

**THE WISCONSIN IDEA:
THE UNIVERSITY'S SERVICE TO THE STATE**

by

Jack Stark

Legislative Reference Bureau

THE WISCONSIN IDEA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

by

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The University of Wisconsin-Madison

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But the Wisconsin tradition meant more than a simple belief in the people. It also meant a faith in the application of intelligence and reason to the problems of society. It meant a deep conviction that the role of government was not to stumble along like a drunkard in the dark, but to light its way by the best torches of knowledge and understanding it could find.

Adlai Stevenson
Madison, Wisconsin
October 8, 1952

The Wisconsin Idea is a magical expression for many residents of this state. It stands for something that distinguishes us from residents of other states. However, there is no consensus on its meaning or causes. References to it are scattered in histories, biographies and speeches, but no one has written its own history. A book that appears to be the only detailed analysis of it is really a campaign document and an account of one legislative session. The Wisconsin Idea needs to be clarified, and the history of the phenomenon that it describes needs to be told so that we can better understand ourselves and our state.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WISCONSIN IDEA

The Wisconsin Idea deserves a lengthy analysis only if it is rare and very important. Eminent scholars and educators who lived during one of the eras when the Idea was particularly strong, the early years of this century, believed that it fulfilled those two criteria. For example, during 1908, President Charles William Eliot of Harvard University, while granting an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to Charles Van Hise, president of the University of Wisconsin, called him the "president of the leading state university."¹ Lincoln Steffens thought that President Eliot made the statement to a large extent because of the University's service to its state; that is, because of the Wisconsin Idea. A few years later, Theodore Roosevelt wrote that "in no other state in the union has any university done the same work for the community that has been done in Wisconsin by the University of Wisconsin."² More recent experts concur. Much later, Frederick Rudolph, the author of the standard history of American higher education, claimed that the University was entitled to President Eliot's praise because of "the success with which it incorporated in its rationale two curiously conflicting currents of Progressivism: the resort to an *expertise* in the affairs of state, and the development of popular nontechnical lectures which carried the university to the people."³ Rudolph also acknowledged the historical significance of the Wisconsin Idea: "in varying degrees other state universities revealed the same spirit, but none came as close as the University of Wisconsin in epitomizing the spirit of Progressivism and the service ideal."⁴ The Wisconsin Idea certainly appears to have been important not only to this state but also to the development of American higher education.

2. DEFINITION OF THE WISCONSIN IDEA

One would expect an historical phenomenon that is as important as the Wisconsin Idea appears to be to have a generally agreed upon meaning. Many residents of this state, if they were asked to define the Wisconsin Idea, would respond, "the boundaries of the University are the

boundaries of the state.” Oddly enough, the person who coined that expression is not known, although President Van Hise and Dean of Extension Louis Reber made similar remarks. Robert H. Foss, the editor of the University’s Press Bureau during the presidencies of Glenn Frank and Clarence Dykstra, has claimed credit for the expression, but his claim cannot be verified.⁵ That is a vivid expression but it is a slogan, a bumper sticker, not a useful definition.

One can divide more careful attempts to define the Idea into two categories. One consists of definitions that emphasize the Idea’s political dimension, even its partisan political dimension (progressive or liberal politics).⁶ The other consists of definitions that emphasize the University’s service to the state.⁷ The definitions in the second category are more convincing. The political definitions are somewhat appropriate for the early years of this century, but even for that era they leave out important contributions. Moreover, the Idea has changed since that time. As David Cronon and John Jenkins point out, Charles McCarthy, who wrote the only book ostensibly about the Idea (but really about the 1911 Legislature) thought of the Idea as “various ameliorative activities of the Wisconsin progressive movement, including those of the University. After the stalwarts [the conservative wing of the Republican Party, Robert M. La Follette’s political opponents] returned to power with the election of Governor Emanuel L. Philipp in 1914, the term increasingly referred more narrowly to University public service.”⁸ As we have seen, persons who lived outside of Wisconsin, such as Theodore Roosevelt, President Eliot and Frederick Rudolph, thought of the Idea as primarily the University’s service to the state. Also, restricting the Idea to its political manifestations would result in ignoring many accomplishments, such as agricultural discoveries and outreach programs, that most persons would consider to be part of the Idea.

In order to sort effectively through the massive amount of available information about the history of the state and of the University and thus make it possible to write an analysis and history of the phenomenon that is called the Wisconsin Idea, it is necessary to formulate a definition of the Idea that is a bit more inclusive than any of the previous definitions. I propose to define the Wisconsin Idea as the University’s direct contributions to the state: to the government in the forms of serving in office, offering advice about public policy, providing information and exercising technical skill, and to the citizens in the forms of doing research directed at solving problems that are important to the state and conducting outreach activities. This article is a history of those types of service. For the sake of brevity, I will use “Wisconsin Idea” more frequently than “the University’s service to the state”. That is not to say that I am writing a history of an *idea*; I am not writing a history of the changes in the ways that term has been defined.

3. CAUSES OF THE WISCONSIN IDEA

The definition stated in the previous paragraph identifies the subject of this analysis. The most logical first step in the analysis itself is to determine the causes of the Wisconsin Idea, the reasons why the University served the state. In turn, the first place that one should look for them is in the University’s charter: the statute that created it. It may be thought that the University has always been required by law to perform the functions that are part of the Idea. That is not the case. The charter imposes a number of duties, primarily on the University’s Board of Regents, but it specifies the University’s educational functions tersely and indirectly:

The university shall consist of four departments:

1. The department of science, literature, and the arts:
2. The department of law:
3. The department of medicine:
4. The department of the theory and practice of elementary instruction.⁹

There is no hint that the University would do research or perform outreach activities. There is no hint that Professor Stephen Babcock would one day invent an easy, cheap test for the butterfat content of milk that would enormously benefit the state’s dairy industry; that Professor Frederick Jackson Turner, who in our era would be called the most influential American historian, would travel the dirt roads of late-nineteenth-century Wisconsin to give extension lectures; or that Professor John R. Commons would repeatedly aid in the planning and drafting of legislation that



This 1918 photograph captures five of the leading advocates of the Wisconsin Idea in a relaxed moment on Bascom Hill. Shown from left to right are UW President Charles R. Van Hise, Former UW President Thomas C. Chamberlin, Dean of Agriculture Harry L. Russell, Former Dean of Agriculture William A. Henry and Professor Stephen M. Babcock (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 1335).

would make Wisconsin the first state to solve difficult social and economic problems. There is no hint of the Wisconsin Idea.

Unconvincing Statements of the Causes

Perhaps the next place to look for a convincing statement of the causes of the Idea is the first extensive discussion of it, McCarthy's *The Wisconsin Idea*. He identifies two causes, the influence of Professor Richard Ely and the Germanic roots of Wisconsin's residents, but neither is convincing. Ely, a noted economist, was lured from Johns Hopkins University and made director of the UW School of Economics, Political Science, and History. Later he was attacked for his political views and activities by a regent and then exonerated by the board in the oft-quoted "sifting and winnowing" statement.¹⁰ Ely did have some beliefs that lend support to McCarthy's argument. For example, of his experience as a student in Germany he wrote, "[many German professors] occupied public and administrative positions and contributed in this way to the German Empire. My experience in Germany had first brought to my attention the importance of linking book knowledge and practical experience."¹¹ This experience was one of the influences that led him to Christian Socialism. Shortly after he came to the University he wrote, in a book that was influenced by that doctrine, "one sort of unity of Christians, however, is found in the State. Men of all denominations act together in the administrative, legislative and judicial branches of government for the establishment of righteousness."¹² Both of those statements are compatible with a belief that academics should serve a state. Ely also reported that "when I came to Wisconsin, La Follette greeted me with the remark, 'You have been my teacher!'"¹³ La Follette, a major supporter of the Wisconsin Idea, probably did not mean that he was a devoted reader of Ely's publications but that he agreed with some of Ely's positions, such as his support of labor, which was one of the reasons for the later attack on him.

Although La Follette mentioned Ely's influence on him, Ely was a Stalwart before 1903 and began to support the Progressives during that year partly because the Stalwarts had not secured a federal position for him.¹⁴ Ely also admitted that he was never a close personal adviser to La Follette, which would have been the most natural way for him to exemplify the Wisconsin Idea.¹⁵ Moreover, Ely's biographer wrote that "apparently no governor considered Ely as a possible appointee to the several new commissions until, in 1910 and 1911, Governor Francis McGovern asked him to serve on either the tax or railroad commissions. After some criticism by conservatives and after conferral with Van Hise, Ely decided not to accept an appointment."¹⁶ One scholar claimed that Ely was a conservative as early as 1894 and that he believed government should have a very limited role in solving social problems, such as the revitalization of the cutover region of Northern Wisconsin, where logging had devastated the forests.¹⁷ That view of government is the opposite of one of the premises that is held by supporters of the Wisconsin Idea: that government should help to solve social and economic problems. Contrary to McCarthy, Ely's only substantial contribution to the Idea was bringing Commons to the University.

McCarthy also believed that Germany was influential in the development of the Wisconsin Idea. One reason for his belief is that Ely had been significantly influenced by his experience in Germany.¹⁸ McCarthy also argued that Wisconsin was "fundamentally a German state," specifically a state molded by persons who fled from Germany during the political upheavals that occurred during 1848, in which attempts to make the German people more free failed, and who therefore loved liberty and good government.¹⁹ Frederic C. Howe, who, like McCarthy published a book on Wisconsin politics in 1912, agreed about the German influence. Howe wrote that "Wisconsin is making the German idea her own. The University is the fourth department of the state."²⁰

One becomes suspicious of McCarthy's claim if one remembers that, unlike the current Legislative Reference Bureau, which is required by statute to be "strictly nonpartisan," McCarthy, as founder of that bureau, made it clear that he was a devoted Progressive. His book was written primarily to aid the Progressives, and there were many German voters in the state, particularly in Milwaukee, where the Socialist Party, with a number of German-Americans as its leaders, was beginning to compete successfully with the Progressives. Praising the influence of Germany and linking it to the Progressives were likely to convince some German-Americans to vote for Progressives.

However, Commons disagreed. He knew more than McCarthy about the political climate of the state outside Madison, especially in Milwaukee, where he had worked with the Bureau of Economy and Efficiency, and he presented a convincing reason to reject McCarthy's theory:

I sometimes have heard from people of other states that the Wisconsin pioneer success in administering progressive legislation must have come from the large German element in the state who brought with them the traditions of the efficient government of Germany. But the Germans in Wisconsin, although exceeding in numbers any other of its many nationalities, have been the least active, politically, of all.²¹

Finally, common sense suggests that McCarthy considerably overstated his case. If he is correct, either German-American citizens who held certain political views influenced University employees to work for the benefit of the state and influenced governmental officials to encourage that effort or German ideas about the proper relation between the state and the University were generally accepted. Those causal relations are not evident.

A Somewhat More Convincing Statement of a Cause

A distinguished historian recently attributed the Wisconsin Idea in part to such characteristic Midwestern values as decency and egalitarianism, "which come together in a remarkable tradition of clean government (despite occasional problems along the way) and a strong tradition of service and cooperation."²² This analysis resembles McCarthy's attribution of the Wisconsin Idea in large measure to the influence of Germany and of German-Americans. Again, it is difficult to demonstrate that values led to actions. This statement of the cause of the Idea also resembles a statement made by Frederick Jackson Turner:

Nothing in our educational history is more striking than the steady pressure of democracy upon its universities to adapt them to the requirements of all the people. From the State Universities of the Middle West, shaped under pioneer ideals, have come the fuller recognition of scientific studies, and especially those of applied science devoted to the conquest of nature.²³

This claim has an intuitive appeal. Most persons would agree that states have distinctive cultures and that a phenomenon like the Wisconsin Idea would appear in only a few states, nearly all of which are in the Midwest. On the other hand, it may be better to distinguish among Midwestern states; even neighboring states, such as Wisconsin and Illinois, are quite different. In short, there may be something to this analysis, but Midwestern values are at most a minor cause of the Wisconsin Idea, and it is difficult to prove that they are even that.

Causes That Also Apply to Other States

Several of the causes of the Wisconsin Idea operated across the country. One is the ferment in American higher education during the second half of the nineteenth century. Until that time, the curricula in nearly all colleges and universities were similar and emphasized required courses in the Greek and Roman languages and cultures, in some basic sciences and in a few other subjects. After the Civil War, the increasing importance of science; the spread of the elective system, which President Eliot of Harvard did more than anyone else to promote; and the growing popularity of the seminar method of instruction and increased emphasis on research, both of which were imported from Germany, most notably by Johns Hopkins University, caused this ferment and a willingness to experiment.²⁴ These changes were more likely to have major effects in recently formed universities that were developing their identities during this era, and the University of Wisconsin, which was founded in 1849, was one of them. In other words, the University matured during a time when it was natural for leaders to consider new notions about the ways in which their institutions should operate. It was thus a time when innovations, such as the Wisconsin Idea, were more likely to be accepted.

Another cause of the Wisconsin Idea, in particular of the research designed to solve state problems and the outreach activities of the College of Agriculture and the College of Engineering, that had effects both in Wisconsin and elsewhere was the federal Morrill Act of 1862.²⁵ It was one of several acts that were passed after the Republicans took control of the federal government during 1861 and that were designed to stimulate economic development. Others include the Homestead Act, a tariff act and an act that granted subsidies to railroads. Before that time, the Democratic Party had controlled the federal government, and, because it was dominated by its Southern wing, that party favored agrarian interests, a static society and a limited role for the federal government in the economy. The Morrill Act was designed to promote economic development by granting to each state 30,000 acres of federal land for each of the state's senators and representatives to Congress. The states were to sell the land and to use the proceeds for the following purposes:

. . . the endowment, support and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes.²⁶

Wisconsin met the Morrill Act's deadline for accepting the land grant by enacting Chapter 114, Laws of 1866. That law revised the list of courses of study in the University's charter to reflect the requirements of the Morrill Act that "the college of arts shall embrace courses of instruction in the mathematical, physical and natural sciences, with their applications to the industrial arts, such as agriculture, mechanics and engineering." The Wisconsin act also appropriated to the University the revenue from the sale of the lands that the federal government granted and authorized Dane County to issue bonds to purchase land that it would donate to the University for the site of an experimental farm. Dane County's donation ensured that the proceeds of the Morrill

Act's land grant would strengthen the University rather than establish a new university, and creating the experimental farm was a major effect of that act on the University.

The president of the Board of Regents argued later that statements in the Morrill Act that the colleges to be aided were not to exclude "other scientific and classical studies" and were to aid the industrial classes "in the several pursuits and professions of life" indicated that it was lawful to use the revenue generated by the land sales to aid an existing university rather than to establish a new one.²⁷ However, the act did state that the "leading object" of the institutions that benefited from the act should be to teach subjects related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, which has never been true of the University of Wisconsin.

In one sense the Morrill Act's effects on the University were less substantial than one would expect, because the land sales were poorly handled. A few years after the University accepted the grant, it admitted that "a judicious management of the liberal grant to the University, would have been productive of treble or quadruple the fund now on hand."²⁸ In other senses, however, the grant had major effects. Together with Dane County's donation of land for an experimental farm, it ensured that Madison would be the state's center for instruction and research in agriculture. If the Morrill Act had led to the establishment of an agricultural and mechanical university elsewhere in the state, or even if a significant amount of the University's agricultural research had been done elsewhere, the history of the Wisconsin Idea would have been very different. Specifically, the Idea would have been considerably weakened, because a new institution would have had neither the strong foundation that already existed at the University nor the University's easy access to the state government. Also, the act clearly signaled that the federal government considered agricultural and mechanical research and instruction to be important. The University's leaders saw that signal. While president of the University, Fred Harvey Harrington, an authority on American history, recognized the important effect that the Morrill Act had on his institution by



E. L. Luther; who served Oneida County, had the double distinction of being Wisconsin's first county agent and the first county agent in the United States to work under a legislative grant. He is shown at the county court house in 1912 with the two-cylinder motorcycle he used to travel to his experimental plots and meetings with farmers (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 1323).

beginning an article about the University's relation to the state with a reference to that act and by alluding to it in a speech that he delivered on the Voice of America.²⁹

Causes That Are More Specific to Wisconsin

Other causes of the Idea are more specific to Wisconsin. One of them is the fortunate fact that the state and the University matured simultaneously. Wisconsin became a state in 1848, and the University opened its doors during 1849. Thus, neither was frozen into ways of doing things before the other was formed. That allowed for flexibility in their interrelations. Because the University was the only public university in the state for a long time, it naturally developed a close relation to the state government.

In only a few states are the seat of government and the major state university in the same city. It may seem that this would be true in many states, but it is true in only nine. In fact, in some states the capitol and the major state university are far apart. In Wisconsin not only are the capitol and the University in the same city but they also are less than one mile apart. Nearness is a minor factor today, but during the nineteenth century, when transportation was much more primitive, it was a major factor. Professors could influence Wisconsin government partly because it was physically easy to do so. Also, if a group of academics live in the same city where legislators work, social interaction and thus cooperation, mutual respect and exchange of ideas are more likely.

The most exhaustive attempt to identify a cause of the Wisconsin Idea is J. David Hoeveler's 1976 article on the Social Gospel.³⁰ It deserves careful attention and evaluation. In a nutshell, adherents of the Social Gospel believed the primary goal of Christians ought to be to help build a righteous government. Hoeveler asserted that "the three persons who best articulated the Wisconsin Idea – Ely, Commons, and John Bascom – each found in the new role of the University the logical and critical vehicle of their ideals: the perfection of the Christian state."³¹

We have seen that, for a time, Ely believed in a form of Christian Socialism, which supports Hoeveler's argument as it applies to him. However, we have also seen that for much of his career Ely favored a limited role for government. He believed, for example, that private enterprise, not the state, should solve the problems of the cutover region of Northern Wisconsin. A belief that government should back away from problems is not compatible with the Wisconsin Idea. Also, Ely was only a minor figure in the development of the Wisconsin Idea.

In contrast, as we shall see, Commons played a very substantial role in the evolution of the Wisconsin Idea. In fact, a strong case can be made that he was the most impressive figure in that evolution. In regard to Commons and the Social Gospel, Hoeveler cited, almost in passing, some vague evidence: the influence of his religious mother and of Oberlin College, and some solid evidence: his participation in, and writing for, the prohibitionist movement.³² However, Commons' prohibitionist activity occurred early in his life. The pamphlet that Hoeveler cited was published during 1894, ten years before Commons came to the University. In his autobiography Commons mentioned that as a young man he briefly was the Secretary of the American Institute of Christian Socialism, but that he quickly became disillusioned with that movement and made other values the bedrock of his ideas about economics.³³

Evaluating Hoeveler's discussion of University of Wisconsin President John Bascom, to whom most of his article is devoted, is more complicated. First, it should be pointed out that Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen identified the influence of the Social Gospel on Bascom before Hoeveler did.³⁴ Hoeveler quoted a number of Bascom's speeches and writings that show his belief in the Social Gospel. Bascom, like many mid-nineteenth-century American college presidents, taught a course in moral philosophy to seniors. Hoeveler made the telling point that in his course Bascom used his own text, the longest section of which was about government and politics.³⁵ That is, he taught his students that improving government was a major ethical duty. Bascom's belief in the Social Gospel and his teaching of that belief are clear.

Although he probably had some influence on Charles Van Hise, Bascom's connection to the Wisconsin Idea is primarily his influence on Robert M. La Follette, who acknowledged that influence and wrote of Bascom, "It was his teaching, iterated and reiterated, of the obligation of both

the university and the students to the mother state that may be said to have originated the Wisconsin idea in education.”³⁶ Edward Birge, who, because of his long service in important administrative positions at the University, was in a position to know, agreed with La Follette:

I question whether the history of any great commonwealth can show so intimate a relationship between the forces which have governed its social development and the principles expounded from a teacher’s desk as that which exists between Wisconsin and the classroom of John Bascom.³⁷

Hoeveler’s evidence about Bascom is somewhat impressive, but there is another side to both Bascom’s philosophy and his influence on La Follette. In regard to his philosophy, to make an absolutely convincing case that Bascom was important to the Wisconsin Idea one would need to add two more links to the chain. One link would connect Bascom’s Social Gospel background to an educational philosophy that fits with the Idea, and another link would connect that background to a conception of the state that would fit with that Idea. However, Bascom was devoted to the classical conception of education, which influenced the curriculum before the ferment in higher education that was mentioned earlier and which is not congenial to the Wisconsin Idea, because it is not based on providing service to the state.³⁸ In fact, Bascom himself recognized that his spiritual conception of education was opposed to practicality: “The most serious evil, associated with the present tendency in education to special departments, is that the immediate uses of knowledge are allowed to take the place of its widest spiritual ministrations.”³⁹ Those are not the words of a university administrator who would favor research focused on the state’s problems and professors serving as experts for the state government or outreach activities. In fact, Bascom was uninterested in two of the early examples of the Wisconsin Idea, the Agricultural Short Course and the Farmers’ Institutes.⁴⁰ It was his successor, Thomas Chamberlin (1887-1892), who gave them the backing that they needed. Moreover, rather than believing that government should improve the lives of the citizens, as did most of the main adherents to the Wisconsin Idea, Bascom believed that it should protect property rights.⁴¹

La Follette’s relation to Bascom is also more complicated than it first appears. David Thelen’s analysis differs considerably from Hoeveler’s:

Bascom’s influence seems to have been that of personality, not of a philosophy. Had Bascom’s been an intellectual influence, La Follette would not have repeatedly taken stands diametrically opposed to the president’s for the next decade. When La Follette introduced Bascom in 1901, he ignored the president’s reforming causes, but he said that “the personality of a great teacher is greater than his teaching.”⁴²

Thelen also mentioned that when the faculty voted about whether to award a degree to La Follette, who was a mediocre student, the result was a tie, which Bascom broke by voting to grant the degree. Had Bascom voted to deny the degree, La Follette’s life would have been quite different, as La Follette surely knew, as would the history of this state. Gratitude for Bascom’s vote (La Follette probably found out about it) and La Follette’s unconscious conception of Bascom as a replacement for his dead father, according to Thelen, may have been reasons for La Follette’s attraction to Bascom.

The most powerful early influence on La Follette’s politics, or at least on his rhetoric, was not Bascom but Edward G. Ryan, whom La Follette heard speak during 1873, shortly before he became a student at the University. The fiery Ryan vividly warned his audience, including the impressionable La Follette, that “the enterprises of the country are aggregating vast corporate combinations of unexampled capital, boldly marching, not for economic conquests only, but for political power.”⁴³ La Follette wrote of Ryan’s speech, “His voice shook with emotion and his prophetic words, which I have never forgotten, conveyed powerfully the feeling of many thoughtful men of that time. I have used them in scores of speeches in my campaigns.”⁴⁴

In short, Hoeveler, by expanding on brief remarks in Curti and Carstensen’s history of the University, has thoughtfully made a case that the Social Gospel exerted a major influence on the Wisconsin Idea. However, Bascom, although clearly a believer in that form of Christianity, had little effect on the Wisconsin Idea. Ely, who was a less ardent believer, also had little effect.

Commons had an enormous effect, but the Social Gospel was only briefly, and long before he did his important work, an influence on him. Although Hoeveler cast some light on the Wisconsin Idea, he overstated his case.

In contrast, the influence of the Wisconsin dairy industry on the Wisconsin Idea has been established. Some background information on the history of agriculture in Wisconsin is necessary to understand this influence. Wisconsin has not always been a dairy state. Soon after it became a state, wheat was by far its most important crop. Improved railroad transportation and the decline in wheat growing in the Eastern states hastened the increase in wheat farming in this state.



Hiram Smith, who considered himself a “scientific farmer”, secured a state subsidy for the farmers institutes held at the UW-Madison in the late 1800s. Thousands of working farmers attended these classes in the winter months. Smith later became a university regent and strong supporter of the College of Agriculture (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 1257).

By 1855, however, problems began to arise. Cultivating that crop began to deplete the soil, prices became unstable (for example, often declining sharply during the period from 1855 to 1860, partly due to the Panic of 1857) and diseases and pests, such as the chinch bug, attacked the crop. Although wheat production remained fairly high in Wisconsin throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, more and more farmers became convinced that to stay in business they would have to diversify and that they needed technical help to do so. It also became increasingly clear, partly because of the growth in the demand for dairy products, that the best way to diversify was to convert their farms to dairying or to add dairying to their current cultivation of wheat and other crops. Both new and experienced Wisconsin dairy farmers organized themselves and began looking for help. Despite its small agricultural staff, the logical place for them to turn was the University.

Between 1878 and 1890, Hiram Smith, a dairyman, supported the dairy industry in his position on the University Board of Regents. By late in the 1880s the Wisconsin Dairymen's Association was well organized, vigorous and persistent in its demands that the University help it. *Hoard's Dairyman*, which was edited by William Dempster Hoard, who was the governor for one term beginning in 1889 and later a regent, advocated the dairy farmers' position. These forces combined to exert considerable pressure on the University, where, beginning in 1880, they had an ally, William Henry, who specialized in agriculture and who recognized the need for dairy research and outreach activities. In fact, in 1890 Henry became the president of the Wisconsin Dairymen's Association.

Eric E. Lampard provided a wealth of facts to demonstrate the strong links among the dairy industry, the University and politicians during the 1880s and 1890s.⁴⁵ He also showed that these interrelations closely resemble the interrelations among the public, the University and politicians during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. He seems to be right that: "Nearly two decades before the election of Robert M. La Follette as governor, the Dairymen's Association, the College of Agriculture and elements within the Republican Party developed a process of co-operation which made the state a laboratory for scientific experiment, teaching, and legislation."⁴⁶ He also connected the dairy farmers to Robert M. La Follette:

It was to Hoard's "mugwump" faction [a group of reformers whose national leadership included Theodore Roosevelt] of the Republican Party that [La Follette] turned after his breach with Philetus Sawyer and the party "bosses". In the company of Hoard, Hiram Smith, W. A. Henry and others he was to find an example of that "proper attitude towards public affairs."⁴⁷

Moreover, "Hoard and the dairymen continued to support La Follette within the Republican Party, helped elect him governor in 1900, and endorsed most of the progressive candidates for a number of years thereafter."⁴⁸ This political support from a group that strongly advocated the Wisconsin Idea made it more likely that La Follette would support that Idea.

Pressure from the legislature has also advanced the Wisconsin Idea. Perhaps the most important application of pressure, because it occurred early in the University's history, is a statement that a legislative committee made during 1858. That committee wrote, for example:

For an institution of learning of the highest class, the general government has made a munificent donation to the people of Wisconsin. It is a sacred and inalienable trust, bequeathed to them for their own benefit and that of future generations. They have an unquestioned right to demand that it shall primarily be adapted to popular needs, that its courses of instruction shall be arranged to meet as fully as possible the wants of the greatest number of our citizens.⁴⁹

In a report that he made during 1859, President Lathrop appeared to be responding to that legislative statement: "The processes of instruction, whether intended for the culture of the individual subjectively, or for scientific analysis objectively, are nothing worth, except for the beneficial practical ends to be reached thereby."⁵⁰ He went on to express confidence that theoretical study and practical application could be connected, regardless of which of the two was a professor's starting point. More than a century later in 1962, President Harrington recognized that statement's significance by quoting it in a speech about the University's relation to the state.⁵¹ However, it is impossible to determine the extent to which the legislative pressure and the presidents' recognition of it resulted in changes at the University.

State government's support of and interest in the University has probably been a more important factor in the Wisconsin Idea's flourishing than has that government's pressure. That support and interest have been demonstrated by providing adequate funding and by using the University's resources in the legislative process. The legislative and executive branches worked particularly closely with the University during the 1911 legislative session. Not by coincidence, that session was the most remarkable in the state's history. Among its other accomplishments, the 1911 Legislature and Governor McGovern enacted laws that established the first workable income tax in this country, limited the working hours of women and children, created the first work-

ers' compensation program in the nation, created an Industrial Commission, made work places safer, created a highway commission, provided for the conservation of water resources and forests, created a state life insurance program, strengthened farm cooperatives, improved vocational education, created a Board of Public Affairs to coordinate state agencies and make them more efficient, and increased the powers of local units of government.

The government's receptivity to the University during that session was foreshadowed in the 1910 platform of the Republican Party, which held the governorship and controlled the legislature during the 1911 session: "We are proud of the high eminence attained by our state university. . . . We commend its research work. . . . We regard the university as the people's servant, carrying knowledge and assistance to the homes and farms and workplaces." Many years later in an interview, Selig Perlman gave a moving account of the 1911 Legislature, which gathered two or three evenings a week to hear and discuss lectures by such experts as Booker T. Washington and Theodore Roosevelt.⁵² Perlman said:

That was the most remarkable thing, the faith in education. . . . They were so friendly to the university experts. . . . They showed in every one of their movements the feeling that this is a new land, this is a new deal, so to say, for them and that they were intent on making the best of it, for themselves and for their children and for anyone that wished to come in.⁵³

Perlman concluded that "it really was a most inspiring thing." It still is a most inspiring thing.

