Educating the Sons of Toil: 
Student Life at the University of Illinois: The Early Years
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Their professionalism and unrelenting support have made possible my ongoing research on University students.

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They are the preservers of this legacy.
The Desire for a New Kind of Higher Education

This bill proposes to establish at least one college in every State upon a sure and perpetual foundation, accessible to all, but especially to the sons of toil, . . .

Justin Smith Morrill
Morrill Act (1862), Section 4

... to the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.
Educating the Sons of Toil:
The Opening on 2 March 1868 –
The First Students at Illinois
Family Backgrounds

- 77 students arrived during the Spring of 1868
- All male cohort
- First generation born in Illinois (48%)
- From homes with a Protestant religious tradition
- Fathers were of a Republican political orientation (4 to 1)
Family Backgrounds

- Students came from medium-size Illinois towns and cities averaging populations of 3,400
- Towns were located on important rail corridors
- Illinois Central Railroad key to the early history of the University
Student Residence & Illinois Rail Lines


RAILROAD MAP OF ILLINOIS 1857

ILLINOIS IN 1857
(Prepared from map in Gerhard's Illinois in 1857 and other contemporary sources by the Illinois Central Railroad)
Family Backgrounds

- Age ranged from 14 to 27, average age of 18
- 58% of the entering class were from Champaign County
- Students came from homes on the upper-half of socioeconomic scale
Economic Comparisons

1860 Census Wealth Indicators

- Abraham Lincoln
- Justin Smith Morrill
- University Trustees
- University Faculty
- Farm-Making Costs
- Student's Family

Costs:
- 0
- 5,000
- 10,000
- 15,000
- 20,000
- 25,000
- 30,000
- 35,000
Educating the Sons of Toil: Student Life at the University of Illinois
JOHN MILTON GREGORY
First President of the University of Illinois
University of Illinois Archives
Photographic Subject File
39/2/20, Box 168
Building an Early Land-Grant Curriculum: Fulfiling the Morrill Act Mandate

- Early curriculum a challenge due to lack of formal development – practical education & experience substituted
- Adapted from Union College Scientific Curriculum (Gregory’s Alma Mater)
- Adapted from the United States Military Academy at West Point
- Adapted from classical antebellum higher education – American collegiate curricular traditions
- Early curriculum a challenge due to lack of formal development – practical education & experience substituted

Engineering & Military
Science
Liberal Arts & Classical Studies
Agriculture
Early Admission Examination Questions

University of Illinois Archives
John Milton Gregory Publications Scrapbook
2-1-11
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN 1868 STUDENT

6:45 to 7:15  Breakfast
7:15 to 8:15  Recitations
8:15 to 8:30  Chapel
8:30 to 9:30  Lectures & Drill (Alternately)
9:30 to 12:30  Recitations
12:30 to 1:00  Dinner
1:00 to 3:00  Labor
3:00 to 6:00  Access to the Library
6:00  Supper
7:00 to 10:00  Study Hours

University of Illinois Archives
28 March 1868,
Faculty Record, 1868-1890
4/1/1
Rooming on Campus

- 65 rooms were available—two students per room on a first-come basis
- Many students boarded off-site or lived at home
- Rooms were advertised as 14 x 10 feet (student recollections indicated 12 X 9 was closer to reality)
- Students were required to furnish their own rooms
Students were expected to acquire coal stoves that served to both heat the room and cook meals.

The university sold coal at cost, but did not provide kindling.

Students scavenged wood from any source available, including a nearby fence and a dilapidated shack. Early female students became adept at nocturnal expeditions to acquire kindling, impressing their male counterparts.
ROOMING ON CAMPUS

• “... coal, kindling, dishes, kettles, pails, basins, pitchers, tubs, oil cans, lamps, food, clothing, books, etc. [were placed] in the cramped quarters.”

• “Beds were elevated with the aforementioned items commonly stowed, with the student’s trunk, under the bed hid by a valance.”

“Gregory and Early Recollections – Brown, Ralph L., 1918-20”
University of Illinois Archives
University of Illinois Early History, 1853-1962
35/3/125
STUDENT DIETS

• Utilizing the coal stove in their rooms, students maintained both a griddle and mush pot to make meals of questionable nutritive, but affordable, value.

• Griddle cakes, potatoes, mush, beans, bread and milk were described as staples.

• Describing the diet, a student noted that “one needed four stomachs and a gizzard to cope with grub so prepared with “fat, greasy gravy.””

