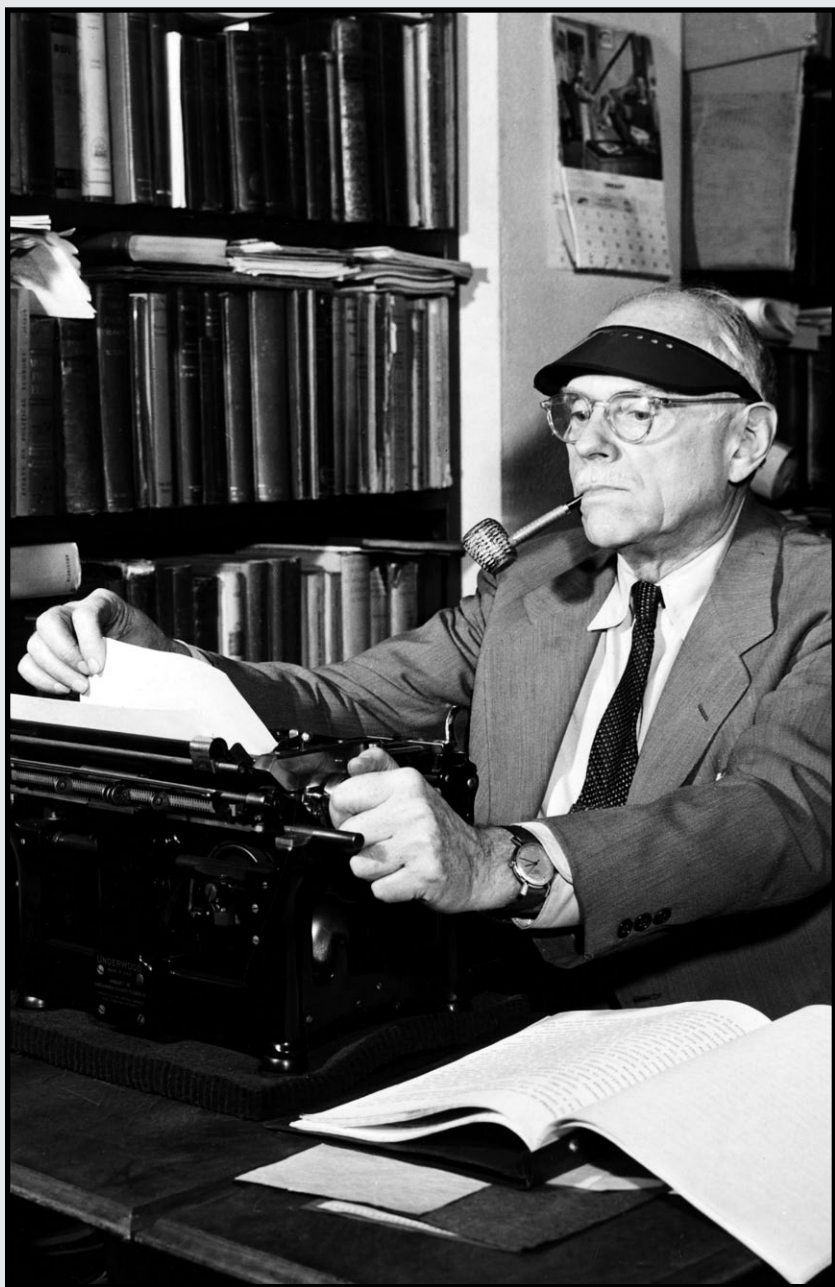
essentially controlled the second two years of collegiate work, either via their departmental majors or by the simple fact (predicted by Sylvia Thrupp in 1958) that they provided the largest number of individual courses that students might select using their free electives.

General education in turn now became a cluster of faculty-taught and faculty-administered sequences, based substantially on small, seminar-style courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and using quarterly grades and faculty-designed tests. Chauncey Boucher's revolution of 1930–31 was thus turned on its head, but its ultimate goals have survived unscathed in the last half century and, indeed, have grown more rooted in the broader academic culture of the University: a statutory and legislative realm of general, interdisciplinary learning for younger students in their first two years, un beholden to the specialized research interests of the departments; a philosophy and methodology of teaching that stresses the acquisition of intellectual habits and scholarly skills; and the remarkable ability of the University to attract students to the College who care deeply about the quality of the learning in which they are eager to engage, who have a passionate commitment to conducting their personal lives infused by Chicago's special intellectual style, and who see the intensive study of the liberal arts as the best possible preparation for a successful career in one of the free professions or in other prominent professional domains of American life. Having begun with a rather unimaginative undergraduate curriculum in the first decades of the University's existence, Chicago negotiated a complex political process after 1930 that created a Core curriculum fully worthy of the creativity of the University faculty, but that also articulated that curriculum as the first stage for a larger set of intellectual opportunities for our students in the majors and free electives offered by the departments, various interdisciplinary programs, and, on occasion, the professional schools.

The Core curriculum had a powerful, long-term impact on the pedagogical practices and educational philosophy of our College, and it was equally efficacious in bestowing on the University of Chicago more generally the image of a hothouse of educational reform, if not revolution. Ironically, a University that started out in 1892 wanting to become most famous for the structure of its graduate programs ended up in the first half of the Twentieth Century becoming more famous for the radical educational reforms in its undergraduate College.

GRADUATE EDUCATION,
THE PROTEST PETITION OF 1944,
AND THE BAKER
COMMISSION OF 1982

In spite of his evident achievements in securing an all-general-education College in 1942, Robert Hutchins remained frustrated about what he perceived to be any interest on the part of the departments to consider serious reforms in the operations of their graduate programs. In a report to the board of trustees in 1935, Hutchins had complained that “the Ph.D. degree is supposed to be a degree for scholars. When the candidates appear at Convocation the dean remarks that they have written dissertations which contain actual contributions to knowledge. This must be regarded as a euphemism. Some dissertations doubtless meet the requirements. But most of them are preliminary exercises in research. As such, they are valuable to those students who are going on in research. We know, however, that most Ph.D. candidates will never do any more. They are going to be teachers, most of them college teachers. It is



Frank H. Knight, Professor, Department of Economics



certainly is useful for a college teacher to know how to do research and to do some if he can find the time. No candidate for the Ph.D. should be allowed to graduate without some training in research. It does not follow, however, that his whole course of study should be based on the idea that he is going to be a scholar. It might be much better for him to do more and broader work in the subject matter of his field or to study under the Committee on the Preparation of Teachers or both.” Hutchins then repeated his proposal that the University should use the Ph.D. primarily for teachers and create a different degree for scholars. He added laconically, “So far, I have yet to find a member of the faculty who agrees with me.”²¹³

