Half-Baby, Half-Man:

Dissertation

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in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
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Abstract

Although the word “freshman” has been around for centuries, the idea of the freshman as someone who is in need of special care and services in college or university is much newer. While much research has been done on the effectiveness of first-year student programming, little has been published about the origins and evolution of the concept of caring for the freshman through programming in American higher education. While a few scattered services were developed in the late 1800s, my research points to Harvard President Albert Laurence Lowell’s 1909 inaugural address as inspiring a national conversation about the need to care for freshmen. Data regarding the proliferation of new programs and structure devoted to freshmen from 1905 until 1930, the justifications institutions provided for allocating resources for freshmen, and the identification of forces that drove the development of such programs provide a historical picture that lays the foundation for current first-year student programming practices.
Dedication

I could not have completed this dissertation without the patience and support of my husband Chris and our daughters Tillie and Lydia. Thank you for understanding when I needed the space to hide and work. Your own sacrifices did not go unnoticed and are more appreciated than I can express in words.

For my dad and mom, who always encouraged me to push forward and not give up.

And finally, for my advisor Bruce Kimball who pushed me when I needed it, and always had kind words and an encouraging smile.
Acknowledgments

There was a small group of people cheering me on and providing much needed support throughout the writing process. Thank you to my classmates Sarah and Josh, for all of our sanity breaks and for helping me get over the walls. And to Caroline and Francis, for providing the grounding perspective that only faculty friends could.
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Publications


Fields of Study

Major Field: Education: Educational Policy and Leadership
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The term “freshman” is not new. In fact it is at least 450 years old. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first documented use of the term freshman was in 1557 by John Cheke and meant a novice – or a proselyte. In 1596, there is reference to the idea of someone being a “freshman in Cambridge,” which appears to be the first appearance in reference to higher education. By 1764, The College of New Jersey identified the four classes of students as Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior, and the term seemed to be standard by 1782, when M. Cutler of New England, wrote the following “The admission of so large a class of Freshmen the last year…is a matter of agreeable surprise.”

But the existence and use of the term “freshman” is different from the idea that freshmen need to be cared for and treated differently from the rest of the university population. When did the shift from the idea of freshmen as being a first-year university

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1 The title of this dissertation, Half-Baby, Half-Man, comes from “Scientific Management of Freshmen,” The Nation, May 6, 1915. “But East and West should not forget that the freshman is as rare a bird as he is usually represented to be. Half-baby and half-man, it is the baby in him which has caught the eye of the caricaturist.”


student change to one of the freshman as a person in transition and, therefore, in need of additional support?

My research in this dissertation demonstrates that concentrated attention to the freshman began in 1909. Prior to this year, there were a very limited number of publications that directly addressed the needs of freshmen. Much of what had been published discussed the hazing of freshmen or basic freshmen curriculum as part of a four-year degree process. And while there is evidence of activity within institutions attempting to address the need to care for freshmen, such as Boston University’s course in 1888, the establishment of the Board of Freshman Advisors at Harvard in 1889, and the Dean of Freshman at Harvard in 1904, there was little published about these efforts prior to 1909 and there is no evidence of a national recognition of the need to focus on freshmen as a special population. One of the few publications that did discuss the needs of freshman, *The American College; A Criticism*, written by Abraham Flexner and published in 1908, calls for a reform to the transitional experience between the preparatory school and university stating: “So again, as regards the relation of college and secondary school, Harvard’s attitude is clean-cut; a sharp horizontal line divides the two.


7 Flexner was a Johns Hopkins University graduate and founder of an alternative preparatory school in Kentucky.
The moment the boy crosses the dividing line, he enters a different world; the line is drawn straight across.”

The 1909 inaugural address of Harvard President Abbott Lawrence Lowell, who served from 1909 until 1933, changed the landscape of higher education from one barely acknowledging the needs of freshmen to one that fostered a debate about freshmen needs and then led to a national movement in which programs and services specifically for freshmen were developed and implemented. As Charles Fitts and Fletcher Swift stated in their 1928 publication, *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen*, the first systematic study of the prevalence of freshman programming in American Higher Education:

Following President Lowell’s inaugural address, other men and other institutions discussed the problem of caring for the needs of freshmen. Out of it all arose at Reed College, Portland, Oregon, in the first semester of 1911-1912, the first orientation course (for which students received college credit), as far as is known, established in the United States.

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9 The full text of Lowell’s Inaugural Address may be found in the appendix.


This claim of Fitts and Swift appears to be substantiated through an extensive search through publications from 1900-1930, as discussed in the next chapter of this dissertation. Identifying and interpreting such statements is a valuable step in understanding this development.

In order to understand why and how the focus on freshmen and development of official freshman programming began and developed, it is important to have an understanding of changes in higher education that took place between the Civil War and the early 1890s. Prior to the Civil War, liberal education, which focused on the “development of intellectual abilities” rather than practical skills, was the prominent form of higher education. This was supplanted post-war in favor of the elective system.

The tight, lock-step curriculum that students had previously experienced together was replaced with course options for students and content specialization for faculty. Nowhere was that more pronounced than at Harvard University. There, President Charles Eliot (who served from 1869 until 1909) transformed the university from the liberal or classical curriculum into one in which faculty were able to create and offer coursework that was specific to their research interests and specializations. Electivism gave freshmen the freedom to choose the courses they took, with little or no guidance from the institution. The result was that many students focused too narrowly on only one discipline, or chose only to enroll in entry level courses in many disciplines, and therefore not achieving depth of knowledge in any.

Not all faculty at Harvard believed that such an extreme change was wise. A.L. Lowell’s use of his inaugural address to outline his thoughts on how best to reinvigorate

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the undergraduate curriculum through the use of faculty advisers and dormitories ignited a national dialogue focusing on freshmen. In it, he provided the following rationale, summarizing many of the criticisms of higher education at that time:

Moreover, the change from the life of school to that of college is too abrupt at the present day. Taken gradually, liberty is a powerful stimulant; but taken suddenly in large doses, it is liable to act as an intoxicant or an opiate. No doubt every boy ought to learn to paddle his own canoe; but we do not begin the process by tossing him into a canoe, and setting him adrift in deep water, with a caution that he would do well to look for the paddle. Many a well-intentioned youth comes to college, enjoys innocently enough the pleasures of freedom for a season, but released from the discipline to which he has been accustomed, and looking on the examinations as remote, falls into indolent habits. Presently he finds himself on probation for neglect of his studies. He has become submerged and has a hard, perhaps unsuccessful, struggle to get his head above water.  

Along side this discussion during the 1910s and 1920s, institutions were actively working to create programs to address the needs of freshmen. Dormitories that segregated freshmen from the influences of upperclassmen were created. Activities were planned with the aim of establishing a collegiate culture early in a student’s academic career. Freshmen Orientation (or Freshman Week) grew into an accepted program in which

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valuable information about adjusting to college life could be communicated. And freshman seminars began to flourish – creating an academic foundation for establishing how a student should approach college academics. These programs were implemented by a growing field of student affairs professionals that institutions hired to do the work research faculty were no longer inclined, nor had the time, to do.

The development of these programs was not without its critics. Questions were raised about why students who did not understand the purpose of their education, or were ill prepared for higher education, were being coddled and “pushed through” to graduation. Criticisms that freshman courses were simply a way to continue the preparatory school routines and arguments against providing college credit for content that should be contained in personal conversations were presented.

In response to these criticisms, institutional leadership provided justifications for the focus on freshman. First, faculty recognized that freshmen needed help in transitioning from the close supervision of high school to the freedom of higher education due to new research in adolescent psychology that supported the idea that the move from high school to college is a time of psychological growth and transition. Second, the adoption of electivism made it necessary for institutions to make clear the educational objectives of higher education for freshmen. And third, institutions sought to stimulate the intellectual interests of new students, resulting in the development of freshman seminar courses.

Finally, three overarching forces, social and institutional conditions or changes that drove the development of freshman program, will be discussed. One was the widespread concern about the failure rate, or “student mortality” and the associated waste
of resources by individuals, institutions, and the public. The second force was President Lowell and Harvard University had an influence on higher education, leading the way in curricular and structural evolutions. And the third force was the growth of a separate administrative department devoted to student affairs.

The research presented here represents the published public discourse of the early 1900s as found in the ProQuest Historical Newspapers and scholarly journals. As such, it does not provide data or information particular to women and minority populations. Some women’s colleges responded to surveys during the timeframe studied and are included in data tables, and co-educational and institutions that served both white and minority populations may be represented. However, women’s colleges and historically black colleges and universities were largely missing from published public discourse.
Chapter 2. Historiography on the Beginning of Official Freshman Programming

Over the past thirty years, there has been a growing body of evidence that first-year experiences affect overall student success in college. Many researchers and scholars, including Astin and Pascarella and Terenzini have focused their work on characteristics and developmental issues that first-year students face. These two factors have led college administrators to focus resources on initiatives to help lay the foundation for first-year students, with the goal of increasing student success and retention. In 1982, John N. Gardner--professor at the University of South Carolina and director of South Carolina’s Course University 101, the freshman seminar--called a meeting of professionals from across the country to discuss the freshman seminar concept. The 175 attendees of this first meeting requested another meeting the following year. This became the Annual

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16 Upcraft, Gardner, and Barefoot, Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student.
Conference on the Freshman Year Experience and is what is currently given credit for being the beginning of the modern first-year experience (FYE) movement.\textsuperscript{17}

Nationally, two organizations regularly collect data regarding first-year student programming in American higher education. The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition conducts a triennial survey regarding first-year seminars. In the 2012 survey, completed by 896 institutions revealed that 804, or 89.7\% of those institutions offer a first-year seminar.\textsuperscript{18} The 2014 National Orientation Directors Association survey of their members, completed by 328 institutions revealed that at 203 institutions, or 77\% offer a mandatory orientation program for first-year students.

Despite the large and growing programming and literature in recent time, current first-year-experience literature or historical scholarship does not address the origins and emergence of this movement. As a result, current student affairs practitioners must rely upon the widespread acceptance that first-year programming currently has. Providing the historical data, original criticisms and institution justifications from the beginnings of official freshman programming will allow current practitioners to frame their work with a deeper understanding of the work done before them.

My literature search was completed through the Ohio State University Library website and included the following: Electronic Library, EBSCOHost, Google Books,

\textsuperscript{17} The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, “About the Center,” 2012, http://sc.edu/fye/center/history.html.
Google Scholar, JSTOR, LexisNexis, OhioLink, Periodicals Index Online, Periodicals Archive Online, ERIC, WorldCat, and ProQuest Historical Newspapers (which includes all newspapers of the period studied). Because the search was largely focused on published public discourse, women’s colleges and historically black colleges and universities are not fully represented here.

This literature search has identified only one book, chapter, or article published since 1960 that directly addresses the origins of an intentional focus on first-year students. This is a chapter written by Virginia Gordon entitled “Origin and Purposes of the Freshman Seminar,” in *The Freshman Year Experience: Helping Students Survive and Succeed in College*. In that chapter she references the seminal 1928 publication by Charles Fitts and Fletcher Swift, *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen*.

Fitts and Swift make the central assertion: “Following President Lowell’s inaugural address, other men and other institutions discussed the problem of caring for the needs of freshmen.” My discovery of the document authored by Fitts and Swift opened the path of my research to the larger national dialogue that was occurring in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Again, Virginia Gordon’s chapter is the only scholarly work published in the last sixty years that mentions the start and growth of freshman programming, which has

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become so prominent. In fact, the following works of historical scholarship do not directly address freshmen, or freshman programs at all.

Adams, Katherine H. *A Group of Their Own: College Writing Courses and...Women Writers, 1880–1940*, (2001).


Boris, Eileen and Nupur Chaudhuri, "Voices of women historians: the personal, the political, the professional", 2001.


Cohen, Robert. *When the old left was young: student radicals and America's first mass student movement, 1929-1941*, 1993.


Gruber, Carol S. *Mars and minerva: World war I and the uses of the higher learning in america*, 1975.


Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Alma mater: design and experience in the women's colleges from their nineteenth-century beginnings to the 1930s*, 1984.


Marsden, George M. *The soul of the American university: from protestant establishment to established nonbelief*, 1994.


Pace, Robert F. *Halls of honor: college men in the Old South*, 2011.


Ross, Earle D. *Democracy's college: The land-grant movement in the formative stage*, 1942.


Solomon, Barbara Miller. *In the company of educated women: a history of women and higher education in America*, 1985.
Apart from directly addressing the origins of freshman programming, those sources above and other recent historical scholarship does help to explain the background and context that led to the need to focus on freshmen. There are brief references to the existence of such programs and structures in either a paragraph or a few pages in the following publications. In addition, although a number of sources below do
not contain any information directly pertaining to freshmen, they are important to providing the context in which these programs were developed.


description of the tension between technical and liberal education in the south is provided.


ceremonies and student transitions at women’s colleges. Five pages focus on traditions specific to freshmen during the late 1800 and early 1900s.


Leslie, William Bruce. *Gentlemen and Scholars: College and Community in the “Age of the University,” 1865-1917*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992. Although there is no information pertaining directly to the development of the first-year experience, this book contains approximately twenty pages that explore the tension between Eliot’s design of the elective system and the ideals of liberal education.


Nelson, Adam R. *Education and Democracy: The Meaning of Alexander Meiklejohn, 1872-1964.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. Although there is no information pertaining directly to the development of the first-year experience, this biography of Meiklejohn provides two pages describing his advocacy for liberal education through his inaugural speech in 1912 in which he pointed to the disintegration of liberal education during the rise of the elective system in the mid-nineteenth century.

Reuben, Julie A. *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1996. Although there is no information pertaining directly to the development of the first-year experience, this book provides 10 pages of information about the tension and transformation from liberal education to professional education, including both Eliot and Lowell as examples.


Rudolph, Frederick. *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977. A book that has one paragraph indicating that, in the 20th century, every institution had something that was called a “freshman year.”

It has one paragraph that refers to Lowell’s plans to create structures that increase student learning outside of the classroom.


Veysey, Laurence R. *The Emergence of the American University*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1970. Although there is no information pertaining directly to the development of the first-year experience, this book provides an extensive history of the academic philosophies and structures developed during the post Civil War years and through the turn of the century. Four pages in particular address Lowell’s advocacy for a quality undergraduate education.


Beyond Lynn Gordon’s work, Rudolph’s work comes the closest to pointing to a focus on freshman. However, Rudolph offers only one small piece of the puzzle, the development of Harvard’s Board of Freshman Advisors in 1889, the forerunner of more
extensive services for freshmen. There is no evidence that this sparked a national
dialogue, nor is there any evidence that it inspired other institutions to develop a similar
model. It was simply the first step in Harvard’s evolution of attention to the freshman.

Current first-year experience literature often attributes the development and
growth of a first-year experience movement to the work of John Gardner’s hosting of the
Annual Conference on the Freshman Year Experience. The widespread offering of
programs today is evidenced in data provided by the National Resource Center on the
First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and the National Orientation Directors
Association. Yet, the scholarly literature over the past sixty years--aside from Virginia
Gordon’s chapter “Origin and Purposes of the Freshman Seminar-- does not address the
beginnings of these programs. Her chapter points to Fitts and Swift’s 1928 publication
that attributes the start of a “movement” to Harvard’s President Lowell’s inaugural
address in 1909. Recent historical scholarship included in this chapter does, however,
provide-for an understanding of the background and context that led to the need to focus
on freshmen.
Chapter 3. The Start and Growth of the Freshman “Movement”, 1905-1930

Given the paucity of historical scholarship addressing the emergence of the freshman in the first quarter of the twentieth century, I began to search for historical literature on freshman programming. I then searched thoroughly through databases for historical sources published in the United States that contained the words *freshman, freshmen, freshman week, transition, and orientation* from 1880 through 1930.

These words were selected due to their prominence throughout *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen*, published in 1928 by Charles Fitts and Fletcher Swift\(^\text{21}\). The time of 1880-1930 was selected in order to validate the assertion of Fitts and Swift that attention to freshmen began approximately in 1909. Also, earlier publications might shed light on how the idea of caring for freshmen had become an understood practice in American higher education. Additionally, I conducted searches focused on Harvard and Albert Lawrence Lowell, because they had been identified as a starting point in the Fitts and Swift publication.

The following databases were searched for historical usage of the terms identified above: Electronic Library, EBSCOHost, JSTOR, LexisNexis, OhioLink, Periodicals Index Online, Periodicals Archive Online, ProQuest, ERIC, and WorldCat. In addition,

\(^{21}\) Fitts and Swift, *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen*. 25
searches were also conducted in Google Books and Google Scholar, as well as the Harvard Archives Online.

