The Development of a Research Mission
In Urban State Universities
In Post-World II America:
The Case of Fenn College

IHELG Monograph
06-07

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University of Houston Law Center/Institute for Higher Education Law and Governance (IHELG)

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INTRODUCTION

American higher education experienced explosive growth in the aftermath of World War II. Driven initially by Public Law 346, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (or GI Bill), and later by the demographic tidal wave of the Baby Boom generation, and aided enormously by the sea change in federal science and education policy after the war, American higher education in this period was characterized by enrollment growth, program growth, plant expansion, the establishment of new institutions and the emergence of two new sectors: the public community colleges and the urban state universities. Few could have predicted that by the turn of the millennium more than 3,500 two-year and four-year degree-granting institutions of higher education would enroll more than 15 million students. Even less predictable at the dawn of the post-World War II era of mass higher education, foreshadowed by the 1947 Truman Commission Report, was the growth and evolution of the urban state universities sector of American higher education. These urban universities, coupled with the rapidly expanding community colleges sector, offered unparalleled access and opportunity to millions of American college students.

1 Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Anaheim, California, November 2006. No portion of this paper may be reproduced without the written consent of the author.
This paper focuses on the emergence and evolution of Cleveland State University, which was created in 1965 when the Ohio Board of Regents acquired Fenn College, a private four-year institution in Cleveland. It is part of a larger study of the development of research missions in two urban state universities, Wayne State University and Cleveland State University, in the post-World War II period. The focus of the study was to explore the connections between the evolution of the doctoral education and research mission in these institutions and the influences of their external environment (e.g., their competitors, accrediting agencies, and the state and federal governments). The aim was to shed some light on the roots of this sector of American higher education by focusing on the transition of these two universities to state university status and the evolution of their research missions in the period ending in 1975.

American higher education institutions have developed a variety of missions over the years. The Peter F. Drucker Foundation’s Leader to Leader Institute defines “mission” as “why you do what you do; the organization's reason for being, its purpose.”

Millet defines mission as a “determination of purposes.” The mission captures the organization’s essential nature, its values and its work. This study focused on one element of the tripartite mission that is commonly associated with higher education institutions today, namely graduate education and research. Teaching and service, two other components of modern university and college missions, were tangential. Focusing on the 25 years following World War II, the study was designed to map the institutional evolution of these two universities in the context of the postwar period generally, and the


expansion of their doctoral program and research missions specifically, in order to shed some light on the roots of this new sector of American higher education.

While higher education institutions in the U.S. have articulated a variety of missions over time, Riesman noted nearly fifty years ago a tendency for colleges and universities to expand their mission in imitation of the perceived industry leaders, or to engage in the process of “academic drift” or “mission creep.” Riesman noted that, “in education it is perhaps not as easy as in manufacturing to say who is the leader, who is at the top, or which way is up: there is no World Series or All-American team,” but nevertheless argued that,

it may be illuminating to see the avant-garde, both educational and more generally cultural, as the head of a snake-like procession – the head of which is often turning back upon itself, as at present, while the middle part seeks to catch up with where the head once was. When the middle part becomes aware, which doesn’t always happen, that the position of the head has shifted, it may try to turn in two directions at once.\(^5\)

Morphew and Huisman, in describing academic drift as the increasing homogenization and decreasing diversity of higher education systems around the world, noted in 2002 that “in any number of state and national higher education systems, colleges and universities are growing more alike over time as smaller, newer, less comprehensive institutions become more like their larger, older, more comprehensive peers.”\(^6\) Expansion of the graduate education component of university missions also has been the subject of

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\(^4\) David Riesman, *Constraint and Variety in American Education* (Lincoln, Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 1956), 23.

\(^5\) Ibid., 25.

scholarly attention. Aldersley argues, for example, that “upward drift,” or the “tendency for [higher education] institutions to introduce higher-level programs, causing a marked increase in the overall number of research and doctoral institutions,” remains apparent today. In an empirical study on changes in an earlier Carnegie Classification system (see Table 1), Aldersley divides public and private research universities into four groups

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<td>R-I</td>
<td>R-II</td>
<td>D-I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research I</td>
<td>Publics</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>Privates</td>
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<td>Research II</td>
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<td>Research IV</td>
<td>Publics</td>
<td>37</td>
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(Research I through Research IV), based on scholarly production and other criteria and demonstrates that “program creep” (i.e., adding higher level programs) occurred at many schools. From 1976 to 1994, for example, more than 50% of the D-II institutions had

moved up into a higher classification, suggesting that “once an institution has embarked on doctorate-level education, the chances are better than even that it will not remain satisfied with one or two doctoral programs and a small number of graduates.”

In commenting on Riesman’s concept of the snake-like progression of American higher education, Ogren argues, “in addition to institutionalizing gender, race, and class bias, the academic progression has implicitly shaped the historiography of higher education. As this field has grown in the decades following Riesman’s observations, historians have assumed that the story of elite institutions captures the history of higher education.” Riesman, of course, did not discuss the normal schools, the subject of Ogren’s work, nor the urban state universities, the subject of this study. In fact, he stated clearly that he was not considering “those institutions so far below the level of current discourse as not to be faced with pressures for improvement, but about those near enough the top in one league or another to be influenced.”

This study aimed to broaden the historiography of American higher education, as noted above, by tracing the historical evidence of academic drift at two institutions that are part of the urban state universities sector, a significantly understudied sector of American higher education.

Three conclusions may be drawn from the data of this study. First, mission expansion did, in fact, occur at both of these institutions. Analysis of the evidence drawn from the archives of these institutions, as well as from a variety of secondary sources, demonstrates that substantial mission creep did occur, albeit at different times at each

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8 Ibid., 56.
10 Riesman, *Constraint and Variety*, 29, emphasis added.
school and with varying evolutionary paths. The histories suggest that this mission creep was driven, in part, by institutional leaders aspiring to change their institutions.

Second, of perhaps greater significance in shaping the graduate education and research elements of their missions was the role played by leaders of organizations and agencies in the external environment, especially the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and the Ohio Board of Regents, which repeatedly imposed their views about mission on these universities. Concerns about legitimacy, the very strongly taken-for-granted nature of organizational structures and missions in higher education, and coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic forces in the environment go far toward explaining the nature and reasons for the mission creep at Wayne State and Cleveland State.

