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(Re)Presenting a half-century of the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island

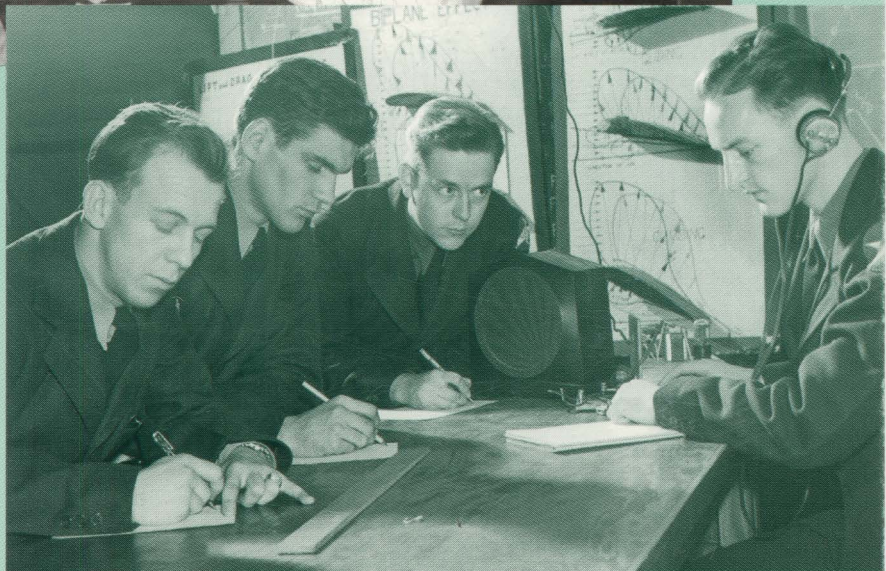
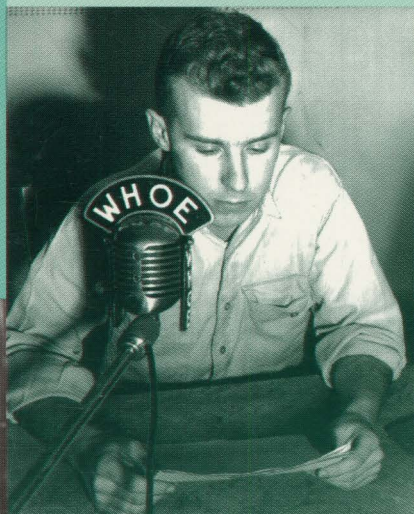
Judith E. Tolnick

Winifred E. Brownell

Lois A. Cuddy

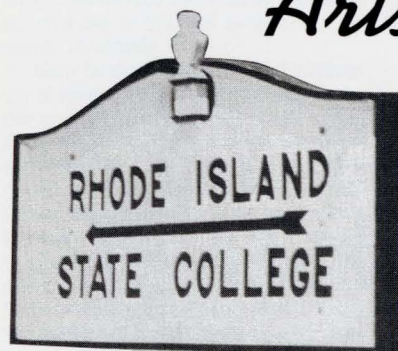
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*(Re)Presenting
A Half-Century
of the College of
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*(Re) Presenting
A Half-Century
of the College of
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Acknowledgments

This booklet is being issued in conjunction with an historical exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island. The exhibition is being mounted in the University's Main Gallery from October 16 through December 13, 1998. The project certainly could not have been realized without the personal and professional assistance of numerous individuals.

Many faculty and staff within the University of Rhode Island contributed their expertise as project advisers and/or lenders. Particular thanks are due to the following: Office of Alumni Affairs, Susan Francis; Department of Art: Linda S. Cinquegrana, Sue Drew, Wendy Holmes, William H. Leete, Linda Mugica, Gary Richman and V. Sheri Wills; Department of Communication Studies: Stephen Wood; Department of Biological Sciences: Christopher Nerone; Department of English: Lois A. Cuddy and Dorothy F. Donnelly; Department of Geology: John Boothroyd and Don Hermes; Department of History: James F. Findlay, Jr.; Department of Military Science: David A. Accetta; Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures: Mary E. Fetherston and Joseph Morello; Department of Music: Claudia Bissett and Donald Smith; College of Nursing: Dayle Joseph and Betsy Nield; Department of Philosophy: Lynn Pasquerella; Department of Physics: Surendra S. Malik, David Notarianni, Stephen T. Pellegrino and Rob Vincent; Department of Psychology: Charles Collyer and Nelson Smith; Department of Sociology and Anthropology: Leo Carroll; Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Design: Alda Kaye, Rebecca Kelly, Margaret Ordoñez and Linda Welters; Department of Theatre: David Howard, Carl Rossi and John Stevenson; Office of Information and Instructional Technology Services: Charles E. Daniels and Timothy W. Tierney; Property and Inventory: Daniel P. Lonergan; Office of Publications: Russell Koltan and Mary Patty; University Library: Paul Gandel, Barbara George, Kevin J. Logan, David Maslyn and Eileen M. Tierney.

I further acknowledge the following lenders not affiliated with the University: Cellar Stories Bookstore, Sara Lincoln, Providence; Lillian B. Hardie, Providence; Representative Leona Kelley, Peacedale; The Kingston Hill Bookstore, Sandy Neuschatz, Kingston; The Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, Inc., Celia Boggs, Kingston; The Polaroid Corporation, Sue Gagnon, Bedford, Massachusetts; The Providence Journal Company, Michael Delaney, Providence; and Doug Stamford, Charlestown. For expert technical assistance I am grateful to the Connecticut firms of LeTourneau Lighting, John LeTourneau, Wallingford and Phyllis B. Borges of Mystic River Foundry, Mystic.

During the summer of 1998, extensive Oral Histories conducted by James F. Findlay, Jr., Professor of History and Stephen Wood, Professor of Communication Studies were

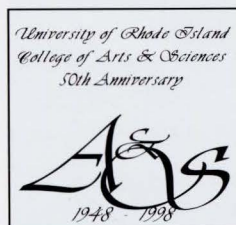
undertaken to form the basis of a single archival videotape marking this special occasion. This effort was directed and produced by Mary Conlon, principal, C Media, Pawtucket. I acknowledge the invaluable participation of those primary witnesses consenting to be interviewed on tape. They are: Roswell S. Bosworth, Jr. '49; Margaret E. Curran '49; William A. Curran '48; William R. Ferrante '49, Justin Smith Morrill Professor Emeritus and Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics; Roger E. Lavallee '48; Robert Lepper, Jr. '36, Professor Emeritus, Botany Department; William DeWitt Metz, Professor Emeritus, History Department; Nancy Potter, Professor Emerita, English Department; LHD '67; and Edward Philip Smith '48. I am very grateful to M. Beverly Swan, Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs and to Winifred E. Brownell, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for their combined contributions to the video.

Eric J. Cote, Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, thoughtfully introduced me to Edward Turner. Very special thanks are due to Edward Turner, Secretary, Navy Seabee Veterans of America, Inc. (Davisville Region), and his devoted Seabee colleagues for their efforts in locating, moving and installing a portion of an authentic postwar Quonset Hut on the grounds of the Fine Arts Center. Probably more than any single display in the exhibition, this one best triggers the strongest visual memories in those who knew the College fifty years ago. Appreciation is also due to Dr. David Whitaker of Narragansett for orchestrating the appearance outside the Fine Arts Center of several vintage automobiles in conjunction with the opening reception.

A temporary exhibition team offered extraordinary "behind-the-scenes" assistance. Kimberly Anne Hanrahan served as a diligent and imaginative Curatorial Assistant for all aspects of the project. Special Assistant Cynthia D. Kirwan-Yemma was the resourceful primary text organizer for all written and display materials. For their patience and dedication in preparing and installing the highly challenging Main Gallery exhibition, I recognize here my Fall, 1998 Gallery Interns at the University of Rhode Island: Jessica Brillii, Jessica Gagne, Rebekah Gewirtz, Sarah Talbert and Tracey Webb.

Finally, for her continuous encouragement and support, I thank Winnie Brownell, the always enthusiastic and seemingly tireless Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, and all of her associates in the Deanery, especially Jonathan Blaney and Wilfred Dvorak.

Judith Tolnick
Director, Fine Arts Center Galleries
& Exhibition Organizer



This booklet was produced in conjunction with an historical exhibition of the same title held at the Main Gallery, Fine Arts Center Galleries, University of Rhode Island, from October 16 through December 13, 1998. This publication is generously supported by the Office of the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences.

