

From a College to a University: 1965-2000

Times Were Changing, really changing!

Albany's transition to a University in the 1960s coincided with dramatic changes occurring in higher education and in major social, economic and political challenges nationwide. Bob Dylan captured it all in his musical lyrics - *The Times, They are a-changin'*. The song reflected a generation gap that divided American society and culture. He touched on core issues - racism, poverty, and social change. He captured the spirit of social and political upheaval that characterized the 1960s.

The demonstrations on campus were becoming more disruptive and were attracting more students and often led by faculty. The initial "sit-ins" in the President's Office expanded to other campus offices and were seriously affecting the ability to maintain classes. The anti-Vietnam war demonstrations hit many universities, some more severely than what we were experiencing. Fortunately, the Dutch Quad Lounge bombing caused no personal injuries, only damage. I had my hands full given my responsibility for student conduct as Associate Dean of Students. Any disciplinary action I might take to suspend or expel a male student could lead to him being drafted into the military.

When I took the position in 1965, Albany was only in its third year as a University and was in the process of expanding from being a College to an institution with seven professional schools under the leadership of President Evan Collins, who began in 1949. New faculty and staff were hired for the new departments and programs that were launched. Some 40 academic majors spanned the new fields of study – business, social welfare, criminal justice, public affairs, nursing and new disciplines in the Humanities and Sciences. Twelve doctoral degree programs were established.

The 1960s and 1970s saw significant changes in the University's structure. The Taylor Law allowed faculty and professional staff to unionize, which they did. The Faculty Senate became a University Senate to allow undergraduate and graduate student representation. Importantly, faculty research became a vital priority for the new University – "*publish or perish!*" The expansion needed to meet the requirements of a multipurpose University began. The projected growth of the American population in the 1960s and the expectation that more high school graduates ("*baby boomers*") would attend college is what led to the construction of the new "Uptown" campus.

In 1962-63 there were about 4,000 students enrolled. There was one Ed.D. program with two students receiving the degree. By 1970-71, there were 13,200 students. During this period, the faculty increased from 244 to 746 (f/t & p/t). The campus operating budget increased from \$3,500,000 to over \$30,000,000 and the AAUP rating went from "C" to "A." How's that for progress?

Collins retired in 1969 and Vice President Allan Kuusisto was appointed Interim President pending the search for a new President. Kuusisto went on to become President of Hobart & William Smith Colleges.

The University faced new challenges in the 1970s. Newly selected President Louis Benezet had to deal with State Education Department reviews of selected doctoral programs and tighter state funding resulted in hard choices among programs to be advanced and others to be held to a minimum. The Milne High School for teacher training was closed and the new School of Nursing was phased out. Benezet retired in 1975 and Emmett Fields took on the Presidency as enrollment increased to 14,000.

The financial environment was worsening, and Fields had to make further budget cuts across the campus. A "Select Committee on Academic Priorities", appointed by Benezet, submitted its recommendations and Fields had little choice but to accept them. Degree programs, academic units, offices, and Centers all faced reductions or retrenchment. In 1977, Fields resigned and took on the Presidency at Vanderbilt University.

In 1978, Vincent O'Leary, former Dean of the School of Criminal Justice, was appointed President. He recognized that State support would not be able to provide all the financial resources necessary for a major public university. He launched a campus-wide effort to secure outside funding. By 1980, enrollment exceeded 15,000 and more faculty were seeking external grants through federal agencies and national foundations. A new School of Public Health was established in conjunction with the State Health Department and its Wadsworth Laboratory, with joint appointments.

When O'Leary retired in 1990 enrollment was 17,400. A new search brought H. Patrick Swygert, UAlbany's first African American President and the first of the four SUNY University's.

Swygert, an attorney, was energetic and gregarious. He pledged to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience and, noting the need for additional space, launched a \$25 million campaign. He received state support for several major projects – the expansion of the Campus Center and, to meet the pressing need for research, announced the plan to construct, across Fuller Road, a Center for Environmental Studies and Technology Management (CESTM) which would house the ASRC, the National Weather Service, the Center for Advanced Technology, X-ray optics research and high-tech business development and incubation programs. With his initiatives on the right path, in 1995, he announced his departure from the University and assumed the Presidency of his alma mater, Howard University.

Another Presidential search was launched and, Karen Hitchcock, the VP for Academic Affairs, was appointed Interim President and then, President. In 1997, Hitchcock, a nationally known cell biologist, became the first woman President. She accelerated the research initiatives, secured funding for a new Science Library, and obtained property in East Greenbush through the University Foundation for what would become a Bioscience Campus. Importantly, a College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering was about to be established with Hitchcock's support,

under the dynamic leadership of Physics Professor Alain Kaloyeros. This “new” college, the first of its kind in the nation, would put UAlbany on the national, indeed, the international scene and foster an extraordinary era in Nano scientific research. A new, high-tech campus was built on the University’s Fuller Road/Washington Avenue land, and it expanded in the years ahead.

The future looked bright as Hitchcock led the University into the new Millennium, and the

times were still...really changing!

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