

**Access and Inclusion:
Women Students at VPI, 1914-1964**

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes coeducation as a process between 1914 and 1964 at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI), as it was called during the period of study. The date for women's full-time admission came in 1921, but this thesis argues that, in the process of coeducation, the date for official access represents only one marker for VPI. Since women had taken courses during the summer before 1921 and did not encounter a welcoming environment after that date, this thesis contends that the relative importance of this "first" needs to be put in perspective. This thesis explores VPI as a case study to analyze how society's gender roles and women's place affected the decision to admit women and their treatment on campus after access. Examining social, political, and economic events in Virginia and the nation, this thesis places VPI within the context of events at the time. In particular, this thesis discusses how federal legislation, during the 1910s, prompted VPI to admit women, an area previously unexplored by historians of higher education. Throughout the period of study, this thesis argues that VPI—its students and administration—limited women's access and inclusion on campus in an effort to maintain its identity as a white, male, military institution.

Acknowledgements

This thesis evolved from a single question asked during Peter Wallenstein's methods class in the fall of 2004 that resonated with my personal circumstances: "When did women come to VPI?" The school's website said women were admitted full-time in 1921. As a part-time graduate student at VPI, the answer intrigued me. What about part-time women, I wondered? Did women come to VPI before 1921? This thesis has only partially answered this question, since I did not find any records to provide the names of the women who did study at VPI in the late 1910s. I would like to thank Peter Wallenstein for providing the spark that set off research for this thesis and for chairing my committee.

This thesis emerged stronger and more coherent due to the work of a dedicated group of people, my committee. As a result, I would like to extend my gratitude to Kathleen Jones, Marian Mollin, and Larry Shumsky for the hours they spent reading several drafts and making suggestions along the way. I would also like to thank the staff of special collections for answering my questions and keeping an eye open for any information that might be helpful. Special thanks go to Tamara Kennelly, University Archivist, for bringing the women's photos in the *Bugle* to my attention and Sam Walters, a fellow student and employee in special collections, for remembering my thesis as he reprocessed Julian Ashby Burruss's papers.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	v
Prologue	1
Introduction: Historiography of Higher Education	7
A General Historiography of Higher Education	16
A Historiography of Women in Higher Education	21
Recent Works on Higher Education and the Need to Explore Gender	24
VPI as a Case Study	29
Chapter 1: Women’s Politics and Education in Virginia	33
Women and Higher Education	35
The Woman’s Movement in Virginia	39
The Case for Women’s Higher Education—a Coordinate College	43
The Case for Equal Suffrage	50
Chapter 2: The Federal Incentive	55
Reexamining the Motives to Admit Women at VPI	58
History of Federal Legislation and the Land-Grants	60
The Necessity to Train Virginia Women and the Extension Wedge at VPI	63
Women’s Higher Education in Virginia and the Smith-Hughes Act	71
VPI and the Desire for Federal Funds	79
Chapter 3: 1921 and the Limits of Coeducation at VPI	88
1921-1944: Incremental Inclusion—The Male Students’ Response	91
1921-1944: Coming Full Circle—The Administrative Response	104
1944-1964: Stagnation for Women, but Progress along the Color Line	114
Conclusion	126
Epilogue: After 1966	129
Appendix A: White Southern Land-Grant Schools	133
Appendix B: White Southern Flagship Schools	134
Appendix C: White Southern Public Women’s Colleges	135
Appendix D: Black Land-Grant Schools	136
Selected Bibliography	137

List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1: The First Five women graduates of VPI	2
Figure 2: The <i>Virginia Tech</i> Editorial Staff, 1935	98
Figure 3: The <i>Virginia Tech</i> Editorial Staff, 1939	99
Figure 4: The Biology Club, 1935	100
Figure 5: The Biology Club, 1939	100
Figure 6: The Tech Players, 1937	102
Figure 7: The 4-H Alumni Club, 1939	103
Figure 8: The Women's Student Union, 1939	103
Figure 9: The Cosmopolitan Club, 1950	117

Prologue

At the beginning of 1921 six white southern land-grant colleges remained nominally male.¹ The schools were in Delaware, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. In January 1921, Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (VPI) decided to become officially coeducational in the fall semester of 1921. White southern land-grants adopted coeducation at different times and for a variety of reasons. Arkansas was the first, founded as a coeducational institution in 1872. Texas A & M was the last to officially adopt coeducation on a limited basis in 1963. In contrast to schools that adopted coeducation early, those schools that became coeducational after years as male military schools often engaged in activities to exclude women and keep their numbers low so that the schools could maintain their traditional identities. VPI was one such institution. Although VPI formally adopted coeducation in 1921, the school marginalized women—either deliberately or inadvertently—until 1964.

Like many institutions today, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, commonly called Virginia Tech, has sought to showcase its diversity by presenting other histories either online or in campus publications. As part of this effort, one photograph in particular demonstrates how the school has tried to project a more diverse image of its past. The iconic image of the “first five” female graduates has endured in the history of Virginia Tech.

¹ Due to their racially segregated systems of higher education, this thesis refers to the South as the 17 states that provided two separate land-grant schools. The South, therefore, includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Refer to Appendix A for data regarding the official dates for coeducation at land-grant schools in the South. By the 1920s southern states enrolled white women either at the flagship school or the land-grant school. Those states that did not provide for women’s education at either of these institutions usually had a separate women’s college, conferring degrees to women. Virginia did not provide a separate women’s college, and it only began to confer Bachelor of Science degrees through normal schools beginning in 1916, much later than other states.

The time has come to reexamine this nostalgic image from an era when the school was known as VPI.



Figure 1: The “First Five” women graduates of VPI. The photograph was taken in 1925. From left: Mary Brumfield (MS) (BS in 1923), Ruth Terrett, Lucy Lancaster, Louise Jacobs, and Carrie Sibold. Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/imagebase/spec/womenatTech/full/women001.jpeg>

A little research reveals that this photograph raises more questions than it answers. These five women did not constitute the first cohort to enroll in 1921. In 1923, one of the first women, Billie Kent Kabrich, left school to get married. She was replaced by transfer student Louise Jacobs. Another of the women, who had enrolled in 1921 as a junior transfer student, was no longer an undergraduate but a graduate student. Thus, the only true “first” in this photograph has no image to accompany her accomplishment. In 1923, Mary Brumfield earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology—the first degree conferred on any woman in the history of Virginia Tech. Then, in 1925, Brumfield achieved another first; she became the first woman to earn a Master of Science degree at VPI, also in biology. Why was she not celebrated as the first on her own? Was she, along with the other “first five,” truly one of the first white women to attend

classes at VPI? If not, then who preceded the twelve white women who matriculated in the fall of 1921? Why did VPI decide to admit white women in 1921? What factors led to the school's decision? Furthermore, if white women could attend in 1921, why did so few enroll? Were limits placed on who could attend, and if so, how long did such limits last? Did VPI welcome women, or did the school deliberately keep their numbers low?

All of these questions suggest that the 1921 date, which has been the hallmark in many accounts of VPI's history, is but one of many dates in the process of integrating women into the school.² In fact, the 1921 and 1925 dates mark the midpoint between VPI's founding in 1872, as a white, male, military institution, and the 1970s, a decade in which the school became less white, much less male, and much more civilian.

Most historians of Virginia Tech state that white women first attended the school in 1921 and attribute this fact to Julian Ashby Burruss, the eighth president, without fully explaining why he made this decision. In Duncan Lyle Kinnear's history of VPI, he claimed: "The most significant innovation introduced by Burruss was the admission of women to VPI, beginning in September, 1921." Kinnear also wrote that "Burruss wanted them admitted on an equality with men."³ This admission of women is an odd choice as "the most significant innovation" of Burruss's twenty-six-year tenure as the president of VPI. After all, due to unrest in the Corps of Cadets, Burruss and the faculty had concluded that VPI should "abandon the four-year military system, do away with the Cadet Corps, . . . and reorganize the student body on a strictly civilian

² Wallenstein says racial desegregation should be "portrayed as a process rather than an event . . ." If this framework works for race, then consider its application for gender—Women's access to state colleges and universities should be portrayed as a process rather than an event. Peter Wallenstein, "Black Southerners and Non-Black Universities: Desegregating Higher Education, 1935-1967," *History of Higher Education Annual* 19 (1999): 124. This idea of coeducation as a process has also been used by others. Goree concluded in her dissertation on Mississippi State College "with a general model of coeducation as an on-going process rather than as a single event." Cathryn T. Goree, "Steps Toward Redefinition: Coeducation at Mississippi State College, 1930-1945" (Ph.D. diss., Mississippi State University, 1993), 5, 169, quote from abstract (n.p.).

³ Duncan Lyle Kinnear, *The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* (Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute Educational Foundation, 1972), 262.

basis.” But Burruss and the faculty did not lean heavily on the Board of Visitors to execute their recommendations. In the end, the military requirement became optional for juniors and seniors in the fall of 1924 because the board decided “that it could not give up the Corps of Cadets.”⁴ Kinnear’s claim also pales when compared to the curricular changes made by Burruss and discussed by Peter Wallenstein in his history of the school. Under pressure from the legislature not to duplicate programs offered at the University of Virginia, Burruss still managed to expand VPI’s course offerings and degrees so that by the late 1930s students could work toward a doctorate.⁵

Other historians have also attributed the arrival of women to the policies of Burruss. In her 1996 work, *Generations of Women Leaders at Virginia Tech*, Clara Cox wrote:

Those five women—transfer student Mary E. Brumfield, Billie Kent Kabrich, Lucy Lee Lancaster, Carrie T. Sibold, and [Ruth Louise] Terrett—and seven part-time coeds—Lucy Randolph Brown, Lucy Butler Groth, Sarah Gainor Kessler, Hattie Mays, Lena Willis McDonald, Josephine Phlegar, and Margaret Robinson Walker—enrolled at . . . VPI, in 1921 after its president, Julian A. Burruss, achieved his goal of admitting women as regular students to the previously all-male institution.⁶

Two issues emerge from Cox’s statement. First, it omits the history of women at VPI before 1921. However, because little research has substantiated some vague references to the presence of women at VPI prior to 1921, this omission seems innocent enough. Yet, a second issue emerges from Cox’s statement that Burruss had a goal of admitting women to VPI. Why? Cox does not explain her assertion and this leads to many other questions—ones this thesis will address.

Regarding Cox’s first omission, the history of white women students at Virginia Tech is murky and not well documented before 1921. For instance, the Virginia Tech Digital Library

⁴ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 275-276.

⁵ Peter Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872-1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Pocahontas Press, Inc., 1997), 145-146, 149.

⁶ Clara B. Cox, *Generations of Women Leaders at Virginia Tech, 1921-1996, 75th Anniversary of Women at Virginia Tech*, March 1996, 7.

and Archives website simply states that in 1921 “Women [were] admitted for [the] first time as full time students.”⁷ This sentence states “women,” but it should explicitly state “white women.” Black women were not welcome before the 1960s; they were expected to attend the black land-grant school, Virginia State College, in Petersburg.⁸ Moreover, the modifier “full time” in the sentence leaves open the possibility that white women may have previously enrolled as part-time students, although they would not have been eligible to earn a degree from VPI. Catalogs for Virginia Polytechnic Institute did not reveal the names of its part-time students until 1922, listing them as “special students.”⁹ While the names of any women who attended VPI part time during the 1910s remain unknown, they helped pave the way for the twelve full- and part-time women in 1921.

The 1921 date presents other problems, too. The date is not an end in itself regarding access; rather, 1921 represents only a single event along the spectrum of inclusion for white women students at VPI, a process fraught with limitations until 1979. White women did not enroll in large numbers immediately after 1921, and through a variety of methods, VPI effectively restricted their numbers until 1966 when not only white women, but black women could also attend the school without restrictions.

The barriers limiting the number of women who matriculated until the 1960s are as important as the omission of women in the history of Virginia Tech before 1921. Many other

⁷ Virginia Tech Historical Data Book: Significant Dates, Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/databook/sig_dates.htm

⁸ Leedell W. Neyland, *Historically Black Land-Grant Institutions and the Development of Agriculture and Home Economics, 1890-1990* (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida A&M University Foundation, Inc., 1990), 9, 50. Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute received one third of the funds supplied by the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Second Morrill Act of 1890 and acted as the black land-grant college in Virginia from 1872 to 1920, when the funds were transferred to Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, now Virginia State University.

⁹ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Catalog* (Blacksburg: the Institute, 1922), 24, 189-191. The Catalog lists students from the 1921-22 academic year and includes the names of the first five full time and seven part time women. Previous catalogs listed special students, but the lists were very short. The Catalog's format changed in many other ways as well beginning with the 1922-23 academic year.

schools, in the South and throughout the nation, experienced similar growing pains, and they also erected barriers to limit the number of women on their campuses. Even the campuses of schools that allegedly welcomed women found ways to limit their activities. In many ways the history of white women on coeducational campuses followed a model that admitted them to the schools but denied them equal access to privileges enjoyed by male students.

This thesis will use VPI as a case study to explore how one white public southern land-grant college responded to the push for coeducation. It will highlight coeducation as a process that occurred over an extended period of time, including social, political, and economic events that occurred before and after VPI granted white women access. Gendered debates about coeducation in Virginia during the 1910s provide the contextual background to the admission of white women to VPI. By examining the various stages the school went through before it made the decision to allow women to enroll full time, this thesis will illustrate the importance of gender roles in Virginia and how national factors, in particular federal funding, influenced the decisions VPI made regarding women. Like many other white southern public colleges, VPI did not embrace coeducation. Rather, VPI engaged in both subtle and overt forms of discrimination against white women when it came to admission and the privileges associated with collegiate life. Thus, this thesis will illuminate the means by which a school could retain a white male identity while claiming a coeducational status.

Introduction: Historiography of Higher Education

The historiography of American higher education since the 1960s has mainly focused on a few institutional histories, most reaching back into the colonial era. Since coeducation was uncommon until the latter part of the nineteenth century, these histories tend to be predominantly concerned with white men, not women. The persistence of white male institutional histories, some would argue, has some basis since most colleges were founded for white men. While the original identity of most schools was undeniably white and male, when, if ever, did that change? Few institutional histories explore the way race and gender formed their white male identity. This institutional identity formation ought to receive more scrutiny. Once established, an institutional identity became difficult to change, although it faced challenges when schools either adopted coeducation or racially desegregated.

Some historians have addressed the issue of race and the process of desegregation in American higher education, yet their works largely ignore the similar and analogous process of coeducation experienced by white women. Upon examination, most institutional histories demonstrate that the process and chronology of inclusion is even more complicated than black access to white schools. White women challenged access to white men's higher education many years before black men. Thus, when studying higher education there are four groupings—black and white, each female and male—not just one, that deserve attention.¹ An analysis of coeducation demonstrates the process of integrating higher education for white women. After admission to white male colleges, both white women and blacks experienced similar exclusions.

¹ This thesis discusses some of the similarities of race and gender in higher education. Discussion of black and white occurs particularly within the context of the South. In the Northeast, Jews constituted another excluded group. Asians have also experienced exclusionary treatment in the West. In the Southwest and West, Mexicans have formed another minority other group. Other ethnic minorities also experienced exclusionary treatment that vary by region.

Instead of focusing on the dates of admission or “firsts” accomplished in higher education, historians need to shift focus and consider desegregation—both racial and sexual—as a process. Peter Wallenstein proposed the analytic framework that racial desegregation should be “portrayed as a process rather than an event at each school, for all doors did not open at the same time.” Focusing on “the process of desegregation in southern public higher education,” Wallenstein argued that his framework “has the potential to reshape our understanding of the history of individual institutions and, more generally, the course of higher education in the South and the nation.”² Wallenstein’s analytical framework for racial desegregation can be applied to coeducation, and this thesis has adopted this framework, hoping to shed light on higher education at southern white land-grants in particular.

The notion of coeducation as a process, not a single event, has been an issue in the field of counselor education and educational psychology as well. In her dissertation, Cathryn Goree claimed “there is no work which looks in detail at the process which occurs when women enter a previously male college.”³ Goree discussed coeducation as a process, but her main purpose was “to examine the participation of women in college life” after they were readmitted to Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1930.⁴ In her conclusion, Goree claimed that comparative studies “discern a pattern which is followed when women are integrated into an all-male collegiate environment.” Calling for other case studies in coeducation, she believed these would “provide a model for understanding the process of introducing coeducation that goes far beyond the initial decision to admit women.”⁵ In addition to her notion of process, Goree

² Peter Wallenstein, “Black Southerners and Non-Black Universities: Desegregating Higher Education, 1935-1967,” *History of Higher Education Annual* 19 (1999): 124.

³ Cathryn T. Goree, “Steps Toward Redefinition: Coeducation at Mississippi State College, 1930-1945” (Ph.D. diss., Mississippi State University, 1993), 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

outlined markers that generally represent the inclusion of women on previously male campuses. These markers include: a period of invisibility, a political or economic motive to admit women, a lack of adequate dormitory space, the abandonment of all-male traditions (specifically the military requirement), the participation of women in student leadership, the full embrace of coeducation, and finally, how, as an undergraduate majority, most southern white land-grants continue to reinforce “the historic all-male image of the college.”⁶ Using many of these markers, this thesis seeks to show how, once women arrived on VPI’s campus, their experiences reflected coeducation as a process.

The work of Wallenstein and Goree both support the analytic framework of coeducation as a process. Because white male schools adopted coeducation at different times and also engaged in activities to marginalize women on campus, the process framework suits the study of racial and sexual desegregation over a period of time. A date is not enough to create an integrated environment along racial or gender lines. This thesis will portray coeducation as a process and demonstrates that access does not provide equality but begins a new process—that of inclusion.

As Joan Scott argued, the story does not end with access.⁷ When considering the process of coeducation, access is not the beginning either. Instead, coeducation is a process that encompasses social, political, and economic events that occurred before, during, and after its adoption. What occurred before the adoption of coeducation is as important as what came after—both reflect how society viewed men and women and their place within it. Because institutions of higher education adopted coeducation at different times, an examination of the process experienced by each provides a window into society and its gender roles for men and

⁶ Ibid., 170-177.

⁷ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 179-180.

women at that time. The adoption of coeducation at Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (VPI) in 1921 provides an opportunity to analyze how and why this process occurred.

The process of coeducation did not occur in a vacuum. A variety of forces came together at specific times that influenced white male colleges as they adopted coeducation. During the Progressive Era, social, political, and economic events affected all aspects of education throughout the nation and exerted pressure to propel coeducation at many white male colleges. In particular, the women's rights movement had an impact on women's access to political institutions and to higher education, although the latter is often overlooked in historical accounts.

In order to study VPI's adoption of coeducation as a process, it is important to situate it within state events. During the 1910s white women of Virginia pressed for access to the voting booth and to the University of Virginia (UVA). Their request for a college education brought gender to the forefront of the debate concerning access and substantiates Geraldine Joncich Clifford's claim that "gender fundamentally shaped the college and university *before women appeared in the institution* to threaten to change or challenge or call attention to its sexual nature."⁸ The General Assembly considered women's request for access to UVA, generating extensive and heated debates about a woman's place in society. The gender debates regarding women's access to higher education in Virginia illustrate the roles of men and women in the 1910s and the relationships of power and hierarchy in the state—relationships that shaped the conditions under which women were admitted to VPI and their place on campus. These debates provide the state-wide context that frames what came before access to VPI and other Virginia schools that adopted coeducation.

⁸ Geraldine Joncich Clifford, "'Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease': Gender and American Higher Education," *Feminist Issues* 3 (1983): 15. Emphasis in the original.

In addition to a state-wide context, national events of the 1910s also contribute to the study of VPI's adoption of coeducation as a process. At the same time that Virginia debated women's access to a collegiate education, federal legislation expanded the mission of the land-grant schools nationwide. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 federally funded demonstration work to distribute information among the population in agriculture and home economics. Three years later, Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 to fund the training and salaries of teachers of vocational education. Both of these acts came with conditions attached and federal funding that the states had to match in order to receive the funds. College histories usually acknowledge the Smith-Lever Act, since its impact significantly extended the mission of and funding to land-grant schools, but not all college histories address the impact of the Smith-Hughes Act. A closer examination of these acts at white southern land-grant schools indicates that both forms of federal legislation provided a push for coeducation during the 1910s.

Historians of two land-grants that became coeducational during the 1910s illustrate how the federal dimension may be tacitly acknowledged but not explored as these colleges adopted coeducation. It is important to note that, during the adoption of coeducation, leaders in certain administrations had to make a stand and persuade the colleges' governing bodies to admit women. In some circumstances, these educational leaders used other criteria to argue for women's admission. Neither of the two following books provided a detailed analysis of their decisions to become coeducational, but in all likelihood the availability of federal funding enticed both colleges to admit women.

In his 1966 history of the University of Maryland, George Callcott claimed that "with the American feminist movement at its peak, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 exerted pressure on the land-grant colleges to establish home economics courses to train women to serve as agricultural

home demonstration agents.” The school admitted its first women in 1916 after President Harry J. Patterson “embraced the change and moved into town so that the president’s house could be rebuilt to serve as a women’s dormitory.”⁹ Callcott acknowledged both the women’s movement and federal legislation, but he did not explore either in detail to substantiate his claim that these two forces led Patterson to embrace coeducation.

In his 1985 history of the University of Georgia, Thomas Dyer also omitted the role of federal legislation in the adoption of coeducation. Dyer claimed that “the coming of World War I and the active support of [President] Andrew M. Soule finally brought official recognition of the right of women to attend the university as full-time regular students in both undergraduate and graduate programs.” In 1916, the University of Georgia admitted women to the graduate program, and in 1918, it admitted women to the undergraduate program. To achieve the latter, Dyer claimed that Georgia needed “women trained in nutrition, extension work, and secondary instruction” and this need “led Soule to urge the Board of Trustees of the State College of Agriculture to admit women.” Dyer claimed that Soule used “ideological grounds” to persuade the Board of Trustees, and that, once they agreed to admit women, he “promptly set about designing a program in home economics.”¹⁰ Dyer alluded to the federal legislation with phrases, such as “extension work,” “secondary instruction,” and “home economics,” but he failed to elaborate on their role in the decision to admit women. The institutional histories written by Callcott and Dyer demonstrate that administrators at land-grant colleges responded to a variety of social, political, and economic factors to admit women.

⁹ George H. Callcott, *A History of the University of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1966), 248-249.

¹⁰ Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 172-173.

Just as Callcott and Dyer neglected a full exploration of the discussion of social, economic, and political events in Maryland and Georgia, so have the histories of VPI. Both Duncan Lyle Kinnear and Peter Wallenstein mentioned women's suffrage and ties to agricultural legislation¹¹—the Smith-Lever and Smith-Hughes Acts—but neither fully delved into these pieces of legislation and their role in President Julian Ashby Burruss's arguments to persuade the Board of Visitors to admit women to VPI. A key part of this thesis will explore the role of this federal legislation as a push for coeducation at VPI. In combination with the gender arguments against women's education at UVA, this thesis will demonstrate that at the same time that women pushed for a collegiate education, Virginia created a place for women at this level at both the College of William and Mary (W&M) and VPI. Both colleges offered a home economics curriculum the very same year that they adopted coeducation—W&M in 1918 and VPI in 1921. Women had a choice in the curriculum they pursued, but both colleges clearly tried to track their female students into home economics.

After white women gained full access to VPI in 1921, the story of coeducation took a new direction and gender roles, crucial to gaining access, continued to affect women on campus. As Clifford suggested, the presence of women on formerly male campuses prompted institutional anxiety and the fear of feminization.¹² Before the arrival of women on campus, VPI's student body was composed entirely of the Corps of Cadets. Organized by ranks, the corps mimicked the hierarchy and discipline of the United States military. The martial atmosphere at VPI did not welcome women. Nevertheless, they came, although their numbers remained low.

¹¹ Duncan Lyle Kinnear, *The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Educational Foundation, Inc., 1972), 262-263; Peter Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872-1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Pocahontas Press, 1997), 110-113, 117, 132.

¹² Clifford, 42, 47-54.

The day-to-day female presence on the campus of VPI prompted a new stage in the process of coeducation. White women could enroll in all courses except for the military ones, making them nominally equal to men. Yet as a tiny minority on the campus, the women at VPI did not receive equal treatment from their classmates. Women were excluded from the most basic traditions at VPI—the Corps of Cadets and life in the corps. Exemplified by residing in the barracks, eating in the mess hall, participating in drill, and wearing a uniform, cadets embodied the essence of what it meant to be a student at VPI. The women could participate in none of these activities. Thus, for women students to be completely equal with men at VPI, the Corps of Cadets would have had to sexually integrate and allow women all of the privileges associated with corps life. With the definition of student as cadet in mind, women could not be students in the eyes of men. Instead, they were coeds. This term made the women of VPI unequal before they arrived to take classes and persisted until the fall of 1924, when the Corps of Cadets became optional for juniors and seniors. At this time the definition of student changed to incorporate the growing number of civilian women and men, and it marked the beginning of inclusion for women.

Beyond life in the Corps of Cadets, VPI had numerous clubs, organizations, and publications. Women could not initially participate in these extracurricular activities, and this exclusion led them to form their own. With the exception of Ruth Terrett, who gained access to the American Society of Civil Engineers in the 1923-1924 academic year, no women joined any male groups before the corps became optional in the fall of 1924.¹³ Of course, as a student publication, the *Bugle* yearbook showed and listed only those its editors wanted to include, which explains the disparate treatment women later received. Terrett was the exception for another reason. The *Bugle* pictured one woman in the Agricultural Education Club in 1927 and

¹³ 1924 *Bugle*, 314. The yearbook does not picture her, but it does list her among the members.

the YMCA Cabinet in 1932, but it did not list them among the members of either, thus Terrett was the only identifiable woman in the *Bugle* until 1934.¹⁴

The contest for space on a male campus illustrates that access to a male campus did not end the story. On the contrary, the 1921 date of access is but one point along the timeline for the process of coeducation at VPI—a process affected by social, political, and economic events that occurred at different times throughout it. Access did not bring equality. Instead, access began the process of inclusion—a subcategory of the process of coeducation. Occurring over an extended period of time, women had to first carve out their own space on campus and then fight for inclusion in male clubs, organizations, publications, and finally, the ultimate identity as a VPI student, the Corps of Cadets, although by the time women received this privilege, it had lost its significance as the core identity at VPI. In the absence of any substantial support from the administration, women had to negotiate with male students to break down the barriers until they had equal access to all aspects of college life at VPI. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that coeducation occurred as a process over a period of time by highlighting what came before and after white women’s access to VPI.

Race and gender now figure more prominently in the historiography of higher education than they once did, but they remain marginal in most institutional histories. When race and gender are included in institutional histories, authors tend to focus on access. Once historians assert that blacks or women have gained access, they generally drop the subject. As Joan Scott has argued, access “is not the end of the story” for black and white women who have “regularly encountered reminders of their difference.”¹⁵ The identity of many institutions of higher education remained white and male. Instead of assuming the white male identity—or not even

¹⁴ 1927 *Bugle*, 353; 1932 *Bugle*, n.p.; 1934 *Bugle*, n.p..

¹⁵ Scott, 179-180. Scott argues this in general terms for women seeking access to any male-dominated institution or organization.

noticing the assumption—of most colleges and universities, historians need to examine how white males sought to preserve this identity, often after women gained access. Specifically, how did race and gender affect institutions of higher education in forming their identity? What actions did colleges and universities take to retain their white male identity? What barriers did these institutions erect to limit the enrollment of those who might challenge the identity of the school? A survey of the historiography of higher education serves as the background to the above questions and situates this thesis within the context of American higher education.

A General Historiography of Higher Education

In the 1960s, two books on the history of higher education, *The American College and University: A History* and *The Emergence of the American University*, became the standard by which many subsequent works have been measured. Frederick Rudolph's *The American College and University: A History* (1962) was the most comprehensive study of American higher education to date.¹⁶ Rudolph thoroughly traced the development of higher education from colonial times through the Progressive Era. Although he discussed the period between World Wars I and II, this coverage pales in comparison to the history up to WWI. Only an epilogue discussed the future of colleges and universities based on the events in higher education since WWII. Despite this rather scant coverage of the twentieth century, Rudolph's book remained the basic source for the history of higher education well into the 1990s. Writing in the early 1960s, Rudolph made an effort to include white women in his text, which is commendable, but he thought that the higher education of black men and women merited only a few pages, therefore

¹⁶ Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

neglecting a significant segment of history that began in the mid-nineteenth century. In sum, Rudolph wrote a history of white men's higher education.

Rudolph wrote an entire chapter about the higher education of women, but this separateness designates the topic as an "other." In addition, Rudolph implies that women achieved equal access to higher education in coeducational institutions during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, Rudolph notes that rising female enrollments caused some institutions to add inherently masculine courses, such as engineering, "to bolster the dwindling male forces."¹⁷ Schools that did not alter the curriculum to attract more men—or repel women—simply limited women's enrollment.¹⁸ These actions imply that women formed a significant portion of student bodies, but the fact that colleges and universities feared increased female enrollments and took steps to counter them reveals that some institutions of higher education did not provide an environment of equal inclusion—a point that Rudolph overlooks. He ignores the fact that coeducation was acceptable only as long as it did not threaten the white male character of a campus.

The second book, Laurence Veysey's *The Emergence of the American University*, published in 1965, focused on the period from 1865 to the early 1900s, a time when colleges and universities redefined their mission and organizational structure.¹⁹ Although Veysey studied a narrow time period, it was a time of significant growth and change in higher education. Given the expansion of opportunities in higher education for black men, black women, and white women during this time period, Veysey's inadequate coverage of these three groups leaves his history far from comprehensive. In fact, his slim coverage of land-grant universities seems

¹⁷ Ibid., 323.

¹⁸ Ibid., 324. Rudolph cited quotas at Stanford. Quotas became a tool to limit women's enrollment at many colleges.

¹⁹ Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

appalling since the Morrill Act passed in 1862, altering the educational landscape during the very period Veysey studied. Veysey's history is not just one of white men but one of elite institutions.