These searches yielded the following types of publications addressing freshman programming between 1900 and 1930: newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, books, and theses or dissertations. The results demonstrate that the conversation that Fitts and Swift refer to was not only among higher education faculty, professional staff, and leadership, but also was of interest to parents, students, and the general public. The following Table #1 Chronological Distribution of Literature on the Freshman enumerates these publications by type and year of publication. Based on the date in Table 1, Graph 1 of Chronological Distribution of Literature on the Freshman provides a visual representation of the trends in these publications. It is pertinent to note that the searches were reflective of the published public discourse, and therefore do not reflect programming found at women’s colleges or historically black colleges and universities.
Table 1. Chronological Distribution of Literature on the Freshman Year

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Total Publications During the Year</th>
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<th>Books</th>
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Source: Electronic searches through databases: Electronic Library, EBSCOHost, JSTOR, LexisNexis, OhioLink, Periodicals Index Online, Periodicals Archive Online, ProQuest, ERIC, and WorldCat.
Figure 1. Chronological Distribution of Literature on the Freshman

Source: Data in Table 1
Source: Data in Table 1

22 Five-Year Rolling Aggregate Totals are presented in order to smooth the annual differences and demonstrate the larger trends.
Table 1 and Graphs 1 and 2 demonstrate that there was a significant increase in the number of publications about the care of freshmen and establishing freshman programs after Lowell’s inaugural address in 1909. The number then declined from 1916 to 1921, likely because the academic literature shifted to address the alarming enrollment decline during World War I, followed by the flood of returning soldiers right after the war, and then the sharp recession in 1920. The number of publications rapidly increased again in 1921. Also, the subject of the freshman in literature expanded during the post-war years, including publications discussing Harvard’s freshman dormitories and programs on individual campuses, to research-based publications identifying practices across the country.

Fitts and Swift observed "the impossibility of attempting to fix any definite year as that in which university authorities first recognized the need of special guidance for entering students.” Nevertheless, they also state correctly that “Following President Lowell’s inaugural address, other men and other institutions discussed the problem of caring for the needs of freshmen.”\(^{23}\) Subsequently, many observed during the period that there was a new emphasis on the care of freshmen.

In 1910, Daniel Abercrombie, principal of Worcester Academy, wrote, “All this is a movement in the right direction, a suggestion that the colleges are beginning to see that freshmen are but men in the making, ‘young barbarians at play,’ if you will, who need the impress and uplift of mature but sympathetic elders.”\(^{24}\) J.K. Hart, Professor of Education


at the University of Wisconsin, wrote in a 1912 edition of *The Nation*, “A recent bulletin of the Carnegie Foundation suggests that the colleges and universities do something to help the freshmen ‘find themselves’.” A 1915 abstract from an address at the Castine Conference of School Principals and Superintendents by Robert Aley, President of the University of Maine, provides further evidence of the awareness of the need to treat freshmen differently from the rest of the university population. He stated: “The very great increase in attendance at American colleges has made the care of the freshman an important problem.”

During the war years and recession of 1920, the number of publications addressing the care of the freshman decreased. Yet, it is apparent that by 1921 the emphasis on the care for freshmen was much more established and the number of publications grew steadily. In 1924, J.M. Gaus, Professor of Government at Harvard, while expressing some skepticism, acknowledged that freshman programs will continue to grow in number. In 1926 an article in *The School Review* demonstrates that by mid-decade it was already becoming common-place to provide a foundation for freshmen:

“Educational institutions are very generally recognizing it as a part of their duty to help new students adjust themselves to their social and institutional environments. Freshman

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27 “Perhaps it is a delusion to see any significance in the development of initiatory courses for freshmen during the past ten years. Nevertheless they are here, and there is good evidence that they will increase in numbers.” John Merriman Gaus, “Initiatory Courses for College Freshmen,” *American Review*, December 1924, 640.
Week has become a generally recognized method for bridging the gap between high school and college. Orientation courses for new students are now common in colleges and high schools.” By 1928, Fitt’s and Swift observed that the “foremost thinkers and leaders” were addressing the “educational problem” of helping the freshman to find himself, and explicitly label it a movement.

The necessity of assisting people everywhere, particularly the youth of the country, to find themselves in relation to this new body of knowledge is an educational problem recognized by many of our foremost thinkers and leaders. The resultant of their efforts to solve it has produced a movement which, for want of a better name, has been called the orientation movement.

Lester D Crow, and educational psychologist at the University of Michigan, reiterated this notion that it was a movement in 1929, stating:

In an attempt to care for this large group of people who are entering, a movement has been started under the auspices of ‘freshman week’ in many of the American colleges. This movement, as given by most institutions, has for its purpose

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28 “Adjusting Students to Their Environment,” The School Review 34, no. 7 (September 1926): 482–84.

29 Fitts and Swift, The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen, 149.
orientation and placement. The aim is to have all freshmen present for freshman week and to have them attend all the classes which are held that week.\textsuperscript{30}

In his 1930 dissertation at the University of Missouri, James Conelese Miller concludes that, “The past decade has been marked by changes in the manner of reception given to the college freshman.”\textsuperscript{31} That same year, Florence Root published an article in the \textit{American Journal of Nursing} proclaiming, “TODAY as never before the question of the adjustment of the individual to his environment is in the thoughts of educators and those who are interested in the progress of our civilization.”\textsuperscript{32}

The development of research regarding freshman programs was a new development in the literature, demonstrating the growing significance of the attention to the care of freshmen. Committee G of the American Association of University Professors, in 1922, published a report entitled “Initiatory Courses for Freshmen,” that provided data on the institutions offering courses that had the aim of “training the student in thinking.”\textsuperscript{33} Dartmouth Professor Leon B. Richardson’s 1924 publication, \textit{A Study of the Liberal College} included information on services institutions were offering particular


\textsuperscript{31}James Conelese Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen” (University of Missouri, 1930), 9.


to freshmen, such as advising, housing, and orientation courses.\textsuperscript{34} C.J. Ho completed a survey of orientation programs in 1926 to “indicate the general trend of the development of orientation work.”\textsuperscript{35} And by the end of the decade, Esther Lloyd-Jones at Northwestern University\textsuperscript{36}, James Miller at the University of Missouri\textsuperscript{37}, and Jay Carroll Knode at Columbia University\textsuperscript{38} had completed thesis or dissertations related to freshman programming.

First-year experience programming and publications related to it today are prolific. In fact, there has been so much researched and published that much of the current literature revolves around the effects of such programs on very specific populations of freshmen. But there is little in current literature that points to the original development of such programs. My research found only one publication include a reference to developments prior to the 1970s. Examining this literature allows for a deeper understanding of the context in which the original development of such programs occurred, and provides a foundation for the widespread acceptance in current higher education practice.

\textsuperscript{34} Leon B. Richardson, “A Study of the Liberal College” (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, 1924).


\textsuperscript{37} Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen.”

\textsuperscript{38} Jay Carroll Knode, “Orienting the Student in College, With Special Reference to Freshman Week” (Teachers College, Columbia University, 1930).
My data show that there was little published about freshman-specific programs prior to President Lowell’s 1909 inaugural address. After a dip in publications between 1916 and 1921 during World War I and the subsequent recession of 1920, there was a rapid increase in both publications and programs across the country in the early 1920s. Evidence of the growth and acceptance of such programs is further provided by the completion of theses and dissertations in the late 1920s and 1930, which provided justifications for the development and expansion of programs focusing on the care of freshmen.

The proliferation of programs may be seen more clearly through the examination of year-by-year trends across the country. Due to the limited and scattered data available, the data included in this chapter have been pulled from Charles Fitts and Fletcher Swifts study *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen* published in 1926. Their data included only information about orientation week programs and freshman seminars. To supplement that, I have included data has been included from the American Association of University Professor’s Committee G Report, published in the eighth Bulletin in 1922.

Table 2. Chronological List of Institutions adopting a credit course for freshmen, 1911-1925, below, provides a chronological listing of the first year in which a given college or university offered a freshman orientation course for the first time, beginning in 1911 with the first documented for-credit freshman seminar. It is followed by a map in

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39 Fitts and Swift, *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen*.

Figure 1 that provides the data in the form of a color scale, and Table 3, which provides the region of the United States each institution is in. In the visual map, the first states to adopt freshman orientation courses, starting in 1911, are in black. From there, the color scale grows through grays in to the 1920s, and then ends in white with the final states that adopted orientation courses, in the 1925-1926 academic year. Table 3 shows this data in a chart format, breaking the institutions down into four geographical regions: northeast, southeast, Midwest, and west. Interestingly, the first documented courses, by Fitts and Swift’s definition\textsuperscript{41}, were at Reed College in the state of Oregon and the University of Washington. This is of interest considering the trends in higher education were usually predicated in the east coast Ivy institution. As stated in Chapter 3, while Boston University is often sited as the first institution to offer a freshman seminar in current literature, such as Upcraft and Gardner’s \textit{The Freshman Year Experience} from 1989\textsuperscript{42}, Fitts and Swift made the argument that the focus of the Boston University course was not

\begin{quote}
41 “Definition of orientation – Orientation may be defined briefly as the art or science of finding one’s self, of getting one’s bearings, of learning one’s relationship to the society in which he lives and works. The Oxford English Dictionary defines orientation as ‘determination of one’s ‘bearings’ or true position in relation to circumstances ideas, etc.,’ and cites as illustration: ‘That is the best education which gives a man, so to speak, the best orientation; which most clearly defines his relations with society and with his Creator…A recognition of the need of giving to youth such orientation has led institutions of higher education gradually to introduce courses which serve this purpose.” Fitts and Swift, \textit{The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen}, 150.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
“Prior to 1917 the number of institutions offering orientation courses was small and these few were pioneering in a field in which there were no sharply defined boundaries. Immediately following the world war, however, curriculum decisions occupied the attention of many universities and colleges. A relatively large number began to include orientation courses in their curriculum. Several large and influential ones led the way in offering courses having some points of similarity in aim, organization, and content.” Fitts and Swift, \textit{The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen}, 154.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{42} Upcraft and Gardner, \textit{The Freshman Year Experience}.
strictly an orientation course, and therefore should not be counted among the first, but rather a predecessor. They also provide a note of caution regarding orientation courses developed prior to the end of World War I, as they were experimental in nature. However, the focus of the courses at Reed College and the University of Washington were clearly orientation, even if the structures would not become the standard.

The pattern of spread across the country was not one of a smooth line, sweeping across from west to east. When examining the dates of identified orientation courses, the data shows that west and east coast institutions started courses at the same time they were being developed in the mid-west. A few southern institutions began adopting orientation courses shortly after World War I, beginning with the University of Kentucky during the 1918-1919 academic year, however states in the Deep South did not adopt orientation courses during the reported years.

Table 4. Chronological List of Institutions adopting a credit course for freshmen, organized by type of governance, 1911-1925, shows that there were far more private institutions (79) that responded to survey requests indicating that they had adopted programs than the public institutions (23). Because we do not know the sample size for public and private institutions, nor the ratio of private to public institutions at the time, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions. On the whole, there were and still are more private institutions than public institutions.
Table 2. Chronological List of Institutions adopting a credit course for freshmen, 1911-1925

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Figure 3. Geographic implementation of freshman seminar courses, 1911-1926
Key: States adopting courses beginning in the 1911-1912 academic year are black, with those still not adopting courses by the 1925-1926 academic year in white. The darker the color shown, the earlier that state was to implement courses.

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Table 4. Chronological List of Institutions adopting a credit course for freshmen, organized by type of governance, 1911-1925

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Chapter 4. The Proliferation of New Programs and Structures Devoted to Freshmen

Today in higher education, it is a foregone conclusion that institutions will offer first-year student transition programming. This was not the case in 1909 when President Lowell of Harvard gave his inaugural address highlighting plans to develop freshman-only dormitories. As publications about freshmen and their care began to proliferate, criticisms of this new focus on freshmen were also published. But by 1930, Jay C. Knode’s dissertation examined what he labeled as “the orientation movement” concerning "Freshman Week" and stated that “the orientation movement took shape in different sections of the country and over a considerable period of time, despite the general impression to the contrary.” So how did higher education make the leap from the early 1900s, when care of freshman was given no special attention, to today’s expectation of such services? When and where did such ideas develop and spread?

By looking at the growth and development of programs focused on freshmen in the early 1900s, we can gain insight into the changes that took place and understand when the nation-wide acceptance of such programs developed, despite the criticisms. The 1910s through the 1920s saw immense growth in institutional programs and structures devoted to the needs of freshmen. At Yale, due to overall restructuring the university was going through at this time, they created the Common Freshman Year in 1919 in which

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43 Knode, “Orienting the Student in College, With Special Reference to Freshman Week,” 15.
freshmen were segregated from the larger university student population. But this was rare. In most institutions, programs and structures were piece-meal and put into place as the faculty and administration encountered problems that needed to be addressed. Johns Hopkins created a system of faculty advisers for the entire student community in 1877, which was then taken up at Harvard as the Board of Freshman Advisers in 1889.

In general terms, these structures signaled “the first formal recognition that size and the elective curriculum required some closer attention to undergraduate guidance than was possible with an increasingly professionally oriented faculty,” states Frederick Rudolph. Ultimately, this formalization led to emphasizing guidance for one particular group of undergraduates at colleges and universities across the country: freshmen. By 1928, colleges and universities were “busy perfecting various systems of freshman counseling, freshman week, faculty advisers, and before long the campus psychologist…” This chapter provides evidence of the proliferation of freshman programs, categorized by program types, advisors and deans, housing, and Freshman Week, from 1905 through 1930 by examining publications from that time period.

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44 George Wilson Pierson, in writing a history of Yale University, described Yale’s Freshmen Year as making the institution “Freshman-conscious,” and stated that “The Freshman Year should be a live institution, with its own character and peculiarities, generating its own loyalties and commanding its own facilities.” Pierson, George Wilson. *Yale College: An Educational History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, 529 and 534.

Freshmen Advisors and Deans

The development of the elective curriculum meant that undergraduates were no longer required to complete a pre-established set of courses. In order to provide some guidance in the choice of courses and to ensure some one was monitoring the successes or failures of individual students, institutions began to establish the role of freshman advisor and freshman dean. In some institutions, the Freshman Dean served as the advisor.

While freshman programs do not proliferate until the 1910s, it is important to acknowledge that there was at least one isolated development prior to that time. As noted above, Harvard’s Board of Freshman Advisers in 1889 was a forerunner of the eventual special attention paid to freshmen. These advisers were faculty enlisted to provide watch and counsel to freshmen at a point when more faculty were beginning to spend time on research rather than the individual needs of their students. Whether or not this was a successful method of building relationships with students appears to have been debatable. Edwin Slosson, professor of Chemistry and author of *Great American Universities* alluded to the “perfunctory relation” between the adviser and student in 1910, stating that it was “sometimes no more personal than the interpretation of the curriculum of railroad trains to the passengers in a union station by the Bureau of Information.”

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46 It is important to note that there were not Deans of Freshmen at Women’s Colleges. These institutions were structured to provide guidance and support from the moment a woman entered, and therefore did not require a separate person devoted to freshmen.

Slosson’s critique demonstrates that the Harvard Board of Freshman Advisors was merely a forerunner of the freshman “movement.”

Based on Harvard’s model, Pennsylvania State College adopted the board of advisers model. In 1917, Albert Hansen described their board as one made up of faculty, who should be chosen carefully:

The opportunity for personal usefulness in guiding the lives of men is the most attractive feature of the position. During the first year of college students frequently need a person to whom they can turn for advice and guidance that is unselfish and impartial. To whom could they better turn that to a member of the faculty whose training and experience have fitted him for this character of work? Only men whose heart interest is with the student should be selected as members of the board of freshman advisers.48

Colorado State Teachers College at Greeley also adopted this model and set up a “freshman bureau” headed by Dr. Clare B Cornell, professor of educational administration. With its focus on training teachers, the bureau’s aim was to “get every student in action effectively early in the year; … save all who have the ability to learn and the traits for skill in teaching in action early, and those who lack professional adaptability will be gracefully bowed out.”49


In most institutions, the role of adviser became the responsibility of individuals including administrators. Deans and Assistant Deans, the Registrar, or other university staff were given the task of serving as adviser to the freshmen.\textsuperscript{50} Harvard led the way in the creation of such a position. In 1904 Byron Satterlee Hurlbut, Dean of Harvard College, created an assistant dean position focusing specifically on the Freshman class.\textsuperscript{51} William R. Castle, Jr., who started at the institution as an English instructor, served in that role from 1904 until 1913 and himself published two articles on the care of freshmen.\textsuperscript{52} In 1917, F.P. Keppel noted that “Most colleges have a single dean, but at Harvard there is an assistant dean who gives his whole time to the freshmen…”\textsuperscript{54} This concept began to spread post-World War I, and in 1924, Leon B. Richardson, Professor of Chemistry at Dartmouth, provides two more institutions that had such deans: “Many institutions recognize the necessity of guidance at this critical period, and, in different

\textsuperscript{50} Ho, “How Freshmen Find Themselves (or Don’t),” 33. And Adam Leroy Jones, “Personnel Technique and Freshman Guidance,” in The Effective College (Association of American Colleges, 1928), 97.


\textsuperscript{54} F.P. Keppel, The Undergraduate and His College (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1917), 270.
ways, try to furnish what seems to be required. At Brown and at Dartmouth special deans have charge of the freshman work and the attempt is made, through faculty organization, to watch the entering student with all possible care.”

In 1923, Thomas Clark of the University of Illinois, the first known Dean of Men in the country, proposed two structures for advising, one in which faculty were assigned to a group of new students in the hopes that they would form relationships; another in which there is an office or position dedicated to offering advice and to give supervision to those who need it or to those who want it. An editorial in the Journal of Education entitled “The Freshman Problem” described “freshman tragedies in colleges and universities” and highlighted the role of the dean at the State Teacher College at Murray, Kentucky “has devoted himself for a year to the rescue of endangered freshmen, and with much success. Practically every freshman found himself, and none who left ‘fell out.’”

