In higher education the period between the Civil War and World War I is conventionally dubbed “the age of the university.” The label has obvious justifications. Remarkable developments in universities established the patterns of modern academic life. Graduate school training became the sine qua non for college teaching. The new academic profession’s standards were determined by journals and organizations dominated by university faculty. Professional schools within universities became the gatekeepers for the most prestigious professions. Academic research was revolutionized and dominated by a small number of universities. But for most students, donors, and the public, these developments were dimly perceived; it was the colleges and the collegiate aspects of higher education that were visible and attractive. There was a structural reality to this perception; during a period of educational ferment, the American college achieved an important new social and intellectual role.

Parts One and Two presented four case studies. Part Three places them in the context of the educational and social system taking shape in the United States in the early twentieth century. This chapter explains how colleges assumed their unique role as advanced American education was systematized.

The American college traces its intellectual history from colonial, and even medieval, predecessors. However, its modern condition as a freestanding institution operating in a clearly articulated system was a post–Civil War development. In 1870 most colleges were parts of multifunctional institutions; many colleges survived only by offering
secondary education.¹ None of the four colleges in this study stood alone for the entire period, and two maintained secondary schools throughout. Frequently noncollegiate students outnumbered collegians (Table 10).

The preparatory branches were not just feeders. They served other educational roles highly valued by denominational sponsors and local citizens. Unfortunately, few left records; Franklin and Marshall Academy is an exception. Formally controlled by the German Reformed church, the college was part of a Reformed educational ladder extending from elementary instruction through advanced theological studies. The academy potentially linked the church’s common schools to the college, but initially most students ended their educations at the academy. After 1890 the academy gradually eliminated terminal students and replaced them with college preparatory students recruited from Reformed congregations throughout Pennsylvania. As a result the academy, which furnished about one-third of the college’s freshmen in the 1870s and 1880s, produced about 50 percent of the freshmen between 1895 and 1910, hitting a peak in 1909 with forty academy graduates in a freshman class of sixty-eight.²

Table 10. Collegiate and Institutional Enrollments, 1869–1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Princeton</th>
<th>F&amp;M</th>
<th>Bucknell</th>
<th>Swarthmore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1869–70</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[83]</td>
<td>{151}</td>
<td>{173}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889–90</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[137]</td>
<td>{214}</td>
<td>{80}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909–10</td>
<td>1,266</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[256]</td>
<td>[236]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>[134]</td>
<td>[18]</td>
<td>[116]</td>
<td>[ca. 5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The figures were compiled from catalogs and other college publications.
Note: Unbracketed numbers indicate undergraduate enrollments. { } = secondary and other subcollegiate enrollments. [ ] = graduate and other postbaccalaureate enrollments. Colleges conventionally included “specials” in undergraduate enrollments, but their work was somewhere between secondary and higher education. Franklin and Marshall figures do not include the theological seminary.

2. Of 269 freshmen entering Franklin and Marshall College from 1872 through
After 1910 the academy’s links to the college and the denomination loosened. For years the administration held down tuition to make the academy accessible to the average Pennsylvania German Reformed church member. Continued low tuition depended upon an increased endowment, but members did not respond with sufficient funds. At the same time, Pennsylvania significantly increased its support for public schools, creating free alternatives to the academy. Eventually tuition more than doubled and the fee reduction for Reformed students was eliminated, resulting in a sharp decline in the percentage of Reformed students in the academy (from 73 percent in 1908 to 35 percent in 1920). Increasingly, academy graduates went to other colleges, and Franklin and Marshall recruited from other preparatory schools. The college president tried to eliminate the academy in 1916, but it survived until World War II, annually providing about twenty freshmen to the college.3

Princeton briefly maintained a preparatory department, but the college’s access to wealth soon provided other sources of students. McCosh’s dreams for Princeton required more well-prepared students. The dependence of rivals like Harvard on exclusive private schools disturbed him, but New Jersey’s weak secondary schools offered little alternative. He urged the New Jersey legislature to provide Scottish-style extensive free secondary education for the middle class, but his ambitions for Princeton demanded an immediate solution. With a donation from a wealthy alumnus he created a preparatory department, which functioned from 1873 to 1880 and supplied seventy-five students to the college.

Princeton soon moved into the prep school movement despite McCosh’s ambivalence about its aristocratic and Episcopalian traditions. In 1875 John Blair, a devout Presbyterian of Scottish descent, underwrote the revival of what became Blair Academy as a feeder for Princeton. Even more significant was the creation of Lawrenceville School with a bequest from another Presbyterian, John C. Green, Princeton’s greatest benefactor in the McCosh years. All of Law-

1885, 102 were academy graduates. Charles Stahr Hartman, “Franklin and Marshall Academy, 1872–1943” (master’s essay, Johns Hopkins University, 1948), 13–117, is a rare and excellent history of a preparatory department.

