Meeting the Challenge: America’s Independent Colleges and Universities Since 1956

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ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Founded in 1956, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of independent colleges and universities working together to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance private higher education’s contributions to society.

CIC is the major national service organization for all small and mid-sized independent colleges and universities in the U.S. CIC is not a lobbying organization, but rather focuses on providing services to campus leaders as well as seminars, workshops, and programs that assist institutions in improving educational programs, administrative and financial performance, and institutional capacity.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Meeting the Challenge: America’s Independent Colleges and Universities Since 1956 marks the 50th anniversary of the Council of Independent Colleges. The book is comprised of three essays written for general audiences. The first, by historian John Thelin, is a historical treatment of the role of independent colleges in American higher education since the 1950s. The second, by former U.S. News & World Report editor Alvin Sanoff, examines the contributions and current status of these institutions. The third essay, by Welch Suggs, reviews the Council of Independent Colleges’ half-century of leadership. Through broad dissemination, we hope this book will become an important part of making the case about the value of the education offered by private liberal arts colleges and universities.

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Meeting the Challenge: America’s Independent Colleges and Universities Since 1956

*Essays by John R. Thelin, Alvin P. Sanoff, and Welch Suggs*
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The Council of Independent Colleges marks its 50th anniversary in 2006. In the past half-century CIC has grown in size—from 63 founding members to more than 550 members today—and greatly expanded the array of services and programs it offers to member institutions. Yet the primary commitments at CIC are the same as they were in 1956: to help campus leaders strengthen their own colleges and universities; to provide practical services to member institutions; to encourage private philanthropy for independent higher education; to promote liberal arts education; and to enhance and advocate for the distinctive effectiveness of small and mid-sized private colleges and universities. We are proud of this record—proud of both the changes at CIC and what has remained the same.

We wanted this milestone anniversary to be more than a celebration—which explains the book in front of you now. We sought to use this occasion to shine the spotlight on the colleges and universities that constitute CIC as well as to reflect on our own development as an organization. We asked three distinguished writers to help us. The first essay, by historian John R. Thelin of the University of Kentucky, examines the many post-World War II challenges that small colleges faced (for the most part, successfully): budgetary crises, demographic booms and busts, philanthropists and policymakers who did not always understand the distinctive virtues of independent colleges, and above all the challenge of “bigness.” The second essay, by former U.S. News & World Report editor Alvin P. Sanoff, turns to the more recent years and current prospects of small and mid-sized private institutions—diverse institutions, he argues, but collectively dynamic, adaptive, effective, teaching-centered, and purposeful about their values and community service. The third essay, by former Chronicle of Higher Education writer Welch Suggs, focuses on CIC’s own development as the only national organization devoted to the collaborative improvement of private liberal arts institutions.

Together the three essays make a powerful case for the value of independent colleges and universities and their unique contributions to American higher education. Overall, there is much good news in this volume, which we hope our members and friends will share widely. The many challenges of the past have given us useful lessons as we look to the future.
“It is, sir, as I have said, a small college... and yet there are those of us who love it.”

—Daniel Webster
The independent liberal arts college has an enduring appeal best dramatized by Daniel Webster’s impassioned brief for his alma mater in the famous Dartmouth College case. As he explained to Chief Justice John Marshall and the Supreme Court in 1819: “It is, sir, as I have said, a small college . . . and yet there are those of us who love it.” Webster’s oratory and logic won the case, which established the independence of American corporations of all kinds from the state.

The independent liberal arts college was the dominant institution in American higher education for most of the 19th century. Between 1870 and 1910 it continued to survive and flourish during the first heroic age of university building. Looking back on this legacy in 1936, the editor of the Saturday Review recalled, “There has never been anything quite like the American college of the turn of the 20th century.” It was a complex, vital, and beloved institution. In the three decades between World War I and World War II, colleges enjoyed a resurgence of prestige and popularity, as both educators and American families reacted against the limits and uncertainties of undergraduate education at large state university campuses.

For over four centuries the small college has balanced widespread and generous support and genuine appreciation alongside equally strong
The story of the small liberal arts college in the past half century also coincides with the formation and development of the Council of Independent Colleges.
enrollment—not because of shrinkage or attrition, but because public institutions increased in number and enrollment at an unprecedented rate between 1950 and 1980 (see chart).

Americans have always been quick to associate quality with quantity, in nearly every facet of national life. The country’s economic health, for example, is reported in terms of the Gross National Product. Marketing campaigns extol jumbo-size products at supermarkets and fast-food restaurants. In Detroit between 1955 and 1970, General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler added tail fins and trunk space to every model automobile; now they promote SUVs.

The slogan “bigger is better” was especially tempting for American higher education in the mid-20th century. It appealed to governors and state legislators who sought immediate fulfillment of their pledges to provide mass access to postsecondary education. The expanded public campus was hailed as an expedient and affordable solution to the “baby boom” of students who would soon be making their way through high school and on to college. More than a few universities in the independent sector also embraced plans to expand their size and mission. When confidence in the benefits of bigness was applied to policies and programs, it heralded the age of the “multiversity”—with the American university described as a “knowledge factory” by its leaders.

Compare the growth of public institutions in the latter part of the 20th century with the typical size of state universities less than 100 years earlier. The University of Illinois and the University of Minnesota, for example, each had total enrollments in 1910 of fewer than 2,000 students.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics
Small private liberal arts colleges not only survived but thrived on their ability to

Just before World War II, the flagship state universities of Oregon, Colorado, Kansas, Georgia, and Virginia enrolled fewer than 6,000 students each. By 2000 most of these institutions had enrollments of more than 20,000 on the main campus, with thousands of additional students at their new branch campuses. The University of Minnesota alone grew from barely 1,700 students to more than 60,000 students at its main Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses in less than a century.

Such a quantitative change in higher education required a shift in educational philosophy. In 1949, *Life* magazine featured an article about the University of California. The president and dean stated that it was preferable to have 500 students in a lecture hall taught by the most notable scholar in the nation than to have smaller classes taught by scholars of lesser stature. Bear in mind, however, that their statement was a belief, not a research finding. Here was the philosophical difference that set small private colleges apart from the multiversity: college leaders believed that small class size, a small student body, and the close interactions of campus life were important parts of a sound undergraduate education. That commitment was crucial in shaping what the small independent colleges would—and would not—do in the late-20th century.

Although the commitment to smallness also began as a belief, we shall see that it has stood the test of rigorous empirical scrutiny by social and behavioral science researchers over the decades since.

The convictions about sound undergraduate pedagogy held at the small colleges meant, for starters, that they could not accommodate a large share of the long-term, nationwide growth in college attendance. In 1950, undergraduate enrollments in the United States were almost evenly divided between institutions in the private and public sectors. By 1980 the public sector—including state colleges and universities as well as community colleges—enrolled about 79 percent of all undergraduates. This proportion has persisted into the 21st century.

One could infer from the data that the independent sector has declined in appeal and that students have shifted overwhelmingly to public institutions. Historical context suggests a different, more nuanced explanation for this statistical summary. Over the past five decades, enrollments in private institutions—a group that includes almost all small colleges—have shown healthy gains, doubling between 1950 and 1980. By 2001 independent colleges and universities enrolled more than three million students—about 23 percent of the national total for all degree-seeking students. Many small colleges, however, deliberately chose to remain relatively small for sound
provide affordable, high-quality undergraduate education to new generations.

educational reasons, preferring a more personalized pedagogical approach.

The statistical skeleton gains a fuller shape when one considers that the major factor in the growth of American undergraduate education has been investments by state and local governments in the creation of new institutions, especially the community colleges. In 1950, junior and community colleges enrolled fewer than 5 percent of first-year college students; by 1980 the comparable figure was 50 percent. The new community colleges were commuter institutions, without residence halls, and populated by part-time students who did not seek to complete a bachelor’s degree. Community colleges dramatically expanded the range of options within American postsecondary education, but their approach to undergraduate education contrasted sharply with that of the private liberal arts colleges.

**Charting the Collegiate Course**

The preoccupation with expanding undergraduate enrollments has been a dominant theme in American higher education since World War II. This big story, however, is not the whole story. The enduring—and endearing—characteristic of American higher education since the 17th century has been its diversity. While the large universities gained resources and publicity, the small private liberal arts colleges not only survived but thrived on their ability to provide affordable, high-quality undergraduate education to new generations of American students.

The aim here is not to dismiss the appeal of bigness in American higher education, but rather to probe this preoccupation by considering alternative educational values and models of institutional effectiveness. Private colleges have responded to changing demographics in a distinctive manner, and they have been especially effective as part of the spectrum of American postsecondary education. Between 1981 and 2001, for example, independent colleges and universities enrolled only 21 percent of first-year students, but they conferred a much larger percentage of the nation’s bachelor’s degrees—37 percent. While the large public institutions were enrolling more students, the smaller colleges were seeing more of their students graduate (see chart on following page).

As we have already seen, the liberal arts colleges also grew with the times. The first sign that private colleges could help absorb a new generation of students came with the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1945, popularly known as the GI Bill. One strength of this legislation was that it gave qualified veterans choices about their education. Scholarships and living expense stipends could be used at any accredited institution. Within the marketplace of
American postsecondary education, liberal arts colleges were an attractive choice for veterans of World War II and later the Korean War. From 1945 to 1953 the small colleges welcomed student-veterans, rearranging facilities and courses to accommodate the influx of mature students.

Although the bulge in enrollments from the GI Bill was temporary and started to subside by 1952, it did give trustees and leaders at liberal arts colleges a preview of changing demographics. Even with the unprecedented number of high school graduates who sought postsecondary education between 1945 and 1975, independent colleges still had to maintain their appeal by being distinctive and affordable. One partial solution to the national demand was for liberal arts colleges to increase the number of students they admitted; institutions usually opted for careful, limited growth. Since massive expansion was not considered an educationally sound option, many liberal arts colleges now found that they had more qualified applicants than they could accept. For these fortunate colleges the years from the 1950s to the 1970s became an era of selective admissions. Some liberal arts colleges began to carve out special niches in American higher education. These were the schools that sociologist Burton Clark characterized as the “Distinctive Colleges,” a category that included such institutions as Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, Antioch College in Ohio, and Reed College in Oregon.
The long-run demographic prospects that surfaced in the late 1950s were small consolation to college presidents and deans immediately after World War II when they faced unexpected financial strains as the nation shifted to a post-war economy. A spurt of inflation that approached double digits between 1945 and 1950 put private colleges to a stern test. Annual expenses for campus operations—including energy, construction, and maintenance—soared far beyond the budget plans drafted a few years earlier.

The financial strains can be illustrated in the growth of annual operating expenses at one small college between 1939 and 1949. In 1949 *Life* magazine published a feature article about Williams College in Massachusetts, which it presented as the pinnacle of excellent undergraduate education in the United States. According to the *Life* editors, Williams demonstrated that “In an era of mass teaching … smallness [is] a virtue.” The faculty was well known for its close attention to student learning. The idyllic elm-lined campus of historic brick buildings was the setting for uncrowded libraries, state-of-the-art laboratories, a cohesive social life, and class sizes that averaged 20 students, almost always taught by full-time professors. The bad news was that despite its tradition, prestige, and endowment, “The college has a hard time making ends meet.”

Williams College’s operating budgets before and after World War II (in actual dollars, unadjusted for inflation) provide a clear picture of the financial difficulties some colleges faced:

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>1939-1940</th>
<th>1948-1949</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>$465,467</td>
<td>$665,021</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$99,966</td>
<td>$197,050</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>$167,961</td>
<td>$295,000</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>$36,085</td>
<td>$60,312</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>$47,459</td>
<td>$101,193</td>
<td>104%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>$66,207</td>
<td>$70,700</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$28,035</td>
<td>$42,331</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$911,180</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,431,607</strong></td>
<td><strong>57%</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

These figures show an increase by more than one-half over less than a decade. Most alarming was the fact that the increase was uneven. Most independent colleges, like Williams, had greatly reduced their expenses and operations during the war years. The increase was sharply concentrated...
in the years after 1945, due primarily to a surge in post-war inflation. Had colleges been extravagant in their post-war spending? No. To the contrary, the Williams case suggests sound institutional stewardship; the college had actually contained educational costs. The national inflation rate in that decade was 73 percent—significantly higher than the college’s 57 percent overall increase. And this at a time when the pressure on campus buildings and physical plant was especially great because the college was welcoming a new wave of undergraduate students.

Even though the college had not indulged in lavish spending on new facilities or programs for undergraduates, it was losing ground in its annual efforts to balance its budget. The cost to educate a student at Williams in the academic year 1948-1949 was $1,300. With tuition at $600 and room and board at $180, an undergraduate’s family paid only $780 toward the real cost of $1,300. The college was required to provide an additional $520 per student that year to meet educational costs. Little wonder, then, that Williams was having difficulty balancing its annual operating budget.

Williams College is an important example because it represented a “best case scenario” as an established, strong liberal arts college which, despite all its resources, planning, and alumni support, still faced severe problems. Other small colleges faced even worse situations. For example, at Transylvania University in Kentucky, the newly inaugurated president in 1949 inherited a financial crisis in which the college was hard-pressed to pay local vendors and contractors for building repairs—just as the University of Kentucky across town was enjoying increased state appropriations for capital construction and student tuition subsidies. St. John’s College in Maryland had impeccable academic standing but was denied regional accreditation until 1953 because of its financial instability. Elsewhere, presidents and business officers faced their own variations on the theme of financial hard times.

One obvious “solution” was to pass the new expenses on to students and their families by raising tuition. To do so, however, would have jeopardized the small-college tradition
of keeping education affordable—and run the risk of deterring large numbers of potential students from applying for admission. Meanwhile, presidents of private colleges understood that their institutions were at a disadvantage compared with state universities that could ride out the inflationary bubble on supplementary appropriations from state governments. From New York to California, state legislators and postsecondary education officials committed themselves to “low tuition” or “no tuition” policies for in-state students at the public universities and junior colleges. The private colleges had no such recourse. A small number of the most affluent private colleges began to draw more heavily from their endowments to subsidize each student. But this was an option that few liberal arts colleges could even consider, let alone implement.

For most schools, the primary response was to trim the budget, tighten faculty and staff salaries, defer campus maintenance and construction—literally, do more with less. This, too, was an early glimpse of a recurring public policy concern for private colleges over the next half century: namely, how to reduce the “tuition gap” between themselves and public institutions that could charge relatively less thanks to state subsidies.

Independent liberal arts colleges soon benefited from a tide of support—both financial and emotional—coming from the business sector and major foundations.

**FLOURISHING PHILANTHROPY**

How, then, did independent colleges deal with their financial problems? The first answer is that they relied on practices acquired during a long tradition of resourcefulness. Starting in the 1950s they also responded with increased attention to alumni giving and other fundraising activities. The adversity of the post-World War II inflationary crunch turned out to have some unexpected advantages, as the colleges’ laudable efforts to handle rising costs were noticed and appreciated beyond their own walls. Independent liberal arts colleges soon benefited from a tide of support—both financial and emotional—coming from the business sector and major foundations.

According to historians Merle Curti and Roderick Nash, the first step in this direction was taken by Frank Abrams, a corporate executive of Standard Oil of New Jersey. Around 1948 he began urging companies to make charitable contributions to private colleges and universities. Soon afterward, however, Abrams’ efforts stalled when Standard Oil’s legal counsel warned that the firm’s corporate charter forbade such contributions to higher education unless all the stockholders approved. But this restriction disappeared when the state of New Jersey amended its corporation law to “empower corporations chartered in the state to contribute,
as public policy, to educational institutions.” Other corporate boards in New Jersey also tested the restrictions. In one high-stakes court case, the board of the A. P. Smith Company made a contribution to Princeton University that was promptly blocked by stockholders who argued that the state amendment was unconstitutional if applied to existing corporate charters. Fortunately for independent colleges, the courts upheld a company’s right to contribute to private higher education. As New Jersey Superior Court Judge Alfred P. Stein wrote in his 1951 opinion:

I am strongly persuaded by the evidence that the only hope for the survival of the privately supported American colleges and universities lies in the willingness of corporate wealth to furnish in moderation some support to institutions which are so essential to public welfare and therefore, of necessity, to corporate welfare.... I cannot conceive of any greater benefit to corporations in this country than to build and continue to build, respect for and adherence to a system of free enterprise and democratic government, the serious impairment of either of which may well spell the destruction of all corporate enterprise.

This decision cleared the way for a period of generous support for independent colleges from corporations and foundations, not just in New Jersey but across the country. When corporations had contributed to independent colleges in the past, their charitable initiatives had usually been confined to scholarships for the children of employees. Corporate executives and board members gave little thought to long-term or large-scale support of colleges as an important, endangered national resource for the public good. However, in the early 1950s major corporate leaders, such as Frank Abrams of Standard Oil and Alfred P. Sloan of General Motors, began appealing to chief executive officers and board members of companies nationwide to overcome the traditional view that a corporation ought not—need not—support independent colleges and universities unless there were some direct benefit to the company.

This informal movement eventually led to the creation of formal agencies to provide dynamic structure and leadership for the systematic, ongoing financial support of independent colleges as a collective entity. The landmark event was the founding of the Associated Colleges of Indiana in 1948—the first cooperative statewide association of independent colleges in the nation. Its founder was Frank Sparks, an entrepreneur and former executive of the Indianapolis Pump and Tube Company who earned a Ph.D.
at the age of 40 so he could become a college president. As president of Wabash College in Indiana from 1941 to 1956, he combined a commitment to his own campus with attention to the larger sphere of higher education philanthropy in the business community.