Cover photographs: *Top*: Announcer preparing to read a nightly broadcast, 1952, WHOE Radio Station, University of Rhode Island, Providence Journal-Bulletin Photograph. © Providence Journal Company. *Middle*: Studying at College Library, ca. 1943 (reverse printed), (Green Hall), Providence Journal-Bulletin Photograph. © Providence Journal Company. *Bottom*: Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Students, ca. 1943, Studying Aeronautics, Courtesy of University Archives and Special Collections.

Title page photographs: Sign to Rhode Island State College, ca. 1948. Reproduced from 1948 *Grist* (the College Yearbook); Interior of Quonset Hut Dormitory, ca. 1948, Courtesy of University Archives and Special Collections

With exceptions noted the majority of the images reproduced in this booklet are courtesy of the University of Rhode Island Archives and Special Collections, which maintains a large corpus of historical photographs of the College, then University.

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UNIVERSITY OF
RHODE ISLAND

Introduction

I am delighted and honored to provide an introductory note for the exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the College of Arts & Sciences. When we celebrated the Centennial of the University of Rhode Island in 1992, all Colleges reviewed their histories to identify the next important anniversary of their respective units. We were fascinated to learn more about the origins of Arts & Sciences at URI, and we discovered several points that should be highlighted in our history: the evolution from the School of Science to the School of Arts & Sciences and then to the College of Arts & Sciences, the authorization to grant the Bachelor of Arts degree, and so forth.

We decided to begin by celebrating the formation of the School of Arts & Sciences and the authorization to award the B.A. Degree which allowed URI to add majors in the liberal arts to the strong foundation of programs in mathematics and the social and natural sciences. In 1948, the then Rhode Island State College underwent a reorganization, forming six academic divisions to establish the School of Arts & Sciences. In that same year, the Board of Trustees authorized the Bachelor of Arts degree. The School of Arts & Sciences awarded its first bachelor's degree at the following Commencement in June of 1949. The addition of the B.A. was essential to provide a strong liberal arts core, and it was one of the necessary elements for the Rhode Island State College to succeed in its quest to become the University of Rhode Island in 1951.

In 1998, the College of Arts & Science houses 22 departments in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics as well as the Center for the Humanities, Cancer Prevention Research Consortium, John Hazen White Sr. Center for Ethics and Public Service, Psychological Consultation Center, R.I. Partnership for Research on Women and Gender, the Great Performances Series, the URI Debate Team, and summer programs abroad in England and Spain as well as on campus for youth in Music and Computer Science, the German Summer School of the Atlantic in collaboration with the Goethe Institute and the University of Connecticut, and participates in a variety of exchange programs from Braunschweig and Novgorod to Mexico City. Some faculty members in Languages play a leadership role or support the International Engineering and Business Programs. For many years, we have co-sponsored "That Ram Band" and the URI Pep Bands with Athletics, providing enthusiastic accompaniment for our student athletic teams. Our faculty throughout the College are engaged in a variety of externally funded and internationally renowned programs of research, creative activities and outreach that bring in millions of dollars in support of innovative research and serve thousands of individuals in the community. These efforts take place in the Liberal Arts Core and in affiliation with the URI focus areas in Marine and Coastal Environments, Health, Enterprise and Technology, and Children, Families and Communities.

In 1998, the College of Arts & Sciences advises over 4,000 majors, serves over 12,000 students, and offers 43 bachelor's, 6 master's, 2 professional master's, and 7 doctoral degree programs. Moreover, we provide general education offerings to all undergraduates at URI. Our programs of study enable students to understand our intellectual and cultural heritage and those of others

in the global community, the physical and biological world in which we live, the rapidly changing roles and capabilities of electronic communications and computing technologies, and our social, economic, and political development. We present over 125 performances for the public each year featuring Theatre and Music, co-sponsor the Kingston Chamber Music Festival, and offer a regular exhibition program across three galleries in our Fine Arts Center throughout each academic year. The College continues to evolve. In 1997 we added a degree in Marine Biology and in 1998 we launched programs in Public Relations and a collaborative program with Rhode Island College in African and African-American Studies. In 1999, we hope to offer a Master's degree in Communication Studies.

In preparation for this anniversary, I met with Judith Tolnick, Director of the Fine Arts Center Galleries, and asked if she could help us celebrate by curating some form of historical exhibit in the Main Gallery. We talked about various options and discussed what was happening in 1948 at URI and throughout the nation in higher education and in popular culture. I was delighted that Judith chose to (re) present the College by transforming the Main Gallery into a post-World War II, "G.I. Bill" composite classroom, that combines the disciplines present circa 1948 and represents a library setting from Green Hall. Recalling the magnificent Green Hall library reading room is particularly appropriate because URI is engaged in a fund raising campaign to renovate and preserve this historic and signature building of the University. Judith was intrigued with the challenge of presenting the formation of the College within both a Rhode Island and national context of change from innovations in science and technology to cultural shifts.

Department heads throughout campus helped Judith Tolnick search through archives and attics to accumulate appropriate artifacts and equipment. Surprisingly, some of these items were still in use by our frugal units that routinely extend the working life of museum-worthy equipment. URI library personnel, faculty, staff, emeriti faculty, professional staff and administrators also supported research on URI, and local and national issues of the 1948-1951 era. The exhibition rapidly grew into a collaborative community project involving volunteers from historical societies, members of the media, local businesses, representatives of state government, and the Navy Seabee Veterans of America, Inc. One of the most vivid memories that many volunteers shared with us was the emergence of the Quonset huts, and in particular those that were on the grounds of what is now the Chafee Social Science Center. These resilient structures housed classrooms and residential units for students that were occupied for several years on campus.

As the exhibition came together, Judith and I talked about several people who played important roles in the College history and were "witnesses" to the events we were commemorating. I asked Judith if it might be possible to build an oral history on video featuring individuals who could represent the major groups of people in the history of the College of Arts & Sciences. She readily agreed and we decided to ask James Findlay, Professor of History and Director of the URI Center for the Humanities, and Stephen C. Wood,

Introduction

Professor and Chair of Communication Studies, to conduct the oral history interviews. Mary Conlon, Principal of C Media, agreed to direct the videography and editing processes.

The consensus of everyone involved was to begin the oral history interviews with Professor Emerita Nancy Potter, Ph.D., L.H.D., a distinguished member of the faculty in English who helped to found the College, who served as past Interim Dean of the College, and who remains an active participant on the College's External Advisory Council. She was joined on tape by other distinguished members of our community, including Roswell Bosworth, Jr. '49, the student leader who courageously and persistently supported the initiative to launch the Bachelor of Arts degree at URI. All of the oral histories will be placed in the URI Library archives. Ms. Conlon edited the recollections into a tape that will play continuously as a companion to the exhibition and will also remain in the Library archives.

I am very grateful to Judith Tolnick, the student gallery interns, and everyone she cites in her acknowledgments who helped make this wonderful exhibition possible. The text panels, exhibition booklet, and video recollections provide a fascinating record of the formation the College of Arts & Sciences and its evolution for 50 years at the University of Rhode Island. Thanks to an exemplary faculty and staff, and our outstanding students and alumni, the College of Arts & Sciences remains the vibrant heart of the University.

Winifred E. Brownell
Interim Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

RISING TO THE POSTWAR EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

Historical Background and The Wriston Report

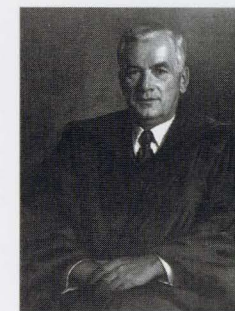
The momentous changes which ultimately would be marked by the formal 1951 State Act changing the name of Rhode Island State College to the University of Rhode Island find their origins in a critical Report delivered to the General Assembly twelve years earlier, in 1939. This Report of a Special Committee contained suggestions for the creation of a new Board of Trustees to oversee the State's administration of its colleges (including Rhode Island College's predecessor, the Rhode Island College of Education) and emphatically and unanimously *against* its "most widely discussed proposal," the changing of the name of our land-grant college to the University of Rhode Island.

The Wriston Report happened in partial response to College President Raymond G. Bressler's continuous agitation for University status in the 1930s. The Committee which drafted the 1939 Report was led by Henry Merritt Wriston, then President of Brown University. Its other members were Dr. Reuben Charles Bates, a prominent pediatrician and State College alumnus who would serve on a newly conceived Board of Trustees for seven years from this point; John Nicholas Brown of the Providence Brown family; Father John Jordan Dillon, then President of Providence College; and the venerable Miss Ruth Franklin of Newport, the ranking female educator in the state and a firm supporter of private university and secondary school education. Interestingly, all of the men on the Committee would receive Honorary degrees from Rhode Island State College within the next few years.