• Griddle cakes provided a cheap form of entertainment as students mastered the art of flipping them. Student Ralph Brown explained, “With their long-handled skillet, they could flip a pancake to the ceiling and catch it deftly raw side down.”

• Commenting on food expenses, one student recalled, “A carefully kept account of food expenses shows an average monthly cost of $4.10 during one college year. The food was prepared in the dormitory rooms by our own hands . . .”
ILLINOIS INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

ILL. INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY.

The Students of the Ill. Industrial University, to J. O. Mooney, greeting:

We command you to appear before the Court of the College Government of the I. I. U., to be held on Week 6, 1875, in Court House Room, 10 AM of the I. I. U., to testify in the case now pending between said Government, plaintiff, and T. M. Palmer and L. McIlvaine, Defendant.

I. I. U., this 4 day of March A. D., 1875

Clerk of Court.

Summons to Appear
Student Government
1875

University of Illinois Archives
Alumni Class Files
26/4/5
A courtroom scene as students tried their hand at self-government.
STUDENT EXPENSES

- Advertised expenses were between $163 to $195 annually for room, board, tuition and incidentals
- Tuition, room rent, and incidentals ($34.50 to $39.50)
- Board in Hall ($108 to $126)
- Fuel and Lights ($10.50 to $15.50)
- Washing (75 cents per dozen) ($10 to 15)
- Early Circulars estimated that students were providing meals in their rooms between $1 and $1.50 a week
- Students were also required to pay a Matriculation Fee (one time) of $10
**Student Finances**

- Students were encouraged that the expense of a university education should not be an impediment to attendance, noting that, "any young man can pay his way though college who is willing, for the sake of an education, to practice steadily the virtues of industry and economy."

- “You will find fellow students, who are taking care of themselves, who will, with true brotherly feeling advise and assist you. Come on without fear. What man has done, man can do.”
Student James Newton Matthews complained to his father that his botany textbook cost $3.50 but, “it is nice and I think valuable book consisting of 882 pages.”

For an Illinois farm laborer, such a text would be worth more than two days’ wages.

Correspondence from James N. Matthews to William Matthews
15 September 1868
University of Illinois Archives
James N. Matthews Papers,
41/20/26
Student Work-Study

Student
Adolphus L. Rader

$5.63 for 3 3/4 days work on buildings and grounds

University of Illinois Archives
Vouchers
6-2-3
“He [Gregory] recognized that we were here not only to fit our minds to grapple with the problems of our time, and with the everyday problems of our callings, or professions, but that underneath all lay the demand for solidity of character and uprightness of purpose, and he made a direct appeal for these ends in morning chapel talk and in Sunday afternoon addresses.”

Henry Mahon Beardsley, Class of 1879

University of Illinois Archives
Allene Gregory Research File,
2-1-3
STUDENT CHAPELS:
REMINISCENCE

“’Tis the chapel hour again.’ The bugles blast sounds through the halls. I hear the hurrying of feet, the roll call and the steady tramp of marching columns. He stands there at the chapel desk. A moment we bow in prayer. Then we listen to the morning talk; some event in the old world, significant of other events to come in the march of civilization. It has its application to ourselves and our life problems. There is an encouragement to manly, courageous living, to doing nobly of our part in the day. The half hour is over, the chapel empty.”

Henry Mahon Beardsley, Class of 1879

University of Illinois Archives
Allene Gregory Research File,
2-1-3
PHILOMATHEAN SOCIETY
1868
ILLINOIS INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY
(now UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS)

L.C. Warner, J.H. McCorkle, P.W. Lowne,
Potter, D.E. Sweeney, Chas. Silver, Elwin Moore, Cyrus Fry, Will Hubbard.

An old picture of Philomathian

PHILOMATHEAN &
ALETHENAI
Societies

Philomathian Society
1868

University of Illinois Archives
Photographic Subject File
39/2/20
Student Activities
Literary Societies

Philomathean &
Alethenai Societies

A SOCIETY HALL.
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

• Whist Parties

• Escaping into Champaign-Urbana (Billiards & Drinking to the consternation of the faculty)

"... the mayors of the cities of Champaign and Urbana be notified that a few of our students have been known to patronize billiard and drinking saloons, and that they be requested that the law is enforced which forbids keepers of saloons to receive the patronage of minors."

