

The Admissions “Crisis” at Princeton University 1963-1971

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EdD

Declaration

I, Monica Rude, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature:

This thesis' word length is 45,672.

Abstract

This thesis examines the impacts of changes in American undergraduate admissions practices through a study of the Admission “Crisis” at Princeton University from 1963 to 1971. By examining this historically important case, I highlight the processes the university went through to admit both undergraduate women and minority students, along with some of the backlash relating to those changes.

During this period, Princeton Admissions personnel worked to reform admissions practices both at the university and nationally. John Osander, the Director of Admissions at Princeton, wanted to help preserve the university’s elite status and genuinely believed in the benefits of diversity. He understood the institutional advantages that Princeton would gain from a more diverse student body and helped other university administrators understand that this change would strengthen Princeton. However, Osander struggled with change management and did not fully convince alumni that new admissions practices and procedures were important. As a result, a group of anti-change alumni banded together to try and discredit Osander’s work.

In the end, the Admission Office began admitting both women and minority students in larger numbers. However, Osander’s vision for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions was not fully realized when he resigned from his job at Princeton in July of 1971. As he stepped down from his position tensions over the changes he had helped to create seemed to fade. While Osander left a career in admissions, the legacy of his work remained. The Cooperative Project limped along until 1975 when it reemerged as the Common Application. The enduring legacies of these events are a more diverse undergraduate population at Princeton and the establishment of the precursor to the modern Common Application.

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Impact Statement

This is a historical study that highlights the importance of the experience of the last half-century during which American higher education was forced to come to grips with a new socio-cultural landscape. Due to a number of factors, the exclusive make-up of elite universities was changing. The success of the Civil Rights and Women's movements, paired with the desire to have a more diverse student body, meant that new processes were needed in admissions. Admissions professionals standardized operations to make admissions less complex. At Princeton, this change generated a backlash that became known as the Admissions Crisis. However, change in professional practice also led to the adoption of the Common Application in 1975. Today, the Common Application is the gate through which most Americans flow to reach higher education—it is the tool universities use to rebuild themselves every year.

The admissions crisis at Princeton showcased enduring issues of identity that came to the surface in the late 1960's and became inescapable flash points. Strategies the wealthy used to maintain their wealth and power during the crisis era are explored alongside widening participation measures relating to race, class, and gender.

Ultimately, this is a story about the impact of gatekeeping and gatekeepers at one of the most storied institutions in the United States, Princeton University. It is intended to reveal some of the previously unexplored “how’s” and “why’s” behind the modern admissions process. Admissions professionals will be able to use this thesis

to inform the context in which they work as it provides insight into historical and contemporary practice. It is my intention to present at conferences like The National Conference of the National Association for College Admission Counseling so that more people can learn about this history. Academics, in particular historians of higher education, race, and gender, can also use it to further inform their understanding of the transition from elite to mass higher education. And finally, I have used this research as a tool for examining my own professional practice. I can now better understand the past while working to shape the future.

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Princeton University People

William Bowen, Provost 1967-1972

Timothy Callard, Director of Admission 1971-1978

Alden Dunham, Director of Admission, 1962-1966

Robert Goheen, President 1957-1972

John Osander, Director of Admission, 1967-1971

Edward "Ted" Weidlein, Office of Admission Director of Communications

Abbreviations

Common App	The Common Application
NASSP	National Association of Secondary School Principals
NACAC	National Association for College Admission Counseling

Glossary

The Common Application: The shared undergraduate application used by thousands of colleges in the USA.

College: In the context of the American vernacular, college traditionally references any institution of higher learning that educate undergraduates, no matter if it self-styles as a “College” or a “University.” Oftentimes, the terms college and university are used interchangeably.

The Ivy League: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale. These institutions make up the American collegiate athletic conference known as the Ivy League. All are private, research universities in the North Eastern United States.

Freshmen: First year students enrolled in university, this term is also used for students in their first year of high school (secondary school).

Public school: Publicly funded educational institutions in the United States (similar to “State Schools” in the United Kingdom). These institutions traditionally receive federal, state, and local monies to finance the cost of pupils’ education.

Elite: For the purpose of this study, elite refers to someone who is a member of one or more of the following distinct groups: economic, educational, and occupational elites. (Rivera) They are people who have “vastly disproportionate control” over symbolic and material advantage (Khan).

High performing and high achieving: Hoxby and Avery’s (2013) modern definition of “high achieving” students is helpful in understanding the type of students that attend Princeton and similar institutions in the present day. As they explain, “high-achieving” refers to a student who scores at or above the 90th percentile on the ACT or SAT and who has a high school grade point average of A- or higher. This is approximately 4 percent of American high school students.

Historically underrepresented or minority student: In the context of the United States, historically underrepresented or minority groups include those with Hispanic, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander backgrounds.

Chapter 1: Background, Research Questions, and Rationale

This thesis investigates the Admissions “Crisis” at Princeton University and examines the admissions changes that took place at the university between 1963 and 1971. One of the seven colleges in the Ivy League, Princeton University was founded in 1746 and is one of nine colleges in the United States to have been chartered prior to the American Revolution. A private, research university located in Princeton, New Jersey it is the fourth oldest institution of higher education in the country. As one of the most prominent universities in America, Princeton is an elite institution that others in academia respect and often look to copy.

Princeton has both academic and social prestige, it is an institution with a reputation that precedes it. Famous alumni include modern notables like Jeff Bezos and Michelle Obama, but also past Presidents of the United States: James Madison, Woodrow Wilson, and John F. Kennedy (who attended but did not graduate).¹ The nature of Princeton is that it is elite. It is also an institution that has changed and evolved over time to retain its elite status within American higher education.

Princeton in the 1960’s was an institution considering excellence and its ability to “remain in the front rank of American educational institutions.” In the 1968 Patterson Report, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, the committee directly addressed how Princeton had established its elite status (by doing things like enlarging the undergraduate body after World War II and expanding the Graduate

¹“Princetoniana: Alumni,” Princeton University, accessed, January 12, 2021, <https://princetoniana.princeton.edu/people/alumni>.

School and the role of research). In the same report, the committee maintained that the university should continue to strive for excellence and to be a place that had a “competitive position” for students, faculty, and financial support.²



Fig. 1. *Airplane View of Princeton University, Princeton, NJ*; Historical Postcard Collection, AC045, PUA.

But the Princeton of 1963 to 1971 (see Fig. 1) was different from the university today. Without question, the university discussed in this thesis is an institution of its own time and it should be examined with that in mind. While it is not my intention to excuse the admissions norms at Princeton that resulted in the exclusion of entire groups of people, it would be incorrect to say that Princeton was unique in its handling of race, class, and gender when admitting students in the 1960's. While it may have been harder for students to access than some institutions,

²Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, PUA, 1.

Princeton was not unique in its exclusionary admissions practices.³ Jerome Karabel has written extensively on admissions history and summarizes the how and why behind modern admissions decisions saying that they are governed by the “iron law of admissions’: a university will retain a particular admissions policy only so long as it produces outcomes that correspond to perceived institutional interests.”⁴ This rule held true during the period of the Admissions Crisis, and as will be discussed, was a contributing factor to the decision to admit new types of students as undergraduates.

Although universities can feel like worlds unto themselves, Princeton’s Crisis era was a time in which focus turned outward towards the wider world before it returned inward to the university. During the “Long Sixties” the United States experienced a wave of social movements and activism. Princeton was not removed from these changes to the social structure and in a short period of time began admitting both women and an increasing number of minority students.⁵ The desire to

³Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005).

⁴Karabel, *The Chosen*, 2.

⁵The term minority is being used to denote both ethnic minority groups and racial minority groups as both were used somewhat interchangeably during the period of this study. In particular, Joseph F. Healey’s work helps explain why this is a useful description. He notes that “the most important defining characteristic of a minority group is *inequality*—that is, some pattern of disability and disadvantage.” As he elaborates, “The pattern of disadvantage is the result of the actions of another group, often in the distant past, that benefits from and tries to sustain the unequal arrangement.” According to Healey, racial and ethnic minorities have distinguishing traits that set them apart from the dominant group. This identification helps “maintain the patterns of disadvantage.” *Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class: The Sociology of Group Conflict and Change*, (London: Sage, 2012), 16. In the case of Princeton, minority groups in the undergraduate population during the Crisis era included women, Black students, and what the Admissions Office referred to as “NBM” students or non-Black minority students, a catch-all category which they used to denote Puerto Rican Americans, Mexican American, Native American Indians, Asian Americans, and presumably any other minority group. See: Timothy Callard, *The Admission of Minority Students: 1958-1972*, Admission Office Records, PUA.

foster equity was important to administrators, but so was preserving institutional interests. In this case the iron law of admissions was in full force, and the 1960's movements' goals dovetailed with what administrators thought was in Princeton's best interest in order to maintain its status as an elite university.

While this history is about an era of widening participation at Princeton, it is also more broadly about how the university grappled with the movement from elite to mass higher education. Growth and change did not come easily at Princeton. Shifts in power and the identity of who could be a Princetonian caused friction. As Princeton navigated the shift from elite to mass higher education, increased heterogeneity in the student and staff populations meant that a broadly held set of shared assumptions could no longer be assumed.

A lack of alignment in worldview was clear as some alumni struggled to understand what the Admission Office was doing and why during the Admissions Crisis. Uncertainty about Princeton's evolving identity caused friction between Alumni Schools Committee men and the Admission Office. While both were largely from elite backgrounds, how they viewed the move towards mass higher education was different. The tension between these groups' viewpoints will be explored in more detail in Chapter Two. At its core, the Admissions Crisis was fueled by conflicting ideas about the Princeton identity and how students should be vetted for entry into the university.

The shift towards mass higher education in the United States was a monumental change. However, it was dealt with differently from institution to

institution. Throughout this thesis I have turned to Arthur Levine's *Why Innovation Fails: The Institutionalization and Termination of Innovation in Higher Education* to try and other similar texts to better understand the "why?" and "how?" behind smooth institutional changes. Prior to the Admissions Crisis, the Princeton Admission Office was innovating the admissions process. It is clear from the reaction of the alumni that not all in the Princeton community were happy about new and different students being admitted. But it seems that the Admission Office and other university officials were keenly aware of a phenomenon that Levine would later describe: neglecting to respond to the "environmental change" of the 1960's would have resulted in extinction as more and more students wanted to attend universities that reflected the diversity of American society.⁶

Princeton's continued success in recruiting was directly tied to the university's ability to bring a more diverse student population to campus. Without different types of people on campus, especially Black students and women, many of the top white male candidates would choose to matriculate elsewhere. Wanting to retain the university's identity as one of the best in the country, administrators accepted and supported innovation for reasons that were not purely altruistic. They knew that Princeton had to react in order to keep attracting their current population and stay selective in their admissions process. Interestingly, they had to do this by changing who Princetonians were—at least to some degree. As later chapters in this thesis will

⁶Arthur Levine, *Why Innovation Fails: The Institutionalization and Termination of Innovation in Higher Education* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1980),12.

show, this change in practice was not without fallout. Some implications of the Admissions Crisis were localized, but others reverberated beyond Princeton.

To summarize, this study will focus on the brief period of opening at Princeton from 1963 to 1971 when admissions policies and procedures were changed to foster a more competitive and diverse undergraduate student population. Much of this thesis relies on primary source documents from the Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University, a collection will be discussed again in more depth later in this chapter. Beyond this archive, interviews with key participants in this history, specifically John Osander, former Director of Admission at Princeton during the Crisis era, added a new dimension to the story.

This history is important because it chronicles a time of great change when admissions was being reimaged. While concrete changes did happen during this time, women and more minorities were admitted for the first time, some of the new admissions procedures championed by admissions officers stalled and floundered. At the same time, the groundwork was laid for the later creation of the Common Application, the ubiquitous application by which most students now apply to undergraduate programs in the United States. As an early career professional, I wanted to better understand the history of admissions and the current application system, but I could not find a history that focused on the origins of the Common Application. This is what prompted the research that is now chronicled in this thesis.

Rationale

The admissions process at highly selective universities in the United States is important because it helps us better understand aspects of American society. Universities like Princeton are places where class reproduction takes place and narratives of merit are constructed. Students (and the people watching them) at schools like Princeton feed off of the idea of the American meritocracy: the notion that anyone can succeed if they work hard enough, no matter where they start.⁷ In truth, economists like Alan Krueger have shown that there is as similar a level of correlation between parents' and childrens' future incomes as with height. Two tall parents stack the deck in someone's favour and the likelihood is that they will end up in the back row of class pictures. The same is true with wealth. This correlation between intergenerational wealth is notable in college admissions as high school grades and SAT scores are also shown to be correlated with socioeconomic status.⁸

Elites, and the elites at Princeton, matter because they produce more elites. But how should "elites" be defined for the purpose of this study? Because of America's lack of a distinct caste system or hereditary titles, a three-fold answer best fits the complexity of the question. I have leaned heavily on Lauren Rivera's work on this topic as her explanation deftly untangles a complex subject. In her work, Rivera talks about three distinct groups: economic, educational, and occupational elites. While all three are unique groups, there is a lot of overlap between them since

⁷See works like Shamus Rahman Khan, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) or Natasha K. Warikoo, *The Diversity Bargain: And Other Dilemmas of Race, Admissions, and Meritocracy at Elite Universities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

⁸Paul R. Sackett, Nathan R. Kuncel, Adam S. Beatty, Jana L. Rigdon, Winny Shen, and Thomas B. Kiger. "The Role of Socioeconomic Status in SAT-Grade Relationships and in College Admissions Decisions," *Psychological Science* 23, no. 9 (September 2012): 1000–1007.

education, occupation, and income are highly correlated.⁹ For the purpose of this study, any reference to elites highlights an individual's inclusion in any of the elite categories mentioned.

As the archival materials show, some Alumni Schools Committee men felt that their relationship to Princeton alone should be enough of a qualification to entrust them to make admissions recommendations. They believed that they were well positioned to evaluate candidates for admission, despite not working as professional admissions officers. Realizing that not all applicants to Princeton would have the same economic, social, and cultural capital with which to impress an interviewer, the Admission Office tried to make their admissions process more equitable by reducing the importance of an interview. This resulted in disgruntled Alumni Schools Committee members who felt that they could use their capital to more directly influence admissions outcomes previously. Involving alumni in the admissions process was common at Princeton in the 1960's, but is still widespread practice today at American colleges and universities. With more than 2000 miles between the East and West coasts, it would be nearly impossible for any admission staff to reach every high school in the country. Alumni were and are used to fill the gaps in staff availability. The role of alumni was important in the Admission Crisis because alumni saw themselves as key stakeholders and were acknowledged as such in the admissions process.

The Ivy League, but Princeton more specifically, is an interesting and deliberate focal point. Princeton is not like most American universities because it is

⁹Lauren A. Rivera, *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 290.

an elite university. This is important because it means that high achieving students want to attend Princeton while other universities look to imitate it because it is seen as a leader in both scholarship and policy. While they are not representative of the full spectrum of American higher education, elite universities matter. As Natasha Warikoo explains in *The Diversity Bargain: And Other Dilemmas of Race, Admissions, and Meritocracy at Elite Universities*: “Everyone pays attention to the likes of Harvard and Oxford, so what happens on those campuses has great symbolic value throughout the country.”¹⁰ Because of this distinction alone, Princeton and Princeton admissions history matter.

Without question, students who get into Ivy League institutions are seen as the best and brightest. This is true today and it was true when *The Daily Princetonian* welcomed a new class to campus in the autumn of 1969 saying,

Princeton offers—Princeton is—one of the best undergraduate educations anywhere, be it judged by such high school yardsticks as student-faculty ratios, number of books in library, median college boards and football winning percentage, or, perhaps more wisely, by the quality of the people who make up its community.

To have attended Princeton signals to both the student and the larger world that they are somehow special, one of a select few who were able to gain entry.

Context

¹⁰Warikoo, *The Diversity Bargain*, 9.

The period and focus on Princeton in this study is deliberate. Although not as well known as the 1962 integration of the University of Mississippi which required federal marshals to disperse anti-integration protesters and protect James Meredith, the integration of Princeton also caused a backlash.¹¹ Notably, the integration of Princeton and the introduction of coeducation unfolded almost simultaneously.¹² Both drew some national attention at the time but are not seared into the collective memory in the same way that other flashpoints in the Civil Rights or Women's Movements are (school children learn about Ruby Bridges, a young Black girl who integrated her elementary school in New Orleans and Title IX, a federal law that ensures gender equity in schools, but not the Admissions Crisis at Princeton¹³). Yet, this does not mean that what happened at Princeton was not important.

The year 1963, is a good place to start in chronicling this history because it is the year that Princeton President Robert Goheen first called on the university to actively recruit Black students.¹⁴ It was then up to Alden Dunham, Director of Admissions, to encourage and ensure their recruitment. When Dunham left the

¹¹Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

¹²Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen*.

¹³See sample lesson plans like "Ruby Bridges: A Simple Act of Courage Lesson Plans and Teaching Resources," Scholastic, accessed December 29, 2020, <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/collections/teaching-content/ruby-bridges-simple-act-courage-lesson-plans-and-teaching-resources/> or Carrie Kilman, "Title IX at 40," Teaching Tolerance, accessed December 29, 2020, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2012/title-ix-at-40>.

¹⁴Mel Masuda, "Ivy Colleges Encourage Negro Applicants," *The Daily Princetonian*, November 14, 1963, 1. Note: The Larry DuPraz Digital Archive at Princeton contains digitized editions of newspapers like *The Daily Princetonian* and *Towne Topics* and the collection spans from 1876 to 2002. Unless stated otherwise all *Daily Princetonian* and *Towne Topic* citations in this work were accessed via The Larry DuPraz Digital Archive, <https://theprince.princeton.edu/>.

university for the Carnegie Corporation, John Osander took over this role. Named Director of Admissions in 1967, Osander continued actively recruiting minority students. Soon after that, it became clear that coeducation was imperative for the continued success of the university. This meant that the Admissions Office was quickly forced to pivot and make another large-scale change in who they were recruiting while still maintaining the momentum required to recruit minority students (who were at that point mainly Black).

Osander simultaneously oversaw the transition to recruiting undergraduate women and many more Black and other minority students. While there was widespread alignment between administrators, faculty, and students who thought that the diversification of Princeton was a positive development, some alumni bristled over the change. This clash resulted in what was called by some an Admissions “Crisis.” Although on the surface a disagreement between the alumni and administrators about admissions interviewing, this crisis highlighted wider alumni fears and prejudices that were bound up with their understandings of gender and race. It also dampened some of the momentum in the admissions office as the admissions staff was forced to spend time addressing alumni concerns instead of focusing on admissions work. The question of whether this series of events warrants the “crisis” label will be discussed throughout this thesis. My interpretation is that the crisis can be understood in a number of ways, but it is important because it calls attention to issues that exploded in the 1960’s but which remain largely unsolved today.

The goals of the Princeton Admissions Office under Osander involved significant reforms as administrators wanted to improve both Princeton and the nation. The informal Princeton motto of the period, “Princeton in the nation’s service,” a phrase coined by former President Woodrow Wilson, captures the spirit of the admissions professionals who sought to reform the admissions process.¹⁵ Although Wilson himself was a proponent of segregation, paradoxically his words symbolize the type of work that administrators attempted at Princeton. Ultimately, dramatic change was ushered in and the faces visible on the Princeton campus looked different from just a few years previously. Print sources like *The Daily Princetonian* and *Princeton Alumni Weekly* highlighted this transition, but so too did additional Princeton employees hired to help aid in the transition. At the time, even just a simple walk around campus revealed new facilities and people.

Despite this success in opening Princeton to new types of students, some of the projects that admissions officers championed were left unexecuted. In particular, a national “Cooperative Project” in admissions languished and stalled before morphing into what would later be known as the Common Application in 1975. This thesis explores the critical period of Princeton’s history, from 1963 to 1971, in the context of the wider developments that influenced it, and with which it interacted. Finally, it considers the immediate aftermath of the Crisis and the years immediately prior to the founding of the Common Application in 1975.

¹⁵Office of Communications, “Trustees Call for Expanded Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion,” Princeton University, accessed June 18, 2020, <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2016/04/04/trustees-call-expanded-commitment-diversity-and-inclusion>.

Crisis

The use of inverted commas around “crisis” in the title of this thesis is deliberate. The crisis can be viewed in a number of different ways that are worth highlighting. All things considered, this is a story about angered alumni who rallied against what they described as an admissions crisis at Princeton when the Admission Office solidified and articulated practices through the publication of an Admissions Handbook in the autumn of 1969. Without question, the alumni who used the word crisis did so in order to attract attention to what was happening at Princeton. Perhaps a similar shock value drew me to use the word, too.

In many ways this thesis’s title alludes to a number of crises that were unfolding simultaneously from 1963 to 1971. This period was certainly an era of identity crises as Princeton and Princetonians grappled with the altered make-up of the university’s undergraduate population. A crisis is a time when a difficult or important decision must be made, and this crisis can absolutely be interpreted as a flashpoint moment. It was during this crisis that university administrators had to choose between the status quo and change. To not change admissions norms would have put the university out of sync with larger societal shifts in higher education surrounding issues of race, class, and gender. While exclusionary admissions practices were indicative of how Princeton had functioned previously, society was changing. Changing who they admitted was important as administrators believed, based on direct feedback from students, that an enrollment crisis would follow if they

did not begin accepting women and minority students.¹⁶ Admitting a more diverse applicant pool was one way to continue to attract top performing academic students. It was heavily studied and not a change that was undertaken lightly. Initially, I will admit to feeling somewhat incredulous towards the alumni who cried “crisis” and disparaged university officials who were trying to perpetuate Princeton’s status as an elite university. However, the alumni’s anger over perceived slights came to seem less surprising as I sought to understand other similar crises.

Although his work focused on a different period, Lawrence Stone’s *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* was helpful as I endeavoured to better understand the Admissions Crisis at Princeton. Stone’s discussions of a “crisis of confidence” in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries seem to echo what was happening at Princeton in the 1960’s.¹⁷ The 1960’s moment saw elites losing power as others gained agency through social movements. While this was not exactly what had happened to the aristocracy Stone studied, it was not wholly dissimilar. The control of and deference to the mostly older, male elite at Princeton was eroding during the crisis era, just as deference to the aristocracy had waned previously. Some Princetonians were angered about what Stone described in the earlier era as “a general weakening of the hierarchical framework of upper-class society.”¹⁸ Although

¹⁶Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, “The Education of Women at Princeton: A Report on the Desirability and Feasibility of Princeton Entering Significantly into the Education of Women at the Undergraduate Level,” PUA, n.p.

¹⁷Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. (ACLS Humanities E-Book. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 753.

¹⁸Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 749.

it was over three hundred years before, Stone noted that during his crisis, "peers showed a hypersensitive reaction to slights, real or imagined."¹⁹

Like the European elites who had come before them, some Princeton alumni were unable or unwilling to gracefully cope with shifts in the American power structure. Seeing their power lessened through the opening of both society and Princeton, some alumni became hypersensitive and reacted to a perceived slight that came in the form of marginal changes to admissions processes and procedures. Despite this upset, these men still maintained a large amount of privilege and had cultural capital that put them in a powerful position within American society—even as the balance of power was shifting. With my own hindsight bias, this anger seems almost ridiculous as the intergenerational transfer of wealth and power in American society was not derailed by the changes of the 1960's. However, those who felt they were losing power in the 1960's had no way to know to what extent they would be impacted. Stone's crisis similarly showcases a group of elites struggling to cope with a shifting power structure and it helps explain their seemingly disproportionately negative response to change.

Methodology

As someone who works in admissions outside of Princeton, this has been a captivating topic of study. Writing this history has at times been difficult as it truly felt

¹⁹Stone, 750.

like what Curthoys and McGrath call “a mix of the known and unknown.”²⁰ Most of the primary sources cited in this thesis come from Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University, which houses a large collection that is available to researchers interested in admissions history. Princeton is a unique location for research of this type since their collection of institutional records is closed for only for 30 years; Harvard’s similar collection is sealed for 50. In many ways, it was fortunate that the Admissions “Crisis” happened at Princeton as their archival unsealing timeline meant that I was able to access crucial primary source material.

The documents housed at Princeton were instrumental in shaping my research and conclusions. They form a specific case study, which in this thesis I have placed in the wider context of the histories of universities and, specifically, admissions, as well as the larger American social history of the 1960s and 1970s. Wanting to capture the Admissions Crisis in a way that showcased the interplay between people and Princeton, I turned to Deron R. Boyles’ “Joseph Kinmont Hart and Vanderbilt University: Academic Freedom and the Rise and Fall of a Department of Education, 1930-1934” as an example of how to undertake this type of history. Boyles’ portrayal of Hart, a contentious figure at Vanderbilt, shared some commonalities with Osander’s story at Princeton as both men had specific visions for how to run their departments which created strife. Like Boyles, I wanted to know was

²⁰Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath, *How to Write History That People Want to Read* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 18.

Osander forced out because of his ideological stances or for personal reasons? And, like Boyles, I also wondered, are these concepts easily distinguishable?²¹

In particular, I was trying to do what Gary McCulloch describes as relating “the *text* to its *context*.”²² In many instances I was not just contemplating what a document said, but who wrote it and why—and the other primary sources it spoke with in chorus. The goal was to triangulate the sources to capture the “richness and complexity” that Cohen and Manion describe is possible by considering “more than one standpoint” and by “making use of both quantitative and qualitative data.”²³ Princeton of the 1960’s bustled with written communication. The archives contain box after box of letters, memoranda, notes, conference proceedings, reports, departmental records, and newspaper cuttings from the Crisis era. The personal communications preserved speak in what often felt like a cacophony of voices. Each voice echoed a particular perspective, and all the documents reflect the viewpoint of their author. Individuals had their own motives, history, and position within the university community that influenced what they wrote and why.

Beyond written evidence, I have also included photos as visual source materials as they allow readers to see, and not just imagine, the people and places involved in this history. Although these photos are helpful in showing and not telling this story, it is important to note that many are not fully candid. Just like in university

²¹Deron R. Boyles, “Joseph Kinmont Hart and Vanderbilt University: Academic Freedom and the Rise and Fall of a Department of Education, 1930-1934,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2003):

²²Curthoys and McGrath, *How to Write History That People Want to Read*, 6.

²³Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 2018), 195.

brochures today, most of the subjects in the photos used in this thesis knew they were being photographed and the images are somewhat posed. Whether or not the images are fully representative of what was happening at Princeton is debatable. Indeed, it was my job to try and place individual sources held within the archive into the larger context of the university and sometimes the wider world.

When working on my Institution Focused Study I had sought to find and interview retired admissions personnel who had been active during the period.²⁴ Despite my attempts to contact them, my calls and letters went mostly unreturned. Some of the informants on my initial contact list had died, while others were difficult to find as they had moved into retirement villages or care homes and were no longer listed in public directories. As part of my thesis stage research, I redoubled my efforts to find informants and schedule interviews via telephone.

After several failed attempts, the project expanded when I found and was able to interview John Osander, the man who was the Director of Admissions at Princeton during much of the period of this study. We corresponded in writing and then later by phone as I conducted a series of interviews with him about his experiences in the Princeton Admissions Office. I found myself enjoying our conversations and thus needed to check my own bias and remember some of the potential pitfalls of oral history. This was certainly an instance where Osander, the storyteller, had what

²⁴The Institution Focused Study (IFS) is unique to the UCL Institute of Education EdD programme. The IFS is a 20,000 word research report completed after all taught modules are completed but before a student progresses onto writing their EdD thesis.

Judith Moyer would describe as “self-serving motives.”²⁵ As I analyzed what he told me, I worked hard to interrogate Osander’s version of the past. I made an effort to not assume his word was the ultimate truth. Despite the complications inherent in interviewing and oral history, I did not want to disregard Osander’s memories of the past. I knew that he was one of the few people who were still alive that had been connected directly to this history. Many other administrators and alumni from that time have died or are too frail to speak with a researcher. Thus the oral history gained from Osander, even if somewhat biased, was important.

To add to my understanding of what was happening more broadly in admissions during the period, I interviewed five other retired admissions officers who worked at other universities during the Crisis era. Their recollections were helpful in framing admissions norms of the time and provided general insights into professional practice. Beyond those informants, I also had an additional 15-20 conversations about my thesis with current and retired admissions personnel who worked in admissions during that period. Most of these conversations took place at venues like conferences and symposiums when I would present or discuss my research. These less structured conversations led to some important learnings as these individuals often posed questions I had not considered previously and shared their own experiences. While these informal conversations are not cited in this thesis they certainly helped shape my thinking. In all instances where I was dealing with people

²⁵Judith Moyer, “Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History,” published via the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, 1993, revised 1999, http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html.

and not archives, I grappled with the failings of human memory as I asked my informants to recall events, developments, and practices from decades earlier.²⁶

Like other insider researchers in education who have come before me, my own place in this history is somewhat complex.²⁷ As someone who is probably best characterized as a partial insider in relation to Princeton, I was as careful as possible not to let myself, someone who works in admissions, be influenced by my own experiences, biases, and judgements. When I began work on this thesis I already knew how the admissions process functions from having worked in various admissions roles. It was thus impossible to approach the topic with complete impartiality. But knowing how admissions worked and having existing professional relationships with people in the admissions world was unquestionably helpful. Professional relationships proved advantageous in interviewing my subjects and opened doors as many of my interviewees were able to connect the dots between me and other shared admissions acquaintances.

Having worked in independent and international schools, and having attended Washington University in St. Louis, a top-ranked university in the United States, it often felt like there were just one or two degrees of separation between me and potential interview subjects. The one separator between me and many of my informants was time, as I am too young to have overlapped with most of their tenures. Regardless of this age gap, the complex web of admissions relationships

²⁶Moyer, "Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History."

²⁷Gary McCulloch, "Historical Insider Research in Education," in *Researching Education from the Inside: Investigations from Within*, ed. Pat Sikes, Anthony Potts (London: Routledge, 2008), 51.

helped me forge connections that would later open more doors for interviews. My own semi-insider status also oriented my informants and told them a bit about who I was prior to our conversations. Many interviewees asked (even though I was at this point a married graduate student living in London) where I had attended high school, my hometown, and in some cases where my parents worked and attended university.

In addition to my own research, this thesis speaks most notably in chorus with a number of excellent and sweeping monographs which explore other related aspects of admissions history. In particular, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation* by Nancy Weiss Malkiel and *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* by Jerome Karabel, have deftly highlighted the importance of admissions history as it pertains to inequality. This thesis builds on their scholarly tradition while also highlighting a unique moment during which admissions procedures changed. My goal in writing this thesis is to take part in the ongoing debate about social justice in admissions. It is also to highlight a moment of potential structural change during a period of rapid social and cultural change in America and elsewhere, and of intense inter-generational conflict.

Aims

The aims of this thesis are to recount the history of the diversification of Princeton with special attention given to the work of the Princeton Admissions Office and how

that work was received by the university community. Between 1963 and 1971 administrators, students, faculty, and alumni worked together to bring new and different students to campus. In the autumn of 1969 a group of loosely organized alumni banded together to protest against what they called “troublemakers” among the student body and admissions staff. But by the time that protest against change erupted, two shifts had already taken place: Princeton was admitting both women and larger numbers of minority students. This thesis seeks to highlight the admissions changes that took place at Princeton and explain why those changes were important both at Princeton and throughout American higher education.

This thesis does not focus exclusively on the history of Black admissions at Princeton, nor does it tell the story of coeducation. Excellent scholarship on both these topics already exists. Other admissions discrimination, like that of the discrimination against American Jews, is wholly absent from this thesis.²⁸ Instead, this thesis focuses on a moment of transformation and seeks to understand its importance within the larger context of American admissions history as it was the beginning of an ongoing national standardization process.

Research questions

My goal in writing this thesis is to contribute to the existing literature on admissions history and specifically explore the previously undocumented Admissions Crisis at

²⁸Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen*.

Princeton. Based on these goals this thesis investigates three key research questions:

1. Why was there an Admissions “Crisis” at Princeton?

With this question I wanted to understand both the nature of the crisis and its cause. As noted, the crisis can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Ultimately the crisis, no matter how you view it, was brought on by the changing nature of who could be admitted to Princeton as an undergraduate. It highlighted just how much micropolitics impact universities and those working within higher education who are trying to enact change.²⁹ The “why?”, as with many histories, cannot be attributed to one single event. While the publication of the Admissions Handbook was the catalyst for specific, organized fury, there was a powder keg-like effect that contributed to the crisis.