Nonetheless, Hutchins had pulled in his horns over this issue, and in the late 1930s and early 1940s he was preoccupied with engineering a radical reinvention of the baccalaureate degree, based solely on non-departmental general education, and the creation of a large and autonomous faculty in the College to teach it. In early 1944, however, Hutchins decided to return to the problem of the (in his mind) relative indifference of the departments toward training their graduate students to become college teachers. The final denouement involving Hutchins and graduate education came in January 1944 in a famous speech that he gave to the trustees and faculty at the South Shore Country Club. This speech was a political disaster for Hutchins. Posing broad claims about the dire state of higher education in America and set in a highly moralistic framework, Hutchins proposed that the University create a new institute of liberal studies that would be licensed to give Ph.D. degrees to graduate students interested primarily in teaching careers and

213. *Report of the President, 1930–1934*, February 1, 1935, p. 24, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 52, folder 3.

that the departments would then be allowed to create new doctoral degrees for specialists in research. Hutchins suggested, "[I]f we are to show the way to liberal education for all, we shall have to get ready to educate teachers who are to undertake this task. At that time we shall have to reconsider our advanced degrees and think once more whether we ought not to award the Ph.D. to those who have prepared themselves to teach through a new Institute of Liberal Studies. If we did so, we should have to confer new degrees, say the Doctor of Science and the Doctor of Letters, upon those who had qualified themselves primarily for research." The speech contained many other provocative statements, including a questioning of the system of academic rank and a proposal to replace the University's motto with a new motto drawn from Walt Whitman:

I must confess that I have never liked the motto of the university—*Crescat Scientia Vita Excolatur*. Let Knowledge Grow That Life May Be Enriched. In the first place it seems incongruous and affected for those rugged and unsophisticated pioneers of the Nineties to think up a Latin slogan for their raw, new university. In the second place, 'enriched' is ambiguous. I do not like the materialistic interpretation to which it is open. Therefore I suggest a new motto for the university, one which will express its spirit and its purpose as it sallies forth to battle in the revolution that must come if men are to live together in peace. The new motto I suggest for the university is a line from Walt Whitman. It is this: 'Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a new world.'²¹⁴

214. A full text of the speech is in the *Robert M. Hutchins Papers*, Box 26, folder 3.



Still, the most controversial item in the speech was the idea of the new graduate school of liberal studies. Frank H. Knight of the Department of Economics, who was a leading opponent of Hutchins and who helped to organize a formal protest by the faculty to the board of trustees against the ideas contained in the 1944 speech, reported to a friend, "The main issue on which we were alarmed into action was the proposal to set up a University within the University—a real one within the traditionalist shell—in the form of an 'Institute of Liberal Studies' with exclusive power to give the Ph.D. degree. This explicitly called for absolute separation between training for teaching and training for research. It was chiefly on this point, as you know, that the correspondence of the 'Six' asked for assurances that such changes would not be recommended to the Board of Trustees without previous discussion and approval on the part of the Senate or the faculties."²¹⁵

Several of the most vocal opponents of Hutchins's ideas on the graduate level cited what Hutchins had done with the B.A. degree as evidence of his propensity to radical actions, which in fact meant his willingness to deprecate the departments as sole custodians of educational wisdom involving graduate education. Hard feelings and vitriolic language followed, with Knight writing to Hutchins in June 1944 angrily, "[U]nless and until you renounce this program, I mean to continue, with others of similar mind, to oppose you to the limit of my small ability; and if you win and we, your opponents, lose in the contest, I mean to get out of the University of Chicago as soon as I can find some other way to meet sacred financial obligations to those who are

215. Knight to Charles O. Hardy, May 26, 1944, *Frank H. Knight Papers*, Addenda, Box 1, folder 3.

dependent upon me for support."²¹⁶ Knight and others saw Hutchins's meddling with doctoral education as a core attack on basic values of research and investigation to which the University had been dedicated since its founding.²¹⁷ Departmentally based graduate education programs thus became a touchstone for the fundamental security of the University's identity.

The result was a petition to the board of trustees, signed by 119 members of the faculty, denouncing Hutchins and his motives and ideas.²¹⁸ One might be tempted to argue that the hugely negative response resulted only from disdain for Hutchins's radical ideas about doctoral education and that it had nothing to do with Hutchins's collegiate reforms of 1942, but in fact many of the men who supported Knight's views did so because they believed that Hutchins had gone too far in his reforms of the College, which they also took to be fundamental attacks on the prerogatives of the departments. The faculty rebellion of 1944 was, thus, an uneasy coalition of several sources of disgruntlement.²¹⁹

216. Knight to Hutchins, June 3, 1944, *ibid.*

217. The uproar over Hutchins's speech also masked deep, personal intra-faculty tensions that played a role in the formation of opinion about Hutchins' proposals. For example, John U. Nef was convinced that Knight had launched his critique of Hutchins merely as a covert way to attack the Committee on Social Thought: "Is it not a fact that your whole campaign is motivated by animus against the Committee on Social Thought, though you dare not mention it, and is it not true that this Committee was created in a wholly constitutional way, for recognized University purposes, by colleagues of equal standing with yourselves?" See Nef to Knight, April 26, 1944, *Hutchins Administration*, Box 199, folder 5.

218. "Memorial to the Board of Trustees on the State of the University," April 1944, *Frank H. Knight Papers*, Box 60, folder 14.

219. Many faculty were also agitated by Hutchins's seeming conviction that the University was responsible for correcting the world's ills. William Ogburn asked



Still, the substantive issue that Hutchins had raised in 1944 was identical to that which he had articulated 15 years earlier. Having succeeded in 1942 in pushing the College experiment to the limit and won, perhaps Hutchins thought the force of history was now on his side in provoking serious reforms in graduate education. But the resulting furor not only led to complete revision of faculty governance at the University, but also a clear reassertion by the departments that they, and they alone, would make decisions about who was qualified for a Ph.D. degree and that the Ph.D. would remain a research-based degree *par excellence*.

