



1930s College Life

Top: Class of 1935, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA.

Bottom: N.Y.A. Display reads “Keeps 12,000 in School,” c. 1935.

“No Formal Cooperation Needed”: Federal New Deal Policy at Elite Massachusetts’ Women’s Colleges, 1933–1942

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Editor’s Introduction: *This article investigates the impact of early federal college aid programs established during the New Deal at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley, three elite women’s colleges which are all located in Massachusetts. Some historians have assessed New Deal federal aid for colleges as a beneficial experiment that assisted struggling institutions in the higher education sector. Gorgosz, however, contends that the experiences of these women’s colleges reveal that not all institutional types viewed this aid in a uniformly positive manner. His analysis demonstrates that federal aid conflicted with the institutional structures present at many elite women’s colleges, resulting in a hesitant response and reservations over restrictions.*

It is important to keep in mind that at this time a college education was reserved for the privileged few. In 1940 only 3.8% of adult women in the United States had earned a B.A. degree or higher (and only 5.5% of men). A college degree of any kind was only available to the upper class or to fortunate members of the middle and working classes. Moreover, the majority of the roughly one half million female college students in the 1930s would have been attending their local state universities or state normal (teacher training) colleges, not elite women’s institutions. However, the experiences of these three elite women’s colleges

during the Great Depression reveals a response to federal educational policy that has not been previously recognized by historians. This analysis sheds new light on Americans' varied responses to the New Deal. Dr. Jon Gorgosz has written and published studies of the history of federal educational policy and twentieth-century college culture.

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During the early years of the New Deal, a significant policy development transformed the relationship between the federal government and the higher education community. In an attempt to solve the employment problems of youth and help struggling colleges and universities during the Great Depression, the Roosevelt administration implemented a federally funded work-study program that partially subsidized the cost of college for students. Housed under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) from 1933 to 1934 and later transferred to the National Youth Administration (NYA) from 1935 to 1943, this New Deal program represented the first federal aid policy that targeted both public and private institutions.

A few elite women's colleges in Massachusetts, however, were highly critical of the regulations that accompanied federal aid. A number of these colleges (all members of the prestigious "Seven Sisters") elected to forego federal assistance.¹ They represented a tiny portion of the 138 private colleges and universities that opted against utilizing federal aid during the New Deal.² Concerned about federal oversight and costly regulations that accompanied federal funding, they felt that creating their own work-study programs, which almost precisely mirrored the federal program, provided more financial and intellectual support for their students. Other elite women's colleges in Massachusetts that decided to receive federal assistance were also highly critical of the requirements that accompanied funding. Despite strong evidence demonstrating that most private and public colleges and universities in the U.S. welcomed federal aid during the New Deal (over 1,400 institutions accepted assistance), why were a number of women's institutions in Massachusetts so resistant to and critical of federal funding?³

Utilizing an approach that combines collegiate records from Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley colleges; articles from the contemporary *Journal of the Association of University Women*; and administrative records from FERA and the NYA, this article argues that the gender-based missions at these Massachusetts women's colleges, coupled with their historically marginalized status within the higher education world, played a significant role in fostering their apprehensive response towards early federal funding during the New Deal. Due to the long history of attacks against women's

education by male-dominated higher educational institutions and society, leaders of these elite women's colleges grew concerned that federal assistance could lead to government oversight and a loss of autonomy. Their fear of government control was not simply unfounded or speculative. During the politically turbulent period of the 1930s, numerous state and national laws were attached to government funding that aimed to regulate the political beliefs of students and faculty. By the 1930s, women's institutions within higher education had sought out their own answers to financial problems throughout their history, culminating in a strong culture of economic independence. Consequently, as the crisis of the Great Depression worsened, Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley's leaders were less willing to enter into a relationship with the federal government for the sake of financial security and less likely to overlook costly bureaucratic demands associated with federal funding. Instead, they opted to develop their own work-study initiatives that mirrored the programs found in FERA and the NYA.

Most scholars have attributed the dismissal of federal assistance by private institutions during the New Deal to the ideological sentiments at well-endowed institutions that had the financial capacity to survive the Great Depression. In addition, the historiography argues that criticism of college aid came from institutions that disapproved of the use of tax dollars for private student aid or acted on anti-New Deal sentiments.⁴ Kevin Bower's examination of the NYA in Ohio provides an in-depth analysis that investigates the wary reaction to federal aid by private institutions. Examining the private colleges of Oberlin and Case Western Reserve, he reveals that these institutions were concerned about bureaucratic requirements that accompanied federal funding but attributes their dissent to either unfounded anxiety or anti-statist ideology.⁵ Christopher Loss' study analyzing the development of higher education as a parastate—an indirect medium that limits direct federal involvement with citizens—contends that private colleges and universities that refused New Deal federal assistance did so as an excuse to curb enrollment and limit access.⁶

Few historians of women's higher education have addressed the role that gender played in contributing to the tepid response to federal aid by elite women's colleges prior to the GI Bill. Barbara Miller Solomon briefly discusses that funding through the NYA provided minimal assistance for college women at Seven Sisters institutions where tuition and room and board cost close to \$1,000, but she does not produce an in-depth analysis.⁷ Amy McCandless' analysis of women's higher education in the South discusses the financial help provided through FERA for struggling colleges and universities in the region; however, she only cites evidence from Historically Black

Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as well as coeducational institutions, failing to provide evidence from Southern women's colleges.⁸ Most scholars have focused on the influence of federal legislation on women's colleges and education following World War II, specifically the effect the GI Bill had on women's enrollment within higher education.⁹ Historians have simply not examined how the gendered nature of women's colleges influenced their responses to federal assistance prior to World War II.