In 1930, President George Rightmire described the collaboration that was occurring among junior deans at the Ohio State University, demonstrating an adoption of the model.

In five of the large colleges of the University, junior deans have been appointed to work with the freshmen students, the groups varying with the college from two hundred to eight hundred persons. For a year and a half these deans have been

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57 “Editorials: The Freshman Problem.”
meeting in a council periodically, discussing methods, situations and policies, and comparing experiences.\textsuperscript{58}

By 1930, the predominant model appeared to be the use of freshman faculty advisers, and the practice had spread enough to merit dissertation research. James Miller of the University of Missouri surveyed 50 institutions; seventy-two percent had a freshman faculty adviser program.\textsuperscript{59} Through his research, he concluded that such a program “seems to be the most satisfactory method of providing personnel service for freshmen.” He believed it aided in bringing together the academic and non-academic parts of college life. In particular, “Friendly personal contacts of freshmen individually with faculty members help to further the humanizing function of the college.”\textsuperscript{60}

The use of faculty advisers took many forms. Princeton’s preceptorial system, extremely small classes that were intended to provide the opportunity for faculty to really get to know the students in their classes, was a structure created with the hopes that relationships would naturally form and provide an authentic way for students to receive advice. Conversely, Harvard’s faculty advisers were “supposed to make the acquaintance of the Freshmen in his charge.”\textsuperscript{61} L.D. Coffman argued that it was important to carefully select the faculty who teach freshman, recognizing that “The organization will not be


\textsuperscript{59} Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen,” 68.

\textsuperscript{60} Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen,” 91.

\textsuperscript{61} Slosson, \textit{Great American Universities}, 18.
complete unless those who teach the freshmen are willing to be advisers to the freshman.”\(^\text{62}\)

In 1914 Nicholas Butler, President of Columbia University, also argued that it was necessary that some person take an interest in the freshman and provide guidance. He stated: “In every college there should be some officer who is, in effect, the elder brother of the freshmen. That officer, by whatever name called, should enjoy their confidence and enter into the spirit of their lives. He should be the man to whom they naturally turn for suggestion, for helpful advice, and for friendly council.”\(^\text{63}\) Harvard’s Assistant Dean Castle had, perhaps, already held this belief that it did not matter who did the advising. In 1909 he had set up a peer advising system that consisted of upper-class students.\(^\text{64}\)

No matter who served as the adviser, the intended purpose was clearly articulated in publications. Assistant Dean Castle believed that the role began with helping freshmen confront their first problem – deciding in which courses to enroll. Additionally, faculty and upper-class students were present to talk to the student, make him feel a part of the institution, and to provide guidance.\(^\text{65}\) In 1917 Albert A. Hansen, a professor at the Pennsylvania State College, was much more emphatic about the role of the adviser in his article in *School and Society*: “The chance to guide men in the proper channel, to help


mould and direct the lives of men during the plastic period of the freshmen year, this is the sacred duty of the freshman adviser.”

At the core, the role was to ensure there was someone present to help provide guidance during this transitional time, be it in course registration or how to be a successful college student. A.B. Crawford, in a review of Doermann’s study The Orientation of College Freshman, expressed concern for the implications of faculty spending time “counseling” students. He argued that this should be recognized as work equivalent to teaching and should not be a burden added on top of a full teaching load.

Either counseling or orientation work is educationally too important a function not to be recognized today as the equivalent, proportionately to the time involved, of teaching itself...there is danger that the instructor-counselor, even though relieved of part of his teaching load, be indirectly hampered in professional advancement because devotion to first-year teaching as such and devotion to his counselor's duties both of necessity restrict time for research and publication. Let us hope, as the need for orientation and guidance becomes more and more recognized, that fuller recognition of effective and stimulating teaching is...fully as worthy of professional recognition and promotion as formal scholarship.67


President James Rowland Angell of Yale agreed with this need to recognize the importance of effective teaching during the freshman year. To that end, the structure of The Freshman Year at Yale included intentional recruitment of faculty that were “able and experienced teachers.” He acknowledged that those leading the work encountered departments that stressed research over successful teaching. Angell also acknowledged that teaching in the Freshman Year program was strenuous and provided little time for other work:

It is alleged that this feeling resulted, in certain instances, in discouraging men best efforts to teaching and from identifying themselves Freshman group, because of their belief that substantial from their departmental professorial colleagues is only by scholarly production. There is doubtless some this feeling.  

While it appears that many institutions were designating one person to the work of focusing on the care of the freshmen, Yale, through the creation of their Common Freshman Year, set up an entire structure made up of a separate faculty and administration and established Percy T. Walden, Professor of Chemistry, as the Freshman Dean in 1924. He went on to publish “The Importance of the Freshman Year” in the Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors in 1928.

Whether it was the development of a single Dean of Freshman or a group of faculty, institutions in the 1910s and 1920s recognized the need to provide individual

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guidance to freshmen. Advisors and deans assisted in making course enrollment decisions, provided council on personal matters, and were responsible for assisting with both the academic and non-academic lives of their students.

Freshman Housing and Facilities

In addition to the use of faculty and administrators who were explicitly focused on aiding freshmen throughout their first year, there arose the realization that physical structures are also a tool to be used. As with many trends, Harvard initiated the idea of freshman-only dormitories, modeled after Oxford, as a physical support for the needs of the freshmen. In his inaugural address of in 1909, Albert Lawrence Lowell announced his initiative to build freshmen-only dormitories:

The undergraduate should be led to feel from the moment of his arrival that college life is a serious and many-sided thing, whereof mental discipline is a vital part. It would seem that all these difficulties could be much lessened if the freshmen were brought together in a group of dormitories and dining halls, under the comradeship of older men, who appreciated the possibilities of college life, and took a keen interest in their work and their pleasures.

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70 Lowell, “President Lowell’s Inaugural Address,” 503–4.
William R. Castle, Jr., Assistant Dean for Freshman at Harvard from 1904 until 1913, published an article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, in October 1909, the same month as the inauguration, supporting the plan:

The first step toward adequate care of the Freshman class must be to assemble the members, either as a whole or in separate but integral divisions. This includes, as Freshman problems are distinct, segregation from upper classes. Sections of dormitories, certain buildings, or better a group of buildings if one large enough for the whole class is not available, should be reserved exclusively for Freshmen.\(^{71}\)

The article also provided the details of the plan. The university would provide accommodations that included a wide range of prices. Once enough space had been created, Freshmen would be required to live in the designated building. The plan would also ensure that boys from different backgrounds, “private and public schools, from city and country, and East and West,”\(^{72}\) intermingled.

Daniel Webster Abercrombie, Principal of Worcester Academy from 1882-1918 and an advocate for assisting in the transition from high school to higher education, wrote in support of the plan in the June 1910 edition of *Education*: “I really think there is immense value in President Lowell’s plan for freshman dormitories, so far as its scope

\(^{71}\) Castle, “The College and the Freshman,” 553.

\(^{72}\) Castle, “The College and the Freshman,” 553.
can be understood from the daily press.” And even the Wall Street Journal provided specifics about the plan in March of 1912:

Boston—Some time ago President Lowell of Harvard proposed to insure the mingling of college students in the freshmen year by building a row of new dormitories facing the Charles river below the boat club houses and insisting upon housing therein for the first year the college students who were not living at home. It was proposed that the division should not be by floors—but vertically from first floor to top floor, thus insuring contact between tenants of all classes of expenditures at the beginning of their college career. Land was purchased, plans made and the raising of the $1,800,000 attempted.  

Educators across the country praised the plan, including Stanford’s President David Starr Jordan, John H. Finely, of the City of New York, and Western Reserve University’s President Charles F. Thwing. 

Initially the idea was met with resistance by students who did not want their freedom infringed upon and by faculty who saw it as an expensive endeavor. A 1912 article in the Harvard Graduates’ Magazine presented an administrator and a student view of the development of dormitories. The student, C.P. Curtis Jr. of the class of 1914 and a Junior at the time, posited that the new freshman housing would provide students

75 Fitts and Swift, The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen, 155.
with the familiarity and happiness felt in the Sophomore year, that students would have
“No more of the ‘lost in a crowd’ feeling.” 76 Furthermore, he laid out the main concern the
students had plainly: they feared paternalism on the part of the College. Despite this, by
1915, Lowell was declaring success: “Many of the present freshmen were prejudiced
against them from a dread of loss of freedom and of school-boy regulations. This has
disappeared; and the men as a body are well pleased, looking upon the halls as a
privilege.” 77

Alex Duke, in his book Importing Oxbridge: English Residential Colleges and
American Universities, describes the results of Lowell’s efforts in 1918. Four residence
halls were built that housed more than five hundred freshmen. “Each of the freshman
halls contained a dining room, commons rooms, and – at the insistence of the president –
large comfortable chairs.” All freshmen, excluding African Americans, were required to
live in the halls. 78

By the 1920s, the idea of separate freshmen housing was spreading to other
institutions. In Leon Burr Richardson’s A Study of the Liberal College in 1924, he notes
that the idea of separate freshman housing had spread from Harvard to Williams
College. 79 And yet, Richardson, a professor of Chemistry at Dartmouth, expressed

Graduates’ Magazine, December 1, 1912, 237.

77 A. Lawrence Lowell, “The Problems of Harvard College,” School and Society 1, no. 6
(February 6, 1915): 215.

78 Duke, Importing Oxbridge, 98. An argument was made that African American men might be
uncomfortable living with white men, and therefore were excused from the housing requirement.

concern over the idea of freshmen being separated from the upper classmen, who he argued were “wiser in their judgments and less flighty in their action.” Without such leadership, he feared that freshmen would do “foolish things” and become “troublesome to the college.” Whether or not upper classmen helped or hurt the efforts to orient freshmen was never really settled in the publications.

H.A. Garfield, President of Williams College in 1924, proposed that freshmen live together in his article “The Stimulation of Intellectual Interests in The Freshman Year and Before” in The Journal of Education:

Specifically, what I should like to do at Williams, and propose to do as soon as we are all of one mind concerning it, is to have the freshman class live together throughout the year. They may become members of social groups as freely as at present, but during their first year in college the ground should be kept fertile for the cultivation of the attitude of mind which we seek to establish.

Professor Robert K. Whitford of Knox College in Illinois also laid out extensive details about what he believed should be included in dormitories to assist freshmen. For

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80 Richardson, “A Study of the Liberal College,” 214.

81 Whitford provided a statement in support of having Juniors and Seniors involved in Freshmen lives through dormitories: “Juniors and seniors resident in this building should be in the proportion of not more than one upper-classman to ten freshmen, and they should have authority and responsibility for the preservation of order and decorum.” Whitford, Robert K. “A Freshman Program for a Middle Western College of Liberal Arts.” Christian Education 12, no. 4 (January 1929): 211.

him, the focus should be on providing an atmosphere “conducive to serious attention to academic work… should be conducive to serious attention to academic work. The men should live in a cheery, quiet dormitory in which are combined the advantages of an exclusive club, a monastery, and a jail… Even evening study hours should be a part of the routine, and the freshmen should be encouraged to follow pretty closely a detailed schedule of their daily activities.”

Lowell’s work in establishing the freshman-only dormitories was later seen as the conceptual foundation of student affairs work in higher education, bolstered by his acknowledgement of the importance of learning outside of the classroom:

since one third of any college education he attributed to life beyond the classroom, what mattered most was the atmosphere and traditions in which a youth was immersed upon his arrival there.

Dormitories were also seen as a way to create a moral community, which was important during a time of “moral reform.” It was believed that they could lessen the pressure on faculty to provide moral guidance in a time when faculty were focusing more on their disciplines.” And the faculty leaders in freshmen residential communities could

83 Robert K. Whitford, “A Freshman Program for a Middle Western College of Liberal Arts,” Christian Education 12, no. 4 (January 1929): 211. Whitford also noted that freshmen women might receive their own building or “one wing or one floor of a large dormitory for women.”

84 Smith, The Harvard Century, 74.

work with freshmen in multiple ways. Castle’s ideal for the dormitories included having the proctors (hall directors) also serve as the instructors for freshman courses.\(^{86}\) Such courses grew in frequency along side the growth of the dormitories.

A.L. Lowell and Harvard University proposed freshman housing as a means of acclimating freshman to their new university. The outline of the plans in Lowell’s 1909 inaugural address spurred others, such as Williams College and Knox College to also consider this form of structural support for freshmen, providing for a built-in community of peers and prevented the feeling of being lost among the upper-classman.

Freshman Week

The structural provisions of deans, advisors, and facilities for freshmen were accompanied by programmatic supports. These took the form of Freshman Week discussed here, and orientation courses which will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

According to James Conelese Miller’s dissertation in 1930, the University of Maine was the first to hold an official Freshman Week in 1923.\(^{87}\) A 1926 article states

\(^{86}\) Castle, “The College and the Freshman,” 554.

\(^{87}\) Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen,” 37. This is also mentioned in another publication: “The plan of a freshman week was first inaugurated at the University of Maine about five years ago.” Seashore, Carl, E. \textit{Learning And Living in College}. Vol. 2. Series on Aims and Progress of Research 1. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa, 1927.
that the first was in 1922, and Earnest Hatch Wilkins, Dean of the Colleges of Arts, Literature and Sciences at the University of Chicago stated in a 1924 article that “This idea is not novel. Several colleges have been doing something along this line for a number of years.” Regardless of when the first freshman week was offered, recommendations for a more formal orientation to higher education were made as early as 1919 when the National Education Association published an article proposing that the first few days of college life should “be something more than a mere distraction to prevent boredom and homesickness,” and therefore should present the “idea and ideals of college.”

If the first Freshman Week was indeed held in 1922, it gained traction quickly. An article published in *School and Society* in 1924 stated “Plainly the idea is a good one—so good that it is hard to understand why it was not thought of before.” Further, it describes the program as mutually beneficial to college and student, providing an opportunity for the college “to look over its prospects.” Wilkins, described the four purposes for beginning a freshman week there in 1924, designed by faculty and student organizations: “to complete before the opening of college all matters connected with the


90 F.L. Nardin, “How May Freshmen Be More Easily and Quickly Adjusted to College Life?,” 1919, 419.

91 The Quadwrangler, “College Orientation Programs,” *School and Society* 20, no. 510 (October 4, 1924): 443.

92 The Quadwrangler, “College Orientation Programs,” 443.
routine of entrance and registration for courses; to give the Freshmen sound advice on the major problems of college life and specific advice and direction as to many immediate problems and requirements; to give them a chance to get settled and to get acquainted with the University as a whole; and to give them a genuine welcome into the college community.”

Harvard began it’s Freshman Week in 1925 in an effort to provide “advice and information” before the “rush of the opening week.” Arthur Klein Jr. provided his summary of the expanse and purpose of Freshman Week in his 1926 article in *School Life*:

Several institutions, following the lead of the University of Maine, the University of Rochester, and the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, which are pioneers in the movement, have adopted the device known as 'freshman week' in order to deal systematically with the condition described. The purpose is to acquaint the new student with the aims, opportunities, and customs of the institution and to secure information, by means of psychological or other tests, which will aid in more careful personal educational service during the freshman year and thereafter. The plan is so simple, results obtained so excellent, and the possibilities for further development so obvious that general adoption of the

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93 Wilkins, “Freshman Week at the University of Chicago,” 746–47.

device of freshman week may be looked for among institutions which are seriously trying to meet their educational and social problems.\textsuperscript{95}

The University of Southern California also implemented a Freshman Week beginning in 1925. In recognition that registration days did not contain enough information about college life to induct freshmen into college work, the institution included psychological tests and orientation classes.\textsuperscript{96} Wesleyan University instituted their three-day Freshman Week in 1926 in order to “mitigate such potential distractions as dancing, drinking, and fraternities.”\textsuperscript{97}

Design of the Freshman Week varied greatly. Carl E. Seashore, professor of Music Education and Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Iowa, set about describing the ideal design and benefits of Freshman Week in a 1927 article entitled “Learning and Living in College”:

At the present time it will seem natural to divide the week into two periods: the first three days for orientation exercise and registration; and the next three days for the taking of placement examinations. There are two ways of looking at the features which should enter into the program of the first half of the week. On


\textsuperscript{96} Frank C. Touton, “Report on Certain Phases of the Educational Guidance Program Now in Use at the University of Southern California,” \textit{The Phi Delta Kappan} 8, no. 6 (June 1926): 24.