Despite these limitations, the books by Frederick Rudolph and Laurence Veysey have provided the paradigm for histories of higher education written since the 1960s. While Rudolph wrote a broader history of higher education, including a large section on land-grant universities, he and Veysey studied mostly elite institutions and their leaders. Occasionally Rudolph and Veysey both discussed Cornell. As a land-grant university that also benefited from the philanthropy of Ezra Cornell, Cornell presents a variety of ways to discuss other issues in higher education. However, both Rudolph and Veysey focused largely on how Cornell represented a new university model in the United States under the leadership of Andrew Dixon White.²⁰ While studying the leadership of a college or university provides one useful framework to study institutional histories, the tendency of Rudolph and Veysey to focus on elite institutions, such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, imposes a class bias that marginalizes black men, black women, and white women. For instance, neither Rudolph nor Veysey discussed black land-grant universities or normal schools as forms of higher education that attracted and served many blacks and women.²¹

Since the works of Rudolph and Veysey, few historians have expanded the history of higher education, but some historians cited the need for a new comprehensive history to cover the era since the 1960s. In 1994, Christopher Lucas published *American Higher Education: A*

²⁰ Rudolph, 265-268; Veysey, 81-86.

²¹ Rudolph, 463, 487. While many could argue that normal schools represented a high school education in the mid- to late nineteenth century, their standards increased throughout this same time period as high schools and colleges matured.

History to address this need.²² Lucas sought to provide the background to the history of American higher education by placing it within the context of higher education in Europe prior to the colonial period. While this goal was admirable, it made a comprehensive history of higher education in America more difficult to write. However, Lucas provided a more recent history of higher education since Rudolph's work. He wrote about both black men and women and white women in higher education in the nineteenth century in an attempt to situate them within the historiography of in higher education. While this attempt deserves merit, these small segments also indicate that the marginality of these groups persists within the overall history of higher education.

In 1998, Arthur M. Cohen published *The Shaping of American Higher Education*, which provided a fresh approach to the subject.²³ Cohen primarily targeted administrators and faculty in higher education and emphasized the last fifty years, in chapters titled "Mass Higher Education in the Era of American Hegemony: 1945-1975" and "Maintaining the Diverse System in the Contemporary Era: 1976-1998." Cohen created a framework to address what he termed "the basic questions in higher education [that] have been debated since colleges began. What shall be taught? Who shall learn it? Who shall pay for it?"²⁴ Because these questions overlap, Cohen's framework focused on discrete categories, such as curriculum, faculty, students, access, administration, and funding. Within each chapter, Cohen addressed issues within each of these categories instead of following the typical framework in the history of higher education, which examines institutions and their leaders. This approach provides the best example of integrating black men, black women, and white women into the history of higher education. Although

²² Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin Press, 1994).

²³ Arthur M. Cohen, *The Shaping of American Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1998).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

Cohen's examination of these subjects remains cursory, he at least acknowledged these "others" and placed them within the context of students or curriculum. In particular, Cohen mentioned barriers erected against blacks and white women; unfortunately he did not explore them in detail. This flaw is somewhat understandable considering the goal of his "book is less a history than a synthesis."²⁵ However, it is interesting to note that where coeducation figures prominently as a contentious issue in many school histories, Cohen seemed to avoid it. Instead, Cohen assumed his readers' familiarity with nineteenth-century history of higher education and coeducation.

Although some historians have sought to redress omissions in the works of Rudolph and Veysey, others have tackled their arguments regarding the importance of liberal arts colleges in the nineteenth century. In 2000, Roger L. Geiger edited a collection of essays, mostly reprinted from the *History of Higher Education Annual*, and published them in *The American College in the Nineteenth Century*.²⁶ This book provided material regarding revisionist interpretations that emerged during the 1970s to counter Rudolph and Veysey. Geiger claimed that this revisionist history failed to dislodge the notion of the nineteenth-century college as a static institution, because it did not create a synthesized argument, and that this failure helped solidify the traditional narrative. Geiger's introduction weaves white women into the narrative of higher education and notes regional differences, yet it falls short on including African Americans. The chapters "The Era of the Multipurpose Colleges in American Higher Education, 1850-1890" by Roger Geiger, "'A Salutory Rivalry': The Growth of Higher Education for Women in Oxford, Ohio, 1855-1867" by Margaret A. Nash, and "The 'Superior Instruction of Women', 1836-1890" also by Geiger all provided some perspective on white women's education and sought to demonstrate how colleges of the nineteenth century either changed over time to adapt to changes

²⁵ Ibid., 6.

²⁶ Roger L. Geiger, ed., *The American College in the Nineteenth Century* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000).

within society or closed their doors. While the history of higher education retained a white face in this edited volume, Geiger presented an alternative interpretation to that of Rudolph and Veysey regarding the nineteenth century.

A Historiography of Women in Higher Education

Since the 1960s, several women historians have tried to incorporate gender and women's history into higher education. An article that raised many questions regarding gender appeared in 1983. Geraldine Joncich Clifford wrote "'Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease': Gender and American Higher Education" to illustrate how most historians of higher education have chosen to remain silent on women within it.²⁷ Clifford called for historians "to advance from writing a history of women in higher education to that of thinking about the role of gender in higher education."²⁸ She astutely observed: "gender fundamentally shaped the college and university *before women appeared in the institution* to threaten to change or challenge or call attention to its sexual nature." Then Clifford added, "women's physical presence . . . functioned primarily to move gender *from the unconscious to the conscious level of response and reaction*, however much that consciousness might be denied." The remainder of her essay outlined "four potential components of a gender-informed history of higher education in the United States, highlighting the years from about 1870-1920." These components were "(1) women and pedagogical change . . . (2) women and institutional relationships . . . (3) women and institutional change . . . and (4) women and institutional anxiety."²⁹ Clifford suggested new views about how higher education should be analyzed, and she also criticized historians of higher education for

²⁷ Clifford, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15. Emphasis in the original.

the tendency to focus on elite schools.³⁰ Clifford recognized the barriers used by many schools to limit women's access, such as the unavailability of dormitories and the use of overt quotas.³¹ In the end, Clifford criticized how the history of higher education has been one of "white men, mostly of rather privileged backgrounds."³² Clifford was on the cusp of a group of women who sought to change the historiography of higher education.

In 1985, Barbara Miller Solomon published *In the Company of Educated Women*, a book that began to fill a void in the historiography of women in higher education and addressed some of the issues raised by Clifford.³³ Covering the higher education of women by generations from colonial times into the 1980s, Solomon explored "four themes: (1) women's struggles for access to institutions; (2) the dimensions of the collegiate experience; (3) the effects of education upon women's life choices; and (4) the uneasy connection between feminism and women's educational advancement."³⁴ Abandoning institutional histories as a framework, Solomon's book provided a structure for analyzing women within the historiography of higher education. Because she also included black women, Solomon's work demonstrated a broader look at women.

Five years later Lynn D. Gordon published *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*.³⁵ Gordon narrowed the time period for her study and noted that this era featured "controversies about changing constructions of gender and appropriate roles for educated women in society."³⁶ By specifically raising the issue of gender, Gordon aimed to

³⁰ Ibid., 23.

³¹ Ibid., 39-40.

³² Ibid., 54.

³³ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

³⁴ Ibid., xvii.

³⁵ Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

³⁶ Ibid., 2.

show how female students affected institutions which in turn shaped the lives of these young women. Within this context, Gordon noted that, by region and within coeducational higher education, women and men mostly “proceeded along separate, although parallel, paths.”³⁷

Gordon’s case studies provided a unique way of examining how coeducational, coordinated, and single-sex higher education institutions operated. These case studies detailed how some schools erected barriers to women and how those women coped with them. While Gordon occasionally mentioned black women, the schools she studied primarily served white women.

Amy Thompson McCandless has sought to broaden the history of black and white women within the history of higher education with a regional emphasis. In *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South*, McCandless traced the higher education of both black and white women from the 1890s into the 1990s within the distinctive context of southern history.³⁸ While recognizing that race, class, and gender figured prominently in defining a woman’s place in southern society, McCandless also explored how ethnicity, religion, and geography affected it.³⁹ In her third chapter, McCandless outlined the stages southern schools used to limit or circumscribe female enrollment once women gained access to traditionally all-male institutions. McCandless demonstrated what Joan Scott asserted—that women’s access does not tell the entire story.⁴⁰ She discussed how institutions responded to a female presence on their campuses by erecting barriers after their admission to keep numbers low. With her inclusion of both black and white southern women, McCandless has made a significant contribution to the historiography of women within higher education.

³⁷ Ibid., 3, 6, 8. The quote is on page 3.

³⁸ Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999).

³⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁰ Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 179-180.

In 2003, Mary Ann Dzuback wrote an article to refocus the role of gender as a factor in institutional development. She specifically discussed the role of gender in higher education, echoing the sentiments of Geraldine Joncich Clifford from twenty years earlier.⁴¹ Dzuback claimed that gender is “the fundamental defining characteristic of American educational institutions, ideas, and practices.” She believed that most historians of higher education have focused on women’s access to the point that they have neglected the influence of women on institutional histories. Their studies largely ignore women or treat them as a separate, side story next to that of men. Dzuback said this should not be so and argued “that *gender* is the central story to the history of higher education.” She claimed that historians rarely explore “the processes and institutions of education themselves” regarding “the significance of gender constructions in understanding cultural and social change in United States history.”⁴² Dzuback noted that many historians have integrated gender into their research and work but claimed that historians of higher education have not. Instead, white women remain at the margins, as do African Americans and other minorities.

Recent Works on Higher Education and the Need to Explore Gender

One recent work, published in 2004 by John R. Thelin, reinforced the pattern of omitting others. His book treated African Americans and women as figures on the periphery, although he provided a broad scope of American higher education. In his *A History of American Higher Education*, Thelin posited institutions of higher education as historical institutions and hoped to

⁴¹ Clifford, 13-15.

⁴² Mary Ann Dzuback, “Gender and the Politics of Knowledge,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43 (2003): 174-5. Emphasis in the original.

add to the work of Frederick Rudolph.⁴³ He claimed that his book will “upset some conventional notions about how colleges and universities have developed and behaved, especially in such volatile matters as institutional costs and effectiveness; admissions and access; and the character of the curriculum and extracurriculum.”⁴⁴ Thelin incorporated research by historians since 1970, which he claimed “may have not always been acknowledged as part of the broad interpretation of American higher education.”⁴⁵ Specifically, Thelin wanted to include an “analysis of the historical significance of other understudied institutions, such as community colleges, women’s colleges, and the historically black campuses.”⁴⁶ While Thelin wrote about each of these “other” categories, he tended to put them in separate subsections within his overall chapters, thereby marginalizing them. Thelin’s effort to include these marginalized groups deserves some acclaim; however, his book portrayed the history of higher education in America as the province of white men, their institutions, and their leaders.

Thelin’s book provided a more current view of the history of higher education in America, but it still marginalized African Americans and women. In particular, his notes reveal a shallow acquaintance with the historiography of women and higher education. Although Thelin mentioned Barbara Solomon’s *In the Company of Educated Women* in his bibliographic essay, her omission from the notes speaks volumes about how he portrays women in higher education. The fact that Thelin did not discuss the most influential book on women in higher education indicates an unwillingness to tackle head-on the discrimination and segregation women have faced in higher education. Thelin could have used Amy Thompson McCandless’s *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South*

⁴³ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), xiii, xix-xx.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii-xiv.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xx.

to round out his discussion of women in higher education, yet he did not even include it in his bibliographic essay. Thelin also failed to cite a host of articles that provide useful information on the role of women in higher education, casting doubt on his claim to broaden the history of higher education.⁴⁷

Since the publication of Thelin's book, several authors have commented on the status of the historiography of education in journal articles. In 2004, Paul H. Mattingly published a conversational essay about the traditional narrative within the field of American higher education.⁴⁸ Mattingly noted the tendency of scholarship to focus on "local interests, narrow specializations, or anniversary celebrations" and pointed out that these tendencies often resulted in the erosion of a general consensus. To address these concerns, Mattingly posed three questions to James D. Anderson, Robert Church, Emmett Curran, and Marilyn Tobias. According to Mattingly, these historians "have addressed broad canonical issues and have confronted the dilemma of synthesis."⁴⁹ Within the conversation to answer the three questions, James Anderson and Marilyn Tobias both criticized the history of higher education as a white, male enterprise. While Anderson focused mainly on African-American history, Tobias claimed that "The omission of women and minorities represented another blatant flaw in most of the earlier studies of the history of American higher education as if they were invisible or their experiences unworthy of serious inquiry."⁵⁰ Both of these historians have addressed these issues in their own work, and both call for new scholarship to explore the role of African Americans

⁴⁷ Historians who have written articles about the higher education of women include: Leah Rawls Atkins, Patricia Bell-Scott, Jill K. Conway, Pamela Dean, Helen Delpar, Mary Ann Dzuback, Paula Fass, Anne Hobson Freeman, Alexandra Gillen, Patricia A. Graham, Christine Ogren, Anne Firor Scott, Maxine Schwartz Seller, Sally Schwager, Judith G. Stitzel, Mary Roth Walsh, Francis R. Walsh, Lillian J. Waugh, and Mary E. Whitney. Their articles are listed in my bibliography. Thelin cited none of these authors in his work.

⁴⁸ Paul H. Mattingly, "Renegotiating the Historical Narrative: The Case of American Higher Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 44 (2004): 577-596.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 577.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 583. For Anderson's comments, see 578-580, 583-585, 590-591; for Marilyn Tobias's comments, see 582-583, 589-590, 593-594.

and women in the development of higher education. Robert Church and Emmett Curran both expressed interest in the inclusion of women in studies of higher education. Curran specifically cited the study of student culture and noted that “there needs to be more appreciation of the complexity of the accommodation of women into higher education.”⁵¹ Mattingly summarized their comments at the end by noting that “new students may be daunted by the number of ‘omissions’ from the existing scholarship—students of different races and genders” among others.⁵² These historians all expressed the hope for a synthesized history of American higher education, one which would create a new narrative.

Today, while many call for a synthesized history of American higher education, specialization within the field seems to be the trend. In addition to the specialization of the field, many historians continue to place their work within the context of that by Rudolph and Veysey, indicating that the revisionists have failed to make their case. In the fall of 2005 the *History of Education Quarterly* invited historians to analyze the work of Laurence Veysey and the impact of *The Emergence of the American University* on current scholarship within the field.⁵³ Most of the contributing historians gave accolades to Veysey’s work, while some of the historians took issue with one point or another in his overall argument. Jonathan Beecher, who wrote a brief article about Veysey, made the alarming statement that Veysey’s book “continues to be assigned regularly in courses on the history of American education, and it has attained the status of a classic.”⁵⁴ If so, then many students graduate with the notion of the American college or

⁵¹ Ibid., 592-593.

⁵² Ibid., 594.

⁵³ Christopher P. Loss, “Retrospective: Laurence R. Veysey’s *The Emergence of the American University*,” *History of Education Quarterly* 45 (2005): 405.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Beecher, “Remembering Laurence Veysey (1933-2004),” *History of Education Quarterly* 45 (2005): 408.

university as the bastion of white men—for African Americans and women received scant attention in Veysey’s book.

Historian Julie A. Reuben tried to uphold Veysey’s overall argument while challenging him on some points. In “Writing When Everything Has Been Said: The History of American Higher Education Following Laurence Veysey’s Classic,” Reuben provided a brief historiography of American higher education since Veysey’s book. Reuben claimed that historians of the nineteenth century must either “argue against Veysey” or “acknowledge his classic book as the foundation on which they are building.”⁵⁵ Reuben questioned some aspects of Veysey’s argument, but she still believed in the overall utility of his book. However, she also noted that Veysey’s book left “some important topics untouched.” For example, Reuben remarked that Veysey said little about women and then cited Barbara Solomon, Helen Horowitz, and Lynn Gordon as historians whose scholarship has advanced that of Veysey’s “by filling in gaps in knowledge.”⁵⁶ Reuben also noted that Veysey’s main challengers have been historians like Roger Geiger, and then she contemplated the possibility that some of Veysey’s assertions needed a reexamination. In particular, Reuben questioned Veysey’s claim that the late nineteenth century was the revolutionary period in American higher education. She cited changes in the last half of the twentieth century in access and the makeup of students within higher education, not to mention its role in “overcoming racial inequality and segregation, compensating for inequities in primary and secondary schools, solving pressing social problems, and fueling economic growth.”⁵⁷ Thus, Reuben counters that while changes occurred in the nineteenth century, they were not the only revolutions in American higher education. While

⁵⁵ Julie A. Reuben, “Writing When Everything Has Been Said: The History of American Higher Education Following Laurence Veysey’s Classic,” *History of Education Quarterly* 45 (2005): 414.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Reuben’s comments indicate that these authors did not challenge Veysey’s argument, although she cites this as a possibility. Rather she portrays their work as addressing deficiencies in Veysey’s coverage of the era.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 416-417.

Reuben claimed that historians should revisit Veysey, she tended to straddle the line between supporting and arguing against Veysey herself.⁵⁸

Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz challenged some of Veysey's assertions regarding colleges. According to Horowitz, Veysey "portrayed the college as a static institution," and the popularity of *The Emergence of the American University* has perpetuated such incorrect notions.⁵⁹ Horowitz also cited Roger Geiger's work as instrumental to demonstrating the variety offered by the "multipurpose college" and then examined women's colleges, in particular Smith, within this framework.⁶⁰ Thus Horowitz accomplished two things: first, she challenged Veysey's assertions and two, she tried to place women within the historiography of nineteenth-century American higher education.

In sum, historians have dealt—or not—with the topics of race and gender in various ways. The current literature either tends to focus on African Americans and white women as areas of specialization within the field of higher education or includes them only minimally within the history of the entire field. As both Geraldine Joncich Clifford and Mary Ann Dzuback have pointed out, most of these works largely ignore the role of gender in the history of higher education. This thesis will address this deficit and explore how gender and the notion of a woman's place affected higher education in Virginia for most of the twentieth century.

VPI as a Case Study

⁵⁸ Ibid., 414, 419.

⁵⁹ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "In the Wake of Laurence Veysey: Re-examining the Liberal Arts College." *History of Education Quarterly* 45 (2005): 420.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 421-425; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

An examination of one white southern land-grant school, VPI, demonstrates the process of coeducation. Gender roles are key to understanding how this process occurred for they defined who received access to higher education and where in Virginia. The thesis will also explore the economic and political role of federal legislation as a push for full-time women's admission. In addition, this thesis will show the limits of access by examining the inclusion of women on VPI's campus after 1921. These two components, the before and after of access, demonstrate the process of coeducation. This thesis will also highlight how the process of coeducation, after the admission of white women, reveals how VPI sought to retain its identity as a white, male, military school—like other southern white land-grant colleges.

Organized thematically, this thesis will examine VPI as a case study. The thesis will explore gender roles before and after the adoption of coeducation at VPI and the impact they had on the school's identity as a white, male, military school. By studying the role of gender, the thesis draws on the arguments, presented by Geraldine Joncich Clifford and Mary Ann Dzuback, that gender defines the history of higher education.⁶¹ These arguments support the idea of coeducation as a process that extended over many years influenced by social, political, and economic events in Virginia and the nation.

Chapter one provides a contextual background and demonstrates that what came before access is as important as the date so many institutional histories highlight. The social and political context of Virginia in the 1910s is essential to understanding how VPI fit into the landscape of higher education for women in the South. The chapter addresses white women's politics, gender roles, and their higher education in Virginia. Discussing these social and political subjects provides the context for the adoption of coeducation at VPI. Much of this chapter discusses the battle led by Mary-Cooke Branch Munford to provide coordinate

⁶¹ Clifford, 13-15; Dzuback, 174-175.

education, a plan that would establish a woman's college on the campus separate from the men but sharing the same faculty and the library, at the University of Virginia (UVA). Many of those opposed to this plan argued that women posed a threat to the masculinity of the school. The debates about women's higher education and opposition to the coordinate college at UVA in Virginia reveal the centrality of gender to the state and support Clifford's argument that gender shaped colleges before they admitted women.⁶²

The second chapter situates VPI within the national context of federal legislation during the 1910s and stresses the economic motive to admit women. This chapter continues the argument that what happened before women's access constitutes part of the process of coeducation. The chapter explores previously mentioned but unexamined federal legislation as a key component to the adoption of coeducation at VPI. An analysis of educational leadership and the presidential papers at VPI demonstrates how administrators used the argument of necessity to gradually introduce coeducation to VPI in the 1910s. The chapter examines VPI's relationship with the State Normal School for Women at Harrisonburg because of the Smith-Lever Act and home demonstration agent training. This connection demonstrates what Clifford termed "overlap" among institutions of higher education.⁶³ The chapter also examines how and why VPI decided to admit white women full-time in 1921 and its relationship to the Smith-Hughes Act, which tied federal funds to training both men and women to teach vocational education. Like other schools in the nation, VPI reinforced traditional gender roles of the era in the courses the school added when it became coeducational.

⁶² Clifford, 15.

⁶³ She states that "colleges and universities were (1) institutions that overlapped other schools and formal educational programs, and (2) institutions caught in a web of other schools and affected importantly by what happened to them." Clifford, 19-20. VPI's extension service is another example of this.

The third and final chapter explores what happens in the process of coeducation after white women received full-time access. By examining the limits of access, the chapter illustrates that women's access did not provide them with equality at VPI. This chapter highlights how the full adoption of coeducation challenged VPI's identity, which provoked a reaction by cadets, and it supports Clifford's assertion that a female presence moved "gender *from the unconscious to the conscious level of response and reaction.*"⁶⁴ The cadets' reaction served to marginalize women through a variety of means that women had to challenge consistently. Access for white women did not bring immediate equality, but it began the slow process of inclusion. Throughout the period of inclusion, women had to battle gender roles that VPI reinforced with special curricula geared toward women to create a space for them on campus. This chapter demonstrates that white women's inclusion occurred as a process after access to a collegiate education, and it discusses the variety of barriers erected by VPI, which effectively allowed it to retain a white male identity into the 1970s.

As a case study, this thesis endeavors to contribute to the historiography of higher education in two ways. First, it discusses the role of federal legislation as an impetus for coeducation during the 1910s. Although mentioned in other institutional histories, to date no other historian has analyzed the role of this legislation as an economic motive for white southern land-grants to adopt coeducation. Second, by using the framework of coeducation as a process, this thesis points to a direction in the historiography of higher education that provides more synthesis rather than a study of elite institutions. Since the process framework can be adapted to other issues, such as race or college curricula, it provides a way to study the changes over time that have occurred at all institutions of higher education.

⁶⁴ Clifford, 15. Emphasis in the original.

Chapter 1: Women's Politics and Education in Virginia

In the process of coeducation, what happened before access is crucial to understand how and why Virginia's white male colleges admitted women. The date white women received access to institutions of higher education marks a milestone in school histories, but it remains just a date. In many college histories, the authors do not thoroughly examine how or why women gained admission. The simple mention of women's access seems sufficient, and then the authors move on to the next issue. Yet, the how and why of access is important because they illustrate the role of gender in society at the moment women gained admission to white male colleges.

To understand how and why white male colleges adopted coeducation, this chapter will explore the women's rights movement in Virginia. This analysis will provide a statewide context for women's place in society and the role of gender as white male colleges adopted coeducation in Virginia. Within the women's rights movement, women's suffrage has received more visibility and attention; however, the struggle for women's higher education, although sometimes overlooked, is just as important. Thus, this chapter will emphasize Virginia women's fight for access to a collegiate education. Because the debates associated with women's access to a collegiate education involved gender, this chapter will examine gender roles in Virginia as well.

By discussing the gender debates in Virginia during the 1910s, this chapter supports the argument made by Geraldine Joncich Clifford and Mary Ann Dzuback—that gender defines America's educational institutions.¹ Clifford specifically claimed that gender “shaped the

¹ Geraldine Joncich Clifford, “‘Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease’: Gender and American Higher Education,” *Feminist Issues* 3 (1983): 3-62; Mary Ann Dzuback, “Gender and the Politics of Knowledge,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43 (2003): 171-195.

college and university *before women appeared in the institution* to threaten to change or challenge or call attention to its sexual nature.”² An analysis of the movement to bring a woman’s coordinate college, which would educate women with the same professors and facilities separately from the men, to the University of Virginia provides a precise example of Clifford’s assertion.

During the 1910s Virginia wrestled with the problem of white women’s higher education—a problem because white women in the state demanded a university education in a political and educational system dominated by white men.³ Unlike other southern states,⁴ Virginia had not provided for the higher education of its white women beyond the normal school level. Other southern states had either accommodated white women in separate women’s colleges or within the flagship or land-grant colleges. Virginia remained the only state with no collegiate level institutions for its women.⁵ What social and political factors influenced Virginians to adopt coeducation in 1918? What role did gender play in the story of higher education for the white women of Virginia? This chapter explores how gendered debates about women’s rights, including higher education—whether by coordination or coeducation—and

² Clifford, 15. Emphasis in the original.

³ Both the white men and women of Virginia expressed the notion of women’s higher education as a problem but from different angles. Support for the coordinate college at UVA represented the “solution for the problem that has been raised in Virginia by the demand from the women of this State for university training.” Editorial, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 January 1912, 4. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* also mentioned a speech by Mary-Cooke Branch Munford. In it she discussed “the growth of the movement for higher education of women.” Women wanted this education because “the problems of the day in all lines . . . were coming to be neighborhood problems, and centered about the home.” “Woman’s College Topic of Debate,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 17 January 1912, 1.

⁴ Due to their racially segregated systems of higher education, this thesis refers to the South as the 17 states that provided two racially separate land-grant schools. The South, therefore, includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. See Appendix A and D.

⁵ See Appendix A, B, and C for the dates women could enroll at Flagship, Land-Grant, or Women’s Colleges. Virginia admitted women to W&M in 1918. Georgia allowed women to attend branch colleges, but according to Dyer, before World War I “no public institution in Georgia offered a four-year course leading to a degree for women.” Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 170, 173. UGA admitted undergraduate women in 1918.

suffrage, in the 1910s provided the social and political context that made the admission of women to VPI possible in 1921.

Women and Higher Education

In the 1910s, Virginia funded and supported a multitude of public institutions of higher education. The University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, the Virginia Military Institute, the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (VPI), and the Medical College of Virginia educated white men. Four normal and industrial schools at Farmville, Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, and Radford educated Virginia's white women. The Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute at Petersburg educated African Americans coeducationally. Like many other states of the South, Virginia segregated its black and white students.⁶ Yet, where the state saw fit to segregate by gender among whites, Virginia did not segregate blacks according to their gender. From the beginning Virginia's black population experienced coeducation, and advocates usually cited economic reasons to promote it. When it came to coeducation for whites, Virginia's conservative views regarded women's traditional roles, as wives and mothers, as more important. Put upon a pedestal, white women experienced separate treatment that, while preserving the southern ideal of true womanhood, often resulted in subordination to white men.

According to southern gender roles, white women had to fulfill certain duties to ensure their status. First and foremost, women belonged in the home, the domestic sphere. As wives and mothers, women were expected to care for their husbands and children, instruct their children properly, preserve the morality of the family, and inspire their husbands, who would

⁶ See Appendix D for a list of Black Land-Grants.

represent the interests of their wives and children in the public realm of men. Women submitted to the will of their husbands, but at the same time they used indirect influence on their husbands. However, women soon realized that their indirect influence did not always succeed, and they sought a direct way to achieve their goals. As southern women sought a larger voice, they did not challenge society's traditional roles for men and women—in fact, they specifically avoided the possibility of alienating men by not challenging the basic tenets of true womanhood. During the Progressive Era, southern women sought reforms, claiming the community as an extension of the home. Women took a position that men could not truly understand women's and children's issues—a maternalist rhetoric—and highlighted their femininity as the key missing component in politics. Based upon these arguments, “new women” argued for educational, legislative, and suffrage rights for women.⁷ Even as women made their arguments, the South continued to cling to its conservative gender ideals for men and women, and women's access to higher education manifested these ideals.

⁷ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6-7, 73, 75-77, 83. Wheeler specifically discusses “new women” and suffrage. Other authors have linked the same issue of not challenging gender ideology when women sought higher education. Horowitz describes this in her study of the Seven Sisters as their conventional “desire to protect nineteenth-century femininity” as they reconciled “the claims of higher education with womanhood.” (69-70) Paula Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920,” *American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 631-633, 639-644, 646-647; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), xviii-xix, 4, 58-59, 69-70; Linda K. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History,” *The Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 27-39; Saul Sack, “The Higher Education of Women, 1862-1962,” in *A Century of Higher Education: Classical Citadel to Collegiate Colossus*, ed. William W. Brickman and Stanley Lehrer, (New York: Society for the Advancement of Education, 1962; reprint, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974), 167; Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 49; Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2-4, 13-21; Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 12, 18, 38, 85; Sheila M. Rothman, *Women's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 97-132.

Of the seventeen white land-grant schools of the South, Virginia's was one of seven that remained officially male in 1910.⁸ Virginia, along with Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, South Carolina, and Texas, resisted coeducation for many reasons.⁹ Ten other southern white land-grants adopted coeducation either at their founding or shortly thereafter. The arguments for this adoption ranged from fiscal concerns to the influence of the West. In general, the western states experienced more political equality, and the land-grants in that region of the country often adopted coeducation at their founding. Although the West demonstrated the success of coeducation in both public and private institutions of higher education, other regions of the country adopted coeducation much more slowly.¹⁰ Clinging to tradition, the South resisted coeducation in its white land-grant schools the longest with Texas as the last to officially admit women without restrictions in 1971.¹¹ Virginia's white land-grant school was not the last to

⁸ The schools were in Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Refer to Appendix A for data regarding the official dates for coeducation at land-grant schools in the South. Arkansas was the first, adopting coeducation at its founding in 1872. Texas A & M was the last to officially adopt coeducation, in 1971, without restrictions. In 1912, Mississippi banned women, making eight land-grants all male that year.

⁹ The University of Maryland and the University of Georgia became coeducational in 1916 and 1918 respectively, but Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College ceased to be coeducational in 1912 as a result of a student strike. Although Betterworth does not mention how women's participation in the strike challenged traditional gender roles, he claims they "were removed as a disturbing factor on the campus." John K. Betterworth, *People's University: The Centennial History of Mississippi State* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980), 166. According to David Lockmiller, North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering admitted women in 1899 to "all departments on a basis of equality with men," (83) yet the first woman did not receive a degree until 1927. As Lockmiller claimed in his 1939 history of the school, it "never had a large number of women students." (170) David A. Lockmiller, *History of the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering of the University of North Carolina, 1889-1939* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1939), 83, 170-171.