The large endowments at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley and the privileged nature of their student bodies certainly affirms the historiographical narrative that these institutions both declined and criticized New Deal federal funding due to a lack of need or as a result of an ideological disposition. However, this analysis fails to acknowledge the significant role institutional structures, such as the gendered mission and marginalized history of these women's institutions, played in determining their responses. Administrators at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley were not wary of federal aid simply due to anti-New Deal ideology, baseless anxiety, or an elitist nature, as the dominant historiography argues. The unique institutional missions and histories on these campuses structured their apprehensive response. For these institutions, there were substantive, justified reasons to be concerned about federal involvement. Building on Christopher Loss' model of higher education as a "parastate," this article explores the tensions that develop between federal policy and specific institutional structures present within the varied types of colleges and universities found in the higher education sector.¹⁰

THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY RELIEF ADMINISTRATION & THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADMINISTRATION

In the summer of 1933, the United States was in the depths of the most enduring economic depression in its history. The market had become saturated with workers, and unemployment levels were at historic highs. Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1932 brought in a group of progressive, reform-minded administrators charged with correcting the unemployment problem in the country. This new fervor manifested with the development of an unprecedented number of federal work programs and regulatory laws, such as the National Recovery Act (NRA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which became defining agencies associated with the New Deal. Despite the Roosevelt administration's overwhelming focus on employment programs, a number of New Dealers

set their attention on simultaneously aiding education while addressing the unemployment problem.¹¹

The FERA and NYA's college aid programs were born out of this attempt to solve both educational issues and the joblessness problem. As Richard Reiman points out, "FERA officials sought solutions that would not only assist youth but would simultaneously stimulate employment and recovery for the rest of society."¹² Federal administrators did not solely look to relief



Poster for the Illinois branch of the N.Y.A., 1937

The college work study program was only a very small part of the NYA's work.

jobs to alleviate the youth problem; rather, they saw education as a tool to delay entry into the depressed economy while building valuable skills for a post-depression marketplace. Bans on child labor, age-limit regulation, and financial incentives in the form of aid were used by New Deal agencies to ensure young adults left the workforce and remained in the educational system.¹³

Despite the support for youth and college aid from students and administrators, mainly at public institutions, significant debate existed about how to administer aid and who should benefit from federal assistance. The Roosevelt Administration eventually settled on a work-study program administered through colleges and universities across the country and vetoed a federal loan initiative due to a partiality towards work-relief programs. The University of Minnesota was chosen as the test institution for the FERA program in late November of 1933. After a successful test-run, FERA officials expanded the program to aid all non-profit institutions in the country by February 1934.¹⁴

The FERA and NYA's college aid programs were positioned as a decentralized federal program to assist with college affordability. Students could earn up to \$20 a month or \$240 a year while working up to 30 hours a week.¹⁵ A separate fund was developed to assist graduate students as well as African American students; however, African American students were limited to utilizing this aid primarily at HBCUs.¹⁶ Although less utilized than the primary aid for undergraduates, these two programs represented early forms of differentiated aid for both graduate and minority students. As the program morphed into a stand-alone agency as the National Youth Administration in 1935, a centralized organization developed along with regional and state offices.¹⁷ Colleges and universities reported to individual state directors who channeled information to and from Washington.¹⁸

The work-study program did not allow students to partake in any campus job; employment under FERA and the NYA was limited to tasks that related to the educational major of the students and fit their particular skill set.¹⁹ Restrictions barred students from teaching classes, participating in hazardous work, or displacing the jobs of others.²⁰ Similar to many other segments of these programs, government officials regulated employment options for participating institutions. Institutions were responsible for finding students to employ and providing them with suitable work—a heroic task.²¹

Overall, New Deal college aid provided 620,000 students with part-time jobs on college campuses between 1933 and 1943. The program cost more than \$93 million dollars and assisted one out of every eight college students.²² Although the college aid program represented only a fraction of

the 2.1 million jobs provided by the NYA, the agency also afforded part-time jobs for high school students and provided other types of work programs for youth. It had a transformative effect on the relationship between higher education and the federal government.²³

FEAR OF FEDERAL CONTROL

In a 1931 issue of the *Journal of the Association of University Women*—the primary association for women's colleges and collegiate educators—Ellen Fitz Pendleton (1864–1936), Wellesley College President, discussed the mounting criticisms levied against liberal arts colleges since the beginning of the Great Depression, specifically women's colleges:

These colleges of liberal arts find their critics in at least two camps. The first believe these institutions unnecessary; the second would perhaps concede them a place in our educational system if they were not so old-fashioned and so out of touch with modern needs. The criticism of this second group is especially directed toward the colleges for women. Articles still find place in current magazines, charging that the training of women's colleges unfits students for wifehood and motherhood.²⁴

This gender-based criticism of women's education had existed since their founding in the nineteenth century.²⁵ Throughout their history, women's college administrators had incurred considerable disapproval from not only male-dominated higher education leaders but also society at large. Opponents argued that education conflicted with women's feminine role, encouraged women to bear fewer children (constituting a form of "race-suicide"), and was physically detrimental to their health due to their perceived fragile biological makeup.²⁶

Criticism toward female higher education also manifested in a political context in the 1920s and 1930s. Historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz argues that after the First World War, a "conservative turn of the nation," resulted in "women's colleges [facing] potential threats to their existence."²⁷ Politicians and pundits charged that the Seven Sisters—with which Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley were associated—were hotbeds for socialist propaganda. These debates spilled over onto the floor of the U.S. Congress.²⁸ Critics again attacked the Seven Sisters as strongholds of anti-capitalist thought. In 1935 *The Advisor*, an anti-communist newsletter, reported that "Bryn Mawr [had] been filled with radicalism for a number of years" and was an important

Wellesley College (Wellesley, MA), founded 1870

Student Population: 1,550 (1932) & 1,494 (1938)

Endowment: \$7,520,844 (1932) & \$8,632,514 (1938)

Financial Aid: 16% applied for aid; demand was so high only 43% of those students received funding.

Smith College (Northampton, MA), founded 1871

Student Population: 2,082 (1932) & 2,061 (1938)

Endowment: \$6,295,280 (1932) & \$5,955,659 (1938)

Financial Aid: Unable to fund all scholarships in 1932 (had provided over \$200,000 in funding); 20% decline in attendance in 1932.

Radcliffe College (Cambridge, MA), founded 1879

Coordinate school for women with Harvard University

Student Population: 993 (1932) & 843 (1938)

Endowment: \$5,046,000 (1932) & \$5,402,299 (1938)

Financial Aid: N/A.

