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**Absorbing Slack: An Historical Analysis of
Central and Peripheral Campus YMCAs**

IHELG Monograph

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Absorbing Slack: An Historical Analysis of
Central and Peripheral Campus YMCAs

Independently two Young Men's Christian Association campus groups were established at the Universities of Michigan and Virginia in 1858. By the start of the Civil War, additional associations cropped up at the Universities of North Carolina and Rochester. After a hiatus during the War Between the States, the existing associations shared the merits and rewards of this new form of religious organization with students on nearby campuses. Robert Weidensall, a contracted agent of the International YMCA (the US and Canadian coordinating body located in New York City), visited numerous American college campuses between 1868 and 1877, initiating local associations across the mid-west as well as the northeast (Morse, 1913). During Progressive Era, the number of Y associations on campuses grew so much that the phenomenon can only be characterized as a social movement; 772 campus associations existed in 1912. Equally impressive, the number of male students who joined and participated in the movement was spectacular; by 1920 the campus Y associations bragged of 94,000 members within a total post-secondary male enrollment of 314,938 (Shedd, 1914; Hopkins, 1951; Snyder, 1993).

A grassroots student movement, the campus Y associations were foremost religious groups that often replaced or absorbed the existing religious clubs on campus. However, through their confederated zeal as part of the larger international men's movement, they expanded their campus activities to promote membership, inventing student services now commonly associated with professionalized student affairs offices. Through the last quarter of the 19th century, this

student movement gradually invented and assumed responsibility for a variety of areas of operation that colleges and universities either ignored or overlooked. In other words, they absorbed the slack—needs not fulfilled—within the institution. However, organizational needs and therefore the nature and types of slack eventually changed and either the campus YMCA associations identified new slack and remained a central group on the campus, or were incapable of perceiving or responding to new niches and became peripheral. This study is an analysis of the intra- and inter-organizational adaptations made by 10 campus YMCAs between 1890 and 1930 as they navigated or failed to attend to the changes in their campus environment.

Review of Literature

The YMCA campus movement was first described by Shedd (1914) in his Clark University master's thesis, and was the subject of several additional theses about the YMCA leaders who assisted the movement and the programs in general (e.g., Seybolt, 1906; Bracken, 1924). Hopkins (1951), in the master history of the YMCA, devoted a chapter to describing the student groups. The associations were also consistently credited with positive contributions to colleges and universities by authors illustrating general campus life during the early part of the 20th century (Sheldon, 1901; Klein, 1930). Previously, we have shared an extensive description of the operations of the YMCAs on campuses (Finnegan & Alleman, 2005; Alleman & Finnegan, 2009a) and continue to analyze the movement in relation to the development of both orientation programs and student affairs. Setran (2007) has analyzed the rise and fall of the religious nature of the movement. In addition, a few monographs have detailed the activities of specific campus associations by local members or authors (Hannah, 1973; Linsley, 1984; Peters & Limbert, 1997).

The efforts to date, however, have provided generalized descriptions of the activities of the movement across the nation. This paper is an historical analysis of case studies of 10 campus YMCAs between 1890 and 1930 with purpose of understanding the processes employed on local campuses that enabled them to thrive or become marginalized.

Conceptual Framework

Robert Burgelman (1991) used the anthropological conceptualization of cultural ecology to analyze the internal processes of adaptation within several businesses in order to understand the strategies of individuals and sub-groups as they recognize shifts in their competitive environment and then effect adaptation and change within their organization. We have adapted Burgelman's intra-organizational cultural ecology model to analyze the presence or absence of adaptations made by university and college YMCAs in response to major shifts on the campus and within national collegiate environments between the 1890s and 1930s. Our adaptation of Burgelman's model is necessitated by two key differences. His work is based on profit-seeking organizations and focuses on intra-organizational strategies. We, obviously, are focused on student associations that existed within non-profit collegiate institutions. These autonomous associations also formed a confederation across the nation, tethered to some degree to an umbrella organization, the International YMCA with its coordinating office located in New York City. To this end, we offer a definition of his term slack within the context of non-profit organizations and also expand his view from an intra-organizational ecology to one of an intra- and inter-organizational ecology.

Burgelman (1999) views an organization "as an ecology of strategic initiatives...that compete for limited organizational resources so as to increase their relative importance within the organization" (p. 240). He focuses on the strategic processes that lead to the adaptations

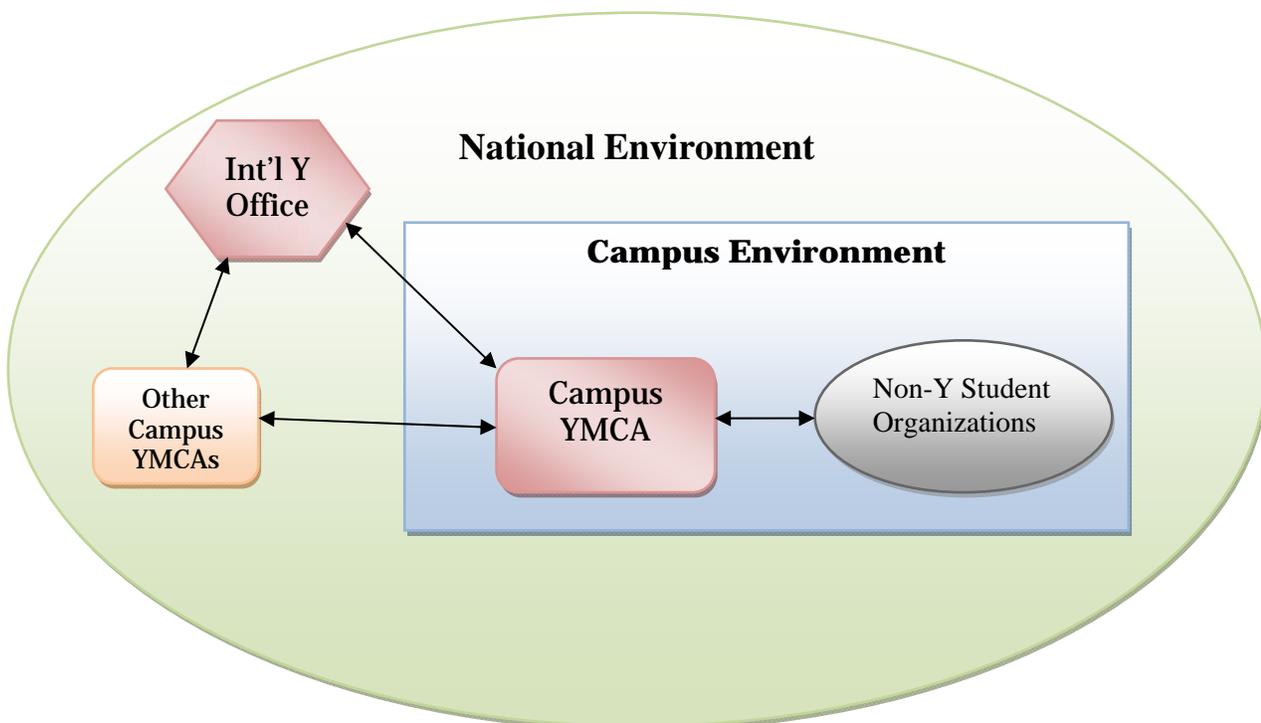
taken with businesses in response to growth opportunities. Identifying the processes of the selection and retention of strategic initiatives of sub-groups within organizations, Burgelman demonstrates how individuals within an organization seek to express “their special skills and career advancement through the pursuit of different types of strategic initiatives” and how administration “[allocates] attention and resources to different areas of strategic initiative” (p. 240). His model then differentiates between *induced* (by top management) and *autonomous* (by managers seeking to use their skills) strategic processes. Thus, his unit of analysis is intra-organizational strategic initiatives that locate slack, augur centrality for the innovators, and ultimately permit the organization to profit financially.