3. Ibid., 45–72. Also see Franklin and Marshall College, Trustees, Minutes (Franklin and Marshall Archives), 16 June 1877, for an insightful view on the relationship of the academy to the high schools.
Gentlemen and Scholars

renceville's trustees were connected to Princeton, and McCosh personally selected the first headmaster, a Scottish Presbyterian immigrant who designed it along the lines of the most prestigious New England prep schools. With its ample endowment and grounds laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted, Lawrenceville was an instant success. By 1890 it was sending about thirty freshmen a year to Princeton. McCosh's successors had no ambivalence about the aristocratic ambiance of prep schools, and Princeton cultivated relationships with them so ardently that it enrolled one of the highest proportions of their graduates of any college in the country by 1900.4

Whereas Princeton's short-lived preparatory department was viewed as an unfortunate necessity, Swarthmore's early experience was the opposite. Many early managers and stockholders were primarily interested in secondary education and were suspicious of higher education. Few students in the preparatory classes intended to continue to the collegiate program. From Swarthmore's founding in 1869 until 1886, the secondary (and briefly primary) students outnumbered the collegiate. The preparatory department supplied nineteen of fifty-one freshmen in 1878 and thirteen of fifty-nine in 1888. After a bitter fight (see Chapter 2) the preparatory classes were phased out in the early 1890s. While the faculty, college students, and some managers wanted a totally collegiate institution, secondary schools were a higher priority for most Hicksites. The collegiate faction won because, unlike the German Reformed church, Hicksite Quakers developed an adequate network of academies to provide a guarded secondary education and prepare candidates for the college.5

Bucknell University included at various times a theological seminary, a male academy, a female institute, and an institute of music. In 1865, only 99 of the 268 Bucknell students were in the collegiate

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department; in 1889–90, only 71 of 286. Collegians did not become a majority until the period of rapid growth under President Harris in the 1890s. By 1899–1900, collegians accounted for 315 in a total enrollment of 487. The academy continued to send most of its graduates to the university, preparing about 20 percent of the freshman classes for many years. But the proportion eventually declined while the college grew: in 1914 the academy supplied only seven of the 140 male freshmen. With public high schools providing secondary education to the Lewisburg area and freshmen to Bucknell, the trustees abolished the academy in 1917, although they retained a sub-freshman class.6 Most presidents and faculty resented preparatory work, but colleges were a luxury in the 1870s. The development of freestanding, or at least clearly distinguished colleges by World War I was a victory for their professional ambitions and for the systemization of American education.

The lack of a true educational “system” in the late nineteenth century was evident in the unsystematic nature of the admissions process before 1900. Antebellum applicants took oral exams from the faculty; after the Civil War, written exams became standard. Prospective students were examined on campus during commencement week or early September on classical authors, mathematics textbooks, and other materials stipulated by that college. Until the early 1900s each college set individual admission requirements. By setting very specific measures of achievement, such as four books of the Aeneid or 137 pages of Gage’s physics textbook, and requiring different combinations of supplementary subjects such as geography, history, and English literature, there were almost as many combinations of requirements as there were colleges.7

All qualified students were admitted; there was no danger of an oversupply. Underprepared students were sent to the preparatory department or given “special” standing in the college. Financial ne-

6. In 1902 Bucknell Academy and the female institute prepared 28 of the 137 new students in the university. Bucknell University, Requirements for Admission, 1902–3 (notebook in Bucknell University Archives). Catalogs show similar ratios in other years. Bucknell University, Board of Trustees, Minutes (Bucknell University Archives), 11 January 1917.

7. The example is from Franklin and Marshall College, Catalogue, 1903–4, p. 17. Much of the information in the following discussion is drawn from the catalogs and faculty minutes of the four colleges.
cessity encouraged flexible standards, especially in hard times; the few surviving records suggest that most candidates were accepted. The faculty admitted some students who had not precisely fulfilled the admission requirements with “conditions,” deficiencies to be corrected. Faculty minutes reveal widespread use of this alternative. For instance, the Princeton faculty “conditioned” 83 of 208 freshmen admitted in 1898 and an astonishing 230 of 328 in 1907 during Wilson’s campaign to raise standards.\(^8\)

In the nineteenth century, presidents personally administered admissions, corresponding endlessly with parents, headmasters, and candidates about entrance requirements and finances. David Jayne Hill spent his last summer at Bucknell processing admissions letters. President Magill wrote five letters in the summer of 1875 to one student’s parents, trying to arrange financial assistance. Even at a larger college like Princeton every new student reported directly to President McCosh. In the 1890s the trustees assigned a faculty member to assist McCosh’s successor; presidents at the other three colleges were allocated assistants in the 1900s. Presidents continued to oversee admissions into the 1920s and occasionally intervened, as when President Swain asked an alumnus to influence a star athlete to choose Swarthmore over Princeton. “I would be glad if thee would have a talk with Pfeiffer and see if thee cannot turn him this way.”\(^9\)

More than secretarial assistance was needed. Admissions was outgrowing the old practices, and the presidents spent much of their time around the turn of the century trying to systematize the process. The colleges’ growth could make the work overwhelming. In addition, the colleges were increasingly dealing with institutions unconnected with their local or denominational communities. Admission of students from the colleges’ preparatory divisions provided an early shortcut in the admissions process. Other preparatory schools soon developed similar arrangements with colleges, usually those affiliated

\(^8\). Princeton University, Faculty, Minutes (Princeton University Archives), 19 October 1898; Princeton University, *Annual Report of the President*, 1907. See also Bucknell, Requirements, for liberal use of “conditions.”