U.S. College Student Population:

1929–1930: 1,101,000 (total) 620,000 men – 481,000 women

1939–1940: 1,494,000 (total) 893,000 men – 601,000 women

Sources: Information on student populations and endowments in 1932 is from the *1932 Almanac and Book of Facts* (New York: World Telegraph, 1932), 263, 268, 269. Information for 1938 is from the *1938 Almanac and Book of Facts* (New York: World Telegraph, 1938), 391–394. Source: Wellesley College financial aid: Letter, from Ellen Pendleton, President of Wellesley College, October 19, 1933, box 17, folder 146, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA. Source for Smith College's scholarship funding: Fundraising pamphlet, fundraising promotional material for Seven Colleges, June 15, 1934, box 21, folder 186, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA, 1–2 and the Scholarship Report, Report on scholarship effort at Smith College, box 54, folder 5, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, SCA. Source on the U.S. college population 1929–30 and 1939–40 is from Thomas D. Snyder, *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait* (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, 1993), 76.

cog in the intellectual red machinery.”²⁹ The author even championed the withholding of funds for a summer program with supposed communist leanings by Bryn Mawr’s administration.³⁰ Unsurprisingly, these attacks resulted in Smith, Radcliffe, and Wellesley developing a guarded demeanor that fiercely protected their independence from outside opponents—both cultural and political.

In 1931 the National Advisory Committee on Education—a group composed of 56 members from the education community commissioned by President Hoover—published their recommendations for the future of federal involvement in the education sector. The report suggested “that there should be no centralized federal control of education and that the autonomy of the States in regard to the purposes and processes of public education should be preserved.”³¹ The committee felt that “harm results when intimacy between schools and their patrons and neighbors is disturbed by remote control of a distant authority.”³² The document criticized the direct federal funding for agricultural and vocational education found in the Smith-Lever Act (1914) and the Smith-Hughes Act (1917) because it reflected a drift towards central control of education.³³ Instead, the committee promoted awarding federal funding through individual states and establishing a Department of Education to provide research and coordination for the sector—however, void of any regulatory or executive power.³⁴

Mary Wooley, President of Mount Holyoke College (a member of the Seven Sisters), represented the interests of women’s colleges on the committee.³⁵ Although committee members speaking for Catholic as well as African American education published minority reports that voiced their disagreements with the committee’s findings, President Wooley signed and fully supported the document. Her support of the National Advisory Committee’s endorsements aligned with the directives found in the American Association of University Women’s (AAUW) legislative program—the prominent professional organization for women educators in the United States.³⁶ Concerned over federal control, since 1924 the AAUW had recommended that any federal branch of government have no legal, financial, regulatory, or executive function over the education sector.³⁷ The AAUW advocated for a less influential Department of Education to research and coordinate in the sector without any significant power or impact.³⁸ The AAUW’s legislative proposals (along with administrators at the Seven Sisters) demonstrate that they were not necessarily anti-government—evidenced by their willingness to support a federal Department of Education; rather, they reveal that women educators were concerned that federal involvement would lead to a loss of institutional autonomy. These perceived links to radicalism

and gender-based attacks over the previous decades contributed to women educators' guarded response towards federal funding.

More importantly, leaders of women's colleges were not simply hesitant to accept federal assistance because of historical precedents. During the politically turbulent 1930s, authoritarian regimes across the world sought to co-opt higher education—and education in general—for political purposes. Consequently, these women's college administrators had substantive reasons to believe that federal funding could lead to a loss of institutional autonomy.

STATE-CONTROLLED EDUCATION AND FASCISM

Throughout the 1930s, the pages of the *Journal of the Association of University Women* were riddled with reports chronicling the persecution of AAUW members in fascist nations in Europe. A 1934 article described the case of Dr. Margarete Bieber, a past AAUW International Fellowship recipient who had “lost her position at the University of Giessen because she [was] of Jewish extraction.”³⁹ The same piece also recorded the plight of Jewish scholars who were unable to obtain recommendations from the German Federation for fellowship opportunities due to their “Jewish blood.”⁴⁰ The AAUW continued to chronicle the difficulty of German academics in fascist Germany as well as the Nazis' incorporation of higher education into their propaganda machine.⁴¹

Although Germany represented an extreme case of state control in education, administrators at women's colleges saw the oppressive results as evidence for the benefits of non-tax supported institutions. During her inauguration as Wellesley College President in 1936, Mildred McAfee (1900-1994) referenced recent events in higher education across the globe to validate her concerns:

Moreover, in this thirst of repression and propaganda to which institutions of higher education have been subjected in so many parts of the world, there is probably more freedom possible for non-tax-supported colleges than for those which must placate legislatures.⁴²

Alluding to state control of universities in anti-democratic nations, McAfee offered a grave example of state-supported education's detrimental effect. The state control of universities in fascist countries in Europe provided real life examples of the detrimental outcomes of government control.

The control of ideological positions within higher education did not just manifest in fascist countries or oppressive dictatorships. By the mid 1930s, anti-communist rhetoric had infiltrated political discourse in the United States.⁴³ The Great Depression challenged the presumptive notion of the superiority of capitalism and provided legitimacy to communist economic arguments as well as political organizations. In reaction to these challenges, patriotic groups and politicians targeted organizations, professions, and individuals deemed to be subversive to American interests.⁴⁴ The presence of anti-war demonstrations by student groups and vocal support for collectivist ideas by left-wing academics led many anti-communist organizations and politicians to target higher education.⁴⁵ Many critics saw American higher education as a channel for radical communist beliefs. Spurred by this anti-communist fervor, state legislatures passed laws requiring teachers to affirm their loyalty to the United States and denounce any un-American political ideologies.⁴⁶ By 1935, ten of those subjected private schools to the same requirement as well.⁴⁷ The attack against un-American rhetoric even reached the floor of Congress, although without any legislative success.⁴⁸