The third and most significant conclusion is that the administrative and faculty leadership of both Wayne State and Cleveland State stayed focused on the development of the research and graduate education missions at their respective institutions despite the extremely turbulent environment of the post-World War II era. These two urban state universities chose to adopt the “look and feel” of most other research institutions, developing a graduate education and research mission and the organizational structures supporting that mission nearly identical to the elite research universities, almost without thought for their urban location. Given all that was happening in the cities of which they were a part, the power of the forces pushing these two institutions toward organizational conformity is striking.
A WORD ON METHODS

The mode of inquiry employed in this research centered on historical methods. The historical account of the emergence and evolution of the research and graduate education mission at Cleveland State University is in the form of a descriptive and interpretive narrative. The study employed case study methodology and utilized concepts from institutional theory (e.g., isomorphism and legitimacy) as the analytical lens through which the history of this school was viewed. The intentional use of a theoretical perspective to guide historical research is not common. In fact, as Lears suggests,

it is no secret that Anglo-American historiography has shown a persistent hostility to theory. At every turn, writers hear the constant refrain: do not ‘impose your own framework’ on the past, let the historical actors speak for themselves, understand them through the categories and idioms they created for themselves."11

As Isaac and Griffin argue, however, “theory cannot be rigidly separated from history. Indeed, in very important ways the ‘historical’ is ‘theoretical’ and the ‘theoretical’ is ‘historical’.”12 They suggest that the application of theory to historical research simply requires recognition that history and theory are interdependent, noting social scientists and historians have long recognized that theory and history are interdependent representations of the social world...Historical facts and ‘evidence’ are neither obvious nor predetermined. As conceptual and analytical

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constructions, they ‘say’ only as much as analysts ask of them, and what analysts ask is a matter of theoretical purpose.\textsuperscript{13}

Institutional theory posits that elements of formal structure in organizations (e.g., doctoral programs and a graduate school) are a function of powerful institutionalized rules with “taken-for-granted” legitimacy that function as myths binding an organization to a particular “look and feel.”\textsuperscript{14} Organizations are structured by phenomena in their environments and tend to become isomorphic with other organizations in the environment as a way to obtain legitimacy and thus resources.

Institutional theory in economics suggests that organizational fields (i.e., aggregates of organizations that produce similar products or services) are structured by government regulation and the demands of the professions such that organizational structures become homogeneous despite efficiency concerns. The institutional context drives organizational behavior as organizations strive to accommodate institutional expectations. Institutional pressures (ideas, values, norms, beliefs, and rules) provide “templates for organizing”\textsuperscript{15} or “archetypal patterns”\textsuperscript{16} that lead organizations in a population to adopt the same (or similar) organizational forms. Economic institutionalists distinguish three types of institutional elements: the regulative, based on coercion; the normative, based on standards and rules; and the cognitive, based on legitimacy.\textsuperscript{17}

Institutional theory in sociology suggests that organizations become isomorphic because of informal rather than formal constraints. As university presidents and members of their faculty attend conferences and participate in professional organizations, they

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 882.
\textsuperscript{14} Meyer and Rowan, “Institutional Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony.”
\textsuperscript{15} Powell and DiMaggio, \textit{The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis}.
\textsuperscript{16} Greenwood and Hinings, “Understanding Strategic Change: The Contribution of Archetypes.”
\textsuperscript{17} Scott, \textit{Institutions and Organizations}. 

enter a domain of on-going social relationships, and the resulting social matrix comprises the basis of informal constraints. When they make decisions about how to structure a graduate program or jump start a research function, they turn to these social relationships as a source or information on organizing. Their choice sets are constrained by the webs of interrelated rules and norms that govern their social relationships. The resulting structures and processes thus tend to be isomorphic with those in peer institutions.

According to institutional theory, colleges and universities are considered "institutional organizations" that use ambiguous technologies to produce outputs that are hard to measure in terms of quality or value. The outputs of these institutional organizations are judged not on criteria of efficiency, as are their for-profit counterparts, but rather on whether they incorporate the "correct" programs and structures acceptable in their organizational fields so that they are viewed – both internally and externally – as legitimate.

The unit of analysis of the study is organizations. Data were drawn from both primary and secondary sources, located primarily in the University Archives at Cleveland State, and from a conversation with Dr. William Patterson, who began his career at Fenn College in 1936 and served as the last Provost at Fenn and the first Provost at Cleveland State. Primary sources for this study included presidential papers, faculty and administrative committees and Board of Trustees meeting minutes, faculty papers, enrollment and graduation records, degree program records, budgets, letters, speeches, newspaper articles, college catalogues and bulletins, college newspapers and yearbooks, and legislative records. Most of these are classified as qualitative data, although some quantitative data (e.g., enrollments) also were collected and analyzed. Dr. Patterson
confirmed portions of the data found in the archives at Cleveland State, while adding new, personal insights. Secondary sources included the largely celebratory institutional history authored by G. Brooks Ernest, the third and final president of Fenn College.

FENN COLLEGE – FOUNDATIONS

The Cleveland YMCA was founded in 1854 and began offering intermittent French and German language classes in 1870, and evening classes, including elocution, business law, bookkeeping, French, German, Latin and art in 1881. By 1906, when day school classes began and the combined programs were named the Association Institute, the Cleveland Y was offering a varied curriculum of industrial education (business, engineering, and automotive), general education (algebra, geometry, chemistry, and literary science) and art. By 1909, the Y’s educational activities were organized into the School of Commerce and Finance (“prepares for a business career”), the Technical School (“prepares for industrial life, drafting and electrical positions”), the Preparatory School (“prepares for colleges, commercial, technical, law, medical, dental or high school”), and the Special School (“for young men and boys who feel out of place in high schools; who have lost time through sickness; who are too big for their grade; etc.”), dubbed the “Department of Misfits,” and having 19 students in the first class.

In 1921, the YMCA Board of Governors re-named the educational branch and all of its programs The Cleveland YMCA School of Technology, which became known locally as Y-Tech. Cecil V. Thomas, the first president of Y-Tech, received approval from the Ohio Department of Education in July 1921 for the conferring of the Bachelor

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18 G. Brooks Ernest, A History of Fenn College.
19 Ibid., 11.
of Commercial Science degree. In announcing this approval, Vernon M. Riegel, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, noted that the curriculum included “76 semester hours of work of collegiate grade” and that the “faculty and other facilities for administering said degree course are deemed satisfactory and adequate.”

Harvey C. Smith, the Ohio Secretary of State, confirmed this degree-granting power in September 1921 following Y-Tech’s submission of its schedule of property.

The Board of Trustees adopted the name Fenn College of the Cleveland YMCA School of Technology in December 1929 to designate the college-level work now being offered. During this period, Y-Tech developed a cooperative engineering program, modeled after programs at Akron University and Boston’s Northeastern University. The co-op program was to prove to be Fenn’s differential advantage in its competition for students with the four other private colleges in Cleveland. The Board also erected the Fenn Building in 1928, providing the first modern facility for Y-Tech.

