

History of the name of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Names changes of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

University of Illinois Archives

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August, 2011

Illinois Industrial University and the Change to the University of Illinois

The University of Illinois began in 1867 as the Illinois Industrial University, a name with roots in the philosophy of higher education that led to the creation of land-grant universities. In an October 4, 1866 statement Jonathan Baldwin Turner, a long-time advocate of providing land-grants to states, for the purpose of raising funds to establish public universities, referred to institutions established under the 1862 Morrill Act as ‘Industrial Universities’ (University of Illinois Archives, Record Series 1/1/802, *First Report*, 1868, p. vii). On January 25, 1867 the Illinois General Assembly enacted legislation regarding the “location of the Industrial University” (1/1/802, *First Report*, 1868, p. 4). On Feb 28, 1867 the state Assembly enacted into law “An Act to provide for the organization and maintenance of the Illinois Industrial University” (1/1/802, *First Report*, 1868, p. 5).

By the late 1870s, the reference to the term “Industrial” began to encounter opposition. Nationally, the sentiment against modifiers in the naming of land-grant institutions was shared by many of the “agricultural” universities that had also been created following the Morrill Act. In addition, the term “industrial,” which was used by Illinois and one other institution was seen locally an “even greater handicap than ‘agricultural’” because it was seen as “either a reformatory or charitable institution in which compulsory manual labor figured prominently”(Solberg, *The University of Illinois, 1867-94*, p. 226-27).

On June 19, 1885, after lobbying from several individuals, including Illinois Industrial University Regent [President] Selim H. Peabody, Governor Richard J. Oglesby signed an act passed by the Illinois General Assembly providing “[t]hat the Illinois Industrial University, located at Urbana in Champaign County, shall after the passage of this act, be known as the University of Illinois.” The certified legislation was reported to and accepted by the Board of Trustees at the July 1, 1885 meeting. It ordered the creation of a new seal and engraving plates for diplomas(1/1/802, *Thirteenth Report*, 1884-86, pp. 44, 49).

Including Urbana-Champaign in the Name of the University

Although virtually the entire campus was located within the boundaries of Urbana, from the first days of the University print and correspondence materials inconsistently used either “Urbana” (more common) or “Champaign” (less common) for the postal designation. When President Edmund J. James arrived in 1904, he immediately launched plans to raise the University’s

national and international prominence, initiating many efforts to strengthen programs, build new research programs, and institutes or formalize departments. While many publications issued by the University continued to list the place of publication as simply “Urbana, Illinois,” University correspondence issued after 1905 increasingly bore the location of “Urbana-Champaign” on the letterhead. The exact reason is not entirely clear, but one factor may have been that to receive free mailing benefits, postal regulations needed the University to dedicate one address as being its official the address. In late summer and early fall of 1906, the Champaign Chamber of Commerce and other citizens of Champaign had taken issue with the University being designated as being solely in Urbana. Consequently, the issue became a topic of discussion in the editorial and letters columns of the local newspapers with many Champaign boosters arguing that Champaign should be included in the name as well. Urbana boosters retorted that if the bulk of the University (if not all of it) rested in Urbana, then the address on letters should list only “Urbana.” (*Urbana Courier*, Sept. 6, 1906, p. 4, col. 1; Oct. 19, 1906, p. 4, col. 2). The Urbana Commercial Club petitioned the Board of Trustees to reject the Champaign Chamber’s request, advancing arguments similar to those voiced in the *Courier*.¹

The request was discussed before the Board of Trustees in September of 1906 and was referred to a special committee consisting of President of the Board, President James, and Mrs. Busey. The issue does not appear to have been discussed formally by the board again, (1/1/802, *Twenty-Fourth Report*, 1906-1908, p.2), but soon after it had been referred to the committee, letters sent from the office of the president carried “Urbana-Champaign” in the dateline. The same place name was reflected in the published Board of Trustees *Reports*, where the text of letters reprinted in the minutes carried the “Urbana-Champaign” designation beginning in December of 1906 (1/1/802, *Twenty-Fourth Report*, 1906-08, p. 28; 1/1/802, *Twenty-Fifth Report*, 1908-10, pp. 25, 112, 114).