One cause of that receptivity was the recognition that adequately funding the University was a wise investment. That can be seen most clearly by looking at the results of the state's investment in the University's agricultural research and outreach activities. During 1904 President Van Hise claimed:

It is absolutely certain that the annual increase in the wealth of the State due to investigations and to dissemination of knowledge among the people by the College of Agriculture is more than ten times the entire grants of the State to the University, and it is probably true that this increase in wealth is more than twenty times the amount of such grants.⁵⁴

During the next year Governor La Follette made a similar claim:

The Babcock milk test increases the product of the state more than a million dollars each year. The introduction of Swedish oats has added millions of dollars annually to the value of the crop. Investigation relating to smut of oats during the past ten years has increased the income of the state by four and one half million dollars per annum.⁵⁵

A few years later a journalist went beyond assertion and presented some statistics that made the same point:

What does the State get for the \$400,000 it spends yearly on agricultural education? In the ten years from 1900 to 1910 the value of all farm property in Wisconsin increased by more than 74 per cent. although the number of farms showed an increase of less than 6 per cent. and their total area less than 10 per cent. The number of its cows increased 47 per cent. in these ten years; the annual value of its butter output, 70 per cent., its cheese product 86 per cent., and its yield of corn from 25 bushels an acre, the average for the whole country, to 36 bushels an acre.⁵⁶

Although the College of Agriculture could not claim sole credit for those accomplishments, it deserved the lion's share.

The Board of Regents also encouraged the University's faculty members to perform activity, especially research on Wisconsin problems and outreach, that are part of the Wisconsin Idea and made policy decisions that made it more likely that faculty members would do so. One year after the founding of the University, the regents created a Department of the Practical Applications of Science. In 1880 the president of the Board of Regents announced:

Recently it has been the policy of the Board to give greater prominence to those departments of instruction which more particularly relate to the practical industries of our State. Reference is made especially to the departments of agriculture and practical mechanics.⁵⁷

Almost 100 years later, during 1974, the regents of the University of Wisconsin System approved mission statements for System institutions that assigned to the University, among other functions, “providing public service by application of the results of scholarly and scientific inquiry for the benefit of society, and meeting the continuing educational needs of the public through coordinated statewide outreach programs.”⁵⁸ Many other examples could be cited, but Curti and Carsensen are correct that there has always been a gap between the regents’ mandates for practical work and the University’s attention to it.⁵⁹

Many of the citizens of Wisconsin were receptive to the Wisconsin Idea. They and the University formed a mutually beneficial relationship. The University provided practical assistance, and the citizens provided support and, less obviously, knowledge. As to the support, President Van Hise’s biographer stated: “There is no question whether a university which emphasized the older curricula alone could have secured the popular esteem, and hence the appropriations, that the broader University of Wisconsin did.”⁶⁰ As to the knowledge, when L. R. Jones, the first member of the Plant Pathology Department, began to study the diseases of cabbage, he was wise enough to ask cabbage farmers to help him select varieties that were likely to resist disease. Two more recent members of that department described that sharing of knowledge and added:

[T]he concept of the professor building on what the farmer already knew was fundamental in an effective partnership. . . . The farmers had other effective inputs. For years thereafter, when legislative hearings on the university budget were being carried on in Madison, the farmers would travel to Madison to support university research.⁶¹

Another cause has been a strong tradition of interdisciplinary work. In the University’s early years, the small size of the faculty made it necessary for professors to teach more than one academic subject. A little later, most professors specialized in one subject, but the faculty was still so small that specialists in a number of disciplines were grouped into an academic unit. These were unavoidable consequences, but during 1892 a School of Economics, Political Science and History was formed as one of the inducements to lure Ely from Johns Hopkins. For decades, professors from various departments have collaborated on agricultural research. Many professors in this century have owed their primary allegiance to their intellectual discipline; whereas, professors who have worked in an interdisciplinary department or done research with professors from other departments are more likely to owe allegiance to their academic unit (a college or perhaps an interdisciplinary department), to the University or to the state. To the extent that this happens, the professor is more likely to do applied research (which is more likely to lead quickly to a solution of specific problems) rather than pure research and to do research directed at solving Wisconsin’s problems rather than doing research that will advance his or her discipline. That of course does not mean that basic research cannot lead to practical and local results.

Under the leadership of Charles McCarthy and Edwin Witte, the Legislative Reference Library was an important source of the Wisconsin Idea. As we shall see, both men shuttled back and forth between the University and state government, which helped them build bridges between the two institutions to convince politicians to use the services of professors and professors to perform those services. Philip La Follette wrote that “an important feature of the ‘Wisconsin Idea’ as it came to be called, was the Legislative Reference Library.”⁶² La Follette was probably thinking of the Library’s role in the legislative process and thus thinking of the Wisconsin Idea as a political phenomenon, but the library’s service as a liaison between state government and the University was also important. That relationship has waned in recent times.

The relationship between Charles Van Hise and Robert M. La Follette is another cause of the Wisconsin Idea. They were both members of the University’s Class of 1879 and were friends of students. For example, Van Hise attempted the difficult task of tutoring La Follette in science.



Professor Ben Elliott, a member of the Steam and Gas Engineering Department of the UW-Extension Division from 1912 to 1938, is shown in the midst of his boiler class in Fond du Lac (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 2794).

Later Van Hise became the first Wisconsin native to become the president of the University, and La Follette became the first Wisconsin-born governor of the state. Their terms in those offices overlapped, which was not a coincidence. La Follette appointed 10 of the 13 regents who chose Van Hise to be president, and the press at the time thought that La Follette strongly influenced the regents' decision.⁶³ During their tenures in office, La Follette repeatedly sought Van Hise's counsel and appointed him to several state boards. Birge overstated the case when he attributed the success of the Wisconsin Idea to the compatibility of Van Hise and La Follette, but their relationship certainly was one reason for that success.⁶⁴

La Follette individually also deserves a substantial share of the credit for the Idea. He appointed the regents who chose President Van Hise, and he worked closely with Van Hise and the University, providing adequate funds and using the skills and knowledge of its administrators and professors. He also deserves much of the credit for making the Legislative Reference Library effective and for preaching the value of service to the state. His desire to diminish the power of the special interests and to protect individuals, especially those who had little influence on state government, led him to seek help from the University.

The Most Important Cause of the Idea's Success

Many of the causes previously discussed were significant; a few have been very important. Together they may have been enough to produce the Wisconsin Idea, but the Idea would not be as strong as it has been if it had been dependent on them alone. One other cause must be identified and credited. It ensured that there would be a Wisconsin Idea and that the Idea would be powerful and effective. Wisconsin can be justifiably proud that, despite its average resources and population size, it produced a number of impressive persons, some of them politicians or government workers, most of them professors, who worked together for the common good. That phenomenon

is similar to the fortuitous circumstances that spawned the classical culture of Ancient Athens and the concentration of genius in little Florence that created its Renaissance culture. It is the likes of Harry Russell, J.C. Walker, Charles Van Hise, Harold Groves, John R. Commons, Stephen Babcock, Thomas Chamberlin, Robert M. La Follette, Aldo Leopold, Charles McCarthy, Louis Reber and Francis McGovern that we ought to celebrate when we celebrate the Wisconsin Idea.

4. THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS' SUPPORT OF THE WISCONSIN IDEA

Because a university president often determines the focus and direction of the institution, it may be useful to gauge the level of interest early presidents of the University of Wisconsin showed in helping the state. One looks in vain for such interest in the first four presidents: John Lathrop, Henry Barnard, Paul Chadbourne and John Twombly. They were all supporters of the classical curriculum and of the model of a university that was dominant until the Civil War. For example, Curti and Carstensen report that Chadbourne published an article "criticizing the emphasis in [state] universities on the practical and utilitarian at the expense of broadly cultural values."⁶⁵

A number of persons who have written about the Idea have credited Bascom, the president who followed Twombly, and Van Hise as being important advocates and facilitators of it. As we have seen in regard to J. David Hoevler, Jr.'s article on the Social Gospel, Bascom's role was minimal: he had, although quite ambivalently, a suitable theory but did little in regard to practice. In contrast, there is abundant evidence for Van Hise's support, both theoretical and practical, for the Idea. One statement of his position, phrased with his characteristic vigor and clarity, is the following:

At the present time a very large fraction of the work of the University is done not for the students who are here, but for the two and one-half millions of people of the state.

If there is one feature which especially characterizes the present administration of the University it has been the emphasis of the University as the instrument of the state.⁶⁶

In the rush to praise Bascom and Van Hise for championing the Wisconsin Idea, the two presidents who served between their tenures have been slighted. One of them, Thomas Chamberlin, wrote, "Scholarship for the sake of the scholar is simply refined selfishness. Scholarship for the sake of the state and the people is refined patriotism."⁶⁷ He made a strong statement in favor of extension work and supported the mechanics' institutes.⁶⁸ At the 1904 Jubilee of the University, at which Van Hise was inaugurated, he remarked that "Research in every realm of a people's legitimate interests is an appropriate function of the people's organized self, the state, and of the people's organized instrument of research, the state university." He subtly argued, however, that practical research and teaching of the most basic knowledge were not enough:

I hold that it is a legitimate function of the state to train boys to be farmers, yet I believe it to be a much higher and truer function to develop a science of agriculture, to increase the intellectual activity of every farmer, to improve the agricultural art on every farm, and by such improved art, to furnish better and safer food to every citizen.⁶⁹

The University's extension work began during Chamberlin's presidency, and he supported the agricultural short course and Farmers' Institutes, which had not interested Bascom. Similarly, President Charles Kendall Adams, in his inaugural address, said, "In no other state has the modern method of reaching the people by means known as university extension been so general or so successful. Nowhere else have the masses of the people received so much direct assistance from the teaching force at the university."⁷⁰ One would expect from those remarks on such an occasion that Adams would be a strong supporter of the Wisconsin Idea, and he was.

After the long administration of Van Hise, 1903 to 1918, the Idea had been so firmly established as a goal that all of the succeeding University presidents have supported it. For example, we have already seen President Harrington's recognition of, and agreement with, that ideal in the

1960s. After Van Hise's tenure the problem was not support for the Idea but realization of it. Although the president is a university's central figure, since Van Hise's time the University and the environment, including state government, in which it exists have changed so substantially that the presidents' support for the Idea has not guaranteed its revitalization.

5. TWO DEPARTMENTS ILLUSTRATE THE HISTORY OF THE WISCONSIN IDEA

The history of the Wisconsin Idea is so rich that merely presenting it from beginning to end would obscure the path that it has taken. One way to avoid that is to begin by presenting the contributions of two quite different University departments, Economics and Plant Pathology.⁷¹ They make good examples because the former is a social science department and has contributed to the state primarily by giving the government policy guidance, information, personal service, and technical assistance; the latter is a scientific department and has contributed to the state primarily through its research on problems important to Wisconsin and its outreach work. They are good choices also because each has produced a fine departmental history. These two departments have very similar histories, which suggests that their stories are good examples of the history of the Wisconsin Idea. This strategy will also allow for an early examination of the person who, I think, has made the most impressive contributions to the Wisconsin Idea: the economist John R. Commons.

The Department of Economics' Service Orientation

For decades the University's Department of Economics has been strong. It has consistently stood near the top of national rankings, which are based primarily on research. It has carried a heavy teaching burden. It has provided service to the federal government, sometimes at the



UW-Madison President Charles Van Hise, pictured in his office at Bascom Hall, guided the university in the 1903 to 1918 period, which was critical for the birth of the Wisconsin Idea (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #(X2-5) 185).

highest levels, such as Robert Lampman's service as a staff member of the Council of Economic Advisors. Nevertheless, Lampman was correct when he wrote in the department's history: "Perhaps the distinctive personality of the Wisconsin Department of Economics is to be found in its emphasis on service to the state."⁷² Its record of service has been exemplary.

The Early Years

As previously mentioned, the department began as the School of Economics, Political Science and History in 1892. In its early years its interdisciplinary nature added to its vitality and effectiveness. Not only did it include then the three disciplines identified in its title, but also elements of sociology and business. The department held together until 1900, when History was separated into its own unit, the School of History, under Frederick Jackson Turner's direction, and the School of Commerce and the Department of Political Science were formed.

The first important economist at the University was the first director of the School and the man for whom it was formed, Richard T. Ely, whose relation to the Wisconsin Idea has been discussed. Of the University's economists who were important to the Idea the next to arrive on the scene, in 1901, was Thomas S. Adams. His first major contribution was an exhaustive report on the taxation of mortgages.⁷³ This was important work because at the time, 1907, the state was in the process of amending its constitution to allow it to impose an income tax. This development occurred partly because the state was not effectively taxing intangible property (property that is not valuable in itself but as it represents a right, in the case of a mortgage the right to seize tangible property if a loan is not paid and thus equivalent to a right to receive payments of principle and interest). Thus, Adams's report enabled the legislature to consider later whether mortgages and other "credits" (rights to receive payments) should be subject to the income tax. His willingness to do that kind of practical intellectual work was foreshadowed by *Labor Problems*, which he and Helen Sumner published during 1905. Of it Robert Lampman noted, "This problems-approach to studies was apparently rather new at the time."⁷⁴

Some writers have claimed that Adams helped draft the income tax law of 1911, which turned out to be the first workable law of its type in the nation. However, McCarthy, who had attempted to enlist Adams's aid for that task, wrote to him: "Your suggestions to us have been critical rather than constructive and at present probably will have the effect of killing the whole matter. . . . At the distance which you are from this place, I believe you cannot be of use to us in the construction."⁷⁵ Moreover, Delos Kinsman, who drafted the income tax bill, in his interview about that experience did not mention receiving assistance from Adams.⁷⁶ Adams, however, did help administer that law, as well as the other state tax laws, because Governor McGovern appointed him to the Wisconsin Tax Commission, a position that he held from 1911 until 1915, when he became a professor at Cornell.

John R. Commons

John R. Commons joined the department in 1904. Certain personal characteristics and his experiences before his arrival at the University were important reasons for his contributions to the Wisconsin Idea. He was anything but a conventional academic. He had been only a middling undergraduate at Oberlin, although one of his professors there saw his potential and helped him gain admission to the graduate program at Johns Hopkins. He did not finish his Ph.D., because he failed a history examination, but again persons who knew him there advanced his career. One was Ely, who brought him to the University. Before he began his academic career, he worked for five years for the U.S. Industrial Commission and the National Civic Federation.

In addition to this unusual background, his mind did not work as does that of a typical academic. His writing is awkward and he was said to be somewhat inarticulate. However, he was charismatic, he identified problems, he could organize and inspire groups to work on the problems that he identified, he was tireless and he had brilliant insights, especially those that resulted from forming analogies. These qualities and the fact that he had worked outside the academy before he worked inside it influenced his teaching, research and public service. Rather than lecturing, he usually organized his classes into groups to do field research on practical problems. He did much of his writing with others. Along with some colleagues, he wrote an important

history of American labor, but many of his publications were about practical problems. He was eager to help state and local governments find solutions to problems.

"Institutional Economics", the school of economic thought of which he was a leader, influenced his willingness to serve the state and the forms that his service took. According to Robert Lampman, "Edwin Witte said he learned from Commons that institutional economics was 'economics in action' and that every economist who dealt with policy-making was inevitably drawn into consideration of institutional or noneconomic factors."⁷⁷

In contrast, most of the economists who were Commons' contemporaries considered their field as virtually self-contained: the study of powerful laws working with little resistance on interchangeable humans. However, Commons believed that "in all cases we have variations and hierarchies of the universal principle of collective action controlling, liberating and expanding individual action in all the economic transactions of bargaining, managing and rationing."⁷⁸ His school of economic thought was called institutional economics because it defined an institution as the agent of that collective action.⁷⁹ Institutions had "working rules" that defined their nature and determined the kinds of pressure that they exerted on individuals.⁸⁰ Because individuals' behavior was influenced by institutions rather than by economic laws, economists, in order to understand economic behavior, had to take account of other disciplines. In fact, Commons believed that the "correlation of economics, jurisprudence and ethics. . . is prerequisite to a theory of institutional economics."⁸¹

At the most basic level of economic activity, the transaction, the parties, according to Commons, interacted in a characteristic manner. He thought that in each transaction there was conflict, a dependence among the parties and a desire for order. Institutional economists studied these three phenomena. The scarcity of the things that the parties want causes conflict. The need to acquire things from others causes dependence. Unlike other economists, he did not believe that transaction would necessarily be harmonious. Rather, he thought that order would emerge from conflict.⁸² That is an important statement because it expresses the idea on which Commons based some of the more important legislation that he drafted for this state.

Actually, Commons appeared on the stage of Wisconsin government one year before he started to teach at the University. Ely's biographer asserted that Commons helped prepare Robert M. La Follette's speech to the legislature at the beginning of the 1903 session.⁸³ The speech was extremely long and dealt with many subjects. La Follette devoted much of it to two of his favorite themes during that portion of his political career: the direct primary and the regulation and taxation of railroads. Most of it seems to have no relation to Commons, but at least one passage has echoes of institutional economics. While arguing for a tax on mortgages, the subject of Thomas Adams' article, La Follette analyzed the subject as would Commons, by looking at transactions: "The lender's ability to name the interest rate is not absolute. It will depend wholly upon the supply of money seeking investment."⁸⁴ Like Commons, he believed that external forces influenced the two parties as they tried to reach a meeting of the minds. La Follette's conclusion is also similar to the one that Commons would propose, and for the same reason: "If it be true that taxing mortgages as an interest in the mortgaged premises under such a statute would, in some measure, increase the interest rate, nevertheless such law rests upon sound principles and correct morals."⁸⁵ That is, La Follette suggested that another institution (the state) establish a working rule (a tax on mortgages) that would influence the transaction, and he argued that to do so would be moral, thereby correlating economics, jurisprudence and ethics, which Commons thought to be the inevitable result of a correct economic analysis. The prose is La Follette's, but the ideas are Commons'.

Shortly after Commons' arrival at the University, La Follette put him to work again. During 1904 the governor asked Commons to draft a civil service law, a project that was dear to La Follette's heart because of his long battle with Elisha Keyes, who during his years in power controlled many patronage positions.⁸⁶ Although McCarthy's Legislative Reference Library had some capacity to draft legislation by 1904, securing expert drafters, especially of technically difficult bills, was a major problem. Commons stated that La Follette's directions for the civil ser-



Professor John R. Commons, UW-Madison economist, was the principal architect of many of the major innovations enacted by the Wisconsin Legislature in the early 1900s, including a merit civil service system, worker's compensation, and hours and wage standards (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #25 1923).

vice bill were very general except for one detail: that only heads of departments and elected officials were to be exempt from taking civil service examinations. That is, Commons did not merely draft La Follette's policy choices; Commons, himself, made most of the policy choices and put them into statutory form.

The two most important features of the act are the requirement that appointments be made solely on merit, to the extent practicable as determined by competitive examination, and the establishment of a civil service commission to administer the law.⁸⁷ The first feature is the detail that La Follette wanted; the second is Commons' idea, and it is characteristic of his thought. He believed that in transactions (in this case, between a state agency that wanted to hire an employe and an applicant for that job) it was appropriate to add a third party (in this case, a commission charged with administering the law that governed the transaction). That arrangement fit with his institutional economics. This notion became basic for him, as he later recognized: "I now see that all of my devices and recommendations for legislation in the state or nation have turned on this assumption of a non-partisan administration by specially qualified appointees."⁸⁸ Dependence on experts is in keeping with the belief that the University's professors should use their knowledge to aid the state, which is, of course, an important part of the Wisconsin Idea.

Commons' next important project for the state was drafting the legislation that regulated municipal and inter-urban public utilities.⁸⁹ While working on this bill, Commons frequently consulted the Railroad Commission, which included his former colleague in the department, Balthasar Meyer. That is, he played less of a role in formulating policy than he had while working on the civil service bill. Although the act is very long, Commons is correct that, because it used general terms that the Commission was to interpret and granted considerable powers to the Commission, it left "a huge field of investigation and discretion to the [Railroad] Commission."⁹⁰ For example, it required utilities "to furnish reasonably adequate service and facilities" and allowed the Commission to establish rates if it found fault with a utility's rates.⁹¹

During 1910, Commons provided his services to the City of Milwaukee. Shortly after the Social Democratic Party prevailed in the elections of that year, Victor Berger, a leading member of that party and the influential publisher of the *Milwaukee Leader*, asked Commons to study the city's government and recommend changes that would make it more efficient. Commons did the job properly, enlisting a number of his graduate students, hiring experts, consulting with other experts and examining nearly all of the city's government. It was exactly the kind of project in which he delighted: attempting to solve a complicated, practical set of problems by mobilizing a large, knowledgeable team under his own direction. His group made many suggestions for improving existing units of the city's government and established two new units: a Bureau of Economy and Efficiency and a Municipal Reference Library, which was modeled on McCarthy's state library. The work of Commons' group in Milwaukee influenced Frederick Howe to comment, "I know of no place in America where officials work with more devotion than they do in Wisconsin. There is an enthusiasm in the public service that is unique."⁹²

Commons realized that the state would benefit from having an agency like the Milwaukee Bureau of Economy and Efficiency, so he approached Governor McGovern and advocated that idea.⁹³ By now Commons was no longer merely drafting bills that would implement someone else's ideas or making some policy decisions; he was initiating policy. McGovern liked the idea, and eventually a law that created the State Board of Public Affairs was enacted.⁹⁴ The board consisted of the governor, the secretary of state, the chairperson of the finance committee of each house of the legislature and three persons who were appointed by the governor. It had extensive duties, including supervising other state agencies' accounting methods, investigating and promoting the development of the state's resources and investigating and suggesting ways to develop the state's economy. For a time, one of Commons' former students, Benjamin Rastall, was the board's director.

Then Commons again demonstrated his knack for forming analogies. In his autobiography he wrote, "While working on the public utility law of 1907 I wondered why similar administrative machinery could not be set up for the conflicts of capital and labor."⁹⁵ Then his preference for organizing work groups to solve practical problems operated again. After reading about a Belgian council composed of representatives of business, labor and the public, he told one of his graduate students to write a dissertation on that council. While Commons was working on the Milwaukee study, he had that graduate student assign one of Commons' classes to study labor administration in other countries. Using the wealth of information that his students had generated, and aided by the advice of McCarthy, he drafted the legislation that created an Industrial Commission and established safety standards for work places.⁹⁶

The commission consisted of three members, who were appointed by the governor. It was entrusted with administering and enforcing the laws on safety in the workplace and in employment, on the labor of women and children and on truancy; with discovering and prescribing safety devices; with operating employment agencies; and with encouraging management and labor to settle labor disputes. The commission had broad investigatory powers and the power to issue orders, violation of which was an offense, and it could request the Attorney General or a district attorney to prosecute violators. For two years Commons served on the commission, and he was responsible for assembling the advisory committees that created standards for the various kinds of work and work places.⁹⁷ To do that, he brought together persons who represented competing interests and had different perspectives and different knowledge. The operation of each advisory group reflected his transaction theory of economics; although they were affected by the institutions of which they were a part and limited by the working rules specified by the statutes, they eventually reached consensus. At the completion of his term, Commons rejected an offer of a six-year term and returned to the University. The Commission eventually evolved into the current Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations.

Rather than providing detailed, voluminous standards for every kind of occupation, the act defined "safe" and "safety," its two crucial terms, as "such freedom from danger to the life, health or safety of employes or frequenters as the nature of the employment will reasonably permit."

That is, as he had in the act that regulated utilities, Commons used general terms and allowed a commission to interpret them on a case-by-case basis. Arthur Altmeyer, who shuttled back and forth between teaching in the Department of Economics and other duties, called this act, particularly its combination of establishing general standards and granting extensive administrative powers, “nothing less than a work of genius.”⁹⁸

Not satisfied with drafting two major acts during the 1911 session, Commons had a hand in a third: a workers’ compensation act, which was the first in the nation. He did not draft that act but he played a major role in formulating its policy and in convincing the interested parties to agree to it. This was groundbreaking legislation. At the time, employers were subject to suits by injured workers and by the survivors of workers who had been killed and they were purchasing liability insurance to protect themselves, but the legal system was heavily weighted on the employers’ side. Under the “fellow servant rule”, a worker who was injured by another worker could not recover damages from the employer. Even if a worker could prove that the employer was at fault, any degree of negligence by the worker would defeat his or her claim. Employers won some cases by convincing a court that the worker, by accepting employment, had assumed all the risks of the employment and thus had no grounds for legal action. Therefore, workers rarely won in court.

As early as 1904, some Social Democrats who represented Milwaukee in the legislature introduced a workers’ compensation bill. In 1907 one of them, Frank J. Weber, met with Commons and Joseph D. Beck, who was a member of the Industrial Commission, to discuss the subject.⁹⁹ During the following year Commons, along with Beck, Beck’s aide and W.W. Cook, a University law professor, met with the Merchants and Manufacturers Association of Milwaukee. The association, because of the advantages its members had in the courts, could be expected to be suspicious of proposed workers’ compensation laws. At the meeting, Commons drew an analogy with the situation in 1907 when the public utility regulation bill was enacted: regulation was inevitable and the businessmen would be better off if they cooperated with the legislature and workers’ groups.¹⁰⁰ He advocated a voluntary system, contributions by both employes and employers and administration by the state.¹⁰¹ All of those details were eventually part of the legislation. During 1909 Commons helped Beck write an attack, published in the *Biennial Report* of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, on the then current means of compensating injured workers and an exhaustive study of the systems that existed in other countries.¹⁰²

The work of Commons and others began to take effect. In their inaugural addresses to the legislature, Governor James O. Davidson in 1909 and Governor Francis McGovern in 1911 called for the passage of workers’ compensation legislation.¹⁰³ McGovern, who described the prevailing legal situation and the advantages to both employers and employees of a compensation system, was especially persuasive. A workers’ compensation law was enacted during the 1911 session.¹⁰⁴ The act did not require participation but encouraged it by abolishing the fellow servant rule and the assumption of risk doctrine. It created formulas for calculating compensation and established a board to administer the law. One commentator has called this act a conservative reform, but, considering the extreme degree to which the law at the time favored employers and the fact that no other state had a workers’ compensation law, by enacting this legislation Wisconsin took a great step forward for its workers.¹⁰⁵

Commons also had a hand in another pioneering piece of legislation. During its annual meeting in 1910 in Milwaukee, the National Consumers League decided to advocate minimum wage laws. The Wisconsin Consumers League began the effort in this state and enlisted Commons.¹⁰⁶ In 1911 a pamphlet was prepared for them “under the direction of John R. Commons.”¹⁰⁷ It contained a description of wage boards in Australia and England, which were used as models for the Wisconsin legislation; a minimum wage bill that had been introduced in both houses of the legislature; a careful, detailed study that documented the appalling working conditions and wages of women and children in Milwaukee; and summaries of legal opinions that appeared to support the constitutionality of the bill. The details of the bill were typical of Commons’ approach to solving social and economic problems (establishing a general standard and giving experts the authority

to administer it), which suggests that he drafted it.¹⁰⁸ Under the bill unless employers obtained an exception they were required to pay a “living wage”, and the Commissioner of Labor was empowered to determine whether wages were up to that standard. The bill was the first minimum wage bill to be introduced in this country. Theodore Roosevelt, during his appearance in Madison to address the legislature, expressed interest in the bill. In fact, one of the first things he said after arriving at the Governor’s mansion was that he had heard that Commons was involved in the legislation and that he wanted to meet him.¹⁰⁹

Both the senate and assembly bills were replaced by substitute amendments that merely mandated a study of wages. Although both substitute amendments passed in their houses, neither passed in both houses, so neither was enacted. However, the 1912 Republican Party platform contained a plank supporting minimum wage legislation. The 1913 Legislature did enact a bill that required the payment of a living wage to all women and minors and gave the Industrial Commission the authority to enforce that requirement.¹¹⁰ The act, although narrower because it did not cover men, closely resembled the version that Commons apparently drafted for the previous session.

Commons unsuccessfully advocated a tax reform. At Oberlin he had been attracted to the ideas of social reformer Henry George.¹¹¹ The centerpiece of George’s economic policy was the single tax: a property tax based solely on the value of the property’s location. George believed that this tax would promote development, because constructing buildings would not increase the tax, and would be so lucrative that no other taxes would be needed. During the 1913 session Representative Edward Nordman introduced a joint resolution to amend the state constitution to permit municipalities and counties to grant very broad property tax exemptions. His goal was to tax only land in order to penalize speculators who held it for future sale rather than developing it. Commons supported the bill and added that if only land were taxed it should be assessed according to its location and speculative value.¹¹² Those details would have made the bill closely resemble Henry George’s ideas. Commons claimed that he drafted a single tax bill in 1923, but he may have meant 1921 Assembly Bill 504.¹¹³

Commons’ influence on state government waned until another La Follette was elected governor. Commons asserted his affinity with La Follette Progressivism by presiding at the last speech that Philip La Follette, one of Robert M. La Follette’s sons, gave during his 1930 campaign.¹¹⁴ La Follette won the election, and during his first term Commons and other Wisconsin economists helped enact the nation’s first unemployment compensation law. The story of that law begins much earlier. In fact, Commons had supported aiding unemployed workers as early as 1893.¹¹⁵ During the second decade of this century two of his former students – William M. Leiserson, director of the Wisconsin employment office system; and John B. Andrews, executive secretary of the American Association for Labor Legislation and the co-author with Commons of *Principles of Labor Legislation* – became advocates for the relief of unemployed workers and specifically for unemployment insurance.¹¹⁶ Commons’ notion of the best way to construct an unemployment compensation system began to take shape when he formed another of his analogies. He had hoped that the workers’ compensation bill of 1911 would induce employers to make their businesses safer in order to reduce their premiums. In his autobiography Commons wrote, “Eventually, in 1921, I began to extend this principle to unemployment. Why not make individual employers responsible for their own unemployment, instead of so-called ‘society’? They could then make a profit by hiring employment experts and paying the bills for public employment offices.”¹¹⁷ Actually, he seems to have made a public statement of that analogy during the previous year in La Crosse.¹¹⁸

By 1921, the economic prosperity that followed World War I was fading and unemployment was becoming a more serious problem. As a result, the enactment of unemployment compensation became both more necessary and more possible. Wisconsin labor leaders supported Commons, who, with some of his students, began to do research for, and to draft, a bill on that subject. Commons began to promote the bill, pointing out its similarities to the Workers’ Compensation Act and arguing that, rather than draining businesses’ resources, it would aid them, partly by pre-

venting labor unrest. Nevertheless, the bill was strongly opposed by business forces and was indefinitely postponed (killed for the session). Commons, with his students and labor allies, continued for ten years to support unemployment compensation bills, but the improvement in the economy made their task more difficult. During that interval Commons had some practical experience in the field. He organized a private system of unemployment compensation according to an agreement worked out between the management of Chicago's men's clothing industry and their workers.¹¹⁹



Paul Rauschenbush, UW-Madison economist, was a member of Governor Philip La Follette's "kitchen cabinet" in the 1930s. Along with Harold Groves, Elizabeth Brandeis and Edwin Witte, he drafted Wisconsin's unemployment compensation act, the first in the nation (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 2803).