Faculty Minutes, 23 November 1868,
University of Illinois Archives
Faculty Record,
4/1/1
STUDENT PRANKS

• Usually targeted first-year students or the janitor

• Placing a freshman under a pump (soaking)

• One New Year’s reveler discharged a borrowed university musket in the hallway with an overcharge of gunpowder. The concussion blew out the window pane at the end of the corridor.

• Students frequently tossed pails of water and slop on the unsuspecting ascending the building staircase.

• In an adaptation of the tradition of taking the president’s horse and leading it up the staircase, Illinois students stole a local dairyman’s jersey and took it to the fifth floor. More than a prank - the students took care of the animal and utilized the milk until found out.

• Faculty records addressed the problem of students blowing bugles in the hallway at unwelcome hours of the night, another popular nineteenth-century prank.
DEPICTED LEVELS OF COLLEGIATE LIFE

PREPARATORY YEAR TO SENIOR YEAR

University of Illinois Archives
Otis W. Hoit Papers
1/20/1
Typical Student Notebook

University of Illinois Archives
Alice Cheever Notebooks, 1871-1875
41-30-4
“The Students”  
(College City)

Possibly Lyman F. Warner (1872)

University of Illinois Archives  
Examination Papers, 1875-1876  
41-30-20
“Learning & Labor”
Eva Bogardus, Class of 1877

University of Illinois Archives
Examination Papers, 1875-1876
41-30-20
“Enthusiastic Entomologist”

Walter Knibloe, Class of 1876
Agricultural Students, 1868
University of Illinois Archives
Photographic Subject File
39/2/20
Charles Wallace Silver, 1868
Second Student at the University

University of Illinois Archives
Alumni News Morgue File, 1867-1999
26/4/1
Botany Class, Summer 1869
University of Illinois Archives
Photographic Subject File
39/2/20, Box 105
Military Drill

“West Point for the Working World”
J.M. Gregory

Arthur Swannell, ca. 1879
I.I.U. Cadet Uniform

University of Illinois Archives
Minnie McAllister Album, 1879
41/20/5
Military Drill

“West Point for the Working World”
J.M. Gregory

University of Illinois Archives
Photographic Subject File
39/2/20
Students in Military Uniforms, 1872
University of Illinois Archives
Photographic Subject File
39/2/20
Store Fronts, north side of Main street and Neil showing muddy streets (Barrett Block)
Educating the Sons of Toil: How did the Original 1868 students perform at the University?
ORIGINAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

- 22 of the 77 enrollees listed no classes or exam scores on university records; early Faculty Records indicate concern that students were not completing examinations.

- The typical student attended for 1.6 years, averaging four terms.

- Student averaged eleven courses, completed nine, and averaged 80.5% on exam scores.
EXAMINATION AVERAGES BY ECONOMIC LEVEL

- Affluent: 84
- Moderate: 82
- No Data Available: 79
- Reduced: 76
Graduates of Illinois Industrial University
1868 Entering Class

No
83%

Yes
17%
First Graduating Class, 1872
University of Illinois Archives
Photographic Subject File
39/2/20
Educating the Sons of Toil: University of Illinois Student Firsts Diversification of the Student Body
Educating the Sons of Toil:
University of Illinois Student Firsts

Mary Frances Romine
Student Number 251, Entered 1870
First Women Enrolled at the University
Course of Study – “Elective”

Daughter of a Prominent Champaign County Farmer
Married fellow Illini, Hiram Powell Blackburn (Entered 1869)
Educating the Sons of Toil: University of Illinois Student Firsts

Gabriel Gregory Dabraskian
Student Number 392, Entered 1871
First International Student
Enrolled at the University

Course of Study - Agriculture

Armenia

University of Illinois Archives
John L Pierce Memory Book
26-30-4
TUNETARO YAMAOU
Student Number 677, Entered 1872
First Asian Student
Enrolled at the University

Course of Study – Not Specified

International student from JAPAN
EDUCATING THE SONS OF TOIL:
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS STUDENT FIRSTS

CARLOS “WAssAJA” MONTEZUMA
Student Number 1580, Entered 1882
First Native American Student Enrolled at the University
Course of Study - Chemistry
Educating the Sons of Toil: University of Illinois Student Firsts

Rodrigo AGUILERA
Student Number 1977, Entered 1885
First Latino Student
Enrolled at the University

Course of Study – Civil Engineering

Parral, Chihuahua, MEXICO
Educating the Sons of Toil: University of Illinois Student Firsts

Jonathan A. Rogan
Student Number 2189, Entered 1887
First African American Student
Enrolled at the University

Course of Study – Civil Engineering

By comparison, Henry Ossian Flipper was the first African American student at USMA – West Point, graduating a decade before Rogan’s attendance.
From 1868 to 1894

Student Demographics

• From 1868 to 1894 approximately 4,975 students enrolled; 81.6% male, 18.3% female

• The University steadily grew from 77 students in the spring of 1868, to 130 new students with the inclusion of women in 1870, to 416 new students in 1894.