College and university officials interpreted these loyalty oaths as an attack on academic freedom. In 1915 the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) had established intellectual autonomy and freedom of thought from coercion as a central aspect of academic freedom.⁴⁹ Consequently, the AAUP responded to the infringement of faculty rights through state-level loyalty oaths by stating, "Certain people today are not only encouraging, but apparently leading, what appears to be a deliberate and concerted onslaught on academic freedom."⁵⁰ The AAUP averred that opponents to academic freedom were in actuality violating "civil liberties guaranteed in the constitution."⁵¹ Crusaders against un-American speech were promoting pro-totalitarian views rather than championing democracy.⁵²

A number of Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley administrators voiced particular opposition to the loyalty oath legislation directed at teachers in Massachusetts. In late 1935 the AAUPs Smith College chapter demonstrated their opposition by passing a resolution against the oath and called immediately for its repeal.⁵³ In early 1936 over 100 faculty members at Wellesley went further by not only signaling their opposition to the law but also petitioning its repeal to the State Commissioner of Education.⁵⁴ These resistance efforts culminated during the 1936 election cycle, when administrators, faculty, and alumni joined organized labor to combat the election of candidates in Massachusetts in favor of the bill.⁵⁵ Their efforts were successful with 61 proponents of the legislation being defeated, including a significant number of Democrats.⁵⁶ The loyalty oath controversy in Massachusetts demonstrates

that faculty at Smith and Wellesley were aware of government threats against institutional autonomy and had reason to be wary of accepting federal funds.

The possibility of ideological control through federal funds attached to FERA and NYA funding was not a hypothetical. FERA's history at Radcliffe reveals that the Massachusetts' loyalty oath was also attached to federal work-study funding. In a letter to the president's office at Harvard University in 1934, Radcliffe President Ada Comstock (1876–1973) discussed an anti-free-speech regulation connected to FERA aid that required "the person certifying weekly to the payroll . . . to take [an] oath to defend the constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic."⁵⁷ Alarmed by this requirement, it was one of the only criticisms (and certainly the most troubling) she had with the program. Thus, administrators at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley had legitimate reason to be leery that federal assistance would lead to federal control.

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND BUREAUCRATIC COSTS

Since their founding, Radcliffe, Wellesley, and Smith had historically addressed and resolved their own financial problems—as had many of the Seven Sisters institutions. Their marginalized and often threatened status within higher education caused them to solve their financial difficulties through rigorous fundraising efforts from wealthy philanthropists and alumni. This independent fervor generated a culture of self-sufficiency and financial independence, particularly at Smith and Wellesley. As the economic crisis of the Great Depression enveloped the nation, these institutions displayed a remarkable aptitude for solving their own financial problems. This economic perseverance peaked with the rejection of FERA and NYA college aid in the 1930s by both Smith and Wellesley.

These elite colleges' financial security undoubtedly contributed to their ability to reject federal funding. In contrast, less stable women's colleges lacking sufficient financial support often had little choice but to accept federal aid—specifically those found in the South as well as Catholic institutions. The large endowments, wealthy alumni, and prestigious nature of these institutions provided a much healthier level of monetary support.⁵⁸ By 1934 Radcliffe (\$4,474,151), Smith (\$6,154,920), and Wellesley (\$8,236,146) had some of the largest endowments in the United States—rivaled only by their male counterparts in the Northeast.⁵⁹ They were financially stable and not in the dire financial position of countless institutions across the country.

Despite these institutions' relative economic health, it is shortsighted to attribute their hesitant response towards federal aid during the New

Deal entirely to their financial stability. To be fair, these institutions still encountered significant financial difficulties during the Great Depression. During the 1932 school year, Smith College experienced a 20% decline in attendance in its freshmen class alone.⁶⁰ Both Smith and Wellesley were also unable to meet the financial needs of students on campus. Smith awarded over \$200,000 in aid to students during the 1932–1933 school year (28% of the student population was on some sort of financial assistance). In spite of this large sum, the college found it difficult to find funding for students and actively petitioned for scholarship donations.⁶¹ During the same year at Wellesley, 16% of students were provided financial aid totaling almost \$50,000.⁶² Demand was so high for aid from students that less than half (43%) who applied for funding received support from the college. If the demand and need for additional monetary support was present at both Smith and Wellesley, why did they opt to forego federal funding and finance their own initiatives? And, why did Radcliffe—which accepted NYA funds—remain vocally critical of the requirements attached to federal assistance?⁶³

Even as the Great Depression worsened, this culture of economic perseverance prevailed as Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley focused on frugality and financial independence to survive the economic uncertainty through their own means. President Neilson at Smith, for instance, provided scholarships to aid needy students not only from endowment funds but also from general operating resources.⁶⁴ In a letter addressed to the Association of American Colleges, he reiterated that Smith had “vastly increased [its] financial aid to students” during the 1933 school year and “felt no formal cooperation with Washington seemed needed.”⁶⁵ Moreover, in a letter to Mary Emma Woolley, Mount Holyoke College President, Comstock stated that Radcliffe “[had] weathered the depression very well.”⁶⁶ The college managed to increase course offerings, stabilize scholarship support, and even awarded loans from the college’s general income to help needy students.⁶⁷ Despite the economic uncertainty, these examples illustrate that prior to 1933, administrators at Radcliffe and Smith were not petitioning for a federal aid program. At these institutions, there existed a deep-rooted attitude—and aptitude—towards solving economic problems independently.

Unsurprisingly, administrators at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley vocally and openly criticized the bureaucratic costs associated with New Deal college aid. Historians argue that this aid was a decentralized program that allowed public and private colleges to make enrollment and employment decisions with minimal oversight from the federal government. However, the experiences of Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley reveal that aid often was

accompanied with burdensome and costly regulatory requirements—in addition to the political controls mentioned earlier.⁶⁸

New Deal agencies allowed college administrators to choose their own students; however, restrictions existed that limited certain candidates from funds.⁶⁹ An affidavit required by all institutions accepting federal aid mandated they ensure students met the standards of the “NYA Student Aid Bulletin No. 12,” a 24-page document.⁷⁰ The bulletin required that college leaders verify, “The student is in need of such assistance in order to enter and/or remain in school.”⁷¹ Moreover, college administrators had to screen candidates for citizenship, ensure they were between the ages of 16-24, and confirm they were “of good character and such ability they can give assurance of performing good scholastic work while receiving aid.”⁷² These requirements were so burdensome and difficult to comply with that some colleges and universities hired “assisting agencies” to “obtain the information necessary to select the neediest applicants for student aid.”⁷³

FERA and the NYA also developed employment regulations that limited students’ pay as well as the hours they could work. Guidelines limited undergraduate students to seven hours of work on non-school days and three hours on school days and further regulated how many hours students could work while the institution was on break.⁷⁴ FERA and the NYA also regulated employment by structuring the hourly wage rates for students.⁷⁵ Colleges were expected to pay their students based on the typical wage at the institution or in the local marketplace for the type of work being completed. In almost every aspect of the employment process, New Deal college aid programs enforced significant restrictions that restrained the autonomy of the participating colleges and universities.