2. What was the impact of the work of the Princeton Admission Office during the Crisis era?

Initially drawn to this topic because of events that happened after the Crisis era, I wanted to understand how the Princeton Admission Office had laid the foundation, from 1963 to 1971, for what would later become known as the Common Application. Since the Common Application is now ubiquitous in American undergraduate admissions, that connection alone was important. However, I hoped that by chronicling the work of Princeton admissions officers that I might be better positioned

²⁹Micropolitics and how different people involved with the crisis used their power and influence will be explored in more depth later in this thesis, see: Louise Morley, “The Micropolitics of Professionalism: Power and Collective Identities in Higher Education” in *Exploring Professionalism*, ed. Bryan Cunningham, (London: Institute of Education Press, 2008), 99-120.

to understand how their work impacted professional practice in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Since the Princeton Archives had preserved so much from that period, I was able to piece together where their work intersected with others and brought thought leadership to the field of admissions.

3. And, what were the longer term implications of the changes at Princeton, both for admissions at Princeton and elsewhere in the United States?

In terms of both policy and practice, Princeton began admitting women and minority students during the crisis era. The Admission Office of that time period was also part of a continued standardization and professionalization in admissions. In my interviews with John Osander this change was something he remembered and stressed as one of the most impactful aspects of his time in admissions. When he first started in the Admission Office under Alden Dunham there was not a fully established process for application submission and reading, according to Osander it felt somewhat disorganized. Slowly, over the course of his tenure the Admission Office started gathering data and writing reports. In our conversation about this change Osander explained that, “[After a while] what we’d done one year started to resemble the next.”³⁰ Princeton was one of the epicentres that helped shape the practice of admissions as it exists today. Specifically, it was also the site where early foundations for today’s Common Application were laid.

³⁰John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

Structure

Chapter One of this thesis is intended to show the rationale for the study and provide some context for the work. It also discusses things like methodology and the historical research techniques used. Chapter Two provides context of higher education in the United States and the historiography of inequity in admissions more specifically. It is intended to show the context in which the Admissions Crisis unfolded and root the Crisis within the landscape of history, with special attention paid to the history of American colleges and universities of which Princeton is an important example. Chapter Three presents and analyzes the events leading up to the Admissions Crisis and situates that history within both the Princeton microcosm while also noting the larger American context of what was unfolding nationally during those years. After that, Chapter Four focuses specifically on the academic year during which the Admissions Crisis took place (1969-1970) and examines that controversy along with the launch of the Cooperative Project in College Admissions. Finally, Chapter Five discusses both the consolidation and settlement that occurred in the post Crisis period. The thesis is intended to showcase the history of the Admissions Crisis while also highlighting its strong contemporary relevance to current admissions practice. Cultural debate over who is admitted to universities like Princeton continues amongst admissions professionals and in society more broadly, especially as both groups question fairness and equity of the admissions process.³¹

³¹See articles like Anthony Abraham Jack, "A Separate and Unequal System of College Admissions," *The New York Times*, September 15, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/33nKbd2>. Gregor Aisch, Larry Buchanan, Amanda Cox and Kevin Quealy, "Some Colleges Have More Students From the Top 1 Percent Than the Bottom 60. Find Yours," *The New York Times*, January 18, 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2jRcqJs>.

Chapter 2: The Higher Education Landscape in the United States

Administrative histories in education are often viewed, at least at first glance, as dull. Many are a blur of long forgotten names and dates written to celebrate something like a bicentennial. The celebratory kind of histories I encountered prior to starting this thesis seemed overly effusive and rather boring. They did not fully capture the complexity of the academic settings that I had known as a student and later as a professional. This chapter is intended to provide additional context for the thesis and also show why this particular social history is relevant to both academics and professional admissions officers. At its heart, this is a social history of an institution in line with current methods in social history.

This thesis is a case study of the Admissions Crisis at Princeton in that the history is focused on one location and time, Princeton University during the 1960's. This is intended to serve as a detailed and intensive analysis of that single case.³² Defining what type of case this is proved difficult. Aspects of the Admissions Crisis are extreme or unique, while others can be interpreted as more representative or typical. Princeton is inherently a unique case because of its status as an elite university (as has already been described, it is part of the Ivy League and a highly selective institution). As was highlighted in Chapter One, this elite status means that it has few institutional peers within the larger landscape of American higher education. It is problematic to generalize and say that what happened at Princeton is indicative of all American universities of that time, or even the Ivy League. Despite some of its uniqueness, it is still worthwhile to study given the Admissions Crisis

³²Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 60.

occurred concurrently with important admissions developments. It is also interesting because it can give expanded insight into opportunity hoarding and elites within American higher education.

Frustratingly for those who want cases to fit neatly into one single category, Princeton is, in some ways, representative. How can this case be at all representative if Princeton is such an exclusive institution? As has been touched upon, the Admissions Crisis at Princeton was part of the reckoning that occurred when universities moved from an elite to mass higher education model. Through that lens, the debate that happened at Princeton almost perfectly matches similar debates that occurred throughout the United States and other countries grappling with this transition. Administrators, and entire universities, had to figure out how to deal with the changing nature of the university. In this way, Princeton was not unique. In particular, Karabel draws parallels between Princeton and problems at Yale, where alumni were dissatisfied and felt that “Clark’s [Osander’s counterpart at Yale] defining of merit was narrowly intellectual, self-consciously hostile to alumni sons, graduates of leading boarding school, and athletes, and at the bottom an assault on Yale’s historic character.”³³ Although events at both institutions did not unfold in precisely the same way, commonalities, in particular between Princeton and Yale, mean that there are aspects of this case that seem representative—at least within the context of highly selective, elite institutions.

Unquestionably, Princeton was the site of change and innovation in admissions. Innovations themselves are predictable in that they are new and

³³Karabel, *The Chosen*, 453-454.

different. As has been shown, “there is a close connection between environmental conditions and innovation.” Clearly, what was happening nationally in the 1960’s had a direct impact on what happened at Princeton. While it cannot serve as a fully typical case, the Admissions Crisis can still provide insight into the variability inherent in the process in moving from an elite to mass model of higher education. In particular, the Princeton case helps showcase the ways in which Princeton reacted to retain its elite status while adapting to the changing times. This case is of special importance to admissions practitioners and university officials who are interested in learning about the change management efforts associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion measures of the past as a way to better understand the present. Taking this all into account, this thesis is intended to document the history of admission policy.

Administrative History and The Common Application Matter

This history is a social history and an insituational history. My goal was to understand Princeton University *and* “the changing society beyond.”³⁴ I used “Educational Research: Which way now?” to further solidify the aims of my research. In thinking about the history of another institution, the British Educational Research Association (BERA), McCulloch argued that “we must try to locate this association in its broader context if we are to fully comprehend its ideals and aspirations, its achievements and the work still to be completed or undertaken.”³⁵ This was the type of work that I wanted to do with Princeton University and the Admissions Crisis. My objective was

³⁴Gary McCulloch, “Educational research: Which way now?”, *British Journal of Educational Studies* 44, no. 266 (April 2018): 176.

³⁵McCulloch, “Educational research: Which way now?”, 176.

to root the story of the Crisis within the larger context of Princeton, American higher education, and lastly, 1960's America.

The Admissions Crisis at Princeton is an important focal point because its causes were commingled with thought leadership that helped spark the beginning of the Common Application. As admissions personnel at Princeton reshaped their admissions processes to reflect the changing values of the university, they also looked to improve cooperation towards those same goals nationally. By changing how admissions worked, they endeavoured to attract and recruit new and different types of students. Understanding the complexity of the admissions process, they wanted to improve shared procedures nationally. While some alumni were angered over procedural changes, other professionals in admissions gravitated towards the innovative suggestions emanating from the Princeton Admission Office. Although the full Princeton vision for the future, the Cooperative Project in College Admission, was never realized, it helped lay the foundation for the establishment of the Common Application in 1975.

Today the Common Application, also known as the Common App, is widely known by anyone even tangentially involved in American admissions. Beyond school personnel, most students bound for higher education know of or remember the application as the vehicle by which people enter higher education in the USA (and in some cases, participating foreign universities). Despite being a key piece in the operation of American universities, there is no comprehensive history of the Common Application.

Interestingly, UCAS, a similar application vehicle in the United Kingdom, also lacks such a history.³⁶ For those who have a long memory for university applications, there is also a dearth of scholarship in history when it comes to both UCCA and PCAS, the two applications that joined in 1992 to become UCAS. This lack of history is notable because both the Common App and UCAS are of paramount importance in that they facilitate the admissions process of a large percentage of undergraduates applying for admission in their respective countries. It seems that this lack of scholarship on applications is in part because administrative history is not much studied by historians of higher education. Later in this chapter I will discuss some of the barriers for conducting research in admissions specifically and highlight why this type of history may have been neglected previously. It is my intention to bring some of this forgotten administrative history to light and show that it is about more than just names and dates.

Curious about why changing professional practice in admissions caused such a backlash at Princeton, I discovered a story about shifting institutional identity and a changing power dynamic as new and different types of students were accepted as Princeton undergraduates. In many ways, the Admissions Crisis at Princeton was part of the history of the larger Common Application but also a history unto itself. This thesis is a historical case study that also relates more generally to the social history of education. This chapter will focus on explaining how this thesis works in conjunction with existing scholarship and discuss how my research on the

³⁶It is worth noting that American university officials were well aware of UCCA when discussions surrounding the possibility of a joint application began. See: Edward R. Weidlein, "What's Wrong with College Admission?" *Change*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Summer, 1971), 75.

Admissions Crisis builds on previous knowledge of topics like race, gender, university politics, and the 1960's—and where those histories intersect directly with this administrative history. This project is also impactful in that the Admissions Crisis both constitutes and reflects the culture wars of the 1960's. Interestingly, the Admissions Crisis was part of a larger wave of alumni dissatisfaction and protest over how Princeton was structured and operated that extended well into the 1970's.

In many ways, the Admissions Crisis was an alumni crisis. By the 1960's the Protestant establishment was in decline, watching changes occur at Princeton put into question the entire worldview of some alumni, and they lashed out in anger over their lessening power and prestige. Unfortunately, much of their decline was of their own doing, as Karabel explains:

Having vested its claim to authority in its code of honor, integrity, service, duty, and sacrifice, its legitimacy was shattered by an unhappy series of events beginning with the Bay of Pigs and the Gulf of Tonkin and culminating with the Pentagon Papers and finally Watergate. By the early 1970s, the central claim of the Establishment—that it was composed of men of superior character and judgement—seemed almost ludicrous.³⁷

Wanting to return to the old Princeton, the alumni who advocated reversing the clock on admissions policies and procedures were out of step with alumni administrators, younger alumni, and students.

By the time the Admissions Crisis took hold in the autumn of 1969, it was virtually impossible to turn back the clock and return to old Princeton. The transition from elite to mass higher education coupled with the success of the Women's and Civil Rights Movements meant that the former Princeton that these men envisioned

³⁷Karabel, *The Chosen*, 481.

was no longer possible nor relevant. To stay elite Princeton had needed to change with the times and adapt to what higher education was becoming (see Fig. 2).

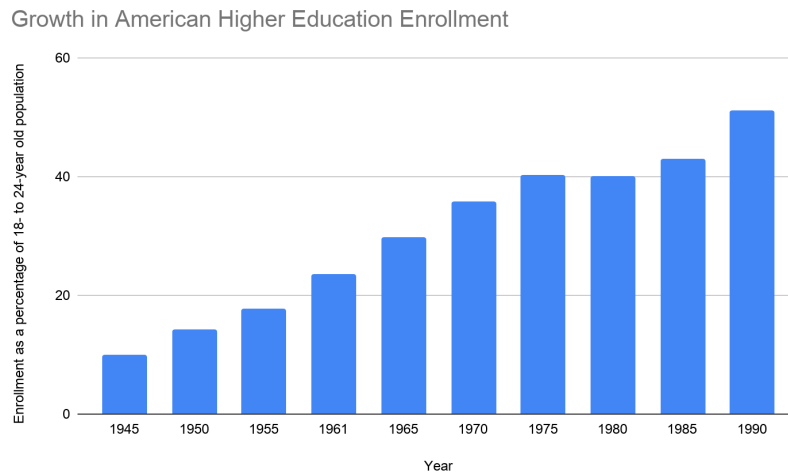


Fig. 2. *Growth in American High Education Enrollment*; Data from: Thomas D. Snyder, ed., “120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait” (Center for Education Statistics, January 1993).

Administrators at Princeton like Osander and Goheen knew that the landscape in higher education was continuing to change and that they would soon be facing an avalanche of undergraduate candidates. If the university did not pivot, it would become obsolete. As Osander knew this and explained this incoming enrollment boom in the *1968-1969 Annual Report*:

The actual 1965 enrollment in all colleges and universities was just under six million; in 1980 it is estimated at twelve million...If Princeton does not expand, and if our efforts to interest an ever wider group of students through admission recruiting continue, the present level of competition and the present policy problems will be magnified enormously.³⁸

Osander worried that Princeton would lose students to colleges like Harvard and Yale if it did not change with the times. This meant that the university had to alter

³⁸Princeton Admission Office, *1968-1969 Annual Report*, Admission Office Records, PUA, 7.

admissions policy and practice to sort through and accept the types of students that would help the institution maintain its elite status. According to Osander, admitting “talented students from all backgrounds” was integral as it was part of “efforts to improve the quality of the Princeton educational experience.”³⁹ The changes at Princeton help us understand the history of how elite institutions grappled with the move towards mass higher education while also giving insight into the power dynamics within admissions offices and on university campuses. Who can enter universities and what their admission hinges upon has a direct impact on both individuals and society.

Today, there is still widespread discussion of how diversity, especially racial diversity, should be fostered in American universities. This is a conversation that sprang from the Crisis era and one that continues now. Cognitive dissonance still dominates national discussion in the United States as there is a general consensus that diversity is worthwhile for both students and society, however, race-sensitive admissions policies are continually challenged.⁴⁰ William Bowen, the former President of Princeton, and Derek Bok, the former President of Harvard, explored race in college admissions in *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. Although framed along

³⁹Princeton Admission Office, *1968-1969 Annual Report*, PUA, 9.

⁴⁰William Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 13.

More recent court challenges continue, including this ruling in the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts: Scott Jaschik, “Judge Upholds Harvard’s Admissions Policies” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 7, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2019/10/07/federal-judge-finds-harvards-policies-do-not-discriminate-against#.X-4Ja36bA7A.link>.

racial lines, this book provides context about the transition from elite to mass higher education as universities grappled with how to admit new and different types of students. Not only did this book provide me with valuable historical context, but it also prepared me to better understand the administrators who I would come to know through the archival material they left behind. If there was anything I learned from practitioner researchers like Bowen, who himself was the Provost at Princeton during the Admissions Crisis, is that administrative history *does* matter.

The time in which the Common App began to emerge was a decisive period in American history. A product of the 1960's, it is understandable that other histories of this period often seek to delve into touchstone moments that loom large in the minds of cultural historians and the general public.⁴¹ The 1960's were an era of change in the United States as movements like the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement, and then Hippy and Anti-War Movements gained traction. However, alongside these significant political and cultural developments, other, perhaps seemingly more mundane history was happening, too. In the case of Princeton, university administrators enacted changes that would shape the face of admissions policy and practice for decades to come. The themes of change, identity, and power seen in American social movements were also being explored at Princeton.

The reshaping of who was and could be a Princetonian was a difficult process as the Princeton microcosm had to grapple with changes taking place in the American macrocosm. In the end, the university was determined to retain its status

⁴¹Popular examples include television programmes like *Living in '66*, "The Education Revolution" which first aired in 2016 or *Frontline*, "Hillary's Class" which was produced in 1994.

as an elite university. The conclusion drawn by administrators in the 1960's based on admitted students matriculating elsewhere was that to draw the most academically talented elite white male students, undergraduates that had traditionally attended, they also needed to admit minorities and women. The best students of the era overwhelmingly wanted to attend institutions that were reflective of America's diversity. In order to diversify and facilitate this change towards widening participation, the Princeton Admissions Office was keenly aware of ways they could potentially improve their internal processes to make admissions more streamlined for all students. Many practitioners in admissions today bemoan the state of admissions but have limited optics regarding how the current admissions process developed. By highlighting this history both practitioners and historical and educational researchers will have the ability to better understand admissions today by learning from the past.

American Higher Education: Fragmentation and Autonomy

Monographs and articles that outline the development of American higher education were especially helpful in providing context for this study. In particular, Labaree's *A Perfect Mess*, helps aptly explain aspects of what occurred at Princeton in the late 1960's. Labaree's assertion that schools are a vehicle through which liberal democracies "satisfy conflicting demands from competing constituencies"⁴² was true at Princeton in the 1960's. During the Admissions Crisis new constituencies, or types of students, were given access to the university for the first time. The university simultaneously allowed both "rising access and continued advantage" as it widened

⁴²David F. Labaree, *A Perfect Mess: The Unlikely Ascendancy of American Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 97.

admissions policy and practice to admit women and minority students.⁴³ This changed who could access Princeton but did not end the advantages already held by Princeton alumni. Nor did it put an end to elite white males having an advantage in the admissions process as they still made up the bulk of admitted students during the crisis era. Despite widening the pool of who could attend Princeton, the university maintained and maintains legacy admissions preferences. This practice favours the children of alumni, who are more likely to be elites (of any gender or race) than applicants without ties to Princeton. These points will be further explored in Chapter Three during discussion of how Princeton began admitting minorities and women in order to solidify its place as a leading American university.

Broader histories of American education and higher education help contextualize what was happening at Princeton in the late 1960's. In particular, Cremin's *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* helps show how schools changed in the post-war era. Because much of the focus of this chapter is on elementary and secondary education, it helps explain the culture of the schools that future Princeton students were coming from as they moved from secondary schools into higher education. The book also discusses how the Truman Commission, whose 1948 report, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, suggested that federal legislation was needed to change discrimination in higher education based on race, color, gender, and income.⁴⁴ Federal involvement did not occur and in many cases institutions like Princeton had to develop their own plans

⁴³Labaree, *A Perfect Mess*, 97.

⁴⁴Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 251.

for how to become more inclusive. Expanding who was admitted and how they were admitted was a monumental change. Without a clearly articulated change management strategy, the university struggled with its evolving identity. A shifting power dynamic that meant who could be a Princetonian was obviously altered as more women and minorities enrolled and the student body was noticeably different.

Part of the complexity of telling this history came from piecing together archival research along with more popular sources from the era like the *New York Times*. There is so much published work about the 1960's that it was easy to be drawn into reading about movement culture and its impact on education generally. The photographic record of campus protests in particular meant that this recent history came alive during archival research. It was up to me as the researcher to piece together the complexity of the era together and not simply highlight the actions of liberal changemakers.

American historians often discuss the 1960s as extending into the 1970's, and as the Admissions Crisis technically occurred during two decades, the late 1960's and early 1970's, this was an important technical point to consider.⁴⁵ This is of particular importance to the history of the admissions crisis at Princeton because, according to Thelin in *Going to College in the Sixties*, "campus activism in 'the sixties' did not crest nationally until the 1970s."⁴⁶ Because of this, even though the period of the Admissions Crisis spans the late 1960's and early 1970's it can be

⁴⁵*The Sixties Project*, Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH), University of Virginia at Charlottesville, updated January 28, 1999, accessed on September 18, 2020, http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Sixties.html.

⁴⁶Thelin, *Going to College in the Sixties*, 10.

considered part of the larger 1960's moment.⁴⁷ Importantly, the 1960's was also a time when selective admissions was beginning to be more fully understood by colleges and also when "modern" admissions was born. According to Thelin, today's admissions policies and procedures were developed in the 1960's.⁴⁸ For the first time, institutions like Princeton had an excess of qualified applicants for their incoming freshmen classes.⁴⁹ Just a few decades earlier, Ivy League institutions accepted the majority of students that applied. While this assertion neglects a long history of discrimination in admissions—especially based on attributes like race, religion, and gender—it helps contextualize that it was previously relatively easy to get into the most renowned colleges.

Thelin's book also delves into a question that Osander and his contemporaries in the admissions office at Princeton were trying to answer as they modernized admissions. Specifically, Princeton personnel asked: why should admissions officers choose an applicant in the middle or lower third of his class at a prestigious school over a higher-achieving applicant from a public high school?⁵⁰ With an eye to equity and merit, the admissions staff at Princeton argued that students who had succeeded despite adversity might in fact be *more* meritorious applicants.⁵¹ Thelin's assertion that as an admissions dean, Osander was "influential inside and outside the college" proves true when considering the fact that highly

⁴⁷To provide some context, *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* focuses on what they describe as "the long Sixties" (roughly 1954 to 1975). This time frame aligns well with the history described in this thesis.

⁴⁸Thelin, *Going to College in the Sixties*, 17.

⁴⁹Thelin, *Going to College in the Sixties*, 17.

⁵⁰Thelin, *Going to College in the Sixties*, 44.

⁵¹Princeton Admissions Office, *Admission Handbook*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA, n.p.

selective institutions like Princeton help shape policy and practice nationally.⁵² While Osander eventually would leave his job at Princeton in the wake of the Admissions Crisis, aspects of his ideas to change admissions had staying power. Some of those ideas continue to impact how modern American students apply to college today.

Despite being a time of immense transformation, the history of the Admissions Crisis might also be interpreted as a warning for those in academia: institutional change can be hard to enact and maintain. To understand change within the context of American universities, Levine's *Why Innovation Fails* is a slightly dated but useful exploration of why some university change initiatives succeed and other, sometimes similar changes, fail.⁵³ Although the change that Osander led towards diversity was started by his predecessor, he carried the initiative forward and expanded it during his tenure. At almost the same time Osander was working to bring more racial minorities to campus, the Board of Trustees voted to accept women undergraduates for the first time. This meant that much change was happening in undergraduate admissions policy and practice simultaneously. Osander and his staff were overseeing the admissions process of two groups that had been largely excluded from Princeton's homogeneous campus that was previously made up of elite white male, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants.

Levine, while not looking at the Princeton Admissions Crisis specifically, is helpful in defining what innovation means in the university setting. What Osander was trying to do involved both reform and change, two things that Levine describes

⁵²Thelin, *Going to College in the Sixties*, 44.

⁵³Arthur Levine, *Why Innovation Fails: The Institutionalization and Termination of Innovation in Higher Education* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1980), 3.

as hallmarks of innovation. At Princeton, the admission of both women and racial and ethnic minorities was a monumental shift in the identity of the institution that had previously been controlled by a group of elite white men. Levine's scholarship is helpful in that he highlights the fact that both change and innovation are relative. What is standard and has been happening for decades on one campus might be seen as wholly revolutionary elsewhere.⁵⁴ This was the case at Princeton. At the time, there were other undergraduate institutions in the United States that had been educating men and women together for generations, so this change was not new. Similarly, some colleges had been integrated for over a century by the time Osander was moving to admit more Black undergraduates. Although they existed elsewhere, these innovations sparked heated debate as some stakeholders struggled to accept and embrace these changes.

Levine's definitions and explanations of change are useful because they help contextualize the steps of what was happening at Princeton. For example, before the Admissions Crisis, it was the norm that admissions officers would give minority applicants special consideration because this was a value of the Admissions Office.⁵⁵ These norms and values supported the goal of diversifying the incoming classes at Princeton. However, the progressive admissions office's norms and values did not necessarily reflect those of the larger university community. Ultimately, Osander was seen as deviant (outside of organizational boundaries) and subjected to resocialization (when an innovative unit is made to renounce its past deviance and institute the acceptable norms, values, and goals it failed to incorporate previously)

⁵⁴Levine, *Why Innovation Fails*, 4.

⁵⁵Levine, *Why Innovation Fails*, 11.

in the wake of the Admissions Crisis.⁵⁶ After his departure, Timothy Callard, another Princetonian who will be discussed in Chapter Four, was selected to replace him as Director. Although it may have shortened his tenure at Princeton, Osander pushed boundaries and introduced new ideas that had staying power, especially in light of the social movements of the era. While the boundaries of what the Princeton Admissions Office could do in regards to admissions locally and nationally might not have been pushed as much as Osander had initially envisioned, they were altered and expanded greatly by the work undertaken during the Crisis era.

Admissions History

Without a doubt, admissions history is a relatively niche subject within the wider history of universities and education more broadly. Contemporary problems facing admissions today make the failures of the 1960's relevant to historians of admissions, admissions professionals, and others working in roles impacted by admissions. Continued complexity and structural inequalities make it so that not all students have an equal chance at enrolling in post-secondary education. The student makeup of elite universities continues to be profoundly unequal. Today's admissions landscape has roots in the past. Understanding that past helps us understand the present and potential reform.

The history of admissions is largely a history of partial or full exclusion of individuals and groups as admissions officers are responsible for rejecting and admitting candidates. Works like Weiss Malkiel's *Keep the Damned Women Out:*

⁵⁶Levine, *Why Innovation Fails*, 15.

The Struggle for Coeducation and Karabel's *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* or even popular press books like Golden's *The Price of Admission: How America's Ruling Class Buys its Way into Elite Colleges—And Who Gets Left Outside the Gates* contain the history of specific incidences of prejudice in the admissions process. These accounts each contribute, in part, to the larger history of admissions. At the same time, each of these cases also provides additional context for understanding how colleges have reformed their admissions policies and procedures as they have grappled with the shift from elite to mass higher education. Until now, the Admissions Crisis at Princeton has not been explored in depth by historians. The history of admission at elite institutions like Princeton is already captured in part through the aforementioned monographs with comprehensive and illuminative descriptions, but they are infrequent.

Despite the obvious contemporary reasons why people should care about this niche history, admissions is a hard area of education to chronicle. By nature the process of admissions spans two institutions, the sending high school and the receiving college. This creates complexity as, in theory, documents were saved in multiple locations. Since very few high schools have archives that include pieces saved from their college counseling departments, that is not a usable avenue for data collection. At the collegiate level, not all colleges saved individual or office files from their Admissions Office. Of what has landed in university archives, much remains restricted as the information pertains to student records and administrative

records—most of which are subject to long restrictions. Because this history also pertains to a form turned organization, the Common Application, that adds another level of complexity. Originally housed at The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) after morphing from the Cooperative Project, the early Common Application does not seem to have surviving archives. Despite a request, the organization did not return my inquiry regarding any historical records that they might have available for researchers. The NASSP also ignored my inquiry. While these valuable historical records may exist somewhere in a forgotten basement or storeroom, I was unable to locate them. Princeton's admissions collection is both extensive and accessible. It is unlikely that this history would have been preserved without the robust archival effort undertaken at Princeton. As admissions is the foundation on which the future of any university literally rests, it warrants study. This thesis builds on the work of other historians of education who have already brought visibility to admissions history.

While student enrolment in higher education expanded after World War I, elite institutions remained exclusive and were only accessible to a subset of the American population. Understanding the national landscape prior to the Admissions Crisis helps contextualize what happened a few decades later at Princeton. The Interwar period is the focus of Levine's *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration 1915-1940*, which is important in that it demonstrates how American colleges grew and changed prior to the late 1960's and early 1970's. Levine shows how selective colleges increased their screening of applicants to exclude some groups. Because of this, enrollment figures at elite colleges did not reflect the composition of American

society during the period.⁵⁷ This was especially noticeable in admissions offices like Princeton's where "college officials and alumni—predominantly white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) and often anxious about the loss of status and power of 'native' American stock in American society in general—created the model student in their own image."⁵⁸ Essentially, university admissions were shaped largely by in-group favouritism that benefited the elite.

Other monographs dealing with the history of admissions help to further enrich an understanding of what was happening at Princeton in the 1960's. Lemann's *The Big Test* tracks the development of the SAT and shows how it went from a modified IQ test to a measure that helps rule admissions offices around the country. Lemann's book shows how two men, James Bryant Conant and Henry Chauncey, formed an alliance in the wake of the Second World War that revolutionized American admissions. As the president of Harvard, James Bryant Conant wanted a system by which to identify promising young men from modest backgrounds outside of New England and New York. He aspired to find serious academic students who would raise the academic calibre of Harvard, a place that was dominated by prep school graduates who did not necessarily prioritize academic study.⁵⁹ Henry Chauncey, the son of an Episcopalian minister who had himself attended the Groton School and Harvard, believed in science's ability to identify the best and the brightest in American society.⁶⁰ James Bryant Conant's vision of a more

⁵⁷David Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration 1915-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 136.

⁵⁸Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration 1915-1940*, 136.

⁵⁹Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (Chicago: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), 27.

⁶⁰Lemann, *The Big Test*, 5.

meritocratic America hinged on his ability to bring a wider swath of American youth to Harvard so that he could launch them into positions of leadership across industry, government, and academia.⁶¹ Chauncey helped develop and deliver a test that could do just that, the SAT. *The Big Test* highlights how top colleges first expanded their enrollment outside of the elite. However, the students that Chauncey was charged with searching for using the SAT were still notably Protestant, white, and male. While the class dynamics at Harvard were being challenged by this change, the look and feel of the university was not much altered as only a small percentage of the student body was there on scholarship, and many of those admitted were the descendants of white, Western European immigrants. This is different from the students who were being admitted during the Admissions Crisis at Princeton in the 1960's. At Princeton, the students admitted were noticeably different from most of their peers, specifically they were racial or ethnic minorities or women, people who could not hide in plain sight like the poor whites at Harvard in the post-war era. The visibility of these new types of students at Princeton undoubtedly heightened the community's ability to pinpoint changes in the student body that they hadn't been able to see previously when most scholarship students were white males.

The history of Black students at Princeton is deftly chronicled in Bradley's "The Southern-Most Ivy: Princeton University from Jim Crow Admissions to Anti-Apartheid Protests, 1794-1969." Prior to the 1960's, Blacks were almost completely excluded from admissions to Princeton while the rest of the Ivy League maintained limited entry quotas. For this reason Bradley describes Princeton as the

⁶¹Lemann, *The Big Test*, 6.

southern-most Ivy because it was as segregated similarly to “most colleges below the Mason Dixon Line.”⁶² Thus, when Princeton started to diversify in the Post-war Era, the change was greater than that seen at the other Ivy League universities. Bradley’s article is key to providing context about the culture that Osander and others like him were trying to change at Princeton before, during, and after the Admissions Crisis. Furthermore, even if they were in the minority, Bradley’s article shows how there was some student opposition to integration on campus. In 1964, a small group of students on campus founded an organization called The Princeton Committee for Racial Reconciliation. This group was pro-segregation and claimed to represent one third of the student body—even though they only had fifteen members.⁶³ It can be assumed that some of the alumni who later protested against the admissions changes at Princeton shared the views of the students who organized the Princeton Committee for Racial Reconciliation. The changing power dynamics at Princeton is a theme that constantly resurfaces throughout subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Two particular monographs give excellent context to the Admissions Crisis at Princeton. One of those is Karabel’s *The Chosen*, a comprehensive admissions history that showcases what he describes as the “history of admissions and exclusion” at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The monograph is expansive and details a period from 1900-2005. Because of its focus on Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, it is an excellent foundation for understanding the history of admissions at Princeton and

⁶²Stefan M. Bradley, “The Southern-Most Ivy: Princeton University from Jim Crow Admissions to Anti-Apartheid Protests, 1794-1969,” *American Studies* 51, no. 3/4 (2010), 109.

⁶³Bradley, “The Southern-Most Ivy,” 117.

two other similarly highly selective institutions. The book highlights what Thelin's work also alluded to more generally, the fact that Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were previously not particularly academically selective. According to Karabel, Princeton entered the Twentieth Century known as "something of a joke among the professoriat: easy to enter and difficult to flunk out of."⁶⁴ This information is helpful because it contextualizes the attitudes of some of the alumni during the Admissions Crisis. Used to more relaxed admissions standards, they were not necessarily enthusiastic about Princeton becoming more academic. Nor were they familiar with a Princeton that refused more applications than it accepted. This was in large part due to Woodrow Wilson's ascendancy to the Presidency of the university in 1902 as his presidency represented a change in academic standards.⁶⁵ With a focus on Harvard, Yale, and Princeton that spans more than a century, *The Chosen* acts as a good bridge between the past and the present in admissions while also providing context to the Admissions Crisis at Princeton.

In addition to his monograph, Karabel's "How Affirmative Action Took Hold at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton" focuses on the admission of minorities at The Big Three and helps to contextualize the changing university community of the 1960's. In particular, the class that was admitted in the spring of 1968, just prior to the start of the Admissions Crisis, was more diverse than ever before. Minority students were 16.5% of the freshmen class in 1968.⁶⁶ This represented a big change for a

⁶⁴Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen*, 59.

⁶⁵Karabel, *The Chosen*, 59.

⁶⁶Jerome Karabel, "How Affirmative Action Took Hold at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 48 (2005), 71.

university that had only admitted its first Black student in 1945.⁶⁷ At the same time that Princeton was admitting more racial minorities, the university was also expanding the number of poor whites accepted. This followed in the footsteps of measures that began in earnest in the fall of 1963 when the admissions office was under the direction of Alden Dunham, Princeton Class of 1957. Much of the policy that Dunham enacted helped pave the way for the more liberal policies of the Osander admissions office that would be called into question during the Admissions Crisis. Again, Karabel's work was instrumental in contextualizing how power was distributed and among which people at Princeton, all through the lens of the admissions process.