\textsuperscript{97} David B. Potts, \textit{Wesleyan University, 1910-1970: Academic Ambition and Middle-Class America} (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 117.
facilities of the campus, such as room, boarding place, laboratories, libraries; and
the various services of the institution, such as health service, opportunity for self-
help, assemblies, churches, lectures, contests, prizes, and facilities for exercise,
recreation, devotion, and amusement.\(^98\)

The goal of such events should include making “the student feel at home and at ease on
the campus… It will eliminate the effervescent boisterousness of the traditional opening
jam and head off fear and homesickness.”\(^99\)

Professor Whitford believed that Freshman “Week” actually only required two
days and should include a series of speeches covering topics such as “How to Study,”
"How to Use the Library" "How to Take Notes," and "Budgeting Time and Money."
Students would also have time during the two days to take a tour of campus, speak
informally with faculty, and to “begin to feel ‘at home’ in the academic environment.”
The focus of the days, while primarily about the freshmen, would also allow time for the
institution’s faculty and leadership to begin to learn about the individual students as
well.\(^100\)

Throughout the mid to late 1920s, a number of news articles were published
announcing the Freshman Week activities happening at local institutions. Publications

\(^{98}\) Carl Seashore E., Learning And Living in College, vol. 2, Series on Aims and Progress of
Research 1 (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa, 1927), 49.

\(^{99}\) Seashore, Learning And Living in College, 2:50.

\(^{100}\) Whitford, “A Freshman Program for a Middle Western College of Liberal Arts,” 209–10.
like School and Society, The School Review, and the Journal of Higher Education. Often these were simple, short articles that described the main speakers and schedule for the week. The proliferation of these articles demonstrates the overall growth and acceptance of the programs.\textsuperscript{101} William Mather Lewis’s New York Times article on The Need for Orientation provided the justification for such programs to the public. During his time as President of Lafayette College, he wrote:

This situation has lately been recognized in the field of elementary and secondary education, with the resultant creation of the junior high school, and now attention is being directed to the unbridged gap between secondary school and college. Success in life depends upon the ability of an individual to adjust himself to conditions. No more vital contribution to effective living can be made by our educational institutions than by stimulating the power of adjustment. The appalling amount of business failure and of industrial unrest is in no small measure due to our persistence in placing the square peg in the round hole. The answer of the college to this problem is to be found in the field of orientation.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{101} Examples of these include: “1200 G. W. Freshman Are to Be Started Off on the Right Foot.” The Washington Post, September 13, 1925; “Adjusting Students to Their Environment.” The School Review 34, no. 7 (September 1926): 482–84. “Redlands College Opens.” Los Angeles Times, September 20, 1927; “Freshman Week at the University of Wisconsin.” School and Society 26, no. 678 (December 24, 1927); “Freshmen Week Opens at Washington College.” The Washington Post, September 21, 1928; as well as others discussed in more detail in this chapter.

Further evidence of such growth may be found in a short questionnaire regarding Freshman Week, distributed in July 1926 by George D. Stoddard, professor of psychology at the University of Iowa. Through it, he discovered that twenty-seven universities had already started a Freshman Week, and twenty-one had set a date to begin one. In total, 72 percent of respondents had or were planning to have a Freshman Week.¹⁰³ Other studies of Freshman Week were conducted around this time as well. H.M. Ellis conducted a survey regarding the student experience at the University of Maine’s Freshman Week provided evidence that students felt the program had helped them be more successful in college.¹⁰⁴ The growth of research on the programs by Ho, Jones, Miller, Doerman, and Knode provides evidence of the impact such programs were having on institutions. Even President Rightmire of Ohio State University published the results of a three-year study the institution completed on the effects of their experimental Freshman Week.¹⁰⁵

As the recognition that organized efforts must be made in order to solve various institutional problems spread in the 1910s and 1920s, administrative structures were developed in higher education institutions across the country. Deans and faculty were assigned the role of advisor to provide personal guidance to students. Harvard University


¹⁰⁴ H.M. Ellis, “Freshman Week at the University of Maine,” School and Society 24, no. 604 (July 24, 1926): 110–11.

developed special housing for the freshman class, aiding in the process of adjusting students to the institution by providing an instant peer group and oversight of faculty and upper-class role models. And Freshman Week programs were developed in order to provide structure in the days prior to the start of the academic year. Raymond D. Bennett, the Secretary of the College of Education at Ohio State University, summarized the efforts there in 1928: “The provision of more adequate facilities for the guidance of freshmen students is one of the important problems in university administration. This, together with closer attention to instructional methods for first-year students, will help to reduce the percent of failure among Freshmen in our colleges and will enable them, in many cases, to avoid making unsatisfactory initial records in scholarship.”

Institution leadership was publicly documenting their efforts to assist students and improve the educational experience.

It may be seen to have been a relatively slow start regarding the development of targeted freshman programming, beginning with Harvard’s Board of Freshman Advisors in 1889. However, programs and structures focusing on freshmen proliferated quickly through the 1910s and 1920s to the point that they became the subject of research studies. In addition to the services discussed in this chapter, freshman seminars and orientation courses were also being adopted across the country. Due to the breadth of offerings and varying aims of those courses, they will be discussed at length in chapter five.

Chapter 5. Freshman Seminars and Orientation Courses

As stated in chapter three, the use of orientation courses grew in the 1910s and 20s alongside the development of dormitories, deans and faculty advisors, and Freshman Week. This chapter will present the documented history of freshman seminar and orientation courses; present various names and contemporary attempts to categorize for freshman orientation courses during the 1910s and 1920s. Then, three categories of orientation courses will be presented by consolidating the various, wide-ranging contemporary types: surveys of academic knowledge; critical thinking and academic skills; and orientation to the curriculum and academic life.

Throughout the contemporary literature, it appears that Boston University offered the first orientation course for freshman in 1888, well in advance of most of these structures presented in chapter three. Through a communication with Dean Warren of Boston University,

In her 1996 book The Making of the Modern University, Julie Reuben provided a brief paragraph about the types of orientation courses that were developing during this period. Referencing only Wilkin’s 1922 Report of Committee G in the Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors, she stated that “most aimed ‘to give the student stimulating and intellectual interest in the main human problems of the present’ and to provide ‘an introductory survey of a considerable portion of the field of collegiate study.’ This reflected university reformers’ view that evolutionary science furnished a basis for integrating knowledge and offered moral guidance. Another common aim of these courses was to teach students scientific methods, thereby instilling in them the values of the scientific investigator.” Reuben, Julie A. The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1996, 163. Wilkins, Ernest H. “Initiatory Courses for Freshmen. Report by Committee G.” The Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors, 1922.
Boston University in the mid 1920s, Fitts and Swift learned that the course, while not strictly an orientation course in the format that they were to become, did have as a goal to assist students in acclimating to college life. While many publications continue to cite this as the first orientation course, Fitts and Swift were cautious in labeling courses prior to 1917 as official orientation courses. Courses prior to that time were experimental, and as such, had few boundaries in their design to provide a clear label.

The first documented for-credit orientation course was in 1911 at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. The College Life Course was a required course that aimed at helping freshmen “adjust to college life and study.” This is noteworthy because it was a west-coast institution and not one of the east-coast ivies that had typically led the way, providing evidence that the focus on freshmen was a nation-wide shift. At the Fortieth Annual Convention of Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities, Raymond G. Bressler, Vice-Dean of the School of Agriculture at Pennsylvania State College presented a paper in which he argued that “the orientation course, reasonably so, has, as its main objective, the guardianship over the freshmen through-out the first semester particularly.


109 Fitts and Swift, The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen, 154.

110 Fitts and Swift, The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen, 185.
The method by which this is done and the subject matter used in order to accomplish this purpose varies widely.\textsuperscript{111}

There does not appear to have been much debate about whether or not to offer freshman orientation courses for credit. It has already been stated that Reed College offered the first documented for-credit course in 1911. Oberlin College’s course in 1916 was required but non-credit bearing.\textsuperscript{112} The University of Southern California began a one-credit course in 1926.\textsuperscript{113} Hudson concluded in his 1929 article with:

Two hours per week seemed to be the maximum amount of time that all freshmen could be required to devote to the survey course. As the course was to be given without credit, it was decided not give any grades on the work done. Without doubt the survey course is more valuable where it can be given as a four-or five-hour course with daily preparation and final examinations and with regular credit.\textsuperscript{114}

Fitts and Swift provided extensive data on courses for credit in their 1928 report. They noted that some institutions started with non-credit courses “that were rudimentary


\textsuperscript{113} Touton, “Report on Certain Phases of the Educational Guidance Program Now in Use at the University of Southern California,” 24.

forms of the later orientation courses for which college credit was given." Their data showed that eleven institutions offered seminars prior to World War I, ten of which were for-credit. 41 institutions had seminars by 1922, and by the 1925-1926 academic year, their data indicate that 79 institutions had credit bearing orientation courses, with an additional 23 non-credit for a total of 102 institutions offering orientation courses.

Contemporary Attempts to Name and Categorize Courses

Names for orientation courses varied greatly and were used interchangeably; most often they were referred to as “orientation” or “survey” courses. Lester D. Crow, an Educational Psychologist, described them in a 1929 article: “Survey courses which cover large fields of information and which have for their purpose educational orientation are being used by many colleges. These courses are being given under many names and are more prevalent in the social-science group than in any other group. In any event they are helping the student to find himself.”

Data at the time was inconsistent, however, as evidenced by a statement Professor Heald of Rutgers University made at the 1929 American Historical Society annual meeting, in which he “emphasized the great variety

of such courses now existing but pointed out that at least sixty percent of them were under the direction of teachers of history.  

Publications between 1922 and 1930 attempted to categorize freshman seminars and orientation courses. Committee G of the American Association of University Professors published a report of what specific institutions were doing in 1922, but the types described included a survey of the field (or discipline), training in thinking, and the nature of the world of man.  

In 1924, Leon B. Richardson published a book entitled *A Study of the Liberal College* in which he devoted a chapter, “Special Treatment of Freshmen,” to services provided to freshmen. In it, he provided descriptions of three types of courses: how to think, how to study, and a survey of the field. Philip L. Harriman, Professor of Psychology at the North Carolina College for Women, chose three categories to summarize course types in 1925: subject matter, reflective thinking, and how to study.  

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119 A summary of Professor Heald’s presentation was published in: Dexter Perkins, “The Meeting of the American Historical Association at Indianapolis,” *The American Historical Review* 34, no. 3 (April 1929): 459. Additionally, a social scientist presented data from a survey in 1926 that highlighted the prominence in social sciences: “The largest number, thirteen, report that the purpose of their course is to arouse interest in citizenship; seven wish to introduce students to contemporary civilization; three to pave the way for the study of advanced courses in the social science field; and three to introduce students to the liberal arts curriculum, or to the whole field of human knowledge and experience.” Mosher, William E. “Orientation Courses.” *The American Political Science Review* 20, no. 2 (May 1926): 410–12.  


121 Richardson, “A Study of the Liberal College.”
effectively. He noted that many institutions were using John Dewey’s *How We Think* as the foundation for the “thinking” courses.\(^{122}\)

In 1926 William E. Mosher’s 1926 publication in the *American Political Science Review* showed a bias of data for social sciences. This is understandable given his position as the inaugural dean for Syracuse University’s College of Public Administration. He provided four categories: citizenship, contemporary civilization, preparation for advanced study in the field, and introduction to liberal arts curriculum.\(^{123}\) This was the same year that Henry J. Doermann published his dissertation that aimed to define and explain the growth of orientation courses. He chose to provide objectives for the courses rather than categories, noting that the courses he examined “have one or more of the following objectives.

1. To enable the student to understand the college curriculum.
2. To give a survey of significant fields of knowledge.
3. To enable the student to understand and make better adjustments to college life.
4. To enable the student to understand present-day problems.
5. To train the student in thinking.
6. To teach how to study.
7. To orient the student with respect to a career.”\(^{124}\)


W.G. Clippinger, President of Otterbein University, gave much more general categorization to these courses in 1928, referring to them as “social orientation,” which “has to do briefly with the life of the student in his four years in college,” and “literacy and scientific orientation,” which “aims to relate him to the larger social order and to the physical universe.”\(^\text{125}\)

The most often-cited study of orientation courses is *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen* by Charles Tabor Fitts and Fletcher Harper Swift and published in 1928. Their extensive study led them to place orientation courses into three “aims” based upon a survey of institutions across the country: 1. “to help the entering student to make adequate adjustments to the new mental and social environment of college life;” 2. “stresses the methodology of thinking,” including attention to how to study; and 3. “to orient the student socially and intellectually. Such courses focus attention upon social problems, duties, and relationships together with a survey of the most outstanding contribution offered by certain major fields of knowledge.”\(^\text{126}\)

Considering all of these publications and their authors’ attempts to summarize the types of courses that existed in the 1910s and 1920s, the following types of seminars and orientation courses will be explored more fully in this chapter: surveys of academic


knowledge; critical thinking and academic skills; and orientation to the curriculum and academic life.

Surveys of Academic Knowledge

Surveys of academic knowledge are common in today’s general education programs. Their beginning, however, was not without debate. As discussed in chapter one, in the late 1800s the spreading elective system left some faculty and administrators feeling that the student experience was disjointed and did not provide a common foundation of knowledge for students. The development of foundational courses grew to counter that feeling of disjointedness.

In 1908 Abraham Flexner, a Johns Hopkins University graduate and founder of an alternative preparatory school in Kentucky, was quite critical of the development of foundational courses when he insinuated that the practice “practically continues the required portion of the preparatory school routine.”127 The following year, a University of Chicago Professor, L.C. Marshall, however, countered this critique. He argued that it was important to show students “the whole machine before they make an intensive study of any of the parts.”128 And Alexander Meiklejohn, President of Amherst College, believed that these courses could “provide a common intellectual experience to aid those freshmen

127 Flexner, The American College: A Criticism, 140–141. Flexner was critical of many components of both secondary and higher education, but this book provided text particularly critical of focusing on freshmen, which he perceived to be an overlap with the work that preparatory schools should be doing. More information on his views will be provided in Chapter 6.

who came to college from the less rigorous public high schools.” Additionally, Meiklejohn wanted to create a sense of solidarity within the entering class before the pull of fraternities, extra-curricular activities, and even “course specialization” (majors) pulled them into subgroups. To that end, he established a course called Social and Economic Institutions in 1914.

The role of such courses also had a political agenda during World War I. Frank Aydelotte, Director of the War Issues Course for the War Department’s Committee on Education and Special Training, led a committee in 1918 that developed the War Issues Course, taught at institutions across the country. Designed to be a liberal study, the focus was on the historical facts, including political and economic conditions, of the causes of the war and the “social philosophy of the warring nations.”

According to Arthur J. Klein, professor of Education at Ohio State University, “the orientation course is intended to orient him in the fields of knowledge which are spread before him in the college curricula. The orientation course is intended to unify the material of the curriculum.”

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described such courses as a shift from studying “partial aspects of these fields” to one in which the student was exposed to “large subject fields.” In other words, rather than first-year courses diving in more deeply but covering fewer topics within a discipline, students were given a broad overview of the many aspects of the discipline.\textsuperscript{133}

Like the War Issues course, most of the initial survey courses were thematic. Columbia College had a course in Contemporary Civilization, which Robert Kelly believed resulted in students pursuing the disciplines included that had previously been experienced with the elective system. Kelly posited that these courses had three purposes:

they give the student an introductory and general view of a field of knowledge; they allow him to put to a severer test than he has had before the interests, if any, with which he came to college; they consciously or unconsciously suggest to him methods of synthesizing his knowledge during the process of achieving it.\textsuperscript{134}

Robert K. Whitford, professor at Knox College in Illinois, proposed a course entitled “the Modern World,” similar to Columbia College’s Contemporary Civilization as a core component of their freshman program, and focusing on the “social and economic history of the Occident in the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth…The


\textsuperscript{134} Robert Lincoln Kelly, \textit{The Effective College} (Association of American Colleges, 1928), 55–56.
leaders of these discussion groups should be instructors who have had special training in the fields of literature and the social sciences.”

By the end of the 1920s, data about the offering of freshman courses, including definitions about these varying types of courses, became more readily available. Adam Leroy Jones, discussing data collected as part of a study conducted by the Commission on Personnel Technique of the Association of American Colleges 1928, demonstrated the dramatic growth in offerings of survey courses. Sixty-six out of 281 institutions indicated they had survey courses, “and several others indicated that they had such courses under consideration or were expecting to give them in the near future”. Only two institutions indicated that they had offered survey courses but discontinued them. This is contrasted with the Fitts and Swift research of 1928 which found that thirty-three of the 102 institutions surveyed had courses that may be categorized as academic surveys. Miller’s 1930 study found that “24 of the 50 institutions, or 48 percent, offer one or more survey courses.”

In 1930, William Bennett Munro, professor of Government at Harvard University, published a Committee on Policy of the American Political Science Association study of “introductory” courses in political science departments at more than 200 institutions. While the largest number in the study, 123, indicated that their introductory courses

135 Whitford, “A Freshman Program for a Middle Western College of Liberal Arts,” 212–213.


137 Fitts and Swift, The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen, 207.

138 Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen,” 60.
focused on American government, thirty-five indicated that they offered a course that “is devoted to ‘General Problems of Government,’ without restriction of geographical field, but with special emphasis upon American problems.” Additionally, 24 institutions had a course on citizenship, and 17 focused on the social sciences more generally.  

Surveys of academic knowledge ranged from thematic courses that introduced concepts from multiple disciplines to discipline-specific courses designed to provide basic level information about the discipline and expose students to the breadth of knowledge within the field. While the data provided during the 1920s regarding the prevalence of academic survey courses varies greatly, it demonstrates the widespread acceptance of such courses as a method of adjusting freshmen to higher education thinking.