By 1930, however, the Depression had again made unemployment compensation an important issue. Commons also had a new set of allies among the University's economists: Elizabeth Brandeis, Paul Raushenbush and Harold Groves. Brandeis and Groves had written their dissertations under Commons, and Groves was elected to the state assembly in 1930. Commons did not help draft the unemployment compensation bill for the 1931 session, but the ideas that he had been developing for years permeated it. For example, under the bill each employer had its own fund and could stop contributing to it when it amounted to \$75 per worker. As a result, an employer that did not lay off its employees and thus did not have to draw money from its fund could eventually stop making contributions to it. This detail derived from Commons' idea that an unemployment compensation system should, among other things, reduce unemployment. This time Commons and his allies won. On January 28, 1932, Governor Philip La Follette, surrounded by

Commons, Groves, Brandeis, Raushenbush and a few others, signed the bill and Wisconsin had the first unemployment compensation system in the country.

Several themes are important in the story of Commons and the Wisconsin Idea. Jack Barbash, another important University economist, has identified them. He recently wrote: “Commons belongs in Labor’s Hall of Fame because he was the first great American economist – or perhaps better, social scientist – to put his science in the service of improving the conditions of labor.”¹²⁰ According to Barbash, Commons did not believe in dismantling the capitalistic system but in modifying it by means of legislation that was conceived by experts with the help of the interested parties, provided incentives for capitalists to change their behavior and created boards to administer the law and regulate behavior. Barbash’s description of Commons’ approaches sounds very much like a description of the New Deal. Wisconsin was certainly a laboratory for much of the New Deal legislation, and some of Commons’ graduate students worked for the federal government during President Franklin Roosevelt’s administration. Thus, Commons probably had some influence on the New Deal. He also influenced the state’s policy by means of his graduate students. He taught at the University from 1908 to 1933. During that period, he supervised 41 graduate students who earned Ph.D.’s, which was 40% of the degrees granted by the Department of Economics during that period.¹²¹ Among them are three who play a role in this account: Edwin Witte, Elizabeth Brandeis and Harold Groves.

Balthasar Meyer

Resuming the chronology of the Department of Economics’ involvement with the Wisconsin Idea requires that we backtrack to 1905, when Robert M. La Follette appointed Balthasar Meyer to the Railroad Commission. Meyer had begun teaching in the department in 1898, when he became its fourth member, and in 1903 he published *Railway Legislation in the United States*. His understanding of railroad regulation seemed to have made him an ideal choice for the commission. He served on it until 1910.

However, Meyer disappointed La Follette, who believed that the railroads needed to be reined in, because Meyer turned out to be anything but an aggressive regulator. In fact, he wrote in his book, “No one whose privilege it is to know the railway men of the country will for a moment maintain that they are not, as a body, desirous of serving the public in the best possible way.”¹²² He expressed the corollary of his conception of the railroad barons in a speech that he made during 1906; in it he argued that the railroads, not the commission, should set rates.¹²³ Stanley P. Caine, in his study of railroad regulation, has demonstrated that during his tenure Meyer dominated the commission and prevented it from interfering significantly in the railroads’ conduct of their business.¹²⁴ Caine concluded, quite reasonably, that the commission certainly did not reform the railroads.

The Second Generation

Soon students of the first generation of the University’s economists began to obtain doctorates. The department hired many of them. In fact, of the 15 professors who were hired between 1906 and 1944 and who taught in the department for at least 10 years, 13 had earned their Ph.D.’s at the University. This inbreeding did not significantly harm the department’s quality, because many of those alumni were first-rate. It ensured that the values and service orientation of members of the first generation, most notably Commons, were perpetuated. That passing of the torch greatly benefited the state.

One of the few academics who participated in the Wisconsin Idea and was not a member of the faculty at the University was Delos Kinsman. However, he taught at a college that is now part of the University of Wisconsin System, the normal (teacher-training) school in Whitewater. In 1900 Kinsman completed a dissertation, *The Use of the Income Tax in the Commonwealths*, at the University. After the voters ratified the amendment to the state constitution that permitted the imposition of an income tax, the legislature attempted to draft a law to impose the tax, but failed.¹²⁵ Because Kinsman had exhibited knowledge of the income tax in his dissertation, McCarthy and a legislative committee asked him to draft an income tax bill.¹²⁶ As Commons had with some of the bills on which he worked, Kinsman made some policy decisions, for exam-

ple providing that income tax assessors were to be appointed.¹²⁷ He also solved some very difficult technical problems and produced a law that withstood a legal challenge and could be administered. In fact, he created the first workable income tax in this country.

Edwin Witte

During 1912, the year after Commons' bill creating the Industrial Commission was enacted, one of his students, Edwin Witte, went to work for the commission, but he stayed only six months. Five years later, after serving briefly as an assistant in the Department of Economics, Witte became the Secretary of the Commission. During his tenure he administered the labor laws that Commons had worked on and that were enacted during the 1911 session. He adopted Commons' approach of applying the commission's regulatory powers with restraint to bring about small but significant improvements.

It was appropriate that Witte followed in Commons' footsteps by administering a law that Commons had drafted. Witte wrote, "I owe to Commons my entire outlook on life and a great many of my ideas."¹²⁸ Witte's biographer described the basic components of that outlook and those ideas in a statement that casts light on both men as well as the working of the Wisconsin Idea during the first third of this century:

Witte inherited from Commons . . . a set of assumptions. . . : that a wide variety of practical and noneconomical considerations impinged upon the making of any economic decision, law, or institution; that laws worked out by the persons whom they would affect were usually superior to those of theoreticians; that associationalism was an irreversible fact and the best means of harmonizing groups in conflict lay in collective bargaining and negotiation; that where voluntary action failed to protect the economically weak the state should rectify the imbalance; and most of all, that social change could come through a pragmatic and democratic approach, without veering from America's capitalistic and constitutional traditions.¹²⁹

In 1922 Witte became director of the Legislative Reference Library, succeeding McCarthy, and a lecturer in the Department of Economics. McCarthy, despite his claims of political neutrality, had a political agenda and nudged legislators in the directions that he approved. In contrast, Witte established the nonpartisan work standard that is now a statutory mandate of the Legislative Reference Bureau. Occasionally he expressed a political opinion in a speech, but his conduct at the library was so politically neutral that he had good working relations with every governor who served during his tenure, despite their varying political positions.¹³⁰ He held a more sophisticated view of drafting than had McCarthy and improved the agency's research function by having his staff summarize, rather than merely gather, material. In short, McCarthy established the library and was a dynamic force for the Progressives, and Witte increased the library's professionalism.

After Witte became chair of the Department of Economics in 1933, he continued to serve the state. For example, he advised Governor Albert Schmedeman and Governor Philip La Follette, and he served on the State Planning Board, the Citizens' Committee on Public Welfare and the Wisconsin Labor Relations Board.¹³¹ His major public service after he left the library, however, was drafting the federal Social Security Act.

Harold Groves

Harold Groves was another University economist who became a major figure in the history of the Wisconsin Idea. Because of his relation to Commons, his interest in public service is not surprising. Not only was he Commons' graduate student, but also in his autobiography he wrote, "Like many others, I idolized Commons and sought to shape my career in the image of his."¹³² For example, like Commons, he believed that economics has a moral dimension and that tax policies should be evaluated according to their economic, social and political effects.¹³³ His expertise in the field of public finance made it likely that he would be drawn into public policy development and he would think that field would inevitably be linked to public policy matters.¹³⁴ He

also was a firm believer in progressive taxation and in its ability to reduce differences in wealth.¹³⁵

During his one session in the Wisconsin Assembly Groves was responsible for enactment of a law that made the income tax much more progressive.¹³⁶ The law increased the personal exemption from \$3 to \$4. That seems like an extremely small change, but it allowed an additional \$100 of income to be shielded from taxation for each person for whom the taxpayer could claim an exemption. In 1931 that was significant. That feature was also progressive, because personal exemptions favor taxpayers who have low incomes. Groves's bill also increased the rates for all of the income tax brackets except the lower three, which both made the tax more progressive and increased the revenue that it generated. At that time 60 percent of the revenue from the income tax was returned to the municipality or county in which it was collected, except that there was a limit based on the value of the property in the municipality or county. Groves's law modified the limit in order to direct more money to units of government that had low property values and low average incomes.

Another bill that Groves introduced failed to pass, but a variation of it passed during the next session. At the time, persons could escape the inheritance tax by making gifts, unless the state could prove that the gifts were made in contemplation of death, which was difficult to do. Groves's solution was to impose a tax on gifts, regardless of the circumstances under which they were made, at the rates that applied to the inheritance tax. During 1932 the Tax Commission, of which he was a member, recommended that the state create a gift tax. In 1933 the state created an emergency gift tax to raise money for the relief of victims of the Depression. Groves believed that that was the first state gift tax.¹³⁷

During the 1931 session he, Raushenbush and several graduate students in the Department of Economics drafted the unemployment compensation bill.¹³⁸ Groves introduced it and was a major force in its passage, as were Commons, Raushenbush, and Brandeis. Raushenbush became the first director of the Wisconsin unemployment compensation system and served in that position from 1932 until 1967. That is probably the longest tenure of any former professor from the University in a position in state government.

After his term in the Senate, Groves kept active in state government by serving in advisory positions. For example, he and two others wrote a book-length study of the state's tax system for the Legislative Council; later he wrote an unpublished history of Wisconsin taxes for the Council; and in 1959 he was one of the co-chairs of a committee that wrote a book on taxation for the Continuing Revenue Survey Commission that Governor Gaylord Nelson had formed. That commission made extensive use of the work of Groves and his fellow committee members, and their report led to major changes in Wisconsin taxes.¹³⁹

Governor Philip La Follette appointed Groves to the Tax Commission, a position that he held from April 1, 1932, until February 5, 1933. During his tenure in that important office, in addition to further serving the state, he gained valuable practical experience. For example, one of his assignments was the difficult task of assessing railroads. After Schmedeman became governor during 1933, Groves resigned from the commission. However, his service in important state positions was not over. He won a State Senate seat in the 1934 elections. The increased strength of the Democrats and the formation of the Progressive Party by liberal Republicans threw Wisconsin politics into disarray and placed Groves in the minority in the Senate. Thus, he was unable to get any significant legislation passed.

Groves was a researcher who worked on problems that were important to the state, a legislator, a state official and an adviser to policymakers. That is, he played nearly all of the roles in the Wisconsin Idea. A few weeks before he died in December 1969, a journalist wrote a feature story about him, headlined: "Harold Groves – The Epitome of the Wisconsin Idea." That is an accurate description.

The Department After the Depression

Thus, during the first third of the 20th century, the Department of Economics at the University was an extremely important part of the Wisconsin Idea. After that its contributions to the Idea

somewhat declined, and in 1958, the department reached a turning point. At that time members of the department began to worry that the practice of hiring and retaining so few persons who had earned their doctorates outside the University was keeping the department on a steady course while the discipline of economics was changing.¹⁴⁰ The response to this situation was the hiring, during 1958, of Guy Orcutt, a econometrician (a specialist in the application of statistics to economic data). Orcutt's appointment was followed by the appointments of a number of other econometricians. After that, according to one member of the department, "the econometricians and the theorists were very assertive in pushing for their priority."¹⁴¹

This change in orientation may have brought the department into the mainstream of economic research, but it abandoned institutional economics. That is, econometrics is based on the assumption that the actors in an economic system are mere bits of data, not human beings who are attached to institutions and who make decisions for non-economic reasons. For this article, it does not matter which position is more sound theoretically, but it does matter that institutional economists – because they believe that law, economics and ethics are interrelated – are very likely to serve the state, and econometricians – because they are most interested in data – are likely not to do so.

The change in the department's orientation has not been absolute. Since Orcutt's arrival, some members of the department have not been econometricists and some have adhered to the Wisconsin Idea. For example, Ralph Andreano was the administrator of the Division of Health in the Department of Health and Human Services, and Charles Cicchetti served as a member of the Public Service Commission and as an economic adviser to Governor Patrick Lucey. Moreover, the department shared staff members with, and otherwise assisted, the Institute for Research on Poverty, founded in 1966, which has worked on some studies relevant to the state. Examples are studies, many of them done with state officials, of the administration of the state's Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, of emergency assistance and of welfare reform.¹⁴² More recently, Donald Nichols and Donald Hester were members of Governor Anthony Earl's Council on Economic Affairs, and some University economists now are members of the Center for the Wisconsin Economy, which is part of the La Follette Institute. It is also possible that econometric research contributed to the work that falls within the tradition of the Wisconsin Idea. Nevertheless, substantial as they are, the department's contributions to the Wisconsin Idea during the most recent years do not quite match its contributions during its early years.

The Establishment of the Department of Plant Pathology

Like the Department of Economics, the Department of Plant Pathology has been both professionally distinguished and a major servant of the state. Even before the establishment of the department, research in plant pathology was conducted at the University. During 1891 Harry Russell began research in Germany on the immunity of plants to bacteria.¹⁴³ After his arrival at the University, the dean of the College of Agriculture insisted that he concentrate on bacteriology as it related to the dairy industry, but Russell devoted some of his efforts to studying the diseases of cabbage. Russell's main contributions to plant pathology were not his own research but his formation of the department in 1910 when he was the dean of the college and his hiring of Lewis R. Jones to be the first member of the department.

The Jones Era and the Continuation of its Work

Soon after Jones came to the University, Harry Russell told him that he had been doing research on diseased cabbages in the Racine area and that the growers there still needed help. Jones recognized the disease, which was caused by a fungus. He kept some plants that had resisted the disease, cross-pollinated them and saved the seeds, eventually developing the Wisconsin Hollander, which was resistant to the disease. In 1919 John C. Walker became a member of the department, and, until his retirement 45 years later, his research included work on the diseases of cabbages. For example, he and Glenn Pound did important work on viruses that attack cabbage plants, and he developed varieties that were more suitable for the production of sauerkraut. Upon Walker's retirement, primary responsibility for cabbage research was placed in the capable hands of Paul H. Williams, although others also worked on the problem. Partly because of Williams'

improvement of the techniques of obtaining cuttings and seeds, the department developed more than 20 varieties of cabbage that resisted the disease “cabbage yellows” that had been the subject of its earliest research.

In addition to his research skills, Jones was an extremely successful recruiter of talent for the department. His major acquisitions were Walker, James G. Dickson, A. Joyce Riker and George W. Keitt. In addition to hiring talented faculty members, Jones encouraged interdisciplinary work, which increased the effectiveness of the department’s research, and encouraged members of the department to attempt to solve the state’s problems. A current faculty member,



Professor Lewis R. Jones was recruited from the University of Vermont in 1910 to head the newly formed UW Department of Plant Pathology. He emphasized the blending of theoretical and applied science to benefit farm production throughout Wisconsin (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 2814).

Luis Sequeira, has written that “Jones went on to build what was unquestionably the strongest department of plant pathology in the country for many years.”¹⁴⁴ The benefits that it has provided to Wisconsin agriculture are incalculable.

Extension Work

Jones was also responsible for instituting the department’s strong tradition of extension work. In 1911, he recruited Richard E. Vaughn, who later became the state’s, and perhaps the nation’s, first full-time extension plant pathologist. Vaughn immediately began helping Wisconsin pea farmers solve the problem of pea blight. Vaughn used two strategies to deal with the skepticism of farmers about the new ideas coming from the University. He used field demonstrations, applying the department’s discoveries at a few farms and inviting other farmers to see the results. For example, he planted the cabbages developed by Jones that resisted cabbage yellows. His second strategy was to hold meetings around the state during the winter to explain the department’s research findings. Vaughn did extension work until 1950.

Vaughn was joined by others. John H. Brann did extension plant pathology work from 1915 until 1947, concentrating on helping the state's potato growers but also doing other work. After Vaughn and Brann retired, Earl K. Wade assumed their duties. In 1963 he was joined by Gayle L. Worf. Wade took responsibility for fruits and vegetables, and Worf took responsibility for all the other crops. In 1974 the department's extension work was strengthened by the addition of a diagnostic program.

Potato Research

The department has done some of its more important work on diseases affecting potatoes. Jones began that kind of research in 1911, and Brann took it up in 1915. The pace of this research accelerated in the mid-1930s, when Walker and Russell Larson began to work on viral diseases. Many members of the department followed the lead of those two men. Because of the severity of potato diseases, particularly those caused by viruses, it is necessary to develop varieties that will resist diseases and then to produce and distribute their seeds. In 1913 the department started the first potato seed certification program in the country. During 1941 the College of Agriculture established a potato seed farm. Members of the Department of Plant Pathology, along with members of other departments, have participated in that farm's work. Mainly because of the farm's success, seed potatoes have become more important to Wisconsin agriculture, and recently about 20 percent of the acres devoted to potatoes in the state have been planted with seed potatoes.

In 1953 Henry Darling discovered a potato rot nematode (a parasitic worm), thereby beginning work in nematology in the department. The problem was serious enough to threaten the state's potato industry, and, as a result, a quarantine was established. Members of the department experimented on heavily infested fields with various fumigants (smokes, vapors or gasses used to disinfect) and found that one of them was very effective. During this crisis Gerald Thorne, a nematologist who worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Utah, was consulted. After the crisis ended, Thorne agreed to take a professorship in the department. During the 1970s Arthur Kelman, aided by others, began doing important research on potato diseases, especially bacterial soft rot.

The combination of research on potato diseases, improvements in breeding and the development of high-quality seed potatoes combined to revive Wisconsin potato production. Much of this work was done by plant pathologists. By 1984 the state's per-acre yields were among the better yields in the country. Persistent and effective work by the department and other units of the College of Agriculture have paid large dividends for Wisconsin potato growers.

Research on Apple Scab

Another example of the department's willingness to devote decades to solving the problems of an important branch of Wisconsin agriculture is its work on apple scab. George Keitt, one of Jones' recruits to the department, who achieved national prominence, began this work in 1916. He, his students and his successors carried on the work for more than 50 years. In fact, Keitt and a colleague published an important paper on the subject in 1964, 48 years after he began work on apple scab. The problem turned out to be so complicated that, in addition to conventional plant pathology research, its solution required work in biochemistry, epidemiology (the study of the spread of diseases), genetics, cytology (the study of cells) and nutrition. Apple scab has not been eliminated, but research on it has led to many important discoveries.

John C. Walker

John C. Walker, another of Jones' early recruits, is the most eminent of all of the University's plant pathologists. His brilliance was obvious early, when, as an undergraduate, he published a paper on potato diseases. As noted previously, he continued his research on potato diseases after he became a member of the department in 1919. However, his potato research is only a part of his accomplishments.

His studies of plant diseases caused by bacteria are important both in themselves and as illustrations of his methods. Having grown up on a dairy farm near Racine, he was well aware of the problems of the cabbage growers of that area, problems that Jones attempted to solve. It was

therefore not surprising that some of Walker's early work was on cabbage black rot. First he discovered that the disease was transmitted by contaminated seeds. Then he learned that applying hot water to cabbage seeds would control the disease. This is a good example of his talent for discovering the point in its life cycle that the cause of a disease could be most effectively attacked. He also believed that he could always find a crop variety that would resist the disease that he was studying. After he found that variety, he used breeding techniques to develop a resistant variety that could be cultivated for commercial purposes. He applied these principles to diseases of cucumbers and beans as well as those of cabbages, and he developed for Wisconsin farmers resistant varieties of all of those crops.

In 1923 Walker turned his attention to diseases of onions. His work culminated in a paper that he and Karl Paul Link, a brilliant biochemist, published in 1935. This paper was the first to establish that the presence of a certain chemical would make a crop resistant to the agent that caused a disease. The paper also explained the inheritance of resistant qualities. Later Walker and some co-workers demonstrated that other factors might make the usually effective chemical fail to cause resistance. In yet another paper he showed that tomato wilt was caused by an interference with water movement, not by a toxin (a poisonous substance). Thus, one can see the subtlety of Walker's mind. He not only could make an important discovery but he also could suspect that it did not apply universally. That skepticism allowed him to modify his original discovery when it was necessary to do so.

Walker could also find unlikely causes of plant diseases. He, along with James G. Dickson, discovered that unusual soil temperatures could cause diseases in plant varieties that were otherwise resistant to them.¹⁴⁵ That insight led to his realization that it was necessary to study not only the relation of a crop and the agent of disease that was attacking it, but also the relation of both to environmental conditions.

These accounts of research projects fall far short of illustrating all of Walker's contributions to Wisconsin agriculture and to plant pathology. Two distinguished Wisconsin plant pathologists have assessed Walker's career in glowing terms. Glenn Pound wrote of him:

He is our profession's best example of combining basic and applied research. He became an unusual resource to the vegetable seed industry, the vegetable canning industry and to the farmers of Wisconsin and the nation. Few, if any, have contributed so much to the economics of food production.

The academic dimension of Walker's life was equally illustrious. He organized his research around projects designed to control diseases but into these projects he built objectives designed to obtain the most fundamental information of the disease process. There were no limits to the extent of his probes for fundamental information. The research of his laboratories brought great international recognition and acclaim to him and the department. He is truly one of the great historic leaders of plant pathology.¹⁴⁶

Luis Sequeira wrote that Walker "has been one of the dominant figures in plant pathology; during his professional life he probably contributed more to our knowledge of vegetable diseases than anyone before him or since."¹⁴⁷

A partial list of Walker's honors demonstrates that Pound and Sequeira were not exaggerating:

- President, American Phytopathological Society
- Member, National Academy of Science
- Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science
- Winner of the National Forty-Niner Service Award
- Recipient of an Honorary Doctorate, University of Gottingen (Germany)

Forest Pathology

Another scientist who was brought to the department by Jones early in its history and later became prominent was A. Joyce Riker. Among his interests was research into the diseases of

trees. After the initial logging had left little of the state's forests standing, attempts were made to reforest. It became clear that that project would be futile unless diseases could be controlled. Jones was greatly interested in forestry, so it was natural for the department to lend assistance to the project. Fred Wilson of the Wisconsin Conservation Department appears to have been the person who convinced Riker to begin research in this field, which he did in 1936. Riker first attacked the problem of white pine blister rust, and by 1938 he was able to develop resistant varieties. The department continued research on blister rust until 1964.

Riker typically sought aid from others who had knowledge of the problems on which he was working, and he was an expert at obtaining research funds. Riker's alliances with the Wisconsin Nurserymen's Association helped him obtain state and federal funding. He and his coworkers did research on many diseases of trees native to Wisconsin. An example is burn blight, which attacked pines in northeast Wisconsin during the 1940s. Riker's group identified an insect and a fungus as causes of the disease. By 1959 twenty-nine persons, funded mainly by the Wisconsin Conservation Department, were engaged in forestry work. Much of their attention was focused on oak wilt. These persons built field laboratories, began training programs for state foresters, and added courses in forestry to the department's curriculum. In 1954 the College of Agriculture established a Department of Forestry and Wildlife Management, and in 1962 Forestry became a separate department.

The Second Generation

The generation that followed Jones and the faculty members whom he recruited early in the department's history continued the department's traditions of high quality research and belief in the principles of the Wisconsin Idea. We have seen evidence of their contributions in the accounts of the continued work on the research projects begun by the first generation. Because the department had grown considerably and its activities had become diversified, it is impossible to give a full account of the work of the second generation. However, focusing on one important representative will give some idea of the department's continued belief in the Wisconsin Idea.

A good example is Glenn Pound, who was the department's third chairperson and, from 1964 to 1979, dean of the College of Agriculture. In addition to his administrative contributions and his work with Walker, he did important research on other subjects relevant to Wisconsin. His research on cabbages in 1940 led to his development of a variety that would resist both mosaic and yellows. During 1946 he began working on a disease that was attacking radish crops in southern Wisconsin. He discovered the source of the disease and then developed a resistant variety of that crop. He published approximately 100 research articles and served as president of the American Phytopathological Society.¹⁴⁸

The Department's Orientation Changes

By 1959 the Department of Plant Pathology was considerably inbred. Thirty-three of the 39 persons it had hired up to that time had earned their Ph.D.'s in the department. Glenn Pound attributed this to two causes. One was the desire of the major figures of the early years – Jones, Walker, Keitt, Riker, and James Dickson – to ensure that the department would stay on the course that they had set. This they did by hiring their own graduate students. The other cause that Pound cited was the rapid expansion of plant pathology departments after World War II, which in turn greatly expanded the job market. The first cause is credible, but the expansion of the job market would make it easier to find qualified recruits elsewhere, which would seem to discourage inbreeding. By the 1950s the department, like several in the University, was getting a reputation for inbreeding. Somewhat worried by its image, the department hired Luis Sequeira, a Harvard Ph.D., in 1961, and Richard Durbin, a University of California Berkeley Ph.D., in 1962. Durbin had a joint appointment with the department and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Sequeira had been interested in plant physiology (the study of plants' life functions and chemical processes) and the use of electron microscopes in research. Durbin, too, was interested in plant physiology, and he "was encouraged to conduct basic research in this area rather than servicing what was to become the diminishing needs for support of the oat breeding efforts of the USDA and agronomy."¹⁴⁹ That is, he was encouraged not to work directly on the problems

of Wisconsin farmers. At about the same time the department changed its curriculum. It had been starting its students in courses devoted to individual crops, but it changed to introductory courses, such as Sequeira's plant physiology courses, that were more theoretical and demonstrated various ways of applying plant pathology. Those changes in orientation made it less likely that the department's faculty members would do practical research directly related to the diseases of crops native to Wisconsin. Plant pathologists who thought of themselves as specialists in a certain crop would be likely to aid Wisconsin farmers who grew that crop, but those who thought of themselves as plant physiologists or plant virologists would be less likely to help Wisconsin farmers and more likely to work on problems that were important to their field. Walker had been able to do both, but there are not many Walkers. This is not to say that the department abandoned the Wisconsin Idea. For example, Sequeira did important work on diseases that were attacking lettuce crops in the state.

The change in orientation can be put most dramatically by looking at the current understanding of a phrase that has been passed down throughout most of the department's history, like a piece of ancient lore that must be preserved. Walker used to advise his colleagues and students to "keep one foot in the furrow." When the department published its history in 1985 it chose as its title *One Foot in the Furrow*, and it devoted the last chapter to speculation about that phrase's meaning. The conclusion reached is that Walker was advising his colleagues that – despite other activities such as teaching, committee work and outreach work – plant pathologists must do research in plant pathology. I interpret the phrase differently and suggest that the interpretation offered in the history indicates that the department has indeed changed its orientation. Perhaps Walker meant that a plant pathologist should keep one foot in the real world of Wisconsin agriculture (the furrow), where problems could be found, and the other foot in the laboratory, where those problems could perhaps be solved. In other words, the great plant pathologist was metaphorically advocating the Wisconsin Idea.

Comparison of the Evolution of the Two Departments

These two fine departments, Economics and Plant Pathology, have, surprisingly, gone through virtually identical phases:

- 1) Founding by a dynamic figure who set the initial course and hired first-rate colleagues (Ely, Jones).
- 2) The early arrival of a giant figure (Commons, Walker).
- 3) The creation of later generations by inbreeding, which continued each department's devotion to the principles of its first generation, including adherence to the Wisconsin Idea.
- 4) About 1960 a change in orientation that made it less likely that the department would be so devoted to the Wisconsin Idea (although neither department came anywhere close to abandoning the Idea) and that was caused by significant hiring decisions (Orcutt, Sequeira and Durbin).
- 5) Recent publication of its history, including an attempt to define a phrase that expressed its orientation during its earliest years ("institutional economics", "one foot in the furrow").

Obviously, some of the departments at the University did not evolve exactly as did these two. However, I suspect that many of the departments that have been important in the story of the Wisconsin Idea did evolve in somewhat similar ways. For example, the Department of Political Science became much more oriented toward quantitative research at about the same time that the Department of Economics did, although it did so gradually, not because of a single decision about hiring.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, abstracting even further from the list of similarities between the two departments that have been the examples so far, one can see a slight downward curve in the strength of the Wisconsin Idea.

6. A HISTORY OF THE WISCONSIN IDEA

The Earliest Example

It is difficult to identify the first example of the Wisconsin Idea in action, but the most plausible candidate is the creation of institutes for teachers in 1860. Although these institutes were held



University research and outreach programs on integrated pest management help Wisconsin farmers increase yields while reducing their use of pesticides and irrigation (photo courtesy of Wolfgang Hoffmann, UW-Madison, Agricultural Journalism).

on the campus, they were outreach activities because the students were at the University only briefly and were not seeking degrees. They are a very odd beginning for the history of the Idea. Henry Barnard became the president of the University in 1859. The regents expected him to present a plan under which the small, fledgling University could develop. Barnard had little to offer by way of a general plan, but he was interested in improving the common schools, for example by strengthening the University's normal department and cooperating with the normal schools. His plan to organize institutes for persons who were already teaching in the common schools was a result of this interest.¹⁵¹ Barnard's tenure lasted only about one year and is nearly barren of accomplishments. It is ironic that a president who had so little effect on the University probably is the one who launched the University's service to the state.