Another monograph that explains the conditions in admissions during the era of the Admissions Crisis is Weiss Malkiel's *Keep the Damned Women Out*. The focus of the book is on coeducation at some of the most selective universities and serves as an excellent overview of female inclusion at American institutions like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Dartmouth, and in the United Kingdom at Cambridge and Oxford. Weiss Malkiel's book, although focused on coeducation, is relevant in contextualizing the Admissions Crisis Era at Princeton. In particular, it shows how administrators dealt with the changes associated with the shift to coeducation. In particular it documents how Princeton officials interacted with various stakeholders to help facilitate the transition to having women undergraduates on campus. Especially at Princeton, administrators took steps to publicize the move toward coeducation and involved alumni by doing things like publishing articles in the alumni magazine about

⁶⁷Karabel, "How Affirmative Action Took Hold at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton," 71.

the research that had gone into the decision.⁶⁸ Since the move to admit women was so widely publicized, it would have been nearly impossible for alumni to claim that it had been a coup, something that was alleged during the Admissions Crisis when some alumni felt that admissions policy had been surreptitiously changed without warning.

Another Princeton history that contextualizes what was happening on campus in the 1960's is Nugent's "Changing Faces: The Princeton Student of the Twentieth Century." Specifically, this article has a section that focuses on developments in how the admissions office operated under both Dunham and Osander's leadership. But, Nugent's article is also insightful due to its focus on Carl C. Fields, the first Black administrator at Princeton who was appointed in 1964. According to Nugent, Fields frequently collaborated in conjunction with colleagues in the admissions office.⁶⁹ This was borne out in the archival documents that also inform this thesis. In particular, letters and memos between Fields and Osander helped shape my understanding of the admissions work being done at Princeton during the Admissions Crisis era.

Fields, respected on campus as an expert with regards to the education of Black students, advocated clearly and succinctly as to why increased integration was necessary at Princeton. While a number of factors undoubtedly influenced Osander's drive to diversify the make-up of the Princeton undergraduate class, Fields' call to action was clear: "The problem that no one seems to fully appreciate is that there is still strong suspicion, skepticism and distrust surrounding the image of Princeton in

⁶⁸Nancy Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 121.

⁶⁹Georgia Nugent, "Changing Faces: The Princeton Student of the Twentieth Century" *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, vol. 62, no. 2, (2001), 228.

the Black community that cannot be dispelled with pronouncements of policy.”⁷⁰ The number of Black undergraduates admitted in the following years show that Osander reacted as more Black students than ever before were admitted, the autumn after the letter quoted above 44 new Black students enrolled, but just three years later in 1971 that figure rose to 230. Having a background for Field’s work outside of admissions at Princeton was crucial in augmenting my understanding of the campus climate of the 1960’s. The changes in enrollment at Princeton were jarring for all involved, alumni, students, and administrators. Just as it was hard for alumni to accept change, it must have been difficult at times to be a trailblazing minority student. As Nugent explains, Fields was important in “recognizing and meeting students’ needs for a supportive environment, enabling their organization as a political presence, and honoring leadership exercised within a distinct cultural group.”

⁷¹ Understanding Fields’ lasting impact also showcases how interwoven admissions are to many facets of a university’s operation as students who are admitted later shape university development both as students and alumni. In particular, the Black students Fields helped bring to campus would go on to influence things like continued minority recruiting, campus programming, and university identity.

Admissions in the Modern Era

Although diversity has increased at American colleges and universities since the 1960’s, the process by which students are admitted remains very similar to the

⁷⁰Carl A. Fields to John Osander, February 28, 1968, Admissions Office Records, PUA.

⁷¹Nugent, “Changing Faces,” 228-230.

Princeton that Osander helped shape. Golden's *The Price of Admission* scrutinizes modern admissions practices and shows that elite families currently use tools like philanthropy and specific donations to gain advantage in admission at top American colleges. Golden's book is interesting because it showcases specific examples where "insider" status has presumably swayed an admissions decision. One such case that helps illuminate this phenomenon is Jared Kushner's admission to Harvard as part of the Class of 2003. Before he was Donald Trump's son-in-law, Kushner was admitted to Harvard after his parents made a strategic gift to the university which made them members of the Committee on University Resources—which is actually just a group of Harvard's biggest donors.⁷² According to Golden, Kushner was "below Harvard's usual standards" for admission.⁷³ While Golden's investigations focus on admissions decisions that happened multiple decades later than the Princeton of the 1960's, the book remains an excellent window into how universities view and viewed their relationship with wealthy donors and alumni. Just as Harvard had a fiscal motivation to admit Kushner, Princeton faced similar concerns regarding their donation pipeline during the Admissions Crisis era and beyond. Balancing the different aims of a university is felt acutely by those in the university who are charged with creating a class that meets the university's needs on a number of fronts.

Bowen understood and wrote about this complex pressure to balance different needs of a university. Especially in his position as the President of Princeton from 1972 to 1988, he became uniquely aware of the complexities of undergraduate

⁷²Daniel Golden, *The Price of Admission: How America's Ruling Class Buys Its Way into Elite Colleges - and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 24.

⁷³Golden, *The Price of Admission*, 25.

admissions. His published work, while excellent scholarship on the topic of race in admissions in and of itself, also helps illustrate how administrators think about what they do on a daily basis. While Bowen himself was not in the Princeton Admissions Office during the Crisis, his writing gives insight into the minds of admissions professionals like Osander. According to Bowen and Bok's assessment admissions is a difficult area to discuss and work in, in part because

The overall result [of how elite universities do admissions] is a process that is much more complicated than most public discussions acknowledge. Admissions officers have been "picking and choosing," as we believe they should always do—admitting the candidate who seems to offer something special by way of drive and determination, the individual with a set of skills that matches well the academic requirements of the institution, someone who will bring another dimension of diversity to the student body, or a candidate who helps the institution fulfill a particular aspect of its mission.⁷⁴

The most significant thing that this passage highlights is the complexity of admissions. This is something that many of the alumni who cried foul during the Admissions Crisis seemed to underestimate. The ultimate goal for any admissions office is to admit a class that best serves the needs of the institution and its mission.

To truly understand elite admissions practices and how admissions works in an operational way, Steinberg's *The Gatekeepers* is probably the most enlightening monograph that has been published to date. Steinberg, an investigative reporter and professor of journalism at Columbia University, embedded himself within the admissions office at Wesleyan University to write the book. The result is a book that details conversations, committee meeting proceedings, and admissions decisions of talented applicants. One of the most elite liberal arts colleges, Wesleyan is often referred to as a "Little Ivy." Steinberg's book gives insight into the subjectivity of the

⁷⁴Bowen and Bok, *The Shape of the River*, 29.

American admissions process discussed by administrators like Bowen and Bok. It also shows how personal relations between stakeholders like independent schools, counselors, admissions officers, and alumni impact admissions decisions.⁷⁵

Furthermore, it highlights how admissions offices face pressure from both elsewhere within the university community. This book, while written about an admissions season decades after the time Osander was a Princeton, contextualizes what life is like on a day-to-day basis for admissions staff. Although much of the admissions process is now online and not on paper, the mechanics of recruiting and reading applications have not changed much in the intervening years.

Both during the Admissions Crisis and today, American colleges are very aware of the cost of doing business and the impact of fundraising. The Admissions Crisis highlighted just how important alumni donations are at American universities like Princeton. Today, whole departments focus on something often dubbed “capital giving” where the college works to raise money for things like scholarships, building projects, or endowment support. This type of fundraising was already emerging in the 1960’s and was something administrators were aware of and tracking.⁷⁶ An enlightening book that contextualizes how universities view alumni engagement and donations in the American context is Armstrong and Hamilton’s *Paying for the Party*. This ethnographic study shows how colleges prioritize admissions policies that benefit the affluent who can pay more while enrolled and will later donate to the university. This focus on financial health and future giving, while not exactly the same

⁷⁵Jacques Steinberg, *The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), PG needed.

⁷⁶Princeton University, *Financial Report* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), 7.

as what was happening at Princeton in the 1960's, shows how American universities are cognizant of alumni giving. Because this is perceived to impact the financial health of the university, universities in the USA place value on trying to cultivate students and future alumni who will donate to the institution.

Change management, especially when it comes to students and alumni, is hugely important. Altering policy and practice while using successful change management techniques means that more constituents will accept new ways of operating for a university. This is not only how change takes place, but also how elite institutions like Princeton stay elite and continue to attract top talent. This, although part of the Crisis story, has strong contemporary relevance today as universities still need stakeholder buy-in as they make changes to either their polity or practice, in admissions and beyond. These ideas have direct links to the themes of this thesis as the larger story revolves around the notions of change, power, and identity. In the next chapter we will see change taking place *at the same time* as the maintenance of the elite status of the institution of Princeton. This started with the slow growth of a crisis in the 1960's.

Chapter 3: Admissions Changes at Princeton in the 1960's

Question: Can you justify favoring one applicant over another because of factors beyond his control?

Answer: With apologies to the loser, I'm afraid we can.

Question: Why?

Answer: Because it is good for our university, and it is good for our society.

-Princeton University Admissions, 1968-1969 Annual Report⁷⁷

The Admission Crisis at Princeton was sparked in September of 1969 when the Admission Office published an updated *Admission Handbook*. An unassuming three-hole-punched book that existed in some form for years, the handbook outlined basic admissions procedures.⁷⁸ It provided process-alignment for those working within the sphere of Princeton admissions: admissions officers, Alumni Schools Committee Volunteers, and school guidance personnel. To today's reader it appears as an unlikely catalyst for much of anything, let alone a "crisis." In reality, a series of significant changes in the Princeton admissions process in the 1960's were to blame for the Admission Crisis, and the *Admission Handbook* was a scapegoat against which angry alumni took out their frustration. Feeling that the Princeton they had attended was disappearing, an unhappy group of alumni rallied against admissions officers who they felt were out of line with the university and its values. While the Crisis did not alter how the admissions office operated in terms of admissions

⁷⁷Princeton Admission Office, *1968-1969 Annual Report*, Admission Office Records, PUA, 24.

⁷⁸Princeton Admission Office, *Admission Handbook*, Admission Office Records, PUA, n.p.

procedures, it did have lasting impacts. To better understand the crisis and what it did or did not mean, it is important to go back further and first look at the modernization of Princeton.

Woodrow Wilson's Princeton, A Modern Princeton?

Woodrow Wilson took over as the President of Princeton on October 25, 1902 with big plans for the institution. This was when he made his "Princeton for the Nation's Service" speech and also when he first articulated how Princeton should adapt and grow to meet the changing needs of the institution *and* American society. As he said: "In planning for Princeton...we are planning for the country. The service of institutions of learning is not private, but public."⁷⁹ Part of Wilson's vision was that Princeton should take part in supplying the United States with "efficient and enlightened men."

⁸⁰ This idea would help shape Princeton for years to come and arguably is still part of the Princeton ethos today. Wilson's leadership also helped set the stage for Princeton's development as an elite university. According to John Milton Cooper, "Princeton University never would have become what it is today without his initial inspiration."⁸¹

Although Wilson's racist views and history have caused Princeton to reconsider his legacy in recent years, there is no doubt that he helped set the stage

⁷⁹Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," in *College and State: Educational, Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)*, ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1925), 443.

⁸⁰Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," 433.

⁸¹John Milton Cooper. *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (United Kingdom: Vintage Books, 2011), 118.

for the changes that would take place at Princeton in the 1960's.⁸² In some ways, later generations of Princeton staff emulated Wilson as they tried to ensure that Princeton would remain an elite institution.⁸³ Like their predecessor, these administrators were enacting changes to ensure that Princeton would retain its elite status. Without questions, the diversification of Princeton in the 1960's allowed it to remain one of the most revered institutions in the United States.

At the same time that Wilson was championing Princeton as a training ground for America's best and brightest, he was also taking action to physically change the university through continued development. In his first year as President of Princeton, Wilson created a giant \$12.5 million spending plan that was 25 times the annual budget. The goal was to transform Princeton into a full-scale modern university by expanding departmental offerings, changing the curriculum, and attracting more talented faculty.⁸⁴ This expansion set Princeton on the path towards growth and helped cement the foundation of the university that is still recognizable today in the form of the physical plant and departmental offerings, as well as endowed financial resources.⁸⁵ When Wilson left the university to pursue politics, he left a university that had a strong identity as an academic leader, but also one that recognized the value of change to maintain its power and reputation.

⁸²For more on Wilson's problematic legacy see: Kenneth O'Reilly, "The Jim Crow Policies of Woodrow Wilson." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 17 (1997): 117-21. Or Dick Lehr, "The Racist Legacy of Woodrow Wilson," *The Atlantic*, November 27, 2015.

⁸³"The Presidents of Princeton University: Woodrow Wilson," Princeton University, accessed January 12, 2021, <https://pr.princeton.edu/pub/presidents/wilson/>.

⁸⁴"The Presidents of Princeton University: Woodrow Wilson," Princeton University.

⁸⁵"The Presidents of Princeton University: Woodrow Wilson," Princeton University.

Princeton continued to grow after Wilson's departure. By the close of the Second World War, Princeton was at a crossroads as the number of students submitting applications exploded as college-aged men returned home after the war. To cope, Princeton's President, Harold Dodds, promoted university-wide expansion and embarked on another period of growth. This expansion to meet post-war demand had a direct impact on admissions. Recruitment efforts began to stretch beyond the small group of independent schools that had previously provided most of Princeton's undergraduate students.⁸⁶ In addition to this change in how recruitment worked geographically, Alumni Schools Committees, groups that helped with recruitment in their local communities, were re-established after the war in 1946. This allowed Princeton to expand its recruiting reach without having to base admissions staff outside of Princeton, New Jersey. Alumni Schools Committees were regional and consisted of alumni volunteers who helped with recruitment efforts. Unlike admissions officers, they were not employed by the university. They did things like represent Princeton at community events and aided in school visits and interviews when asked by the Admission Office. While they received some training, Alumni Schools Committee members were not admissions personnel. It was common for American universities to use alumni in their recruitment efforts and this continues today with alumni interviews still being offered by a number of leading universities. The Princeton Alumni Schools committee men would later be part of the core group that was most upset by changes in admissions procedures in 1969. It was Alumni Schools Committee men who first penned missives bemoaning the

⁸⁶Alexander Leitch, *A Princeton Companion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 140.

“Admissions Crisis” and calling for an admissions system that more directly factored their input into admissions decisions.

Shortly after the reestablishment of the Alumni Schools Committees after the Second World War, President Dodds called for the alumni to “tell us about the boys we cannot miss, for we will be guided more than ever before by your recommendations.”⁸⁷ His plea was answered. While independent schools continued to send groups of freshmen, lone applicants from public high schools from all over the country also enrolled in higher numbers than ever before.⁸⁸ In part, some of this can be attributed to recruitment efforts like those of the Alumni Schools Committees as directed by the Admission Office. While Princeton had been a bastion of wealth and privilege, the university population was beginning to reflect the continued post-war economic boom. More students from the southern and western states enrolled as those areas rose in prominence as economic centres. This change altered the make-up of the Princeton community but was in-line with the other Ivy League colleges that also attracted top students from all over the country. The colleges were particularly successful in this expansion of recruitment because of their partnership with the College Board. The College Board, the organization that administered tests like the SAT, identified students considered to be potential candidates for elite universities and allowed admissions officers to compare candidates from different curricula by using standardized exams.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Harold Dodds to Princeton Alumni, April 22, 1947, Office of the President Records, PUA.

⁸⁸Karabel, *The Chosen*, 297.

⁸⁹Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (Chicago: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999).

Alumni Sons at Princeton

Princeton had given preference to the applications of alumni sons and the university continued to do so throughout the period of rapid expansion after the Second World War. Coe and Davidson have worked to synthesize the history of undergraduate legacy admissions in “The Origins of Legacy Admissions: A Sociological Explanation” and their findings help explain why these policies were important and how they impacted admissions at Princeton. As they explain, “these [legacy admissions] policies are a product of social inequality, and they affect people's access to power, privilege, and prestige.”⁹⁰

Coe and Davidson’s work on legacy admissions policies is worth noting because it highlights how stratified American society was—by race, class, gender, ethnicity, and religion, both in and out of higher education—from America’s founding through the 1960’s. Just like at Princeton, white, male, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants dominated higher education and the rest of America so that “[the] Protestant worldview became institutionalized to the point that it became the cultural norm by which all other groups would be evaluated.”⁹¹ As a result, applicants who did not fit that Protestant mould were at a disadvantage in gaining admissions to institutions like Princeton for many years. In particular, Coe and Davidson help explain why some Alumni Schools Committee members’ held such disdain for changing admissions procedures. For them, the new types of applicants did not fit their idea of

⁹⁰Deborah Coe and James Davidson, “The Origins of Legacy Admissions: A Sociological Explanation,” *Review of Religious Research* 52, no. 3 (2011): 234.

⁹¹Coe and Davidson, “The Origins of Legacy Admissions,” 236.

the Princeton cultural norm (a white, male, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant). Knowing that this Protestant worldview had permeated higher education, Osander and others like him in admissions worked to make the process more equitable through standardization and policy changes that would allow new and different types of students to access elite spaces like Princeton.

Dislike and distrust of new people was nothing new for powerful Americans who could help dictate the inclusion or exclusion of entire groups of people within American society. Increased immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had already alarmed the Protestant establishment and politicians had taken action to limit immigration from places like Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Asia. According to Coe and Davidson, at institutions like Princeton “Protestant groups who had long maintained their dominance felt threatened because they were no longer assured that their values and ideals would continue to be those of the American mainstream culture.”⁹² This was a problem for university officials across the Ivy League who wanted to maintain their power and the identity of their institutions as elite places. They worked to do this by enacting biased admissions policies that favoured the Protestant elite.⁹³

Although it is hard to pinpoint exact dates, it appears that many Ivy League institutions, including Princeton, began using legacy admissions criteria during the 1920’s.⁹⁴ This was in-line with nativist thinking of the time that manifested itself in things like the eugenics movement and exclusionist immigration policies. In

⁹²Coe and Davidson, "The Origins of Legacy Admissions," 236.

⁹³Karabel, *The Chosen*.

⁹⁴Coe and Davidson, "The Origins of Legacy Admissions," 240-241.

university admissions, it was around this same time that “character” started to be used in student evaluations along with academic qualifications.⁹⁵ This nebulous category of “character” evaluation allowed admissions personnel to knowingly or unknowingly discriminate against applicants who did not match the existing demographics of the university.

Character evaluations, in many ways, were an exclusionist policy tailored to allow undergraduate admissions personnel to deny qualified students based on characteristics beyond their academic qualifications. Implicit and explicit bias contributed to the exclusion of certain groups. In particular, the number of Catholic and Jewish students was highly controlled at institutions like Princeton.⁹⁶ University personnel feared that too much diversity on campus would drive away the Protestant establishment. When university officials had the chance to accept alumni sons or recommended acquaintances they often did so, and that perpetuated the exclusion of certain groups. Once in place, these pro-alumni policies continued (and still continue) to factor into admissions decisions. In most cases if an alumni child is rated the same as a non-alumni child, the alumni child is offered admission.

At Princeton the topic of alumni sons was addressed specifically in a 1958 newsletter entitled *Answers to Your Questions About the Admission of Princeton Sons* where the Admissions Office explained: “No matter how many other boys apply, the Princeton son is judged on this one question: can he be expected to graduate?”⁹⁷ In practice this meant that alumni sons were not in competition with

⁹⁵Coe and Davidson, “The Origins of Legacy Admissions,” 238.

⁹⁶Karabel, *The Chosen*.

⁹⁷Alumni Council of Princeton University, *Answers to Your Questions About the Admission of Princeton Sons*, June 1, 1958, PUA, 3.

non-alumni sons. Although this directive comes from 1958, it does not appear that standards had changed greatly as Princeton moved into the 1960's. The holistic review of applications meant that both alumni and admissions office interviewers assigned applicants a "personality" ranking which is similar to the "character" ranking previously described by Coe and Davidson. This ranking allowed interviewers to cast aside students with whom they did not have much shared affinity.⁹⁸

Problems related to this personality or non-academic rating, specifically that alumni readers brought their own biases to interviewing and then rated students unfairly, was something that the Admissions Office would try to combat in the Crisis era by de-emphasizing the importance of the interview in admissions decisions.⁹⁹ Osander remembered his own student years at Princeton explaining, "When I went there it was tweed jacks, pipes...it was really white and well off. The first thing that was missing was color."¹⁰⁰

As time wore on, the longstanding policy of almost automatically accepting alumni sons prompted concerns amongst the faculty at Princeton. They called for more academic criteria to be considered in the admissions process. On-campus discussions led to the *Report to the President of the Subcommittee on Admission*

⁹⁸Karabel, *The Chosen*, 238.

⁹⁹Both personality and character have been debated at length and across time, especially in relation to education. Crisis era concerns about Communism and how Americans could resist that and other feared vices is discussed in Heather A. Warren, "The Shift from Character to Personality in Mainline Protestant Thought, 1935-1945." *Church History* 67, no. 3 (1998): 537-55. Warren is particularly helpful in contextualizing the Protestant worldview shared by most of the Princeton alumni community. Alternatively, more modern views of character are explored in depth by Randall Curren; see: "Why character education?" *Impact* 2017 (24): 1-44.

¹⁰⁰John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

Policy and Criteria.¹⁰¹ Published in 1960, this report highlighted faculty worries that academically gifted students were sometimes being passed over for other candidates. They advocated that unless a top-ranked student had considerable demonstrated reason to be denied, those students should be admitted based on their strong academic qualifications.¹⁰² From an academic standpoint, this made a lot of sense as the faculty had a vested interest in working with the most academically able students. The question of whom to admit—and why—only got more complicated as the 1960's progressed. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century various stakeholders, including alumni, faculty, and other university staff, had shown that while their loyalty was to Princeton, they were not always on the same page when it came to the question of the Princeton identity and who should be a Princeton student.

Alumni Schools Committees and Admissions Professionals

In addition to the Princeton Admission Office, Alumni Schools Committees were responsible for aiding in recruitment efforts during the 1960's. Although they were active in recruiting, the alumni were not admissions professionals. Most held “day jobs” and attended recruitment events locally in support of the Admission Office in the evening or on weekends. This distinction between volunteers and professionals was something that would later become important in the Admission Crisis. Some of the disconnection between alumni and admissions staff arose out of

¹⁰¹*Report to the President of the Subcommittee on Admission Policy and Criteria*, 1960, Office of the President Records: Robert F. Goheen Subgroup, PUA.

¹⁰²Karabel, *The Chosen*, p. 312.

an apparent rift in thinking. The two groups diverged despite the fact that many in the Princeton Admission Office, in particular Osander, were themselves alumni. The eventual development of the Admissions Crisis begins to make more sense when admissions work is viewed as a profession as opposed to just an occupation.

The distinction between profession and occupation is important because it helps explain the difference between the admissions personnel and Princeton alumni. Although the alumni had large amounts of economic, cultural, and social capital within society at large and at Princeton, they were not admissions professionals. This difference is key, especially when considered within the context of professionalism in higher education. According to William Sullivan, professionals have “specialized training...usually acquired by formal education and apprenticeship.”¹⁰³ This was absolutely true in admissions in the 1960’s (and it is still true today) as young people joined admissions offices and were informal apprentices to the more experienced associate deans, assistant deans, and deans in their office. Traditionally, admissions staff were responsible for geographic territories and developed a deep knowledge of the schools and curricula in those areas. In comparison to the Princeton admissions staff, alumni Schools Committee members had far less training in admissions practices and procedures, they were not expected to have an encyclopedic knowledge of their territory’s schools. Instead, if the admissions office needed someone to do something like attend a local college night, these alumni could represent Princeton when a university employee was unable to travel to the event.

¹⁰³William Sullivan, *Work and Integrity: The Crisis and Promise of Professionalism in America*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 36.

Importantly, admissions officers saw themselves as professionals and that identity was formed in opposition to people not working in the field. In the 1960's professional groups like the Ivy Deans and Directors, Eastern Group of Admissions Directors (EGAD), and The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) were professional organizations where the Princeton Admission Office staff met and exchanged information with other admissions officers, this was something Schools Committee volunteers did not do. This professional identity was cemented through developments like the adoption of a Code of Ethics by NACAC in 1961 as a document that was separate from the organization's constitution; this document was an early precursor to today's *Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission*.¹⁰⁴ As is true today, admissions officers saw themselves as highly specialized practitioners who were devoted to developing a more scientific and organized framework with which to operate within their field. In line with this idea of the admissions officer as a professional, in the *Annual Report 1968-1969*, Osander advocated for "the need for an analytic and methodical approach" in admissions.¹⁰⁵

Seen as subject matter experts, college presidents trusted their admissions professionals to recruit effectively. They were responsible for reading application files and making decisions regarding applications. Sometimes, admissions staff did face questions, but this was still regarded as a dialogue surrounding decisions that had been made and admissions officers had the opportunity to explain and defend their

¹⁰⁴National Association for College Admission Counseling, "NACAC History: 1960s." accessed February 26, 2021, https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/about/history/nacac_history-timeline_1960s.pdf.

¹⁰⁵*Annual Report 1968-1969*, Admissions Office Records, PUA, 29.

decision making. As Osander remembered, “There were some quite dramatic instances where we’d push back on a call from someone [like the president].”¹⁰⁶

Admissions personnel at Princeton were able to defend their professional decision making in part because they worked collaboratively to regulate their own “standard practice” through mechanisms that were both formal (NACAC) and informal (information sharing during group travel).¹⁰⁷ In short, admissions officers took great pride in their standing as professionals.

Beyond training and knowledge, the Princeton Admission Office seems to have had something else that Sullivan claims is unique to a profession. Both documents written in the 1960’s and interviews with Osander suggest that the Princeton Admission Office was working to “provide [a] service to the public beyond the economic welfare of practitioners.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, they were doing admissions in the nation’s service. This tenet was, in part, what later fueled the Admission Crisis with Schools Committee men. Princeton admissions staff were trying to diversify and open Princeton to new types of students and found that this was difficult because their vision did not necessarily align with the alumnis’ with regards to the Princeton identity and who should be a Princeton student.

As Osander said about interviews and interviewing, “[The] admissions office held their interview in higher esteem than that of alums [because] some of the alumni wrote some really awful stuff.”¹⁰⁹ In particular, minority students suffered under alumni evaluation. As Osander noted “We had so few minority candidates...they’d

¹⁰⁶ John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Sullivan, *Work and Integrity*, 36.

¹⁰⁸ Sullivan, *Work and Integrity*, 36.

¹⁰⁹ John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

[alumni interviewers] imply a negative, they'd write things not related to how they'd [minority candidates] do in their studies."¹¹⁰ The observation that interviews could be biased led the Princeton Admission Office to de-emphasize the importance of interviews in undergraduate admissions decisions over time.¹¹¹ This change was interpreted by some Alumni Schools Committee members as "counterproductive" and something that emanated from Osander without approval from either President Goheen, who will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter, or the Board of Trustees.¹¹²

In reality, documentary evidence supports something different—admissions officers were given autonomy to make decisions for Princeton as top managers like Goheen relied on professionals across offices and departments to be the subject matter experts. Interpreting national trends and wanting to preserve Princeton's status as an elite university, the Princeton Admissions Office in the 1960's acted in ways they felt were in the best interest of the university. As this and the following chapters will show, in a very short period of time from 1966 to 1969, the identity of Princeton changed as both women undergraduates and minority students were accepted in significantly larger numbers.

Feeling like they were losing power and wanting to maintain influence at Princeton, some alumni reacted. They used their connections within the university community to try and maintain opportunity hoarding through alumni interviewing.¹¹³

¹¹⁰John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

¹¹¹John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

¹¹²John H. Thatcher to Members of the Executive Committee, n.d., Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

¹¹³Richard Reeves, *Dream Hoarders: How the American Upper Middle Class Is Leaving Everyone Else in the Dust, Why That Is a Problem, and What to Do about It*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2017).

Not fully grasping how a change to retain Princeton's elite status would upset alumni, Osander and his team soon learned what Richard Reeves would later write about the upper middle class, that "sensible policy is not always easy politics."¹¹⁴ The conflict over interviewing eventually came to a head as the Admissions Crisis exploded. This highlighted the gulf between a vocal group of alumni and those still on campus working in the Princeton Admission Office.

Robert Goheen's Princeton

In some ways, the Admissions Crisis may have begun as early as 1956 when Robert Goheen was appointed as the President of Princeton. Goheen had arrived on campus as a student in the late 1930's after growing up in India. His childhood made him somewhat different from his peers as he had lived and experienced life outside of the elite domestic circles of most Princeton students.

Being President of Princeton during the 1960's meant that public discussions about racial justice were inescapable for Goheen, someone who purported to have watched the developments of the Civil Rights Movement with interest. In 1963, Goheen gave a speech about education at Princeton in which he said, "For the past decade, we have been terribly concerned with what we could do for students from underdeveloped countries. It took a shock (the civil rights crisis) to make us realize our problems at home."¹¹⁵ Goheen was aware of domestic racism, it would have been almost impossible not to be. However, he felt that Princeton had a civic responsibility to educate future leaders who would improve the country for the better

¹¹⁴ Richard Reeves, *Dream Hoarders*, 6.

¹¹⁵ Mel Masuda, "Ivy Colleges Encourage Negro Applicants," 1.

by addressing problems like racial justice. As the leader of Princeton, he was deeply aware of Woodrow Wilson's declaration that the institution should be a university "for the nation's service." This informal motto, coupled with his own background, impacted how Goheen led Princeton through a tumultuous decade. Years later Goheen would be recorded in an interview reflecting on the 1960's saying: "The Civil Rights Movement really affected me, it really woke me up. And, uh, I decided that we simply had to do something here at Princeton to take part in educating able young Blacks and helping them become full and fruitful members of society."¹¹⁶

Not only did Goheen buy into the value of having a diverse population at Princeton, but he actively supported the changes needed to welcome new and different students to Princeton. How was Goheen able to do this? Advocacy and change generated by civil rights leaders was key, but his personal background also supported a disposition that was more accepting of people who were different from. Multiple historians have suggested that Goheen's status as the child of missionaries may have further impacted his thinking on race and made him more likely than his Princeton peers to be accepting of people who were different from him.¹¹⁷

Goheen was part of a cadre of Americans who had their worldview changed by a foreign upbringing as the child of missionaries. Returned missionary children of Goheen's generation often viewed minority people in the United States with more nuance and compassion than their non-traveled peers. As David Hollinger's

¹¹⁶Melvin McCray, *Looking Back: Reflections of Black Alumni at Princeton*, Historical Audiovisual Collection, AC047, PUA.

¹¹⁷ Stefan M. Bradley, "The Southern-Most Ivy," 116. David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World But Changed America* (Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 2017), 2.

Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America explains: “Missionary-connected individuals and groups were prominent in efforts to end the mistreatment of people of non-European ancestry at home and abroad, and they opened the public ear to nonwhite voices within and beyond the United States.”¹¹⁸ It is very likely that Goheen’s childhood in India gave him a worldview that made him more inclined to help end exclusionary policies at Princeton. His personal identity was one that supported change and was more accepting of a shifting Princeton identity that would come to include new types of students.

As Princeton’s President, Goheen made speeches that called for equality. From Goheen’s own writing and the first person accounts of others, it seems that diversity was something he frequently thought about as a leader. Franklin Moore, former Associate Director of Admissions, later remembered the university under Goheen’s Presidency and said the following decades later: “Goheen when I first came to Princeton, he really showed vision. He, I think, understood a time where people were still questioning whether or not you wanted minority students on your campus at all, I think Goheen was clear, and clearly committed to having a cross-section of students.”¹¹⁹ This type of leadership was key as Goheen was the manager who helped set the tone for the entire university. His vision for Princeton was crucial as he was ultimately the university’s top manager.

During his presidency the undergraduate program of study responded to what Goheen later described as “an exploding, booming, shifting world of knowledge and

¹¹⁸Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad*, 2.

¹¹⁹McCray, *Looking Back*.

ideas.”¹²⁰ By the time he left office in 1972, Goheen and university staff had overseen policy changes that would render Princeton almost unrecognizable to those who had enrolled just a generation before. It was Goheen’s leadership that set the stage for the changes Osander and others throughout the university worked to implement. In some ways, Goheen himself foreshadowed and supported the changes that Osander would enact in the Admission Office. In October of 1963, Goheen talked about how as a leader in education Princeton could “help and advance the movement toward open and equal opportunities.”¹²¹

Goheen’s leadership profile is particularly interesting because it fits Hollinger’s claim that former missionary children understand better than typical Americans “the tension between inclusion and identity, between an impulse to bring everyone together and a need to make a community viable.”¹²² Goheen steered Princeton during a time of unprecedented change and helped unite a campus that had previously been a place of extreme exclusion. While he was not physically present in the Admissions Office during the Admissions Crisis, his leadership and guidance on admissions-related decisions shaped the university Princeton was becoming. Despite not being on the Admission Office staff, Goheen was a central figure in shaping both policy and practice in the Princeton Admission Office.