Critical Thinking and Academic Skills

Orientation courses, in addition to providing a survey of fields or foundational knowledge in content, were also used “to teach their students how to think, and indeed how to use all the tools of learning.” There was a movement that started in the natural and social sciences that aimed to promote and develop what we now call critical thinking

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139 William Bennett Munro, “Report of the Committee on Policy of the American Political Science Association,” *The American Political Science Review* 24, no. 1 (February 1930): 60. This report was published two years after he published a scathing article against orientation courses in 1928 entitled “Quack-Doctoring the College.” His critique will be presented in Chapter 6 with other criticisms of the focus on freshmen.

and academic skills. This was done through the teaching of scientific methods. Fitts and Swift described these courses as stressing “the methodology of thinking… courses which concentrate attention upon the methods of thinking and of study.” President Meikeljohn of Amherst reported the development of a course that would “serve as an introduction to the humanistic science…” The course had five listed aims, two of which were “to teach freshmen to use the library, read newspapers and magazines, make reports and carry on discussions of live topics and issues” and “teach them to think, if possible.”

And Johns Hopkins University formed a committee to plan its own course. The committee described it as follows:

At the critical period in mental development which is marked by the beginning of college life the all-important thing is that the student should, if possible, be acquiring sound habits of intellectual procedure—habits of definiteness in ideas and accuracy in statement, a sense of the difference between the plausible and the proved, and appreciation of the contrast between the patient, critical and circumspect methods of genuine science and the casual observation and hasty generalization of the untrained mind.

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141 Fitts and Swift, *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen*, 182.

142 Fitts and Swift, *The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen*, 159.

In 1922, the American Association of University Professors’ Committee G looked into the idea of initiatory courses and submitted a report that included a statement of belief in the importance of training students to think and recommends that institutions provide a course to do so.¹⁴⁴

These findings were published in an article in School and Society in December of 1922, which noted that twelve such courses were discussed in the report. More importantly, the article stated the explicit recommendation “that a course in ‘Thinking’ be given in the freshman year, together with a course on ‘The nature of the world and of man,’ both courses to be required of all freshmen.”¹⁴⁵ The report also noted that there were fourteen institutions providing such courses: Amherst College, Antioch College, Brown University, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Johns Hopkins University, Leland Stanford University, the University of Missouri, New Hampshire State College, the University of Pittsburgh, Princeton University, Reed College, Rutgers College, and Williams College.¹⁴⁶

Although not included in the list provided by Committee G, Klein, at Ohio State University, also noted that the orientation course was “intended to train the student to think and to introduce him to a general survey of the nature of the world and of man.”¹⁴⁷


¹⁴⁵ “Special Courses for Freshmen,” School and Society 16 (December 2, 1922): 633–34. Institutions with courses listed were: Amherst, Antioch, Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, Johns Hopkins, Leland, Stanford, Missouri, Princeton, Rutgers and Williams.


¹⁴⁷ Klein, “Higher Education,” 212.
Harriman’s institution used applied psychology to structure the course, focusing on motivation for study as a foundation for training study methods and “cultivating his powers of independent, logical thought.”

And, in addition to four-year institutions, Professor Stowe of Randolph-Macon Woman's College noted the importance of helping students of junior colleges to gain a “higher intellectual level than attained by the elementary-school graduate.” This aim, he said, implied the need for orientation courses.

Perhaps C. D. Bohannon, Vice Dean of the College of Agriculture at New Mexico State College in 1928 stated the need for orientation courses focusing on academic skills most clearly:

Certainly, if we are sincere in our statements to freshmen that one of the most important things they can learn in college is how to study it would seem that we should our selves sufficiently recognize the importance of this to give them such special training as we may through such a course.

In 1929, Professor H. Gary Hudson of Blackburn College supported this notion of the foundational skills needed. He noted in his article “An Experiment in a Freshman Survey

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148 Harriman, “The Orientation of College Freshmen,” 159.


Course” that part of teaching students to think included basic information on methods of study, particularly “in note-taking and comprehension of lectures, so fundamental to successful college work.” Even Nursing colleges were embracing the use of orientation courses focusing on study methods. Carrie A. Benham, Instructor of Surgical Nursing at the University of Cincinnati published an article in the Journal of Nursing in 1930 that described the content of their orientation course: “wherein they are given definite schemes for planning their study periods, taught economical use of textbooks, reference libraries, and so on.” In her observation, students who had struggled in their first semester without taking the course “often show marked improvement after doing so.”

According to Fitts and Swift, fifteen institutions identified their orientation course as focusing on study methods. They noted that it was possible that many other institutions also incorporate “how to study” into their orientation courses, but that it may not have been the primary aim of the course. And at least three of the fifteen institutions indicated that they used science and social science content to provide the materials for the course.

Orientation to Curriculum and Academic Life


152 Carrie A. Benham, “Teaching Preliminary Students How to Study,” The American Journal of Nursing 30, no. 9 (September 1930): 1133.

153 Fitts and Swift, The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen, 193.
Institutions came to realize that it was not just the content and the academic thinking that needed to be addressed during the freshmen year. Students needed assistance in understanding the structure of the institution, how to navigate it, and to understand their place within it. Such ideas have been found as early as 1912 in publications discussing courses aiming to adjust students to academic life. The Carnegie Foundation urged the creation of such courses.

The University of Washington took this to heart and created a course with three six-week sessions. The first set was “devoted to a presentation by leaders and thinkers and doers in the world of action of the general, subject of the vocational opportunities and social demands of our times, the responsibilities that men and women will meet and measure themselves against in the modern world.” The second section was a series of presentations about the different departments, academic and administrative, within the institution. Finally, students heard a series of talks, also referred to as lectures, which included methods of study and “deans of the general university activities and their relationship to the intellectual life of the university.”

The lecture series format was a popular one in the early years of orientation seminars. Brown University’s series was described simply as “a series of lectures or talks about the college…to help the new students to adjust or orient themselves so that their four years of college may be both enjoyable and permanently satisfactory.” These lectures were “on hygiene, on how to study, on certain matters in regard to the routine of

154 Hart, “Helping the Freshman to Find Himself.”

college work, and so on.”\textsuperscript{156} A 1915 article in \textit{The Nation} noted that Brown University’s announcement of a one-hour orientation course “is possibly only in line with the action adopted by certain other Eastern universities in recent years.\textsuperscript{157}

The idea of the lecture series appears to have spread substantially by 1924, when an article in \textit{The School Review} refers to the concept of initiatory courses as a given.\textsuperscript{158} John Merriman Gaus, a founding father of the field of Public Administration, saw the trend and noted “Perhaps it is a delusion to see any significance in the development of initiatory courses for freshmen during the past ten years. Nevertheless they are here, and there is good evidence that they will increase in numbers.”\textsuperscript{159} In assessing their value, he stated:

I believe the first result is that these courses give significance and meaning to the curriculum of the college and university. It is important for those of us who have been engaged in college teaching to try to appreciate how planless and inchoate it all seems to the entering student…The initiatory courses can honestly claim to have given some significance to the various


\textsuperscript{157} “Scientific Management of Freshmen,” 501.

\textsuperscript{158} “Orientation courses for new students are now common in colleges and high schools.” “Adjusting Students to Their Environment.” \textit{The School Review} 34, no. 7 (September 1926): 482–84.

\textsuperscript{159} Gaus, “Initiatory Courses for College Freshmen,” 640.
departments and courses within the departments to the freshmen who have come and have hitherto been bewildered by the sheer variety of studies.\footnote{Gaus, “Initiatory Courses for College Freshmen,” 642.}

Gaus’s prediction of the growth of seminars may be said to be accurate by 1928, when addresses were making it into daily newspaper articles, such as one entitled “Freshmen to Hear Butler” in the \textit{New York Times}. Such articles typically announced that the president of an institution would be giving an address to freshmen as part of an orientation course.\footnote{Another example is Columbia University’s president Nicholas Murray Butler gave a required address to freshman that outlined the new required course and the “aims and purposes of education at Columbia.” “Freshmen to Hear Butler,” \textit{New York Times}, October 2, 1928.}

President Nicholas Murray Butler will address Columbia University students for the third time this year at an assembly to be held in McMillin Academic Theatre at 1 o’clock this afternoon. Although the meeting is to be held for the university at large, Dr. Butler’s talk will be delivered primarily for freshmen who will attend the exercise as the opening session of a required orientation course…All freshmen will be required to attend the assembly today and the subsequent weekly lectures of the orientation course, under a new ruling…Dr. Butler’s address today will introduce the freshmen and other new students to the aims and purposes of education at Columbia and will outline the features of the new course.\footnote{“Freshmen to Hear Butler,” \textit{New York Times}, October 2, 1928.}
Courses such as the one at Brown often had a combination of purposes. The orientation to academic life would often be combined with lectures aiming to assist freshmen in adapting to their new environment, or “college life.” These lectures were given by faculty and administrators with themes related to introductions to academic disciplines and administrative structures.\(^{163}\)

Regardless of structure, the goals for courses that focused on orientation to academic life were becoming clear by 1928. Burton Confrey’s article in the Catholic magazine *America* told the public:

> The usual objective of introductory courses for the newcomer on college level is to enable him to make the proper adjustment to his new life – he must pass his courses, become oriented to his new environment and to his inheritance in the world as a whole, and comprehend clearly the requirements of his university career in its entirety.\(^{164}\)

Fitts and Swift provided data that showed that the goal of orienting students to “college life” was the most common in their data. Forty-three of seventy-nine institutions responding to that portion of their survey indicated this was the aim of their course. Combined with the aim they classified as “to survey the entire field of collegiate study,”

\(^{163}\) Ho, “How Freshmen Find Themselves (or Don’t),” 29.

\(^{164}\) Burton Confrey, “The Orientation of College Freshmen,” *America*, October 6, 1928, 615.
or orientation to the institution’s curriculum, sixty-two percent of responding institutions may be placed into the category of orientation to the curriculum and academic life.

The development of Freshman Orientation and Seminar Courses happened quickly given the long history of American Higher Education. Data provided by Fitts and Swift illustrates this clearly. At the end of World War I, institutions in eight states were reported to have orientation courses. Five short years later, that number exploded to thirty-two of the forty-eight states, showing a clear acceptance across the country.\textsuperscript{165} The Committee G of the American Association of University Professors had concluded that teaching the student to think and providing “a sound general conception of the nature of the world and of man” should be prioritized.\textsuperscript{166}

In the conclusion of his 1930 thesis on the induction of college freshmen, Miller determined that orientation courses, which is in the category of Curriculum and Academic Life in this chapter, “does not give promise of increased popularity and use as an adapting device. It has failed to receive general adoption.” He did, however, conclude that surveys of academic fields were “in better favor.” These conclusions are interesting in light of the fact that, almost 90 years later, both types of courses are widely offered in American institutions today.

The development and adoption of freshman seminar and orientation courses happened rapidly in the 1910s and 1920s. Reed College’s course was the first

\textsuperscript{165} Fitts and Swift, \textit{The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen}, 179.

\textsuperscript{166} Ernest H. Wilkins, “Initiatory Courses for Freshmen. Report by Committee G,” \textit{Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors} 8, no. 6 (October 1922): 376.
documented for-credit course in 1911. But by 1926 there were 102 reported for-credit and non-credit freshman seminar and orientation courses. These courses have been categorized into surveys of academic knowledge; critical thinking and academic skills; and orientation to the curriculum and academic life. Whether focusing on the mechanics of navigating the institution, or orienting students to academic life, the freshman course quickly became an accepted way to assist freshmen in the transition from high school to college.
Chapter 6. “Adequate Protection” for First-Year Students: Criticisms, Justifications for and Forces Contributing to New Focus on Freshmen

In current higher education practice, the need to have a robust first-year experience program is undisputed. Students attend summer orientation before the academic year starts, and student affairs offices ensure there is a variety of programming available when students move to campus prior to classes starting. A national survey of institutions conducted in 2012 found that 804 institutions of the 896 respondents offer first-year seminars to help students understand their institution and adjust to academic life. Yet why did this become an accepted practice? Given that there were higher education leaders who objected to the new first-year programs, what were the justifications and forces that overcame these objections?

This chapter will begin with criticisms and reservations of the spreading idea of attending to freshmen that were published in the 1910s and 1920s. Then, the three primary justifications--the reasons provided by educators for the programs that were delivered at the time--will be presented and examined. First, developments in the field of psychology which had just developed the concept of the adolescent, led institutions to

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167 The term “adequate protection” was presented by Harvard’s Assistant Dean. Castle, “The College and the Freshman,” 548.

168 “2012-2013 National Survey of First-Year Seminars Executive Summary.”
recognize that freshmen needed help in transitioning from the close supervision of high school to the freedom of higher education. Second, the adoption of electivism made it necessary for institutions to make clear the educational objectives of higher education for freshmen. And third, institutions sought to stimulate the intellectual interests of new students, resulting in the development of freshman seminar courses.

Finally, three overarching forces, social and institutional conditions or changes that were a driver in the development of freshman program, will be discussed. First, there was a need to address the widespread concern about the failure rate, or “student mortality” and the associated waste of resources by individuals, institutions, and the public. Second, President Lowell and Harvard University had an influence on higher education, leading the way in curricular and structural evolutions. And third, the period experienced the growth of student affairs as a separate administrative organization.

Criticisms and Reservations Regarding Programs for Freshmen

The rise of Freshman programs was not without its critics. James Miller recognized this in his 1930 dissertation on the effectiveness of freshman programs. He stated, “Its proponents are now being called on to validate its claims to justify its place in the college and university program.”\(^{169}\) Miller’s call for validating the claims institutions used to defend freshman programs was, itself, justified. In the twenty years since Lowell

\(^{169}\) Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen,” 49.
proposed freshman dormitories as a means of enculturing students, there had been few publications providing rationales for the idea that freshmen were in need of special care, leaving the idea open to criticism.

One early argument against such programs was presented in an editorial in *Science* magazine in 1909 that argued against Lowell’s proposal to house freshmen separately. Perry argued that such segregation “would inevitably gain something of social unity and identity. But would the gain be worth the cost to the college and to the individual?...The most natural way to teach freshmen that they are not of so much importance to others as to themselves is to submerge them in a community of older college men.”

Also, Abraham Flexner, a leader in experimental high school education, had spoken out as early as 1908 against the growing idea of a required “Freshman course” as a method of transitioning students to the elective system. In his book *The American College, A Criticism*, he stated that, while he felt that the students lacked “seriousness or the knowledge require[d] to put together a course of study which will in these days best serve as introduction to his vocation,” he also believed that using a course to assist with the development of them was not warranted.

An effort has been made to meet this difficulty by means of a required Freshman course, which practically continues the required portion of the

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171 Flexner, *The American College; A Criticism*, 125.
preparatory school routine. This procedure is supposed to contribute once and for all ‘breadth of culture’ to the college course; and it is held to be additionally recommended by the fact that a ‘broad basis’ is calculated to ensure the success of whatever personal superstructure is erected upon it, in the course of the three years following. Two objections may be confidently brought against this somewhat confused scheme: in the first place, ‘culture’ thus huddled into a preliminary year takes no root, - a fact made abundantly plain by our college product; in the second, the validity of the interests here in question does not in any degree depend on their serviceableness as a basis for an education in which they are subsequently ignored. They are valid, if at all, as continuous and accompanying considerations from the very first to the very end; and not because they make a solid basis anterior to the really serious business of college education. ‘Culture’ and ‘vocation’ are not to be conceived as consecutive. They go along together, overlapping, playing upon each other, enriching and diversifying life as a whole, increasing its range and volume.\(^{172}\)

In other words, he saw no evidence that institutions could adjust a student to the ways of higher education in one year, much less determine a student’s vocation through a course.

Beyond Flexner’s book, opposition also appeared in editorials printed in national newspapers and magazines. One such editorial in *The Nation* in 1915 entitled “The

\(^{172}\) Flexner, *The American College; A Criticism*, 140–141.
Scientific Management of Freshmen” stated “A compulsory course on any portion of the freshman’s superneeds sounds forbidding,” and argued that, rather than courses for credit that might require examinations and a grade, a simple series “of informal talks by specially qualified persons, ought to be sufficient.” 173 John M. Gaus, even while arguing against such criticisms, contended in 1924 that the critics of freshman courses must be heard. “They are many and vociferous. The fact that they are contradictory in their criticisms will surprise no one who has participated in faculty discussion. These courses, they assert, are superficial…It would be very easy to make these courses superficial, as most courses are at times. We have tried to avoid this, however, in the courses with which I have been familiar…” 174

Additionally, a debate was occurring about who is responsible when a student is unsuccessful: is the responsibility solely on the individual student, or should institutions be doing more to assist students in order to reduce the chance that a student will fail? In 1917, St. Olaf College Professor of Education Professor Julius Borass believed that the fault lies with the colleges.