The 1939 Wriston Report stated unequivocally that "At the present time the state college does not have either the form or the substance of a 'university.'" It elaborated at length. First and foremost, the institution lacked a college of liberal arts, "the foundation stone of the edifice." Second, it lacked a graduate school to carry forward training in the arts and sciences or professional subjects, or both. Third, it lacked a heavy accent upon research. Instead of these qualifications, the "center of gravity" at State College was perceived to lie in technical, practical and professional fields.

The Committee found that no strong tradition in liberal studies was evident. No department of Philosophy, not even a single course was offered. No department of Classics, no

*"Neither the form
nor the substance
of a 'university'"*



PORTRAIT OF RAYMOND G.
BRESSLER, 1945

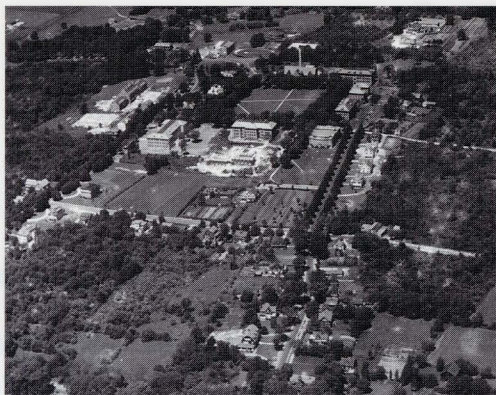
(President, 1931-40)

Wilfred I. Duphiney

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of University

Library

**AERIAL VIEW**

Rhode Island State College
Campus, 1930s
Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections

work in ancient languages and only a limited foreign language component existed. Political Science and History courses were not extensive and Economics courses were practical rather than theoretical in emphasis. Such were the facts. A shift in direction to make the Liberal Arts a central factor was seen to require time, effort, expanded financial resources, and even a "profound reorientation of the entire institution."

One fundamental component of legitimate graduate study was of course a library. The Committee acknowledged the library's appropriate housing for the first time in the College's history (Green Hall, 1937) yet its contents and staffing were deemed sufficient only for a college but not a (research) university. Other related inadequacies, "hardships and limitations" of State College were carefully considered, from the overcrowding of laboratories to the non-university *quantity* of research being undertaken by faculty.

With its many examples as cited, the 1939 Report stated,

"To change the name without changing the substance would be unfair. To change the substance is difficult in any case. It is probably impossible without at least substantially increasing the present state of appropriations."

Comparisons with other New England state institutions who had established state universities from colleges were largely moot, the Committee insisted. Neither the University of New Hampshire (1923) nor the University of Maine (1897), for example, possessed another institution in their state with the name, status or function of a university. The Committee did not need to cite directly Brown University's commanding presence in Rhode Island. Finally, the Report addressed the issue of population numbers. It foresaw a decrease in "numbers of youth of college age" which

"may lessen the pressure of numbers clamoring for higher education at state expense, unless that factor is counterbalanced by other influences now unforeseen."

Written on the brink of WWII, those influences absolutely unforeseen in Rhode Island in 1939 emerged on a national scale following the war when a federal program popularly known as the G.I. Bill of Rights enabled heretofore inconceivable numbers of students to enroll in colleges and universities at no cost to states and indeed to their profit. Could the postwar federally subsidized program correct the many deficiencies named and evaluated in 1939 by a thoughtful, if elitist, Wriston Committee? On the near term, the Report

appeared to have terminated overt agitation for University status (while also arguably precipitating President Bressler's departure). But the significant circumstances of the next decade, under the College's stewardship of President Carl R. Woodward, brought changes which the drafters of the Report could not and did not foresee.

Some "Pre"-History

Let us recall that in 1939 State College was a land-grant institution. Its service to the State was a founding mandate of the Morrill Act of 1862, in which Congress had created land-grant status for institutions of higher education across the U.S. whereby, in each state, public lands were sold for

"the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts...in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes..."

The State Agricultural School, with an Agricultural Experiment Station, was established in 1888 from which in 1892 was born the Rhode Island College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. At that juncture Brown University, which had held but not acted upon the State of Rhode Island's land-grant title, appropriately sold the title to Rhode Island College, its newly re-constituted agrarian neighbor to the south and an appropriate receiver for the economic development message of the Morrill Act.



The War Years

At Rhode Island State College the war years - as no period since the College's founding - necessarily magnified the mission of service to the State and to the country inherent in the original land-grant legislation. In these years there incubated an intense sense of public support for higher education in Rhode Island, concomitant with a sense that those "unforeseen influences" of 1939 had begun to emerge. For Rhode Island State College, the home front effort of the wartime period was extraordinary. It was a period of University building not in terms of serving large numbers of students (to the contrary, only 363 students were enrolled in the spring of 1944) but in the high level of prestigious research performed by the College, especially in the sciences, where the research potential of the College in terms of national health and welfare and warfare was realized and

**STUDYING AT COLLEGE
LIBRARY, CA. 1943**
(Green Hall)
*Providence Journal-
Bulletin Photograph*
©Providence Journal
Company



**RESERVE OFFICER
TRAINING CORPS (R.O.T.C.)
STUDENTS, CA. 1943**
Studying Aeronautics
Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections

recognized nationally. As President Woodward itemized in *From College to University*, his memoir of 1960, "The College made tests of products for sixty industrial organizations on war contracts. Other investigations, some of which were undertaken for the U.S. Office of Scientific Research and Development and the War Production Board, related to the fire-proofing, insect-proofing and mildew-proofing of military textiles, improvements in the manufacture of DDT, the stability of chlorinated lime, locating sources of ocean quahogs...Also, improvements in food production, processing, distribution and conservation were among the College's contributions from [sic] war research..."

Professional consulting services were significantly expanded during the war period. Woodward reported in his Fall Convocation of September 20, 1945 (in an address which he called "From Swords to Ploughshares") on the nature of this activity. One faculty chemist spent two days weekly in Washington to consult with the Ordnance Department of the U.S. Army. Another professor offered technical work on mine-laying operations for the Navy. Another served as a faculty member of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and an instructor in Chemistry worked on the atomic bomb project in New Mexico.

The high-level wartime research profile stands apart, of course, from the emergency demands placed upon the State College as a deviser and deliverer of accelerated education to aid the war effort. In the process of providing a Bachelor (of Science) degree in only 2 2/3 years from 1942 through 1945, ten different graduation exercises were held. Furthermore, new specialized educational programs under contract with the Federal Government were carried out for aviation cadets, for a unit of the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) and for secretarial trainees, the latter to supply the Office of Strategic Services in Washington. The College's extension division operated strenuously, among its many outreach mandates servicing more than 10,000 workers in Rhode Island industrial plants engaged in war production. The College cooperated with the U.S. Naval Air Station at Quonset Point by providing extension courses to its reservation personnel. Indeed it pledged to send a faculty member anywhere in the state where a class size of twelve was assured. Ignited by the situation of a Second World War, on all fronts the College proved it was poised to meet advanced research and pedagogical demands.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced the unexpected if inevitable in a fireside chat broadcast from the White House as early as July 28, 1943: "the return to civilian life of our gallant men and women in the armed forces." The President elaborated,

"They must not be demobilized into an environment of inflation and unemployment, to a place on a breadline, or on a corner selling apples. We must, this time, have plans ready..."

I have assured our men in the armed forces that the American people would not let them down when the war is won."

He went on significantly to note,

"Of course, the returning soldier and sailor and marine are a part of the problem of demobilizing the rest of the millions of Americans who have been (working and) living in a war economy since 1941. That larger objective of re-converting wartime America to a peacetime basis is one for which your government is laying plans to be submitted to the Congress for action..."

Returning veterans smoothly to a population employed to the maximum in their absence was certainly a challenge. Consider that the draft age had been lowered to eighteen a year before (1942), so many veterans had been of pre-college age when joining the armed forces. How could the government service the inevitable societal shift in educational needs of a huge returning workforce?