The College of Engineering at Y-Tech was approved to confer the degree of Bachelor of Science in Engineering in January 1927 and the authority was extended to the evening division in July 1931. The State of Ohio also approved the conferring of the Bachelor of Business Administration degree in January 1927.

\[\text{20} \quad \text{Vernon M. Riegel, Letter to Whom it May Concern, July 14, 1921, 1, Folder: Accreditation – Ohio Department of Education, 1919-1937, University Archives, Cleveland State University (hereafter UA-CSU).}\\
\[\text{21} \quad \text{Harvey C. Smith, Letter to Cecil V. Thomas, September 2, 1921, 1, Folder: Accreditation – Ohio Department of Education, 1919-1937, UA-CSU.}\\
\[\text{22} \quad \text{G. Brooks Earnest, A History of Fenn College, 69.}\\
\[\text{23} \quad \text{Director of Education, Letter to Whom it May Concern, January 3 14, 1927, 1, Folder: Accreditation – Ohio Department of Education, 1919-1937, UA-CSU.}\\
\[\text{24} \quad \text{L.L. Louthiam, Letter to Cecil V. Thomas, July 14, 1931, 1, Folder: Accreditation – Ohio Department of Education, 1919-1937, UA-CSU.}\\
\[\text{25} \quad \text{Cecil V. Thomas, Letter to E.L. Bowsher, Ohio Director of Education, September 23, 1936, 1, Folder: Accreditation – Ohio Department of Education, 1919-1937, UA-CSU.}\\
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Arts received degree-granting authority in March 1935.\textsuperscript{26} In a letter to the Secretary of State in May 1937, E.L. Bowsher, the Ohio Director of Education, announced his approval of the conferring by Fenn College of the Bachelor of Science degree, noting, "inspectors from my office have visited the college and report that the faculty, library, buildings material equipment and ratio of instructors to students are such as to guarantee effective instruction."\textsuperscript{27}

The North Central Association, however, was not as sanguine about the quality of Fenn College. Fenn filed an application for membership in the North Central Association in October 1934. The application noted that the Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction had found Fenn's program to be "satisfactory as courses of study leading to the designated degrees, that the faculty and facilities are adequate, and that the college is therefore authorized to grant the designated degrees."\textsuperscript{28} The application noted that there were 35 full-time members of the instructional staff (including, as required by the NCA, the presidents, deans, directors, librarian and registrar). Of those, only five had earned doctoral degrees and 20 held the master's degrees. While the number of graduates had risen substantially over the previous four years (see Table 2), the number of full-time students had held steady at about 500 and both retention and persistence were on-going problems.

\textsuperscript{26} B.O. Skinner, Letter to Cecil V. Thomas, March 4, 1935, 1, Folder: Accreditation – Ohio Department of Education, 1919-1937, UA-CSU.
Table 2: Fenn College Full-Time Students and Graduates Receiving Diplomas or Degrees, 1929-1930 to 1933-1934

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1929-1930</th>
<th>1930-1931</th>
<th>1931-1932</th>
<th>1932-1933</th>
<th>1933-1934</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Juniors</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cleveland State University Archives

In a letter to President Thomas (who may or may not have appreciated the irony) dated April 1, 1935, George A. Works, Secretary of the NCA, informed the President that the Board of Review would take up the Fenn application at its meeting of April 9th, but also provided a list of items the Board would want to discuss with him. This included, among the 10 items listed,

unproven effectiveness of the institution for achieving its avowed and its implied purpose . . . unsatisfactory academic record keeping . . . the unusually large dependence on student fees as a source of income . . . unsatisfactory conditions in the library . . . [and] the unsuitable nature of some parts of the physical plant.29

Perhaps suggesting that this letter foreshadowed the eventual outcome, the NCA voted to decline Fenn’s application for initial accreditation, although the Board of Review noted “the particularly good presentation that you made of the college before the

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Board” and expressed “its interest in the future of the college and the belief that it shows promise.”

The NCA visiting team called Fenn “a most interesting institution,” congratulated the College on “the educational daring that has characterized their experimentation with a new type of collegiate program,” and noted, “the outstanding characteristic of the college is the measure of attention which is given to the individual student and the evaluation of the students’ experience while on cooperative placement.” In addition to criticizing Fenn along the lines suggested in Works’ letter of April 1st, however, the report noted that the College did not have an independent governing board. The election of the first Board of Trustees of Fenn College on December 12, 1934 did not satisfy the criteria of the NCA, which cited the co-mingling of the governing boards and the subservience of the Fenn Board of Trustees to the Association Board in its rejection of Fenn’s application.

Dr. William Paterson, who served Fenn College and later Cleveland State University from 1936 to 1972, recalled a story he had heard about this visit of the NCA Examiners upon first arriving at Fenn as a mathematics instructor in 1936.

I’ll never forget the time North Central came for its first visit. They didn’t approve us on their first visit. But on their first visit, they the president... Dr Thomas proudly showed our library. But our library was a room probably twice as big as this [the living room of Patterson’s small apartment] with a lot of books on the shelves. Just a conglomerate of anything they could drag up. And the

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30 George A. Works, Letter to President Thomas, April 19, 1935, 1, Folder: Accreditation – North Central Association, 1934-1936, UA-CSU.
North Central person who was in charge of the examination said, 'Well, this is a nice room. Now where is the library?'  

Fenn College applied again for membership in the NCA in the fall of 1939. NCA Examiners President L.B. Hopkins and Alphonse M. Schwitalla, S.J. conducted the site visit March 11 and 12, 1940. In their draft report, Hopkins and Schwitalla noted that Fenn College “has taken literally phenomenal strides since the previous inspection by the North Central Examiners in 1935,” including incorporation as a separate entity, the acquisition of a new building, the centralization of many administrative functions (e.g., the registrar’s office and the business office), improvements in the quality of instruction and reorganization of the curriculum. A number of significant deficiencies were cited by the Examiners, however, including lack of selectivity in the admission of students; unclear control by the Fenn Board of Trustees, since the ex officio members gave the YMCA Board a majority vote; unclear status of the presidency of Fenn, whose incumbent was also the General Secretary of the Cleveland YMCA; debt amounting to nearly a quarter of a million dollars, which the Examiners noted “can scarcely be considered a negligible factor in the institution;” the reliance on part-time teachers “without adequate integration in the general faculty;” and the number of library holdings. The report concluded,  

the examiners are greatly impressed with the developments which have taken place at Fenn College. Nevertheless, in view of the situation which has been

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32 William D. Patterson, Transcript of Conversation With the Researcher and the Cleveland State University Archivist, August 11, 2005, 3.
34 Ibid., 44.
35 Ibid.
summarized above, particularly the incomplete autonomy of the Board, the debt and the lack of clarity in the extremely complex educational program of the institution, the Examiners find themselves regretfully forced to recommend that accreditation of this school be withheld for the time being.36

While the archival records are incomplete with respect to what transpired between issuance of the draft report of the NCA Examiners and the NCA vote in April 1940, it is clear that Fenn College was approved for membership for a two-year probationary period at that meeting. As a condition of its probationary status, the NCA appointed an advisory committee to supervise the continued development of Fenn. In 1941, Fenn prepared a statement of developments that had occurred during the two years of the probationary period. In their January 1942 report to the NCA, the Committee on Fenn College concluded,

Fenn College is a distinctive institution, different in many respects from the typical college of its size. It has deliberately adopted many unusual features [e.g., the co-op model of higher education] in order to provide a unique type of service to its students. . . The Committee believes that Fenn College must be judged in the light of the fixed policy of the North Central Association, to consider institutions with regard to their success in achieving their individual objectives rather than with regard to their conformity to any standard pattern [the NCA’s new standard, as described above].37

36 Ibid., 46.
Applying this standard, the Committee declared, “Fenn College is worthy of accreditment (sic) by the North Central Association. The institution has no more need for special supervision over its general program from the North Central Association.”

