

STUDENT ACTIVISM

at Pomona, Willamette, and Whitman

1965-1971



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A Publication of the
Whitman College and Northwest Archives

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*A photo collage from the 1971 Whitman College yearbook, Waiilatpu. Photo courtesy of
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FOREWORD

Memories of student activism four decades ago, and newspaper headlines at the time, focus upon anti-Vietnam war protests culminating in confrontations with the police and bloody violence at Berkeley, Stanford, Columbia, Kent State and other larger universities. Coupled with minority allegations of institutional racism, these protests drained the protective moat surrounding the Ivory Tower and created a single landscape under generational siege between 1965 and 1970. Led by the University of California's Clark Kerr, emerging multiversities of the earlier 1970s proudly championed the bureaucratic economies of scale which emulated successful sectors of the greater American society, including the military-industrial complex thriving during the Cold War.

These memories and the 40-year-old headlines may, or may not, be the best focus for understanding protests on the big campuses. Tom Edwards argues that small colleges should be understood differently. Edwards first advanced his interpretation in a 65-page chapter, "Student Activism and Its Disruptions, 1965-1975," in the second volume of his history of Whitman College, published in 2001.

On the Whitman campus, activism began with attempts to modify stringently restrictive rules governing undergraduate behavior under the umbrella of the college acting *in loco parentis*. Liberalization was sought in residence hall gender segregation, coeducational visiting rights, women's freedom to choose their apparel and bedtimes, and participation in some aspects of campus governance. Edwards' ordering of issues, after efforts to modify parietals, moved from race and ethnicity to the Vietnam War to feminism to environmentalism to prison reform to the role of fraternities and sororities. Edwards suggested that the local campus scene provided the context into

which national issues flowed, and stimulated further dissent by the minority of students who were activists.

In the essay that follows, Edwards broadens his canvas to depict student activism at Willamette and Pomona, as well as Whitman, during the half-dozen years after 1965. In so doing, he accents the differences between the small colleges and the mega-universities in the 1960s. The large universities were confident about their futures, as student enrollments, and graduate/research programs fueled by government funds, increased dramatically. Little criticism of the resulting undergraduate educational experience at the universities was offered in the early 1960s, despite the research data showing that the small colleges provided superior satisfaction in students' evaluation of their intellectual and personal development between matriculation and graduation. As the tidal shift in student enrollments moved from small to large institutions, and from private to public ones, observers predicted the demise of small independent colleges of arts and sciences. First articulated in the 1960s, this gloomy scenario became educational gospel within a decade. One of the features of small colleges which made them most anachronistic in the 1960s to observers located in cities and large university campuses was the "stranglehold" role of *in loco parentis* maintained by the colleges over the students.

What Edwards argues, paradoxically, is that one of the strengths of small colleges was rooted in the very family-like community which produced the claustrophobic parietal policies. Initiated by the minority leadership of students in the 1960s, the heated debates at Whitman, Willamette, and Pomona created a context of dialogue, disagreement and compromise into which the significant national debates over Vietnam, race and gender fell peacefully (for the most part). By contrast, the most violent explosions occurred on big campuses which had liberalized themselves away from familial communities in favor of impersonal bureaucracies justified by student freedoms and administrative economies of scale.

Edwards' broadened canvas shows commonalities among small institutions, but it also reminds us of the importance of the character of individuals

in leadership positions when patience is strained and tempers frayed due to conflicts of values. Presidents and deans, faculty members and student leaders, played their own idiosyncratic roles contributing to the relative tranquility or turmoil on each campus.

The following essay is a further contribution by Edwards to our understanding of the significance of the small college on the history of higher education in the United States.

Robert Allen Skotheim
President Emeritus, Whitman College (1975-1988)
and Huntington Library, Art Collections, and
Botanical Gardens (1988-2001)

Robert Allen Skotheim

Robert A. Skotheim, currently president of Occidental College, served as president of Whitman College from 1975-1988. He earned his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Washington. He has authored influential essays and books, including *American Intellectual Histories and Historians*. He was honored by Whitman College and received honorary doctorates from several institutions. In 1988, Skotheim became president of the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens where he served until 2001.

G. Thomas Edwards

G. Thomas Edwards received his B.A. in history at Willamette University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in history at the University of Oregon. In 1964 he came to Whitman College, where he taught a wide variety of classes in American history, especially the Civil War and the American West. He received various teaching awards, and in 1998 his former students established the G. Thomas Edwards Faculty Award for Teaching and Scholarship.

He has spoken widely on behalf of the college, and in 1996 received the Alumni Faculty Award for Service. He authored *Sowing Good Seeds: the Northwest Suffrage Campaigns of Susan B. Anthony*, and *The Triumph of Tradition: The Emergence of Whitman College, 1859-1924*, for which he received a Governor's Writing Award. Edwards' second volume of Whitman College history, *Tradition in a Turbulent Age: Whitman College 1925-1975*, was published in 2001.

In 1998 he retired; he and his wife, Nannette, who taught in Walla Walla public schools, moved to Portland in 2000.

Student Activism at Pomona, Willamette,
and Whitman, 1965-1971

During the years 1965-1971 student activism was a major factor in the transformation of higher learning. At various places, including Pomona, Whitman, and Willamette, protestors raised a variety of issues; the major six were *in loco parentis*, the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, women's rights, the environment, and student involvement in academic matters, including the hiring and retention of faculty, curriculum reform, and membership on influential college committees.

Beginning in 1965 activism first appeared at major universities and was linked to the founding of the Students for Democratic Society (SDS) in 1962. Students from Ivy League and Big Ten universities met in Port Huron, Michigan. Tom Hayden was the principal writer of the organization's Port Huron Manifesto, arguing that faculty and students "must wrest control of the educational process from the administrative bureaucracy." This was an example of participatory politics, a powerful proposition endorsed by students who referred to their movement as the "New Left." In the fall of 1964 the student protest began at the University of California after administrators banned political activity near the Telegraph Avenue entrance. A coalition of students responded by forming the Free Speech Movement (FSM), heavily influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, and staged a sit-in led by Mario Savio. Dispatched by the governor, policemen arrested several hundred protestors, a few of whom had worked to register black voters in the Freedom Summer in Mississippi. The FSM, employing such Civil Rights tactics as the sit-in, pressured the university's administration to make sweeping changes of student regulations.

Student activism quickly spread to other campuses, where individuals had become aware of SDS. The FSM at Berkeley and the challenging SDS manifesto appealed to thousands of young people, although few joined

the militant organizations. In seeking reasons why students followed the strategy of FSM and the rhetoric of Hayden, those teaching them and historians recording their activism have generalized that the so-called “baby boomers” were a more sophisticated generation. A scholar listed specific reasons for the notable change: “Television, paperback books, more community tolerance for candor in literature and entertainment, increasing opportunity and ease of travel, new theories of child-raising that encouraged independent experiences, and accelerated and more imaginative elementary and secondary school education made college age youth more sophisticated than they had been in earlier generations.”¹ Coming to the universities in record-breaking numbers, this generation complained about institutional bureaucracies and regulations. Large universities often neglected undergraduates treating them impersonally and sometimes brusquely. Some receiving such treatment responded by comparing their collegiate situation with their secondary experiences. As high school seniors they had been acknowledged and praised, but as undergraduates their individualism mattered much less.

Much has been written and spoken about the student activism between 1965 and 1971 and its impact upon such West Coast universities as the University of California, University of Washington, University of Oregon, and Stanford University. But the liberal arts colleges also experienced activism that brought profound change. In the late 1960s the national and international headlines reported the compelling story of activism on America’s major university campuses, especially when it turned violent. Liberal arts colleges, however, passed these turbulent years more the way families did, responding with considerable complexity in ways seldom captured by the sensational headlines and cameras. As in the case of families, smaller campuses were preoccupied with a variety of anxiety-inducing and conduct-producing issues, not merely the Vietnam War. For the small, West Coast independent college, where *in loco parentis* was still a formal campus policy, the family analogy is particularly appropriate. This essay describes the range, pace, and impact of student activism from 1965 to 1971 at three leading small, independent West Coast institutions.

Pomona, Willamette, and Whitman, reputable liberal arts schools, had different backgrounds. Willamette, with its Methodist influence, was the most conservative. The Congregational Church had been of critical importance in the early history of Pomona and Whitman, but these colleges had long been free of church affiliation. Willamette and Whitman operated in Salem and Walla Walla, towns that were far more conservative than Claremont, and they were more central to these places than Pomona was to Claremont. Pomona was unique; it was one of six institutions forming The Claremont Colleges. With a larger financial base Pomona was in better condition than the two northern institutions; for example, its faculty was larger and better paid.