In the brilliantly formulated options of the G.I. Bill, the Education option alone (Title II of five options) could promise what might become up to a four-year educationally productive delay in the veterans rejoining a national and local workforce. The national program was indisputably economic and political in motivation and mass versus individual serving at base. The Selective Service Act of 1940 itself had guaranteed broad re-employment rights to all veterans who, in serving, would be forced to leave their regular jobs, another example of how deeply the government feared a post-war economic depression. But with maximum employment reached during the war years the delay mechanism formu-

The G.I. Bill of Rights and The Liberal Studies Curriculum, 1944



**PRESIDENT FRANKLIN
DELANO ROOSEVELT
DELIVERING HISTORIC
"FIRESIDE CHAT"**

The White House,
June 28, 1943
Courtesy UPI/Corbis-
Bettmann



**ISSUING OF STUDENT
UNION ACTIVITIES CARDS**
Opening of the fall
semester, 1947/48
Reading Room, College
Library (Green Hall), 1947
Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections

lated as the G.I. Bill's higher education option was a critical maneuver. President of the University of Chicago Robert M. Hutchins' 1944 opinion that "education is not a device for coping with mass unemployment" was a minority protest that did not sway the force of the American Legion and so many other advocates who worked to craft, to pass, and to enact the Servicemen's Readjustment Act in 1944.



**LECTURE ROOM,
RANGER HALL**

Reproduced in *Alumni
Bulletin*, March-April 1947
Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections

University of Maryland historian Keith W. Olson has traced the development and ongoing assessment of the pivotal 1944 Bill in his statistically based historical overview, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans and the Colleges* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974), the first and still the most detailed of its kind. Olson documents the fact that early projections of veteran numbers that would utilize the Bill's education provisions, as well as the anticipated academic performance of the veterans, were both massively underestimated. Numbers of students and quality of performance would prove striking, and indeed unprecedented nationally. Although most campus postwar planning committees (including that of Rhode Island State College) established themselves by 1944, frantically projecting massive needs and shortages, 1946 marked the beginning of the G.I. Bill watershed, with well over a million student veterans in place (Olson, 43). By the fall of 1947, "veterans constituted 49% of the total enrollment in higher education." (Olson, 45).

"Ten years later [1956] when the last student had received his last check, the Veteran's Administration...counted 2,232,000 veterans who had attended colleges under the G.I. Bill." (Olson, 43).

As a final assessment, the historian states

"they attended approximately 2,000 institutions of higher learning at a cost of above five and a half billion dollars." (Olson, 59).

Olson also signals several other important facts in his study. Across the U.S. - and especially in those better-known private and state universities which the veterans chose to attend - the influx of students in unprecedented numbers mandated changes in curriculum, calendar, credit, evaluation and admission as well as in new special services such as counseling. (Olson, 36). Inadequate physical plants and

housing shortages were confronted everywhere. These were the immediate dire issues faced by nearly all institutions. The Federal Government assisted magnanimously here, too, through several indispensable programs including those based on amendments to war period legislation such as the Lanham Act of 1940, shifting defense models to postwar needs. The broad Veterans Reuse Program, and later the Veteran Education Facilities Program, were exceptionally generous to institutions of higher education. Federal aid helped alleviate housing shortages, provided for use of surplus federal structures to accommodate veterans in colleges and even provided surplus structures beyond housing for educational use, including funding their necessary remodeling and equipment costs. Moreover, surplus property was offered to colleges first at massively reduced rates. This property included much-needed equipment for infirmaries, cafeterias, laboratories, and other core facilities. (Olson, 68).

In regard to sheer numbers, the married status of fully half of the G.I. Bill student veterans, and their increasing number of dependents, produced a remarkable change in the profile of the college student (and the college campus) on many fronts. While monthly subsistence checks provided by the Bill were payments raised several times for single and married

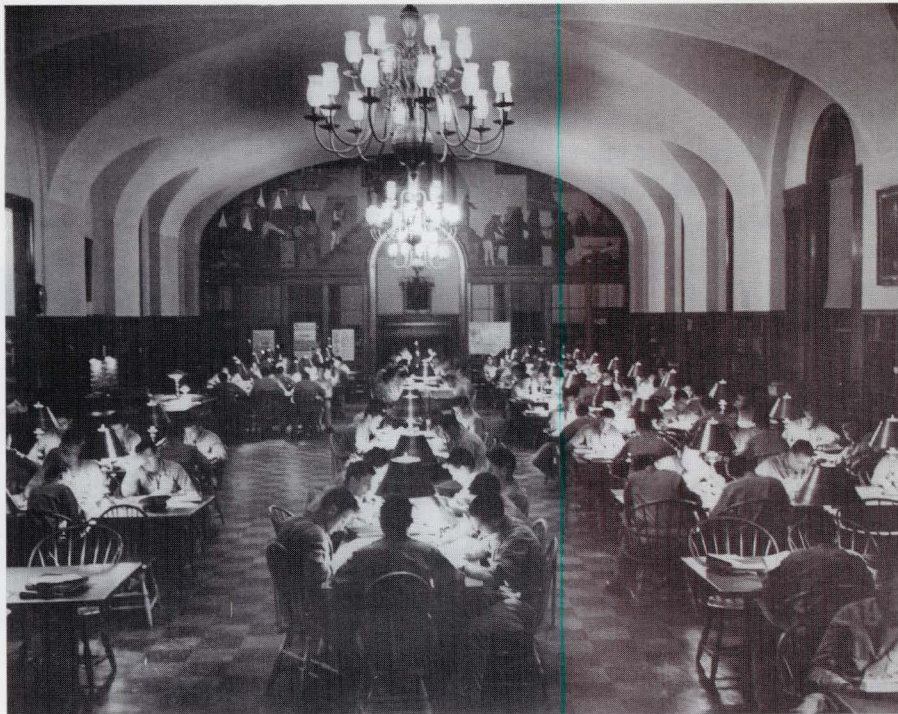
veterans, every college administration encountered a new and heretofore permanent drain on the services demanded of it by the married veteran population. While federal programs proliferated to assist in the crisis, individual states including Rhode Island had to find ways to manage hugely expanded local student populations, on levels ranging from providing housing with electricity to budgeting sufficient books to assigning space in which to perform required reserve reading—all of this on a continuous (accelerated) academic calendar!

The early postwar period was in essence a buyer's market in matters of education. The G.I. Bill-assisted student could matriculate practically anywhere he or she might be admitted. The student had, after all, funds from the government with which to pay. But what sort of student was it? The



**MARRIED STUDENT
HOUSING, CA. 1947**

(Quonset Family Life)
Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections



**INHABITED INTERIOR OF
READING ROOM
COLLEGE LIBRARY,
CA. 1944
(Green Hall)**
*Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections*

student veteran's credentials were surely unorthodox and even marginal by traditional standards, leading some at prestigious private institutions to agree in 1947 with Prof. Seymour E. Harris of Harvard that, "In education, however, the G.I. Bill carried the principle of democratization too far." In this spirit, nearby Brown University instituted an experimental, probationary program called "Veterans College" which effectively made the paying part of the G.I.'s degree substantially longer. But these student veterans on academic "probation" showed they could compete as academic equals and they were unexpectedly able to join the regular student body in record time. While Brown undertook a peculiar trial period which ultimately proved unnecessary, everywhere, nationally, the veteran student excelled. As Benjamin Fine, Education Editor of the *New York Times* (and a 1928 Rhode Island State College graduate himself) summarized it in 1947,

"...here is the most astonishing fact in the history of American higher education...The G.I.s are hogging the honor rolls and the Dean's lists; they are walking away with the top marks in all of their courses...Far from being an educational problem, the veteran has become an asset to higher education." (quoted in Olson, 41)

The New State College Product

Through the leadership and actions of its President during the war years, Rhode Island State College had grown strong and could boast of its expanded educational and research functions whereby it served the State and the nation. In the immediate postwar period, through its proximity to Quonset, Rhode Island and the naval quarters of Fort Kearney it could offer far better emergency housing (then readily available as "Quonset huts") than, for example, Indiana University where students slept on cots in locker rooms, or Alabama Polytechnic Institute, where students bunked by twos in cabins of decommissioned tugboats. As elsewhere, however, Rhode Island State College competed aggressively to benefit from surplus property programs, and again with success. But in an increasingly product driven period, Rhode Island State College had also prepared to appeal to the returning veterans in offering a new academic product—the Liberal Studies curriculum.