To let freshmen flounder through the first semester because of troubles that could by taking some thought to eliminate, and then fail them and send them home does not seem just. When a large number of freshmen do not pass, it may be the college that should have a blue slip either for


174 Gaus, “Initiatory Courses for College Freshmen,” 643.
inadequate entrance requirements or for maladjustments which cause failures.\textsuperscript{175}

And yet, ten years later, at least one editorial could be found in a religious magazine called \textit{America} that encouraged institutions to remove students who are not prepared. It stated that “it is important that the freshman be properly oriented…but we cannot help asking why these courses are necessary.” Instead, the author argued for the sink or swim approach to education:

Meanwhile, what can be done for the freshman? The chosen few will not greatly stand in need of our aid...The others should be dismissed in all charity, but as soon as possible...But it seems to us that the college is wasting valuable time and valuable resources in admitting those who do not know why they are there, or who cannot be readily taught the demands of four years at college.\textsuperscript{176}

Perhaps the most scathing critique was one published in \textit{Harper’s Monthly Magazine} in 1928. Entitled “Quack-Doctoring the Colleges,” William Bennet Munro, professor of Government at Harvard University, argued that freshman orientation programs were like an “ointment,” prescribed by institutions to cure the students of their

\textsuperscript{175} Julius Boraas, “Troubles of College Freshmen,” \textit{School and Society} 6, no. 148 (October 27, 1917): 494.

\textsuperscript{176} “Orientation and the Freshman,” \textit{America}, October 1, 1927.
ailments. He argued that institutions understood what the programs intended to do, but that the students did not. Worst of all, he believed that “various institutions which have fallen for this pick-me-up” were deluded and “As a preparation for serious work in college or elsewhere these orientation courses have a value that accountants would express in red ink.”

In summary, critics of special programs for freshman were vocal about their concerns in the first third of the twentieth century. They argued against segregating freshmen from other classes out of concern that it would lead to a class of self-important students. They stated that it was unreasonable to expect that students could be taught the culture of an institution and determine their life’s vocation through coursework taken in a single year, but that these should be developed throughout the entirety of the college experience. Structured courses as an introduction to higher education appeared to be going well beyond what was required, with the author insisting that a simple lecture series was good enough. And finally, they argued that freshman programs were not the magic answer for failing students, but that students should be allowed to “sink or swim” as the responsibility is on the individual to succeed or not.

Justification: "Adolescent" Freshmen Need Guidance

Criticisms in the literature were far overshadowed by justifications for developing programs that focused on freshmen. These justifications may be placed into three

177 William Bennett Munro, “Quack-Doctoring the Colleges,” Harper’s Monthly Magazine, June 1, 1928, 479–480.
categories. First, there was an increased understanding among faculty and institutional leaders due to the development of the concept of adolescence in the field of psychology, that the freshman year was a period of psychological growth, and that institutions needed to help freshmen transition from the close supervision of high school to the freedom of higher education. Second, the adoption of electivism made it necessary for institutions to make clear the educational objectives of higher education for freshmen. And finally, the faculty wanted to stimulate intellectual interests among new students, which resulted in the development of freshman seminar courses. Publications in the 1910s and 1920s countered the criticisms above by questioning the previously held notions of role of higher education and providing justifications of the development of freshman programs for the purposes of aiding in student transition.

Thirty years before the growth of freshman programs really began to take hold, G. Stanley Hall’s work in the development of the concept of adolescence within the field of psychology was published and gained prominence. This work had an influence on how higher education leadership and faculty began to understand their students in the decades immediately following. Hall characterized this period of life as one with a “lack of

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178 G. Stanley Hall was a professor of Psychology at Johns Hopkins from 1881-1887 prior to becoming president of Clark University. He coined the term “adolescence” and his culminating book *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* in 1904 was foundational in the field of psychology. Demos, John, and Virginia Demos. “Adolescence in Historical Perspective.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31, no. 4 (November 1969): 632–38.
emotional steadiness, violent impulses, unreasonable conduct, lack of enthusiasm and sympathy…All is solvent, plastic, peculiarly susceptible to external influences.”

As stated throughout this dissertation, the acknowledgment that a student did not magically mature from a child into an adult during the summer between high school and college was gaining traction. For example, Lockwood, in 1913 stated “The transition from boyhood to manhood involves tremendous changes, both mental and physical. One is no longer quite a boy, yet he is not altogether a man. There is, therefore, more or less confusion within, more or less lack of coordination, and, possibly, a not altogether happy blending of diffidence and self-assertiveness.”

This change in thinking was accompanied by the progressive thought that the individual should not be left to struggle on his own. Community organizations, such as the famous Hull House in Chicago, were forming with the aims of helping struggling families and immigrants. It was becoming more socially acceptable to receive or provide help. The development of the fields within the social sciences (psychology, sociology, and anthropology in particular) promoted a self-awareness among the public, as well as highlighting the relationships between public association and private needs. Institutions of higher education struggled to transition to this new way of thinking. The sink or swim

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ideology was being replaced by the philosophy that it was not entirely on the individual
to do all of the work in providing for himself.

The development of adolescent psychology and the understanding that a person
did not instantly become an adult at age eighteen was one that was gaining traction across
the country in the early 1900s. Former Ohio State University President James Hulme
Canfield provided a description of the stressful transition of freshman year in 1902 as
“doubtful and distressing and dangerous.” He spoke about the transition much more
abruptly than many others of the time: “You have ceased to be a schoolboy, and have
become a collegian; you are no longer a pupil, but a student; you are no more under
tutelage and supervision as to every detail of your work, but you have come into a greatly
enlarged freedom.”\textsuperscript{182}

President Lowell of Harvard showed an understanding of the need to provide
support after experiencing years of frustration regarding the delayed intellectual and
emotional development of his students. His Assistant Dean at Harvard, William R.
Castle, Jr, had inquired in 1909 as to “whether the college gives adequate protection to its
first-year students; what measures may be taken to broaden and intensify the scope of this
protection; and whether a younger Freshman class would be likely to make these
measures more effective.”\textsuperscript{183} Castle believed that youth needed to be given “every
opportunity to develop along ennobling lines” during the “critical period comes when the

\textsuperscript{182} James Hulme Canfield, \textit{The College Student and His Problems} (New York, NY: The

\textsuperscript{183} Castle, “The College and the Freshman,” 548.
boy leaves school and enters college.”\(^{184}\) It was not only those in higher education that saw the need for assistance with the transition. Daniel W. Abercrombie, principal of Worcester Academy, supported the new focus on freshmen as movement in the right direction, and suggested that the colleges were beginning to see that “freshmen are but men in the making, ‘young barbarians at play,’ if you will, who need the impress and uplift of mature but sympathetic elders.”\(^{185}\)

When President Lowell made his public case for Freshman-only dormitories, he expressed concern that students did not understand the college environment until late in their academic lives. In a statement in the Harvard Graduates Magazine in 1912, he justified the creation of freshman-only dormitories: “Their object is to plunge the newcomer at once into the life that the upper classmen have learned to value; to teach him what it means to be a member of a community gathered together for serious aims…”\(^{186}\) In 1914, he made his case for focusing on freshman by placing emphasis on the concerns of parents who were fearful “of the sudden transition from school and home to college.” This fear was also reflected by the President of Columbia University Nicholas Murray Butler, in an article entitled “The Freshman Year”, published in Educational Review in 1914. He was concerned that students start on the right path during the “crucial moment to education” which is freshman year, because “The youth who goes wrong then may

\(^{184}\) Castle, “The College and the Freshman,” 547.


never wholly recover his intellectual or moral balance.”

Butler proposed that this time was “a unique bit of human experience” that required preparation needed to start at home prior to entering college, but that it become the responsibility of the freshman and the college once they entered the institution.

The recognition that freshman were in a time of stressful transition, going from adolescence to adulthood, was also taken up in a plea Professor Stanley T. Williams, of Yale University, asking faculty to take up the important role of teaching freshmen in 1921.

For the first months the Freshman is hopelessly hybrid; he does not yet belong to the University. The right tailor, the right talk, the right tobacco- these he embraces blindly, passionately. He is a neophyte in orthodoxy. Part of him is still on the farm, or in a high school in one of those large rectangular States in the middle of our map, or in the athletic field of St. Numbskull’s. The truth is, his mind is in short trousers, though he has craftily covered his legs...No longer boy, not yet man; between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born.

By 1928, Adam Leroy Jones, professor of Philosophy and Director of Admissions for Columbia University was making the claim that special programs for freshmen were “

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the duty of every institution which wishes to be classed as an effective college.”

William Mather Lewis, while President of Lafayette College, supported this notion in an editorial published in *New York Times*, in which he acknowledged the argument that it is the job of colleges to provide the curriculum and instruction, and the job of the students to take advantage of it. He even acknowledged the argument that colleges that provide freshman programs are being “paternalistic.” In defense of such programs, however, Lewis argued:

Perhaps we should ask ourselves at just what point in the Summer he ceased to be a boy and became a man. Perhaps we do well to remind ourselves that even men seek the line of least resistance and that all of us need sound leadership and wise guidance if we are to make the most of our opportunities. The fact is that an impressively large number of those who have been submitted to the “Take it or leave it alone” policy have chosen to leave it along, to the detriment of the intellectual life of the college and of society in general.

It appears that the argument during the 1910s and 1920s that the freshman year was a period of psychological growth and transition had taken root as evidenced in Ester Lloyd-Jones’ thesis 1929, which summed up the shift in thinking about the freshman year over the previous 20 years. Entitling it “The Freshman Problem,” she acknowledged the

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191 Lewis, “Student Failure Rate Alarms The Colleges.”
transition through “important emotional and social experiences, as well as intellectual ones” freshmen faced and the shift in thinking by institutions to one of helping the student adjust instead of placing blame for struggle and failure on the student. “A great deal might be done to help him avoid some of the mistakes in his trial and error process of adapting himself to this new, complex situation.”\textsuperscript{192} No longer was it the case that failure was solely blamed on ill prepared or immature students; a shift to institutional responsibility had taken hold across the country.

Justification: Clarify Educational Aims

The idea of providing programs for freshmen to help them as they transition from an adolescent into an independent adult, was extended as a means of helping to address another conundrum that plagued institutions during the early 1900s: the lack of understanding freshmen had about the educational objectives of higher education. Edwin E. Slosson\textsuperscript{193} noted in 1910 that the free elective system left a void in the curriculum, and that required foundational courses were one solution.\textsuperscript{194} Lowell attributed this void to the fragmentation of the curriculum that “had decreased undergraduates’ consciousness of

\textsuperscript{192} Lloyd-Jones, \textit{Student Personnel Work at Northwestern University}, 10.

\textsuperscript{193} Slosson earned a PhD from the University of Chicago and served a literary editor for a magazine and visited universities throughout the United States and Europe and interviewed many philosophers and writers before authoring \textit{Great American Universities}.

\textsuperscript{194} Slosson, \textit{Great American Universities}, 14.
the value of a liberal education.” He believed that students could connect their success in professional school with success in careers, but were missing the connection between “intellectual training of a liberal arts college and success in life.” He turned to the residential experience at Oxford college as a model that would help students engage in ways that would more intentionally connect them to the full intellectual experience.

In 1923, Margaret Ball, professor of English at Mount Holyoke College, wrote that the dash to create foundational courses showed “marks of panic” on the part of institutions. “There is, to be sure, some reason for panic. The modern student’s knowledge, however fragile it may be, is tucked away in a filing cabinet must be devised, with larger and more adjustable units. The dozen patents already applied for are indicated in the October bulletin of the American Association of University Professors, which discusses initiatory course for freshmen.” At the same time, she was critical of the idea that foundational courses did not require the students “to recognize the aims, do the work, and use reflective thinking in the doing of it...”

Institutions were struggling to figure out how to ensure that students understood the overall curriculum, to engage them with the goals of their education and then ensure that they achieved those goals, but Ball was dissatisfied that institutions did the work for the students, rather than arming them with the skills to do so themselves. Part of the reason for this could have been, according to Jay C. Knode, the fact that there was no


197 Margaret Ball, “Introducing Freshmen to Scholarship,” *School and Society* 17, no. 426 (February 24, 1929): 205.
consensus regarding the aims. “Students, alumni, parents and professors not only fail to see eye to eye with respect to educational ends and values, but between groups and within groups widely divergent views develop.” While individual students might have individual reasons for pursuing higher education, it became clear that institutions needed to clarify what the overall goal of attaining a higher education should be.

Justification: Stimulate Intellectual Interests

The final justification for freshman programs was the desire to stimulate the intellectual interests of new students. In Lowell’s Inaugural Address in 1909, he argued that undergraduate students were kept in an intellectual isolation and spoke nostalgically of a time when students engaged with each other on academic topics. He placed blame for this squarely on the shoulders of universities. “They do not strive enough in the impressionable years of early manhood to stimulate intellectual appetite and ambition….” F.M. Perry, in an article in Science two months after the address, was quick to agree with Lowell. “There can be little question that President Lowell is right in his opinion that the passing of the common habitation made necessary by the increased number of students, and the passing of the common curriculum attending the introduction of the elective system, have resulted in social and intellectual disintegration…” Twelve

198 Knode, “Orienting the Student in College, With Special Reference to Freshman Week,” 3.
199 Lowell, “President Lowell’s Inaugural Address,” 504.
200 Perry, “College Solidarity,” 844.
years later, in his 1922 Inaugural Address as Chancellor of the University of Buffalo, Dr. Samuel P. Capen also expressed concern about what he called the “intellectual morale of college students.”

Like Lowell at Harvard, in 1924 H. A. Garfield, President of Williams College, proposed that the freshman class live together. He was concerned about the ways in which students spent their time outside of class, believing it to be spent in non-academic pursuits. While he expressed a willingness to be flexible on the details of the plan, he insisted that some form of it was necessary “to stimulate the intellectual life of freshman year, thereby not only in large measure solving our own problem but assisting the schools to solve theirs.”

D. Orr, in his 1927 article “Students Discover Education” stated that “some sort of orientation course” such as Columbia’s Contemporary Civilization was justifiable because “…students’ intellectual interests must be aroused early- when they are freshmen if possible.”

H. Gary Hudson, of Blackburn College, went so far as to survey students and faculty to find out the impact of the freshman course that was required in 1929. Through the survey he was able to confirm that the course did help to stimulate intellectual interest. Students indicated that they were “led by the interest aroused by the lecturers to reading serious books and articles” and that the course “started me thinking,” and “gave

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me new ideas.” The faculty indicated that they “believe that there is a healthier intellectual tone about the life of the college this year.”^{204} The ability to provide specific feedback from students and faculty bolstered the justification for the survey course.

While today it is a given that institutions of higher education will provide special programs for first-year students, it was a new concept in the first part of the twentieth century. Institutions needed to provide justification for focusing resources on specialized programs. The discussions above provided three overarching justifications used during the period. First, there was an increased understanding, through the development of the field of psychology, that the freshman year was a period of psychological growth, and that institutions needed to help freshmen transition from the close supervision of high school to the freedom of higher education. Second, institutions needed to make clear the educational objectives of higher education for freshmen. And finally, the faculty wanted to stimulate intellectual interests among new students.

Forces Contributing to Freshman Programs: “Freshman Mortality”

Apart from the principled justifications discussed above, literature from the early 1900s points to certain institutional and social forces that contributed to the development of freshman programs. These forces may be placed into three categories. First, widespread concern about the failure rate, or “student mortality” and the associated waste of resources by individuals, institutions, and the public; second, the influence of President

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Lowell and Harvard University on higher education; and third, the change in higher education structures, and the growth of student affairs as a separate administrative organization in particular.

The first force was widespread concern about the increasing failure rate, or “freshman mortality,” linked to the greater number of students pursuing higher education, particularly at state institutions, and the associated waste of resources by individuals, institutions, and the public. Many states in late 1800s passed laws making elementary school compulsory, which, in turn, led to more students pursuing secondary school. This increased the number of children that were eligible for college admission, and increased the overall demand for higher education. Public institutions with open enrollment faced the difficulty of appropriately handling the large number of students not only enrolling, but coming from a wide variety of quality related to preparatory curriculum.

Between 1915 and 1930, the dramatic rise in enrollment was outpacing state funding, and the traditional method of accepting most applicants and allowing them to drop out was costly. Institutions began to require more than a high school grade point average for admission in an attempt to reduce the use of their limited funds on students ill prepared for success. Even Land Grant institutions, which were dedicated to educating the masses, began requiring minimum examination scores to decrease the mortality rate.205

Public concern over student success is evident in an article published in The Washington Post in 1925. The article introduced the incoming class at George Washington University and stated that “Educators have come to the conclusion that the high rate of mortality in academic institutions is due to the fact that the student gets off on the wrong foot, fails to have the idea of college properly impressed upon him.”

The mortality rate of students also worried private colleges. President Ogilby of Trinity College reported the failure of 20 percent of undergraduates in 1922 due to poor academic performance. Grover Alderman’s 1927 article noted that the mortality rate at the University of Pittsburgh was 19 percent in 1926 (but through the implementation of freshman programs decreased to 9 percent the following academic year). Other studies of “freshman failure” were being conducted throughout the country, including one by the Georgia Institute of Technology’s Registrar, Hugh H. Caldwell. Studying figures from “several hundred institutions,” he claimed a freshman mortality rate across the country of 31 percent.