Early Work for Farmers

The next example of the Idea is the establishment, in 1866, of the experimental farm. As we have seen, this was a result of a reorganization that the University implemented in order to secure the funding that the Morrill Act made available and a result of Dane County's contribution of the revenue from a sale of bonds. The regents purchased nearly 200 acres of land that were located immediately to the west and southwest of the campus. There they planned to establish "an *experimental farm*, where agriculture is to be practically taught by experimenting on different soils and location of land, and *not a model farm*, where the best kind and largest quantity of particular products are sought to be obtained."¹⁵²

Examining the University's potato research from its beginnings in the early years of the experimental farm up to the present reveals that the early research conducted at the farm was much less sophisticated and effective than was later research. During 1869 workers at the experimental farm sowed eight plats of potatoes, using seven methods of preparing the seeds. They found that planting seeds in different ways did not result in a significant difference in yield. In fact, the

yields of the two plats in which seeds were planted in the same way differed considerably. Disheartened, they conceded that “this is a further proof of the difficulty of securing those uniform conditions in agricultural experiments, which will enable one to draw correct conclusions from a limited number of trials.”¹⁵³

Later University researchers had more success. Early in this century they found a spray that would control potato blight and help increase yields by 20 to 25 percent.¹⁵⁴ A few years later, in 1914, Dean Russell reported, “Wisconsin stands near the head as a potato growing state. The opening up of large areas of virgin soils in the central and northern portions of the state has resulted in a material expansion of this industry.”¹⁵⁵ Russell gave credit to Professor Milward’s attempts to organize potato farmers into cooperatives and to the State Potato Growers’ Association, of which Milward was the secretary, and he promised that in the following year the University would begin to inspect and certify potato stock that was to be used for seed. More recently four geneticists – Gustav H. Rieman, Delmer C. Cooper, Robert Hougas and Stanley Peloquin – developed the Superior variety, which resists potato scab and is very suitable for processing into potato chips.¹⁵⁶ They and others also created varieties that were appropriate for table use, and the seed certification program that Russell promised was created. Within the last few years, Peloquin has developed another variety that is important because it can be stored cold.¹⁵⁷

In 1877 the regents claimed that many useful experiments were performed at the experimental farm but the results were published only in the annual *Reports of the Regents* and thus did the state’s farmers little good.¹⁵⁸ In other words, the University was beginning to carry on research on Wisconsin problems, but it was having difficulty beginning outreach activities to communicate the results of that research. That problem was solved not by publishing results more widely but by sending the director of the farm, William Henry, around the state during the winter. Henry fought, not always successfully, against the difficulties of the Wisconsin winter to contact farmers. He reported that he was enthusiastically received by farmers and also learned a good deal from them.¹⁵⁹

By 1883 Henry had begun advising the state’s dairy farmers to store fodder in silos over the winter.¹⁶⁰ At first farmers refused to believe that fodder could be preserved. The establishment of the Wisconsin Farmers’ Institutes in 1885 allowed an exchange of ideas on the subject, and during an 1887 Institute several farmers who had decided to try silos reported that the silos had allowed their dairy operations to survive the drought of 1886. Meanwhile Professor Franklin H. King had been working to improve the design of the silos and had discovered that cylinders were much more effective and safer than squares, which trapped gasses in the corners, creating the potential for an explosion. He published his research in 1891, and the Wisconsin landscape was on the way to being dotted with cylindrical silos.

During the early 1880s, Henry was also interested in adding an experimental station (which would be more oriented toward research projects and less of a working farm) to supplement the experimental farm. The Wisconsin Dairymen’s Association supported the idea, as it supported much of the early work in agriculture at the University. In his 1883 address to the legislature, Governor Jeremiah Rusk urged that an experimental station be begun and that it be funded by an appropriation of \$6,000.¹⁶¹ In response to Rusk’s suggestion, a law was enacted to establish a station and a professorship in pharmacy, both to be funded by increasing the state property tax.¹⁶² The timing was fortuitous because in 1886 the federal Hatch Act created a system of state agricultural experiment stations, and Wisconsin’s station was opened in the following year. Joining the system put the University’s station on firmer financial ground and facilitated interaction with the stations that other universities operated.

H.P. Armsby, the associate director of the station, reported early in its existence that, rather than trying to obtain immediate answers to narrow problems that farmers faced, it did broader research in an attempt to discover more general principles.¹⁶³ His statement suggests that the station was doing pure research and was thus not an example of the Wisconsin Idea. His example, however, was research about the relation between the feeding of dairy cattle, especially the proportion of their food that is protein, and their milk production. He also reported the implications

of his findings for cattle in Wisconsin. Experiments of that kind would certainly please the Wisconsin Dairymen's Association. In fact, in 1888 Henry, who still directed the station, wrote, "We have endeavored to prosecute lines of investigation which seemed the most important and to offer large prospects of usefulness. To this end the feeding of livestock and the dairy industry have occupied most of our time."¹⁶⁴

In 1885 a law was enacted that authorized the University to hold Institutes for farmers during the winters in order to "present the most recent investigations in theoretical and practical agriculture."¹⁶⁵ This outreach function, especially its attention to practical problems, is a good example of the Wisconsin Idea at work. The University conducted 57 Institutes during the winter of 1886-87, and approximately 50,000 farmers attended them.¹⁶⁶ This impressive statistic indicates that Wisconsin farmers' initial skepticism about the University's ability to help them quickly disappeared and that the University was willing to devote considerable effort and substantial resources to accommodate the farmers. Nine years later the number of Institutes increased to 106, and again the number of participants was estimated at 50,000. In addition, at 11 of the Institutes cooking schools were offered for farm wives. During that same year ten summer meetings were held and the University published 60,000 copies of the Institutes' bulletin.¹⁶⁷

The interest of Wisconsin farmers in the Institutes continued to be intense, and this program was clearly one of the more successful of the University's outreach activities. After about 15 years of its operation the Board of Visitors reported that:

the crowds that attend these Institutes, which are limited only by the size of the hall where held, the intense interest manifested, the notes taken and questions asked are in themselves a refutation of the charges of inefficiency. If not, observe the silos built; the creameries and cheese factories established; the more scientific methods of feeding that are now practiced; the more intelligent use of fertilizers; increasing quantities and better fruits; less waste; healthier and better bred stock, better schools, better homes and a greater degree of contentment among the people. Surely the money is well invested! Their benefits are incalculable.¹⁶⁸

The millennium seemed to be at hand.

Another very successful outreach program was thrust upon the University, rather than started by it, at about the same time that the Farmers' Institutes began. In the early 1880s a number of farm groups lobbied the legislature to separate the College of Agriculture from the University.¹⁶⁹ A bill to do so was introduced but failed to pass. Nevertheless, the University felt pressure to improve its agricultural training. The regents appointed a committee to address the problem.¹⁷⁰ One appointee could not serve, but William Vilas (a lawyer and later a U.S. Senator and generous donor to the University) and H.D. Hitt (a farmer) wrote a report in which they proposed that the University add an agricultural program consisting of two 12-week sessions that would be held during winters and would offer practical instruction. Henry and other faculty members did not like the idea, but the regents forced it upon them.

The Wisconsin Farm Short Course, the first such educational program in the nation, began in 1886. Despite his misgivings, Henry, whose years of contact with Wisconsin's farmers made him aware of their educational needs, devised a rational curriculum. The first year consisted of courses in feeds and feeding, soils, breeding, laboratory work in plant science, dairying, crops, agricultural chemistry and bookkeeping. The second year consisted of practical courses, such as stock judging and drainage, as well as some pure science, such as a bacteriology course.¹⁷¹ Henry then went out into the state looking for students. The first year only 19 enrolled, but the number grew and the University maintained the course. In fact, in 1903 it added a miniature version of it: a two-week course.

Some faculty members were suspicious of the short course because they thought that students should take basic preparatory courses before they took practical courses and because they thought that an over-emphasis on practical instruction would weaken the College's research program. However, as to the second objection, Frank Parker Stockbridge was probably correct when he stated that, during the Short Course, knowledge flowed in two directions: as well as learning,

the students identified for the professors actual problems, thereby stimulating research. The effect on the legislature and governors is much less speculative. The Short Course, and even more so the Farmers' Institutes, convinced them that the College of Agriculture was an invaluable resource, not a drain on the state's revenues.

Outreach During President Chamberlin's Administration; The Babcock Test

Of the University's first five presidents, only Barnard was interested in outreach activities, and his tenure was so brief that the summer training program for teachers was the only result of his interest. Bascom, the fifth president, held a traditional view of a university's mission; he supported the liberal arts and traditional, on-campus instruction. However, as we have noted, Bascom's successor, Chamberlin, was a strong supporter of outreach programs. He approved of both the Short Course and the Farmers' Institutes, and a number of outreach programs began while he was president.¹⁷² Partly because of this attitude, the University's service to the state grew rapidly during Chamberlin's term of office.

One of Chamberlin's outreach activities was to revitalize the summer training program for teachers that Barnard had begun.¹⁷³ John W. Stearns, who was a professor, president of the Wisconsin Teachers Association and editor of the *Wisconsin Journal of Education*; began to direct that program. Stearns, because he was familiar with and known by teachers, was an ideal director. The summer schools began by emphasizing science, trying to make teachers aware of new developments. Two years later a summer session for students who were working toward degrees was begun, and Dean Birge was chosen to direct it. The programs were combined in 1904 and Dana Munro then became the director. Summer school thus became only in part an outreach program. In 1926 the University began the first of its short-term summer clinics, a series of classes for coaches. Later it began clinics for engineers, drama teachers, high school musicians, bankers and others.

Buoyed by the success of the Farmers' Institutes and the increasing popularity of the Short Course, the University, during 1890, designed a dairy course to train operators of butter and cheese factories and offered it during the winter. Only two persons attended the first session. However, that year the director of the program became widely known, so that the next year 72 students attended.¹⁷⁴ In 1893 the University hired its first specialist in dairy science, Edward H. Farrington, and he began to work in the dairy course. The program was later made flexible: students could study for periods ranging from 10 to 20 weeks. The director of the dairy course who became famous between its first and second years was Stephen Babcock. He also created for Wisconsin's dairy industry an enormous benefit that is surely one of the high points in the history of the Wisconsin Idea.

In 1890, the second year of the College of Agriculture, Babcock published Bulletin 24 of the Wisconsin Agricultural Station, which described his butter fat test that revolutionized the dairy industry. The importance of this little bulletin was recognized immediately; the University initially published 60,000 copies. By coincidence, during its second year (1893), the School of Economics, Political Science and History included among its faculty Frederick Jackson Turner, whose brief paper, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," published that year, revolutionized the understanding of the study of American history.

Babcock began as a chemist who was interested primarily in analyzing the chemical composition of milk. His discoveries had begun to make a mark for him. However, Hiram Smith and other prominent dairymen convinced Henry that they needed a simple, inexpensive test to determine the butterfat content of milk. In turn, Henry, by that time caught up in the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea, prodded Babcock, who had very recently joined the faculty, to set aside his theoretical studies and work on the problem.¹⁷⁵

Babcock discovered that applying the correct amount of sulfuric acid to milk would dissolve the casein (a type of protein), which in turn would liberate the butter fat. Using a centrifuge to whirl the milk's container completed the separation. In fact, after the whirling the fat rose into the bottle's neck, and if the proper markings were made on the neck the person who was conducting the test could read the percentage of butterfat in the milk. The equipment needed for the test



Professor Stephen Babcock made an important contribution to dairy science when he developed the first reliable butterfat tester in 1890. He is shown here (right) demonstrating the tester to College of Agriculture dean William A. Henry and University President Thomas C. Chamberlin (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 226).

was inexpensive, the time needed to perform it was short and the training needed to perform it was simple so that almost anyone could learn to do it.

Babcock did not patent the process and modestly described it in his bulletin: "in the hope that it may benefit some who are striving to improve their stock and enable creameries to avoid the evils of the present system, the test is given to the public." Attractive as Babcock's modesty was, it was inappropriate. The test had enormous consequences. The most obvious is that it provided a way to determine the butterfat content, and thus the value, of a quantity of milk that was offered for sale. An operator of a cheese factory put that result bluntly: "The Babcock Test can beat the Bible in making a man honest."¹⁷⁶ The availability of this simple test of value stabilized and rationalized the milk market. Later Dean Henry pointed out some less obvious benefits of the Babcock test: it allowed buttermakers to use their churns more effectively, it helped dairymen distinguish between good dairy cows and bad dairy cows and it allowed milk to be valued before it was combined with other milk for skimming, which made milk cooperatives and large creameries possible.¹⁷⁷

The financial benefits of the test demonstrate its importance. Because the test allowed a creamery operator to test the change in butterfat content of milk during the operation of a separator, the operator could make fine adjustments of the machine instead of merely guessing at the amount of fat that was being removed. The operator could thus save much more of the fat to be used to make butter. Dean Henry thought that this reduction of the amount of butterfat wasted increased by five percent annually the amount of butter that the creameries in the state sold. That increase was worth \$800,000.¹⁷⁸ Although it is difficult to grasp the magnitude of \$800,000 in 1904, one gets the point by recalling that the University's budget for that year was \$400,000.

The historian of Wisconsin's dairy industry claimed that "the Babcock test was a truly monumental achievement. No other single invention, with the possible exception of the centrifugal cream separator, had a more beneficial influence on the manufacturing side of the dairy business."¹⁷⁹ That conclusion seems to be inescapable.

During the year after Babcock invented his test, the University began offering extension courses. This program was modeled on the English system of extension work in that it consisted of series of off-campus lectures. Ten courses, each consisting of six lectures, were offered in 1891-92. The range was impressive: American History, English Literature, Scandinavian Literature, Greek Literature, Economics, Antiquities of India and Iran, Bacteriology, Physiology of Plants, Electricity and Landscape Geology. Some of them were offered more than once. Courses were held around the state, including locations as far away as Ashland and Washburn, as well as in Chicago. It was also impressive that the average attendance was 170.¹⁸⁰ These figures for the first year of a program demonstrate once again that there was considerable demand in the state for the University's services.

During the early years of this program, full-time faculty members gave the lectures in addition to attending to their other duties. The most popular, as measured by the requests for his lectures, was John Charles Freeman, who spoke on American Literature, a field in which he was one of the first specialists. Freeman was a Civil War hero, a former diplomat, an acquaintance of Robert Browning and Alfred Lord Tennyson and a wealthy man whose network of friends included most of the socially and financially prominent citizens of Madison.¹⁸¹ This elegant man's lectures in remote Wisconsin villages were received as enthusiastically as were Oscar Wilde's lectures to the miners of Nevada. Assigning extension lectures to full-time faculty members ensured their quality but took its toll on the professors. By 1904 it was clear that "ever since the extension movement was organized, professors have found that it has very considerably interfered with their own investigations. On the other hand, few, if any of them, have felt that the compensation afforded by the system was any adequate return for the sacrifice thus made."¹⁸² As a result, a number of professors dropped out of the program that year.

Late Nineteenth-Century Agricultural Work

One of the more spectacular scenes in the history of the Wisconsin Idea occurred during 1894. Harry Russell, a bacteriologist who had studied with Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch, had

joined the University's faculty the previous year. At that time tuberculosis was taking a heavy toll on Wisconsin dairy herds, and Russell had developed faith in a new test for the disease. The test indicated that 28 of the 30 cows in the University's dairy herd had tuberculosis. To the horror of the students who were attending the Short Course and who watched the experiment, Russell slaughtered the 28 cows. Much to the relief of Dean Henry, who had given Russell permission to slaughter the cows, post-mortem examinations demonstrated that all of them did have tuberculosis, although they had no visible symptoms of the disease. President Adams reported on Russell's work in terms that belied its drama: "Dr. Russell's studies of tuberculosis in dairy cows show that the disease ... has afflicted a good many of our herds Dr. Russell is now co-operating actively with the State Board of Health in this matter, and has under care at the present time several tuberculous-infected herds in the state."¹⁸³ Russell's demonstration that cows needed to be tested for tuberculosis and the imposition of quarantines helped to slow down the disease's spread.

The legislature, during 1895, passed two laws that gave new duties to the College of Agriculture, thereby showing its confidence in the college's ability to solve problems. One of those laws required every manufacturer and seller of commercial fertilizer to send a sample, along with a \$25 fee, to the experimental station.¹⁸⁴ The station was required to analyze the samples to determine whether the manufacturer or seller of the fertilizer had accurately stated its chemical composition. If the statement was accurate, the station certified the fertilizer. The law created a criminal penalty for manufacturing, importing or selling fertilizer if its chemical composition did not match the certified composition. The station certified ten brands during the first year of analysis.¹⁸⁵

The other law required the College of Agriculture to "prepare a bulletin or handbook describing the agricultural resources of Wisconsin, especially the newer and more thinly settled districts In general it shall set forth the advantages of the newer portions of this state for those seeking homes on lands in the effort to draw to Wisconsin a desirable class of farmers."¹⁸⁶ Although this law did not clearly state the area that was to be promoted, it was Northern Wisconsin.¹⁸⁷ Dean Henry himself, along with four professors, studied that part of the state, and the college wrote and printed 50,000 copies of *A Hand Book for the Home Seeker*. The college soon reported that an agent had convinced 100 families to move into one northern county. This was an effort to deal with the effects of deforestation in Northern Wisconsin, a problem that, as we have seen, also interested Ely. Unfortunately, we have also seen that the area's disadvantages for agriculture virtually doomed these efforts to failure.

The College of Agriculture's next breakthrough that had huge financial implications occurred in 1896.¹⁸⁸ In that year, Babcock (who thus made his second major discovery for the dairy industry), Russell (who again demonstrated his versatility), and Decker devised the Wisconsin Curd Test. Cheesemakers were occasionally producing an inferior product. They suspected that the cause was some of the milk they used, but, because most of them bought milk from more than one farmer and mixed it before beginning to make cheese and because none of them had a way to identify tainted milk, they were unable to prevent the occasional bad lot of cheese. The only solution was to throw away the cheese and, thus, some of their profits.

Babcock, Russell and Decker's test consisted of heating a sample of milk, adding a chemical that curdled it, cutting the sample into small pieces, pouring off all the whey and reheating the milk. Then the milk fermented, much as it did during cheesemaking. After the fermentation was complete, the curd was cut again. At that point the presence of small holes, which were easily seen, indicated that the milk was bad.¹⁸⁹ Like Babcock's butterfat test, this one was quick, simple to learn and required only inexpensive equipment and materials.

President Adams considered the curd test to be "probably next in importance to the invention of the Babcock Milk Test," and he estimated that it was worth \$100,000 annually to the state's cheesemakers.¹⁹⁰ A few years later Dean Henry claimed that the test saved Wisconsin cheesemakers an amount equal to the College of Agriculture's budget.¹⁹¹ In addition, it increased the

confidence that Wisconsin agriculturists had in the University and the confidence that the public had in Wisconsin agricultural products.

One measure of the College of Agriculture's outreach program during this era is its distribution of bulletins. By 1896 the series of bulletins had grown to 54 publications, nine having been added that year. The college also had published 12 *Annual Reports*, 10 annual *Farm Institute Bulletins* and a number of other items. It printed 216,000 copies of the publications that it prepared during that year, including 60,000 copies of the current *Farm Institute Bulletin* and 50,000 of the *Hand Book for the Home Seeker*. It published a bulletin on its new commercial fertilizer certification program and a wide variety of bulletins on narrow topics. Some of the publications were substantial: the *Annual Report* and the *Farm Institute Bulletin* were more than 300 pages long, and the *Hand Book for the Home Seeker* was about 200 pages long.

In 1897 the team of Babcock and Russell made another important discovery that aided the dairy industry. This one began with theoretical research, and their discovery was later applied to practical problems. In the course of conventional chemical analysis of milk, the kind of research that Babcock did before Henry set him to work on the butterfat testing problem, they discovered galactase, an enzyme. Later they found that this chemical resembled human digestive fluids and, with a leap of insight, concluded that it might therefore have something to do with the ripening of cheese. They managed to establish that this was the case, thereby overturning the notion that bacteria caused the ripening.

At this point they tried to find a practical application of their discovery. They succeeded, causing Dean Henry to write, "here is a happy illustration of the value of a purely scientific discovery to the farmer."¹⁹² If bacteria did not cause the ripening, the process could be carried out at temperatures near the freezing point. Babcock and Russell asked cheesemakers if that was possible, were told that it was not, tried it anyway and proved themselves correct. As a result, cheesemakers began shipping their product to refrigerators rather than curing it in their own factory. The ultimate effects were higher quality cheese and the growth of dairy cooperatives in Wisconsin.

Dean Henry was not only an able and energetic administrator but also a scholar. His greatest scholarly accomplishment was *Feeds and Feeding: A Hand-Book for the Student and the Stockman* (1898). It is an exhaustive study – nearly 700 pages long – and for some time was a standard work. Its subtitle is revealing: the book contains both scientific information for the student and a wealth of practical information for the farmer. Henry hoped that the book would entice Wisconsin stockmen into becoming students of their occupation, into learning some basic science, as well as helping them farm more effectively and profitably.¹⁹³

The Progressive Era

By the turn of the century, the Wisconsin Idea was flourishing. There were quite a few examples of the Idea in action, most of them examples of either outreach work or agricultural research that was directed at the problems of the state's farmers. The state government responded with funding that, in light of the high quality of the University, appeared to be adequate, although the Reports of the Regents during the 19th century contain many pleas for increased funding. The state government also occasionally required the University to perform services useful to the state. As the new century dawned in 1901, a dynamic force appeared on the scene. It strongly supported the Wisconsin Idea and expanded its scope, especially to include service to the state government. That force was the Progressive wing of the Republican Party and, in particular, Robert M. La Follette.

La Follette, unlike earlier governors, eagerly sought the guidance of University professors. He noted that "while I was governor, I sought the constant advice and service of the trained men of the [University] in meeting the difficult problems which confronted the state. Many times when harassed by the conditions which confronted me, I have called in for conference President Van Hise, Dr. Ely, Professor Commons, Dr. Reinsch and others."¹⁹⁴ The first three of those advisers have already appeared in this account. The other, Paul Reinsch, was originally a member of Ely's School of Economics, Political Science and History, but in 1901 he became the first chair-

person of the first political science department in the country. He wrote a number of solid books, such as *World Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century* and *Intellectual and Political Currents in the Far East*. His public service expanded beyond Wisconsin: he was a delegate to the Pan-American Conference in 1908 and 1910 and later he was Minister to China.

In 1901, the year that Robert M. La Follette entered state government, so did another major figure in the Wisconsin Idea story – Charles McCarthy. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin had recently moved from the capitol to its new quarters on the University campus, taking with it a collection of documents that had been used by the legislature. To fill that vacuum the Free Library Commission established a Legislative Reference Library. McCarthy, one of Turner's graduate students, was hired to be a document clerk.

McCarthy is part of this story for several reasons. First, after he became the chief of the Legislative Reference Library and a very prominent figure in state government, he taught at the University. Appropriately, his assignments were courses in The Theory and Practice of Legislation and Practical Bill Drafting. Thus, although he was a civil servant before he taught at the University, he was in fact also a faculty member who served state government. With one foot planted at each end of State Street, maintaining contact with state government and the University, he was perfectly positioned to encourage an interchange between the two institutions. He was convinced that such an interchange was valuable. He wrote to Ely that the University's professors should be eager to help state government: "We had a glorious ideal for our state University, it seems to me, in that of 'Service to the State'. To me it seemed the solution of a great many of the ills which



Charles McCarthy was both a University instructor and the organizer and first chief of the Legislative Reference Bureau. The bureau, which performs drafting and research for the legislature, was one of the first agencies to apply the Wisconsin Idea to government service (photo courtesy of State Historical Society; WHi (X3) 44686).

have beset us."¹⁹⁵ He also thought that the state government should recruit professors. In a memorandum addressed to the Board of Public Affairs, he wrote, "I will suggest that the agricultural extension department of the University could well be called in to help in this matter [immigration]. Indeed the whole Economics Department of the University should be called upon for the solution of this question."¹⁹⁶

McCarthy not only prodded state officials and University professors to make it more likely that the latter would help the former, but also when that help was arranged he worked to increase its effectiveness. For example, Commons reported his experiences as he began to draft a civil service bill: "Within a day or two after La Follette requested my help on the bill, McCarthy had me supplied with everything one could need in drafting that bill. I soon could submit to him and to La Follette a preliminary draft."¹⁹⁷ It is important to note that Commons submitted the draft to McCarthy. Commons also acknowledged the value of McCarthy's "stubborn criticism of every detail in my work." Thus, McCarthy facilitated the operation of the Wisconsin Idea when it took the form of professors providing technical skill or advice on matters of policy.

Finally, McCarthy advocated certain policies and worked to make the passage of certain legislation more likely. Ostensibly the Legislative Reference Library under McCarthy was not in either of those businesses. One of the "Rules for the Drafting Room," which were prominently displayed in the library, was "the draftsman can make no suggestions as to the contents of the bills." However, McCarthy was not a mere technician. For example, he, on his own initiative, submitted a draft of a resolution that would require a study of continuing industrial and agricultural education. After the resolution passed, McCarthy was named to the study commission. In fact, the report of the commission, as it was presented to the Governor on January 10, 1911, bears his imprint.¹⁹⁸ An example of his influence on the outcome of legislation is his correspondence, during the administration of Governor Philipp, with Zona Gale, who was a prominent writer and keenly interested in state and University matters. Philipp's attitude toward the University at first differed radically from La Follette's. When McCarthy heard that the University's budget for extension work might be reduced, he wrote to Gale, hoping that she would use her influence with State Senator George Staudenmayer, who, like Gale, lived in Portage.¹⁹⁹

Governor Philipp attempted to call McCarthy to task for his support of Progressive causes. In fact, during his campaign he advocated abolishing the Legislative Reference Library and dismissing McCarthy. The Joint Committee of Investigation of State Boards and Commissions questioned McCarthy for two days. Eventually Philipp himself took over the questioning. Their exchange is slightly comic, because as Philipp probed McCarthy evaded.²⁰⁰ McCarthy and his library weathered the crisis. In fact, Philipp soon came to realize that McCarthy and his staff could, and would, do valuable work for him and his allies, too.

Although Wisconsin politics significantly changed after La Follette became governor, the College of Agriculture held to its course of providing useful information and service to the farmers of the state. The college's work for tobacco farmers illustrates its ability to mobilize specialists in a variety of disciplines and to work simultaneously on a number of problems having to do with one crop. President Van Hise reported that during 1905:

[T]he work on tobacco has been upon the securing, testing, and distribution of seeds of the qualities best adapted to Wisconsin; experiments upon commercial fertilizers for tobacco in Rock, Columbia, and Crawford counties; experiments upon cover crops to supply humus and nitrogen; the advisability of raising in Wisconsin shade grown Sumatra tobacco; the production of new varieties of tobacco adapted to Wisconsin; and handling, curing, and fermenting the crop.²⁰¹

Many of those projects resulted in useful information.

Not only did President Van Hise approve of work of that kind and, in general, of the Wisconsin Idea but his own work reflected the Idea. He was a geologist and during his field work he had become interested in forestry. Because he had studied the geology of Northern Wisconsin, where the forests by his time had been nearly logged into nonexistence, he was especially interested in preserving forests and in reforestation. His interests and the state's needs coincided, and

between 1905 and 1915 he was the president of the Department of State Forestry. During part of that time he was also the chairperson of the Conservation Commission, which had even wider duties and also included Birge. During his tenure in the Department of State Forestry, a law was enacted that allowed the state to take over and preserve land for forestry purposes if the property taxes on it were delinquent. In addition, an amendment to the state constitution was ratified that authorized a state forestry program.²⁰² On those bases, the state began to acquire a considerable amount of land for a forest preserve. However, the Wisconsin Supreme Court later invalidated both the constitutional amendment and the forest reserve program.²⁰³

Another of Van Hise's efforts to aid the cause of forestry in Wisconsin was more enduring than the forest reserve program. His connections to persons who were interested in forestry extended beyond Wisconsin to the national scene. He used those connections to persuade the United States Forest Service to locate the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory, the first such laboratory in the world, adjacent to the University's campus.²⁰⁴ Being a national institution, the laboratory did not restrict itself to research on problems that benefited this state, but much of its research was relevant to Wisconsin. Moreover, connections between it and the University began to be formed – that was the reason for locating it next to a university's campus – and its scientists and some of the University's scientists worked together.

Van Hise's service was not unique at that time. He proudly reported in 1906 that:

[T]he Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences is the director of the state Geological Survey, and is a member of the Fish and Forestry Commissions. The Dean of the College of Agriculture is a member of the Forestry Commission. The College of Engineering is the custodian of the public standard weights and measures. The professor of history is a member of the commission for the purpose of devising a plan to provide for the preparation of the history of the Wisconsin soldiers in the Civil War. The professor of bacteriology is a member of the state Live Stock Sanitary Board. The professor of railway engineering has been an aid to the Tax Commission and the Railroad Commission A professor of political science is chairman of the Civil Service Commission. A professor in the department of political economy has been carrying on investigations for the Tax Commission The president of the University is president of the Geological Survey Commission, president of the Forestry Commission, and a member of the Free Library Commission.²⁰⁵

Although Van Hise, from the beginning of his presidency, strongly advocated the University's research on Wisconsin problems and the service of University administrators and faculty members to state government, he did not at first significantly support another component of the Wisconsin Idea: extension work. When, during 1905, he was asked his opinion about one type of extension instruction he replied, "I have given so little attention to correspondence work that I am unable to express an opinion on the point you raise."²⁰⁶ In fact, general extension, unlike agricultural extension, had been languishing. Although the University had been doing extension work since 1891, Van Hise pointed out that one person had charge of both inspecting high schools and general extension.²⁰⁷ The former was thought to be more important, so extension was slighted, and it also suffered from insufficient funding.