¹²⁰“Robert Francis Goheen,” The Presidents of Princeton University, accessed December 12, 2020, <https://pr.princeton.edu/pub/presidents/goheen/>.

¹²¹Princeton Admission Office, *Princeton University’s Efforts to Identify Talent Among the Economically Disadvantaged and Educationally Disadvantaged*, Admissions Office Records, PUA.

¹²²Princeton Admission Office, *Princeton University’s Efforts to Identify Talent Among the Economically Disadvantaged and Educationally Disadvantaged*, 23.

Undergraduate Admissions at Princeton: The Early 1960's

In 1962, C. William Edwards, Class of 1932, retired as the Director of Admission at Princeton. In his place E. Alden Dunham, Class of 1953, was appointed to lead the Admission Office. Dunham was a notable figure at Princeton because he sought to find and enrol more non-alumni sons from rural and minority communities. According to a *Princeton Alumni Weekly* profile, he focused on admitting the “well-rounded class” rather than the “well-rounded boy.”¹²³ Dunham was important for another reason, too. As Jim Wickenden, Class of 1961, Assistant Director of Admission from 1963 to 1967, explained, it was Dunham who “decided that we should aggressively recruit young African Americans.”¹²⁴ This was new for Princeton, an institution that had a long history of exclusion in admissions.

Following Goheen's message on the importance of diversity and wanting to increase minority enrollment, Dunham began to change undergraduate recruiting practices. In 1963 he sent a report to schools that contained a special section entitled “Search for Negro Applicants” where he explicitly told readers that Princeton wanted to recruit more Black students. He wrote: “Princeton is actively seeking qualified Negro applicants.”¹²⁵ He went on to note that: “Though there has generally been a handful of American Negroes in each freshman class, the essential problem is the shortage of applicants.”¹²⁶ In part, this was because Princeton had not welcomed Black students and the first recorded Black undergraduate had only

¹²³Allie Wenner, “Lives: E. Alden Dunham '53,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, February 3, 2016, <https://paw.princeton.edu/article/lives-e-alden-dunham-53>.

¹²⁴Wenner, “Lives: E. Alden Dunham '53”.

¹²⁵Mel Masuda, “Ivy Colleges Encourage Negro Applicants,” *The Daily Princetonian*, November 14, 1963, 1.

¹²⁶Masuda, “Ivy Colleges Encourage Negro Applicants,” 1.

graduated in 1947.¹²⁷ Soliciting applicants from schools signaled a change in internal policy at Princeton that was being articulated to outsiders involved in the admissions process.

While Princeton's past exclusionary policies may have dissuaded Black applicants from applying, Dunham's goal was to change Princeton's image. Much of this was done by appealing to secondary schools for minority applicants, something that was easy to do as Princeton had established relationships with high schools and administrators across the country. While the recruitment numbers of the time seem insignificant when compared with modern admissions statistics, ten new Black students enrolled following Dunham's appeal in 1963.¹²⁸ Enrollment among Black students would continue to increase slowly for the next half decade until John Osander became Director of Admissions and began an even more aggressive recruitment effort aimed at increasing Black enrollment.

Interestingly, 1963 was also the same year that Princeton unveiled the Critical Language Programme, a Cold War era initiative that aimed to produce more Americans who could fluently speak languages like Russian and Mandarin. Princeton was both encouraging internationalism and creating a type of soft power that would advance American security interests both at home and abroad. That September five women entered Princeton as members of the Class of 1965 for a year-long language-intensive programme. Some bemoaned the arrival of the small

¹²⁷ "African Americans and Princeton University: A Brief History," Princeton University, Princeton University Library, last modified March 11, 2005, <https://libguides.princeton.edu/c.php?g=84056&p=544526#:~:text=Four%20black%20students%2C%20John%20Leroy,degree%20on%20February%205%2C%201947.>

¹²⁸ Bradley, "The Southern-Most Ivy: Princeton University from Jim Crow Admissions to Anti-Apartheid Protests, 1794-1969," 116.

group who came from women's colleges and coeducational institutions.¹²⁹ However, *The Daily Princetonian* quoted one undergraduate who seemed to represent the prevailing student opinion on coeducation: "I think this is a much-needed reform in Princeton's attitude toward women, and I hope we will move faster in the future to change the present ridiculous situation."¹³⁰ From this autumn onward, there was a small but constant cohort of women students living and learning on the Princeton campus.

From 1963 until 1966, Princeton continued along much as it had for decades. The small incremental changes that led to the inclusion of a small number of women and Black students on campus was just the beginning of much larger changes to follow. Yet, these small-scale changes showed that it was possible for new and different types of students to succeed at Princeton. These pioneers entered into the Princeton bubble and helped set in motion a change of identity at Princeton. Later in the decade as the university grappled with the shift from elite to mass higher education there was a small but workable template that showed change and inclusion of new types of students was possible. As the numbers of women and Black students on campus remained low, the Princeton identity did not have to shift all that much. This would change later in the 1960's as the scale of inclusion increased dramatically and the new look and feel of the university suddenly forced Princetonians to grapple with what it meant to be a Princeton student and alumni.

¹²⁹Dale Lasater, "Five Girls Break Sacred All-Male Tradition," *The Daily Princetonian*, September 23, 1963, 1.

¹³⁰Lasater, "Five Girls Break Sacred All-Male Tradition," 1.

Change Starts to Beget Change, School Year 1966-67

The 1966-1967 academic year saw both Princeton, and the nation, bustling with activity. That fall, the Black Panther Party was founded in Oakland, California by college students Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. The Black Panther Party called for black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-defense.¹³¹ Lyndon B. Johnson was President and the Cold War (1947–1991), Vietnam War (1964–1973), and Space Race (1957–1975) were ongoing. On campus, Princeton undergraduates founded the Association of Black Collegians (ABC). In addition to organizing and advocacy work, the organization quickly began helping with Black recruitment efforts.¹³² As the second semester began, John Osander was officially appointed Director of Admissions. The following portion of this chapter will explore how Princeton was changing during this year and how these changes foreshadowed the Admissions “Crisis.” Specific focus will be given here to the work of the Princeton Admissions Office; however, the complexity of the university meant that nothing happened in a vacuum. This close reading of campus events in the remainder of this chapter has been organized by academic year. This academically inspired organization reflects the life-cycle of the university more accurately than the calendar year, especially with regards to undergraduate admissions and the timing of when classes begin university study.

¹³¹National Arch
<https://www.arch>

¹³²Bradley, “The

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[thers.](#)



Fig. 3. *Ali, Muhammad*; Historical Subject Files Collection, AC109, PUA.

The 1966-67 academic year signaled a change on the Princeton campus. Just before Christmas in 1966, the Association of Black Collegians (ABC) was founded by Paul Williams (pictured in Fig. 3, standing first from the left) and A. Deane Buchanan, both Class of 1968.¹³³ An affinity group that served various roles on campus, the ABC was instrumental in helping to recruit new Black students to Princeton by creating an organized group of admissions ambassadors.¹³⁴ *The Daily Princetonian*, along with other archival materials in the Princeton University Archives, showcases how Black student activism and participation on campus worked to create a more student-centered environment. Black students spearheaded specific and noticeable change, particularly in regards to undergraduate admissions. As Stefan M. Bradley's shows in "The Southern-Most Ivy," advocacy on campus led to increased Black

¹³³Joseph A. Field, "Negro Undergraduates Unite," *The Daily Princetonian*, April 18, 1967, 1.

¹³⁴Field, 4.

enrollment as the ABC connected qualified high school students with Princeton in a more organized, thoughtful, and successful way.

As Bradley explains, “by the end of the 1960s, black students, with the assistance of liberal university officials, were able to improve Princeton University’s relationship with black people.”¹³⁵ In admissions, one such liberal university official was John Osander. On the admissions staff since 1963, Osander was promoted to run the Admissions Office just after the Christmas holiday ended in 1967.¹³⁶ This directorship gave Osander a platform from which to help enact change. Reflecting on his time at Princeton, Osander recognized that the institution was already changing when he took on his leadership position, as he said “The old Princeton...really changed when Alden Dunham came in.”¹³⁷ Osander’s goal as Admissions Director was to build on what was already established and further create a more scientific, organized admissions process. This way, “[after a while] what we’d done one year started to resemble the next.”¹³⁸ Princeton’s changing admissions procedures, at least to Osander, were already well underway when he began helming the Admission Office.

Osander constantly considered ways to improve the admissions process and continue the work that Dunham had started. Alden Dunham represented a new type of Princeton for Osander, as Dunham was incharge of the office when they first started admitting Black students and at a time when admissions officers were trying to create processes and procedures that would support a more fair and uniform way

¹³⁵Bradley, “The Southern-Most Ivy”, 111.

¹³⁶Department of Public Information, Information Sheet, 2, January 11, 1971, PUA.

¹³⁷John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

¹³⁸John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

of doing admissions work.¹³⁹ When Dunham left his position at Princeton to join the Carnegie Corporation, Osander's ideas to improve the Admission Office were built on the foundation of what he had learned from his former manager. His vision was holistic and stretched beyond one short admissions cycle.

The goal was that the admissions staff should understand the university as a whole and do things like participate on the Board of Advisers and assume campus responsibilities as athletic coaches.¹⁴⁰ Osander's idea was to follow students throughout their time in college to better understand who succeeded at Princeton and why. He talked about making changes and called for things like the founding of a research department to collect longitudinal data on academic performance, graduate school acceptances, and job placement after graduation.¹⁴¹ His goal was to use this data to further inform admissions decisions in the future.¹⁴² Osander was aware that inequity meant that applicants to Princeton were not on equal footing and he wanted to understand those inequities better so that he could make more fair evaluations of candidates. At the same time, admissions in the late 1960's was becoming more organized across many campuses as admissions professionals were striving to improve professional practice. Princeton was no exception to this trend. In particular, Osander noticed the lack of process in admissions and started doing things like gathering data and writing reports in an effort to standardize the activities in the Admission Office.¹⁴³

¹³⁹John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

¹⁴⁰Ted Weidlein, "Board Names Osander Director of Admissions," *The Daily Princetonian*, January 18, 1967, 1.

¹⁴¹Weidlein, 1.

¹⁴²Weidlein, 1.

¹⁴³John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

Osander was in constant contact with admissions professionals in the Ivy League and beyond, which gave him a unique view of both his office and the national landscape. Interested in innovation, he was constantly contemplating ways to improve admissions and Princeton. A heavy flow of preserved correspondence in the Princeton Archives shows that Osander was continually advocating, in meetings and correspondence, that there should be another, better way, to “do” admissions. His thinking continued to develop as he continued in his role.

This shift was not unique to Princeton as a number of admissions officers of the time began to think of admissions as more than just a game of chance. Other innovators, such as William Ihlanfeldt at Northwestern University, were doing similar things. Ihlanfeldt, like Osander, was data-driven and later went on to write about admissions in *Achieving Optimal Enrollments and Tuition Revenues: A Guide to Modern Methods of Market Research, Student Recruitment, and Institutional Pricing*. Given the interconnected nature of admissions, Osander and the staff in his office were constantly mixing with other admissions professionals as they traveled the country with personnel from other universities for presentations at high schools and college fairs. As a result, Princeton employees were hearing and seeing how other campuses with more heterogeneous populations were succeeding in recruiting new students.

The racial diversification that continued during Osander’s tenure was aided dramatically by the work of the ABC. The ABC held a conference in the spring of 1967 that was designed as a Black recruitment event. They were able to bring 150

students from 46 high schools to Princeton.¹⁴⁴ Coverage of the ABC's conference appears in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* adjacent to stories that might indicate a more liberal mindset on campus generally. The magazine included articles about students competing for room draw (a process through which dormitory assignments were made), the university reminding people that illegal drugs were not tolerated on campus, and a summary that explained that 66 students had pledged to not go to Vietnam if drafted. In this context, the work of the ABC is not treated as radical nor out of the ordinary.

There was synergy between the goals of the ABC and Osander's Admission Office. The ABC pushed for and created change while the Admission Office was able to channel their energy and work with student volunteers to improve the college's recruiting efforts. As has previously been discussed, Osander saw himself as continuing the work of his predecessor. He wanted to admit more minority students in general. As he recounted: "Admitting Black students was the first big change when I got there. I didn't do it, but I was there. Then [we started working on admitting] Asians and the Hispanic community...and they were all visibly identifiable."¹⁴⁵ Easily noticed, minority students on campus signaled a change was taking place to the larger community—including alumni who returned to see a much more diverse Princeton from the one they had known.

Movement Ideology Arrives at Princeton, School Year 1967-68

¹⁴⁴"Black Collegians," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, May 2, 1967, 4. Note: The full collection of the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* is available in the Reading Room at Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University and via GoogleScholar.

¹⁴⁵John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

The summer of 1967 was a time of continued change. Not far from the Princeton campus, violence erupted in Newark, New Jersey as Black residents clashed with white police and military forces during a period of rebellion and uprising. This was part of the “long, hot summer” and was one of the most serious incidents of violence during the decade.¹⁴⁶ At the same time, the hippy counterculture movement continued to gain traction in California, focused in San Francisco’s Haight Ashbury neighbourhood. That June, the Monterey Pop Festival and subsequent gatherings signaled, as Russell Duncan characterizes it, that young people were envisioning “a very different society.”¹⁴⁷

The movement culture of the 1960’s was relevant to university admissions because it changed people’s thinking about how society was structured. This directly impacted both Princeton and Princeton students, many of whom wanted to see an end to the repression of women, Blacks, and other groups that had faced discriminated. As Peter Braunstein explains, young people like Princeton students and early career employees were important because: “No longer simply an age category, youth became a metaphor, an attitude toward life, a state of mind that even adults could access.”¹⁴⁸ These changemakers were important because of how their thought process was different from others. A “persuasive rejuvenation mentality went

¹⁴⁶Walter C. Rucker and James N. Upton, *Encyclopedia of American Race Riots* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 447.

¹⁴⁷Russell Duncan, “The Summer of Love and Protest: Transatlantic Counterculture in the 1960s,” in *The Transatlantic Sixties*, ed. Grzegorz Kosc et al., (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 163.

¹⁴⁸Peter Braunstein, “Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation”, in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and ’70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 243.

on to imbue the ideology of the late-'60s counterculture” and this was seen at Princeton¹⁴⁹ The Admissions Officers involved were influenced by the youth and movement culture of the 1960's that questioned the status quo. They advocated for a more just and equitable future for all people and attempted to work towards that future through their work in admissions.

While society and the institutions around it changed, so too did Princeton. The new academic year was the first full year in which John Osander was officially serving as Director of Admission. He largely continued the policies put in place by his predecessor, E. Alden Dunham. That spring the United States was rocked by the high profile assassinations of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy.¹⁵⁰ Both of these changemakers were highly visible figures in the larger fight to end inequality that was being echoed by some in the Princeton community. The continued shifts in policy and practice at Princeton, specifically with regards to undergraduate admission, reflected calls for change that were being heard nationally.

The 1967-1968 academic year brought change to the admissions team at Princeton in the form of a new administrator. Paul Mattox, a Black man, was hired as the Assistant Director of the Bureau of Student Aid in an effort to diversify the staff and encourage minority recruitment.¹⁵¹ Mattox publicly expressed surprise over how liberal Princeton was in practice compared to his perceptions of it before joining the

¹⁴⁹Braunstein, “Forever Young”, 243.

¹⁵⁰Sharon Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), xxvi.

¹⁵¹Bob Schnell, “Second Negro Joins Student Aid Staff; ABC Sponsors 'Enrichment' Program,” *The Daily Princetonian*, February 2, 1968, 1.

staff. He said in an interview with the *Daily Princetonian*, "Before I came here, I didn't view Princeton as positively liberal...I didn't think that such things as the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], the Vietnam protests, or the conflict over Bicker [the entrance process by which students entered private eating clubs] could exist here."¹⁵² His expectations were proven wrong as students involved themselves in changing Princeton. Just before returning to campus in the autumn of 1967, members of the ABC used their time at home to expand Princeton's Black recruiting. Impressively, almost all of the university's Black students visited high schools in their hometowns with the intent of each recruiting five to ten Black applicants for the class of 1972.¹⁵³

Despite changes in Princeton's recruitment efforts, there were still few Black students on campus. Only 24 Black students had been admitted to the Class of 1971 and 16 actually took up a place on campus. This small group of students was important because they worked to become successful recruiters and helped change the status quo by providing the Admission Office with a pipeline of strong candidates for admission. However, the low numbers of Black students on campus during an era when the university professed to want to diversify made observers question if it was only an act. As the *Daily Princetonian* reported that October: "The Negroes on campus want to know what happened [with regards to Black recruitment]. And they want to make sure that it doesn't happen again."¹⁵⁴ In the same article Osander

¹⁵²Schnell, 1.

¹⁵³John V. Dippel, "On Recruiting Black Students," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Oct 15, 1968, 13.

¹⁵⁴Bob Durkee, "A New Era for the Negro at Princeton?," *The Daily Princetonian*, October 17, 1967, 1.

stressed that it was a continuing concern saying, "our search for Negro applicants is still a high priority item. We don't intend to let up on our efforts."¹⁵⁵ The diversification at Princeton was happening, but the number of minority students on campus remained low. Student activists worked to publicize injustice on campus and highlight the biases the Black community faced at Princeton. *The Daily Princetonian* published "A New Era for the Negro at Princeton" to show white students what day-to-day life was like for a Black student.¹⁵⁶

Attuned to what was happening both on campus and nationally, Osander's new role as Director of Admission gave him the power to expand on the work that Dunham and the ABC had begun. He too worked toward change and was particularly interested in making admissions practices more fair for all applicants. When asked about Black recruitment in April, Osander said: "An institution such as Princeton must make it clearly known in 1968 that we put the highest possible priority on making opportunities in higher education available to promising black students."¹⁵⁷ While this was a nice sentiment, it was easier said than done. To address the problem changes needed to be made to how Princeton recruited and evaluated potential undergraduate students.

One of the things Osander changed centered around the implementation of a more structured recruiting process for all applicants. This included things like a systemic filling plan to keep track of applicants, scheduled mailings, and an expanded high school travel and recruitment program.¹⁵⁸ As a result of these efforts,

¹⁵⁵Durkee, 1.

¹⁵⁶Durkee, 1.

¹⁵⁷"Negro Admissions Soar," *Town Topics*, April 18, 1968, 4.

¹⁵⁸John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

the Admission Office could collect more data on students and produce reports informed by this data.¹⁵⁹ Surviving reports and speeches from the era show an office that was keen to understand student motivation and decision making.¹⁶⁰ In addition to these process changes, the Admission Office started involving both faculty and students in the admissions process in more substantive ways. While the Admissions Office was still in charge of decision making, they worked collaboratively with the people who would most directly interact with future students: professors and current undergraduates. The opinions of professors and students were built into the admissions process and the Admission Office valued their feedback as Princeton experts on topics like academic and social fit. As Osander remembered of this era: “interviewing, traveling, sitting in on meetings —it [the Admission Office] became pretty inclusive.”¹⁶¹

Expanding on these ideas, the Admission Office began recruiting and paying faculty to read applicant folders and evaluate them in order to bring a specifically academic perspective to admissions decisions.¹⁶² A student’s future teacher often evaluated academic promise slightly differently from an admissions officer, and the juxtaposition of different types of expert opinions were valued in the Admission Office. Initiatives like this lead to more success in recruiting *and* accepting students who might not have been given the opportunity to attend Princeton previously. After a while, “the numbers [of enrolled minority students] changed and it was very

¹⁵⁹John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

¹⁶⁰See documents like: *Annual Report 1968-1969*, Admissions Office Records, PUA. or *Admissions Workshop Opening Remarks*, September 26, 1968, Admissions Office Records, PUA.

¹⁶¹John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

¹⁶²John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

noticeable.”¹⁶³ This noticeable change will be discussed more in Chapter Four as it was part of what fueled the Admissions Crisis.

As the head of the Admission Office, Osander was responsible for the entirety of the admissions process, a process that still operated in almost the same way that it had for decades—a student applied and then was accepted or rejected. Osander’s job meant that he was responsible for orchestrating the whole admissions cycle while also overseeing the recruitment of speciality groups like those of legacy applicants, athletes, engineers, and disadvantaged applicants.¹⁶⁴ Legacy applicants have been part of the fabric of admissions at elite American universities and continue to cause controversy. To fully understand Osander’s Princeton it is important to consider what the Princeton Admission Office was doing with regards to these applicants, both before and during the Crisis era.

Within the Princeton community there were frequent and often revisited discussions of the admissions policies as they related to legacy applicants: the sons, grandsons, and brothers of alumni. Today, there is a feeling among students at elite universities that legacy students often have an advantage. Many admissions directors talk about a student’s legacy status as something that “tips the scales” when two candidates are equal. Present discussions about who gets admitted are surprisingly indicative of what was talked about at Princeton in the 1960’s.¹⁶⁵ The number of legacy students on campus was discussed within the community and *The*

¹⁶³John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

¹⁶⁴Stephen Dreyfuss, “Scholarship Money Runs Out For First Time Osander Discloses Tripled Black Admission,” *The Daily Princetonian*, April 11, 1968, 4.

¹⁶⁵ See articles like: Alexandra A. Chaidez and Samuel W. Zwickel, “Meet the Class of 2022,” *The Harvard Crimson*, 2018, <https://features.thecrimson.com/2018/freshman-survey/makeup-narrative/>.

Daily Princetonian reported that the 1967-68 admission cycle saw an increase in accepted legacy students. In fact, 203 legacy students were admitted over the previous cycle's 158.¹⁶⁶ Osander himself attributed this to the applicant pool having been more qualified rather than reflecting any change in admissions policy.¹⁶⁷ Overall, applications fell by 3% that cycle, but there was no organized initiative to make-up the difference through the admission of legacy students.¹⁶⁸

Wanting to understand who was not matriculating and why, Osander sought more information from students who had declined their offer of admission and explained that Princeton's "most vulnerable area" was "the social one."¹⁶⁹ He described the problem in terms of recruitment saying, "We are picking up the old negative images without gaining new ones to offset them."¹⁷⁰ According to Osander's understanding, Princeton's image was not necessarily in line with what students were seeking in terms of a college experience. Responsible for bringing in new students, this fact was undoubtedly troubling. Wanting to improve, the Admissions Office pushed forward to try and aid in the creation of a campus community that would attract more top students to Princeton. Admissions personnel knew that admitting new and different students was part of the solution to changing future students' perceptions of the university.

Beyond the Admission Office, other Princeton leaders knew that the university was seen by many students as lacking in social life since there were no full time

¹⁶⁶Dreyfuss, 4.

¹⁶⁷"Negro Admissions Soar", *Town Topics*, April 18, 1968, 5.

¹⁶⁸Dreyfuss, "Scholarship Money Runs Out For First Time Osander Discloses Tripled Black Admission," 1.

¹⁶⁹Dreyfuss, "Scholarship Money Runs Out," 4.

¹⁷⁰Dreyfuss, 4.

women undergraduates. Wanting to preserve the university's elite standing and shore up the traditional pool of elite white male applicants, administrators were spurred to act in order to preserve their applicant pipeline. Those who were in touch with students and their thinking knew that without women on campus Princeton would continue to lose applicants to other elite institutions that had embraced coeducation.

The Second Sex (Almost) Arrives at Princeton, Summer 1968

July of 1968 represented a pivotal time in Princeton admissions history. Gardner Patterson, a Professor of Economics, submitted his committee's findings to President Goheen after a year of careful study regarding whether or not the university should admit women. Gardner and his colleagues had been charged with investigating the "advisability and feasibility" of admitting women undergraduates and consulted widely in the university community and beyond.¹⁷¹ Their answer to the question of coeducation was "most emphatically 'yes.'"¹⁷² And thus, Princeton immediately started working towards implementing coeducation.

The debate over whether or not to become coeducational involved many in the university community. Gardner had solicited input from a wide array of stakeholders. In terms of admissions and the future of Princeton, the report included details on the impacts of coeducation and what that might mean for the Admission Office and matriculation. In particular, the committee noted that segregation of the

¹⁷¹Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, "The Education of Women at Princeton: A Report on the Desirability and Feasibility of Princeton Entering Significantly into the Education of Women at the Undergraduate Level," PUA, n.p.

¹⁷²Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, 1.

sexes was viewed as “anachronistic by most college students.”¹⁷³ The committee highlighted the fact that students valued “learning from each other” and learning from those who were different from them “intellectually, emotionally, and socially.”¹⁷⁴ Beyond this, the “overwhelming majority” of students aged 18-22 “strongly preferred” to attend mixed institutions.¹⁷⁵ Essentially, a diverse student body was important to the high achieving students that Princeton was trying to attract. Because Princeton looked much like it had a generation or two before (while other universities were changing whom they admitted), the admissions office struggled to recruit the students that had been highest ranked by admissions officers. As the Patterson Committee explained, “too many of the students who apply, and whom we admit and whom we would most like to have at Princeton, go elsewhere.”¹⁷⁶ The admissions conclusion was clear: unless Princeton started admitting women, the university was going to continue to lose the admissions battle with other Ivy League institutions like Harvard and Yale, and leading liberal arts colleges that were already admitting both genders. When considering other potential benefits of coeducation, the committee believed that a mixed student population would continue to allow the university to attract top faculty and secure better financial support than it would as a male-only institution.¹⁷⁷

Weiss Malkiel has written extensively on the transition to coeducation at elite institutions like Princeton and a full exploration of the topic can be found in her

¹⁷³Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, 2.

¹⁷⁴Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, 3.

¹⁷⁵Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, 3.

¹⁷⁶Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, 18.

¹⁷⁷Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, 1.

monograph. Weiss Malkiel's observations regarding the dialog that took place surrounding coeducation between the administration and alumni helps explain, in part, the later Admissions Crisis. Soon after the Patterson Report was released, the administration set out on a national tour spearheaded by university leaders Goheen, Bowen, and Patterson.¹⁷⁸ The men met some challenging crowds on their journey, and there were venues where the atmosphere remained largely anti-coeducation. It was a hard tour because, as Malkiel explains, "Alumni had a strong sense of ownership and entitlement, and, they believed, a unique perspective on Princeton."¹⁷⁹ In particular, the alumni wondered why Princeton needed to change if it had been strong for so many generations? President Goheen answered alumni questions in writing and speeches as he faced skepticism and hostility from some. As he said in one letter to an alumnus:

Princeton is today one of the leaders among institutions of higher education in America because for more than two centuries it has been able to adapt itself to the needs of its time. The Princeton known and loved by the Class of 1969 is not the same Princeton that was known and loved by the Class of 1940; nor was its Princeton just the same as that of the Class of 1926. And this is how it should be.
¹⁸⁰

In the same letter he went on to say that the goal of the university should be to make Princeton "relevant to the times, in central not simply superficial ways."¹⁸¹

In fostering changes at Princeton, Goheen understood that the university needed to take note of what was happening around it in order to stay relevant and

¹⁷⁸Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation*, 167.

¹⁷⁹Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation*, 167.

¹⁸⁰Robert F. Goheen to Orvel Sebring, Dec. 26, 1968, Goheen, Box 96, Folder 1, PUA.

¹⁸¹Robert F. Goheen to Orvel Sebring, Dec. 26, 1968.

compete on the national stage. Goheen's perspective on Princeton was different from those of the graduated alumni who had left campus because he interacted regularly with students, faculty, and university leaders outside of Princeton. While he could empathize with alumni because he was one himself, Goheen saw where American society was moving in regards to widening participation based on both gender and race. Charged with looking after the university's future, he supported the changes that he believed would keep the university competitive and relevant. Admitting women was a way for Princeton to further cement its status as an elite university in the future.

Relevant to the Times, School Year 1968-69

In the autumn of 1968 students returned to the Princeton campus knowing the university would probably change existing policy and admit women during their time on campus. Off campus, the country focused on the presidential race as Richard Nixon was elected President of the United States in November. During the election cycle Nixon ran against George Wallace of the American Independent Party, a candidate who would end up winning much of the South with a segregationist platform.¹⁸² Wallace's southern victories in the 1968 election highlighted the division that was present nationally between those who wanted to maintain the status quo and those who continued to work towards societal change, especially for women and minorities. Similar divisions were just as present at Princeton as tensions

¹⁸²Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s*, 26.

surrounding a changing Princeton were openly discussed by students, staff, and alumni.

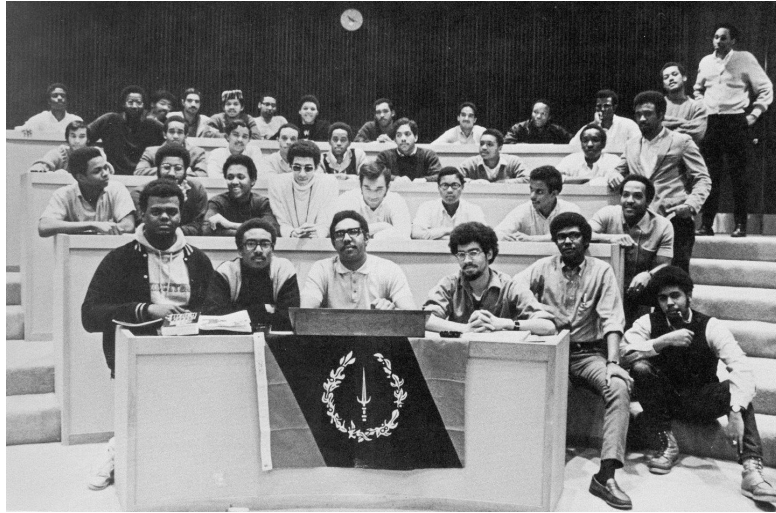


Fig. 4. Bric-A-Brac. *The Association of Black Collegians*, 1968, Princeton University Publications Collection, AC364, PUA.

The autumn semester at Princeton meant that a new class was taking their place on campus. As the summer ended, 44 Black students enrolled and moved to campus. In October, the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* highlighted changing trends in minority admissions in a piece entitled “On Recruiting Black Students.” The article told of how alumni groups had previously failed to recruit Black students because they “lacked direct access” to the high schools students attended. With the help of the ABC (see Fig. 4) the numbers of both applicants and admitted students increased dramatically. While Princeton alumni in Cleveland had only ever found a few Black prospective students, Princeton undergraduates were able to find 20 in one year—and nine were later admitted.¹⁸³

¹⁸³John V. Dippel, “On Recruiting Black Students,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Oct 15, 1968, 13.

Both the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* article and the increase in Black students on campus are notable, although it is interesting to observe that the article was sandwiched between a faculty biography and a recap of the most recent Columbia vs. Princeton football game. Admissions specific news appears to have been a business as usual-type filler for the magazine which regularly reported on all types of university information. While the recruitment of Black students was in line with what Goheen and others had been working towards for years, this article is important because it shows that older Princeton alumni had been poor recruiters of young minority students. By changing who helped recruit future students the Admission Office was also changing the status quo. This move shifted recruiting power into the hands of a few Black students, a group that had not been present on campus a few decades previously.

The work of these pioneering students showed that diverse talent was readily available, assuming the recruiters used the right channels. By changing who was doing the recruiting the Admission Office observed that undergraduates were able to succeed where alumni had failed. Students found academically strong prospects from minority backgrounds who would actually matriculate to Princeton. The *Princeton Alumni Weekly* celebrated this recruiting success, but it also clearly summarized the plan to bring more minority students to campus. The piece reminded readers that as early as 1963 President Goheen had said that Princeton was “actively recruiting” Black students. Although they may have not received the message, alumni were clearly being communicated with regarding the ways in which Princeton was changing (see Table 1. Black Undergraduate Enrollment at Princeton).

Academic Year	Admitting for the Class of	Number of Black Undergraduates Enrolled in the Freshmen Class
1966-1967	1971	16
1967-1968	1972	44
1968-1969	1973	69*
1969-1970	1974	150
1970-1971	1975	230
1971-1972	1976	283

*This was the first year with a mixed gender group of Black undergraduates, four of this group were women.

Table 1. Black Undergraduate Enrollment at Princeton

At the same time that the Black community at Princeton was steadily growing thanks to the work of both students and administrators, the debate over coeducation raged on. That autumn, 33 meetings were held to discuss coeducation and the Patterson Report with alumni.¹⁸⁴ In some places administrators like Goheen, Bowen, and Patterson faced prickly crowds that were skeptical about the notion that Princeton would become a coeducational institution. The Patterson Report, along with various writings from Goheen, make it clear that Princeton's leaders felt they had to start accepting women regardless of what the alumni thought.

In particular, the first chapter of the Patterson Report focused much of its attention on admissions and how coeducation might change Princeton's ability to recruit new students. Troubling admissions data showed that Princeton often lost many of its best prospective students to other universities.¹⁸⁵ Longterm, this would

¹⁸⁴Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation*, 166.

