

**Report for the Wilson Legacy Review Committee**  
**Brent Henry, Chair**  
**January 16, 2016**

Instead of repeating myself, I suggest that your committee read two of my writings on Wilson. The first is an exercise in forecasting history. In my long history of *The Making of Princeton University: From Woodrow Wilson to the Present* (PUP, 2006), the first chapter seeks to suggest what Wilson--from his own perspective and time--would make of modern Princeton. I can only trust that every Princeton trustee has a personal copy. The other is a full sketch of Wilson's evolving educational philosophy and career, from Princeton undergraduate to Princeton president, with a few stops at other institutions in between. This appeared as the opening chapter ("The Educational Vision of Woodrow Wilson") in my edited *The Educational Legacy of Woodrow Wilson: From College to Nation* (University of Virginia Press, 2012), which resulted from a conference I organized in October 2009 at the Woodrow Wilson School. I assume your committee has also consulted this book, since it directly addresses the question you are considering. But to be certain that you see my chapter, I enclose a xerox copy; and in what follows, a bullet-pointed summary of its chief findings.

\* WW spent 27 years in higher education, only 14 in political life. In retirement, he even had dreams of returning to higher education in some capacity to carry out his progressive reforms in the *nation's* universities.

\* In the academic two-thirds of his life, WW was the national leader of the *progressive* movement in higher education. He received more coverage in the *New York Times* than his exact contemporaries (all born in 1856) and fellow presidents, Arthur T. Hadley (Yale) and A. Lawrence Lowell (Harvard). By 1910, when he resigned from the Princeton presidency, he had given 180 public lectures and 57 alumni talks, and written a book and 17 articles, most of them on education.

\* WW wanted Princeton to be *distinctive* among its peers: the best university "of its kind" in the world, known for its "*selective* excellence" in the "*pure*" arts and sciences (rather than professional schools); *relatively* small size; *personal* teaching and learning; *coherent* curriculum (5 3-hour instead of 7 shorter courses per semester; *faculty-assisted* rather than rampant *electives*; emphasis on student *learning* rather than faculty teaching; democratic *diversity* [largely *regional* rather than racial, religious, or ethnic] befitting the country in admissions; "social coordination" in quadrangular residences for all four classes to counter the influence of the divisive and anti-intellectual eating clubs and freshmen "hat lines;" a diminution of emphasis on the *extracurriculum* (he even proposed giving varsity letters to the best *scholars*); and, above all, *intellectual* distinction, power, and primacy (rather than a moralized and social emphasis on "character," which he believed resulted from assiduous *study*).

\* The Board of Trustees gave him unusual personal authority to hire and fire faculty in order to upgrade their professional attitude, pedagogical aptitude, and scholarly performance. The few he fired (including a full professor) were let go because of weak *teaching*. The nearly 50 young and middle-aged preceptors and several older "stars" (largely from Great Britain) he hired were known for their scholarly promise and *vitae* as well as their infectious and effective teaching. Despite his considerable presidential power, he consistently valued and trusted the results of "common counsel" with his faculty. Their major and path-breaking curricular reforms resulted in the creation of 11 departments, chairmen thereof, and academic majors. His hiring reduced the student:faculty ratio from 12:1 to 7:1.

\* In 1910, Edwin Slosson's influential portraits of 14 *Great American Universities* included an

enthusiastic nomination of Wilson's new Princeton. This gave credence and real substance to Princeton's premature founding membership (1900) in the elite *Association of American Universities*.

\* WW added his mark to Princeton's famous architectural signature by raising eight buildings in eight years, often in Collegiate Gothic designed or overseen by supervising architect Ralph Adams Cram of Boston. In daringly increasing the endowment, he also promoted the art museum and library as key instruments of liberal education. Although in the end he did not win his fierce battle with graduate dean Andrew Fleming West over the location of the new Graduate College, WW characteristically wanted it built in the heart of the campus so that the undergraduates would be "infected with the spirit of scholarship."

\* A final note on WW's "notorious" (but uncontextualized) reluctance to admit Blacks, Jews, and Asians (Chinese). His reasons revolved around "the temper and tradition of the place," dominated socially by the eating clubs, whose formidable critic he was. Because he knew those minorities would not be accepted by the clubs (and thereby excluded from the social and some of the academic life of the university), he knew they would "feel like outsiders" (and probably form lonesome cliques for self-protection.) He also knew he could not reform quickly or wholesale Princeton's alumni make-up, admissions, and social structure--he had plenty of other, more important, battles to fight--and he could not waste political capital if he wanted to put Princeton at the head of America's academically progressive universities. So he trusted his allies and successors (many of them former preceptors or hand-picked administrators) to move Princeton forward on those delicate fronts.

At the recent annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Atlanta, more than one panelist in a large public session reminded us--and today's protesting youth--that "the historian's role is to provide the context in which people can understand the *very complex* issues of the past *and* the present" (my emphasis). Another sensibly urged us not to confuse the *acknowledgement* of historical facts with the *glorifying* of them. To "erase" history (which the current protests prove is nearly impossible) is to remove our ability to *learn* from it. *Every* generation's job, including and perhaps especially ours, is therefore to live with and learn from its "troubled wisdom."

With best wishes for your wise deliberations,

James Axtell  
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# The Educational Legacy of Woodrow Wilson

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*From College to Nation*

Edited by James Axtell

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## The Educational Vision of Woodrow Wilson

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James Axtell

Before being elected governor of New Jersey and president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson was indisputably the most eloquent, influential, and perhaps controversial American university president in the first quarter—and arguably the first half—of the twentieth century. In leading Princeton to full university status and prominence between 1902 and 1910, he produced large numbers of polished and often witty speeches and writings on academic reform that generated as much national news and serious rethinking on other campuses as they did amazement and, eventually, alarm on his own. The boldness of his leadership and the imaginative consistency of his thinking made him the spokesman for liberal arts colleges and universities that sought to buck the era's trends toward unplanned growth, curricular chaos, extracurricular excess, and myopic vocationalism. For all their historical importance, those same qualities make him a surprisingly relevant guide for our own perplexed thinking about the goals and policies of higher education.

When Wilson became president of Princeton in 1902, he had been thinking about higher education for a long time. As a graduate student of politics and history at Johns Hopkins in the early 1880s, he scoffed at the new institution's genuflections before the altar of German “research” and complained about the aridity and factualism of his professors' teaching and scholarship. In his first appointment at nascent Bryn Mawr, he lamented his (female) students' passivity in lecture classes and his (mostly male) associates' tepid interest in his favorite subjects, politics and government. After a short breather at still small, congenially masculine, though officially coed Wesleyan, he returned in 1890 to Princeton, his more “cultured”



and “progressive” alma mater.<sup>1</sup> There he helped forge the college’s soon-proclaimed identity as a university and sang, mostly sotto voce, in the growing chorus of opposition to its feckless leader and stunted academic development.

By 1897 at the latest, a year after delivering the keynote address at the new university’s sesquicentennial celebrations, he had substantially outlined what he would do if he were, as he said, “the autocrat of Princeton.”<sup>2</sup> When unexpectedly he acquired the presidency and a mandate for change from the trustees five years later, he launched reforms of the faculty, the curriculum, teaching, and college life in an attempt to elevate Princeton’s reputation from one of the best American colleges to the best university “of its kind.”<sup>3</sup>

During Wilson’s eight years at the Princeton helm, he thought hard, wrote copiously, and spoke frequently about Princeton’s problems and opportunities, as well as about politics, current affairs, culture, literature, religion, and history. By his final commencement in 1910, he had given at least 57 talks to alumni groups and 180 public lectures. He had also published 17 articles (3 more remained in a drawer) and a book. Extensive newspaper coverage of his public and even intramural appearances drew additional attention to his bold thinking and campus controversies.<sup>4</sup> By the summer of 1910, the *New York Times* had mentioned Wilson in articles, editorials, or book advertisements 190 times; in 90 of these, his or Princeton’s name featured in the headline. Eleven of the articles, many of the lectures, and virtually all of the alumni talks were devoted to higher education, but not narrowly so. Although many addressed Princeton topics for Princeton audiences, others were aimed at listeners and issues at other institutions. Still others took wing from Princeton concerns but then rose to prescriptive heights over a host of academic ailments widely shared.

When Wilson’s analytical frame of mind turned local questions into broad answers, wide media attention to his often striking ideas and uncommon eloquence and wit gave his prescriptions—for what a later Princeton dean called the “liberal university”—greater exposure than the analyses of any other presidential spokesman in his day.<sup>5</sup> At a time when the “Big Three”—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—were renewing their leases on the top spots in academic prestige and Columbia was making a conscious bid for national attention, Wilson’s three closest presidential contemporaries—Arthur Twining Hadley of Yale, A. Lawrence Lowell of Harvard, and Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia—could not rival his command of both the

literate public’s and the academy’s attention. Even during much longer terms, none of the three faced—or created—high-stakes controversies on their campuses the way Wilson did, in part because none of them sought to effect reforms as major as his or as quickly.

Wilson was able to generate news in part because Princeton had further to go to become a university of *any* kind. Simply changing its name four years before it even had a graduate school was not enough to convince skeptics that it had changed its collegiate stripes. And admission to founding membership in the elite Association of American Universities in 1900 was bestowed more as recognition of Princeton’s long social pedigree and academic *promise* than of achieved university status.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, Charles W. Eliot had decisively moved Harvard to that level well before the turn of the century, though some of its developments needed attention or curbing by the time Lowell, Wilson’s friend and admirer, succeeded Eliot in 1909.<sup>7</sup> Columbia under Seth Low had also grown willy-nilly to fit the emerging American pattern of professional- and graduate-school dominance, faculty emphasis on research, curricular incoherence, and inattention to undergraduate education; Butler’s ascendance in 1902 did little to stop or ameliorate it.<sup>8</sup> At least Yale, in a condition similar to Columbia’s, after Timothy Dwight’s conservative management had the good sense to appoint political economist Arthur Twining Hadley as his successor late in 1899. Adroitly and gradually, Hadley instituted policies and procedures that capitalized on Yale’s considerable assets, seeking, in general, to make a “better, not bigger Yale” to serve as a truly “national university”—goals that complemented those being pursued simultaneously in Princeton.<sup>9</sup>

The differential magnitude of the challenges that Wilson and his peers faced, and the tenor and tenacity of their respective responses, dictated the amount of serious ink and attention they received nationally. During his 44-year tenure, the entrepreneurial and self-promoting Nicholas Murray Butler commanded more copy, particularly in New York papers, and published more words than Wilson, but he had less of importance to say and he said it much less well. In the same eight-year span as Wilson’s, Butler was mentioned in 303 articles in the *New York Times*, mostly in connection with the reform of football, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (which he chaired), personal honors, travel, and social appearances; attention to higher educational issues beyond Columbia was conspicuously rare. Although Butler edited the *Educational Review* for nearly three decades and published numerous articles in popular and professional



publications, Laurence Veysey has concluded that “no other prominent academic executive said less of significance or conviction about what either the college or the university should be. Butler simply was not a figure in the intellectual history of American higher education.”<sup>10</sup>

The presidents of the Big Three made a much bigger impact on educational thinking than Butler did because their ideas for reform were, as Lowell assured Wilson, “very much alike” and they stood solidly against the prevailing views of the other members of the Association of American Universities, some of which were large state universities in the West and Midwest, where scientific and technological research, professional education, and bigness were the names of the game.<sup>11</sup> These three exact contemporaries—all born in 1856—were also friends even before they climbed into their presidential bully-pulpits and presented a united front in the (largely northeastern) cause to save the American university for liberal education and culture.<sup>12</sup>

Wilson had long assigned Lowell’s books on government in his classes, and the two experts sparred amicably over the state of the field. When Lowell was chosen to lead Harvard, Wilson conferred on him an honorary Princeton degree and wrote warmly of anticipating future meetings in which he might often “enjoy the benefit of comparing views with you and of drawing thoughtful counsel from you.” These occasions, Wilson was certain, would “draw us”—institutions and presidents—“even closer together than we have been in the past.”<sup>13</sup> Lowell reciprocated by inviting Wilson to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa oration at the 1909 Harvard commencement (Eliot had already given him a degree) and to deliver a paper representing the Big Three’s view on the importance of the preprofessional arts curriculum at the next meeting of the AAU.<sup>14</sup> Lowell also approved Princeton’s preceptorial system in his inaugural address and by dispatching a dean to Princeton to study it, and he implicitly endorsed Wilson’s prescription of residential colleges or “quads” to bridge what Lowell deemed “the chasm that has opened between college studies and college life.”<sup>15</sup>