¹⁰ Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education for American Women* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959), 5-51; Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: Science Press, 1929; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 2: 224-303; Leslie Miller-Bernal, "Coeducation: An Uneven Progression," in *Going Coed: Women's Experience in Formerly Men's Colleges and Universities, 1950-2000*, eds. Leslie Miller-Bernal and Susan L. Poulson (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 5; Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 30-31; Rosalind Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access: The History of Coeducation in America," in *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia*, eds. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 109-111; Solomon, 50-55.

¹¹ Henry C. Dethloff, *A Centennial History of Texas A & M University, 1876-1976*, vol. 2 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1975). Texas A&M allowed Ethel Hutson to attend courses, but not receive credit, in 1893. Others followed in 1900-1910. In 1903, two women received certificates in civil engineering. In 1915, Texas A&M decided to exclude women from regular sessions, but WWI relaxed these rules somewhat. In 1925, Mary Evelyn Crawford became the first woman to earn a degree even though the school did not officially admit

adopt coeducation, but the gender debates in the General Assembly indicate that the state was loath to embrace it.¹²

Events in Virginia, the South, the nation, and the world converged between 1908 and 1921 affecting women's rights. During these years of the Progressive Era, Virginia struggled with the same issues in higher education as other states. Throughout the Northeast and the South, states debated the merits of coordination between men's college campuses and a women's annex and outright coeducation.¹³ At the same time that these states grappled with the expansion of women's higher education, the women's suffrage campaigns became more vigorous. As part of these national trends, this chapter focuses on how the women's higher education and suffrage movements evolved in Virginia and the role of gender in both.¹⁴ The individuals—Mary-Cooke Branch Munford and Lila Meade Valentine—responsible for the movements in higher education and suffrage respectively had special links to progressive men in Virginia, especially Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., an educational leader in the state since 1905. These three figures deserve special attention because they created a network of men and women to tackle progressive issues,

women. In 1963, the school allowed women undergraduates on a limited basis until 1971, when women could attend without any restrictions. The Texas experience closely parallels UVA's experience with coeducation.

¹² Like Virginia, Georgia and Maryland adopted coeducation during the 1910s. Peter Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872-1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Pocahontas Press, 1997), 118; Sara Bertha Townsend, "The Admission of Women to the University of Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 43 (1959): 156-169. The University of Georgia allowed women to attend during the summer sessions, beginning in 1903. The summer education provided a "backdoor" to a university education. Even before then, however, women attended branches of UGA. The school admitted women to the graduate program during the regular sessions in 1916 and became fully coeducational in 1918. George H. Callcott, *A History of the University of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1966), 245-249, 292. In 1916, Maryland admitted its first women: Charlotte Vaux and Elizabeth Hook. A series of events contributed to coeducation at Maryland: a fire in 1912, the end of the old military system in 1916, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. Women's enrollment remained low for the first decade. Most of the 17 southern states enrolled white women either at the flagship school or the land-grant school. Those states that did not provide for women's education at either of these institutions usually had a separate women's college, conferring degrees to women. Virginia provided degrees through normal schools beginning in 1916, much later than other states. See Appendix A, B, and C.

¹³ Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 59, 73; McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 104-105; Newcomer, 40-45; Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 30-31; Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access," 112; Sack, 171-172; Woody, 304-320.

¹⁴ Other factors, such as World War I and women's roles during it, also influenced the men who made the decisions regarding women's rights but will merit little discussion in this chapter.

such as education. In fact, these progressive leaders engaged in tactics and campaigns similar to others in the South, such as Rebecca Latimer Felton in Georgia and Laura Clay in Kentucky, who supported both women's higher education and suffrage.¹⁵

The women's rights movement influenced prominent men, like Eggleston, throughout Virginia—just as it did in other states. Both movements began in Virginia while Eggleston served, as State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1906 to 1912 and then in the office of the President at VPI from 1913 to 1919. Due to the efforts of Eggleston and others in the General Assembly, opportunities for white women in Virginia expanded. In fact, Eggleston's presidency at VPI and his accomplishments there dovetailed with the shifting social and political climate in Virginia. Steps taken by Eggleston during this era of change enabled Julian Ashby Burruss to admit white women full-time for credit and the opportunity to earn a degree from VPI in 1921.

The Woman's Movement in Virginia

Like other states, Virginia women participated in organizations and movements that often engaged in politics. White men made the decisions at the top levels of state institutions and government, but the white women used indirect influence and maternalist rhetoric that induced many of these men to respond.¹⁶ Two movements in Virginia used these tactics to garner male support for their female goals. The Co-Ordinate College League (CCL) and the Equal Suffrage

¹⁵ Alice Matthews Erickson, "Woman's Rights in Virginia, 1909-1920" (M.A. Thesis, College of William and Mary, 1975), 37-39; Josephine Bone Floyd, "Rebecca Latimer Felton, Champion of Women's Rights," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 30 (1946): 89-93; Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and the Women's Rights Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 87-89, 164; McCandless, 122; Solomon, 111-114; Wheeler, 54, 81.

¹⁶ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 317-320, 331-333, 337, 529.

League of Virginia (ESL) involved predominantly upper- and middle-class white women throughout the state. Many of these women belonged to both organizations. In both cases, the women framed their requests within their traditional domestic role and what was appropriate for a southern lady.¹⁷

Most of the women involved in the CCL and ESL portrayed their activities as part of women's traditional domestic concerns. Like other progressive women of the era, they invoked the rhetoric of municipal housekeeping, educated motherhood, and maternalism to combat the ills associated with industrialization, advocate for women's education, and call for special legislation regarding women and children.¹⁸ The women also argued that indirect influence had not worked in the late nineteenth century. If men would not take the action necessary to better the lives of children, then women needed the right to vote to obtain progressive measures on behalf of their families and the wider community. By focusing on issues affecting all families, these women enlarged their space of public activity—a space normally reserved for men.

Many women of the CCL and ESL had engaged in political activity before 1908. They knew how government operated and understood the limits of women's indirect influence. Most of this political activity resonated with the traditional roles of women, which concerned the home and family, extending into the arena of public education in the common schools. Largely as a result of their efforts, strides in public education culminated with the May Campaign of 1905 in Virginia.¹⁹ This effort by progressive white men and women of Virginia led, in 1906, to the

¹⁷ Wheeler, 72-73.

¹⁸ Baker, 640-642; Rothman, 97-132; Skocpol, 317-320, 331-333, 337, 529. Skocpol noted the link between "municipal housekeeping" and "educated motherhood" in the Progressive Era. Elna C. Green, "Gendering the City, Gendering the Welfare State: The Nurses' Settlement of Richmond, 1900-1930," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 113 (2005): 281-283, 288, 303; Wheeler, 73-99; Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*, 14.

¹⁹ Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, 2 vols., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 2: 325-328. Dabney also wrote about North Carolina in Chapter 22, Kentucky in Chapter 23, Tennessee in Chapter 24, Alabama in Chapter 26, and in Chapter 26 he covered Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi,

establishment of a system of public high schools, which were mostly coeducational.²⁰

Throughout this campaign several key educational boosters emerged in Virginia, including Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, and Lila Meade Valentine.

Like leading promoters of women's education across the country, Munford and Valentine had extensive records of service in progressive endeavors. Munford helped get the first Virginia child labor law passed in 1890, and in 1894 she became a founder of the Richmond Woman's Club. In 1900, Valentine formed the Richmond Education Association (REA) to promote education for all regardless of race or sex. Valentine served as its first president and Munford as its second from 1904 to 1911.²¹ In January 1902, Valentine organized a board to manage the Instructive Visiting Nurses Association, which promoted health education through several different organizations.²²

Both women also helped form, along with progressive men from around the state, the Co-operative Education Association of Virginia (CEA) in 1904. The CEA emerged as part of a broader educational movement sweeping the nation. Several Virginians attended the Capon Springs Conference in West Virginia, sponsored by the Southern Education Board—an organization that received aid from the General Education Board located in New York City. They returned from the conference with the conviction to promote democracy in education

Texas, and Arkansas. Also see McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 20-21, 27. Other southern states participated in similar educational endeavors because it was “the key to regional economic progress” (20).

²⁰ Dabney, 2: Chapter 27. Dabney discussed the development of high schools in Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, and Arkansas.

²¹ Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 157; James S. Wamsley, *Idols, Victims, Pioneers: Virginia's Women from 1607* (Richmond: Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, 1976), 223-225; Lloyd C. Taylor Jr. “Lila Meade Valentine: The FFV as Reformer,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 70 (1962): 474.

²² Green, “Gendering the City, Gendering the Welfare State,” 289-290; Taylor, 475-476; Wamsley, 226.

through cooperation among state educational agencies.²³ The CEA worked with the Virginia Department of Public Instruction to promote education as well as health, better roads, and improvements in agriculture, such as demonstration work. Munford, an active member, became president in 1910.²⁴ Eggleston, as State Superintendent of Public Instruction, had extensive contact with Munford, and in 1911 he helped establish an office for the CEA at the Department of Public Instruction.²⁵ These efforts established a foundation to later promote the higher education of white women by Munford and Eggleston, and it resulted in a personal friendship between the two.²⁶

Like other localities and states, Virginia had active Women's Clubs that sometimes engaged in political activities.²⁷ Munford and Valentine, along with other women, actively worked through the Richmond Woman's Club to advocate for women as well as other issues, going beyond the club's original purpose of intellectual and literary pursuits.²⁸ In 1907, the local clubs organized, forming the Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs. These clubs lobbied the General Assembly, using indirect influence for reforms targeting women and children, especially education.²⁹ The women observed the limited impact of their efforts, however, and realized that

²³ Cornelius J. Heatwole, *History of Education in Virginia* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 313-319. Some of the Virginians attending the conference included Governor Montague, Dr. H. B. Frissell of Hampton, Munford, and Eggleston, who was school Superintendent of Prince Edward County at the time.

²⁴ Dabney, 323-325; Heatwole, 312-314; Taylor, 478-479; Wamsley, 226.

²⁵ Co-operative Education Association of Virginia, undated report [ca. 1915], Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 3, Folder 223, Special Collections, Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Hereafter: SCDLAULVPISU).

²⁶ As late as 1917, Eggleston and his wife invited Munford to stay with them while she was in Blacksburg to speak to home demonstration workers in Blacksburg. Joseph D. Eggleston to Mrs. Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, 16 January 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 2, Folder 84, SCDLAULVPISU.

²⁷ Skocpol, 328-333.

²⁸ Treadway states that the women founders were "keenly aware that their initiative fell within a wider national context." Part of the original idea behind the club was also "the improvement and elevation of domestic life." Valentine resigned as a member in 1906 but maintained ties to the organization. Sandra Gioia Treadway, *Women of Mark: A History of the Woman's Club of Richmond, Virginia, 1894-1994* (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1995), 14-15, 22-23, 36, 46-47, 61.

²⁹ Suzanne Lebsock, *Virginia Women, 1600-1945: "A Share of Honour"* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1987), 110; Erickson, 11, 36; Skocpol, 328-333.

the power to vote could make a difference. This realization led prominent Richmond women to organize the ESL. Because suffragists recognized the expansive understanding of woman's rights, the ESL worked, at times, with the CCL to promote a collegiate education for women.³⁰

The Case for Women's Higher Education—a Coordinate College

In 1879, the push for white women's higher education in Virginia formally began. The Virginia Senate listened to a resolution by C. T. Smith, who asked that the state provide for women's higher education. He claimed that the state's support of higher education had "never, at any period of her history, made any provision" for women. The opposition claimed that the higher education of women would "drag the women of Virginia into politics."³¹ The opposition's fear suggests that higher education represented a wedge for women into politics, which would simultaneously bring women into the public sphere while threatening the male privilege of the vote. In the end, the Senate decided to act on Smith's resolution and requested that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, William H. Ruffner, investigate and report on the matter of women's higher education. Ruffner complied and later recommended a women's college, but the General Assembly took no action until 1884 when it established the State Female Normal School at Farmville.³² The normal school did not provide a true college education, yet it

³⁰ Erickson, 38-39.

³¹ *Journal of Education of Virginia*, 10 (1879), 212-213; quoted in Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, 2 vols., (New York: Science Press, 1929; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 2: 254.

³² William Hall Cato, "The Development of Higher Education for Women in Virginia" (Ph. D. diss., University of Virginia, 1941), 257, 256, 311. Even before women's public normal schools in Virginia, however, there were a few daring experimental forays with coeducation by a small and select group of private schools. During the Civil War, Roanoke College allowed some women to attend, though it ceased with the conclusion of the war. Again in the 1890s, it experimented with coeducation and a few women were allowed to attend classes and receive certificates in lieu of diplomas. Four other private colleges were coeducational in the 1890s. New Market Polytechnic Institute and Bridgewater College had opened as coeducational schools in 1870 and 1880 respectively.

remained an acceptable option for men who feared women's higher education.³³ Normal school training allowed women to extend their education while it simultaneously kept women safely ensconced within their traditional role of caring for children as primary school teachers after two years of course work. The state did not establish any other institutions of higher education for Virginia's white women for the next twenty-four years.

After the May Campaign of 1905, the stimulus for white women's higher education reemerged. In 1908, Virginia established two more normal and industrial schools for white women, at Harrisonburg and Fredericksburg. Two years later, the General Assembly authorized one more school, at Radford. However, none of these schools for white women could confer a bachelors degree until 1916, when the General Assembly granted the Normal School Board the authority to do so.³⁴ Even then, the women earned the Bachelor of Science (BS) degree after four years in the fields of education and home economics. The first degrees awarded to women came in 1919 at Harrisonburg.³⁵ White women in Virginia could finally earn a bachelors degree at a public institution of higher education in the state. However, these schools did not offer a

In 1893, Fredericksburg College opened as a coeducational school, and Richmond College became coeducational in 1898. Most of these had the daughters of professors attending. Women's enrollment was never very large at any of these schools. Cato states that between 1891 and 1900 only 431 women attended coeducational colleges, which represented only 4% of the women attending college in Virginia during this ten year period. Though not mentioned by Cato, black women attended either Hampton Institute or the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute at Petersburg both of which were coeducational institutions.

³³ McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 105; Miller-Bernal, 6; Newcomer, 40-45; Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 42; Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access," 115-116; Solomon, 81. Men feared coeducation would feminize male schools and threaten their masculine identity.

³⁴ Virginia General Assembly, *Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1916), 749-750.

³⁵ Edward Alvey Jr., *History of Mary Washington College, 1908-1972* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), 119; Raymond C. Dingleline, Jr., *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Madison College, 1959), 114; M'Ledge Moffet, *A History of the State Teachers College at Radford, Virginia, 1910-1930* (Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press, 1933), 67; Rosemary Sprague, *Longwood College: A History* (Richmond: Fine Books Division of the William Byrd Press, 1989), 92. Radford conferred its first degrees in 1921 and Fredericksburg in 1923. Sprague's book did not provide a date for Longwood, saying that degrees were conferred between 1902 and 1930.

liberal arts curriculum or the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree. For these two reasons, some women agitated for access to the University of Virginia (UVA) during the 1910s.

The case for women's higher education at UVA actually began as early 1892, when Miss Carolyn Preston Davis requested permission to take examinations within the school of mathematics. The Board of Visitors approved it, but Davis faced restrictions and, instead of earning credits and a degree, earned a certificate. Two other women followed her challenge, causing the Board of Visitors to question the advisability of allowing women to take examinations. This second guessing led to the decision by the Board of Visitors on June 11, 1894 to deny women admission to UVA on the grounds that coeducation was inappropriate.³⁶

When UVA's Board of Visitors decided in the 1890s not to admit women, they cited a host of reasons. First, the board denied that women had the right to an education at UVA, claiming that UVA could not meet the needs of women—reflecting the belief that women needed a different type of education than men. Second, the board claimed that women would be harmed physically, socially, and emotionally by coeducation—a typical argument of the era popularized by Dr. Edward Clarke's *Sex and Education; or, a Fair Chance for the Girls*, which claimed that female education would harm a girl's reproductive capacity. Third, highlighting an apparent belief in female inferiority, the board claimed that admitting women would lower UVA's standards. Finally, the board claimed that the presence of women would require student supervision—presumably women would destroy the honor system because male chivalry would inhibit men from reporting honor code violations. In the end, men at UVA feared that coeducation would change southern women.³⁷

³⁶ Mary E. Whitney and Rebecca S. Wilburn, "Women and the University" (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1969), 18-19, 30.

³⁷ Whitney and Wilburn, 29-31, 59. The argument about honor was not elaborated in the 1890s, but in the 1910s.

At the heart of the argument to deny women an education at UVA lay the issue of gender and a woman's place in society—the domestic sphere—arguments much like those against women's participation in politics and the right to vote. Once brought into the company of men, whether through a coordinate or coeducational arrangement, white women would lose status as paragons of virtue. Men dreaded the interaction of the sexes, which would supposedly ruin women's manners and make them aggressive and competitive—masculine traits. If women lost their femininity, then the cost of coordination or coeducation was too great. Men also worried that they might lose their masculinity if women gained access to UVA. The faculty believed that a female presence would inhibit the school's "eminent success in developing manly, self-reliant character."³⁸ The higher education of white women, men feared, would damage both the domestic sphere of women and the public sphere of men. Instead, white men of the era preferred to preserve the status quo—a hierarchical society in which white men reserved power for themselves and kept white women and blacks in subordinate roles.

All of the arguments used against coeducation in the 1890s reemerged when women, led by Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, renewed their efforts for a collegiate education at UVA in 1910—a year in which other events in the state affected higher education. The state created the Virginia Education Commission, which maintained, managed, and expanded higher educational institutions. Out of its creation came the requirements and definitions for the public high school, state normal school, college, and university.³⁹ After the standards became law, the educational system as a whole benefited, especially women's normal schools, which raised their standards for certification. In 1911, when the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, an

³⁸ Ibid., 31-32. *Faculty Minutes*, Vol. 16, June 8, 1907, 7; quoted in Ibid., 30.

³⁹ Cato, 212-213; Virginia Senate, "Report of the Virginia Education Commission, Senate Document Number 3," *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1912), 15-22.

accrediting body, passed a resolution requiring high school teachers to have a BA or its equivalent in training, certification of women's colleges became a greater issue for women.⁴⁰ Since none of the state's normal schools provided the same level of collegiate work as the white men's institutions and none conferred bachelors' degrees in 1911, women added these deficits to their argument. Claiming that they had a right to a collegiate education at the state's capstone institution, white women pressured the state legislature to either create a separate women's college or a women's annex at UVA to provide this opportunity. These various forces prompted the formation of the Co-Ordinate College League in Virginia.

In 1910, after the defeat of Senator Aubrey E. Strode's first bill to bring a coordinate college to UVA, Munford organized upper- and middle-class white women and a few men to establish the CCL.⁴¹ The league's goal was to pressure the legislature to establish and appropriate funds for a coordinate college for white women at UVA. The CCL built upon the foundations of a larger social reform movement led by white women in 1892, the Society for the Extension of Higher Education in Virginia, an organization dedicated to the coeducation movement.⁴²

Throughout the 1910s the Co-Ordinate College League worked with its supporters in the General Assembly to introduce bills to establish "a State College for women at the University of Virginia," but these bills either failed to come up for a vote or met defeat.⁴³ Following the defeat

⁴⁰ Whitney and Wilburn, 55-56; Virginia Senate, "Report of the Virginia Education Commission, Senate Document Number 3," *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1912), 61-62.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 50; Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, Papers, 1881-1935. Accession 28142, Personal papers collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (Hereafter: LVA); Equal Suffrage League, Records, 1909-1938. Accession 22002, Box 3, Folder 65, Organization records collection, LVA. I found no evidence to show that Strode, a senator for Amherst County, was a member of the CCL or ESL, but his wife was a member of the ESL.

⁴² Cato, 257-267.

⁴³ Aubrey E. Strode to Joseph D. Eggleston, 24 November 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU; Whitney and Wilburn, 45.

of Senator Strode's bill in 1910, others introduced bills at each biennium.⁴⁴ Many legislators professed that they were not against women's higher education, but they were against having it at UVA. In addition, alumni of UVA banded together to protest the bills with a variety of arguments. These included the belief that coordination would lead to coeducation, that state funds would be diverted from UVA to the women's college, that it would disturb the relationship between the sexes, that it would have a negative impact on the University's traditions, and that it would harm the school's national reputation.⁴⁵ Richard E. Byrd, an alumnus and speaker of the House of Delegates, attended alumni meetings and participated in debates regarding the coordinate bills in the General Assembly. He claimed that the purpose of the coordinate college bills was "to put women alongside men in everything; that they want[ed] to destroy the difference between the sexes."⁴⁶ As Byrd's quote demonstrates, gender was at the heart of the debate regarding women's higher education coordinate with men's, which would ultimately threaten white male domination in society and politics.

Between 1910 and 1918 the opponents of the coordinate college at UVA raised multiple gender arguments to counter each bill, arguments that essentially rephrased those raised in the 1890s. Opponents of the coordinate bills did not oppose higher education for women in the state's normal schools. Rather, they wanted to preserve the male identity of UVA, which they

⁴⁴ The Early-Rison Bill followed in 1912 and again in 1914. The movement had bicameral support in 1916 with the Houston and Willis Bill in the Lower House and the Early and Strode Bill in the Upper House. In 1918, the General Assembly had three bills introduced: the Anderson Bill, the Shackelford-Strode Bill, and the McNutt Bill. All had slightly different provisions. See Whitney and Wilburn, 45-46, 51-54, 62-70.

⁴⁵ Whitney and Wilburn, 45-46, 51, 53, 59-60, 63-64, 67-68.

⁴⁶ Richard E. Byrd; quoted in "Alumni Bitterly Oppose College," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 January 1912, 2; also quoted in Whitney and Wilburn, 53. Byrd also served as a member of the Virginia Education Commission in 1912. Its report stated that three options existed to provide women with a collegiate level education "in coeducational schools, co-ordinate affiliated schools or in independent institutions equally endowed and equipped. There is no women's college in existence that can claim this last distinction." The Commission concluded that coordination was the best method to educate women because it avoided "unpleasant social relations of the co-educational institutions, and it at once attaches itself to an institution with good educational traditions and sound scholarship." Virginia Senate, "Report of the Virginia Education Commission, Senate Document Number 3," *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1912), 62.

believed the CCL would destroy. Alumni especially feared the potential female threat to the male community and believed that women would undermine the honor system, since men would have difficulty accusing and dismissing women for cheating. The leader of the alumni opposition, Murray McGuire, summed up these sentiments with a statement regarding the male nature of the school. McGuire claimed that the University, “its history, its traditions, its system of government are all founded on the teaching of men and for the teaching of men and the association of men with men. The University is a little world of its own where young men . . . develop amid surroundings that inculcate manliness and men’s high ideals.”⁴⁷ Other sources of opposition to the CCL emerged between 1914 and 1916, and these vocal opponents claimed that a coordinate college for women at UVA would not provide the best education for women.⁴⁸ However, not all Virginians opposed a coordinate college at UVA. Prominent men, including Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr. and President Woodrow Wilson, supported the CCL.⁴⁹

Although a number of educators around the state supported either coordination or coeducation at the University of Virginia, the effort failed, largely as a result of the gender arguments of alumni. Though the Co-Ordinate College League failed in their main goal to admit female undergraduates to UVA, they received other concessions from the General Assembly as a result of their efforts. In 1918, the College of William and Mary formally admitted white women.⁵⁰ The Medical College of Virginia also admitted white women in 1918, although this

⁴⁷ Murray M. McGuire, “Some Objections to the Co-Ordinate Woman’s College,” *Alumni Bulletin*, vol. 14 (January, 1914), 12; quoted in Whitney and Wilburn, 59.

⁴⁸ Whitney and Wilburn, 46, 48, 53, 59, 64-66.

⁴⁹ Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, Papers, 1881-1935, Box 10, Folder 3. Accession 28142, Personal papers collection, LVA. In 1913, the CCL courted Eggleston for support. In November 1913, Eggleston declared his support for the coordinate college for women at UVA, and Munford reprinted his letter, along with one by Woodrow Wilson, in a bound pamphlet, *The Co-ordinate College at Charlottesville Affiliated with the University of Virginia* (Virginia, 1913). In 1914, Eggleston was a listed member of the CCL movement. The original letter and pamphlet are in Eggleston, J. D. RG 2/7 Box 3, Folder 203, SCDLAULVPISU.

⁵⁰ Cato, 289; Susan H. Godson et al., *The College of William and Mary: A History*, 2 vols., (Williamsburg, Virginia: King and Queen Press, 1993), 2: 508.

policy remained unofficial until 1920. In the one concession to Munford's battle, the University of Virginia finally admitted white women to the graduate and professional programs in 1920.

The Case for Equal Suffrage

Some of the women who participated in the Co-Ordinate College League also advocated women's suffrage and sought to resurrect what was then a flagging movement in the state. Like many other southern states, Virginia women came to support the suffrage movement in fits and starts.⁵¹ As early as May 1870, some Richmond women, under the leadership of Anna Bodeker, the wife of a Richmond druggist and delegate, founded the Virginia State Woman Suffrage Association. Though the women received help from their national affiliate, the National Woman Suffrage Association, its connections to Republican reformers offended white Democrats in Virginia. The state's hostile political climate caused membership to lag, and by 1872 the state organization collapsed.⁵² In the 1880s, Orra Langhorne, the daughter of a Unionist and a Republican, repeatedly petitioned legislators to pass a law that would permit women to vote. When her efforts failed, she attended National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) conventions and tried to organize a Virginia association in 1893. Nothing permanent materialized as a result of her efforts, however, and the movement languished for the next sixteen years.⁵³

⁵¹ Wheeler, 20-22. Wheeler noted the tardiness of southern women to join the suffrage campaigns of the 1890s, most of which worked with NAWSA. Because of a lack of success, however, these groups faded at the turn of the century. Wheeler associates the revival of the woman's suffrage movement with the progressive movement's similarity between men and women's political goals.

⁵² Carol Jean Clare, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Virginia: Its Nature, Rationale, and Tactics" (M.A. thesis, the University of Virginia, 1968), 2-5; Charlotte Jean Shelton, "Women Suffrage and Virginia Politics, 1909-1920" (M.A. thesis, the University of Virginia, 1969), 5-9; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 153-154.

⁵³ Clare, 5-6; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 155; Shelton, 9-10; Wamsley, 266.

In 1909, during a time when the national suffrage movement began to expand its scope and reach, Laura Clay, a suffragist from Kentucky, provided the impetus to form the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia (ESL). Clay spoke to the Richmond Woman's Club about women's suffrage, and this meeting led to the establishment of the ESL, which was affiliated with NAWSA. Lila Meade Valentine became the president of the movement, which began with recruitment and earnest determination to achieve women's suffrage—an effort that extended over the next eleven years.⁵⁴

As a prominent member of Richmond society and a progressive activist, Lila Meade Valentine influenced many. Valentine's views regarding women's suffrage apparently affected her cousin, Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., and he became a member of the ESL in 1911.⁵⁵ During his presidency of VPI, Valentine and Eggleston maintained contact, and on several occasions she requested to speak to students and faculty. She also requested information regarding Blacksburg's Women's Club. Eggleston was unsure of the position of R. H. Hudnall, the Blacksburg Women's Club president, regarding women's suffrage and told Valentine "I have not attempted to force my views upon any one, although I have been prompt to state my position when it has been asked." As Eggleston's language suggests, he strove to maintain a conservative image as the president of a male institution. For instance, when Valentine requested to speak at VPI, Eggleston did not deny her outright. Instead, he explained that her chosen dates coincided with exams, a time which prohibited meetings. Eggleston claimed: "it would be impossible to get up an audience for you under such conditions as these."⁵⁶ Valentine made several more

⁵⁴ Clare, 8-11; Erickson, 9; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 157-158; Lebsack, 120; Shelton, 10-12. Virginia did not ratify the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

⁵⁵ Equal Suffrage League, Records, 1909-1938. Accession 22002, Box 4, Folder 226, Organization records collection, LVA. Eggleston was one of the few male members in 1911.

⁵⁶ Lila Meade Valentine to Joseph D. Eggleston, 23 May 1914; Joseph D. Eggleston to Lila Meade Valentine, 29 May 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU.

requests, and for each one Eggleston stated the logical reasons why it was inconvenient for her to come and speak at those times.⁵⁷ Although Eggleston turned Valentine down, he did not dissuade her attempts. In fact, he encouraged her by stating she would “get a good audience when [she came] to Blacksburg,” but he did not advise coming in the winter.⁵⁸ As these exchanges indicate, Eggleston’s participation in the Equal Suffrage League remained limited.

Other national forces also contributed to the expansion of women’s roles in society. At the same time that the debate regarding the coeducation of women reached its apex in Virginia, and women’s suffrage reached a national peak, the United States entered World War I. Women in Virginia and the nation responded by supporting the country’s involvement in the war in a variety of ways. Some women performed men’s work, while others participated in volunteer work to raise money or conserve resources. Burruss himself mentioned the roles women had fulfilled during WWI as part of his argument when he asked the Board of Visitors to admit women in 1921.

While engaged in war, Virginia’s suffragists, like others across the nation, suspended their agitation and turned to volunteer war work, such as Liberty Loan drives and Red Cross activities. The women did not petition for a state amendment for the right to vote, but they monitored the progress of the federal amendment then in Congress.⁵⁹ After the war ended, the federal amendment, approved by Congress, went to the states for ratification. The women of Virginia suffered from humiliation when the General Assembly issued a joint resolution to reject

⁵⁷ Lila Meade Valentine to Joseph D. Eggleston, 17 June 1914; Joseph D. Eggleston to Lila Meade Valentine, 27 June 1914; Lila Meade Valentine to Joseph D. Eggleston, 19 November 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU.

⁵⁸ Joseph D. Eggleston to Lila Meade Valentine, 21 November 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU.

⁵⁹ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 171.

it.⁶⁰ Tennessee ratified the Nineteenth Amendment on August 13, 1920, making it part of the Constitution. That same year, the University of Virginia's graduate school admitted women as one concession to the CCL.

This chapter has presented what came before access as part of the process of coeducation, extending over a number of years, not just the date of access. Chapter one has discussed the importance of gender in the movement for white women's collegiate education in the 1910s to demonstrate the context for access before white male colleges admitted women. As Geraldine Joncich Clifford and Mary Ann Dzuback claimed, gender defines America's educational institutions, and the efforts of the Co-Ordinate College League substantiate their claim. This chapter has also demonstrated that gender affected male colleges before they admitted women, supporting Clifford's argument about the sexual nature of male institutions.