\(^9\). Joseph Swain to James Lippincott, Swain Presidential Papers (Friends Historical Library), 14 January 1904. Magill’s correspondence on admissions, which he handled for both the college and the preparatory department, is voluminous; Edward Magill, Presidential Papers (Friends Historical Library). Presidential papers at all four colleges show that great attention was paid to admissions. Bucknell, Trustees, 26 June 1888. Varnum L. Collins, *Princeton*, American College and University Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914), 294.
with the same denomination. At first this certificate system operated informally, as reflected in a letter in 1886 to President Apple at Franklin and Marshall College from the principal of a Reformed church academy describing a group of his students whom he wanted admitted to the freshman class without examination: "They are pretty well prepared except in German. Of course they can get along with [the] class by reason of their knowledge of Pa. German, but for their sake I would suggest that the Faculty condition them in German Grammar. They can study up before the opening of the fall term."10 The author was a former professor at the college whose ability to get students admitted on his recommendation stemmed from personal ties. A year later the Franklin and Marshall faculty established a formal certificate system whereby students from approved schools were admitted on the principals' recommendations.11 Bucknell admitted students informally on principals' recommendations for twenty years before officially offering admission by certificate in 1896 to graduates of all Pennsylvania normal schools and selected academies and high schools.12

Swarthmore, the first to establish a list of certified schools, sent faculty members to investigate each institution and by 1884 granted the privilege to nine Friends schools. The faculty slowly expanded the list in the 1890s, examining each request carefully and eventually including non-Friends schools. With the arrival of Joseph Swain from the Midwest where the certificate system was prevalent, Swarthmore considerably expanded its list.13 A large number of students were admitted by certificate at all of the colleges except Princeton.

10. Principal Nathan Schaeffer to Theodore Apple, 9 June 1886 (Franklin and Marshall Archives).
11. Franklin and Marshall College, Faculty, Minutes (Franklin and Marshall Archives), 4 May 1887. The assertion that eastern colleges did not use certificates is partially incorrect. Although no state or regional system existed in the East these colleges developed certification systems based primarily on denominational relationships. Two works mistaken on this point are Joseph L. Henderson, Admission to College by Certificate, Teachers College Contributions to Education, no. 50 (New York: Teachers College Press, 1912), and Edward A. Krug, The Shaping of the American High School, 1880–1920 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).
13. Swarthmore College, Faculty, Minutes, 5 and 12 October 1882, 22 January
Princeton’s broader geographic constituency made certificates less feasible. The system depended upon personal contact between the faculties and principals, many of whom had previous connections with the particular college. These relationships sufficed for the three colleges that drew their students primarily from Pennsylvania but were inadequate for Princeton’s national ambitions. In the 1870s Princeton began giving its admission examinations in midwestern and southern cities. McCosh wrote to one alumnus who volunteered to administer the examinations that, if “there is a fair chance of getting even a few students from Louisville,” he should begin to advertise immediately, with Princeton paying the cost. In the 1880s Bucknell also began holding off-campus examinations within Pennsylvania. 14

Even when geography was not a problem, Princeton did not cooperate with public high schools. Its social prestige and connections with the elite prep schools eventually enabled Princeton to draw upon them for three-quarters of its students. Despite criticism in the Educational Review and by a prominent alumnus-educator, Wilson Ferrand, as late as 1912 the faculty still rejected the certificate system and accepted the New York regents examinations only if reread by Princeton faculty. 15

Even the certificate system left out many new public high schools that objected to adjusting their curricula to individual colleges. The first instance of intercollegiate cooperation came when nine New England colleges synchronized their entrance requirements for English in 1879. Six years later the formation of the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools created a permanent

1894; Swarthmore College, Stockholders, Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders, 1884, pp. 12–13. A good example of the system at work in Magill’s correspondence is Principal Fannie Pyle (Friends High School, West Chester, Pa.) to Edward Magill, 26 August 1884, Magill Presidential Papers. For an example of a school seeking to be placed on the certificate list, see George Megangee to Charles De Garmo, 2 and 14 March 1896, De Garmo Presidential Papers (Friends Historical Library). Joseph Swain, “Remarks,” Proceedings of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools 16 (1902): 42.


organization to coordinate articulation. In the Middle Atlantic states, a group of Pennsylvania colleges met in 1887 on the initiative of Swarthmore's President Magill. They formed the College Association of Pennsylvania and elected President Apple of Franklin and Marshall as the first president. Although formed to deal with the relationship of private colleges to the state government, by 1893 its focus shifted to articulation and its geographic scope broadened as it became the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland. In 1894 the New England and Middle Atlantic associations agreed upon uniform English entrance examinations for colleges from Maine to Maryland. This led to a National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English that set national standards in the late 1890s. High schools and academies were told which literary works would be covered in tests for the next few years so they could satisfy all colleges' requirements with a single curriculum.16

The work of the Middle States group led to the creation of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB).17 In 1899, Columbia's President Nicholas Murray Butler persuaded the Middle States Association to form committees to consider establishing such an agency. In 1900 they reported favorably, and a year later the CEEB administered its first tests to 973 students. Twelve colleges including Swarthmore were represented on the first board, and a thirteenth, Princeton, participated in its development. Bucknell joined the CEEB in its second year, and Franklin and Marshall, although not a member until after World War I, accepted the results of the board's examinations from the beginning.18

At first the CEEB was merely one of several options. In 1913 only one-seventh of Princeton applicants took the board's tests; the remainder took Princeton's own entrance examinations. An even smaller