Despite differences these small colleges shared much in common. They had produced many professional leaders, long enjoyed public confidence, and assumed continued influence. Their predominantly male faculties, who often held classes in their homes, were experienced, dedicated to the liberal arts, and committed to teaching and advising rather than publishing. Professors supported their students by attending their activities and serving as chaperones. Pomona's president described professors as "eager futurists and essentially optimistic."²

The student bodies of these three institutions shared other similarities, including traditional male domination. In 1965 Whitman enrolled 1,080, Willamette 1,200, and Pomona 1,250. Males made up about 57% of each school, a ratio changed little by 1970 except at Pomona's where the percentage of males had increased to 60%, leading outside evaluators to complain about "a male stronghold."³ In 1965, when 94% of college students nationally were classified as white, the three institutions enrolled few minority students.⁴ In exchange programs with historically black institutions, Willamette and Whitman enrolled a few blacks. Prior to the mid-1960s small college admission officers had not made a path to inner city schools, but they, or black student recruiters, eagerly trod it in the late 1960s. The Claremont colleges, utilizing their Southern California location, had more success in recruiting minority students; for example, Pomona in

1971 enrolled 89 blacks, far more than the two Pacific Northwest schools combined.

In the early 1960s administrators at the three schools planned construction, not campus diversity. Recognizing the need to upgrade their facilities, especially new dormitories that would match the modern facilities recently erected at large universities and classrooms that would compare with suburban high schools, leaders raised construction funds. Meanwhile, campus residents continually grumbled about the fact that men lived on one side of the campus and the women on the other, a space that Pomona residents called no-man's land. But in the mid-1960s the college had opened a co-educational dormitory; this significant departure from tradition received praise from local and far distant dormitory residents.

From the late 1950s into the 1970s profound change overtook the nation's campuses, especially in the wake of the great growth of public universities and the arrival of what seemed to be a unique generation of students. These two factors significantly influenced Pomona, Willamette, Whitman, and sister institutions. Consistently impressed with large numbers, Americans hailed reports of record enrollments. In 1960 3,583,000 students attended institutions of higher learning. This number increased to 7,920,000 in 1970, and about three-quarters of them enrolled in public schools.⁵ As historian Steven Koblik explained the impressive growth of the public universities meant, "The residential liberal arts colleges became an increasingly smaller part of the educational scene."⁶ This significant loss of status worried small college leaders, who realized that in the late 1940s more students attended private than public institutions of higher education. Responding to Sacramento's lavish support for the California State system of higher education, California's private schools struggled to raise needed funds for operations and expansion. President E. Wilson Lyon of Pomona lamented in 1969: "It is a matter of grave concern that the nature of the independent liberal arts college is poorly understood in the United States today. The rapid growth and expansion of publicly supported colleges and universities have eroded the comprehension which most educated Americans earlier held for

the independent college.” His successor, David Alexander, pondered: “It may well be that collegiate institutions are doomed, like the pre-Civil War academies in the United States.”⁷

In the 1960s Whitman President Louis Perry, who had taught at Pomona, also emphasized that liberal arts colleges were being marginalized by the power and appeal of the expanding public universities, including the fact that better pay at the universities meant that it was difficult for small schools to recruit and retain professors. Historian Robert Skotheim asserted that in the early 1970s “the demise of most private liberal arts colleges was widely predicted. Economies of scale, vocational preoccupations of students and parents, rising private college tuition prices and student preference for non-residential, non-supervised living arrangements all combined to favor community colleges...and larger public institutions.”⁸ Other informed observers concluded, “Perhaps we should regard the liberal arts colleges as leftovers from an earlier era—the educational equivalent of the British roadster.”⁹

The liberal arts colleges were dealing with a loss of status, and, in the cases of Whitman and Willamette, with attrition as sophomores transferred to large universities. These small schools in the mid-1960s, like the larger ones, were enrolling more perceptive and questioning men and women. Willamette Vice President for Student Affairs Jerry Whipple spoke for many educators when he asserted that the 1960s students had a heightened social consciousness and “were more knowledgeable, honest, and filled with a sense of the ‘now’ than ever before.”¹⁰ But traditionalists expressed concern about the change in student attitudes: for example, in 1969 Pomona President Lyon complained that at the conclusion of 28 years in office it was “Not until the past two years did any significant body of students disappoint me or seem to act in a way contrary to the best interests of the college.”¹¹

In the early 1960s the American family and the American campus still bore considerable similarity. Writers hailed and—sometimes lampooned—the decade’s close knit family; the college president knew best on campus. He and his assistants controlled everything from hiring and firing faculty

to intramural sports. Each understood that he served as the moral as well as intellectual leader of his campus community. For decades disaffected students and disgruntled faculty had grumbled about the college president's power, but traditional discontent about housing and meals did not threaten campus calm or presidential power. A government report concluded, "From the early 1940s to the early 1960s, colleges and universities were uncharacteristically calm, radical student movements were almost nonexistent, and disruptions were rare. The existence of this 'silent generation' was in part a reflection of the Cold War."¹² "College and university officials," historian Diane Ravitch judged, "had no reason to anticipate the era of crisis that lay before them."¹³

Indeed the leaders at the three small colleges worried about their futures. Would their institutions be marginalized? Early in this turbulent decade, Pomona, Willamette, and Whitman anticipated traditional success, but the loss of status resulting from the growth of public universities and colleges shook their foundations. As the public institutions increasingly dominated higher education, some critics questioned the relevance of liberal arts colleges. To skeptics, schools of 15,000 or more seemed of much greater worth than those of 1,200 or fewer. In 1966 a panel of professors and students at Whitman discussed the role of the liberal arts colleges, including the question of their very right to exist. A speaker reminded the audience that many sophomores transferred to the University of Washington, thus he recommended that Whitman should become that university's honors college.

In 1970 the distinguished historian Henry Steele Commager wrote a widely read essay entitled "Has the Small College a Future?"¹⁴ Responding in the same year to attacks from individuals who wanted either more or less campus activism, Pomona's president agreed with Commager by warning that "the institution is in danger." He concluded that college and university presidents also believed that "the stresses society was putting upon their institutions threatened...their intellectual independence."¹⁵ A critical issue at schools of all sizes was the practice of *in loco parentis*. Large school

activists complained about the indifferent administrators and faculty and bureaucratic procedures. Through negotiation they succeeded in ending *in loco parentis*. Meanwhile, the small school activists complained less about bureaucracy and more about the administrators and faculty who favored traditional regulations. In 1968 Harper's explained that colleges everywhere played a parietal role because parents insisted that they be their substitutes: "What mama and papa really feared was premature pregnancies and shotgun marriages, so they demanded the college serve as a relentless chaperon."¹⁶ Willamette's Dean of Students Norman Nelson stated: "parents felt the University should accept the responsibility of providing direction and guidance for students."¹⁷ A Pomona professor explained that a college taught students "to be ladies and gentlemen by the observation of rules of prescription (you must go to chapel, you must wear a coat and tie at dinner) and proscription (you must not drink or smoke, you must not stay out late). Such rules satisfied anxious parents that their children were not in moral danger while away from home."¹⁸

Thus colleges vigorously sought to prevent liquor consumption on campus and sexual intercourse anywhere. Pomona, which had as late as the mid-1960s closed the women's dormitories at 10:30 p.m., eventually shifted its defense of these restricted hours for women from a concern about virtue to a concern about rape. Despite stringent rules against alcohol on campus—off campus in the case of Willamette—enforcement was impossible. Students enjoyed favorite neighborhood taverns and remote drinking spots; Pomona and Whitman drinkers consumed alcoholic beverages in nearby mountains. While students frequently and fervently violated drinking rules, the effect of rules designed to prevent sexual intercourse was speculative. Although alumni recall that stringent dormitory rules helped reduce premarital sex, the use of birth control pills in the late 1960s significantly increased it.