The debate about women's rights for higher education and suffrage in Virginia demonstrates the key role of gender in the state's politics. During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, Virginia women expanded their roles in movements involving municipal housekeeping and educated motherhood among others. By simply participating in these movements, white women challenged traditional gender roles in Virginia. When the indirect influence of Virginia women failed, they realized the utility and necessity of suffrage to achieve their goals. As a right, to improve the education of teachers, and to become responsible and knowledgeable citizens, Virginia women urged higher education, and this helped push the coordinate college movement. Although Virginia did not ratify the Nineteenth Amendment in

⁶⁰ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 172; Virginia General Assembly, *Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1920), 50-51, 588-591. Virginia passed an act that extended the right of suffrage to women on March 20, 1920 with the condition that it was not effective unless the amendment was ratified within 90 days of the General Assembly's adjournment. This act occurred five months before Tennessee ratified the amendment.

1920, enough states did to put it into effect. This shifting social and political climate represented by the Co-Ordinate College League and Equal Suffrage League in Virginia, created a wedge for others, such as Julian Ashby Burruss, to present the Board of Visitors with his argument and persuade it to admit white women to VPI.

While this chapter has focused on the social and political elements before access, the next chapter will analyze the economic motive to admit white women to VPI. Together, chapters one and two show coeducation as a process that began before women received access. These chapters emphasize how social, political, and economic considerations affected the process by discussing the Co-Ordinate College League, the Equal Suffrage League, and gender roles before women received access to male colleges. An analysis of federal legislation that provided funding to certain programs provides a novel way to examine how and why a white male college adopted coeducation in the face of seeking to preserve traditional gender roles.

Chapter 2: The Federal Incentive

While Virginia debated women's access to a collegiate education, the federal government passed legislation that provided an economic incentive to admit white women to the nation's white male land-grant colleges. Focusing on the economic aspect of the process of coeducation, this chapter complements the social and political events that occurred before white women gained admission to some white male colleges in Virginia during the 1910s and 1920s. The federal legislation of the 1910s provided an opportunity for women's access—an opportunity some educational leaders capitalized on to persuade their institutions to admit women.

This chapter seeks to analyze a neglected avenue of research: how federal legislation provided an economic incentive for some white male land-grants to admit women. As a case study, an examination of how Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) responded to two specific pieces of federal legislation reveals that the college experienced the process of coeducation as early as 1914. After seven years of incremental steps, VPI admitted white women full time to all courses except the military ones. Because this process occurred slowly and only affected summer and winter sessions, it did not challenge VPI's identity, which became an issue after women could enroll during the regular fall and spring sessions—an issue discussed fully in chapter three as part of the process of coeducation: inclusion.

To show how and why VPI adopted coeducation in 1921, this chapter examines two pieces of federal legislation: the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. These two acts federally funded demonstration work to distribute information about agriculture and home economics among the population and the training and salaries of teachers of vocational education respectively. These acts also reflected society's notion of a woman's place and

traditional gender roles, which the federal government reinforced with its legislation. Thus, this chapter supports the argument of Geraldine Joncich Clifford and Mary Ann Dzuback that gender shaped American higher education. Although this chapter notes the role of gender occasionally, the main argument highlights the economic motive to admit white women to southern white male land-grants.

Why would a white, male, military school admit women? What would motivate a school to adopt coeducation? According to the histories of Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI), it was a matter of principle to admit women. But one factor, the federal money factor and its role in coeducation, has not received a thorough examination. As a land-grant school, VPI existed based on meeting federal criteria since its founding. Throughout the years, VPI has benefited from federal dollars by meeting various terms, a pattern that continues to this day. Some white land-grants adopted coeducation before the federal legislation of the 1910s created the incentive. Two southern white land-grants, Maryland State College and the University of Georgia, adopted coeducation in a direct response to it.¹ Six southern white land-grants remained officially male in January 1921, including Delaware, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia; however, most also provided separate public colleges for white women and therefore had the means to take advantage of the federal legislation.

Virginia did not provide a separate woman's college, but it had created an opportunity for white women's public undergraduate higher education in 1918. The adoption of coeducation at William and Mary (W&M) seemed an unlikely place to execute the requirements of the federal

¹ Space does not permit an examination of the land-grant schools in Maryland and Georgia, which adopted coeducation in 1916 and 1918 respectively. However, the federal incentive probably induced these schools to adopt coeducation as mentioned on pages 11-12 of the introduction. Mississippi ended coeducation at its land-grant in 1912, but it also had a separate women's college. Delaware established a public women's college in 1914 affiliated with Delaware College. The school created work in home economics, but Hoffecker ignored examining federal legislation in detail. Instead, she attributed the curriculum "to the reform agendas of the Progressive Era, attracting a largely female, professional work force." Carol E. Hoffecker, *Beneath Thy Guiding Hand: A History of Women at the University of Delaware* (Newark: University of Delaware, 1994), 45.

incentive created by the Smith-Hughes Act since domestic science had not been offered at the previously male school. Yet, its reputation as a teacher training institution helped it gain those federal funds. In addition to coeducation at W&M, Virginia also offered Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees through its normal schools—an option that became available in 1916—but their primary focus remained teacher training.² Thus, Virginia’s white women had only recently had the opportunity to avail themselves of a higher education leading to a degree. W&M was eligible for federal funds as a public institution, but its mission as a liberal arts college and teacher training school was very different from VPI’s.

As a land-grant school, VPI’s mission was to provide education in the agricultural and mechanical arts, including military training, for the industrial classes. The Smith-Lever Act coordinated demonstration work with the land-grant schools, and the Smith-Hughes Act focused on vocational training for teachers in agriculture, trade and industries, and home economics. Both of these acts demonstrate the overlap that Clifford mentioned between institutions of higher education and “other schools and formal educational programs” like the demonstration work.³ The Smith-Hughes Act did not state that the training had to occur at land-grant institutions, but the connection was implicit. The location for this type of education was generally not in liberal arts schools but in the land-grant colleges in states that had both flagship and land-grant schools. Administrators at VPI felt that the Smith-Hughes work should be at VPI, and they wanted the federal funds associated with this work. These two desires provided the federal incentive to admit white women to VPI in 1921.

² The state retained the title of normal schools until 1924, when they became state teacher colleges, reflecting their emphasis on this level of education. Harrisonburg conferred the first BS degrees in 1919.

³ Geraldine Joncich Clifford, “‘Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease’: Gender and American Higher Education,” *Feminist Issues* 3 (1983): 19-24.

Reexamining the Motives to Admit Women to VPI

Accolades have surrounded the presidency of Julian Ashbury Burruss at VPI for a variety of reasons, particularly the admission of women. Duncan Lyle Kinnear claimed in his history of VPI that “the most significant innovation introduced by Burruss was the admission of women to VPI, beginning in September, 1921.” Kinnear also stated that “Burruss wanted them admitted on an equality with men.”⁴ These actions are overstated for three reasons. First, Burruss implicitly meant white women, but because of white, racial hegemony in his segregated world, he did not state what was then obvious. Second, nowhere did Burruss actually state he wanted women treated equally. In fact, the curricula he established as president of the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg indicated that teaching and homemaking remained the primary acceptable fields for women.⁵ Third and finally, 1921 marked only one date in the process of coeducation for white women at VPI.

Beginning with the fall session in 1921, white women could enroll in any course at VPI except for military ones. But what motivated Burruss to admit women? Historians cite Burruss’s eleven years of experience at the Harrisonburg State Normal School, which had acquainted him with the abilities of white women.⁶ However, certain incidents reveal Burruss’s lack of commitment to female equality. His predecessor, Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., was a

⁴ Duncan Lyle Kinnear, *The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* (Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute Educational Foundation, 1972), 262.

⁵ Raymond C. Dingleline Jr., *Madison College: The First Fifty Years, 1908-1958* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Madison College, 1959), 56. I will refer to the school as Harrisonburg throughout this chapter, although I also refer to it by its legal name, which changed several times throughout this period.

⁶ Kinnear does not mention women directly. Instead he alludes to them: “As a result of his work at Harrisonburg, he also became familiar with the several agencies working to improve conditions surrounding rural life in Virginia.” Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 253-254; Clara B. Cox, *Generations of Women Leaders at Virginia Tech 1921-1996, 75th Anniversary of Women at Virginia Tech* (Blacksburg, March 1996), 7; Peter Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872-1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Pocahontas Press, Inc., 1997), 132; Dingleline, 49-50. In 1914, Virginia reorganized the normal schools under the Virginia Normal School Board and changed the name—the first in a series of many to come.

member of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia. Burruss was not. Although Burruss was a member of the Co-Ordinate College League, which sought a collegiate education for white women coordinate with the University of Virginia (UVA), equal educational opportunities for white women at VPI was not a top priority on Burruss's agenda.⁷ Historians of VPI also cited the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment and the risk that VPI might have forfeited federal and state funds when they discussed Burruss's plan to admit women. However, they did not elaborate on which funds the school stood to lose.⁸ So, what were these federal funds? What role did these federal funds play in the admission of white women to VPI? And to what extent did Burruss build upon the efforts of Eggleston?

In a report to the Board of Visitors, a year and a half after becoming president of VPI, Burruss cited thirteen reasons to admit women to VPI, two of which alluded to federal funds. In particular, Burruss discussed the Smith-Hughes Act, which funded vocational education training for teachers and paid a portion of their salaries. He specifically cited that female home demonstration agents had received training in home economics at the short courses at VPI, but that it was insufficient to bolster the education they received at the normal schools. In addition, Burruss claimed that VPI was the best place to train these women as home demonstration agents. He cited the opinion of the Federal Board for Vocational Education, which suggested that "the home economics work supported from Smith-Hughes funds should preferably be given at the agricultural colleges." However, Burruss lamented, "when the Smith-Hughes [A]ct was passed and its conditions accepted by Virginia, the agricultural college was not in position to take

⁷ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 254-262; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Reports of the President, 1919-1920* (Blacksburg: Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, 1927), 8-11. Kinnear does not provide any evidence to support his assertion that Burruss wanted women at VPI in the first two years of his administration. Nor do Burruss's own presidential reports from his first year indicate that he sought the admission of women to the school as either an ultimate or proximate objective in his list of goals for VPI.

⁸ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 263; Cox, 8; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 132.

advantage of it because it did not admit women.” Thus the portion of funds for home economics teacher training went to the Harrisonburg State Normal School and the College of William and Mary. Burruss indicated that he believed VPI should receive these funds, and the only way to accomplish this was to admit women. In addition to money already going elsewhere, Burruss expressed fears about current and future legislation in Congress that would provide federal funds only to schools with departments of home economics.⁹ A brief history of federal legislation concerning land-grant schools will illuminate the role of federal funds as the impetus to admit white women to VPI in the 1910s.

History of Federal Legislation and the Land-Grants

Signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, the Morrill Act of 1862 funded the land-grant schools to teach agricultural and mechanical arts in addition to military training for the industrial classes.¹⁰ Under the Morrill Act, the states received land scrip in the west, which they in turn sold and reinvested the money at a minimum of 5 percent per annum. The land sales created an endowment to fund the day-to-day business of the land-grant schools. States were expected to provide the land and buildings to organize their schools. The states utilized the money generated by the land-grants in a variety of ways. Some states created entirely new institutions, while others allocated the money to preexisting institutions. A few

⁹ Julian A. Burruss, President’s Report, Board of Visitor Minutes, January 13, 1921, page 13 of the report in Ledger IV; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Reports of the President, 1920-1921* (Blacksburg, Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, 1927), 142-145. Burruss referred to the Smoot Bill pending in Congress. This bill did not pass; however, another act, the Purnell Act, did pass in 1925 and affected home economics. VPI later published the president’s reports, beginning in 1927.

¹⁰ States in the Confederacy could not capitalize on the grant until they were readmitted to the Union.

states chose to create new institutions by transforming existing ones to suit the parameters of the Morrill Act. Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (VAMC) was one such school.

The Virginia General Assembly founded VAMC in 1872 by acquiring the land and buildings of the Preston and Olin Institute in Montgomery County. At the same time, the General Assembly also designated one-third of the land-grant funds to Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute as the black land-grant school. This move was unusual; only two other states, Mississippi and South Carolina, made the effort to share their funds.¹¹ Thus Virginia had two schools of higher education receiving an endowment from the Morrill Act of 1862, one for white men, VAMC, and one for black men and women, Hampton. Provisions for the higher education of white women remained conspicuously absent as Virginia disbursed these federal funds, although the act made no reference to sex.

In 1887, Congress passed the Hatch Act, expanding the original mission of the land-grant institutions. The Hatch Act encouraged agricultural research by creating agricultural experiment stations—work that would bring the land-grant colleges in closer contact with the people.¹² Congress also created requirements the schools had to meet in order to receive their annual funds. The Hatch Act encompassed a broader spectrum of the population and improved agricultural research, but the need for some coordination of agricultural higher education with public schools was a constant refrain—one which would not be addressed for another thirty years

¹¹ Leedell W. Neyland, *Historically Black Land-Grant Institutions and the Development of Agriculture and Home Economics, 1890-1990* (Tallahassee: Florida A&M University Foundation, Inc., 1990), 2-15; Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South: Public Policy in Nineteenth Century Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 162-164. According to Neyland, Alcorn University in Mississippi received federal funds from the 1862 Morrill Act in 1871. Hampton in Virginia and Claflin in South Carolina followed in 1872. According to Wallenstein, Georgia also provided public funds to Atlanta University, which also received money from the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association. Georgia originally funded both Atlanta University and the white land-grant in Athens, the University of Georgia, equally from state funds.

¹² Gary E. Moore, "The Involvement of Experiment Stations in Secondary Agricultural Education, 1887-1917," *Agricultural History* 62 (1988): 166; Clifford, 19-24. This first piece of federal legislation to expand the land-grant mission also supports Clifford's argument about overlap among institutions.

until the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, which funded the training of teachers in agricultural subjects.¹³

In 1890, three years after the Hatch Act, Congress passed the Second Morrill Act to expand educational opportunities by providing annual funding to the land-grant schools. The first Morrill Act made no reference to sex or race, but Congress specifically addressed the omission of race in the Second Morrill Act in 1890 by tying the funds to race. According to the new legislation, states that segregated their students had to provide blacks with an equitable proportion of funding. The Second Morrill Act eventually brought the total of black land-grant schools to seventeen. This act legally segregated institutions of higher education six years before *Plessy v. Ferguson* established the separate but equal doctrine—though the black land-grants hardly received equal funding.¹⁴ Most of these black land-grants accepted black women, but the Second Morrill Act did not address sex specifically, leaving provisions for the education of white women to the individual states.

On May 8, 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act. The act's purpose was to disseminate information about agriculture and home economics among the people, which further expanded the mission of the land-grant schools. The federal government initially offered \$10,000 annually to states that were willing to accept its provisions. The goal of the act was to teach useful information regarding agriculture and home economics to men, boys, women, and girls not enrolled in college. Teaching people throughout the state required both male and

¹³ Moore, 168.

¹⁴ Legally the states had to provide for the black land-grants out of their federal funds from the Second Morrill Act of 1890. However, many states appropriated additional state funds to the white land-grants but excluded black ones from receiving any of these. Because Virginia's appropriation acts do not include the source of funds, it is difficult to determine the amount the state provided directly. See Appendix D for a list of the 17 black land-grants.

female agents to carry out the demonstration work.¹⁵ To qualify the state had to match the federal funds, hire a director under the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture, and align its program according to the Federal Extension Division of the Department of Agriculture.¹⁶ The Smith-Lever Act furthered the work of the experiment stations, which remained separate under the legislation, by relaying this information to the people and providing instruction and demonstrations in agriculture and home economics. The blueprint for extension divisions, in the form of farmers' institutes, demonstration trains, and boys' and girls' clubs, had existed throughout the United States prior to the passage of the Smith-Lever Act.¹⁷ The act simply provided the funds for land-grant schools to coordinate this work among the federal, state, and local levels of government.

The Necessity to Train Virginia Women and the Extension Wedge at VPI

Virginia had participated in demonstration work since 1907. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., invited Seaman A. Knapp, the former president of Iowa State College who initiated demonstration work in the United States, to introduce his agricultural methods to a group of Virginia educators. As a result of Eggleston's efforts, demonstration work began in 1907 under the direction of Thomas O. Sandy, a Burkeville farmer and VPI alumnus; however, the program remained small and principally for men. In addition to

¹⁵ Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, 2 vols., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 2: 186, 193, 331. Dabney says women agents were added in 1911, but then says girls' club work began in South Carolina under Marie Cromer in 1910 and three months later under Ella Agnew in Virginia. Later, Dabney says girls' canning clubs started under Agnew in 1908.

¹⁶ United States, *Statutes at Large of the United States of America from March, 1913 to March, 1915* Volume 38, Part I (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), 372-374.

¹⁷ Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., *Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 256. Many agricultural programs emerged from Theodore Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life, the General Education Board, and the United States Department of Agriculture in the first decade of the 20th century.

demonstration work, Sandy hired Southall Farrar to develop boys' corn clubs and Ella Agnew to develop girls' garden, canning, and poultry clubs. Eggleston, who recognized the program's potential for Virginians, helped found the United Agricultural Board (UAB) to organize demonstration work throughout Virginia in 1910. The legislation for the UAB focused on the male farmer and agriculture as a general category.¹⁸ The UAB did not address women's needs specifically as farmers' wives, but the lack of specificity led to a broad interpretation of the law enabling Agnew to expand her work with girls' clubs to women's home demonstration.

When Eggleston became president of VPI in 1913, he immediately set out to find ways for VPI to develop the demonstration work.¹⁹ In fact, while Congress debated the Smith-Lever bill in late 1913, Eggleston formed plans "to train men and women to do demonstration work," which he hoped to accomplish through summer sessions funded by the General Assembly at VPI "running from six to eight weeks, and to make a special effort to train men and women for the organization of boys' and girls' clubs."²⁰ Eggleston anticipated that Congress would pass the Smith-Lever Bill, and he sought to arrange a smooth transition for the benefit of VPI.²¹ Working closely with Bradford Knapp, the Special Agent in Charge of the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work through the United States Department of Agriculture, the two men agreed

¹⁸ Edward Overton, "A Study of the Life and Work of Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Junior" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1943), 297, 299; Virginia General Assembly, *Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia 1910* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1910), 573-576; Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 198. The General Assembly established the United Agricultural Board to coordinate the efforts of demonstration work, in 1910. As a body, the UAB disbursed funds from the United States Department of Agriculture, the General Education Board, and Virginia. Agnew stated that she began work as the State Home Demonstration Agent on July 1, 1910; in Overton, 300.

¹⁹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 229-232; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 110-111.

²⁰ Joseph D. Eggleston to Governor William Hodges Mann, 8 September 1913, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 3, Folder 198, Special Collections, Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. [Hereafter cited as SCDLAULVPISU.]

²¹ Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 3, Folder 198, SCDLAULVPISU. Correspondence between outgoing Governor Mann and Eggleston from December 1913 and January 1914 demonstrate that the two men anxiously worked with the incoming governor, Henry C. Stuart, to dissolve the United Agricultural Board and discuss the future of demonstration work as an extension division at VPI, which would support the then debated Smith-Lever Bill.

that the UAB had outlived its usefulness for demonstration work. Eggleston began a letter writing campaign to members of the General Assembly claiming that he no longer saw “the necessity of continuing the United Agricultural Board.”²²

While Eggleston petitioned members of the General Assembly, Knapp drafted legislation to repeal the UAB.²³ Knapp also encouraged Eggleston to agree to “a form of understanding” for the cooperative demonstration work in February. Knapp sent copies of those from other states for Eggleston to peruse, but not until March 1914 did Eggleston officially ask Knapp to create a proposal for Virginia.²⁴ By April, Knapp sent a draft to Eggleston that provided for demonstration work for both men and women and boys’ and girls’ clubs. Male and female agents had the same hierarchy and organization with one simple difference: the women could have their headquarters “at the College or elsewhere, in the discretion of the official representatives.”²⁵ A month later, on May 8, 1914, Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act.

Shortly after the passage of the Smith-Lever Act, Virginia acted to utilize the funds it provided. On May 19, 1914, Eggleston received a letter from the governor’s secretary authorizing VPI to receive the funds from the Smith-Lever Act “to organize and conduct

²² Quote from Joseph D. Eggleston to Senator J. B. Watkins, 12 January 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 4, Folder 274, SCDLAULVPISU. The correspondence comes from the same folder.

²³ Bradford Knapp to Joseph D. Eggleston, 21 January 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 1, Folder 23, SCDLAULVPISU; Virginia General Assembly, *Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia 1914* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1914), 710-712; Joseph D. Eggleston, Jr., “President’s Report October 1, 1915,” 12 in Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Reports*, 2 vols. (Blacksburg: Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, 1940). While Congress debated the Smith-Lever Bill, Knapp and Eggleston must have presented very persuasive arguments to the General Assembly because it repealed the UAB on March 27, 1914. The act also transferred all remaining funds to VPI, which explains why the 1915 Annual Report of the president indicates that VPI received \$209.96 from the United Agricultural Board that year.

²⁴ Bradford Knapp to Joseph D. Eggleston, 11 & 24 February 1914; Joseph D. Eggleston to Bradford Knapp, 17 February & 16 March 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 1, Folder 23, SCDLAULVPISU. It seems that Eggleston did not feel comfortable with drafting a proposal until the fate of the UAB was certain.

²⁵ Bradford Knapp to Joseph D. Eggleston, 1 April 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 1, Folder 23, SCDLAULVPISU.

agricultural extension work.”²⁶ Eggleston moved immediately to transfer the responsibilities of the UAB to VPI, a move that went smoothly largely as a result of his political maneuvers and letter writing campaign to the General Assembly.²⁷ By July 1914, Knapp and Eggleston had made progress toward a plan for the Smith-Lever funds.

Bradford Knapp, who was familiar with demonstration work, noted problems with some of Eggleston’s plans and made recommendations to change them. Under Eggleston’s plans Ella Agnew and Thomas O. Sandy became the first state demonstration agents. Knapp noted that Eggleston’s original plan had Agnew subordinate to Sandy, a situation Knapp claimed would “not be satisfactory to her.” Eggleston quickly replied that this had not been his intention, adding “I have assured Miss Agnew that her work should stand on its own feet . . . not under the men’s demonstration work.”²⁸ Eggleston intended for women’s home demonstration work to be independent and separate—an interesting arrangement for the time given gender relations, where women were subordinate to men. On the one hand, the organization of the demonstration work may have reflected traditional gender roles for men and women—with men in the field and women in the home. On the other hand, the arrangement may have illustrated a new independence not normally allotted to women in Virginia. Of course, Agnew still had to report to the Director of the Extension Division, and Eggleston served in this capacity until VPI hired Jesse M. Jones in 1916. A synopsis plan outlined that the women’s home demonstration work

²⁶ Alexander Forward to Joseph D. Eggleston, 19 May 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 3, Folder 213, SCDLAULVPISU.

²⁷ Joseph D. Eggleston, Jr., “President’s Report October 1, 1915,” 12; in Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Reports*, 2 vols., (Blacksburg: The Institute, 1915). While Congress debated the Smith-Lever Bill, the 1915 Annual Report of the president indicates that VPI received \$209.96 from the United Agricultural Board that year—a very small sum.

²⁸ Bradford Knapp to Joseph D. Eggleston, 16 July 1914; Joseph D. Eggleston to Bradford Knapp, 17 July 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 1, Folder 23, SCDLAULVPISU.

received \$2,500 and the men's received \$2,550,²⁹ indicating a degree of fiscal equality. This work led to the establishment of the Agricultural Extension Division at VPI.

Because the Smith-Lever Act addressed both the subjects of agriculture and home economics, VPI, like other land-grants, needed both men and women demonstration agents. The act prompted two white southern land-grant colleges, Maryland State College and the University of Georgia, to admit women and offer home economics courses to train women as home demonstration agents in 1916 and 1918 respectively.³⁰ Early in the demonstration work states hired women like Ella Agnew to direct girls' clubs. Her experience put her in a position to become the Virginia's first home demonstration agent in 1910 for the UAB—a position that helped her continue as state home demonstration agent for VPI in 1914. Agnew worked out of Burkeville, about 55 miles southwest of Richmond, until accommodations for the Extension Division were built on VPI's campus in 1916.³¹ To carry out the work of the Smith-Lever Act, however, more women needed training to become district and county agents. But where would these women receive training? And when? Conscious of the need for trained home demonstration agents, Eggleston requested funds for a summer school at VPI, one which would admit women, as early as 1913. But when exactly did women begin to attend and under what circumstances?

Two months after Eggleston became president of VPI on September 8, 1913, he wrote a personal letter to Governor Mann covering a variety of issues, especially demonstration work. Expecting “to train men and women to do demonstration work,” Eggleston suggested that VPI

²⁹ “Synopsis Covering Work to Be Performed Under the Smith-Lever Appropriation of \$10,000.00” n. d. (probably July 1914), Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 1, Folder 23, SCDLAULVPISU.

³⁰ George H. Callcott, *A History of the University of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1966), 248-249; Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 172-173; Peter Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 118.

³¹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 198, 231; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 107, 111.

“should undertake the whole job, but in such a manner as to link the demonstration work with the public school work.” Thus, before passage of the Smith-Lever Bill, versions of which included vocational education that Congress later implemented under the Smith-Hughes Act, Eggleston had a vision of what he would like the demonstration work to accomplish. This vision led Eggleston to request “the funds to open a summer school” at VPI “to train men and women for the organization of boys’ and girls’ clubs.”³² Mann’s response indicated that he supported Eggleston’s views regarding demonstration work. Nevertheless, no evidence suggests that women attended the summer session of 1914.³³

By Eggleston’s second year as president, women could apply to attend the summer session. Harry Downing Temple, an alumnus who has written a history of VPI’s Corps of Cadets, briefly referred to women during the 1914-1915 academic year stating, “Technically, the summer school was open to women as well as men.”³⁴ The VPI catalog, published in April 1915, did not indicate that women could apply for admission to the summer school, but the

³² Joseph D. Eggleston to Governor William Hodges Mann, 8 September 1913, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 3, Folder 198; Joseph D. Eggleston to the Appropriations Committee, House of Delegates, 31 January 1914, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 4, Folder 274; Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 5, Folder 387, SCDLAULVPISU. Eggleston again requested funds for a summer school in January 1914. This request, which did not materialize, proposed a joint session with William and Mary to be held at VPI. Similar letters went to members of the Senate.

³³ Reports to the Superintendent of Public Instruction make no mention of the summer school at VPI. Nor does the section regarding State Summer Normal Schools mention VPI. However, if limited only to normal training, this may explain the absence. If classified as a farmer’s course, it would appear under this heading. Evidence for the 1914 summer school comes from the president’s 1916 annual report, which indicates that “The Summer School [was] reestablished two years ago.” However, there is no evidence that women attended. Joseph D. Eggleston, “President’s Annual Report” submitted to the Board of Visitors July 10, 1916. Board of Visitor Minutes, Ledger III, 232. Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1913-1914* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1916), 360-396, 500-515; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Catalogue: Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute*, April 1914, 23, 148-149. The 1914 catalog does not mention a summer school; however, the decision to hold a summer school may have come after its printing. The catalog does mention the farmers’ winter course and, within the department of agriculture, the home demonstration agents’ course, a new offering.

³⁴ Harry Downing Temple, *The Bugle’s Echo: A Chronology of Cadet Life at the Military College at Blacksburg, Virginia, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Volume III 1912-1920* (Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, Inc. 1998), 1843.

decision to admit women to the summer school probably came after VPI printed the catalog.³⁵ Correspondence from Eggleston to Colonel Henry C. Ford, a member of the State Board of Education, substantiates this claim. Seemingly agitated that his request for \$250 had not been approved at the last board meeting, Eggleston wanted it brought before the board again. Eggleston emphasized that the funds were “for the six weeks’ summer school here, so that men and women in the State who might desire to take agricultural courses with a view to teaching agriculture in the public school system might have the advantage of our excellent laboratories and farm equipment free of any tuition fees.”³⁶ Thus Eggleston had an eye toward allowing women, probably those already with normal school training, to attend VPI’s summer session. The “Account of Receipts Summer Normal Schools” indicated that Eggleston received the appropriation of \$250 from the state and \$2,468.32 in registration fees and tuition from 59 attendees.³⁷ The 1916 catalog clearly stated: “The summer session is open to women as well as to men.”³⁸ Thus, for the first time, a VPI publication provided proof that the school had decided to admit women before 1921. These women did not receive course credit and could not work toward a degree at VPI, but they could at least attend summer classes on campus and later winter courses as well.

Reports to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction indicate that women who attended VPI’s summer and winter sessions received training to become home demonstration

³⁵ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Catalogue: Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute*, April 1915, 150.

³⁶ Joseph D. Eggleston to Colonel Henry C. Ford, 26 January 1915, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 3, Folder 231, SCDLAULVPISU.

³⁷ Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1914-1915* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), 82-83, 180-181, 537-556. Most of these receipts paid for salaries and only \$58.50 went to advertising, printing, and postage costs. Blacksburg received the smallest appropriation from the state for a summer session.

³⁸ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Catalogue: Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute*, January 1916, 157.

agents under the Smith-Lever Act.³⁹ This legislation, however, was far from comprehensive because it did not provide funds to train agents. In fact, because one of the bill's original sponsors, Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia, found certain aspects of the bill lacking—namely the absence of vocational education—he introduced a resolution to Congress in April 1913.⁴⁰ Called the Smith Resolution, it requested “a presidential commission to devise a plan for federal assistance to agricultural and industrial schools.” On January 20, 1914, President Wilson signed the resolution and appointed Smith as the chairman of the commission on which eight other men served, including Representative Dudley M. Hughes of Georgia.⁴¹ The findings of this commission in 1914 led Smith and Hughes to introduce the Vocational Education Bill in their respective legislative bodies in 1914 and, when Congress did not act on it, again in December 1915.⁴² Their bill planned to appropriate money annually for the “salaries of teachers and supervisors of agricultural subjects” and “the preparation of teachers and supervisors in industrial and agricultural schools.”⁴³ Neither house addressed the bill until late 1916, when they finally debated and passed it. The bill became law when Wilson signed it on February 23, 1917.