In the spring of 1910, as Wilson’s deteriorating relations with alumni and trustees threatened to end his presidency, Lowell offered to plead Wilson’s cause with anyone who might prevent what he called the looming “catastrophe for Princeton” and “a very grave misfortune for the whole cause of American college education.” When Wilson was nominated for the governorship of New Jersey in September, Lowell wished him every success but rued a Wilson victory because it would remove “one of the

main stays of the progressive college education” movement.<sup>16</sup> It did, but Lowell continued to support his friend in Wilson’s national campaign in 1912 and in his fight for the League of Nations. His close adaptation of Wilson’s blueprint in creating a system of concentration and distribution, tougher academic standards, tutors to guide student reading, and residential “houses” to democratize college life was perhaps his sincerest compliment to Wilson. As he told a meeting of the Association of American Colleges in 1931, Wilson was “the first college president who tried to remedy the real defect of the American college, the fact that the students in the main have not taken their education seriously.”<sup>17</sup>

Arthur Hadley’s friendship with Wilson began about the same time Lowell’s did, in the late 1890s. As one of Yale’s smartest and most versatile professors, Hadley had trained Yale’s debating teams for their classic contests with Harvard and Princeton by analyzing “the various arguments to be developed by the opponents in the light of the personality of the debating coaches on the other team,” in Princeton’s case, the *sui generis* but readable Professor Wilson.<sup>18</sup> When Hadley was inaugurated in 1899, Wilson was one of four Princeton representatives at the ceremonies. Two years later, when Yale celebrated its bicentennial, Wilson—not yet a president himself—was given an honorary Litt.D. degree.<sup>19</sup> Four months later, Wilson and Hadley shared another platform at the installation of Johns Hopkins’ new president, Ira Remsen. Both received honorary degrees: Hadley’s citation spoke of him as “one of the strongest and most brilliant of this strong and brilliant company” of twenty-three honorees; former Hopkins lecturer Wilson was acknowledged as a “writer and speaker of grace and force” whom Hopkins “would gladly enroll . . . as a professor of historical and political science.” The relative future weight of these two friendly rivals must have been obvious to all when “the name most cheered” all day was Wilson’s. Led by a vocal row of former Hopkins students, “the applause continued unbroken for nearly five minutes” and resumed when Wilson, clearly touched, rose and bowed.<sup>20</sup>

When Wilson himself was inaugurated eight months later, Hadley represented Yale near the head of the procession of institutions (ordered by date of founding) and was invited to a special luncheon at Wilson’s home. Although the meal was rushed in order to catch the Columbia football game, it did nothing to diminish Hadley’s regard for the reliable “clearness of vision” of his “old and trusted friend.”<sup>21</sup> As their presidencies overlapped, the first lay executives of their respective institutions seemed to be



rowing in the same direction, though Yale's greater size and complexity prompted Hadley to plan more patiently for "evolution rather than revolution." Without increasing the student population, he, too, sought to raise standards in the undergraduate college, centralize administration, abolish "undemocratic" student societies, increase endowment, buck up faculty quality and rewards, build according to a coherent architectural plan, create academic departments, remodel the curriculum, tame intercollegiate sports, shore up the graduate school and science, and emphasize the university's ultimate purpose to be the liberal education of leaders for "the Service of the Nation."<sup>22</sup>

Not only did the "Three" presidents have similar "progressive" agendas—some of which, in light of national academic trends, might have been seen as "reactionary," a sly description of his plans that Wilson used on occasion—they wrote and spoke a good deal about them to a variety of large audiences. All published frequently, and their talks were reported more so, in their respective alumni magazines.<sup>23</sup> Like Wilson, Hadley and Lowell gave annual baccalaureate sermons, but, unlike Wilson, they delivered enough of them to collect and publish them in book form.<sup>24</sup> They, too, like Wilson, wrote lengthy annual reports, which often addressed academic problems well beyond their own campuses. All were thought sufficiently important to be printed, and indeed were sent to and read by officials at peer and aspiring institutions.<sup>25</sup> Taking office nearly three years before Wilson, Hadley also reached beyond the Yale campus to speak broadly on academic issues to national audiences. During his first eight years in office (comparable to Wilson's whole term), he published 23 articles in mainstream and professional periodicals.<sup>26</sup> Yet, for all his efforts, he merited only 20 mentions in the *New York Times* during his coterminous tenure with Wilson, who drew nearly ten times as many. Perhaps because Lowell did not assume office until Wilson had been in his presidency and the national limelight for seven eventful years, Lowell did no better during his first eight years: he, too, earned only 20 mentions in the *Times*, mostly in reference to sports reform. It may not have helped that he tended to address Harvard constituencies largely through Harvard or New England publications; such messages understandably received more generous coverage in Boston papers.<sup>27</sup> Apparently, after Eliot's long and newsworthy reign, it was assumed that if Harvard spoke, even in local whispers, the nation would listen.<sup>28</sup>

Wilson drew more press coverage and academic attention, not only

because he had more progressive plans for his more conservative institution than either Hadley or Lowell, but also because he was in a bigger hurry to implement them, particularly after suffering a frightening cerebrovascular incident or stroke in 1906, only halfway through what he called his "fight for the restoration of Princeton."<sup>29</sup> When medical specialists deemed his condition so serious that he might have to retire to prevent further damage, he felt the urgency of the academic struggle he was in and the need to push his plans forward before it was too late.<sup>30</sup> The incident also breathed fire into his already winning words, which in turn provided combustible copy for his opponents among the alumni and trustees and hot news for the national press. Wilson's two friendly rivals in New Haven and Cambridge could never compete in the publicity race because he wrote—and spoke—better than both.

Hadley, the Yale- and German-trained authority on the economics of railroads, wrote clear, sensible, quite abstract, and utterly bland prose, which easily fled from memory and elicited a smile only inadvertently. The titles of his three collections of miscellaneous writings—*The Education of the American Citizen*, *The Moral Basis of Democracy*, and *Education and Government*—were as uninspired as most of their contents.

Because of Lowell's long career in the law, his style was as precise, logical, and informed as Hadley's, but it was sprightlier, more idiomatic, and more fluid. Lowell had some of Wilson's flair for memorable phrases, well-chosen illustrations, and witty quotations. Like Wilson, he knew how to reify his abstractions, even if he seldom equaled the passionate Princeton crusader in breathing life into them through appeals to the readers' emotions as well as their intellects.<sup>31</sup> At least he knew how to draw readers to his collected writings with a feisty title, *At War with Academic Traditions in America*, which Wilson might have chosen for his own favorites had he not been preoccupied with running New Jersey and then the nation.

Perhaps the best measure of Wilson's quality as an educational theorist is the surprisingly fresh relevance and durable power of his thought. As he entered the literary lists for the first time as an educator, his imagination, verbal dexterity, and passionate idealism suffused his writing and speeches with a combination of vision and vitality that won over academic recruits and large alumni gatherings with equal ease. Wilson always liked challenges, and taking Princeton to a new level of institutional excellence was as



inspiring as it was daunting. Halfway through writing his inaugural address in July 1902, Wilson admitted to his wife Ellen, with some playfully false modesty, that "I never worked out the argument on liberal studies . . . before, never before having treated myself as a professional 'educator,' and so the matter is not stale but fresh and interesting. I am quite straightening out my ideas!"<sup>32</sup> But he knew that much had to be done to reform Princeton and that it was "impossible yet to plan it wisely all the way through." The best course, he told ally and trustee David B. Jones a month later, was to "make our general purpose distinct to ourselves, and the outline of the means by which we mean to seek its attainment, and then attack the details one at a time." The general outlines he found "forming in [his] mind with a good deal of definiteness and certainty" because, he revealed, "we have so long talked them over in a little circle in Princeton that they are easily compounded out of common counsel."<sup>33</sup>

Wilson was wise to plan carefully and not to rush headlong into grand new plans and policies of his own making. One reason is that he knew, from seventeen years of personal experience, that faculties jealously guarded their academic prerogatives and needed to be major players in any important changes. Another is that his philosophy matured during his eight years in office. A year after he had moved to the governor's office in Trenton, David Jones gently reminded him that "when you were elected to the presidency of Princeton you were somewhat mediaevally inclined in the cause of education," in danger of sounding like a curricular mossback. In 1900 Wilson had admitted as much to his old friend and Hopkins classmate, Frederick Jackson Turner. Expressing his suspicions of the University of Chicago's academic "fads" and undignified "hustling," Wilson confessed that "I am very old fashioned and conservative," something his sesquicentennial remarks on the excesses of science had suggested four years earlier.<sup>34</sup> But Jones also noted that Wilson "very soon saw that in education, as well as in politics, we had passed into another time, and that if one could not be in a conservative sense a progressive, one would have to be a reactionary."<sup>35</sup>

If Wilson's progress was much faster than that of some of his academic constituents, it was largely because he was quicker to recognize that America had "entered upon a new age in the development of [its] universities," and that Princeton needed to change in significant, perhaps unsettling, ways if it wanted not only to stay in the game but to take the lead in liberal academic reform as well.<sup>36</sup> As his tenure at Princeton was coming to an end, he told the Princeton Club of New York, whose nostalgic, club-

conscious members had become some of his most vocal opponents, "The traditions of no American university fit the future development of universities in this country, Princeton not excluded. . . . We must make ourselves, therefore, conscious trustees of aspirations rather than traditions, even though we change Princeton radically and begin an utterly new tradition. . . . For other universities," he informed them, no doubt thinking—and making them think—of Lowell's Harvard and Hadley's Yale, "have seen the light as [Princeton] has seen it and have started in her direction," which he assured them was "a process of integration and growth . . . so far . . . unique in the history of education in this country." "The choice," he said, "is not whether we will form part of the procession but which part . . . the van or the rear." But, he warned, "When you have once taken up the torch of leadership you cannot lay it down without extinguishing it."<sup>37</sup>

Laying it down was the furthest thing from his mind when he took it up in 1902. With eager support from faculty, trustees, and alumni, he had a mandate to overcome Princeton's proud complacency and soon had a coherent plan that would involve them all in his high aspirations for the university. At the outset, he appealed to their various competitive spirits by showing how far Princeton had slipped from the top of the academic pecking order. In his first report to the trustees, and in many faculty meetings and alumni talks thereafter, he minced no words: "There was a time when Harvard, Yale, and Princeton was the list in everyone's mouth when the leading colleges of the country were spoken of; but since the greater colleges were transformed into universities Princeton had fallen out of the list. At least when academics speak; and they must be the ultimate judges. Persons who stand outside academic circles still speak of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton together," he conceded, "but those who are informed know that Princeton has not kept pace with the others in university development, and that while she has lingered, other, newer, institutions, like Columbia, the Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago have pressed in ahead of her." In such a situation, Wilson thought, Princeton had only two possible courses of action: "Either we may withdraw from the university competition"—which he was confident "no true Princeton man would seriously consider for a moment"—"or we must find money enough to make Princeton in fact a great university." The sum required he estimated to be \$12.5 million, more than three times the current endowment.<sup>38</sup>

The smaller half of that awesome amount would simply level the academic playing field and meet the university's moral obligations to the



public who read its catalogue. The Princeton library had too few books; the science labs were too few and under-equipped; classrooms were at a premium; the faculty was too small and underpaid. Its weakest departments—history, economics, and biology—had a total of only 9 faculty; at Harvard and Yale the same departments had 44 and 21 respectively. The larger half of Wilson's request was sought for Princeton's loftier future: to re-endow and reorganize an infant school of electrical engineering and to build from scratch a residential college for the Graduate School, a school of jurisprudence (not a conventional law school for practitioners), and a museum of natural history to anchor the biological sciences.<sup>39</sup>

Yet among the nuts and bolts, beakers and books, on the first list was a line item for "Fifty tutorships at \$45,000 each—\$2,250,000," preceded by a short diagnosis of Princeton's troubled curriculum. The root of the problem was that Princeton, like Harvard, Yale, and most other American universities, had seen "remarkable growth" in the last thirty years, "almost in spite of us," Wilson conceded, "and in ways which sometimes seem independent of our control." This resulted in "miscellaneous enlargement" rather than "systematic development," a multiplication of "uncoordinated" courses and incoherence.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the dominant modes of teaching—lectures and recitations—led to student passivity or boredom, which in turn led to mental laxity, mischief, and an eager search for *extracurricular* engagement.