Across the country schools subjected women residents to comprehensive regulations. At Whitman, women above the freshman rank had to be in the residence hall by 11:00 p.m. on weekdays and by 1:00 a.m. on weekends. Rules restricted "overnighters." "A student may not spend

the night in a motel or hotel without special permission from her parents or college officials.” Furthermore, “no woman shall take an overnight on the night of an out-of-town dance.”¹⁹ Males had to have permission to be upstairs in the woman’s dormitory. A judicial council of resident women enforced regulations, giving demerits to rule breakers such as those who had failed to use sign out cards properly or had returned to the hall more than ten minutes late. The Whitman Coed-Code prescribed the proper attire for the campus, explaining that women leaders and the faculty had concluded that dress standards were necessary because the women would look “more ladylike.” Co-eds could not wear sportswear, slacks, jeans, or sweatshirts in classrooms, the library, or downtown. When women opposed to a scheduled execution at the penitentiary prepared to attend an airport protest against Governor Albert Rosellini, the director of women’s affairs inspected them, explaining that she did not want the demonstrators “to embarrass Whitman by being poorly dressed.”²⁰

At Willamette the Student Handbook for 1960-1961 provided a single page of rules for men, including a prohibition of liquor “at all times and places” and a requirement that coats and ties must be worn during Sunday dinner. Women, on the other hand, had to follow six pages of rules that had been adopted by coeds. Closing hours were 10:00 p.m. except for 12:30 a.m. on Friday and Saturday; lights were turned out at midnight. Freshman women could only date on Wednesday night during weeknights. All women must use a sign out sheet but must not erase it. “Overnighters” could be granted only if the housemother had a written note or a personal talk with the hostess. A Salem ordinance, the handbook informed, forbade Sunday dances. A dean defended the traditional rule system because parents thought that Willamette should provide “direction and guidance for students.”²¹

At many small colleges it took nearly five years for the students and their faculty allies to convince the trustees and administrators to liberalize rules such as these and grant students more influence in writing and enforcing regulations. Officials at these institutions reluctantly gave ground to dissenters. This was in contrast with large universities where adminis-

trators much more rapidly abandoned parental supervision; for example, even conservative Washington State University had rescinded most of its parietal rules in 1968. In opposing requests by women in the 1960s to live in apartments, Whitman practiced *in loco parentis*. Speaking for many classmates, a disgusted male responded: “For years we have been told by our elders that we are the best generation, both in intelligence and preparation, ever to attain adulthood, but we are not yet ready to assume responsibilities.” He concluded, “I am forced to go along with ideas and rules that my parents would laugh at as archaic—all this in the name of *in loco parentis*.”²² Whitman’s student body president maintained in 1968 that the majority of his classmates resented the fact that the institution treated them like children, not adults. A survey of Willamette students reached the same conclusion, and a school editor griped that some social restrictions had been in place since the founding of the university 127 years ago.

Pomona women in the mid-1950s “had to cover their bathing suits while walking by the administration building on their way to the pool.”²³ But the regulation of women was less onerous than that practiced at the two other schools. Dean Jean Walton, who had served Pomona for many years and had earned faculty confidence, received great credit for her role in the school’s transition. A colleague recalled that she “changed with the times to an amazing degree.”²⁴ Obviously she moved faster than deans at most small West Coast colleges in dismantling rules. A Pomona professor recalled that “parietal rules were not very interesting in Southern California” and that his colleagues humorously erased long standing strictures.²⁵ But in 1968 a male objected to a few remaining restrictions “requiring the flowers of Pomona to be tucked safely within their edifice.”²⁶ By contrast Willamette’s President Smith who referred to the school’s early Methodist influence, acknowledged a slow revision of rules. In February 1970 a *Collegian* editor concluded, “Progress, in many people’s opinions at Willamette has been a non-existent word,”²⁷ but soon he expressed surprise at the administration’s sudden willingness to accept an open dorm policy after “many years of proposals, pleas and threats.”²⁸ To the disgust of activists, the president’s fear

of trustee reaction to reformed social policies, including visitation hours in dormitories, delayed their enactment. Soon after President Smith announced a delay in implementing reforms, a male telephone caller threatened that “unless our demands are met, there will be a sit-in next week or a building may be bombed.”²⁹ With so much violence on campuses, administrators and the police investigated the threat. In early 1971 Whitman students, like those at numerous sister institutions, had won the right to open co-educational dormitories, to set alcohol policies, to decide on the retention of house-mothers, to exclude chaperones, to delete dress codes, and to help write and enforce housing rules.

As committees met to enact these reforms, many of their proponents evaluated the atmosphere as well as the reforms. A Willamette *Collegian* editor explained: “The campus appeared calm, but beneath the surface there is great turbulence.” At Pomona, Willamette, and Whitman the college communities and alumni described the elimination of rules as either evolutionary or revolutionary. Some angry alumni denounced college leaders for abandoning the long-standing practice of *in loco parentis*. At each institution, long meetings between activist students, faculty, deans, presidents, and trustees tested everyone’s patience. The faculties often advised and sided with the students, asserting that campus residents, not administrators and professors, should formulate housing rules.

Fortunately crisis managers at these schools provided reasonable leadership in the long and often stressful struggle over traditional rules. In the late 1960s Vice President for Student Affairs Jerry Whipple at Willamette, President David Alexander of Pomona, and President Donald Sheehan at Whitman joined with undergraduates and professors in liberalizing rules and then convinced governing boards to accept them. Sheehan explained to his faculty that his task was to “act in such a way that the majority of students does not join the minority.”³⁰

At Whitman hard feelings and resignations followed the enactment of significant changes. In 1967 the director of women’s affairs departed, denouncing thoughtless young male faculty of opposing parietal rules and

warning that fraternities free from experienced senior members and housemothers would become mere drinking clubs. Two trustees from the board of nine—an unusually small body—resigned because of liberalized rules, and one alerted townspeople that co-ed dorms threatened morality. At Pomona an “old guard” dean of men resigned in 1967 and thus made it possible for Dean Walton and a new young staff to dismantle parietal rules. Thus administrative changes at Pomona and Whitman helped explain this significant revision of long-standing rules of conduct.

Activism soon became more inclusive and widespread. According to the Princeton Educational Testing Service survey of the 1967-1968 school year, activists protested the war, denounced dormitory regulations, favored Civil Rights, and sought a greater voice in shaping academic policy. Another survey reported, “Students felt the most important issues on campus were *in loco parentis* rules, followed by free speech, and a usual concern of young adults, food service.”³¹ Activists at the three schools stressed these same concerns. Although historians have emphasized the anti-war issue over others, it is important to understand that a combination of campus struggles over collegiate and national concerns permanently changed schools regardless of size.

Realizing the impossibility of serving as strict parents through the long-standing practice of *in loco parentis*, numerous schools, as Colorado College’s historian judged, adopted in the late 1960s “policies and programs that helped the students deal with the possible consequences of their newly liberated behavior.”³² In an explanation to the Willamette community, Vice President Whipple explained that the university would continue to play “a parental role and will step in asked or unasked to keep a student from harming himself or others. We would much rather work with a student who has an alcohol or drug problem to help him overcome it than to expel him just because he broke a rule.”³³ Whitman and Pomona also would assist and not expel drug users. In summary, these three administrations, like schools everywhere, moved from preventive rules to supportive roles, a policy that still prevails. President Alexander of Pomona reported an increase

in counseling, medical services, and psychiatric services, explaining that the college “spends more for these activities *in loco parentis* than ever before, despite our general abdication of any pretense to parental control.”³⁴ Reviewing conditions at many schools, former Whitman president Robert Skotheim emphasized that expanded student services required considerable money.

Students at Whitman and Willamette expended more energy between 1965 and 1971 protesting the practice of *in loco parentis* than the Vietnam War. This ranking of issues conflicted with the conclusion of *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s*: “Only the Vietnam War evoked more student protests in the 1960s” than *in loco parentis*.³⁵ Anti-war students, who wanted to move beyond campus to national issues, consistently denounced apathetic or pro-war classmates. Although protestors expressed frustration, their views on Vietnam influenced some classmates, alumni, and townspeople. But conservative students, including members of the Young Americans for Freedom, staunchly supported the war.

At the liberal arts colleges, anti-war protest slowly evolved. In 1965 Pomona students joined those from other Claremont colleges and participated in either an anti-war march or one held by the Committee to Support American Fighting Men. The latter drew the larger number of marchers despite the fact that many more non-college supporters joined the anti-war group. President Joseph Platt of Harvey Mudd College observed that the television crew from KNBC “had been concerned that not enough placards would be in evidence in the anti-war march, and had brought along several dozen with anti-war sentiments, which were passed out to student marchers.”³⁶ Angry Pomona students and others rejected the placards, made their own, and raised anti-KNBC messages.

In the fall of 1967 a Pomona poll revealed that a majority of students supported American intervention in Vietnam, a sentiment reflecting the national mood. Historian Ravitch concluded, “Not until 1968 did a majority of students oppose the war.”³⁷ The furious Communist Tet offensive in January contradicted the administration’s previous positive military

assessments, but the war was obviously a stalemate and seemed endless. Throughout the turbulence of 1968, millions of young, anti-war protestors, utilizing the Civil Rights tactics of sit-ins, marches, or rallies, attracted national attention and created concern. Despite all of this activity, the war's opponents at the three liberal arts colleges complained that classmates remained apathetic. In March 1968, a coalition of anti-war faculty and students at Whitman attempted to obtain students' signatures on a resolution opposed to the war, but only one-fourth of the student body complied. Activists denounced this percentage, pointing out that half of Harvard students signed a similar resolution.

