

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
ORGANIZATION PRESENTED TO
THE TRUSTEES OF THE CORNELL
UNIVERSITY, OCTOBER 21ST,
1866**

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Report of the Committee on Organization presented to the trustees of the cornell university,
October 21st, 1866 by Andrew D. White

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ANDREW D. WHITE

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REPORT.

In establishing a college on the ordinary basis, and with the ordinary scope, there are few difficulties which earnest men and moderate means will not readily surmount. The course required is simple and single; the equipment is compact; instructors are readily found for every department; precedents at every point are abundant.

But the work committed to the Trustees of the Cornell University is far larger, far more complicated. In most cases it has few available precedents, in many it has none. The committee upon organization, therefore, cannot hope to present a plan which shall cover every point likely to arise in carrying on the institution now to be commenced; but they hope to present a plan which shall aid in setting the University in operation, and to suggest ideas which will aid it in developing healthfully and largely.

THEORY OF THE PLAN OF ORGANIZATION.

The theory on which the committee have based their plan is that throughout the national and State legislation preparatory to the establishment of the institution, and also throughout the ideas of the founder of the Cornell University, as explained to us by himself, are two leading convictions as to the educational needs of the country, and two corresponding ideas as to meeting these needs.

Each of these convictions, and its corresponding idea, is separate and distinct, yet each is necessary to the other.

The first of these convictions is that there exists a necessity never yet fully met, for thorough education in various *special* departments, and, among them, the science and practice of Agriculture, Industrial Mechanics, and kindred departments of thought and action. The corresponding practical idea is that institutions be founded where such instruction can be conducted with every appliance necessary in discovering truth and in diffusing truth; that such instruction be not subordinated to any other; that the agricultural and industrial professions be regarded as the peers of every other; that access to these departments be opened as widely as possible, and progress in them be pushed as far as possible.

The second of these convictions is that the system of collegiate instruction now dominant leaves unsatisfied the wants of a very large number, and perhaps the majority of those who desire an advanced *general* education; that although there are great numbers of noble men doing noble work in the existing system, it has devoted its strength and machinery mainly to a *single combination of studies*, into which comparatively few enter heartily; that where more latitude in study has been provided for, all courses outside the single traditional course have been considered to imply a lower caste in those taking them; that the higher general education has therefore lost its hold upon the majority of the trusted leaders of society, that it has therefore become under-estimated and distrusted by a majority of the people at large, and that therefore it is neglected by a majority of our young men of energy and ability.

The corresponding practical idea is that colleges of wider scope be founded; that no single course be insisted upon for all alike; that various combinations of studies be provided to meet various minds and different plans; thus presenting a *general course* to meet that *general want* which existing colleges fail to satisfy.

FUNDAMENTAL PLAN OF INSTRUCTION.

The labor imposed upon us then is two-fold.

First, we are to make provision for *special courses*—special instruction in the departments of agriculture, mechanic arts, &c.

Secondly, we are to provide a *general course*—a general course in which such instruction and culture be afforded as shall be demanded by the young men who come to group themselves in the different *special courses*.

Even if it should be claimed that the whole effort of the trustees ought to be devoted to agriculture and the mechanic arts alone; even if we were to construe away the plain words of the original act of Congress, which speaks of "other scientific and classical branches" as part of the object of the government grant of lands, still the oft-repeated declaration of our founder that he "wishes to make such provision that every person can find opportunity here to pursue any study he desires," would be our sufficient warrant in using at least his munificent gift in supplementing the special instruction with general instruction, and rounding it out into the proportions of an university.

Again, even were we to found merely technical schools, giving

instruction merely in special departments, the committee believe that we should be very soon obliged to supplement these special courses with a general course. Common sense, as well as general experience teaches that there must be some variation in mental labor. With rare exceptions, any man who pursues one science or art alone, devoting his mind entirely to that, though he may at first progress rapidly, soon shows that such progress is not normal. It is very firmly believed that the great majority of men who wish to attain a high place in any science or art, can rise higher, even in that, by enlarging the mind by some parallel studies, than by narrowing the mind constantly to their single pursuit. Such contracted study gives facility and accuracy, but it is too often fatal to the qualities which ensure eminence.

Your committee are therefore of the opinion that there should be two great divisions of the university.