After World War II, Sparks led an ambitious plan to create a “Greater Wabash.” It became a model for self-revitalization at small colleges. As a college president, Sparks emphasized multiple initiatives. These included healing the schisms between college officials and old-guard alumni; reconstructing the board of trustees as a powerful body of prominent, wealthy individuals; recruiting nationally distinguished professors to the small college; renovating and expanding the campus and physical plant; and attracting sustained, large-scale financial support. The convergence of these initiatives gave Wabash College national visibility as a “pillar of strength” in the private sector. Sparks’ aim was to associate his college—and all private colleges—with the philosophy of independence and self-reliance characteristic of the American private business sector.

President Sparks’ visionary leadership at Wabash College provided a platform for his larger commitment to the character and health of all independent colleges in Indiana and nationwide. The commitment sprang from his concern after World War II that the recent growth of state and
federal support for higher education also carried the threat of government control in higher education. As he wrote at the time, “Federal aid to education almost certainly will mean the disappearance from our educational system of the independent, privately financed, liberal arts colleges.”

Sparks talked with leaders from business and industry as well as board members and presidents at other independent colleges in the state. The resulting Associated Colleges of Indiana soon fostered counterparts elsewhere, particularly in Ohio, Michigan, New York, and California. The hallmark of these early associations was the partnership between college presidents and corporate leaders. As historians Curti and Nash observed, Sparks emphasized that “liberal arts colleges preserve freedom; they produce many essential scientists and business executives; tax laws make it inexpensive to give, since corporations could deduct up to 5 percent of their net income for contributions to charitable institutions and causes.”

The creation of state associations to support independent colleges eventually led to national initiatives. The Council for Financial Aid to Education was incorporated in 1952 “with funds supplied by the General Education Board, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Ford Foundation’s Fund for the Advancement of Education.” In 1957 business and academic leaders created the Informal Committee for Corporate Aid to American Universities. Thanks in large part to these efforts, the Council for Financial Aid to Education could report more than $42 million in corporate contributions in 1962.

An important development in the support of independent higher education came in 1951, when the affluent Ford Foundation created its Fund for the Advancement of Education. Emphasizing innovation beyond “business as usual,” this initiative helped a variety of colleges and universities explore new curricula. In 1955 the Ford Foundation awarded a total of $210 million to 630 private liberal arts colleges. The goal was to encourage this diverse group of institutions to raise faculty salaries. Since eligibility for the Foundation’s awards depended on regional accreditation, a number of colleges were prompted to shore up both their curricular and financial structures in compliance with accreditation standards. Indeed, CIC’s origin in 1956 was an indirect consequence of this Ford largesse (this story is told on pages 63–86). A few years later, the Ford Foundation identified a smaller group of 126 institutions to share an award of $50 million, again with an emphasis on raising faculty salaries. Many of the Ford programs required matching grants, so participating colleges were obliged to raise dollars from new sources to release the Foundation’s funds.
The short-term result of Ford’s influence was enhanced external support for independent liberal arts colleges in a time of continuing financial crisis. The long-term benefit was strengthening the tradition of large-scale philanthropic support for higher education. Viewed in tandem, these two emphases constituted an effective support strategy. Philanthropy that limited itself to underwriting bold, innovative programs provided incentives for cutting-edge exploration at the colleges. In contrast, the direct support for raising faculty salaries helped colleges maintain “business as usual” and then do more. In fact, this apparently conservative approach had a strong multiplier effect that invigorated liberal arts colleges. It meant that they now could compete against other kinds of institutions both to retain established faculty members and attract Ph.D. recipients from leading universities as new faculty members. Thanks to foundation support, liberal arts colleges were increasingly able to attract a new generation of committed scholars to their teaching ranks. The challenge for a president or provost was to identify those graduate students at major universities who combined skills in advanced research with an essential passion for teaching and undergraduate education.

INNOVATION AND PUBLIC POLICIES

The great experiment in American postsecondary education over the past half century has been the development of federal and state policies intended to make college accessible to almost every student who seeks to participate. The higher education sector has attempted to increase the varieties of educational settings and experiences from which students can choose, while making sure that students are able to afford the tuition and other college expenses in every setting. This ambitious venture has been both uncertain and uneven in its accomplishments.

Alexander Astin, the founding director of UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute, has studied the differential impacts and outcomes of the college experience for more than four decades. His research provides useful information and much good news for the independent sector of higher education. According to Astin, “the undergraduate experience at small, residential, liberal arts colleges tends to promote strong cognitive growth, the development of solid values, and a high rate of degree completion.” He first reported this set of outcomes in his 1977 study *Four Critical Years* and reconfirmed his findings in a 1993 follow-up study, *What Matters Most in College?* Astin’s systematic research supports the long-term contention of independent colleges
that a residential campus experience combined with small class sizes and close teacher-student interaction represents a highly effective approach to undergraduate education.

Not only is this educational philosophy effective, but studies by Astin and others show that it is also relatively efficient. A high percentage of undergraduates at small colleges tended to continue beyond the freshman year and then complete their degrees in four years. In contrast, the retention rate at public colleges and universities is considerably lower, and taking five or even six years to complete the bachelor’s degree has become increasingly typical. Over the years, large state universities have acknowledged their own problems about declining educational efficiency and effectiveness. By the early 1960s undergraduates were persistently complaining about what they called the “impersonality of the multiversity.” As sociologists Christopher Jencks and David Riesman noted in *The Academic Revolution* (1968): “There are no public Amhersts, Swarthmores, or Oberlins.” The implicit message was that independent colleges continued to serve an important role. Psychologist Nevitt Sanford’s pioneering 1962 study of college students, *The American College: A Psychological and Social Interpretation of Higher Learning*, also warned about the growing student dissatisfaction with mass undergraduate education in large institutions. The small independent colleges were (and are) an exception to this general trend.

While independent colleges were effective at educating and graduating students during the 1950s and 1960s, they were also innovating and expanding. Contrary to some popular notions, there was institution-building in the private sector. Between 1949 and 1965 the historic Claremont Colleges in California added Claremont Men’s College (later Claremont McKenna College), Harvey Mudd College, and Pitzer College to their distinctive arrangement, popularly praised as the “Oxford of the Orange Belt.” In western Massachusetts, Hampshire College opened in 1964—the harmonious product of cooperation among Amherst, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and the University of Massachusetts. The unique “Great Books” curriculum at St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland was sufficiently attractive and successful that in the 1960s the college’s trustees created a second campus in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Independent colleges avoided complacency and embraced thoughtful reform in the 1960s. A Carnegie Corporation study by Morris Keeton and Conrad Hilberry, *Struggle and Promise: A Future for the Colleges* (1969), commended such colleges as Earlham, Morehouse, Simmons, Oberlin, Amherst, Berea, and Wheaton (MA) for their intensive self-studies and institutional adaptations.

By the early 1960s undergraduates were persistently complaining about what they called the “impersonality of the multiversity.”
In American higher education, imitation is a form of flattery. Presidents of the great state universities have repeatedly looked to small private colleges as models to reform undergraduate education in the public “knowledge factories.” Their innovations tacitly acknowledge that the liberal arts campus remains an admirable setting for undergraduate education. Clark Kerr, legendary president of the multi-campus University of California system, who often invoked favorably his own undergraduate experience at Swarthmore College, had great hopes in 1965 for the newly opened campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz to create diversity within the large state university. Kerr and his colleagues sought a new structure that would allow the “university to seem smaller as it grew larger.” Even though the University of California, University of Michigan, and other large state institutions struggled to rediscover the appeal of small size for undergraduate education, few of these initiatives to humanize the scale of undergraduate education—such as creating experimental colleges or cluster colleges in the state universities—took root. Only a dozen public, genuinely liberal arts colleges exist today, although a new wave of imitation can be seen in the recent establishment of honors colleges within large universities. Meanwhile, independent colleges continued to refine their vision of small campuses with vital communities and rich curricula.

A Carnegie Corporation study, Struggle and Promise: A Future for the Colleges (1969), commended institutions such as Berea College for their intensive self-studies and institutional adaptations.
PROMOTING ACCESS AND CHOICE

The prestige and popularity of liberal arts colleges rose during the same decades that their share of American higher education enrollments began to shrink. Why? Most important, parents, guidance counselors, prospective students, and even state legislators respected their traditions and educational effectiveness. Still, the public interest included repeated overtures for small private colleges to play an expanded role in absorbing the new generation of college-bound students. Nowhere was this urging more evident than in Alexander Astin and Calvin B.T. Lee’s 1971 study for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, *The Invisible Colleges: A Profile of Small, Private Liberal Arts Colleges with Limited Resources*.

Two distinct types of policy recommendations grew out of this study. First, state governments and several national educational groups were encouraged to seek ways to ensure that private colleges could remain affordable to a wide range of students by family income and resources. This policy goal resulted in thoughtful state scholarship programs during the 1970s, which allowed eligible high school graduates to receive tuition credits for study at any accredited college within the state, whether public or independent. These programs increased both access and choice for students by allowing portability. Second, liberal arts colleges were encouraged by state officials to consider substantial increases to the size of their student bodies.

Independent colleges worked hard to remain affordable. This effort meant devoting increased institutional resources to scholarships and financial aid. At many small colleges, it also meant adhering to a tradition of thrifty stewardship to keep expenses—and thus tuition charges—relatively low. These internal initiatives were enhanced by public policies that allowed private colleges to participate in state programs. California and New York offer good examples. The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities and the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities in New York worked with their state governments to create public scholarship programs that allowed qualified students to make financially affordable choices. By 1978 more than 30 state governments had established student financial aid programs that could be useful at independent colleges within the state. This philosophy of institutional and government cooperation on financial aid blossomed at the national level in 1972 with the federal government’s creation of the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants (which later evolved into the Pell Grants).

Many private two-year colleges also responded to the growing wave of college-bound high school seniors, which
had a positive influence on the independent college sector. The two-year colleges shored up their curricula, faculties, and physical plants—and transformed themselves into four-year colleges that now conferred bachelor’s degrees. This trend is typified by Berry College in Georgia. Originally a secondary-level training school for boys in the early 20th century, it gradually expanded to coeducation and then to offering the two-year associate’s degree. In the late 1950s Berry worked with regional accreditation teams to transform its mission to collegiate, baccalaureate work while eliminating its secondary school. Similar initiatives to add or reinstate a bachelor’s degree program took place at other institutions, including Averett College (now University) in Virginia, Lindsey Wilson College in Kentucky, and later Stephens College in Missouri.

The second policy recommendation from state governments and the Carnegie Commission—namely, welcoming more students by expanding the size of entering freshman classes—elicited mixed responses from the private colleges. The sticking point was not a lack of interest. Rather, the colleges faced a paradox of popularity. If a college expanded its entering class too much, it risked forfeiting the small size that made it both distinctive and educationally effective. For most colleges, the reasonable compromise was a careful monitoring of modest growth.
Small Science is Excellent Science

The fascination with bigness influenced American approaches to science education and research while providing a model for managing the growth of undergraduate enrollments. The large university campuses gained attention and support after World War II when Presidential science advisor Vannevar Bush persuaded Congress to invest in serious, high-level scientific research and development as a permanent post-war commitment. Central to his case was the motto, “Big Science is the Best Science.” The underlying premise was that advanced scientific research would flourish when concentrated in a select group of large, established universities. During the next decade, the consequences of this priority became evident. Ranking institutions by the gross dollars of federal grants received was quickly accepted as a proxy for prestige. As a result, by 1960 15 large universities were receiving about 80 percent of all federal research grants. Small liberal arts colleges had a difficult time competing for these grants in the sciences.

It is easy to assume that the small liberal arts colleges were completely left out of the picture in the decades of “Big Science,” simply because the majority of federal research grants went to a handful of large doctoral-granting universities. But that assumption is wrong because the full picture was more complex. Many systematic studies now show that small colleges made significant contributions to the education of future scientists all through the 20th century. Nobel laureate Thomas Cech offers a good account of this contribution in his essay “Sciences at Liberal Arts Colleges: A Better Education?” which appeared in Stephen Koblik and Stephen R. Graubard’s anthology, Distinctively American (1999).

One reason for the popular misconception about science in the small colleges is that many casual observers presumed that “the liberal arts” do not include the sciences. In fact, biology, chemistry, geology, physics, and mathematics were staples of the liberal arts curriculum before psychology, political science, and sociology. As Cech observes, the curriculum and culture of the liberal arts college often made it more likely that its students would take science courses than students at larger institutions. One result is that graduates of liberal arts colleges tend to pursue Ph.D.s in science and mathematics at a rate substantially greater than graduates of other institutions.

As one would expect, such academically selective small colleges as Oberlin, Swarthmore, Williams, Harvey Mudd, and Pomona are high on the lists of future Ph.D. producers. But other liberal arts institutions with less visibility and smaller endowments also have very strong
records in science and mathematics initiatives—such as Allegheny and Juniata Colleges and Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania, Knox College in Illinois, Hope and Calvin Colleges in Michigan, Xavier University in Ohio, and Drury University in Missouri. Drury, for example, has gained stature for its leadership role in the National Science Foundation’s “Course and Curriculum Development Program.” And Dickinson College in Pennsylvania was the host campus for three model national programs: Workshop Physics, Workshop Mathematics, and Workshop Calculus. One of the best indicators of continuing excellence in undergraduate science has been CIC’s annual Heuer Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Undergraduate Science Education, which between 2001 and 2005 honored a range of CIC member institutions, including Juniata, Oberlin, Whitworth, Benedictine, and Allegheny Colleges, and Drury and John Carroll Universities. Most of the award-winning projects focus on science majors; but others, like Columbia College Chicago’s “Institute for Science Education and Science Communication,” are designed to improve the science education of non-science majors.

Liberal arts colleges have excelled in other national initiatives. Mount Holyoke, Cedar Crest, and Spelman Colleges stand out as models for the education of women in science and mathematics. Spelman and Morehouse Colleges are innovators in science education at historically black colleges and universities. Spelman warrants special recognition. According to an analysis provided by the United Negro College Fund, Spelman ranks first in the nation in graduating African-American students with majors in mathematics and statistics. According to a *U.S. News & World Report* survey, more than a third of Spelman students major in mathematics and science fields at this all-women’s college.

Although the small liberal arts colleges by definition do not offer Ph.D. programs in the sciences, they have well prepared a significant number of future scientists. They have been hailed as a robust pipeline to graduate

Many systematic studies now show that small colleges, such as Juniata College in Pennsylvania, made significant contributions to the education of future scientists throughout the 20th century.
A small student body and small course enrollments are roots from which many good

work in the sciences and mathematics. Furthermore, the projects to reform science education at liberal arts colleges usually influence the entire undergraduate program at these institutions—benefiting more students than those who choose to major in a science or mathematics discipline. Serving as a crucible for future Ph.D.s in the sciences is hardly the whole story of the liberal arts college’s connection with the sciences. An essay by Priscilla Laws in the same Distinctively American anthology supplements Cech’s perspective with another important story. By the 1970s, she notes, small independent colleges had become effective partners and participants in a number of long-term projects on undergraduate science sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). Institutions such as Drury University served both as leaders in campus-based innovation in science instruction and as the hosts of centers and institutes that shared and spread “best practices” in science education with colleges elsewhere.

One reason that such federally-funded projects flourished at the small colleges was that the hallmarks of these colleges—the overall small size of the student body combined with the small size of course enrollments—encouraged active undergraduate learning. Small class size was conducive to hands-on field work and laboratory projects in which all students worked directly with full-time faculty members. This close attention to students enhanced science learning for majors and non-majors alike. The federal agencies especially encouraged these approaches, with the long-term aim to transform undergraduate science education from a conventional emphasis on mastering information toward a new emphasis on achieving a conceptual understanding of how scientists think and go about their work. An added attraction of the small college for the education of scientists is that professors often rely on undergraduates—not doctoral students—to be their research assistants and coauthors on scientific papers and journal articles; indeed, independent small colleges have a tradition of encouraging and supporting such student-faculty collaboration. In large universities, introductory science courses typically suffer from very high attrition rates. In small colleges, much higher percentages of students clear this hurdle, complete science majors, and pursue careers in science.

The innovations that began in science education at small colleges have carried to other fields of study. As Susan Borque shows in yet another essay from Distinctively American, undergraduates at liberal arts colleges have also had excellent opportunities for close work with faculty in the social and behavioral sciences, in such fields as psychology, government, sociology, and anthropology. This benefit includes serving as research assistants and project participants. Finally, Borque brings to light another, underappreciated side-benefit of the small campus: professors
things grow in the shape, structure, process, and results of undergraduate education.

in the social and behavioral sciences are more likely to cooperate with each other on interdisciplinary research and teaching that involves cutting across departmental lines than their faculty counterparts who teach in large departments at research universities.

THE IMPACT OF THE SMALL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Independent small colleges have gained confidence and momentum by publicizing the studies that document their innovations and contributions. One finding that emerged from numerous studies as far back as the 1960s was that “small size” appeared to be correlated with many of the positive characteristics of undergraduate education—student satisfaction, high rates of persistence, high levels of degree completion, changes in attitudes and values, and cognitive growth. But small size is more than just the correlate of a good undergraduate education. A small student body and small course enrollments are roots from which many good things grow in the shape, structure, process, and results of undergraduate education.

Put another way, small size by itself has never been a guarantee against poor teaching or an uninspired student experience. However, an institution that grew large, whether by accident or design, faced an increasingly difficult task of promoting student engagement with the campus experience or fostering positive student-faculty interaction in the classroom. Alexander Astin found that a large number of independent colleges used small size as the structural base from which to create and improve undergraduate experiences.

Thanks to increasingly sophisticated tools of analysis in the social and behavioral sciences, combined with institutional and national student databases, researchers since the 1970s have been able to discern the impact of institutions on the thinking, values, and experiences of their students. Positive results were most pronounced in the independent liberal arts colleges that were also academically selective and financially strong. Even more significantly, the liberal arts colleges that were not among the most selective or wealthiest also had strong records in these areas of influence.