During the fall, a small part of the student bodies at Pomona and Whitman conducted sit-ins. These actions were the most controversial anti-war activities conducted on those campuses between 1965 and 1971. In February 1968 students from Claremont colleges demonstrated against two Air Force recruiters. An estimated 150 students carrying placards marched around Sumner Hall, and about 49 Pomona students with others actually obstructed the airmen. Many of these youthful protestors argued for a wide-ranging agenda, including one urging the college to take an anti-war position.

Members of the campus community debated the confrontation. A Pomona College editor labeled the blockers as "authoritarians" and denounced the rule of force, including the obstruction of recruiters from Dow chemical company, a manufacturer of napalm. Another student charged that many students came to Pomona "to major in four years of dissent, rebellion, and generally obnoxious behavior rather than pursuing a meaningful program of academic study." A group of students, however, responded that in "a world gone mad" the demonstrators were "earnest and sincere."³⁸ The administration implied that all groups could use the placement office, thus some Pomona students "arranged for the chairman of the Communist Party of Northern California to request the opportunity to recruit Pomona students through the placement office to work in a summer project furthering party aims."³⁹ Opposed to this prank, President

Lyon ruled that the placement office could not be used for political propaganda.

While the campus community argued over the sit-in, a special student judiciary conducted extensive hearings and recommended suspension for the 49 students who had obstructed the recruiters. Authorities suspended the punishment but warned them not to repeat their disruptive behavior. President Lyon explained to the Pomona community that the school would not take a stand on the war, that a special committee would review the college's judicial procedures, and that all placement office interviews were cancelled.

In April 1968 Whitman activists—some of whom held membership in the SDS—staged a campus sit-in against U.S. Navy recruiters. Administrators had informed students that the college, like many other schools, maintained an open campus and welcomed all recruiters. In response disgruntled male and female students organized a sit-in on a campus driveway. Deans insisted that the 15 protestors allow the recruiters' automobile to pass or be suspended. Most students departed but two men remained. The president then called the police who arrested them but promptly released the activists on \$100 bail. The Walla Walla police chief reported that 10 on-duty officers and seven off-duty officers had been assigned to handle the situation. In fact, his entire force had either parked at the edge of the campus or had been placed on standby at a cost of \$340.⁴⁰

The administration's use of police was the only time that any of the three schools summoned police, an action prompting controversy. The Whitman faculty, however, unanimously approved a motion commending the administration "for the skillful and restrained manner in which it conducted a potentially explosive situation."⁴¹ The bitter controversy at Columbia University had influenced the faculty vote.

Soon after the confrontation at Whitman, rebellious black and white radicals at the prestigious Ivy League institution barricaded several university buildings. "The young occupiers," according to historians Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, "viewed Columbia as a pillar of the system responsible

for ghettoizing the residents of Harlem, exploiting the garbage workers of Memphis, and raining death on the peasants of Vietnam.”⁴² College authorities summoned the police, who forcefully returned the buildings to the administration. A student strike followed the confrontation. Americans everywhere discussed these well-publicized events at the prestigious Ivy League school.

In September 1968 students returning from summer vacation learned that the presidents of the Claremont colleges gave each other the right to suspend students in any of the other schools who engaged in obstructive protest. According to critics, trustees and presidents adopted this policy because they feared the violence that had rocked Columbia University the previous spring could occur at their campuses.

With support for the war eroding, the small colleges, like the larger universities, became centers of anti-war protest. Townspeople opposed to the war came to campus, conversing with like-minded professors and students. In Salem, Claremont, and Walla Walla these individuals petitioned government officials, attended rallies, marched on major streets, conducted teach-ins, and in 1972 campaigned for Democrat George McGovern. Activists at Pomona conducted a “teach-out,” encouraging participants to be neat and non-confrontational while urging neighbors to oppose the war. The protestors reported that neighbors often responded coolly to their anti-war pleas. In 1969 a Whitman class also canvassed neighborhoods. To the surprise of many Walla Wallans, they found that 54% of residents thought it was a mistake to send American troops to Vietnam.⁴³ This report inspired the college’s so-called “peaceniks.” Meanwhile, Willamette students, after some training, passed out anti-Vietnam War literature at downtown Salem sites.

Marches and vigils drew far more attention than teach-ins. In 1969 Pomona students joined in a march of 150 individuals opposed to the army’s ROTC unit, but an anti-war march proved more popular as an estimated 5,000 students and townspeople took to the streets. At Willamette, as at many other colleges, activists had been quiet to see if President Nixon would

initiate policies to terminate the war. Because he failed to do so, students across the nation joined other groups in formalizing their opposition to the war.

All three schools participated in the first Moratorium, a national event held on October 15, 1969. Scheduled by the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, an organization enlisting many groups, including student government officers, the vigils, marches, and other anti-war activities, attracted moderates as well as activists. An estimated one million participants expressed displeasure with the war.

Around the time of the Moratorium, Willamette activists, who had received the support of Senator Mark Hatfield—the school’s former dean of men—conducted well-publicized events. On October 10, the Willamette *Collegian* had concluded that the student protest against the Vietnam War was “a positive, constructive, and non-violent effort to educate the public.” The three day program included a candlelight vigil that launched a 36-hour reading of the names of 44,800 Americans who had died in the war, a vigorous anti-war speech by ex-senator Wayne Morse, a letter of support from Senator Hatfield, and a march to the nearby state capitol. A Willamette anti-war activist explained that the reading of dead Americans was “not political, but rather symbolic of the immoral deaths these people have suffered.” “Students oppose the war because Americans and Vietnamese are dying needlessly and because the war is, in every respect, a disaster for America.”⁴⁴ Students from other Willamette Valley campuses joined the demonstration. At the capitol a delegation from the 1,000 protesters handed Governor Tom McCall a petition calling for the end of the war. He praised the decorum and methods of the demonstrators but rejected their call, asserting that the United States should withdraw “as soon as we are sure that the South Vietnamese can carry on for themselves.”⁴⁵ On a personal note, McCall explained that he had a son in Vietnam and another who refused to comply with the draft. Meanwhile, Whitman protestors placed the number 685,340 on buildings, estimating that this was the total number killed in the Vietnam War, and marched by candlelight to the courthouse.

Anti-war protestors on many liberal arts campuses demanded an end to ROTC programs, insisting that they linked their school to a detested war. Whitman lacked a ROTC unit thereby avoiding the difficulty that beset its sisters. But a few of its women and men demonstrated against the local high school's ROTC unit, an action that agitated the school's administration and townspeople. Willamette's elective Air Force program came under limited criticism. Following its study of the ROTC program, professors and students endorsed it, concluding that liberal arts officers were needed to balance the "technically oriented officers from the military academies."⁴⁶ Pomona students and outsiders marched, demonstrated, and wrote letters against the elective Army ROTC program. Its opponents applied considerably more pressure against ROTC at Pomona than at Willamette, and late in 1969 nine Pomona students, as part of a Moratorium demonstration, conducted a sit-in at ROTC headquarters. Appearing before the Judiciary Council made up of students, the accused defended themselves and referred "to the genocidal nature of the war and the immorality of the Claremont colleges' participation in the war through their sponsorship of ROTC."⁴⁷ Found guilty of violating the regulation on obstructive demonstrations, the defendants were expelled, but the expulsion was suspended. The defendants learned that, if they were again found guilty of violating the regulation regarding obstructive demonstrations, they faced automatic expulsion. They and their sympathizers protested the verdict and ROTC. Taking about the same general position as the Willamette faculty, Pomona professors defended ROTC, arguing there was a need for liberal arts majors in the army, and revised the regulation. Student opposition waned.