Institutions were required to submit paperwork to guarantee guidelines were being met. Along with affidavits, colleges and universities were also required to have students fill out individual applications.⁷⁶ The NYA developed a central bureaucratic structure that partnered with state education officials to ensure that participating institutions were adhering to regulations and to dictate funding and allot quotas to participating institutions. The agency had a central office located in Washington, D.C., along with individual offices in each state.⁷⁷

While participating institutions interacted with state offices, the NYA transferred the responsibility of determining participation—based on an institutions tax-exempt status and collegiate level curriculum—in the college aid program to state education officials. In a letter to the NYA’s Deputy Executive Director, Anne Treadwell, state director of the California NYA,



Ada Comstock, President, Radcliffe College 1923–43

Ada Louise Comstock (1876–1973) dedicated her life to women's education and advocacy. A graduate of Smith College, she went on to serve as the first Dean of Women at the University of Minnesota in 1907 and the first dean of the college at Smith in 1912. In 1917, when the college presidency became vacant, Smith's Board of Trustees placed Dean Comstock in charge of operations but refused her the title of acting president because of her sex. Nor did they consider her as a candidate for the permanent position. Instead, Comstock left Smith to become the first woman president at Radcliffe in 1923. Unlike Radcliffe and Wellesley, Smith did not have its first female president until the appointment of Jill Ker Conway in 1975. During the time period of this study, William A. Neilson served as president at Smith College from 1917 to 1939. Although Comstock never forgot the trustees' "insult," she formed a close partnership with Neilson. A role model for young women, Comstock encouraged her students to consider alternative careers to the traditional path of marriage and motherhood, inviting them to play a larger role in society.

discussed the role of the State Department of Education in verifying eligibility for institutions:

With reference to your letter of August 22nd which stated that you would accept the certified application affidavit of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, and supplementing our letter of October 19th which stated that we had been advised by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction that this college was not exempt from taxation and therefore not eligible to participate in the program, we wish to advise you that the college is endeavoring to prove its tax-exempt status and the matter has come up again for consideration by the State Department of Education.⁷⁸

Although the NYA was not directly involved in determining the status of institutions joining in the program, the agency partnered with individual state educational bureaucracies to regulate and determine participation in the college aid program. In this sense, FERA and the NYA transferred some oversight responsibility to state governments—a decentralized approach. However, their policies still subjected institutions to new regulations and certainly did not provide a high level of autonomy to colleges and universities enrolled in the college aid program.

Enforcing these regulations and ensuring institutions were meeting their obligations proved difficult for NYA officials. After complaints from both administrators and federal officials about the “misuse” of funds on students without significant financial need, the NYA created a “yardstick” in 1940 to assist institutions in determining funding amounts for individual students.⁷⁹ The report provided colleges and universities with a framework to determine student need based on family income in relation to the number of members in a household.⁸⁰ For example, a student with a family of three earning \$1,800 a year was eligible for funding, while a family of two with the same income was not (the yardstick went up to eleven-member households). NYA officials highlighted that any applications received that did not meet the stated parameters would be rejected.⁸¹

The culture of economic independence at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley made them less likely to overlook the regulatory requirements—and their costs—that accompanied FERA and NYA federal aid. As a result, these institutions were vocally critical of the programs’ costly requirements. For example, although Smith College was initially intrigued by the promise of federal college aid, President Neilson became discouraged by the burdensome and incoherent enrollment regulations found in FERA aid. In a letter to

George Scott, a FERA administrator in Boston, Neilson discussed the difficulties in balancing sophomore, junior, and senior applications with a freshman contender:

The reason for our delay in making application for participation in the Federal Student Aid Program is that until next Monday we cannot tell what number of new students we are likely to have who could take part in this program. We have been working on students who were here last year, but as each one of these has to be balanced by a new student, we cannot make application at this date.⁸²

Attempting to meet this enrollment demand produced an array of problems that led to the university postponing—and eventually declining—federal college aid. Moreover, the pressure to allot 50% of aid to the freshmen class did not just confuse and deter Smith College; complaints from institutions across the country resulted in the regulation eventually being retracted.⁸³

At Radcliffe, administrators noticed another detrimental drawback: the burden of federal oversight and changing regulations. Distinct from Smith and Wellesley, Radcliffe accepted federal aid through both FERA and the NYA. A FERA report illustrated the success of the program at the college, highlighting that from November to May of 1935 the college managed to administer \$8,329.21 to students.⁸⁴ Despite the program's accomplishment, President Ada Comstock realized there were serious "penalties" to the aid.⁸⁵ She was concerned about the "state of perpetual flux" of federal regulations and the detrimental outcomes on the institution. President Comstock understood that Radcliffe's relationship to the federal government could quickly change based on regulation and comprehended the unstable nature of government policy.

Regulations associated with New Deal college aid agencies did not solely inhibit implementation on campus; administrators at both Smith and Wellesley were also concerned about the bureaucratic demands imposed by the acceptance of both FERA and NYA aid. No other issue caused more turmoil or complaints from university officials. College aid represented unfunded mandates in regards to their operating costs. Colleges and universities across the country had to provide the means to administer aid and to ensure they were meeting regulations required by the federal government.