17. Charles Eliot's Committee of Ten, the Committee on College Entrance Requirements, and the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English dealt with the problem in the 1890s. Educational journals such as the Educational Record also focused their attention on this issue.

percentage chose the CEEB tests at the other three colleges. However, the precedent set by Columbia, Barnard, and New York University in 1901 of abolishing their own tests and requiring all applicants to take the board’s examinations eventually prevailed. In 1915 Princeton, Harvard, and Yale took the same step. Swarthmore followed suit but retained a certificate system for Friends schools. Both Bucknell and Franklin and Marshall continued holding their own examinations until the 1920s as well as accepting certificates and the CEEB examinations.\(^{19}\)

Entrance requirements came to be expressed in nationally recognized quantitative measures, an idea suggested by the National Education Association (NEA) in 1899. It proposed that colleges set their requirements in “units” indicating the years spent studying a subject rather than specifying textbooks and areas of coverage.\(^{20}\) In 1901 Swarthmore followed the NEA recommendation, requiring applicants to have taken a basic core of high school courses and to choose the others from a list of electives. Bucknell, Franklin and Marshall, and Princeton adopted similar plans over the next twelve years. By 1913 colleges almost universally expressed their requirements in units and permitted a choice of exams rather than examining all subjects. When the CEEB developed comprehensive examinations in 1916, students gained even greater choice. Under this plan the colleges accepted high school certificates for most units, and students chose four subjects for extensive examination.\(^{21}\)

Educational reformers hoped to rationalize the whole system. Not only would courses become measurable units, but there would be a uniform, nationally recognized boundary between secondary and higher education. Graduation from a secondary school was not the only path to college admission until well after 1900. Since admission was based on work completed, colleges sometimes accepted students before they graduated from secondary school or on the recommendation of private tutors. Graduates of normal schools, collegiate institutes, and less prestigious colleges entered at various levels. Among the students entering Franklin and Marshall in September 1913 were

\(^{19}\) Malick, 240–41, 288; CEEB, 1902–16.

\(^{20}\) Malick, 196–298, 313. The term “unit” was in use prior to the Carnegie Foundation’s adoption of it.

two graduates of Elizabethtown College admitted to the senior class and three graduates of Millersville Normal School admitted to the junior class; the sophomore class included graduates of Kutztown Normal School, Williamsport-Dickinson Seminary, Schuylkill Academy, and Massanutten Academy.22 On the other hand, early graduates of Swarthmore were admitted to Harvard's junior class. After Swarthmore raised its standards by holding back most students in 1881, Harvard accepted its graduates into the senior class. In the late 1880s over 10 percent of Swarthmore's graduates went on for a second bachelor's degree, entering the senior class of more prestigious institutions. Princeton admitted graduates of other colleges into its senior class.23

Setting admission standards in units of work rather than specific levels of knowledge in effect defined the length of secondary education. The Carnegie Foundation, needing a definition to determine which institutions qualified for its college faculty pension fund, adopted the NEA's approach. It defined colleges as institutions that require "four years of academic or high school preparation or its equivalent in addition to preacademic or grammar schools."24 The foundation sought to clarify the two levels of education further by urging abolition of collegiate preparatory departments and of the admission of students before high school graduation. Between 1890 and 1915 the line between higher and secondary education became more distinct. Institutions that originated in small-town America—academies, normal schools, and collegiate preparatory departments—had to adjust to a more bureaucratic system demanded by an urbanizing society.

The modern era of selective admissions at prestigious private colleges was a few years off. Princeton hired its first admissions director in 1922 to administer the beginning of selective admissions. Except

23. Swarthmore, Stockholders, 1877; Phoenix 6 (1886). "Alumni Notes" lists several such cases; Homer D. Babbidge, Jr., "Swarthmore College in the Nineteenth Century: A Quaker Experience in Education" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1953), 180. For a discussion at Princeton of whether to admit two graduates of other colleges into the senior class, see Francis L. Patton to S. R. Winans, 21 November 1901, and Patton to Robert D. Williams, 30 November 1901, Patton Papers. For Bucknell, see Bucknell, Requirements.
for a few students turned away due to lack of dormitory space, the four colleges admitted all qualified students before World War I. Those not qualified were usually admitted as “specials” or sent to a preparatory school for further training. The trauma of outright rejection originated when some private colleges decided to limit enrollments in the early 1920s. Princeton and Swarthmore did so primarily for “reasons of space rather than race,” though prejudice, especially anti-Semitism, encouraged selective admissions. The confidence to reject qualified students stemmed from the colleges’ newly secured role in educating the professions.