In the late 1960s the draft was a more significant issue than ROTC. At every college campus, activists—both men and women—attended anti-draft meetings and railed against the war. Stanford's former student body president, David Harris, and others formed the Resistance, a militant group that urged opposition to the Selective Service System. This group recruited few members at the three liberal arts colleges, but Whitman anti-draft protestors hailed the fact that one-third of the student body attended his talk

and often quoted him. Students, professors, and townspeople offered draft counseling: for example, Willamette and Salem volunteers jointly operated a draft counseling center for local young men and their parents. The Walla Walla Resistance was an organization that drew Whitman students to weekly meetings that sought to reform or resist the Selective Service. Faculties at all three schools wrote letters to draft boards seeking deferments for their advisees and others. Cheering classmates at rallies praised those few men at Pomona and Whitman who burned or claimed to have burned their draft cards. Many males acknowledged that college deferments were a privilege denied to others but continued to use them in graduate school or remained deferred by joining the popular Peace Corps. In 1969 about half of the Pomona graduating seniors wore white armbands demonstrating support for a mimeographed statement that called the conflict in Vietnam “a totally unjustifiable war,” denounced the draft, opposed pollution, and warned of “the cancer of exploitation which is gradually creeping into every aspect of American society.”⁴⁸

During the 1969-1970 school year fewer Pomona, Whitman, and Willamette students attended anti-war rallies. At all three the April 1970 Moratorium lost support because, as a Whitman editor concluded, individuals did not see “a direct cause and effect relationship between their marching, their candles, and the end to fighting.”⁴⁹ But later in the month anti-war activity greatly intensified at these schools after Nixon sent troops into Cambodia and after the National guardsmen killed four students at Kent State. An estimated 80% of the nation’s colleges and universities experienced protests. Pomona’s president emphasized that these spring events had “a galvanic” effect, creating a student mood similar to “the aftermath of the firing upon Fort Sumter.”⁵⁰ Emotional Pomona dissidents proposed blocking freeways and igniting the ROTC building; at Whitman frustrated students talked of painting yellow the tanks at the local armory. Although Pomona students rejected radical action, they sponsored a major protest parade in Claremont. Assistant Dean of Students Beverly Brice explained that in this emotional situation, as during earlier Pomona demonstrations, the violence

that had happened at other campuses was avoided because administrators and faculty listened and understood their angry students. She added: "Size helped, for you would be talking with students that you had known and who had a respect for you."⁵¹

Willamette sought to explain the surprising militancy to alumni by publishing an article by Harvard University psychiatrist Dr. A. M. Nicholi II in its alumni magazine. He informed college leaders that activists came "from homes where their fathers frequently were absent—and they feel rejected by campus administrators who seem to them to be just as unreachable as their fathers used to be." He concluded: "Today's youth possess a peculiarly intense sensitivity to remote, invisible, and unresponsive authority" and advised college presidents to be accessible.⁵² Perhaps alumni and others concluded that at small schools, administrators, like responsible fathers, connected with young people while those at large schools often ignored them. In any event, small school administrators often asserted that their campus community was like a family. Across the nation the small colleges, unlike the large universities, were face-to-face communities while responding to Vietnam and other controversies.

But the actions of angry students in the spring of 1970 understandably attracted far more attention than a discussion of the reasons why this generation of young people turned to activism. Several California colleges and universities elected to adhere to Governor Ronald Reagan's unique request that they close, but Pomona only canceled classes on May 7. Administrators offered their distracted students the option of taking classes on a pass-fail basis and urged them to attend meetings discussing the controversial war. To the disgust of activists, many classmates preferred a beach party to a campus seminar. Anti-war activists at Whitman and Willamette also energized by the intrusion into Cambodia and the incident at Kent State, denounced administrators for failing to close the institution for a day and emphasized that numerous colleges and universities had closed in a widespread anti-war protest. In opposing petitioners, President Sheehan assured them of their right to demonstrate against the war but emphasized that the college did not



*David Alexander,
Pomona College*



*Jerry Whipple,
Willamette University*



*Donald Sheehan,
Whitman College*



Pomona students protesting the Vietnam War. Photo courtesy of Special Collections at the Honnold/Mudd Library, The Libraries of The Claremont Colleges.



Vietnam War protest, 1970 Wallulah yearbook, University Archives, Willamette University.



Student protest, 1971, Whitman College. Photo courtesy of Whitman College and Northwest Archives, Penrose Library, Whitman College.

have a foreign policy. Pomona President Lyon had emphasized the same point.

In May 1970 Whitman's anti-war group, joined by sympathetic townspeople and Walla Walla College students, marched once again to the county courthouse. The Whitman community raised money to send a delegation of faculty, students, and a Walla Wallan to Washington, D.C. As anticipated Congresswoman Catherine May (R) and Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson (D) gave the delegates no satisfaction, but Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, Whitman's most distinguished alumnus, encouraged continued local action against the prolonged conflict.

Pomona took action similar to Whitman. It joined the other Claremont colleges in sending five administrators, including the president of Harvey Mudd, and ten students to the nation's capital. For about three days they met with political leaders, urging termination of the controversial war. The group met with Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an assistant to President Nixon, who gave the visitors a civics lesson and, like Justice Douglas, advocated local action. Willamette dissenters did not send a group to Washington but conducted seminars and vigils as ways to express their "grief and disillusionment."⁵³

News coverage of peaceful attempts to terminate the long conflict—critics argued that it had lasted longer than the American Civil War—attracted little public attention. Violent campus protests in May, including the burning of ROTC buildings, outraged citizens. Responding to widespread campus confrontations, Americans polled in June 1970 identified campus unrest as the nation's most disturbing issue. The Scranton Report of Campus Unrest tried to assure the troubled public—with limited success—that "Most student protesters are neither violent nor extremist."⁵⁴ Many townspeople, alumni, and members of the college communities frequently condemned administrators, students, and professors. In Walla Walla, Salem, and other college towns, the estrangement between the campus and community seemed almost irreconcilable. Veteran teachers maintained that the divide between town and gown was the deepest ever, and small college fundraisers feared

that potential donors would be angered by the dissident students' behavior. Pomona's president recalled that "tensions between colleges and their communities were surely greater than normal" and he observed that college presidents dealt carefully with alumni, who "mirrored public attitudes to colleges and their students."⁵⁵ Townspeople and parents denounced the students' counterculture—including long hair, scruffy beards, patched jeans, granny glasses, drugs, casual sex, and rock music—and the lack of patriotism, including shouts against the President, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, General William Westmoreland, marches with the American flag upside down, displays of the Viet Cong flag, or burning draft cards. According to historian David Farber, "It was the counterculture, more than the anti-war movement or Black Power groups, that seemed to many older Americans to be most threatening to their families."⁵⁶ Asserting that it was a privilege to attend college, critics urged administrators to crack down on dissenters; expulsion seemed a fit punishment. At Pomona, for example, some trustees charged that the school's administration was "weak-kneed" and favored expulsion, although most board members, "believing in the rule of law, opposed such drastic action."⁵⁷

Defending their activist classmates, moderate students sometimes reacted against local critics, calling them unsophisticated conservatives or worse. Students coming from major cities looked upon Salem and Walla Walla as cultural backwaters and emphasizing intergenerational disagreements, often voiced a universal slogan "You cannot trust anyone over thirty." A Willamette senior described Salem "as the only place in the world that serves Geritol on Tap" and asserted that his classmates must travel to Eugene or Portland for "action."⁵⁸

Activists at colleges large and small expressed frustration. Despite their protests the costly and controversial war continued. According to historian Rorabaugh anti-war students determined "that the war had a life of its own and that energetic opposition was futile."⁵⁹ Dissidents discovered that it was far easier to influence the dean of students than Dean Rusk. Traditional campus rules could be revised or terminated through consistent pressure—

often with the assistance of young male faculty—on administrators and trustees. These same teachers frequently encouraged opposition to the war and helped students find ways to avoid military service. Both groups despaired over the course of the costly war.

In 1970 anti-war protest across the country crested and then sharply declined in 1971. “The recession has probably contributed,” one journalist explained, “to some students’ preoccupation with their own careers.”⁶⁰ Nixon’s Vietnamization policy significantly cut troop numbers and his replacement of the draft with a lottery system reduced the number of college men who were draft eligible. His policies contributed to the reduction of anti-war activity. Discouraged by this situation, Pomona’s activists in 1971 wrote an open letter to President Nixon: “The relative quietness of the college students this year is quietness of desperation, not a quietness of consent to present policies.”⁶¹ Some Willamette and Whitman critics concurred; “Nixon’s credibility gap,” a Whitman student asserted, “is now wider than any previous administration.”⁶² While many college activists agreed with this opinion, they gloomily concluded that their efforts had not ended “Nixon’s war.”

Walla Wallans and Whitmanites actually greeted President Nixon in the fall of 1971. He was making a visit to the Hanford nuclear reservation. Despite controversy surrounding the president, a large crowd cheered him during his stopover. On campus anti-war activists flew the American flag backwards as a visual protest. But at the airport captains of Whitman’s football team expressed a different opinion, presenting their president with a homemade football letter jersey with the name “Nixon” and the number 1. Wary of visiting college campuses, the president appreciated the tribute, informing his large audience: “It’s the greatest compliment I’ve ever received on one of these trips.”⁶³ Reciting the war’s atrocities, anti-war activists, including some alumni, bemoaned the presentation of the Nixon gift. These individuals, however, expressed pleasure upon learning of a later campus vote. Within a year student body officers, angered by the escalation of the war, passed a resolution asking the president to return the jersey. Although

Nixon's opponents hailed this widely publicized action, many in the college community and the town expressed outrage, insisting that requesting the gift's return had discredited their alma mater. The White House refused to comment upon the request.

As had been the case at the large universities, the Civil Rights Movement had great influence upon student activists at small institutions. At the three small schools the emergence of the Black Student Union (BSU) made racism on and off the campus a major issue. The nation's long-standing racial practices, like the Vietnam War, became a campus concern. Prior to the arrival of the BSU, white activists had identified campus racism but aroused only limited concern among classmates. At Whitman in 1965, for example, a small number of students and faculty, responding to events at Selma, Alabama, conducted a protest march to the county courthouse; a small number joined the recently created Friends of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a group formed in 1960.