Wellesley President Pendleton particularly condemned the "red tape" and bureaucratic structure associated with acceptance of federal aid. Tasked with the "keeping of records" and "making of reports," she felt "the expense



**Ellen Fitz Pendleton,
President, Wellesley
College, 1911–36**

Left: Ellen Fitz Pendleton (1864–1936) was a pioneering female educator. Her long involvement with Wellesley began with her B.A. in 1886. In 1888 she was hired to teach in the Math Department. In 1891 she earned her M.A. from the college. In 1911 Pendleton became the college's first alumna president, a term that lasted 25 years until her death.

**Mildred H. McAfee,
President, Wellesley
1936–42 & 1945–48**

Right: Mildred H. McAfee (1900–94) attended Vassar and the University of Chicago. She served as dean of women at two colleges before becoming president at Wellesley in 1936. In 1942 she took a leave to serve as the first director of the women's WAVES Navy program where she advocated for women to receive equal pay and benefits as men. She briefly returned to Wellesley after the war then began a new career with the National Council of Churches.



of the administration was out of all proportion to the amount received.”⁸⁶ Without financial assistance to help administer the program, federal aid was not financially advantageous at Wellesley. The problems associated with dispensing aid caused President Pendleton even to criticize the costs connected with the bureaucracy in Washington: “If we felt that at this end, the expenses of administration in Washington must have been of staggering proportions.”⁸⁷ The critique of bureaucratic demand produced from FERA and the NYA also resonated at Smith College. In a letter to the Oberlin College president, Neilson highlighted that the college “found the bookkeeping burdensome and the amount earned by students pitifully small.”⁸⁸ These critiques reveal that there existed a culture of economic independence at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley that was unwilling to accept the burdensome regulatory costs associated with federal funding.

The economic independence found at these Massachusetts women’s institutions peaked with their development of a privately financed work-study and college loan program that mirrored the programs found in these New Deal initiatives. At no other institution was this more apparent than at Smith College, where President Neilson became an unlikely opponent to federal college aid. Neilson was an adamant supporter of President Roosevelt and the New Deal, and he publicly endorsed the president during his reelection campaign in 1940.⁸⁹ Although he had initially accepted college aid, the burdensome process and limited results for students caused him eventually to reject it. In a letter to President Ernest Wilkins of Oberlin College, President Neilson revealed that he had elected to continue aid privately to students through a work-study program similar to FERA:

This year we discontinued [FERA grants] and instead instituted a second grade scholarship which made the student liable for a certain amount of work of much the same kind as she did under the FERA but, of course, not subject to the restrictions imposed by Washington.⁹⁰

These “second grade scholarship[s]” mirrored the work-study program and revealed a striking reality: for private colleges, providing their own college aid program through a work-study environment actually provided more financial support for students.⁹¹ Smith College’s work-study program exposed that absent of federal oversight and regulation, self-governing programs often better met their institutional needs.

Wellesley College also rejected government aid after realizing a separate, private program provided more benefits for the students and the institution.

Another unlikely opponent of federal aid, President Ellen Pendleton had publicly praised aspects of the New Deal, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).⁹² However, she was extremely concerned with the practicality of the government program for Wellesley students enrolled in the college's challenging curriculum:

We did not feel that the government aid extended to students through FERA was a success. The maximum amount any of our students could earn was \$10 a month, and at thirty cents an hour this would require fifty hours of work which is more than they could give . . . Somewhat to take the place of that movement we granted a number of cooperative scholarships to the group that had received government aid, granting each student \$20 in exchange for a small amount of work in laboratories or offices.⁹³

Similar to the response of the administration at Smith College, President Pendleton did not believe that the federal aid program represented the most advantageous option for Wellesley students. Low wages and the excessive hours of work made a privately funded work-study program to aid needy students a more viable option.

Certainly, the large endowments and financial security at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley allowed these institutions to take a more critical stance toward federal funding than other struggling institutions. However, their critical response towards federal assistance was also a result of the culture of self-sufficiency fostered in part by their historically marginalized status within higher education. This culture culminated in the development of private work-study programs that mirrored the federal programs at Smith and Wellesley. Unwilling to accept the bureaucratic costs and requirements that accompanied federal funding, these institutions continued their long tradition of financial self-determination. Scholars must acknowledge that the critical response by a number of the women's colleges in Massachusetts towards federal funding was not simply a result of their elite status or financial acumen; their culture of economic independence resulting from their marginalized status in higher education contributed significantly as well.

CONCLUSION

By the early years of the Second World War, the NYA had begun to retool its purpose to meet the demands of wartime.⁹⁴ Focusing on providing

training in defense work, Director Aubrey Williams hoped the agency could prove its necessity for the war effort.⁹⁵ Despite Williams' attempt to repurpose the NYA, by 1943 Congress had decided the agency was nonessential to the war effort and not a cost-effective use of federal funds.⁹⁶ The NYA was officially closed by May of that year, and one of the most enduring New Deal programs found itself a sacrifice of the war in Europe and the Pacific.

NYA's closure signaled the end of the college work program. Never again would federal college aid in American higher education be primarily administered through an employment program.⁹⁷ Although Congress disbanded the agency, college aid continued through an entitlement program that came to be known as the GI Bill.

Enacted in 1944, the GI Bill had bipartisan support from both liberals and conservatives in Congress.⁹⁸ Proposed to limit the effects of an anticipated depression from an influx of returning servicemen, Congress developed the legislation as an attempt to remove individuals from the workforce—similar to the goals of FERA and the NYA.⁹⁹ Veterans returning from war were provided tuition assistance—up to \$500 dollars a year—as well as a housing stipend to help manage living expenses.¹⁰⁰ Policymakers expected enrollment in the college aid portion of the GI Bill to be modest—it contained six other parts; however, veteran enrollment skyrocketed from 88,000 in 1945 to 1,013,000 in 1946.¹⁰¹ The success of the GI college aid program transformed American higher education both physically and culturally. The legislation was not only successful at furthering higher education towards a more egalitarian status but also transforming the structure and shape of the sector. Changing the framework of American life in the twentieth century, no other piece of legislation aimed at college education had a more significant influence on the socioeconomic status of Americans than the GI Bill.