What is all the more remarkable about this dustup over faculty and departmental prerogatives was that it came only a year before Robert Hutchins boldly supported the creation of two new interdisciplinary Institutes, the Institute for Nuclear Studies and the Institute for the Study of Metals, in 1945. Renamed the Enrico Fermi Institute in 1955 and the James Franck Institute in 1967, these interdisciplinary institutes responded to a long-standing quest on the part of faculty from the Physical Sciences for more trans-disciplinary support, but they also came to have a profound impact on the funding of research in the Physical Sciences in ways that encouraged, if not necessitated, the individual academic departments to adjust themselves to new forms of collaboration and cooperation, and that had powerful influence on the training of their graduate students. Hence, the collision of 1944 should not be read as evidence that the faculty were unwilling to change, adapt, and create new and more flexible methods for organizing their research and graduate programs, but that such changes had to occur in a more organic and more self-directed way, with the departments

archly in his private diary in 1946: "Is the University a promotional or propaganda agency?" Diary, January 10, 1946, *William F. Ogburn Papers*, Box 46, folder 2.

having the chance to slowly come to terms with new ways of structured collaboration.

The bad taste that the feud between the president and the faculty over who would or should control graduate education in 1944 endured for many years on our campus, and it was not until two decades later that a group of faculty led by Martin E. Marty of the Divinity School would be asked to take stock of the graduate programs of the University. The Marty Report of November 1972 offered a clear sense of the challenges facing the University, and in addition to calling for more creative enrollment strategies for M.A. students and other adult students who might help to populate our program, the committee focused much of its discussion on the need to maintain high quality faculty resources and strong departments to teach graduate students.²²⁰

And yet what was most interesting about this report was what it did not contain, avoiding as it did any comments on the internal curricular offerings of the various departmental doctoral programs. Indeed, the committee admitted that “every effort to reform and improve graduate education is eventually channeled through the University’s departments or their analogues.” Ironically, one could read the report of the Marty Committee as a return to the very first articulations about graduate education from the 1890s, in which the status and research success of the faculty were seen to be the most plausible gauge of the success or failure of a graduate program.

Enrollments in graduate programs remained sufficiently resilient in the decades between 1950 and 1980 to allow a time of quiet evolution. Indeed, as the College’s enrollments collapsed in the 1950s, because of a

220. Martin E. Marty et al., “Report of the Committee on the Problems and Scope of Graduate Work,” *University of Chicago Record*, January 15, 1973, pp. 1–10.



massive negative public reaction to the all-general-education curriculum of the 1940s and early 1950s, graduate and particularly doctoral education became a more contextually prominent feature of the University of Chicago's self-understanding and institutional identity for the faculty who arrived at the University in the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Subsequent University leaders had little stomach for proposing radical reforms involving graduate education such as those put forward by Robert Hutchins. And it is telling that the debates of the Council of the University Senate in the decades between 1950 and 1980 contain very few major interventions that related to the general structure of graduate education, much less to particular curricular issues relating to the education of doctoral students in the individual departments.

The most interesting recent developments in the history of graduate education took place in 1980 and 1981. Facing a seemingly dramatic drop in graduate enrollments in the late 1970s (a decline that all top research universities faced and that was thus seen to be all the more ominous), President Hanna H. Gray appointed a high-level faculty committee, chaired by Keith M. Baker, to investigate its causes and recommend possible responses to improve the attractiveness and effectiveness of our graduate programs. Using its power of the first draft, the Baker Commission formulated a set of interventions, including new strategies for graduate recruitment and new funding mechanisms to provide more competitive doctoral fellowships. The commission also proposed that the formal course work requirement for the doctorate be reduced from 27 to 18 courses, and a new system of residence that would help to make the progress of students toward their degrees more efficient and more transparent. The commission's most controversial proposal, however, was that the University should create a new post-departmental structure for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, the research insti-

tute, into which doctoral students would move after they had completed two years of formal course work in their departments. This research institute would then take responsibility for supervising and mentoring the Ph.D. students during their dissertation writing.²²¹ As a majority of the commission imagined the institute, it would “create and sustain seminars and workshops for advanced research in the humanities and social sciences, thereby establishing a clearer institutional definition of—and more stimulating context for—the research stage of graduate work in the two Divisions. We anticipate that graduate students would be admitted to the Research Institute upon completion of the preliminary course work required for the Ph.D. . . . and subject to clear demonstration of their research promise. The Research Institute would then provide an institutional locus for their research and writing until they had completed the dissertation. As members of the Research Institute, students would be expected to continue to acquire the specialized knowledge and skills necessary for the achievement of their scholarly goals. They would also be able to participate in one or more seminars, workshops, or research groups, normally conducted by a small group of faculty members who would commit themselves to systematic investigation of common problems as a means both of advancing their own scholarly interests and of providing an appropriate intellectual context for graduate student apprenticeship in research. The introduction of a Research Institute structure into the Humanities and Social Sciences Division would thus create an institutional and intellectual framework that would place less exclusive emphasis on conventional course work

221. See the “Report of the Commission on Graduate Education,” *University of Chicago Record*, May 3, 1982, pp. 67–180.



and greater emphasis on an apprenticeship in research as the essential dimension of advanced graduate training.”²²²

The idea of the research institute was quite radical, and had it been implemented it would have had a powerful impact both on the broader structures of graduate student identity and on faculty governance at the University. Perhaps understandably, neither the graduate divisions nor the departments showed much enthusiasm for the idea of such a supra-divisional research institute. In fact, the reaction of most departments, particularly in the Social Sciences, was quite negative. The Department of Political Science rejected the proposal, arguing, “[T]he department as a whole is unequivocally opposed to a radical reorganization of the University that would reduce departments to a set of residual administrative entities, limited to the processing of a shrinking part of the faculty’s teaching activities, namely course work addressed to the middle phase of education (two years of undergraduate and two years of graduate work).”²²³ The Department of Sociology in turn expressed similarly strong reservations: “We are impressed by the potential harmful effects of such an institution. We fear it would exacerbate the split between teaching at the college and graduate levels. We anticipate that it would constitute an external influence on departmental prerogatives, including thesis evaluation, faculty appointments, and departmental curricula. We regard it as an unnecessary bureaucratic elaboration imposed on an

222. Ibid., pp. 168–169.

223. Response of the Department of Political Science to the Commission, February 9, 1983, Response of the Department of Sociology to the Commission, December 7, 1982, *Office of the President. Gray Administration*, Box 133.

already administratively complex system.”²²⁴ Given such ardent opposition by key departments, the idea quietly died, without the public *Sturm und Drang* that Hutchins had engendered in his attempt to monkey with the basic structures of graduate education in 1944.