³⁹ In addition to allowing women to attend the summer school of 1915, VPI's report to the superintendent stated: “During the winter of 1915 were given a three weeks' course to the county demonstrators, a one week's course to Miss Agnew's garden and canning clubs, and a four weeks' course to the farmers.” (537) The report further claimed under a subheading of “Courses of Study” that VPI offered “a farm demonstrators' course of three weeks, a farmers' winter course, and a one-week's winter course in gardening and canning.” (539) Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1914-1915* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), 180-181. Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1915-1916* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), 166-167. Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1916-1917* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1918), 200-201. No courses in home economics were offered during the 1915 or 1916 summer school. However, they may have been classified as “agricultural subjects.” The summer session of 1917 clearly lists two teachers in domestic science and an enrollment of three.

⁴⁰ Grantham, 259.

⁴¹ Philip A. Grant, Jr., “Senator Hoke Smith, Southern Congressmen, and Agricultural Education, 1914-1917,” *Agricultural History* 60 (1986): 117.

⁴² Grantham, 264-266.

⁴³ Grant, 118.

Women's Higher Education in Virginia and the Smith-Hughes Act

The Smith-Hughes Act marked another expansion of the mission of land-grant colleges, further connecting them to their surrounding communities by paying for the training and salaries of vocational education teachers. Gladys Branegan, who wrote about the impact of the Smith-Hughes Act on home economics teacher training in 1929, noted that the act was “the first instance of the Federal government’s participating in the support of education of less than college grade and therefore provided the first official contact of state educational officials with a Federal agency.”⁴⁴ The Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States, the United States Bureau of Education, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching had all maintained contact with high schools throughout their development to work out the curricula and credits so that the transition from secondary to post-secondary education would be smoother.⁴⁵ Because the Smith-Hughes Act provided funds to train teachers of agriculture, industrial trades, and home economics, the act strengthened the relationship between colleges and secondary schools, marking another instance of overlap, discussed by Geraldine Joncich Clifford at the beginning of this chapter.⁴⁶

The Smith-Hughes Act promoted vocational education, including agricultural subjects, industrial trades, and home economics. In order to benefit from the appropriations in the act, the states had to meet all the conditions by June 30, 1920. As the act stated: “no State shall receive any appropriation for salaries of teachers, supervisors, or directors of agricultural subjects,” or

⁴⁴ Gladys Alee Branegan, *Home Economics Teacher Training Under the Smith-Hughes Act, 1917 to 1927: A Study of Trends in the Work of Seventy-One Institutions Approved under the National Vocational Education Act* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1929; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1972), 39.

⁴⁵ William Hall Cato, “The Development of Higher Education for Women in Virginia” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1941), 196-202; Virginia Senate, “Report of the Virginia Education Commission, Senate Document Number 3,” *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1912), 22-28.

⁴⁶ Clifford, 19-21.

“trade, home economics and industrial subjects until it shall have taken advantage of at least the minimum amount appropriated” in the act—except home economics, whose teachers’ salaries could not exceed 20 percent of the appropriation total for teachers. The states had to match the federal funding, spending at least 20 percent to *train* teachers of these vocational subjects to receive full funding.⁴⁷

States had to do more than agree to accept and match federal funds. The states had to create a state agency to coordinate work with the Federal Board of Vocational Education (FBVE), which the Smith-Hughes Act created. This state agency was responsible for planning how to spend the federal funds. In Virginia, Governor Henry C. Stuart initially vested this authority in the State Board of Education because the legislature was not in session. In January 1918, the General Assembly complied with the provisions of the Smith-Hughes Act, creating the legal basis for the act in the state of Virginia. This action ensured that work initiated under Governor Stuart’s directive, accepting the Smith-Hughes Act, could continue unabated. With the General Assembly’s legislation the State Board of Education also served as the State Board of Vocational Education (SBVE), and it made the treasurer of Virginia custodian for federal disbursements. This money was not disbursed through the SBVE but under the supervision of VPI’s Extension Division. The state’s legislation also established a state department of

⁴⁷ Branegan, 93-94; United States, *Statutes at Large of the United States of America from December, 1915, to March, 1917*, Volume 39, Part I (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 932, 933, 935; Duncan Lyle Kinnear, “A History of Agricultural Education in Virginia with Special Emphasis on the Secondary School Level” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1952), 328; Charles Maphis to Joseph D. Eggleston, 1 May 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 2, Folder 79, SCDLAULVPISU. This letter indicates that many were confused about the appropriations—*training* teachers of all subjects had to have at least 20%, but no more than 60%. Salaries for teachers only limited home economics to 20%. Maphis argued that since home economics teachers could only account for 20% of the salary funds, that normal schools should only receive 20% of the training funds. Virginia State Board of Education, “Vocational Education, Plan of the State Board for Vocational Education,” *Bulletin: State Board of Education*, 2 (1919): 29. The SBVE equally divided the funds for teacher training among agricultural subjects, trade and industrial subjects, and home economics subjects. The federal act condoned gender bias by limiting home economics teacher salaries to 20% of funding.

vocational education to organize and supervise the teaching of vocational education.⁴⁸ Because Virginia already had a set of Congressional District Agricultural High Schools which worked closely with VPI, the transition under the Smith-Hughes Act went smoothly, although many of these schools became regular high schools with departments of vocational education.⁴⁹

The Smith-Hughes Act further bound the work of public high school education, which had only been widely established in Virginia in 1906 at the instigation of Eggleston as State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to the work of VPI. Virginia's plan for vocational education under the parameters of the Smith-Hughes Act specifically distributed the funds for teacher training equally among agricultural subjects, trade and industrial subjects, and home economic subjects.⁵⁰ Because VPI did not accept women as full-time, degree-seeking candidates, they could not attend and receive teacher training there; however, VPI received almost two-thirds of the funding in the end. After much wrangling among board members and state institutions, VPI became the location "For the training of white teachers of vocational agriculture . . . [with] a four years' course of training."⁵¹ White teacher training for trades and industries occurred at two places: "in Shop Subjects, Richmond City School Board" and "in related subjects, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia."⁵² Thus VPI became the institution where most white men received training to teach agriculture and trade and industries under the plan established by the SBVE.

⁴⁸ Kinnear, "A History of Agricultural Education in Virginia," 329-336.

⁴⁹ Cathy McNeely Sutphin, "History of Virginia Congressional District Agricultural High Schools" (Ph.D. diss., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1999), 4, 47, 147-148. The passage of the Smith-Hughes Act led to the dissolution of these Congressional District Agricultural Schools, which Eggleston had helped establish in 1908, but the act spread vocational education to more high schools in the state.

⁵⁰ Virginia State Board of Education, "Vocational Education, Plan of the State Board for Vocational Education," *Bulletin: State Board of Education*, 2 (1919): 29.

⁵¹ The plan also states that "the training of colored teachers of vocational agriculture, the State Board has established at the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, Petersburg, a two years' course of training." *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵² The plan also states: "Colored teachers will be trained at the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, Petersburg." *Ibid.*, 32.

VPI was the logical location to train teachers of agriculture and industrial trades, but it did not offer teacher education courses. Originally the state plan called for an arrangement among W&M, UVA, and VPI so that teacher education occurred at the two former ones and agricultural education at the latter one. The FBVE rejected this plan, which led to the development of a four-year course for agriculture at VPI and a new Department of Agricultural Education, which opened in 1918.⁵³ Eggleston's position on the funding issue straddled both sides. On the one hand, his correspondence with Lyon Tyler, president of W&M, and Charles Maphis, a professor of secondary education at UVA, indicated a willingness to share the Smith-Hughes appropriations to train teachers even though Eggleston "felt that all of the work should be located at VPI," which did not have an education department. On the other hand, Eggleston also expressed an interest in creating a department to train teachers for agriculture,⁵⁴ which would obviate the need to share the Smith-Hughes funds. Even though VPI created a department of agriculture education, Eggleston still had to face the fact that, since VPI did not admit women, the funds to train them as home economics teachers would go elsewhere—a blow to VPI, which always struggled with funding in the General Assembly.⁵⁵ Thus, as much as Eggleston desired

⁵³ "The Virginia Polytechnic Institute in co-operation with the State Board for Vocational Education, established during the session of 1918-19 a department of agricultural education, which department will have as its chief purpose the training of teachers of vocational agriculture for the Smith-Hughes schools." Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1918-1919 and 1919-1920* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1921), 42; Kinnear, "A History of Agricultural Education in Virginia," 358, 510-514; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Catalogue: Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute*, February 1918, 28-29; and February 1919, 32-33. Kinnear states that the department of agricultural education began in 1918, but there is no such course listed in the 1918 catalog. It does appear in the 1919 catalog. The date of printing my account for this discrepancy.

⁵⁴ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 244; Correspondence from Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 2, Folder 79 and 163, SCDLAULVPISU.

⁵⁵ Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1917-1918* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1919), 175. During the first year of disbursements, VPI actually received \$1,500 for Smith-Hughes funds for the school's fiscal year July 1, 1917- July 1, 1918. This would amount to 0.24% of the school's total income. Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1918-1919 and 1919-1920* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1921), 165. The financial reports in the superintendent reports do not indicate how much and where Smith-Hughes funds were disbursed for teacher training. Yet, the General Assembly appropriated \$2,000 to UVA, \$4,500 to VPI, and \$2,000 to W&M for

to train white women at VPI, the institution did not receive the Smith-Hughes appropriations for the training of home economics teachers during his administration.

With two-thirds of the funds going to VPI for training white male teachers, the board then split the remaining third of Smith-Hughes funds between W&M and Harrisonburg for the training of white women teachers.⁵⁶ When the Smith-Hughes Act passed, these institutions already had teacher training programs in place for those interested in teaching vocational education or agriculture, especially Harrisonburg. The state normal schools for white women had provided training in certain agricultural subjects, such as home economics, since their founding, and the State Board of Education expected them to continue to do so. Both W&M and UVA held summer sessions offering teacher training to high school agriculture teachers in the years before the Smith-Hughes Act passed.⁵⁷ Facing the reality that other schools were better

each fiscal year in 1919 and 1920. See Virginia General Assembly, *Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1918), 708-712, 740-743.

⁵⁶ The plan also provides training in the trade and industrial subjects for “colored teachers in related and shop subjects, [at the] State Normal and Industrial Institute at Petersburg.” Virginia State Board of Education, “Vocational Education, Plan of the State Board for Vocational Education,” *Bulletin: State Board of Education*, 2 (1919): 36.

⁵⁷ According to Godson, women were allowed “to attend the summer program under the same conditions as men—for the 1917 session only.” Susan H. Godson, et al., *The College of William and Mary: A History*, 2 vols., (Williamsburg: King and Queen Press, 1993), 2: 486. Kinneer, “A History of Agricultural Education in Virginia,” 509, 511-512; the Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1913-1914* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1915), 364-365, 387-396, 516; Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1914-1915* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), 154-156, 168-180, 556; Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1915-1916* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), 489-490; Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1916-1917* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1918), 204-206, 222-232, 542; Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1917-1918* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1919), 114-116, 180. Before the Smith-Hughes Act, the summer schools of W&M and UVA from 1914 to 1917 both offered education courses. Only UVA offered agricultural subjects. Unfortunately the format changed with the 1917-18 Annual Report, eliminating the list of courses offered and enrollment figures by subject. W&M’s summer school (at Dublin) was available only to men through 1916. The 1917 and 1918 reports are vague about the admission of women. UVA’s summer school admitted both men and women and offered courses in domestic economy. Ella Agnew appears as a teacher of agriculture in the summer of 1915, and as a teacher of demonstration work in 1917 at UVA.

equipped to train white women teachers for home economics, VPI did not actively pursue the funds associated with it.⁵⁸

Although VPI did not adopt coeducation as this time, a series of letters between Eggleston and State Senator Aubrey Strode suggest that support for it existed within the office of the president and the Virginia General Assembly. In November of 1917, Strode reminded Eggleston of his support—dating back to 1910—for a women’s coordinate college at UVA. Although Strode expressed doubt as to whether the proposition would pass, he said, “the idea has occurred to [him] that it might be practicable to offer courses to women at some of the other State Colleges.” He wanted Eggleston’s opinion and “the availability of your institution along this line if the General Assembly should be advised to provide for opening some of its courses to women.”⁵⁹ These two statements demonstrate that some Virginia legislators considered the possibility of coeducation at VPI. Eggleston misinterpreted Strode’s initial request and returned a terse reply, stating “I do not feel authorized to speak for the board.”⁶⁰ This language demonstrates that Eggleston guarded his views and did not want anyone to misconstrue his opinions as those of the Board of Visitors, suggesting that his views differed.

Eggleston and Strode continued to discuss the possibility of coeducation at VPI in a series of letters throughout December 1917. Strode restated his request about coeducation more simply: “what I desired was the benefit of your personal judgment.” He then went on to offer an apology for troubling Eggleston with the subject.⁶¹ Eggleston’s response confirmed his beliefs

⁵⁸ From the available evidence, it would seem that the events on campus during World War I distracted Eggleston. The amount of correspondence concerning the Smith-Hughes funding pales in comparison to that of the Smith-Lever Act.

⁵⁹ Aubrey E. Strode to Joseph D. Eggleston, 24 November 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU.

⁶⁰ Joseph D. Eggleston to Aubrey E. Strode, 26 November 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU.

⁶¹ Aubrey E. Strode to Joseph D. Eggleston, 1 December 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU.

regarding coeducation at VPI. Eggleston apologized for his earlier bluntness, claiming that he thought it “was an official communication wishing to know the position the authorities [at VPI] would take in reference to a woman’s college” at VPI. Having clarified this misunderstanding, Eggleston stated his position clearly: he had “no objection to the admission of women to this institution to study all phases of agriculture,” although he believed that these would be the only subjects women would be interested in studying. Regarding a woman’s college at VPI, Eggleston firmly declared that “to include studies which are not pursued at this institution . . . would be entirely out of place.”⁶² Thus, Eggleston supported women’s admission to VPI but only along the course lines the school offered at the time—primarily agriculture and engineering, which were traditionally male fields.

Strode heartily agreed with Eggleston’s views about coeducation at VPI. In fact, Strode declared: “there should be no separate Woman’s College at Blacksburg, but I am glad to know that you see no objection to the admission of women to the Agricultural Courses there.”⁶³ As the two men discussed coeducation, a subject that raised ire when discussed in conjunction with UVA, two things become apparent. One, their correspondence suggests that there was support for women’s enrollment at state institutions other than UVA. Two, as a land-grant college, VPI alumni did not have the prestige or clout that UVA alumni had. Together, these two points indicate that the battle for coeducation at VPI would be less intense.

⁶² Joseph D. Eggleston to Aubrey E. Strode, 3 December 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627; Joseph D. Eggleston to Ella G. Agnew, 22 December 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 6, Folder 532, SCDLAULVPISU. Perhaps his involvement with women in the agricultural extension service, which had been active for two years, blinded him to other possibilities. The first full time women students did not enroll in agriculture but the sciences. This could also be attributed to the influence of Ella Agnew. In a letter to her, Eggleston mentions preparing women for agricultural work in Virginia so that they do not have to attend school outside of the state for it. Or perhaps, the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, requiring the training of home economics teachers made Eggleston think only along these lines of education.

⁶³ Aubrey E. Strode to Joseph D. Eggleston, 7 December 1917, Eggleston, J. D., RG 2/7 Box 7, Folder 627, SCDLAULVPISU.

VPI directed the Extension Division and employed female home demonstration agents, yet the training of women teachers in home economics went to other schools. The primary reason VPI had to decline this money was simple: The school did not admit women, and although the school had made accommodations available to its female home demonstration agents in the past, it did not have the facilities to house larger numbers of women. Thus the SBVE designated Harrisonburg State Normal School and the College of William and Mary “as centers for teacher training work in home economics under the provisions of the Smith-Hughes bill.”⁶⁴

Harrisonburg, founded as a teacher training normal school for white women in 1908, had offered courses in household arts from the beginning.⁶⁵ In 1916, the school offered a BS degree in education and also raised entrance requirements for admission.⁶⁶ Then, in 1917, Harrisonburg offered a new four-year degree program in Household-Industrial Arts for Advanced Teaching and Supervision with a concentration in Domestic Science, Domestic Art, Institutional Management, or Industrial Arts. The timing of this new program allowed the school to capitalize on the funds provided by the Smith-Hughes Act. According to Raymond Dingleline, who wrote the history of the school in 1959, the department of “Household Arts became the Home Economics department” and the school specifically offered a four year program, which led to a BS degree in Home Economics “to prepare high school teachers, supervisors, home demonstration agents, and dieticians.”⁶⁷ In 1924, a reorganization of all white women normal schools in the state transformed them into teacher colleges. At that time, the Board of the

⁶⁴ Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1917-1918* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1919), 19; Virginia State Board of Education, “Vocational Education, Plan of the State Board for Vocational Education,” *Bulletin: State Board of Education*, 2 (1919): 36.

⁶⁵ Dingleline, 56.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

Virginia Teachers Colleges made Harrisonburg the center for home economics work among the four teacher colleges.⁶⁸ The following year VPI created its own home economics department, but Harrisonburg and W&M continued to receive Smith-Hughes funding.

In the same year that Harrisonburg began to train women with Smith-Hughes funds, so did the College of William and Mary. W&M, which had only become a public college in 1906, opened its doors to women in the fall of 1918 as a concession to the women of the Co-Ordinate College League.⁶⁹ The Smith-Hughes funds helped W&M pay for the training to prepare home economics teachers and attract twenty white women students.⁷⁰ The women and the new curriculum marked two departures for the previously all male liberal arts college. W&M developed a four-year course in home economics leading to a BS degree under Edith Baer, who recruited girls from Virginia's high schools to attend program.⁷¹ The fact that W&M established a department of home economics and admitted women in 1918 is no coincidence. The new home economics department created a distinctly feminine space for women on the male campus and helped the state fulfill the requirements of the Smith-Hughes Act, while appeasing female requests for access to a collegiate education in Virginia.

VPI and the Desire for Federal Funds

Julian Ashby Burruss became president of VPI in 1919. As the former president of Harrisonburg, he was aware that the absence of women and home economics classes at VPI

⁶⁸ Ibid., 147.

⁶⁹ Godson, 2: 502-508.

⁷⁰ Godson, 2: 510; Branegan, 96.

⁷¹ Godson, 2: 510; Virginia State Board of Education, "Vocational Education, Plan of the State Board for Vocational Education," *Bulletin: State Board of Education*, 2 (1919): 2; and Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1918-1919 and 1919-1920* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1921), 4. Edith Baer also served as the Supervisor of Home Economics Education, an executive office within the State Board for Vocational Education.

prevented the school from receiving more federal funding. It is probably no coincidence that VPI organized a curriculum for home economics three years after Harrisonburg and W&M had been approved to receive the Smith-Hughes funding, and it occurred simultaneously with the admission of women to VPI in the fall of 1921—two years after Burruss became president.⁷² In 1919, two years after the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, Burruss had set out to reorganize VPI's administration, curricula, and fiscal management, but these goals did not include the admission of white women to VPI.⁷³ Two years later, when Burruss prepared his report for the Board of Visitors in January 1921, the admission of women to VPI became logical from a financial perspective.

When Burruss approached the Board of Visitors in January 1921, he made a number of arguments to admit women, several of which highlighted the loss of federal funding from the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. In a four-page report, Burruss outlined thirteen points to advocate the admission of women. A quick summary yields nine major points. First, Burruss pointed out several inquiries from women interested in attending VPI.⁷⁴ Second, he stressed that women's suffrage made them full citizens. Thus, if the school denied them access, it could possibly jeopardize state and federal funding. Third, he argued that it was more economical to provide women an education at VPI than to build a separate school. Fourth, he cited state precedents in the 1918 law allowing the admission of women to W&M and the 1920 decision to admit women to the University Medical College. Fifth, he mentioned the presence of women on the staff of

⁷² Branegan, 92; Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1917-1918* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1919), 19; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Catalog* (Blacksburg: The Institute, 1921), 25, 33-35, 56-57, 115-116.

⁷³ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 254-261; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Reports of the President, 1919-1920* (Blacksburg: Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, 1927), 8-11.

⁷⁴ An examination of miscellaneous correspondence in his records does not support this: most correspondence seems to have come *after* the decision was made. The lack of evidence to support this argument has two possibilities. Burruss either did not save this correspondence, or he received the requests orally.

the home demonstration section of the Extension Division and linked them to the need for more demonstrators with better training. He also raised the issue of federal funds that might be lost if women were not admitted, or that future funds may be cut off from VPI, because some programs required the school to admit women. He cited how VPI lost out on funds from the Smith-Hughes Act because it did not admit women and claimed: “the Federal Board for Vocational Education has repeatedly given the opinion that the home economics work supported from Smith-Hughes funds should preferably be given at the agricultural colleges.” Sixth, it was no trouble to house the new students because he was willing to convert the president’s home if necessary. Seventh, he believed VPI could attract better professors if they knew their children, both male and female, could attend. Eighth, though he claimed the board had the authority to add women, he suggested that VPI ask the General Assembly for approval. And ninth, he stressed that admitting women would not put VPI in any competition with other white state schools because none offered agricultural courses. This led to the unanimous vote on January 13 to admit women to all courses except military ones.⁷⁵

Burruss carefully constructed his argument by considering all the angles, but money was the main point. Burruss hinted that if only VPI admitted women and offered home economics, it would receive the funds allocated to Harrisonburg and W&M, which he claimed “were quick to take advantage of the fact that the state agricultural college had its hands tied in this respect.”⁷⁶ These arguments, in addition to the allusion that pending federal legislation for home economics would jeopardize future federal funding, helped the board decide to admit women.

⁷⁵ Julian A. Burruss, President’s Report, Board of Visitor Minutes, January 13, 1921, 11-14 of report, and 3 in Ledger IV; Cox, 8.

⁷⁶ Julian A. Burruss, President’s Report, Board of Visitor Minutes, January 13, 1921, page 13 of the report in Ledger IV; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Reports of the President*, 1920-1921 (Blacksburg: Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, 1927), 142-145.

By the fall of 1921, the same year that white women could matriculate at VPI, Burruss added a home economics curriculum within the School of Agriculture, but his addition did not bring VPI more federal funding immediately. The home economics curriculum was limited to women who had graduated from a state normal school prepared to pursue home economics for a third and fourth year. The main purpose of the course work was to prepare students as home demonstration agents and teachers in high schools,⁷⁷ which would mean that VPI now met the requirements to receive Smith-Hughes funds. Yet, because of Virginia's State Board of Vocational Education plan, which had received approval from the Federal Board of Vocational Education, these funds continued to go to Harrisonburg and W&M.⁷⁸ VPI missed out on Smith-Hughes funds due to its late admission of white women and its creation of a home economics curriculum, but the school was now poised to capitalize on future federal appropriations. This opportunity came in 1925 with the Purnell Act, which provided funding for certain types of home economics research.

⁷⁷ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Catalog* (Blacksburg: the Institute, 1921), 42, 56-57, 115-116; Laura Jane Harper and W. Charlene Howery, "Home Economic/Human Resources at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; 1921 through 198_-8_" (Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1985), 4.

⁷⁸ According to the 1920-21 report, only two schools received Smith-Hughes funding to train white teachers of home economics: the College of William and Mary and Harrisonburg State Normal School and both offered a four year BS degree. The report noted: "After 1922 four years' training, in addition to home experience, will be the minimum preparation required for home economics teachers for day unit work." Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1920-1921* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1922), 43. Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1921-1922 and 1922-1923* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1924), 134, 138. The 1921-22 and 1922-23 reports show Smith-Hughes funds distributed for the 1922-23 academic year to VPI in the amount of \$6,388.28, which was 2.5% of federal funding and 0.42% of total income that year, and to W&M in the amount of \$2,697.74. The report does not indicate that Harrisonburg received any specifically from the Smith-Hughes funds. Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1923-1924 and 1924-1925* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1926), 147, 152. The 1923-24 and 1924-25 reports show Smith-Hughes funds distributed for the 1924-25 academic year to VPI in the amount of \$7,982.02, which was 3.2% of federal funding and 0.53% of total income that year, and to W&M in the amount of \$5,391.00, yet the report does not indicate that Harrisonburg received any specifically from the Smith-Hughes funds.

In 1925, Congress passed the Purnell Act, which appropriated federal monies to carry out experiments to develop rural life and homes, extended the reach of the Experiment Stations, and helped develop certain fields, including home economics.⁷⁹ At the same time that Congress debated the bill, VPI made the decision to expand its home economics curriculum from a two-year to a four-year program as a separate department, beginning with the 1925-1926 school year.⁸⁰ In the past, women admitted to the home economics program were expected to have completed two years of home economics at a normal school. Now the young women who wanted a four year degree in home economics could attend VPI for all four of those years. With the expansion of the program, the course offerings within the curriculum expanded as well. The research undertaken in courses, such as nutrition and dietetics, probably occurred as a result of federal funding from the Purnell Act.⁸¹ If VPI had not admitted white women and created a home economics department, the school might have lost the ability to receive the federal funds allocated to research issues in home economics.⁸²

⁷⁹ J. I. Falconer, "Survey of Economic Research Now Being Conducted in Experiment Stations," *Journal of Farm Economics* 8 (1926): 26; United States, *Statutes at Large of the United States of America from December, 1923 to March 1925* Volume 43, Part I (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), 970-972. Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, School Year 1926-27* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1927), 118-119. For the 1926-27 academic year, VPI received Smith-Hughes funds in the amount of 5,692.54, which was 2.0% of federal funding and 0.32% of total income. However, the Purnell Act added another \$30,000, which was 1.7% of federal funding and 10.7% of total income for VPI. Some of the Purnell funds supported research in home economics, but the budgets do not provide amounts.

⁸⁰ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Catalog* (Blacksburg: the Institute, 1925), 53-54, 118-120; Harper and Howery, 5.

⁸¹ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Catalog* (Blacksburg: the Institute, 1925), 119, Harper and Howery, 111. Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Reports of the President, 1925-1926 and 1926-1927* (Blacksburg: Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, 1927), 22, 46, 54-55. The president's report shows the first allocations for Home Economics as a department in the 1926-27 school year. The report also describes research projects undertaken by the Experiment Station, using federal funds from the Purnell Act, in home economics and rural sociology. The 1926-27 report indicates that the Experiment Station published these reports.

⁸² In addition to the potential loss of federal funds through the Purnell Act, Congress also amended the original Smith-Hughes Act several times between 1917 and the 1970s. Thus, the desire to receive federal funds was an ongoing incentive.

As this review of federal legislation concerning land-grant schools indicates, federal appropriations provided the impetus to educate white women at VPI as early as 1914 under the Smith-Lever Act. The summer of 1915 appears to be the earliest date that Eggleston brought women to the summer school at VPI, although he had attempted it in 1914. Female home demonstration agents received training at VPI during the summers of the late 1910s, but they also received it at Harrisonburg, which had the facilities and housing to accommodate them year-round. Because the Smith-Lever Act did not provide funds to train teachers, the push to admit women to VPI for that purpose did not exist. Yet correspondence with State Senator Aubrey Strode (Amherst) from Eggleston's presidential papers indicates that he was willing to admit women in November 1917—nine months after the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act. The fact that Eggleston did not push to admit women in 1917 remains a mystery. As a member of the Coordinate College League and the Equal Suffrage League and the president who first encouraged the education of white women at VPI, it seems strange indeed that Eggleston did not have the wherewithal to admit women during his presidency. Perhaps Eggleston felt that the timing was not right—that too much change, too soon, might upset the status quo and alarm the alumni—especially with the heated debates in Virginia's General Assembly regarding not just the effort by Mary-Cooke Branch Munford for a women's coordinate college at UVA, but the efforts of Lila Meade Valentine for women's suffrage. In sum, Eggleston's actions provided the wedge for white women to attend VPI, and Burruss pried it fully open.

In the fall of 1919, Julian Ashby Burruss succeeded Eggleston as president of VPI. For the first two years of his administration Burruss was content to preside over a mostly white, male campus. Burruss, as the former president of Harrisonburg State Normal School, certainly knew that only the exclusion of white women prevented VPI from receiving those funds diverted to

train teachers of home economics. Yet, he waited until January 1921 to recommend that the Board of Visitors adopt coeducation.

The time lag of almost two years indicates that the admission of white women was not a priority for Burruss. However, once the states ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, Burruss manipulated new circumstances to form the context for his proposal to the Board. Burruss may have cited requests by women to attend VPI, their full citizenship, their admission to the Medical College of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, and graduate school at the University of Virginia, but these reasons only formed the background to the heart of his proposal. As his seventh point, Burruss discussed the importance of women's home demonstration work as part of the extension division, which received funds through the Smith-Lever Act. He also cited that these women needed training beyond the normal level to become effective agents and that VPI was the logical place for their education. In addition, he cited the opinion of the Federal Board of Vocational Education, which encouraged the training of home economics teachers at the agricultural colleges. Burruss mentioned the loss of a portion of Smith-Hughes funding because VPI did not accept women in 1917 and expressed the fear that the school might not receive future federal funds should the college continue to exclude all women. In sum, Burruss's final arguments to admit white women to VPI centered on pecuniary concerns rather than his belief in their equality.⁸³

As this chapter has demonstrated, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 built on the social and political changes in the status of women occurring throughout

⁸³ Lawrence Priddy, "MEMORANDUM: re Resolution introduced by Mr. Harry M. Smith, Jr. at the 1932 Annual Meeting of the V.P.I. Alumni Association" 3 June 1933 in RG 8/3 Folder 1, SCDLAULVPISU. In 1932, several members of the Alumni Association sought to end coeducation at VPI. After collecting data, the chairman of the committee appointed to investigate coeducation reported "it is my opinion that should we exclude women from V.P.I. much of the financial support which we now receive from the Federal Government will be discontinued." Thus, it was not only Burruss who worried about federal funds. Clearly some alumni also hoped to benefit from federal funds.

the 1910s to provide an economic incentive to admit women to the College of William and Mary and Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1918 and 1921 respectively. By examining how VPI's presidents responded to federal legislation, this chapter has demonstrated the economic aspect to the process of coeducation before full access. The federal legislation also provided a clear example of overlap among institutions of higher education and other government agencies, such as the extension service. White women at VPI could only attend the summer and winter sessions before 1921, and they were ineligible to receive credit or seek a degree. However, their presence at VPI supports the argument that coeducation occurred as a process before full-time admission in 1921.

Mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the presence of white women at Virginia Polytechnic Institute did not challenge the school's identity before 1921. As nontraditional students, women did not associate with most of the male students, who did not attend the summer and winter sessions. Thus, women on campus remained invisible to most male students. However, when the Board of Visitors granted women full access, except the military courses, they became suddenly very visible, although they were only 1.2 percent of the student body in 1921. Faced with the reality of women on a previously male campus, VPI's cadets responded. Their reaction shaped the next stage in the process of coeducation: inclusion.

When white women arrived at VPI, they faced a hostile student body and an indifferent administration. As the women soon learned, access did not provide them with the equality they sought. Throughout Burruss's presidency, in fact, his actions demonstrated that equality for men and women on VPI's campus remained unimportant to him. During this twenty-six year period Burruss had several occasions to demonstrate a belief in the equality of the sexes on campus. Instead, his actions helped the Corps of Cadets maintain the identity of VPI as a white, male,

military school. The next chapter demonstrates the process of inclusion that began after access. Women faced the barriers men at VPI erected—barriers that effectively limited the women’s visibility in the historical record, which helped preserve VPI’s identity.

Chapter 3: 1921 and the Limits of Coeducation at VPI

Too often in the institutional histories of previously white male colleges authors cite the date for white women's and African Americans' admission as a single event as if that date made access a *fait accompli*. The first two chapters have highlighted the importance of social, political, and economic events that shaped how and why access occurred when it did, stressing their importance in the process of coeducation. This last chapter will analyze what happens after white women's access to demonstrate that coeducation occurred as an on-going process that continued after formal admission. As such, it will focus on the limits of access in the process of inclusion that began at VPI in 1921.

Despite the ideological sympathies cited by Julian Ashby Burruss in his thirteen point report to the Board of Visistors, the desire for future federal funds lay at the heart of his argument. Recognition of Burruss's main points helps explain the ideological conflict on campus with the arrival of women. Because Burruss sought federal money, rather than to make women equal with men, there was no administrative push to include women on campus. Full-time coeducation began in 1921, but many years passed before women achieved equality on campus. For the purposes of this chapter, equality means full access to all aspects of college life on the campus of VPI, including the ability to join campus clubs, organizations, publications, the Corps of Cadets, and receive representation in items for the historical record, such as the *Bugle*. In the years that followed 1921, both the administration and male students marginalized women on campus, delaying true parity.

In order to fully comprehend the institutional anxiety women created at VPI, a brief overview of campus culture illustrates the male character of the campus in 1921. Since the founding of VPI in 1872, cadets created a military lifestyle on campus. When the first class

returned in the fall of 1873, the intermediates—the name for second year students—called incoming first year students “Rats.” VPI students borrowed the term from the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), but “Rat” had a different meaning at VPI. Whereas all cadets were “Rats” at VMI, the term at VPI only applied to new cadets. In addition to calling the new class of cadets “Rats,” the intermediates also introduced hazing to the school. Designed to test the manhood of the new cadets, hazing involved humiliation in a variety of forms. One such method was “bucking,” which involved paddling a “Rat” with a bayonet scabbard on his rear end while he bent over a chair. Hazing also included pranks, including mock duels in which upperclassmen feigned death at the hands of underclassmen. In order to condition the “Rats,” upperclassmen also tossed cold water into the faces of new cadets. Finally, the last custom started as part of this “Rat System” mandated that all “Rats” speak first in all encounters and that the addressee would respond accordingly—a custom that persists to this day. This “Rat System” worked to incorporate new cadets and weed out the weak—a process that bonded the men involved and helped foster a class identity.¹

The “Class System” also developed along with the “Rat System” at VPI. The common experiences of all “Rats” under the “Rat System” fostered a common bond that united the men of the same class. These experiences also created a cadet lifestyle on campus that judged individuals based on the proof of one’s worth within the two systems. All the cadets lived in similar rooms within the barracks, wore the same uniforms, dined together in the same mess hall, drilled together, and acted under the same military rules. The only difference in cadet life came from privileges assigned to each class according to seniority. According to the historian of VPI’s Corps of Cadets, every class “became a closely knit and cohesive entity for a lifetime, and its

¹ Harry Downing Temple, *The Bugle’s Echo: A Chronology of Cadet Life at the Military College at Blacksburg, Virginia, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Volume I, 1872-1900* (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, Inc., 1996), 62-64.

graduation-year numeral became a symbol of deep pride.” In this way, the “Class System” became a part of cadet life at VPI.²

Together, the “Rat System” and the “Class System” came to dominate the lives of cadets at VPI. Both systems fostered loyalty to one’s class that superseded all other experiences at the school. Because cadets implemented both systems, which were a matter of custom and culture, the administrators at VPI had a difficult time comprehending and tackling the thornier issues associated with hazing in the Corps of Cadets. In the end, the “Rat System” and the “Class System” helped forge the identity of VPI as a white male military school.³ When VPI admitted white women in 1921, they had no place within either system.

White women could apply to VPI in 1921, but very few came.⁴ The first “coeds” to matriculate included five full-time and seven part-time white women.⁵ While the numbers of white women grew throughout the decade, they were never very large and certainly did not pose any threat to the white, male, military atmosphere that permeated VPI’s campus. Yet the daily presence of white women on campus throughout the regular academic year signaled a new phase in the process of coeducation—inclusion. The process of inclusion stretched from 1921 to 1964, when a new presidential administration made changes to the school as part of its vision for VPI. These changes enabled women’s enrollment to jump tremendously. The last structural barrier fell in 1979 when the Corps of Cadets sexually integrated. But why did it take so long for white

² Ibid., 64-65.

³ Ibid., 65.

⁴ Some southern white land-grants also experienced low female enrollment. For instance, North Carolina State accepted women in 1899, but as Lockmiller claimed in 1939 without any explanation, “State College has never had a large number of women students.” David A. Lockmiller, *History of the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering of the University of North Carolina, 1889-1939* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1939), 170.

⁵ Susan H. Godson et al., *The College of William and Mary: A History*, 2 vols. (Williamsburg: King and Queen Press, 1993) 2: 510. Fewer women matriculated at VPI in 1921 than enrolled at the College of William and Mary in 1918 during its first year of coeducation—“about twenty” who were probably full-time—the only other public white coeducational college in the state.

women's enrollment to swell? How did VPI maintain its identity as a white, male, military school? To what extent did the office of the president manipulate circumstances to limit the number of women on campus to preserve this identity? And how did male students respond to coeducation?

This chapter will highlight some of Geraldine Joncich Clifford's argument about institutional anxiety and women, who posed a threat once they were admitted to previously all male colleges. Clifford asserted that "women's physical presence . . . functioned primarily to move gender *from the unconscious to the conscious level of response and reaction.*"⁶ An examination of the barriers erected to women and the development of a new curriculum will demonstrate how the male students and the administration at VPI tried to find ways to minimize the visibility of women on campus and their threat to the school's identity. Despite the barriers to inclusion, women forged ahead in the process of coeducation. An examination of the male response to women both physically on campus and in the historical record reveals the limits of access in 1921. As the published yearbook for VPI, the *Bugle* provides a way to examine VPI's clubs, organizations, publications, and student government. This examination reveals the way in which the process of inclusion occurred at the student level. The lack of administrative commitment to female equality exposes itself in VPI's policies, curricula, and infrastructure as seen in school catalogs and presidential papers.

1921-1944: Incremental Inclusion—The Male Students' Response

⁶ Geraldine Joncich Clifford, "'Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease': Gender and American Higher Education," *Feminist Issues* 3 (1983): 15, 42-43, 48-54.

That white women could enroll full-time at VPI marked an expansion of white women's opportunities for higher education in the state—albeit a limited one. In a variety of ways VPI's male students did much to discourage white women and little to attract them. Some forms of exclusion were blatant, others more subtle. Publications originally excluded women, as did other clubs, organizations, and student government on campus. Between 1921 and 1944 white women made incremental steps toward inclusion in the face of obstacles placed by cadets both physically and for the historical record.

Initial student reaction to the admission of women in *The Virginia Tech* was scant. On January 27, 1921, there was a brief article stating the Board's decision, which gave the erroneous date of January 16 to admit women. There was no mention of Burruss's strongest arguments. Rather, the article emphasized that women would be interested in continuing work they had embarked on during the war without mentioning specifically what type of work it had been. The article seemed to justify the Board's decision based on the admittance of women to the College of William and Mary (W&M) in 1918 and the graduate and professional programs at the University of Virginia (UVA) in 1920.⁷ No outrage, no opinion, which seemed odd—after all, VPI was a white male institution with a military tradition that specifically excluded women on account of their sex.

When women arrived the following fall, there was one article about women in *The Virginia Tech*, dated September 29, 1921, but it was cursory. As a subheading "10 CO-EDS MATRICULATED" proclaims on page one, the only mention of women is buried on page ten. The article states that "for the first time in the history of the school, women are admitted to all courses of instruction, and the campus is now graced by the presence of ten co-eds."⁸ Of course,

⁷ "Women May Attend Tech Next Session," *The Virginia Tech*, 27 January 1921, 1.

⁸ "Enrollment Now Over 875," *The Virginia Tech*, 29 September 1921, 1.

the co-eds—a term that specifically referred to women students—numbered twelve, not ten. By the barest minimum of comment from both articles, this could be construed as a statement of protest on the part of the male dominated campus. The act of silence served as a way to limit female visibility.

From the beginning coeds knew that the rules that applied to cadets did not apply to them. The vocabulary alone indicated an otherness, a difference that made the first white women coeds keenly aware of their separateness.⁹ The military courses were exclusively male, and the corps tradition created a fraternity among the cadets. Because cadets lived in the barracks by company under military discipline, it created an “Esprit de Corps” further enhancing the notion of fraternity among the male students. Within the companies, a structured class hierarchy evolved with freshmen “Rats” at the bottom. The introduction of coeducation in 1921 had, as Harry Temple from the class of 1934 remarked, “built up a resentment against the coeds.”¹⁰ This resentment persisted, creating a campus environment hostile to women, who were considered invaders. After 1921 the cadets found a variety of ways to reinforce this notion of women as the enemy as part of their reaction to coeducation.¹¹

The upper quadrangle became one of the physical battlefields for coeducation at VPI. The cadets prohibited women from walking in the upper quadrangle, an all-male space reserved for military functions. This posed a dilemma for women for two reasons. First, the bookstore

⁹ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 102; Leslie Miller-Bernal and Susan L. Poulson, eds., *Going Coed: Women's Experience in Formerly Men's Colleges and Universities, 1950-2000* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), x.

¹⁰ Harry Downing Temple, interview by Tamara Kennelly, tape recording, 2 May 1994, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia. Temple's interview discussed corps traditions and only mentioned women at the end.

¹¹ The notion of women as invaders comes from Kinnear, who stated: “The cadets continued to protest the invasion of VPI by the women and predicted dire consequences for school spirit, athletics, academic standards, and school traditions.” Duncan Lyle Kinnear, *The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* (Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute Educational Foundation, 1972), 263-264.

was located on the quadrangle in what is now known as Lane Hall, which meant the women had to find a male to purchase books for them. Second, their classes in the science building bordered the quadrangle, so the women had to pass near it. If a coed strayed too close or chose to challenge the rule, the cadets would announce: “Woman on the Quadrangle.” This announcement led to spirited exchanges about the right of women to step into the exclusively male space. Those residing in the facing barracks witnessed these exchanges and offered advice to the cadet on duty as well as the trespassing woman to convince her of the error of her ways. Women also suffered from mild forms of harassment when attempting to get to classes near the barracks. As they passed the barracks, one coed recalled: “Up went the windows and down came the water as they seemed to be in their chief indoor sport. Along with the water came squeaky voices yelling and saying silly things to us.”¹²

One of the first female students, Ruth Terrett, challenged the notion of male space in a different way. As a freshman during the 1921-22 academic year, Terrett climbed the water tower in a cadet uniform and remained atop it while cadets harassed her from below. Terrett’s steadfast determination and refusal to climb down until the cadets left represents the tension between coeds and cadets on campus: by remaining atop the water tower, Terrett physically demonstrated that the women planned to endure at VPI. By mimicking this “Rat” tradition to

¹² Lucy Lee Lancaster, “First Tech Coed Earned Degree in 1923: Dr. Burruss Paved Way for Women,” *Montgomery News Messenger* Centennial Edition, December 31, 1969, J1. Also available online at <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/125th/women/coed.htm> First quote is from Kinnear, 264. The second quote is from the *Tin Horn* 1929, 13; both of these also appear in Clara B. Cox, *Generations of Women Leaders at Virginia Tech 1921-1996, 75th Anniversary of Women at Virginia Tech* (Blacksburg, March 1996), 10; Peter Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872-1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Pocahontas Press, Inc., 1997), 134. Wallenstein only mentions the quadrangle. Harry Downing Temple, *The Bugle’s Echo: A Chronology of Cadet Life at the Military College at Blacksburg, Virginia, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Volume I, 1872-1900* (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, Inc., 1996), 63, 285. The water prank had earlier versions, where upperclassmen threw cold water in the faces of new cadets, as part of the indoctrination of Rats. Another version involved dropping paper bags filled with water onto cadets below the windows of the barracks. Both of these occurred very early in VPI’s history; however, these initiation traditions probably persisted into the 20th century. If so, then the cadets may have merely subjected the women to the same treatment they received as new students, i.e. the cadets hazed the women.

prove one's manhood, Terrett boldly challenged the notion that women were different than men. Terrett's water tower demonstration, dressed as one of the cadets, seemed to invite a discussion about the equality of men and women on campus and proved that the women could participate in corps activities just like the cadets. This feat did not endear the coeds to cadets; rather they felt that this encroachment on male traditions symbolized the invasion by women on campus.¹³

Because cadets excluded most coeds from their clubs and organizations, the women formed their own.¹⁴ Throughout the 1920s the women formed their own science, chemistry, biology, business, drama, and glee clubs. In their third year on campus, the women organized a basketball team. Known as the Sextettes, they won three of the five games they played. Because there were few collegiate women to play in the area, the women played against Blacksburg High, Roanoke's Young Women's Christian Association, Radford, and Concord Teacher's College in West Virginia. By 1929, they called themselves the Turkey Hens and played teams from Radford and Concord and Bluefield Colleges in West Virginia. In both cases the women chose gendered names for their teams, designating their teams as female.¹⁵

The cadets also excluded women from campus government—even though the women would have the right to vote, just like the men, when they turned twenty-one. In response to this, women created their own Women Students' Organization in 1929.¹⁶ As the years passed, however, the strict exclusion of women from student government began to wane as a result of the

¹³ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 263; Cox, 10; the *Tin Horn* 1925, 9. Kinnear did not identify Ruth Terrett, but Cox did.

¹⁴ Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 125, 145-148; Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access," 112; Solomon, 103. Separate societies, student government associations, clubs, and sports teams appeared on many coeducational campuses throughout the nation, including the Midwest—see Andrea G. Radke, "'Can She Not See and Hear, and Smell and Taste?': Women Students at Coeducational Land-Grant Universities in the American West, 1868-1917" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2002).

¹⁵ The *Tin Horn* 1925, 14-15, and 1929, 8, 21-22. The *Tin Horn* does not explore the origins for the names of either team. However, there is a poem, titled "Only a Turkey Hen" that seems to invoke the question of why women would attend a men's school.

¹⁶ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 264; Cox, 10; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 134.

growth in the number of civilian men. In the fall of 1924 the Corps of Cadets became optional for junior and senior men, and while most still served four years, the civilian male population increased as the years passed and emerged with its own student government, the Civilian Student Union.¹⁷ After years of competition with the cadets, the civilian males and the Women's Student Union formed one body in 1939, using the civilian male title.¹⁸ Thus, after eighteen years, the women had some inclusion in male government activities.¹⁹ However, because the cadets were separate from the civilians in student government, this inclusion was of a limited nature—women and civilian men remained outside the mainstream of campus life in the Corps of Cadets.

Beyond the physical notion of where women did and did not belong on campus, cadets easily found other spaces to exclude women in ways that made them invisible in the historical record.²⁰ Cadets prohibited women from working on or appearing in the *Bugle*, the campus yearbook. In response to this exclusion, women created their own, hand-made yearbook, the *Tin Horn*, in 1925 and again in 1929. In 1930 and 1931, two other volumes followed but came from a printer.²¹ That the women could afford a printer indicates the power of the women to organize and muster the resources necessary to run a separate yearbook. Unfortunately, the women did not publish another *Tin Horn* after 1931 and had to wait until 1941 for all four classes of women to appear in the *Bugle*.

Women and their activities did not appear in the *Bugle*, but they occasionally appeared as individuals within male organizations or clubs, such as the American Society of Civil Engineers

¹⁷ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 275-276.

¹⁸ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 264; Cox, 11; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 155.

¹⁹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 265. Another opportunity for inclusion came about during the 1935-36 school year, when the women's drama club joined the men's Tech Players, which later became the Maroon Mask.

²⁰ Rosalind Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access: The History of Coeducation in America," in *Women and Higher Education in American History: Essays from the Mount Holyoke College Sesquicentennial Symposia*, eds. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 112. Rosenberg mentions this occurred at Wesleyan and probably occurred at more schools. Few books discussed yearbooks as an exclusion.

²¹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 264; Cox, 10; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 134.

or the Agricultural Education Club. However, the male students in charge of the photography for the clubs and organizations within the *Bugle* inconsistently portrayed the women. The variety of ways in which women students appear in the *Bugle* indicates that, as a novelty on campus, the men featured the women within their organizations as subordinates or marginal figures for the historical record.²² In the 1920s, the first decade of coeducation, a few women joined male clubs. In the 1924 *Bugle*, the American Society of Civil Engineers listed Ruth Terrett as a member, but she was absent from the photograph.²³ The Agricultural Education Club featured a woman in the front row of its photograph, but it did not identify her in its list of members.²⁴ These two organizations dealt with the issue of women differently, and in both instances the women remained invisible—either nameless or faceless for the historical record.

Women students were only 4 percent of the student body, but they continued to request inclusion within the *Bugle* throughout the 1930s.²⁵ The *Bugle* continued to exclude women as members of the student body and refused to feature all-female clubs, yet the number of academic women appearing in the pictures of clubs dominated by men continued to increase throughout

²² The students who published school yearbooks captured the history of the school as they interpreted it. As Alan Trachtenberg, who has written about interpreting American photography, noted, the photographer decides “where to place the edge of the picture, what to exclude, from what point of view to show the relations among the included details.” For yearbook photography, this would include directing students where to stand in the portrait. To an extent, Trachtenberg called this deliberate composition a “political act, a matter of judgment and choice about the emerging shape of the present and future.” The order of pictures in a yearbook, their composition, and their captions all reveal a “view of society implicit in the internal dialogue of images and texts, and their external dialogue with their times.” With this interpretation in mind, the order of pictures in the *Bugle* demonstrates the hierarchy on campus among cadets and later civilians—both male and female. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), xiv-xv.

²³ 1925 *Tin Horn*, 8-9; 1924 *Bugle*, 314. My thanks to Tamara Kennelly of Special Collections in the Newman Library for bringing the photographs of women in the *Bugle* to my attention. It is possible that other reasons explain why Terrett was not pictured. She may have missed the meeting announcing the photograph, she may have had a class, she may not have had transportation to campus, or she may have forgotten about it. Descriptions of her from the *Tin Horn* indicate an outgoing personality, so I doubt she was camera-shy—she was, after all, the one who climbed the water tower. It seems more likely that the men “forgot” to inform her about the picture.

²⁴ 1927 *Bugle*, 353. It is possible that she was not a student since other photographs for this club do not include any women. The club lists 56 members.

²⁵ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 311; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 154-155.

the decade, suggesting that the process of inclusion enlarged. Although women could not receive attention as women, it was all right for them to appear within other group pictures—where they did not challenge the male identity of VPI.²⁶

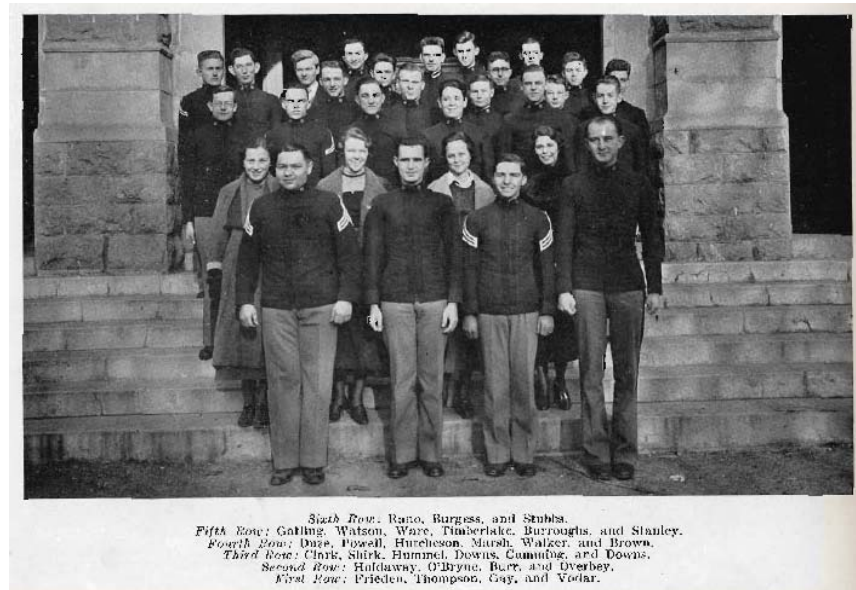


Figure 2: The *Virginia Tech* Editorial Staff photograph from the 1935 *Bugle*.

After 1935 women appeared more frequently in the photographs of clubs and organizations in the *Bugle*. Perhaps the most interesting feature of these photographs is the location of women within the group. In 1935, the *Virginia Tech* had four women on its staff, all of whom were identified and appeared in the yearbook photograph—in the second row, so that only their faces and feet were visible (see Figure 2). By placing the women behind the men, the women, while not invisible, have a reduced presence in the photograph so that it makes the group appear more male. The following year the writing and business staffs had separate pictures. The writing staff listed two women, but only one, Virginia Holden, a senior, appeared in the picture—in the front row at the far right, putting her on the periphery of the group. This contrasts with the picture of the business staff, which placed Frances Eoff, who was the assistant

²⁶ Lancaster remarked in a recollection: “The students individually were not impolite to the women students, but as a whole they did not like the idea of coeducation.” Lancaster, J1.

circulation manager, in the front, next to the man in the middle. Interestingly, in 1937, no women were on the staff. In 1938, only two women were listed, but they were not pictured. The 1939 *Bugle* closed the decade with typical inconsistency. The *Virginia Tech's* editorial staff pictured two women in the rear but did not identify them (see Figure 3), and the business staff listed Miss Agnes Crockett, but it did not picture her.²⁷

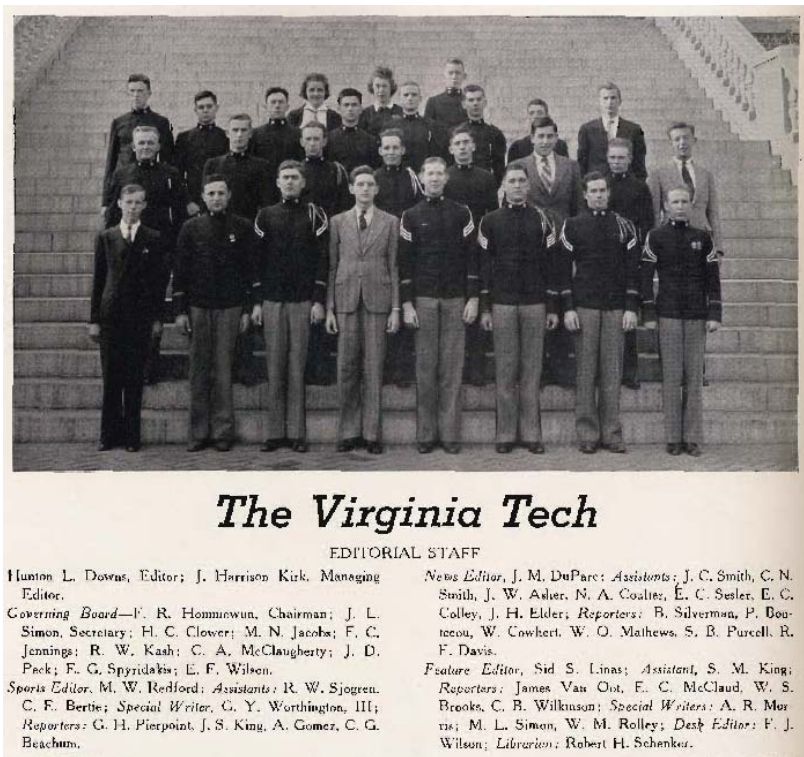


Figure 3: The Virginia Tech Editorial Staff photograph from the 1939 Bugle.

Several other clubs demonstrated the same inconsistency within the pages of the *Bugle*. In 1935, the Biology Club pictured and listed five women, while two others were only listed. Like the *Virginia Tech*, these women were in the second row or at the periphery in the photographs (see Figure 4). In 1936, the Biology Club listed seven women, but only two were pictured—in the second row at the ends. By placing women at the periphery or omitting them from their yearbook photographs, the male members of the Biology Club made women second-

²⁷ 1935 *Bugle*, 328; 1936 *Bugle*, 292; 1937 *Bugle*, np; 1938 *Bugle*, 264; 1939 *Bugle*, 280-281.

class members of the group. After a year with no women, the 1938 *Bugle* listed six women but pictured none of them in the Biology Club. However, after these years of discrimination, the Biology Club seemed more inclusive in 1939, when the club listed thirteen women and pictured nine of them. Clustered in the middle of the second and third rows, except for one in the front row, the women appear as a subset within the dominant group (see Figure 5).²⁸

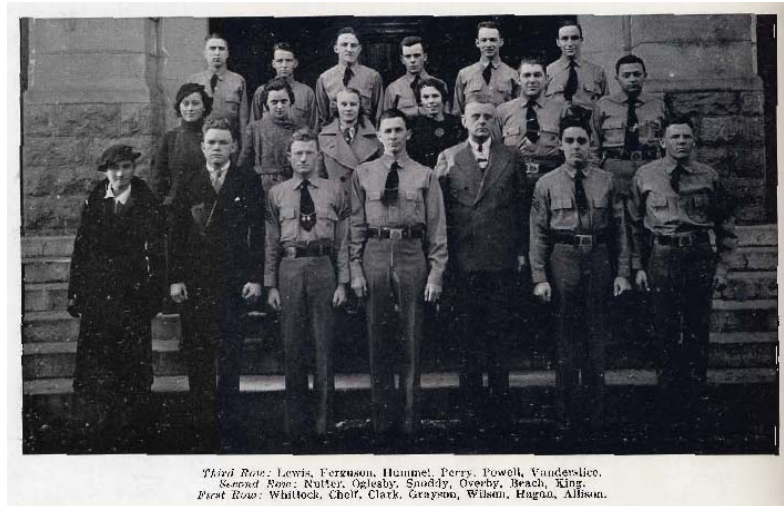


Figure 4: The Biology Club photograph from the 1935 *Bugle*.

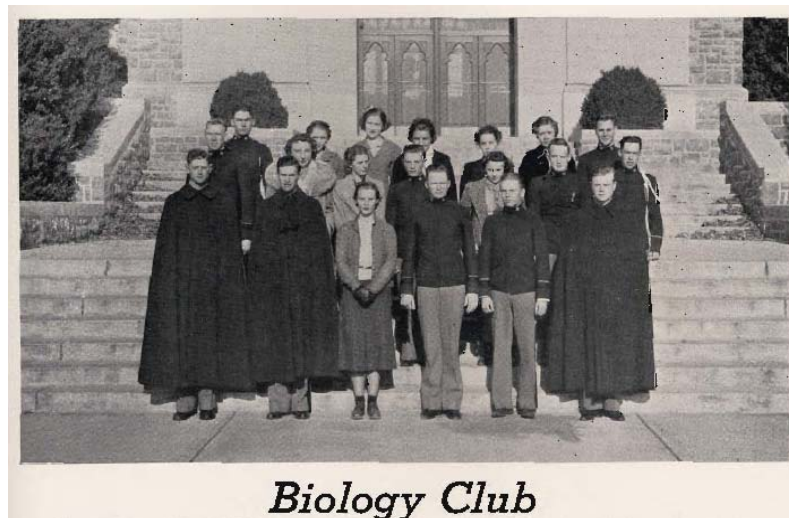


Figure 5: The Biology Club photograph from the 1939 *Bugle*.

²⁸ 1935 *Bugle*, 350; 1936 *Bugle*, 316; 1937 *Bugle*, np; 1938 *Bugle*, 278; 1939 *Bugle*, 295. Other reasons may explain the absence of women from the photographs. If they lived off campus, transportation may have been an issue. The photographs may have been scheduled during classes—this could explain the absence of some of the men as well. The 1939 *Bugle* listed 47 members but only 20 are in the photograph.

As the decade closed, the *Bugle* reflected the ambiguous status of women on campus. In 1937, the same year that few women seemed to appear in pictures, VPI reinstated the home economics program, which the school had dropped in 1934. Perhaps the exclusion of women from several group pictures was a reflection of how the male student body felt about a program that was sure to bring more women to VPI. However, there were two exceptions in 1937. The YMCA Cabinet pictured a woman in the front row, third from the right out of eight, but it did not identify her.²⁹ The photograph of the school's drama club, the Tech Players, which had included women since the 1935-36 academic year, was the other exception. One of the few indoor photographs, the Tech Players appear more informal than other clubs, with some members seated on the floor. The club listed its members, but the women come at the end of the list, suggesting their status as subordinate to the men in the group. The picture appears symmetrical with four women on the left and three women on the right in the rear; and two women seated in the middle row, both just one person away from the edge (see Figure 6).³⁰ The visibility of women and the inclusive nature of the picture demonstrates that some organizations on campus welcomed women.

²⁹ 1932 *Bugle*, np.; 1934 *Bugle*, 286; 1937 *Bugle*, np; 1938 *Bugle*, 310; 1939 *Bugle*, 262. The YMCA Cabinet pictured a woman in the front row in the *Bugle* for 1932, 1938, and 1939 but did not identify her. Only in 1934 did they identify her as Miss Cutherall. However, an examination of the Register for students for 1933-34 does not list a Miss Cutherall. See Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1934).