Higher education analysts have tended to give primary attention to the data on student enrollment, retention, and bachelor’s degree completion rates—a preoccupation, in other words, with courses and degree programs. In addition to that understandable focus, it is also important to look at how participating in extracurricular activities at small colleges contributes to a student’s collegiate experience—as a partner to, not at odds with, the formal curriculum. Indeed, a growing body of research indicates that students who are more involved in campus activities outside
A growing body of research indicates that students who are more involved in campus activities outside the classroom are more likely to do better in the classroom.

the classroom are more likely to do better in the classroom.
Given the American tradition of supporting and encouraging intercollegiate athletics, it makes sense to start with trends in varsity sports at the small colleges.

During an era when large universities dealt with the prospects and problems of big-time, big-money intercollegiate sports, small liberal arts colleges created competitive athletic programs that showed how extracurricular activities might enhance liberal learning. The small liberal arts college provided an alternative to the highly commercialized athletics of the National College Athletic Association’s (NCAA) Division I category. Small colleges usually played in the NCAA’s Division II and III or as members of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The NAIA has a long tradition of pioneering reforms in intercollegiate sports, including the end of racial segregation in its organizational membership in 1952. NAIA has in recent years emphasized “competition with character,” where “academics come before athletics.” The NCAA Division III was created in 1981 as college presidents and athletic directors succeeded in their sustained effort to assure an alternative to high-pressure programs within the NCAA.

These were institutional developments that allowed college presidents to take a collective stand in favor of constraints on athletic grants-in-aid, reduced dependence on revenues from ticket sales and commercial broadcasts, and much less investment in huge football stadiums or basketball arenas. Avoiding these excesses did not mean that college sports at the independent colleges were insignificant, marginal, or noncompetitive. Rather, these institutions showed that athletics and academics could be integrated, both within the institution and within the individual student. The emphasis was on student-athletes, not athlete-students.

Perusing the NCAA Division III records shows that college students can be excellent in both academics and athletics. Over the past decade Wartburg College in Iowa has had a win-loss record of 86-20 in football and eight Academic All-Americans in the sport. The football team at Augustana College in Illinois has had a 76-25 record and ten Academic All-Americans in the same period. Augustana stands fifth in the nation for all-time Academic All-Americans in all sports, with 114 students winning that honor. Only the Universities of Nebraska and Notre Dame, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Bucknell University rank higher. Kenyon College in Ohio has combined sustained high regard for its academic excellence with an equally impressive national record of 45 NCAA Division III swimming team championships—with the women’s team winning 20 championships in the 21 years
since the program started in 1983-1984 and the men’s team earning 25 consecutive national championships.

CIC member institutions consistently shine in the rankings for the Sears Cup, a nationwide competition for outstanding intercollegiate athletics program sponsored by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics. In 2004-2005, for example, Azusa Pacific University of California won the annual Sears Cup and Williams College received the NCAA Division III award for the top overall athletics program—the ninth time in ten years that Williams was so honored.

The small-college approach to varsity sports includes a distinctive definition of collegiate coaching. Without the distractions of ticket sales, television revenues, and shoe endorsements that characterize larger programs, coaches at the small colleges have the opportunity to be teachers. These coaches often teach classes. They may coach a second or third sport. Frequently they hold academic appointments. Nor is it unusual to have a professor serve as an assistant or head coach. Faculty members also show support for intercollegiate athletics by serving as officials and time keepers at home contests, or by volunteering as faculty sponsors—just as they might do for the student yearbook or the thespian club. The rigid specializations that are the rule at large research universities do not apply at most small colleges.

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The size and scope of varsity sports programs across the range of small liberal arts colleges varies. Many of the institutions are committed to offering a large number of sports. This means that such “Olympic sports” as track and field, cross country, swimming, water polo, field hockey, wrestling, volleyball, gymnastics, soccer, and lacrosse often find a home beside football and basketball. It also means that small colleges emphasize opportunities for active involvement, rather than sidelining most students as passive spectators at intercollegiate games. In 2000, many independent colleges could report that more than 25 percent of their students played on a varsity squad, including teams for women in compliance with the federal Title IX legislation of 1972. The educational lessons and experiences of the playing fields, courts, and pools have been integrated into the complete curricular experience.

This pattern of participation in varsity sports by students at small independent colleges reinforces a more general finding about the benefit of their undergraduate experience—namely, that each student at a small college is more likely to have opportunities to be an integral member of a student organization or group, whether it be as a swimmer on the college team, a member of the editorial board of the student newspaper, an officer in student government, or a member of an honor society. And participation is a source of satisfaction. Furthermore, the habits developed as an undergraduate tend to continue into adult life. Alumni activities, including donations to one’s alma mater, echo the strong record of undergraduate participation. A good illustration of this lifelong affiliation is the percentage of alumni who make financial contributions to their college. Centre College of Kentucky, for example, has often topped the national lists with an alumni donor rate over 60 percent. Indeed, alumni of private colleges are more likely to give financial support to their alma mater than are graduates of public colleges and universities. Sound education can be a gift that keeps on giving—to the mutual gain of students, alumni, and the college as a whole.

ADVERSITY TO ADVENTURE

In contrast to the combination of affluence and optimism that characterized American institutions and the economy from the late 1950s, by 1973 colleges and universities faced what economists called “higher education’s new depression.” Academic institutions were confronted by “stagflation”—an unprecedented combination of more than a decade of high inflation and soaring energy expenses.
combined with a declining rate of financial support. To compound the problem, demographers pointed out that the number of high school graduates was declining—and graduating seniors were showing less inclination to go to college than their predecessors.

Just as they had done in the wake of World War II, many colleges and universities initially responded by adopting severe measures to reduce operating expenses and keep tuition from soaring. Thrift, in the various forms of energy conservation, deferred plant maintenance, hiring freezes, and salary reductions, seemed to work from 1975 to 1979, as increases in the price of attending college remained below the nation’s generic consumer price index (CPI). These measures eventually proved insufficient and sometimes counterproductive. The failure to maintain campus buildings and grounds, for example, could not continue indefinitely without leading to problems of health, security, and obsolescence—and thus declining appeal to prospective students and their parents.

In place of piecemeal measures, by 1980 the presidents and other administrators at independent colleges were reading—and heeding—books about strategic planning and other approaches to management that encouraged rethinking how colleges work. The influential books included Lewis Mayhew’s *Surviving the Eighties* (1980) and George
Keller’s *Academic Strategy* (1983), whose recommendations provided a healthy alternative to the despairing, dire predictions that many colleges would close. Any college or university, whether public or private, that faced financial problems and declining enrollments was prone to cast about for drastic changes, often by imitating the programs and offerings of other institutions. Clark Kerr lamented what he called the “frantic race to remain contemporary” as institutions launched new ventures such as offering doctoral programs or opening professional schools.

Sometimes the decision to add new degree programs at the master’s or doctoral level was appropriate and effective. But if done with little consideration of mission and constituency, it could be counterproductive, causing an institution to drift into unwieldy programs that were expensive and perhaps ill-suited to its character and resources. In some cases, an expanded mission was both responsible and successful. Lesley University in Massachusetts extended its curriculum to include a variety of innovative, flexible master’s programs that supplemented its traditional bachelor’s degree offerings in education and related fields—with favorable results for both the institution and its community. During the lean decade from 1974 to 1984, the models and values espoused by the independent colleges kept resurfacing as solutions to the major puzzles and problems that other higher education institutions now faced also.

Most small independent colleges resisted the temptations of overextension or undisciplined and unplanned growth. Instead they considered some interesting, even daring, innovations in campus operations and budgeting that could be reconciled with their core institutional commitments.

Despite the dire projections about a high institutional mortality rate, only a handful of private colleges closed their doors in the 1970s. They included Immaculate Heart College and Lone Mountain College in California, Parsons College in Iowa, and Milton College in Wisconsin.

Many other colleges dramatically changed their admissions and financial aid policies in response to broad demographic, economic, political, and social forces. Elizabeth Duffy and Idana Goldberg traced some of the most important changes in *Crafting A Class: College Admissions & Financial Aid, 1955-1994* (1998), a study of the development of competitive admission and financial aid policies at 16 liberal arts colleges in Massachusetts and Ohio. They showed how admission policies were affected first by the struggles for civil rights and gender equality in the 1960s and 1970s and then by the decline in applications as the influx of baby boom students slowed in the 1980s. In the 1990s financial aid became another tool that colleges used to compete for the shrinking pool of highly qualified students.
Some of the major changes in the small colleges in the 1970s and 1980s had less to do with deliberations about academic programs and more to do with fundamental discussions about student constituencies. The effect of these changes on women’s colleges—including mergers, closures, and decisions to become coeducational—were especially significant. Gradually yet persistently, many historically single-gender institutions opted for coeducation. It was not an obvious or easy choice, as it altered an institution’s distinctive character and constituency. On balance, the move to coeducation tended to be most helpful for colleges that had been exclusively for men. These institutions usually enjoyed an increase in the number of applicants plus a rise in the applicants’ high school academic records and SAT scores.

But generalizations cannot replace the careful, sometimes difficult consideration of each institution’s own situation and prospects. Bennington College in Vermont, for example, continued its curricular tradition of progressive education in the arts and humanities while shifting from an exclusive focus on the education of women to coeducation. Kenyon College in Ohio opted to become coeducational in 1969 and began a period of expansion. Pitzer College in California opened in 1965 as a college for women with a progressive, experimental curriculum. Less than a decade later, Pitzer retained its curricular focus while opting to become coeducational. At the same time, several other independent institutions decided to maintain their traditional commitment as women’s colleges. Among these were Agnes Scott, Alverno, Notre Dame of Maryland, Hollins, Mary Baldwin, Mills, Mount Holyoke, Saint Mary’s in Indiana, Scripps, Spelman, and Stephens. While most colleges that had historically been just for men eventually adopted coeducation, this was not always the case, as Wabash College in Indiana continued to flourish academically and financially as an institution exclusively for men. In Los Angeles, two historically single-gender institutions, Loyola...
College (for men) and Marymount College (for women), merged successfully to create an attractive coeducational university.

A comparable period of serious institutional scrutiny took place in the ways in which small colleges considered—and sometimes renegotiated—their affiliations with religious groups and denominations. By the 1960s the larger universities had in most instances become secular, and the religious character of smaller colleges was beginning to change as well. The general trend was toward loosening the church bonds. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the small colleges often reduced or abolished their course requirements in religion and moral philosophy. On many campuses, mandatory chapel attendance was eliminated too.

Protestant colleges, especially in “mainline” denominations, reduced their ties to the founding religious bodies as financial support from the churches diminished and interest grew on the campuses in having the flexibility and autonomy that came with an independent board of trustees. Roman Catholic colleges were often more successful in maintaining their religious identities, though they also had to adjust to changing circumstances, particularly the steep decline in the membership of their founding religious orders. For some Baptist institutions, a move toward independence came only toward the end of the 20th century, sometimes with very public struggles for institutional control between the state Baptist conventions and the college trustees.

Despite a secularizing trend overall, many colleges deepened their religious character. Wheaton College in Illinois was hailed in national studies for its ability to fuse high academic standards with its evangelical commitment. In California, Azusa Pacific University was cited as an exemplary institution for using its religious commitment to revitalize its admissions and curriculum. Wheaton and Azusa Pacific were two institutions among a larger group with strong ties to the Protestant evangelical movement that banded together under
From the 1960s to the 1980s, the small colleges often reduced or abolished their course requirements in religion and moral philosophy.


In an earlier era, the religious identity of the colleges had been defined by formal features, such as legal ownership, control of governance, and financial dependence. By the end of the 20th century, however, that identity was more often characterized by a historic commitment, a shared mission, and an enduring commitment to a particular faith and set of values.

An underappreciated phenomenon of the period that began in the early 1970s was the self-scrutiny small independent colleges applied to their campus operations as they rethought the interconnections of form, function, and philosophy. No less than a managerial revolution enabled these colleges to collect the data they needed to make thoughtful decisions after careful deliberations. A number of colleges underwent rigorous reviews in order to redirect the campus from inertia to energy. The transformations could permeate an entire campus—ranging from admissions, financial aid, fundraising, and alumni affairs, to purchasing and the maintenance of buildings and grounds. Even the traditional academic calendar was scrutinized.

Could the college save substantially on its energy consumption by starting the first semester earlier in late August, and ending it earlier in late December? Did closing the library between midnight and 8:00 a.m. necessarily squelch learning? Which educational practices promoted student retention—or avoided wasted time and effort? Scores of such questions, combined with systematic data, allowed every campus constituency to reconsider academic business as usual. Among CIC members, institutional decisions about financial and enrollment concerns took markedly different forms. Mount Holyoke College, for example, gained national publicity in the 1980s for a strategy to increase its pool of academically strong applicants by raising tuition and increasing its need-based financial aid awards. Muskingum College of Ohio took an opposite tack in the 1990s as it opted to reduce its tuition charges in order to increase the number of applications. Each approach worked for that college.

Ironically, small colleges are often stereotyped as captives of inertia and tradition when, in fact, they behave quite differently. Managerial changes have been accompanied by remarkably enterprising initiatives. This has been especially evident in development and fundraising, as presidents and development officers have worked hard to tell the story of the small college to alumni, donors, and foundations. One result is that independent colleges were especially effective in keeping college affordable during the 1980s and 1990s, both by containing expenses and by providing generous student financial aid.
Hallmark programs like the Pell Grants and other federal financial aid programs brought the independent colleges and universities into the mainstream of government efforts to increase student aid and student choice simultaneously. Thanks in large measure to the collective efforts of independent colleges—through such groups as the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities—the large-scale federal financial aid programs started in the 1970s proved that sound public policies could include private institutions as full partners. Notable exceptions included Hillsdale College in Michigan and Grove City College in Pennsylvania, which gained renown for taking strong, deliberate stands to assert their institutional autonomy by refusing federal funds.

INNOVATION AND INSPIRATION

Having survived the financial crises of the 1970s, small independent colleges embarked on three decades of enterprising developments. CIC’s members have maintained their diversity and distinctiveness in an era when the pressures of mass media encouraged homogenization of the entire culture, including higher education. Faced with a changing national population of prospective students and persistent economic pressures—including more competition from community colleges and for-profit institutions—many independent colleges and universities added master’s degrees and other graduate programs in the 1980s and 1990s. More and more often, they also found ways to cooperate with each other, sharing programs and resources, even as they competed for students and the attention of donors and the public as a whole. Pioneering efforts at collective purchasing, sharing of technology and other administrative services, and online courses serving groups of campuses emerged—among other places in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and among colleges in the Southeast.

Independent colleges and universities do not constitute a homogeneous sector of American higher education. There has always been great diversity among the colleges. Though some institutions enjoy national prestige, every institution shapes itself in terms of local and regional constituencies. Berea College in Kentucky continues to offer tuition-free, liberal arts education to low-income students from the Appalachian region. Whittier and Mills Colleges in California transformed their traditional curricula in the liberal arts to respond to the changing demographics of gender and ethnicity in the surrounding communities, attracting a strong representation of students of color.

The College of Wooster in Ohio distinguishes itself through a prominent independent study program. The
University of the Ozarks in Arkansas takes rightful pride in an exceptional program to serve students with learning disabilities. Principia College in Illinois benefits from a harmonious campus environment thanks to a master plan developed by noted architect Bernard Maybeck in the 1920s and 1930s. Saint John’s University and the College of Saint Benedict in Minnesota have fashioned a unique shared curriculum and course schedule for two campuses six miles apart. Westmont College in California, the University of Richmond in Virginia, and Franklin College in Indiana all offer signature programs centered on understanding and developing leadership. There have been as many variations on the theme of diverse approaches to college education as there have been CIC member colleges and universities.

It was largely the desire of CIC institutions to combine their interest in addressing local educational needs with curricular innovation that explains the frequent expansion into selected master’s degree and graduate programs. Today, nearly 70 percent of CIC institutions offer master’s (or higher) degrees. Often these programs were tailored to provide access to underserved constituencies by offering weekend and evening courses, with Mundelein College in Illinois and Hiram College in Ohio offering the first weekend colleges in the country. Whitworth College offered master’s programs in teaching, nursing, 

Institutions such as Mills College in California transformed their traditional curricula in the liberal arts to respond to the changing demographics of gender and ethnicity in the surrounding communities, attracting a strong representation of students of color among their constituencies.
and international management. Drury University extended its traditional liberal arts curriculum to embrace a school of architecture and half a dozen master’s programs in professional fields as varied as criminology, communication, and instructional technology. Goddard College in Vermont continued its innovative impulses, which go back to the school’s founding in 1938, with master’s programs in consciousness studies; nature, culture, and healing; and transformative language arts. Shenandoah University in Virginia offered a variety of master’s programs through its school of health professions and conservatory of music.

Antioch College branched out from its historic Ohio campus to establish law schools in several metropolitan areas, characterized by an innovative, public service-oriented approach to legal education—a bold move that was philosophically consistent with an undergraduate curriculum that emphasized work experience. Some liberal arts institutions, such as Capital University in Ohio, Chapman University in California, McKendree College in Illinois, Mercy College in New York, and Saint Leo University in Florida, added programs beyond their home campus that were tailored to nontraditional constituencies, including working adults and personnel at educationally underserved locations such as military bases.

Diversity within the group of private colleges has not precluded cooperation with peer institutions. Since its chartering in 1962, the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) has provided a national model for an effective, coherent consortium. Its fundamental bond is a commitment to teaching and learning, as members share expertise and pool resources and facilities across multiple independent college campuses, in areas ranging from international programs to technological innovation. Its members include 12 independent liberal arts colleges in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. In Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, a dozen colleges formed the Associated Colleges of the Midwest at about the same time that the GLCA began.