Scholars investigating early forms of college aid during the New Deal have placed importance on these agencies' influence and relation to the GI Bill.¹⁰² They have argued that federal aid found in the New Deal helped alleviate concerns over government intervention into higher education.¹⁰³ Kevin Bower argues that FERA and the NYA's significance resided in their ability to convince higher education administrators that the federal government could be an ally for later legislation—primarily the GI Bill.¹⁰⁴ The high level of support for both FERA and the NYA within the higher education community certainly affirms the narrative that New Deal college aid was positively received and helped ease the sector's anxiety for later legislation.

The public support and success of New Deal college aid at some institutions does not invalidate the concerns and criticisms of others. The history of New Deal college aid at Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley

in Massachusetts challenges the contemporary, nostalgic assessment of early federal aid as an unproblematic, decentralized program that aided in expanding higher education to millions of Americans. Their records reveal that federal aid brought increased regulation and a bureaucratic structure that made it expensive and cost adverse to administer. Federal legislation and administrative records at these institutions illustrate the uncertain nature of federal policy and the justified fear of government control of higher education in the 1930s and 1940s, which made the acceptance of federal aid a serious threat to institutional autonomy. Joining recent scholarship that questions the idealized interpretation of early federal college aid, Radcliffe, Smith, and Wellesley's reactions to New Deal college aid demonstrate that early federal assistance was not received as a beacon of support by all.¹⁰⁵

Historians need to acknowledge that not all colleges and universities that supported and opposed federal aid did so for the same reasons. More research needs to explore the tensions that developed from the expansion of higher education in the twentieth century with specific institutional types. Examining these structures produces a more accurate history that illuminates the complex factors not only pertaining to the history of federal expansion in higher education but also the individual institutions themselves. This article only explores how the unique gendered structure of a select group of elite women's colleges in Massachusetts influenced their reaction to federal aid in the 1930s. More research needs to be undertaken to examine the role institutional structures, such as religious and minority-based missions, financial structures, and interest group dynamics, played in fostering responses to federal expansion in the twentieth century at various colleges and universities across the United States.

HJM

Notes

1. The Seven Sisters Colleges were a group of similar elite women's institutions located in the Northeast, comprised of Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley.
2. Walter Greenleaf, "Federal Aid to College Students," *The Journal of Higher Education* Vol. 6 (1935), 94-95.
3. Ibid.
4. Christopher P. Loss, *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 377; Kevin P. Bower, "'A Favored Child of the State': Federal Student Aid at Ohio Colleges and Universities, 1934-1943," *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 44 (2004): 370; Rebecca S. Lowen,

Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation at Stanford (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997) 31-32; Rupert Wilkinson, *Aiding Students, Buying Students: Financial Aid in America* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), 112.

5. Bower, 364-387.

6. Loss, 75.

7. Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

8. Amy T. McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 186.

9. Suzanne Mettler's *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) argues that the legislative intent of the GI Bill along with the patriarchal views of postwar America caused decreased participation in higher education by women—which both economically and educationally marginalized women for decades to follow. Glenn Altschuler and Stuart Blumin highlight that despite the low number of women that gained access to higher education through the GI Bill, some women's colleges allowed returning, male veterans to take courses due to the lack of space at coeducational and all-male institutions.

10. This article joins more recent analyses that examine the tension that developed between educational aims and government priorities within federal initiatives directed at higher education, specifically Brent D. Maher's, "Divided by Loyalty: The Debate Regarding Loyalty Provisions in the National Defense Education Act of 1958," *History of Education Quarterly* 56 (2016), 301-330.

11. Richard Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 61.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. Circular, NYA Circular No. 10, box 24, The Papers of Harry Hopkins, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library, 2 (hereafter abbreviated as Hopkins Papers, FDR Library).

15. Letter, Aubrey Williams to All State Youth Directors, Aug. 15, 1935, box 31, folder 32, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, Smith College Archives, Smith College (hereafter abbreviated as SCA).

16. Bulletin, NYA Bulletin No. 12, box 24, Hopkins Papers, FDR Library, 9 & 12.

17. *Ibid.*, 3.

18. *Ibid.*, 2.

19. *Ibid.*, 14.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Solomon, 148; Bower, 365.

23. Bower, 365.

24. Ellen Fitz Pendleton, "Changes and Experiments in Colleges for Women," *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, Vol. 24, no. 3 (1931), 113.
25. See Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 56. She discusses early critiques by religious figures about higher education's inability to develop women's femininity—an outcome that could only be formed through domestic training; Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Vintage books, 1962), 313-315; Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 84.
26. Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 56 and 280-281; Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 313-315; Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 84; See also Rosiland Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 21. Rosenberg highlights arguments against women's education in relation to its effect on their health.
27. Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 281-282. See Horowitz's notes discussing debates on the senate floor.
28. *Ibid.*, 282. See Horowitz's notes discussing debates about the Maternity Bill on the senate floor.
29. Newsletter, *The Advisor*, June 12, 1935, box 21, folder 15, Coll. RG 02, Office of President Records (J. Oliver Buswell), Wheaton College Archives, Wheaton College.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Federal Relations to Education: Report of the National Advisory Committee on Education* (Washington: Office of the Committee, 1931), 103.
32. *Ibid.*, 13.
33. "Editorials: The Federal Government and Education," *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, 26, no. 1 (1932), 104.
34. *Ibid.*, 105
35. *Federal Relations to Education*, 100.
36. "Editorials: The Federal Government and Education," 105.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. "The Nazi Anti-Jewish Campaign Strikes University Women," *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, Vol. 78, no. 4 (1934), 33.
40. *Ibid.*, 34.
41. See also Bettina Ripley, "Our Friends in Germany: The Tragic Dilemma of University Women in the Third Reich," *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, Vol. 27, no. 2 (1934), 66-69; Esther Caukin Brunauer, "The German Frauenfront: "Kinder, Kuche, Kirche" and the Women's Organizations," *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, Vol. 27, no. 3 (1934), 131.
42. Publicity record, McAfee Inauguration, box 13, Coll. 1SD, Records of the Publicity Office, 1912-1969, Wellesley College Archives, Wellesley College, 5 (hereafter abbreviated as WCA).