Some students sought to end existing discriminatory policies of fraternities and sororities, emphasizing the ongoing struggle for Civil Rights in the South, the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and urban riots that rocked the nation in the 1960s and 1970s. Activists debated black leadership tactics ranging from Martin Luther King to Malcolm X and denounced Senator Barry Goldwater's opposition to Civil Rights legislation.

As late as the mid-1960s, the well-entrenched Greek system shaped student life. At Willamette and Whitman more than two-thirds of the student body joined national fraternities and sororities. While Pomona sanctioned no sororities, most men joined the seven local fraternities, operating in dormitory rooms, not individual houses. At these three small schools as at large ones, Greeks had traditionally dominated social and political life, won election as student body officers, served as presidents of clubs and societies, and edited campus publications. Sorority women at Willamette and Whitman, like those at big institutions, dominated organizations ranging from rally squads to homecoming courts. In summary, it seemed to many

students that to be an independent at these three small schools was to miss much of college life.

On the college campuses, the Civil Rights Movement was played out in opposition to practices of the Greek system. Many chapters had traditionally discriminated against racial minorities and Jews, but in the 1960s a growing number of professors and students, including Greeks, attacked such practices and insisted that it made no sense to denounce racism in the distant South or Los Angeles while it existed on their campuses. In 1968 Willamette's student body president charged that blacks visiting the campus had been insulted and predicted: "When all of the fraternities and sororities will gladly accept Negroes, then they would enroll" at the university. A Sigma Chi member observed that it was strange that his Christian fraternity did not have a single black member in 1969.⁶⁴ Changes in the racial membership clauses of fraternities and sororities have attracted little scholarship, but the revision of membership rules was a giant step in the struggle for campus equality. Many critics and some defenders of Greek organizations deserve credit for the long overdue reform.

Led by concerned Greeks Whitman's student congress sent letters to student body presidents of all schools listing Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Chi chapters, seeking a joint attack against their discriminatory policies. Meanwhile a Whitman faculty committee, insisting that the Greek organizations revise their rules or face eviction, conducted hearings with members and alumni of ten fraternal groups. This effort to remove racial and religious clauses was strengthened because state schools were taking similar action. Whitman's Sigma Chi chapter folded when men disaffiliated and formed Nu Sigma Chi after a fraternity officer in Spokane would not allow the chapter to initiate a Japanese-American. But Sigma Chi soon reformed its rules and returned to campus.

By the late 1960s increasing numbers of freshmen refused to participate in the Greek system. Many—activist and not—regarded fraternal experience as irrelevant. In a period of increased individualism, Greek membership dropped in the early 1970s to less than 50% of the students at

all three schools, and many, including faculty, gleefully predicted the death of the fraternal system. The Willamette *Collegian* on April 24, 1970 insisted that unless the Greeks terminated “some archaic traditions” and became more involved in the campus community, they would become irrelevant. Although the Greeks survived at all three schools, they never regained their past influence.⁶⁴

While colleges discussed racism—local and distant—and debated the merits of the fraternal system, the Black Student Union at all three schools presented college communities with a fresh and sharp challenge. Pomona’s president frankly admitted that the BSU “had group loyalties which transcended their members’ attachment to their colleges. Thus administrators and faculties found themselves dealing with students whom they did not know. The difficult issues that students raised was exacerbated by the lack of personal acquaintance that normally characterized relations within the college.”⁶⁵ The rhetoric of black students angered many in every campus community. At Willamette in 1969 a black sophomore wrote: “The hypocrisy and ignorance here can be compared to other White Christian oriented American groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. This comparison may be somewhat far flung, but so is my situation.”⁶⁶ He insisted that a BSU chapter was necessary because the school placed its black students in a separate category.

At all three colleges the BSU kept in contact with chapters at other schools, sought funding to bring black speakers to campus, and lobbied to add more library books about the black experience. More importantly, the group insisted—sometimes demanded—that the colleges recruit more minority students, hire more minority faculty and staff, and offer Black Studies courses.

BSU agitation, including its action at Reed College, created sharp disagreements among students, faculty, and administrators at various campuses. College communities in the Pacific Northwest closely followed events at Reed in November 1968, when the BSU presented non-negotiable demands, including complete control in selecting black faculty for a new

Black Studies program.⁶⁷ Disgusted with the faculty's response, the BSU barricaded the president's office. He refused to call the police, and the school bitterly disagreed over the demands and actions of the activists. Administrators and faculty at regional campuses discussed Reed's dispute and spoke in favor of compromise over confrontation. Many discussants denounced BSU's tactics, especially the sit-in. Seeking conciliation, administrators and faculty realized that the BSU was the most militant group that had ever been on their campuses. What had happened at Reed could happen elsewhere, but a Willamette editor put the confrontation in perspective. He judged that Reed College handled the demonstration much better than San Francisco State College. Demanding a black student program and increased enrollment of minority students, the BSU had led a long campus strike at San Francisco State. In December President S. I. Hayakawa employed an imposing police force to reopen the institution. Later police with drawn guns using mace drove demonstrators away from the administration building. The president's use of force, expulsion of radicals, and threats to faculty made him a controversial figure on West Coast campuses.

Realizing that Reed's experience with the BSU was more relevant than San Francisco State's long encounter, a Whitman dean early in 1969 received demands from a coalition of black and white students. The college did not meet the demands but the campus thoroughly discussed students' rights, the need to hire minority professors, to recruit blacks and other minority students, and to add some courses on the minority experience. During their lively discussion of issues raised by the coalition, some Whitman leaders feared that the impatient BSU members and white sympathizers would occupy administrative offices.

During Pomona's "agitation over Black Studies" a pipe bomb addressed to a professor exploded in the hands of a secretary who lost part of her sight and two fingers.⁶⁸ Officials determined that outsiders were responsible for the device. According to Joseph Platt, ex-president of Harvey Mudd, it was rumored that some "white students, expert in the use of hunting rifles, had concluded that the BSU members were responsible for the bombings,

and were determined upon vengeance.”⁶⁹ Thus presidents of the Claremont colleges met with BSU officers who insisted that the shades be pulled before they entered the meeting place. Platt added that the presidents “worked out a plan to get all black students in our colleges off campus and in faculty homes overnight.”⁷⁰ In early 1969 Pomona and the other Claremont colleges engaged in a heated debate and then jointly created the Black Studies Center and the Mexican-American Center. The academic standards of these two programs prolonged the controversy. Under less pressure for such programs, Whitman rejected a Black Studies department but added sociology and history courses dealing with black culture, history, and the consequences of racism. Willamette offered a new course, “Black Culture in Africa and America.”

In the spring of 1969 Willamette’s BSU did not challenge the campus community. Its chairman complained that, if the organization pushed for “social or academic reform,” it would not receive support from a student body that accepted the status quo. A writer complained that 12 blacks could not “educate two thousand ignorant [Willamette] WASPs.”⁷¹ But two years later the BSU was much more active. With 35 black, Chicano, and American Indian students enrolled at Willamette, 40 administrators and faculty attended a ten-session discussion series called “Black-White Uptight.” The Willamette BSU approved this unusual program dealing with the black experience, and urged the school’s trustees “to take a course in Black History and Awareness...so they can better chart the course of the University.”⁷² The board rejected a class but added a black member to its ranks. Whitman sent BSU members as recruiters to Watts and other inner cities; the student body funded part of this effort. But activists demanded more. In February 1971 students called for a town meeting that attracted more than 400 participants, including faculty and administrators. Angry activists accused the college of not doing enough to recruit blacks. Soon after Whitman hired a black admissions officer, who also served as an advisor to all minority students. Pomona also used BSU recruiters and joined the other Claremont colleges in hiring a full-time black admissions officer. Willamette’s white admission director,

who insisted, “No white person on this campus really understands what the black students have gone through,” also sent BSU members to California cities.⁷³ He and administrators at many schools insisted that these undergraduates had more success in attracting blacks than admission officers. Thus these three schools joined universities in competing for black students and professors. Because of its location and its minority studies programs, Pomona continued to have greater success than Willamette or Whitman in attracting blacks and other minority students.

While Pomona, Whitman, and Willamette generally rejected the BSU’s “non-negotiable” demands, they eagerly met requests. Whitman’s BSU members joined sympathetic white students to form the “Coalition” and push traditional BSU objectives. The BSU unnerved the administration by bringing two militant and possibly armed Black Panthers to campus. A few months earlier Pomona students heard Black Panther President Bobby Seale advocate people power and insist that collegians work to end racism. A student editor objected to the speech that included Seale’s explanation that his party’s purpose was “To teach you white people that it’s goddam time to go into your community and root out racism.”⁷⁴ Although the BSU did not achieve its full agenda, no other organized minority group ever had such an impact on the small colleges during the activist era. The BSU legacy remains.