Nine small colleges and universities in the South formed their own consortium in 1991, the Associated Colleges of the South, and soon it had grown to 16 members. In the multi-state area of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina, the Appalachian College Association, incorporated in 1990, now brings together 35 colleges that assist one another and also compete effectively
as a group for grants from foundations and federal agencies. The Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges in Pennsylvania brought strength in numbers to its six members by cooperating on professional development programs for faculty and administrative staff, and by purchasing commodities and services as a group.

Cooperation also has meant that independent colleges can work in partnership with adjacent state universities. In Kentucky, Alice Lloyd College of rural Pippa Passes arranged with the University of Kentucky to establish a special house in Lexington that enabled Alice Lloyd students to take upper-division courses in engineering and the sciences at the flagship state university and also to prepare for graduate school. In California and other states, the articulation between independent colleges and public institutions includes working with nearby community colleges in admitting transfer students. Other mixed, private-public consortia involving CIC member institutions included the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education, Cooperating Raleigh (NC) Colleges, Hartford Consortium for Higher Education, and Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education.

The small independent colleges in the United States have been remarkable over the past half-century in their ability to harmonize their broad traditional commitments to collegiate education with demographic and economic changes at the national level. They have survived and been faithful to their missions, successfully weathering an era that Christopher Jencks and David Riesman called an “Academic Revolution.” Tending to finances and enrollment management, although important and necessary, has not diverted these colleges from their essential, enduring commitment to undergraduate education and to the liberal arts. Their distinctive role is aptly conveyed in the titles of books and articles about the small colleges: “cradles of conscience,” “models and mavericks,” and “colleges of character.” In an era of mass higher education, the colleges and universities belonging to CIC have remained “small by design” and have proven to be “large in effect.”

over the past half-century in their ability to harmonize with demographic and economic changes at the national level.
The independent sector of American higher education is filled with a vast, astonishing, and sometimes bewildering assortment of colleges and universities. CIC member institutions fully reflect that diversity. Some have given the curriculum an environmental focus, others emphasize traditional religious thought and values, and still others blend academics and work in a seamless mix. “Educational experimentation is much stronger at small colleges,” says David Breneman, dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia and author of *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered?* (1994). A small college, Breneman adds, is able to prosper by assembling “a student body with a strong focus on a particular aspect of education.”

In addition to their academic diversity, virtually all the CIC members strive for diversity in their student bodies. This can take the form of racial, ethnic, geographic, academic, religious, or gender-based diversity—and usually a combination of some or all of these factors.

Yet despite their differences, CIC member institutions have a great deal in common. They share not only the goal of feeding their students’ minds but also a deep concern about values and ethics. As a result, alumni of independent colleges are almost three times as likely as graduates of public institutions to believe that their college experience was extremely effective in helping them develop moral principles, and they are more than twice as likely as public university alumni to say they experienced an integration of values and ethics in the classroom.
Similarly, independent colleges and universities instill in their students a sense of community and social responsibility. Alumni of independent institutions are more likely than their public-college counterparts to work in nonprofit and education organizations and to participate in volunteer and community service activities.

CIC member institutions also share a commitment to providing students with a supportive environment—and that produces academic success. More than 70 percent of students at independent colleges graduate in four years, a rate that is 20 percentage points higher than the average at public institutions. Students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as undergraduates considered at risk, have higher graduation rates at independent than at public institutions.

A major part of this academic success can be attributed to close interaction between students and faculty. Michael McPherson, president of the Spencer Foundation and a nationally recognized expert on American higher education, says that the collective definition of excellence for CIC institutions is “outstanding personalized undergraduate education.”

That observation is verified in the data compiled by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Since it was launched in 2000, NSSE has examined student engagement on almost a thousand American campuses. George Kuh, Chancellor’s Professor at Indiana University and director of NSSE, says that, like the independent sector in general, CIC institutions excel in four of the five major clusters of activity that NSSE examines: supportive campus climate, faculty student interaction, active and collaborative learning, and an enriching educational experience. All of these factors, according to researchers, are linked to undergraduate success.

At independent institutions, Kuh observes, students are more likely to say that they have positive relations with the faculty. “Undergraduate teaching,” he points out, “is the predominant mission of these institutions.” A number of CIC members—Sweet Briar College in Virginia, Wabash College in Indiana, Wheaton College in Massachusetts, Ursinus College in Pennsylvania, the University of the South in Tennessee, Wofford College in South Carolina, and Alverno College in Wisconsin—are among a group of colleges and universities that Kuh and the other authors of *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* (2005) recently identified as doing an exemplary job of educating undergraduates.

The smaller size of many private institutions, says Kuh, “creates all sorts of educational opportunities” because
students are called on to participate more often and more intensely. “People learn best in the company of others pursuing common questions and concerns.”

ADAPTABILITY

David Breneman says that “100 years ago, people thought that small colleges would whither and die. The best of them would become universities and the weakest would become prep schools. But they have had surprising staying power. That’s a tribute to the fact that parents feel they provide the right kind of setting for their children.”

A key factor in the ability of independent colleges and universities to not just survive, but flourish, is their willingness to adapt. Some institutions have adapted by moving from single sex to coeducation, and others, which were founded to educate students of a particular religious denomination, have chosen to broaden their mission to include students from diverse religious backgrounds. A number of institutions have adapted by reaching out to students of nontraditional age, while others have initiated programs to serve students located at a geographic distance, providing them with courses and even complete degrees online. Many colleges and universities are blending these and other strategies. Dolphus Henry, president of Tusculum College in Tennessee, says that the willingness to change is proof of “the resiliency of small schools.”
There are many examples of how small and mid-sized schools have successfully adapted to changed circumstances. Regis University in Denver offers a dramatic example. It began life as a Jesuit liberal arts college for men. In the early 1970s its enrollment was in decline. It was, in the words of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Allan Service, “careening toward a cliff.” Then a new president arrived. David Clarke, S.J., soon concluded that if Regis continued to limit itself to educating young Catholic men it would not survive. So Regis, like a number of other CIC member institutions, began to transform itself into a university that serves both traditional undergraduates and adult learners. Today Regis is thriving. It enrolls about 14,000 men and women, only about 1,400 of whom are traditional undergraduates.

Regis now has six satellite campuses, five in Colorado and one in Las Vegas, Nevada. It has broadened its curriculum and offers extensive programs in the health professions. It has also been a leader in online education, launching its first online programs in the early 1990s, long before most other institutions embraced the Internet.

Yet even with these enormous changes, Regis has not lost touch with its Jesuit roots. Part-time faculty members are informed about the Catholic perspective on moral issues, so they can articulate those views. In hiring full-time faculty, says Service, “we look for people who have a good sense of what our mission is, namely education for leadership in service to others.”

Marylhurst University in Oregon is another institution that has evolved while remaining true to its mission: serving the underserved. Founded in 1893 by the Sisters of the Holy Names, who felt that women in the Pacific Northwest were underserved by higher education, Marylhurst was the first liberal arts college for women in the region. But in the 1970s, as enrollment dwindled, Marylhurst decided that it needed to re-invent itself. It looked at its mission and at other institutions in the region and concluded that there was a new underserved population to reach out and serve—working adults seeking a liberal arts education.
President Nancy Wilgenbusch, who has led the university since 1984, says that Marylhurst, which now enrolls some 1,300 women and men, “offers a traditional curriculum in a nontraditional format.” It schedules courses to offer students maximum convenience, with classes held during the day, in the evening, on weekends, and online. Many of its students are already working and decide that they want to earn a bachelor’s degree relevant to their careers, while others see a degree as essential to making a career change. One student was working in the highway department in Alaska but wanted to earn a degree in music therapy and moved to Oregon to enroll at Marylhurst. Like many Marylhurst students, he was married and had a child. Typically, Marylhurst students are between 35 and 45 years of age and have already earned some college credits, frequently from a two-year institution. As a result, the average time to a degree at Marylhurst is less than four years. As much as Marylhurst has changed, Wilgenbusch says its educational philosophy has remained constant: “We think the underpinning of education has to be the liberal arts.”

Like Marylhurst, Goucher College in Maryland started life as an institution dedicated to serving women. In 1986, faced with declining interest in single-sex schools, Goucher decided to admit men. This change did not immediately stem what had become an ongoing decline in applications. It took time for Goucher to transform itself and for the message to spread that men were welcome at the school. “We had to do a lot of things to become a normal coed college, including establishing athletic teams for men and joining the NCAA,” says President Sanford Ungar.

Today, about one-third of the college’s 1,350 undergraduates are men. Like a number of CIC member institutions, Goucher has not only evolved but set itself on a path to growth. By 2008, it hopes to increase enrollment to 1,500 students. If that leads to a slightly higher proportion of men on campus, no one at Goucher will be unhappy.

Adaptability, then, is a characteristic that many CIC schools share. At some institutions that adaptability is accompanied by an entrepreneurial philosophy. Georgetown College in Kentucky is just one institution that has taken this route. Georgetown is a Baptist-affiliated school that was founded in 1781. In 1991, when William Crouch, Jr., became president, he brought with him an entrepreneurial energy that many say has transformed the institution. When Crouch arrived, enrollment was 1,050. Today it has grown to 1,250 with plans to reach 1,400 in the years ahead.

Crouch has launched a number of initiatives to provide students with “real world” experience in business and entrepreneurship. Eleven years ago, he turned over $50,000 from the endowment to a group of students to manage. Each
fall the money in the account is handed over to a new group of students to manage. The original principal has swelled to $200,000 and in some years the students have outperformed Georgetown’s professional money managers.

Perhaps Crouch’s most creative student-centered initiative is derived from real estate mogul Donald Trump’s television show, The Apprentice. Crouch divides participating students into teams of two to four. He presents each team with a different problem facing the college and asks the team to solve it. For example, he challenged one group to change student attitudes about the condition of campus residence halls and gave that team a $4,000 budget to work with. Over the summer, the students redecorated the lobbies of six halls using a different theme for each building. To succeed in the challenge, the students had to prove that their efforts had measurably altered student attitudes, which they were able to do.

Once a team has completed a task, Crouch takes them to a Trump-style “board room”—it is actually the executive cabinet room, which Crouch persuaded a company to redecorate so that it resembles the set on The Apprentice. Crouch takes a kinder, gentler approach than Trump’s weekly “You’re fired!”Crouch does not fire anyone, he just turns thumbs up or down on whether the team has succeeded at its challenge. Each member of a successful team receives a
check for $2,000. Crouch says that the student challenge is not only a teaching tool but a cost-effective way to improve the campus. For example, he says the college staff wanted $10,000 to paint each residence hall lobby, something the students accomplished for a fraction of that amount.

Crouch brings his entrepreneurial instincts to fundraising as well. He has established a variety of partnerships with corporations that have enabled him to raise the profile of the college and creatively woo new donors. For example, the college serves as the summer training camp for the National Football League’s Cincinnati Bengals. (Georgetown is among several CIC members that host NFL training camps.) As part of the arrangement with the team, Crouch negotiated a deal that provides Georgetown with a suite at Paul Brown Stadium in Cincinnati, and allows the college to bring guests down to the field prior to each home game. “When the Bengals play the Dallas Cowboys,” says Crouch, “we invite alumni from Texas to come on the field so they are right there with the players.”

**Programmatic Diversity**

Just as they have chosen different strategies for dealing with an ever-changing educational landscape, CIC member institutions have pursued diverse academic paths. Some have opted for innovation, while others—such as Birmingham-Southern College in Alabama, Hamilton College in New York, Illinois Wesleyan University, and Millsaps College in Mississippi—have adhered to a traditional liberal arts mission. Still others have chosen a third way, innovating within the framework of their traditional mission.

Whichever path they have taken, most schools have developed academic programs that contain at least a few distinctive elements. Looking in detail at a small number of programs provides some sense of the richness and academic diversity at CIC colleges and universities.

The environment has always been part of Northland College’s history. Northland, which enrolls about 750 undergraduates, is located in Ashland, Wisconsin, in the heart of a region once brimming with virgin timber. The timber was fully harvested in the 19th century, leaving ecological devastation behind. The college was founded to serve the residents of the “cut over” district, and part of its mission was to help people in the area adapt to environmental change.
In keeping with this history, in the 1970s Northland became a self-described “environmental liberal arts college.” Many students pursue an environment-related major, and as part of their general education all undergraduates must take courses that focus on the environment. For example, students in an English course might study nature writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold, and then take a canoe trip, write about their own perceptions of nature, and compare their views to those of the writers they are studying.

The environmental emphasis goes well beyond the curriculum. Northland uses solar energy to heat its water supply and wind towers to help generate electricity. “We think that many of our practices and what we are doing in our curriculum can be models for others,” says President Karen Halbersleben. Already, Northland is part of a consortium of schools, extending from Alaska to Maine, that have an environmental focus, including Antioch College in Ohio, Green Mountain College in Vermont, Naropa University in Colorado, Prescott College in Arizona, Unity College in Maine, Sterling College in Kansas, and Warren Wilson College in North Carolina. Students at one participating institution can spend up to two semesters at another. Says Halbersleben, “It really allows them to experience different ecosystems.”
St. John’s College, which enrolls a total of about 900 students on its two campuses in Annapolis, Maryland and Santa Fe, New Mexico, marches to a very different beat. Its curriculum is rooted in the “Great Books” of Western thought. The books are selected by the members of the faculty who, in keeping with the school’s distinctive approach to education, are called tutors, not professors. The curriculum is structured chronologically. All freshmen begin by studying the works of the ancient Greeks; by the time they near the end of their intellectual odyssey in their senior year, they are grappling with the ideas of such modern thinkers as Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, and Werner Heisenberg.

Although built around the classics, the curriculum has modern origins. It was instituted in the late 1930s and based on a concept developed by scholars from the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and the University of Virginia. While there have been modest adjustments over time, such as adding more science and music, the curriculum and the course structure have remained relatively unchanged. “We don’t do what we do because it is popular,” says St. John’s Annapolis President Christopher Nelson, himself a graduate of the college. “We try to find the best curriculum for students who are willing to apply themselves to learning for its own sake.”

The curriculum, while rooted in the humanities, includes a substantial amount of science and mathematics. Nelson estimates that the students spend about half their time studying major works in these fields and replicating in the laboratory some of the experiments of the greatest scientists. No courses are taught in a lecture format. Students and tutors meet in small groups to discuss the reading, and examinations take the form of an extended conversation between student and teacher. The goal, says Nelson, “is to help students come to their own answers.”

Nelson says that visitors from other colleges come to St. John’s to gain a better understanding of its curriculum and instructional methods. “My colleagues think it is a good thing St. John’s exists,” says Nelson. “They tell me I live in paradise. I have to remind them that paradise was not given to us.”

Like St. John’s, Alverno College in Milwaukee attracts visitors from many other institutions, both here and abroad. They are intrigued by the unusual approach to education developed at this Catholic college for women, which enrolls about 2,000 undergraduates. Unlike most colleges and universities, which only require students to demonstrate that they have attained mastery of the academic content in their courses, at Alverno students must also demonstrate mastery in areas considered vital for success both
within and outside of the university. The Alverno approach is usually called “ability-based education.”

Under Alverno’s system, students must demonstrate mastery in eight areas before they graduate: communication, analysis, problem-solving, social interaction, effective citizenship, aesthetic engagement (that is, involvement in the arts), making value judgments and independent decisions, and developing a global perspective. Within each of these eight areas, Alverno has defined six levels of mastery. Students must reach the sixth level in their major and the fourth level in other parts of the curriculum. Each course includes mastery requirements at a specific level. Students demonstrate their mastery in a number of ways, including presentations, small group interactions, and writing.

Alverno’s distinctive approach has been in place for more than three decades. “The theory was that if you give students more elaborate feedback, and don’t focus so much on competition among students for grades as on how students develop as learners, that would lead to a better educational outcome,” says Mary Meehan, Alverno’s president. Meehan is the first lay leader of the college, which was originally established to educate nuns entering the Franciscan order. Today only about 30 percent of the students are Catholic. More than 70 percent are first-generation college students, and many are members of historically under-represented minority groups. More than 90 percent of the students receive financial aid.

At Alverno the research of faculty members typically does not focus on their discipline, but on the teaching of their discipline—for example, how to teach history most effectively. Alverno’s approach, says Meehan, “requires enormous energy, dedication, and will on the part of the faculty.” But the efforts pay off in a variety of ways, including very high pass rates on professional certification examinations in fields such as nursing and teaching.

Warren Wilson College in North Carolina, which enrolls about 800 undergraduates, offers yet another approach to undergraduate education. From its beginning in 1894, work outside the classroom was deemed an essential part of the college’s mission. To earn a diploma, all students must work 15 hours a week in a campus-related job. The work can take many forms, such as helping on the college farm or assisting in the accounting office, but every student must take part. Those who fail to fulfill their work responsibilities do not graduate. “This is much more than work study,” says President Douglas Orr, Jr. “Students are learning a larger lesson of working as part of a community.” Along with the work requirement, Warren Wilson has a service-learning requirement that dates back 50 years. Students must spend a minimum of 100 hours in off-campus

“The idea [of Warren Wilson College’s service-learning requirement] was to encourage students to give back to society. It became such a strong component of the ethic of the college that we decided to institutionalize it.”

—Douglas Orr, Jr., President, Warren Wilson College
service activities, at least 25 percent of which must be with one organization. Projects are approved and monitored by the college. This orientation to service was also part of the college’s original mission. “The idea was to encourage students to give back to society,” says Orr. “It became such a strong component of the ethic of the college that we decided to institutionalize it.”

Warren Wilson is an atypical liberal arts college because of its work component, but even institutions that seem relatively traditional frequently embrace distinctive programmatic elements. Oberlin College in Ohio, for example, includes the nation’s oldest continuously operating music conservatory, dating back to 1865. It is a true rarity, a major music school linked with an eminent liberal arts college. The nation’s first four-year degree program in music education was established at Oberlin in 1921.