By 1930, Miller argued that there was statistical data “which indicates an excessive rate of freshman mortality, a large amount of student migration at the end of the freshman year, and a high percentage of freshman failures both in number of students

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206 “1200 G. W. Freshman Are to Be Started Off on the Right Foot,” The Washington Post, September 13, 1925.


and semester hours carried.\textsuperscript{209} This data reflects the increase in enrollment that higher education was experiencing. No longer was it “the luxury of a few…merely as a matter of culture.” Students enrolled “because it is believed that its [higher education’s] possession will make the individual a more efficient member of the social world and will enable him more readily to meet the fierce competition of modern life.”\textsuperscript{210}

The growth in enrollment affected public institutions in particular (with their mission to educate the masses) since their students came from varying levels of academic preparation in secondary school. There was a tension caused by admitting students under “faulty [admission] standards.”\textsuperscript{211} According to W.M. Lewis in 1928, of the approximately 200,000 freshmen expected to enter higher education that year, 60,000 were expected to drop out, with “resultant economic, social, and educational loss.”\textsuperscript{212} Lester Crow laid out the difficulties faced by public institutions in particular faced in an article in the Journal of Educational Sociology in 1929:

These students come from all social classes, with a great range in intelligence. The differences in intellectual ability accompanied by the fact that many of the students who are presenting them-selves for entrance to college are products of small high schools, where there is danger of poorly trained teachers and

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{209} Miller, “The Induction and Adaptation of College Freshmen,” 9–10.
\item \textsuperscript{210} Aley, “The College and the Freshman,” 152.
\item \textsuperscript{211} Rightmire, “The Floundering Freshman,” 185.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Lewis, “Student Failure Rate Alarms The Colleges.”
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inadequate equipment, intensify the problem of attempting to handle all students uniformly.213

Knode pointed out that such enrollment growth “inevitably lead to greater complexity of administrative problems,” and made it more difficult for students to navigate the multifaceted institution.214

The increased student population also involved an increase in diversity of the student body. In addition to coming from a wide variety of secondary schools, and therefore preparation, the students were “as variable and as varying as the individual members of the democracy from which they come.”215 Knode referred to this as “a lack of homogeneity of social background” related to “a steadily increasing variety of homes and social strata.” These diverse students were faced with a higher education system that was growing in complexity, with “the increase of vocational problems coming with a socially less select student body, the multiplication of scientific researches and applications, and the usual division of broader fields into what President Coffman has called ‘attenuated bits of knowledge’ have led to a veritable maze of schools, courses and curricula.”216 The diversity of students only further highlighted the difficulty of facilitating the articulation between high school and college. In part, this diversity stemmed from the growth of high schools and compulsory education. Knode pointed out


216 Knode, “Orienting the Student in College, With Special Reference to Freshman Week,” 3–9.
that The Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies attempted to “attack this problem as early as 1893.” James C. Mackenzie, Head Master of the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey and member of the Committee of Ten had highlighted that, “not thirty of the 3,000 public high schools referred to are giving a training which our older universities accept as a satisfactory preparation for college.”

This disparity between preparation and attendance created a disconnect that most institutions had to address if there was to be any hope of ensuring student success.

Force: the Influence of Lowell and Harvard University

The second force to be acknowledged is that of the prestige and influence of President Lowell and Harvard University. In 1910, Daniel W. Abercrombie published *The Responsibility of the College for the Freshman*. In it, he names Harvard and its President Albert Lawrence Lowell, as “the real leader in the effort to broaden the field of college work.” F.M. Perry, Professor of English at Wellesley College stated in 1909 that “If, therefore, solutions both profitable and unprofitable to the college problem were numerous before President Lowell's installation address, they may be expected in

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increasing numbers to follow his clear and impressive presentation of the needs of American colleges.”\textsuperscript{219}

In 1917, Keppel pointed to Lowell as being the primary origin of ideas that were picked up by many institutions: “The new ideals of college administration and teaching, which have really been under headway only since Mr. Lowell’s paper was published, are all working to stimulate intellectual rivalry in the better colleges.”\textsuperscript{220} Fitts and Swift referred to Lowell’s speeches as “some of the earliest utterances upon the subject of orientation.” These references to his words demonstrate the inclination of institutions to see Harvard as a leader in institutional affairs. “David Starr Jordan, of Stanford, John H. Finely, of the City of New York, and Charles F. Thwing, of Western Reserve” were just some of the many educational leaders who heard Lowell’s words and continued the dialogue through national publications already sited in this dissertation.\textsuperscript{221}

Force: Rise of Student Affairs Personnel

The third force was the change in higher education institution structures, in particular the growth of the separate administrative department devoted to student affairs.

\textsuperscript{219} Perry, “College Solidarity,” 844–845.

\textsuperscript{220} F.P. Keppel, \textit{The Undergraduate and His College} (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1917), 199.

\textsuperscript{221} Charles Tabor Fitts and Fletcher Harper Swift, \textit{The Construction of Orientation Courses for College Freshmen} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), 155.
In the late 1800s, at the same time as the development of the graduate school structure and the elective curriculum and along with the increased class sizes, the appearance of institutional roles focused on students outside of the classroom began to appear. Discussed in more detail in chapter 3, this took the form of separating the work of an academic dean from a dean of student affairs at Harvard.

As universities in particular grew in complexity, the problems within them naturally became more complex. The number of students attending institutions grew beyond that which the institution’s president and faculty could manage while still focusing on academics. Research faculty no longer had the time, or perhaps the desire, to be involved in a student’s life outside of the classroom and, as a result, a new field of professionals developed known as personnel technique, which today we call student affairs. And overall “concern for the welfare of the individual student,” a concern that was growing during this time period, brought with it the expansion of services such as health and counseling and placement centers in addition to the programming specifically for freshmen. Student affairs professionals took an approach to the work that fit into the growing bureaucracy of higher education, and allowed them to focus on the

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223 Richard B. Caple, *To Mark the Beginning* (University Press Of America, 1998), 16.

224 Caple, *To Mark the Beginning*, 43.

There were many justifications for the development of freshman programs made by institutions throughout the early 1900s. The work of G. Stanley Hall within psychology provided a foundational understanding that there was a psychological transition from high school to college that required assistance from higher education institutions. The development of programs was aimed at supporting this transition process, from the close supervision of high school to the new freedom that higher education provided. Electivism’s rise led to the need to make the educational objectives of higher education clear for freshmen. And freshman seminar courses were developed in an effort to stimulate the intellectual interests of new students.

Behind these justifications were forces that were, to a certain degree, beyond institutional control. The rise in the population of people with a high school education meant that there was an increased demand for higher education. Public institutions with open enrollment had to figure out how to appropriately handle the large numbers of students enrolling with the incredible variation in secondary school preparation. And institutions that shifted to selective admissions wished to ensure that those students matriculated. At the same time, society was shifting away from a “sink or swim” mentality, both in private life as well as education. Failure was no longer being blamed entirely on the individual, instead social structures were being developed to support those

in need, and the concept began to be applied to education. Institutions needed to address
the widespread concern about the failure rate, or “student mortality” and the associated
waste of resources by individuals, institutions, and the public. President Lowell and
Harvard University’s influence on higher education was a second force. They led the way
in curricular and structural evolutions. And finally, the period experienced the growth of
student affairs as a separate administrative organization.

Overall, despite some objections to the initiatives within higher education, the
consensus was that the programs being put into place were “the result of attempted
common-sense solutions of experienced difficulties.”227 The growth of programs was no
longer to be debated, but instead quickly became an accepted part of higher education’s
structure.

227 Knodle, “Orienting the Student in College, With Special Reference to Freshman Week,” 2.
Chapter 7. Conclusion

Over the past one hundred years, the concept of providing protection and programming for first-year students went from a debated, but growing idea to an accepted necessity in today’s higher education institutions. In the 1970s, Frederick Rudolph summarized the development in his book *Curriculum: A history of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636*:

In the twentieth century, as college enrollments dramatically mounted, more and more thousands of young men and women went off to college to experience something called ‘freshman year.’… Every college and university delivered a freshman year appropriate to its own history; higher education in the United States necessarily delivered a whole range of freshman years.\(^{228}\)

Yet little else is mentioned in current higher education literature about the history of these programs, in particular, why they were developed and how we have progressed to the point of acceptance today. As current practitioners and institutional leaders continue to expend time and financial resources on first-year programming, there are

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many studies and publications that demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs on narrow populations within the overall population of first-year students. This dissertation explains the start and proliferation of the focus on first-year students and of freshman programming during the 1910s and 1920s.

As demonstrated by the data in table 1 and graphs 1 and 2, there were very few publications that discussed the concept of the freshman as a special population in need of care prior to Albert Lawrence Lowell’s 1909 presidential inaugural address at Harvard University. After his speech, publications referenced to his ideas of the freshman dormitory and began debating the idea of segregating and caring for the freshman separately. While many spoke highly of his plans, others critiqued the idea, believing it to be a form of coddling. After a break in the work of developing curriculum and programs during World War I, there was an immediate uptick afterward in both publications and programs. By the end of the 1920s, the programs had proliferated enough that research was being conducted and presented in theses and dissertations documenting both the aims of such programs as well as the types of programs that were being developed.

There were a variety of freshman-specific programs conceived during the 1910s and 1920s. Deans and faculty were assigned advising roles, providing personal guidance to students. Freshman-only housing was carved out. Freshman Week programs (now referred to as first-year student orientation) were developed to provide structure to the days preceding the academic year.

The most prominent of freshman programs was that of the orientation and seminar courses. As Fitts and Swift data described in 1928, in the five short years after World War I, the number of states reporting institutions with seminar courses grew from eight to
thirty-two. The American Association of University Professors even published a report supporting the work of these seminars.

Many of the publications of the early 1900s provided justifications for the creation of freshman programs. The recognition that freshmen needed help in transitioning from the close supervision of high school to the freedom of higher education came about due to new research in adolescent psychology. The adoption of electivism made it necessary for institutions to make clear the educational objectives of higher education for freshmen. Lastly, institutions sought to stimulate the intellectual interests of new students, resulting in the development of freshman seminar courses.

The focus on the freshman as a population requiring special attention was also driven by forces that were often beyond institutional control. There was a need to address the widespread concern about the failure rate, or “student mortality” and the associated waste of resources. The influence President Lowell and Harvard University had on higher education, lead the way in curricular and structural evolutions. And the 1920s experienced the growth of student affairs as a separate administrative organization, further expanding services to students.

Overall, despite some objections to the initiatives within higher education, the national consensus was that the programs dedicated to assisting freshmen being created were “the result of attempted common-sense solutions of experienced difficulties.” Data collected demonstrated the success of the programs, reducing student mortality and providing for a better higher education experience reported by students. The offering of

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229 Knode, “Orienting the Student in College, With Special Reference to Freshman Week,” 2.
programs dedicated to freshmen was no longer to be debated, but instead quickly became an accepted part of higher education’s structure. President A.L. Lowell’s inaugural address spurred this antecedent conversation forward, igniting a national dialogue via newspapers and scholarly journals, that engaged higher education leaders and faculty across the country in a debate about the best ways in which to assist the “half baby and half man”\textsuperscript{230} that is the first-year student.

\textsuperscript{230} “Scientific Management of Freshmen,” \textit{The Nation}, May 6, 1915, 501.
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Appendix A. Alphabetical List of Institutions with freshman orientation courses, 1911-1926

This Table provides a simple, alphabetical listing of institutions with freshman orientation courses from the years 1911 (the first year reported for such a course according to Fitt’s and Swift’s definition\textsuperscript{231}) and spring 1926, the year their study ended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akron, Municipal University of (AU)</td>
<td>1916-17</td>
<td>OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny College</td>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amherst College</td>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antioch College*</td>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona University of</td>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas, University of</td>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bates College</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berea College</td>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown College*</td>
<td>1915-16</td>
<td>RI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Institute of Technology</td>
<td>1916-17</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California, University of L.A.</td>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carleton College</td>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carthage College</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, University of</td>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark University</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colgate University</td>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia University</td>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{231} See footnote 123.
Dartmouth College 1919-20 NH
Denver University of 1922-23 CO
DePauw University 1915-16 IN
Doane College 1917-18 NE
Earlham College 1921-22 IN
Emory and Henry College 1925-26 VA
Emory University 1925-26 GA
Gettysburg College 1925-26 PA
Grinnell College 1922-23 IA
Hamline University 1925-26 MN
Hanover College 1920-21 IN
Hobart College 1922-23 NY
Huron College 1919-20 SD
Idaho, University of 1924-25 ID
Illinois Women’s College 1919-20 IL
Indiana, University of 1919-20 IN
Iowa State College and Agriculture and Mechanic Arts 1918-19 IA
Iowa, University of 1924-25 IA
Johns Hopkins University 1921-22 MD
Kentucky, University of 1918-19 KY
Lafayette College 1922-23 PA
Lawrence College 1925-26 WI
Lehigh University 1924-25 PA
Marietta College 1920-21 OH
Massachusetts Agriculture College 1923-24 MA
Middlebury College 1924-25 VT
Milton College 1924-25 WI
Minnesota, University of 1923-24 MN
Missouri, University of 1920-21 MO
Morningside College 1925-26 IA
Nebraska, University of 1922-23 NE
New Hampshire State College (UNH) 1917-18 NH
Northwestern University * 1921-22 IL
Occidental College 1925-26 CA
Ohio State University * 1921-22 OH
Ohio University 1921-22 OH
Pacific College of the 1921-22 CA
Pacific University 1920-21 OR
Park College 1923-24 MO
Pennsylvania, University of 1925-26 PA
Pittsburgh, University of* 1921-22 PA
Pomona College 1921-22 CA
Princeton University 1918-19 NJ
Redlands, University of 1925-26 CA
Reed College* 1911-12 OR
Ripon College 1921-22 WI
Rockford College 1924-25 IL
Rutgers College 1921-22 NJ
Southern California, University of 1923-24 CA
Southwestern College 1920-21 KA
Southwestern University 1925-26 TX
St. John’s College 1925-26 MD
Stanford University 1920-21 CA
Syracuse University 1920-21 NY
Trinity College 1925-26 DC
Vanderbilt University 1921-22 TN
Washburn College 1918-19 KS
Washington State 1920-21 WA
Washington, University of 1911-12 WA
Western College for Women (now part of Miami OH) 1922-23 OH
Whitman College 1915-16 WA
Whittier College 1925-26 CA
Willamette University 1915-16 OR
Williams College 1919-20 MA
Wittenberg College 1922-23 OH
Yale University 1923-24 CT
AMONG his other wise sayings Aristotle remarked that man is by nature a social animal; and it is in order to develop his powers as a social being that American colleges exist. The object of the undergraduate department is not to produce hermits, each imprisoned in the cell of his own intellectual pursuits, but men fitted to take their places in the community and live in contact with their fellow men.

The college of the old type possessed a solidarity which enabled it to fulfill that purpose well enough in its time, although on a narrower scale and a lower plane than we aspire to at the present day. It was so small that the students were all well acquainted with one another, or at least with their classmates. They were constantly thrown together, in chapel, in the classroom, in the dining hall, in the college dormitories, in their simple forms of recreation, and they were constantly measuring themselves by one standard in their common occupations. The curriculum, consisting mainly of the classics, with a little mathematics, philosophy, and history, was the same for them all; designed, as it was, not only as a preparation for the professions of the ministry and the law, but also as the universal foundation of liberal education.

In the course of time these simple methods were outgrown. President Eliot pointed out with unanswerable force that the field of human knowledge had long been too vast for any man to compass; and that now subjects must be admitted to the scheme of instruction, which became thereby so large that no student could follow it all. Before the end of the nineteenth century this was generally recognized, and election in some form was introduced into all our colleges. But the new methods brought a divergence in the courses of study pursued by individual students, an intellectual isolation, which broke down the old solidarity. In the larger institutions the process has been hastened by the great increase in numbers, and in many cases by an abandonment of the policy of housing
the bulk of the students in college dormitories; with the result that college life has shown a marked tendency to disintegrate, both intellectually and socially.

To that disintegration the overshadowing interests in athletic games appears to be partly due. I believe strongly in the physical and moral value of athletic sports, and of intercollegiate contests conducted in a spirit of generous rivalry; and I do not believe that their exaggerated prominence at the present day is to be attributed to a conviction on the part of the under-graduates, or of the public, that physical is more valuable than mental force. It is due rather to the fact that such contests offer to students the one common interest, the only striking occasion for a display of college solidarity.

If the changes wrought in the college have weakened the old solidarity and unity of aim, they have let in light and air. They have given us a freedom of movement needed for further progress. May we not say of the extreme elective system what Edmond Sherer said of democracy: that it is but one stage in an irresistible march toward an unknown goal. Progress means change, and every time of growth is a transitional era; but in a peculiar degree the present state of the American college bears the marks of a period of transition. This is seen in the comparatively small estimation in which high proficiency in college studies is held, both by undergraduates and by the public at large; for if college education were closely adapted to the needs of the community, excellence of achievement therein ought to be generally recognized as of great value. The transitional nature of existing conditions is seen again in the absence, among instructors as well as students, of fixed principles by which the choice of courses of study ought to be guided. It is seen, more markedly still, in the lack of any accepted view of the ultimate object of a college education.

