

**REPORT TO THE CORPORATION
OF BROWN UNIVERSITY, ON
CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM OF
COLLEGIATE EDUCATION, READ
MARCH 28, 1850**

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Report to the Corporation of Brown University, on Changes in the System of Collegiate Education, Read March 28, 1850 by Francis Wayland

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FRANCIS WAYLAND

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REPORT

TO THE

CORPORATION OF BROWN UNIVERSITY,

ON

CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM

OF

COLLEGIATE EDUCATION,

Read March 23, 1850.

PROVIDENCE:
GEORGE H. WHITNEY.
1850.

BOSTON:
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PRINTERS, DEVONSHIRE STREET.

At a meeting of the Corporation of Brown University, held December 18, 1849, the consideration of some changes in the system of education in the University, was referred to a Committee consisting of the following gentlemen; to wit.

THE PRESIDENT,	SAMUEL BOYD TOBEY, M. D.
ROBERT E. PATTISON, D. D.	WILLIAM HAGUE, D. D.
BARNAS SEARS, D. D.	NATHAN BISHOP, Esq.
ZACHARIAH ALLEN, Esq.	ALVA WOODS, D. D.
RUFUS BABCOCK, D. D.	JOHN KINGSBURY, Esq.
SAMUEL GREENE ARNOLD, Esq.	

At an adjourned meeting, held March 28, 1850, the Report of the Committee was read, and it was *Ordered*, that the Report be published, and that final action be taken on the same at an adjourned meeting to be held on Tuesday, May 7, 1850.

N. B. CROCKER,
Secretary of the Corporation.

R E P O R T .

THE Committee to whom was referred the subject of the proposed alterations in the course of studies in Brown University, have attended to that duty, and submit to the corporation the following Report.

The Committee considered themselves bound to inquire into the present condition of the University, and to suggest such measures, as, in their judgment, would tend most directly to increase the usefulness of the Institution.

The present condition of the University cannot be well understood, without considering its relation to collegiate education in this country; nor can the present condition of collegiate education in this country be understood, without referring to its past history, and its relation to University Education in Great Britain, from which it originated. The subjects, therefore, to which the attention of the corporation will be directed in the present report, are the following:

The System of University Education in Great Britain.

The progress and present state of University Education in this country.

The present condition of this University.

The measures which the Committee recommend for the purpose of enlarging the usefulness of the Institution.

The subject of Collegiate Degrees.

The system of University Education in Great Britain.

The collegiate institutions in New England, of which all but one of those in the other states are copies, were established by graduates of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in England. We were then in a state of colonial dependence, and it was natural that our forefathers should desire to reproduce here, as far as it was in their power, literary seminaries, similar to those which they had long venerated at home. This they accomplished in several important respects.

The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were, as it is well known, established mainly, if not exclusively, for the benefit of the clergy. They were ecclesiastical and monastic institutions. The course of study which they prescribed, was designed for the education of priests, who formed, in fact, the only educated class in the middle ages; and who probably intended, by means of an exclusive education, to render perpetual the influence over the masses which they had so successfully usurped. This design of these Universities is distinctly asserted in an elaborate paper written in defence of their present position, in the following words:—“The foundation of colleges, though almost

always containing *provision* for the education of youth, was *primarily* designed for far other objects. They were for studious men to retire to, to devote themselves, in leisure and freedom from the cares of daily subsistence, to *meditation* and the study of the arts and sciences in general; always, however, as the *handmaids* of the architectonic science of *theology*, to which they were bound both *professionally* and *academically*." Again: "It is true that the education of young men is one of its objects; but it is distinctly *not* the primary one,—that is, *ad studendum et orandum*; to encourage the systematic study of the arts, first by way of preparation, and then of divinity, by persons enabled by the munificence of the founders, to consecrate their time to deep reading." *

Such being the nature of an English university,† it may well be supposed that its organization is adapted to answer its end. As at present constituted, however, Oxford and Cambridge are not universities, in the sense in which this word is used on the continent of Europe. They are a collection of colleges, all teaching the same branches of study, while the university, as it formerly existed, teaches nothing, or until lately, nothing that was required of the candidate for a degree. Each college carries on its own

* Quarterly Review, July, 1840.

† It has been conclusively shown by Sir W. Hamilton, that the colleges have usurped all the power of the universities, and radically changed the character of these institutions. This, however, will not affect the course of our argument. We speak of the facts as they have existed for centuries, and of the doctrines on this subject, held for ages by the established church.

tuition by means of tutors, holding their offices generally but for a few years, as is the case in this country; and at stated times, each presents its candidates for degrees to the general meeting of the members of the university. If the power of conferring degrees were bestowed on all the colleges, the university would be merely a name; it would do nothing, for it would have nothing to do.*

Our ancestors, of course, would never have thought of establishing, in the infancy of our country, a congeries of colleges such as form the University of Oxford or Cambridge. They took a single college for their model. Let us then briefly consider the nature of a single college in one of these splendid establishments.

A college in one of the English universities, is a foundation composed of a master, tutors, fellows, and students. The fellows are generally resident graduates, supported by the foundation. The master has the government of the whole society. The teaching, as we have said, is done by the tutors. The course of study embraced originally a term of four years, though now, we believe, that three years is the usual period of residence for an undergraduate. At Cambridge, almost the whole of this time is devoted to the study of the mathematics. At Oxford, it has been almost as exclusively devoted to the study of the Greek and Latin classics.

* Changes of an important character have been commenced within a year or two, in both Oxford and Cambridge. We here refer to the condition of these institutions as it existed until very lately.