Some CIC colleges and universities combine the traditional liberal arts with strong professional programs. For example, the University of Saint Francis in Indiana offers a comprehensive program in nursing. About 30 percent of the undergraduates at Saint Francis are enrolled in the program, which is the largest major on campus. The four-year program has grown rapidly since it was launched in 1987. Nursing was a natural fit for the university, whose founders, the Sisters of St. Francis, see healing as part of their mission.

A number of CIC members also combine the liberal arts with teacher education. Ohio Dominican University and Lesley University in Massachusetts, for example, both consider the training of teachers an integral part of their mission. About a fifth of the undergraduates at Ohio Dominican and a quarter of them at Lesley study to become teachers. Lesley, in fact, began in 1909 as a “normal school” to prepare kindergarten teachers. President Margaret McKenna says that undergraduates who want to teach spend time in area schools as freshmen; in their sophomore year they already do some teaching. By the time they graduate, she says, they have spent many hours in four or five different school settings, so that “when they walk into their own classroom for the first time they are competent and comfortable.”

Three Indiana colleges affiliated with “peace churches”—Earlham, Goshen, and Manchester—blend the liberal arts with peace studies. At Earlham, courses in peace and global studies “are scattered throughout the curriculum so that it is impossible to find your way through without taking at least one course in this area,” says President Douglas Bennett. Manchester offered the first undergraduate program in the interdisciplinary field of peace studies, which includes coursework in political science, psychology, economics, philosophy, and religion. Undergraduates at Manchester
often combine peace studies with a second major to enhance their career options. The three colleges have developed a peace studies collaborative in Indianapolis. Students who participate in the semester-long program take courses related to peace issues and participate in an internship that emphasizes peace and justice activities.

Earlham, like many CIC member institutions, encourages its students to study abroad, but its programs differ from most other programs in one important respect: they often take students to places such as Northern Ireland, where they can study conflict and conflict resolution first-hand. Earlham’s Quaker heritage, says Bennett, “infuses almost everything we do.”

Just as a number of CIC members put a high priority on global education, others emphasize student involvement in research. At Hendrix College in Arkansas, almost half of the college’s undergraduates major in the sciences and conduct research. Research is also an important part of the educational process at Ursinus College in Pennsylvania. “Science faculty over the course of the past two or three decades have made students partners in their research,” says President John Strassburger. “In the process, the design and function of science spaces has changed, so that students have their own research and write-up areas, and now more often than not they also are co-authors on peer-reviewed publications.”

The CIC universe is programmatically diverse and distinctive. There is even some distinctiveness in the way academic calendars are structured. Both Cornell College in Iowa and Tusculum College in Tennessee offer students one course at a time rather than several courses at once. “It has immediate appeal to students who like to learn by focusing on a particular topic,” says Cornell President Leslie H. Garner, Jr. Courses at Cornell last for three and one-half weeks. Students typically are in class for four hours a day, five
days a week. For an English seminar in which students have to read 12 novels in the compressed time frame, however, they might spend less time in class so they can devote as much time as possible to reading. The unusual schedule makes it easier to move a course off campus without students having to worry about missing other classes. For example, a Cornell course on the biology of coral reefs is held in the Bahamas in the winter. Part of a course on the geology of the prairie is held out on the prairie. For the faculty, who teach for six out of the nine course-blocks during the academic year, each course is an intense experience. For the duration of a course, says Garner, “those students are your life.”

Another CIC member, Spalding University in Kentucky, has created a unique program of accelerated courses designed to meet the needs of working adults. The institution created a year-round calendar consisting of seven six-week terms, in which students take two courses at a time.

Collectively, the academic programs at CIC member institutions form a rich mosaic. They help explain why American higher education is the most diverse in the world—and show how small and mid-sized colleges often take the lead in promoting diversity of every sort.

Student Diversity

Colleges with diverse programs naturally attract students with diverse interests and backgrounds. Most institutions strive for student diversity across many dimensions; others strive for diversity within the context of educating students of a specific gender or race. Some institutions, such as the women’s colleges and historically black colleges and universities that were established mainly in the 19th century, pursue the explicit mission of educating students who were under-represented in higher education at their founding. More recently, a number of institutions have made it a priority to serve students who are members of today’s under-represented minorities or who have special needs, although these colleges and universities do not form a self-identified group.

Looking at a small number of institutions that have taken distinctive approaches to diversity helps paint a picture of the initiatives taken by the CIC membership as a whole. Cedar Crest College in Pennsylvania and Agnes Scott College in Georgia are among some 60 undergraduate colleges and universities, most of them CIC members, that have remained focused on their founding mission of educating women. Nonetheless, these institutions come to their shared mission with diverse perspectives. Some have a strong religious
affiliation; others are secular. “The schools are definitely not cookie cutters,” says Susan Lennon, executive director of the Women’s College Coalition. “What they share is their mission” of educating women.

Cedar Crest’s mission dates back to the years after the Civil War. So many men had died in the conflict, that there was an urgent necessity to provide women with higher education to help meet the growing needs of the nation. As Cedar Crest has evolved, it has continued to put a high priority on meeting the nation’s needs. Today it is fulfilling that mission by focusing much of its energy on educating young women in the sciences. In 1983, Cedar Crest developed one of the first undergraduate programs in genetic engineering and recently it launched a program in neurosciences. “These are programs we can offer at a high level of quality, with only moderate investments in equipment and labs,” says President Dorothy Gulbenkian Blaney, who has led the college since 1989. “I would love to say I came here to advance poetry and comparative literature,” adds Blaney, whose expertise is in comparative literature. “But we didn’t have enough students interested in those fields to grow. Moreover, the world needs more people who can think about the sciences.”

Still, Cedar Crest does provide its students with opportunities in the arts. Blaney says that it is not unusual for students to complete a dual major in biology and dance. She says that the college strives to enable science majors to pursue other interests “so they are not in labs to the exclusion of all other things.” The campus is also home to a notable collection of outdoor sculpture. The college’s schedule facilitates the pursuit of multiple interests. Cedar Crest has three six-week terms each summer, as well as three-week winter and May terms. This set of short terms makes it easier for students to pursue interests such as ceramics that they cannot fit into the regular semester calendar.

As a result of these and other initiatives, including developing and expanding programs for adult learners,
Cedar Crest has doubled in size and now enrolls the full-time equivalent of about 1,700 students, half of whom are traditional undergraduates and the rest adult learners. Says Blaney: “Building our reputation in the sciences has brought about the growth.”

Agnes Scott College in Georgia is another women’s college that has enjoyed substantial growth. In the past decade undergraduate enrollment has risen from 600 to 900. Founded in 1889 as part of the Presbyterian educational movement, the college’s original mission was to educate women for the betterment of their families and the elevation of their religion. It has since widened its vision dramatically. Today, many graduates enter law, medicine, and other professions and a number pursue graduate studies. Indeed, measured by the proportion of graduates who go on to earn their doctorates, Agnes Scott ranks in the top 10 percent nationally and in the top one percent in the field of economics.

President Mary Brown Bullock, herself a graduate of Agnes Scott, describes the college as a place that helps women “achieve their highest expectations.” Bullock, who has led Agnes Scott since 1995, says that as the college has expanded offerings in the sciences and ramped up its international programs—about 40 percent of students now study abroad—it has benefited from its location in Atlanta. While Boston may be the first city that comes to people’s minds when they hear the words “university town,” Bullock notes that 18 colleges and universities in Atlanta form a regional consortium and that Agnes Scott students can cross-register at any of the other institutions. Because of the college’s location, it can guarantee internships to all students, at institutions ranging from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and the federal government’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to many smaller companies run by women. Agnes Scott offers women an education filled with opportunity that is both “challenging and engaging,” says Bullock.

**REACHING OUT TO THE UNDER-REPRESENTED**

Another school that was established to educate young women, Mount St. Mary’s College in California, also continues to serve a student body composed mostly of women. But the college, founded in 1925, is best known as one of the nation’s most ethnically and racially diverse institutions of higher education. More than half the students in the college’s baccalaureate program are Latina or African-American, and more than one-fifth are Asian-American. Many of the college’s 1,800 undergraduates are from lower-income families. About 40 percent are first-generation college students—many from families whose primary language is not English.
Mount St. Mary’s College in California sees the education of students from all economic and social strata as a vital part of its mission. Almost 15 years ago, it established the Institute for Student Academic Enrichment (ISAE) to provide support services such as tutoring and academic planning for low-income, first-generation undergraduates. The support provided by the ISAE has played a significant role in the academic success of participating students. For example, 93 percent of students who enrolled in the college for the first time in 1999 and participated in ISAE programs had either graduated or were still enrolled five years later.

The commitment of faculty at Mount St. Mary’s to educating diverse students also led to the establishment of a program called MARC (Minority Access to Research Careers), which helps students prepare for professional and graduate school from their very first semester of college. Students take rigorous courses, conduct research with faculty members, and take part in science-related internships and fellowships. Over a ten-year period, minority students in the program have achieved an 80 percent acceptance rate to M.D., M.D./Ph.D., and Ph.D. programs.

Mount St. Mary’s not only works with its own students, but reaches out to inner-city high schools in the Los Angeles area through its Student Ambassadors Program. Participating undergraduates are assigned to a high school or community site and typically visit once a week, bringing information about such topics as the college application process, campus life, and financial aid.

Like Mount St. Mary’s, Bloomfield College in New Jersey also enrolls large numbers of students from racial and ethnic groups that have been under-represented in higher education. Located just outside Newark in the city of Bloomfield, the college, which was founded in 1868, today has a student body of 1,750. More than half of the students are African-American and approximately 15 percent are Latino. About 95 percent of the students receive some form
In addition to the courses that are taught on campus, Bloomfield offers non-credit classes at a Baptist church in Newark for non-matriculated students. Those who do well in the non-credit courses are given a chance to enroll at the college. Many of these students are in their fifties and sixties,
To help students in its College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) get off to a solid start, St. Edward’s University in Texas brings them to campus early and provides group counseling and tutoring. Another institution that has made the education of the under-represented a priority is St. Edward’s University in Texas, which was founded in 1885 by the Congregation of the Holy Cross. For more than three decades, the institution has recruited, enrolled, and graduated the children of migrant workers through the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). About 40 to 50 students per year, mostly from Texas and California, are admitted to the university through this program. St. Edward’s works closely with high school counselors to recruit students for CAMP. The students receive free tuition, room, and board in their freshman year. Because federal support for the program has declined, the university puts more than $1 million from other sources into CAMP annually.

More than half of the 2,300 CAMP students who enrolled in the program since it began have graduated from St. Edward’s, while another 10 percent have earned a degree from another college or university. “Despite cultural problems, their motivation is extremely high,” says President George E. Martin, who has been at the helm of St. Edward’s since 1999. To help the students get off to a solid start, the university brings them to campus early and provides group counseling and tutoring.

and one of them told Levao that “when my grandchildren see me bring books home, they look at books as something special.” Levao himself is a nontraditional president. He was a partner in a Philadelphia-based law firm and chairman of the board at his alma mater, Rutgers University. Then he decided to take on a new and socially important challenge as head of Bloomfield.
St. Edward’s also brings the students’ parents to campus to let the families learn what life will be like for their children—in the process, helping to build family support for students who will be entering a world very different from the one they have known before. As CAMP students progress academically, many of them become mentors to younger students in the program.

Martin says that St. Edward’s has remained committed to recruiting under-represented minorities while at the same time expanding enrollment and improving its academic profile. The university’s undergraduate enrollment, which was below 2,000 in 1999, is now above 3,000; the goal is to reach 4,000 students by 2010. The average SAT score has risen by 71 points during the same period. As the university has grown the number of Latino students has increased proportionately, and the student body remains more than 25 percent Latino. Diversity, says Martin “is one of the essential elements of the St. Edward’s community.”

Heritage University in Washington state is much younger than St. Edward’s but it, too, is committed to educating historically under-represented students. The university opened as a college in 1982 with a total enrollment of 85, one-third of them Native-Americans and one-fifth Latinos. Today, Heritage has grown to 1,100 students—53 percent Latino and 15 percent Native-American. About 70 percent of these students are women. Because so many of its students are Latino, Heritage decided to seek state approval to become a university instead of a college: the word “colegio” means high school in Spanish, and that produced confusion in the community about Heritage’s mission.

Only about 40 percent of Heritage’s students enroll immediately after high school. The average age of the student body is 35. “In many cases the academic preparation of the students has not been strong,” says Kathleen Ross, the university’s founding president and a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Prospective students are given assessment tests in English, mathematics, and reading and many are then placed in remedial courses so they have a better chance to succeed. “Our financial aid system allows for a year of remedial work,” explains Ross.

Like other institutions that have made educating under-represented minorities a priority, Heritage has a network of academic support programs—including an emergency revolving loan fund (students can borrow up to $150 but must pay it back by the end of the semester). Many of the students enroll for a semester or two and then take time off to earn additional funds to pay their tuition. About 40 percent of low-income students at Heritage eventually earn a degree, and that rate is more than three times the state average for low-income students. Most graduates stay

“I have come to realize how many places there must be where talent exists and if the educational opportunity is provided it can be of tremendous benefit to the whole community.”

—Kathleen Ross, SNJM, President, Heritage University
in the Yakima Valley, where Heritage is located, and many become teachers and community leaders. Ross says that her two decades at Heritage have transformed her entire view of higher education: “I have come to realize how many places there must be where talent exists and if the educational opportunity is provided it can be of tremendous benefit to the whole community.”

While Heritage is a relative newcomer in the world of small and mid-sized independent colleges, Claflin University in South Carolina and Dillard University in Louisiana both date back to 1869. They were founded during Reconstruction to provide college educations to African-American students, and that remains their primary mission today.

Claflin has faced struggles through its history, but is now in the midst of a renaissance. A decade ago, it enrolled students with low SAT scores and then struggled to retain them (the first-year retention rate was less than 50 percent). Today, the first-year retention rate at Claflin is nearly 80 percent, average SAT scores are up by 250 points, and enrollment has climbed from 1,000 to 1,800. The establishment of an Honors College in 1994 has played a key role in turning Claflin around. The recent creation of a Freshman College, which coordinates placement, orientation, advising, tutoring, and mentoring, has also made an important difference. Meanwhile, Claflin continues to serve large numbers of students from low-income families, with about 70 percent of the current undergraduates coming from families with annual incomes of less than $25,000. The university’s focus on its primary mission remains as strong as ever.

Until the recent devastation by Hurricane Katrina, Dillard University in Louisiana was also rising after a period of financial uncertainty—and the institution's leaders are optimistic that Dillard will continue to thrive when the university re-opens in 2006. Members of the university community are “on a mission to return Dillard to the superior learning institution it was before the hurricane,” says president Marvalene Hughes. They want “teaching
and learning to commence without further interruption.” A New Orleans neighbor, Tulane University, has agreed to provide temporary facilities while Dillard rebuilds its own campus. Former president Michael Lomax, who spearheaded Dillard’s transformation in the 1990s and is now president of the United Negro College Fund, says that the single most important ingredient in Dillard’s success is understanding the needs of each student and addressing them to the fullest extent possible. Katrina is unlikely to alter that tradition.

Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina has taken on a mission of a different sort—educating students with disabilities. The effort dates back to the late 1970s, when the university began enrolling students who were hearing-impaired and offering them special assistance. A few years later, the university decided to open a comparable program for blind students. Over time, the university has expanded its distinctive programs to serve learning-disabled students, chronically ill students, and others with special needs. The university offers the students individual assistance appropriate to their particular needs, including note takers for the blind and sign-language interpreters for the deaf. The students in the program live in the same residences as their classmates, but in rooms that are specially equipped for them. Each student is assigned a disability specialist who works with the student throughout his or her time at Gardner-Webb. Graduates of the program have gone on to careers as attorneys, ministers, teachers, and accountants.

While students with special needs represent fewer than 5 percent of the 2,300 undergraduates at Gardner-Webb, their impact is disproportionate to their numbers. Frank Campbell, who recently retired as the university’s president, says that the presence of these dedicated students has added an important dimension to the education of all Gardner-Webb students. Many undergraduates now enroll in
American Sign Language courses so they can communicate more easily with their peers; some have even decided to pursue careers working with the hearing-impaired. The special needs initiative is in keeping with the historical values of Gardner-Webb, a Baptist-affiliated school that was founded in 1905. In fact, the program was launched after a Baptist clergyman, whose ministry was to serve the deaf in North Carolina, approached the university with the idea. “Values,” says Campbell, “are the underpinning of what we do.”

THE PERVERSIVENESS OF FAITH AND VALUES

A deep and deliberate concern about values infuses the mission of most CIC member institutions. The emphasis on values can be seen in their curricula as well as their co-curricular activities. As we have already seen, a number of CIC members value social commitment highly. Institutions such as Cedar Crest, Earlham, and Warren Wilson incorporate social commitment and community service into their programs. As part of its service-oriented mission, Ohio Dominican places a high priority on educating both teachers and social workers. Similarly, institutions such as Bloomfield, Claflin, Dillard, Heritage, Mount St. Mary’s, and St. Edward’s assign a high priority to serving the underserved. Their individual approaches are distinctive. They hold in common their commitment to values.

Approximately two-thirds of CIC member institutions are religiously affiliated. A number of these institutions require coursework that is rooted in the philosophy, values, and faith of the institution’s founders. A few structure the entire undergraduate experience around faith-related issues. Indeed, for many CIC institutions, faith defines who they are.

Colorado Christian University is one such institution. The university, which began in 1914 as a Bible college, has evolved into a Christian liberal arts institution. “All of our faculty share a Christian worldview and bring their faith perspective to bear on their discipline,” says President Larry Donnithorne. “Students learn fields such as business, history, and economics from a framework that looks at the world as Christians do.”