¹⁸⁵Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, "The Education of Women at Princeton," 17.

have a devastating impact on Princeton's status as an elite university. University officials knew they had to change campus demographics or risk being left behind as other universities adopted coeducation. The report writers noted that the best students were keen to learn from each other and wanted to be exposed to peers with "different combinations of qualities."¹⁸⁶ Both faculty and students polled for the report were overwhelmingly positive in their responses to the prospect of coeducation.

In addition to admissions concerns, the Patterson Report considered "Annual Giving" in an attempt to speculate how coeducation might impact donations from alumni since the financial health of Princeton was paramount to its elite status. The committee noted that they received "surprisingly few" letters from alumni who would cease to give if coeducation were adopted.¹⁸⁷ Younger alumni polled were generally in favour of coeducation, 80% of those in education who had graduated after 1949 reported being for coeducation. That group's opinion influenced the committee. In comparison with supporting the wishes of aging alumni who were dwindling in numbers, it was clear that siding with younger alumni and accepting women would be the best financial choice for the institution.¹⁸⁸

Communication surrounding coeducation was a key part of Princeton's strategy and that communication helped alumni understand what was happening and why. The *Princeton Alumni Weekly* of September 24, 1968 published the Patterson Report in its entirety in order to make the findings public. James Oates, a member of

¹⁸⁶Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, "The Education of Women at Princeton," 2.

¹⁸⁷Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, "The Education of Women at Princeton," 123-4.

¹⁸⁸Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, "The Education of Women at Princeton," 124.

the Board of Trustees, stated in the foreward that “no decision was made” regarding how to proceed and he requested comments from alumni who wanted to give feedback.¹⁸⁹ The transparency in sharing the report, although not well-received by everyone, was intentionally a very public exercise.

At the same time that the Patterson Report was being disseminated and discussed, the Schools Committee Conference was held on Princeton’s campus in late September. An event for Schools Committee Members aiding in the admissions process, the workshop was intended to cover topics like coeducation, student dissent and “other areas in which Princeton is proceeding in new directions.”¹⁹⁰ In his closing remarks at the conference, John Osander highlighted the potential flaws inherent in the interview process. The Admission Office had observed in-group bias where interviewers were more positive towards students like them, even if their applications were weaker than previously admitted profiles. To highlight this problem, Osander and his colleagues designed a conference exercise that called into question the “reliability” of interviews using two admissions files as a test.¹⁹¹ The goal of the exercise was to show alumni readers that just because a student was a good interviewer (and probably a candidate with a lot of social, economic, or cultural capital), they were not necessarily a top academic prospect. Before adjourning, Osander explicitly stated his two goals for the Schools Committee Conference in his

¹⁸⁹“The Education of Women At Princeton,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, September 24, 1968, 3.

¹⁹⁰Stephen Dreyfuss, “Weekend Admission Workshop Reviews Alumni Representation,” *The Daily Princetonian*, September 30, 1968, 3. Of note: papers from this conference survive, but are very damaged as the result of flooding in the Princeton Archives.

¹⁹¹Princeton Admission Office, *Admission Workshop Papers*, AC152, PUA, 5.

closing remarks. According to him, the dual purposes of the workshops were to “bring you [alumni] into closer contact with some of the important things going on at Princeton, and to give us [the Admission Office] the benefit of your involvement in long-range planning.”¹⁹²

While the Admission Crisis would later be sparked by alumni who felt that the interview process was changed clandestinely, surviving documents suggest otherwise. Although the entire programme from the Schools Committee Conference is not in the archives, the surviving sources prove that Schools Committee volunteers and Admissions Officers openly discussed problems with the Princeton interview process. The goal of the Admission Office was to highlight what they were doing to change their practice and improve the admissions process. This type of community discussion about how to build a better recruitment system continued in other places, too.

On October 7, 1968, a *Daily Princetonian* article was published with the headline “Admissions: Restructuring Of Organization Suggested.” This front page story highlighted issues with admissions processes and procedures. In particular, the article pointed to the problem of alumni participation in admissions explaining that “the lack of experienced admission officers places undue emphasis on alumni opinions and prevents close contact with local schools.”¹⁹³ The writer specifically considered why non-admissions staff alumni might make poor interviewers. As he noted, “It is inevitable that each of these men [Alumni Schools Committee members]

¹⁹²Princeton Admission Office, *Admission Workshop Papers*, AC152, PUA, 4.

¹⁹³Stephen Dreyfuss, “Admissions: Restructuring Of Organization Suggested,” *The Daily Princetonian*, October 7, 1968, 1.

will pursue his recruitment and interviewing with the memory of his Princeton fondly in mind.”¹⁹⁴ Reading between the lines it seems that the reporter, Stephen Dreyfuss, felt that alumni would be out of touch with modern Princeton and its students. President Goheen’s observation that Princeton needed to adapt to the “needs of its time” is echoed in this student-authored article.¹⁹⁵ As Dreyfuss noted on the evaluative aspect of interviewing, “It is doubtful that persons far from the actual selection process can grade applicants fairly using the same scale the staff employs.”¹⁹⁶ The article highlights the distinction that was being made between professional admissions officers and everyone else. This identity in opposition, alumni *not* admissions officers, would become important during the later Admissions Crisis.

Notably, John Osander was not the only one calling for change with regards to how interviews were used. Edward Sullivan, who was Dean of the College, spoke at the Schools Committee Conference and recommended that the numerical grades used by alumni to grade interviewees should be discontinued. He made this recommendation after seeing the misalignment between alumni and admissions staff rankings.¹⁹⁷ This shows that other administrators noticed the disconnect between how alumni perceived students versus how professional admissions officers ranked those same candidates. This represented a change in the identity of Princeton gatekeeping. While admissions officers might have in the past overridden some alumni rankings, this change formalized a practice that had been going on in some

¹⁹⁴ Dreyfuss, “Admissions: Restructuring Of Organization Suggested,” 1.

¹⁹⁵ Robert F. Goheen to Orvel Sebring, Dec. 26, 1968.

¹⁹⁶ Dreyfuss, “Admissions: Restructuring Of Organization Suggested,” 1.

¹⁹⁷ Dreyfuss, “Admissions: Restructuring Of Organization Suggested,” 1.

form for years. More than anything, Osander believed that interviews were “supposed to help candidates.”¹⁹⁸

In the October 16, 1968 *Admissions Bulletin* the Admissions Office published a recap of the September conference and again reiterated a similar point to alumni readers. The *Bulletin* said:

The 1968 Workshop focused on several major areas: new and important facts about Princeton; *the aims of the interview* [italics added]; the increasing complexity of admission decision-making; financial aid and the recruitment of the disadvantaged; and two controversial topics at Princeton today - - the education of women and student dissent.¹⁹⁹

As existing archival documents show, the Admissions Office was clearly and regularly communicating with the Princeton community about their policies and procedures. Their frank discussions of what they were doing and why reflect a university grappling with the shift from elite to mass education, a period during which the identity of Princeton and Princetonians was in flux.

As the fall continued so did discussions regarding the future of Princeton and the types of students that should be admitted as undergraduates. A *Princeton Alumni Weekly* article from October entitled “On Recruiting Black Students” drew attention to the fact that Princeton was admitting more Black and minority students.²⁰⁰

Interestingly, that same issue contained a letter from an alumnus, James Harrison Cohen, about the recruitment of what he characterized as “disadvantaged students.” Harrison Cohen stated that he thought this recruitment was being done to protect the

¹⁹⁸John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

¹⁹⁹Princeton University Admissions, *Admissions Bulletin*, October 16, 1968, Admissions Office Records, PUA.

²⁰⁰John V. Dippel, “On Recruiting Black Students,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, Oct 15, 1968, 13.

university's image. He complained that the Admissions Office was “obsessively concerned” with the image of the university and ignoring “standards of proven excellence” for candidates.²⁰¹ While it is not clear exactly what Harrison Cohen meant by “proven excellence” he was seemingly advocating to maintain the status quo and not change Princeton’s recruitment process.

It is noteworthy that people like Harrison Cohen wanted to preserve the elite identity of Princeton because John Osander and his staff shared that same goal. However, they believed that this should be accomplished in different ways. To Osander, the Admissions Office was looking for excellence in all candidates. In particular, they sought students who had “triumphed over a tough background” and admissions officers believed that some of the best students fell into that category.²⁰² Beyond consideration of a student’s background and grit, Princeton staff were actively trying to preserve academic standards by changing and modernizing while still enrolling students with very promising academic potential. Although research linking higher income to better academic outcomes was not yet available in the same way it is today, the admissions officers at Princeton had witnessed this in practice. They inherently knew what would be concluded by researchers: poor and minority students were not any less smart than their peers. This meant that if Princeton did not change admissions policies and procedures the university faced losing out on some of the best students who were not already members of the American elite.

²⁰¹James Harrison Cohen, letter to the editor, “Disadvantaged’ Admissions,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 15, 1968, 5.

²⁰²John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

People like Harrison Cohen wanted Princeton to adhere to “standards of proven excellence” that were based on the type of elite students Princeton had admitted previously. What he failed to grasp was that the best students, as the Patterson Report described, wanted to learn from “persons who have different combinations of qualities [from themselves].”²⁰³ Princeton had to admit a diverse body of high achieving candidates to attract the best students. That meant admitting a diverse class of students whose identities may or may not have matched with those that had studied at Princeton in previous decades.

Letters continued to arrive at the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* as alumni digested the prospect of a changing Princeton. In late October, 14 letters to the editor were published that dealt with the topic of coeducation (this represented all of the letters received after the publication of the Patterson Report, not just a selection).²⁰⁴ The letters showcased a chorus of voices across the spectrum of pro- and anti-coeducation. It allowed the community to engage in dialog and contemplate potential changes. Beyond the forum of the *Alumni Weekly* the Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton also directly solicited correspondence as alumni registered their thoughts on coeducation.²⁰⁵ People like E. Trudeau Thomas, Class of 1923, and Warman Welliver, Class of 1934, wrote in favour of coeducation after having worked at mixed universities. Both relayed that they had seen coeducation be successful at other institutions.²⁰⁶ Others, like George R. Cook III, Class of 1926, replied and urged

²⁰³“Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, “The Education of Women at Princeton,” 2.

²⁰⁴“Letters,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 22, 1968, 5 & 18-19.

²⁰⁵Alumni Letters, Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton Records, AC184, PUA.

²⁰⁶ “Letters,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 22, 1968, 5.

the trustees to wait until he was “stone dead!” to go co-ed.²⁰⁷ The potential change to becoming a coeducational institution loomed over Princeton as administrators worked to finalize what the university should do.

As the Winter holidays approached, the Admissions Office continued to work towards improving processes and procedures. To do this they organized five work groups that were devoted to studying and making recommendations about female students, disadvantaged applicants, the alumni schools committee handbook, admission research and special students.²⁰⁸ Professor James Banner, a history professor, chaired the committee on coeducation. The goal was to make sure that Princeton would be “prepared” for coeducation based on the assumption that the Board of Trustees would approve of moving to mixed instruction.²⁰⁹ Since the Admission Office had never had to evaluate women applicants, they needed to develop new internal policies and practices that would facilitate this change.

Finally, on January 11, 1969, the Board of Trustees voted to admit women. The vote was not unanimous, but coeducation won by a vote of 24 to 8. Quickly, the Admissions Office had to scramble to coordinate that process and move to accept women candidates they had shortlisted in the event of a positive vote from the trustees. In April of 1969, women were sent acceptance letters as part of the Class of 1973. This change was important for the university as it was seen as a way to secure Princeton’s future as a leading American higher education institution. It also signaled the university’s acknowledgement of the larger shift occurring as the

²⁰⁷“Letters,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 22, 1968, 5.

²⁰⁸Stephen Dreyfuss, “Five Committees Created To Advise On Admissions”, *The Daily Princetonian*, December 5, 1968, 1.

²⁰⁹Stephen Dreyfuss, “Five Committees Created To Advise On Admissions”, 1.

country moved from elite to mass higher education. As Weiss Malkiel has explained of this decision, “Princeton officials were thinking a little bit about whether Princeton would be good for women — but they were thinking a lot more about whether women would be good for Princeton.”²¹⁰ In many ways, changing who was admitted to Princeton helped cement the Admissions Office’s ability to recruit the high achieving students that they had seen enrol elsewhere. In university officials’ minds, this was one of the ways to secure Princeton’s future and its identity as an elite institution that attracted top academic talent.

The spring of 1969 was important, and not just from the standpoint of gender equality. The second semester saw continued empowerment for both staff and students at Princeton as many worked together to improve the university and its operations. In May, the Council of the Princeton University Community (CPUC) was established. Chaired by Professor Stanley Kelley Jr., the CPUC was described as “a permanent conference of the representatives of all major groups of the University” where “they could each raise problems that concern them and...be exposed to each other’s views.”²¹¹ The CPUC included faculty, students, staff and alumni representatives, but meetings were open to all. This type of collaboration and empowerment was very much a hallmark of Robert Goheen’s Princeton Presidency and was another instance which showcased the university listening to and incorporating the suggestions of students, the people most like future applicants. With their input, administrators could better understand what students wanted in a

²¹⁰Weiss Malkiel, *“Keep the Damned Women Out”: The Struggle for Coeducation*, 173.

²¹¹Princeton University, “Council of the Princeton University Community,” accessed July 5, 2020, <https://cpuc.princeton.edu/>.

university and continue to make changes at Princeton that would attract talented individuals from a wide range of backgrounds.

President Goheen's leadership was pivotal in bringing change to Princeton. As has been mentioned previously, he was very much a part of what Hollinger describes as the "the Protestant boomerang," a globally minded group of leaders that rose to prominence in the post-war period.²¹² Goheen published a book, *The Human Nature of a University*, in 1969. While obviously edited and curated, it does offer a window into his mindset as Princeton's President. His identity as a former Princeton student, but also as an administrator attuned to the needs of a new generation of students, allowed him to see the university from a unique perspective. Goheen reflected on the modern university saying:

Today it is clear that there is a marked desire among many students and many faculty members to have an effective role in the direction of their universities. And what is more important, they seem willing—in principle, at least—to devote time and effort to it. This was not always so, and may not be again. As long as faculty and students are inclined to effective participation, it is in everyone's best interest, I believe, to draw on what they can contribute.²¹³

This willingness to accept increased student involvement and move away from a more paternalistic university culture also contributed to the changing identity of Princeton and what it meant to be a Princeton student.

The CPUC was not a unique development as a push towards collaboration was also seen in the Admissions Office. John Osander and the admissions staff noted the changes that were taking place at Princeton and shaped the Admissions

²¹²David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 2017), 1.

²¹³Robert Francis Goheen, *The Human Nature of a University* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 7.

Office's policies and procedures to reflect what was happening across the university. They reacted by getting faculty and students directly involved in the admissions process. These new people were involved in interviewing, traveling, and sitting in on meetings.²¹⁴ This mixing and inclusion brought new people and ideas into a previously isolated admissions team and also helped change how admissions officers viewed their work. Osander remembered this time saying, "I developed a hang-up on selecting people. You want to be very conscious and circumspect about doing it well!"²¹⁵

At the same time, admissions officers continued to travel and recruit all over the country in a business as usual manner. As is common today, they participated in something called "small group travel" and teamed up with admissions staff from other colleges. In the spring of 1969, Princeton admissions personnel were connecting with peers from other highly selective institutions and sharing tidbits about what was happening at Princeton. As they mixed over coffee or lunches on the road, the Princeton staff and others like them discussed how to streamline procedures and make the process easier for a growing number of applicants. In most cases, they realized they were doing duplicate work and wanted to change the application process so that it would be easier for colleges, high schools, and students. In many places, Osander described the "admission problem" which he characterized as a number of unnecessary complexities that made accessing higher

²¹⁴John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

²¹⁵John Osander, interview with author, May 23, 2020.

education difficult for students.²¹⁶ Seeing this, Osander and other like minded admissions officers considered ways in which they might help solve this problem. In working together admissions officers were envisioning themselves. They were no longer just as representatives of one college but potential ambassadors for all of higher education.

Building on that collective energy, Edward Wall, the Dean of Admission at Amherst College, took up the mantle of cooperation. Based on conversations that happened during travel with colleges like Bates, Colby, Middlebury, Trinity, Wesleyan, and Williams, Wall put forward a plan that would unite the colleges even further by connecting their admissions processes. Noting the success of “SAM,” the Single Application Method, that had been implemented by the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) in 1966-67, Wall devised a plan for how elite colleges in the Northeast might be able to do something similar.²¹⁷ Wall drafted a proposal regarding potential cooperation in August of 1969 that will be discussed further in Chapter Four. Wall’s vision would prove difficult to execute as officials from many different colleges had to agree on one application.

At the same time, college officials knew that they could work together because past cooperation had proved that common processes were possible. Many colleges had been participating in a shared Secondary School Report (SSR) form for a number of years. From 1965 to 1970 the use of the common SSR doubled from

²¹⁶Princeton Admissions Office, *Admission Handbook*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA; *A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

²¹⁷Edward Wall, *A Modest Proposal*, August 1969, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

approximately 40 to 80 admissions offices.²¹⁸ Institutions from Colby College to Stanford University were able to compromise regarding how high school principals and counselors would report information about things like class rank, personal characteristics, and grades.²¹⁹ This allowed school officials to copy one form for many colleges rather than continually duplicate information.

Despite cooperation between colleges, Princeton still received regular correspondence from high school officials offering suggestions about how they could further improve admissions procedures. In a letter dated June 10, 1969 came from Chevy Chase High School in Maryland and appealed to the deans and directors of admission at “leading colleges.” It called for a streamlining of teacher recommendation forms so that teachers were not needlessly duplicating information. While they applauded the Common SSR form, the teachers believed colleges could do better.²²⁰ They outlined the “tremendous burden writing recommendations” placed on teachers and the “magnitude” of the letters that they were writing on students’ behalf.²²¹ Constant contact and collaboration with others made officials like Osander want to change processes and innovate how admissions worked both at Princeton and beyond.

In that vein, Princeton admissions officers were very much aware of the existing collaboration within admissions and continued working towards an admissions process that would better serve students, high schools, and colleges and

²¹⁸*Common Secondary School Form*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

²¹⁹*Common Secondary School Form*, Admission Office Records, PUA.

²²⁰Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School Teachers to Admissions Deans, June 10, 1969, Ivy Group, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

²²¹Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School Teachers to Admissions Deans, June 10, 1969, Ivy Group, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

thus solve Osander's "admissions problem." Suggestions like those from Chevy Chase, coupled with their own thinking, would lead Princeton innovators to continue working towards a more collaborative admissions process. Having streamlined their own internal systems, broadened collaboration, and expanded the types of students they were admitting, Princeton Admission Office and Osander were ready to tackle something larger.

This chapter has shown that themes of change, identity, and power were constantly being explored at Princeton during the 1960's. Changes on the national scale in the form of social movements meant that Princeton was forced to confront its history of being an institution that was dominated by the American elite and figure out how to judge its own history and adapt to the times. To stay relevant Princeton began admitting both minorities and women for the first time—all within a very short window of less than three years. Almost overnight the look and feel of Princeton and Princetonians changed dramatically. The Princeton identity was totally different from what it had been just a half a decade previously. While this was in line with the national shift from elite to mass higher education, it did not make the changes easy for some in the Princeton community who longed for the Princeton of the past. Despite the alumni's wistful remembrances, changes in population and enrollment meant that there was no turning back to an older way of doing things with regards to undergraduate admissions.

Changes in admissions procedures meant that who could be a Princetonian shifted dramatically. This changed Princeton's institutional identity and affected the identities of Princetonians, past, present, and future. While the institution proved

fairly nimble and was able to accept larger societal changes and incorporate those into university life, some alumni bristled over these modifications. Many reacted poorly and felt that their belief systems and culture were being attacked, much like other aristocrats who had faced similar declines in previous eras. Feeling that their morality was being called into question and simultaneously worried that they were losing power and authority over Princeton's admissions process, a small number of alumni rallied together in an attempt to preserve their vision of a university that no longer existed. As the next chapter will show, the Admissions Crisis was fueled by a longing to return to a Princeton that no longer existed. While this would trigger a number of events on the Princeton campus, it most directly impacted the work of a very innovative Admission Office. These impacts will be explored in more depth in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4: The Admissions “Crisis” at Princeton

Before the return to campus in September in 1969, a lot was happening. In July, Princetonians watched on television as American astronauts walked on the moon for the first time.²²² The next month, youth from all over the United States made the pilgrimage to the iconic Woodstock Festival in upstate New York.²²³ As September began, so too did classes at Princeton. For the first time in university history women entered as full time undergraduates alongside their male classmates (see Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Bric-A-Brac. *Female Princeton University Student During the First Year of Coeducation*, Princeton University Publications Collection, AC364, PUA.

The beginning of the academic year signaled the start of another admissions cycle. As the Admission Office and Alumni Schools Committees readied themselves

²²²Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s*, xxviii.

²²³Monteith, 68.

for another year of recruitment, controversy erupted in the form of an “Admission Crisis” as some alumni cried foul over perceived changes to the role of the interview in the admission process. Unhappy about changing admissions norms and procedures, a small but vocal group of alumni rallied together in an attempt to resurrect a more homogeneous Princeton. As this chapter will show, this vision did not align with university goals and, in some ways, represented pining for an idyllic Princeton that existed largely in rosy retrospection. While their vision for Princeton that involved returning to a bygone era may have been impossible to construct, alumni did create real problems for Princeton administrators. University leaders needed to engage with accusations that they were not accepting elite academic candidates and explain why Princeton was changing its admission procedures. This controversy would continue and have implications beyond the 1969-70 academic year.

As usual, nothing at Princeton happened in a vacuum. President Richard Nixon’s “Silent Majority” speech of November of 1969, while at first glance unrelated to changes at Princeton, helps contextualize the thoughts and feelings of alumni who cried “crisis.” In his televised address Nixon famously asked Americans who were not involved with the movement cultures of the era support his agenda in Vietnam.²²⁴ Nixon claimed that a vocal minority of counter-culture protesters created a misrepresentation of the will of the American people, a group he dubbed the “silent majority.” While it is not the focus of this chapter, Nixon’s speech provides an

²²⁴Richard Nixon, *November 3, 1969: Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam*, accessed via the Miller Center at The University of Virginia, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/november-3-1969-address-nation-war-vietnam>.

interesting comparison to the Admission Crisis which was unfolding almost concurrently because alumni expressed similar sentiments that a small group was unduly influencing admissions decisions and policies.

Nationally and at Princeton, American identity and power was being reconsidered and redistributed, but the process was not always smooth. In some ways, Nixon's sentiments were echoed in the words of upset Princeton alumni. According to Scott Laderman, Nixon's speech highlighted issues swirling around "patriotism, race, and class"; it had a "powerful implication" because it suggested that the radicalism of the 1960's was not representative.²²⁵ Alumni like John Thatcher, Class of 1953, similarly felt that a few rogue actors at Princeton were implementing huge change. In addition to "policy shifts and resultant misunderstandings," Thatcher took exception to his own perceived loss of power as an alumni.²²⁶ He disliked being stripped of powers like being able to submit a "preferential list" of candidates for admission, which was something the Admission Office had moved away from due to bias that benefited some groups more than others.²²⁷ According to Osander, some alumni "weren't big on minorities or poor kids, so those ones [once admitted] caused some controversy."²²⁸

This dissonance at Princeton connected to what was happening nationally and specifically Nixon's silent majority speech. Laderman explains that Nixon was "masterful at exploiting white resentment" and united sentiments against a range of

²²⁵Scott Laderman, *The "Silent Majority" Speech: Richard Nixon, the Vietnam War, and the Origins of the New Right* (Routledge, 2019), i.

²²⁶John H. Thatcher to S. Barksdale Penick, January 12, 1970, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

²²⁷John H. Thatcher to S. Barksdale Penick, January 12, 1970.

²²⁸John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

people including the Eastern liberal press and campus radicals.²²⁹ Similarly, during the Admissions Crisis alumni channeled their anger and resentment at an assortment of people including admissions personnel, academics, and even some undergraduate students.

Controversy abounded while the Admission Office needed to, and proceeded to, recruit students in a business as usual type manner. Despite some obvious changes that resulted in coeducation and continued integration (see Fig. 5 from “Princeton in a New Light,” a slide show developed by the Office of Admission to showcase university life), the steadfast cycle of admissions continued much as it always had before. This chapter will explore, in depth, what happened at Princeton during this pivotal time and why this history, while basically forgotten and short, deserves attention today.

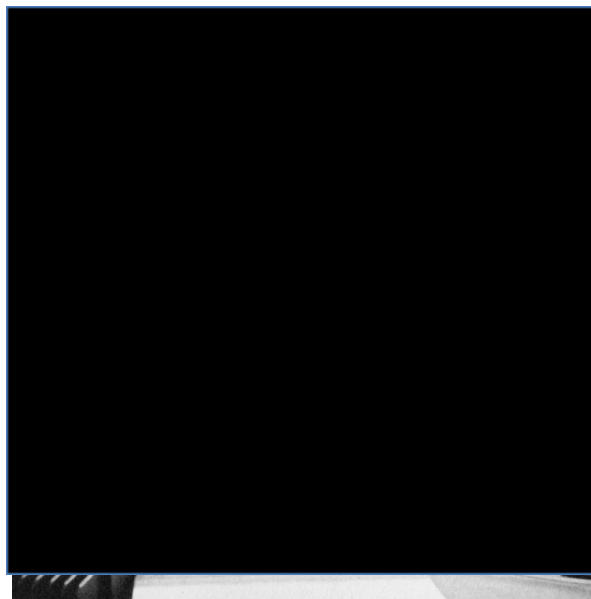


Fig. 6. Princeton in a New Light. *Wayne Hunt, Class of 1973, ca. 1970.* Historical Subject Files Collection, PUA.

²²⁹Laderman, *The “Silent Majority” Speech*, 95.

Princeton in Flux, School Year 1969-70

The academic year 1969-70 was important at Princeton because it signaled a change as more women and minorities entered campus, but events elsewhere also caught the university's attention too. After much fanfare surrounding the arrival of women and "moving day" in September, the campus settled into a routine.²³⁰ After the publication of a new Admission Handbook that autumn, disagreement over how admissions were being done at Princeton began building and before Winter Break some alumni were discussing an Admissions Crisis. This crisis played out over the course of the academic year and will be discussed in depth throughout this chapter.

Returning to the larger national picture, that spring President Nixon announced the invasion into Cambodia at the end of April and Princeton students jumped into action to protest. Approximately 4,000 students, faculty, and staff packed into Jadwin Gymnasium on May 4th and called for a general "strike against war."²³¹ Unlike some campuses, student demonstrations at Princeton remained peaceful, and much of this can be attributed to President Goheen and his active listening and thoughtful leadership.

As the academic year drew to a close in May, four unarmed student protesters were shot by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State University in Ohio.²³² This incident captures the type of divide that existed between student activists and those

²³⁰ Greg Conderacci, "Moving Days Are Here For The Girl Next Door," *The Daily Princetonian*, September 8, 1969.

²³¹Office of the President Records, Robert F. Goheen Subgroup, *Collection Overview*, accessed October 2, 2020, <https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/collections/office-president-records-robert-f-goheen-subgroup>.

²³²Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s*, 144.

who were not ready to embrace change. As many Princeton students supported a more open and diverse campus (and themselves represented the movement towards a more diverse class), the Princeton identity was in flux. As Osander would later characterize it, “By the time we got [to admitting] women we were still battling over minorities.”²³³ A constant undercurrent tugged at members of the larger Princeton community as administrators, alumni, and students all struggled to determine the new bit parts they would play in the admission process. Questions over the future of the Princeton identity came to a head in the form of the Admissions “Crisis.” The following sections of this chapter will detail how that crisis unfolded and what it meant for Princeton, Princeton admissions, and the larger admissions community.

It is clear from examining archival records that Princeton was not the only campus where admissions officers were thinking about their roles as gatekeepers and how to improve their work. Ed Wall, Associate Dean of Admissions at Amherst College, circulated a memo in August that suggested that elite East Coast colleges should work together to use one admissions form.²³⁴ Wall proposed that the elite East Coast colleges work together to use one admissions form. His idea was to allow students to submit one form to their first choice college and include a list of alternates ranking their preferences. If the top choice institution did not admit the candidate, the form would be forwarded along until they were admitted. If not admitted to any of their choices, the final admissions office in possession of the application would offer the candidate a chance to apply to additional colleges. Wall

²³³John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

²³⁴Wall, *A Modest Proposal*.

addressed his peers in admissions offices saying, “If we can forget our pecking order hang-ups and join hands in a cooperative effort of this kind, I see the beginnings of at least a partial solution to the college admission rat race.”²³⁵ This letter was important because it demonstrated that administrators saw the value in trying to simplify a process that involved a lot of duplication of information from students, teachers, and colleges.

However, Wall’s proposal was not revolutionary. His ideas were influenced by George Hanford’s College Admissions Matching Plan (CAMP). As the Executive Vice President of CEEB, Hanford had taken note of the United Kingdom’s success with the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) and wanted to create a similar clearing house for the United States admissions process. Following Hanford’s lead, the Associated Colleges of the Midwest had created and experimented with something they called the Single Application Method (SAM), a smaller-scale but successful common form.²³⁶ The idea of process simplification was not revolutionary, but it had never been widely used within undergraduate admissions in the United States.²³⁷ Discussions like this, spurred by individuals like Ed Wall, were taking place around John Osander. Devoted to professional practice and how to improve the work of the Admission Office at Princeton, he took in the information and continued to think about improvements.

Around the same time that Ed Wall was proposing using a standard application form, the Ivy Group, a collection of admissions officers from the Ivy

²³⁵Wall, *A Modest Proposal*, 4.

²³⁶Wall, *A Modest Proposal*, 1.

²³⁷Blair Stewart, “The Liberal Arts,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 37, no. 6 (1966): 340–44.

League and MIT, were corresponding with a range of colleges to confirm an updated version of the Secondary School Report (SSR) Form, a reference letter and academic history overview that had been in use for a number of years and allowed school personnel to use a common template.²³⁸ This collective effort led to approximately 80 colleges accepting the same recommendation form from school counselors by the academic year 1969-70. This standardization was important because school officials wishing to consolidate work could request a list of the participating institutions and then send copies of the same SSR to many colleges. The SSR was welcomed by counselors who previously complained about needing to duplicate their work to send slightly different forms to every college.

Much of the organizational work that was happening in the autumn of 1969 on the SSR flowed out of Harvard and the office of Robert Kaufmann, Director of Admissions. Cooperative work like the SSR demonstrated what admissions officers and offices could accomplish collectively. Because of this, admissions officers and their collaborators were able to see, at least to a certain extent, a united group of professionals. That they were able to work together to improve the application forms used in admissions was not something that went unnoticed. While each college had a unique identity, they shared very similar admissions procedures and used almost equivalent processes to admit students. By working collectively, college personnel were able to make the lives of school officials easier by lessening the workload of each student's application.

²³⁸Archival records at Princeton suggest that this shared form had been used for the first time around 1963 by approximately 13 colleges. By 1965, there were 44 universities sharing the form. See: *Common Secondary School Form; Joint Secondary School Report Form*, May 26, 1965. Admission Office Records, PUA.

Because of the shared nature of the SSR form, any college using it could submit suggestions or changes that were then considered by a committee of college representatives. While the Ivy League and Harvard specifically wielded power in the creation of the form, this joint-project showed that a range of institutions could successfully work together. John Osander, always interested in innovating and improving was continually paying attention to these types of developments and considering further improvements both at Princeton and beyond. All of this synergy in the admissions realm was happening in parallel to what could be considered a monumental year at Princeton.

In September of 1969, 101 women freshmen entered the university as full members of the first mixed class in Princeton's history. This transformation was not just ideological, it was surprisingly physical too. Pyne Hall, an existing dormitory, was renovated prior to the arrival of the new women students and equipped with brand new lounges, a kitchen, a laundry room, and additional bathrooms.²³⁹ The university spent \$160,000 in total readying the campus to receive female students by renovating living spaces, adding bathrooms, and installing additional flood lighting throughout the campus.²⁴⁰ These physical changes were especially obvious to alumni who had frequented The Princeton Inn. The university purchased the building in order to gain space for an additional student dormitory needed to house both male and female students. For alumni, The Princeton Inn had long been a gathering place before football games. The *New York Times* characterized the inn's demise by

²³⁹Luther Munford, "Coeducation at Princeton: The Struggle of an Idea at a University in Transition," *The Daily Princetonian*, Oct. 21, 1969, 13.

²⁴⁰Luther Munford, "Construction Boosts Coed Living Space," *The Daily Princetonian*, September 8, 1969, 1.

saying that it was “a victim of coeducation and the changing character of Princeton itself.”²⁴¹ Even for those who were not keeping up on all of the news from their alma mater, it would have been hard for visiting alumni to miss the fact that a modernizing Princeton looked different from the campus they had known. These physical changes were directly connected to the shifting identity of who could be a Princetonian. As this chapter will show, not all alumni were interested in expanding that definition and embracing new types of students while also relinquishing perceived powers that were attached to their alumni status. These identity issues help fueled the Admissions Crisis.