To Wilson's mind, all this called for "a radical change of method," a shift of emphasis from faculty *teaching* to student *learning*. Students should be expected "to get and to take, not to receive," because he was convinced, from experience and principle, that "the only study that ever does anybody any good is the study that he does for himself, and not the study that the teacher does for him."<sup>41</sup> This kind of learning went on routinely in science labs, but students in the "reading subjects"—philosophy, English, history, politics, economics—were denied the same opportunities for self-discovery and mastery. "University men," Wilson thought, "should be made to get up *subjects*, not lectures, for examination,—and to get them up for themselves." Exams should cover whole subjects, each prepared from "a library of books" rather than lifted from a textbook or a purchased set of lecture notes. Wilson's plan still allowed for drill work in elementary mathematics and foreign languages. However, lectures would have to be rewritten, not to convey more information, but to highlight the contours and significance of broad fields and the absorbing questions they could pose, or to model "the zest and the method of exact enquiry."<sup>42</sup>

To help turn the students into "reading and thinking men," Wilson proposed to add to the faculty 45–50 serious and competent young scholars as "tutors," "superintendents," "coaches," and "companions" of the juniors' and seniors' reading. In weekly meetings in their offices or homes with small groups of students, the tutors would suggest (not mandate) and discuss supplementary course reading, oral reports, and essay topics, but they would not quiz or examine, leaving those tasks to the course lecturers. The tutors would serve for no more than five years, to preserve freshness and to encourage their advancement up the professorial ladder. Securing this cadre of tutors was, he was certain, "our central and immediate need." He was also willing to wager that fifty of them "would do more to make educated men out of our students than fifty full professors . . . who did nothing but lecture to large classes."<sup>43</sup>

It was a bet that paid off handsomely for Princeton. With funds raised largely by a Committee of Fifty wealthy trustees and alumni, Wilson was able to hire forty-five preceptors in 1905 alone. (The new name *preceptors* came from similar coaches at the Inns of Court in London and was chosen to avoid any association with the hired tutors in American cram schools.)<sup>44</sup> This influx of talent had several newsworthy results. Thanks to Wilson's persuasive eloquence and charisma, it deprived twenty-five other institutions of thirty-seven of their most promising young scholars. Partly by dropping the student-faculty ratio from 12:1 to 7:1, it promoted an unusual degree of intellectual closeness between teachers and taught. This, in turn, led to a requickening of academic excitement that spilled over after class, even in table talk in the studiously unacademic eating clubs.<sup>45</sup> It also garnered Princeton publicity that money alone could not buy. In North America, an eyewitness recalled, "probably nothing since the founding of Johns Hopkins University had attracted such far and wide attention to things purely educational." Abroad, favorable media coverage reached as far as Africa and the Middle East. Eventually, the plan was borrowed by other colleges and universities. But, as President Hadley of Yale complained good-naturedly, none could do so immediately because "Princeton had already got all the best preceptors in the country."<sup>46</sup>

The advent of the unsystematic preceptorial system also brought Princeton longer-range rewards. As late as 1919, it was thought by many to have given Princeton its "greatest advantage over every other college in America."<sup>47</sup> It did so less because of its pedagogical novelty and bold common sense, as pronounced as those were, than because it brought to the faculty a large number of outstanding scholar-teachers whose quick promotion to



full professorial status moved Princeton up several notches in academic reputation both during and long after Wilson's presidency.<sup>48</sup> "It was [the quality of] these new men who revolutionized Princeton," a distinguished Harvard historian and former preceptor argued in 1940, rather than the "machinery" of the system itself.<sup>49</sup> As even its presidential architect admitted after five years, the system had "accomplished no revolution in human nature" and left several problems to be solved.<sup>50</sup>

Before Wilson could augment the faculty by a third, he knew he had to reorganize it and to modernize the curriculum. These fundamental and quiet tasks were prerequisites for Princeton's more newsworthy reform efforts. That he accomplished both in less than two years, the first after a deft handling of the board of trustees, the second through full and "common counsel" with the faculty, contrasts with his later (post-stroke) reputation for stubbornness, impatience, and autocracy.

Before Wilson's advent, Princeton faculty members dealt directly with President Francis Landey Patton ("King Log"), a quick thinker and brilliant preacher but a notoriously poor administrator. His inefficient, laissez-faire style of leadership led to professorial laxity, license, and a noticeable accumulation of "deadwood" who produced neither scholarship nor effective teaching. After buying Patton out of office in June 1902, the trustees gave Wilson broad powers to whip the faculty into competitive shape. In October they "fully authorized" him to reorganize the faculty by creating "such vacancies . . . as he may deem for the best interest of the University."<sup>51</sup> This unpublicized power enabled Wilson in the next few years to fire several instructors and three full professors, all for inadequacies in the classroom rather than in the quality or quantity of their scholarship. These actions put teeth in Wilson's general elevation of standards for students and faculty alike. Both groups quickly noticed that the president had "put screws" to the faculty and wanted them to "get to work to improve their courses." A senior song about one of the eventual casualties intoned: "He had to make his courses hard / Or he couldn't play in Woodrow's yard."<sup>52</sup>

Wilson was not only given unprecedented authority by the board over faculty firing—he managed to seize it for faculty hiring. His predecessors, McCosh and Patton, had always deferred to the board's powerful curriculum committee, chaired by a prerogative-minded conservative minister, by suggesting three or four candidates and letting the trustees

choose. Wilson kept only the husk of tradition by choosing his own professors, preceptors and senior stars alike, and presenting them to the board for rubber-stamping. Even the committee chair had to acquiesce when Wilson's appointments put Princeton conspicuously on the academic map and favorably in national headlines.<sup>53</sup>

Wilson's next move, in the fall of 1903, was to organize the 108 faculty from the hitherto separate "Academic Department" and the School of Science into eleven departments and to appoint chairmen or "heads" of each. The departments were sorted into four divisions, one of which comprised Mathematics and Science. The foundation of departments by subject matter or branches of study made possible the simultaneous creation of upper-class concentrations or majors.<sup>54</sup> In 1905, the departments were also given primary responsibility for filling assigned quotas of preceptors. After combing the country for candidates, the departments brought them to campus for vetting and a persuasive conversation with the president. Even in his own department, History, Politics, and Economics, Wilson let his chairmen take the lead in choosing candidates and letting colleagues go.<sup>55</sup>

The faculty Wilson sought to fashion had three distinguishing features. The first was its concentration on the "pure" liberal arts and sciences: mere mechanics and professional practitioners need not apply. As a true believer in the undergraduate college as the "very heart" of the "true" American university, Wilson argued at the beginning and at the end of his Princeton career that preprofessional specialization and "empiric" narrowness had no place in elite universities, certainly not in his. If they must have professional schools, they should be newly modeled to "exemplify the liberal spirit of learning" and admit no one who lacked a liberal education.<sup>56</sup>

Wilson's second requirement was that all faculty would be active scholars as well as keen and engaging teachers. As he reminded the audience at his inauguration, "A true university is a place of research as well as for instruction. It cannot keep alive without research." "The undergraduate," he believed, no less than the graduate student, "should have scholars for teachers." Wilson's old friend and new dean of the faculty, mathematician Henry Fine, was able to persuade him that even "clubbable" (socially winning and personable) preceptors should be proven scholars, capable—sooner than later—of moving into full professorships.<sup>57</sup>

The third feature of the new Wilsonian faculty is that it was a single teaching force, not bisected, as in many large universities, into separate graduate and undergraduate faculties. "We none of us believe," he said of



his faculty, "that the graduate and the undergraduate work might be divided." It never was. By 1910, "a very large proportion of the courses offered to graduate students" were taught by the preceptors, just as every senior scholar taught his share of undergraduate courses.<sup>58</sup>

With his faculty reconfigured, Wilson moved quickly to reduce the chaos in the Patton curriculum. Calls and plans for reform had been made by faculty committees since the late 1890s, but Patton's patented foot-dragging stymied them all. In the fall of 1903, however, as the departments were being formed, Wilson as chair began to meet weekly with a new standing Committee on the Course of Study to revise and systematize the curriculum for the university of the new century. Knowing that "a wise President carries his Faculty with him in every educational reform," Wilson was careful to consult the committee on every detail and principle. He was equally solicitous of the whole faculty, which took only four nights of special meetings to pass the complex proposal unanimously the following April. The result was a resounding success. "We began a group of individuals," Wilson confessed, "and ended a *body* in common counsel."<sup>59</sup>

That slow, deliberate process had three important results. First, it drew the university together as an "organism" more effectively than anything else Wilson had ever seen. Second, the new curriculum so conceived, particularly after the preceptorial system was added, had a "profound influence" throughout the American academic world. Not only was it one of the earliest "reconstructions" of academic life; the Princeton faculty was regarded as the symbolic leader in adopting "definite and workable ideas" for reform in enviable concert as well. Other universities hailed its leadership, said Wilson, "not because there was anything strictly original in the ideas we adopted," but because Princeton's deliberative process and distinctive curricular product were "indispensable [models] for them all."<sup>60</sup>

The third result was that it taught Wilson a lifelong lesson in leadership: the need to confer with interested parties before deciding matters of importance, because the results are almost always improved. The day after passage of the new curricular plan, Wilson told his wife, "It is not, as it stands now, exactly the scheme I at the outset proposed, but it is much better." Eleven years later, while presiding over a much larger institution, he explained why. In an address to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, U.S. President Wilson described how the curriculum committee's fourteen members had entered their deliberations all painted for war, as had its chairman, but after six months they emerged with a report "no one of us

had conceived or foreseen, but with which we were all absolutely satisfied. There was not a man who had not learned in that committee more than he had ever known before about the subject, and who had not willingly revised his prepossessions; who was not proud to be a participant in a genuine piece of common counsel."<sup>61</sup>

The new curriculum was built on two premises. One was that the free elective system made fashionable by Harvard led to haphazard results because the student's "own inexperienced judgment is put in charge of his university training, and he is more apt to follow his whim than his judgment." Too often he avoids studies that are unfamiliar or difficult and relies too much on the advice and hearsay of fellow tyros.<sup>62</sup> The second premise followed from the first: "The choice that we [the faculty] make," said Wilson, "must be the chief choice, the choice the pupil makes the subordinate choice." Since even four years is too short, "we who have studied the geography of learning . . . must instruct him how in a brief space he may see most of the world, and he must choose only which one of several tours that we may map out"—which major—"he will take. . . . We must supply the synthesis and must see to it that, whatever group of studies the student selects, it shall at least represent the round whole, contain all the elements of modern knowledge, and be itself a complete circle of *general* subjects."<sup>63</sup> As Wilson told a critic of the new plan, "Conservative, but not illiberal, Princeton has always stood for system as against miscellany in studies." Better yet, he wrote, after sleeping on it, Princeton sought "systematic liberalization."<sup>64</sup>

The curriculum Wilson inherited was in need of "system" more than "liberalization" (by which Wilson meant an emphasis on the liberal arts and sciences). The main problem was in the upper-class years. In both years, the faculty allowed too many electives, which were usually unrelated, too short (two hours), superficial, too passive (lectures and cramming), and too easy. This approach led to widespread demoralization among the students and dissatisfaction among the faculty. On three occasions, Patton-era faculty committees tried to change the status quo, only to be rebuffed by King Log's stonewalling. But many of their recommendations fed the successful deliberations of Wilson's committee in 1903–1904.<sup>65</sup> Among them were proposals to reduce the normal course load from seven to five (four for special senior honors students), standardize courses to three credit hours, promote more small-group discussions, and add general courses in philosophy and science to the junior-year requirements.<sup>66</sup>



But Wilson's reforms went much further, without giving up Princeton's longstanding "preference for classical culture." To preserve the B.A. degree for those who could read Greek for admission and more of it for graduation, Princeton followed many other colleges and universities in creating a bachelor of letters (Litt.B.) degree for those who could demonstrate only Latin and French or German proficiency. The existing bachelor of science (B.S.) degree, which also did not require Greek, was reserved for students of math, science, and engineering, no longer for underprepared humanists. In a signal change from the recent past, the sciences were regarded as "indispensable parts of a liberal training" and accorded equal weight to the arts in electives and to Greek, the *ne plus ultra*, in freshman and sophomore requirements.<sup>67</sup> To equalize course rigor, candidates for all degrees were taught, and held to the same raised standards, by the same instructors.<sup>68</sup>

Depending on the two courses they elected in their sophomore year, students chose a departmental major for their last two years.<sup>69</sup> Juniors took all of the required (usually two-year-long) courses in the major subject, often another in a "cognate" subject within the same division, and a fourth outside it; the fifth course was elective, though often highly advised. Seniors took three courses from a narrow range in their major, as well as two electives. Thus, the principle of election was maintained but mostly "of substantial *subjects*, not innumerable *courses*."<sup>70</sup> Wilson's favorite word to characterize this new system of "assisted election" was *elastic*: it had a well-defined shape, but also some "give" to suit the student's talents, predilections, and career goals.<sup>71</sup> He summed it up this way: "The freshman is to be given a preliminary schooling in university methods of thorough study; the sophomore to be put in the way of getting a view of his studies which will broaden to modern horizons; the junior to be given choice of his chief field of study without discrimination between subjects new and old; the senior to be accorded the rights of those who know at last where they stand in the domain of knowledge and wish to get a firm, final grip upon a few things."<sup>72</sup> The combination of required and elective, breadth and depth, gave Princeton's curriculum a look both modern for its time and surprisingly contemporary for ours.