Fenn did not grapple at this point in its history with the issues of research and graduate programs and their role in the mission of the institution. As William Patterson recalled,

it was really too much work. I couldn’t devote any time to research. It was difficult to do it with 17 hours [the weekly teaching load at the time]. I published a paper... I have a copy in there if you want... It was called “Inverse Problems of the Calculus of the Problems of Multiple Integrals.” It was published for the American Mathematical Society, which is one of the prestigious journals. And, I think that was the only publication that I knew of that anyone published at the time I was teaching.39

That is not to say that the faculty and administration at Fenn did not struggle to improve their programs and clarify their mission. William Patterson recalled Fenn during this era as a rather limited institution, but one whose president, Cecil V. Thomas (who served in that capacity for two decades), had serious aspirations for its future.

I started in September of 1936. I taught all of the various subjects. At that time Fenn was very largely and just an engineering school. It hardly had an arts school at all and it had a very, very modest sized business school. The math department was in the college of engineering, which is a little unusual. It’s usually in the college of arts and sciences, so that was because we were predominantly an

38 Ibid.
39 Patterson, Transcript of Conversation, 4.
engineering school. We were just trying our wings. We were just getting started.

*We were hardly recognized. We didn’t have the accreditation of a barber college at that time.* But, I was an instructor for 7 years, and during that time I was involved in a lot of work on admission standards and educational standards and *devising programs for the College that we thought might enhance its reputation* and so on. And we went through the process of North Central accreditation… and so on.⁴⁰

As World War II engulfed America and most of the Western world, Fenn College was a religious-affiliated college struggling to define and articulate its undergraduate co-op education model and to maintain a sufficient enrollment to keep the College’s doors open (it did not enroll 1,000 day students until 1940). It was engaged, however, in a variety of legitimacy-seeking activities during this period, particularly efforts to win recognition by external agencies, including accreditation from the North Central Association and recognition by the Engineers’ Council for Professional Development. Administrators and faculty believed – and responded to – the normative and coercive isomorphic forces of their accrediting agency and of the organizational field in which they were embedded.

During the next phase of its evolution, the transition to state university status, Fenn College would continue to evolve its missions. Academic drift, or mission creep, would also take root as Fenn morphed almost overnight into Cleveland State University. The demands of NCA to confirm to specific university standards and criteria would continue to be in evidence during the transition phase.

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⁴⁰ Patterson, Transcript of conversation, 3, emphasis added.
FENN COLLEGE – TRANSITION

Fenn College had become a private, independent four-year higher education institution when the YMCA spun off its college-level educational programs in 1951. Between 1951 and 1960, the College's headcount enrollment grew from 4,350 (690 day, 3,660 evening) to 6,348 (1,173 day, 5,175 evening), or about 46%. Operating income increased from about $1,275,000 to about $2,541,000, and alumni annual contributions rose from $1,716 to $113,091, although the College operated only on a break-even basis in terms of net income. Faculty annual salaries increased from less than $5,000 to nearly $8,000 during this decade.41

When Fenn became an independent institution in 1951, the campus consisted of Fenn Tower at the corner of Euclid Avenue and 24th Street, purchased in 1937; Foster Hall, built with funds contributed by Claude Foster in 1947; four Quonset huts serving as temporary classrooms; and a parking area provided by the adjacent YMCA. The College purchased the Ohio Motors Building (an automobile dealership) in 1953, the White Apartments in 1954 (lost to the City of Cleveland and the Ohio Department of Highways through condemnation as part of the Inner Belt Freeway construction project. 42 and the George and Jon Sadd property on the east side of 24th Street for construction of a dormitory, a $110,000 deal that closed in January 1961. 43

The expansion of the campus, particularly building a new dormitory, also had mission implications that were debated by the Provost's Cabinet in the fall of 1960.

41 Earnest, A History of Fenn College.
43 See Minutes of the Fenn College Board of Trustees, January 29, Fenn Board of Trustee Minutes 1959-1960, UA-CSU; and Minutes of the Fenn College Board of Trustees, September 22, 1960, Fenn Board of Trustee Minutes 1960-1961, UA-CSU.
Based on enrollment estimates included in the *Integrated Plan of Fenn College*, which was developed as a blueprint to guide the College's decision-making several years before the issue of state status arose, the Fenn administration originally contemplated adding three new residence facilities between 1960 and 1970. The *Integrated Plan* outlined a six-point program for the decade, including increasing enrollment to 3,600 day students and 7,000 evening students (from about 1,400 and 5,000, respectively, in 1960) and building two new lecture halls and three new residence halls, along with an administration building and a service building.  

Patterson noted in an October 1960 discussion of dormitories that the *Integrated Plan* "stressed the role of Fenn in educating youth for Cleveland business and industry. Therefore we could not justify changing the character of the institution by increasing the proportion of out-of-town students." Members of the Cabinet pointed out, on the other hand, that Western Reserve had built residence halls "just in time to prevent a decline in enrollment when it could no longer get commuting students in adequate numbers" and that local competitors John Carroll University and Case Institute of Technology had quickly followed suit. After months of debate, the Cabinet recommended to the Board of Trustees that a single, 350-bed dormitory should be constructed.

Fenn did not substantially expand its programmatic mission during this period. The *Fenn College Bulletin* issued in March 1950 still listed the three schools of Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, and Engineering, and each had a statement of purpose with language similar to the earlier bulletins. While a history of Fenn College now was

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44 "The Integrated Plan of Fenn College," Fenn College (January 4, 1960), UA-CSU.
45 Minutes of the Fenn College Board of Trustees, October 19, 1960, 2, Fenn Board of Trustee Minutes 1960-1961, UA-CSU.
46 Minutes of the Fenn College Board of Trustees, October 25, 1960, 2, Fenn Board of Trustee Minutes 1960-1961, UA-CSU.
presented, there was no overall college mission statement. The 1950 catalogue for the evening division noted that, "the world is not interested in four years spent on an elm-shaded campus. What it seeks are the fruits of education." Instead, the bulletin stated, "the evening division at Fenn is designed for that purpose [i.e., 'making higher education available to the young man or woman who goes directly from high school into business or industry'] and adapted to it through years of experience."

Into the early 1960s, as the administration and faculty of Fenn College were beginning to discuss the feasibility of continuing as a private institution, the College’s bulletin still was articulating its mission as a combination of vocational and cultural objectives in a cooperative education context. The 1960-1962 bulletin for the day division, for example, stated,

> ideas are the beginnings of things. Men have ideas, and then they must mold them, change them, work them into the solid, real things of the everyday world.