• In the 1890s enrollment expanded substantially

• 68.8% of students were born in Illinois

• Average age at admission was 19.4 years

• 25% of attendees graduated from the University
Admission Residences, 1868 – 1894
Where did Students Come from?

17 International Students
Other popular courses were Natural History/Science; Chemistry; Commercial; English & Modern Languages.
Sesquicentennial reflections on 150 years of innovation and contribution by the University of Illinois

Notable Students
Professors & Physicians
Encouraged & inspired a young African American poet - Paul Laurence Dunbar - who gained national reputation.
To James Newton Matthews,

All round about, the clouds encompassed me;
On every side I looked, my weary sight
Was met by terrors of Plutonian night;
And chilling surges of a cruel sea
That beat against my stronghold ceaselessly,
Roared rude derision at my hapless plight;
And hope, which I had thought to hold so tight,
Slipped from my weak'ning grasp and floated free.

But when I thought to flee the unequal strife,
As wearied out I could not bear it more,
Fate gave the choicest gem of all her store, --
And noble Matthews came into my life.
He warmed my being like a virile flame,
And with his coming, light and courage came!
ANNETTA AYERS
Student Number 1556, Entered 1880
Course of Study – Literature & Science

Professor & Physician

Professor of Physiology and Obstetrics at the Women's Medical College in Chicago and the first woman on the medical staff at Cook County Medical Hospital

University of Illinois Archives
Annetta A Saunders Class Album
41/20/10
Professor & American Botanist

• First woman to hold a research position for the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station (Ohio State University)

• Her research focused on plant pathology problems, weed naturalization and control.

• Became Curator of the USC Herbarium in California
Politicians
James Henderson Kyle
Student Number 442, Entered 1871
Course of Study – Literature & Science

United States Senator
South Dakota
1891 - 1901
JAMES BENTON GRANT
Student Number 721, Entered 1872
Course of Study – Civil Engineering

Governor of Colorado
1883 - 1885
Willis Joshua Bailey
Student Number 708, Entered 1872
Course of Study – Agriculture

U.S. Congressman
Governor of Kansas
1901-1905
FRANK CHARLES WHITE
Student Number 1146, Entered 1876
Course of Study – Civil Engineering

Governor of North Dakota
1901-1905

Treasurer of the United States
1921-1928

University of Illinois Archives
Corda Lucas Album
41/20/6
ASHTON COKAYNE SHALLENBERGER
Student Number 1403, Entered 1879
Course of Study – Literature & Science

U.S. Congressman
Governor of Nebraska
1909-1911
Outlaws
Called the “Outlaw Statesman”

Rode with Billy the Kid’s gang, eventually leaving to serve the Chickasaw nation in Oklahoma

Designers & Dreamers
WILLIAM ALCIPHRON BORING
Student Number 1669, Entered 1881
Course of Study - Architecture

Co-Architect of the Second Ellis Island Immigration Station in New York
JOHN BUCK LEONARD
Student Number 1802, Entered 1883
Course of Study – Civil Engineering

Bridge Designer & Engineer

Early Advocate of Reinforced Concrete Structures after 1906 San Francisco Earthquake

Fernbridge, CA (Built 1911) – only bridge in 190 miles of the Eel river that has never been destroyed by floods – and it is the last bridge before the Pacific Ocean – taking the full force of the river at flood stage
HENRY BACON
Student Number 1934, Entered 1885
Course of Study - Architecture

Architect
Lincoln Memorial
Washington DC
Inventors & Industrialists
FREDERICK LEWIS HATCH
Student Number 181, Entered 1869
Course of Study - Agriculture

Credited with building first Grain Silo in America – a mainstay of the American Agricultural Landscape
LOUIS LATZER
Student Number 664, Entered 1872
Course of Study - Agriculture

President of PET Milk Company -
Credited with developing methods to
eliminate spoilage & enhance product

Source: Highland Historical
Society, Highland, IL
CHARLES WILLIAM POST
Student Number 200, Entered 1869
Course of Study – Military & Commercial

Founder
C.W. Post Cereal Company
A mainstay of American culture