Acknowledgments

For most college teachers, research and writing occur in stolen moments, and projects stretch out for years. Publication of a work started as a dissertation written in youth too often becomes a middle-age rite of passage. This is no exception. Such long gestation is frustrating and conjures up uncomfortable thoughts of mortality, but it also has benefits. Author and discipline have a chance to mature. Over two decades many of the puzzles that stumped me as a graduate student have been addressed. In particular, the once "new" social history produced methods, information, and conceptual frameworks that unlocked some mysteries and offered plausible answers to others.

This book explores the relationship between American society and its colleges. The medium has been the message. My experience in writing it has been a personal saga of college life. As an undergrad- uate at Princeton University, I was privileged to experience the intellectual and social community that a college, at its best, can provide. As a doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University, the first American research university, I was exposed to the very different ethos of graduate school and professional training in a discipline. While I tried to develop the historical skills demanded for university research, dormitories and lacrosse fields near the library reminded me of collegiate life. Finally, as a professional, for two decades I have participated in the struggle of a state college to find an identity that is true to the ideals of mass higher education as well as older collegiate traditions.

The origins of this project can be traced back to a swimming pool in the summer of 1964, where I was working as a lifeguard for a
former high school social studies teacher, Robert Searles. When I shared with him my lack of a topic for my junior paper at Princeton, he suggested the history of education. Donald G. Mathews kindly directed the paper in a field outside his specialty. That venture led me to Johns Hopkins University, where the late John Walton had the vision to bring graduate students from various disciplines together to apply their tools to the study of education. Timothy L. Smith directed my dissertation, giving me the benefit of his unique view of American history and his pioneering methodological and interpretive achievements.

Working on this project for nearly a quarter of a century, I have compiled numerous debts that I take joy in finally acknowledging. At Johns Hopkins, Charles Biebel contributed personal and intellectual support in difficult times. Two seminar colleagues and friends, Elizabeth Ross and George Woytanowitz, read my initial efforts and shared the anxieties and discoveries that accompany writing a dissertation.

I came to the State University of New York College at Brockport thanks to the faith of George C. Simmons and the late Sig Synnestvedt in interdisciplinary work. George Simmons has inspired me with his love of scholarship and his humanity. I have been lucky to be part of an exceptionally supportive department. John Ingham and Steve Ireland introduced me to the wonders of the “new” social history and gave me faith in the value of my scholarly work at a critical stage. John Ingham, now at the University of Toronto, has uncomplainingly read and reread this work in its various reincarnations. Ken O’Brien has offered support as friend, colleague, and chairman on many occasions, most memorably by doctoring my ailing computer late one hot summer evening. Brenda Peake has spent parts of many summers typing different versions of this work with extraordinary skill and good cheer. I also thank my other departmental colleagues, with whom I have shared the successes and frustrations of mass higher education over two decades. Mark Anderson has frequently crossed the disciplinary divide from English to prod me into reconsidering the canon of my field.

As Harold Wechsler recently commented over Indian food, one advantage of the history of higher education is that people only study it if they are committed to the field and to scholarship as a shared venture. The subspecialty may have a low profile, but the sense of
community is high. Harold has generously given his time and thoughts to me. David Potts has encouraged me for twenty years, repeatedly giving me encouragement and insights. Colin Burke, Louise Stevenson, Frank Stricker, and Ira Read have unselfishly shared their work and ideas with me. I also want to thank two anonymous readers for Penn State Press who saw merit in the manuscript and offered ways to improve it. It is conventional to accept the blame for all shortcomings and absolve all others of guilt. But it seems more useful to say that this book profited immensely from the generosity of others, and that it shares the strengths and weaknesses of the way our generation has tried to understand the evolution of American society.

I have accumulated debts to several generations of archivists at a number of institutions. I was assisted in the Bucknell University Archives by Ann Mumper and Doris Dysinger. Dorothy Neprash and Charlotte B. Brown led me to materials in the Franklin and Marshall College Archives. At Princeton the late Halsey Thomas, Alexander Clark, Francis J. Dallett, Earle E. Coleman, and Nanci A. Young have guided me through the Princeton University Archives and Manuscript Collection. At the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore I was helped by the late Frederick Tolles, Robert W. Fowler, and Mary Ellen Chijjoke. Former Swarthmore President Robert Cross offered assistance to a fellow historian at a difficult moment.

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My only regrets about this book are personal. I wish that my parents, William and Annette R. Lesliè, had lived to see this product of the education for which they sacrificed so much. I do hope, however, that my stepmother, Dorothy K. Leslie, enjoys this as part of her voracious reading program. I also regret the amount of time my work stole from family life. An earlier draft was completed in an office nursery shared with my son Andrew. The final project took long enough for him to help me compile the statistics in Chapters 3 and 7. My daughter Sarah was born as I started reshaping the work into its next phase. In that time she has grown up into a young woman with her own interest in history. Finally, Nancy A. Leslie shared this project with me for nearly a quarter-century. Her belief in scholarship and her contributions to the life of a college have inspired me. I thank her for her sacrifices and dedicate this book to her.