Subsequently, “Urbana-Champaign” was commonly used in communications to refer to the University, especially as operations of the medical campus in Chicago required more attention in administrative documents and meeting agenda. From November 1916, the Board of Trustees used “Urbana-Champaign” to identify the campus, and reports of itemized information, particularly concerning financial matters, were consistently broken down in terms of “Urbana-Champaign” and “Chicago” beginning in 1919 (1/1/802, *Thirtieth Report*, 1918-20, p. 441).

In the media as well, “Urbana-Champaign” was used to designate the campus. The *Chicago Tribune* used the term as early as Jan 5, 1913 to identify Eugene Davenport, Dean of the College of Agriculture, “a department of the state university at Urbana-Champaign” (*Chicago Tribune*, January 5, 1913, p. 6). The *Daily Illini* used the term as early as 1938 to refer to the enrollment numbers of the different University units (*Daily Illini*, February 13, 1938, p. 1 col. 6).

¹In response to charges that the University was slighting the city of Champaign, one particular editorial in the *Urbana Daily Courier* noted that the president’s office used Urbana-Champaign in the dateline of each letter sent (*Urbana Daily Courier*, Oct. 19, 1906, p. 4, col. 2).

Nevertheless, although many University Officers and members of the press referred to Urbana-Champaign when discussing the Champaign County campus, the name “University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign” was not formally codified until the 1960s.

While some people chose to invoke both cities in the datelines or signatures of their official correspondence, the use of Urbana-Champaign was not consistent among the administrators, and faculty/staff members. Several documents, such as title pages of Board of Trustee *Reports* or the *Register of the University of Illinois*, simply note the location as Urbana, presumably because the administrative offices were headquartered in Urbana. From the teens through the 1950s, “Urbana” is often listed the only place designation, other than “Illinois,” on publications, letterhead, and correspondence from colleges such as Agriculture, Engineering, and Liberal Arts and Sciences. Contrary to the number of instances of “Urbana-Champaign,” there are irregular instances where “Champaign-Urbana” was used. For example the University of Illinois Foundation’s Constitution, approved by the Board of Trustees on October 25, 1935, stated that the Foundation’s principal office “shall be on the main campus of the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana” (1/1/802, *Thirty-Eighth Report*, 1934-36, p. 442). Indeed, when the Board of Trustees proceedings for December 3, 1937 incorporated a verbatim transcription of a letter from the Foundation, the proceedings replicated their address line as “University of Illinois Foundation, University of Illinois, Champaign,-Urbana, Ill.” (1/1/802, *Thirty-Ninth Report*, 1936-38, p. 587). The Foundation was not the only entity affiliated with the University to identify itself as being part of the University of Illinois in this way. The text of the Trust Agreement and Lease for the Illini Union Building noted that the agreement was created “in order to provide the Illini Union Building for the students of the University on the Champaign-Urbana campus” (1/1/802, *Forty-First Report*, 1940-42, p. 35). Additionally, during the construction of what is today Willard Airport, the airport was referred to as the University of Illinois Airport at Champaign-Urbana (1/1/802, *Forty-Second Report*, 1942-44, pp. 359, 489, 491, 812, 847, 951). And finally, as the *Daily Illini* reported in October of 1938, when students broadcasting on WILL identified the station, they would report, “This is the radio service of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana” (*Daily Illini*, October 21, 1938, p. 4 col. 1). However, the predominant practice was to either cite simply “Urbana,” or “Urbana-Champaign.”

Identification of the Campus as a Distinct Unit in the University

As the University continued to grow and expand into different regions of the state, there was a need to specifically identify each location. A 1951 strategic planning document announced a proposal to bring Illinois institutions of higher education into a statewide university system. This plan specifically identified the following possible institutions: “the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Illinois at Chicago (to include as parallel units the present professional colleges and the proposed new campus), the University of Illinois at Normal, the University of Illinois at Carbondale, the University of Illinois at DeKalb, the University of Illinois at Macomb and the University of Illinois at Charleston” (1/1/802, *Forty-Sixth Report*, 1950-52, p. 637). While this plan never came to fruition, this document is the first mentioned in

the Board of Trustee Reports of both the “University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign” and the “University of Illinois at Chicago.”