The colleges’ ambitions intersected with those of powerful members of the professions, transforming professional training and turning liberal arts colleges into influential gatekeepers. In colonial and early republic America, the learned professions were dominated by those with a college degree followed by professional apprenticeship. Evangelicalism and the Jacksonian political spirit of the antebellum United States reduced the educational requirements for admission into the professions. Some professionals, mainly those in elite urban positions, continued to be college educated, but colleges educated only a small proportion of future doctors and lawyers—and not even all ministers. The trend was reversed by a resurgence of professional self-consciousness and a growing public acceptance of the claims of expertise that encouraged stricter licensing procedures. In the mid-1890s Johns Hopkins Medical School, Harvard Divinity School, and Harvard Law School became the first institutions in their fields to require baccalaureate degrees for admission. Increasingly, the best positions went to those who attended the professional schools that required baccalaureate degrees.26


The conflict over training was especially acute in medicine, where training in proprietary schools was rapidly replacing apprenticeship in the 1890s and 1900s. The role of colleges was precarious because they competed directly with medical schools for students. Colleges responded by offering courses that qualified students for advanced standing in the professional schools. In the early 1890s the College of Physicians and Surgeons agreed to accept Princeton's B.S. degree in place of the first six months of study. Princeton also issued special certificates to graduates who took advanced courses in biology and chemistry, recommending them for advanced standing in medical schools. In the mid-1890s Bucknell recruited students who wanted one or two years of college before going to medical school. In 1901 Bucknell opened a Department of Medicine purporting to offer most of the nonclinical studies of the first two years of medical college. Swarthmore pledged that its preparatory medical course would lead to admission in the second year of Philadelphia's leading medical colleges. Franklin and Marshall created a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1899 to enable future physicians to study more science and enter the second year of medical school. Even some Franklin and Marshall Academy graduates bypassed the college to go directly into medical colleges.\footnote{Princeton, \textit{Catalogue}, 1892–93 to 1900–1901; Bucknell, \textit{Catalogue}, 1896–97, insert; Oliphant, 218–22; Swarthmore, \textit{Catalogue}, 1900–1901; Franklin and Marshall, Trustees, 17 June 1899; Hartman, 45.}

The pressure from leading medical educators that culminated in Abraham Flexner's famous indictment of American medical schools in 1910 revolutionized medical education. Liberal arts colleges gave up any pretense of professional training; Princeton ceased to list its program in 1905. The Flexner Report led to the abolition of Bucknell's Department of Medicine and Swarthmore's preparatory medical course. In turn, all four colleges increased their offerings in biology and other sciences along the lines Flexner suggested. Flexner went further than even the AMA contemplated and recommended two years of college as a minimum requirement for medical school admission. As none of the eight medical schools in Pennsylvania had previously required any college study, the colleges stood to benefit from the report. Science was to be left to colleges, and professional training to medical schools. Since the medical reforms effectively favored native-born, affluent, Protestant, white males, these four col-
leges were particularly well positioned to provide the kind of gentlemen that the AMA wanted in medicine. The notice in the *Daily Princetonian* that read, “After 1908 candidates for admission to the Cornell University Medical College must be graduates of approved colleges or scientific schools,” reflected a major victory for liberal arts colleges. By World War I some college science, if not a baccalaureate degree, was required by most medical schools.28

The colleges’ relationship to the law profession evolved along parallel lines. As in medicine, college control over the profession declined in the face of Jacksonian hostility. Bucknell, Franklin and Marshall, and Princeton made abortive attempts to start law schools before the Civil War. After the Civil War, law schools (many of them proprietary) replaced law office apprenticeship as the most common form of training. Between 1870 and 1910 the proportion of those admitted to the bar who were law school graduates jumped from one-quarter to two-thirds.

In 1893, when Harvard Law School became the first to require a baccalaureate degree for admission, it heralded a greater role for colleges in educating lawyers. As in medicine, educators at leading professional schools led the campaign for higher educational standards. The Association of American Law Schools, founded in 1900, was dominated by prestigious law schools and championed full-time attendance in three-year law programs that required at least a high school diploma for entrance. The four colleges in this study worked as feeders within this system; none of them made a serious attempt to found a law school after the Civil War. Instead, they developed curricula designed either to attract future lawyers for one or two years or to give their graduates advanced placement in existing law schools. In the 1890s Woodrow Wilson developed a pre-law program

based on political science courses after failing to interest President Patton or donors in establishing a law school at Princeton. Bucknell created the most vocational program, which, in addition to political science and economics courses, offered applied courses taught by local lawyers and promised advanced standing in affiliated law schools. A Pennsylvania Supreme Court decree that a college diploma was grounds for waiving the preliminary law exam considerably enhanced these colleges' position.29

Reform took place more gradually in legal education than in medical training. A transformation of the magnitude of that following the Flexner Report did not occur until well after World War I. But colleges, especially in the East, benefited from both custom and entrance requirements that made college degrees advantageous for entering the most prestigious law schools and firms. As in medicine, educational reform was intertwined with racial and ethnoreligious predilections. Night schools and other less socially prestigious law schools continued to supply lawyers for the lower end of the profession to serve upwardly mobile new immigrants and African Americans. The four colleges in this study provided students who met the standards for education and "character" desired by the dominant members of the legal profession.

Colleges had much less competition in the third traditional learned profession. Theology had the highest educational standards among the professions. In 1900 most seminaries required a year of college, and almost half required a college degree; in the East the proportions were much higher. Since many seminaries were connected to colleges, their curricula developed naturally in sequence with baccalaureate work. Crozer Theological Seminary, the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, and Princeton Theological Seminary were clearly graduate institutions and did not compete with the colleges. Theological seminaries pioneered the professional model that eventually prevailed in the other learned professions and in academia.30


30. Rudolph, Curriculum, 179; Natalie A. Naylor, "The Theological Seminary in
A different model developed in engineering, the one area in which most of these colleges offered vocational training. Princeton, Swarthmore, and Bucknell established engineering programs at considerable cost. Civil engineering was the least expensive and most popular. These programs were natural extensions of the science curriculum, but the willingness to spend large sums on them suggests their importance in attracting students and donors.