We are adopting the concept of slack as the primary concept in this analysis, employing Burgelman’s use of the term, but for which he does not offer a specific definition. We define *slack* as areas of perceived organizational need. *Absorbing slack* is the process of specific institutional constituents discerning these areas of organizational need and initiating actions to address the unmet needs. By their absorption of the slack, the innovators gain and maintain a position of centrality within the organization as long as the slack remains.

Most analyses of the culture and operations within universities and colleges focus on intra-organizational patterns (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Schein, 2004; Tierney, 1988; Kuh, Arnold, & Vesper, 1991; Magolda, 2000). We have adapted Burgelman’s model to permit us to define more broadly the ecological environments within which the Y associations operated from the 1880s through the 1930s, thus making this effort a combined intra- and inter-organizational analysis (see figure 1). For us, the cultural ecology consists of the larger external environment as well as the local environment of the college or university.

Our definition of the external environment includes modifications in the national zeitgeist as well as the influence of the parent organization that both educated campus Y leaders and tied the campus YMCAs together. Over the period in question, two major shifts in societal beliefs affected the nature of the campus groups: the emergence of the view of a college education as a positive mechanism for social mobility, which translated into increased enrollments across the country, and the evangelical religious swing toward social gospel ministry. The guidance received by campus associations from the International YMCA Committee altered as its national College Branch matured in its organizational goals, knowledge, and skills. For the purpose of this argument, the main components of the local environment, that is, the particular campus in which the 10 associations operated includes the organizational patterns of the administration as well as the non-Y student organizations and activities. In terms of the collegiate environment, we include the organizational character, the nature of the student body, the complexity of student activities, and the direct and indirect institutional support of the Y association.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Between the 1890s and 1930s simultaneously as college and university enrollments enlarged and diversified, and as electives, disciplines, and administrative role differentiation developed, several patterns evolved on campuses across the nation. First, students with limited assistance from the faculty expanded their social and academic interests and activities. Second, beginning in the second decade of the new century, faculty and administrators tentatively stepped in to advise student activities. And finally, gradually through the 1920s and early 1930s, the administrative personnel assumed the control and management of student activities. Through the last 20 years of the 19th century the YMCA grew to occupy a significant role on most campuses. However by the mid-1920s especially, these campus-based groups either adapted to the changing nature of their institutions and sustained their centrality or succumbed to a minor role on campus due to failing to finding new and relevant areas for service and activities.

Employing our adaptation of Burgelman's model of organizational cultural ecology, we analyze case studies of Y associations on 10 campuses to determine the strategic initiatives taken by the associations themselves in light of their particular ecological context. Adaptations resulted from induced strategic processes, suggested and required by relationships within the associations' different ecology arenas, and from autonomous strategic processes, the best of which resulted from a keen sense of their environments combined with the skills, knowledge, and resources of the association leaders and the changing "availability of unabsorbed slack" on the campus (Burgelman, 1991, p. 248).

Methods

Our multiple-site case study focuses on the campus YMCAs at three small institutions (University of Maine, and Springfield and William Penn Colleges) and seven large universities (the Universities of California[Berkeley], Illinois, Minnesota, North Carolina [UNC], Virginia [UVA], and Ohio State and Vanderbilt Universities) between 1890 and 1930.¹ These institutions represent both a representative and a convenience sample. These institutions appear to us to be representative exemplars—other institutions follow similar patterns. As a convenience sample, more literature and information is available about these 10 institutions than many others. Using YMCA-produced student handbooks, archival materials, monographs written about the specific campus YMCAs, and institutional histories, we created an extensive data base that tracks change by decades from two general perspectives: the institutional ecology and the YMCA association.

From the institutional perspective, we recorded enrollment growth; shifts in the number and variety of student activities; presidential leadership in administrative standardization and sympathy toward and support of religious and campus work by Y; the installation of student government and its control of student activities; the emergence of student personnel offices; and the progressive development and control over athletics and other student activities by the institution. From the perspective of the Y association, we documented their shifting activities of progressively complex religious and social services rendered to fellow students and their institution; the development and nature of community religious and secular service programs; and their relationships with national YMCA office & personnel.

¹ What must be kept in mind is that our HEIs case studies were not established at the same time nor were their campus YMCAs founded in the same years. The institutions, the dates of establishment and the founding of the Y (in parenthesis) include: Berkeley, 1868 (1884); Illinois, 1868 (1873); Maine, 1862 (1882); Minnesota, 1851 (1887); Ohio State, 1866 (1884); [William] Penn College, 1873 (1882); Springfield, 1885/1890 (1896); UNC, 1795 (1860/1876); UVA, 1825 (1858); and Vanderbilt, 1875 (ca. 1985). However, they display similar patterns of development, often with the Illinois in the lead.

Using the conceptual framework that serves as the basis of the analysis of the case studies, we present two different time frames: 1880s to World War I and 1919 through the 1920s. In the early campus environments during which the campus YMCAs were established and matured, their colleges and universities were relatively simple organizations. The lack of organizational complexity and the dearth of institutional services produced comparable types of slack across most campuses, thus permitting the YMCAs to contribute equivalent initial innovative responses. In the second phase, when enrollments bulged after World War I, the institutions grew in complexity and centralization. The campus YMCAs demonstrated two primary responses to the changes on their campuses; some identified new slack and maintained their centrality as campus organizations and others failed to perceive innovations and slid into a peripheral role.

Recognizing and Absorbing Slack

In his 1929 survey of operations at the land grant institutions, Klein (1930) details the plethora of student social organizations, but also explains that “in the [eighteen] eighties the faculty and administrative officers of all colleges held more or less of a laissez-faire attitude toward all student activities” (p. 519). In some respect, this tolerance was understandable. Administrators, whether at newly-created colleges or established ones, were building the academic, financial, and physical infrastructure of their institutions. Established colleges transformed into universities, while infant colleges mortgaged everything to build the all important Main Hall. Strategic decisions had to be made for the institutions to survive and thrive. During his short tenure at the University of Michigan mid-century, President Henry Tappan made a deliberate decision to invest in instructional buildings rather than in dormitories (Cowley, 1934). Similar to Michigan, many of the larger institutions did not bother building

residence halls for students for decades. New colleges found it more efficient temporarily to have students live in the main building not only to provide income, but to utilize space that eventually would become instructional areas (Watson, 1971). Utilizing this sort of tactic, some colleges did not erect *bona fide* residence halls until the 20th century. At Ohio State, the first residential quarters “consisted of several curtained-off spaces in University Hall” that was completed in 1873—“hardly more than cubby holes with muslin-curtain partitions” (Sawyer, 1970, p. 7). Its first residence hall finally made its debut in 1908, housing women students. Even as late as 1927, among the 135,659 students registered at 44 of the land-grant universities, “not quite 15 percent of the entire number [was] housed in institutionally-owned and operated residences” (Klein, 1930, p. 426).