³⁰ 1937 *Bugle*, np. The list includes 17 women, and only 9 were pictured.



Figure 6: Tech Players photograph from the 1937 *Bugle*.

By 1939, just two years after the reinstatement of the home economics program, women became more visible in the *Bugle*. As the number of women in the photographs of clubs and organizations increased, the variety of ways in which the groups portrayed women indicates hesitation on the part of the men to fully include women. For instance, on the one hand the YMCA, the *Virginia Tech* Editorial Staff, Roanoke Club, and Southwest Virginia Club all had women in their photographs, but they chose not to identify them.³¹ On the other hand, the *Virginia Tech* Business Staff, the Business Club, and the Newman Club did not picture the six women among all three clubs but included them in their list of members.³² Four other groups, the Biology Club, the 4-H Alumni Club, the Life Saving Corps, and the Maroon Mask, all listed and included the women in their photographs.³³ The 4-H Alumni Club had the most inclusive photograph, with the women dispersed throughout the picture (see Figure 7). The strongest evidence for women's inclusion comes from a separate section for the Women's Student Union.³⁴ However, the placement of the organization, near the end—just four pages before the

³¹ 1939 *Bugle*, 262, 280, 321, 324.

³² 1939 *Bugle*, 281, 296, 345.

³³ 1939 *Bugle*, 295, 328, 331, 333.

³⁴ 1939 *Bugle*, 340-341. The Women's Student Union had two pages: one for officers and one for the group.

advertisements—suggests the marginality and subordination of the women to the men (see Figure 8).

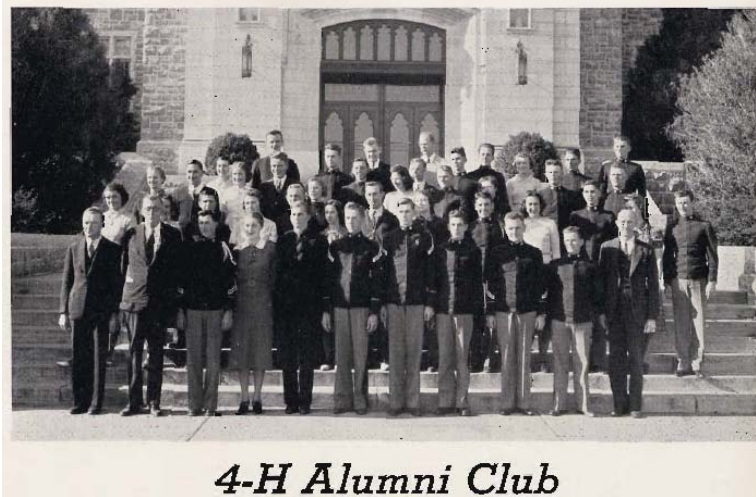


Figure 7: The 4-H Alumni Club photograph from the 1939 *Bugle*.



Figure 8: The Women's Student Union photograph from the 1939 *Bugle*.

At the beginning of the 1940s, changes in the *Bugle's* format reveal a shift toward including women in group activities outside the classroom and some recognition as a minority on campus. In 1940, the *Bugle* included individual photos of senior women for the first time.³⁵

³⁵ 1940 *Bugle*, 163-167; Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 264.

However, their placement in the yearbook reveals the limits of inclusion because the women remained marginalized as a separate group. Traditionally the *Bugle* featured Cadet Seniors first, followed by the male Civilian Seniors. Women, not part of VPI's military traditions, did not have a place in the *Bugle* until 1940. In that year the Women Seniors followed the Civilians, demonstrating the hierarchy of power on campus within the pages of the yearbook. Women had gained space in the yearbook, but they remained subordinate to the men. Things quickly changed, however. The following year all male and female civilian students, from seniors through freshmen, were pictured together in a separate section. A new hierarchy emerged with all civilians following all cadet classes.³⁶ This hierarchy makes sense considering that soldiers embodied the ultimate qualities of manhood. In the new hierarchy, civilian males were subordinate to cadets and on par with women. For women, their inclusion among the male civilians suggested the largest degree of equality in the twenty years since coeducation began, a promising sign.

1921-1944: Coming Full Circle—The Administrative Response

The full-time enrollment of white women at VPI in 1921 marked an expansion of women's opportunities for higher education in Virginia, but the administration did little to foster equality between men and women on campus, choosing instead to maintain traditional gender roles. Either by deliberate design or by simple inaction, the administration under the presidency of Julian Ashby Burruss did little to create either a welcoming atmosphere or establish policies that would have promoted the interests of women. An examination of school catalogs and presidential papers demonstrates how administrative policies, the curricula, and campus

³⁶ 1941 *Bugle*.

infrastructure all contributed to an environment in which the administration tried to keep women students in their traditional domestic roles. Despite the administration's lack of commitment to female equality throughout the 1921 to 1944 period, white women made incremental steps toward inclusion. In 1944, the Virginia General Assembly checked the process of inclusion by a legislative act. This act, however, did not stop inclusion.

The most subtle—or not so subtle—experience white women had at VPI, and at other colleges throughout the nation, involved the curricula. Women were not forced to enroll in the home economics curriculum, although some women chose it deliberately; nevertheless, it became a way to reinforce traditional gender roles.³⁷ At the highest levels within the administration, both at VPI and the State Board of Vocational Education, which implemented federal legislation, the home economics curriculum provided women wishing to pursue higher education a female sphere within a male dominated institution. Although women could enroll in any course except for military ones, the development of a two-year home economics curriculum in 1921 within the School of Agriculture at VPI typifies the notion that women had a proper place in the college setting.³⁸ The September 1922 *Bulletin* outlined opportunities for women in all of VPI's majors—those in agriculture, engineering, and its general departments—but it touted home economics as the “special curriculum for the preparation of home demonstration agents.” The bulletin featured the home economics curriculum prominently throughout, indicating the

³⁷ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 416; John F. Goucher, “Education of Women,” *Proceedings of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States Annual Meeting* 10 (1904): 127; John M. McBryde, “Womanly Education for Woman,” *Sewanee Review* 15 (1907): 469, 475, 477; Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education for American Women* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959), 56-58, 89-91, 99, 217; Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: Science Press, 1929; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 52-64; McCandless, 27, 58, 73-76; Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, 49-50; Rosenberg, “The Limits of Access,” 118-120; Solomon, 85-87. At the time that VPI admitted women, domestic science had become the “place” for women on male-dominated campuses. This movement began at Chicago in 1902. Solomon cited a 1911 study that claimed that 60% of female faculty in coeducational institutions taught in home economics, demonstrating how hiring practices reflected gender roles.

³⁸ The first five full-time women at VPI majored in the sciences and engineering.

program's appropriateness for women.³⁹ In the 1925 catalog, home economics became a four-year curriculum, further reinforcing the notion that women should study this subject. While not forced to enroll in these courses, the message was clear: a college education should prepare a woman for the primary function of homemaker. The bulletin suggested that within the school of Agriculture "some courses are especially well adapted" to women.⁴⁰

At the start of the second decade of women's enrollment, there were some positive and successful signs of progress on the campus of VPI. In the 1931-32 school year, VPI had 61 full-time and 25 part time women enrolled out of a total of 1,810—the largest number of women at VPI yet.⁴¹ Of the sixty-one registered as full-time students, twenty-five (41%) enrolled in the home economics curriculum, sixteen enrolled in biological sciences (26%), eleven enrolled in business administration (18%), and three enrolled in chemistry (5%). The remaining six women (10%) were scattered among agricultural economics, horticulture, rural sociology, architectural engineering, civil engineering, and pre-med.⁴² Although the women had multiplied their original numbers by seven—from a total of twelve in the fall of 1921 to a total of eighty-six in the fall of

³⁹ Home Economics has three pages (9-11) describing it. This description follows two pages about the School of Agriculture. The entire School of Engineering has two pages and the General Department has only three pages. The bulletin lists eleven opportunities for women in home economics. The eleventh is homemaker. Although this is last, it does not get lost as the least important. The bulletin seemed to suggest it as the one with greatest importance stating on page 11, "education in home economics and also in agricultural branches is of the greatest value to those who desire to become efficient homemakers, and to lead lives of usefulness and influence in their communities." Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute*, 15 (1922): 3, 9-11.

⁴⁰ The School of Engineering also claimed to have courses well adapted for women, but the opportunities in the field filled less than a page. Within the General Department, the bulletin states that "women students should find the curricula in applied science well adapted to their needs, particularly in view of the teacher-training options." The message, while not blatant, implied that women should only fill positions deemed acceptable by society—homemaking and teaching. Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute*, 15 (1922): 7, 12-16.

⁴¹ McCandless, 178-179, 212. On the one hand, women suffered from less financial aid and programs they enrolled in were the first cut and the last restored during the Great Depression. On the other hand, some schools, desperate for funds, opened their doors to women.

⁴² Registrar's Office, "Enrollment of Women Students at the V. P. I. by Years and Curricula" 14 December 1932, in RG 8/3 Women Students Folder 2, Special Collections, Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. [Hereafter cited as SCDLAULVPISU.]

1931—in their first decade of enrollment, and they had a residence just for them, the women remained a tiny minority on campus.⁴³

While an increase in female enrollment suggests positive actions on the part of the administration, one incident reveals that the administration did not consider women as the equals of male students. In 1932, the senior class passed over the top two students for the position of valedictorian and salutatorian. Frances Rosamond Aldrich had the highest grade point average, a 2.84 out of 3.0, followed by Hyman Hertzell Addlestone, who had a 2.81. Carol M. Newman, Department Head for English and Foreign Languages, explained the senior class's decision: "It is easy to see why the class made the selection it did, Miss Aldrich being a girl and Mr. Addlestone having been a student here for only two years."⁴⁴ Burruss reacted in a fashion that betrayed his true feelings toward female students. He scoured through old records to prove that the senior class did not always select the student with the highest grade point average for either position. According to Duncan Lyle Kinnear's rendition of events, the man elected stated that "he would serve only if public acknowledgement was made at the commencement exercises that the coed in question had achieved the highest academic standing."⁴⁵ Burruss agreed to these conditions and recognized Aldrich at graduation as the student with the highest grade point average, but his actions proved two things. First, Burruss was not committed to female equality on campus. He could have used the occasion to assert the equality of men and women at VPI by persuading the

⁴³ Ibid. Total enrollment for 1921-22 was 975. Women were 1.2% of the total and only 0.5% if looking at just full-time women. Total enrollment for 1931-32 was 1,810, making women 4.8% of the total and only 3.4% if looking at just full-time women.

⁴⁴ Carol M. Newman to Julian A. Burruss, 18 April 1932, Burruss RG 2/8, SCDLAULVPISU; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1932), 212. Addlestone must have been a civilian, transfer student. He was not pictured in the *Bugle* for 1931 or 1932. The Bulletin lists Addlestone as a senior, majoring in biology. His hometown was Sumter, South Carolina. Addlestone did not appear in the battalion lists for 1931 or 1932 either.

⁴⁵ In addition to the uproar regarding Aldrich, some alumni called for an end to coeducation. Burruss had other alumni, more favorable to coeducation, work with one very vocal opponent of coeducation. Burruss turned to the argument of federal funding resulting in an interesting quote that supports my argument in the Federal Incentive chapter. According to Kinnear, the anti-coeducation alumnus responded: "women's rights I'll never understand, but money I do understand." Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 310; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 154.

senior class to make Aldrich the valedictorian. Burruss's response to the situation demonstrates that coeducation did not bring equality, instant or delayed—not even a decade after the admission of women. Second, Burruss chose to preserve the male identity of the school by merely announcing Aldrich's achievement, making the visibility of women on campus less so than if she had made the valedictory speech.

The way in which Burruss handled the Aldrich incident in 1932, compounded with the difficulties of the Great Depression, set the administrative tone for the exclusion of women on campus for most of the 1930s. Dampening the promise at the beginning of the decade, when opportunities for women seemed to be on the rise at VPI, the difficulties associated with the Great Depression hampered women's progress not just at VPI but throughout the nation.⁴⁶ VPI managed to escape most of the harmful effects of the economic difficulties by tightening its belt; it cut only one program, home economics, during the 1933-34 academic year.⁴⁷ As a program with low enrollment—after a peak in 1930-31 with 29 students, it fell to 25 in 1931-32, and to 19 in 1932-33—women in home economics had declined from 45 percent in 1930-31 to 34 percent in 1932-33 of the full-time women at VPI.⁴⁸ Because only one percent of the total student body enrolled in home economics, the decision to cut the program made sense administratively. Yet, by cutting the program specifically tailored for women, it also demonstrated gender discrimination since the administration did not suspend any male programs. This action was not unusual given the dynamics of gender roles at the time, which reinforced the notion of a woman's place in the home. Men took precedence as the breadwinners in families and received

⁴⁶ Woloch, 450-457.

⁴⁷ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 305; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 148.

⁴⁸ Registrar's Office, "Enrollment of Women Students at the V. P. I. by Years and Curricula" 14 December 1932, in RG 8/3 Women Students Folder 2, SCDLAULVPISU. Based on numbers for the school years mentioned in the text, home economics enrolled 45% of women students in 1930-31, 41% in 1931-32, and 34% in 1932-33. These figures only include full-time women. The chart did not report the course work part-time women enrolled in.

preferential treatment in the job market and at the college level, yet the segregated workplace protected women's fields.⁴⁹

Despite the three-year suspension of the home economics program, the number of female freshmen enrolling increased slightly from an average of nine to eleven at VPI during this time. The women simply enrolled in other majors, such as business administration, biology, or general science.⁵⁰ Any woman who wanted to major in the home economics curriculum had two choices. She could enroll at VPI, declare another major, and then enroll in the home economics courses, which VPI continued to offer for women who had declared it as a major before the school cut the program. Or she could enroll at one of the state teachers colleges offering home economics as a major. In 1937, VPI reversed its decision and reinstated the home economics program. Two years later, the school completed the Home Economics building, called Agnew Hall.⁵¹ The home economics curriculum then experienced a revival largely due to the

⁴⁹ McCandless, 152-153, 155-156, 177-179, 183-185, 188, 194-195. The case could also be made that Virginia needed more home demonstration agents trained at VPI to help women run farms more efficiently and productively. The theme of a practical education pervades the 1930s.

⁵⁰ Registrar's Office, "Enrollment of Women Students at the V. P. I. by Years and Curricula" 14 December 1932, in RG 8/3 Women Students Folder 2, SCDLAULVPISU. Total enrollment for 1932-33 was 1,817, of which 56 women attended full-time and 16 part-time. Full-time women represented only 3.1% of total enrollment of which 34% registered as home economic majors. Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1933), 224; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1934), 216-222; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1935), 217-224; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1936), 219-227; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1937), 254-265. Home Economics enrolled 2 graduate students, 1 senior, 5 juniors, 4 sophomores, and 7 freshman in the 1932-33 school year. The *Bulletins* for 1934, 1935, and 1936 do not list home economics separately for enrollment; however, VPI continued to offer home economics courses within the School of Agriculture. The register of students for 1936-37, a year before VPI restarted the program, shows 3 women enrolled as freshman in the home economics curriculum.

⁵¹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 308; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 151.

recruitment effort by Mildred Tate, who became Dean of Women and Department Head in 1937.⁵²

Since the first years of coeducation at VPI, the administration had hired few female role models on the faculty and staff; thus, having a Dean of Women and a female department head marked progress for women students.⁵³ During the first year of coeducation, the catalog listed eight female faculty members. Seven of these women belonged to the staff of the Extension Division under State Agent Mary Moore Davis. These women may have provided instruction in the new two-year home economics curriculum, but as part of the extension division, their presence on campus was limited. Only one woman, Anna Montgomery Campbell, had a position as a regular faculty member, but only as an instructor in elementary education.⁵⁴ Because the first cohort of full-time women did not enroll in home economics, these women had mostly male instructors.⁵⁵ Therefore, the first women to attend VPI had few female role models to encourage them in a male environment.⁵⁶

As the years passed a few more women joined the faculty and staff. Four of them were also VPI alumnae. Lucy Lee Lancaster, who had worked in the library as a student, graduated with the first cohort in 1925 and remained to work in the library until she retired in 1975. Carrie Sibold also graduated in 1925 and worked in the alumni office until she retired in the 1960s.

⁵² Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 328; Laura Jane Harper, “Against the Odds: Women at VPI” (speech at Founder’s Day in Blacksburg on 11 April 1980), online source <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/125th/women/founders.htm> SCDLAULVPISU.

⁵³ Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 42-43; Rosenberg, “The Limits of Access,” 115-116, 125; Solomon, 81. With the exception of women’s colleges, most colleges kept the numbers of female faculty low to prevent the feminization of the academy—men believed that female faculty would lower their status. The fear of feminization also extended into the professions.

⁵⁴ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Catalog* (Blacksburg: the Institute, 1921), 13-18.

⁵⁵ The seven part-time women may have enrolled in home economics courses—something difficult to prove given that the catalog does not indicate the course of study they pursued as “special students.”

⁵⁶ Although not discussed here, other coeducational institutions and women’s colleges produced graduates who could have been hired by VPI to instruct. The fact that VPI did not choose to do so indicates a male bias on the part of the administration and Board of Visitors to hire male faculty. See footnote 53 about the fear of feminization.

Ella Russell became a faculty member in the chemistry department. Having received her BS in 1926 and her MS in chemistry in 1928, Russell became the first alumna to also serve as a faculty member. Russell taught chemistry until she died in 1949. Clarice Slusher graduated in 1927 and served as the school's registrar from 1937 to 1963.⁵⁷ Although small, each of the first three graduating classes of women provided graduates who then went on to serve the school. Yet their numbers remained low and did not provide women attending VPI with many female role models, thus the hiring of Mildred Tate in 1937 marked a step toward progress. Shortly after the hiring of Tate, VPI began construction on the first dormitory specifically for women.

As at many other colleges throughout the South, dormitory space was perhaps the biggest factor to limit the number of women enrolling at VPI.⁵⁸ Burruss, who in his 1921 report to the Board of Visitors offered the presidential home on campus to house women wishing to enroll, did little to accommodate them after the board agreed to admit them. Instead, a school bulletin titled "Opportunities for the Education of Women" stated: "As yet no special buildings are set apart for the use of women students, but additional facilities will be arranged for them when necessary. Living accommodations will be secured for women students in private homes."⁵⁹ The women received separate treatment in housing, stemming from the notion that men and women were not the same.⁶⁰ Male students were cadets who lived in manly barracks. Women

⁵⁷ Of the three women, only Slusher married, becoming Mrs. Pritchard. Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 200; Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, "The Early Years" available online at <http://www.unirel.vt.edu/vthistory/vtwomen/earlyyears.html>

⁵⁸ McCandless, 86-91, 94, 96-100; Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access," 113-114. Whether a school adopted coeducation in the late nineteenth century or mid-twentieth century, the pattern remains the same—dormitories for women always lagged behind their enrollment, effectively limiting their numbers on campus. McCandless discusses the lack of dormitory space at the University of South Carolina, Clemson, the University of North Carolina, North Carolina State, the University of Georgia, the University of Florida, the University of Arkansas, the University of Tennessee, and VPI.

⁵⁹ Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute*, 15 (1922): 21.

⁶⁰ McCandless, 136-137. This gendered housing style also occurred on women's campuses, see Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 75, 307, 311-316.

were coeds and they needed a more home-like setting suitable to their sex. When VPI decided to provide a dormitory for women in 1925, it chose to remodel the Chrisman home in the Grove on campus. Cadets called it the “skirt barn”—years before Hillcrest, a subsequent women’s dormitory, would earn the same moniker.⁶¹ The dormitory reflected society’s beliefs about how women should be housed, and because it was a remodeled house, it also limited the number of women who could reside in it.⁶²

A significant marker for women’s inclusion on campus came in 1940, when VPI completed Hillcrest. The first dormitory constructed specifically for women, Hillcrest could house about 108 of them.⁶³ The architecture and location of the dorm indicates much about women’s place on campus. The red brick and gothic window façade of Hillcrest was homier than the stark, utilitarian, military barracks on campus. The arrangement of the rooms also reveals that women needed different treatment. The dormitory had four small parlors decorated in Queen Anne, Eighteenth Century, Regency, and Modern styles on the first floor. It also had its own separate dining room. The early American furnishings inside the dormitory rooms gave them a more home-like appeal.⁶⁴ Located at the furthest diagonal from the men’s barracks, Hillcrest ensured little casual contact with men. This location also meant that the women on campus were far from most academic buildings—except those for agriculture, which housed home economics. Thus, the physical placement of Hillcrest put women on the periphery of activity at VPI—they remained separate and other on a nominally coeducational campus.

⁶¹ Lancaster, J1; Cox, 11.

⁶² The 1929 *Tin Horn* lists 15 women as “dormitory girls” and 31 as “town girls” on page 25.

⁶³ Jenkins Mikell Robertson, *Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Historical Data Book: Centennial Edition* (Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1972), 105.

⁶⁴ Descriptions of Hillcrest come from Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute*, “Education for Women,” 34 (1941): n.p.

Women at VPI in the 1930s had survived the Great Depression and made some progress toward inclusion, but the Second World War and an act by the General Assembly reversed most of women's gains at VPI. Just when women began to attend in larger numbers,⁶⁵ VPI geared up programs for military purposes: an Army Specialized Training Program in 1943 and later a Specialized Training and Reassignment unit, programs that occurred on other land-grants throughout the country.⁶⁶ These programs intensified the military atmosphere at VPI and gave men preferential treatment in campus housing. The programs also briefly reduced the influence of civilian men and women on campus. In addition to the war effort, state legislation altered the conditions under which women could enroll at VPI, when it made Radford the women's division of VPI.

In 1944, the General Assembly created coordinate arrangements between UVA and Mary Washington and between VPI and Radford, which became the Women's Division of Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The coordinate systems used existing female campuses as separate spaces for women at these schools and helped preserve the white, male identity of UVA and VPI. According to Kinnear, Burruss had wanted women "admitted on an equality with men," yet he responded to the merger "with surprising apathy, if not complete indifference."⁶⁷ The fact that Burruss did not step up to fight the coordinate plan indicates once again that he was not

⁶⁵ Lancaster, JI. According to Lancaster, there were 156 women enrolled in the 1939-40 session. While this shows an increase in the number of women, they were only 5% of a total enrollment of 3,119 that year.

⁶⁶ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 326-327; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 161; McCandless, 177, 195-201, 208-210; Solomon, 187-193. McCandless points out that the drop in male enrollment allowed women to participate in campus activities formerly closed to them, such as student government and campus publications. She also notes the overall drop in female enrollment as a result of the G. I. Bill, claiming that women made up only 32% of students enrolled in southern colleges in 1949.

⁶⁷ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 262 and 330 respectively for the quotes.

committed to female equality.⁶⁸ However, this time, because of the arrangement between Radford and VPI, Burruss did not have to fear losing federal funds.

The coordinate arrangement of Radford and VPI meant that women at VPI had to meet a new set of criteria if they wished to attend that campus instead of Radford's. To attend VPI, a woman had to be one of the following: a graduate student, at least twenty-one years old as an undergraduate, an undergraduate day-student residing in Blacksburg, or enrolled in a program with the approval of the Board of Visitors—mainly those not offered at Radford, such as engineering. Although both schools retained their home economics departments, women attended Radford for the first two years and VPI for the last two—an arrangement much like Burruss's original plan of 1921.⁶⁹ VPI had come full circle regarding women, since in 1944 the home economics program limited women to the junior and senior years of study, just as it had in 1921. With the "new" home economics plan and other criteria in place, the administration effectively limited the presence of women on campus. Yet, women continued to attend classes on VPI's campus, which allowed the process of inclusion to continue.

1944-1964: Stagnation for Women, but Progress along the Color Line

As a result of administrative complicity and legislative fiat, the Radford/VPI merger reduced the number of women able to attend classes at VPI, but it did not eliminate them. Two events blunted the effect of the merger. First, VPI allowed those women enrolled, when the

⁶⁸ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 331. Kinnear claimed that the Corps of Cadets protested the coordinate plan.

⁶⁹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 330-332; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 165-166; "College Merger Presents Living Quarters Problem: Principles To Determine What Girls May Live At Tech Outlined," *Roanoke Times*, June 29, 1944, 2 (also available online at <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/125th/women/dormprob.htm>); Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *Reports of the President, 1920-1921* (Blacksburg, Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, 1927), 134.

merger occurred, to finish their degree. Second, World War II caused men's enrollment to diminish between 1944 and 1946.⁷⁰ Women continued as a presence on campus, and their photographs in the *Bugle* reflected this. The women also remained involved in extracurricular activities, and they became more active in campus publications, such as the *Bugle*, the *Virginia Tech*, and the *Virginia Tech Engineer*.⁷¹ As this section will demonstrate, while VPI's administration did little to advocate female equality, the college and its students evolved as a result of changes in the South, the nation, and world—changes that slowly began to alter the identity of VPI, until one administrator took the helm and declared new policies for the emerging university.

After WWII, an influx of veterans capitalizing on the benefits of the G.I. Bill began to alter VPI's identity. Veterans did not have to serve in the Corps of Cadets, nor did they seem inclined to preserve its traditions. By the winter of 1946, for the first time in the seventy-three year history of VPI, civilians outnumbered cadets on campus. This trend continued, and civilian students demonstrated against the Corps of Cadets in the 1951-52 school year, claiming "The Corps Must Go." This situation caused a reaction by alumni, who passed resolutions urging the protection of the Corps of Cadets.⁷² The large influx of male civilians after WWII kept the percentage of women students, who averaged 3 percent of the student population between 1947 and 1950, low.⁷³

⁷⁰ Virginia Tech Historical Data Book, available online http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/databook/text/chap2/2_2.htm In the 1944-45 school year, total enrollment was 738, for 1945-46 it was 2,331; however, this was still far below the prewar enrollment of 3,382 in 1941-42. Enrollment recovered to 4,971 students with the 1946-1947 school year.

⁷¹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 328-329, 352, 398; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 166. These publications, as well as the Maroon Mask, temporarily suspended operations during WWII.

⁷² Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 343, 352, 370; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 171. Kinnear states that there were 1,189 registered and only 370 were cadets in 1946.

⁷³ Virginia Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1949), 234-235; Virginia Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1951), 259; Virginia Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia*

In addition to larger male enrollments, the State Department of Education made changes to the vocational education programs preparing teachers for business and home economics during the 1948-49 school session.⁷⁴ Although both VPI and Radford had teacher training in these subjects, the changes posed a dilemma since Radford already offered both of these subjects. VPI resolved this dilemma by only providing technical home economics at the undergraduate level and graduate education for women in home economics and business. Women preparing to teach these subjects took all of their courses at Radford. Kinnear remarked that “the cost of a large portion of the program of teacher-preparation in vocational education was reimbursed by the state board of education,” thus rules and regulations “had to be observed” throughout these curricular changes.⁷⁵ Because schools received funds from the modified Vocational Education Act, VPI and Radford had to meet these criteria in order to continue receiving these funds. Thus, federal and state policies both helped VPI maintain a low female enrollment.

At the same time that VPI’s policies kept women’s enrollment steady, the proportion of international students increased on campus, increasing the diversity of the student body. Thus, as the military identity of VPI faded somewhat in the late 1940s, the campus also became less

Polytechnic Institute (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1952), 261. Total enrollments at VPI swelled between the fall of 1946 and spring of 1950, hovering between 4,971 and 4,857. VPI began to track women’s enrollment as a subgroup with the 1947-48 academic year, and they constituted 166 out of 5,458 students, or 3.0%. For the academic year 1948-49 the women were 165 out of 5,689 or 2.9%. For the academic year 1949-1950 women were 152 out of 4,857, or 3.1%. Enrollment fell to 3,948 for the 1950-51 academic session but women, 147 of them, still represented only 3.7% of the student body.

⁷⁴ After WWII Woloch contends that domestic ideology experienced a revival that began during the Great Depression with an inherent paradox between a woman’s place in the home and the need or desire to work outside the home. This paradox led to the focus on home economics in college curricula. The 1950s reinforced the notion of woman’s sphere as the home and continued with the domestic ideology of the last 100 years repackaged “in modern garb, bolstered by experts, and widely promoted.” In the 1950s college curricula clearly reflected society’s gender roles. Women still worked, but most entered “a sex-typed occupation.” Woloch, 484-485, 508-515; 508 and 515 respectively for the quotes.

⁷⁵ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 386-387. As Kinnear indicates, although he does not specify it, the Smith-Hughes Act (or Vocational Education Act), continued to influence decisions at VPI regarding women. The Federal Incentive chapter discussed the role of money.

white. At the conclusion of the war, students revived the Cosmopolitan Club. The club, which had fallen by the wayside in the 1930s, claimed international students as members and promoted an interest in foreign cultures. As an example of the inclusive nature of VPI at the end of the 1940s, Yvonne Rohran Tung, a student from China studying horticulture, demonstrates how a VPI student could be non-male, non-white, and non-military. More foreign students than previously, both male and female from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, attended VPI (see Figure 9).⁷⁶ While this club demonstrated diversity on VPI's campus, the numbers remained small and none were African American. VPI entered the 1950s a little less white and a lot less military, yet its identity within the state remained that of a white, male, military school—an easy identity to maintain since women had been marginalized on campus or segregated so that they mostly attended Radford.

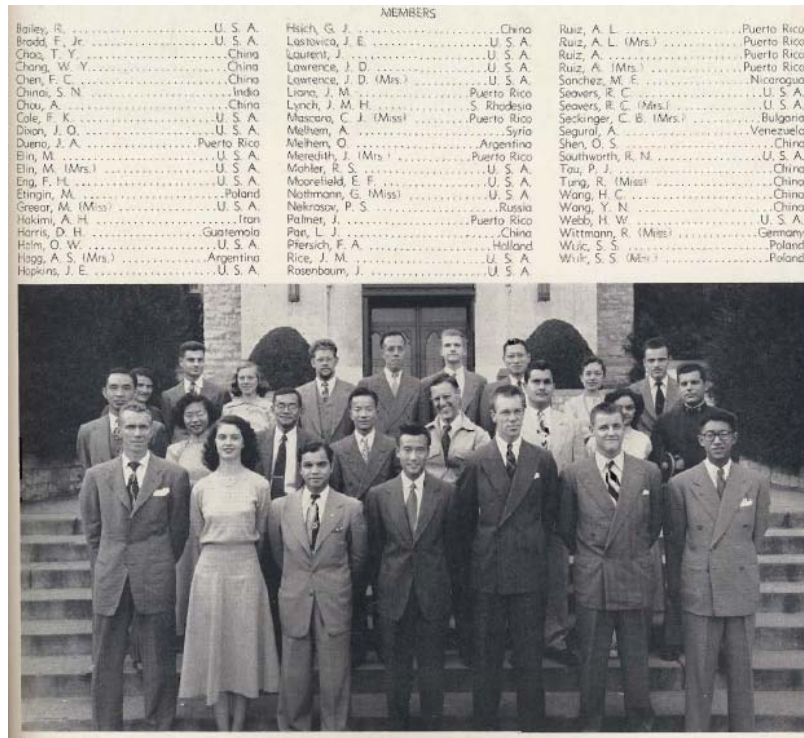


Figure 9: The Cosmopolitan Club from the 1950 Bugle.