The approach to business training was quite different. Although a college diploma rapidly gained currency as an appropriate credential for executives in the new corporations, there were relatively few formal business programs before World War I. Economics departments particularly benefited from the growing relationship, but even vocationally minded President Harris of Bucknell did not create a business program. Princeton turned down an offer from Philadelphia's Wanamaker family to underwrite a business program.31 Liberal education or engineering training combined with the right social credentials sufficiently prepared graduates to enter corporate life.

These colleges, however, were ambivalent about competing for a role in training for another growing profession, public school teaching. State normal schools overlapped the last years of high school and the first years of college. Colleges convinced a few normal school graduates to enter their junior or senior classes. But as long as a college degree was neither required nor expected, they remained a small minority. Early normal school leaders hoped that their graduates would continue to college, but by the 1890s the two institutions were competitors.

Swarthmore's flirtation with becoming a normal school in the mid-1880s was the only venture in explicitly vocational teacher training by these colleges. President Magill wanted to train teachers through the baccalaureate program, but, having saved Swarthmore from be-

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31. Selected correspondence of 1916 and 1917, John Grier Hibben Papers (Princeton University Manuscript Collection); Princeton, Catalogue, 1916–17. The university especially objected to Rodman Wanamaker's desire to have businessmen teach these courses. Kenneth W. Condit, History of the Engineering School of Princeton University, 1875–1955 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 75–96; Princeton University, Annual Report of the President, 1916, pp. 9, 31–32. The relationship of colleges and business training has been neglected and needs the same careful scholarship that has recently been devoted to the professionalization of law and medicine.
coming a normal school, he refused to consider subcollegiate teacher training. No new teacher training programs were created at Swarthmore until a grant from the Friends General Conference and the college’s alumni association underwrote an education department in 1906. James McCosh envisioned Princeton training high school teachers as Scottish universities did, but he made little progress and his successors had little interest in teacher training. A number of graduates from both Bucknell and Franklin and Marshall became teachers, but neither college offered formal training through education departments until the 1910s. The colleges continued to produce teachers, especially for schools in their denomination and for prep schools, but that was a modest market. The job of preparing teachers for the mushrooming public schools remained primarily in the hands of state normal schools. 32 As these colleges secured roles in educating students for more highly paid and prestigious professions, they had little incentive to make special efforts to attract future teachers.

In contrast to normal schools, which overlapped the freshman and sophomore years, graduate study raised new questions about colleges’ upper limits. The explosion of knowledge beyond the bounds of theological seminaries and amateur science created the problem of organizing postbaccalaureate studies in the new subject areas. Bucknell, Franklin and Marshall, and Swarthmore responded ambivalently. Each offered the traditional M.A. “in course” after three years of vaguely defined studies, good citizenship, and a small fee. Over the next few decades they experimented with various types of advanced work. In 1872 the Mercersburg Review called on the Reformed church to underwrite graduate studies at Franklin and Marshall. Swarthmore had a few “resident graduates” in the 1870s. In the 1880s and 1890s each college offered a few graduate courses, primarily for their own graduates. In addition to offering on-campus graduate courses, the colleges experimented with credit for courses taken by their graduates at universities or for off-campus work, and with giving degrees by examination.

By 1910 such programs and the M.A. “in course” were disappearing in the face of a consensus that master’s degrees required at least a year of study. Franklin and Marshall, perhaps because the

theological seminary was across the street, offered only a handful of master’s degrees and abolished its graduate program in 1924. Bucknell’s graduate student body reached 114 in 1906 before declining to forty-five in 1915 and five in 1920. Swarthmore’s small program peaked with six master’s degrees in 1908. After awarding a flurry of honorary doctorates to bolster their staffs’ credentials in the 1880s and 1890s, none of the three colleges gave serious thought to offering doctoral work. By 1917 graduate work had been standardized, and the three institutions were willing to leave most graduate study to the universities.33

Princeton, after decades of ambivalence, developed a medium-sized, prestigious graduate program by World War I. James McCosh arrived at Princeton determined to establish European-style university studies. He urged the establishment of graduate fellowships and badgered the trustees to compete with Harvard. In 1877 he established graduate studies and awarded the first fellowship. Two years later Princeton awarded its first doctorates. But few full-time students matriculated, and only twelve doctorates were awarded, all to Princeton graduates, during McCosh’s presidency. He had more luck endowing fellowships to send Princeton graduates to other graduate schools. The trustees refused to underwrite McCosh’s desire to compete with the research universities.34

In the late 1890s Princeton brought its degrees into line with policies at the leading universities. The perfunctory M.A. “in course” was abolished, and requirements were standardized for master’s degrees and doctorates. Even so, when the College of New Jersey was officially renamed Princeton University in 1896, the graduate program remained modest. In 1905 Bucknell had as many graduate students as Princeton, yet the latter became a founding member of the American Association of Universities in 1900. Apparently Prince-


ton's wealth and social prestige enabled it to join that group and be considered a "university" when its curriculum hardly justified the term. Princeton enrolled only sixty-seven full-time and seventy-six part-time graduate students in 1911. On the eve of World War I, Princeton enrolled eighty-nine full-time graduate students, most supported by fellowships, and forty-eight part-time students.