Several influences began to change Van Hise's mind. One was William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, whom Van Hise had known when he was a visiting professor at Chicago. Harper had been active in the Chautauqua lecture movement and was thus convinced of the value of education that occurred outside classrooms and that was provided to non-degree students. He wrote to Van Hise that he hoped Van Hise would "extend the direct work of the University beyond its walls, to bring all the people of this splendid state directly into contact with university men and university thought."²⁰⁸ Another influence that moved Van Hise in the same direction was the Free Library Commission, especially Frank Hutchins (its secretary), McCarthy and Henry Legler.²⁰⁹ By late 1905 Van Hise had been converted. During a speech he proclaimed, "a state university should not be above meeting the needs of the people, however elementary the



University Extension was launched in 1907 when Louis Reber was hired to direct the new department, which had been unanimously approved and funded by the 1907 Legislature. During his tenure of two decades, he promoted the expansion of Extension service to all state residents (photo courtesy of State Historical Society, WHI (X3) 6012).

instruction necessary to accomplish this."²¹⁰ The president's phrasing is instructive. He revealed that at first he thought that extension work was beneath the University's dignity, but extension advocates had convinced him otherwise.

When Van Hise became convinced that a course of action made sense, he almost invariably began vigorously to pursue it. His newfound attraction to extension work was no exception. He reported that "in 1906 E.W. Pahlow was appointed secretary for [extension] work to study the problem and organize the movement. The coming year the department of the university extension will be regularly organized, with H.E. Legler as secretary, F. A. Hutchins as field organizer, and W.H. Lighty in charge of correspondence work."²¹¹ Again, Van Hise's wording is revealing. By referring to a "movement" he indicated that the University would be making far more than a feeble attempt. It is also interesting that he appointed two of the staff members of the Free Library Commission to the extension program, thereby using their experience with assisting the general public (one of the library's duties was loaning books to persons who did not have easy access to other libraries) and following up on their expression of interest.

Legler did not remain at the head of the extension program for long. Near the end of 1907 Van Hise brought Louis Reber from Pennsylvania State University to direct the program. Reber

held that position until 1926. He, more than anyone else, deserves credit for building a strong general extension program at the University. His view of extension work was broad; he proposed to teach anything to anyone in the state. In fact, he wanted to create an interest in learning, and thus in using the extension programs, in persons who previously showed no such interest.²¹² He fended off complaints that extension work was beneath the University by arguing that the University was a service institution; that is, he believed in the Wisconsin Idea. Reber conceded that the University's on-campus departments should have control of extension courses that could be counted toward degrees, but he built a separate teaching force for the other courses. He also stationed some of his staff members out-state, where they would be more accessible to their students. Van Hise agreed with Reber's approach. The public apparently liked the approach, too. The clientele for extension work grew rapidly, and as a result so did the appropriations for it.

Beginning in 1907, an attempt was made to merge General Extension with the outreach programs of the College of Agriculture, but that attempt failed, and until the 1960s that college had its own extension programs and the Cooperative Extension program. Russell, who became Dean of the College in 1907, was a strong believer that each department in the college should teach, conduct research and do extension work. That arrangement became known as the "three-legged stool." Russell even kept track of the amount of funds spent on each of the three functions.²¹³ Each of the three functions contributed to the effectiveness of the other two.

Van Hise and Reber built the extension program so well that when Governor Philipp, who took office in 1915, attacked the program, he could not make a dent in it. Extension's budget had grown from \$20,000 in 1907, the year during which Reber arrived, to \$200,000 in 1914. Philipp wished to reduce the state's budget, and he may have considered extension work to be part of a complex that included the Progressives, the Legislative Reference Library, President Van Hise and professors who were active in state government: a complex that constituted much of the Wisconsin Idea at the time. Philipp wanted to cut the Extension's budget in half and eliminate some of its field work and its non-traditional instruction.²¹⁴ Van Hise and Reber fought back, and McCarthy worked behind the scenes. In addition, by this time Lincoln Steffins and Frank Stockbridge had published articles in nationally circulated magazines that gave glowing accounts of the University's service to the state, including its extension work. The legislature passed a bill that increased the Extension's budget to \$206,000. Philipp had prepared a veto message but instead acquiesced and signed the bill.

Before extension work was reorganized and before Reber arrived at the University, a movement had begun that would lead to the creation of one of the more important branches of that work. In the early years commercial operations were taking advantage of a substantial desire for correspondence courses. The redoubtable McCarthy studied the market and estimated that 35,000 residents of Wisconsin were annually paying \$800,000 for that kind of course.²¹⁵ At about the same time McCarthy and Legler surveyed Wisconsin business leaders, who overwhelmingly agreed that the University should begin to offer correspondence courses.²¹⁶

After becoming convinced that the Extension should offer correspondence courses, President Van Hise was soon able to report that "a large number of departments in the University are planning to offer correspondence courses. Thus the correspondence work offered will have the widest range, including language and literature, political economy, political science, history, sociology, mathematics, the pure sciences and the applied sciences."²¹⁷ There were to be sequences of courses and courses for workers, such as locomotive engineers and mechanical drafters, and, with certain restrictions, students were granted credit toward degrees for the courses.

The state government immediately recognized the value of this program and began to support it financially. Governor Davidson (1906-1911), who was a strong supporter of the Wisconsin Idea, told the legislature in 1909:

The extension division is strongly organized, and meets with great favor among the people of the state. At the end of the first year after the appropriation [for correspondence instruction in 1907], more than one thousand students were doing regular correspondence work. This work should be encouraged as it gives to a large class of

our young men and women who, by reason of circumstances, are obliged to leave school and begin earning a livelihood before they are properly equipped for the business of life, an educational advantage which they would not otherwise enjoy.²¹⁸

The persons who were in charge of the correspondence study program were shrewd enough to monitor it and to adjust it to fulfill its students' needs. For example, recognizing that the students had difficulty working without direct contact with their teachers, Reber began to send professors out into the state to meet with groups of students who were studying the same subject.²¹⁹ The combination of a strong market and the University's intelligent efforts to appeal to that market caused correspondence study to grow rapidly. By July 1, 1910, students had completed or were taking 4,794 correspondence courses from the extension division.²²⁰ At that time the most popular course was Mathematical Engineering, and many other courses that directly related to work were popular. Nonetheless, 350 students had registered for English courses and there were even 63 students in Ancient Languages and 24 in Philosophy.

The boom days of the correspondence study program came much later during the years when United States Armed Forces Institute courses were offered under a contract with the U.S. Department of Defense. During 1956-57, there were 8,423 students enrolled in regular University correspondence courses, which was not many more than the number enrolled during 1910, but about 85,000 students were taking the USAFI courses.²²¹ When the contract with the Defense Department ended during the mid-1970s, student enrollments dropped significantly, but recently the growth in students has been fairly consistent at about two percent annually, and 11,616 students were enrolled in Extension correspondence courses during 1994.²²²

While the Extension Division was being revitalized, the College of Agriculture continued its outpouring of information that benefited the state's farmers. Research on soils was an important part of the college's work during this era. Some of it was aimed at increasing the amount of tillable land in the state. Professors and others from the college studied marshy soil to determine the proper drainage, the more effective fertilizers, the crops that were more likely to be successful and the best methods of growing them. Others did research on sandy soil to find methods to add humus (the organic matter in soil), effective fertilizers, and ways to prevent the soil from blowing away.²²³ A few years later, in 1915, soil scientists joined the effort to promote and assist the growing of alfalfa in the state. For example, they found that adding lime to the fields would improve alfalfa crops, but that could be done effectively only after a simple test for the acidity of soil was discovered by Emil Truog.²²⁴

The College of Agriculture directed much of its efforts to Northern Wisconsin, where there was still a need to replace the virtually defunct logging industry with more viable economic activities. The college established three experimental farms in the far north. Some nearly worthless land was drained on one farm and barley, which grew well, was planted. The college also entered into contracts with three farmers under which the college provided fruit trees and directions for cultivating, pruning and spraying them, and the owners did the work. The college also attempted to establish the commercial growing of strawberries in the area.²²⁵

The impressive agricultural activity during the middle of the first decade of this century is attributable in part to increased funding. President Van Hise acknowledged the generous increase in the college's funding in 1905.²²⁶ Also, at about the same time, the federal government enacted the Adams Act, which provided funds to each state for agricultural research. In 1905, the first year that the act was in effect, each state received \$5,000, and the amount increased by \$2,000 each year until it reached \$15,000.

Another reason why the College of Agriculture flourished during this era is Van Hise's 1907 appointment of Harry Russell as dean of the College. In fact, Russell deserves most of the credit for the College's generous funding. He was effective in dealing with the legislature and adept at convincing corporations and farming groups to fund research that would benefit them. Russell strongly supported research, teaching and extension work. An energetic man, as his scientific discoveries that have already been mentioned indicate, he vigorously worked for the College, even engaging in turf battles with Dean Birge of the College of Letters and Sciences. One exam-

ple of his administrative skill was his establishment of departments in new areas of inquiry. For example, the Department of Agricultural Economics and the Department of Plant Pathology were established early in his tenure. Like many forceful and effective persons, he was not without his enemies, and he finally grew tired of the battle in 1930, when he accepted an appointment as the first full-time director of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation. John Jenkins accurately wrote of Russell, “he in fact presided over the transformation of the College into a ‘state-of-the-art’ institution whose shape and accomplishments attracted imitators and admirers far and wide.”²²⁷

As Russell began to reshape and revitalize the College of Agriculture, Reber continued to expand the offerings of the Extension Division. One imaginative program that the division began, about 1908, was aid to debating and literary societies. Organizations of those kinds were among the more vibrant and important extracurricular activities on the main campus, and they had their counterparts in many municipalities in the state. However, as someone who worked for the Extension Division realized, the non-university societies had little guidance. Van Hise put the Extension Division’s response well: “this opportunity for educational work has been seized by the extension division.”²²⁸ Seizing opportunities was the division’s practice during the Progressive Era. Soon a stream of suggestions about topics, reading lists and materials was flowing out of Madison to the societies. From this project Van Hise concluded “the above but illustrates the fundamental idea of the extension division. It is not enough for knowledge to exist in books to be obtained by men under favorable circumstances; the knowledge must be carried out to the people.”²²⁹

Reber also saw that the Extension Division attended to the needs of industry and its workers, although this program was begun at the initiative of employers. He reported that, in cooperation with the Milwaukee Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association, the Extension Division was offering courses in Milwaukee to train workers. Employers provided space and equipment and paid the tuition and the workers’ wages while they were in class, and every two weeks an instructor from the division arrived to teach the workers.²³⁰

Nor did Reber ignore the state’s municipalities. He established the Municipal Reference Bureau in 1909 to serve them. This bureau’s functions were “to collect data and information on subjects of municipal government and place it at the disposal of the citizens of the state who [could] benefit from it.”²³¹ To accomplish those objectives it assembled a library of about 10,000 documents. During the two-year period that ended on July 1, 1912, it answered nearly 3,000 requests for information. The volume of requests indicates that once again the Extension Division had discovered a significant need for services. The requests covered a wide range of subjects. The bureau received more requests for information about the commission form of government than about any other subject, and eventually it published a bulletin on that subject. Today some of these functions are carried out by the extension’s Local Government Center.

An unusual and short-lived extension program was the Civic and Social Center Bureau, which was founded in 1910. Its goal was to help develop the civic, social and recreational resources of municipalities.²³² Its Director, Edward Ward, thought that school buildings should be the center for this kind of activity. Among the outpouring of laws by the 1911 Legislature was one that required school boards, upon the application of at least half the voters of the district, to make school buildings available for the discussion of public questions and for civic, social and recreational purposes.²³³ The law also provided that if the citizens of a community were organized into a “nonpartisan, nonsectarian, nonexclusive association for the presentation and discussion of public questions,” the school board was required to open school buildings to them free of charge. This program failed because of lack of interest.

During this era Governor McGovern, like Governor La Follette, turned to President Van Hise and prominent University professors for advice, among them Reinsch, Commons and Ely, who had served La Follette in the same capacity. Others were William Scott, an economist and the second person to join the School of Economics, History and Political Science; Balthasar Meyer, whose work with the Railroad Commission has been noted; and Edward Ross, who was consid-

ered a controversial sociologist (partly because he brought Emma Goldman, an anarchist and social activist, to the University for a lecture).²³⁴ That was indeed an odd assortment; it ranged from Meyer, who favored railroad executives, and Ely, who by that time was quite conservative, to Ross, who was very liberal. The occasion for the interaction of these notables was a Saturday lunch club, which included state officials, such as McCarthy, and some legislators.

Many other University administrators and professors served state government during the Progressive Era. McCarthy listed 46, and more names appear on other lists.²³⁵ Some of these academics have been mentioned, but the service of a few others is worthy of note. Among them are William Pence (Engineering), Railroad Commission; Samuel Sparling (Political Economy), first chairperson of the Civil Service Commission; Frederick Turneure (Dean of the College of Engineering), Highway Commission; William Hotchkiss (Geology), Highway Commission; E.M. Griffith (Forestry), State Forester; Edward Birge (Dean of the School of Letters and Sciences), Supervisor of the Geological and Natural History Survey, Fishery Commission, Conservation Commission and Forestry Commission; William A. Scott (Political Economy), Teachers' Examiner; and Harry Russell (Dean of the College of Agriculture), State Board of Forestry. In addition, McCarthy enlisted a number of professors to help draft bills. Among them were Eugene Gilmore (Law) and Chester Lloyd Jones (Political Science). Like Commons, Jones organized his students into work groups and worked with them on bills.

It is surprising that Gilmore is only the second professor of law to appear in this account, because one would expect many professors from that school to have provided advice and drafting skills. In addition to Gilmore's contributions, several law professors were working together on a project on criminal law.²³⁶ After the persons who attended a conference on criminal law and criminology asked the regents to consider appointing a law professor in those fields, the School of Law responded by studying criminal procedure. Dean Oliver Rundell prepared a report of the findings. The professors later expanded their study to include civil procedure. The Wisconsin branch of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology, which had started the ball rolling, formulated recommendations for legislation based on the School of Law's report on criminal procedure, and in 1911 a law that incorporated some of those recommendations was enacted.²³⁷

By this time President Van Hise's interest in conservation had become even greater. In 1910 he published *The Conservation of Natural Resources in the United States*, which at the time was a classic treatment of the subject.²³⁸ At the urging of the Conservation Commission and particularly of Van Hise, a law was enacted that ensured that the state would have the primary rights to water power and that holders of water power franchises would be subject to regulation by the Railroad Commission.²³⁹ This law created difficulties for Van Hise because two regents were part of a group that was interested in constructing a dam on the Wisconsin River, the kind of project that the act affected.²⁴⁰ In 1912 the state Supreme Court decided that the law was unconstitutional because it deprived citizens of property and liberty.²⁴¹

In 1911 the College of Agriculture began another outreach program. Late that year the Oneida County Board asked the college to station an agricultural agent permanently in Rhineland-er.²⁴² By the end of the following spring, agents had begun work in that county and two others. This was the beginning of the Cooperative Extension program, which has been a mainstay of the Wisconsin Idea and which remained in the College of Agriculture until the 1960s. The agents traveled around the county to farms during most of the year and taught courses during the winter, as well as providing instruction in the county teachers' training school. The college paid half of the agent's salary; the county paid the other half and the agent's expenses. The legislature soon recognized the value of this program, and during the next session a bill on the subject was enacted.²⁴³ That act allowed each county, except those that had a school of agriculture, to arrange to have an agricultural agent; directed the agents to do the work that they were already doing; and, most important, made an appropriation. Funds that the federal Cooperative Extension Service began to provide in 1914 strengthened this program. The partnership between counties



Professor Laurence Graber earned the title of “Mr. Alfalfa” for his work to increase alfalfa production across the state. Annual alfalfa acreage grew from 18,000 to 3 million from 1911 to 1954 (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 2802).

and the University’s outreach programs turned out to be fruitful. In 1981 Wisconsin’s counties ranked third in the nation in the amount of money that they spent on extension programs.²⁴⁴

Also during 1911, Laurence Graber began the work for which he became known around the state as “Mister Alfalfa.” Ransom A. Moore, head of the Agricultural Experiment Association, directed Graber to increase the number of acres in the state devoted to growing alfalfa from 18,000 to at least one million.²⁴⁵ Graber promoted the crop by writing “Wisconsin’s Opportunity with Alfalfa” with Moore. The University eventually printed more than 50,000 copies of the piece. He even wrote and distributed a poem about alfalfa and encouraged young persons to present alfalfa pageants. Another of Graber’s roles was to make sure that alfalfa growers were aware of relevant discoveries that the College of Agriculture and the Experiment Stations had made. One of them was the discovery early in the 1920s of a variety that they called the Grimm. Later geneticist Royal A. Brink, plant pathologist F. R. Jones, and agronomist Dale Smith developed

Vernal, an even better variety, which added millions of dollars to the value of Wisconsin's alfalfa crop.²⁴⁶ By 1954 alfalfa production in the state had gone well beyond Moore's apparently impossible dream: three million acres were in cultivation. Although Graber does not deserve all the credit for the vast increase in the cultivation of that crop, he deserves a large measure.

This great burst of creative energy that the University unleashed between 1900 and 1913 did not go unnoticed at the very highest level of state government. Addressing the legislature in 1913 Governor McGovern remarked:

Among the educational institutions of America none more frequently calls for the unstinted praise of thoughtful men who live outside our borders than the University of Wisconsin. This preeminence of our University is due not to its age, its size, nor the richness of its endowment, but principally to its willingness to serve all the people of the state, especially those who have never been within its walls as resident students.²⁴⁷

However, McGovern, recognizing that there was also a minority view of the University, then began a counterattack against the University's enemies, such as those who claimed that it interfered with the people's liberty. We have had glimpses of those enemies and will have a closer look at them later. They became more dangerous during the administration of Governor Philipp, who succeeded McGovern.

Further Expansion of Outreach Work

The University pioneered the use of radio for educational purposes. At first that medium was little more than a toy, but eventually it became an important part of the University's mission. The story begins in 1914, when Edward Bennett, a professor of electrical engineering, built a transmitter and obtained an experimental radio license, 9XM.²⁴⁸ During the following year Bennett transferred the license to Earle M. Terry, an assistant professor of physics, who began transmitting weather reports that the U.S. Weather Bureau station on campus had prepared. In 1919 Terry and a student assistant added broadcasts of music during the evening. Soon the station began to broadcast agricultural price reports and accounts of athletic events. By then the experimental era was ending, as a change in the station's call letters, to WHA, indicated.

Because the station was no longer experimental and was thus expected to broaden its offerings and its audience, Terry began looking for programs. The College of Agriculture provided a noon hour program on farm and home topics, and the School of Music provided more live broadcasts of its concerts. Thus, by 1925 WHA offered diverse programs, but its funding continued to be a problem. At that time, it was not funded by the University and was making do on its own. During the 1926-27 fiscal year President Glenn Frank gave modest financial support to the station from the University. During the Depression years programming continued to outpace funding. A number of state agencies provided programs, so that the station also became a means of communication from state government to its citizens. Three major expansions of WHA's mission occurred in 1931. One was that, upon the urging of President Frank, WHA added a "Freedom of Speech Forum" which was intended to provide a means for the expression of diverse viewpoints on current issues. The second was instituting the "Wisconsin School of the Air," which consisted of programs that school children listened to in their classrooms. The third was offering the first full-length, non-credit course in Elementary Spanish. Those three additions to its programming made the station educational in the purest sense of the term. A logical extension of the second and third of those developments was beginning the "Wisconsin College of the Air" in 1933. Other stations were added and a network evolved so that the entire state could be reached.

One can get a clearer idea of WHA and the evolution of its programming by looking at the programming for a representative day after the network became well-established. On Friday, September 3, 1954, the network broadcast the following:

MORNING

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Weather Roundup | Direct from transmitters |
| Farm Feature | College of Agriculture personnel giving latest in farming; V.G. Rowley, Dairy and Food Division; and Reports from State Department of Agriculture. |
| Band Wagon | March music |
| News | United Press wire service |
| Weather | Direct from Madison weather station |
| Morning Melodies | Classical music |
| Piano Music | Classical selections |
| Markets | To farmers from capitol |
| Homemakers Program | UW Home Economics personnel in daily talks |
| Views of the News | Readings of editorial comment |
| Classroom lecture | A 50-minute visit in a professor's lecture room: Professor D. Fellman |

AFTERNOON

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Noon Musicale | Light classical music |
| News | United Press wire service |
| Farm Program | University and State Department of Agriculture report to farmers; 4-H Club activities |
| Chapter a Day | Daily readings from books |
| Afternoon Concert | Classical music |
| The Lively Arts | Series by author-lecturer Gilbert Seldes |

This program – along with the “Wisconsin School of the Air”, which was being broadcast for children in schoolrooms – is entirely in keeping with the network’s mission. According to a study of the network done at that time, “it is the policy of the University and the State Radio Council to provide programs which would not find an assured place on the air on commercial stations because they appeal to less than the mass audience demanded by sponsors, or because the stations lack the educational resources to produce them.”²⁴⁹

One of the more colorful persons involved with the Wisconsin Idea created one of the more successful of WHA’s instructional programs. In 1921 Edgar Gordon, who was a young teacher of music at the University and who later was known affectionately as “Pop” Gordon, volunteered to create a music program for elementary students. Many of the school districts in the state were unable to hire a music specialist, so Gordon filled a need. Within ten years his occasional program had become a weekly feature of the “Wisconsin School of the Air,” and soon he was traveling throughout the state to meet his students and inviting them to come to the campus. At the height of the on-campus program, 10,000 students were involved. Gordon responded to that influx by holding music festivals around the state. His students recognized his contributions when 3,000 gathered to sing for him upon his retirement, and President Harrington concluded his address “The University with a State as its Community” by telling Pop Gordon’s story. Gordon’s obvious success led to the creation of another very popular outreach program, the summer music program for high school students.

During this same era another significant outreach program began. As we have seen, under the leadership of Ely and Commons, the Department of Economics from its beginning was interested in, and strong in, labor economics. Selig Perlman, a member of the Department’s second generation, kept alive that interest. The Department supported the founding, in 1926, and the continuation of the School for Workers, which is designed to train both workers and union leaders. Witte said later that Perlman “enthusiastically devoted himself to the work of the School for Workers ... of which he was the principal mentor in [1926-50].”²⁵⁰ Robert Ozanne, Jack Barbash, James Stern and others held joint appointments in the School and the Department, and for a while Edwin Young, who would later serve as president of the University, was the School’s director.

Conservation Efforts During the Late 1920s

After the attempt to persuade persons to move to Northern Wisconsin and take up farming failed, the University began to attack the problem of the cutover area of Northern Wisconsin from a different angle. By the late 1920s attention shifted to reforestation, not only because the other solution had failed but also because too-extensive logging had endangered the watersheds and other parts of the environment. During the 1927 legislative session two laws were enacted to encourage reforestation. One provided property tax benefits for land owners who agreed to refrain from logging on their land.²⁵¹ The other authorized counties, if their voters approved, to create forest preserves on land that they acquired, for example because of delinquent taxes.²⁵²

In 1928 Benjamin Hibbard of the Department of Agricultural Economics and several colleagues published *Tax Delinquency in Northern Wisconsin*. It showed that recolonization of Northern Wisconsin had failed and argued for land use controls, zoning and reforestation and for encouraging recreational, rather than agricultural, use of the land in that part of the state.²⁵³ Dean Russell had independently come to similar conclusions. The legislature, probably responding to Hibbard's report and to Russell's opinions, passed a bill, which the governor signed. The resulting act extended county zoning power, with the approval of town boards, to include setting aside areas for forestry, agriculture or recreation.²⁵⁴ This prodding by the University and these responses by the legislature did much to shape present-day Northern Wisconsin, an area that has extensive forests and a few farms and an economy that depends heavily on tourism and recreation.

Aldo Leopold is usually considered to be a national figure, because his *Sand County Almanac* has made him the environmentalists' moral philosopher. However, he, too, plays a role in the history of the Wisconsin Idea. In fact, his most famous book is part of that role. In his book he describes and contemplates things and events in nature. The basis for most of his meditations is observations that he made near his shack, which was located between Lake Delton and Portage. In a sense, then, he was a University professor who learned about issues pertinent to Wisconsin and then communicated his findings. The issues discussed in *Sand County Almanac* are very different from the ones that have been mentioned so far in this history, and so is the means of communication: his book is, among other things, a work of literature, because of its elegant prose.²⁵⁵

Leopold's more conventional role in this story, as an expert in game management, began in 1929, when the University sponsored a series of his lectures on the subject.²⁵⁶ At the time, game management was not sufficiently developed to be an academic discipline or at least to be widely considered as such. That would change as Leopold's ideas on the subject crystallized. They certainly had done so by the time he published *Game Management*, the classic text in the field, in 1933. Prodded by Russell, who by that time had moved to the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, President Frank approved hiring Leopold to teach game management, which he began to do in 1934. During that year he also was very busy as a guest lecturer in and near Madison.

Leopold eventually began to apply his knowledge of game management principles and the information he obtained from field observations in Wisconsin to the state's game management problems. For example, in 1943 he made detailed recommendations about the type of deer hunting season that should be allowed. The basis of his recommendations was his belief that the season should be designed to reflect the status of the deer herd, not to provide maximum opportunities for hunting. He also recommended that the bounty on wolves be eliminated and that deer not be fed. That same year he became a member of the Conservation Commission. In his research and publications he often dealt with Wisconsin problems. Some examples are "Population Turnover on a Wisconsin Pheasant Refuge" and "The Ecology of the Wolf in Wisconsin."

One of Leopold's main theoretical contributions to environmental thinking was his rejection of the idea that one should focus on preserving one part of nature (or, to use Leopold's term, "the land") at a time in favor of the belief that one should consider nature as a whole. As a member of the Conservation Commission he applied this principle when he made decisions about environmental issues. For example, in 1948 he convinced a majority of the commission's members to delay a decision about whether to allow a dam to be built on the Menominee River so that more



Aldo Leopold's role in the Wisconsin Idea revolved around his pioneering work in wildlife ecology and game management that resulted in the broader view of environmental systems replacing single species management (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X2194N).

information could be gathered on the state's rivers. About this issue Leopold asserted, "the building of a power dam is an act of violence on nature and it is up to somebody to prove a dam will make the river more valuable than it is without it." That is, rather than thinking narrowly about the uses of water resources, he thought broadly about the entire environmental system of which the river was a part.

Governor Philip La Follette and the Professors

Of all of Wisconsin's governors, Philip La Follette probably was the most comfortable with intellectuals. Horace Gregory, who later became a fairly well known writer, remarked in his autobiography that, when he was a student at the University, Philip La Follette, Moses Slaughter (who taught Latin), William Ellery Leonard (an English professor, poet and translator who was the son-in-law of Professor Freeman, the popular Extension lecturer) and he formed a Sunday night discussion group.²⁵⁷ Gregory also wrote that La Follette was "the first real intellectual of my own age that I had met."²⁵⁸ La Follette asked two eminent professors, Max Otto of the Philosophy Department and John Gaus of the Political Science Department, to help him prepare the inaugural address that he gave in 1931.²⁵⁹ La Follette referred to Gaus and his wife Jane as "intimate friends" of himself and Mrs. La Follette.²⁶⁰

Philip La Follette, like his father, turned frequently to professors for advice. In fact, he turned to one of the professors to whom his father had turned, Commons. In describing the work of two committees that met during 1931, La Follette wrote:

The interim committees dealing with chain banking and unemployment were aided by the best expert and technical assistance we could find – such people as Professor John R. Commons; Arthur Altmeyer (later chairman of the federal Social Security Board); Paul and Elizabeth (Brandeis) Raushenbush; Professor Edwin Witte; Dean Lloyd Garrison of the Wisconsin Law School.²⁶¹

Agricultural and Environmental Work During the Depression

The University had conducted research on corn for many years, but it made its first substantial breakthrough during 1932, when a team of agronomists developed a hybrid that was uniquely suited to the state's growing conditions.²⁶² Farmers soon became convinced of the variety's possibilities and began planting it. Also, this achievement had a good deal to do with the establishment of many seed companies in the state. During the next generation, some geneticists (including Brink, Oliver E. Nelson and Norman P. Neal) and some agronomists (including Arthur M. Strommen) developed several varieties of corn suitable for planting in Wisconsin.²⁶³ For example, these varieties do not require long growing seasons, so they make cultivation of corn possible in more northerly parts of the state. That attribute, their higher yields and their resistance to disease added considerably, perhaps as much as \$20,000,000 annually, to the value of the state's corn crop and helped make corn Wisconsin's leading crop.²⁶⁴

President Harrington (1962-1970) began a speech about the University's service to the state by telling the story of a farmer who was having trouble with his corn crop.²⁶⁵ He had driven to one of the University's experimental farms for help and started asking questions of a man who was standing in a corn field. Luckily, he had by chance found Neal, one of the world's leading authorities on corn. Neal asked if the farmer had made use of some of the University's aids for farmers: its free soil testing program and its free bulletins. He recommended planting one of the varieties that he and the other University scientists mentioned above had developed. To Harrington this was a typical and oft-repeated example of the University gathering useful knowledge and making it readily available and of a Wisconsinite realizing that the University was a good place to turn for advice.