43. M. J. Heale, "Citizens versus Outsiders: Anti-Communism at State and Local Levels, 1921-1946," in *Little 'Red Scares': Anti-Communism and Political Repression in the United States, 1921-1946*, ed. Robert J. Goldstein (New York: Routledge, 2016), 60-62.
44. *Ibid.*, 59.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Mackenzie Catherine, "Teachers Oath Debated," *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 1935, 15.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. John Thelin argues in *A History of Higher Education*, p. 256, that the AAUP and other professional organizations had a mixed record in protecting academic freedom against educational boards as well as authoritarian presidents; The American Association of University Professors "1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure," (1915).
50. Harold L. Ickes, "The Need for Academic Freedom," *Bulletin of The American Association of University Professors* Vol. XXI no. 7, Nov. 1935, 562.
51. *Ibid.*, 563.
52. *Ibid.*, 564.
53. "Local and Chapter Notes," *Bulletin of The American Association of University Professors* Vol. XXII no. 1, Jan. 1936, 150.
54. "Local and Chapter Notes," *Bulletin of The American Association of University Professors* Vol. XXII no. 2, Feb. 1936, 150-151.
55. "Opposing the Teachers' Oath Bill in Massachusetts," *Bulletin of The American Association of University Professors* Vol. XXIII no. 1, Jan. 1937, 35.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Letter to Harper Woodward, Secretary to the President of Harvard University, from Ada Comstock, Nov. 10, 1934, box 19, folder 166, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, Radcliffe College Archives, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America (hereafter abbreviated as RCA).
58. McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 32; Thomas Landy, "The Colleges in Context," in *Catholic Women's Colleges in America*, ed. Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 89-92.
59. Fundraising pamphlet, fundraising promotional material for Seven Colleges, June 15, 1934, box 21, folder 186, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA, 1.
60. Scholarship Report, Report on scholarship effort at Smith College, box 54, folder 5, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, SCA.
61. Fundraising pamphlet, fundraising promotional material for Seven Colleges, June 15, 1934, box 21, folder 186, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA, 1-2.

62. Letter, from Ellen Pendleton, President of Wellesley College, Oct. 19, 1933 box 17, folder 146, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA.
63. Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, 19, 102, 127, 228, 236.
64. Letter, President Neilson to Mrs. Robert Redpath, Feb. 5, 1935, box 54, folder 5, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, SCA.
65. Correspondence, Letter to Dr. Robert Kelly of the AAU from President Neilson, September, box 25, 1933, box 28, folder 33, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, SCA.
66. Seven Colleges Correspondence, Letter to Mary Woolley from Ada Comstock; Fundraising pamphlet, November 6, 1934, box 21, folder 186, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Bower, 368; Loss, 75.
69. Circular, NYA Circular No. 10, box 24, Hopkins Papers, FDR Library, 4.
70. Affidavit, NYA institution affidavit, box 24, Hopkins Papers, FDR Library, 2
71. Bulletin, NYA Bulletin No. 12, box 24, Hopkins Papers, FDR Library, 10.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*, 12.
76. *Ibid.*, 11.
77. Report, "Organization Procedure Results," 1935-1936, box 5, RG 119 Records of the National Youth Administration, Records of the Deputy Executive Director and the Deputy Administrator, NARA.
78. Letter to Orren H. Hall from Anne Treadwell. Nov. 3, 1936, box 3, RG 119 Records of the National Youth Administration, Records of the Deputy Executive Director and the Deputy Administrator, NARA.
79. Report, Manual of Procedure for Colleges. 1940-1941, box 5, RG 119 Records of the National Youth Administration, Records of the Educational Relations Section, NARA.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*
82. Letter to George Scott from President Neilson, Sept. 22, 1934, box 31, folder 32, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, SCA.
83. Letter to Harper Woodward, Secretary to the President of Harvard University, from Ada Comstock, Nov. 10, 1934, box 19, folder 166, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA.
84. Report, FERA Student Aid Program, 1935, box 18, folder 162, Call No. RG II, Series 2, Records of the President of Radcliffe College: Ada Louise Comstock, RCA, 1.
85. *Ibid.*

86. Publicity record, status of the university, box 14, folder 2, Coll. 1SD, Records of the Publicity Office, 1912-1969, WCA, 6.
87. Ibid.
88. Letter, President Neilson to Ernest H. Wilkins, President of Oberlin College, box 35, folder 24, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, SCA.
89. "Dr. Neilson Backs Third-Term Drive," *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1940, 16.
90. Letter, President Neilson to Ernest H. Wilkins, President of Oberlin College, box 35, folder 24, Coll. RG 32, Office of President William Allan Neilson Files, SCA.
91. Ibid.
92. Publicity record, status of the university, box 14, folder 2, Coll. 1SD, Records of the Publicity Office, 1912-1969, WCA, 6.
93. Publicity record, status of the university, box 14, folder 2, Coll. 1SD, Records of the Publicity Office, 1912-1969, WCA, 6.
94. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth*, 176.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., 8.
97. Ibid., 9.
98. Altschuler and Blumin, *The G.I. Bill*, 3.
99. Theodore Mosch, *The G.I. Bill: A Breakthrough in Educational and Social Policy in the United States* (Hicksville: Exposition Press, 1975), 2.
100. Michael Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington: Brassey's, 1996), 18.
101. Ibid.
102. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth*, 9; Bower, 386-387.
103. Bower, 386-387; Loss, 77.
104. Ibid.
105. Maher, 301-330.

Year	Female	Male
1940	3.8%	5.5%
1950	5.2	7.3
1960	5.8	9.7
1970	8.2	14.1
1980	13.6	20.9
1990	18.4	24.4
2000	23.6	27.8
2010	29.6	30.3
2019	36.6	35.4

In 1930 only 3.9% of the population over age 25 in the United States had earned a B.A. degree or higher (no gender breakdown was provided in the 1930 census). In 1940 3.8% of adult women had earned a B.A. degree or higher as had 5.5% of men. A college degree of any kind was only available to the upper class or to a few, very fortunate members of the middle and working classes. In the post-WWII period, the G.I. bill helped make it possible for many more men to receive college and advanced vocational training, yet even as late as 1980 only 20.9% of the male population had a B.A. degree or higher. It wasn't until the twenty-first century that women caught up with men. Source: U.S. Census.