It was also during September of 1969 that the first chapter of President Goheen’s book, *The Human Nature of a University*, was published in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. In the piece, Goheen highlighted the distrust that many Americans felt towards academia and explained that this distrust arose out of misunderstanding. While there is no discernable evidence that Goheen was reacting to Admissions Crisis sentiments (the timing of the publication suggests it was written and edited before the controversy arose), his writing showcases a leader who understood larger issues faced by universities like Princeton. As President, he knew that alumni would often disagree with how their institution evolved. Goheen noted in his writing that despite more people than ever before engaging with institutions of higher learning, they still failed to understand what universities were *supposed* [emphasis added] to do.²⁴² He knew and explained that the constituents within a university could not be

²⁴¹Special to The New York Times, “The Princeton Inn Will Close and Become Student Housing,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 1969, 25.

²⁴²Goheen, *The Human Nature of a University*, 3.

distilled to just being members of a certain group. Instead, individuals at Princeton were just that—individuals. To Goheen, statements making broad assumptions about groups on campus like “the professors” or “the students” were almost always incorrect if built on generalities.²⁴³

Goheen’s writing gives modern readers insight into his thinking and provides specific examples about how he approached his role as the leader and President of Princeton. In particular, his writing is noteworthy in relation to the Admissions Crisis because he saw assumptions as the cause of many of the problems in higher education. As will be explored further in this chapter, stakeholders involved in the Admissions Crisis ended up vilifying one another and noting being able to find common ground. Goheen had seen similar issues before and noted that, “misunderstanding grows at least in part out of the tendency so many of us have to see others only as stereotypes.”²⁴⁴ As a leader, Goheen was a keen student of human behaviour. He understood how the people around him thought, but importantly he also was able to empathize with a broad range of people.

Beyond his understanding of people, Goheen was astute in his observation that both students and faculty of the era wanted to be more involved with university decision making. This shift was part of a movement away from a paternalistic Princeton and was a way to empower new groups and include them in the subtle tuning and re-tuning of the Princeton ethos. Not only did this help shape the identity of Princeton, but it also was a symbolic relinquishing of power from leading

²⁴³Robert F. Goheen, “The Human Nature of a University,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, September 23, 1969, 15-17.

²⁴⁴Goheen, *The Human Nature of a University*, 4.

administrators who ceded unilateral decision making to a process that was more collaborative. In the Admission Office this shift was reflected in the decision to proactively hire both faculty and students to read applications.²⁴⁵ This empowered individuals in those two groups to use their point of view and expertise to help select the next generation of Princetonians. However, it also changed who was traditionally seen as a selector of the next class because it expanded the definition of who could “do” admissions.

Collaboration between constituencies occurred and was cemented through organizations like the Council of the Princeton University Community, which was discussed in Chapter Three. Goheen saw integrated projects as positive. He reflected on this power sharing by saying, “when decisions are discussed widely and hammered out jointly among the principal parties of interest, they tend to be sounder institutional decisions” and they gain “wider, readier acceptance.”²⁴⁶ This observation helps explain why students and academics might not have been as affected by the admissions changes at Princeton. Since some of their ranks were included in the decision making, Goheen’s rule of wider and more readily accepted changes held true.

Reflecting on the role of the university, Goheen said that the biggest job of the institution was to “press the search for truth.”²⁴⁷ As a leader Goheen was aware that many people did not appreciate this truth seeking. He described being asked questions like, “Well, why don’t they just teach good, old, solid Americanism - or

²⁴⁵John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

²⁴⁶Goheen, 7.

²⁴⁷Goheen, 23.

good, old fashioned, logic or good, old, intelligible music? (or good, sound, whatever it may be)?”²⁴⁸ Goheen saw this question and decoded it. As he observed, “What such a person wants an institution restricted to in those ideas with which he is comfortable. He wants indoctrination, not education.”²⁴⁹ This indoctrination was not something that Goheen believed in. Nor was it the way to keep Princeton an elite institution as top students and scholars would not gravitate towards indoctrination. As a result, he did his best to listen to all Princetonians while still making sure that the university was run in a way that upheld his principles surrounding the goals of an elite education.

In October of 1969, discussions over admissions continued on campus as perceived changes in procedure caught the attention of the university community. On October 2nd, *The Daily Princetonian* ran a headline proclaiming “Admission Office De-Emphasizes Interview.”²⁵⁰ While it was important enough to warrant coverage in the campus newspaper, it is worth noting that the story did not run on the front page. The most interesting line from the article relating to the Admissions Crisis told readers that, “previously the interview had been considered one of the most important parts of the admission process, *at least from the applicants' viewpoint* [author’s emphasis].”²⁵¹ While interviews were part of the admissions process, the Admission Office was much more interested in things that pointed to sustained excellence in and out of the classroom. They evaluated students through academic

²⁴⁸Goheen, 23.

²⁴⁹Goheen, 23.

²⁵⁰Bill Highberger, “Admission Office De-Emphasizes Interview”, *The Daily Princetonian*, October 2, 1969, 4.

²⁵¹Highberger, “Admission Office De-Emphasizes Interview”, 4.

records, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and essays. Beyond that, it is important to note that the admissions process was holistic and admissions officers considered the entire range of factors mentioned when admitting students.

In the same article mentioned above, John Osander admitted that this change in interview policy had caused some controversy for his office. He acknowledged that “some alumni interviewers wondered why there were no longer compulsory interviews” and that “some alumni had expressed concern...that those who turned down the interview might be potential troublemakers.”²⁵² The use of the word troublemaker is notable because that seems to contradict the image of the student who would be accepted to Princeton, someone with high academic achievement who had the support of his or her teachers and school. As will be explored later in this chapter, it seems that some alumni were using the word troublemaker almost interchangeably with someone who did not fit their vision of the Princeton identity. In many cases it seems that the alumni’s vision of a Princetonian dovetailed almost perfectly with their own economic, social, and cultural backgrounds. As the university changed its identity and moved to include new and different types of students, this caused friction that would continue to build between upset alumni and admissions officers.

At around the same time, the university was still coming to grips with what it meant to be a Princetonian in the modern era. Some were more open to changes than others. One such proponent of change was Thomas Wagner, Class of 1932, who wrote to the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* to show his support for the changing and

²⁵²Highberger, “Admission Office De-Emphasizes Interview”, 4.

more inclusive Princeton identity. His letter reflects President Goheen's suggestion that there was no one size fits all type of alumni (or student). While it would be easy to assume that the older alumni were less inclined to support change, the archival record shows that not to be the case. Wagner wrote about his own love for Princeton and expressed the hope that more people would have a positive collegiate experience saying:

In the autumn of 1928, for reasons not yet disclosed, Princeton accepted me as a freshman. Within twenty-four hours of arriving there, I loved Princeton...Boy and girl, black and white, I pray only that others may come to love her, soon or late, as I did and have and do.²⁵³

Unfortunately for those in the Admission Office, not all alumni were as open to change as Wagner.

On October 10th, John H. Thatcher, Class of 1953, Chairman of the Alumni Schools Committee of Northern New Jersey, wrote John Osander a letter regarding his concerns about changes to the undergraduate interview process. Copies were sent to several trustees and schools committee chairmen.²⁵⁴ Thatcher was part of a vocal group of alumni who were unhappy in the changes they were witnessing at Princeton. In response to these changes, this group of alumni loosely rallied together against the Admissions Office. In a number of places these alumni articulated that they felt that admissions personnel were rogue actors who made decisions without

²⁵³Thomas Wagner, letter to the editor, *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 7th 1969, 5.

²⁵⁴This correspondence is referenced in this letter: John H. Thatcher to Members of the Executive Committee, n.d., Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA. However, I was unable to locate the original letter in the archival record so cannot confirm its exact date or contents. Despite the absence of the original, I believe that, at minimum, a letter that more-or-less matches this description was sent based on other sources in the PUA.

involving or consulting university leaders, specifically President Goheen and the Board of Trustees.²⁵⁵ Based on available archival records, it appears that Osander responded to some of their initial complaints, but his attention was focused on that year's recruitment efforts. Some of his own personal bias may have influenced him to paint these men with a broad brush and not engage fully with their concerns. He would later remember some of these men as "rich and idle" while their attention to detail surrounding alumni interviewing suggests a strong investment in helping Princeton, even if they did not accept the university's changing identity.²⁵⁶

Many of the complaints lodged against the Admissions Office were about the interview, a topic that had been discussed during the conference and workshops that were held for Schools Committee Members in September of 1968.²⁵⁷ Despite these events that were specifically for alumni volunteers, it was clear that some attendees felt that their concerns had fallen on deaf ears. This set the stage for further conflict as alumni reacted and tried to restore their own sense of lost power by eventually bypassing the Admission Office and appealing to other university leaders. This was all happening in the background as typical university business continued to unfold normally.

On October 27, the Deans and Directors of Admission in the Ivy League met for one of their semi annual meetings. The agenda points to specific questions they were entertaining surrounding ways to foster collaboration. This was important because it signaled an ability to change the ways they were doing admissions work.

²⁵⁵ John H. Thatcher to Members of the Executive Committee, n.d., Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

²⁵⁶ John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

²⁵⁷ *Admissions Bulletin*, October 16, 1968, Admission Office Records, PUA.

The group debated if they even had “enough in common to speak with a single voice on some matters in admission.”²⁵⁸ After posing that question, they explored areas where they could work together and noted that because of public perception it might in fact be their “obligation” to “continue to press” for common practices nationally.²⁵⁹ This highlights an interesting professional focus on ethical and altruistic ways to improve admissions for all involved. Discussions of this nature highlight how admissions officers viewed themselves as professionals who should be thought leaders in their field. It also shows how Osander continued to seek insight into national admission policy and the ways in which his own professional practice as an admissions officer was shaped by working collaboratively with others.

Shortly after this meeting between the Ivy League admissions leaders the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* featured a story on undergraduate admissions interviewing. In that article, the idea that the admissions interview was informational and not evaluative was stressed to the reader. Today there is a common misconception among American applicants that their interviews for undergraduate admissions are make-or-break in terms of helping them gain admissions. This is largely untrue and was untrue at Princeton in the 1960’s. Admissions decisions at Princeton were made holistically, thus several parts of an application were weighted and considered by Osander’s team. Today, Princeton considers several aspects of an application to be “very important;” these include academic GPA, the application essay, character/personal qualities, class rank, extracurricular activities, recommendations, rigor of secondary school record, standardized test scores, and

²⁵⁸*Ivy Group Agenda*, October 27, 1969, Admission Office Records, PUA.

²⁵⁹*Ivy Group Agenda*, October 27, 1969, Admission Office Records, PUA.

talent/ability.²⁶⁰ The interview is not in this “very important” category, and it was not stressed during Osander’s tenure either.

According to Osander, the importance of the interview was debated in admissions during the 1960’s.²⁶¹ Performance in high school was what admissions readers valued most. They had anecdotally observed a trend that has since been explored further by researchers: high school results tend to be most indicative of future performance.²⁶² Interviews were (and continue to be) less reliable for admissions purposes because they can be more subjective. While there were some excellent Princeton alumni interviewers in the 1960’s, others were less trusted by the admissions staff.²⁶³ Today, this bias problem persists in admissions. As has been observed by admissions staff, “The notion of “fit” implies preferences for individuals like one’s self, or “in-group preferences” (i.e. preferences for members of the group one identifies with most closely). Fit is therefore an embodiment of both implicit and explicit bias.”²⁶⁴ Furthermore, according to these modern admissions readers, sometimes alumni “struggle with this the most.”²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰The College Board, “Princeton University,” accessed October 2, 2020, <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-university-search/princeton-university>.

²⁶¹John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

²⁶²Saul Geiser and Maria Veronica Santelices, “Validity Of High-School Grades In Predicting Student Success Beyond The Freshman Year: High-School Record vs. Standardized Tests as Indicators of Four-Year College Outcomes,” *Research & Occasional Paper Series* (University of California, Berkeley, 2007).

²⁶³John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

²⁶⁴Olufemi Ogundele, Ashley Pallie, Calvin Wise, “Challenging Your Lens: Diversity Training for Admissions Readers” (PowerPoint presentation, NACAC Guiding the Way Conference, Bethesda, MD, July 27, 2020).

²⁶⁵Ogundele, Pallie, Wise, “Challenging Your Lens: Diversity Training for Admissions Readers.”

Seeing implicit and explicit bias at work in admissions, the Princeton Admissions Office began to downplay the role of the interview and also articulated that change. For admissions officers, this change was regarded as positive. It was something they could do to make admissions more fair. As Osander reflected: “We were driving to be as honest as we could.”²⁶⁶ In expressing this change to applicants, the Admissions Office was trying to alleviate applicant fears that a few minutes of interviewing would negate things like their entire cumulative academic performance or recommendations from their teachers.²⁶⁷ Instead, admissions staff wanted the candidate to have a conversation with a Princeton affiliate so that they could learn about Princeton and college life more generally.²⁶⁸ Osander felt that the job of anyone working in admissions was to help students, he wanted anyone associated with Princeton to be a proponent for higher education generally and ask things like, “What are your questions? How can we help you?”²⁶⁹

While there seems to be no direct archival evidence to suggest that the article mentioned previously in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* about admissions interviewing was published in direct response to unhappy Schools Committee Members, the piece seems to address some of their potential concerns. It reiterated ideas from the Admissions Office regarding the “why?” behind their admissions philosophies. The article explained that thirty minutes of interview success (or failure) was not usually the best way to evaluate a student.²⁷⁰ In order to emphasize this to applicants, they

²⁶⁶ John Osander, interview with author, May 23, 2020.

²⁶⁷ Princeton Admissions Office, Admission Handbook, September 1969, Admission Office Records, PUA.

²⁶⁸ John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

²⁶⁹ John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

²⁷⁰ “Admission Interviews,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 28, 1969.

wanted to draw attention to the informational nature of the interview. Rather than base an admissions decision on a few short minutes, admissions officers wanted to see strong performance across a student's entire application. Most important were an applicant's transcript and the letters of recommendation written by their teachers.

²⁷¹ As Osander explained to fellow alumni, "We are very much interested in his [the applicant's] accomplishments, but not how he 'performs' in the interview."²⁷² This represented a change because the new policy meant that students did not need to "play up to his questioner's personal interests."²⁷³ As has already been discussed, this bias is something that modern admissions leaders have commented on and thought about extensively since. No great solution has been introduced, but it is something that continues to be discussed and debated at length.

The perceived change in Princeton interviewing policy was not accepted by everyone on the Schools Committees, especially those who felt their power to influence admissions decisions was being stripped. Ted Weidlein wrote to alumnus Vincent Damian Jr. responding to this claim. As Weidlein explained, "Any parts of the interview leaflet which seem to represent a dramatic change in policy really do so only to the extent that they have now been written down on paper for the first time."

²⁷⁴ In the same letter, Weidlein shared that the Admission Office felt that the interview was the "single greatest source of confusion" for applicants.²⁷⁵ He noted that it would be difficult to quickly come to widespread agreement because "there has been so

²⁷¹ John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

²⁷² The University, *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 28, 1969, 6.

²⁷³ The University, *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 28, 1969, 6.

²⁷⁴ Edward Weidlein to Vincent E. Damian, Jr., October 9, 1969, Admission Office Records, PUA, 2.

²⁷⁵ Edward Weidlein to Vincent E. Damian, Jr., October 9, 1969, 2.

much misunderstanding for so long a time by so many people that it would be folly for us to expect to bring immediate clarity to the whole issue.”²⁷⁶ Weidlein followed-up by saying that he hoped that Damian would still be amenable to what he had described as “the recruitment responsibility and information role” because, according to Weidlein, “these activities are absolutely vital.”²⁷⁷ While the alumni may have felt disenfranchised, the Admission Office knew that with exploding numbers of college bound students that alumni contact with prospective students could still have a profound impact on where students decided to matriculate. In that sense, they very much valued alumni contributions and that value is reflected in the long three page letter Weidlein sent in response to Damian’s concerns.²⁷⁸

In November, a headline in *The Daily Princetonian* proclaimed “Criticism Surrounds Admissions Interview Policy” as groups splintered into different camps.²⁷⁹ Several issues got entangled within the interview debate, and this made smoothing things over more difficult. According to one internal memo, some alumni felt that the Alumni Schools Committees were the “heart and soul” of the Alumni Association and that they had been “turned off” by the Admission Office.²⁸⁰ As is shown through Weidlein’s writing, that was not the case as the Admission Office very much wanted to collaborate with alumni and saw the value in sharing information about Princeton as widely as possible.

²⁷⁶ Edward Weidlein to Vincent E. Damian, Jr., October 9, 1969, 2.

²⁷⁷ Edward Weidlein to Vincent E. Damian, Jr., October 9, 1969, 2.

²⁷⁸Committee on the Education of Women at Princeton, “The Education of Women at Princeton: A Report on the Desirability and Feasibility of Princeton Entering Significantly into the Education of Women at the Undergraduate Level,” PUA.

²⁷⁹Bill Highberger, “Criticism Surrounds Admissions Interview Policy,” *The Daily Princetonian*, November 25, 1969, 1.

²⁸⁰Charles B. Anderson, Memo dated November 21, 1969, PUA.

A communication breakdown between Princeton administrators and alumni began to widen as alumni did not fully understand or agree with what Princeton was doing and why. In the midst of the shift from elite to mass higher education, the Admission Office instinctively knew that the admissions landscape was changing. Anecdotal information and direct feedback from students informed them that young people wanted to go to college in a place that reflected the diversity of American society. Administrators shared information about the changes taking place more broadly in higher education and at Princeton with Princetonians. They did this through things like the Alumni Schools Conference, Admissions Bulletin, and articles in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. But, some alumni did not fully understand or accept the changes taking place. Later on, many in the group would express that it felt like a few people, namely Osander, were responsible for implementing a wholly new vision for Princeton. While earlier sections of this thesis highlight why this was not the case, the reality did not negate alumni feelings that they were being left behind or left out of Princeton's future.

Once it became clear that dissatisfaction over these changes in admissions had united some alumni, the Admission Office seemed to fall prey to one of the mistakes Goheen warned against. Instead of trying to understand and truly listen to upset alumni, the Admission Office saw the angered alumni as a monolithic group. In some ways, this is an understandable reaction. They were in the midst of what was one of the busiest admissions years in Princeton's history. Progressive and wanting to move Princeton and admissions forward, in Osander's mind "Princeton had

emerged from being a very appearance and background place.”²⁸¹ However, not all of the alumni bought into this vision.

Because of the way some of the changes in interview policy were introduced and then discussed, alumni anger continued to rise. As has been highlighted previously, the Admission Office did not anticipate this contention nor did admissions officers react in a way that quickly deescalated tensions. Without a clear change management strategy, they were caught flat footed and were not able to “facilitate and sustain the enthusiastic acceptance and adoption of new strategies,” something that will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.²⁸² Because admissions officers focused on doing what they believed was right for students and right for the university, they did not fully consider how some alumni would react. However, changes in the Princeton identity shifted how gatekeeping into the elite functioned. Unfortunately, admission officers did not have a strong change management strategy nor a way to facilitate community discussion about the transition from elite to mass higher education. As a result, problems quickly ballooned.

As the year continued relations became less cordial. Public slights were dropped on either side of the issue as camps started forming. Dr. D. Bruce Merrifield, Class of 1942, Chairman of the Alumni Council said publicly that alumni like John Thatcher had “misinterpreted the tone” of the new interviewing policy.²⁸³ There does not seem to have been an attempt to find common ground as Merrifield dismissed

²⁸¹John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

²⁸²Cole Clark, “Seven Principles for Higher Education Change Management: Sustaining Stakeholder Commitment in Higher Education,” accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/public-sector/articles/effective-change-management-higher-education.html>.

²⁸³Highberger, “Criticism Surrounds Admissions Interview Policy,” 1.

the idea that the changes in interview policy were having a negative impact on alumni. As he said, "the intent is not at all to abolish the schools committees."²⁸⁴ It seems that in Merrifield's mind, since alumni could still network and gather through venues like the Schools Committees, the problems being raised were being blown out of proportion. On the other side of the issue, some alumni felt like they were being pushed aside and no longer had an impact as applicant screeners.²⁸⁵ Confusion created a divide as the Admission Office saw the alumni's role as supportive, while some of them viewed themselves as evaluators. As has been discussed previously, this showed a lack of understanding on the part of administrators about how to effectively manage institutional change. It also showed that the alumni did not fully grasp how admissions worked procedurally as interviews had never been the deciding factor in admissions decisions. This lack of understanding between groups also constitutes and reflects the culture wars of the 1960's. The rift between Princetonians essentially pitted the old way of doing things against the new. The Admission Office and other administrators were embracing change while Princeton alumni were still learning to navigate a world that looked very different from the one they had inhabited previously. When considering all the changes taking place in that moment historically, it must have felt disorienting for men who cared deeply about Princeton and wanted their beloved alma mater to continue to reflect their own identity. Emotions signal values, so the alumni's

²⁸⁴Highberger, "Criticism Surrounds Admissions Interview Policy," 1.

²⁸⁵ John H. Thatcher to S. Barksdale Penick, January 12, 1970, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

response helps modern observers unpack both what was being said about the Admissions Crisis and also what remained unsaid.

The disagreement over interviewing was complicated. Administrators saw that interviews were not often used decisively in the admissions process so wanted to lessen the burden on all involved by explaining how they were used. Alumni who had been spending their free time helping with this endeavor were hurt, feeling that their time had been poorly spent. This fear was not alleviated by later encounters with other Princetonians. In fact, according to D. Bruce Merrifield's take, interviewing was "a total waste of energy in terms of helping the admissions process."²⁸⁶ By stating this publicly, people like Merrifield may have unwittingly stoked alumni anger over perceived changes. The assumption made by some Princetonians was that alumni were previously either doing something that did not help the admissions office or they were being stripped of their power to pick the next Princetonians. According to one alumni, "We are...zealous about the quality of future Princetonians."²⁸⁷ It is clear from this letter that some alumni did not see eye-to-eye with the Admission Office about which candidates for admission were the best candidates. By eliminating the required interview and making interviews informational, these alumni had a dwindling role in having their voices heard with respect to picking the next Princetonians.

On December 6, 1969, William Lane wrote to President Goheen regarding a resolution to address "Princeton's current admissions policy" that came from the Princeton Club of Chicago. The clash of thinking between leaders on campus and alumni was obvious when Lane wrote, "There is a feeling here in the Chicago area

²⁸⁶Highberger, "Criticism Surrounds Admissions Interview Policy," 1.

²⁸⁷William Lane to Robert Goheen, December 6, 1969, PUA.

that certain negative features have been permitted to seep into our admission system almost by default due to your preoccupation, and that of the Trustees, with so many other complicated affairs of a very dynamic institution at Princeton.”²⁸⁸

Although Lane felt Osander had obtained his role by “default,” as has been discussed previously, Osander took most of his cues in admitting more women and minorities from his predecessor, E. Alden Dunham, and his supervisor and mentor, President Goheen. As is true of any university leader working in admissions, Osander’s ultimate goal was to admit the very best students and class possible. Future students were the foundation upon which Princeton’s continued success and status as an elite university were built.

The aforementioned letter from Lane to Goheen showcases how the themes of power and authority surfaced throughout this moment in Princeton history. A university that was grappling with the transition to mass higher education, it was also a place that was transitioning away from paternalistic rule. Unhappy alumni appealed to decision makers like Goheen and the Board of Trustees while simultaneously casting aspersions on Osander. While the Admission Office had not done a good job with change management in regards to process and procedures, it seems that these men were also out of touch with modern university life. Goheen had shown through both his actions and his words that he embodied his own beliefs about empowering students and staff. Respecting the wishes of these alumni would have meant potentially alienating students who were in the process of choosing a university or students who had yet to apply. Every time Princeton lost a student to Harvard or

²⁸⁸William Lane to Robert Goheen, December 6, 1969, PUA.

Yale, Princeton lost prestige. So while Goheen and the Board of Trustees were incentivised to take alumni seriously when they threatened to withhold donations or stop participating in university functions, the future of the university more squarely rested with the interests of youth. Administrators needed to convince the very best students they could to enrol as those individuals were the future of Princeton (and the people who would donate to the university going forward). Alumni, on the other hand, were the past.

For some alumni, the perceived slight in the downplaying of the interview process was more than they could bear. In February of 1970, Bailey Brower Jr., Class of 1949, wrote a scathing open letter to School Committee Chairmen, Class Secretaries, and Association Secretaries. In writing to this large group of people it was clear that he was trying to convince people to join his cause or at least gain their support. His critiques centered around the fact that beginning that year interviews were to be informative not evaluative. He reiterated the idea that the Admissions Office, led by Jack Osander, was acting without any input from university leaders. As has been shown, Goheen was keenly aware of almost anything of note taking place on campus. The vast amount of correspondence he left behind that pertains to the Admissions Crisis alone makes this claim dubious, at best. What Brower could not or would not accept was that interview bias would stymie efforts to create classes that more closely resembled the make-up of the American population. Goheen, who wanted a more diverse class in order to help retain Princeton's elite status, could not be swayed to turn back the clock on widening participation measures.

Bailey Brower and others like him did not accept the changing Princeton identity. In his widely circulated packet, Brower included correspondence from John Thatcher, Class of 1953. This is noteworthy because both men believed that “evaluation” was an important aspect of the interview. They critiqued Osander for trying to “smooth the matter over.”²⁸⁹ According to Thatcher, the Board of Trustees met on January 23, 1970 to address the interview issue but their resolutions did not quiet his concern and “very deep problems remain[ed] unresolved.”²⁹⁰ And, as a result he called for, “Trustee clarification and redefinition...to restore true effectiveness to the vital work of the Alumni Schools Committees.”²⁹¹

The minutes from the January 17, 1970 meeting of the Board of Trustees paint a slightly different picture of the meeting that Brower seemed to reference.²⁹² The Board discussed admissions interviews during this meeting, but they noted no specific worries about admissions policy or practices. In fact, the most recent admissions statistics indicated that applications were up and that year’s admissions numbers would be some of the strongest in history. Instead of being worried about Princeton’s admissions practices and procedures, the Board was more focused on losing the “loyalty and devotion” of some alumni.²⁹³

Dean Sullivan, a keen observer of Princeton alumni and people in general, pointed out the difficulty in trying to appease the group that was upset. He theorized that alumni were angry about the changes at Princeton, but also probably by the

²⁸⁹*Brower Mailing*, Office of the President, Goheen, Box 98, Folder 5, PUA.

²⁹⁰*Brower Mailing*, PUA.

²⁹¹*Brower Mailing*, PUA.

²⁹²*1969 October-1970 June*, Board of Trustees Records, AC120, PUA.

²⁹³*1969 October-1970 June*, PUA, 14.

changes they were witnessing in American society more generally. As he said: “There is a serious disaffection among alumni, and in a world where various dissatisfactions are diffused and lack focus, the admission question has provided a ready target.”²⁹⁴ Sullivan’s assertion is obvious from the alumni’s emotionally charged letters. Reading through their writing, it was challenging to untangle how such a seemingly small decision that had much more impact on future students than alumni created such a large controversy. To better understand, it is helpful to focus on just how much Princeton had changed in a short period of time.

The changes that had happened at Princeton, while they did not happen overnight, may have felt that way to some. In the autumn of 1967 there were 16 Black undergraduates enrolled in the freshmen class. In September of 1969, that number had increased to 69 (4 women, 65 men). At the very same time, women were able to enrol for the first time and 170 women joined as undergraduates that term.²⁹⁵ The rapid changes in the Princeton identity made some alumni uncomfortable. Their perceived reduction of power in the admissions process made the admissions office an easy scapegoat for their overall discomfort with how American society and Princeton was changing. Despite the overwhelming evidence that the work the admissions office did was highly visible and often interwoven with other university departments and offices, some alumni claimed to have been blindsided by changes to the interview procedures.²⁹⁶ That a few rogue individual administrators like Osander were upending the entire existing admissions system at

²⁹⁴1969 October-1970 June, PUA, 15.

²⁹⁵Munford, “Construction Boosts Coed Living Space,” 1.

²⁹⁶1969 October-1970 June, PUA, 12-3.

Princeton is not reflected in the extensive archival record from that time. The work of the Admissions Office was simply too important to be ignored or fly under the radar.

The copious number of memos preserved in the Princeton Archive between President Goheen and his Director of Admission, Osander, make it clear that Goheen had direct knowledge of what was happening in admissions and why.

What Bailey Brower and other alumni like him wanted was power and authority. They wanted to influence an applicant's acceptance or rejection to Princeton and felt that the interview was an important part of that. Aware that bias crept into interviewing, university officials sought to lessen the impact of a short evaluation that was not necessarily representative of a student's academic and extracurricular talents. As Osander succinctly explained, "Jolly didn't do well in the classroom."²⁹⁷ Like the Crisis of the Aristocracy, the Admissions Crisis was triggered by a series of long established societal patterns being upset. As social changes impacted thinking at Princeton, the Princetonian identity changed to include both minorities and women. In their protests, men like Brower attempted to resist further changes insisting that they were best equipped to help select future Princetonians.

Part of the problem was that alumni like Brower felt that Osander was railroading through liberal changes that were not in line with the beliefs of other university leaders. As has been highlighted previously, this was not the case. Goheen especially was very much attuned to the sentiments of Princeton students, students who wanted their university to change and reflect more accurately American society at large. Although he never used this exact language, Brower's

²⁹⁷ John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

argument against diversification echoed Nixon's idea of a "silent majority." The idea was that alumni wishes were being ignored in favour of Osander's small but vocal minority. This misunderstanding drove Bower to seek out other alumni and Board of Trustee members, people who he believed would share his views. He closed his letter appealing to others to resist change saying, "Tiger, it's time to stand up and be counted."²⁹⁸ While evidence like minutes from Board of Trustee meetings and Goheen's correspondence confirm that university leaders were aware of and approved of Osander's decisions relating to admissions, it appears that he ran afoul of university politics. Very good at his job, Osander may not have been as equipped to deal with the change management and interpersonal conflicts that the admissions post brought with it.

Despite continued protestation from a small but vocal group of alumni, the academic year progressed fairly normally. April brought more developments both in the Admissions Office and on campus. In some ways, it was an important and watershed year for Princeton. The university received over 600 applications from Black teenagers. Of that group 131 men and 31 women were accepted.²⁹⁹ For the first time in university history the Black-white composition of the incoming class would approximate that of the American population. In addition to this, Osander touted that the number of students admitted from "economically and educationally disadvantaged" had increased, both for white and non-white students.³⁰⁰ In that

²⁹⁸*Brower Mailing*, PUA.

²⁹⁹Princeton University Admissions, *Admissions Bulletin*, April 16, 1970, Admissions Office Records, PUA.

³⁰⁰Princeton University Admissions, *Admissions Bulletin*.

sense, Goheen accomplished what he had set out to do in educating young Black students to become “full and fruitful members of society.”³⁰¹

While some alumni worked to get Osander dismissed from his position as Director of Admission, others within the alumni community praised his work. John Brightman, Class of 1929, reported to the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* in a letter that a recent recruiting trip in his home state of Missouri had gone exceptionally well. Brightman’s Class Secretary, George Bassett, Class of 1929, felt that his classmate’s comments would be “of some interest” to their cohort and shared Brightman’s findings. Brightman reported:

Everyone in the Admissions Office is not only highly skilled and dedicated but also sensitive to the thoughts of the alumni...they most certainly do not wish to recruit 'radicals'...Jack Osander and his staff are doing a great job...They are, by and large, selecting kids who are responsible, interesting and certainly in the Princeton tradition...After working with many young applicants, my faith in them has certainly been restored and strengthened.³⁰²

So while some alumni were unhappy with recruitment practices, others were effusive and lavished praise on the admissions team. This diversity in opinion on how Princeton admissions should be done highlights how the Princeton identity was not monolithic. Even Osander, who felt that some alumni were not effective interviewers due to their bias, was also able to see that “there were a certain number of alumni that we counted on and prized.”³⁰³ Shaped by their individual ideas, beliefs, history, and culture, some alumni seemed more able to accept change at Princeton than others.

³⁰¹Melvin McCray, *Looking Back: Reflections of Black Alumni at Princeton*, Historical Audiovisual Collection, AC047, PUA.

³⁰²George Bassett, “Class Notes,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, May 19th 1970, 20.

³⁰³John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 20.