During the next year a similar incident that had a very different outcome occurred. A farmer drove from central Wisconsin to Madison with the carcass of a cow, a milk can of the cow's blood, and the clover that the cow had been eating, which a veterinarian thought caused the cow's death.²⁶⁶ Finding the State Veterinarian's office closed, the farmer began looking for help elsewhere and stumbled upon a biochemist. It was a lucky stumble. The biochemist had been working on the very problem, and the biochemist was Karl Paul Link. The luck, however, was not the farmer's but Link's and, eventually, the University's and the world's. Link confirmed the veterinarian's belief about the cause of the cow's death, so that the farmer was left with more knowledge but also with the problem of finding different feed for his herd. Link, however, was stimulated to concentrate harder on his research on clover's prevention of clotting. He eventually flipped the problem around, realizing that preventing clots is sometimes beneficial. The result was Link's invention of Dicumurool, which has medical uses and, in the form of Warfarin, kills rodents. The ultimate result, after the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation patented Dicumurool, was millions of dollars that the University could use for research.

Although during the Depression Wisconsin did not have the serious soil conservation problems that the "Dust Bowl" states had, its problems stimulated interest at the University in soil conservation. By that time the University had a long history of soil research, dating back to Henry, and of interest in soil conservation. President Van Hise, a geologist, was an advocate of soil conservation.²⁶⁷ Staff members of the Cooperative Extension service aided in drafting a bill that, when enacted, created a soil conservation program and established a state soil conservation committee, consisting of two Extension staff members and the assistant director of the agricultural experiment station, as well as two farmers.²⁶⁸ The committee was given responsibility for working with local soil conservation districts, which were authorized by the act. The local committees were given considerable power to regulate farming methods so as to conserve soil.

An Update of the List of University Persons in Government

A dissertation submitted to the University in 1940 attempted to catalog as many as possible of the University persons who worked, other than as members of examining boards and informal advisers, for state government between 1905 and 1940.²⁶⁹ The list includes 98 names but is of limited use because it provides only a few dates and, with a few exceptions, does not indicate the ways in which the individuals listed divided their time between the University and government service. It also names persons who moved from state government to the University. A few of the more significant persons listed are Nathan Feinsinger, a professor of law who was a counsel



Robert Gard played a major role in Wisconsin's cultural life as he brought theater and arts to the state through radio and television educational broadcasts and various statewide programs, including the summer Rhinelander School of the Arts program (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #99977.C.2).

for the Labor Relations Board; John Gaus, a political scientist and friend of Philip La Follette's who served on the Citizens' Committee on Public Welfare; W. O. Hotchkiss, a professor of geology who was an *ex officio* member of the Highway Commission; Don Lescohier, a professor of economics who, during 1929 and 1930, directed a study of reemployment opportunities; and Henry R. Trumbower, an assistant professor of political economy who was a member of the Railroad Commission from 1916 to 1923. The most interesting combination of duties was that of John Walsh, who was an instructor of boxing and a law clerk for the executive department.

The 1940s and 1950s

In 1945 a lanky young man from Kansas, Robert Gard, arrived at the University. He later published many books, some of them set in Wisconsin, and frequently lectured, thereby developing a considerable following. However, it is primarily because of the reason he was brought to

Wisconsin – to rejuvenate its theater – and for logical extensions of that task, that he is part of this story.²⁷⁰ Oddly enough, he knew soon after his arrival that he would belong in a story like this one. He read McCarthy's *The Wisconsin Idea* and realized that McCarthy described the same service concept that Gard had adopted. In fact, Gard recognized his own aspirations in McCarthy's title. Thus was born the Wisconsin Idea Theater.

Gard, both in his own writing and in his conception of the theater, was a regionalist, a believer that persons could create valid and significant art by describing experiences that were unique to the area in which they lived. He turned first to developing playwrights. One of his methods was to present a weekly radio program, "Wisconsin Yarns," in which he communicated Wisconsin folk material that could be used by playwrights. He realized later, with the help of a group of persons who visited him, that simply encouraging rural persons in the state to write would be more effective than would feeding them material. To provide encouragement, he organized the Wisconsin Rural Writers' Association in 1948. At about the same time, theater groups began to spring up spontaneously around the state, so Gard and the small staff that worked with him contacted them. Later Gard founded Wisconsin House, which published regional literature; the Wisconsin Arts Foundation and Council; the Rhinelander School of the Arts and the Robert E. Gard Wisconsin Idea Foundation.

Gard thus was a major force in the state's cultural life. He achieved so much to a large extent because he developed the quality Adlai Stevenson mentioned in the quote at the beginning of this article: a belief in the people of Wisconsin. He believed that they had talent, that they could be reached and inspired and that they were interested in, and could profit from, services that the University provided. The spotlight in this article has been on the University, but there would not have been a Wisconsin Idea if the people of the state had erected a wall between themselves and the University. All the major contributors to the Wisconsin Idea probably had, at least unconsciously, the same belief in the people that Robert Gard had.

Governor Oscar Rennebohm (1947-1951) revived in a small way a practice that had been a major component of the Wisconsin Idea but that had fallen into disuse: appointing persons from the University to permanent, full-time positions in state government. He chose William Young of the Department of Political Science to be the director of the Division of Departmental Research in the Governor's office. That may sound like an inconsequential position, but the division was the precursor of the current Division of State Executive Budget and Planning in the Department of Administration. That is, it was the unit of state government that had the main responsibility for advising the governor on policy issues. Young, therefore, was one of the governor's more important advisers.

During 1952 Dean Rudolph Froker of the College of Agriculture appointed Henry Algren to be the associate director of Cooperative Extension.²⁷¹ Algren proved to be an imaginative, dynamic administrator. For example, he provided financial assistance for extension agents to pursue graduate studies. He worked nationally to provide training for extension administrators; in fact, he was instrumental in establishing the National Agricultural Extension Center for Advanced Study at the College. He also clarified the duties of the Cooperative Extension staff and made its programs more responsive to the needs of the state's residents. John Jenkins correctly asserted that "largely through Henry Algren's initiative and leadership, the decade of the 1950s was the golden age of Cooperative Extension for the state and the College."²⁷²

In 1953 it had been almost 50 years since the University's extension was reorganized. Some statistics about the Extension for that year indicate the size to which it had grown.²⁷³ Almost a million and a half persons attended meetings that the Cooperative Agriculture Extension sponsored. That branch of the extension program also distributed more than one million bulletins, which was the equivalent of seven to each farm in the state. The division wrote more than 18,000 news articles and prepared more than 8,000 radio broadcasts. Its county offices received more than 200,000 telephone calls. University Extension was also thriving. During the 1953-54 fiscal year, the enrollment in correspondence courses was about 90,000 (about 80,000 in courses for

the United States Armed Forces Institute), and about 30,000 persons participated in the division's institutes.

During 1953 the University began serving the citizens of this state by means of a new medium: television. That year the State Radio Council began operating WHA-TV, an educational television station. In 1963 the state's Coordinating Committee for Higher Education was made responsible for devising a plan for educational television in the state. One impetus for the increased interest in educational television was the availability of federal matching grants under the Educational Television Facilities Act of 1963. Six years later the Educational Communications Board was formed and attached to the Coordinating Committee. The ECB became an independent agency in 1971, and the following year it began to build television stations. That same year, Vilas Communication Hall opened on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Its television facilities, which WHA-TV operated, were vastly superior to the facilities that had been available. At the present time, the Educational Communications Board holds the license for five television stations, and the University Extension holds the license for WHA-TV, the flagship station of the network. The network has recently begun offering instruction by means of fiber optics, microwave, satellite and cable. In short, the entire state now benefits from a large array of educational opportunities that the Extension and its partner, the Educational Communications Board, provides.

Governor Nelson (1959-1963) used members of the University faculty more extensively than any governor since McGovern.²⁷⁴ In fact, he began using them during his first campaign for the governorship, when he sought advice about land use planning and environmental policy from Jacob Beuscher of the School of Law and Raymond Penn of the Department of Agricultural Economics.²⁷⁵ Their advice resulted in the creation of the Department of Resource Development by means of a bill that Beuscher, Penn and others drafted. Nelson appointed David Carley, who had recently earned a Ph.D. from the University, as the first director of that department, and he named Beuscher, Penn, George Hanson (State Geologist) and Robert McCabe (Wildlife Ecology) to the department's board. The board also sought advice from other faculty members.

One of the main accomplishments of Nelson's administration was the enactment of the Outdoor Recreation Action Program. Ahlgren of the Cooperative Extension Service, who was also the chair of the State Soil and Water Conservation Board, served on the Recreation Committee, and faculty members prepared studies for the committee. Nelson also revitalized the Natural Resources Committee of State Agencies, which coordinated the environmental work of various units of state government. That group, too, sought advice from faculty members, including, again, Beuscher and Penn, and also William Loomer, Arthur E. Peterson, Arthur H. Robinson, Marvin Beatty and George L. Wright, as well as Vice President Ira Baldwin.

Nelson also asked Isadore V. Fine to predict the economic effects of establishing an Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. While serving in the U.S. Senate in 1970, Nelson was instrumental in securing passage of the law that created the National Lakeshore. He also asked Fine to study the economic development problems of Northern Wisconsin and appointed Sherman Weiss, an Extension agent, to be an economic development agent for that area. As we have seen, by this time state policymakers realized that Northern Wisconsin's hopes lay with tourism and recreation, not with farming.

Nelson also turned to the University when the issue of county forests arose. It will be recalled that establishment of those forests was authorized in 1927. During Nelson's administration, the 27 counties that had established forests and the Conservation Department disagreed about dividing the income that the forests generated. Nelson vetoed legislation that would have ended the partnership between the state and the counties that were in the program, and his veto was narrowly sustained. Realizing that the issue was volatile, he created a task force to work on it. Penn and William Lord (Agricultural Economics) served on the task force, and Fred Trenk of the Extension, who had worked on the program in its earliest years, assisted it. Alterations to the program that the task force suggested forged a consensus, and the program was saved.

The 1960s and 1970s

Between 1962 and 1964, during Governor Reynolds' administration, David Adamany, who was to play important roles in state government for more than a decade, was a member of the Public Service Commission. At the time of this appointment, Adamany was not a professor, but during the 1970s, after completing his Ph.D. at the University, he joined the Department of Political Science. His next appearance on the state government stage was in a very important role: chief designer of a campaign finance law (Chapter 334, Laws of 1973) that moved Wisconsin into the national forefront on that issue. His work on that act drew on the knowledge that he gained by writing a dissertation and a book on the subject.²⁷⁶ During the administration of Governor Lucey (1971-1977), Adamany was for a time the Secretary of the Department of Revenue.

The campaign finance act deserves some scrutiny. The act created an Elections Board to administer the finance provisions and election law in general. The basis for the regulation of campaigns was a requirement that candidates, political committees and political groups register and periodically report to the Elections Board the contributions they received and the disbursements they made. The act also created limits on the contributions that individuals may make to campaigns and on the disbursements that campaigns may make. The limits of both contributions and disbursements varied according to the office for which the candidate was seeking election. Book-keeping and other technical requirements were established to make it easier for the Elections Board to monitor compliance with the law. The act was rational in its conception and sophisticated in its details.

For years the University's efforts to aid industry were primarily Extension's training of workers to do their jobs and the activities of the School for Workers. In 1963 the University added a different kind of assistance: the University-Industry Research Program.²⁷⁷ The program's missions are to direct businesses and industries to University researchers who have the knowledge that they need, to facilitate the acquisition of technology by business and industry and, in general, to foster economic development in the state. Some new companies have made extensive use of the program. For example, through the program, businesses could obtain University review of their business plans, suggestions for improvement of their products and for developing markets, information on product liability law, testing of products, and creation of manufacturing processes. The program also provides literature searches, sponsors seminars and conferences and publishes *Touchstone*, a periodical that contains information on the University's basic and applied research that may interest the program's clientele. The Department of Development frequently calls on the program to give information to businesses that are considering locating in this state.

We have seen the Nelson administration's great interest in environmental issues. Governor Warren Knowles (1965-1971) also made protecting the environment a major priority. During his administration a committee, the more important members of which were connected to the University, drafted an important piece of legislation that protected shorelands.²⁷⁸ Herman Smith, an extension agent, was the chairperson of the committee, which also included Doug Yanggen of the Agricultural Economics Department. For this work the state government also called once again on Beuscher and Penn. Staff members of the Extension Division helped to write a manual to explain the new act and assisted county officials in administering it.

The act's central provision authorized counties to zone shorelands that met certain requirements. The act also allowed the state to determine the limits of floodplains in any county, city or village that had not adopted a "reasonable and effective" floodplain zoning ordinance. To improve the state's monitoring and administration of the laws that protected shorelands and floodplains and water resources in general, the act also created a water resources division in the Department of Resource Development and transferred powers to it from other state agencies. The act is highly technical, so the contributions of the University experts were crucial.

The need to assemble University experts to work on public policy issues having to do with the environment made it clear that problems of that type had become complex. The University responded in 1970 by forming the Institute for Environmental Studies. In addition to granting

interdisciplinary degrees, the institute engages in a wide range of environmental research programs and has an extensive outreach program that includes a radio program, frequent lectures, seminars, publications and reference services.

In a speech delivered in 1977 on interactions between the University and state government, Clara Penniman, former chairperson of the University's Department of Political Science, included some of the Institute's work among her four examples of current interactions.²⁷⁹ She mentioned its work with the state climatologist and the Department of Natural Resources (in regard to fish) and its thermal scanning research, which has improved both the state's rating of the insulation of buildings and the energy efficiency of the state's own buildings. After it discovered the need for more insulation in many of the buildings in the state, the Institute brought in the University Extension to promote wider use of insulation. Penniman herself has taken an active interest in Wisconsin government and has published on Wisconsin taxes.²⁸⁰

Today much of the Institute's work is coordinated by four units: the Center for Climatic Research, the Center for Environmental Policy Studies, the Environmental Remote Sensing Center and the Great Lakes Cooperative Park Studies Unit. The outreach functions are part of the Wisconsin Idea, and, although much of the institute's research is national or international in scope, some of it is directed at Wisconsin problems. An example of research that directly benefits this state is a study of contamination in the Fox River and Green Bay, conducted in collaboration with scientists from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services.²⁸¹

Although Governors Nelson and Knowles used faculty members mainly on a temporary basis and principally for advice and technical skill pertinent to the environment, Governor Lucey appointed a number of faculty members to permanent positions in the state government in a variety of fields. A few governors who succeeded Governor Lucey continued this practice. For example, Governor Lucey appointed two young, talented faculty members to the technically demanding position of commissioner on the Public Service Commission. They were Matthew Holden of the Department of Political Science and Charles Cicchetti of the Department of Economics. Stephen Born of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning became the Director of the Office of State Planning and Energy, and Ralph Andreano, an expert on health care finance from the Department of Economics, became the administrator of the huge Division of Health in the Department of Health and Social Services. One member of Governor Lucey's cabinet was also from the University: Virginia Hart, who came from the School for Workers to become the Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing. A Lucey appointment who continues in the position to which the governor appointed her is Shirley Abrahamson, formerly of the Law School, who became the first woman justice on the Wisconsin Supreme Court. She has served with great distinction, attaining a national reputation for her thoughtful opinions as well as her publications and her speeches. Recently she has been considered for a position on the U.S. Supreme Court, and the length of her tenure will soon qualify her to become the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

Governor Lucey formed the Employment Relations Study Commission and charged it to make a thorough study of the state's civil service system. Between 1975 and 1977 Dennis Dresang, a member and later chair of the University's Department of Political Science, served as the Commission's staff director. The Commission's work led to a major rewriting of the civil service statutes and to the transfer of personnel functions from the Department of Administration to the newly formed Department of Employment Relations.²⁸² Thus, the Commission had major consequences. As we shall see, Professor Dresang has continued to make his skills and knowledge available to state government.

During the first year of the Lucey administration, Engineering Extension reached its 70th year of existence. Its growth had been quite dramatic. Two years later, during the 1973-74 academic year, approximately 15,000 persons took advantage of its correspondence courses, evening classes, institutes and other offerings.²⁸³ By that time Engineering Extension had expanded its program to include the Professional Development Degree, video cassettes, educational telephone and television networks and the Statewide Extension Education Network. It has also be-

come the largest university engineering extension program in the country, and its high quality is widely known.

At about the same time, the General Extension and Cooperative Extension programs were also thriving. Their officials estimated that they served about 25% of the state's citizens.²⁸⁴ That included about 72,000 persons who attended institutes and workshops for which fees were charged and 15,642 persons who were enrolled in off-campus courses for credit or took correspondence courses. Seventy percent of the state's elementary students listened to WHA's "Wisconsin School of the Air." County Extension agents had contacts with more than 500,000 persons. The Extension also conducted more than 20,000 group meetings and field trips. The range of the subject matter in which the Extension provided instruction was very broad.

During the Lucey administration the Wisconsin Idea took an unusual twist. Until that time University professors had influenced state government's policies either by accepting positions in that government or by offering advice directly to public officials, sometimes at their own initiative, more often at the officials' initiative. However, during 1973 Jon Udell, a professor in the School of Business, began to exert an influence on state government by publishing research at the request of, and sometimes with the financial support of, non-governmental entities. His interest was tax policy and his views were the opposite of Harold Groves'. That is, he did not believe that taxes should be progressive but that they should be designed to stimulate economic growth, which often meant that tax advantages should be given to the wealthy under the assumption that, having more capital after they paid taxes, they would create more jobs.

During 1973 the *Milwaukee Journal* commissioned and published a series of articles by Udell that were based on surveys of opinions about the state's business climate and, specifically, about its taxes.²⁸⁵ The persons whom Udell surveyed believed that the state's taxes were too high. Udell offered a number of solutions that had been proposed by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, including creating an investment tax credit for manufacturing machinery and equipment used in Wisconsin, a property tax freeze for industrial facilities that



Early educational broadcasting experiments by Professors F. M. Terry (left) and William H. Lightly, shown here in the Sterling Hall studio about 1923, eventually led to statewide broadcasts of educational, agricultural, music and other public affairs programs over WHA-AM, which is the nation's oldest station today (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #1159 B.1).

needed repair, a repeal of the property tax on inventories and a property tax exemption for manufacturing machinery and equipment.²⁸⁶

Governor Lucey was concerned about the state's economy and was quite responsive to Udell's suggestions. Probably at the urging of the governor, the Democratic Assembly members of a conference committee on the state budget bill joined forces with the Republican senators on the committee. The result was the creation of a number of tax advantages for business and industry: an income tax and franchise tax deduction for sales taxes paid for energy used in manufacturing; an increase in the rebate for the property taxes paid on inventories, finished products and livestock; and a property tax exemption for manufacturing machinery and equipment.²⁸⁷ These and subsequent policy changes significantly shifted the property tax burden from owners of factories and retail businesses to homeowners. Some argue that those tax advantages also significantly improved the state's economy. Udell was among those who so argued.²⁸⁸

Udell's next target was the income tax on capital gains. He and employees of the Public Expenditure Survey of Wisconsin argued against Wisconsin's tax treatment of that kind of income.²⁸⁹ They thought that the severity of the tax discouraged investment and encouraged elderly persons to leave the state. Udell and his coauthors did not assert that capital gains should be exempt from the income tax, but that, in computing the tax, 40% of the taxpayer's net capital gains should be subtracted from the taxpayer's income and that the gain should be indexed to cancel the effects of inflation.²⁹⁰ Udell's efforts did not have the immediate success that his 1973 business tax proposals had. However, the legislature included a provision in the 1987-88 state budget bill that would have exempted 30% of the capital gain on assets held for more than one year but less than five years and 60% of the capital gain on assets held more than five years.²⁹¹ Governor Thompson used his veto powers to convert that provision into an exemption of 60% of the gain on assets held more than one year.

Udell and the Public Expenditure Survey next turned their attention to the inheritance tax.²⁹² They argued, based on a study that was sponsored by the *Milwaukee Journal* and depended heavily on surveys, that the inheritance tax was encouraging elderly persons, especially those who were wealthy, to leave Wisconsin and that it was regressive. Some of the state government's tax experts immediately countered that additional factors needed to be considered.²⁹³

The first result of the pressure that Udell, the Public Expenditure Survey and others exerted was the creation of an inheritance tax exemption for property left to a spouse.²⁹⁴ Supporters of women's rights had also been advocating that change in policy. A later result was the repeal, in phases, of the inheritance tax.²⁹⁵ Ironically, soon after that repeal, Tun-Mei Y. Chang of the Department of Health and Social Services wrote a paper that convincingly argued that the inheritance tax was only a minor reason why elderly persons moved away from Wisconsin.²⁹⁶

In fact, Wisconsin's tax policy has been altered substantially from 1970 to the present. That change can be seen not only in the legislative provisions just mentioned but also in others, such as the reduction in the number of the brackets for the individual income tax. To phrase that change as simply as possible, emphasis has been on taxation designed to increase economic development rather than on progressive taxation. Certainly Udell was not the only reason for these changes in Wisconsin's tax policy, but his work has been one of the more important reasons for that change.

The Lucey administration continued the tradition of environmental legislation that had been revitalized by the Nelson administration and expanded by the Knowles administration. One major law enacted in the Lucey era depended on a study that began before Lucey took office. For six years the University Extension and the Department of Natural Resources had jointly conducted the Inland Lake Demonstration Project to determine whether it was feasible to manage Wisconsin's lakes.²⁹⁷ Three members of the staff that conducted the project – Stephen Born, Lowell Klessig and Doug Yanggen – helped to draft legislation that authorized the creation of inland lake preservation districts.²⁹⁸ The districts were given the power to impose taxes and special assessments, and a state appropriation was created to help fund them. The districts' commissioners were charged with doing research, planning rehabilitation projects and coordinating ef-

forts to save and rehabilitate lakes. The bill also created an Inland Lakes Protection and Rehabilitation Council in the Department of Natural Resources. Like some of the earlier environmental acts, this one was made possible by the technical knowledge of the persons who drafted it, many of whom were from the University.

The legislature and the governor enacted the farmland preservation program during 1977. An important factor in drawing the government's attention to the problems that the act was designed to solve was a paper written by Richard Barrows of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Richard W. Dunford, who was not a University employe.²⁹⁹ They studied the degree to which agricultural, urban and recreational factors affected the value of agricultural land in the state. Although they were not entirely satisfied with the reliability of their data, they were able to make a convincing case that in many counties urban and recreational factors were more important than agricultural factors. It follows from that finding that in those counties there was significant pressure to convert agricultural land to those other uses. Barrows and others provided technical assistance during the preparation of legislation to deal with this problem.³⁰⁰ After creation of the farmland preservation program was enacted, Barrows served as the first director of the program.

The legislation had two main components. One was an ingenious income tax and franchise tax credit that was based on the fact that in areas where agricultural land was being sold at high prices and then converted to other uses, land that continued to be farmed would be assessed at high levels for property tax purposes because its value was determined on the basis of its potential selling price for other uses. In response, the credit applied to agricultural land that was taxed at a high level and that was subject to either zoning restrictions or a county's agricultural preservation plan that would prevent its conversion to other uses. The other component was a system for preserving farmland. It included the requirements that land owners had to fulfill in order to enter into farmland preservation agreements and thus qualify for the credit and other requirements for agricultural preservation planning and zoning.

Governor Lucey resigned during July 1977 to become the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. Lieutenant Governor Martin Schreiber then served as acting governor for one and a half years until he lost the 1978 gubernatorial election. He retained most of the officials Lucey had appointed, including those from the University. In addition, he made one major appointment from the University. Donald Percy, a brilliant administrator, had risen rapidly through the ranks at the University and the University of Wisconsin system to become one of the two senior vice presidents, one level below the System's president. Governor Schreiber appointed him Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services, the state's largest agency.

The man who became governor in 1979, Lee Sherman Dreyfus, had been the chancellor at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. To date, he is the only person who came from the University System to the governor's office, and thus his service can be viewed as an example of the Wisconsin Idea operating at the highest level of state government. He retained Percy and brought a number of academics into his administration. One was Kenneth Lindner, also a chancellor (at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse), who assumed the vital position of Secretary of the Department of Administration and brought with him a professor of education, Richard Rasmussen, to be his deputy. Governor Dreyfus appointed Lowell Jackson of the University of Wisconsin-Extension as the Secretary of the Department of Transportation; Virginia Hart of the School for Workers (who had also been a Lucey appointee) as a member of the Labor and Industry Review Commission; Gary Rohde, a professor of agriculture and applied economics at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; and Cyrena Pondrom, an English professor and administrator, as executive director of the Governor's Employment and Training Office.

The 1980s and 1990s

During the last few decades, the University of Wisconsin System has increased its efforts to assist business and industry. One example of these efforts is the publication, beginning in 1982, of a *Directory of University Resources for Business and Industry*. By 1990 the directory had

developed into an exhaustive listing of resource centers, laboratories, research units, small business development centers and institutes, career planning and placement offices, internships, libraries, reference services, translators, business services and other useful resources. In short, by using the directory, persons in business and industry could easily find in the University System almost any kind of help that they needed.

After the Dreyfus administration, fewer persons from the University System were appointed to high positions in state government. The next governor, Anthony Earl (1983-1987), retained Jackson for a time and appointed Walter Dickey, a law professor, as administrator of the Division of Corrections in the Department of Health and Social Services. Governor Tommy Thompson (1987 to the present) appointed only two persons from the University System to major, full-time positions. One was Robert Haase, a business professor, who became the Commissioner of Insurance, and the other was Charles Kuehn, a lecturer at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, who became chairperson of the Parole Board. Governor Thompson, however, appointed many University persons to various councils, boards, commissions and study groups.³⁰¹

In 1983, the legislature created the Robert M. La Follette Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.³⁰² The Institute was directed to engage in “research, public service and educational activities to advance the knowledge of public affairs and the application of that knowledge to the needs of this state.” The Institute was built on the foundation of the Center for Public Policy and Administration, which was formed during 1967 at the request of Governor Knowles. (The Center had granted masters degrees in Public Policy and Administration but did little research.)³⁰³ The work of the Institute certainly fits within the definition of the Wisconsin Idea. It soon refined its mission, deciding that “the Institute’s major scholarly function will be to provide an objective non-partisan center for policy studies, studies that will be problem-



From early Institutes for Farmers to today's Farm Progress Days, university innovations in agriculture continue to be passed on to Wisconsin farmers (photo courtesy of Wolfgang Hoffmann, UW-Madison, Agricultural Journalism).

oriented, building on and including basic research.”³⁰⁴ The faculty of the Institute decided to consult with governmental officials about the areas of policy research on which it should concentrate. Among its early choices were economic development, responses to changes in the scope of the federal government, state priorities and unemployment compensation. It also eventually began an outreach program that included workshops and seminars.

The La Follette Institute soon began to produce many publications on issues pertinent to Wisconsin. For example, it has published four major collections of articles. The first, issued in 1988, included articles on the state budget process, the recent history of state and local finance, a number of human services issues, agricultural policy and natural resource policy.³⁰⁵ The authors included Institute faculty members, other academics and non-university persons. The Institute has published three editions of *Dollars and Sense: Policy Choices and the Wisconsin Budget*, in 1990, 1991 and 1994. Each of these volumes included articles on the process of creating a governmental budget, both in general terms and specifically related to Wisconsin, and articles on a number of policy issues that, because of their importance at the time, were likely to be analyzed and debated during the preparation of the state’s budget bill.

Governor Earl appointed the Wisconsin Task Force on Comparable Worth, which issued its report in 1986. Dennis Dresang, the director of the La Follette Institute, served as chairperson and Carin Clauss, a professor of law at the University, as vice chairperson. James Jones, a professor of law at the University, and Wallace Lemon, an associate vice-president of the University of Wisconsin System, were members of the task force. The mission of the task force was to determine whether the pay for state jobs held mainly by women and members of minority groups was less than the pay for similar jobs held mainly by white males. The task force determined that there was such a disparity. It produced an exhaustive report to document its findings and recommended that the disparity be eliminated. Since the report was published, the state has made some progress in achieving pay equity.

In the 1993 spring election, Alex Molnar, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, ran unsuccessfully for State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Late that year the winner of the election, John Benson, having recognized Molnar’s abilities and in particular his grasp of urban education issues, appointed him chief of staff of an Urban Initiative Task Force. The task force had the difficult assignment of proposing actions that school districts and the Department of Public Instruction can take to reduce violence and other symptoms of social disorder that, although not unique to urban schools, are most serious in them. The task force was also directed to propose statutory changes that will alleviate those problems and a strategy that will make it more likely that its recommendations will be followed.

The final figure discussed in this history of the Wisconsin Idea is John Witte, a professor of political science, a member of the La Follette Institute faculty and an expert in education and state tax issues. He was one of the two editors of the institute’s *State Policy Choices: The Wisconsin Experience*, co-author of an article about the Wisconsin budget process and author of “Wisconsin Income Tax Reform”. He also wrote on education issues for Volume I of *Dollars and Sense*. In addition, the La Follette Institute has published his “Public Subsidies for Private Schools,” in which he analyzed the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, under which the state provides funds for some children to attend private schools. These are useful works and certainly serve the state. He is also the grandson of one of the major figures in the history of the Wisconsin Idea, Edwin Witte, and his contributions reflect that lineage.

7. EVOLUTION OF THE WISCONSIN IDEA

Although no history of the Wisconsin Idea could possibly be complete, this one provides enough detail to allow a reasonable assessment of the Idea’s evolution. For this article the Idea has been defined as the University’s service to the state, which includes six distinct components. Two components relate to direct services to the people of Wisconsin – performing research that is focused on Wisconsin’s problems and providing outreach activities. Four components relate to state government – offering policy advice, providing information, providing technical skill and serving in governmental positions. The relative amounts of energy expended on the compo-

nents has changed over time. During the first decade and a half of this century, when many of the innovations credited to Wisconsin were developed, policy advice was the most impressive component. Over the past 50 years, outreach activities have probably been the most important.