Donnithorne, a retired Army colonel and West Point graduate who has been at the university since 1998, teaches a course on leadership in which the discussion of Christian ethics plays a significant part. “Issues are framed in terms of Biblical rather than traditional ethics,” he explains. At the same time, because the university’s 800 undergraduates come from a variety of Christian denominations, “we don’t try to insist that any one denomination has the right approach,” says Donnithorne. “We try to get students to think for themselves and decide for themselves what convictions they will carry with them beyond college and into life.”
themselves and decide for themselves what convictions they will carry with them beyond college and into life. If they think carefully about faith and ground it in thinking and reading, their resulting faith will be stronger and it will see them through the storms of life.”

Colorado Christian students attend chapel twice a week. Donnithorne describes chapel as part of a comprehensive program of co-curricular student life, “where the practice of faith is explored and affirmed.” The classroom, by contrast, is “where the intellectual side of faith is explored.”

Values and spirituality also play a central role at Loyola College in Maryland, a Jesuit institution with 3,500 undergraduate students. Loyola’s core curriculum includes courses in ethics, theology, and philosophy. A required course in theology looks at Scripture through the eyes of scholars. The focus is on interpreting in modern terms the words that were written two millennia ago, explains David Haddad, the university’s vice president for academic affairs. “We believe that searching for truth through reason is completely compatible with faith,” he adds. At Loyola, the campus ministry holds periodic religious retreats, and not just for Roman Catholics. One was recently held for agnostics and...
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another for students “who did not know whether they have any faith at all,” says Haddad. “The purpose was to help them find their spirituality.”

As part of its mission, Loyola has established a Center for Values and Service that sends students into the community to help people in need. A student might tutor a woman trying to earn her GED diploma, or volunteer at a Baltimore agency that works to prevent lead poisoning in children, or serve as a Big Brother/Big Sister. Haddad explains that students are told beforehand that the experience will teach them a great deal about life—they should go forward feeling “solidarity as a human being” with those they help. Once students complete their community service projects, they share their experience with peers and discuss how it relates to the development of their own spirituality.

The service activities at Loyola and scores of other small and mid-sized colleges benefit both students and the communities beyond the campus. They also help build a greater sense of community on campus as students unite around common experiences. This sense of community is a defining characteristic of CIC member institutions. In the words of Alverno’s President Mary Meehan, “We are a learning community and we are all here to support each other.”

CONCLUSION

Goucher College President Sanford Ungar describes his institution as “increasingly a place for individuals. It is hard to come up with a stereotype of the Goucher student.” The same can be said about the diverse members of the Council of Independent Colleges. Despite the many things they have in common as small and mid-sized liberal arts institutions, each college or university has its own, unique DNA.

But just as the individuality of each person cannot negate our shared humanity, the individuality of CIC members cannot negate what the institutions have in common. The CIC members share a commitment to private undergraduate liberal arts education. They share a belief that good teaching should be valued. They share an understanding that small classes and the close, continuous interaction between students and teachers are fundamental parts of a high-quality education. Though diverse in many ways, they are driven by the common mission to serve their students—and to serve them well.
Hidden gems. Diamonds in the rough. Unsung heroes. Almost every laudatory phrase uttered about small colleges has two sides to it. No matter the awards won by their students, the lengths of their faculty members’ curricula vitae, or the strengths of their administrative staffs, independent institutions must overcome the stigma of size. Smaller colleges are usually less well-known than land-grant or Ivy League universities, regardless of the quality of education and services they provide.

The 50-year history of the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is a story of helping member colleges and universities find ways to increase their visibility and providing them with a broad range of initiatives to improve the quality of education and strengthen institutional resources. In its earliest days, what was then the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges (CASC) was dedicated to helping its members raise money and win regional accreditation. Over the past five decades, the organization has been transformed into a dynamic association of independent colleges and universities working together to support institutional leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance private higher education’s contributions to society.
CIC is the only national organization today that focuses solely on providing services directly to independent colleges and universities. To fulfill its mission, CIC provides ideas, resources, and programs that help institutions improve their leadership expertise, educational programs, administrative and financial performance, and institutional visibility. CIC’s growth is testament to the need for such an organization. Since 1990, CIC has nearly doubled its membership, expanding far beyond the small and somewhat isolated colleges that comprised its charter members. Today, CIC institutions are drawn from across the spectrum of independent higher education, including selective liberal arts colleges, medium-sized private universities, religious colleges, historically black colleges, and single-sex institutions.

This is the history of an organization and a history of its motivating ideas. The ideas have made the organization distinctive among associations of higher education, giving its members the professional development, resources, and tools they need to show the American public how crucial small colleges will always be in the ongoing challenge to produce an educated citizenry.

“THE NOISE YOU HEAR IS PROGRESS”

CIC got its start in the years after World War II as an organization of colleges trying to help themselves. It was not an advocacy group, but instead enabled like-minded college leaders to share ways of raising money and gaining regional accreditation.

In December 1955, K. Duane Hurley received a letter from the Ford Foundation in his office at Salem College in West Virginia. The foundation had just announced a $210 million initiative to supplement faculty salaries at 630 private colleges, whose enrollments were burgeoning as soldiers returned to school on the GI Bill. Salem College, Hurley was informed, was to be one of the recipients.
The president, in his fifth year at Salem, was far from elated. Salem was a small college affiliated with the Seventh-Day Baptist Church and was just beginning to professionalize its administration. The college was not accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Ford Foundation had said it would grant funds only to colleges with regional accreditation. Hurley contacted the foundation, where an officer told him with deep embarrassment that the foundation had intended to make the grant to another Salem College, a women’s college in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The experience epitomized Hurley’s deepest frustration as a college president. Small colleges like his were respectable educational institutions—Salem had graduated four United States Senators and two West Virginia governors—but meeting the benchmarks required for regional accreditation had never been a need or a priority. Now, Salem, like many small colleges, needed the imprimatur of a regional accreditor to receive money from foundations, corporations, and other sources. But to qualify for accreditation—by having “a strong curriculum, sound teaching methods, library facilities, and financial solvency,” as summarized by a New York Times writer—they needed to raise money and spend it on improvements to meet those standards. Hurley and others termed this the “vicious circle” in which small colleges were trapped.

Shortly after the Ford Foundation episode, Hurley and two staffers identified 125 colleges in the same position as Salem: lacking regional accreditation but having credits approved by state departments of education, state universities, or other accredited colleges or universities. He wrote to them asking for accounts of any experiences similar to his own that he could share with foundation officers and invited them to discuss ways they could work together to improve their common situation.

He received an enthusiastic response, and scheduled a meeting in conjunction with a conference of the North
Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The meeting was held on April 9, 1956 at the Palmer House hotel in Chicago. Representatives from 80 colleges, as well as foundation and association staffers, showed up for two sessions titled “The Colleges Look at Themselves” and “Industry Looks at the Colleges.” Apologetic construction signs at the Palmer House read “The Noise You Hear Is Progress,” and the attendees adopted that phrase as their slogan.

The group decided they needed a self-help organization. In barely a day, a set of committees organized by Hurley came up with a name, a purpose, membership qualifications, and personnel. His choice was the “Fund for Forgotten Colleges,” but the group decided instead to call itself the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges. Its mission was to preserve and enhance the small college as a vital component of higher education in the United States. The Council would be a service organization designed to help colleges improve their educational programs, thus enabling them to obtain accreditation. Hurley served as the first president of the group, but CASC’s board of directors decided the following month that a full-time staff member was needed. Alfred T. Hill of the Council for Financial Aid to Education was named Executive Secretary and assumed his duties on September 1, 1956.

1959
The CASC colleges prided themselves on offering a low-cost, high-quality educational experience. The 63 founding members (see page 89) had an average annual operating budget of $274,000 and an average endowment of $1.2 million. Their average enrollment was 483, which led to one of the earliest controversies over institutional membership: the maximum enrollment that should be allowed at colleges seeking to join CASC. Through the 1950s and 1960s, the cap went from 500 to 1,000 to 2,000 full-time undergraduates before being eliminated altogether in the late 1980s in favor of a requirement that members must offer bachelor’s degrees and “demonstrate a commitment to liberal arts and sciences by such means as requiring for graduation approximately one-third of all courses taken to be in those fields.”

The average full-time professor’s salary at CASC institutions in 1956 was $3,681 and the average president’s pay was barely $6,000. Both figures trailed national averages for private colleges, but Hill boasted of the CASC colleges’ ability to keep costs low and educational quality high for students: “When the question is asked, ‘How do the small colleges meet the challenge financially?’ an honest and straightforward answer is that they pay low salaries to dedicated teachers and administrators. They operate in simple utilitarian plants rather than in luxurious buildings; they offer programs which can be handled without elaborate and expensive scientific equipment, and they serve a serious-minded group of students who do not demand some of the fashionable luxuries associated with large stadiums and fraternity life. The result is a simple, low-cost education for those who want it.”

CASC’s early programs were collectively dubbed “Operation Bootstrap.” “CASC, as has been emphasized repeatedly, is not offering a free ride to sightseers,” Hurley wrote, “but an opportunity for those who want it to help themselves collectively beyond their means individually.”

To gain accreditation, and perhaps to survive, the colleges attracted to CASC needed to increase their

1968
Richard P. Saunders succeeds Hill in January; he is replaced by Roger J. Voskuyl (pictured) in September.
enrollments, expand their campus facilities, add books to their libraries, and improve the scholarly credentials of their professors, and all of these improvements required more operating funds and larger endowments. “Operation Bootstrap” proposed to aid them in all these endeavors by helping them strengthen their academic programs, deploying consultants to advise colleges on fundraising and fiscal management, and raising money directly for member institutions.

CASC’s programs were governed by groups of college presidents and other officers, first separated into three commissions—one concentrating on accreditation status and the members’ financial means; a second on the effectiveness of the institutions’ educational programs; and a third devoted to educational research and experimentation. After a try at regional governance, the organizational structure was simplified with the members of a national board serving on three subcommittees responsible for Council operations, programs, and membership.

Hill left the CASC executive directorship in January 1968 after seeing the Council through its infancy, raising nearly $1.5 million in corporate and foundation donations, and, in his words, breaking the “vicious circle.” His successor was Richard P. Saunders, who had been president of the Institute for Human Resources Development and of Future for Children, Inc. Saunders served for only eight months, owing to conflicts with the board, and was succeeded by Roger J. Voskuyl, president of Westmont College and a longtime member of the CASC board. Voskuyl led the Council until 1974, moving the offices in 1969 to the National Center for Higher Education at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. When he retired, the Council hired Gary H. Quehl, a college administrator who had been executive director of the College Center of the Finger Lakes. In 1986, Quehl left CASC to become president of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. He was succeeded by vice president Allen P. Splete, who had been president of Westminster College in Pennsylvania and a vice president.
president at St. Lawrence University in New York. Splete led the Council of Independent Colleges (as it was now called) for 14 years. CIC’s current president is Richard Ekman, who was selected for the position after Splete’s retirement in 2000.

THE BIG TENT FOR SMALL COLLEGES

In the 1970s and 1980s, CIC underwent a crucial transition. As its membership expanded, it became the primary association for helping the presidents and other top leaders of small, independent colleges. Instead of assisting its members to reach a certain goal—accreditation—it began to offer a variety of programs to help them improve institutional operations and academic programs.

The earliest years of CASC/CIC were characterized by debates over membership, mission, and goals. One of the key issues was whether the Council ought to be one voice among several for small liberal arts colleges or the sole voice for those institutions. It was an important question, not only to define the Council among the many higher-education associations in Washington but also to shape what the Council’s own goals should be. In his final report to the CASC Board in January 1968, Alfred Hill called on CASC to take up “the voice for the small college” as its “battle cry”:

It seems to me this symbolizes the questions we are constantly raising about our image, our relation to other educational associations, the need for small colleges to receive recognition at the national level. Why do other colleges apply for membership in CASC? For two reasons—our practical program not supplied elsewhere and the fact that we give them a voice in Washington, New York, Chicago, and other financial centers which they would not otherwise have.

Roger Voskuyl, however, was careful to make sure that CASC was committed to helping its existing members: the private colleges, many of them affiliated with religious

1973
CASC publishes The Small College: A Bibliographic Handbook. First Deans’ Institute is held.

1974
Gary H. Quehl succeeds Voskuyl upon his retirement.
bodies that were trying to gain mainstream credibility in American higher education. When Gary Quehl became president of CASC, he focused his mission on making the Council broader and stronger. “I took seriously the stated and unstated mission of CASC/CIC,” Quehl said in a recent interview. The stated mission was to help members all get accredited and to continue to strengthen themselves afterward. “The unstated mission was to grow and build a national association of private colleges and universities that would have clout, meaning, and status.”

To those ends, one of Quehl’s most public accomplishments was changing the name of the Council. He and the Council’s staff saw their constituency as being not just their own membership, which had grown to 240 institutions by 1981, but the broad range of four-year independent colleges. In June 1981 the Board voted to change the name to the Council of Independent Colleges.

The name change, CIC officers pointed out, did not mean that the association was changing its mission, or even modifying its requirement that members have 2,000 students

1976

CASC develops the National Consulting Network for Liberal-Arts Colleges. Also, H.E.W. grants the first of four $1.5 million awards for the Small College Consortium Institutional Development Project.
or fewer. Nor did it mean that the Council was trying to compete with other higher education associations. Instead, Quehl said in a news release at the time, “it simply means that a new name will assist us in…becoming the national service association for most of the nation’s small independent undergraduate colleges.”

As noted, CASC/CIC’s membership began growing very quickly in the 1970s. After leveling off somewhat in the 1980s, it began growing again under Allen Splete’s two-pronged strategy of visiting the campuses of member and nonmember institutions alike as well as convincing CIC presidents to recruit their peers. “I recall conversations in many a campus president’s office,” Splete recalled recently. “I discussed current trends in higher education and possible opportunities as well as news from Washington. They countered with local examples and issues. The fact that I cared enough to visit left many dumbfounded.”

Splete also noted that “the common denominator I found most useful when assuming the presidency dealt with the word ‘values’ that was in one way or another embedded in the missions of all CIC members. Whether they were in the business of creating, sustaining, or responding to values—it was always at the heart of the academic enterprise. This, I think, remains a unique aspect of their being today.”

And CIC’s unique ability to bring together leaders from similar institutions to solve mutual concerns contributed to CIC’s continued growth, Splete says. “The belief in mutual self-help was deep-seated in CIC’s history and the common missions of members made group activities flourish. CIC became a place where the action was and this new level of visibility attracted members.”

Another CIC program launched in 1977 remains popular today and is a key attraction for new members. The CIC Tuition Exchange Program (CIC-TEP) is a network of colleges and universities willing to accept, tuition-free, students from families of full-time employees of other CIC-TEP institutions. The goal of CIC-TEP was to create a true-access program, without any costly fees or cumbersome
credit-debit limitations. The program addresses several needs. First, it encourages students from employee families of private colleges and universities to attend similar institutions. Second, it assists these same families in meeting the partial cost of college attendance. Finally, CIC-TEP establishes an educational resource that enhances each institution’s benefits package.

CIC broke the 300-member barrier in 1992, with 316. That number rose to 470 by 2000, Richard Ekman’s first year as the Council’s president. By the fall of 2005, membership stood at 550, and included not only the smaller regional independent institutions that chartered the Council, but also many of the mid-sized comprehensive universities and some of the most selective liberal arts colleges in the country.

“I have tried to emphasize that the commonality among all small and mid-sized private institutions is much greater than any differences among them,” says Ekman.

“The traditional notions we have of difference—in affluence or admissions selectivity—just aren’t as important as the characteristics we share: a belief in independence, an emphasis on teaching, a willingness to be explicit about values, a commitment to the centrality of the liberal arts, and relatively small size.”

**The Key Constituency—Presidents**

In the 1970s, the Council’s programming priority became professional development for college presidents at member institutions. Many college leaders were only partly prepared for their jobs—many had been classroom instructors, some were ministers, and others were former administrators or business leaders. Voskuyl himself was a research chemist who had worked on the Manhattan Project. Between 1969 and 1974, CASC received five grants from the U.S. Office of Education for an “Institute for the In-
Service Training of Administrators and Members of Boards of Trustees of Small Colleges.” The annual institute was open to the CASC member institutions and other colleges, and it gave campus leaders a chance to learn more about building relationships with trustees, fundraising, and fiscal management.

Beginning in 1970, CASC also hosted three Presidents Management Institutes with the theme of teaching college presidents how to manage their time and employees more effectively. These Institutes were the start of what eventually became the annual Presidents Institute, which is now CIC’s signature event. The Presidents Institute has been an annual event since 1980. It attracts more four-year college presidents than any other meeting held by any group in the country. Participants say the meetings are “more practical” than other gatherings of college presidents. The Institute epitomizes CIC’s approach to practical programming, combining formal presentations, individual consultations, and opportunities for presidents and their spouses to network informally with colleagues. The participants consider solutions to common challenges and learn how to do their jobs better from people in similar positions. In addition, representatives from the sponsors, the companies that provide financial support for the Institute—and there were more than 40 companies involved by the 1990s—bring expertise as well as dollars to the conference. The Institute has also retained a focus on a program for spouses, which is widely praised.

“What I found most interesting was that it was always a really good combination,” says Anita M. Pampusch, president emerita of the College of St. Catherine in Minnesota, now president of The Bush Foundation. “There were always some very good national speakers, the kind of people I would not personally have had come to my college. The sessions usually were very practical and related to the kind of work I was doing. And meeting other presidents was
also a big plus. I made friends with people with whom I’m still friends today.”

Another long-standing annual event for presidents is the Conversation Between Foundation Officers and College and University Presidents. Started in 1987, the meeting takes place in New York City and features presentations from foundation presidents and officers and a structured exchange of ideas between the worlds of small colleges and philanthropic foundations.