Although “change management” was not yet a field of study in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, aspects of modern change management recommendations for higher education can help historians better understand the problems Osander and Princeton encountered as a result of the Admissions Crisis. According to Cole Clark, “The primary goal of stakeholder commitment (or “change management” as it’s commonly referred to in consultant-speak) is to facilitate and sustain the enthusiastic acceptance and adoption of new strategies, technologies, and processes.”³⁰⁴

Although Osander’s admissions office communicated regularly with Alumni Schools Committee Members, it seems they never got to a point of enthusiastic acceptance with regards to changes within the admissions process. Osander and the Admissions Office initially used one-sided communication and did not foster the type of “multidirectional dialogue” Clark references.³⁰⁵ As the experts, it is understandable that the Admissions Office believed that they had the knowledge to understand what was best for Princeton and the authority to act on the knowledge. But, without substantial opportunities for dialogue, there was no “critical mass of knowledge” in the alumni community.³⁰⁶

In the end, the alumni did not fully understand why changes to the interview were being implemented. It seems that the Admissions Office did not consider the fact that some alumni might react poorly to perceived or actual changes in the admissions process of which they were a tangential part. This is counter to what

³⁰⁴Cole Clark, “Seven Principles for Higher Education Change Management: Sustaining Stakeholder Commitment in Higher Education,” accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/public-sector/articles/effective-change-management-higher-education.html>.

³⁰⁵Clark, “Seven Principles.”

³⁰⁶Clark, “Seven Principles.”

Clark suggests when implementing changes. Administrators are encouraged to “walk a mile in the shoes of those whose roles will change...[and] create win-wins and align incentives.”³⁰⁷ Alumni interviewers interpreted a loss of power and authority. While admissions personnel understood that interviews were flawed because of the bias involved, that message seems to have gotten garbled or failed to reach alumni at all. Alumni who bristled over the changing identity of Princeton also did not seem to grasp how a more diverse class would attract top academic talent. Administrators knew this and openly talked about it, but had seemingly not yet mastered discussing diversity in a way that united Princetonians behind that cause. As a result, some alumni focused on the negative aspects of the change (their perceived loss of power) rather than the positive (maintaining and expanding Princeton’s standing as a leading university). As Bowen, the University Provost at that time, would later write, “the subject of race in America is as sensitive and contentious as it is important.”³⁰⁸ For Princeton to not engage with the end of de jour and de facto discrimination would have signaled the beginning of the end of the university’s elite status.

At the helm of the university, President Goheen was both supportive and understanding of Osander’s work in the admissions office. He realized that the work Osander was doing to modernize Princeton was needed if the university was going to continue to attract the most talented students. In fact, they were already seeing results: during the 1969-70 cycle, the potential applicant group had run as high as 94% ahead of the numbers from the previous year. Not only were they getting many more applications of women who were now able to matriculate, but the pool of men

³⁰⁷Clark, “Seven Principles.”

³⁰⁸ William Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River*, I.

applying increased too. While they previously faced a five year plateau in numbers, this was a dramatic turn around.³⁰⁹ Osander attributed this increase in applications to “coeducation, efforts for black students, the establishment of the Council of the Princeton University Community, and the addition of younger members to the Board of Trustees.”³¹⁰ According to what he told the Board of Trustees, all of these things had elicited “favorable comments” from both candidates and schools.³¹¹

While Goheen was able to be a peacemaker and unite people across the Princeton community, Osander was less understanding of those with views he felt were antiquated. Osander remembered the conflict saying, “They [the alumni] weren’t getting their favourite people in, their nextdoor neighbor or cousin. It wasn’t a mystery to us what they [the alumni] were doing [in recommending these candidates].”³¹² Interviewing and interview policy was a “ready target” but unhappiness was more of a reaction to continued changes at Princeton. This uneasiness throughout the United States and in particular for people like Princeton alumni who were watching their world be upended. In January of 1970, *Time* had named “The Middle Americans” as their “man of the year.” According to *Time*, this group “feared that they were beginning to lose their grip on the country. Others seemed to be taking over —the liberals, the radicals, the defiant young, a communications industry that they often believed was lying to them.”³¹³ The article is interesting because it suggests that the group is a “a state of mind, a morality, a

³⁰⁹1969 October-1970 June, Board of Trustees Records, AC120, PUA, 14.

³¹⁰1969 October-1970 June, PUA, 14.

³¹¹1969 October-1970 June, PUA, 14.

³¹²John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

³¹³*Time*, Man and Woman of the Year: The Middle Americans, January 05, 1970.

construct of values and prejudices and a complex of fears,” something that was reflected in the loosely organized group of alumni who lamented the Admissions Crisis.³¹⁴

For those Princetonians who saw the country changing and balked, a question seemed to swirl just below the surface. As the debate surrounding admissions interviewing continued, some seemed to be asking themselves: if Princetonians were losing influence at Princeton, what other privileges might they continue to lose both there and elsewhere? For many these changes felt connected, at least in part, to the documented phenomena of white feelings of “reverse racism.” Alumni seemed to feel that they were somehow being penalized or discriminated against in favour of new women and minority applicants.³¹⁵ Osander addressed this question in the 1968-1969 *Annual Report* and framed it as “Are you favoring someone whose skin happens to be black?”³¹⁶ However, this was not the intent. Instead, the university wanted to include groups of people who had been prevented from entering Princeton previously. It was about widening participation rather than totally ending white privilege that already made entering Princeton easier for certain types of people.

As the academic year wore on, the admissions staff reported a record number of applications. The 1969-70 year represented a watershed moment as the number of applications submitted increased by approximately 2,500 in a single year. It had

³¹⁴*Time*, Man and Woman of the Year: The Middle Americans, January 05, 1970.

³¹⁵Michael I. Norton and Samuel R. Sommers, “Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game That They Are Now Losing,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 3 (May 1, 2011): 215–18.

³¹⁶ *Annual Report 1968-1969*, Admissions Office Records, PUA, 21.

taken a decade to see a similar bump in the number of applications previously (from 1959 to 1969 the number of applications had increased about the same amount).³¹⁷

Despite criticisms, the admissions staff were doing better than ever before.

Assuming the number of applications can be considered an indication of quality, Princeton was doing better than ever. In a field that celebrates ever increasing numbers of applicants, the Princeton admissions staff were at the top of their game.

The drive towards continuous improvement persisted, however, and Osander and Weidlein as leaders in the Admission Office thought constantly about how they could continue to progress. With this in mind they began working in earnest with other college colleagues on a “Cooperative Project” to “investigate ways to improve the national systems of college admissions” and produce a draft report by the spring of 1971.³¹⁸ The plan was to do a “consumer survey” of problems that colleges could then solve together. The initial group consisted of sixteen colleges that Weidlein would coordinate and correspond with in order to facilitate the project.³¹⁹ This Cooperative Project will be explored in more depth in the coming section of this chapter. The Cooperative Project is hugely important as it ended up being a catalyst for significant admissions changes in the undergraduate admissions landscape in the United States. At the same time that this new development was unfolding, a shadow continued to loom over the Admission Office in the wake of the Admissions Crisis. While it was clear that the alumni did not win, the entire episode impacted Osander’s standing in the Princeton community. As had been true with Joseph Kinmont Hart at

³¹⁷*Annual Report 1969-1970*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

³¹⁸*Annual Report 1969-1970*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA, 7.

³¹⁹*Annual Report 1969-1970*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA, 7.

Vanderbilt University, the line between ideological and personal dislike blurred at Princeton.³²⁰ As Osander would later wonder, “we get so passionate [about admissions], but what are we really accomplishing?”³²¹

Admissions Officers in the Nation’s Service, School Year 1970-71

As the 1970’s began, the Princeton Admissions Office continued to be a busy place. In September, Osander hosted the first meeting about the Cooperative Project. In conjunction with Ted Weidlein he focused on ideas of collaboration and advancement in admission. The two men contacted admissions colleagues at colleges across the United States and suggested convening a think tank-like organization that would study contemporary issues in admissions. Their goal was to identify problems and then work towards solutions. Both men were enthusiastic about the project. Their correspondence shows a great deal of excitement about the idea. They championed the initial proposal and attempted to gain traction for the project by lobbying other admissions officers who they felt would be sympathetic to the cause. More than anything, the project’s goal was to foster mutual support between admissions officers. But, the idea was that they were working together to improve the application process for all stakeholders: colleges, applicants, and high schools.

Compared to the years just preceding it, 1970-71 was relatively calm. Outside of the university, the Vietnam War continued. In June of 1971, the Pentagon Papers

³²⁰Deron R. Boyles, “Joseph Kinmont Hart and Vanderbilt University: Academic Freedom and the Rise and Fall of a Department of Education, 1930-1934,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2003).

³²¹John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

were published after the school year came to an end. This leak gave details about how the Johnson Administration had misled the American public about the Vietnam War. But overall, the charged atmosphere that had existed just a few years earlier on campus and throughout the United States had faded. Still, much was happening in the Princeton Admissions Office.



Fig. 7. University: A Princeton Quarterly. *Donna Palmer, Carol Thompson, Roberto Barragan, John Osander, and Nathaniel Abbott Collaborate in the Princeton Admissions Office, Summer 1970, no. 45, PUA.*

The school year had just begun when the first “Cooperative Project” meeting was held on September 11, 1970. After thinking about admissions for years, Osander and Weidlein were ready to embark on a project that would impact admissions beyond Princeton. Thinking holistically, the pair championed a national undergraduate admissions solution. They wanted to draw widely on the expertise of the many people working in the admissions space. The men advocated bringing a diverse group of people together to study what they had dubbed the “Admissions

Problem.” According to them, “the national sorting of talent” was not an orderly process. It should be the responsibility of admissions officers to serve society and attempt to resolve some of the existing complexities.³²² They proposed a one year project that would bring together admissions officers, counselors, students, teachers, and parents to brainstorm ways in which colleges could cooperate to help fix the admissions process.³²³ To do this, they devised a plan that could be executed by admissions officers across the country.

The Cooperative Project was to start with a one year “information exchange” between colleges and secondary schools that would then result in the group developing a “communication mechanism” that would result in a more “unified program.”³²⁴ The idea was that participating colleges would devote eight days to the project including two meetings for representatives, a planning and briefing session in the summer of 1970, and a two day analysis and debriefing session in the spring of 1971. Between these meetings a steering committee was supposed to coordinate reporting and set the agenda for the larger group. Each individual college would be responsible for holding focus group type sessions that included 5-15 participants. The idea was to go to different locations to get different opinions, especially as they related to socioeconomic and geographic diversity.³²⁵ To make the project truly national they wanted to have participating colleges from all over the country that were not from a specific type of institution group.³²⁶ Once in the focus groups, college

³²²*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA, 1.

³²³*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 2.

³²⁴*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 2.

³²⁵*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 3.

³²⁶*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 2.

admissions officers were supposed to spend approximately two hours discussing possibilities for institution collaboration and the recommendations each group might have regarding application forms and submissions of those forms, the admissions calendar and timeline, recruitment travel by admissions officers, the role of alumni volunteers in recruitment, literature and presentations on college admissions, and existing organizations and agencies working in the admissions space.³²⁷ The goal was that by the summer of 1971 that two items would be delivered: a questionnaire and a report.

The long-range plan was that the questionnaire and the report would help identify “larger or more specific efforts” and that it might continue in “any one of several directions.”³²⁸ The idea being championed by the Princeton admissions officers was intended to change how the country applied to college. They were specifically interested in soliciting information about how to do this from a range of people with diverse backgrounds. The plan was to transfer the power held by individual colleges’ admissions offices into an organization that better represented a broader range of admissions stakeholders.

The session in September spearheaded by Osander and Weidlein did not go as they had envisioned. In a letter written to John Quinlan, Dean of Admissions at Pomona College, Weidlein described the meeting as “strange.”³²⁹ Weidlein’s view on the meeting was that many of his Ivy League colleagues had not read the “Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions” and thus were confused by the

³²⁷*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 4.

³²⁸*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 6.

³²⁹Edward Weidlein to John Quinlan, October 7, 1970, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

meeting. Time was spent trying to justify the project rather than being used on the project itself. Following this chaotic meeting, Osander and Weidlein moved forward assuming that some colleges would still be interested.³³⁰ Feedback from school administrators at high schools like Horace Mann School, an independent school in New York City, was much more positive.³³¹ Ultimately, the pair decided to push forward with the project but to rely less on big group meetings. Instead, they suggested that the interested colleges should move towards scheduling the focus group events and collecting feedback from various parties in admissions.³³²

Still keen on meeting and discussing how to improve admissions, many of the admissions officers who were interested informally planned to meet at the College Board meetings in October, an annual event that drew educators and admissions professionals from across the country. At this point the project hit another roadblock as, according to Weidlein, it was “almost impossible to get anyone to do any work.”³³³ The idea, however, had taken hold. Individual colleges had already seen the power in the collective through joint efforts like the SSR form. Many of the ideas that Osander and Weidlein wanted to explore through the Collaborative Project revolved around continuing to build on college collaboration.

To an applicant, the colleges each had their own identities—but the shared procedures and forms also fostered a sense that they were all using almost identical application processes and procedures. To foster a semi-collective process and

³³⁰Weidlein to Quinlan, October 7, 1970, PUA.

³³¹Weidlein to Quinlan, October 7, 1970, PUA.

³³²Edward Weidlein to Robert Jackson, October 9, 1970, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

³³³Ray Warner, “Colleges Are Slow to Act on Reform of Admission Procedures,” *The New York Times*, September 3, 1972, 44.

identity, colleges worked together to bring even more conformity to the process. With ever increasing numbers of applicants, it was in everyone's interest to foster an orderly transition from secondary school to university. Since colleges depended on both applicants and their sending schools, the process needed to be consistent enough between colleges so that students could more easily be evaluated for admission and enrol. Collaboration was (and is) part of what made the admissions system in the United States work. Without some norms in procedure it would be hard for admissions professionals, let alone applicants, to navigate an admissions cycle. Things like common reply dates, similar applications, and requirements made the immensely complicated task of sorting students into colleges manageable. The Cooperative Project sought to go beyond what existed at the time.

Despite an enthusiastic start, Osander and Weidlein struggled to gain traction. Although the colleges had a history of working together some admissions officers attended the first meeting without really understanding the goals of the project. Why was it so hard to get people who already often worked together to work together? The answer appears to be related to the proposal and its complexity. In many cases, busy admissions officers did not take the time to engage with the plan and showed up without knowing what they were there to do. The following section will outline the plan while also addressing what happened once admissions officers started working cooperatively.

The six page proposal for the Cooperative Project addressed many important points, but it was complex. It did not clearly identify actionable items that were a win-win-win for admissions officers, schools personnel, and students. Without clear

and specific language to focus and persuade stakeholders, the project was a rather nebulous joint communication and research plan rather than an explicit way forward for admissions.

The initial *Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions* noted seven major issues within the undergraduate admissions process in the United States. The following is a summation of the issues identified:

1. The admissions process was too complex.
2. There was an arbitrary break between secondary education and further education that did not reflect teenage development.
3. It was difficult for students (and other people) to truly understand the differences between colleges.
 - a. Misleading information came from various sources.
 - b. There was often a discrepancy between an institution's image and the realities of being a student there.
4. Undermatching resulted in disadvantaged students not going to the best colleges they could get into.
5. Diversity needed to be fostered, planned for, and encouraged deliberately.
6. There were an increasing number of students that needed to be sorted into colleges efficiently.
7. And finally, it was expensive to both apply and attend college.

This list of seven major issues will be revisited in Chapter Five as part of a discussion of whether or not the Cooperative Project did what it was intended to do.

It is clear from this proposal and other similar documents that Osander and his team spent much of their time in the office thinking about issues in undergraduate admissions, both at Princeton and nationally. In particular, they were able to identify problems in a way that must have resonated with many admissions officers, but not in a way that created a clear path towards a solution.³³⁴ Instead, they identified several issues and resolved to study them further.

For those like Edward Wall at Amherst, the answer to the complexity problem identified by Osander and Weidlein seemed to rest with a single application.³³⁵ But dismantling the complexity of the admissions process was difficult given the size and scale of American higher education. In addition to this, it is important to note that the Cooperative Project was being undertaken in *addition* to the work that admissions officers were already doing at their respective institutions. It may have been overly optimistic of Osander and Weidlein to hope that admissions officers could spearhead sweeping reform while still keeping up their normal responsibilities at work. In addition, without a clear and measurable outcome to work towards, it may have been difficult for admissions officers outside of Princeton to justify participation in the project to their bosses. Based on surviving letters, it seems that many in admissions did not get why the Princeton admissions staff was so passionate about changing a system that was not broken. Visionaries who wanted true reform, it must have been disappointing for the two men to not get the type of buy-in they sought. Osander remembered being “so discouraged” during this period as it was hard to convince

³³⁴It is worth noting that when I first read their proposal, it resonated with me as accurately capturing many of the issues inherent in the admissions process today.

³³⁵Edward Wall, *A Modest Proposal*, August 1969, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

people that cooperation could make things easier for everyone. This false start with the Cooperative Project and the Admissions Crisis of the previous year were serious frustrations, as Osander later wondered, perhaps he had “false pride” in thinking admissions could “lead other parts of our society.”³³⁶

In January of 1971, after informal discussions back-and-forth with Goheen, Osander announced that he would be leaving the university in the spring to found what was then being called the “Educators’ Learning Studio.” In *The Daily Princetonian* President Goheen expressed his “gratitude, and the gratitude of the university trustees, for Jack Osander’s strong, effective and innovative direction of Princeton’s admission process during an especially exciting and challenging five years.”³³⁷ In announcing his departure, Osander shared that he would be leaving in conjunction with Ted Weidlein. According to *The Daily Princetonian*, the project grew out of the pair’s interest in the Cooperative Project. At the time Osander was quoted saying “I was restless [after eight years in the Admission Office].”³³⁸ Despite their belief in the need for change, Osander and Weidlein ultimately struggled to launch the Educators’ Learning Studio too. However, the idea of cooperation in admissions was kept alive by those who had heard their message and others like it. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the Cooperative Project would later become the foundation for the modern Common Application.

³³⁶ John Osander, interview with author, May 23, 2020.

³³⁷ Bill Highberger, “Osander To Leave Admission Post In June, Plans ‘Studio’ To Reform Teacher Education,” *The Daily Princetonian*, January 11, 1971, 1.

³³⁸ Highberger, “Osander To Leave Admission Post In June,” 1.

In reflecting on his time in admissions, Osander said: "I left for a change of pace. I couldn't keep doing admissions forever."³³⁹ According to him, when he left he was anticipating "diminishing excitement."³⁴⁰ Without a doubt, he had overseen a phenomenal amount of change. In a period of less than a decade Princeton had moved to admit both more minorities and women.

Leaving Princeton, Osander finally joined the Educational Testing Service (ETS) as an Associate Programme Director.³⁴¹ Weidlein, also moving out of admissions, left to work at the Chronicle of Higher Education.³⁴² Despite departing Princeton after the close of the academic year, Osander stayed involved with the evolving Cooperative Project and used ETS as a springboard to continue some of his previous work.

On campus that semester, undergraduate admissions continued despite the twin resignations. In fact, diversity initiatives were ongoing as new groups of students sought more inclusion on campus. In particular, the Union Latinoamericana (ULA) established its own recruiting programme while also asking for a "careful reviewing of Princeton's admission policy as it relates to the latino student." Larry Garcia, Class of 1973, told *The Daily Princetonian* that, "Princeton has not demonstrated a commitment to the recruitment and admission of latino students in representative

³³⁹John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

³⁴⁰John Osander, interview with author, May 30, 2020.

³⁴¹Warner, "Colleges Are Slow to Act on Reform of Admission Procedures," 44.

³⁴²Warner, "Colleges Are Slow to Act on Reform of Admission Procedures," 44.

numbers."³⁴³ Reacting to this, the UAL worked to double the amount of latino applications while also holding discussions with Osander about Latino recruitment.³⁴⁴

Princeton again faced a leadership change on March 25, 1971 as Robert Goheen announced that he would be stepping down as President of Princeton.³⁴⁵ A retrospective in *The Daily Princetonian* had high praise for his leadership throughout the volatile 1960's:

Goheen's flexibility had assured peace on campus through the years' of the university's greatest change. If student activism was responsible for bringing up and pushing many issues—coeducation, the university's relationship to the Defense Department, minority opportunities and ROTC, for example—it was the president's ability to change with the times that kept the students, administration and alumni together.

Goheen was remarkable because of his ability to unite people and keep the peace. In terms of admissions, even while those who could be admitted to Princeton expanded, he worked to help create a more inclusive community. Attuned to the needs of both students and Princeton, Goheen was the ultimate architect of the plan to expand the definition of who could be a Princetonian.

As the second semester drew to a close in 1971, Princeton entered into a new era. The massive changes that had taken place at the university were still present, but they were no longer as new as they once were. In admissions, the twin stresses of the Admission Crisis and the frustration from the Cooperative Project helped push Osander towards his new job at ETS. However, his legacy and impact were lasting. Under his tenure the definition of who could be a Princetonian expanded to be much

³⁴³“ULA Seeks More Latino Admissions, Establishes Own Recruiting Program,” *The Daily Princetonian*, February 26, 1971, 5.

³⁴⁴“ULA Seeks More Latino Admissions, Establishes Own Recruiting Program,” 5.

³⁴⁵Dave Elkind, “1970-71: Goheen Resigns During Quiet Year,” *The Daily Princetonian*, June 19, 1971, 1-3.

more inclusive. And nationally, admissions officers' interest in working together increased as they heard leaders from elite institutions call for change. As already noted, Princeton is important because “everyone pays attention to the likes of Harvard and Oxford, so what happens on those campuses has great symbolic value throughout the country.”³⁴⁶

After a rather dramatic 1960's period, an era of consolidation and settlement took hold at Princeton. As the next chapter will discuss, this brought new leadership to Princeton but the status quo was maintained. Although the people who had created change in the Admission Office were gone, the Princetonian identity did not revert back to what it had been previously. In admissions, the alumni's crisis demands were not met or really even considered. Outside of the university, the Cooperative Project limped along. In 1975, the Cooperative Project, which would continue to morph and change, reemerged as the Common Application. Now the preeminent application for entry into undergraduate study nationally, its eventual founding out of the ashes of the Cooperative Project highlights the importance of what was happening at Princeton in the 1960's. Although they certainly did not know it, the alumni who protested the Admissions Crisis were pushing back against the architects of a movement that would forever change American higher education.

³⁴⁶Warikoo, *The Diversity Bargain*, 9.

Chapter 5: Consolidation and Settlement?

As the new decade and school year began, much of the debate over admissions seemed to have settled, if not finalized. The basis for admissions had been largely agreed for the future. Administrators listened closely to student feedback and agreed that diversity within the undergraduate population was required to maintain Princeton's elite status within the American milieu. Knowing that the top students expected the university to at least attempt to mirror the makeup of American society as a whole, enrolment awareness pushed Princeton's leaders to accept change. It was key to the institution's long term survival as an elite institution.

Although disgruntled alumni felt that the university was losing its elite status by enrolling new types of students, the opposite was true. Princeton was able to retain its elite identity during the Crisis Era because the institution pivoted. Changes in how Princeton did admissions signaled a power shift endorsed by leaders like Goheen who actively wanted to involve students, staff, and university leaders in the decision making process. It also was an acknowledgement of how Princeton needed to change who it admitted in order to be a university training the next generation of leaders "in the nation's service." The years immediately following the Admissions Crisis were less volatile, but of vital importance in the history of admissions more broadly. Although the Collaborate Project did not achieve all of its goals, it did help lay the foundation for the emergence of the Common Application. This chapter will explain how that project continued after Osander's departure. It will also explore the longer term implications of the changes at Princeton, both for admissions at Princeton and elsewhere in the United States.

The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same; 1971-1972

As violent protests of the 1960's faded, a shift towards quieter change emerged. The 1970's proved to be less volatile on college campuses and beyond in society more generally, especially when compared to the prior years. Before students returned to campus in the autumn of 1971, the *New York Times* began publishing the Pentagon Papers on June 13, 1971.³⁴⁷ This was accompanied by continued troop draw-downs in Vietnam as the USA slowly exited that country. At the same time, subtler changes were also happening at Princeton.

As a new academic year began, it did so with a new Admissions Director. Timothy Callard, Class of 1963, returned to Princeton and the Admissions Office after working at Philips Academy Andover, a well-known independent boarding school in Massachusetts.³⁴⁸ As a Princeton student, Callard had been an athlete and on the All Ivy teams for Football and Lacrosse.³⁴⁹ Although he was a new face in the Admission Office, he was also a Princeton graduate like both Goheen and Osander. While leadership at the university was changing, it was still being cast in a similar mould. Callard was aware of both the university community and changing admissions practices. In an interview before starting back at Princeton, Callard seemed to understand the balance the admissions office needed to maintain as the

³⁴⁷Ronald Frankum, *Historical Dictionary of the War in Vietnam* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011), xxxvii.

³⁴⁸Dave Elkind, "Andover's Callard To Direct Admissions Office," *The Daily Princetonian*, February 26, 1971, 1.

³⁴⁹Elkind, "Andover's Callard To Direct Admissions Office," 1.

gatekeepers of the institution, saying "I see admission work as reaching deeply into the university, while also reaching out. I like that."³⁵⁰

According to the *Daily Princetonian* Callard also professed to be "particularly pleased" with the university's emphasis on maintaining extensive student aid despite budget cutbacks.³⁵¹ When questioned, Callard went on to say that the admission office's policy of specifically considering "minority and disadvantaged groups" in admission was "valid at this point in history."³⁵² This early interview seems to indicate that Callard was aware of the Director of the Admission Office's need to balance the views of many constituencies at Princeton, both from within and outside of the university.

Callard's selection as Osander's successor was not accidental. Dean of the College, Edward D. Sullivan, said "things couldn't have worked out better" with regards to Callard's hiring as the Board of Trustees and President Goheen agreed on his selection.³⁵³ While Callard's statements to the *Daily Princetonian* right after his hiring supported diversity and inclusion efforts, he was not a controversial choice to lead the Admission Office. Callard's arrival from Andover, a place with its own complex institutional climate, along with his own Princeton background, made him someone that university leaders may have hoped would mix better with some of the previously disenchanted alumni. Dean Sullivan's quote that Callard's hiring "couldn't have worked out better" makes it seem like his selection out of a pool of 48

³⁵⁰Elkind, 1.

³⁵¹Elkind, 1.

³⁵²Elkind, 1.

³⁵³Elkind, "Prep School Instructor To Fill Osander's Post," *The Daily Princetonian*, February 26, 1971, 1.

candidates was carefully orchestrated by leaders who wanted to smooth things over with alumni.³⁵⁴

Callard's first year in office was not without struggle. As the person with the ultimate power to turn students away, the head of any admissions office is often under fire. Allegations that there was a quota on Jewish students at Princeton plagued Callard's first year as director.³⁵⁵ Like Osander before him, Callard faced armchair quarterbacking of his office as non-admissions personnel leveled critiques. No matter who they admitted, the fact that the Admissions Office held so much power with regards to students' futures made some lay people uncomfortable. As has been explored previously, this was (and is still) complicated by the fact that many in the university-going community think they know how admissions works because they themselves went through the process. Onlookers often have a false sense of familiarity with a process that is in reality professionalized through an unofficial apprenticeship process. Emerging professionals learn best practices via mentorship in their offices, through interactions in professional organizations like NACAC, and when traveling with colleagues from other universities.

The professional connections forged in admissions can be long lasting. Away from Princeton, Osander and Weidlein were employed in non-university roles but continued to work on the Cooperative Project in their free time. This meant that much of the work that had begun before continued to evolve. Discussions with previous

³⁵⁴Elkind, "Andover's Callard To Direct Admissions Office," 1.

³⁵⁵David Zielenziger, "Student Alleges Jewish Quota; Files Complaint With Rights Unit," *The Daily Princetonian*, February 18, 1972, 1. For a more in-depth look at Jewish discrimination see: Karabel, *The Chosen*.

colleagues throughout the admissions world proceeded as they had before. However, with their attention split in two directions, the grant funding sought for the project never materialized and the momentum stalled.³⁵⁶ But, the idea had staying power. As has been discussed, Osander was not the only one to advocate for cooperation between colleges on the application process. While the Princeton proposal may have been more far reaching than some, it aligned with what others were thinking and feeling about collaboration. Having stepped down from his role as director, Osander continued to support the idea of cooperation in education generally and college admissions specifically.

More Seats at the Table, 1972-1973

The autumn of 1972 signaled the start to another academic year at Princeton. Off campus, the last lunar mission returned to Earth in December of 1972.³⁵⁷ Just as the last Apollo missions were built on what came before, the Princeton Admissions Office continued to build on past successes. Although some debates emerged, as always there was a need to be conducting “business as usual” due to the fact that the Admission Office must function in order for university life to continue.

In particular, that autumn the Admissions Office tried to improve and build upon past recruitment of minority students. In an attempt to increase the number of Mexican American and American Indian students on campus, the Admissions Office

³⁵⁶Cole Bunzel, “Proposed Admission Policy Rules May Simplify Selection Procedure,” *The Daily Princetonian*, September 21, 1972, 1.

³⁵⁷NASA, “Apollo 17, The Eleventh Mission: The Sixth Lunar Landing 7 December-19 December 1972,” accessed November 5, 2020, <https://history.nasa.gov>.

turned to the existing undergraduate population. They worked directly with eight student leaders from these two groups and organized university funded recruiting trips. Paul R. Rodriguez, Class of 1976, a student recruiter, believed that many alumni recruiters were not equipped to be successful minority recruiters and so student workers were a better fit for the job. He told the *Daily Princetonian*, "If the Alumni Schools Committee, the people responsible for recruiting, were doing the job we'd like them to do, there wouldn't have been a need to ask for special funds [for the minority recruitment trips]."³⁵⁸ Despite all of the changes in recruiting at Princeton, the cultural capital held by elite white men at Princeton still was felt in the admissions space. The sweeping change that had felt so possible just a few years previously began to fade into a settlement stage as some reforms had become standard but others failed to materialize.

By the autumn of 1972, Osander was less upbeat than he had been previously about the potential for change. That September he talked to a reporter from the *New York Times* about the mood in admissions saying, "The spirit of cooperation has less potential now than it had a few years ago."³⁵⁹ He zeroed in on the why and noted, "There is a little more institutional self-interest now, mainly for economic reasons."³⁶⁰ Despite his departure from Princeton, the Ivy League was still discussing admissions policy and how the different colleges might jointly streamline their processes.

³⁵⁸Denny Chin, "Admissions Grants Recruiting Funds to Chicano, Indian Undergraduates," *The Daily Princetonian*, October 25, 1972, 1.

³⁵⁹Ray Warner, "Colleges Are Slow to Act on Reform of Admission Procedures," *The New York Times*, 44.

³⁶⁰Warner, "Colleges Are Slow to Act on Reform of Admission Procedures," 44.

People like Timothy Callard and Spencer J. Reynolds, Associate Director of Admissions, attended joint committee meetings where potential joint admissions changes were discussed. In particular, things like a universal application timeline, early decision protocol, and an applicant rating system were considered as ways the Ivy League could make admissions easier and more straightforward to all involved.³⁶¹ This proposed standardization addressed some aspects of the “Admissions Problem” identified by Osander and Weidlein, but it did not really get at the root of the issues they had identified. The biggest issues in American admissions revolved around issues of transparency, equity, and access.

Outside of Princeton, people were still working on what had initially been dubbed the Cooperative Project and trying to tackle existing issues within the college admissions space. But, the project itself was continuing to morph and grow as new people and a new organization became involved. In some documents the name itself had changed and the participants were calling themselves “the Cooperative for School/College Communication Studies.”³⁶² Around that same time, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) became a partner in the project through volunteer office space, some materials, and secretarial help as everything was being done on a “shoestring-type budget.”³⁶³ While it was still small, the connection with NASSP, a national organization, helped give the project stronger footing on which to operate.

³⁶¹Bunzel, “Proposed Admission Policy Rules May Simplify Selection Procedure,” 1.

³⁶²Warren Seyfert to Selected AACRAO Member Representatives, January 15, 1973, National Association of Secondary School Principals, Admission Office Records, AC152, PUA.

³⁶³Seyfert to Selected AACRAO Member Representatives, January 15, 1973, PUA.

One of the Coop's first projects was to develop a set of guidelines for transcripts to help foster uniformity in records that would facilitate easier admissions for high school students transitioning to college. In order to do this, they solicited submissions of example transcripts from people working in admissions and asked for their suggestions with regards to what information was most crucial.³⁶⁴ The Coop colleges reached out to colleagues in their network. Warren C. Seyfert of NASSP expanded the project by contacting the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers to collect data from individuals in that professional organization.³⁶⁵ At this stage, the Coop was not tackling all of the problems laid out in the Admissions Problem, but it was moving to try and solve one of the major issues: complexity.³⁶⁶

From the spring of 1973 until the autumn of 1975 the Cooperative Project limped along. Surviving archival records at Princeton suggest that not much forward motion was accomplished on the project during those years outside of continued discussions about how to move forward. School years 1973-1974 and 1974-1975 proved hard to chronicle due to the lack of surviving documentary evidence pertaining to the Cooperative Project during that period. However, the project did not fully fade away as those working in the admissions space continued to seek to improve the admissions system. Given how often admissions professionals from various institutions meet, it is likely that more information discussions were

³⁶⁴Seyfert to Selected AACRAO Member Representatives, PUA.