Unlike most universities, Princeton made no provision for professional preparation; all graduate work was in the disciplines. The two plans for the graduate college over which Wilson and West locked horns both envisioned residential life in Gothic dormitories. They disagreed only about whether to isolate graduate students from undergraduates. Princeton's wealth enabled it to develop top-notch libraries and to provide university-level research facilities for its graduate students and faculty by 1917. Building its graduate college a mile from the main campus guaranteed that the tone of undergraduate life remained very collegiate. As American higher education bifurcated into colleges and universities, Princeton moved into the latter category as a total institution, but for most students and alumni it remained a college.

Speeches and magazine articles by presidents and other college spokesmen at the turn of the century suggested that colleges were on the verge of demotion, if not extinction. Yet these four colleges were all stable or growing. These jeremiads became rhetorical commonplaces, particularly useful for soliciting support from alumni. But there were also honest fears. While the likelihood of fundamental change seems, in hindsight, to have been minimal, collegiate spokesmen may be excused for their concern that the dramatic changes in the role and image of college might not turn out to their benefit.

The clearest perceived threat was movement toward the "university," by which supporters meant not merely adding graduate schools

35. Princeton, Annual Report, 1907; Princeton, Trustees, 13 January 1916. In 1906-7 full-time enrollment was only thirty-eight; in 1915–16 it was 126. Collins, 255–86. For two statements on Princeton's approach, see Alexander T. Ormond, "University Ideals at Princeton," Journal of the Proceedings and Addresses of the National Education Association 36 (1897): 346–57; and Andrew F. West, The Graduate College of Princeton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1913). The first professional graduate program was a master's degree course in engineering begun in 1921. Condit, 89; Princeton University, Report of the Librarian (Princeton, 1921), 1–13. For a sense of a faculty member who was committed to Princeton becoming a research university, see the Edwin G. Conklin Papers (Princeton University Archives).
onto existing colleges but adopting a European-style educational system. Admiration for German academic life led some to agree with John Burgess's declaration that he was "unable to divine what is to be ultimately the position of Colleges which cannot become Universities and which will not be Gymnasia." In Germany students progressed from a restrictive secondary education directly to the social freedom and academic specialization of the university without an intervening collegiate experience. Although the dissimilarity between gymnasia and American high schools made transplanting the German system unlikely, some university reformers adopted it as a model and proposed eliminating or shortening baccalaureate studies. Reducing college work to three years or less was possible, particularly as students going to medical or law school were already doing so de facto by leaving without a degree. Although attacks on the college received considerable publicity, the spirited defenses probably tell more about the insecurity of college leaders than about the reality of the threat.

Most university presidents spoke in favor of preserving the college's role in American education. Daniel Gilman, first president of Johns Hopkins University and founder of the first American graduate school, strongly defended the liberal arts colleges and expected all Johns Hopkins graduate students to have a baccalaureate degree. He maintained that colleges provided intellectual discipline, which had to precede the intellectual freedom of university work. Gilman believed that colleges provided an essential moral as well as intellectual preparation and that, with the growth of universities, colleges "will be recognized as more important than ever, because they lead to higher work." President Jacob Schurman of Cornell wanted to shorten secondary education but retain the four-year college course. His only concern was that colleges might try to do university work and abandon the disciplinary work they did best. The preponderance of discussion in the Educational Review and the Association of American Universities shared these positive evaluations of colleges. Even William Rainey Harper, who experimented with

36. Rudolph, American College, 330, quoting Burgess's American University of 1884.
a Germanic structure at the University of Chicago, spoke warmly of college life at President Swain's inauguration at Swarthmore.\textsuperscript{39} The college was to be a distinctive part of the emerging American system. Vive la différence!

Representatives of all four colleges stressed the need for a broadening and disciplinary experience preceding students' entry into their vocations and, naturally, nominated the college as the appropriate institution to provide it. As President Stahr said of Franklin and Marshall, “It does not claim to be a university. It lays stress on college education as liberal culture fitted to make men, preparatory to their taking up the study of a profession.”\textsuperscript{40} In 1913 Stahr’s successor, President Apple, affirmed that Franklin and Marshall still believed that “the ideal of a college education is mastery of fundamental principles, training toward specific professional education being secondary and incidental.”\textsuperscript{41}

College and university presidents shared a desire to clarify the line between collegiate and university studies. Former President Edward Magill of Swarthmore wrote to Daniel Gilman that the ideal to be aimed for was “the separate existence of our various grades of Institutions each doing the very best work possible in our own field without aspiring to be more than it really is, or to do more than belongs to its particular grade.” Only with a “good solid four-year College course, kept intact between our secondary Schools and universities,” would order be restored in the educational system.\textsuperscript{42}

The withdrawal by 1917 of all except Franklin and Marshall from


\textsuperscript{40} John Stahr, “Remarks,” in College Association of the Middle States and Maryland, \textit{Proceedings} 22 (1908): 9.