More recently, CIC expanded its offerings with other programs designed specifically for presidents. In 2005, CIC began a new program on Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission. These seminars, designed to assist presidents in deepening their own sense of vocation in the context of their institutions’ distinct missions, are supported by Lilly Endowment Inc. The Council also has offered presidents ongoing discussion and support groups known as Presidential Forums, established a Presidents Consulting Service consisting of recently retired presidents, and held regional President-Trustee Dialogues for president and board chair teams. These presidential services have been supported by the Henry Luce Foundation.

MAKING THE CASE

From its earliest years, one of CIC’s central tasks has been to help its members tell their stories to a wider audience. To that end, the organization has published books and other materials, conducted national publicity campaigns, and offered workshops to give institutions a chance to show that “small colleges can help you make it big.”

A key challenge has always been how to lift the bushel basket off small colleges and let their lights shine, both singly and collectively. Wrote Alfred Hill in 1961:

The greatest weaknesses to date have been their failure to create a clear, sharp public image and their failure to capitalize on the advantages of their group impact…. This is a day when we

1985
Jossey-Bass publishes Planning Effectively for Educational Quality, an outgrowth of Project QUE.

1986
Allen P. Splete succeeds Quehl as president.
From Accreditation to Validation: CIC’s First Half-Century

Welch Suggs

are responsive to such terms as ‘Ivy League,’ ‘The Seven Sisters,’ ‘The Mother Universities,’ and ‘Old State U.’ However, our reaction is not so clear to the phrase ‘Small College.’

Hill and his successors were determined to make a big splash, not just on behalf of CASC/CIC as an organization but for the members as well. The CIC executive directors and presidents always wrote widely, delivered numerous addresses, and networked relentlessly with foundations and higher education associations. As far back as Hurley’s presidency, the Council began collecting and publishing research on its members to help educate donors, potential students, and other constituents about the strengths and characteristics of small colleges.

CASC/CIC also aggressively courted the mainstream media to tell the members’ story. In 1959, the Council published a 16-page supplement in The New York Times titled “Small Colleges: An Untapped Resource.” Even though it cost $42,000, the supplement was phenomenally successful: one college reported receiving more than 100 requests for information, and CASC’s own office received more than 300 letters in the first week after the supplement appeared.

In the early 1980s, CIC took a different approach to telling the story: a modern public-information campaign, featuring advertisements and specials in a variety of media. The goals of the “Small Colleges Can Help You Make It Big” campaign were to increase public knowledge about small colleges, cultivate student enrollment and private financial support, and reach out to high school students, their parents, guidance counselors, community colleges, alumni, religious organizations, and others.

Over the past two decades, CIC has continued to refine its materials to help colleges tell their own stories. Among other programs, it has sponsored conversations between business executives and college leaders with the goal of developing a shared understanding of the connections between business and the liberal arts.

“Coupling the rhetoric of claims for the distinctive effectiveness of smaller institutions with the growing supply of data that confirm the truth of this rhetoric seemed crucial.”

—Richard Ekman, President, CIC, 2000–present

1987
CIC hosts the first Conversation Between Foundation Officers and College and University Presidents.

1988
CIC and the United Negro College Fund launch Enhancing Black College Leadership, a project to improve management practices at historically black colleges and universities.
In 2005, the Council continued these efforts with an updated approach: “Making the Case,” a dynamic website containing a collection of data-backed assertions about the effectiveness of small and mid-sized independent colleges. As Richard Ekman has noted, “Coupling the rhetoric of claims for the distinctive effectiveness of smaller institutions with the growing supply of data that confirm the truth of this rhetoric seemed crucial when we began to develop the plans.” Organized under six principal messages with documentation in more than 100 tables and graphs, these materials provide a strong argument for the benefits and effectiveness of CIC institutions to students and society.

CIC’s Making the Case website (www.cic.edu/makingthecase/index.asp) provides detailed evidence that independent institutions:

- **Are Affordable for Students and Families**—they represent perceived value, provide financial assistance, and enable timely degree completion
- **Provide Access and Success for Diverse Students**—they educate students of color, students of all income levels, first-generation students, “at-risk” students, and non-traditional students
- **Provide Personal Attention to Students**—they encourage faculty-student interaction, offer engaging classroom experiences, promote learning outside the classroom, facilitate participation in campus activities, and foster development of faith and values
- **Enable Student Success**—they lead to higher graduation rates and enable better preparation for life
- **Engender Alumni Satisfaction with Education**—they offer quality education, represent a worthwhile investment, and encourage support for institutions
- **Involve Students and Alumni Contributing to the Public Good**—they foster values and ethics, lead to higher graduation rates, encourage community involvement, and promote contributions to nonprofits.
Developing the Leadership Team

With encouragement from presidents, CIC has always placed a priority on programming for other campus leaders. Over the years, CIC has offered a wide range of seminars, research tools, and other services to academic, business, and student affairs officers as well as directors of libraries, information technology, and institutional research, and also division and department chairs and faculty members.

Prior to the advent of the Presidents Institute, the Council held a National Institute initially every summer and then every four years. The National Institutes were designed for teams of campus officials from CASC/CIC member institutions, who came together to focus on campus change strategies and to work collectively to frame their institution’s distinctive role in American higher education. The most recent themes were “Values and Education: Developing Personal and Public Ethics,” “Learning and Service,” and “Creating Cultures of Learning.”

In the early 1970s, the Council began what became its second major annual event, the Institute for Chief Academic Officers. Its wellspring was a “Neophyte Deans Workshop” in 1973, a two-day conference organized and staffed by the CASC Commission on Academic Affairs and featuring advice from senior campus leaders to peers who were new to their jobs. The next year programming for experienced as well as novice academic officers resulted in a Deans Institute offering a range of practical sessions, big-picture presentations, and a spouses program. In 1999, the event was renamed the Institute for Chief Academic Officers. In recent years, the chief academic officers have often invited colleagues in other campus leadership roles—chief student affairs officers in 1991, 1996, and 2001; chief financial officers in 2004—to form teams with them at the meetings.

1991
CIC publishes A Good Place to Work: Sourcebook for the Academic Workplace, the culmination of The Academic Workplace in Liberal-Arts Colleges program.

1992
CIC assumes operational responsibility for the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education (CAPHE). Membership tops 300 colleges for the first time.
Faculty members are another campus constituency that CIC has long sought to serve. When Gary Quehl assumed the presidency in 1974, CASC was just beginning a project on faculty development that involved the president, dean, and nine faculty members from each of 40 institutions. The project involved several intensive training sessions over an 18-month period in 1974-1975. In addition to a week-long session at CASC’s National Institute, the program required teams to participate in smaller regional workshops and to create faculty development programs on their own campuses, aided by competitive grants from the Council. CIC was a national leader in faculty development in the 1970s, publishing two widely used volumes in the series *A Handbook for Faculty Development*. A third volume appeared in 1981. During the 1980s and 1990s, CIC offered an annual series of regional workshops for faculty members, addressing a range of issues in teaching and learning. In 2001, these regional workshops were redesigned to focus on the needs of division and department chairs, with sessions on such topics as recruitment and hiring, the evaluation of faculty members, and improving interdepartmental cooperation.

This focus on faculty issues also included a 1985 project on faculty morale and the quality of the academic workplace, culminating in *A Good Place to Work: Sourcebook for the Academic Workplace*. This book documented the distinctive outlook of faculty members at CIC institutions: higher morale, on average, than faculty members at other types of institutions; values that matched the values of their institutions; an awareness of the important role that college presidents played in promoting job satisfaction among faculty members; and a somewhat different definition of scholarship than their peers maintained at other institutions. In the mid-1990s, a major project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts looked at “Faculty Roles and Rewards.”

**1993**

CIC receives a $1.25 million grant from Atlantic Philanthropies for Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve. CAPHE also receives a $1 million grant from the DeWitt Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund (now the Wallace Foundation) to develop academic partnerships between community groups and local colleges.
Improving Institutional Capacity

In addition to its attention to presidents and other institutional leaders, and beyond its concern for such overall institutional issues as accreditation and visibility, CIC has also developed an array of programs to help member colleges and universities enhance their capacity in a number of critical areas. Some of these programs have addressed the pedagogical training of faculty members; others have focused on specific topics like service-learning and technology. CIC has pursued its mission of campus improvement with the help of generous grants from many of the major American foundations supporting higher education.

Project QUE (Quality Undergraduate Education), launched in 1979, was the Council’s first significant contribution to curricular reform. All CASC colleges were invited to identify an existing or proposed academic program that held the greatest promise of personalizing undergraduate teaching and learning, and then propose experimental or alternative approaches that would help fulfill the promise. Fifty-nine colleges were chosen through a competitive process and awarded grants, with the requirement that they had to publish case studies on the lessons learned from their experiments. The Council also launched a Center for the Academic Professions, a two-week residential seminar for Project QUE faculty members and administrators.

CIC has always paid attention to the central educational function of its member institutions, as this partial list of CIC publications shows:


1996

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation awards a $1.5 million grant for Implementing Urban Missions, a program to study and improve eight urban colleges. Pew Charitable Trusts awards $1 million to begin the Faculty Roles, Faculty Rewards, and Institutional Priorities program. CIC membership surpasses 400 colleges and universities.
Recently, CIC has drawn attention to curricular excellence in the sciences and humanities. The Heuer Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Undergraduate Science Education, inaugurated in 2001, recognize outstanding undergraduate science programs. The criteria for the awards include the impact on students, improvements in the institution as a whole, service to local schools through outreach programs, and distinctive features with potential for wider influence in higher education. Between 2001 and 2005, the $10,000 awards were bestowed on 13 institutions.

Several partnerships have made possible special seminars for private college faculty members. Since 2002, CIC has cosponsored with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, an annual seminar on teaching American history. These seminars, held at various universities and led by noted historians, offer faculty members the opportunity to strengthen their teaching and recharge their intellectual batteries. In 2004 and 2005, CIC and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, with support from the U.S. Department of State, collaborated to offer a seminar on Teaching About Islam and Middle Eastern Culture to a dozen faculty members from CIC colleges and universities. The three-week seminars, held at the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, Jordan, provide participants an opportunity to learn more about the Middle East while immersing themselves in Jordan’s rich culture.

CIC was also one of the first national associations to recognize the revolution sparked by changes in information technology on college campuses. In January 1984 the Council invited Margaret MacVicar, a professor of physical science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to address the Presidents Institute. Attendees were given the
opportunity to try out the latest innovation in desktop computer technology: the Apple IIe.

For a dozen years in the late 1980s and 1990s, CIC conducted annual workshops for the campus administrators responsible for making decisions about the purchase and use of information technology. For a number of years, through a collaborative relationship with Compaq and Microsoft Corporation, CIC offered computer labs at the Presidents and Chief Academic Officers Institutes to introduce campus leaders to emerging technologies. In 2004, with support from the Verizon Foundation, CIC commissioned and published a volume on Information Technology Benchmarks: A Practical Guide for College and University Presidents, to provide quantitative benchmarks and answer questions that presidents frequently raised about the return on the considerable investments in technology that their institutions had made in the past decade.

Beginning in 2002, CIC has sponsored workshops on the Transformation of the College Library, exploring such topics as: advancing information literacy as an element of liberal education, the role of the library in teaching and learning through collaboration between librarians and faculty members, the changing use and conceptualization of physical space in the library, the challenges of using technology to improve student learning, and setting institutional priorities for library-related costs when they exceed traditional budget guidelines. Teams consisting of three persons from nearly 200 CIC member institutions will eventually participate in the library workshops. CIC has received grants for these workshops from the William and Flora Hewlett, Gladys Krieble Delmas, Carl and Lily Pforzheimer, and Andrew W. Mellon Foundations.

To help colleges and universities plan academic facilities that use technology effectively, CIC has also collaborated with the National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education and Project Kaleidoscope to develop a Learning Spaces and Technology Workshop. Financial support is provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

1998
The Atlantic Philanthropies award CIC $2.5 million in grants for the Engaging Communities and Campuses program, which culminated in 2005 with a web-based best-practices publication.

1999
The Dean’s Institute is renamed the Institute for Chief Academic Officers.
The workshop is designed to serve both institutions that are planning to construct new facilities and those that are intending to renovate existing buildings. In both instances, the goal is to enable faculty members and students to use technology more effectively and creatively in the service of learning.

Because so much of its programming to assist member institutions involves external grants, CIC was quite receptive to an approach from the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education (CAPHE) to join forces. In 1993, CIC assumed responsibility for the operation of CAPHE, which had been established ten years earlier as a cooperative effort of several major foundations to support the broad middle tier of independent higher education. Typically, the schools in this tier had not been able to compete for grants against the major state universities and elite private research institutions. The agreement with CAPHE strengthened CIC’s ties to key foundations and helped to usher in a period of million dollar and larger external grants.

A major thrust of the grant support and CIC programming under the CAPHE banner has been institutional capacity building—especially the ways that institutions, in partnership with community organizations, can enhance student learning while contributing to local communities. This work engaged more than $7 million in external support from the Atlantic Philanthropies, Kellogg Foundation, the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, and the Corporation for National Service, among others. It provided grant support to nearly 90 institutions and assisted many more CIC members through conferences, workshops, publications, and web-based materials. The projects included:


2000

Richard Ekman succeeds Allen Splete as president of CIC. Also, the Council establishes a “Protocol for Collaboration” with Foundation for Independent Higher Education and National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities to work together more closely on joint projects and programs benefiting private colleges and universities.
Helping institutional leaders obtain information that can be useful in decision-making is another long-standing area of interest for CIC. The concern that colleges have good data for institutional research dates back to the Institutional Research and Planning Project of 1972, a three-year initiative for which CASC secured $900,000 in grants from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to help colleges set up offices of institutional research.

Another early CASC initiative was Advancing Quality Education. One of its components involved administering voluntary standardized tests at CASC member institutions to track the preparation of students in their sophomore and senior years, and then comparing the results to those of similar students at other kinds of institutions.

The second component was a survey of the business practices of small colleges. Together, the two components established that CASC members were similar to other small colleges in their financial administration and student achievements. The results also gave the organization a benchmark to evaluate later experiments and measure deviations from the norm.

Data-informed decision-making is becoming increasingly vital at institutions with limited budgets and sharply rising costs. In 2002, CIC initiated a series of Data and Decisions Workshops in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research to train college teams to acquire and make use of institutional and comparative data to inform campus decision-making. The Data and Decisions Workshops are funded by the National Center for Education Statistics.

In 2004, with assistance from The William Randolph Hearst Foundations, CIC developed the Key Indicators Tool to benchmark data on students, faculty, and finances for

**2001**

CIC announces a new strategic plan and grants the first Heuer Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Undergraduate Science Education. The Council launches the Teaching Scholar Partnerships Program to assist institutions to improve mathematics, science, and technology education in K-12 classrooms; and Presidential Leadership Services to strengthen college and university leadership.
member institutions. Presidents at CIC member institutions now receive annual confidential reports showing how their institutions measure up against peers.

In addition to better utilizing data to improve campus decision-making, CIC launched a new endeavor in 2004 to measure institutional contributions to student learning. A consortium of CIC member colleges has been recruited to use the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), a new measurement instrument developed by the Council for Aid to Education, to assess students’ critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and writing skills. A unique feature of the CLA is the ability to measure the “value added” by a college to student learning over a four-year undergraduate education. The CIC/CLA Consortium is receiving financial support from the Teagle Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

**ACCREDITATION**

The Council’s first mission in 1956 was to help its members attain the formal credentials they needed to demonstrate their worth to the public. In higher education, the most valued credential is regional accreditation. In similar fashion, one of CIC’s major recent efforts has been to help teachers get the credentials they need to demonstrate their worth.

The need for an alternative to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) became clear in the mid-1990s. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the existing mechanisms for obtaining approval for a college that wanted to offer a teacher preparation program. A number of CIC members determined to do something about the situation. Frank B. Murray, former dean of the

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**2002**

CIC, with Getty Foundation support, initiates the Survey of Historic Architecture and Design on the Independent College and University Campus. Also launches Transformation of the College Library Workshops in cooperation with the Council on Library and Information Resources. The first Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History seminar for CIC faculty members is held in New York.

**2003**

Membership surpasses 500 colleges and universities.
College of Education and now H. Rodney Sharp Professor in the School of Education and the Department of Psychology at the University of Delaware, was selected as president of the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). He worked with CIC President Allen Splete to find an alternative approach to NCATE. Splete secured initial start-up grant support and Murray was able to interest several foundations in the idea of creating a new approach to teacher education, one that shifted the basis for accreditation away from the input-heavy and complicated requirements mandated by NCATE to a focus on presenting evidence that the teacher education program’s graduates knew their subject matter and could actually teach well.

In 1997, working with a group of its member college presidents as well as representatives of schools of education at large research universities, CIC formed the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving academic degree programs for professional educators—those who will teach and lead the nation’s schools. TEAC’s membership represents teacher education programs at a broad range of higher education institutions, from small liberal arts colleges to large research universities. TEAC is now fully recognized as an accrediting body by the U.S. Department of Education, and colleges and universities are selecting TEAC as their accreditor in greater numbers with each passing year.

2004

CIC and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers launch the Teaching About Islam and Middle Eastern Culture seminar in Amman, Jordan for CIC faculty members from various fields. CIC also publishes Report of a Symposium on the Liberal Arts and Business. Microsoft Corporation cosponsors with CIC a Presidents Leadership Summit on technology-influenced approaches to learning.
FROM ACCREDITATION TO VALIDATION

In a recent interview, Gary Quehl noted that CIC has had five long-serving presidents. Each, he thought, had been the right person for the Council at the right time: Alfred Hill to shepherd CASC through its infancy; Roger Voskuyl to strengthen the ties with the founding membership; Quehl himself to make it a national service organization; Allen Splete to expand the membership and obtain new grant support; and Richard Ekman to widen CIC’s services to people in many leadership roles on campus, increase membership, and raise CIC’s national visibility.