³⁶⁵Seyfert to Selected AACRAO Member Representatives, PUA.

³⁶⁶*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA.

continuing despite the lack of official change that can be noted during those years based on the archival record.

School Year 1975-1976

The autumn of 1975 was different from the late 1960's in that rapid change was no longer gripping the nation. The fall of Saigon the previous April had signaled the end of the Vietnam War and lingering student anti-war protests dwindled.³⁶⁷ In admissions, the admissions staff working to further the Cooperative Project was also in transition. In September of 1975, Dick Moll, who had been involved in the project, left Bowdoin for Vassar. According to a senior member of the Bowdoin Administration, being an director of admissions remained "a thankless job."³⁶⁸ Individuals like Moll were important in college admissions as leaders, but like Osander before him, both were pulled between two interests as each had a job working for a specific institution and a desire to create change within the larger landscape of admissions.

Still working on the idea of cooperation, Osander helped orchestrate continued discussions about admissions collaboration through his job at ETS. After many years of discussion, a pilot year of what was then being called the "Common Application" started in the autumn of 1975. But as has been noted previously, the "Admissions Problem" identified by Osander and Weidlein was not being fully

³⁶⁷Ronald Spector, "The Fall of South Vietnam," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed November 5, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War>.

³⁶⁸Steve Maidman, "Moll Trades Brunswick for Poughkeepsie," *The Bowdoin Orient*, September 12, 1975, 1.

addressed by this common form. Later sections of this chapter will explore how the Common Application met or failed to meet the goals of the initial project.

In the beginning, 15 colleges participated in the project. Institutions from all over the USA were included in order for it not to be what Osander deemed an “Ivy Eastern thing.”³⁶⁹ The new application allowed students to fill out just one application and send that same form to all of the participating colleges and then receive admissions decisions. In many ways, this was finally a solution to the duplicated paperwork that admissions officers, school personnel, and students had been complaining about. It also proved that with compromise many colleges could agree on a certain amount of standardization in admissions.

The experiment was lent a large amount of further credibility because partner schools included 28 leading independent and public high schools like Concord Academy, New Trier East High School, East Grand Rapids High School, The John Burroughs School, Shawnee Mission South High School, Nicolet High School and the Polytechnic School.³⁷⁰ In addition to Princeton, there were 14 participating colleges including places such as Harvard/Radcliffe University, Lafayette College, Amherst College, Bowdoin College, Colgate University, Oberlin College, Trinity College, Vassar College, Carleton College, Goucher College, Colorado College, Emory University, Mills College, and Southern Methodist University.³⁷¹ Once the admissions office at any of the colleges received the application, they would evaluate

³⁶⁹Art Schankler, “University, 14 Other Colleges To Test Common Application Form This Year,” *The Daily Princetonian*, November 17, 1975, 3.

³⁷⁰Schankler, “University, 14 Other Colleges To Test Common Application Form This Year,” 3; Doug Thomson, “Single Form Streamlines Admissions Process,” *Carletonian*, January 15, 1976, 1.

³⁷¹Thomson, “Single Form Streamlines Admissions Process,” 1.

it just as they would any other application. This was different from SAM, which some of the midwestern colleges had used previously, in that it was not a waterfall evaluation system that involved passing the application through multiple rounds. Instead, all colleges simply evaluated a student's application simultaneously as they had before.

This meant that with the Common Application there was the advantage over SAM: a Common Application student did not need to select an ordered preference list of colleges. Thus, if they were unsure of their top choice institution or later changed their mind, there were no ill effects. Despite getting off the ground successfully and improving the college admissions process, the project remained somewhat homeless. As Osander noted at the time, this was in part because it was a group effort spearheaded by people working across the spectrum of admissions. As he explained, "It's not an ETS project. It doesn't need to go through a big bureaucracy. But if it catches on, I don't know who would run it."³⁷²

The Common Application immediately made an impact because it saved administrators' and students' time. Floyd Hillman of New Trier East High School said, "We think it's a good idea and we've advertised that it's here."³⁷³ But Hillman also noted that there were some issues still to address. In particular, he did not like the fact that schools like Harvard, Princeton and MIT still required more information than was on the form.³⁷⁴ This issue would remain (and persists today) as colleges

³⁷²Schankler, "University, 14 Other Colleges To Test Common Application Form This Year," 3.

³⁷³Schankler, 3.

³⁷⁴Schankler, 3.

cemented the use of an application supplement along with the Common Application itself.

While the streamlined process was popular with college admissions officers and guidance counselors, students wondered if colleges evaluated applications made on the Common Application in the same way they read their own application form. There was a fear that using the Common Application might somehow signal to colleges that an applicant was less interested in their institution.³⁷⁵ The change in admissions that allowed for a single form was new. The shared alignment between universities helped contribute to a stronger unified identity between admissions personnel as universities acknowledged that they were, in some ways, more similar than they were different. But, total agreement remained elusive between colleges.

At Princeton, Callard addressed the fact that they were asking for additional information on top of the Common Application. As he explained, "It's hard to come to a common agreement on what's needed for application to college."³⁷⁶ So, a supplement was required. Osander, the project's initial champion, was more upbeat. He felt that any crowdsourced form could be used successfully. He explained his thinking saying, "My own personal bias, having watched admissions people work together, is that whatever information you give them, they can make decisions."³⁷⁷ While this comment at first may strike some as rather flippant, it is reflective of reality. Admissions leaders have adapted time and time again to read applications from

³⁷⁵Schankler, 3.

³⁷⁶Schankler, 3.

³⁷⁷Schankler, 3.

students with incomplete academic records due to disasters like wildfires or hurricanes.

Osander's observation that decisions could be made with "whatever information" was in some ways reflective of a continued professionalization within admissions that was becoming more crystallized in the Crisis Era. Many of the admissions officers discussed in this thesis had worked at multiple schools and colleges, using similar values, procedures, and practices in order to do their work. People like Callard, Moll, and Wall, men who continued to participate in Common Application planning, had moved between institutions and thus understood different ways of conducting admissions business. They were part of a growing group that worked professionally in admissions, and in cases like Callard's, this had been done on "both sides of the desk" (both in the high school and college setting).

As a professional group, admissions officers spent time connecting, both informally and formally. Admissions staff from colleges traveled and attended professional meetings and conferences together throughout the year. NACAC, the National Association for College Admissions Counseling, was at this point already three decades old having been founded in 1937.³⁷⁸

Ultimately, admissions officers' specialization and collaboration is of particular importance because it was both what allowed for the Common Application to work (it needed buy-in from several sponsors and their institutions) but also what had sparked the Admissions Crisis (an event that pitted admissions officers,

³⁷⁸National Association for College Admission Counseling, "The Founding Years: 1937-39," accessed November 3, 2020, https://www.nacacnet.org/about/history/founding_years/.

professionals, versus the Schools Committee men who voluntarily aided in the admissions process but who were not professionals). The identity of admissions officers as professionals was important in that it helped form an identity in opposition. In many ways, either you worked in and “got” admissions or you did not. Because much of admissions work was happening behind closed doors, this meant that power was uniquely concentrated in the hands of those making admissions decisions.

Aware of this power, admissions personnel wanted to shift towards a system that would be easier to navigate for both applicants and the people supporting them. In February of 1976, representatives from the participating schools met to share feedback and consider improvement measures that would further improve the Common Application.³⁷⁹ Still very much a cooperative project, it was not clear if and how the Common Application would continue.

Slow But Steady Growth, 1976-1977

A new academic year began as presidential campaigning between Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford was concluding. Just as the election was a moment of change for the nation, so too was the autumn of 1976 important for the Common Application. Gaining traction, 83 colleges joined the project along with 300 secondary schools.³⁸⁰ This was important because it signaled that the pilot year had been successful enough that more institutions wanted to be involved with this shift in how admissions worked.

³⁷⁹Thomson, “Single Form Streamlines Admissions Process,” 1.

³⁸⁰Edward Fiske, “83 Colleges Agree on Common Application Form,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 1976, 26.

Ed Wall, Dean of Admission at Amherst College, said that the Common App was “one of the first things that has come along in a long time that is really for the good of the students.”³⁸¹ The fact that students could complete one application and then apply to 83 different colleges was noteworthy as experiments like SAM had been much smaller in scale. School counselors’ loads were reduced further too. As Douglass Hunt, of the National Association of Secondary School Principals explained, “It means that they [school counselors] can put a lot of effort into one document.”³⁸² For almost everyone involved, this change made administrative tasks easier while also helping to further solidify the collective identity of the admissions community through their cooperation.

By adopting the Common Application, colleges were actively embracing the idea that a central system could mechanize and drive the application process. In many ways, they were acknowledging a form and an emerging institution. The application was legitimized further by the universities accepting it. Participation at places like Columbia and Princeton, Ivy League institutions, signaled that it was a project to be taken seriously. Those working in admissions (and those participating and watching admissions, too) took note of the big players' actions.

Yet the Common Application that emerged in the autumn of 1976 was different from the initial vision that was articulated by Osander and Weidlein when it was still the Cooperative Project. The first proposal was six pages long and tried to address a wide range of problems in admissions. It highlighted one overarching problem in admissions: improvements were needed in the coordination of the

³⁸¹Fiske, 26.

³⁸²Fiske, 26.

admissions process.³⁸³ However, the proposal also outlined various sub-problems to be addressed simultaneously.

While the critiques and proposals included made sense within the context of admissions, the multifaceted nature of the document made it hard to operationalize. As a result, there was no real blueprint for change as the document acted more like a call to arms than a battle plan. The next section will focus on drilling down into those plans and trying to understand how and if the Common Application addressed the issues outlined in the initial proposal.

The *Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions* noted seven major issues within the undergraduate admissions process in the United States.³⁸⁴ Osander and Weidlein observed that the national sorting of talent was not an “orderly process” and wanted to solve that problem.³⁸⁵ They believed that admissions personnel “serve[d] society” when they worked towards reducing complexity in admissions.³⁸⁶ While the Common Application did reduce complexity by allowing students, administrators, and admissions officers to use one application, many of the other problems identified remained unsolved by the new form. Conversations from the 1960’s continue today as undergraduate admissions personnel are *still* trying to solve issues related to structural inequality, bias, and access.

In terms of what a common application could do, problems one and six were addressed by the application that launched in the autumn of 1976 because using one form reduced complexity and allowed for a more streamlined process for all

³⁸³*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 1.

³⁸⁴See Chapter Four for a summary of the seven points.

³⁸⁵*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 1.

³⁸⁶*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 1.

involved. Because of how they were written, the other goals were not as effective in helping to spark change. In general they were too open-ended, vague, and general. Because of this, project participants could not use them as a roadmap for reform. In particular, the goals lacked what today might be framed in context of the SMART convention.³⁸⁷

While SMART was not yet in use, the framework helps explain why Osander and Weidlein struggled to get people fully onboard with the Cooperative Project. The proposal sounded wonderful, but it was hard to envision how the proposed working groups would resolve the issues in a focus group type setting. By choosing more specific, measurable, ambitious but realistic, and time-bound goals perhaps they would have been more successful in creating more changes.³⁸⁸ Institutional participants latched onto revamping the mechanism that drove the admissions process instead of addressing all the points. The idea (one student, one form) was easy to explain and execute. Because it made counselors' and teachers' lives easier by reducing workload, school based personnel often reacted positively to the idea of change. Once the Common Application was launched, it continued to grow relatively slowly through the 1980's and 1990's. Like Osander predicted, it did not need to go through a big bureaucracy and was run leanly out of the NASSP office with admissions officers and school counselors meeting during large events like the NACAC Conference to discuss any changes and updates. The physical form remained largely unchanged until the internet revolutionized how Americans applied

³⁸⁷Theodore H. Poister, *Measuring Performance in Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 63.

³⁸⁸Poister, *Measuring Performance in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 63.

to college. The next section of this chapter will explore how these modern changes have impacted the Common Application and how Osander’s goals from the 1960’s have been reimaged for the present moment.

Epilogue, 2007-2008 to Today

Academic year 2007-2008 was a landmark year for the Common Application. It was the first time the application was fully online. At the time, few admissions professionals would have predicted the importance of this shift because it had been partially online since 1998.³⁸⁹ Overall, the landscape of American higher education had changed dramatically in the intervening decades. The Common Application had grown considerably (see Fig. 7. Common Application Membership Growth by Year 1975-2007).

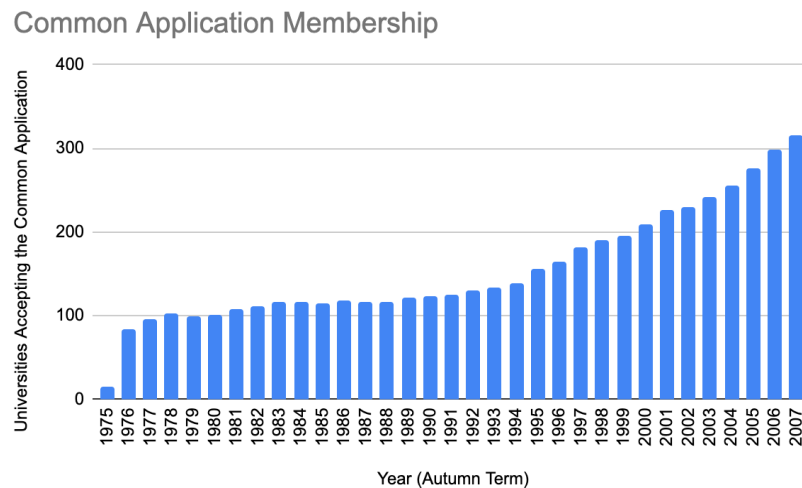


Fig. 8. Common Application Membership Growth, 1975-2007

³⁸⁹Eric Hoover, “The Uncommon Rise of the Common App,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 18, 2013.

The Civil Rights and Women's Movements had changed the United States and those changes were evident in higher education. While the ruling elite was still largely composed of white men, the balance of power was continuing to shift. In the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi was about to assume her role as Speaker. At the same time, Black politicians like John Lewis served alongside her in Congress. American society looked and felt very different than it had prior to 1970.

College enrollment and admissions decision making looked different too. In the years since the Admissions Crisis, admissions statistics and student application behaviour changed. In 1967 only 19.9% of entering college students reported that they had applied to four or more colleges. By 2006 that figure had increased to 56.5%.³⁹⁰ During that same time, students applying to only one college fell from 43.1% to 17.7%.³⁹¹ The size and scale of the application pool was shifting, which again added to the complexity of applying to college.

Academic year 2007-2008 saw the launch of the next generation Common App Online system. By that point, all member colleges were accepting applications online.³⁹² The number of member colleges had increased to 315, and applicants had more options than ever when using the Common App. The transition to fully online submissions was a pivotal turning point. According to Liu, Ehrenberg, and Mrdjenovic, membership in the Common Application was hugely successful in making it easier to apply to college. By decreasing what economists call the

³⁹⁰John Pryor, Sylvia Hurtado, Victor B. Saenz, Jose L. Santos, and William S. Korn. *The American Freshman: Forty-Year Trends, 1966–2006*. (Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California Los Angeles, 2007), 20.

³⁹¹ Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, and Korn, 20.

³⁹²The Common Application, *Common Application Milestones*.

“opportunity time cost” of completing an application prospective students could apply with just a few more clicks online. This helped increase the number of applications received by the institution across the board as students needed to exert minimal effort to apply to more colleges via the online form.³⁹³

But the Common App was and is not just a tool for students. It also turned into a valuable tool for colleges. Critics of the current system often complain that colleges have used the Common App to both attract more students and manipulate application and enrollment statistics. In particular, the Common Application has been used as part of some colleges’ strategy to ascend in national rankings, especially the *U.S. News and World Report’s* “America’s Best Colleges.” Research suggests that rankings directly impact admissions.³⁹⁴ This leads to a cascade of problems for admissions professionals: lower ranked institutions need to accept a higher percentage of applicants, their matriculation percentages drop, and then their entering class has lower SAT scores.³⁹⁵ In some ways, this waterfall effect is not dissimilar from the calculation’s Princeton administrators were making during the Crisis Era surrounding whether or not to admit new and different types of students to create more diversity on campus. To stay on top, college officials need to attract elite students and then get them to enrol.

³⁹³Liu, Ehrenberg, and Mrdjenovic. “Diffusion of Common Application Membership and Admissions Outcomes at American Colleges and Universities,” 2.

³⁹⁴James Monks and Ronald Ehrenberg, “The Impact of US News and World Report College Rankings on Admission Outcomes and Pricing Decisions at Selective Private Institutions,” (NBER Working Paper Series, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA, 1999).

³⁹⁵Monks and Ehrenberg, “The Impact of US News and World Report College Rankings.”

Expanding the applicant pool by adopting the Common Application allowed colleges to try to manipulate rankings. This worked especially well because becoming a Common App college meant an increase in applicants that typically ranged from 5-7%.³⁹⁶ Today, there are 916 members of the Common App. It is easier than ever before to apply to a broad range of institutions using the application. In many ways, this has exacerbated the biggest issue that Osander and Weidlein were trying to combat: the problem that the admissions process was (and is) too complex.

The Common App was created as a mechanism to drive the admissions process, but now institutions are being changed by the mechanism itself. The process of applying to college, facilitated by the Common App, drives institutional *and* student behaviour. While they hoped to be part of a solution that would simplify admissions, Osander and Weidlein laid the foundation for today's increasing application numbers. Based on the industry that produces SAT/ACT tutoring, guidebooks, and websites and other businesses that specialize in admissions advice, it is clear that the process to apply to college is not easy. We are absolutely not "coordinating wisely" in the way that Osander had envisioned, nor has the operational process really improved besides the fact that everything is now digital.³⁹⁷

Just as in the 1960's, students applying to colleges today still do not have a strong understanding of the programmes they are applying to. Nor do students appreciate the discrepancies between an institution and its image.³⁹⁸ Undermatching,

³⁹⁶Liu, Ehrenberg, and Mrdjenovic. "Diffusion of Common Application Membership and Admissions Outcomes at American Colleges and Universities," 2.

³⁹⁷*A Proposal for a Cooperative Project in College Admissions*, PUA, 1.

³⁹⁸As a practitioner researcher, part of my own fascination with this topic was and is driven by students who cannot answer the question, "Why do you want to attend that college?" When discussing top institutions, students often look at me incredulously,

when high-achieving students who are low-income do not apply to any selective college or university, still occurs at high rates in the United States.³⁹⁹ One bright spot where the application has succeeded is that Common App membership has been shown to increase minority enrollment at institutions that transition to using the form.⁴⁰⁰ An institution's identity as a "Common App School" is now something that itself can be used as a powerful marketing tool as Common App membership is used to denote quality. As the organization highlights, Membership is open to colleges that "share our mission" of advancing college access. All members must be: not-for-profit, undergraduate degree-granting, accredited by an association recognized by either CHEA or U.S. Department of Education, if located outside the U.S., a member of the Council of International Schools, and committed to the pursuit of access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process.⁴⁰¹

The modern Common Application is able to create change and holds a lot of power as an organization. Recently, the organization removed a question about applicants' disciplinary record because of research showing that Black applicants reported disciplinary infractions at rates twice that of their white peers.⁴⁰² While

and say something like "Because it's [insert institution name here]!" When asked to explain more about the programs or unique offerings they are unable to do so.

³⁹⁹Caroline M. Hoxby and Christopher Avery, "The Missing 'One-Offs': The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students" (NBER Working Paper Series, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA, 2012).

⁴⁰⁰Liu, Ehrenberg, and Mrdjenovic. "Diffusion of Common Application Membership and Admissions Outcomes at American Colleges and Universities."

⁴⁰¹Common Application, "Member Institutions," accessed November 2, 2020, <https://www.commonapp.org/members>.

⁴⁰²Common Application, "Common App Removes School Discipline Question for 2021-2022 Application Season," accessed November 10, 2020, <https://www.commonapp.org/blog/common-app-removes-school-discipline-question-2021-2022-application-season>.

member colleges can still ask about disciplinary records in their supplementary materials, the question is no longer automatically included in the main portion of the application. In making this decision the Common App cited research showing that discipline is racialized and negatively impacts Black students.⁴⁰³ They used their decision-making power to push institutions to make a conscious decision to opt into asking about discipline rather than just providing that information.

The Common App's ability to influence change in admissions is large given the number of member colleges using the platform.⁴⁰⁴ Part of the change that Osander drove towards as Director of Admission at Princeton was standardization. As he noted when he arrived, there were not many processes in place to streamline the admissions process. As a result, admissions officers in the 1960's began doing things like gathering data and writing reports in order to make more evidence based decisions.⁴⁰⁵ This mindset, a mindset that was imparted into the Cooperative Project and then the Common App, allows for a more professionalized process that relies on data.

Today, colleges use the Common Application and other tools like Slate, a Customer relationship management (CRM), that allow admissions officers to capture huge amounts of data about potential students based on their online behaviour.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³Common Application, "Common App Removes School Discipline Question for 2021-2022 Application Season."

⁴⁰⁴There are around 2,800 four-year colleges in the USA, 916 institutions are Common App members. See: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2018*. Of the most highly ranked institutions, only a handful have resisted joining the Common App, examples include: Georgetown University, MIT, and the University of California System.

⁴⁰⁵John Osander, interview with author, June 13, 2020.

⁴⁰⁶Eric Hoover, "A Tech Whiz Is Conquering College Admissions. It Takes Charm, Innovation, and Dancing Sharks," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 20, 2018.

Admissions have continued to change, but instead of questions of who should or should not be included in the admissions process (multiculturalism has been embraced in theory, even if equality still lags in practice) there are questions about how to continue to harness technology to further enrollment goals (see Common Application Membership Growth in Fig. 8). While matches are now made in a way that is more organized than before, it is still unclear if that is truly in students' best interest.

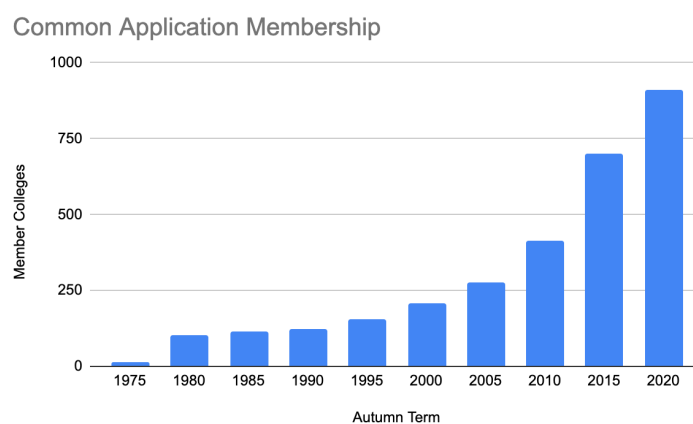


Fig. 9: Common Application Membership Growth, 1975-2020

In terms of gender and racial and ethnic diversity, what Osander helped cement is now a reality at Princeton. Today, 48.5% of undergraduate Princetonians are American minorities. In terms of gender balance, 49.9% of undergraduates are women.⁴⁰⁷ As about 25% of the total United States population is composed of racial or ethnic minorities, this means that Princeton is more diverse than the total population of the United States.⁴⁰⁸ It is important to note, however, that Princeton is a

⁴⁰⁷Princeton University, *A Princeton Profile*, accessed on October 17, 2021, <https://profile.princeton.edu/node/326>.

⁴⁰⁸The US Census Bureau, *QuickFacts*, accessed on December 24, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>.

fairly accurate reflection of American youth, a group which is much more heterogeneous than the overall population. Both racial and ethnic diversity is greater in American young people. In 2018 the US Census Bureau reported that the population breakdown for children was 50% white, 25% Latinx, 14% Black, 5% Asian, 4% multi-racial, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.5% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.⁴⁰⁹ The aforementioned breakdown at Princeton mirrors the national population figures and shows that Princeton undergraduates are, if considering racial and ethnic diversity, quite representative of the American population. In September of 2020, Princeton's current President, Christopher L. Eisgruber, recognized institutional change as being key to creating a more just and equitable Princeton today, just as it was during the Admissions Crisis. As Eisgruber noted, "Much of this [racial equity] work is unglamorous, focused not on flashy symbols but on the nuts and bolts of University management. That is essential: to care about eradicating systemic racism, one has to care about systems."⁴¹⁰

Although changes in the Princeton profile were what sparked the Admission Crisis, the impact of the managers in the admission staff facilitating those changes was monumental. Princeton is today a place with incredible amounts of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. This is, in part, due to the systems and policies that were enacted beginning in the 1960's.

⁴⁰⁹U.S. Census Bureau, *2017 National Population Projections Tables*, accessed on October 15, 2021, census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html.

⁴¹⁰Princeton University, *Racial Equity*, accessed on October 17, 2021, <https://racialequity.princeton.edu/university-initiatives>.

The ideas that came out of Princeton in the 1960's were perhaps more important than the concrete progress towards widening participation that was facilitated by the Common Application. Although derailed somewhat by the Crisis, the original work of the Cooperative Project is part of the foundation on which the modern Common Application rests. Without the forward thinking Princeton Admissions Office, the Common Application in its present form would not exist. The changes that admissions personnel worked to enact regarding who could attend college, and especially elite colleges, continue to be relevant today due to the importance of the Common Application. If the Admissions Crisis at Princeton reflects the culture wars of the 1960's, the success of the Common Application helps demonstrate just how successful broader cultural movements were in impacting higher education. Although inequality persists in higher education, the move from elite to mass higher education has succeeded. The history of the Admissions Crisis both adds to our historical understanding of the important Common Application, but it also helps illuminate some of the "why?" behind both successes and failures in admissions innovation. The next and final chapter of this thesis will conclude by considering what happened at Princeton, the implications of this research, and suggestions for future work on the topic.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The Admissions Crisis at Princeton unfolded as the university grappled with how to manage the transition from elite to mass higher education during the turbulent 1960's. Although in the relative scheme of things the Admissions Crisis was a small moment in the larger history of Princeton, it was important. A reflection of the larger culture wars, the Admissions Crisis shows a university grappling with how to stay elite in a changing landscape. New and different types of people were being included for the first time in elite institutions and society more broadly, but how this should be done at Princeton was being negotiated. In the end, innovation and change were tools used by Princeton administrators as a way to reaffirm the university's power and secure its continued status as an elite institution.

Altering admissions practices and procedures helped new types of students to access Princeton. In turn, Princeton was able to market its status as a modern university that had successfully made the transition to mass higher education. It was still a place for elite students, but they were now from an expanded range of backgrounds and identities. Knowing that the students they were targeting to enrol wanted a diverse undergraduate cohort, university officials moved towards creating more diverse classes that would attract these leading academic candidates.

This thesis provides insight into the innovations in practice that were happening in the Princeton Admission Office in order to realize this vision for Princeton's future. Admissions officers, and in particular John Osander, supported developing an admissions system that would be more meritocratic. This type of

thought leadership was directly linked to the diversification of Princeton and the later development of the Common Application. Today's relatively more inclusive Princeton and a single dominant system for sorting students into American colleges is partly a result of what happened at Princeton in the 1960's. Despite these profound changes, the language of the American meritocracy helped to hide the ways in which social stratification and capital continued to impact who was admitted. While the foundation of the current racial, ethnic, and gender diversity at Princeton can be directly linked to the work of Crisis era administrators, modern Princeton is still not reflective of American society as a whole, especially when considering the lens of socioeconomics.

This thesis recounts the early history of the diversification of Princeton with special attention given to the work of the Princeton Admissions Office and how that work was received by the university community. This has been achieved through extensive use of the Princeton University Archives. In particular, both print and select photographic evidence helps readers to get a fuller picture of the 1960's at Princeton. An additional notable source cited throughout this work was a series of interviews conducted with John Osander, who was the Director of Admission at Princeton during the Crisis era. All of these sources work, if not always in clear harmony, to demonstrate the Princeton Admission Office's importance as a place that was developing undergraduate admissions in what they believed to be the nation's service.

Elite institutions like Princeton are worth studying, even if they are outliers and not typical American universities. Returning to a quotation from Chapter One,

“Everyone pays attention to the likes of Harvard and Oxford, so what happens on those campuses has great symbolic value throughout the country.”⁴¹¹ The elite universities’ policies and practices are constantly watched in admissions. The Admissions Crisis provides insight into admissions that can be used as a springboard for future comparisons across institutions or time.

When I embarked on writing this thesis I did so because I wanted to know more about the origins of the Common Application. No academic work of this nature existed to explain the history of the profession. For this reason, this thesis is a contribution to knowledge. Broadly, only a few excellent monographs have been published on the history of undergraduate admissions in the United States and the rise of the Common Application as a response to mass higher education. Existing histories do not focus on this transition and innovation.

The history of the Admissions Crisis is important because it was, at least in part, predicated by ideas that would go on to have a major impact on how Americans apply to college. Because of the links between the Admissions Crisis and the modern Common Application, this history is of value to both scholars and admissions practitioners. At its core, this thesis helps to explain the beginnings of an important form *and* institution.

The history of the Admissions Crisis is significant in that it allows us to better understand a specific set of innovations that were proposed in the Admission Office at Princeton. It also shows which parts of the proposal succeeded. In some ways, the failures of the Cooperative Project and, later, of the Common Application are

⁴¹¹Warikoo, *The Diversity Bargain*, 9.

more interesting than the successes. This is because admissions professionals are still trying to solve for many of the points outlined in the initial proposal for the Cooperative Project. Potential innovators can now use this history to build future proposals about how to tackle existing problems that others have worked on before and incorporate the knowledge gained from this history in order to formulate solutions.

Osander and others who believed in his vision were trying to solve a problem that has persisted in undergraduate admissions: capital matters. As has been discussed both in this thesis and at length elsewhere—the advantages of wealth and cultural and social capital remain of paramount importance in university admissions. Elite status and money help students get admitted, especially to institutions like Princeton. In 2017, more students at Princeton came from the top 1% of the income scale than from the entire bottom 60%.⁴¹² This was also true at institutions like Dartmouth, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and Brown.⁴¹³ The myth of the American meritocracy is shattered by statistics as economic, social, and cultural capital continue to open doors at elite institutions. Despite being more diverse than they were in the early 1960's, elite American universities still have a long way to go in order to be truly reflective of society at large. The undermatching of qualified low-income students still results in many individuals not reaching their highest

⁴¹²Gregor Aisch, Larry Buchanan, Amanda Cox and Kevin Quealy, "Some Colleges Have More Students From the Top 1 Percent Than the Bottom 60. Find Yours," *The New York Times*, January 18, 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2jRcqJs>.

⁴¹³Aisch, Buchanan, Cox, and Quealy, "Some Colleges Have More Students From the Top 1 Percent Than the Bottom 60. Find Yours," <https://nyti.ms/2jRcqJs>.

academic potential. At the same time, legacy admissions policies still exist and disproportionately favour more affluent students.

While this study is a good window into better understanding the transition from elite to mass higher education and how that transition impacted Princeton, it is not without limitations. The Princeton University Archives provided a wealth of documents, but like most old institutional archives there were gaps in what was preserved. Especially with sources like correspondence, often the conversations recorded were one-sided or missing pieces. Each individual had their own motives, history, and position to advocate, and each put them in writing to create the documentary sources that have been used in this thesis. Likewise, interviews told many different stories while also relying on memories of events that took place decades ago. Frustratingly, despite attempts to engage the Common Application directly, I was unable to learn if they have any archives of their own that might add nuance or additional information. More of this history could potentially be explored in the future as new sources become available—this is especially true as other colleges unseal their institutional records on a timescale that is slightly behind Princeton's.

The “why?” of the Crisis was sparked by changes that disturbed some in the elite fraternity of Princeton graduates. This is the foundation on which questions for further research have emerged. Moments of emotion signal value. The alumni upset by the changes at Princeton saw their way of life being challenged. However, there have been other instances in the history of admissions, and higher education more broadly, where similarly emotional debates emerged. This suggests that comparative studies, especially those that are transnational in nature and examine widening

participation, might be a logical next step to further understand more generally why these initiatives succeed or fail. Change management, especially during times where identity was being reimagined or redefined and the balance of power shifted, warrants further consideration. This thesis illuminates a small piece of Princeton history while also showing how the balance of power at elite American universities continues to be held in the hands of a limited number of gatekeepers.

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Sources: A Note

The conventional separation between primary and secondary sources is less clearly defined in this thesis because so much was being published about changes in the Princeton community while these events were still unfolding. This bibliography highlights two subsets of primary sources: unpublished document collections and personal papers, and contemporary sources. The intention is to highlight the interplay between what was openly being discussed and published and what exchanges were taking place in more private forums. Note: materials from the Princeton University Archives are quoted extensively and the archive has deliberately been noted as PUA.

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Timeline