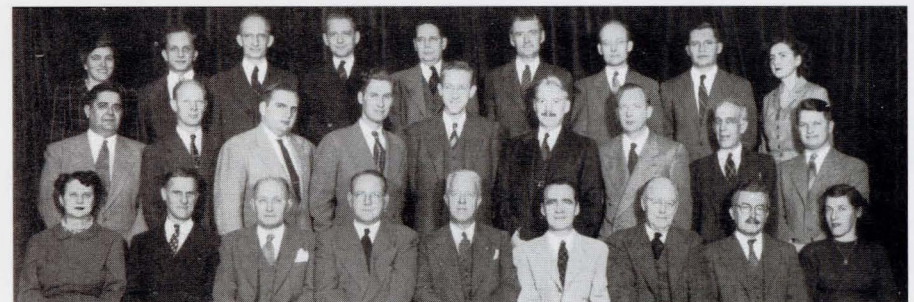
In terms of their academic intentions, the returning G.I.s seemed to desire to know more about a broader world which they had encountered firsthand. Their cultural horizons had been expanded through the cultural/geographical range of their military experience outside combat. As soldiers, sailors and airmen they had to deal successfully with the technical side of things, demanded by their military training and wartime combat. But History, Literature, Psychology, etc. were among the fields of inquiry left *unserved* by the military. In his precocious wartime book entitled *Democratic Education* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1945) Benjamin Fine attributes the following to an early returning University of Oklahoma veteran:

"The chief shortcoming of my education I have found to be the lack of political science, history, geography, sociol-

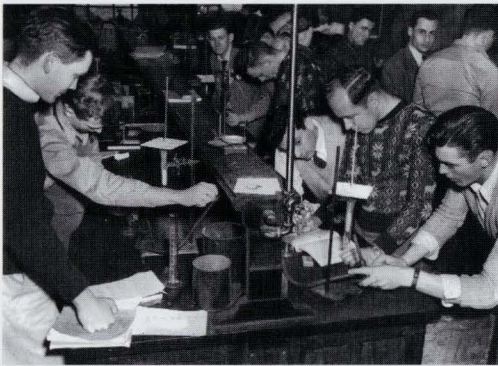


**INSTALLATION OF RHODE
ISLAND STATE COLLEGE
SIGNAGE AT KINGSTON
TRAIN STATION, 1947**
*College and Railroad
officials looking on
Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections*

**PORTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE SCHOOL OF ARTS
AND SCIENCES, 1949**
*(Those in place when
B.A. was first offered.)
Reproduced from 1949
Grist (the College
Yearbook)*



ogy, and philosophy. I find myself unable to understand at all some trends of politics, etc., which must be understood to realize just what the war is all about and what is to be the postwar state of the world." (Fine, 148-49).



**OVERCROWDING IN
GENERAL CHEMISTRY LAB
RANGER HALL, 1947**

*Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections*

But while the terrible war continued and in the same year as the inauguration of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act itself, 1944, Rhode Island State College inaugurated its prototype Liberal Studies curriculum. The definition, hence the growth, of this curriculum remained flexible until the needs and expectations of the veterans were actually confronted. The statistics are telling. Applicants for admission to Liberal Studies rose from 50 in 1944 to 239 in 1947, and in this latter year the College also founded its own chapter of the national honor society in History, Phi Alpha Theta. The selectivity of the Liberal Studies program necessarily increased such that in 1947 only *one quarter* of those applying could be admitted and serviced. This increase occurred in the face of the relentless local (*Providence Journal*) editorializing questioning the advisability of a liberal program at the State College. (Report of the Committee on Bachelor of Arts Degree dated December 8, 1947.)

In response to "on site" expectations by the returned veterans, the Liberal Studies curriculum was appropriately elaborated, modified and eventually codified in such a way that a Bachelor of Arts degree, which had never before been available to a Rhode Island State College graduate, emerged as a serious goal and a realistic possibility. "Unforeseen influences" indeed had emerged at the College.

"Dividends Unlimited" Explosive Growth and Hastening Maturity at Rhode Island State College

As students recollect, President Woodward's public refrain during the mid-1940s was to remark to each entering class that it was the largest to enter the College and that "The College had come a long way." The first peacetime class was that of the freshmen greeted by Woodward on September 18, 1945. Not surprisingly, military analogies pervaded Woodward's public addresses ("Freshman week for college students is something like the briefing room of an air force") but the principal objectives of college education professed by Woodward and "Particularly [to] a land-grant college such as ours" was a combination whose emphasis was "first, to learn to live, and second, to learn to make a living"; that is, a "combination of cultural and professional preparation."

Overall, as the new postwar crossroads was reached, rhetorical emphasis was subtly shifting in Woodward's remarks toward Liberal Studies first, then professional training. "Many will be the calls upon us to render special services, to broaden our curriculum, to provide for increasing enrollment, to rehabilitate our campus life," the President announced in "From Swords To Ploughshares," his Convocation Address of September 20, 1945. The forming of reasoned civilian leaders from the academy (the colleges and universities) had become a driving need when measured against the horror and human debasement of the atomic bomb which felled Hiroshima only a month earlier (August 6). Woodward recognized that the College's reconciling of new forces with older values was "a mighty work that must be done." (Report of the President, 1945-46)

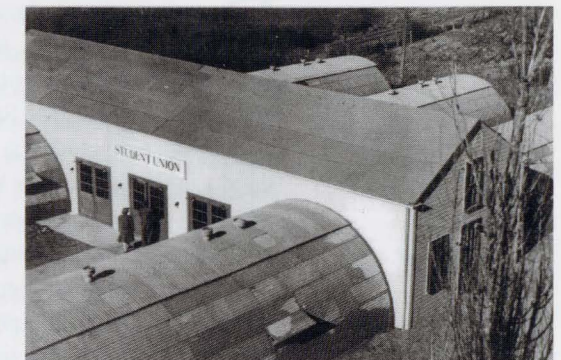
The College's role in creating informed leaders for the next generation was matched in 1945 by its desire to support ongoing research on the part of its faculty, a desire which also signaled a resumption of the Wriston Committee's recommendations. A report on postwar faculty research policies was accepted by the State Board of Trustees (Minutes of January 3, 1946). Anticipating the continued

*"a mighty work
that must be
done"*



**OVERSEEING ERECTION OF
QUONSET HUTS, CA. 1946**

Showing Dean Harold
Browning, President
Woodward and Governor
John O. Pastore
*Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections*



**STUDENT UNION
TEMPORARY STRUCTURE
USING QUONSET HUTS,
CA. 1947** (This structure
would house studios of the
Department of Art into the
1960s.)

*Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections*



**STUDENT RESIDENTS OF
QUONSET "HUT CITY,"**

CA. 1948

*En route to class
Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections*

growth in faculty appointments, it officially recognized the importance of research as integral to the College program and encouraged it through reduced teaching, personnel assistance, travel expenses for professional meetings and even a College supported publication series. Linked with research was the development of graduate study; teaching and research assistants were approved and stipends were budgeted for them. Finally, responding to military innovations in instructional technology, necessary new equipment purchases were made and introduced into the classroom. Especially important were audio-visual materials and requisite delivery systems.

But immediately facing all postwar administrators in higher education, nationally, was the huge influx of students and concomitant housing and facilities shortage. At Rhode Island State College preference was given first to returning students, then veterans resident in Rhode Island and only thereafter to out-of-state veterans. Quonset huts were imported and erected, surplus military property acquired, a "Memorial" Union in tribute to WWII heroism to be used for socially responsible recreation and cultural activity would be built through private subscription fundraising and architects were selected for a new gymnasium. By 1946 (the Class of 1950) only one in five seeking enrollment could be admitted to the College (550 freshmen were accepted from the pool of 3000) and they contrasted enormously in type since half of these students had served in the army forces while half had only recently graduated from high school. In Rhode Island the academic potential of the veterans who had matriculated a year before, in 1945, as nationally, was already proven. As President Woodward announced in his "Remarks to Freshmen" on September 17, 1946,

"They have demonstrated a degree of maturity, a seri-

ousness of purpose, a definiteness of aim, and a capacity for industry which have raised the scholastic levels of the college. Their work has been decidedly superior."

With the accommodating of a diverse student body, extra-curricular campus life also revived. Resumption of inter-collegiate football, college band, fraternities (whose activities had been suspended for four years and whose houses had served as dormitories) and a range of special interest clubs and societies reinvigorated campus life. A ten-year building program was developed by the Board in 1945 and significantly "presented to the people" in 1946. Major facilities it envisioned were *permanent* dormitories for men and women, a new gymnasium, a student union and discrete permanent buildings for Administration, Agriculture, Chemistry, Physics, as well as a building exclusively for classroom use.