Fenn College follows this pattern as the basis for its programs of cooperative education. Students and teachers wrestle with ideas and theories in the classroom; then the students take jobs during their cooperative work quarters.

The only real mission expansion at Fenn during this period was a joint venture with the Huron Road Hospital. The Hospital’s Board of Trustees voted in June 1961 to approve the transfer of the nursing school faculty to Fenn College. Fenn planned to take control of the School of Nursing in the fall of 1962. The plan fell through, however,

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49 Ibid.
51 See Minutes of the Fenn College Board of Trustees, June 7, 1961, Fenn Board of Trustee Minutes 1960-1961, UA-CSU; and January 29, 1962, Fenn Board of Trustee Minutes 1961-1962, UA-CSU.
“because the College could not afford the additional cost” and because of a lack of applications “attributed to the announced tuition increase and lack of accreditation”, although Fenn continued to provide courses for Huron’s nursing program.\textsuperscript{52}

The North Central Association, on the other hand, continued to expand its reach. In July 1958, Fenn sought membership in the American Association of University Women (AA UW). In replying to this petition, Eunice C. Roberts, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education, noted that they had established an agreement with the National Commission on Accrediting that the AA UW would not “study for membership-eligibility approval any institution which has not been accredited or reaccredited since 1948” and that “it is our understanding that you have not been reaccredited by your regional since 1948.”\textsuperscript{53} It is unclear from the evidence whether Fenn then petitioned the NCA for an accreditation visit, as Brooks claimed in a June 1959 memorandum to the Board of Trustees, or whether the visit was under the aegis of the ten-year re-accreditation process adopted by the NCA. In any case, a three-person team chaired by Perry E. Gresham, President of Bethany College in West Virginia, made their visit to Fenn on April 14 and 15, 1959.

In their report delivered to the NCA in May 1959, the team commended Fenn for its performance of “an unusually effective service both to American Higher Education and to the American economy [since] very few institutions are as well integrated with local industry.”\textsuperscript{54} They recommended the appointment of an academic vice president

\textsuperscript{52} Minutes of the Fenn College Board of Trustees, April 18, 1962, 2, emphasis added, Fenn Board of Trustee Minutes 1961-1962, UA-CSU.


(Patterson became the first Provost in 1960) and an increase in the library budget and collection. They also sounded a cautionary note about the College’s finances, stating in closing, “the financial resources appear to be adequate as long as the economy does not suffer severe recession.” In a letter to President Earnest enclosing the team’s report, Donald H. Mackenzie, Associate Secretary of the NCA, stated merely that he hoped Earnest would “find the suggestions in it of value to you as you plan for the further development of the Fenn program.”

The Board of Trustees created a Special Committee on the Ten-Year Plan in 1961 and the Provost’s Cabinet spent the next few months developing a long-term financial plan. The enrollment figures underlying the financial plan included four estimates: a basic enrollment estimate of 2,850 day students and 5,500 evening students in 1969-70; an estimate based on competition from a community college of 2,250 day students and 3,300 evening students; an estimate based on competition from a community college and state university branches of 2,250 day students (i.e., they assumed no effect of the branches on day enrollment because they would operate in suburban high schools) and 3,000 evening students; and an estimate based on competition from a four-year tax-assisted institution of 1,900 day students and 2,500 evening students. The ten-year plan projected an operating deficit that would grow from about $110,000 to nearly $1,000,000 unless substantial endowment funds were raised.

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55 Ibid., 4.
58 Earnest, A History of Fenn College, 572-573.
Clearly, the Cabinet recognized that the advent of a state institution in Cleveland would have serious consequences for Fenn, driven as it was almost entirely by student tuition and fee revenue. They also were concerned with the history and future of endowment at Fenn as they were preparing the ten-year plan. Establishing an endowment, however, had suffered “because we have been engrossed in raising capital funds for the building program” and because the “low caliber” of the Board of Trustees meant that “the Balanced Budget has become a fetish” while the operation of the College “has been held to an economy of impoverishment.”

The Provost’s Cabinet presented its report to the Board of Trustees in April 1962. The report noted that, in the period since the Cabinet’s report of the impact on Fenn of a tax-assisted college in Cleveland in March 1961 recommended that Fenn seek to combine a tax-assisted lower division with an independent upper division, the community college bill adopted by the Ohio Legislature had eliminated this option. Consequently, the Cabinet now believed that Fenn had to remain private, noting in the report, “the conclusion appears inescapable that adequate endowment is the price of our survival as a private college.” The report described the weaknesses of Fenn, including the limited instructional budget (e.g., a meager library budget, heavy teaching schedules and a small number of faculty with terminal degrees) and an inadequate physical plant (e.g., the lack of lounges, a gymnasium and dormitory dining facilities). The report also documented increased competition from the imminent opening of a community college, five Kent State University and one Ohio State University branch campuses in the

59 Ibid., 2.
61 Ibid., 1.
Cleveland Metropolitan area (as well as a technician training program at the Max S. Hayes Industrial School operated by the Cleveland Board of Education), and state university branches in western Pennsylvania and New York. It concluded, we feel that to remain in a competitive position as a private college Fenn must develop quality and this requires an endowment for two reasons. First, we cannot compete successfully with other private colleges for qualified faculty and students without endowment when all other private institutions are actively seeking endowment in addition to continued gift support. Second, the imminence of competition from tax-supported institutions necessitates increased financial support because they serve the same socio-economic group from which our students come.62

As the archival record demonstrates, the Fenn administration and Board of Trustees were acutely aware of the impact that publicly supported higher education would have on Fenn. They worked throughout 1961 and 1962 to define Fenn’s role in this brave new world, crafting plans to become a part of the shift to public higher education in Cleveland or alternately to remain private and fight the competition. As the transition to state university status approached, however, Fenn remained exclusively an undergraduate institution whose mission was virtually unchanged from its pre-World War II incarnation.

FENN COLLEGE – EVOLUTION

By the end of November 1963, it had become clear that Ohio Governor James Rhodes intended to place a four-year state university in Cleveland. The State thereby would provide a full-blown state university for the Ohio city with the largest population

62 Ibid., 3, emphasis added
and no publicly supported four-year institution. In response, President Ernest and Provost’s Cabinet developed a brochure entitled “A Plan for Unified Public Higher Education in Cleveland-Northeastern Ohio.” The Plan called for “a comprehensive State University to be developed on the present site of Fenn College, utilizing its facilities and personnel as a nucleus.” It listed eight reasons why Fenn was a good choice to become a state university, including the co-op plan that provided the Cleveland business community with a stable workforce, the 7.7-acre campus with three buildings and downtown location, the quality of its faculty and administrative units, its “university-type organization with Schools of Arts and Sciences, Business Administration and Engineering” and the fact that Fenn “already has accreditation in important areas.” The Plan estimated costs for site acquisition, construction and equipment to accommodate a potential student body of 20,000 and faculty and staff of nearly 4,000 at about $102 million net of the $13.5 million value of the existing Fenn campus. Having first struggled to define a path that would keep Fenn a private four-year institution, the administration and the Board of Trustees now turned to a full-blown marketing campaign aimed at convincing the various stakeholders that the State of Ohio should acquire the college.