A more difficult question is whether the Wisconsin Idea has flourished or faded in the latter part of the 20th century. Two shrewd observers, who were well-qualified to make a judgment on the issue of the Idea's course, argued that the Idea has faded. In 1972 John Weaver, the president of the recently formed University of Wisconsin System, addressed a rhetorical question to the Board of Regents: "Is it not timely – indeed prerequisite – that we begin a re-examination and rededication as well to the public service role of these universities? Should we not, with zeal, seek a revitalization of the 'Wisconsin Idea'?"³⁰⁶ He would not have called for a revitalization if he had not believed that the Idea had faded. During 1992 Bryant Kearl, a veteran University faculty member and highly placed administrator, gave a speech entitled "Who Killed the Wisconsin Idea?"³⁰⁷ He overstated his title for rhetorical effect, but he certainly thought that the Idea had faded, partly because the University's structure, especially the restructuring of Extension during 1962, and the demands on its faculty members discouraged public service and partly because persons outside the University turned less frequently to it for assistance, even though the University had much to offer the state.

Some statistics support the position that Weaver and Kearl take. Between 1969 and 1987 nine groups, which five governors appointed, studied property taxes in Wisconsin. This is the kind of public policy work that professors often did during the early years of this century. A list of these groups, the year in which they began work, the number of University of Wisconsin System full-time faculty members appointed to serve, and the total number of members (those two numbers expressed as a fraction) follow:

1. Task Force on Local Government Finance and Organization (The Tarr Task Force), 1967, 1/13.
2. Governor's Task Force on Educational Financing and Property Tax Reform (The Doyle-Task Force), 1972, 0/47.
3. Governor's Commission on State-Local Relations and Financing (The Wallace Commission), 1976, 1/53.
4. Blue Ribbon Tax Reform Commission, 1978, 4/13.
5. Committee on the Personal Property Taxation Phaseout, 1978, 0/7.
6. Governor's School Finance Task Force, 1983, 0/5.
7. Strategic Development Commission, 1984, 0/22.
8. Wisconsin Expenditure Commission, 1985, 0/9.
9. Governor's Local Property Tax Relief Commission (The Barry Commission), 1987, 0/23.

The scarcity of professors is striking; the groups were composed primarily of legislators and representatives of interest groups that had a stake in the group's recommendations. One could argue that appointing such persons made it more likely that practical recommendations would result and that legislation to implement them would be enacted. Conversely, one could argue that a wonderful source of knowledge and intellect was virtually ignored.

I think that the assessments of Weaver and Kearl are too harsh. It is true that there have not been recent contributions by professors of the magnitude of the Babcock Butterfat Test and the pioneering legislation of the Progressive Era. However, Extension work is flourishing and the number of professors who have served state government recently is impressive. My intuition is that the Idea was stronger in some earlier eras than it is now, although a compelling demonstration of that intuition is impossible.

8. FORCES THAT OPPOSED THE WISCONSIN IDEA

It is clear there have been forces that have opposed the Wisconsin Idea, made it less effective or both. Some of them have been in the state government and others have been at the University. It is worth examining some of those forces, partly for their historical interest and partly to inform those who would work to ensure that the University's service to the state will remain significant.

Early Political Counterforces

Near the end of Governor McGovern's term of office, which was one of the high points of the University's service to the state, a sword forged by the Wisconsin Idea's most staunch supporters was turned against it. It will be recalled that, because of his experiences with a similar board that he created in Milwaukee, John R. Commons had advocated that the state establish an agency that would oversee the rest of the executive branch. The result of Commons' advocacy was the Board of Public Affairs. The 1913 Legislature, although it was controlled by the Progressives and was friendly to the University, passed a bill that directed the Board to study the University. Governor McGovern, although he was a great supporter of the University, signed that bill. The Board hired two persons from outside the state, one to investigate the efficiency of the University's teaching methods and the other to investigate the College of Agriculture.³⁰⁸

The intent of the legislature and governor was not hostile, but the "experts" had little understanding of universities, and its report, known as the Allen Report after its primary author, was quite negative. President Van Hise brushed it off:

The survey of the University, while resulting in elaborate reports both on the part of the members of the survey and of the University, led to no results; for the reason that at almost every point there was direct conflict in regard to facts, between the officers of the survey and the university authorities.³⁰⁹

The survey was sharply attacked both from inside and outside the University. The Stalwart wing of the Republican Party, which was victorious in the 1914 elections, was not greatly influenced by the report, probably because of the negative reaction to it.³¹⁰ The report thus produced little, but it was the first attack on the University that included substantial analysis rather than mere carping, such as that of Charles Cary, who was the State Superintendent of Public Instruction at the time.

Although the Stalwart legislators did not take the Allen Report seriously, during the 1915 session they introduced many bills that could be considered "anti-university". Among them were bills that would remove the president from the Board of Regents, abolish the Board of Regents, discontinue the property tax that was allocated to the University and lower the entrance requirements for the Law School and the Medical School.³¹¹ None of the bills was enacted; in fact, they may have been introduced merely to send a message or to appeal to constituents.

Because he spoke more frequently on the subject, Governor Philipp's position on the University, and in particular on the Allen Report, is clearer than that of the Stalwart legislators. Philipp was predisposed to believe the negative view of the University that the report presented. For example, during the 1914 campaign he attacked the University for influencing students to be disloyal to the United States.³¹² At first Philipp believed the report, as is indicated by the fact that he hired Allen as an aide after the report was issued.³¹³ As the University's allies rallied to support the institution, Philipp changed his mind. His biographer reported that:

Before the end of the summer [of 1915] he and Van Hise reached a general agreement on the immediate course of the university. Surveyor Allen's temporary position was terminated and he departed, much to the relief of Van Hise and the university faculty. In time the atmosphere between the Capitol and Bascom Hall became almost cordial.³¹⁴

Later Philipp agreed to call a special session of the legislature to appropriate additional funds for the Medical School and shrewdly added a few other bills to the agenda so that the legislature would not adjourn before passing the bill that Philipp most wanted.

Philipp's original motives were a desire to limit the University's appropriations and, probably to a lesser extent, to punish it for certain actions and its alliance with the Progressives. He gradually learned that it was a valuable resource and, for that reason, had considerable support. This episode of the Allen Report and the Stalwarts' treatment of the University did little damage to the University and the Wisconsin Idea, but it reduced the Idea's momentum.

In 1921 John Blaine, a progressive Republican, replaced Philipp as governor. Under ordinary conditions the resulting change in the political climate would have improved relations be-

tween the state government and the University, but the conditions were far from ordinary. That was the year that McCarthy died. Although Witte was a worthy successor as chief of the Legislative Reference Library, he was not the human dynamo that McCarthy was. Also, by that time McGovern and Robert M. La Follette had long since had a falling out, which was caused in part by McGovern's attempt to become the chairman of the 1912 Republican National Convention, in order to aid the Progressive candidates, Theodore Roosevelt and La Follette, against William Howard Taft. La Follette interpreted this attempt as a shift in allegiance to Roosevelt, and it increased his enmity toward McGovern. He had earlier turned against his first large financial backer, Isaac Stephenson, and many of his other early allies. All of these struggles splintered the Progressives.³¹⁵ Although they had recaptured the governorship, they were weakened and thus less able to pass legislation that faculty members helped to develop. Even more damaging to the Wisconsin Idea was the extremely negative and public reaction that most University faculty members and administrators, including many of the leading proponents of the Wisconsin Idea, had to La Follette's opposition to World War I. As a result, Blaine, who supported La Follette, was cool to the University.³¹⁶

Early Problems at the University

At about the same time, certain events at the University did not bode well for the Wisconsin Idea. Van Hise, who probably did more for the Idea than any other president, died in 1918. Birge, who came to the University in 1879 and had been dean of the College of Letters and Sciences since 1891, replaced Van Hise and served until 1925. Soon after he assumed the presidency, Birge wrote in a letter, "No one at my age desires to undertake the duties of a new and arduous position."³¹⁷ He also thought that he would serve for a brief time, as he had from 1900 to 1903, until a permanent president was chosen. Consistent with his attitude toward his new position and his expectation of a brief tenure, he ran a caretaker administration. For example, he, unlike Van Hise, did not vigorously fight for state funding. He also declined to reorganize the University and to try to improve faculty salaries. Although he believed that the University should serve the state, he did little to facilitate that work. Birge had served the University loyally and well for decades, but, because of the age at which he became president and his attitude toward the position, he was not the president that the University needed at that time.

Similarly, Birge's successor, Frank, made certain decisions that diminished the University's stature. The most recent volume of the history of the University presents a moderately favorable assessment of Frank's administration, but earlier writers took a dim view of it.³¹⁸ Extensive evaluation of the merits of Frank's presidency would be beyond the scope of this study, but three facts about it are relevant to the Wisconsin Idea. Because Frank became the University's president at a time when the Wisconsin Idea needed a shot of adrenalin, it is important to examine those facts.

The first is that his tenure was plagued with controversy (and was ended with his firing by the Board of Regents, which Philip La Follette dominated). The faculty mistrusted him because of his lack of academic credentials (he had been the editor of a popular magazine before he came to Wisconsin) and because of his fancy life style, which he maintained even when the Depression began to have a devastating effect on the faculty members' salaries. Philip La Follette, realizing that Frank was a conservative who had political ambitions – perhaps even aspiring to the U.S. Presidency – became Frank's enemy. Various persons attacked him for fiscal mismanagement, favoritism, ineffective oversight of the athletic program and other problems. The complaints made against Frank probably resulted in lower appropriations for the University, and they certainly resulted in the devotion of a great deal of time and energy to fending off his critics and a lowering of the popular opinion of the University.

Two of Frank's appointments significantly affected the Wisconsin Idea. One, the appointment of Chris Christensen to be the dean of the College of Agriculture, somewhat changed its emphasis. Christensen was an economist, not a scientist, like all of the previous deans of that College. He made policy decisions that reflected his background. For example, on a radio program he stated, "In the redirected short course, special emphasis is being given to the economic and social problems of farming and marketing for rural living."³¹⁹ In fact, the Short Course, un-



UW county agricultural agent E. L. Luther takes the Wisconsin Idea into the field in 1914 with the latest technology of the day (photo courtesy of UW-Madison Archives, Neg. #X25 2815).

der Christensen, began to resemble the Danish folk schools that impressed him.³²⁰ That is, cultural and social components were added to the instruction in agriculture. In general, although the college continued to do impressive scientific research, Christensen shifted some of its efforts to social, cultural and economic work, especially to the promotion of agricultural cooperatives. Those changes may have been appropriate during the Depression, but they probably did not sit well with some of the faculty members of the College, which had emphasized science for decades.

The other of Frank's appointments that significantly affected the Idea was clearly unfortunate. That was the selection of Chester Snell to be the dean of the Extension Division. Reber, the retiring dean, had recommended Snell, who had been in a similar position at the University of North Carolina.³²¹ Although Snell was highly regarded, he was only 30 years old, and he and Frank agreed that he would eventually reduce the time he spent at the Extension Division and begin working for Frank. As he did with his other appointees, Frank left Snell alone. The new dean quickly set about shuffling personnel and speeding up the division's expansion at Milwaukee. Snell's inflated self-image and Frank's belief that he should give his subordinates considerable autonomy, more than Snell desired, caused the relationship between the two to deteriorate, and extension faculty members at Milwaukee began to think that Snell was autocratic and vindictive. It eventually became clear that Snell was causing major problems for the University, and in 1935 he was fired.

In addition to his sins of commission, Snell can be charged with one sin of omission. President Frank appointed him partly because at North Carolina he had run an extension program that was integrated with the campus program. That is, rather than having separate extension and regular faculties, the individual departments at North Carolina were responsible for both extension and on-campus work. At the University of Wisconsin, the College of Agriculture was similarly organized, and its extension work was much more effective than was the rest of the University's. Frank hoped that Snell would bring about that kind of integration. Snell did not succeed. The

degree to which extension work has been integrated with the on-campus departments has varied considerably throughout the University's history, and it appears that close integration is more effective.

More Recent Problems at the University

In 1963, the year after he became the president of the University, Harrington proposed to the Board of Regents that General Extension and Cooperative Extension be merged in order to achieve efficiency and coordination. The College of Agriculture opposed this idea, just as, in 1907, it had opposed an attempt to remove Cooperative Extension from it. Harrington prevailed and during 1965 the University of Wisconsin-Extension was created. Four years later Glenn Pound, the dean of the College of Agriculture, sharply and publicly denounced the merger, alluding to the new unit's "gross inefficiencies" and arguing that there were too many layers of authority and that extension activities had been cut off from their blood supply: research and classroom teaching.³²² Recently Bryant Kearl said of the merger: "For the Wisconsin Idea, which obviously depended on access to the wide range of specialized knowledge available in a true university, it was a deadly blow."³²³

In 1971 legislation was enacted to merge the University of Wisconsin and the State Universities (formerly the State Colleges, which in turn had developed from the Normal Schools) into the University of Wisconsin System. This resulted in greater isolation of the Extension, exacerbating the problems created in 1962. During the early 1980s, a study group formed by the Board of Regents recommended that many of Extension's staff members be reintegrated into units in the System that primarily served full-time students, especially the University. However, after some movement in that direction, the course was reversed. During the last few years Extension personnel have been formally reintegrated into the University, but the actual level of reintegration is open to question. Policymakers seem to have realized that the 1965 merger was a mistake, but its effects persisted for many years and, as Pound and Kearl charged, it has harmed the Wisconsin Idea.

Changes in the Academic World

The Wisconsin Idea was also affected by external forces: changes that took place in all universities. For example, the importance of, and nature of, research have changed. For decades academics have been expected to teach, do research and perform public service, but the relative weight given to each role has changed. The priorities have varied considerably from institution to institution, but over time the importance of research, especially publishable research, has increased and the emphasis on public service has decreased. This is one reason why certain branches of the Wisconsin Idea (direct service to state government and outreach work) have recently not been attractive to some faculty members.

The nature of research has also changed. For example, as has been noted with regard to the Department of Economics, social science research has become more quantitative. William Sewell, who during the 1950s was the chair of the Faculty Division of Social Sciences and then the chair of the Social Science Research Committee, has noted, with approval, this trend.³²⁴ Also, during that decade there was a movement in the College of Agriculture away from applied research and toward basic research.³²⁵ Basic research often prepares the way for the solution of practical problems. However, working directly on practical problems is often more effective. In addition, large increases in federal funding for research have made it more likely that faculty members will work on theoretical or "national" problems rather than on practical or state problems. By the end of the 1950s, the shocking realization that research in the Soviet Union had progressed to the point that that country could put Sputnik into orbit was responsible for a large increase in national research funds, which accelerated these changes in the nature of research. The ability of some professors to obtain consulting contracts has also reduced the amount of research done on the state's problems.

Changes in the Legislative and Executive Branches of State Government

The legislative change that has most significantly affected the Wisconsin Idea is the increase in the sources of information available to legislators. As a result, legislators have tended to rely less on the University for information. Part of that increase is attributable to the legislators' own increase in knowledge. At the beginning of the 1993 session, 63 of the 131 members (there was one vacancy) identified themselves as full-time legislators. Because their attention was focused on their legislative work, they were more likely to acquire information that was relevant to their policymaking. All legislators, regardless of whether or not they also have other occupations, have in recent years spent an increasing amount of time on legislative business, thereby increasing their knowledge of issues.

Legislators, as well as policymakers in the executive branch, also recently have had increased access to information, some of which is thrust upon them. Lobbyists and interest groups, in addition to their more obvious work to influence legislation, acquire a considerable store of information, which they make available to legislators. The number of lobbyists, and thus the amount of information, has grown considerably in recent years.

Both the executive branch and the legislative branch have created and increased sources of knowledge and technical skill for themselves. The Legislative Reference Bureau, formerly the Legislative Reference Library, has provided research and bill drafting services since 1901. For many decades it was the only unit in state government that had those functions as its primary mission. The executive branch preceded the legislature in establishing its own source of information. In 1959 the Department of Administration was created and was given several functions, among them policy research.³²⁶ The Division of Departmental Research in the Governor's office had been performing that function, but the creation of the new department significantly increased the research capacity of the executive branch of the state government. The new department included a Bureau of Management, which was charged with, among other things, preparing and analyzing the governor's budget and performing organization and management analysis.³²⁷

The legislature soon realized that it would be in its interest to give itself the kind of research capacity that it had given to the executive branch. During the 1961 session, it passed a law that authorized a committee to study the staff services that it needed.³²⁸ The legislature and the Ford Foundation financed the study and the addition of staff members. In 1964 a research analyst was hired for each party caucus in each house, and two part-time interns were hired for each house.³²⁹ Later more interns were hired and still later their positions were made permanent. When the funding from the Ford Foundation ceased, the state appropriated money for those positions.

The committee also recommended that the legislature hire fiscal experts, and a Legislative Budget Staff was created. In 1969 that unit was renamed the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, and its duties were more clearly defined.³³⁰ Its primary function has always been to provide support for the Joint Committee on Finance, the legislature's most powerful committee, but it also aids other legislators. Its work involves not only fiscal analysis, such as determining the fiscal effects of bills, but also policy analysis. The bureau's analysts are specialists, so they develop a good deal of knowledge of their fields. In the past, professors had fairly frequently performed the policy analysis that the Legislative Fiscal Bureau now performs.

The interns and the permanent employes who replaced them were assigned to some of the Legislative Council's study committees. The Legislative Council had been created in 1947 to conduct studies during the intervals between legislative sessions.³³¹ It was at first composed of ten legislators. After the interns who were assigned to the council were replaced by permanent employes and more persons were hired, their duties were expanded. In 1969, members of the Legislative Council Staff were assigned to each of the legislature's standing committees. The staff members became familiar with their interim committees' subject matter. If they were assigned to a standing committee for a long time, they became experts in that committee's subject matter. Thus, they, like the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's analysts, performed functions that professors had performed.

At the time when staff members of the Legislative Council began to assist standing committees and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's functions were increased and more clearly defined, the Legislative Reference Bureau had only two permanent drafting attorneys and hired a handful of others during the legislative sessions.³³² During the early 1970s, the bureau began to hire more permanent attorneys and stopped hiring sessional attorneys. The bureau has gradually increased the number of its drafters. As a result of these developments, it has become better able to provide a technical skill, bill drafting, that is essential to the legislative process and is another function that had occasionally been performed by professors. The bureau's attorneys are also specialists in subject areas, and thus, in addition to developing drafting skills, they acquire knowledge of their subjects. Both they and the research and library staff act as sources of knowledge for the legislature.

Thus, between 1968 and 1973, three service agencies significantly increased the support that they supplied to the legislature. At about the same time the number of legislative aides, another source for gathering information, increased significantly. This growth in information sources is revealed in the legislature's major appropriations for operating expenses:

| | 1965-66 | 1966-67 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Legislature | \$1,783,750 | \$1,909,150 |
| Legislative Council | 138,000 | 153,000 |
| | 1967-68 | 1968-69 |
| Legislature | 1,504,500 | 1,571,500 |
| Policy Research | 80,300 | 85,000 |
| Legislative Council | 148,700 | 239,400 |
| | 1969-70 | 1970-71 |
| Legislature | 3,039,100 | 3,245,700 |
| Legislative Fiscal Bureau | 125,600 | 132,700 |
| Legislative Council | 276,600 | 291,600 |
| | 1971-72 | 1972-73 |
| Legislature | 4,303,400 | 4,625,000 |
| Legislative Fiscal Bureau | 174,500 | 208,200 |
| Legislative Council | 339,400 | 357,100 |

Interactions Between the University and State Government

Finally, during recent years relations between the University and state government have not been as cordial as they were during, say, the Van Hise-Progressive Era. A series of political protests at the University cost it some support. They included: demonstrations during 1967 that were aimed generally at the Vietnam War and specifically at recruitment at the University by Dow Chemical Company, which manufactured napalm that was used in the war; a strike during 1969 in support of demands by African-American students; a strike during 1970 by the Teaching Assistants' Association; escalation of anti-war activity in 1970 after the invasion of Cambodia; and in 1970 a bombing directed at the Mathematics Research Center, which did work for the U.S. Department of Defense.

The University and the state government have always disagreed about the proper level of funding for the University. Sometimes the disagreements have been minor; at other times, the government has provided significantly less revenue than the University desired. On rare occasions, the government's motive for doing so has perhaps been punitive, although much more often the government simply has had too little revenue to satisfy everyone. More recently the issue of authority has been a sticking point. The state government perceives the issue to be oversight that is needed because of the large amount of state money that the University receives. The University perceives the issue to be over-management and a decrease of its authority. The com-

bination of political activity at the University that has disturbed state officials and disagreements about the proper level of funding for the University and the allocation of decisionmaking responsibility may have made the government less likely to request assistance from the University and may have made the University less likely to volunteer it.

9. GAINS AND LOSSES RESULTING FROM THE WISCONSIN IDEA

By this point, both the nature and the magnitude of the benefits that this state has derived from the Wisconsin Idea should be obvious. The state government has benefited enormously. University professors have contributed invaluable technical skill and advice on policy matters; they have left their mark on numerous state laws. Moreover, those contributions have ranged from significant to essential in regard to the legislation that has given Wisconsin its reputation as a pioneer and innovator, legislation regarding the income tax, worker's compensation, unemployment compensation and campaign finance. Some of the more able administrators who have served in the executive branch of the state government have come from the University.

The citizens of Wisconsin have also received much from the operation of the Wisconsin Idea. Some of the huge fiscal effects of the University's research have been mentioned. The countless examples of knowledge and advice passing from the University to individual citizens of the state have also been important. Opportunities for formal instruction away from University campuses have been plentiful. Nor should the pleasure provided by the University be ignored; for example, persons throughout the state have been able to listen, in their own communities, to concerts by the Pro Arte Quartet, a first-rate musical group.

The costs of the Wisconsin Idea are far less obvious, partly because, luckily, their magnitude is much less. The Idea has somewhat distorted the University's operation. President Van Hise argued that pure research and practical research not only are not mutually exclusive but also blend:

It can not be predicted at what distant nook of knowledge, apparently remote from any practical service, a brilliantly useful stream may spring. It is certain that every fundamental discovery yet made by the delving student has been of service to man before a decade has passed.³³³

He had a point, but sometimes the two kinds of research are distinct and then, to the extent that one is emphasized, the other is deemphasized. Adherents of the Wisconsin Idea have encouraged and engaged in practical research. There is no way to credibly assess the results of that emphasis. On the one hand, it is better to have developed a new variety of corn that will add millions of dollars to the state's revenue from agriculture than to have published the results of esoteric research that will be read by only a few specialists. On the other hand, probably some important discoveries were not made because researchers were doing practical, not pure, research.

It is not difficult to weigh the benefits of the Wisconsin Idea against its costs. This state has been a clear winner because the Wisconsin Idea has operated. We owe thanks to the thousands of persons who have believed in it and acted on their beliefs. We also owe them a commitment to keep the Idea alive. It would be even better if we would commit ourselves to making it stronger.

10. PROSPECTS

It is difficult to predict the future of the Wisconsin Idea, just as it is difficult to predict the future of anything. Some facts relevant to that future, however, are clear. Some of the reasons the Idea was accepted, such as the Morrill Act and the relationship between Van Hise and Robert M. La Follette, were unique to their time and have long since lost their impetus. Others, such as the Idea's monetary value, have continued in effect. However, the major reason was the involvement of great human beings. They arrive on the scene randomly, so the future of that factor cannot be confidently predicted. Similarly, some of the counterforces, such as the Stalwart Republicans' suspicions about the University and the problems of the Birge and Frank administrations, no longer have an effect. However, it is clear that the state government will not dismantle its own sources of information, and the value to faculty members' careers of public service probably will

not increase. Looking at the question from this perspective, one sees the same blurry picture. The future of the Idea is not necessarily assured.

That assessment leaves one in doubt. Another reason for doubt is that a major determinant of the Wisconsin Idea's future is desire, the desire of state government's policymakers and University administrators and faculty members. If they resolutely decide that the Idea will die, it will die. If they resolutely decide that the Idea will become stronger, it will become stronger. We can hope that the latter path is taken. The Wisconsin Idea, the University's application of intelligence and reason to this state's problems, has immeasurably improved life in Wisconsin.

In addition to the persons whom I interviewed for this article, whose assistance is acknowledged in endnotes; for advice, information, encouragement and assistance I heartily thank Arthur Hove, R. David Myers, Donald Percy, David Stute, Paul H. Williams, Barbara Brown, David Cronon, Larry Barish, Patricia Meloy and John Jenkins.

ENDNOTES

1. Quoted in Lincoln Steffins, "Sending a State to College," *American Magazine*, vol. 62, no. 4 (February 1909), 350. Changes in the names of the institutions that now make up the University of Wisconsin System could add confusion to this account. To avoid that confusion, I will refer to the current University of Wisconsin-Madison as the University of Wisconsin, the name that it had for most of its existence, or simply as the University. I will refer to other parts of the system and to the system itself by the names that they had at the time about which I am writing.
2. From an article in *The Outlook* quoted in the Papers of the Board of Regents, December 13, 1911.
3. Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990, reprint of a 1962 edition), 363.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Correspondence, Robert H. Foss to J. E. Boell, February 20, 1965 (Archives, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin).
6. Examples are Wilbur Cohen, Foreword to Theron F. Schlabach, *Edwin E. Witte: Cautious Reformer* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1969), v.; R. David Myers, "The Wisconsin Idea: Its National and International Significance," *Wisconsin Academy Review*, vol. 37, no. 4 (Fall 1991), 4; Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1848-1925* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1949), vol. II, 3, and Charles McCarthy, *The Wisconsin Idea* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 16.
7. Examples are Robert Haveman and Mark Shroder, "Roots of the Wisconsin Idea: The University and Public Policy Since the Progressive Era," *L & S Magazine*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1989), 36; Edward N. Doan, *The La Follettes and the Wisconsin Idea* (New York and Toronto: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1947), 12; William Cronon, "Planning Another Century of Good Government: The Wisconsin Idea in the Twenty-first Century," Remarks before the Wisconsin SAVE Commission (January 7, 1994), 3; Leo Walsh in John W. Jenkins, *A Centennial History: A History of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison* (Madison: College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, 1991), Preface and Vernon Carstensen, "The Origin and Development of the Wisconsin Idea," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 39, no. 3 (Spring 1956), 182.
8. E. David Cronon and John W. Jenkins, *The University of Wisconsin, A History, Volume III: Politics, Depression and War, 1925 to 1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 828.
9. *1849 Revised Statutes*, Chapter 18, Section 9.
10. McCarthy, 28. The statement is: "Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere we believe the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found."
11. Richard T. Ely, *Ground Under Our Feet* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 187.
12. Richard T. Ely, *The Social Law of Service* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1896), 175.
13. Richard T. Ely, *Ground Under Our Feet*, 216.
14. Benjamin G. Rader, *The Academic Mind and Reform: The Influence of Richard T. Ely in American Life* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1966), 173.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 175.
17. Robert J. Gough, "Richard T. Ely and the Development of the Wisconsin Cutover," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 75, no. 1 (Autumn 1991), 3-38.
18. McCarthy, 28.

19. *Ibid.*, 20-21.
20. Frederic, C. Howe, *Wisconsin: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 39.
21. John R. Commons, *Myself: The Autobiography of John R. Commons* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1963, reprint of a 1934 edition published by The Macmillan Company), 106.
22. William Cronon.
23. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 283.
24. See, for example, Rudolph, 246, 264 and 306.
25. The act is now codified as 7 *United States Code* 301-305.
26. 7 *United States Code* 304
27. 1884 *Report of the Regents*, 10. The name of these reports varies, and some of them are for two years rather than one. To indicate that the source cited is the same I will cite them consistently, using this title and, if the report covers two years, refer to the second year.
28. 1872 *Report of the Regents*, 8-9.
29. Fred Harvey Harrington, "The University and the State," *Wisconsin Alumnus*, November 1962, 14 and "The University with a State as its Community" (pages not numbered).
30. J. David Hoeveler, Jr., "The University and the Social Gospel: The Intellectual Origins of the 'Wisconsin Idea'," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 59, no. 4 (Summer 1976), 282-298.
31. *Ibid.*, 283.
32. *Ibid.*, 296.
33. Commons, *Myself*, 33-34.
34. Curti and Carstensen, vol. I, 286-287.
35. Hoeveler, 286.
36. Robert M. La Follette, *La Follette's Autobiography* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), 13.
37. Quoted in J. F. A. Pyre, *Wisconsin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), 228.
38. Curti and Carstensen, vol. I, 248.
39. John Bascom, *Things Learned By Living* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 140.
40. Maurice M. Vance, *Charles Richard Van Hise: Scientist, Progressive* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1960), 84.
41. Curti and Carstensen, vol. I, 283.
42. David Paul Thelen, *The Early Life of Robert M. La Follette 1855-1884* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1966), 47.
43. Quoted in *La Follette's Autobiography*, 11. For an account of Ryan, a fascinating person who played an important role in this state's legal history, see Alfons J. Beitzinger, *Edward G. Ryan: Lion of the Law* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1960).
44. La Follette, 53
45. Eric E. Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin: A Study in Agricultural Change 1820-1920* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963).
46. *Ibid.*, 341.
47. *Ibid.*, 342.
48. *Ibid.*, 342.
49. *Journal of the Assembly*, 1858, vol. 2, 1522-23.
50. 1859 *Report of the Regents*, 20.
51. Fred Harvey Harrington, "The University with a State as its Community."
52. *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 3, 1911, and April 15, 1911.
53. Tape I, recorded April 13, 1950, at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, State Historical Society of Wisconsin archives, Perlman files, transcript, 10-12.
54. 1904 *Report of the Regents*, 26. In 1968 the College of Agriculture was renamed the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. For the sake of convenience, I will use the earlier name throughout this article.
55. *Journal of the Senate*, January 12, 1905, 103.
56. Frank Parker Stockbridge, "A University That Runs a State," *World's Work*, vol. 25, no. 6 (April 1913), 706.
57. 1880 *Report of the Regents*, 5.
58. Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, "Select Mission of the University of Wisconsin-Madison," January 1974.
59. Curti and Carstensen, vol. I, 75.
60. Vance, 111.
61. Glenn S. Pound and Douglas P. Maxwell, "Plant Pathology and the Wisconsin Idea," in Paul H. Williams and Melissa Marosy (eds.), *With One Foot in the Furrow: A History of the First Seventy-five Years of the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1986), 301.
62. Philip La Follette, *In Politics: The Memoirs of Philip La Follette* (ed. Donald Young) (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 147.
63. See, *The Milwaukee Journal*, November 30, 1908.
64. Edward Birge, "Effect of the War on Higher Education," National Education Association, *Addresses and Proceedings of the 57th Annual Meeting*, vol. 57, 217-219.