Likewise, faculty were distracted by the burgeoning knowledge as disciplines emerged and split in what Metzger (1987) called *subject parturition*—knowledge growing too much within a subject to stay intact—or gained acceptance through *subject dignification*—overcoming ignoble reputations (see for example, Sanborn, 1905; Coben, 1971). Returning from European and especially German universities, university faculty attended to the excitement of advancing knowledge within their nascent fields (Veysey, 1965; Geiger, 2000). Even at smaller colleges, faculty began earning advanced degrees in the new American universities. A few served as informal advisors to literary societies and as participants and religious confidants to the developing YMCAs, but remained aloof (except to express disdain for shenanigans perpetrated off campus) to most student life and activities including the fraternities and athletic events. At UNC, in fact, as late as 1890, the literary societies independently monitored student behavior within the University’s residence halls and dispensed fines to miscreants. Honor codes at other colleges, such as UVA, were the purview of students ([Tyler, 1914]).

Gradually increasing during the last decades of the 19th century, enrollments were tiny by today's standards. The degree of communication between the institution and a prospective student is an issue yet to be researched, but existing broadsides indicate that colleges advertised widely, both hoping for and expecting inquiries to initiate a lasting relationship. Some recruitment resulted from alumni contacts. However, many optimistic students arrived as unknown quantities. Pre-enrollment standardized testing was fifty years in the future. To determine the quality of the walk-ons, institutions set aside several days late in September prior to start of the fall term for students to take entrance examinations. Thus, faculty time was taken up before classes began with evaluating and sorting new students into their proper courses; little time would have been left over to shepherd new students. In addition, catalogues provided information about courses, the institution, the faculty, but little else. With little or no room and board and often campus work as their only employment option, new students faced enormous logistical obstacles during their first days at the college. Simultaneously most had to sit for qualifying examinations. Unless they knew upper-class students who could show them the ropes, first-year students would have been overwhelmed. Slack abounded.

The Campus Environment for Students, 1880-1910s

Not until the early 1890s does a budding complexity of student extra-curriculum really develop, even at what have now become large universities. Although literary and religious societies both had existed for most of the 19th century, the amount and diversity of organized student activities were minimal until the turn of the 20th century at most institutions, due in large part to small enrollments. Generally, students had a choice of joining one of the two literary societies, whereas, religious activity arose from one body, often the Society for Religious Inquiry. By mid-century, fraternities had erupted on campuses, morphing from the early literary

and sometimes secret societies, much to the dismay of many presidents and faculty members (Sheldon, 1901). The earliest student publications emerged from both the literary societies and the fraternities. Literary magazines endowed students with public voices, but often volumes and issues remained sporadic until after mid-century. In contrast to the more serious genre of the literary societies, the fraternities, such as those at Vandy sometimes jointly published humor magazines. Through the 1880s, enrollments prohibited stretching students too thinly over too many activities (see table 1). As the size of the student body multiplied through the turn of the century so did the number and diversity of activities.

Table 1. Student Enrollment and Activities in 1880s in the Colleges²

	Enrollments 1880s/1890s	Literary & Honorary Societies	Fraternities	YMCA	Publications	Athletics	Other Activities
Berkeley	/1717	2 literary societies	7 fraternities	YMCA (1884)	The Occident (1881)		Associated Students
Illinois	362/833	3 literary societies	2 secret fraternities	YMCA (1873)	<i>The Illini</i> (newspaper, 1872) <i>The Illino</i> (yearbook), YMCA Student Handbook (1884)	Base ball, track	
Maine	/106	2 literary societies	2 fraternities (1879 & 1885)	YMCA (1882)		Athletic Association Intramural sports	Press club, Photographic Society
Minnesota	406/2,467	2 literary, 1 law literary & 1 honor society	13 fraternities	YMCA (1887)	The Gopher (newspaper), The Ariel (yearbook), Y Student Handbook (1887)	Athletic Association (1889)	Student Christian Assoc., Oratorical Assoc., Glee club
Ohio State	/745	3 literary societies		YMCA (1881)	<i>The Lantern</i> (1881); <i>The Makio</i> (yr book, 1880), Y Student Handbook (1884)	Baseball (1880), track (1884)	Strollers (drama)
Penn College	>70/90	2 literary societies (1875)		YMCA 1882	The Chronicle (1885) (monthly newspaper)		
UNC	/405	2 literary societies (1795)		YMCA (1888)	Y Student Handbook (1888)	Field Day	
UVA	375/538	2 literary societies		YMCA (1858)	<i>University Magazine</i> (1838); Y Student	Boat Club; gymnasium	Temperance Club

² Springfield is not included on this table as the school was not incorporated until 1895.

					Handbook (1883)		
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The 1880s: Y Networks and Innovations

The sparse though locally significant student organizations of the late 1800s were joined by a growing network of Y student associations, which although modest in scale and participation initially, strategically and inspirationally benefited from reciprocal relationships with other local and national Y partners. With the exception of Springfield College, the YMCA appeared on each of the other campuses by the end of the 1880s. Significantly, the International YMCA adopted the campus movement at its national meeting in 1877. The formal recognition resulted in the appointment of a provisional college secretary, Luther Wishard. Wishard immediately established the *College Bulletin*, a four-page newsletter featuring information pertaining to the movement, its conventions, and proven organizational processes as well as notes on activities within the campus associations. Widely distributed, the *College Bulletin* permitted associations to share their accomplishments and read about the triumphs of and adversities faced by other associations throughout the country. The earliest undertakings were restricted most often to the establishment of Bible classes and Prayer Weeks, which often brought praise from the faculty and presidents (White, 1870).

However, beginning in 1876, the YMCA members at the University of Illinois sponsored a new student Welcome Program consisting of meeting the trains before and during the entrance exams and registration days and providing new students with a list of boarding establishments near campus (Hannah, 1973). In October 1878 the campus YMCA at East Tennessee University (now the University of Tennessee) sponsored the first recorded reception specifically organized for new students to meet faculty and upperclassmen (Johnson, 1878). The ETU Y secretary

provided a detailed description of the successful reception in the YMCA organ, *The Watchman*, enabling other campus associations to pick up on the idea (Johnson, 1878). Within a few short years, campus associations across the country sent delegates sporting ribbons of the school colors to the local train station to meet new students; further, they established information bureaus stocked with lists of boarding and rooming houses, and sponsored an all-campus reception often on the Friday night after classes began. Clearly, all these activities, but especially the receptions were held for "the purpose of impressing them with the advantages of the Christian fellowship to be derived from their union with the Association" (Maine State College YMCA, 1896, p. 10). However, the latent function of the receptions and subsequent services was to ease the transition to college and help to make the new students comfortable in their new environment. But, the associations did not stop there.