The first division should comprise the separate departments devoted each to a special science and art. The second division should comprise the department of Science, Literature and the Arts in general.

In accordance with this division is presented the following plan:

ORGANIZATION OF INSTRUCTION.

I. *Division of Special Sciences and Arts.*

1. Department of Agriculture.
2. Department of Mechanic Arts.
3. Department of Civil Engineering.
4. Department of Commerce and Trade.
5. Department of Mining.
6. Department of Medicine and Surgery.
7. Department of Law.
8. Department of Jurisprudence, Political Science and History.
9. Department of Education.

II. *Division of Science, Literature and the Arts in General.*

1. 1st General Course.
2. 2d General Course.
3. 3d General Course.
4. Scientific Course.
5. Optional Course.

The character of each of the departments named in the first division is in the main, sufficiently explained by its title. Details

of courses of instruction in each cannot well be arranged until the trustees shall have consulted with the faculty, and it is recommended that at periods previous to the commencement of active instruction, the Academic Senate be requested to convene for the purpose of discussing this subject and presenting plans.

But there is one department, regarding which, perhaps, some explanation is needed here: *the department of Jurisprudence—Political and Social Science, and History.*

We believe that although there will be some attention to these subjects in the general course, there is need of a separate department devoted to a study of them, wider and deeper. We believe too, that such a department should be established so soon as we approximate a full corps of professors.

In various connections with institutions of learning, and in various public employments, the committee have been convinced:

First—That great numbers of the most active young men long for such a department, would work vigorously in it, and would secure good discipline by it, and that these young men are many of them not attracted to the existing colleges.

Secondly.—We believe that the State and nation are constantly injured by their chosen servants, who lack the simplest rudiments of knowledge which such a department could supply. No one can stand in any legislative position and not be struck with the frequent want in men otherwise strong and keen, of the simplest knowledge of principles essential to public welfare. Of technical knowledge of law, and of practical acquaintance with business, the supply is always plentiful, but it is very common that in deciding great public questions, exploded errors in political and social science are revamped, fundamental principles of law disregarded, and the plainest teachings of history ignored.

In any republic, and especially in this, the most frequent ambition among young men will be to rise to positions in the public service, and the committee think it well at least to *attempt* to provide a department in view of the wants of these; a department where there should be something more than a mere glance over one or two superseded text books,—where there should be large and hearty study and comparison of the views and methods of Guizot, and Mill, and Lieber, and Woolsey, and Bastiat, and Carey, and Mayne, and others.

There are among you, gentlemen of the board of trustees, representatives of every walk in life, of every important profes-

sion, of every party. There are among you, representatives of the highest state and national employments, and we appeal to you for corroboration of the statement, that whatever may be the opinion of cloistered men, the opinion of men active in the world at large, is decided, that there is a great branch of instruction here, for which the existing colleges make no adequate provision.

It may be said that the function of colleges is to give discipline, that knowledge is subordinate. We answer that they should give both, and that *as a rule, the attempt to give mental discipline by studies which the mind does not desire, is as unwise as to attempt to give physical nourishment by food which the body does not desire.* Discipline comes not by studies which are "*droned over.*"

Again, we believe that the knowledge given, is far more important than many would have us think. The main stock in political economy and history of most of our educated public men, is what they learned before they studied for their professions. Many an absurdity uncorrected at college has been wrought into the constitutions and statutes of our great commonwealths, and when we consider that constitution making for new states and old, is to be the great work in this country, of this and succeeding generations, surely, we do well to attempt more thorough instruction of those on whom the work is likely to fall.

One other department, needs, perhaps a few words of explanation—that of Commerce and Trade. Throughout the country have sprung up schools known as "commercial colleges." The number of persons attending them is such as to show that they meet a want widely felt, and the idea has suggested itself that at some future day it might be well to try the experiment of a department under the above name, in which a more thorough and large instruction could be given, than in those at present so numerous. Anything which will bring some university culture to bear upon those preparing to lead in commerce and trade, will be a benefit to the country. How far it can be done your committee will not venture to say. At least one great European university has kept up a course of this sort for many years.

In the *second division*, it is necessary to give a more detailed explanation of courses, and ideas upon which the courses are based.

The "First General Course" comprises a combination of studies mainly like the classical course at the existing colleges.

The "Second General Course," comprises a combination of