Still, the emergency support of several federal programs providing surplus properties remained critical on the near term, 1946, to house the incoming class. From Wickford came temporary dormitories to serve as an annex to Roosevelt Hall, a Quonset "Hut City" housed male students, "Club 400" was the popular name of an emergency auxiliary dining space. Not quite ready at the start of the school year but anticipated and installed shortly were apartment huts for married veterans, the conversion of barracks at nearby Fort Kearney into apartments for students and faculty, a temporary student union comprised of five huts and additional huts from the Sun Valley Naval Reservation for classrooms, laboratories, offices and an auxiliary gymnasium. Rhode Island State College boasted that it was the first institution to receive an allotment of Quonset huts (the highest quality of then-temporary structures) and the first in the country to receive buildings under the new Federal Works Administration. The College's own extensive "Hut City" was filmed and featured in a "March of Time" newsreel segment surveying the national housing shortage.

In his "This is Your College" address of fall, 1946, President Woodward gratefully recognized government assistance to higher education as a continuing and farsighted national commitment inaugurated and conditioned by the G.I. Bill:

"It is true that the provisions of the bill are a reward for national service and a means of compensating the veteran for the time he has given in the national service. But more than this, the assistance which the Federal Government is giving to the thousands of service men and women who will

be on our campus this fall and to the thousands in other institutions represents one of the best investments the government can make in its public funds. It is a recognition of the importance of an educated and trained citizenry, particularly an education for leadership in the professions and in the higher callings in life."

But the demands upon the College in the period 1945-48 were comprehensively intensified by the pressure of unprecedented numbers. In 1945 a five year projection for enrollment was 1500, but by September 1947, thanks to the veterans, that number already had been reached. Highly qualified faculty were hired in record numbers to accommodate a six day per week, eighteen-credit teaching load. Even that prior fall (1946) library overcrowding was so severe during evening

hours that students were turned away for lack of space. From quantity of auxiliary housing and teaching units to quantity of books placed on reserve, shortages were endemic.

"Dividends Unlimited" was the name of the planning booklet issued by the Board of Trustees as a March 1947 *Bulletin* of the College. This significant long range planning document - directed primarily to-

ward state legislators and the bond issue-voting public - was predicated on the College as an investment in which all Rhode Island owned a share, with dividends benefiting everyone in the past and in years to come, as A.L. Kelley, Chairman of the Board, emphasized in his dedicatory statement. (Kelley was President of the Providence Institution for Savings and had a long, productive tenure on the Board, from 1939-55. He served twice as its chairman [1941-46; 1950-55] both critical periods of growth for the College/University.) The Board's plan made plain at the outset that the College's Morrill Act mission had been misconstrued:

"Contrary to the concept which prevailed for many years...[the land grant college] was to teach not only agriculture and the mechanic arts but subjects related to them. Moreover, it was to include other scientific and classical studies. It was to provide not only practical education but liberal education as well."

With many supporting examples, the document pointed out that College's abundant and long-standing service to the state had paid demonstrable "dividends," with its contribu-



**INTERIOR OF QUONSET HUT
DORMITORY, CA. 1948**
*Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections*



tion during the war years only the most recent manifestation. But the document repeatedly emphasized the non-technical contributions of the College:

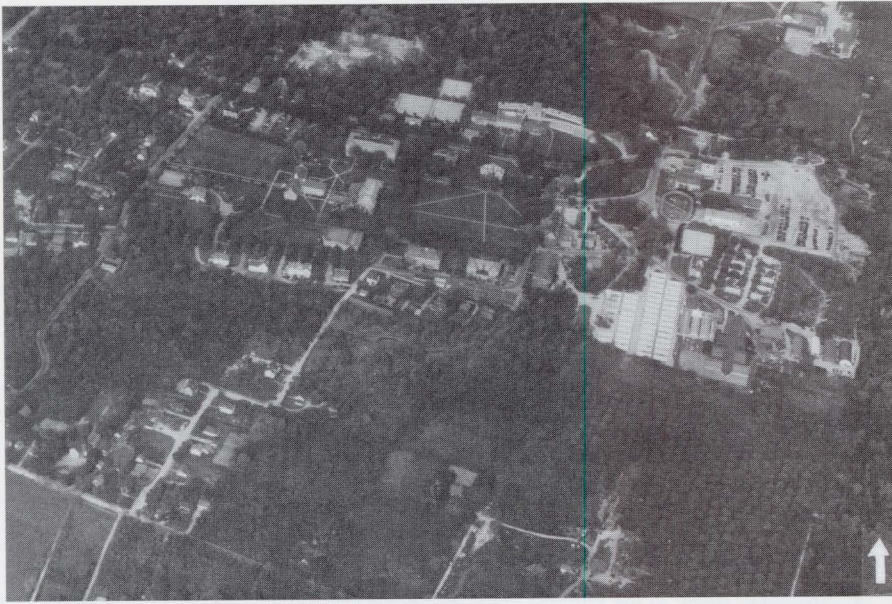
"It has added richly to the cultural life of the state; it has promoted agricultural and industrial progress; it has increased the state's income and taxable property values...The greatest contribution of the college, however, has been...in the men and women whose lives it has influenced and enriched. A state's greatest asset is the character and ability of its people."

The Board's document likewise made clear that the state had heretofore clearly under-recognized its College's contributions since it had not financially supported it. Based on the most recent U.S. Department of Education figures, while Rhode Island was 7th of 48 states in per capita income, it ranked an abysmal 39th in per capita expenditures for higher education. The G.I. Bill veterans posed a most urgent accommodation problem, but the document pointed out that even pre-war situation housing and institutional facilities fell far short of minimum standards for safety and efficiency. Furthermore, it stated that a publicly supported institution - unlike a private one - cannot limit enrollments, nor exercise preference or discrimination of Rhode Island students on the basis of race, sex or religious faith, so that "an enlarged program, an enlarged staff, and an increase in physical facilities" were being called for.

On a first 5-year and second 5-year timetable a wide range of buildings was urgently targeted, including a new Administration building to alleviate the combined Library/Administration burden but also to expand the Library's square footage (which ranked at the bottom of institutions its size even judged by prewar enrollment figures). For immediate building needs of assorted instructional buildings, a gymnasium-armory, the Memorial Union and dormitories, \$3,830,000. was being sought—with less than half requested from public funds, a figure reducible even further if appropriate federal

**TORCHLIGHT PARADE,
MARCH 26, 1947**

Showing Kingston student activists parading in support of new building and dormitory accommodations as recommended in "Dividends Unlimited" *Courtesy of Roswell S. Bosworth, Jr.*



**RHODE ISLAND STATE
COLLEGE, CAMPUS, 1947**

Aerial View
(Note Quonset "Hut City"
at right)

Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections

legislation were passed. Of course, according to the document, increased revenue from student fees from an enlarged student body were projected. These would help substantially to offset enlarged budgets for future operation and maintenance.

The Board's well-researched yet user-friendly document concluded with the thematic Coda that, "The many public services of the college add to the wealth of the state and increase its revenues. Dividends in better living for all the people of the state accrue from the investment in educational facilities at their State College." Bolstered by a state-wide educational campaign in which many student leaders played a strategic part, the voting public endorsed the College's projects in a June 1947 referendum by a margin of 7:1.

The Wriston Report: A Template Applied (1948)

The clear subtext of the 1947 planning document - the text lying beneath the call for necessary practical improvements - was a commitment to an increasingly visible Liberal Arts profile for the College. Inaugurated in 1944, the Liberal Studies curriculum originally encompassed four majors - Economics, English, History and Modern Language - and seventeen minors, from Art to Zoology, were approved. Overall, this newest course of Study was characterized formally (May, 1945 College Catalogue) as "broader and more 'liberal' than is offered in the more technical or professional curricula." In language resonant of then-contemporary ideals and values, it was anticipated that graduates from this curriculum

"should have a facile use of their own and a foreign language, should understand the scientific method in this age of science, should understand our nation's history, its ideals, its resources and its place in world society, and should be able to make satisfactory adjustments in their relations with individuals and groups, should appreciate spiritual and philosophical values, should derive pleasure from literature and the other arts, should enjoy physical and mental health, and should be able to use resources with both economic and esthetic gratification."

Despite mention of "philosophical values," there was resistance to the institution of Philosophy as a course offering, although it was part of the classical definition of Liberal Arts and argued as a *fundamental prerequisite* for legitimate University status in the 1939 Wriston Report. But Liberal Studies graduates of State College as late as 1949, when diplomas would first proudly bear the Bachelor of Arts imprint, were exempt from Philosophy. It began to be taught only in the spring semester of 1949 by a new professor named W. Oliver Martin—chairperson of a department of which he was sole member.

The first four courses to be taught were a highly conservative representation of Philosophy, Philosophy as classically defined. No socially or religiously controversial forms of 20th-century Philosophy were taught, so that no potential for asocial or irreligious texts existed. There would be an exceptionally long gestation of the Philosophy program: it was a recognized minor subject in 1959 and became a major only in 1962.