In 1883, at least four campus Y associations published student handbooks that for new students contained vital information on entrance examination and registration procedures, faculty directories, and of course an introduction to their association. Within a few short years as the idea of the handbooks spread across the country and various associations added new features that were adopted readily by others. Handbooks grew to include campus mores, details about student organizations, calendars and campus maps, and eventually words of welcome from the institution's president and deans. Although each student handbook was tailored to its campus, most handbooks grew in similarity as well as size through the 1890s.

In large part, the diffusion of these new services for first-year students adopted by the local campus associations was promoted by the national YMCA through several mechanisms. In addition to the national newsletter³ as a means of disseminating information, YMCA officers shared innovations by attending regional YMCA campus association summer camps at Lake

³ The *College Bulletin* was renamed *The Intercollegian* in 1887.

Geneva, Wisconsin, Northfield, Massachusetts, Black Mountain, North Carolina, and Pacific Grove, California. Here national YMCA officials taught the campus representatives religious and organizational lessons, while the campers could trade their accomplishments. In large part, credit for the diffusion of services belongs to John R. Mott, who eventually would head the national YMCA and earn the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946, assumed the role of College Secretary for the International Committee in 1889 (Hopkins, 1951). Mott collected and published the local innovations in a series of pamphlets to assist and coordinate the campus activities; specifically to the discussion here they included: *How to Secure a College Association Building* (1892) and *The Fall Campaign, or How to Reach New Students* (1892). Having transferred to Cornell in his sophomore year, Mott experienced the welcome program in 1885 first-hand.

No doubt, Mott's pamphlet on the Fall Campaign helped to regularize and for several decades, institutionalize the YMCA services provided to new students in the absence of university and college programs. During the 1890s, the student handbooks published by each of the campus YMCAs informed first-year students that they might secure from its various bureaus information on registration, on room and board, and on employment. Each hosted receptions for new students at the beginning of the fall term. Indeed, as the sole religious group on campus at the time, the campus Ys fostered spiritual growth among the student body—and for that activity alone, were often praised by the administration. However, in addition, the campus YMCAs embraced strategic initiatives to absorb the slack in the organization, proving themselves invaluable to the faculty and administration of their institutions and realizing enhanced visibility and centrality at their colleges.

The Expansion of Student Activities, 1880s-1900s

As enrollments gradually increased in the 1890s, so too did student activities, both in the number and diversity. Typically throughout the institutions, student newspapers and yearbooks appeared as hands multiplied. UC Berkeley's famous *The Daily Californian* first rolled off the presses in 1895 (University of California Christian Associations, 1897). Music activities followed the forays into communication, often at first with musical activities that required little investment: glee clubs, quartets, and eventually individual instrument clubs, such as mandolin and banjo. A certain local flavor manifested in idiosyncratic clubs such as the Bicycle Club at Vanderbilt, the Temperance at UVA, and Maine's Press Club and Photographic Society. One step beyond the oratorical debates sponsored by the literary societies and the presentation of class skits for institutional celebrations was the introduction of drama clubs, such as the Strollers at Ohio State.

Although Minnesota is clearly the outlier, the degree to which enrollments could facilitate new student enterprises is evident in the explosion of its student activities between 1885 and 1895. In the mid-80s, the 408 students might join one of the two literary societies (unless a law student, which unlocked the law society for membership), sing for the glee club, or pledge one of the 13 fraternities. At the end of the decade, a student could join the YMCA or the Student Christian Association as well as become a member of the Athletic Association. However, the seniors who entered in 1892—no doubt less than one quarter of the 2,467 students—must have been an ambitious group. Under their senior pictures in the yearbook, they might have been credited with membership in one of the nine literary societies, seven honorary and departmental societies, the 18 fraternities and sororities, three different choral groups, the newspaper, the yearbook (both university and for the engineers), the Press, Gun, Chess, Dancing, and various political clubs (YM & YWCAs of the University of Minnesota, 1897).

Managed almost exclusively by students through the end of the century, athletics debuted on the campuses most often from class contests and what today would be called intramurals and club sports during the 1880s. Inter-collegiate sports most often did not begin until the last years of the century, requiring investment in fields and gymnasias. Inter-class football, tennis, track, and sometimes baseball contests, often brought students into competition on campus before taking on other colleges and private athletic clubs within the locale and then on a state level. The second stage in athletics was the establishment of an athletic association to bring order to and promote sporting events. At Vanderbilt, the student-initiated Athletic Association (AA) not only controlled all of the athletic contests, but also the bathing facilities provided for athletes. Originally giving members free admittance to athletic events in 1891, the AA reduced the cost for member by 1896 (Vanderbilt YMCA, 1891; Vanderbilt YMCA, 1896). The Athletic Association at Penn College under the control of the campus YMCA outfitted the men's "gymnasium" in the basement of Penn Hall with weights and other exercise apparatus as well as showers and lockers during the mid-1890s (Penn College YM & YWCA 1892; Penn College YM & YWCA, 1898). By the end of the 1890s (again with the exception of Springfield College), every one of the colleges and universities had begun to compete on an inter-collegiate level. Noticeably, when the institutions began to compete with other institutions on the court or the field, the number of yells and cheers multiplied by the year within the student handbooks. The YMCA Handbooks, or Freshman Bibles as they were often called, clearly provided incoming students with more "on the ground" information.

During the last decade of the century, several of the YMCAs sponsored unique programs that contributed to the well-being of students and clearly were new initiatives taking up slack on campus. When no tutoring program existed, the campus Y University of Minnesota at the

secured instructors to assist students admitted with conditions to make-up (University of Minnesota YMCA, 1897). The UNC Y started a book exchange so that students would not have to buy new texts (handbook, date). And students in need of a short-term loan could apply to the OSU YMCA (Sawyer, 1970).

Up until now, Springfield College has not been included in the discussion. The School for Christian Workers was established on January 5, 1885 as a training school for YMCA secretaries (directors). It operated for one year, focusing solely on administrative duties and then added a physical department in 1886, headed by Dr. Luther Gulick. The school was incorporated as the International Young Men's Christian Association Training School in 1890 and finally became the International YMCA College, better known as Springfield College, in 1912 (Student Association of the International Young Men's Christian Association College, 1914).

Springfield College is unique within our case study HEIs in that it not only was a product of the YMCA, specifically established to educate administrators and physical directors for the urban associations across the country, but the campus Y association literally administered all of the student services and activities on the campus from almost the beginning of the school. The 1906 college yearbook, *The Massasoit*, explained that "No other Young Men's Christian Association controls such a variety of student activities. The peculiar nature of the school makes this possible" (Student Association of YMCA International College, 1906, p. x). Through the last years of the 19th century and until the mid-1920s, the campus Y gradually assumed supervision and operation of all athletic events and schedules, all student activities, the dining hall-student union, the co-operative store, and administered student discipline. This campus association literally picked up all of the slack at the school, but this approach was a deliberate mechanism

manifestly to enable students to learn the art of administration through practical application, while latently saving the struggling school precious financial resources.