At its meeting of February 10, 1965, just two months after Governor Rhodes signed the emergency legislation creating the Cleveland State University (CSU), the newly appointed CSU Board of Trustees adopted bylaws by which the Board would be governed and voted to petition the Ohio Board of Regents for $250,000 to hire

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64 Ibid., 5-6, emphasis added.
65 Ibid., 13, 15.
consultants, including Harry K. Newburn of Arizona State University who would eventually serve as CSU's interim president. Assuming negotiations with Fenn College were concluded successfully, the Board also stated, "C.S.U. will offer academic programs in 4 major units: Engrg., A & S, Education, and B.A.,” but that “at the outset no graduate study program will be offered.”

The Ohio Board of Regents' (OBR) “Provisional Master Plan for Public Higher Education in Ohio” released in April 1965 and in final form in 1966, however, stated in its chapter on the missions and roles of state-assisted institutions that while Cleveland State should be, “operating primarily for the service of commuting students, and should provide undergraduate programs in arts and sciences, engineering, teacher education and business administration,” it also should “provide graduate instruction at the Master’s level in these same program fields.” In an August response to the Master Plan, the CSU Trustees stated that they assumed CSU could expand this mission, including “to build on Master’s work in established areas to the Ph.D. level.”

Although mention of graduate programs first appeared in the minutes of the Provost’s Cabinet in March 1964, it was not until Dean Bush reported in November 1965 on his participation in a conference of the research administrators of tax-assisted Ohio colleges and universities that sponsored research was a subject discussed at the Cabinet. In the meeting that followed, Patterson reported on a meeting that he had attended with Newburn in Columbus that was called by Chairman Millet of the OBR to discuss Ph.D.

66 Minutes of the CSU Board of Trustees, February 10, 1965, 3, emphasis in the original, UA-CSU.
67 "Provisional Master Plan for Public Higher Education in Ohio” (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Board of Regents. April 1965): 112, UA-CSU.
68 "Statement Adopted by the CSU Board of Trustees Relative to the Provisional Master Plan for Public Higher Education in Ohio,” August 11, 1965, 1, Folder: Provost Cabinet Minutes 1964-1965, UA-CSU.
69 Minutes of the Provost’s Cabinet, November 4, 1965, Folder: Provost Cabinet Minutes 1965-1966, UA-CSU.
programs in state schools.\textsuperscript{70} The first substantive discussion of graduate programs did not appear in the Cabinet minutes until nine months after Harold L. Enarson’s appointment as President of CSU effective January 1, 1966. Meanwhile, Newburn had delivered his recommendations on the academic programs at CSU to President Enarson in December 1965. In his preamble to the recommendations, Newburn declared, \begin{quote}
the \textit{most commonly accepted definition of a university} is an educational institution built around a strong and sound core of the arts and sciences surrounded by several important areas of professional preparation and \textit{topped by a significant program of graduate studies and research}. The Cleveland State University is conceived of as such an institution and the Board of Trustees is dedicated to the development of a full fledged university of this character and quality as rapidly as possible.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}

Having noted that the goal was creation of a new institution, not merely the expansion of Fenn College, Newburn argued that new faculty should be selected with regard to “research aptitude and interest”, as well as teaching ability, and that “increasingly, the faculty must include personnel deeply committed to and highly qualified in the area of research activity.”\textsuperscript{72} In summary, consultant Newburn’s blueprint for the development of The Cleveland State University recommended the creation and implementation of a radically expanded mission for the former Fenn College, including entering into an entirely new field (education) and developing graduate programs and a research function within 18 months.

\textsuperscript{70} Minutes of the Provost’s Cabinet, November 11, 1965, Folder: Provost Cabinet Minutes 1965-1966, UA-CSU.

\textsuperscript{71} Harold K. Newburn, “Recommendations Relating to the Academic Program for The Cleveland State University,” December 8, 1965, 1, UA-CSU.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 4.
On the eve of World War II, as Provost Patterson recalled in describing the organizational structure of Fenn College, “the math department was in the college of engineering, which is a little unusual. It’s usually in the college of arts and sciences, so that was because we were predominantly an engineering school.” 73 Patterson also related that, as director of student activities in addition to carrying a reduced 14-hour teaching load, research “was difficult to do with 17 hours. It was really too much work. I could not devote any time to research” 74 and said of the paper he published just before the war “I think that was the only publication that I knew of that anyone published at the time I was teaching.” 75 A mere 25 years later, the little college that Patterson had never heard of when he was hired in 1936, despite having grown up in Cleveland, was on the cusp of implementing a traditional university organizational model and a full blown university mission, including graduate education and research.

This radical transformation is reflected in the catalogues of the period. The final Fenn College Bulletin for the day division, issued in September 1964, stated that the College’s goal was “to educate each student to take his place in the world aware of the realities he will encounter as a member of a profession and a citizen of a democracy” 76 through the cooperative program, whose “balance between theory and practice gives new relevance to learning while it is going on and when it can be oriented and directed to purposeful life goals.” The first bulletin of the new Cleveland State University, issued in July 1965, stated that the purpose of the university was to provide “new educational opportunities for the citizens of Ohio’s largest urban complex” by creating “a

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73 William D. Patterson, Transcript of Conversation, 3.
74 Ibid., 4.
75 Ibid.
76 Fenn College, Fenn College Bulletin, Day Division, September 1964, 7, UA-CSU.
comprehensive university able to serve the educational needs of more than one quarter of Ohio’s population.”

The North Central Association (NCA) and the Ohio Board of Regents (OBOR) proved to be significant obstacles to the implementation of graduate programs at Cleveland State. The OBOR had “naturally been much concerned about the expense of doctoral programs and the danger of unnecessary proliferation of doctoral offerings” and had directed the urban universities to align their doctoral offerings with “the needs for scholarly talent in their adjacent metropolitan areas.” As a result, CSU had initiated three doctoral programs in chemistry, biology and engineering, and further noted that, “extension of doctoral programs beyond those presently planned does not appear to be likely in the immediate future.” In October 1972, the CSU Graduate Council discussed the OBOR’s crackdown on non-productive doctoral programs (i.e., those with fewer than six FTE students per year and graduating fewer than two students per year) and noted that it was “important that this Graduate Council examine CSU’s graduate programs before the Board of Regents does so.”