What emerged from the work of the Baker Commission instead was a program of new graduate workshops in the Humanities and Social Sciences designed to foster greater intellectual and social support for advanced graduate students during their dissertation writing period, but within the existing authority and legitimacy of their departmental programs. Under the direction of a faculty committee created in 1983–84 and drawn from faculty in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Divinity School, named the Council on Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, the graduate workshop program grew rapidly, and as of two years ago the council was supporting over 65 such workshops each year involving hundreds of faculty members and doctoral students. Over time, the new CAS workshops became stunningly successful and integrated themselves well into the extant governance structures, precisely because they did not seek to challenge or displace the authority or the control of the individual departmental doctoral programs of their graduate students.²²⁵

Rather, the workshop program followed a gradualist and completely

224. Response of the Department of Sociology to the Commission, December 7, 1982, *ibid.*

225. I served as Chair of the Council on Advanced Studies for 21 years, from 1986 to 2009, and in that role I observed at close hand one of the most remarkable evolutionary changes that took place over these decades, namely, the slow but certain transformation of the workshops from simply serving as dissertation support conventicles to a much broader self-understanding as having a responsibility to prepare students to give effective job talks, to sharpen conference presentation skills, and to give feedback on drafts of scholarly manuscripts that were to be submitted to learned journals.



voluntary strategy, inviting teams of individual faculty members to apply for support on behalf of discrete groups of graduate student dissertation writers. In this format, the workshops were embraced by most of the departments in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, and in many cases they became key vehicles for mentoring and professionalizing doctoral students within their existing graduate programs. Some, but certainly not all, CAS workshops adopted a distinctly interdisciplinary flavor, and in these cases they were able to serve as productive agents to cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, the program of professionalization sponsored by the graduate workshops went far beyond simply providing moral and cultural support for nervous or anxious dissertation writers, in that the workshops also became remarkably effective vehicles for encouraging students to test new and often controversial ideas for first publications and for giving students practical training in public speaking skills and in conference presentation techniques. To the extent that Chicago graduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences have gained a reputation since the 1990s for the poise and confidence that they are able to deploy at scholarly conferences and in job interviews, the CAS workshops have certainly played a critical role in enhancing the self-confidence of our advanced doctoral students, without raising any of the fears and paranoia that the departments originally projected toward the idea of a research institute. Perhaps most importantly, by bringing Ph.D. students and faculty together in interactive structures in which faculty and doctoral students had to defend their scholarly work in the presence of each other in ways that were outside of then-conventional hierarchical social roles, over the decades the workshops helped to establish less hierarchical modes of faculty and graduate student interaction, moving closer to the kinds of egalitarian cultural practices that have long obtained in interdisciplinary graduate

degree programs like the Committee on Human Development.²²⁶

The creation of the Enrico Fermi Institute and the James Franck Institute in 1945 played, over time, a similar role in creating denser and more interdisciplinary training opportunities for graduate students in the physical sciences and the mathematical sciences. As a prominent former director of the James Franck Institute has observed,

I do think that it is fair to ascribe to the Research Institutes (at least in their evolution if not their founding) a broadening and expansive function for graduate students. We pride ourselves on providing opportunities for students (and postdocs) to work with multiple advisors, in the JFI cutting across physics and chemistry and physics and mathematics, sometimes even with one advisor who is an experimentalist and one who is a theorist. In the EFI, the whole ethos is to mix particle physics and cosmology.

226. John Lucy, the chair of the (now renamed) Department of Comparative Human Development, has observed of his unit's traditions, “The Committee on Child Development was founded to bring together researchers on campus interested in the child from whatever home unit or discipline they were a part of. It therefore had a relatively democratic or egalitarian quality and this extended to students. This was expressed most succinctly by our welcome as new students by Bernice Neugarten, then Chair, when I arrived: we were welcomed to Chicago and told that we were now ‘on the Committee’ as members, conveying to us explicitly that we were part of a common project despite other differences in status. This is reflected structurally, at that time and up to the present, in that we have a student representative at regular faculty meetings and serving on Departmental committees, including ad hoc promotion committees. They have to recuse themselves when we discuss particular faculty or students, and they cannot have access to confidential letters, but insofar as possible, we involve them in the full life of the Department. Over time this has affected our speech practices and the entire unit, students and faculty, is on a first-name basis—no titles or honorifics.” Communication from John Lucy to the author, September 30, 2011.

We also sponsor activities like graduate student (one-day) symposia. Moreover, the success of the central facilities (microscopy, x-ray scattering, materials preparation, etc.) depends on the overlap of techniques in different fields and they serve as nucleating points for new collaborations, often driven by the graduate students from different groups who overlap in using the equipment or teaching each other.

I would also note that the success of the JFI and EFI has been intertwined with competing successfully for big research grants that involve multiple investigators from different disciplines: the Kavli Center for Cosmological Physics and the NSF Frontier Center in Cosmology for EFI (relatively new) and the Materials Research Laboratory, now the Materials Research Science and Engineering Center for JFI (going back to the '50s, first with ARPA funding, then NSF). These grants demand collaboration between fields and emphasize the educational and training mission, where successful mixing of graduate students and their job placement is tracked explicitly.²²⁷

Yet in spite all of these interventions to enrich the educational opportunities of our graduate students, the basic issues raised by Robert Hutchins in 1930 and 1944 have still, in my view, not been fully or compellingly answered. Granted that we now have brilliantly successful mechanisms in place to help our advanced graduate students prepare themselves as young researcher-scholars, what have we done to help our graduate students achieve a similar level of preparation to be successful collegiate teachers? Harlan Barrows was convinced in 1931 that, if left

227. Communication from Thomas F. Rosenbaum to the author, September 4, 2011.

to themselves, the individual departments had the capacity to develop responsible and serious programs of teaching preparation, and yet the decades since his report have shown that this undertaking still faces a series of unanswered questions. The Baker Commission Report in 1982 renewed the call for more serious attention about preparing graduate students for careers as teachers. Given the small size of the College in the late 1970s, which made it unnecessary for us to use many graduate students in instructional positions, the Baker Commission was understandably concerned with creating more opportunities for advanced graduate students to gain practical teaching experience on campus, but it also offered a few comments about the broader issue of the training of students to do such teaching in the first place and the role of the faculty in participating in that training. The report noted, “[W]e believe that the general question of graduate student teaching should be considered on its educational merits, quite apart from the issue of financial support. . . . As faculty members, we are therefore in a position to relate elements of our graduate and undergraduate teaching activities in ways that could enhance the liveliness and quality of both. Thus we should not ask how graduate student teachers might replace faculty members in the classroom, but how they might participate in our teaching efforts in ways that would improve the overall quality of our undergraduate education. Nor should we expect a reduction of faculty teaching responsibilities to accrue from any such participation. On the contrary, the creation of teaching contexts in which graduate students may appropriately contribute to the education of undergraduates, and the responsible supervision of their efforts to do so, will place greater demands on faculty energies rather than less.”²²⁸ Given the growth in the College since the mid-1990s,