The First Decades of the New Century

As the 1890s came to a close and the new century began, the YMCA expanded and refined its repertoire of program and activities by helping freshmen throughout their process of institutional acclimation. Expanded tactics included publishing the student handbook for their institutions, maintaining employment and housing bureaus, but they also started new initiatives off-campus. Their institutions continued to welcome these services until well into the late 1920s and early 1930s. As Hannah (1973) noted

The University of Illinois until fairly late in its career did not feel any great responsibility for supplying housing to students or for helping those in need [of finding] jobs. Yet young men and young women came by the thousands, most needing rooms and may needing jobs if they were to remain in school. To the credit of the University YMCA, it sensed these needs and did something about them. (p. 28)

Consistently, the Employment Bureaus reported success helping men “who [were] willing to work physically and mentally to fit themselves for the part they will play in the game of life” (UNC YMCA, 1918, p. 30). At Ohio State, the YMCA’s Employment Services gave out jobs totaling \$42,000 in 1900 (Sawyer, 1970). At Minnesota 300 men gained employment in 1909 (University of Minnesota YMCA, 1910).

Finally, a critical contribution of the Y on many campuses was its building. Princeton is credited with constructing the first campus Y building in 1879 and at least 50 other associations followed suit over the succeeding decades. Seven of our 10 institutions erected or maintained buildings at one time or another: Berkeley (Stiles Hall, 1891), Illinois (YMCA Building, 1938 –

their 4th building), UVA (Madison Hall, 1905), Maine (MCA Building, 1926), Vanderbilt (Kissam Hall, 1922), Minnesota (YMCA Building, 1923) and UNC (YMCA Building, 1906). Often these buildings served as the first student union on campus and were hubs of social activity. Benjamin Ide Wheeler enjoyed his inauguration party in Stiles Hall in 1901 as there was no other building on campus suited for the occasion. UVA's Madison Hall sported tennis courts in the rear that served as the borrowed home of the University's tennis team (University of Virginia YMCA, 1910).

For years, campus Y associations as part of their religious mission began sending deputations to nearby towns, running Sunday Schools, leading religious singing, and conducting Bible study. Clearly, town-gown relationships were advanced as a result of their ministries. By the early decades of the new century, the Y men advanced their out-reach programs to include work with young boys, settlement houses, English and citizenship classes for immigrants, and in the case of UNC, educational night classes for local African American boys and men. Although technically not picking up slack on the physical campus, two forms of slack were nonetheless involved: engagement of local community needs that reinforced the value of the Y (particularly during canvassing efforts), and involvement of students for whom community involvement was a compelling cause. Thus, by identifying off-campus slack, the Y expanded its value among students and among local constituents.

By this time, campus YMCA graduates from earlier decades began to filter into administrative positions as several of our institutions, which only ratified the continuing encouragement and approbation of the Y. At Illinois, Thomas Clark Arkle, a faculty member and former Illinois YMCA member, taught Bible classes for the Association. Within a few years, Arkle became the first dean of men not only at Illinois, but in the nation (Gatyas, 1998).

At Penn College, President David Edwards (1910-1917) and Dean of the College, Stephen M. Hadley, had both served as members and officers of Penn's YMCA. And active Stiles Hall (YMCA) members and officers, David P. Barrows (1919-23) and Robert Gordon Sproul (1930-58) both became the presidents of UC Berkeley.

Campus Environment Post-World War I

The campus landscape that proved so advantageous for the Y student associations during the later years of the previous century proceeded into a phase during which an extensive remodeling occurred—both in the intervening years leading up to World War I as well as the succeeding years of peace. The rising social expectations of college-going, combined with a growing list of religious, political, and industry constituents who viewed college as a resource for individual and social benefit, led to an explosion in college founding and expansion as well as attendance (Levine, 1986). Land grant institutions, experimental teachers colleges, and the first junior colleges opened alternative forms of higher education to meet emerging demands. From 400 institutions serving 63,000 students post Civil War, by the turn of the century more than a quarter of a million students were enrolled at nearly 1,000 colleges (Snyder, 1993). And enrollments continued to increase at a dramatic pace through the first quarter of the twentieth century, with only a momentary hitch during the World War I. At Berkeley, enrollments rose from 1,717 in 1898 to nearly 13,000 students in 23 years. At the University of Illinois, undergraduate enrollment more than doubled to 10,627 students between 1912 and 1922. Even more dramatically, Ohio State University experienced a 295% growth in student enrollment in one ten year span, reaching 8,055 students by 1922. By 1930, OSU's enrollment had surpassed the 15,000 mark (Hurt, 1923).

Without doubt, the age of standardization oozed onto collegiate campuses, stemming from the federal and professional movements to gain efficiency and foster equivalence (Hawkins, 1992) as well as the need to cope with larger enrollments, and in some cases, the push to build a university (Geiger, 1986; Thelin, 2004). Large enrollments brought both bounty and migraines, however. Increased revenues from tuition permitted buildings to be constructed, but additional faculty members had to be acquired. Institutional expansion included not only services, but structures designed for student use as well. Among our case institutions, the universities of Ohio State (1908), Maine (1924), and Berkeley (1929) built residence halls (though mostly for women). The national football craze led to the construction of a variety of neo-Romanesque stadiums (including Memorial Stadium at the University of Illinois in 1921, and Ohio Stadium at Ohio State University in 1922, which seated 90,000 spectators), impressive visually for their style and scale, and impressive symbolically for the commitment of resources they represented. Finally, student union buildings were constructed at Ohio State (1909), Minnesota (by 1920), and Berkeley (1923) to provide board, entertainment, meeting rooms, and offices spaces, among other functions that had traditionally been found in the local community, if at all.

After a very slow start, athletics rapidly proceeded from inter-class to intercollegiate contests by the end of the century, enlivening the campus spirit and culture and encouraging alumni support, but threatening to disrupt academics. Fraternities enticed students who in former times would have joined the literary societies; at the University of Illinois, they became clandestine for years while being banned from campus (DeMartini, 1976). Myriad student organizations sprung up in this fertile organizational ground, matching the rich variety and diversity of the student body and their interests with increasingly specialized clubs,

organizations, and activities (see table 2). At Penn College (Iowa), enrollment jumped from 138 students in 1908 to 627 students about 15 years later (1922). With the growth in enrollment came an impressive expansion in student initiated extra-curricular offerings. The 70 students enrolled in 1890 automatically became a member of one of two literary societies, and could participate in the YM or YWCA, the newspaper, yearbook, oratorical society, and the YMCA Athletic Association's campus athletics. The 1908 *Students' Hand Book* lists 18 clubs and organizations, including four music groups, two publications, and six sports. By 1929, students could choose from at least 26 student clubs and organizations (including Forensic, Ministerial, Debate and Cosmopolitan clubs), varsity and intramural sports for men and women, and Student Council.