⁷⁶ Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 173-175.

In the 1950s, the non-black racial identity of VPI faced a challenge from African-American men seeking admission.⁷⁷ Like the date that white women gained admission, the date that black men gained access marks only one point in the process of desegregation. VPI began the process of desegregation in 1953, when Irving L. Peddrew III sought to study electrical engineering at VPI—a program not offered at Virginia State in Petersburg. After President Walter S. Newman, who served from 1947 to 1962, examined every aspect of the situation, he concluded that VPI had no means to deny him admission. As Peter Wallenstein noted, Peddrew became the first black student at VPI and the first black undergraduate at “any historically white public four-year institution of higher education in Virginia or indeed the former Confederacy.”⁷⁸

Peddrew’s experience at VPI was remarkably similar to the first white women in 1921, suggesting that the processes of coeducation and desegregation were analogous. Of course, Peddrew faced one significant exception that VPI specifically forbade to white women when they first enrolled. VPI required Peddrew to participate in the Corps of Cadets, and normally all cadets lived in the barracks unless they had special circumstances exempting them, yet VPI classified Peddrew as a day student. This classification forced him to find housing off-campus, just like the white women in 1921. Peddrew also had to eat off campus.⁷⁹ While the housing and board situation Peddrew experienced had their roots in segregation laws, other restrictions he faced clearly demonstrate how the process of desegregation mirrored the process of coeducation. For instance, if Peddrew had wished to change his major from electrical engineering to one also offered at Virginia State, then he would have forfeited the reason behind his admission—that Virginia State did not offer his chosen major. This paralleled the experience of white women

⁷⁷ Anthony Blaine Deel, “Virginia’s Minimal Resistance: The Desegregation of Public Graduate and Professional Education, 1935-1955” (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1990), 30-64. Throughout the South black men and black women challenged segregation in higher education.

⁷⁸ Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 186-187.

⁷⁹ Deel, 128; Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 396; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 186-187.

after the Radford/VPI merger: if women decided to switch majors to one also offered at Radford, then they lost the right to study on VPI's campus. Peddrew left after his third year, but his admission helped pave the way for other African Americans later.

Throughout the 1950s the number of black students attending VPI remained small, paralleling the persistently small number of women students in the 1920s. Floyd Wilson, Lindsay Cherry, Charlie Yates, Matthew M. Winston, and transfer student Essex E. Finney, Jr. all followed Peddrew in the engineering school and Corps of Cadets. Yates graduated in 1958—a first not only for VPI but also for any historically white public institution in the former Confederacy. None of these men challenged their segregated living and eating accommodations until 1961, when sophomore James L. Whitehurst campaigned for the right to eat and live on campus. Successful in this endeavor, Whitehurst still faced discrimination. He could not play college sports, and the administration tried to dissuade him from participating in the Ring Dance. Whitehurst became VPI's fourth black graduate in 1963, when he received his degree in electrical engineering.⁸⁰

The number of black men at VPI remained so small that, like the students from places such as China, their presence did little to alter the white identity of the school. Just as white women had challenged the male identity of VPI in 1921, black men challenged the racial identity of VPI in 1953, but neither of these challenges resulted in an immediate shift in the white male military identity of the school. VPI began to lose some of its defining characteristics, and its

⁸⁰ Deel, 131-132; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 177, 187-190; 1958 *Bugle*, 84, 209, 245, 247; Charlie Yates, "The First Black Student to Graduate from Virginia Tech," interview by Tamara Kennelly, tape recording, 13 September 2000, transcribed by Susan Cook, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia. <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/blackhistory/oralhistory/Yates/>. Yates appeared in photographs for Pi Tau Sigma and Tau Beta Pi along with a senior photo, which listed him as a member of Squadron C and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. In his interview, Yates did not recall any specific attempt to prohibit him from appearing in the *Bugle's* photographs, but the administration wanted him to keep a "low profile" at on-campus and off-campus activities in the YMCA and the Ring Dance. The 1961 and 1963 *Bugles* do not picture Whitehurst in the class sections or others, suggesting that the administration continued to exert subtle pressure that black students maintain a "low profile."

reactions to both white women and black men suggest that the school feared the loss of its identity. The exclusion of white women and black men from campus activities illustrates how VPI's white male students fought to preserve the gendered and racial character of the school. Just as coeducation occurred as a process, so did racial desegregation.

Beginning in 1953, VPI's administration did not close the school's doors to black men, but neither did it prop them open—a pattern established for the first white women in the 1920s that continued into the 1960s. While the student body at VPI became more inclusive throughout the 1940s and 1950s, women still received separate administrative treatment.⁸¹ Two events demonstrate that VPI's administration continued to see women as a different group. First, women alumnae formed their own chapter of the Alumni association in the spring at 1951. Second, at the commencement exercises in June 1959, Patricia Ann Miller became the first woman to receive a ROTC commission in the Army Women's Medical Specialist Corps, yet the manner in which she received it suggests that the male hierarchy and military traditions at VPI remained strong.⁸² According to Laura Jane Harper, who served as Miller's advisor and worked in the department of home economics, Miller had attempted to enroll in the Corps of Cadets every quarter of the twelve she spent on campus. Miller received her commission despite the fact that she had not enrolled in ROTC. Harper stated that all the cadets marched into Miles Stadium, with those entering the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard coming in first, followed by Miller "alone and last."⁸³ This image of Miller, isolated from the rest of those receiving their commissions, captures the experience of many women at VPI.

⁸¹ A look at the 1950 *Bugle* suggests several items of note. First, the civilian students precede the cadets in the order of appearance reflecting the hierarchy on campus—probably as a result of the fact that civilian enrollments remained large at this time. Second, women featured in clubs and organizations are listed and photographed in a variety of ways. The treatment of the women in the 1950 yearbook indicates a more inclusive environment than earlier ones.

⁸² Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 397-398.

⁸³ Harper, "Against the Odds: Women at VPI".

Although they were included in many campus activities, women remained a tiny and marginalized minority on a campus dominated by men.

Throughout the 1950s, the Radford/VPI arrangement hindered the development of programs at both schools, which had to avoid duplication. Discontent with this arrangement led to the creation of VPI's School of Home Economics, a field dominated by women, in the fall of 1960. The three other schools on campus, Agriculture, Engineering, and Applied Science and Business, remained fields dominated by men. With the creation of a separate school of School of Home Economics at VPI, women experienced further segregation at the same time as greater equality on campus.⁸⁴ President Newman appointed Dr. Laura Jane Harper as dean of the new school, which had four departments. VPI housed three along the lines created by Mildred Tate. Radford housed one, focusing on home economics education under Dr. Ruth Hackman. This change represented progress of a sort since it marked the first time in the forty-year history of women at VPI that women organized and staffed a school on campus, allowing women to create their own arena of power at VPI.⁸⁵

When Thomas Marshall Hahn, Jr. became president of VPI in 1962, the school still largely retained its white, male, military identity, although its cohesiveness was beginning to unravel. Hahn arrived with a vision for future greatness, one which involved the development of the liberal arts curriculum at VPI and the transformation of the school into a university. Hahn's administration during the 1960s also signaled changes for both race and gender. Two of the

⁸⁴ Virginia Polytechnic Institute, *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* (Blacksburg: VPI Printing Department, 1958), 310-311. The last year that VPI kept track of women's enrollment within each field and published it in the Bulletin reveals that women were 4.1% (or 194) of the 4,786 students for the 1956-57 academic year. Out of a total of 194, 89 enrolled in home economics (45.9%). Another 10 graduate women enrolled in home economics education (5.2%). Thus, if VPI created a separate school, it effectively cut in half the number of women in classes with men. Only biology rivaled home economics as a single major attracting large numbers of women—10, which would equal home economics graduates (5.2%). Fall enrollment for 1957 dropped to 169 women (3.7%) out of 4,582. Home economics enrolled 79 women (46.7%) and home economics education enrolled 4 graduate women (2.4%). Eight women enrolled in biology (4.7%). These figures include part-time students.

⁸⁵ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 388.

changes he made considerably challenged the male, military identity of the school. Hahn not only changed the male to female ratio at VPI but also made the Corps of Cadets completely voluntary for men, which boosted the proportion of civilian males in the student body. Hahn's administration also began to actively recruit African Americans.

Before Hahn could implement his vision for VPI as a university offering a broader liberal arts curriculum—not just an agriculture, engineering, and business school—he had to tackle the coordinate policy linking Radford and VPI. Hahn stressed that the Radford connection inhibited the ability to expand curricular development and raise faculty salaries at VPI.⁸⁶ After working throughout 1962 to maneuver changes, Hahn formally recommended the separation of Radford from VPI in 1963. The General Assembly approved the plan, and VPI became, once again, an officially coeducational campus beginning with the fall session in 1964. Even the Board of Visitors recognized the growing demand for women's education and wanted to accommodate this expansion.⁸⁷ However, the admission of women was more of a policy statement by the Hahn administration than a substantial immediate change in proactive administration until VPI provided more living space on campus. In 1962-63, women represented less than 5 percent of the student body—305 out of a total student enrollment of 6,358—but these numbers increased dramatically in 1967-68 to 1,168 women out of a total of 10,254, or 11.4 percent, partly as a

⁸⁶ There seems to be an implied stigma attached to coordinate women's colleges. Women usually received less pay than men for the same work in academia in general. In addition, the same fears of the 1870s seem to be present: an association with women lowered the status of a "male" school. Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access," 125; Warren H. Strother and Peter Wallenstein, *From VPI to State University: President T. Marshall Hahn Jr. and the Transformation of Virginia Tech, 1962-1974* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2004), 112.

⁸⁷ Kinnear, 405-406, 424; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 198-200; Strother and Wallenstein, 56-59, 66-67, 111-115. President Walter S. Newman expressed these same concerns about Radford and offering new programs in the liberal arts at VPI.

reflection of more dormitory space for women. With the swift increase in female enrollment, Hahn's policies began to alter the male identity of the school.⁸⁸

When Hahn became president of VPI, the Corps of Cadets was mandatory for male underclassmen. For forty years, participation in the Corps of Cadets had been optional for male upperclassmen—a policy change that had occurred under the presidency of Julian Ashby Burruss in 1924. Hahn proposed to make the Corps entirely voluntary for two reasons. First, Hahn used statistics to demonstrate that many freshmen and sophomores, if they left the corps, had to drop out of school because of the military requirement. Second, Hahn argued that many civilian underclassmen male students chose to attend college elsewhere because of the compulsory requirement. Hahn believed that the end of the compulsory Corps of Cadets for freshmen and sophomores would relieve both of these negative conditions. Hahn's proposal brought about much controversy among students and alumni, yet he prevailed in the end. By the fall of 1964 the Corps of Cadets became voluntary for all males, and the identity of VPI became less military and more civilian as male students who had not wished to serve in the Corps applied in greater numbers.⁸⁹ The change to an all-voluntary corps reduced the previous importance of VPI's Corps of Cadets on campus, a pattern that continued well beyond the 1960s and slowly altered the school's identity.

The magnitude of change to the identity of VPI in 1964 came from two fronts. Not only were non-black women allowed to enroll without restrictions, but male freshmen and sophomores could enroll as civilians. With his policy changes, Hahn challenged the military

⁸⁸ Lancaster, J1. Lancaster notes that there were 305 women enrolled in the 1962-63 session. By 1966-67 women numbered 639, and the following year they reached 1,168. However, the total enrollments for those respective years were: 6,358, 9,064, and 10,254; therefore, women comprised 4.8%, 7.0%, and 11.4% respectively. Dormitory space was provided in 1966 corresponding to increased enrollment.

⁸⁹ Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 428-429; Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 146-147, 204; Strother and Wallenstein, 151-161. Hahn was keenly aware of the baby boom and how it might affect college enrollments. Hahn acted practically when he suggested the removal of the Corps of Cadets requirement.

character of the campus. Women could enroll without Radford restrictions at the same time that civilian men could enter without the military requirement. As a result, the number of civilians, especially males, increased. Since no additional dormitory space was immediately made for women, the identity of the campus did not change instantly, but the pace of change increased in 1966 with the enrollment of the first black women and the expansion of women's dormitories.

Just as 1921 was not the definitive year for women's enrollment at VPI, neither was 1964—yet another date in the process of coeducation. For most years between 1921 and 1964 white women's enrollment stayed at or below 5 percent.⁹⁰ The physical lack of dormitory space for white women created restrictions on their enrollment even without a quota system. For those women who did matriculate at VPI, the school created a home economics curriculum as a female place on campus. Women were not forced to enroll in this program, but the message was implicit: a woman's place resided in traditional domestic roles—on and off campus. As Geraldine Joncich Clifford has argued, the presence of women on campus moved gender from the subconscious to the conscious, and VPI's experience with coeducation supports her argument. VPI demonstrated how traditional notions of gender and women's place led to the exclusion of women from the yearbook and their marginalization within clubs and organizations; in addition, the administration reinforced these notions with special female curricula. While exclusionary tactics by cadets lessened in the late 1930s and early 1940s, VPI's administration sanctioned the marginalization of women on campus at the same time. In the end, VPI's white, male, military identity remained fairly intact into the 1970s, although it was under assault.

⁹⁰ Woloch claims that women's college enrollment doubled during the 1960s and that, despite the calls for female curricula, colleges provided "academic programs, not preparation for domesticity." Furthermore, female college students may have had an egalitarian academic experience but also received mixed social messages—that success was inconsistent with femininity. Woloch, 519-521; quote on page 519.

The process of inclusion, slowed by legislative action in 1944, resumed in 1966.

Although 1966 is not *the* year for full inclusion, it marked the beginning of a new era on three fronts: VPI lifted restrictions along the color line by actively recruiting blacks and creating new dormitory space for women; at the same time, civilian males enrolled in far greater numbers and proportions than ever before. As president, Hahn provided for women on campus in a way that Burruss had failed to exercise. More dormitory space for women was built in the first decade of Hahn's administration than during those of all his predecessors combined. Thus, instead of preserving the white, male, military identity of VPI, Hahn initiated changes that altered this identity during his tenure.

As this chapter has demonstrated, 1921 marked one of many dates in the process of coeducation. Subtle and overt actions by the Corps of Cadets and administrative complicity limited female access after 1921. These actions stalled full inclusion for over fifty years. As a result of actions—or inactions—by the Corps of Cadets and administrators, VPI maintained its white, male, military identity well into the 1970s. Only after various forces came together in the 1960s and 1970s did this cohesive identity begin to transform. Yet, as coeducation is a process, this identity continues to adapt as society changes.

Conclusion

As a case study, this thesis has sought to demonstrate how one southern white land-grant school adopted coeducation as a process affected by traditional gender roles, which allowed Virginia Polytechnic Institute to mostly retain its white, male, military identity into the 1970s. This thesis has addressed the issue of gender roles, women's proper place in society, federal legislation, and events that all land-grant colleges experienced, though they may have occurred earlier or later at some schools depending on their location in the country and the date they formally adopted coeducation. Virginia's experience was not exceptional, but neither was it typical.

In 1983, Geraldine Joncich Clifford called for historians to think “about the role of gender in higher education.”¹ Mary Ann Dzuback reissued this call in 2003, claiming it to be “the central story of the history of higher education.”² This thesis has examined coeducation at VPI with this goal in mind. In order to understand how VPI adopted coeducation, this thesis placed the school within the context of events in Virginia and the nation. In particular, the debates about women at the University of Virginia demonstrated what Clifford called institutional anxiety with gender before women appeared on male campuses.³ The battle fought by the Co-Ordinate College League in Virginia was not unique, but it was slightly more intense than the push for women's college-level education as seen in other states, such as Georgia and Kentucky.⁴

¹ Geraldine Joncich Clifford, “‘Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease’: Gender and American Higher Education,” *Feminist Issues* 3 (1983): 13-15.

² Mary Ann Dzuback, “Gender and the Politics of Knowledge,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43 (2003): 174-175.

³ Clifford, 42-54.

⁴ Josephine Bone Floyd, “Rebecca Latimer Felton, Champion of Women's Rights,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 30 (1946): 89-93; Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and the Women's Rights Movement* (Lexington: University

Gender debates and debates over women's higher education were common throughout the nation, spanning a century as some regions adopted coeducation earlier than others. Once women arrived on male campuses, the fear of feminization led to debates about women's appropriate role in society, including the proper course of study at college. Some colleges, at the beginning of their experience with coeducation, responded to a female presence with quotas on enrollment and limits on dormitory space. In a few cases, some schools attempted to segregate women within the college, such as President William Rainey Harper did at Chicago. Looking for a place for women within colleges, coeducational institutions created programs and departments of home economics, among others, to maintain traditional gender roles for women. This placement supports part of Clifford's argument about "women and institutional change."⁵ In part, VPI demonstrated this when the school initiated a home economics curriculum in 1921. Women were not forced to enroll in home economics, but the curriculum reflected society's notion of women's proper place. To an extent, administrators offered home economics believing that women wanted to study it.

To a degree unseen in the historiography of higher education, the federal government contributed to the creation of a female space for white women at male colleges. Two federal acts provided funding to the states that accepted their terms. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 both provided funds that hired female home demonstration agents and teachers of home economics. In addition to paying for a portion of their salaries, the Smith-Hughes Act also paid for the training of vocational education teachers. Both of these occupations fell safely within women's traditional domestic roles either at home or working with

Press of Kentucky, 1975), 87-89, 164; Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 80-81. Rebecca Latimer Felton led the higher education movement in Georgia, and Laura Clay led it in Kentucky. Both of these movements occurred earlier than Virginia's.

⁵ Clifford, 28-42.

children, making them acceptable changes to men. As this thesis has shown, these two acts provided the federal incentive to admit white women to some southern land-grant schools. Maryland, Georgia, and Virginia all grappled with this federal legislation at different times and particular to events in their states. Further examination of this federal legislation at Maryland and Georgia's land-grant schools will likely support the hypothesis stated in the federal incentive chapter: the lure of federal money prompted administrators at these white male schools to admit women. VPI did not respond immediately to this incentive, but as chapter two demonstrated, the federal acts provided the background that made Julian Ashby Burruss's arguments all the more compelling in 1921.

From the beginning, this thesis has argued that, while significant as the date of white women's first full-time enrollment as degree-seeking students, 1921 is but one date in the process of coeducation at VPI. This thesis has discussed white women's access and inclusion as students of the school between 1914 and 1964. Clifford's words about a female presence on a male campus, which moved "gender *from the unconscious to the conscious level of response and reaction*,"⁶ demonstrate how gender shaped women's experiences at VPI. Through the years, women's access and inclusion has increased and decreased in response to events such as the Great Depression and World War II, which reinforced society's traditional gender roles. The process of access and inclusion at VPI was one experienced by women on coeducational campuses throughout the nation. In this way, VPI's tenacious hold on its white, male, military identity has no doubt been similar to other white land-grants, especially in the South.

⁶ Clifford, 15. Emphasis in the original.

Epilogue: After 1966

Thomas Marshall Hahn, Jr.'s policy changes did not immediately alter the identity of VPI, but they brought the timelines for the processes of coeducation and desegregation together in 1966. The unrestricted admission of white women was more of a policy statement, and their numbers remained small until VPI provided more living space on campus for them. Therefore, real change did not begin on the gender front until 1966 when VPI renovated men's dormitories to accommodate the women. Eggleston Hall became the first renovated dormitory to open for women in 1966, followed by Campbell Hall the next year. Female enrollment continued to increase at such a pace that VPI planned for a new women's dorm. In 1971, construction began on Slusher Hall, named after Clarice Slusher Pritchard, an alumna and former registrar.¹

In 1966, change also came on the racial front when VPI admitted black women for the first time. These six black women benefited from the actions taken by black men who had enrolled at VPI in small numbers since 1953, ones that made the transition smoother. Of the six black female undergraduates, at least two enrolled in courses that would have excluded them on the basis of race and gender before 1964. Jackie Butler, who originally majored in biology but later switched to sociology, was the first black member of Angel Flight, a sister organization to the Air Force ROTC. Although it was a social, not a military organization, Angel Flight had ranks, and members had to apply and go through an interview to join.² Marguerite Harper, who enrolled in history, had originally intended to attend Virginia State College. However, after Harper received a "Rockefeller Scholarship for culturally disadvantaged students" her father told

¹ Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 200; Strother and Wallenstein, 169, 230.

² Jackie Butler Blackwell, "One of the First Six Black Women Students at Virginia Tech: Jackie Butler Blackwell," interview by Tamara Kennelly, tape recording, 29 April 1995, transcribed by Cindy McLaughlin, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia.
<http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/blackwomen>

her to “teach them who is culturally deprived later, but right now take the money and go on to school there.”³

The first black women enjoyed freedoms on campus that the black men had not. Some of them participated fully in on-campus activities. For instance, as a member of the student senate, Harper challenged traditions, such as flying the Confederate Battle Flag and playing Dixie at football games. Harper also made an effort through the Human Relations Council, an on-campus organization, to promote the desegregation process by providing a forum to discuss the effort.⁴ Harper’s activities demonstrate how black women had the opportunity to be politically active on campus in ways the first white women and black men had not.⁵

Although Jackie Butler and Marguerite Harper demonstrated new faces on the campus of Virginia Tech, it was not until the Corps of Cadets admitted women in 1973 that a final—and symbolic—assault began on the white, male, military identity of VPI. The number of women increased every year after 1964, as did the number of civilian men, but the campus retained a strong male and military character, although these two components of the school’s identity began to wane. The Corps of Cadets had suffered from declining enrollments since the 1964 decision to make it voluntary. Low numbers and the acceptance of women by the United States military helped propel the decision to admit women to the corps, which hoped that perhaps a few women might bolster its flagging membership.

The formation of L Squadron and its first members represented a change in the military character of the school. No longer did the Corps of Cadets embody the ultimate essence of manhood through military service. Women, as members of the corps, altered its male identity.

³ Marguerite Laurette Harper Scott, “One of the First Six Black Women Students at Virginia Tech: Marguerite Laurette Harper Scott,” interview by Tamara Kennelly, tape recording, 2 March 1996, transcribed by Cindy McLaughlin, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 203, 207; Strother and Wallenstein, 292-297.

Cheryl Butler and Deborah Noss were at the forefront of this change. In 1973, three women led L Squadron: Deborah Noss, a senior, as commander, Shirley Burnett, a junior, as the executive officer, and Cheryl Butler, a black sophomore, as the administrative officer. Although women could participate in the corps, they were not fully equal with men. The women could not play in the band, the Highty-Tighties, which did not admit women until the end of the spring semester in 1975. Women in the corps also experienced exclusionary treatment since they did not sleep in the barracks. L Squadron slept in Monteith Hall, a male civilian dormitory. This arrangement separated female cadets from other women on campus and segregated them from the male cadets as well.⁶ The women of L Squadron were both separate and unequal within the Corps of Cadets.

In many ways Cheryl Butler embodies the changing racial and gender character of Virginia Tech that has been underway from the 1960s to the present. As a black woman in the corps, even if it segregated its members by sex, Cheryl Butler, who began as a civilian math major and switched to art in her junior year, attended a school that would not have admitted her ten years earlier—on account of her race, gender, and major. That she was able to join the Corps of Cadets brought down one of the last barriers remaining to women on campus. So did Butler experience discrimination as a black woman in the Corps? Most of her answers overwhelmingly state that her gender was a bigger obstacle than her race: “There were some people who were a little racist. But I never had anybody ever come in my face and say I don’t like you because you’re black. It was more I don’t want you here because you’re female as opposed to you’re black.” Perhaps the first black women on campus had helped deflate the issue of race in the six years before Butler’s arrival. Butler, for all the difficulty she cited as a woman in L Squadron,

⁶ Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 225-227; Strother and Wallenstein, 308-310; Cheryl Butler McDonald, “First Black Woman in the Corps of Cadets: Cheryl Butler McDonald,” interview by Tamara Kennelly, tape recording, 28 November 1998, transcribed by Stacy Swain, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia. <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/blackwomen>

claimed that Virginia Tech's gradual changes, within the context of society's changes, had made it possible for her to participate in Corps of Cadets.

The admission of women and the formation of L Squadron in 1973 posed the greatest challenge to the Corps of Cadet's male identity. Women represented the third challenge to the Corps in the past fifty years. The corps first lost prominence at VPI in 1924, when it became mandatory only for underclassmen under the administration of President Julian Ashby Burruss. The second loss of prominence came in 1964 when the corps became all voluntary for men under President Thomas Marshall Hahn, Jr. The addition of women, so soon on the heels of an all-voluntary corps, shook the male identity of the ranks. As Butler so aptly observed, "Everybody is afraid of change."⁷ The final change, the last structural barrier women had to remove, came in 1979, when the Corps of Cadets integrated women into its companies. Though a racially and sexually integrated corps represented how much policies and practices had changed since 1921, women and blacks remained minorities on campus. Thus, change came slowly to VPI.

This thesis represents the story of gender in higher education. As society has changed its expectations for men and women, so too have the institutions that educate them. Thus the date women first gained any access to institutions, while significant as a marker, only begins to tell the story as one event in a series of many in the process of coeducation. Access alone can only accomplish so much. By examining coeducation and what it did and did not accomplish provides a way to examine the society in which it occurred. Higher education, as a reflection of society, shows the value that society places on gender. The role of gender in the history of higher education has been a process, one that has been evolving and continues to evolve. The story of Virginia Polytechnic Institute from 1914 to 1964 demonstrates how one traditional southern school evolved. It continues to evolve to this day.

⁷ Cheryl Butler McDonald, "First Black Woman in the Corps of Cadets: Cheryl Butler McDonald."

Appendix A
White Southern Land-Grant Schools

State	Land-Grant	Women Admitted
Alabama	Auburn University	1892
Arkansas	University of Arkansas	1872
Delaware	University of Delaware*	1872, again in 1945
Florida	University of Florida**	1947
Georgia	University of Georgia***	1918
Kentucky	University of Kentucky	1880
Louisiana	Louisiana State University	1905
Maryland	University of Maryland	1916
Mississippi	Mississippi State University****	1882, again in 1930
Missouri	University of Missouri	1868
North Carolina	North Carolina State University at Raleigh	1899
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State University	1890
South Carolina	Clemson University	1955
Tennessee	University of Tennessee	1893
Texas	Texas A & M University	1963
Virginia	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	1921
West Virginia	West Virginia University	1889

Notes

* Coeducation ceased between 1885 and 1945.

** The original land-grant in Lake City admitted women in 1893, but under the consolidation plan in 1905, it became sex segregated.

*** Branches accepted women in the 1880s.

**** Coeducation ceased between 1912 and 1930.

Appendix B
White Southern Flagship Schools

State	Flagship	Women Admitted
Alabama	University of Alabama	1893
Arkansas	same as land-grant	1872
Delaware	same as land-grant	1872, again in 1945
Florida	same as land-grant	1947
Georgia	same as land-grant	1918
Kentucky	same as land-grant	1880
Louisiana	same as land-grant	1905
Maryland	same as land-grant	1916
Mississippi	University of Mississippi	1882
Missouri	same as land-grant	1868
North Carolina	University of North Carolina	1897
Oklahoma	University of Oklahoma	1892
South Carolina	University of South Carolina	1893
Tennessee	same as land-grant	1893
Texas	University of Texas	1883
Virginia	University of Virginia	1970
West Virginia	same as land-grant	1889

Appendix C
White Southern Public Women's Colleges

State	Public Women's Colleges	Founded
Alabama		
Arkansas		
Delaware	Women's College Coordinate with Delaware College	1914
Florida	Florida State College for Women, Tallahassee*	1905
Georgia		
Kentucky		
Louisiana		
Maryland		
Mississippi	State Industrial and Normal College	1885
Missouri		
North Carolina	North Carolina College for Women**	1918
Oklahoma		
South Carolina	Winthrop College	1891
Tennessee		
Texas	Texas State College for Women	1891
Virginia		
West Virginia		

Notes

* Tallahassee had been coeducational, but a reorganization in 1905 segregated white men and women. White men attended Gainesville.

** Founded in 1891 as the Normal and Industrial School for White Women, it gained college status in 1918 along with the name above. In 1931, it became a part of the UNC system.

Appendix D
Black Land-Grant Schools

State	Black Land-Grant	Founded
Alabama	Alabama A & M University (Normal)	1875
Arkansas	University of Arkansas--Pine Bluff (Pine Bluff)	1873
Delaware	Delaware State College (Dover)	1891
Florida	Florida A & M University (Tallahassee)	1887
Georgia *	Fort Valley State College	1895
Kentucky	Kentucky State University (Frankfort)	1886
Louisiana	Southern University (Baton Rouge)	1880
Maryland	University of Maryland--Eastern Shore (Princess Anne)	1886
Mississippi **	Alcorn State University (Lorman)	1871
Missouri	Lincoln University (Jefferson City)	1886
North Carolina	North Carolina A & T University (Greensboro)	1891
Oklahoma	Langston University (Langston)	1897
South Carolina ***	South Carolina State University (Orangeburg)	1896
Tennessee	Tennessee State University (Nashville)	1912
Texas	Prairie View A & M University	1878
Virginia ****	Virginia State University (Petersburg)	1882
West Virginia *****	West Virginia State College (Institute)	1892

Notes:

* Georgia State Industrial College accepted Morrill funds from 1890 to 1947.

** Admitted women informally in 1884, officially in 1905.

*** Claflin University accepted Morrill funds from 1872 to 1896.

**** Hampton University accepted Morrill funds from 1872 to 1920.

***** Lost land-grant status in 1957.

Information from Leedell W. Neyland, page 24.

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