The NCA conducted a reaccreditation site visit at CSU from December 2 to December 7, 1972. Although the actual report of the NCA team was not available in the archives, several pieces of data give a relatively clear picture of the results of that visit. First, President Waetjen updated the Faculty Council at its meeting of March 28, 1973 on his appearance before the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education in Chicago on

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77 Cleveland State University, *The Cleveland State University Bulletin*, July 1965, 7, emphasis added, UA-CSU.
78 Ibid., 329.
79 Ibid., 330.
80 Ibid., 330.
81 Minutes of the Graduate Council, October 5, 1972, 1, Graduate Council Minutes, 1972-1973, UA-CSU.
March 25, 1973. Wachtjen reported that he had learned in a verbal conversation several days after the visit that Cleveland State University would be granted “full accreditation” for 14 master’s degree programs and “preliminary accreditation” for the Ph.D. program in Chemistry. The good news on the programmatic front was offset by bad news on the organization of the Graduate School, namely that the NCA had taken CSU to task in five areas: unevenness of admissions requirements across departments and failure to leave final admission decisions with the Graduate Dean; failure to require the Graduate Dean’s approval for appointment to the Graduate Faculty and permitting persons other than Graduate Faculty to advise graduate students; lack of quality control for existing programs and failure to subject new degree programs to scrutiny by Graduate Faculty other than those involved in the program; failure to permit the Graduate College to allocate assistantships to graduate students; and lack of a budget controlled by the Graduate Dean to allocate research grants to new and existing faculty. CSU responded to these criticisms by reorganizing its graduate organization structure in order “to move in a direction to satisfy the North Central Association and to have a more effective operation of the graduate programs at CSU.”

In fact, Cleveland State was forced by the fiscal realities of its appropriations from the State Legislature to grow its graduate programs – as well as its campus facilities – at a pace barely able to keep up with the increases in enrollment and the demand for programs. Nevertheless, by 1975, the end of the period of this study, Cleveland State had undergone a remarkable transformation from a small, private, baccalaureate college to a large, public, comprehensive institution offering a variety of master’s and doctoral degree

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83 Ibid., emphasis added.
programs. In the 25 years following World War II, this urban state university had experienced significant and substantial academic drift. As the evidence suggests, the NCA was a major factor in producing this mission creep and the administrative structures that evolved at Cleveland State that were so similar to all research institutions.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

At the outset, I argued that three conclusions could be drawn from the data of this study. First, mission expansion did, in fact, occur at as Fenn College was transformed into Cleveland State University. In fact, the results of this study replicate Ogren’s finding that the change in mission among state normal schools constituted a leap into a new realm. It seems clear from the archival evidence that Cleveland State University leaped into its new mission of graduate education and research within a remarkably short period of time.

Second, concerns about legitimacy, the very strongly taken-for-granted nature of organizational structures and missions in higher education, and coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic forces go far toward explaining the nature and reasons for this mission creep. As the institutional histories of Fenn and CSU make clear, the administrations and faculties of these two schools looked to their professional organizations and their sister institutions, and reacted to their accrediting agencies and to their statewide governing board in crafting models of organizing for their expanded research missions.

The third and most significant conclusion is that the administrative and faculty leadership of Cleveland State stayed focused on the development of the research and
graduate education missions at their institution despite the extremely turbulent environment of the post-World War II era. The cataclysmic events of the civil rights movement, the immediacy of the anti-war movement, and the pressure of the women’s movement had a substantial impact on most colleges and universities in the 25 years following World War II. The faculty, staff and students of Fenn College and Cleveland State clearly were influenced by the riots in the streets and massive demonstrations that characterized the period. However, the leadership of the new state university in Cleveland continued to focus on the development of graduate programs and a research function. By 1975, they had created a doctoral-granting research mission that closely paralleled the established research universities, expanding their mission in imitation of the perceived industry leaders, in spite of all that was happening around them.

**Evolution of Mission**

If we accept the definition of “mission” as “why you do what you do; the organization’s reason for being, its purpose,”\(^8^4\) or as Millet suggests as a “determination of purposes,”\(^8^5\) and thus that “mission” captures an organization’s essential nature, its values and its work, then it seems clear from the history of Cleveland State that its mission evolved significantly during the period of this study. The essential nature of the school and what its administration and faculty valued changed over time, and the work they did and the purposes they served expanded dramatically.

If we accept Riesman’s concept of the snake-like progression of American higher education, where the middle part (of newer or lower level schools) seeks to catch up with

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where the head (or the elite institutions) once was; Morpew and Huisman’s description of academic drift as the increasing homogenization and decreasing diversity of higher education; and Aldersley concept of upward drift, the tendency for colleges and universities to introduce higher-level programs and thus increase the overall number of research and doctoral institutions, then it seems clear from the data that Cleveland State was a model of these tendencies. They chased the head of the snake all the way to research university status, adding the kinds of doctoral programs, organizational structures for graduate education, and research functions that began at Johns Hopkins in 1876 and evolved in the elite research universities during the century ending in 1975. The data suggest that mission expansion occurred in five phases as Fenn College morphed into Cleveland State University.

**First Phase**

The YMCA institute from which Fenn College evolved began humbly as the educational branch of the Y, offering intermittent French and German language classes beginning in 1870, and evening classes, including elocution, business law, bookkeeping, French, German, Latin and art in 1881. Day school classes began in 1906 and soon were offering a varied curriculum of industrial education (business, engineering and automotive), general education (algebra, geometry, chemistry, literary science) and art. This period constitutes Fenn’s first mission phase, the offering of non-credit occupational/vocational courses, when no coherent curriculum existed and no degrees were offered.
Second Phase

The re-naming of the educational branch and its programs to The Cleveland YMCA School of Technology, and the initial approval from the Ohio Department of Education in July 1921 for the conferring of the Bachelor of Commercial Science degree, represent the first change in the College’s mission. This phase also saw development of the cooperative program in engineering, attracting students who valued the opportunity to interchange periods of study with periods of work.

Third Phase

The third mission phase was initiated by the separation of Fenn College from the YMCA in 1951. Structurally, the College had separate schools of arts and sciences, business, and engineering. Organizationally, the College created the Provost’s Cabinet, a typical faculty governance mechanism, to provide faculty leadership in decision-making. From the point of view of mission expansion, Fenn established a relationship with Huron Hospital to offer general education courses for its nursing students and debated the effect on its mission (as well as its finances) of the construction of residence halls.

Fourth Phase

In the fourth phase, Fenn entered a period of mission uncertainty in the run-up to its transition to state university status. As the evidence suggests, the faculty and administration struggled with whether Fenn would continue to be a four-year private institution, or become either a hybrid with a public lower division and private upper division or a four-year tax-assisted state school. This mission uncertainty is captured succinctly in the differences among the Integrated Plan of Fenn College, which included increasing enrollment and constructing seven new buildings between 1960 and 1970 and
clearly anticipated a future for Fenn as a private institution; the *Ten-Year Plan*, which recognized both increasing competition and the need to raise significant endowment funds if the College was to be able to remain a private school; the two reports of the Provost’s Cabinet to the Board of Trustees in 1961 and 1962 that first argued for hybridization of Fenn, then concluded that the College must remain private; and finally the *Unified Plan for Public Higher Education in Cleveland-Northeastern Ohio*, which called for the creation of a comprehensive state university on the site of Fenn College, utilizing its facilities and personnel as a nucleus.