Table 2. Student Enrollment and Activities in 1920s at Selected Institutions⁴

	Enrollment	Student Government	Literary & Honorary Societies	Fraternities	Religious Clubs	Publications	Athletics	Other Activities
Berkeley	12,900	ASCU: control of all activities, finance, and student discipline AWS (women)	28 honor societies, 2 literary societies, Parliamentary and Debating Societies; 12 professional frats	35 frats; 7 men's house clubs; 20 sororities 4 women's house clubs	YMCA YWCA Menorah Club	<i>The Daily Californian, The Pelican, The Occident, The Blue and Gold; YMCA Student Handbook</i>	Athletic Assoc. football, basketball, track, tennis, swimming, water polo, rugby. Baseball & crew; intramural athletics.	Ukulele Club, Treble Clef, Mandolin Club, Art History Circle; 21 dept clubs international club, 4 ethnic clubs,
Illinois	10,627	Illinois Union Women's League, Mixed Student Council,	6 women's literary societies 2 men's literary societies Inter-Literary Council; 44 honorary fraternities; 47 professional fraternities; debating;	Pan-Hellenic Association, 33 sororities, Inter-fraternity Council, 72 fraternities 14 Professional social fraternities	YMCA, Y Glee Club, YWCA, Christian Science Society,	<i>Y Students' Handbook; The Daily Illini; Illio; Illinois Magazine; Illini Weekly, The Siren, Scribbler; Technograph; Agriculturalist; Enterpriser; Arch.</i>	Women's Athletic Association, 12 intramural sports; Athletic Association, track, football, baseball, swimming, basketball, wrestling, gymnastics, fencing, tennis, golf	Concert Band, Military Band, Glee Club, Choral Society, Orchestra, Hospital Association,
Maine	2,585	Men's Stu-Senate (1922), Women's Student Government (ca. 1917)	14 honorary societies	17 fraternities, 5 sororities	YMCA YWCA Newman club (1925)	<i>The Maine Campus, The Prism, The University of Maine Handbook, The Maine Spring, The Maniac, The Maine Alumnus</i>	Athletic Association, Women's Athletic Association (1922) track club (1925)	women's drama ('22), drama, men's music (glee, mandolin, banjo, quartette, reader; women's glee, Liberal club lettermen's club; 4 language clubs, Masonic club, debating, rifle (men's and girls) Women's Round Table
UVA	1,729	The Virginia Union (1916) Woman's Self-governing Association	2 literary societies Oratorical and Debating Council, Congress of the Debating Union 5 Academic Schools Clubs 8 honorary societies; 19 academic fraternities	30 fraternities	YMCA, Y's Woodrow Wilson Club Brotherhood of St. Andrew, St. Paul's Club	<i>University Magazine; Corks and Curls (frats), YMCA Handbook,, Madison Hall Notes, Virginia Law Review (1913), Virginia Reel, UVA Journal of Engineering</i>	General Athletic Association, track, football, baseball, basketball;	Civic Club Journalism Club

⁴ We present merely four of the 11 institutions to conserve space. These are representative of the others.

At larger institutions trends illustrate a similar branching and growth pattern among student organizations, as colleges became universities and grew in scope and complexity. At the University of Illinois, student publications grew in number from six in 1908 to 11 in 1926 (University of Illinois YMCA, 1908, 1926). At Berkeley in the 'teens, students published the *Blue and Gold* (yearbook), *The Daily Californian*, *California Occident* (literary paper), the *Pelican* (humor), and the *Journal of Technology*, and of course, the Y published the *Student Handbook* (UCB YMCA, 1919). Although a similar list of publications continued a decade later, these established enterprises required managerial and editorial staffs, suggesting growth in complexity parallel to the growing student body.

A shift of student organization type was underway as well. In the first decades of the 20th century the most common student organizations (in addition to the Y) were literary societies, oratory societies, a variety of glee clubs and music groups, and usually a student newspaper and athletic association that occasionally was a mechanism for selling tickets to sporting events. By the late 1920s, students also had assumed the model of efficiency, creating representative student councils and governing groups. Even so, faculty, trying to reign in student behavior, created oversight committees, especially for athletics, and established activity point systems thereby limiting the amount of time that students could officially devote to the extra-curriculum.

The net effect of the expansion of the campus physical plant and the growing institutional concern for student welfare translated into both a reduction of unmet student and institutional needs, and continued expansion of need that the Y associations scarcely had the resources to meet. Enrollment growth at the turn of the century had rendered the university an open and rich environment for creative programming to the benefit of the students, the institution, and the Y. Ironically, due to the persistent enrollment explosion of the teens and

twenties the scale of available slack outpaced the Y's ability effectively to provide services and activities. Metaphorically, the Y originally provided a timely finger in the dyke hole of student needs, but by the early 1920s the sea wall had nearly given way, overwhelming their meager organizational and logistical resources.

The pre-War increase in students was a bonanza for most institutions, but by the early 1920s some administrators fretted over the quality of the students enrolling (Hopkins, 1924; McKown, 1923). Innovations resulting from IQ testing in the Army during the war encouraged educational psychologists to experiment with new forms of admissions testing; however widespread use of standardized testing would not be possible until the mid-1930s (Finnegan & Alleman, 2009b). By the mid-1920s, administrators and faculty with the colleges and universities began to take small, but irregular steps toward assuming responsibility for some of the services that traditionally had been absorbed by the Y. Although the office of deans of women had an earlier start, the establishment of the office of deans of men (and sometimes deans of freshmen) only slowly appeared in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Nidifer, 2000; Schwartz, 2002). Thomas Arkle Clark assumed the role of Dean of Men at the University of Illinois in 1901 (Gatyas, 1998), but the position was slow to catch on. By 1933, only eleven men held such a title (McGrath, 1936).

Perceiving New Slack

With the increase in enrollments, for some Y associations, the fall welcome receptions, meeting the trains, and information bureaus were becoming overwhelming. Those who had buildings could still hold receptions, but certainly not for the entire first-year class. Simultaneously, administrators began to realize that they had to ensure the early adjustment of students or continue to face retention problems (Klein, 1930). The first real institutional

orientation program, Freshman Week, initiated at the University of Maine in 1923, spread to other campuses through the late 1920s and early 1930s (Finnegan & Alleman, 2009b). Many campuses still involved the campus YMCA in orientation, but annexed and institutionalized the introduction of first-year students to the campus.

Several of the campus Y associations rebounded however with the first Freshman Camps, weekend retreats to which a limited number of new men students would be invited and at which Y leaders would offer camaraderie, mentoring, leadership training, and of course fun. Camps at the University of Illinois (1923), Vanderbilt (1928), Minnesota (1926), and UVA (>1929), were not only successful, but enjoyed long histories (Hannah, 1973; Vanderbilt YMCA, 1928; University of Minnesota YMCA, 1926). Freshman work committees were also established to promote counseling, discussion groups, and the creation of freshman councils, which engaged first-year leaders to the YMCA's work.

The rising student enrollments and institutional involvement that displaced the Y from its seat of ubiquity also provided a different (though perhaps less desirable) form of slack: niches based on sub-group interest and the degree and alacrity with which the institutions bureaucratized. The rich opportunities of organizational slack the Y had identified and exploited soon attracted the involvement of other student organizations and the institutions themselves, forced the Y to face a new institutional context: *environmentally-induced adaptation*. As the Y associations began to scale down, they either adopted more specialized programs or started sliding down in prestige and often into oblivion.