\textsuperscript{41} Apple’s remarks are quoted in H.M.J. Klein, \textit{History of Franklin and Marshall College, 1787–1948} (Lancaster, Pa., 1952), 160. See also Woodrow Wilson, “Should an Antecedent Liberal Education Be Required of Students in Law, Medicine, and Theology?” \textit{Proceedings of the National Education Association} 32 (1893): 112–17; Andrew F. West, \textit{American Liberal Education} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 65–77; John Stahr, “President’s Report: 1907,” in Franklin and Marshall, Trustees, 10 June 1907.

preparatory work and all but Princeton from substantial graduate work structurally fulfilled the rhetorical commitment.

The distinction between professional and liberal education was more difficult to establish. Although the rhetoric of the time and historians ever since have often counterposed the college and the university, the professional schools outside of universities posed a rarely acknowledged but greater threat. Many potential students bypassed or shortened their college educations in order to attend proprietary medical and law schools. It was probably the increasing numbers of students going into business who were responsible for rising enrollments in four-year college courses. Since graduate business schools were almost nonexistent there was little incentive to leave without a degree.43 Once the more prominent medical and law schools began requiring college degrees, the four-year program was safe.

In the 1890s colleges experimented with balancing liberal and applied studies. In that decade Swarthmore made its last major effort at teacher training, President Patton at Princeton considered making senior year preprofessional, and John Harris rapidly expanded undergraduate professional curricula at Bucknell.44 But with the ascendency of Presidents Swain and Wilson in 1902, Swarthmore and Princeton moved clearly to what Laurence Veysey has labeled “liberal culture.” Franklin and Marshall was the most consistent defender of the liberal arts. President Thomas Apple told the College Association of Pennsylvania in 1888 that “the college should preserve its character as ministering first and foremost to high liberal culture, and should keep itself carefully distinguished from the professional school, the technic school, etc.”45 Liberal education, amended to allow some student choice and specialization, was clearly dominant at three of the colleges in the 1900s. Only students in engineering programs and in some of Bucknell’s vocational tracks did not share a common liberal arts curriculum in the underclass years. At all four colleges a majority “majored” in a discipline.

The emerging consensus on the educational role of colleges was reinforced by their considerable success in convincing the public of

43. Andrew West, “Remarks,” Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the College Association of the Middle States and Maryland 17 (1903): 53–60. See also Stahr, “President’s Report,” for another attack on medical school admissions.
44. Patton’s report to the Princeton trustees, 8 June 1896.
their unique social and moral atmosphere. The collegiate spirit appealed to the popular mind, an attraction reinforced by collegiate novels and athletics. For most students and parents the social rewards of college life overshadowed the intellectual pursuits. Presidents repeatedly asserted the social and moral superiority of private colleges in terms that appealed to the values of upper-middle-class parents. College publicity stressed smallness, gentle and personal oversight, healthy activities, and desirable peers. The rapidly growing eastern and midwestern universities, many with enrollments reaching the five thousand range by 1910, could not convincingly make the same claims.

Presidential rhetoric at the four colleges became more confident after 1900. In 1903 Swarthmore President Joseph Swain still portrayed dangers but surmised that colleges would survive if they improved their academic facilities while continuing to provide more contact between students and faculty and closer moral and social oversight than universities. President John Harris of Bucknell more expansively asserted that colleges would soon be deluged with students. Princeton's Dean West proclaimed renewed faith that the four-year college course would endure in 1903, having been convinced a few years earlier that shortening it to three years was unavoidable. President John Stahr told Franklin and Marshall's trustees in 1907 that “the fear which many have entertained as to the future of the denominational colleges and the smaller institutions of learning is really groundless.” The educational system that President Magill proposed when he organized the College Association of Pennsylvania had come about; college had become the preferred institution for more privileged youths seeking access to the most prestigious professions. In 1893 Woodrow Wilson defensively pleaded for making a bachelor's degree a prerequisite for professional training in order to return law, medicine, and theology to the status of “learned professions.” By contrast, in 1909 the Reform Church Messenger confidently


asserted that “in law and medicine as well as in theology the tendency is to insist that students for these professions shall have a college course as a preparation.”48 By World War I an American educational ladder had been built and colleges occupied a secure rung. Clear distinctions between secondary, collegiate, and graduate or professional studies were gaining acceptance, distinctions that have characterized American education ever since. The ambitions of college authorities intersected with those of the new professional and business classes. The presidents’ confident pronouncements suggest that the “age of the university” was also an “age of the college.”

The college’s intellectual role in transmitting a tradition with classical and medieval origins makes the college appear more venerable than it is. Institutionally, the American college is relatively modern. Although its form derives partially from colonial models, much of it is a twentieth-century development. Historians must be careful not to read history backward and view the college as an ideal type emerging into a predestined future perceived by the wisest educators. Its form was hardly predestined, and its relationship to other types of education was uncertain at the beginning of the century.

The development of the college was one part of the rationalization of a system of education in the United States. The relationship of baccalaureate work to other levels of education changed dramatically between the Civil War and World War I. While the outlines of an educational system were evident in the 1860s, much was not systematized. The relationships of colleges to high schools, normal schools, professional training, and graduate study were neither rationalized nor static. Different configurations of institutions might well have occurred if the colleges’ interests had not intersected with those of crucial members of the professions in favor of the freestanding four-year baccalaureate college. Threatened by two emerging giants, the high school and the research university, the college not only survived, but prospered. As the American educational system crystallized, the colleges carved out a major role without parallel in Europe.