Once the mechanics of faculty and curricular reorganization and of the preceptorial system were in place, Wilson could turn more systematically to the general, animating *principles* of his vision for Princeton's future. The

more funds he asked of the alumni and the more speeches he was therefore obliged to give, the more eloquent and philosophical he could and needed to be to sell his particular dream for the university.<sup>73</sup> When he ran into opposition, he met it head-on and refined his arguments, in the process reaching out to wider, more public, audiences for support. As his arguments gained clarity from experience in changing circumstances and from further thought, he could better contextualize his earlier goals and efforts, gaining perspective both for contemporaries and for those of us who follow a century later.

At a time when universities increasingly looked and acted alike, Wilson argued that "the deadliest thing that could happen" would be for them to run to a standard model and "follow the same methods." "Imitation and mere reproduction" deprive institutions of their individuality and force. "Richness of power, abundance of strength," on the other hand, "come by variety, in the field of education as in every other field of endeavor."<sup>74</sup> For its part, Princeton never wanted to resemble any other university. To a parent who criticized some aspect of the education his son was getting at Princeton by pointing to a rival institution's methods, Wilson replied that "Princeton did not follow in the footsteps of any university, but beat her own trail as she saw fit." Even in acknowledging an honorary degree from Harvard in 1907, Wilson felt compelled to tell his hosts that "Princeton is not like Harvard, and she does not wish to be. Neither does she wish Harvard to be like Princeton."<sup>75</sup>

That independence earned Princeton national notice and renown. In a report to the trustees in June 1907, at the start of his campaign to install four-year residential colleges, Wilson boasted that "Princeton is the only university in the country which has found itself, which has formulated a clear ideal and deliberately set about the synthesis of plan necessary to realize it." Two years later, in a series of articles on fourteen "Great American Universities," educator-journalist Edwin Slosson backed Wilson's boast. No other universities, he wrote, could be compared with Princeton for "novelty and rapidity of transformation." In the face of widespread "uniformity and conventionality," "Princeton is steering a pretty straight course toward a port of its own choice, regardless of wind and current, perhaps even heading a trifle upstream." Rather than wild and woolly experimentation, however, "Princeton has shown its originality chiefly in going ahead and doing what others have always said ought to be done," particularly in repairing "the loss of personal relationship between instructor and stu-



dent.”<sup>76</sup> In sum, Wilson sought to realize Princeton’s potential to become “the best and most distinguished institution *of its kind* in the world.”<sup>77</sup>

Just what special kind of university that was Wilson worked hard to define during his eight years in office. For the new president, it was axiomatic that Princeton was founded and must remain “for the *Nation’s* Service,” not for selfish social or even solely scholastic reasons. “Princeton,” he told the alumni club of Chicago, “is no longer a thing for Princeton men to please themselves with. Princeton is a thing with which Princeton men must satisfy the country.” The service of *all* institutions of learning, he insisted, is “not private but public.” As the nation’s affairs “grow more and more complex and its interests begin to touch the ends of the earth,” it needs “efficient and enlightened men. The universities of the country must take part in supplying them.”<sup>78</sup> “My ambition,” Wilson told Andrew Carnegie at the end of his first semester in office, “is to make our men reading and thinking men and to keep their thoughts upon real things, so that the University may be directly serviceable to the nation. The Scots blood that is in me makes me wish to renew the [public-service] traditions of [colonial president] John Witherspoon’s day in the old place.”<sup>79</sup>

By “directly serviceable” Wilson did not mean that Princeton should produce bookish hewers of wood and drawers of water. “The college is not for the majority who carry forward the common labour of the world, nor even for those who work at the skilled handicrafts.” It is for the minority, he assured his inaugural audience, “who plan, who conceive, who superintend, who mediate between group and group and must see the wide stage as a whole.” It was, in short, to produce leaders, “pilots” for “the ship of State.” “Democratic nations must be served in this wise no less than those whose leaders are chosen by birth and privilege; and the college is no less democratic because it is for those who play a special part.”<sup>80</sup>

A democratic elite, however, must be chosen “not by birth, but by ambition, by opportunity, by the compulsion of gifts of initiative.” “Theoretically,” Wilson admitted, “the minority that frequents the halls of the university is a self-chosen minority, chosen by reason of ambition” and cultivated talent.<sup>81</sup> For “the mind is a radical democrat,” he famously argued, and “learning knows no differences of social caste or privilege. Genius comes into what family it pleases, and laughs at the orders of society, takes delight in humble origins, and yet will appear in palaces if it please.” It was a major function of universities, therefore, “to afford open, unclogged channels for the rising of the obscure powers of a nation into observation

and supremacy.”<sup>82</sup> This meant that Princeton and other elite universities should diversify their student bodies to represent the whole nation. Although Wilson still suffered from racial and gender astigmatism, he argued that “the university should draw its students from all over the nation.”<sup>83</sup> The more regions of the country you have represented, the safer an instrument for the service of the country is the university.” Concerned about the fashionable influx of “boys from families of wealth,” he was also convinced by Dean Fine that Princeton should create more opportunities for harder working, more ambitious middle-class sons, “to keep the tone of the place healthy and democratic.”<sup>84</sup> From his own undergraduate days in the late 1870s, Wilson had held that “the great thing about our universities”—and Princeton in particular—was “their democracy. The only difference in them,” he wanted to believe, despite growing evidence to the contrary, “is in achievement . . . intellectual, athletic, or social.”<sup>85</sup>

To prepare their students for the expanding and complex new world in which they were expected to play leading roles, Wilson acknowledged that Princeton and its elite peers had a seemingly contradictory task. In giving students a rich liberal education in the arts and sciences, the university had to prepare them for a life of action and service in the noisy “real world,” but optimally in a quiet, cloistered setting. “What Is a College For?” Wilson asked his audiences time and again. His answers, though variously expressed, were consistent.

“The thing that the university must do is to make men acquainted with the world intellectually, imaginatively.” It should give them “the first conspectus of the mind,” their intellectual orientation for the future. “Every considerable undertaking,” every profession, “has come to be based on knowledge, on thoughtfulness, on the masterful handling of men and facts.” The university, therefore, “must stand in the midst, where the roads of thought and knowledge interlace and cross, and, building upon some coign of vantage, command them all.”<sup>86</sup> Even the scholar in his ivory tower “should throw his windows open to the four quarters of the world.” Because the university is “a world in miniature,” “more than half way to that thing which we call The World,” only a liberal education can introduce students to the ongoing “mapping of the world of knowledge.”<sup>87</sup> Not how-to or preprofessional courses, but only the pure liberal arts and sciences are “the sources whence we shall know the world in which we live,—know it in its long measurement, in its past life as well as its present,—hear its voices of passion and perceive its visions of itself.”<sup>88</sup>



Wilson's conception of higher education was, he said, "broad enough to embrace the whole field of thought, the whole record of experience." But he emphasized that it required temporary "withdrawal from the main motives of the world's material endeavor." It was part of what he called intellectual "statesmanship" that "a certain seclusion of mind" should ideally "precede the struggle of life, . . . when no particular skill is sought, no definite occupation studied, no single aim or ambition dwelt upon, but only a general preliminary orientation of the mind." It is, he said, "a process by which the young mind is . . . laid alongside the mind of the world, as nearly as may be, and enabled to receive its strength from the nourishing mother of us all, as Ant[a]jeus received his strength from contact with the round earth."<sup>89</sup>

For all its philosophical portability, Wilson's cloister had a very Princeton look and feel. He obviously sought to make general virtues of local realities. First, he thought the liberal university was best when privately financed. A private university like Princeton had the advantage over a state institution because it is able to preserve its "particular ideals" and characteristics from generation to generation, its goal is not "the utilitarian object loved of the tax-payer," and it is not obliged to seek "the changing favor of politicians and of the uninformed" who have a say in the running of public universities.<sup>90</sup> Second, as he told a somewhat startled, Columbia-heavy audience at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1902, a quiet rural setting was preferable to a noisy city one. "The gist of the university," Wilson argued, "is that it should be a community with all the wonderful advantages that that word conveys." Unless the students live and study together, they cannot get "the atmospheric advantage of the community," nor enjoy unscheduled social and intellectual contact with the faculty. If after class they "dive out into the street of a great city and become drifting and separate integral parts of urban life, they are not getting the benefit of a university. They are simply going to a day school." "You cannot go to college on a street car," he told a more sympathetic alumni audience three months later, "and know what college means." Because he believed that "the real effects of a university are wrought between the hours of 6 p.m. and 9 a.m.," he was convinced that the "compact and homogeneous" residential college was "the only proper institution."<sup>91</sup>

Another Princeton feature—its relatively small size—might have concerned Wilson had he wished Princeton to compete with the large public

and private members of the AAU or to offer its students a plethora of specialized rather than carefully chosen general courses in the liberal arts and sciences. But he did not. With the elective system cut down to size, the curriculum did not need to map every nook and cranny of knowledge. Nor was the Princeton Graduate School so large that advanced offerings needed to engorge the course catalogue. Again, Wilson sought to capitalize on Princeton reality by telling the alumni that "we can afford to be one of the lesser universities in number if we are one of the foremost in power and quality. With good quality," he assured them, "we can be perfectly indifferent in reference to quantity." In fact, he told the Princeton Club of Philadelphia, "The *danger* to Princeton is the danger of a big, numerically big, university" because it would preclude the "close and personal contact" between teachers and learners, which was "the greatest good in education."<sup>92</sup>

When Wilson spoke of qualitative "power" as the proper goal for Princeton, he was uttering no presidential bromide. Throughout his tenure, he gave it specific meaning, which caused many alumni brows to furrow and many other university leaders to rethink their institutional objectives. In the chapel exercises to open his first academic year in office, he emphasized the new direction Princeton was about to take. He told the assembled faculty and especially students that "we are men in the midst of a world of men. We have put off short clothes, and the mere life of play. We are in the midst of a strenuous age" and "the world demands of us expert advice or nothing. Scholarship, he said—broad[,] luminous, thorough[,] catholic, masterful scholarship—is our chief duty and our chief glory." In the spring of 1905 he told a large gathering of western Pennsylvania alumni, to whom he was appealing for funds, that "the mere expenditure of money out of hand does not make a great university." Unlike some of the newer "money colleges," such as Chicago and Stanford, Princeton would gain notice "by genius and genius alone." On both occasions he made it clear that "scholarship" and "genius" applied equally to the faculty and the students.<sup>93</sup>

If there was any doubt on that score, he put it firmly to rest well before he left the presidency. After describing, to frequent applause, the campus awakening brought about by the preceptorial system and the new curriculum, Wilson told a meeting of the western alumni in 1906 that "the undergraduates have welcomed the change," hinting that their predecessors should as well. Asserting that scholarship or "education, in a country like ours, is a branch of statesmanship," he won the crowd by saying that he



was “covetous for Princeton of all the glory that there is.” But he wanted them to realize that “the chief glory of a university is always intellectual glory.”<sup>94</sup>

By the spring of 1908, however, Wilson had clearly recognized that the new intellectual tone at Princeton was facing resistance from some familiar quarters. For the middle- and upper-class matriculants who increasingly sought college for the enjoyable life there and not the studies, the extra-curriculum stood much taller than either the faculty or the library. For many eastern urban alumni, Wilson’s plans to subsume the eating clubs in a residential college system threatened their beloved recruiting and weekend stomping grounds and the anti-intellectualism they perpetuated. And surrounding the Princeton contest was the larger competition and confusion among university leaders and constituencies over the primary goals of America’s rapidly evolving universities: discipline and piety (the residue of nineteenth-century, often church-related, colleges), research (the specialized province of faculty belonging to the new academic disciplines), utility or public service (the mandate of many state institutions), and liberal culture (the cause of the eastern Big Three).<sup>95</sup>