228. “Report of the Commission on Graduate Education,” p. 102.



which has made it possible for us to expand the range of meaningful teaching opportunities for our advanced doctoral students, and given the recent establishment of the Graduate Aid Initiative, which integrates teaching expectations for service as an intern or teaching assistant or even as a part-time lecturer as part of the new multiyear fellowship program for doctoral students, the concerns of the Baker Commission about the availability of teaching opportunities have certainly been met. But the larger issue of the way in which we prepare our graduate students for these teaching opportunities, and for their longer professional careers as teachers, still requires serious thought. Since the 1990s, some of our departments have taken serious steps to create structured programs within their own home units, while others have, to be candid, made less progress. The College has come to play a major role in the training of graduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences via its Core staff system, for most Core sequences now require graduate students who wish to apply for lectureships to go through structured teaching internships. Yet more can and should be done to respond to the challenges that we face. Our goal should be to offer the most coherent and effective educational preparation to our advanced graduate students that we possibly can, not only for the sake of our College students, but because it is the right thing to do more generally for their longer-term professional success.

Yet in thinking about such training, we inevitably come back to an issue of boundaries and territoriality, not in the sense that anyone, in our day and age, would want to imagine or propose any possible infringements on the sovereignty of the departments over the scholarly training of their doctoral students (which I take to be properly set in stone), but rather in the sense that the same faculty colleagues who have graduate appointments in departments that license them to teach *their* graduate

students also have faculty appointments in the College that charge them with playing critical roles in the various teaching programs of the College. The joint appointment system put in place in the 1960s has served the College and the divisions well, and more intense collaboration by the departments and the College to enhance the preparation of our advanced graduate students to be effective teachers would flow quite naturally from the structurally integrated system of faculty joint appointments that defines our institutional identity.

The issue of the relationship between College and graduate teaching as it relates to the professional identity of the faculty themselves did find some fascinating, if unsystematic, comments in the various position papers and commentaries solicited by the Commission on Graduate Education in 1981 and 1982. James Cronin, our distinguished Nobelist in physics, commented on what he saw to be a logical interrelationship between high-quality faculty teaching in College programs and graduate programs, insisting, "[I]f the size, strength, and diversity of programs in the College were to dictate the composition of the faculties in the above [Humanities and Social Sciences] Divisions, I believe we would also have a faculty which would provide most of the requirements for excellent graduate education. Perhaps the planned enlargement of the College will provide a stronger base for some of the worthy intellectual disciplines which seem to be in decline as measured by their ability to attract graduate students."²²⁹ Cronin's creative muddling of the boundary between undergraduate and graduate education, as it related to faculty talent and creativity, found a similar resonance in a report on views of colleagues in the Humanities Division about the Baker Report. Writing on behalf

229. James W. Cronin to Keith M. Baker, April 15, 1981, *Office of the President. Gray Administration*, Box 133.



of a faculty subcommittee on the humanities, Susanne H. Rudolph commented, “[T]here is a great danger, in deliberation about ‘graduate education’, that we will fall into a sharp conflict with thinking about the College, as if the interests of the two levels were opposed. Though there are obvious senses in which the College deflects time and energy that might otherwise be spent on graduate teaching and research (one member of the Division said, quite flatly, that all of our woes would be solved if we just wiped out the College), we feel a strong sense in the Division that a healthy graduate Division depends on a healthy College. Perhaps in this Division more than any other, people believe that their teaching at all levels, including that of first year students, contributes—often in subtle ways but sometimes quite directly—to their research and writing. The effect is especially evident for those who engage in the kind of exchange that the best staff-taught [Core] courses stimulate. Again and again we have heard comments like, ‘My book would have been entirely different if I had not been required to read X, Y, or Z as part of my Humanities teaching assignment and to discuss it with those who knew it well’.”²³⁰

This final comment brings us full circle back to the revolution in general education at Chicago—from lecture-based to discussion-based teaching—articulated in the previous section and points to the universality of teaching not only as a professional responsibility for the faculty but as a fruitful, productive privilege that enriches one’s own scholarly work. I assume that this is also the case for our advanced graduate students. We are a teaching university on all levels, and the more we acknowledge that the core identity of the University is constituted by our teaching on

230. “Report of the Subcommittee on the Humanities,” prepared by Wayne Booth, Françoise Meltzer, Susanne Rudolph, and Stephen Stigler, undated [1981], pp. 32–33, *ibid.*

all levels in a simultaneous and deeply unified way, the stronger and more resilient that identity will be.

CONCLUSION



riting to John U. Nef of the Committee on Social Thought in August 1946 and still bruised by the intense political-curricular battles that he had fought with senior faculty in the 1940s, Robert Hutchins complained, "I am afraid that there is something in the Brandeis theory of size, after all. When a place gets as big and complicated as the U. of C., the burden of institutional detail is so great that nobody can think of what the institution is for, and, what is worse, nobody could do anything about it, anyway, because the place is so unwieldy it can't be moved."²³¹

Our story so far is one of surprising outcomes. The New Plan created a system of general education that, in a wonderfully dialectical manner, contained the seeds of its own destruction, but that also gave birth to a successor model that is still robustly practiced in the College and that helps to define the very identity of the College. Boucher's general survey courses and his Office of the Examiner gave way to faculty-taught, discussion-based Core courses in which comprehensive examinations were considered baneful and educationally primitive.

On the graduate level, the consistent determination of the departments to maintain curricular control of their individual doctoral programs resisted efforts at top-down changes and reforms, but in the end, the workshop program of the Commission on Graduate Education was embraced because the departments were able to make it their own. The

231. Hutchins to Nef, August 17, 1946, *John U. Nef Papers*, Box 23, folder 7.



workshops in turn helped to (slowly) reshape departmental cultural practices defining role expectations between faculty and doctoral students into less hierarchical modes, helping to acknowledge graduate students as full (or at least fuller) members of the collegium of each department in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

What is striking about the numerous communications and position papers in the 1920s through the 1950s on college and graduate teaching is the lack of any serious structural connections between the two, as if the two levels were separate worlds, with nothing to say to each other and with no impact on each other on our own campus. Yet in terms of faculty politics and policy making, the two levels constantly bumped up against each other, and in the mid-1950s faculty from the divisions helped to lead the charge against the Office of the Examiner, an agent created for and by the College in 1931. We encounter extreme cases of partisanship on both sides, such as the open derision about undergraduate teaching offered by men like William Dodd and the more covert dismissiveness of a Gordon Laing or a Harry Pratt Judson, or the intense paranoia felt by the beaten forces of the College faculty in the 1950s. But most faculty members over the course of our history have been more like Harlan Barrows, valuing both graduate and undergraduate education, not only wanting the best for both worlds, but also assuming that it was the professional responsibility of the faculty to provide high educational quality to both at all times.