**JOHN NICHOLAS BROWN
RECEIVING HONORARY
DEGREE FROM PRESIDENT
WOODWARD**

1948 Commencement
Ceremony, Rhode Island
State College

Courtesy of University
Archives and Special
Collections



**ORIGINAL RHODE ISLAND
STATE COLLEGE DIPLOMA**

Bachelor of Science
Degree in Liberal Studies
Issued in 1948
Courtesy of Roger E.
Lavalley

Catholic base. Considering neighboring New England states alone, 55% of Rhode Island was Catholic versus 43% of Massachusetts and 35% of Connecticut. These are 1950 diocesan figures given in Jay P. Dolan, ed., *The American Catholic Parish I* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987). But the College's administrators and faculty were predominantly not of this faith. In addition and likely complicating the situation further, the Dean of the then-School of Science was known to be a high ranking member of the Freemasons. Six religiously affiliated student clubs existed on the campus in 1948, yet the size of their membership differed radically. The organizations were The Asbury Club sponsored by the Methodist Church; The Baptist Group for members of the Baptist Church; The Canterbury Club sponsored by the Episcopal Church; Hillel for members of the Jewish faith; The Newman Club for Catholic fellowship; and Student Fellowship associated with the Kingston Congregational Church. An umbrella Inter-Faith Organization established in 1946 conjoined all religious groups on campus.

Herman F. Eschenbacher has outlined in his indispensable chronicle entitled *The University of Rhode Island History* (1967) that while momentum was gained publicly in 1947 for the College to grant the B.A. degree, contentiousness arose around the Philosophy question. Hesitations were voiced, particularly by leaders of Rhode Island religious communities, at the anticipated inclusion of Philosophy in the Liberal Studies project. Agreeing with what he understood to be Roman Catholic opposition, the canon and rector of St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Bristol sermonized on January 5, 1947 about philosophy's dangers to the faithful and that sermon was quoted the next day in the state's newspaper of record, *The Providence Journal*. In a letter to the Catholic newspaper, the *Providence Visitor* of January 9, 1947, an anonymous student member of the Newman Club predicted that a Catholic certainly would not be appointed to teach Philosophy, given President Woodward's perceived record of not hiring sufficient "outstanding Catholic and Jewish deans and professors." The student further suggested that it would be "State suicide" to proceed in the accustomed exclusionary manner regarding the

In retrospect, the teaching of Philosophy at Rhode Island's non-denominational State College reveals an interesting social chapter in the story of the College's asserting itself within the State. Rhode Island's religious profile, of which its student body was a reflection, was atypically weighted in terms of its Roman

hiring of a professor in this particular field. As Eschenbacher points out, the student's reference to Woodward's hiring pattern referred back to a dangerous contest a year earlier. Then, the pastor at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Wakefield, attributed anti-Catholic bias to the President and Woodward responded in a letter to the Bishop of Providence, Francis P. Keough, which he wrote in consultation with Governor J. Howard McGrath. In later January, 1946, Woodward investigated the matter of his faculty's religious beliefs in a confidential internal survey.

Against the inevitable backdrop of the secular Philosophy question, the campaign to legitimize the Liberal Studies curriculum accelerated among alumni and students through their respective associations and platforms like *The Beacon*, the student newspaper. These camps persistently championed official recognition of the College's well-deserved credentials to grant the B.A. degree, long preconceived as *the* significant step on the route to becoming a full-fledged University. "We are going to have a University of Rhode Island—as soon as the technicality of granting us the A B (sic) degree is taken care of," asserted *The Beacon* in its September 25, 1947 lead article. The campaign for the B.A. was waged in earnest in its final year, from January, 1947 which yielded a very close vote among the Board of Trustees through January 1948 when the vote was unanimous and the bells were tolled in Davis Hall.

The most potent and persuasive argument made to convince the Board of the College's preparedness to offer the B.A. was arguably a Report submitted midway in the campaign that responded throughout to the Wriston Committee's recommendations eight years before. At President Woodward's request, the cogent Report was written in only one week's time by faculty historian Daniel H. Thomas and a large (fourteen member) faculty committee. The Wriston Committee's areas of inquiry remained the guiding template for the strategic Report of the Committee on Bachelor of Arts Degree. The latter's five-part format covered

- I. Increasing Interest in the Liberal Arts
- II. Comparative Analysis of Staff and Course Offerings in Major Departments
- III. Analysis of Library Holdings
- IV. Comparative Analysis of Programs Leading to a Bachelor of Arts Degree
- V. Proposals



**ORIGINAL RHODE ISLAND
STATE COLLEGE DIPLOMA**

Bachelor of Arts Degree in
Liberal Studies
Issued in 1949 (the first
year awarded)
Courtesy of Roswell Sewell
Bosworth, Jr.

It measured in detail the College's current situation against sister New England land-grants and private peer institutions to prove that State College more than measured up to those already granting the B.A. degree. Time had more than arrived:

"[The College's] major Liberal departments are relatively stronger in staff and course offerings than the average of these institutions which have granted the degree for years."

The Thomas Committee's concluding proposals were simple to enact and also in keeping with the content of the Wriston Committee's emphasis on classical education: establish a Department of Philosophy; expand the Department of Languages to include four Latin courses; allocate Library appropriations to service the above expansions.

With the Board of Trustee's 1948 vote in unanimous favor of the B.A. degree, appropriate curricula adjustments were enacted. The School of Science, long a misnomer, became the School of Arts and Sciences. Interestingly and in a curious tribute to Rhode Island's institutions of private education, John Nicholas Brown, former member of the Wriston Committee and Father Robert Joseph Slavin, President of Providence College, were both awarded honorary Doctor of Law degrees in the February 1, 1948 (still-accelerated) Rhode Island State College Commencement. Remarkably the Commencement featuring these Rhode Island private education eminences was held only within weeks of the B.A. degree's successful passage.

Paralleling the climate of challenge and change within Rhode Island State College, American society at large had begun to experiment with an uncharted future. The year 1948 brought many new beginnings. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) was consolidated in Princeton, New Jersey; the first operating computer to combine electronic computation with stored instructions was developed by International Business Machines (IBM); the first post-experimental television sets were marketed; magnetic audiotape technology was on a firm footing at the 3M Company; the first Polaroid Camera was introduced; "The Kinsey Report" (*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*) was published; the Tucker '48 prototype Dream Car was premiered; the first Long Playing Record (33 1/3 rpm) was demonstrated (by Columbia Records); the infectious disease fighter Penicillin became available for routine medical usage; Levittown, Pennsylvania housing was designed for and marketed exclusively to veterans; and the U.S. Congress approved the Marshall Plan of economic reconstruction for postwar Europe.

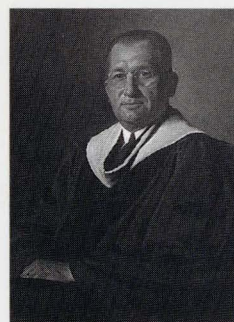
Into the Future: The University of Rhode Island

Once Rhode Island State College had been certified to award the B.A. degree in Liberal Studies in 1948, the

"evolutionary process" was underway, as Daniel Thomas rightly predicted, such that there would be "no major obstacle to University status." (*The Beacon*, February 20, 1948.) Rhetoric was naturally more tempered on the seasoned administration side than on that of the impatient students. In attributing comments to a "new arrival on campus," that prior fall semester the student newspaper demanded, "Why isn't this college a university? We have 2,500 students and they call us a college. We're the only state in the country that doesn't have a [state] university. It's time we did something about it!" (*The Beacon*, September 25, 1947). Indeed, the University of Rhode Island was soon to become the last of the New England land grants to secure University status, following Massachusetts' change in name of May, 1947.