One initial tactic was to revise their thinking about the role and utility of dedicated Y buildings. At the University of Minnesota, the Y men had long pined for their own building, but their plans were delayed by the onset of World War I. Persisting in their enthusiasm for digs of

their own, a promotional study entitled “Men of Minnesota” compared the influence and achievements of other major university Y’s to that of Minnesota’s Y. The Minnesota YMCA (1919) concluded that

.... the Association at Minnesota has not kept pace with Associations in other Universities of its size and type. This is due in no small measure to the lack of suitable building equipment. At present our Association is restricted to one office in the Minnesota Union. (p.4)

Yet even as the Minnesota Y achieved the dream of autonomous organizational housing, the artifice constructed differed in scope and function from the student union-style buildings raised at the turn of the century. By design,

The social needs of the men of the university are well taken care of in the Men's Union and it remained for the YMCA to provide an environment of special character, perhaps more intimate, quiet, and possibly more stimulating to reflection and study. (1923, p. 4)

On campus, the Minnesota campus Y sponsored marriage courses that were popular and well attended and continued to offer its Freshman Camp well through the 1930s. Among other community outreach programs, the Minnesota Y students (with its 2,089 members) organized a "Peace Caravan" in 1936 to educate the public through skits and radio shows about peace and disarmament (Centennial History Committee, 1987). The following year, the program shifted to a student-led peace conference which took an objective perspective, exploring both the costs and benefits of war.

Just as the new University of Minnesota Y re-conceptualized the role of their new Y building as a place of contemplation and study, the Y at Berkeley spruced up Stiles Hall with help from the National War Work Council after World War I as compensation for billeting

soldiers in the Student Army Training Corps (SATC), and taking care of those soldiers who were flattened by the Spanish Influenza (Linsley, 1984; Adams, 1998). Newly fitted with steam heat, Stiles Hall lent itself suitable for dialogue and debate and the Y adopted a policy of opening the doors of Stiles Hall to myriad student groups. Thoroughly modern, Stiles Hall was serving 1600 men a day in its cafeteria as well as in the lounges and meeting rooms.

The experience with housing and working with the SATC in the fall of 1918 broadened the vision of the Berkeley Y; it adopted a motto of social, moral, and religious service for all men at the university. The 1919 Handbook announced that the Y was

...open to any man who believes in its purpose and is willing to take some part in promoting its growth in the University. Such as man becomes a member on payment of the initiation fee of one dollar, which entitles him to membership. In place of regular dues each man contributes annually in proportion to his ability toward the support of the work. (UCB University Christian Association, 1919, p. 26-27)

As a reflection of this policy, new students (in quantity and diversity) became involved. As a number of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Philippino students increased on campus, they found a welcoming haven at Stiles Hall. Once they became involved in Stiles Hall (as the Berkeley Y is called), the Cabinet established slots for representatives for each ethnicity/nationality (Linsley, 1984). The Y also expanded its community service from merely religious deputations to include work with Boy's Clubs and Boys' Bible Classes, Boy Scouts, playground work, and teaching English to Immigrants (UCB University Christian Association, 1919, p. 29-30). Long time Stiles Hall General Secretary, Harry Kingman remembered as a Freshman Secretary, recruiting Cal students to serve as poll watchers to keep the vote count honest in a very controversial and important San Francisco election (Levenson, 1973).

Another significant role assumed by Stiles Hall involved providing space on campus for free speech. Two principles that comprised Stiles Hall's free speech policy were adopted at first informally after the war and the formally by the mid-1930s (Fisher, 1955). Added to its policy and practices of non-ethnic discrimination in membership, Stiles Hall (both the Y and the building) served as Berkeley's free speech center from after the war through the 1960s, permitting controversial student activist groups to meet in the building in spite of pressure from a variety of local non-university organizations. And Stiles Hall aided Japanese students on campus during the evacuation of 1942 as well as supplied former Berkeley students with books and assistance upon their relocation to the internment camps. Finally, in 1933 as the Depression was economically hitting the student population, General Secretary Harry Kingman gathered some Y members to establish a co-op housing initiative to help students who could ill afford room and board. From one house operated by 14 students who worked during their summers to raise money to sustain the co-operative, the Berkeley Student Cooperative (BSC) is now 1,250 students strong who are living in 20 student housing cooperatives (BSC, n.d.).

Vanderbilt, UNC, UVA, Illinois, and Ohio State all followed much the same pattern of rethinking their programs and finding ways to maintain their central position and influence on campus. UNC, for example, further developed its organizational structure and activities to include at least six diverse outreach committees: a Boys' department that worked with Scouts and created a Knights of King Arthur group; a Community department that included publishing the student handbook and a student-faculty directory, operating the book exchange, the Self-Help (employment bureau), infirmary, information, lost and found programs; a Negro [sic] department that included a dedicated YMCA, a night school, a Sunday school, a Lyceum, and a program for janitors); an Excursion department that offered a college night and freshman continuation

programs; a Foreign department, offering programs for international students; and a Rural department (Sunday school, lyceum, boy's clubs, social events) (UNC YMCA, 1918).

Regardless of the efforts made by some of the associations to hang onto their bureaus that in a previous era took up the slack left by an absence of institutional services, many were doomed. Employing the best of their organizational learning the Illinois Y ensured that

...the work of the Employment Bureau grew until in 1932 the University of Illinois established a student employment service and took over the function. It also hired Dwight F. Bracken, the Y staff member who supervised the service so efficiently for the Y. ...Thus, the YMCA spawned the University Employment Service and the University Housing Division. (Hannah, 1973, p. 28)

As in the case of Bracken, the impact of the campus services dispensed some significant benefits to individuals and to the associations as the universities began to absorb the functions officially. Joseph Park, the General Secretary of the Ohio State Y, was named as the first dean of men in 1927 (-1957) as the University moved toward organizing a student personnel office (Sutton, 1983). At UNC, Vanderbilt, and Berkeley, the dean of students (once installed) and the General Secretary of the YMCA worked hand-in-hand to coordinate programs, utilizing the energy and drive of the Y in conjunction with the institutional goals for student services. At UNC and Vanderbilt specifically, the University supported the YMCA with annual subventions to enable the organizations to continue their work.

Loss of Slack, Loss of Place

Indeed, those associations that were larger—generally at the larger universities—that employed professional general secretaries and possessed buildings appear to have weathered the consolidation of disparate offices around the campus that formed the first student personnel

offices. The professional secretaries most often collaborated with the student affairs officers and in some cases were actually hired away from the Y to the new institutional administrative role for their expertise. The Y building undoubtedly helped to sustain the association, providing an alternative social and educational place on campus. However, the fact that these associations were able to transform their mission and redeploy their resources to identify and absorb new slack enabled them to continue to recruit and sustain a healthy though in most cases reduced membership.

The smaller colleges did not fare as well. At Penn College, the YMCA slowly lost control of its programs and services beginning in 1912. After having started the College's Athletic Association in 1891, furnishing the first gym equipment, showers, and lockers for the men, and then fitting out the new gymnasium in 1907 with lockers and a towel service, the faculty established an oversight committee, taking control of athletics completely. A year later, varsity athletes established their own Letter Club to promote athletics on campus. As the college began to participate in inter-collegiate athletics, the Athletic Association and the Letter Club gained in stature. At the same time, President Edwards invited student representatives to join the composite governing committee, the College Council. The Y no longer controlled student life and retreated back to its religious activities and although they enjoyed approbation for their deputation work, their mission no longer held a position of centrality (Finnegan, 2006).

At Springfield College, a similar loss of control and centrality occurred for the Student Association ([SA] the campus YMCA's name), but began in 1920 with an administrative reorganization of religious work sponsored by the Y. The College assumed control of the religious instruction and left the deputation work to the Y. Four years later, concerned with institutional finances, President L. L. Doggett assumed institutional control over athletics, which

had been controlled entirely by the SA. Although the College paid the coaches' salaries, the SA realized the gate receipts that amounted to \$1,760-\$4,000 for intercollegiate matches. Doggett determined that athletics should pay its own way.