With the growth of the University programs in Chicago, the medical programs in Chicago and the Chicago Undergraduate Division were made their own distinct campuses within the University of Illinois system. With the construction of new facilities for the Chicago Undergraduate Division, on April 17, 1964 the Board approved the name of the institution for undergraduate studies to be the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle with Chicago Circle being a reference to the interchange of the Kennedy, Eisenhower, and Dan Ryan Expressways, which the City designated as “Chicago Circle” (1/1/802, *Fifty-Second Report*, 1962-64, p. 1191).

While the elevation of the Chicago Undergraduate Division into a campus of its own clearly required explicit action on naming by the Board of Trustees, the continuation of the Urbana campus as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign did not engender a parallel direct action. However, the logical outcome of establishing a general Chicago campus was the need to establish chief executive officers for each. Thus, on June 15, 1966, the Board approved a proposal to create a “Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign” while simultaneously changing the titles of the “Vice-President” to “Chancellor” for the senior executives at the University of Illinois at the Medical Center and the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle (1/1/802, *Fifty-Third Report*, p. 1193). The Board document, as well as President Henry’s statement are unambiguous in the use of “Urbana-Champaign” to refer to the institution located in Champaign County.

As the Chicago campuses evolved, the Board decided on November 19, 1981 to unite the Medical Center and Chicago Circle campuses under the leadership of one chancellor and to designate this institution as the University of Illinois at Chicago. This decision was effective in September of 1982 (1/1/802, *Sixty-First Report*, 1980-82, p. 416).

Another official action related to the identification of University of Illinois campuses occurred in June of 1995, when Sangamon State University in Springfield was integrated into the University of Illinois System. Accompanying this integration was a formal designation of that campus by the Board of Trustees as the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS). The preface for the action also used the acronyms UIUC and UIC to describe the Urbana and Chicago campuses respectively. (1/1/802, *Sixty-Eighth Report*, 1994-96, p. 298).

Following the formal designation of the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1964 and the 1966 formal creation of a chancellor for the “University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign” there was significantly increased adoption of “Urbana-Champaign” to identify the campus. This can be seen in the Official Course Catalogs and Programs of Study printed during the time of great organizational shifting within the University –the four years from 1966-1969. In the publication for 1966-67 (printed in May 1966), the title page reads, “The University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.” and there is no mention of a Chancellor in the pages of this publication. In the next year, 1967-

68, the title page reads the same as the previous year, but included in the pages is the identification of the “Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.” For 1968-69 the cover of the publication includes the words, “Urbana-Champaign Campus” and the note regarding the Chancellor is included, but the title page reads just as the previous two. Finally, in the 1969-1970 publication, the title page reads “The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign” and this manner of identification continues for the duration of the printed course catalogs and programs of study 2002-04 (25/3/801, box4).

UIUC as a Means of Identifying the Campus

Seeing that the course catalogs identify the campus as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign beginning in the academic year 1969-70, it is no surprise that an acronym soon gained wide usage. Perhaps the first university authorized use of the acronym UIUC was in the media in 1973 Daily Illini announcements about campus happenings that are called, “UIUC Official Notice” (*Daily Illini*, March 8, 1973, p. 16, col. 1-2). The Chicago Tribune referred to the campus acronym beginning in 1977 (*Chicago Tribune*, October 19, 1977, p. B6). The first appearance of the acronym UIUC in the Board of Trustee *Reports* occurs in 1979 with one occurrence in the Sixtieth Report (1/1/802, *Sixtieth Report*, 1978-80, p. 298). From this point the use of UIUC increased, for example with 8 instances of UIUC being found in the Sixty-Eighth report for 1994-96, the last for which the Archives has globally searchable electronic copies (1/1/802, *Sixty-Eighth Report*, 1994-96).

In the over 100 years since the idea of Urbana-Champaign (as opposed to Urbana, Champaign, or Champaign-Urbana or some other designation) as the location designator on communications was proposed, that idea seems to have resonated with University administrators, trustees, faculty members, journalists, and members of the public, and as use of term grew steadily through the 20th century. It has now been 60 years since the first mention of the title “University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign” made its way into the official record of the University. And it has been nearly 45 years since the Chicago and Urbana-Champaign units became autonomous campuses within the statewide system, necessitating a clear way of identifying which University of Illinois is the subject of discussion.

Although no single document or an official statement neatly designated the University campus in Champaign County as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Nevertheless, this nomenclature provides the most fitting designation for the comprehensive and internationally-respected University that evolved from its humble beginnings as the Illinois Industrial University.