In his considered if not understated way, President Woodward wrote that, "The time has come for us to consider seriously the steps that remain to be taken before the institution becomes in fact a university." (Report of the President, 1948-49.) Following precedent, Woodward appointed a faculty committee, led by this time by Dean of the new School of Arts and Sciences Harold W. Browning, and it reported in spring, 1950. Historian Hermann Eschenbacher summarizes the content of that report:

"In size, organization, and quality and scholarship of faculty the State College met or exceeded every criterion that could be devised to test its claim." (Eschenbacher, 347)



**PORTRAIT OF CARL
WOODWARD, 1945**

(President, 1941-58)

Willfred I. Duphiney

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of University

Library

GRADUATION CEREMONY, 1951

University of Rhode Island

Courtesy of University

Archives and Special

Collections



Immediately following the report, in sequence and in record time the Board of Trustees, Governor Dennis J. Roberts, and then both Houses of the State's Legislature considered the proposal for the name change. Seemingly inevitable *Providence Journal* resistance to the change did operate loudly in the brief window of public debate time provided beginning late fall 1950. But by winter, 1951 and with unprecedented cooperation and support among state legislators, the measure was introduced and passed without hesitation. Postwar educational euphoria firmly exerted itself in the State of Rhode Island when Governor Roberts signed an exceptionally swiftly moving bill into law on March 23, 1951. The Act reads,

"Whereas, Rhode Island State College, through its years of development - in size, in organization, in scope of program, and in caliber of educational performance, embracing the threefold services of residential instruction, research, and extension - has attained the status of a university; and Whereas, the prestige of both the State and the institution would be enhanced if the character of the institution were more accurately expressed in its title; therefore, It is enacted [that] the name of Rhode Island State College is hereby changed to University of Rhode Island."

Judith Tolnick
Director, Fine Arts Center Galleries

Post-Script: The Quonset Hut apartment tenants - mostly married students - were finally told to vacate their quarters permanently on February 2, 1956.

Remembering the English Department at Rhode Island State College in 1948

Now one of the largest departments on the University of Rhode Island campus with a thriving program for majors and minors and with nationally-recognized M.A. and Ph.D. programs, the English Department in 1948 had a very different profile and mission.

At that time there were only twelve faculty (half of whom left the Department and were replaced within the next two years). The normal teaching load was fifteen hours, though Prof. Nancy Potter remembers teaching up to twenty four credits one semester! Only three of the twelve faculty were women, and half of the faculty were hired without a Ph.D. Some of the faculty, like Nancy Potter and Robert Sorlien, went on to earn a Ph.D. at major institutions while they taught here full time with teaching loads that would kill a camel. A new instructor earned a salary of \$3,000. annually.

For whatever reasons, faculty came and went rather briskly in those years. For example, only six of the twelve faculty in 1948 were still at the College two years later: George Warren Phillips, Nancy A. Potter, Dr. E. Arthur Robinson, Dr. Walter L. Simmons, Dr. Warren D. Smith, and Robert Sorlien. Yet this group was notable for many reasons, for as Dr. Potter recalls, "Walter Simmons, our chair, was head of the New England College English Association." By 1950, Dr. Grace Sherrer, Garold Sharpe, and Robert E. Will had joined the faculty and would remain at the College to make their own mark. These nine dedicated people provided the foundation, vision, and incredibly hard work that have marked the development of the English Department and brought honor to the institution over the years.

Dr. Robert "Sparks" Sorlien remembers the period that immediately preceded 1948:

"Following the end of World War II, remarkable, unprecedented changes occurred at the State College in Kingston. We grew from a student body of 1200 to one of 1800 within the first eight months of 1946 as veterans enrolled under the G. I. Bill of Rights and our sparse faculty had to be augmented. When I arrived at the end of January, 1946, fresh from service in the 4th Marine Division and two years in the Pacific, our department had a handful of oldtimers, chaired by Dr. Kenneth Knickerbocker (back from Naval duty), along with our exuberant professor of Shakespeare, Dr. Warren Smith; Dr. Lee Wilson, a talented pianist in charge of play-production; George Phillips, a WWI vet; and two or three others including Dr. Kenneth Barnard. These were joined in

summer by a Virginia gentleman, Professor Walter Simmons as chairman (following Dr. Knickerbocker's departure for Tennessee or Kentucky) and by Dr. Arthur Robinson, whom I had the honor of escorting to meet Dean Harold Browning at Greene Hall. The following year we welcomed Nancy A. J. Potter to our ranks (What a scholarly and personal delight she proved to be, as even our rather crotchety Department secretary acknowledged)."

Though all the faculty had to teach composition, speech, and other introductory courses, the junior faculty carried a particularly heavy teaching burden in those days when publications were not a major requirement for tenure or promotion. For example, Dr. Potter says, "I know that I taught two sections of English 1 [Composition-with 25 to 30 students in each class], two of English 31 (the Lit. component containing heavy writing [about 8 themes each semester-with 35 students in each class]), and a section of the basic speech class (Discussion)." She says wryly, "Some of us taught Engineering Report Writing and Business English-but I would prefer not to remember the details of those." Classes were large, and advanced courses were taught by senior faculty in the Department. Junior faculty felt fortunate to teach an occasional Survey course in literature.

The student body was made up of both traditional students and veterans of World War II. Faculty (and students) from that time remember the excitement generated by the more mature men who appreciated new opportunities for education that they would never have enjoyed without federal government support. Faculty talk about the classroom atmosphere of excitement and challenge from these non-traditional students (many with families) who brought enormous experience and a sense of responsibility that younger students cannot be expected to have. Yet both Dr. Potter and Dr. Sorlien also remember with fondness the younger students. Dr. Sorlien recalls the straight-A student like Nancy Reynolds and the less proficient writers like James W. Ainsworth, "who became a lifelong friend." As he says, "I enjoyed almost all of my students."

Students attended classes six days a week, with some classes held on Saturday morning. As Dr. Sorlien notes, "I well remember one student's wearing her marching-band uniform to my 11 o'clock class; many of the others brought their suitcases which they began to pick up about 11:45" as they prepared to head home for the weekend. Class cuts were limited to three per semester, according to one reporter; however, Dr. Sorlien recalls that "We frequently had

problems with students who cut classes." And the calendar was considerably different from the present schedule: classes for the Fall semester began on September 16 and the last day of final examinations was January 29; classes for the Spring semester began on February 9 and final exams ended on June 10. Commencement Exercises were held on June 13. It would seem that class schedules and the calendar were not designed to accommodate students who were required to work to support themselves, as so many of our present-day students must do.

Dr. Potter recalls other interesting experiences with students: "We did have a lively English club, named Scroll, and produced a literary magazine. In the 1950s we had the unremarkable idea that we should test all freshmen during Orientation, all together in Edwards Hall, writing their essays on lap boards. We spent the next day reading all these papers and then assigning some students to Honors type sections and the other extreme to less elite groups. That diverting strategy did not last long."

The English Program

Then housed in Quinn Hall and South Hall (demolished for the Carlotti Administration Building), the English Department between 1948 and 1951 included Literature, Speech, Theater, Journalism, Composition, and Technical Report Writing. The undergraduate English major was being developed at this time, and the courses in literature were primarily on English literature, with only five out of twenty five literature courses on, or including, American literature. However, Nancy Potter remarks, "Curiously, World Lit. became a popular course in the early 50s, and I found it a splendid course to teach." She notes also that the syllabi included almost exclusively dead, white males (notably European males), and "the introductory courses were taught with the use of a handbook (Harbrace Handbook which went through many editions). Along with the literature anthology we seemed to be dedicated to essay anthologies, which, I guess, provided models." The literature anthologies commonly used at that time included the following: *Understanding Fiction* by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (1943), *An Approach to Literature* by Brooks, Warren, and Purser (1946), and *Understanding Poetry* by Brooks and Warren (1950). *Armstrong's Public Speaking for Everyone* was probably used for introductory Speech courses.

Dr. Potter speaks, I'm sure, for everyone who taught at Rhode Island State College (now the University of Rhode Island) at that time when she concludes, "Although all this

sounds rather uneventful, upon consideration I realize that we were trying to do our best following various demands—the profession, the contemporary student body, the arrangement of the College of Science (until 1948) and then the real College of Arts and Sciences after March 1948. The faculty was quite diverse and, perhaps thanks to the market and the geography and various other factors, I think that we did a reasonably good job. When I used to chat with colleagues at the public institutions throughout New England, I would be reassured that we were in the mainstream and perhaps swimming near the front.”

For those of us who know people who attended this institution during those years, I can say with certainty that the faculty did far more than “a reasonably good job.” It was a remarkable job, and these people left a legacy for later faculty-like me—who have struggled to measure up to their image and their standards.

This material was taken from the University of Rhode Island Archives and from the memories of faculty. I wish to thank particularly Professors Nancy Potter and Robert “Sparks” Sorlien for their enduring generosity, great good will, and remarkably accurate memories in sharing their reminiscences with me. My warm memories of both of them—as teachers, scholars, colleagues, friends, and models of professionalism—have defined the driving principles which influenced my own and many other careers. Their contributions to the evolution of the English Department will remain embedded in the history of the College of Arts and Sciences and the growth of this University.

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