**Final Phase**

The final phase of mission creep at Cleveland State during the period of this study – or more accurately, mission leap or accelerated upward drift - occurred during the ten-year time period after its transition to state university status in 1965. In addition to adding a college of education, the strictly undergraduate Fenn College morphed into a master’s and doctoral degree-granting institution within a decade of its transition and created organizational structures to govern and administer both its graduate programs and its research function.

**Support for Institutional Theory**

The history of Fenn College and Cleveland State and the evolution of a research missions in the period following World War II offers strong support for institutional theory. Much like Studer-Ellis found for Catholic women’s colleges86, Fenn College had established research institutions in Ohio State University and Kent State University that

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served as models for their organization of graduate work and research. They were able to – and did - look to these and other established universities for templates for organizing their graduate education and research functions. As Newburn’s blueprint for the development of graduate programs and the McKinsey Report’s\textsuperscript{87} suggestions for structuring the management of Cleveland State illustrate, isomorphic forces of mimicking more prestigious institutions and adhering to professional norms clearly were in play as CSU got organized.

Similarly, the NCA team that visited the CSU campus in December 1972 raised serious questions about the organization of the Graduate School. The leadership team at CSU moved quickly to reorganize the graduate education and research function in order to come into line with NCA expectations. It is in their relationship with the North Central Association and the Ohio Board of Regents where the forces described by institutional theory are most evident. Despite evolving its conception of the role of accreditation over the years from standardization to review in the context of an institution’s mission and stated objectives, the NCA continued to exert significant influence in the direction of isomorphism at Cleveland State, as described above. Because of the coercive power it wielded to take away accreditation and thus destroy the legitimacy of a college or university, even though that power was rarely exercised, the NCA was a major force in how graduate programs and research were organized and administered at these two urban state universities.

The historical record suggests, of course, that the faculty and administrative leaders of Cleveland State actively engaged in strategic decision-making. Much like the

experiences of Notre Dame, DePaul, and Loyola chronicled by Goodchild, where a series of strategic decisions helped to shape the direction and mission of these Catholic institutions, their urban state university counterparts also made strategic choices, such as seeking state affiliation and accreditation of their graduate programs, that helped to determine their missions. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that these choices were severely constrained and directed by the isomorphic forces in their environment.

Factors that Influenced the Development of a Research Mission at CSU

The archival records of Fenn College and Cleveland State University suggest five factors that contributed to the development of the research mission at CSU: Fenn’s precarious financial position and the relative instability of its business model; competition; social, political and economic forces of the times; the power of the North central Association and the statewide governing board; and the blueprint for higher education in Cleveland promulgated by Ohio Governor James Rhodes.

Money – or lack thereof

An overriding element of the strategic planning of Fenn College centered around its financial situation. Having little endowment to speak of, Fenn was heavily dependent on tuition to fund operations. The influx of veterans after World War II and the advent of the Baby Boom generation meant that the administration and faculty were constantly scrambling to find money for campus expansion, as well as to fund faculty and staff hires and provide a modicum of student support services. Their precarious financial situations

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drove the leadership to seek state affiliation, albeit perhaps reluctantly if not regretfully. At Fenn College, there was no evidence of the discussion of graduate education and research until the potential competition from a public community college caused Fenn administrators and faculty to worry about the viability of their institution.

**Competition**

Fenn College not only had four well-established private colleges in its midst, but by the early 1960s was facing competition from a proposed community college and the suburban operations of Kent State and Ohio State universities. Fenn’s local environment, therefore, was quite turbulent. In fact, it was this increasing competition that seems to have convinced the Fenn College leadership and the Board of Trustees that Fenn was no longer viable as a stand-alone institution.

**Social, Economic, Political Forces**

The changing demographics of the student population, driven not just by birth rates but also by federal subsidies such as the GI Bill and the NDEA, that significantly increased the demand for college teachers; the effects of the Cold War on technology and hence the need for scientists and engineers with advanced training; and the shifts in American culture that permitted an increasing role for the federal government in science and education policy, provided a strong impetus for the creation of Cleveland State and its rapid conversion to a doctoral-granting research institution.

**The NCA and the OBOR**

The North Central Association and the Ohio Board of Regents were another key element in the external environment that played an important role in shaping the mission of the new state university in Cleveland.
In voting to decline Fenn’s application for initial accreditation, the report of the NCA visiting team noted the lack of an independent governing board and the unusually large dependence on student fees as a source of income as reasons for the rejection. While Fenn could do little about the latter criticism, the YMCA did incorporate Fenn College as a stand-alone legal entity and created a separate Board of Trustees for the College in response to the NCA rejection. When it added Fenn to its accredited list in 1940, the NCA cited the incorporation as a separate entity, the acquisition of a new building, the centralization of many administrative functions (e.g., the registrar’s office and the business office), improvements in the quality of instruction and reorganization of the curriculum as the deciding factors. Obviously, Fenn had responded to the coercive pressure of the Association.

The College responded in like fashion to the 1959 NCA re-accreditation visit, creating the position of Provost, developing the Provost’s Cabinet as the primary legislative arm of the College, and increasing the library budget substantially.

A third example of the power of the NCA is found in the 1972 review of Cleveland State’s graduate programs and the report that followed in March 1973. As described above, the NCA accredited graduate work at CSU, but took the University to task for its bifurcated Graduate Council system and the lack of power invested in the Graduate Dean. The CSU leadership again made the changes necessary to bring the university into compliance with the standards of its accrediting agency.

Cleveland State had one additional major player with whom it had to contend as it expanded its mission into graduate work and research – a statewide coordinating board for higher education. The Ohio Board of Regents, like the NCA, represented a strong
coercive force acting to shape the program at CSU, because the OBOR had veto power over the establishment of doctoral programs. The leadership of CSU had to justify their request for graduate programs by arguing that strong demand in Cleveland for graduate work, the need to recruit a quality faculty to replace the Fenn faculty, and the need for doctoral programs to attract grant funds required an expanded mission of graduate education and research. The CSU Board of Trustees had to use its political clout to win the argument.

Intentional Design

The development of a research mission at CSU was as much inevitable as it was planned once it became clear that the Governor of Ohio would take over Fenn to create a state university for Northeastern Ohio. An expanded research and graduate program mission was, in essence, thrust on the new institution as it was forced to rapidly organize master’s degree and then doctoral programs and create the organizational structures required to support this expanded mission.

CONCLUSION

It seems clear from the evidence that coercive and normative forces in the external environment helped to shape the mission of Cleveland State University. The data suggest that the organizational forms they adopted to administer graduate work and the research function were the result of mimetic and normative forces as well. Neither the administration nor the faculty chose to eliminate the departmental structure of academic organization or to offer their students graduate programs without majors, graduate work governed jointly by the faculty and the student body with no administrative oversight, or
faculty positions involving research without teaching. Instead, they largely copied the structures and processes of their sister universities as they expanded (or exploded) into graduate programs and research and complied with the demands of the NCA.
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