The logic of Robert Hutchins's critiques was based on his attempt to combine features of his College plan (a College completely devoted to general education and staffed by dedicated pedagogues selected for their skill in teaching general education) and a new form of graduate education that would produce teachers worthy of this new form of undergraduate teaching. Hutchins's actions were, thus, of whole cloth. The

elimination of his scheme for an all-general education College in the 1950s, the reintroduction of majors and departmental courses in the College's degree programs, and the disappearance of most of the College-only faculty by the late 1960s, meant that both parts of Hutchins's gamble had failed. On the graduate side, Hutchins ran up against fear and anxiety on the part of those who felt that research was not only the fundamental norm of the identity of the faculty and thus of the University, but that the identity of the faculty was essentially the same as the identity of our graduate educational programs. To put training in “research” in jeopardy seemed to undermine the very fundament of our mission as a university. Put in such stark terms, spending on research had to have moral and cultural priority over training for teaching, and if choices in resource allocation had to be made, the prioritization of research could not be weakened.

Hutchins's views found a fascinating subsequent proponent, however, in the person of Earl J. McGrath, who served as the United States Commissioner for Education during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. In 1959, McGrath, then an official of the Institute of Higher Education at the Teachers College, Columbia University, published a broadside attack on the deep and in his view dangerously narrow specialization that characterized training of doctoral students, which he blamed for the weakening of liberal arts education in the nation's colleges. McGrath argued, “It should be recognized at the very outset of any effort at reform that the present practice of subjecting teachers and researchers to the same graduate requirements has produced fewer highly skilled researchers and fewer efficient teachers than would otherwise have been possible. . . . The facts of psychology provide cogent argument for establishing somewhat different educational programs for research and for college teaching.” He also insisted that “with notable exceptions, the



graduate experience does not cultivate the capacity for the interrelations of facts and theories which is indispensable in successful undergraduate teaching. Indeed, too commonly the practices of graduate schools do the very reverse. By requiring students to devote almost their whole time to the deeper and deeper penetration of narrower and narrower areas of learning, they discourage, if not bar, the intellectually adventurous student from ranging widely even in fields adjacent to his own. They concentrate his attention on the minutiae of specialized knowledge and foster the processes by which it is created. The result is an individual inadequately prepared for the normal teaching obligations of a faculty member in a liberal arts college." McGrath proposed, therefore, the creation of two different tracks in graduate education, one for those who sought careers in college teaching, the other for those interested in professional research.²³²

It is perhaps not surprising that Earl McGrath had deep connections to the University of Chicago, having attended graduate school here in the 1930s and having received his Ph.D. from the Department of Education in 1936. In a subsequent autobiographical memoir, McGrath remembered with fondness the fact that Robert Hutchins "was vigorously and articulately promoting a general education for all college students." McGrath remembered that because of his encounters with men like Hutchins and others of a similar cast of mind, "I was convinced then, as I am now, that the undergraduate curriculum had to be redesigned with the purpose of providing a broader range of intellectual experiences for enlightened citizenship."²³³ For McGrath, the quality of teaching *in*

232. Earl J. McGrath, *The Graduate School and the Decline of Liberal Education* (New York, 1959), pp. 28, 36.

233. Earl J. McGrath, "Fifty Years in Higher Education: Personal Influences on My Professional Development," *The Journal of Higher Education*, 51 (1980): 81.

a curriculum was just as important as the logical structure of the curriculum. That is, he believed that badly prepared or poorly motivated instructors, however luminous their research credentials might be, were the bane (and a corrosive bane at that) of any serious liberal arts enterprise for college students.

McGrath's formal prescriptions went nowhere, of course, and most graduate schools in the United States continued their traditional practices involving the Ph.D. degree in the coming decades. This is not to say that there have not been fruitful and imaginative interventions to improve graduate education, and the whole subject remains a lively point of national debate.²³⁴ Attempts at reform have focused on time to degree for doctoral students, access to quality programs by students of color, and adequate funding for graduate students, all of which were certainly justified, but which did not address the more fundamental, substantive educational and pedagogical criticisms that McGrath presented. Nor has the issue disappeared from national discourse, since its traces are often embedded in the screed-like critiques of faculty and universities contained in the various “prof scam” books that populate bookstore shelves on higher education. Thus, in the recent book by Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus, *Higher Education? How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids—and What We Can Do about It*, we encounter the argument (in reference to the number of scholarly papers presented at the 2007 meeting of the American Sociological Association) that “[m]ost of what is now being done under the guise of academic research isn't

234. See, for example, the essays in Chris M. Golde, George E. Walker, and Associates, *Envisioning the Future of Doctoral Education: Preparing the Stewards of the Discipline* (San Francisco, 2006); and George E. Walker, et al., *The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century* (San Francisco, 2008).



really that. Of course each of these projects adds something to our knowledge. We now know more about some aspects of women's hockey and middle-aged policemen, two of the sociologists' offerings. Are we suggesting that these are things we don't need to know? Part of us says yes—the world would remain just as enlightened had these topics remained unexplored. But as we have noted, our recurring argument is that the time and energy and resources spent on all these papers and articles and books can and should be devoted to better classroom teaching.²³⁵ This kind of Manichaean rhetoric, contrasting the virtue of unadulterated teaching with the irrelevance and even malevolence of faculty research, suggests that the universities have sacrificed virtue for corruption in their dealings with their students and does so in tones that recall the most excessive language of Hutchins and McGrath.²³⁶

Indeed, one might argue that the first prof scammer in American higher education was none other than Robert Maynard Hutchins himself. Hutchins's view of many things was bi-valent—good or bad, corrupt or pure, clear or muddled, general or special, liberal or professional. Things cannot be mixed or combined without being corrupted. If you are a teacher, you are not a researcher, so we need two doctorates. If you

235. Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus, *Higher Education? How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids—and What We Can Do about It* (New York, 2010), p. 86.