While the issues of *in loco parentis*, the Vietnam War, and Civil Rights aroused the college communities, many activists favored the decriminalization of marijuana. Some users, often using the columns of college newspapers, defended the controversial substance. Writers assured concerned parents and the campus community that very few classmates used LSD. The colleges established rules against drugs—they proved to be about as ineffective as the old restrictions against alcohol—and counseled drug users.

Another new campus issue was the birth control pill’s impact. Middlebury College was unique in attempting to compile data about premarital sexual intercourse. But alumni at the three colleges—activist or

not—recall the various methods used to acquire the pill and its increasing use. The number of users is impossible to estimate, but activists often insisted that the pill was basic to youth culture. Alumni of the three West Coast schools have often speculated about its consequences; for example, some of them remember that in 1971 the *Willamette Collegian*—to their great surprise—carried an advertisement for legal abortions in New York City.⁷⁵ Meanwhile two Whitman women through a letter to the *Pioneer* successfully urged the administration to make birth control pills available to some who made the request. Others went to the local family planning center.

In the early 1970s a few feminists at liberal arts colleges, following the lead of universities, began agitating for equality, including the establishment of women's centers, the expansion of women's intercollegiate athletics, the hiring of female teachers, and the inclusion of women's literature and history in new or established classes. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963, became increasingly popular in the late 1960s. Few liberal arts students had joined Friedan's National Organization for Women (NOW), but many more expressed opinions about the Congressional debate over the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). In 1971 three members from the Portland Women's Liberation group conducted a meeting at Willamette. More men than women attended, and they dominated the discussion. According to a woman staff writer, the women "clung to their acculturated role of being meek and quiet, not daring to initiate a dialogue."⁷⁶ By contrast Pomona women clearly explained to alumni that women's liberation was a "chance for self definition," that women faculty served as role models, and that co-educational dormitories significantly improved both social and intellectual conditions.⁷⁷ A few women students at small schools had laid the foundation for a more vigorous activism that would, in the 1970s, alter the campus community, including significant expansion of women's intercollegiate sports.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s activists, occasionally employing the popular term "student power," turned their attention to academic practices—grading, testing, lecturing, tenure, graduation requirements,

and teaching evaluations. They followed a national trend that challenged professors. Administrators and professors, who had opposed or questioned student activism, had warned faculties that activists would become increasingly critical of their authority. A few students had read and circulated Jerry Farber's essay, "The Student as Nigger," which faulted professors for their sarcasm, authority, test and grading procedures. While some enrolled at small schools argued for the curtailment of faculty power, only the most radical would agree with Farber's description of students as "slaves."

A Willamette dean explained: "In the past the students complained over coffee about a requirement, but the sixties students wanted to know the reason for it, and, if they disliked the answer, they advocated its elimination."⁷⁸ Students of various political persuasions—only a minority actually spoke of "student power"—rejected explanations for foreign language and religion requirements, and some denounced tenure because, they argued, it protected ineffective professors. Some faculty, who had consistently supported protest against administrators, resented students advocating a role in curriculum reform, faculty hiring practices, tenure decisions, and student-published class critiques.

Responding in part to student pressure, professors enacted several "reforms." Willamette ended its traditional orals and comprehensive system and limited the use of mid-term grades; Whitman, like several other schools, abolished its Freshman English requirement and liberalized graduation requirements. Pomona debated but retained its foreign language requirement, eliminated its required Western Civilization class and began the lengthy process of restructuring the whole curriculum. These three schools, like numerous sister institutions, adopted and revised the pass-fail option. Some professors warned their colleagues that these grading changes, often championed by student activists and sympathetic teachers, weakened the liberal arts and led to grade inflation and specialization.

Students frequently used the word relevance in discussing the curriculum. Some favored additional practical courses that would prepare them for a career; others insisted upon courses dealing with racism, ecology,

poverty, and the third world. Arguing that their schools offer more meaningful courses, Whitman and Willamette activists established free universities with classes, often open to the public and student taught, covering such topics as dance, drama, poetry, drugs, love, sex, and race. These efforts were short-lived.

At all three colleges the student newspapers applauded academic reforms, as they had attacked *in loco parentis*. But academic reform was a more divisive student issue than parietal rules. Some students wrote editorials and letters accusing their classmates of making ill-founded charges about administrators and faculty. Disgusted with his classmates, who had accused the school of stifling “ambition and responsibility,” a Willamette senior insisted that this charge was “utter bunk,” and the student body president, who denounced some of his classmates as “character assassins,” judged that they did not want to be governed by either the university president or by student government.⁷⁹ Pomona editors carried more criticism of dissenters than the editors at the other two schools did, but in 1969 a new editor liberalized *Student Life*. Seeking to expand the student point of view, students at both Whitman and Pomona launched lively, alternative newspapers—the *Narrator* and the *Spectator*. While their editors gave readers—activist or not—a greater campus voice, they did not advocate extreme tactics, including violence as was sometimes advocated in underground newspapers. Editors of these campus newspapers everywhere consistently harped about student apathy; for example, an exasperated Willamette editor explained that the only way to move his classmates “out of their caves and into this world were emotion packed appeals.”⁸⁰ While editors criticized indifferent students, many of them, in turn, denounced the practice of personal journalism and the reliability of the campus weekly. A disgusted alumnus wrote that the Willamette *Collegian* had “a tone of carping puerility,” and a Whitman professor complained that militants had captured control of the *Pioneer*, making it “less a source of information than a polemic.”⁸¹

About the same time, activists brandished another arrow in their reform quiver—an attack on polluters. As historian Adam Rome recently empha-

sized: "Though the environmental movement drew young people from all parts of the ideological spectrum, the new cause appealed especially to critics of the nation's cultural and political institutions."⁸²

Activists joined others in warning student bodies about water and air pollution and the need to protect forests and soils. Such dire messages connected with young listeners. Many who joined the environmental cause had expressed concern about pollutants, especially mercury, and the destruction of habitat. In April 1970, for example, at Pomona, Whitman, Willamette and hundreds of other campuses, students conducted Earth Day ceremonies using tactics similar to those used at the 1969 Moratoriums. Organizers insisted that this event was the "the largest, cleanest, most peaceful demonstration in American history." Besides the well-known teach-in tactic, Whitman students conducted a plant-in. At Willamette students scheduled an Earth Day during earth week. Pomona joined other Claremont colleges in listening to scholars discuss various topics, including ecosystems, air pollution, and "Human attitudes and the environment." *Student Life* stated that "perhaps it is already too late" to save the environment.⁸³ Activists at all three schools voiced numerous complaints, including student litter, administrative waste of resources, and consumer use of non-biodegradable detergents. Some militant environmentalists charged that the United States practiced ecocide because it used chemical defoliants on Vietnam's forests and fields.

Willamette undergraduates, inspired by Ralph Nader's vigorous discussion of the environmental crisis during a campus visit, raised funds for the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG). Increasingly, Willamette's newspaper editors, reflecting a changing focus, devoted more space to environmental concerns than to anti-war concerns. In November one writer explained that OSPIRG sparked activism; this fresh issue served a purpose because the de-escalation of the war weakened the protest against American involvement. At all three campuses professors, responding in part to student pressure, offered ecology classes and environmental majors. Across the continent young people also insisted that they had

aroused the public to take up the cause of environmental protection. In the early 1970s students played a crucial role in launching a new conservation movement. It drew more support than opposition against the war, and for many young people it was more relevant.

Willamette activists, including those launching an environmental movement and brooding over a war that seemed endless, sought a greater voice in the shaping of the school's social regulations and academic policies. Confrontations with President Roger Fritz over his leadership came to a head in early 1971. Critics denounced him for various reasons, especially because Assistant Professor of English William Powell—the university's first black teacher—had not been renewed after one year of service. The campus and the community became involved in the administrative controversy, and activists convinced school leaders to close the college. At town meetings held in March 1971, students, faculty, and administrators discussed the need to improve campus communications. Thus Willamette, like Pomona, suspended classes; Whitman activists, however, failed to achieve this administrative action.

At the 1971 graduation, Willamette's seniors circulated a petition requesting Fritz's resignation. Willamette, the most conservative of the three small schools, was the only one that sought a president's removal and forced the trustees to defend him. Responding to numerous campus community complaints, the board fired Fritz in 1972.

The Salem *Oregon Statesman* correctly reminded its readers that Willamette was "traditionally one of the last institutions to feel the forces of change, and was involved at last in a form of student-administration-confrontation."⁸⁴ The editor praised the students for avoiding needless disruption in seeking better communication with the administration and greater influence in the resolution of campus issues.