Wilson sidestepped that larger context in May 1908, when he took his campaign back to the western alumni meeting in Pittsburgh and to the New England alumni in Boston. For the sake of argument, he reduced his contest to two ideals of university life, one dominant, the other “struggling for recognition.” The prevailing ideal, he said, is that a university is “a mode of life, . . . a place where young men go to get together in order to *standardize* themselves in respect to certain conceptions of life and conduct.” Unfortunately, the “intellectual processes of *individualization*” are incidental to the “college life.” The average undergraduate studies and passes exams only “to retain his connection with a delightful [way] of life.” The currently more modest ideal, but one that Wilson was confident was on the rise, was that “universities exist first, last[,], and at every turn for intellectual objects.” This he regarded as “the utter commonplace of the history of education,” but he was surprised that men congratulated him for his courage in saying it.<sup>96</sup>

Perhaps he was remembering his reception in March when he took his message to Hadley’s Yale. There he had expressed to a receptive audience at the annual Phi Beta Kappa dinner his incredulity that “learning is on the defensive, . . . actually on the defensive, among college men.” “Is it not time we reminded the college men of this country,” he asked rhetorically, “that

they have no right to any distinctive place in any [academic] community, unless they can show it by intellectual achievement? that if a university is a place for distinction at all it must be distinguished by the conquests of the mind?” As for himself, he vowed, that was his “motto,” he had “entered the field to fight for that thesis,” and “for that thesis only [did he] care to fight.” He went so far as to beard the Bulldog alumni in their dens (his remarks were published the following week in the Yale alumni magazine) by slyly suggesting, as he had before at Princeton, that the university award its best scholars varsity letters to recognize their major contributions to Yale. Knowing the brouhaha his suggestion would raise, he admitted that young men did need extracurricular diversions, including sports, to relieve tension and reward hard work. But his conclusion was unabated: “The object of a university is intellect; as a university its only object is intellect.”<sup>97</sup>

In throwing his full weight behind intellectual accomplishment as the right goal for Princeton, Wilson discussed openly what other goals he was not interested in pursuing. The most popular was character-building, the chief selling point of Princeton’s private feeder schools and most nineteenth-century colleges, even many that evolved into more complex universities. In his first speech to the influential New York alumni in December 1902, he must have elicited some audible harrumphing by telling the graduates of those kinds of schools that “we hear a great deal of sentimental cant nowadays about cultivating our characters. God forbid,” he exclaimed, “that any man should spend his days thinking about his own character. . . . The minute you set yourselves to produce [characters] you make prigs of yourselves and render yourselves useless.” “Nothing will give Princeton reputation except the achievements of men whom she creates.” And character, he told them, is a “by-product,” which comes, he later reminded his Yale audience, “whether you will or not, as a consequence of a life devoted to the nearest duty.” In a university, that meant that “study is the object and character the result.”<sup>98</sup>

Predictably, Wilson’s notion of study was also a departure from that of his predecessors. As soon as his presidential tenure began, he heard from alumni that they were glad they had attended Princeton before his academic reforms took hold. It was what he said about the balance between work and play that gave them pause. In December 1902, he told the New York alumni that he was “not going to propose that we compel the undergraduates to work all the time”—the U.S. Constitution, he quipped, “guarantees to a man a certain amount of loafing.” But he did intend to try to



make them “*want* to work all the time,” by showing that all subjects were “intrinsically interesting” if the students approached them from the inside, through their own inquiries and investigations.<sup>99</sup> After Princeton’s curricular reforms and the arrival of the preceptors, the president’s emphasis on serious study became only more frequent and hardnosed.

Two days after Christmas in 1907, Wilson put Indiana schoolteachers on notice that testimonials to good character, piety, and clean living would no longer secure their graduates a place in Princeton’s freshman class, as they once did. Even the angel Gabriel, the president said, would not be admitted unless he passed the entrance exams. “Two or three years ago,” Wilson said, “we stopped [mollycoddling applicants and students] at Princeton, and the consequence is every graduate I meet of recent years thanks his stars he graduated before that began. In a university where life smiles and is gracious, we are compelling men to shut themselves up in a room and actually study. The beauty of it,” he assured the teachers, “is that when a boy once tries it he likes it” because he discovers “the zest of using his mind.” The following year Wilson continued his re-education of the secondary schools with a talk at the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut, one of Princeton’s (and Yale’s) major feeders. He warned straightaway that at Princeton, at least, the long reign of “college life,” which resembled the activities of “a very superior country club,” was over. “This is not a world of play,” he announced; “it is a world of work, and if you don’t learn how to work in college, you have learned nothing, absolutely nothing serviceable to the world.”<sup>100</sup>

In November 1909, Wilson took his tough new message to the public and the academy in two national magazines. Assuming that any university or college worth its salt had a curriculum like Princeton’s, ordered around a few fundamental requirements, “assisted election,” and culminating majors in a variety of disciplines, he argued that “the *common* discipline should come from very hard work.” “The spirit of work should pervade the place—honest, diligent, painstaking work. Otherwise,” he counseled, “it would certainly be no proper place of preparation for the strenuous, exacting life of America in our day.”<sup>101</sup> Extracurricular activities, no matter how absorbing or businesslike, could not give students that vital preparation. They need a “severer . . . discipline” to fit them for “the contests and achievements of an age whose every task is conditioned upon . . . some substantial knowledge, some special insight, some trained capacity, some penetration which comes from study, not from natural readiness or mere

practical experience.” College “must release and quicken as many faculties of the mind as possible,” but it must also put them to “the test of systematic labor. Work, definite, exacting, long continued, but not,” he emphasized, “narrow or petty or merely rule of thumb, must be its law of life for those who would pass its gates and go out with its authentication.”<sup>102</sup>

Just as Wilson wanted no make-work in the university, so he had no tolerance for “mere pedantry” in the advanced scholarship of graduate students and faculty nor unrealistic expectations for what undergraduates could accomplish. He wanted all university scholarship to be “related to the national life,” directly or indirectly. “The spirit of the scholar,” therefore, could not be “a spirit of pedantry,” by which he meant “knowledge divorced from life, . . . knowledge so closeted, so desecrated, so stripped of the significance of life, that it is a thing apart and not connected with the vital processes in the world about us.” He also realized early in his Princeton career that “no undergraduate can be made a scholar in four years.” “In the graduate school,” he said, “we have to make scholars.” Even that was only an apprenticeship for those marked by “some largesse of Providence” in their makeup, because “the process of scholarship, so far as the real scholar is concerned, is an unending process.”<sup>103</sup> “It takes a lifetime to be a scholar,” he told the Hotchkiss students, “and most men do not manage it by the time their funeral occurs.”<sup>104</sup>

If it was not possible for the university to give the undergraduate the true scholar’s supply of “exact knowledge,” it was possible—and desirable—to give him “the *spirit* of learning,” the spirit that animates the scholar. In explicating what he called his whole “academic creed” in July 1909, Wilson told the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa chapter that the object of a liberal education was “not learning” per se but “discipline and enlightenment of the mind.” The spirit of learning, he said, is “citizenship of the world of knowledge, but not ownership of it. Scholars are the owners of its varied plots, in severalty.”<sup>105</sup>

Wilson characterized that spirit in slightly different ways over the course of his presidency. In his inaugural address, he spoke of the inculcation of a spirit that “is neither superficial nor pedantic, which values life more than it values the mere acquisitions of the mind.” A year later in Pittsburgh, he described for the research-oriented Carnegie Institute the stimulation of the average undergraduate to “the best uses of his mind” and the imparting to him “methods of thought, impulses of investigation, habits of candid inquiry, and a knowledge of the sources of information which will make



him a real master of the information which subsequent observation, reading[,] and experience will bring him."<sup>106</sup>

By the time he spoke at Harvard, his definition had been honed still further. "It consists," the visitor said, "in the power to distinguish good reasoning from bad" and to "digest and interpret evidence, in a habit of catholic observation and a preference for the non-partisan point of view, in an addiction to clear and logical processes of thought and yet an instinctive desire to interpret rather than to stick in the letter of the reasoning, in a taste for knowledge and a deep respect for the integrity of the human mind."<sup>107</sup> Although Wilson saw it as an educational "commonplace," his nuanced and implicit critique of the increasing number of universities that promoted faculty research as their primary objective, at the expense of undergraduate education, was declared by the Boston press "a new idea on the *raison d'être* of the university."<sup>108</sup> In the context of contemporary university developments, it was indeed a new idea and one of Wilson's most resonant.

Imparting the spirit of learning, Wilson insisted, was "not a method but a process," which resulted when "minds meet minds," both in and after classes. Moreover, it "requires time" and cannot be rushed.<sup>109</sup> To Wilson's way of thinking, it certainly took all four years, not the two or three being argued for by rivals such as Presidents Eliot of Harvard and Butler of Columbia. Eliot thought that many of his students were entering with advanced standing and could easily graduate in three years. Butler wanted to speed up the production of his many professional schools by taking students after only two years of college work and sending them out to do the world's work after a total of four years. Others argued that contemporary sophomores were as well educated as their grandfathers had been at graduation. Wilson thought all of these notions ill-conceived and based on negligible knowledge of sophomores "in the flesh." What the short-course advocates missed, he charged, was that "our sophomore is at the age of twenty no more mature than the sophomore of that previous generation was at the age of seventeen or eighteen. The sap of manhood is rising in him," quipped the president who still taught them, "but it has not yet reached his head. It is not what a man is studying that makes him a sophomore or a senior: it is the stage the college process has reached in him. A college, the American college, is not a body of studies," he reiterated. "It is a process of development. It takes, if our observation can be trusted, at least four years for the completion of that process, and all four of

those years must be college years. They cannot be school years: they cannot be combined with school years. . . . The environment is of the essence of the whole effect."<sup>110</sup>

Wilson's belief in the sovereign effect of environment upon the educational process led in 1907 to his most daring reform of Princeton: the "social coordination" of the university. His intent, he was quick to emphasize, was not "social" per se but only the culminating, "indispensable part" of the ongoing "reorganization and revitalization of the University as an academic body, whose objects are . . . intellectual."<sup>111</sup> Although he acknowledged its "radical" character, he noted that it had been "taking form in my mind for many years," apparently since his inauguration, and was "the fruit of very mature consideration."<sup>112</sup> After the success of the preceptorial system and the planning of an impressive residential college to anchor the Graduate School, he was confident in June, when he made his initial presentation to the board, that the time was right to consolidate Princeton's national lead in university reform. In words whose cruel irony would soon emerge with defeat, he believed "there never was a time when such processes could be undertaken with less fear of serious friction or factious opposition." The "recent innovations . . . have put the whole university body in a wholesome humour of reform and have made all well-considered changes, devised and executed by frank common counsel, much easier of accomplishment." The undergraduates in particular, he asserted, were "ready to accept any thoroughgoing reform." Moreover, he warned, "other universities are likely to try this method of reintegration, but none has such materials for it or such bases of cooperative enthusiasm as we have."<sup>113</sup>

Wilson's overconfidence and perhaps a sense of urgency attributable to his recent stroke led him to miscalculate the timing of his presentation of the quad plan. He correctly submitted the plan to the board first, but at the end of the academic year. This allowed rumor to circulate uncontested all summer while he was in England. When classes resumed in September, he asked the assembled faculty for its opinion, without inviting their "common counsel"—he had, as usual, consulted a small circle of trusted friends and allies—or allowing a lengthy "investigation." Without the faculty's approval, Wilson thought he could not "go before the students and alumni in advocacy and explanation of his idea." After one of the greatest speeches of his life, the faculty did stand, cheer, and applaud its educational prem-



ises, but by then it was too late. The alumni, particularly the younger classes in the eastern cities that had belonged to the eating clubs, had formed such vocal opposition that, within a fortnight, even the trustees rescinded their approval of the plan when they saw its implications for the clubs.<sup>114</sup>

Despite his tactical mistake, Wilson's diagnosis of Princeton's socio-academic ailment was careful and astute. Many other college and university leaders accepted his well-publicized analyses of Princeton's problems as accurate pictures of their own, even if they did not share all of his premises or go as far in holding intellectual power as their institution's primary goal. His first assumption was that a university was a *community*, and a community was, in its social essence, a single *organism* whose constituent parts acted, or were supposed to act, metaphorically if not biologically, as one. Despite his own slim background in science, *organic* was his favorite adjective in discussing "our close-knit little University world." A second premise, which lay at the heart of the preceptorial plan, was that teaching was most effective in small groups. As even Wilson, a hugely popular undergraduate lecturer, admitted, "almost universal experience" showed that a teacher gets his best results by "direct, personal, intimate" interaction with his students, "not as a class but as individuals."<sup>115</sup> "Men must meet face to face to kindle each other." In close, companionable settings, in class or out, teachers "do not seem pedagogues but friends" and "can by the gentle *infection* of friendliness make thought a general *contagion*." Teaching of this kind, Wilson concluded, now required as its "social and indispensable environment a new social coördination."<sup>116</sup>