236. Hacker and Dreifus's book does contain examples of worthy educational endeavors, but they portray them as hidden away in honors colleges and secondary institutions. What is good in higher education is beleaguered and countercultural, while the self-interested professors take all the credit for excellence and all the money. Interestingly, Hacker and Dreifus mention Robert Hutchins twice as a courageous defender of academic freedom and also include him on their list of idealistic and outspoken university leaders, the like of which we no longer see.

care about graduate education, you cannot care about the College, so we need two faculties. If you are not a generalist, you are a specialist, and your views are narrow and biased and not truly educated, etc. This rhetorical strategy is also apparent in the work of Hacker and Dreifus and other prof scam authors: The universities are dominated by self-indulgent professors who hide their self-interest behind a public pose that claims an interest in education.

Can the American research universities afford to allow such profoundly negative and distorted portraits of their work to go unanswered? If we stand back and think about the logic of Earl McGrath's concerns we might well conclude that he was using the wrong means to achieve the right ends, or that he was throwing the baby out with the bath water. I believe that our own history affords us both challenges and encouragement in this regard, and that, in contrast to Hutchins, McGrath, and the more recent prof scam crusaders, teaching and research are not only complementary but that in sustaining teaching informed by research and in sponsoring research informed by teaching the greatest potential of our universities is realized. We should be deeply encouraged by the fact that the form of general education—our Core curriculum—that emerged from curricular battles of the 1950s is precisely one taught by a highly research-oriented faculty and that this paradigm has proven both effective and stable. That is, we have shown, and we continue to show every day, that a large research university can develop, implement, and staff a highly attractive form of general education for students entering the College. We have also demonstrated that our departments can, if they have the will and discipline to do so, offer remarkably effective majors that introduce our students to the scholarly agendas and methods represented in their research milieus. Moreover, we have also assembled a group of undergraduates in the College who, now more than ever, are



deeply committed to our broad ideals of liberal education, but who also respect and admire the scholarly activities and research mission of the faculty and who understand that scholarly training will not only enrich their adult lives but also substantially improve the likelihood of their future professional success as well.

The students who emerge from the Core are intellectually curious and devoted to disciplined work, and their third and fourth years in the College involve a deeper and more profound grounding in the skills of a scholar. The first two years of educational work thus prepare for and complement the second two years in our College, giving a pace and logic to our broader curriculum that has served our students very well indeed. Our curricular model, which emerged as a distillation of decades of controversy and conflict, has come to have a very high value and well-known impact on all aspects of our students' future lives, both deeply private and broadly public, and it is sustainable because it has become part of the central mission of the University itself, not just the College and the divisions, but the University as a whole.

Moreover, with the creation of the Graduate Aid Initiative we now have put in place a system for the funding of doctoral education that is stable and competitive, and we are recruiting highly talented young college graduates to our doctoral programs.

Our challenges might be seen in the form of a question: How can we connect these two very encouraging developmental trends? The issue is not whether we can sustain the recent progress of the College and the recent progress of the graduate programs, for I have no doubt that, with continued dedication and hard work, we can do so. My concern is a different one, namely, given the progress on both fronts, how can we better integrate both broad domains of teaching and learning, to the greater advantage of both College students and doctoral students? One might

begin by reframing the venerable tensions between the two levels, that is, by challenging the very notion that graduate school equals research, while the College equals teaching. Granted, those who tried to mix up these broad ideal types, when viewed in terms of jurisdictional alignments, usually encountered frustration and failure. Yet the very logic of Harper's original plan was that the final two years of college should flow into the graduate programs. Remember, Harper saw one important justification for the undergraduate programs in the new University as feeders of well-trained students into his new graduate and professional programs. If this is the case, should it not be worth our interests to think about this boundary once again? Is it as sacred and untouchable now, in our time, as it seemed to be for most of the 20th century? How different, in point of fact, is the preparation and training of our College seniors and our first-year graduate students? We already see the teaching of many double-numbered courses to both groups. The Registrar's Office estimates that last year 486 courses (28 percent of courses in the College) were offered in 71 departments and programs across the campus with two simultaneous numbers, thus formally suggesting, at least under some circumstances, the two populations can be productively mixed. Allowing for the variety that must inevitably obtain across the units, would it be desirable for us to find ways to enrich these arrangements and to imagine more innovative ways in which to operationalize them? What if faculty members decided to sponsor not merely double-numbered lecture courses, but research seminars that were populated quite deliberately by students from both groups, based on overlapping interests and qualifications? And further, what if we combined that model with new resources to encourage collaborative teaching by faculty members from different disciplinary or subdisciplinary areas?

The University has had a stunning engagement with all forms of



teaching, and at various times has emerged as a national leader. True, its leadership was not always consistent and it did not always accomplish what was intended. But the record is remarkable nonetheless. The teaching innovations of the 1930s and 1940s have had a lasting impact on the academic culture of the College, all the more because in recent decades we have managed to sustain the interdisciplinary logic and substance of the Core while also drawing faculty with regular disciplinary/departmental identities. The current state of play is thus a compromise, seen from the purist views of the 1940s, but a creative compromise that has sturdy roots and that has gained widespread support from the faculty. On the graduate level, doctoral training continues to be controlled by the individual departments, but many graduate students take courses outside their home departments, and the CAS workshop system has had a powerful impact on the professionalization of graduate students as young scholars.

Another vital issue that remains is to re-engage the issue that Robert Hutchins and others put forward in the early 1930s and that the Baker Commission rearticulated in the early 1980s, namely, how can we most effectively prepare our doctoral students for the formidable demands of teaching that await most of them in their own professional careers? The past is not a reservoir of good tips for the present, but it is striking how prescient Hutchins was in arguing that preparing graduate students to be effective teachers should be a central concern of graduate education. The College is eager to cooperate in the coming years with departmental leaders across the divisions in thinking seriously about this issue, in which we both have a profound stake. Could we imagine the departments and the Collegiate divisions sponsoring joint pedagogy workshops that would introduce advanced graduate students to issues of course design and discussion methods? Could we use new interdisciplinary

programs like the College's Chicago Studies initiative or the various Sawyer Seminars on the divisional level to create new opportunities for faculty and advanced graduate students to think about the design of new undergraduate courses or other pedagogically valuable enterprises that would have a strong research and field-experiential component? Let me be clear: I am not proposing a Hutchins-like redrawing of administrative or budgetary boundaries, which would be foolish and counterproductive. Rather, I am suggesting serious, creative, and flexible thinking about a shared problem and a shared opportunity.