In summary, the student revolt had significantly changed the three liberal arts colleges. Many faculty and administrators had joined these young protestors in reforming their institutions, but student activists stressed their own importance, especially the liberalization of dormitory regulations and

rules of conduct. Furthermore, at each institution administrators and faculty appointed students to committees where their opinions often counted. Whitman's President Sheehan probably spoke for most administrators when he maintained, "any committee dealing with student life without student members was a scab committee."⁸⁵ The term "student power" was more than a slogan at these three schools as traditional power of administrators over students had been lessened or terminated. In 1970 a Willamette activist summarized all of the school's changes and concluded that there was "an increased participation by students in every phase of the university's operation."⁸⁶

Obviously no earlier generation of undergraduates at these West Coast institutions had made a greater and longer lasting impact; the results could be read in such campus publications as catalogs, yearbooks, and alumni magazines and could be heard at alumni meetings. These publications demonstrated that liberal arts schools were very much different institutions than they had been six years earlier. Like society in general, they had undergone momentous and often stressful changes between 1965 and 1971. The *Collegian* of May 1, 1970 praised seniors for helping reform Willamette, an institution that had "evolved from the traditional past into a university looking for answers to solve the problems of today." Seniors at the other colleges expressed similar sentiments. But, of course, some activists insisted that more reforms should be enacted; for example, a frustrated dissident accused Whitman of trying to "keep us in a position of niggers."⁸⁷

These institutions had passed through a turbulent period and anticipated greater growth and influence. Slowly alumni, who had questioned the need for such sweeping campus changes, accepted the end of parietal rules, student involvement in school administration, and gradually tolerated the counterculture.

Foundations and alumni, who were aware of the bitter confrontations at some large universities, came to be impressed with the response of small schools to their youthful challengers. Donors often made conclusions similar

to that found in Republican Congressman William E. Brock's "Report on Student Unrest." He reasoned that the smaller schools were able "to deal with some problems more readily and with greater acuity than the multi-university. Size affects responsiveness, communications and many other needs."⁸⁸ The turbulence at the large universities stimulated small school applications. In the late 1960s and early 1970s admissions officers at Whitman, Willamette, and other regional schools referred to the fact that they benefited from "the California flight."

In the early 1970s the three West Coast schools noted—as did those in other regions—a decline in protest activities. The school communities speculated about this change and offered analysis that included the termination of parietal rules that no longer agitated student bodies, the economic downturn, the end of urban rioting, the black movement's loss of national momentum, and the collapse of SDS. Many asserted that military conditions in Vietnam best explained the decline of the anti-war movement. Nixon's "Vietnamization" policy turned combat over to the South Vietnamese military and young men expressed less fear of the draft.

Scholars have emphasized that American reform periods have been brief and that once again young people, like their elders, pursued individualism and materialism, not societal reform. In the fall of 1971 Pomona's president observed: "Perhaps one saw a slight mitigation of the cheerless, often bitter, choleric sourness of some students—a welcome relief." The leader also reported that the school had not recently experienced a disruption or confrontation but observed, "The biggest problem related to student life nowadays is the shocking rise in criminal incidents. Thefts from dormitory rooms, classrooms, and hallways have become commonplace."⁸⁹ Willamette and Whitman also experienced increased thefts, but what some called a "liberation" of school property was apparently less common at these places than at Pomona.

One historian in assessing the impact of the New Left—a term rarely used in the publications of the three small colleges—found that it "spurred the growth of wider public opposition to the Vietnam War...aided in liber-

alizing many facets of student life and in rendering university governance less authoritarian. Following the campus protests, dress codes and curfew virtually disappeared.... [Schools] recruited minorities; and students sat on the committees that shaped their education, often pushing for 'relevant' or contemporary courses."⁹⁰ Pomona, Whitman, and Willamette accomplished all these important changes with less turmoil than the large universities and congratulated themselves for being free from disruptive radicalism and vandalism that continually angered the public. Many Americans accepted historian Ravitch's summary: "Radical students, attracting sympathizers by their opposition to war and racism, arrogated for themselves the right to decide who was entitled to free speech on the campus and declared war on their enemies by disrupting their classes, destroying their research, bombing their offices, and burning their buildings."⁹¹ Small school communities congratulated themselves for not experiencing such violence and often reasoned that their size explained why the discontented rarely damaged campus property, scribbled graffiti, or disrupted classes. A scholar concluded that in 1970 "three-quarters of a million students out of more than 7 million identified themselves as radical or far left."⁹² A very much smaller percentage of such individuals attended the three West Coast schools.

Many larger schools handled dissension much the same way as the three small ones; for example, UC Davis, with an enrollment of 12,500, also experienced a "Quiet Revolution." A UC Davis professor explained: "faculty and students acted as if they were friends, rather than antagonists pitted against each other within a depersonalized education machine.... The victories of the students, faculty, staff and administrators at UC Davis were none the less real for being untelevised, none the less important for being silent."⁹³

Small school activists knew about the conflicts at large schools and were influenced to some degree by them. In 1968 traditionalist Willamette President Smith explained: "There is no doubt that Willamette students, in keeping with their peers all over the country, have sought a stronger voice in forming their educational and social environment." Furthermore, he

urged trustees to become acquainted with “problems, which are disturbing students.”⁹⁴

Activists at small colleges not only learned from those at large ones, they also received support from freshmen, who had worked for change in their high schools. A scholar recently emphasized that “activist American high school students—themselves a minority—wanted just this: a voice in the rules that governed them and a decent respect for their rights as citizens.”⁹⁵ Besides complaints about their high schools’ oppressive dress rules and irrelevant curriculum, these teenagers had sometimes participated in the anti-war movement and the Civil Rights Movement. These restless newcomers sometimes wearied college leaders; for example, President Sheehan, beset by immature freshmen activists urging improbable changes, described them as “unguided missiles.”⁹⁶

Political activism faded in the early 1970s, but much of the counter-culture of the 1960s is still evident at the small schools. Historian William Rorabaugh’s observation about the University of California is also applicable to the small schools, where it “blossomed, became co-opted, and eventually was accepted as a vital standard of mainstream, middle-class culture.”⁹⁷ The clothes, hair, music, and drugs of contemporary students are in many ways similar to those introduced 35 years ago.

During the 1970s criticism of small colleges declined, including accusations of irrelevancy. Their reputations had been restored and even enhanced and their fiscal health improved. In considering the turbulent period between 1965 and 1971, the public concluded that small colleges compared well with big universities. In fact, many universities had instituted or expanded small honors colleges to compete with the private institutions. Those who had piloted small colleges through turbulent seas thought that imitation was indeed a form of flattery.

The 1970s differed from the 1960s. Activism gave way to apathy, grade inflation began its rise, monetary inflation beset college treasurers, and diversification of students and professors became very competitive. By 1980 conditions improved at all three schools; they were stronger than

they had been during the period of activism. They enjoyed resourceful leadership, built their endowments, hired larger and better-trained faculty, awarded more scholarships, offered improved compensation, attracted more alumni and foundation support, and expanded their physical plants. Thus current members of small college communities have expressed disbelief when informed that Professor Commager asked in 1970 if the small colleges had a future.

Today's student generation has little comprehension of small college activism of 1965-1971 that revitalized their institutions. No other period of modern collegiate history—at small as well as large schools—had such a long lasting impact. These formative years included the end of traditional parietal rules, the appointment of students to influential committees, the emergence of the pervasive counterculture, the decline of Greeks in numbers, and academic reforms. In summary, activists spearheaded major changes at the three small colleges in a period of about six academic years. No other time period in collegiate history has experienced such meaningful and long lasting results. Today's colleges reflect the profound changes brought about by activists in the sixth decade of the twentieth century.

ENDNOTES

*The author appreciates evaluations made by
W. J. Rorabaugh, Maurice Isserman, Marsh Lee, Eckard Toy,
David Johnson, Mike Smith, Carol Long, Roger Hull, and Bob Wallace.*

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21. Willamette University *Collegian*, September 22, 1970.
22. Whitman College *Narrator*, February 12, 1969.
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Cover: A photo collage from the 1971 Whitman College yearbook, *Waiilatpu*; Whitman College and Northwest Archives, Penrose Library, Whitman College.

P. 28: President David Alexander; Pomona students protesting the Vietnam War; Special Collections at the Honnold/Mudd Library, The Libraries of The Claremont Colleges.

P. 28: Dr. Jerry Whipple, 1962, University Archives, Willamette University.

P. 28-29: President Donald Sheehan; student protest, 1971; Whitman College and Northwest Archives, Penrose Library, Whitman College.

P. 29: Vietnam War protest, 1970 *Wallulah* yearbook, University Archives, Willamette University.

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