Perhaps Princeton's most serious problem calling for solution before it could claim to be a seriously intellectual place was that the *extracurriculum* needed to be tamed and subordinated to study. By the closing years of his presidency, Wilson famously said, "The peculiarity of our American universities . . . is that the sideshows have swallowed up the circus." College life organized by the students "has come to absorb [their] whole interest and attention and energy," and "those [faculty] who perform in the main tent must often whistle for their audiences."<sup>117</sup> This "immoderate addiction" to college life "has thrust the truest, deepest, most important objects of college work and association into the background." The undergraduates' outside interests are not only "irrelevant to study," but most are "subtly antagonistic to it" as well.<sup>118</sup> The problem was more serious, Wilson thought, because the extracurriculum had seduced not only the growing number of upwardly mobile students seeking "manliness," social contacts, and "the

standards of true sportsmen." It had also claimed "most of the finest, most spirited, most gifted youngsters in the undergraduate body, men fit to be scholars and masters in many fields, . . . the very men the teacher most desires to get hold of and to enlist in some enterprise of the mind, . . . whose [proper] training would count for most in leadership outside of college, in the country at large, and for the promotion of every interest the nation has."<sup>119</sup>

In most universities, intercollegiate sports was the male undergraduates' consuming passion, but at Princeton the eating clubs posed the biggest challenge to the curriculum. Two-thirds of the upperclassmen belonged after often heart- and friendship-breaking competitions called "bicker," and thereafter enjoyed exclusive dining and party privileges in increasingly luxurious mansions on Prospect Avenue. Although the clubs were restricted to juniors and seniors, the selection process favored ready-made groups over individuals, such as prep-school cliques that formed freshman and sophomore feeder clubs. This tendency toward narrow associations offended the president's growing progressivism. He regretted the social exclusivity of the old and new monied classes and its impairment of the college's traditional democracy. He believed that "democracy is made up of unchosen experiences . . . unselected contacts." "Admission to the University must mean full membership in its community. . . . There must be no inequalities except the natural inequalities of age and experience." Moreover, the clubs were "distinctly and very seriously hostile to the spirit of study, incompatible with the principles of a true republic of letters and of learning."<sup>120</sup> As social arbiters, the clubs led "men in all classes [to] feel that too great absorption in study will involve a virtual disqualification for social preferment." To prove his point, Wilson noted that 41.7 percent of non-clubmen were honor students but only 9.6 percent of clubmen were. When it came to academic reform and the setting of intellectual priorities, "the clubs," he told the board, "simply happen to stand in the way."<sup>121</sup>

Wilson's conclusion was that "the only way in which the social life of the undergraduates can be prevented from fatally disordering, and perhaps even strangling, the academic life of the University is by the actual absorption of the social life into the academic." As a solution to Princeton's particular dilemma, he proposed to build Oxbridge-like residential colleges around or, if need be, over the eating clubs. Each college would house and feed members of all four classes, a faculty master, and a few unmarried preceptors and host other faculty fellows as well. This would bring younger



students into frequent, casual, and emulative contact with older ones and involve the faculty for the first time in “university life.”<sup>122</sup> The goal, Wilson was quick to clarify, was not to legislate or force “a marriage between knowledge and pleasure; we are simply trying to throw them a good deal together in the confidence that they will fall in love with one another.” This radical but “organic” reorganization of the university through colleges, the president told the faculty in October 1907, was “nothing more or less than Professor [Andrew Fleming] West’s idea of the Graduate [College] . . . adapted to the undergraduate life.”<sup>123</sup>

That both Anglophiles thought in architectural terms of Tudor Gothic and Wilson had endorsed in principle West’s published description of his dream college might seem to have secured a key faculty ally for the president’s cause.<sup>124</sup> But appearances can be deceiving. Wilson sought to integrate the hitherto autonomously governed Graduate School into the newly coordinated university in three ways. First, he wanted to reduce the dean’s authority and place it firmly under his own. Second, he wanted to add intellectual firepower to the university by adding several senior stars to recruit and teach graduate students as well as undergraduates. West had no problem with that, except that Wilson’s hires proved to be intensely loyal to the president and not to the dean. And, third, Wilson wanted to locate the proposed Graduate College near the center of the campus, to serve as a visible symbol of Princeton’s aspirations to the highest learning, to counter the anti-intellectualism of the clubs, and to bring advanced students into daily contact with those they were being prepared to teach. “The graduate students need humanizing,” Wilson thought, perhaps remembering his own graduate isolation at Johns Hopkins, “as much as the undergraduates need sobering and inspiration; and both need to be reminded every day that learning is a part of life . . . even though it first of all be the fruit of the silent and lonely vigil.”<sup>125</sup> West, contrarily, wanted “his” college removed from the puerile hubbub of undergraduate life and placed on an eminence overlooking the local golf course, nearly a mile from campus. This disagreement precipitated the last maneuvers in the nationally publicized “Battle of Princeton” and the defeat of Wilson’s final plans for the university’s academic “salvation.”<sup>126</sup>

But those last sorry scenes did not mean the death of his plans in Princeton nor the influence of his whole design and thinking upon American education in subsequent decades.<sup>127</sup> Every Princeton president since Wilson has acknowledged him as the architect of Princeton’s status as a

major research university and perhaps the leading “liberal university” in the country. The blueprints he drew for Princeton’s collegiate-university have retained their philosophical freshness and served as relevant guides to its institutional priorities for more than a century.

Perhaps the most grateful heir of Wilson’s legacy was President Harold W. Dodds (1933–57), who had entered the Graduate School soon after Wilson resigned. After a decade living and writing university speeches in Prospect, Wilson’s former home, Dodds discovered his predecessor’s numerous writings and addresses on education. It was a “humbling experience,” he admitted in 1956, the centenary of Wilson’s birth, because “it revealed to me how much of what I had been saying about Princeton’s aims and ambitions had been said by him so much earlier and so much better. And how I had subconsciously absorbed his ideals by a process of intellectual osmosis from the intellectual atmosphere which he had generated. And how effectively he had prepared both the scholarly and institutional foundations for what we in New Jersey call the modern Princeton was brought home to me in full strength.”<sup>128</sup>

Dodds also testified that Wilson’s “high visibility throughout the nation” enabled him to “lift . . . the sights and set new targets for all American colleges.” Even when he spoke directly to Princetonians, “the whole college and university world listened. When he exposed the weaknesses of Princeton, he was exposing the prevailing maladies of all American colleges. And to the mounting unrest in educational circles of the time, he gave inspiration and direction and leadership. That so much for which our colleges and universities are striving today was implicit or explicit in his policy,” Dodds concluded, “is the greatest tribute which we can pay him as an architect of educational progress.”<sup>129</sup>

Well beyond Princeton, emulators have sought to produce their own versions—as he would have wished—of curricular coherence, preceptorial closeness, institutional synchrony, and social-academic coordination. Perhaps the best example is Harvard. As soon as he was inaugurated in 1909, President Lowell initiated a curriculum of “planned freedom” around concentration and distribution requirements (1911), reading periods and comprehensive exams (both 1914), and later a system of tutors to guide the students’ reading and writing (1919).<sup>130</sup> By the 1930s, both Harvard and Yale had in place the beginnings of a system of residential colleges for the top three classes.<sup>131</sup> Many universities have followed suit as resources have allowed. In 2006, according to a “Collegiate Way” Website, 12 of the top 25



national universities in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings and 18 other American universities “have faculty-led residential college systems that are either complete, partial, or in the works.”<sup>132</sup> Beginning in the early 1980s, Princeton finally earned a spot on the list with a series of five colleges, crafted from existing and new buildings, for *underclassmen*; one college, appropriately, was named for Wilson.<sup>133</sup> More recently, the university has realized Wilson’s final dream more fully by building two new imposing colleges—one Gothic, the other postmodern and ecologically “green”—for all four classes and liberal quotients of graduate students and faculty fellows. A third is planned, but the eating clubs stubbornly remain, though in smaller number.<sup>134</sup>

Wilson’s signal contributions, then, were both historic and surprisingly contemporary. At a time when America’s universities were growing rapidly, adding new constituencies, and attempting to please them all, when their aims and methods were being blended and somehow reconciled to produce all-purpose institutions bearing a striking resemblance, Wilson led Princeton in spearheading the reforms of the Big Three, who stood firmly and united against the prevailing standardization. Yet his ideas and proposals, even—perhaps especially—those that failed to be realized in his own day, have shown surprising life and durability over time. They have given courage and lent clarity to leaders not only of humanly scaled liberal universities that chose to keep the undergraduate college at their core but also of liberal arts colleges that deliberately chose not to become universities. In the end, his ideas and ideals, their continuing cogency, expression, and relevance, may prove to be his greatest contribution to American higher education.

## NOTES

1. Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson: The Academic Years* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 163; *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Arthur S. Link et al., 69 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966–1994), 6:623, 625 (May 5, 1890) (hereafter *PWW*).
2. Stockton Axson, “Brother Woodrow”: *A Memoir of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 115.
3. *PWW*, 16:453 (Sept. 16, 1906).
4. James D. Startt, *Woodrow Wilson and the Press: Prelude to the Presidency* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), ch. 2.
5. J. Douglas Brown, “The American Liberal University,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, May 6, 1955, 8–9; Brown, *The Liberal University: An Institutional Analysis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969).

6. James Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University: From Woodrow Wilson to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 593–95.
7. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636–1936* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), chs. 14–15, 17; Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America: The Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Henry Aaron Yeomans, *Abbott Lawrence Lowell, 1856–1943* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948); Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 87–98, 248–51.
8. Veysey, *Emergence of the American University*, 363–66, 367n90; Robert A. McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University in the City of New York, 1754–2004* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), chs. 6–7; Michael Rosenthal, *Nicholas Miraculous: The Amazing Career of the Redoubtable Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).
9. Morris Hadley, *Arthur Twining Hadley* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 145, 153, chs. 10, 13; Brooks Mather Kelley, *Yale: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), chs. 14–17; George Wilson Pierson, *Yale College: An Educational History, 1871–1921* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).
10. Veysey, *Emergence of the American University*, 366. Michael Rosenthal, Butler’s most recent biographer, has also concluded that “despite his impressive credentials as an educator,” Butler cannot be regarded “as any sort of significant educational theorist. He left behind no body of innovative thought for the academic profession to which his name might properly be attached.” Rosenthal, *Nicholas Miraculous*, 461.
11. *PWW*, 19:310 (July 14, 1909), 448 (Oct. 26, 1909). When Wilson was elected president of Princeton in June 1902, Hadley wrote to congratulate him. “Changes have been wonderfully rapid in the last few years. With you and Butler and myself in our new positions, we certainly have old friends working all together.” *PWW*, 14:560 (June 10, 1902).
12. Veysey, *Emergence of the American University*, ch. 4, 252–59.
13. *PWW*, 18:622, 627 (Jan. 15, 1909), 19:254 (June 16, 1909).
14. *PWW*, 19:270 (June 26, 1909), 290 (July 3, 1909), 448 (Oct. 26, 1909).
15. *PWW*, 19:274 (June 28, 1909), 407n1, 495–96 (Nov. 12, 1909).
16. *PWW*, 20:276–77 (March 21, 1910), 21:109 (Sept. 16, 1910).
17. Yeomans, *Abbott Lawrence Lowell*, 153–55, 184–85, 188, 296, 355. In *Lawrence Lowell and His Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1980), former Harvard president Nathan M. Pusey was not as forthright as Lowell in acknowledging Wilson’s precedence and leadership.
18. Hadley, *Arthur Twining Hadley*, 77; Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, 269.
19. *PWW*, 12:193–94 (Oct. 26, 1901).
20. *PWW*, 12:280–83n1 (Feb. 23, 1902).
21. *PWW*, 11:194, 560 (June 10, 1902).
22. Hadley, *Arthur Twining Hadley*, 108, 115–16, ch. 13, 272; *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone (New York, 1932), 8:77–80.
23. Hadley, for example, published 17 articles or talks on higher education in the *Yale Alumni Magazine* during his first eight years in office (comparable to Wilson’s tenure) and another 31 before he retired in 1921. Hadley, *Arthur Twining Hadley*, 258–76.
24. In retirement, Lowell published *Facts and Visions: Twenty-Four Baccalaureate Ser-*



mons, edited by his future biographer, Henry Aaron Yeomans (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944). After only eight years in office, Hadley published a few in *Baccalaureate Addresses and Other Talks on Kindred Themes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907) and several more in *The Moral Basis of Democracy: Sunday Morning Talks to Students and Graduates* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919). But he was more comfortable with educational themes for matriculation addresses in the fall, which he tended to publish in the *Yale Alumni Magazine*. Hadley, *Arthur Twining Hadley*, 258–76.