At the same time, conversations about the preparation of graduate students for teaching must and should properly re-emphasize the intrinsic importance that the faculty themselves take in their *own* teaching. To be a teaching and research university does not mean that we are a university filled with some who do research and others who teach, or with some who only teach small numbers of advanced students and others who teach larger numbers of younger students. It means that we should understand ourselves for what we are, in fact are and always have been, namely, a holistic community defined by the high value of teaching on all levels and at all times to all of our members.

Nor is it altogether surprising that some of the most eloquent statements about the fundamental values of the University have come forth in rhetoric celebrating the University's teaching mission. Responding to the question “why we teach,” as a way of introducing the Report of the Committee on Teaching in 1972, Stuart Tave responded, “We speak here not of teaching and not of teaching at a University but of teaching at a University of a certain sort. We do not say that it is what all universities should be, and would insist rather that there should be varied institutions seeking excellence in varied ends, but we do say it is important that there should be some of this sort. It is a University that



conceives highly of itself and with these pretensions it must be judged severely, for if it is not what it claims to be then it has no valid claim; it becomes not merely good in another kind but an inferior version of a thing that has value only when it is superior. In any statement we make, therefore, we risk writing our own satire.”²³⁷ Tave’s admonition about the high stakes involved in claiming that we are a teaching university of a certain sort, unless we also remember that we depend on teaching to indeed make us into that “certain sort” of superior university, found a splendid analogue in the more individualistic claim that Karl J. Weintraub made in 1974 in his wonderful lecture “In Behalf of the Humanities.” For Jock Weintraub teaching was not simply a way of valorizing the University’s institutional mission, but also a confession of the power of the University in constituting the kind of world that we want to bequeath to the young people who come after us: “A teacher finds his satisfaction simply in having raised consciousness by one little notch; it may make all the difference between mediocrity and excellence. The quality of a culture depends ultimately on this long, this sustained cultivation of sensitivities, of refined taste, and of sound judgment. There is no cheap easy way to culture. Much of the true cultural labor is not readily visible; but in this invisible labor lies the great contribution a university makes to all that is visible to the larger public.”²³⁸

Both Tave and Weintraub understood that the vocation of teaching has come to define the highest and best nature of this institution—teaching has given the University a singular identity of intellectual

237. “Report of the Committee on Teaching,” *The University of Chicago Record*, January 15, 1973, p. 11.

238. Karl J. Weintraub, “In Behalf of the Humanities,” in *The Freedom to be Excellent. Three Views* (Chicago, 1974), pp. 19–20.

transformation, and teaching has also made our university a powerful agent in the constitution of the quality and integrity of the broader culture in which we live.

Let me conclude with a story about my two favorite cities, Vienna and Chicago. This past fall, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the direction of its new music director, Riccardo Muti, toured Europe, and it generated astonishingly positive reviews. Even in Vienna, notorious for its tough and often prickly critics, a city insanely proud of its status as the home of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner, and Mahler, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was publicly acknowledged as being one of few (if any) equals to the Vienna Philharmonic, a tribute that is remarkable. The first time that the CSO visited Vienna was in the fall of 1971. Under previous conductors, the orchestra had never visited Europe, but upon becoming music director in 1970, Sir Georg Solti insisted that the CSO could only confirm and sustain its world reputation by journeying back to the Old World and taking on local talent head on. And so a tour of Europe was organized. My wife and I as young graduate students happened to be in Vienna that fall, and it was with both pride and some trepidation that we attended the CSO's performance of Mahler's Fifth Symphony at the historic Musikverein on September 25, 1971. The performance was nothing short of brilliant, and the next day the local music critics reacted with levels of acclaim rarely seen for any other foreign orchestra, then or since.

Many years later my wife, Barbara, and I were invited to attend a dinner at the University in honor of Sir Georg Solti, who was being awarded the University's Rosenberger Medal. The evening (held in Hutchinson Commons) was pleasant and even festive, and at the end, as people were leaving, we noticed Sir Georg standing rather alone under the portrait of Edward Levi. Being a very enterprising person, my wife



went up to Solti and confided to him that we had seen his historic performance of the Mahler Fifth in Vienna in September 1971, but she also added, “[M]y husband, John, was really worried about how the orchestra would sound.” Upon hearing Barbara’s comment, Solti paused for a long, thoughtful moment, and with an evident sense of both irony and wistfulness, responded quietly to Barbara, “Yes, yes, *I* was worried too.”

Now one might ask, what was Solti worried about? After all, the Chicago Symphony then and now consists of musicians of the highest caliber, who regularly perform at levels of accomplishment achieved by few other ensembles. But Solti was not interested in 1971, just as Riccardo Muti is not interested in 2011, in leading a merely great orchestra. What Solti demanded/coaxed/inspired in the musicians on that wonderful evening in Vienna, 40 years ago, was a level of greatness beyond conventional expectations, a level of greatness that was of superior proportions.

This parable is of direct relevance to our work as teachers. Like the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the University of Chicago is one of the city’s most venerable institutions, and like the CSO it is an ensemble filled with scholars and teachers of the highest intellectual caliber. We can be a very good university and college on most days of the week, even walking in a trance, and I suspect that we can even be a great university and college without giving the matter a great deal of thought. But our goal, as Stuart Tave reminded us 40 years ago, should be something quite different: to be a teaching college and a teaching university of consistently superior proportions, day in, day out, which in this context means that we must provide both a level of educational clarity and rigor and a level of personal encouragement and moral support for all of our students, undergraduate and graduate, that is (almost) unparalleled in American higher education today. The struggles of our predecessors to create and to define this great University’s teaching programs were often

tense and conflicted, because they were not only struggles about structural formalities. They were infused with a strong sense of pride and a profound sense that our work as educators would have a dramatic impact on the resilience of the fundamental values and the style of intellectual life that must define the University. In a word, our predecessors believed passionately that the training of the young was a momentous calling and an ever-challenging responsibility, a project involving both the humane and the intellectual and going deep into the bones of the University.

Our students are the future of the University. They come here caring deeply, if somewhat anxiously, about what the place is, about its remarkable values, and about what it expects from them. They come with great pride in joining our community. We should care deeply about them, and inspire and empower them to be worthy of this place.

Let me close by thanking all members of the faculty for your dedication to the College and to our students. It is a pleasure and honor to serve as your dean, and I am grateful for your support for our students and our alumni. May we all have a safe, stimulating, and fruitful academic year. ■

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