On this last subject the ears of the college world have of late been assailed by many discordant voices, all of them earnest, most of them well-informed, and speaking in every case with a tone of confidence in the possession of the true solution. One theory, often broached, under different forms, and more or less logically held, is that the main object of the college should be to prepare for the study of a definite profession, or the practice of a distinct occupation; and that the subjects pursued should, for the most part, be such as will furnish the knowledge immediately useful for that end. But if so, would it
not be better to transfer all instruction of this kind to the professional schools, reducing
the age of entrance thereto, and leaving the general studies for a college course of
diminished length, or perhaps surrendering them altogether to the secondary schools? If
we accept the professional object of college education, there is much to be said for a
readjustment of that nature, because we all know the comparative disadvantage under
which technical instruction is given in college, and we are not less aware of the great
difficulty of teaching cultural and vocational subjects at the same time. The logical result
of the policy would be that of Germany, where the university is in effect a collection of
professional schools, and the underlying general education is given in the gymnasium.
Such a course has, indeed, been suggested, for it has been proposed to transfer so far as
possible to the secondary schools the first two years of college instruction, and to make
the essential work of the university professional in character. But that requires a far
higher and better type of secondary school than we possess, or are likely to possess for
many years. Moreover, excellent as the German system is for Germany, it is not wholly
suited to our republic, which can not, in my opinion, afford to lose the substantial, if
intangible, benefits the nation has de-rived from its colleges. Surely the college can give a
freedom of thought, a breadth of outlook, a training for citizenship, which neither the
secondary nor the professional school in this country can equal.

Even persons who do not share this view of a professional aim have often urged
that in order to save college education in the conditions that confront us we must reduce
its length. May we not feel that the most vital measure for saving the college is not to
shorten its duration, but to insure that it shall be worth saving? Institutions are rarely
murdered; they meet their end by suicide. They are not strangled by their natural
environment while vigorous; they die because they have outlived their useful-ness, or fail
to do the work that the world wants done; and we are justified in believing that the
college of the future has a great work to do for the American people.

If, then, the college is passing through a transitional period, and is not to be
absorbed between the secondary school on the one side and the professional school on the
other, we must construct a new solidarity to replace that which is gone. The task be-fore
us is to frame a system which, without sacrificing individual variation too much, or
neglecting the pursuit of different scholarly interests, shall produce an intellectual and social cohesion, at least among large groups of students, and points of contact among them all. This task is not confined to any one college, although more urgent in the case of those that have grown the largest and have been moving most rapidly. A number of colleges are feeling their way toward a more definite structure, and since the problem before them is in many cases essentially the same, it is fortunate that they are assisting one another by approaching it from somewhat different directions. What I have to say upon the subject here is, therefore, intended mainly for the conditions we are called upon to face at Harvard.

It is worth our while to consider the nature of an ideal college as an integral part of our university; ideal, not in the sense of something to be exactly reproduced, but of a type to which we should conform as closely as circumstances will permit. It would contemplate the highest development of the individual student-which involves the best equipment of the graduate. It would contemplate also the proper connection of the college with the professional schools; and it would adjust the relation of the students to one another. Let me take up these matters briefly in their order.

The individual student ought clearly to be developed so far as possible, both in his strong and in his weak points, for the college ought to produce, not defective specialists, but men intellectually well rounded, of wide sympathies and unfettered judgment. At the same time they ought to be trained to hard and accurate thought, and this will not come merely by surveying the elementary principles of many subjects. It requires a mastery of something, acquired by continuous application. Every student ought to know in some subject what the ultimate sources of opinion are, and how they are handled by those who profess it. Only in this way is he likely to gain the solidity of thought that begets sound thinking. In short, he ought, so far as in him lies, to be both broad and profound.

In speaking of the training of the student, or the equipment of the graduate, we are prone to think of the knowledge acquired; but are we not inclined to lay too much stress upon knowledge alone? Taken by itself it is a part, and not the most vital part, of education. Surely the essence of a liberal education consists in an attitude of mind, a familiarity with methods of thought, an ability to use information rather than a memory
stocked with facts, however valuable such a storehouse may be. In his farewell address to the alumni of Dartmouth, President Tucker remarked that "the college is in the educational system to represent the spirit of amateur scholarship. College students are amateurs, not professionals." Or, as President Hadley is fond of putting it: "The ideal college education seems to me to be one where a student learns things that he is not going to use in after life, by methods that he is going to use. The former element gives the breadth, the latter element gives the training."

But if this be true, no method of ascertaining truth, and therefore no department of human thought, ought to be wholly a sealed book to an educated man. It has been truly said that few men are capable of learning a new subject after the period of youth has passed, and hence the graduate ought to be so equipped that he can grasp effectively any problem with which his duties or his interest may impel him to deal. An undergraduate, addicted mainly to the classics, recently spoke to his adviser in an apologetic tone of having elected a course in natural science, which he feared was narrowing. Such a state of mind is certainly deplorable, for in the present age some knowledge of the laws of nature is an essential part of the mental outfit which no cultivated man should lack. He need not know much, but he ought to know enough to learn more. To him the forces of nature ought not to be an occult mystery, but a chain of causes and effects with which, if not wholly familiar, he can at least claim acquaintance; and the same principle applies to every other leading branch of knowledge.

I speak of the equipment, rather than the education, of a college graduate, because, as we are often reminded, his education ought to cease only with his life, and hence his equipment ought to lay a strong foundation for that education. It ought to teach him what it means to master a subject, and it ought to enable him to seize and retain information of every kind from that unending stream that flows past every man who has the eyes to see it. Moreover, it ought to be such that he is capable of turning his mind effectively to direct preparation for his life work, whatever the profession or occupation he may select.

This brings us to the relation of the college to the professional school. If every college graduate ought to be equipped to enter any professional school, as the abiturient
of a German gymnasium is qualified to study under any of the faculties of the university, then it would seem that the professional schools ought to be so ordered that they are adapted to receive him. But let us not be dogmatic in this matter for it is one on which great divergence of opinion exists. The instructors in the various professional schools are by no means of one mind in regard to it, and their views are of course based largely upon experience. Our law school lays great stress upon native ability and scholarly aptitude, and comparatively little upon the particular branches of learning a student has pursued in college. Any young man who has brains and has learned to use them can master the law, whatever his intellectual interest may have been; and the same thing is true of the curriculum in the divinity school. Many professors of medicine, on the other hand, feel strongly that a student should enter their school with at least a rudimentary knowledge of those sciences, like chemistry, biology and physiology, which are interwoven with medical studies; and they appear to attach greater weight to this than to his natural capacity or general attainments. Now that we have established graduate schools of engineering and business administration, we must examine this question carefully in the immediate future. If the college courses are strictly untechnical, the requirement of a small number of electives in certain subjects, as a condition for entering a graduate professional school, is not inconsistent with a liberal education. But I will acknowledge a prejudice that for a man who is destined to reach the top of his profession a broad education, and a firm grasp of some subject lying outside of his vocation, is a vast advantage; and we must not forget that in substantially confining the professional schools at Harvard to college graduates we are aiming at the higher strata in the professions.

The last of the aspects under which I proposed to consider the college is that of the relation of undergraduates to one another; and first on the intellectual side. We have heard much of the benefit obtained merely by breathing the college atmosphere, or rubbing against the college walls. I fear the walls about us have little of the virtue of Aladdin's lamp when rubbed. What we mean is that daily association with other young men whose minds are alert is in itself a large part of a liberal education. But to what extent do undergraduates talk over things intellectual, and especially matters brought before them by their courses of study? It is the ambition of every earnest teacher so to
stimulate his pupils that they will discuss outside the classroom the problems he has presented to them. The students in the law school talk law interminably. They take a fierce pleasure in debating legal points in season and out. This is not wholly with a prospect of bread and butter in the years to come; nor because law is intrinsically more interesting than other things. Much must no doubt be ascribed to the skill of the faculty of the law school in awakening a keen competitive delight in solving legal problems; but there is also the vital fact that all these young men are tilling the same field. They have their stock of knowledge in common. Seeds cast by one of them fall into a congenial soil, and like dragon's teeth engender an immediate combat.

Now no sensible man would propose to-day to set up a fixed curriculum in order that all undergraduates might be joint tenants of the same scholastic property; but the intellectual estrangement need not be so wide as it is. There is no greater pleasure in mature life than hearing a specialist talk, if one has knowledge enough of the subject to understand him, and that is one of the things an educated man ought so far as possible to possess. Might there not be more points of intellectual contact among the undergraduates, and might not considerable numbers of them have much in common?

A discussion of the ideal college training from these three different aspects, the highest development of the individual student, the proper relation of the college to the professional school, the relation of the students to one another, would appear to lead in each case to the same conclusion; that the best type of liberal education in our complex modern world aims at producing men who know a little of everything and something well. Nor, if this be taken in a rational, rather than an extreme, sense, is it impossible to achieve within the limits of college life? That a student of ability can learn one subject well is shown by the experience of Oxford and Cambridge. The educational problems arising from the ex-tension of human knowledge are not con-fined to this country; and our institutions, of higher learning were not the first to seek a solution for them in some form of election on the part of the student. It is al-most exactly a hundred years ago that the English universities began to award honors upon examination in special subjects; for although the mathematical tripos at Cambridge was instituted sixty years earlier, the modern system of honor schools, which has stimulated a vast amount of competitive
activity among undergraduates, may be said to date from the establishment of the examinations in Literis Humanioribus and in mathematics and physics at Oxford in 1807. The most popular of the subjects in which honors are awarded are not technical, that is, they are not intended primarily as part of a professional training; nor are they narrow in their scope; but they are in general confined to one field. In short they are designed to ensure that the candidate knows something well; that he has worked hard and intelligently on one subject until he has a substantial grounding in it.

For us this alone would not be enough, because our preparatory schools do not give the same training as the English, and because the whole structure of English society is very different from ours. American college students ought also to study a little of everything, for if not there is no certainty that they will be broadly cultivated, especially in view of the omnipresent impulse in the community driving them to devote their chief attention to the subjects bearing upon their future career. The wise policy for them would appear to be that of devoting a considerable portion of their time to some one subject, and taking in addition a number of general courses in wholly un-related fields. But instruction that imparts a little knowledge of everything is more difficult to provide well than any other. To furnish it there ought to be in every considerable field a general course, designed to give to men who do not intend to pursue the subject farther a comprehension of its underlying principles or methods of thought; and this is by no means the same thing as an introductory course, although the two can often be effectively combined. A serious obstacle lies in the fact that many professors, who have reaped fame, prefer to teach advanced courses, and recoil from elementary instruction—an aversion inherited from the time when scholars of international reputation were called upon to waste their powers on the drudgery of drilling beginners. But while nothing can ever take the place of the great teacher, it is nevertheless true that almost any man possessed of the requisite knowledge can at least impart it to students who have already made notable progress in the subject; whereas effective instruction in fundamental principles requires men of mature mind who can see the forest over the tops of the trees. It demands unusual clearness of thought, force of statement and enthusiasm of expression. These qualities have no necessary connection with creative imagination, but
they are more common among men who have achieved some measure of success; and what is not less to the point, the students ascribe them more readily to a man whose position is recognized, than to a young instructor who has not yet won his spurs.

Wherever possible, therefore, the general course ought to be under the charge of one of the leading men in the department, and his teaching ought to be supplemented by instruction, discussion and constant examination in smaller groups, conducted by younger men well equipped for their work. Such a policy brings the student, at the gateway of a subject, into contact with strong and ripe minds, while it saves the professor from needless drudgery. It has been pursued at Harvard for a number of years, but it can be carried out even more completely.

We have considered the intellectual relation of the students to one another and its bearing on the curriculum, but that is not the only side of college life. The social relations of the undergraduates among themselves are quite as important; and here again we may observe forces at work which tend to break up the old college solidarity. The boy comes here sometimes from a large school, with many friends, sometimes from a great distance almost alone. He is plunged at once into a life wholly strange to him, amid a crowd so large that he can not claim acquaintance with its members. Unless endowed with an uncommon temperament, he is liable to fall into a clique of associates with antecedents and characteristics similar to his own; or perhaps, if shy and unknown, he fails to make friends at all; and in either case he misses the broadening influence of contact with a great variety of other young men. Under such conditions the college itself comes short of its national mission of throwing together youths of promise of every kind from every part of the country. It will, no doubt, be argued that a university must reflect the state of the world about it; and that the tendency of the time is toward specialization of functions, and social segregation on the basis of wealth. But this is not wholly true, because there is happily in the country a tendency also toward social solidarity and social service. A still more conclusive answer is that one object of a university is to counteract, rather than copy the defects in the civilization of the day. Would a prevalence of spoils, favoritism or corruption in the politics of the country be a reason for their adoption by universities?
A large college ought to give its students a wide horizon, and it fails therein unless it mixes them together so thoroughly that the friendships they form are based on natural affinities, rather than similarity of origin. Now these ties are formed most rapidly at the threshold of college life, and the set in which a man shall move is mainly determined in his freshman year. It is obviously desirable, therefore, that the freshmen should be thrown together more than they are now.

Moreover, the change from the life of school to that of college is too abrupt at the present day. Taken gradually, liberty is a powerful stimulant; but taken, suddenly in large doses, it is liable to act as an intoxicant or an opiate. No doubt every boy ought to learn to paddle his own canoe; but we do not begin the process by tossing him into a canoe, and setting him adrift in deep water, with a caution that he would do well to look for the paddle. Many a well-intentioned youth comes to college, en-joys innocently enough the pleasures of freedom for a season, but released from the discipline to which he has been accustomed, and looking on the examinations as remote, falls into indolent habits. Presently he finds himself on probation for neglect of his studies. He has become submerged, and has a hard, perhaps unsuccessful, struggle to get his head above water.

Of late years we have improved the diligence of freshmen by frequent tests; but this alone is not enough. In his luminous Phi Beta Kappa oration, delivered here three months ago, President Wilson dwelt upon the chasm that has opened between college studies and college life. The instructors believe that the object of the college is study, many students fancy that it is mainly enjoyment, and the confusion of aims breeds irretrievable waste of opportunity. The undergraduate should be led to feel from the moment of his arrival that college life is a serious and many-sided thing, whereof mental discipline is a vital part.

It would seem that all these difficulties could be much lessened if the freshmen were brought together in a group of dormitories and dining halls, under the comrade-ship of older men, who appreciated the possibilities of college life, and took a keen interest in their work and their pleasures. Such a plan would enable us also to recruit our students younger, for the present age of entrance here appears to be due less to the difficulty of preparing for the examination earlier, than to the nature of the life the freshman leads. Complaints of the age of graduation cause a pressure to reduce the length of the college
course, and with it the standard of the college degree. There would seem to be no intrinsic reason that our school boys should be more backward than those of other civilized countries, any more than that our undergraduates should esteem excellence in scholarship less highly than do the men in English universities.

The last point is one that requires a word of comment, because it touches the most painful defect in the American college at the present time. President Pritchett has declared that "it is a serious indictment of the standards of any organization when the conditions within it are such that success in the things for which the organization stands no longer appeal effectively to the imaginations of those in it." We may add that, even in these days, indictment is sometimes followed by sentence and execution. No one will deny that in our colleges high scholarship is little admired now, either by the undergraduates or by the public. We do not make our students en-joy the sense of power that flows from mastery of a difficult subject, and on a higher plane we do not make them feel the romance of scholarly exploration. Every one follows the travels of a Columbus or a Livingston with a keen delight which re-searches in chemistry or biology rarely stir. The mass of mankind can, no doubt, comprehend more readily geographical than scientific discovery, but for the explorer himself it would be pitiful if the joy of the search depended on the number of spectators, rather than on zeal in his quest.

America has not yet contributed her share to scholarly creation, and the fault lies in part at the doors of our universities. They do not strive enough in the impressionable years of early manhood to stimulate intellectual appetite and ambition; nor do they foster productive scholarship enough among those members of their staffs who are capable thereof. Too often a professor of original power explains to docile pupils the process of mining intellectual gold, without seeking nuggets himself, or when found showing them to mankind. Productive scholarship is the shyest of all flowers. It cometh not with observation, and may not bloom even under the most careful nurture. American universities must do their utmost to cultivate it; by planting the best seed, letting the sun shine upon it, and taking care that in our land of rank growth it is not choked by the thorns of administrative routine.
If I have dwelt upon only a small part of the problems of the university; if I have said nothing of the professional and graduate schools, of the library, the observatory, the laboratories, the museums, the gardens, and the various forms of extension work, it is not because they are of less importance, but because the time is too short to take up more than two or three pressing questions of general interest. The university touches the community at many points, and as time goes on it ought to serve the public through ever increasing channels. But all its activities are more or less connected with, and most of them are based upon, the college. It is there that the character ought to be shaped, that aspirations ought to be formed, that citizens ought to be trained, and scholarly tastes implanted. If the mass of undergraduates could be brought to respect, nay, to admire, intellectual achievement on the part of their comrades, in at all the measure that they do athletic victory; if those among them of natural ability could be led to put forth their strength on the objects which the college is supposed to represent; the professional schools would find their tasks lightened, and their success enhanced. A greater solidarity in college, more earnestness of purpose and intellectual enthusiasm, would mean much for our nation. It is said that if the temperature of the ocean were raised the water would expand until the floods covered the dry land; and if we can in-crease the intellectual ambition of college students the whole face of our country will be changed. When the young men shall see visions the dreams of old men will come true.