25. Hadley, *Arthur Twining Hadley*, 125; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1944), 31:2 (q.v. Lowell, A[bbott] Lawrence); Yeomans, *Abbott Lawrence Lowell*, 497. Lowell published excerpts from twenty-three of his reports in *At War with Academic Traditions in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934; reprt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1965), 238–352. Wilson's 1904 report (*PWW*, 15:554–69 [Dec. 8, 1904]), for example, was printed in an edition of 8,000 and distributed to alumni, other colleges, and leading preparatory schools. *PWW*, 16:3 (Feb. 18, 1905).

26. He published another twenty-seven before he retired. Hadley, *Arthur Twining Hadley*, 258–76.

27. When he collected his favorite writings in 1934, only 2 of 30 (not counting 23 annual reports) had been published outside New England. Lowell, *At War with Academic Traditions*.

28. Even in his last eight years in office (1901–1909), Eliot figured in 120 *Times* articles. He was quoted mostly on sports corruption, Harvard's need for a three-year B.A., and plans for what became the famous "Ten-Foot Shelf" of *Harvard Classics*.

29. *PWW*, 17:240–41 (July 1, 1907).

30. John M. Mulder, *Woodrow Wilson: The Years of Preparation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 185–86, 225; Edwin A. Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson: A Medical and Psychological Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), ch. 10; Bert Edward Park, *The Impact of Illness on World Leaders* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 3–76, 331–42. For doubts about the frequency and the impact of Wilson's cerebrovascular accidents on his personality and decisions, see Robert M. Saunders, "History, Health, and Herons: The Historiography of Woodrow Wilson's Personality and Decision-Making," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 24:1 (Winter 1994): 57–77.

31. Lowell's slim valedictory book, *What a University President Has Learned* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), is a more thoughtful, informative, and enjoyable read than the vast majority of tomes left by the era's leading educators.

32. *PWW*, 14:27 (July 19, 1902).

33. *PWW*, 14:75 (Aug. 11, 1902).

34. *PWW*, 11:532 (April 4, 1900). Ten days after being elected president, Wilson assured the parent of a newly admitted freshman that "we are of the conservative school in education here, and I do not think we should ever get too far away from the classical model." *PWW*, 12:441 (June 19, 1902).

35. *PWW*, 23:600 (Dec. 19, 1911).

36. *PWW*, 20:347 (April 7, 1910).

37. *Ibid.* On March 7, 1908, Wilson told a Baltimore meeting of the Princeton Alumni Association of Maryland that "the country now says that Princeton knows what to do, and

God forbid that Princeton will ever lose that leadership. We must keep ours the leading light of the country." *PWW*, 18:11.

38. *PWW*, 14:157 (Oct. 21, 1902).

39. *PWW*, 14:156, 160 (Oct. 21, 1902).

40. *PWW*, 14:152 (Oct. 21, 1902), 175 (Oct. 25, 1902), 15:71 (Dec. 10, 1903).

41. "The College Course and Methods of Instruction," Dec. 12, 1903, in *PWW*, 15:88, 16:384 (May 4, 1906).

42. *PWW*, 14:153 (Oct. 21, 1902), 20:230 (March 11, 1910); see also 15:89–92 on the legitimate uses of lectures.

43. *PWW*, 14:154 (Oct. 21, 1902). In the fall of 1906, Wilson changed his own popular lecture course on jurisprudence to all preceptorials twice a week, partly because he was not fully recovered from a possible stroke, but mostly because "now . . . the men really read" on their own. *PWW*, 16:449–50 (Sept. 3, 1906).

44. Hardin Craig, *Woodrow Wilson at Princeton* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 91.

45. Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, 67–68.

46. Axson, "Brother Woodrow," 124; *PWW*, 16:460 (Oct. 17, 1906).

47. Princeton University, *Report of the President (1919)*, 21.

48. In 1946, Dean of the Faculty Robert K. Root, one of the original preceptors, asserted that "no university in the country has ever, before or since, added to its faculty at one blow so large and so able a new recruitment. A surprisingly large proportion of them qualified for professorships, and have borne a very important part in maintaining during the past forty years the university's intellectual distinction and in administering its affairs. The group has provided Princeton University with nine chairmen of departments, four deans, and one charter trustee." Robert K. Root, "Wilson and the Preceptors," in William Starr Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Some Princeton Memories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 16. The last five preceptor alumni retired in 1946. "Rear Guard of 'Preceptor Guys' Retires," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, July 19, 1946, 8–9.

49. Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, interview with Charles W. McIlwain, Jan. 2, 1940, p. 5, Woodrow Wilson Collection [WWC], Princeton University Archives [PUA], box 62, folder 11.

50. Wilson, "Five Years of the Preceptorial System," in his *Annual Report*, Jan. 1, 1910, *PWW*, 19:694; Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, 68–70.

51. *PWW*, 14:162, 168 (Oct. 21, 1902). Trustee and former U.S. President Grover Cleveland made the motion.

52. Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, 52–54; *PWW*, 14:441 (May 1, 1903); Bragdon interview with Charles Grosvenor Osgood, April 14, 1939, p. 1, WWC, PUA, box 63, folder 24. See also Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 3, 55.

53. *PWW*, 14:486–88 (June 11, 1903), 556–57 (Sept. 1, 1903), 15:26n2 (Oct. 23, 1903); Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, 59–68.

54. *PWW*, 14:474 (June 5, 1903), 15:55–56 (ca. Nov. 20, 1903), 73–74 (Dec. 10, 1903), 381 (June 14, 1904).

55. Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, 58, 62–65.

56. *PWW*, 14:181 (Oct. 25, 1902); "Should an Antecedent Liberal Education Be Required of Students in Law, Medicine, and Theology?" 8:285–92, at 290–91 (July 26, 1893); "Position



and Importance of the Arts Course as Distinct from the Professional and Semi-Professional Courses," 19:713–27 (Jan. 5, 1910); Edwin Grant Conklin, "As a Scientist Saw Him," in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*. Harvard professor of English Louis Menand blames Harvard president Charles W. Eliot (1869–1909) for making the bachelor's degree a national prerequisite for admission to professional school and isolating the "pure" liberal arts in the undergraduate college. Wilson needed no tutelage from Cambridge on that score. Louis Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 45.

57. *PWW*, 14:152 (Oct. 21, 1902), 19:284 (July 1, 1909); Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, 66.

58. *PWW*, 14:158 (Oct. 21, 1902), 182 (Oct. 25, 1902), 20:231 (March 11, 1910). In January 1910, 21 graduate courses were being taught by preceptors, largely in the humanities and social sciences. But even 13 mathematicians were studying with 3 preceptors. Dean Andrew Fleming West to Dean of the College Edward Elliott, Jan. 20, 1910, Graduate School Records, West Correspondence, Princeton University Archives, Seeley G. Mudd Library, AC127, box 14, folder 1.

59. *PWW*, 12:299 (March 19, 1902), 15:264 (April 17, 1904); Axson, "Brother Woodrow," 122.

60. *PWW*, 15:292, 20:339 (April 7, 1910).

61. *PWW*, 15:296 (April 26, 1904), 32:186–87 (Feb. 3, 1915). Two years earlier, Wilson told his advisor, Colonel Edward House, that "his long University training had shown him how necessary it was to confer about important matters; that he seldom went into a conference and came out with the same ideas as when he went in." *PWW*, 29:58 (Dec. 22, 1913). See also Trygve Throntveit, "'Common Counsel': Woodrow Wilson's Pragmatic Progressivism, 1885–1913," in John Milton Cooper Jr., ed., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), ch. 2 (25–56).

62. *PWW*, 15:459 (Aug. 29, 1904).

63. *PWW*, 14:181 (Oct. 25, 1902), my emphasis. In his 1946 memoir of Wilson, professor of English J. Duncan Spaeth was "struck by his constant use of the word 'general,' as a kind of dominant motif" in his inaugural address at Princeton. J. Duncan Spaeth, "Wilson as I Knew Him and View Him Now," in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 78.

64. *PWW*, 15:459 (Aug. 29, 1904), 460 (Aug. 30, 1904).

65. Luther P. Eisenhart, "The Far-Seeing Wilson," in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 62–63.

66. *PWW*, 12:331 (April 16, 1902). See the Editorial Note on "The New Princeton Course of Study," *PWW*, 15:277–92, esp. 284–88.

67. In the 1850s, several required and a few elective sciences were offered at Princeton in the senior year, and mathematics dominated the prescribed curriculum. James Buchanan Henry and Christian Henry Scharff, *College As It Is, or, The Collegian's Manual in 1853*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Libraries, 1996), 109, 224–25, 229. By contrast, the curriculum of 1898–99 required mathematics only in the first two years and physics in the junior year; five other sciences were electives. Craig, *Woodrow Wilson at Princeton*, 74–75.

68. *PWW*, 15:252–57 (April 16, 1904), 379, 380 (June 14, 1904). Princeton dropped its Greek requirements for admission and graduation in 1919. Yale dropped Greek in 1904 and

Latin in 1931, a year after Princeton. Harvard had begun the Greek retreat in the 1880s. Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study since 1636* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), 213–14; Pierson, *Yale College*, 187.

69. The concept of majors (and minors) began in the late 1870s at Johns Hopkins, from which it spread to the Midwest, Bryn Mawr, and Stanford. In 1901, Yale began moving to a system of concentration and distribution, as did Harvard in 1910. Rudolph, *Curriculum*, 131, 227–29.

70. *PWW*, 12:328 (April 12, 1902)

71. "Princeton's New Plan of Study," *PWW*, 15:459 (ca. Aug. 29, 1904), 561, 565 (Dec. 8, 1904), 20:230 (March 11, 1910).

72. *PWW*, 15:455 (ca. Aug. 29, 1904).

73. *PWW*, 20:347 (April 7, 1910).

74. *PWW*, 15:85 (Dec. 12, 1903), 456 (Aug. 29, 1904).

75. *PWW*, 14:401–2 (March 28, 1903), 17:227 (June 26, 1907).

76. *PWW*, 17:203 (June 10, 1907); Edwin E. Slosson, *Great American Universities* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 75–76.

77. *PWW*, 16:453 (Sept. 16, 1906), my emphasis.

78. *PWW*, 14:170 (Oct. 25, 1902), my emphasis, 20:438 (May 12, 1910). See Theodore J. Ziolkowski, "Princeton in Whose Service?" *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Jan. 23, 1991, 11–16, for an astute reading of Wilson's phrase. After the Spanish-American War in 1898, Wilson put new emphasis on an international focus for higher education and renewed his faith in the liberal arts as the best way to educate young men for the nation's expanded role in the world. See the next essay in this volume, by Adam Nelson.

79. *PWW*, 14:307 (Dec. 27, 1902).

80. *PWW*, 14:176 (Oct. 25, 1902), 16:270 (Dec. 15, 1905).

81. *PWW*, 15:35 (Nov. 5, 1903), 16:270 (Dec. 15, 1905). Although Wilson had to admit that "not every man that goes out from Princeton is fit to be a leader," he did believe that every graduate was "fitted to understand and choose a leader." *PWW*, 14:486 (June 10, 1903).

82. *PWW*, 19:60 (Feb. 19, 1909), 20:160–61 (Feb. 24, 1910).

83. On Wilson's blind spots, see Gary Gerstle, "Race and Nation in the Thought and Politics of Woodrow Wilson," in Cooper, ed., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson*, ch. 4 (93–123). See also Victoria Bissell Brown, "Did Woodrow Wilson's Gender Politics Matter?" in Cooper, ed., ch. 5 (125–62), and her essay in this volume.

84. *PWW*, 14:299 (Dec. 19, 1902), 18:246 (April 9, 1908).

85. *PWW*, 14:285 (Dec. 12, 1902). For Wilson's growing doubts about Princeton's "democracy," see "What Is a College For?" *Scribner's Magazine*, 46 (Nov. 1909): 570–77, in *PWW*, 19:334–47.