In 1925, an Advisory Council had been formed consisting of two seniors, two juniors, two members of the Faculty, and the College's President and General Secretary of the Association. The Council was the final arbiter in controversies between faculty and students. In addition, a Dean of Freshmen was appointed. Thus, as enrollments grew at Springfield through the 1920s, the College grew in complexity. Its stature also heightened as its graduates succeeded as YMCA professionals and within the mushrooming instructional area of physical education. President Doggett streamlined and professionalized the operations, squeezing revenue out of places that previously the College valued on the basis of its democratic spirit and philosophy of practical application, but could no longer afford (Finnegan & Alleman, 2005).

Conclusion

At the turn of the century, the YMCA student associations became the benefactors of a shift in the zeitgeist in the nation. Though largely mirroring the staid organizational structures and purposes typical of the religious groups in the 1870s and to some degree in the 1880s, the maturing campus Y associations were imbued with a fresh evangelical enthusiasm, stemming from the spread of the Social Gospel movement (Hopkins, 1940). The new spirit revealed a new kind of vision not just for local religious renewal, but for global Christian revival. This vision was promoted to the campus associations by the International YMCA College Secretary, John Mott (1903), using the mantra of "the evangelization of the world in this generation" (p. 43). However, the promise of world-wide evangelism could only be met through effective local recruitment. The infective imagination for religious commitment and service occurred in a

collegiate environment in which a motivated group of students could find an abundance of opportunities in the form of unmet student need, and institutional leaders pleased to have a moral voice among the student body.

The volatile political, social, economic, and religious forces of the Progressive Era removed the Y associations' contextual advantages as quickly as they were lent. What remained was an extensive national network of information sharing based on the continued and supportive leadership from the parent YMCA organization, and a menagerie of local associations that were forced to evaluate nimbly and seize upon available slack. The tables clearly were tipped away from the Y's advantage.

In this post-War, pre-Depression scramble to maintain both pride and place, this analysis points to the existence of a continuum of patterns ranging from a dramatic reorientations of the goals and activities of some of the Y associations to lack of sustained adaptation by other Y associations. This continuum consists of four non-discrete points at which various Y associations cluster and demonstrates a range of behaviors from successful adaptation to the changes in their ecology to marginalization. The points on the continuum include: (1) institutional absorption of services formerly provided by campus YMCA (William Penn, Springfield, Maine); (2) a transitional stage between patterns 1 & 3 (Ohio State); (3) a collaborative relationship between professional Y secretary (administrator) and dean of students (); coupled with successful strategic and entrepreneurial efforts (Berkeley, Illinois, UNC-Chapel Hill, UVA, Vanderbilt, Minnesota).

A second round of analysis comparing the four points on the continuum yielded additional patterns. Within the locus point 1, none of the campus YMCAs built, owned, or operated their own buildings, although all enjoyed dedicated rooms provided by their institutions

at their start and in addition, none employed professional secretaries to oversee their association. At the second point, Ohio State employed a professional secretary, but also did not have a dedicated building. In the third groups, the Y associations both maintained their own buildings and employed dynamic, long-term professional secretaries, but further devised unique extra-institutional programs that absorbed external (to the institution) slack .

Our analyses led us to two different levels of conclusions. On a theoretical level, we found that slack—using Burgelman’s view of the concept as potential areas for strategic initiatives designed for enterprising organizational members—shifted on collegiate campuses through the decades we are studying. The slack of the 1880 and 1890s was perceived by the Y due to a lack of institutional responsiveness to new student needs for assistance during their first days on campus. During the early years of enrollment growth as student activities began to multiply, the campus Y associations enriched their programs and services, effectively maintaining the centrality of their position and prestige on campus. However, after World War I, enrollments skyrocketed and with the increased and diversified student bodies, the nature of the slack changed. Exacerbated by an enlarged institution and more diversified student populations and activities, new slack begged for a secular student government, and eventually administrative annexation of control.

As student activities shifted from sectarian to secular and the institutional reorganization of student personnel office unfolded, the local campus Ys had to find new niches (new slack) to remain vibrant and viable. One strategic mode was to extend their work off-campus performing religious and semi-secular services for local populations. A second and a generally more effective strategy (but often paired with the first) was to perceive or generate new slack on campus and to capitalize on those operations. Those associations that could not find or create

new and sustainable slack became marginalized and operated on the periphery of student activities or in some cases, simply disappeared.

Concretely, we characterize at least two (although we believe a third exists) types of campus YMCAs dependent entirely on the association's ability to adapt to the changes in its ecology. The *Mainstay Campus Y* possessed a dedicated building that could be managed fiscally by the association through creative endeavors and that served as a hub for the campus. Its programs and the methods of operation were deemed not merely worthwhile but fit into the president's vision of the institution and the developing student personnel mission/aims/goals, i.e., leadership, community service, workshops and programs to help freshmen adapt and grow; and sustained programs through socialization of new officers. And finally, it found specialized niches, such as civil rights and free speech, which resonated with significant portions of campus.

On the other hand, the *Sidelined Campus Y* from its earliest days relied on assigned rooms that were shifted from one building to another through the years by a supportive administration. Although its programs at times were entrepreneurial, they were not sustainable. As the campus grew, the association became less important through inertia and failure to adapt to a changing student body and institution. The association became absorbed as a generic Christian club with peripheral status. And finally the institution's administration annexed and maintained control of student service programs.

We also believe that if we extended our analysis to more colleges, we would find the *Shrinking Violet Campus Y*, which never achieved the critical mass of student support, external funding/support, professional resources, etc., to generate services and activities necessary for a strong campus presence. The most likely institutions to find this type of association would be

those on a small campus that was geographically isolated, and that were constrained by other relevant contextual variables, such as an early secularization of the campus in general.

Several lessons for contemporary collegiate groups emerge from this analysis. First, the concept of unabsorbed slack is attractive in its broad applicability. Nineteenth century colleges took little responsibility for student life and as a result, students recognized and filled the vacuum. The recent movement across campuses to take up domestic and international service learning is akin to many of the activities of the early Y associations, demonstrating that strategic entrepreneurial spirit and activities continue. Second, our continuum suggests that certain elements promote the well-being of student groups. Although a dedicated building is often not feasible, committed room(s) for which the group takes responsibility provides formal and informal space that welcomes participants and serves as an important geographic center for group identity, particularly on a large campus, and for students of traditionally marginalized populations (Alleman, 2008; Attanasi, 1986; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Researchers have shown the relationship between group space and a sense of belonging that is linked to enrollment persistence (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). The Y continuum reinforces these findings, and provides insights into the specific resources and processes that may contribute to student success through organizational stability and adaptation. Most importantly, student groups need strategic leadership that can scan the environment for opportunities, respond with programs that fill special niches, learn to mobilize support, and adopt new visions of the organization in line with its mission and with its changing ecology. Professionals, whether dedicated student affairs personnel, academic administrators, or faculty, can provide students with training to perceive and envision slack and encourage them to absorb it.

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