Today, CIC is an organization that provides college presidents and other campus leaders with opportunities to learn from one another’s experience. Both CIC and its member institutions are more robust today than they were in 1956. But the challenges of 2006 are no easier than the challenges of 1956, and the organization must continue to evolve in order to meet them effectively.

2005

CIC launches Making the Case, a data-collection and public-relations initiative; CIC/Collegiate Learning Assessment Consortium, a project to define the “value added” by institutions to their students’ learning; and Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission, a program designed to guide current and prospective presidents in reflection about each leader’s sense of calling as it relates to the mission of the college that the president leads or might lead.
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Nasson College / Springvale, ME / 1912
National College / Kansas City, MO / 1899
New England College / Henniker, NH / 1946
Nichols College / Dudley, MA / 1931
Northwest Christian College / Eugene, OR / 1895
Oakland City College / Oakland City, IN / 1883
Olivet College / Olivet, MI / 1844
Paul Quinn College / Waco, TX / 1872
Piedmont College / Demorest, GA / 1897
Pikeville College / Pikeville, KY / 1889
Ricker College / Houlton, ME / 1926
Rio Grande College / Rio Grande, OH / 1876
Roberts Wesleyan College / North Chili, NY / 1866
Sacred Heart College (now Newman University) / Wichita, KS / 1933
Saint Francis College / Biddeford, ME / 1939
Saint Francis College / Brooklyn, NY / 1884
College of Saint Joseph on the Rio Grande / Albuquerque, NM / 1940
Saint Joseph's College / North Windham, ME / 1915
Saint Mary of the Plains College / Dodge City, KS / 1952
Saint Meinrad College / Saint Meinrad, IN / 1861
Saint Michael's College / Santa Fe, NM / 1947
Salem College / Salem, WV / 1888
The College of Steubenville / Steubenville, OH / 1946
Tabor College / Hillsboro, KS / 1908
University of Hartford / Hartford, CT / 1879
Upland College / Upland, CA / 1920
Western New England College / Springfield, MA / 1919
Westmont College / Santa Barbara, CA / 1940
Wilberforce University / Wilberforce, OH / 1856
William Jennings Bryan College / Dayton, TN / 1930
William Penn College / Oskaloosa, IA / 1873
Current CIC Membership
(as of December 2005)

Alabama / Birmingham-Southern College / Huntingdon College / Miles College / Oakwood College / Spring Hill College

Alaska / Alaska Pacific University

Arizona / Prescott College

Arkansas / Hendrix College / John Brown University / Lyon College / Ouachita Baptist University / Philander Smith College / University of the Ozarks

California / Azusa Pacific University / Bethany University / California Baptist University / California Lutheran University / Chapman University / Dominican University of California / Fresno Pacific University / Golden Gate University / Holy Names University / Mills College / Mount St. Mary’s College / Notre Dame de Namur University / Pitzer College / Point Loma Nazarene University / Scripps College / Simpson University / Thomas Aquinas College / Westmont College / Whittier College / Woodbury University

Colorado / Colorado Christian University / Naropa University / Regis University

Connecticut / Albertus Magnus College / Connecticut College / Mitchell College / Sacred Heart University / Saint Joseph College / Trinity College / University of Bridgeport

Delaware / Wesley College / Wilmington College

Florida / Barry University / Bethune-Cookman College / Clearwater Christian College / Eckerd College / Flagler College / Florida Memorial University / Jacksonville University / Palm Beach Atlantic University / Rollins College / Saint Leo University / Southeastern University / St. Thomas University / Warner Southern College

Georgia / Agnes Scott College / Berry College / Brenau University / Clark Atlanta University / LaGrange College / Mercer University / Morehouse College / Oglethorpe University / Paine College / Piedmont College / Shorter College / Spelman College / Thomas University / Wesleyan College

Hawaii / Brigham Young University Hawaii / Chaminade University of Honolulu

Idaho / Albertson College of Idaho
Illinois / Augustana College / Aurora University / Benedictine University / Blackburn College / Columbia College Chicago / Dominican University / Elmhurst College / Eureka College / Greenville College / Illinois College / Illinois Wesleyan University / Judson College / Kendall College / Lewis University / MacMurray College / McKendree College / Millikin University / Monmouth College / National-Louis University / North Central College / Olivet Nazarene University / Principia College / Quincy University / Rockford College / Saint Xavier University / Shimer College / Trinity Christian College / University of St. Francis

Indiana / Anderson University / Bethel College / Calumet College of St. Joseph / Earlham College / Franklin College / Goshen College / Grace College and Seminary / Hanover College / Huntington University / Indiana Wesleyan University / Manchester College / Marian College / Saint Joseph’s College / Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College / Saint Mary’s College / Taylor University / Tri-State University / University of Evansville / University of Indianapolis / University of Saint Francis / Wabash College

Iowa / Briar Cliff University / Buena Vista University / Central College / Clarke College / Cornell College / Dordt College / Drake University / Graceland University / Grand View College / Iowa Wesleyan College / Loras College / Morningside College / Mount Mercy College / Northwestern College / Simpson College / St. Ambrose University / University of Dubuque / Upper Iowa University / Waldorf College / Wartburg College / William Penn University

Kansas / Baker University / Benedictine College / Bethany College / Bethel College / Friends University / Kansas Wesleyan University / McPherson College / MidAmerica Nazarene University / Newman University / Ottawa University / Southwestern College / Sterling College / Tabor College / University of Saint Mary

Kentucky / Alice Lloyd College / Bellarmine University / Berea College / Brescia University / Campbellsville University / Centre College / Georgetown College / Kentucky Wesleyan College / Lindsey Wilson College / Midway College / Pikeville College / Spalding University / Thomas More College / Transylvania University / Union College / University of the Cumberlands
Louisiana / Dillard University / Loyola University New Orleans

Maine / Saint Joseph’s College of Maine / Unity College / University of New England

Maryland / College of Notre Dame of Maryland / Columbia Union College / Goucher College / Loyola College in Maryland / McDaniel College / Mount St. Mary’s University / St. John’s College / Villa Julie College

Massachusetts / American International College / Anna Maria College / Assumption College / Bay Path College / Curry College / Eastern Nazarene College / Elms College / Emerson College / Emmanuel College / Endicott College / Gordon College / Hampshire College / Lesley University / Merrimack College / Mount Holyoke College / Mount Ida College / Nichols College / Regis College / Simon’s Rock College of Bard / Springfield College / Stonehill College / Western New England College / Wheaton College / Wheelock College / Williams College

Michigan / Adrian College / Alma College / Aquinas College / Ave Maria College / Calvin College / Cornerstone University / Hillsdale College / Madonna University / Marygrove College / Olivet College / Siena Heights University / Spring Arbor University

Minnesota / Augsburg College / Bethany Lutheran College / Bethel University / College of Saint Benedict / College of St. Catherine / College of St. Scholastica / Concordia College / Hamline University / Northwestern College / Saint John’s University / University of Saint Thomas

Missouri / Avila University / Central Methodist University / College of the Ozarks / Columbia College / Culver-Stockton College / Drury University / Fontbonne University / Hannibal-LaGrange College / Kansas City Art Institute / Maryville University of Saint Louis / Missouri Baptist University / Missouri Valley College / Park University / Rockhurst University / Stephens College / Webster University / Westminster College / William Jewell College / William Woods University
Mississippi / Millsaps College / Rust College / Tougaloo College

Montana / Carroll College / Rocky Mountain College / University of Great Falls

Nebraska / Bellevue University / College of Saint Mary / Dana College / Doane College / Hastings College / Midland Lutheran College / Nebraska Wesleyan University

New Hampshire / Colby-Sawyer College / Franklin Pierce College / New England College / Rivier College / Saint Anselm College / Southern New Hampshire University

New Jersey / Bloomfield College / Caldwell College / Centenary College / College of Saint Elizabeth / Drew University / Felician College / Georgian Court University / Monmouth University / Rider University / Saint Peter’s College

New Mexico / College of the Southwest / St. John’s College

New York / Cazenovia College / College of Mount Saint Vincent / College of New Rochelle / College of Saint Rose / Concordia College / Daemen College / Dominican College / D'Youville College / Elmira College / Hamilton College / Hartwick College / Houghton College / Ithaca College / Keuka College / Le Moyne College / Marymount College of Fordham University / Marymount Manhattan College / Medaille College / Mercy College / Molloy College / Mount Saint Mary College / Nazareth College / Nyack College / Pace University / Roberts Wesleyan College / Sage Colleges / Siena College / St. Bonaventure University / St. John Fisher College / St. Joseph’s College / St. Lawrence University / St. Thomas Aquinas College / Utica College / Wagner College / Wells College

North Carolina / Barton College / Belmont Abbey College / Brevard College / Catawba College / Chowan College / Elon University / Gardner-Webb University / Greensboro College / Guilford College / Johnson C. Smith University / Lees-McRae College / Lenoir-Rhyne College / Livingstone College / Mars Hill College / Meredith College / Montreat College / North Carolina Wesleyan College / Peace College / Pfeiffer University / Saint Augustine’s College / Salem College / St. Andrews Presbyterian College / Warren Wilson College / Wingate University
North Dakota / Jamestown College / University of Mary

Ohio / Antioch College / Ashland University / Bluffton University / Capital University / Cedarville University / College of Mount St. Joseph / College of Wooster / Defiance College / Franciscan University of Steubenville / Franklin University / Heidelberg College / Hiram College / John Carroll University / Kenyon College / Lake Erie College / Lourdes College / Malone College / Marietta College / Mount Union College / Mount Vernon Nazarene University / Muskingum College / Notre Dame College / Oberlin College / Ohio Dominican University / Ohio Northern University / Ohio Wesleyan University / Otterbein College / Tiffin University / University of Findlay / Urbana University / Ursuline College / Walsh University / Wilberforce University / Wilmington College / Xavier University

Oklahoma / Oklahoma City University / Oral Roberts University

Oregon / George Fox University / Marylhurst University / Pacific University / Willamette University

Pennsylvania / Albright College / Allegheny College / Alvernia College / Arcadia University / Cabrini College / Carlow University / Cedar Crest College / Chatham College / Chestnut Hill College / College Misericordia / Delaware Valley College / DeSales University / Duquesne University / Eastern University / Elizabethtown College / Franklin & Marshall College / Gannon University / Geneva College / Gettysburg College / Grove City College / Gwynedd-Mercy College / Holy Family University / Immaculata University / Juniata College / Keystone College / King's College / La Roche College / Lebanon Valley College / Lycoming College / Marywood University / Mercyhurst College / Messiah College / Moravian College / Mount Aloysius College / Neumann College / Philadelphia University / Point Park University / Robert Morris University / Rosemont College / Saint Francis University / Saint Vincent College / Seton Hill University / Susquehanna University / Swarthmore College / Thiel College / University of Scranton / Ursinus College / Washington & Jefferson College / Waynesburg College / Westminster College / Widener University / Wilkes University / Wilson College / York College of Pennsylvania
Rhode Island / Roger Williams University / Salve Regina University

South Carolina / Anderson College / Benedict College / Charleston Southern University / Claffin University / Columbia College / Converse College / Limestone College / Morris College / Newberry College / Southern Wesleyan University / Voorhees College / Wofford College

South Dakota / Augustana College / Dakota Wesleyan University / Mount Marty College / University of Sioux Falls

Tennessee / Belmont University / Bethel College / Carson-Newman College / Christian Brothers University / Crichton College / Cumberland University / Fisk University / King College / Lambuth University / Lane College / Lee University / LeMoyne-Owen College / Lincoln Memorial University / Maryville College / Milligan College / Rhodes College / Southern Adventist University / Tennessee Wesleyan College / Trevecca Nazarene University / Tusculum College / Union University / University of the South

Texas / Austin College / East Texas Baptist University / Huston-Tillotson University / Jarvis Christian College / McMurry University / Our Lady of the Lake University / Schreiner University / Southwestern University / St. Edward’s University / Texas College / Texas Lutheran University / Texas Wesleyan University / University of St. Thomas / University of the Incarnate Word / Wiley College

Utah / Westminster College

Vermont / Bennington College / Burlington College / Champlain College / Goddard College / Green Mountain College / Marlboro College / Norwich University / Saint Michael’s College / Southern Vermont College
**Virginia** / Averett University / Bluefield College / Bridgewater College / Eastern Mennonite University / Emory & Henry College / Ferrum College / Hollins University / Lynchburg College / Mary Baldwin College / Marymount University / Randolph-Macon College / Randolph-Macon Woman’s College / Roanoke College / Shenandoah University / Sweet Briar College / University of Richmond / Virginia Union University / Virginia Wesleyan College

**Washington** / Heritage University / Pacific Lutheran University / Saint Martin’s University / Seattle Pacific University / University of Puget Sound / Whitworth College

**West Virginia** / Alderson-Broaddus College / Bethany College / Davis & Elkins College / Ohio Valley University / University of Charleston / West Virginia Wesleyan College / Wheeling Jesuit University

**Wisconsin** / Alverno College / Cardinal Stritch University / Carroll College / Edgewood College / Lakeland College / Marian College / Mount Mary College / Northland College / Ripon College / Silver Lake College / St. Norbert College / Viterbo University / Wisconsin Lutheran College

**Associate Members**

Ancilla College, IN / Cottey College, MO / Dean College, MA / Hesston College, KS / Hiwassee College, TN / Lincoln College, IL / Louisburg College, NC / Marymount College, CA / St. Augustine College, IL / Young Harris College, GA

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American College of Greece / American University of Paris, France / American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates / American University-Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan / Forman Christian College, Pakistan / Franklin College of Switzerland / John Cabot University, Italy / Richmond the American International University in London, England / Universidad Católica de Occidente, El Salvador / Universidad Interamericana de Costa Rica / Universidad José Cecilio Del Valle, Honduras
Arkansas / Arkansas’ Independent Colleges & Universities

Colorado / EDUCAUSE


Georgia / American Academy of Religion / Associated Colleges of the South / Georgia Foundation for Independent Colleges, Inc. / Society of Biblical Literature

Iowa / Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

Illinois / Associated Colleges of Illinois / Conference for Mercy Higher Education / Evangelical Lutheran Church In America / Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges & Universities / Illinois Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities / LeaderShape, Inc.

Indiana / Independent Colleges of Indiana, Inc. / Organization of American Historians

Kansas / Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs / IDEA Center, Inc. / Kansas Independent Colleges Association

Kentucky / Appalachian College Association / Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities / Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities

Maryland / Maryland Independent College and University Association

Michigan / Great Lakes Colleges Association, Inc.

Minnesota / Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching and Learning / Minnesota Private College Council

Missouri / Church of the Nazarene

North Carolina / North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities
Nebraska / Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Nebraska

New Hampshire / Christian College Consortium

New Jersey / Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in New Jersey / Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation

New Mexico / Tuition Plan Consortium

New York / American Council of Learned Societies / Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools / Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

Ohio / Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Ohio / Council for Higher Education, United Church of Christ / Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges

Oregon / Society for Values in Higher Education

Pennsylvania / Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Pennsylvania

South Carolina / South Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities, Inc.

South Dakota / Lutheran Educational Conference of North America

Tennessee / Tennessee Independent Colleges & Universities Association / United Methodist Church, General Board of Higher Education & Ministry

Texas / Texas Independent College Fund

Virginia / Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia

Washington / Independent Colleges of Washington

Wisconsin / Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges & Universities / Wisconsin Foundation for Independent Colleges, Inc.

West Virginia / West Virginia Independent Colleges and Universities
Suggested Readings


Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1968)


Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963)


Meeting the Challenge: America’s Independent Colleges and Universities Since 1956

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

John R. Thelin is University Research Professor at the University of Kentucky. Before joining the University of Kentucky in 1996, Dr. Thelin worked for the American Council on Education for about a dozen years. Prior to joining ACE, Dr. Thelin served as associate vice president for institutional development at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Thelin is a member of the Council of Independent Colleges Academic Advisory Board.

Alvin P. Sanoff is the former managing editor of U.S. News & World Report’s ranking project of “America’s Best Colleges” and “America’s Best Graduate Schools.” He has written about higher education for The Chronicle of Higher Education, USA Today, and many other publications, and has been a consultant to numerous colleges and universities on strategic planning and related issues. Sanoff now works as a consultant, freelance writer, and contributing editor for Washingtonian Magazine.

Welch Suggs has been a knowledgeable observer of liberal arts colleges for more than 15 years—first as a student at Rhodes College in Tennessee, then as a journalist, and now as associate director of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. Before joining the Knight Commission in 2005, Suggs was a reporter and then senior editor for The Chronicle of Higher Education. He is also the author of A Place on the Team: The Triumph and Tragedy of Title IX, published in 2005 by Princeton University Press.

ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Founded in 1956, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of independent colleges and universities working together to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance private higher education’s contributions to society.

CIC is the major national service organization for small and mid-sized independent colleges and universities in the U.S. CIC is an authentic organization, not a lobbying or public relations service, but rather focuses on providing services to member leaders as well as technical, intellectual, and practical resources that can sustain institutions in improving educational programs; enhancing administrative performance; and institutional capacity.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Meeting the Challenge: America’s Independent Colleges and Universities Since 1956 marks the 50th anniversary of the Council of Independent Colleges. The book is comprised of three essays written by three general audiences. The first, by historian John Thelin, is a historical treatment of the role of independent colleges in American higher education since the 1950s. The second, by former U.S. News & World Report editor Alvin Sanoff, examines the present contributions and current status of independent colleges and universities. The third essay, by Welch Suggs, reviews CIC’s half-century of leadership. Through broad dissemination, we hope this book will become an important part of making the case about the value of the education offered by private liberal arts colleges and universities.