86. *PWW*, 14:174, 184 (Oct. 25, 1902), 235 (Nov. 29, 1902), 402 (March 28, 1903).

87. *PWW*, 14:174 (Oct. 25, 1902), 402 (March 25, 1903), 18:499, 502 (Nov. 12, 1908).

88. *PWW*, 17:135–36 (May 4, 1907).

89. *PWW*, 15:40–41 (Nov. 5, 1903). In his inaugural address, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," Wilson had made the same point: "in order to learn[,] men must for a little while withdraw from action, must seek some quiet place of remove from the bustle of affairs, where their thoughts may run clear and tranquil, and the heats of business be for a time put off." *PWW*, 14:184 (Oct. 25, 1902).



90. *PWW*, 14:308 (Dec. 29, 1902), 446 (May 2, 1903).
91. *PWW*, 14:283–84 (Dec. 12, 1902), 402 (March 28, 1903); see also 14:318–19 (Jan. 3, 1903), 446 (May 2, 1903). As of December 1904, about 400 Princeton students, mostly freshmen and sophomores, lived off campus. Four years later, 345 were still not in residence, though two dormitories to hold 172 were about to be built. *PWW*, 15:567 (Dec. 8, 1904), 18:580 (Jan. 1, 1909).
92. *PWW*, 14:385 (March 8, 1903), 410 (April 15, 1903), my emphasis.
93. *PWW*, 14:132 (Sept. 18, 1902), 16:32–33 (March 19, 1905).
94. *PWW*, 16:407–8 (May 26, 1906).
95. Veysey, *Emergence of the American University*, part 1.
96. *PWW*, 18:281, 284 (May 2, 1908), 298–99 (May 15, 1908), my emphases.
97. “The Training of Intellect,” *PWW*, 18:54–56 (March 18, 1908). For Wilson’s suggestion that Princeton’s top scholars deserve a “P,” see also *PWW*, 15:284, 382 (June 14, 1904).
98. *PWW*, 14:276 (Dec. 9, 1902), 18:55 (March 18, 1908).
99. *PWW*, 14:272–73 (Dec. 9, 1902), my emphasis.
100. *PWW*, 17:581 (Dec. 27, 1907), 18:503 (Nov. 12, 1908).
101. “My Ideal of the True University,” *The Delineator*, 74 (Nov. 1909): 401, 437–38, in *PWW*, 19:298, my emphasis.
102. “What Is a College For?” in *PWW*, 19:339, 345.
103. *PWW*, 14:318 (Jan. 3, 1903), 18:56 (March 18, 1908).
104. *PWW*, 18:501 (Nov. 12, 1908).
105. “The Spirit of Learning,” *Harvard Graduates’ Magazine*, 18 (Sept. 1909): 1–14, in *PWW*, 19:282–83, my emphasis; 19:290 (July 3, 1909).
106. *PWW*, 14:171 (Oct. 25, 1902), 15:42 (Nov. 5, 1903).
107. *PWW*, 19:283 (July 1, 1909).
108. *PWW*, 14:316.
109. *PWW*, 14:317–18 (Jan. 3, 1903).
110. *PWW*, 19:285–86 (July 1, 1909); see also 14:263–64 (Dec. 6, 1902), 16:397 (May 19, 1906). At a large meeting of Princeton alumni in New York in December 1902, the exuberant diners sang from a printed songbook a chorus verse about Wilson’s position: “Now Butler at Columbia / Has cut the course in two; / He must have quite forgotten / Both the football team and crew; / But Wilson down at Princeton / Didn’t stand for it a bit; / It struck him right way that it / Would graduate De Witt”—a football star in the class of ‘04. *PWW*, 14:289 (Dec. 13, 1902). On Eliot’s views, see “Harvard Will Cling to Higher Standards,” *New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1903, 8.
111. In his 1946 memoir, Dean Luther Eisenhart sought to squelch “the [still] mistaken belief that Mr. Wilson proposed his plan not as part of an *educational* program but as means of changing, if not eliminating, the Princeton club system.” Eisenhart, “The Far-Seeing Wilson,” in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 65, my emphasis. Stockton Axson also emphasized that Wilson’s so-called “Quad” plan was “a purely educational reform” before Wilson’s reaction to alumni opposition turned it into a fight between privilege and democracy. “*Brother Woodrow*,” 114, 128.
112. *PWW*, 14:183 (Oct. 25, 1902), 16:519 (ca. Dec. 13, 1906), 17:199, 202 (ca. June 10, 1907).
113. *PWW*, 16:525 (ca. Dec. 13, 1906), 17:176 (ca. June 6, 1907). In 1904, Charles Van Hise,

the new president of the University of Wisconsin, had proposed—not Oxbridge colleges but the more economical Midwestern equivalent—residential dormitories (of which it had only one for women and none for men), “a [dining] commons,” and “a commodious and beautiful union” for the whole student body, which numbered perhaps 2,400. In the summer of 1907, Harvard men assured Wilson of their approval of his plan, saying, “If you do it, we must; and we ought all long ago to have done it.” “Inaugural Address of President Charles Richard Van Hise,” in *Science*, n.s. 20, no. 502 (Aug. 12, 1904); Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin, 1848–1925: A History*, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1949, 1974), 2:76–77, 178, 497–503; *PWW*, 17:240–41 (July 1, 1907): the editors erred in saying that *each* Wisconsin dorm was meant to have a commons and a union (241n3).

114. The fateful chronology is described in William Starr Myers, “Wilson in My Diary” and Eisenhart, “The Far-Seeing Wilson,” both in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 47–49, 65–66, and in Craig, *Woodrow Wilson at Princeton*, 113–24. Myers was confident that, in all his reforms, Wilson “was supported in the main by a majority of both the faculty and the student body” (49). Biologist Edwin Grant Conklin thought that “the older members” of the faculty were “generally” against the quad plan, and “the younger ones for it.” “As a Scientist Saw Him,” in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 59. Duncan Spaeth, on the contrary, said that Wilson’s speech “swept the faculty into all but unanimous support of his plan.” “Wilson as I Knew Him,” in Myers, ed., 82.

115. “The Princeton Preceptorial System,” *The Independent*, 59 (Aug. 3, 1905): 239–40, in *PWW*, 14:107 (ca. June 1, 1905), 519 (ca. Dec. 13, 1906). Myers, “Wilson in My Diary,” in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 38.

116. *PWW*, 17:180 (ca. June 6, 1907), 331 (Aug. 1, 1907), 19:285, 288 (July 1, 1909), my emphasis.

117. *PWW*, 19:57–58 (Feb. 19, 1909).

118. *PWW*, 19:279 (July 1, 1909), 344 (Aug. 18, 1909), 20:162 (Feb. 24, 1910).

119. *PWW*, 19:285, 287 (July 1, 1909), 344 (Aug. 19, 1909).

120. *PWW*, 16:522–23 (Dec. 13, 1906), 20:161, 166 (ca. Feb. 24, 1910).

121. *PWW*, 17:201 (ca. June 10, 1907), 424 (Oct. 7, 1909). Professor of English Stockton Axson, Wilson’s brother-in-law, was “constantly in the house during the discussion of these matters” and “never heard Mr. Wilson at this time make any attack whatsoever upon the Princeton clubs as such. They were merely more or less of an obstacle in the way of the larger [educational] result which he wished to accomplish.” “*Brother Woodrow*,” 127. Axson’s colleague, Hardin Craig, agreed. *Woodrow Wilson at Princeton*, 49.

122. Princeton president Shirley Tilghman regards Wilson’s goal of vertical integration as one of his major legacies to the modern university. Opening remarks at the conference on “The Educational Legacy of Woodrow Wilson: New Approaches,” Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, Oct. 16–17, 2009.

123. *PWW*, 17:185 (ca. June 6, 1907), 424 (Oct. 7, 1907), 19:289 (July 3, 1909).

124. For a discerning comparison, see Bruce Leslie’s essay in this volume.

125. *PWW*, 20:165 (ca. Feb. 24, 1910), 334 (April 7, 1910).

126. *PWW*, 17:241 (July 1, 1907). See Bragdon, *Wilson: The Academic Years*, ch. 18; Mulder, *Wilson: Years of Preparation*, ch. 8; Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, ch. 7;



W. Barksdale Maynard, *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton to the Presidency* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), chs. 12–14.

127. Craig, *Woodrow Wilson at Princeton*, 155–56.

128. Dodds's statement of beliefs about Princeton's future role at the final Bicentennial Convocation on June 17, 1947, could almost have been written by Wilson. For an excerpt, see Alexander Leitch, *A Princeton Companion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 140. Beginning in the mid-1930s, Dodds worked assiduously to commemorate Wilson's legacy at Princeton by building a home for the nascent School of Public and International Affairs and naming it for him; because of the Depression and World War II, the school was not renamed for Wilson until 1948 nor was the new building similarly dedicated until 1952.

129. "Wilson's Impact on Higher Education in the United States" address to the Woodrow Wilson Institute at Staunton, Virginia, April 26, 1956, in Raymond F. Pisney, ed., *Woodrow Wilson in Retrospect* (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1978), 68–73 at 68, 69, 72; reprinted in "Wilson as Educator," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Oct. 12, 1956, 9–10. See also Dodds, "The Educator," in Em Bowles Alsop, ed., *The Greatness of Woodrow Wilson, 1856–1956* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1971 [1956]), 50–65.

130. See above, note 17; Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., *The Development of Harvard University since the Inauguration of President Eliot, 1869–1929* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930), xlvii–xlix.

131. Alex Duke, *Importing Oxbridge: English Residential Colleges and American Universities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), ch. 4.

132. R. J. O'Hara, "Half of the Top 25 Universities Have Residential Colleges" (Aug. 20, 2006) and an international roster of collegiate-universities: <http://collegiateway.org>. The latest entrant abroad is the National University of Singapore, which will have four high-rise colleges for its freshmen and sophomores by 2012. Its planners, including five students, visited Harvard, Yale, and Princeton for their ideas about mixed faculty-student residences, small seminars, and multidisciplinary encouragement. Newley Purnell, "A Singapore University Plans Its First Residential Colleges," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (online), Dec. 14, 2010.

133. In 1946, professor of English George McLean Harper hoped that "some day perhaps a residential college such as [Wilson] envisioned will be incorporated in the University and named for him." "A Happy Family," in Myers, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Princeton Memories*, 6.

134. "Welcome to Whitman College," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Nov. 21, 2007, 18–23; Catesby Leigh, "Traditional Style and Substance: Princeton's New Whitman Hall," *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 25, 2007, D6; Richard Sammons, "Leaving the Dark Ages," [Clem Labine's] *Traditional Building* (Feb. 2008), 20–24; Ellis Woodman, "American Gothic," *Building Design*, 1080 (Feb. 29, 2008), 12–27; Shaina Li, "Butler Rising," *Daily Princetonian* (online), Feb. 20, 2009 ([www.dailyprincetonian.com/2009/02/20](http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2009/02/20)); Lawrence Biemiller, "Princeton's Butler College Gets New Buildings—and May Lose an Old Nickname," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Aug. 12, 2009 (<http://chronicle.com/blogPost/Princetons-Butler-College/7655>).

## Woodrow Wilson on Liberal Education for Statesmanship, 1890–1910

Adam R. Nelson

Throughout his years at Princeton, first as a professor and later as president, Woodrow Wilson asked one central question: how, in an era of rapid change, could the university prepare students for lives of national service, or, as he often called it, *statesmanship*? This question framed Wilson's sesquicentennial address, "Princeton in the Nation's Service" (1896), as well as his inaugural address, "Princeton for the Nation's Service" (1902). This essay traces Wilson's struggle to answer this question from the time he joined the Princeton faculty in 1890 to the year he left the presidency in 1910. A close look at his writings during this period suggests that his perspective on both liberal education and statesmanship changed over time. What began as a critique of abstract intellectualism and "denationalized" scholarship became, in the wake of the Spanish-American War, an impassioned call for a return to intellectualism and a reconceptualization of the purpose of liberal education in a global context. The modern American university, Wilson came to believe, had an urgent duty to prepare undergraduates for lives of both national *and* international statesmanship.

Although Wilson had been a proponent of "liberal education" from the start of his academic career, historians and biographers have overlooked the degree to which his perspective on the meaning and purpose of liberal education changed over time. In particular, they have ignored the ways in which his views shifted from a national to an international perspective after the United States' rise to a new role in world affairs. This change imposed