65. Curti and Carstensen, vol. I, 234.
66. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 26.
67. Thomas Chamberlin, *The Coming of Age of the State Universities* (no publisher listed, 1890), 9.
68. *1889 Report of the Regents*, 29-30, and 595-596.
69. Thomas Chamberlin, "The State University and Research," *The Jubilee of the University of Wisconsin, 1904* (Madison: the Jubilee Committee, 1905), 182.
70. Quoted in Charles Foster Smith, *Charles Kendall Adams: A Life-Sketch* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1924), 37.
71. The economists' academic unit at the University has been given three different names over the past century: the School of Economics, Political Science and History in 1892, the Department of Political Economy in 1903, and the Department of Economics in 1918. For convenience's sake, with a few exceptions I will refer to the unit throughout this section as the Department of Economics.
72. Robert Lampman (ed.), *Economists at Wisconsin: 1892-1992* (The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 1993), xix.
73. "Mortgage Statistics and Taxation in Wisconsin and Neighboring States," *1907 Wisconsin Tax Commission Report*, 295-414.
74. Lampman, 25.
75. Quoted in Fitzpatrick, 124.
76. "Genesis of Wisconsin's Income Tax Law: An Interview with D. O. Kinsman," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 21, no. 1 (September 1937), 3-15.
77. Lampman, 29-30.
78. John R. Commons, "Institutional Economics," *American Economic Review*, vol. 21, no. 4 (December 1931), 654.
79. *Ibid.*, 649.
80. *Ibid.*, 650.
81. *Ibid.*, 650.
82. *Ibid.*, 656.
83. Rader, 173.
84. *1903 Assembly Journal*, 28. The article on institutional economics that was quoted earlier was published long after La Follette's speech, but it stated positions that Commons had held for decades.
85. *Ibid.*, 28.
86. Commons, *Myself*, 101. Commons's account of this work illustrates the unreliability of Fitzpatrick's biography of Charles McCarthy, which states at page 115: "Professor Commons tells in his autobiography the story of how in 1905 Governor La Follette asked McCarthy to prepare a civil-service bill." Commons tells no such thing; he wrote that La Follette asked Commons to write the bill.
87. Chapter 363, Laws of 1905, Sections 2 and 3.
88. Commons, *Myself*, 106.
89. Chapter 499, Laws of 1907.
90. Commons, *Myself*, 126.
91. Chapter 87, 1911 Statutes, Sections 1797m-3 and 1797m-60.
92. Howe, 50.
93. Commons, *Myself*, 153.
94. Chapter 583, Laws of 1911.
95. Commons, *Myself*, 153.
96. Chapter 485, Laws of 1911.
97. Commons, *Myself*, 157-159.
98. Arthur Altmeyer, *The Industrial Commission* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1932), 106.
99. Robert Asher, "The 1911 Wisconsin Workmen's Compensation Law: A Study in Conservative Labor Reform," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 57, no. 2 (Winter 1973-1974), 126.
100. *Ibid.*, 128.
101. *Ibid.*, 128.
102. *Ibid.*, 126.
103. *1909 Assembly Journal*, 38-40; *1911 Assembly Journal*, 27-31.
104. Chapter 50, Laws of 1911.
105. Asher.
106. This background information depends on Legislative Reference Library, "History of Minimum Wage Legislation in Wisconsin [with Information relative to the Folding Furniture Works v. Industrial Commission of Wisconsin Case] which involved the Constitutionality of the Minimum Wage Law," 1923.
107. "Proposed Minimum Wage Law for Wisconsin," 1911.
108. 1911 Assembly Bill 799 and 1911 Senate Bill 317.
109. Letter to Alice E. Smith, Erich Stern papers, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin. This letter is the only item in the Madison Collection. Stern's other papers are at the Milwaukee regional center.
110. Chapter 712, Laws of 1913.

111. Commons, *Myself*, 39.
112. *The Milwaukee Journal*, May 5, 1913.
113. Commons, *Myself*, 40.
114. Philip La Follette, 143.
115. John R. Commons, *The Distribution of Wealth* (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1893), 81.
116. Daniel Nelson, "The Origins of Unemployment Insurance in Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 51, no. 2 (Winter 1967-1968), 112-114.
117. Commons, *Myself*, 143.
118. Nelson, 116. Much of the remainder of the account of Commons's role in the passage of the unemployment compensation bill depends on this article.
119. Commons, *Myself*, 198-200.
120. Lampman, 69, reprinting excerpts from "John R. Commons: Pioneer of Labor Economics," *Monthly Labor Review*, 112 (May 1989), 44-49.
121. *Ibid.*, 30.
122. Balthasar Henry Meyer, *Railway Legislation in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), 169.
123. "Government Regulation of Freight Rates," reprinted in *Freight*, vol. 5, no. 60 (February 1906).
124. Stanley P. Caine, *The Myth of a Progressive Reform: Railroad Regulation in Wisconsin 1903-1910* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1970).
125. For the story of the establishment of the Wisconsin income tax see John Stark, "The Establishment of Wisconsin's Income Tax," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 71, no. 1 (Autumn 1987), 27-45.
126. Kinsman, 4.
127. *Ibid.*, 11.
128. Letter to Kenneth Parsons, May 14, 1945, Witte papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.
129. Schlabach, 32.
130. For a description of Witte's work at the Legislative Reference Library see Schlabach, 39-49.
131. *Ibid.*, 49-50.
132. Harold M. Groves, *In and Out of the Ivory Tower* (Madison: no publisher listed, 1969), 97.
133. Harold M. Groves, *Tax Philosophers: Two Hundred Years of Thought in Great Britain and the United States* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 16 and "Toward a Social Theory of Progressive Taxation," *National Tax Journal*, vol. 9, no. 30 (March 1956). For a full account of Groves' thoughts on taxation and his influence on Wisconsin taxes, see John O. Stark, "Harold M. Groves and Wisconsin Taxes," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. 74, no. 3 (Spring 1991), 196-214.
134. Harold M. Groves, *Financing Government* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1939), 2.
135. Harold M. Groves, *Trouble Spots in Taxation: Essays in the Philosophy of Taxation and Other Public Finance Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 25.
136. Chapter 448, Laws of 1931.
137. "History of the Wisconsin Tax System," a statement prepared for the University of Wisconsin Tax Study, 27.
138. Nelson, 120.
139. Stark, "Harold M. Groves and Wisconsin Taxes," 211.
140. Lampman, 142.
141. Interview with Jeffrey G. Williamson in Lampman, 207.
142. Lampman, 186.
143. Williams and Marosy, 206. Most of the remainder of this section on the Department of Plant Pathology is based on that book.
144. *Ibid.*, 209.
145. Curti and Carstensen, vol. II, 416.
146. Williams and Marosy, 35.
147. *Ibid.*, 210.
148. Jenkins, 150.
149. *Ibid.*, 59.
150. Interview with Leon Epstein.
151. Curti and Carstensen, vol. I, 168.
152. *1866 Report of the Regents*, 8.
153. *1869 Report of the Regents*, 40-41.
154. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 29.
155. *1914 Report of the Regents*, 109.
156. William B. Sarles, "Examples of Progress in the Biological Sciences," Allan G. Bogue and Robert Taylor (eds.), *The University of Wisconsin: One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 212.
157. Interview with Stan Peloquin.
158. *1877 Report of the Regents*, 47.
159. *1881 Report of the Regents*, 34.

160. This account of silos depends on Lampard, 158-161.
161. *1883 Senate Journal*, 16.
162. Chapter 300, Laws of 1883.
163. *1886 Report of the Regents*, 42.
164. Jenkins, 10.
165. Chapter 9, Laws of 1885.
166. *1888 Report of the Regents*, 55.
167. *1896 Report of the Regents*, 14.
168. *1902 Report of the Regents*, 50.
169. Carstensen, 183.
170. This account of the report and the reactions to it depends on Curti and Carstensen, vol. I, 471-474.
171. Steffins, 353.
172. Vance, 84.
173. This section on summer schools depends on Cronon and Jenkins, 757-765.
174. Jenkins, 41.
175. Lampard, 199.
176. *Ibid.*, 202.
177. *1904 Report of the Regents*, 74-75.
178. *Ibid.*, 74.
179. Lampard, 203.
180. *1892 Report of the Regents*, 44.
181. For a picture of this social set see William Ellery Leonard's *Two Lives* (New York: Viking Press, 1925). Leonard, Freeman's colleague in the English Department, roomed in the Freeman house and married Freeman's daughter. Freeman and his friends blamed Leonard for her suicide.
182. *1896 Report of the Regents*, 30.
183. *1898 Report of the Regents*, 17.
184. Chapter 87, Laws of 1895.
185. *1896 Report of the Regents*, 13.
186. Chapter 311, Laws of 1895.
187. *1896 Report of the Regents*, 13.
188. That date appears to be correct, although Lampard gives the date as 1895.
189. Lampard, 224.
190. *1898 Report of the Regents*, 15.
191. *1904 Report of the Regents*, 75-76.
192. *1904 Report of the Regents*, 76.
193. Jenkins, 30.
194. Robert M. La Follette, 14.
195. Quoted in Fitzpatrick, 237.
196. Quoted in Fitzpatrick, 145.
197. Commons, *Myself*, 109.
198. Fitzpatrick, 267.
199. *Ibid.*, 105.
200. For an excerpt see Robert S. Maxwell, *Emanuel L. Philipp: Wisconsin Stalwart* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1959), 102-103.
201. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 29-30.
202. Chapter 491, Laws of 1907.
203. *Owen v. Donald*, 160 Wis. 21 (1915).
204. Vance, 114.
205. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 39.
206. Letter to Austin W. Stultz, April 17, 1905, University Archives.
207. *1906 Report to the Regents*, 35.
208. Quoted in Vance, 87.
209. Carstensen, 185.
210. *Ibid.*, 186.
211. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 35.
212. This section on Reber's work depends on Curti and Carstensen, vol. II, 563-577.
213. Jenkins, 54.
214. The account of Philipp's attack, except for Philipp's motives, and the resulting defense depends on Maxwell, *Emanuel L. Philipp: Wisconsin Stalwart*, 100-101.
215. Fitzpatrick, 250.

216. *Ibid.*, 287.
217. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 36.
218. *1909 Journal of the Senate*, 29-30.
219. *1908 Report of the Regents*, 19-20.
220. *1910 Report of the Regents*, 233-235.
221. Clay Schoenfeld, "The 'Wisconsin Idea' Expanded, 1949-1974," in Bogue and Taylor, 253.
222. Interview with Sheila Pink, Registrar.
223. *1906 Report to the Regents*, 27-28.
224. Jenkins, 65.
225. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 27-29.
226. *1906 Report of the Regents*, 27.
227. Jenkins, 55.
228. *1908 Report of the Regents*, 20.
229. *Ibid.*, 21.
230. *1908 Report of the Regents*, 177.
231. *1912 Report of the Regents*, 170.
232. *1912 Report of the Regents*, 173.
233. Chapter 514, Laws of 1911.
234. Robert M. La Follette, 15.
235. In addition to the list in Robert M. La Follette, see Maxwell, *La Follette and the Rise of the Progressives*, 139; Howe, 40; Fitzpatrick, 239 and McCarthy, 313-317.
236. Curti and Carstensen, vol. II, 442.
237. Chapter 187, Laws of 1911.
238. Charles Van Hise, *The Conservation of Natural Resources in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910).
239. Chapter 652, Laws of 1911.
240. Curti and Carstensen, vol. II, 20-21.
241. *Water Power Cases*, 148 Wis. 124 (1912).
242. This account of the beginning of the program depends on Jenkins, 70.
243. Chapter 611, Laws of 1913.
244. Gale VandeBerg's contribution to "The Wisconsin Idea: A Tribute to Carlisle P. Runge," March 28, 1981, published by the University of Wisconsin-Extension.
245. This section on alfalfa, except for the material on the vernal variety and the 1954 acreage total, depends on Jenkins 30, 65, 72, 79, 99-100 and 177. For Graber's version, see Laurence F. Graber, *Mr. Alfalfa* (Madison, 1976).
246. William B. Sarles, "Examples of Progress in the Biological Sciences," in Bogue and Taylor, 212.
247. *1913 Journal of the Senate*, 45-46.
248. The account of the University's work with radio, up to the 1954 program listing, depends on Cronon and Jenkins, 815-826.
249. "Serving All the State," *Wisconsin Alumnus*, January 15, 1955, 19.
250. Quoted in Lampman, 27.
251. Chapter 454, Laws of 1927.
252. Chapter 57, Laws of 1927.
253. This paragraph depends on Cronon and Jenkins, 774-775.
254. Chapter 356, Laws of 1929.
255. For an account of Leopold as a literary figure, see John Stark, "Wisconsin Writers", *1977 Wisconsin Blue Book*, 135-141.
256. This account of Leopold and game management depends on Curt Meine, *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
257. Horace Gregory, *The House on Jefferson Street: A Cycle of Memories* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 115.
258. *Ibid.*, 116.
259. Philip La Follette, 148.
260. *Ibid.*, 200.
261. *Ibid.*, 160.
262. Jenkins, 98.
263. Sarles, 211-212.
264. Based on cash receipts for 1991, *1993-1994 Wisconsin Blue Book*, 613.
265. "The University with a State as its Community."
266. Jenkins, 105-106.
267. Gaylord Nelson's speech in "The Wisconsin Idea: A Tribute to Carlisle P. Runge."
268. Chapter 341, Laws of 1937.
269. Howard Johnstone McMurray, *Some Influences of the University of Wisconsin on the State Government of Wisconsin*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1940.

270. This account of the Wisconsin Idea Theater depends on "The Wisconsin Idea Theater," *Wisconsin Alumnus* (December 1951), 23-25.
271. This material on Algren depends on Jenkins, 139-143.
272. Jenkins, 143.
273. "Serving All the State," *Wisconsin Alumnus* (January 15, 1955), 18-19.
274. Gaylord Nelson's speech in "The Wisconsin Idea: A Tribute to Carlisle P. Runge."
275. For an account of the state's environmental legislation during the tenures of Governors Nelson, Reynolds and Knowles, see Thomas R. Huffman, *Protectors of the Land and Water: Environmentalism in Wisconsin 1961-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
276. The book is David Adamany, *Financing Politics: Recent Wisconsin Elections* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).
277. "University-Industry Research Program Activity Report 1991."
278. Gale VandeBerg's speech in "The Wisconsin Idea: A Tribute to Carlisle P. Runge." Chapter 614, Laws of 1966.
279. Clara Penniman, "Seventy-five Years of State Government Collaboration," presented at University-State Government Linkages, State University of New York at Albany, February 4-5, 1977.
280. Two examples are "The Wisconsin Income Tax and Erosion," *National Tax Journal*, vol. 15, no. 4 (December 1962), 413-422 (with Dr. H. Rupert Theobald) and "Property Tax Equalization in Wisconsin," *National Tax Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2 (June 1961), 182-189.
281. "Institute for Environmental Studies Bulletin," p. 20.
282. Chapter 196, Laws of 1977.
283. Thomas J. Higgins, "A Resourceful College of Engineering," in *A Resourceful University: The University of Wisconsin-Madison in its 125th Year* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 49.
284. Clay Schoenfeld, "The 'Wisconsin Idea' Expanded, 1949-1974," in Bogue and Taylor, 262.
285. Reprinted in Jon Udell, "Wisconsin's Economy as Seen by Industry, Labor and the General Public," University of Wisconsin-Madison Bureau of Business Research and Service (1973).
286. The first suggestion would probably violate the commerce clause of the federal constitution, and the second suggestion would probably violate the uniformity clause of the state constitution (see Jack Stark, "The Uniformity Clause of the Wisconsin Constitution," *76 Marquette Law Review* 577 (1993)). For a more extensive treatment of this episode see Jack Stark, "A History of the Property Tax and Property Tax Relief in Wisconsin," *1991-1992 Wisconsin Blue Book*, 144-146.
287. Chapter 90, Laws of 1973.
288. Jon Udell, "The Impact of Recent Legislation on Wisconsin Manufacturers and Employment Growth," (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Graduate School of Business, 1977).
289. Jon Udell and the Public Expenditure Survey of Wisconsin, "Wisconsin's Taxation of Capital Gains: Fair? Progressive? Competitive?" (Public Expenditure Survey of Wisconsin, 1979).
290. Capital gains are the profits from the sale of capital assets (examples are stocks, bonds and livestock). They are calculated by subtracting the basis (usually the cost of acquiring the asset) from its selling price. The income tax was imposed on net capital gains: the result of offsetting capital losses and capital gains. Indexing could be done by adjusting either the basis or the selling price to reflect changes in a measure of the cost of living, such as one of the consumer price indices. It should be noted that taxes are paid only at the time an asset is sold or otherwise gotten rid of, so that the value of the money paid in taxes has shrunk to reflect inflation (in other words, there is an automatic indexing).
291. 1987 Wisconsin Act 27.
292. Jon Udell and William M. Babcock, Jr., "Death Taxes in Wisconsin," (Public Expenditure Research Foundation, Inc., 1980).
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296. Tun-Mei Y. Chang, "Wisconsin's Elderly Outmigration and Wisconsin Death Taxes," (Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, 1987).
297. Gale VandeBerg's speech in "The Wisconsin Idea: A Tribute to Carlisle P. Runge."
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299. Richard Barrows and Richard W. Dunford, "Agricultural, Urban, and Recreational Determinants of Farmland Values in Wisconsin," College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, 1976. Barrows has written or co-written a number of useful articles on state policy issues, such as "Planning for our County Forests" (with Richard Stauber), 1975; "Transfer of Development Rights: A New Land Use Policy for Wisconsin?" (with Bruce Pregel and Doug Yanggen), 1975; "Individual Economic Incentives, the Tax System and Wetland Protection Policy: A Study of Returns to Wetland Drainage in South-eastern Wisconsin," 1982 and "The Property Tax and Agriculture," 1986.
300. Chapter 29, Laws of 1977, Sections 799m and 982m.
301. For a list of some of Governor Thompson's appointments to boards, councils and study groups see Haveman and Schroder, 35.
302. 1983 Wisconsin Act 27, Section 908c.
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 313. Maxwell, *Emanuel L. Philipp: Wisconsin Stalwart*, 96.
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 315. See Maxwell, 173-194.
 316. Cronon and Jenkins, 791.
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 328. Chapter 686, Laws of 1961.
 329. "Fourth Report," Legislative Programs Study Committee, November 1969.
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 331. Chapter 444, Laws of 1947.
 332. Interviews with Dr. H. Rupert Theobald, chief, and Peter Dykman, deputy chief, Legislative Reference Bureau.
 333. Inaugural Address in *The Jubilee of the University of Wisconsin*, 123.
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The Wisconsin Idea is now high tech. In the past, farmers could not know a bull's genetic makeup until his daughters grew up and produced milk. UW researchers have patented a genetic fingerprinting technique that can help identify promising bulls soon after birth and will allow breeders to predict further milk productivity (photo courtesy of Wolfgang Hoffmann, UW-Madison, Agricultural Journalism).

THE WISCONSIN IDEA FOR THE 21st CENTURY

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The Wisconsin Idea has a special significance, not only because of its beneficial implementation within the state, but also because of worldwide recognition of its success. Dr. Jack Stark has described the evolution of the Wisconsin Idea in the 20th century. This article will suggest a future vision of its expansion in the 21st century.

The definition of the Wisconsin Idea will change substantially in the next century. The objective in the 20th century has been to make university resources more available to Wisconsin citizens; the 21st century will see an increase in organizational interaction and the growth of resources and technology.

In the current century, educational opportunities have spread across the state through the efforts of both public and private organizations. Partnership will receive new emphasis as one of the hallmarks of the Wisconsin Idea in the next century. University faculty and staff and their partners in external organizations will make up the "outreach leaders" of tomorrow. In addition, evolving technologies will broaden the outreach from beyond the state's borders to national and international horizons.

1. BACKGROUND

The sweeping changes transforming both society and higher education require changes in the conceptualization of the Wisconsin Idea. For more than a century, the services carried out in its name yielded mutually beneficial exchanges between the university and the people of the state. From the establishment of a lecture service for teachers in 1860, farmers institutes in 1885, a mechanics institute in 1888 and continuing with the development of summer classes, applied research, public lectures and many other extension activities, the university has viewed individuals throughout the state as the direct beneficiaries of its outreach. UW President Chamberlin broadened the early emphasis on agricultural extension to include general extension, and President Van Hise nurtured this seed "to assist the ordinary individual as well as the person of talent by carrying light and opportunity to every human being." A strong extension mission was supported by Governor Robert M. La Follette in his first message to the state legislature in 1901:

The State will not have discharged its duty to the University nor the University fulfilled its mission to the people until adequate means have been furnished to every young man and woman in the state to acquire an education at home in every department of learning.

In parallel efforts, Van Hise and La Follette promoted university service to state government, which took various forms, such as drafting proposed legislation and serving as members of state boards, commissions, and administrative departments. These cooperative services reinforced each other and shaped the the creative ventures that formed the Wisconsin Idea. Although the essence of the Idea is likely to persist, the familiar forms of cooperation between the university and the people of the state are already changing.

At the core of the Wisconsin Idea is the concept of partnership. Throughout the 20th century, terms such as "extension" and "public service" have been used in reference to these educational partnerships. The national prominence of UW-Extension was already evident by 1915 when 22 directors of university extension from around the country met in Madison to found the National University Extension Association, the current National University Continuing Education Association. Louis Reber, director of the UW-Extension Division at the time, was elected president of the new association. During the previous year, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 had been enacted by the U.S. Congress to foster federal, state, and county cooperation in expanding a county agent system. The county agent program had already been sanctioned by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1911, and it continues to this day to provide Cooperative Extension programs in agriculture, family living, youth, and community and natural resource development.

During the Great Depression, the Extension Division created extension centers in Milwaukee and other locations around the state that enabled many high school graduates to begin their college education locally. After World War II, it created additional two-year centers, offering college credit courses. At the peak of the veterans' enrollments, 2,000 students were served at over 30 locations. During this period, correspondence study grew to over 400 courses enrolling 10,000 students. Concurrently, WHA staff broadened its educational radio service with the creation of a statewide FM network, and WHA-TV began broadcasting in 1954. During the 1950s and 1960s, under the direction of Lorenz Adolphson, University Extension Division was acknowledged as one of the four top divisions in the country along with the University of California system, New York University and Syracuse University.

The university continues to review the organization and impact of extension services to keep them productive in a fast-changing world. From 1983 to 1986, the Commission on the Wisconsin Idea for the 21st Century explored desirable future directions. One major theme was responsiveness to emerging partnerships. With growing acceptance of lifelong learning and distance education, which uses new technology to cross time and space barriers, the university's outreach function has received increased reemphasis. At the same time, state and local government, as well as private enterprises, associations, and community agencies have recognized the need for continuing education. The partnership essence of the Wisconsin Idea remains, but new forms of cooperation are evolving.

The comprehensive teaching and research mission of UW-Madison accounts for its distinctive outreach emphasis on cooperative extension, continuing professional education, community



The Wisconsin Idea of today includes interaction with many state industries. As part of the UW-Madison industrial consortia, these companies benefit through educational internships, combined research efforts, and technology transfer (photo courtesy of Bruce Fritz).

resource development, and applied outreach research. In addition, at each of the UW System institutions, faculty, staff, and students help to plan and conduct outreach activities of all kinds. Systemwide facilities and assistance, such as UW-Extension undergird outreach activities by providing conference centers, telecommunications networks, and program development services.

Millions of people, throughout Wisconsin and beyond, participate in a wide variety of outreach activities each year. They and their respective organizations and communities, in turn, contribute to the vitality and ongoing transformation of the Wisconsin Idea. Local groups and organizations, business enterprises and labor unions, communities and associations, state agencies, and organizations throughout the United States and the world are major partners in outreach planning and support. The university also benefits from this cooperation. Faculty members and students gain first-hand experience from work, family, and community settings that enrich their experiential learning and research. A crucial aspect of the Wisconsin Idea is to promote this two-way exchange between the University of Wisconsin and a wide variety of external partners.

2. INFLUENCES ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The single most important influence on the course of the Wisconsin Idea in the future will be the increasing recognition throughout society of the need for lifelong learning. University students are advised to think about their degrees not as end products but as foundations to enable them to make multiple major career shifts in their lifetimes. Continuing education will be the key to those shifts. To dramatically state this point, some industry representatives claim that on their graduation day, the holders of new engineering baccalaureates already possess more obsolete knowledge than cutting edge knowledge. In a society dependent on mastering emerging information, the new wealth of nations is the degree to which people can access and master new ideas as the basis for economic and social progress.

In addition to benefitting individuals, continuing education contributes greatly to the health of the Wisconsin economy. Whether the state remains competitive in a fast-changing world will depend on opportunities for further education and training among its entrepreneurs and employees.

Within this mix of individual and societal needs is a special challenge to the Wisconsin Idea that warrants careful consideration. The importance of lifelong learning for the 30% of the population with a university degree is obvious, but the state must also recognize that the majority of its citizens, who did not attend college, will need continuing education, both as contributors to the economy and as individuals in the society. This larger group may fail to see the benefits of continuing education unless the university gives special attention to their needs and coordinates outreach with other public and private providers.

A second major influence on the Wisconsin Idea is the role of 21st century technology. It is likely to affect all aspects of the Wisconsin Idea's evolution. Examples of the impact of technological development will be discussed in greater detail at various points throughout this essay.

A third influence is the need for multidisciplinary solutions. Most societal issues are now so complex that they extend well beyond any one academic specialty or department — whether economics, social work, or medicine. To this point, however, universities have had only modest experience and success in organizing in multidisciplinary ways. While this challenge can probably be resolved eventually, it currently remains a major organizational stumbling block.

A fourth influence is the declining farm population, which is causing modification of the UW Cooperative Extension Service and its role in the Wisconsin Idea. Cooperative Extension has historically derived support from federal, state, and county governments. Federal support comes through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but, as Cooperative Extension seeks to modify its outreach efforts, particularly in relation to industrial and urban extension, family, youth, and natural resources, those historic funding patterns may change. The nature of such shifts deserves serious consideration.

The final influence is the parochialism suggested by the popular slogan regarding the Wisconsin Idea: "The boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state." Most people



Since the turn of the century, teachers have attended summer continuing education courses for professional development as illustrated by this math education program at the Verona Elementary School (photo courtesy of Judy Reed, UW-Madison Outreach Information Office).

probably recognize that the Wisconsin economy is more affected now by national and international forces than forces internal to the state. However, it is not clear if state fiscal support, which has been the backbone of the Wisconsin Idea success story in the 20th century, will be continued if many extension activities occur beyond state borders. A challenge to outreach leaders is to clarify and gain support for a contemporary global definition of the Wisconsin Idea.

3. OUTREACH AND THE WISCONSIN IDEA

Transformation of the Wisconsin Idea in the 21st century will reflect major changes in higher education and the society as a whole. As E. L. Boyer points out in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990) universities are recognizing the interdependence between sharing and applying knowledge, as well as creating and integrating knowledge. This enhances appreciation of outreach forms of teaching, research, and service. Lifelong learning is essential for all, and the university is an important and distinct resource. The following examples of teaching, research and service illustrate the outreach partnerships that will probably characterize the Wisconsin Idea in the 21st century.

The most familiar examples are the teaching and learning that occur beyond the campus and sometimes beyond the state. Each year, many Wisconsinites participate in University of Wisconsin courses, conferences, or workshops which may be held anywhere in the state. Such continuing education programs usually match topics of high interest to targeted populations with the specialized expertise of faculty. Many of these educational activities draw regional or national audiences and make use of the latest information technology to offer outreach teaching through “distance education” as differentiated from the traditional classroom setting. Educational telecommunication networks, video conferencing, and computer conferencing provide participants with easy access to programs in which they can learn from each other, as well as from instructors.

In another type of outreach teaching, people who work in hospitals, schools, private enterprise, or community agencies participate in staff development activities conducted by university faculty and staff members. Cooperative Extension county staff and state specialists work with local volunteers in thousands of extension education activities throughout the state each year.

The added benefit of outreach teaching is that the faculty members find it enriches their research and resident instruction on campus.

Outreach research, which was an important part of the Wisconsin Idea as it developed throughout this century, is likely to become even more important in the 21st century. One form is the applied research that develops when outreach programs attempt to solve community problems. Examples of such problems include contaminated water supplies, relocation of a town destroyed by a flood or tornado, or selecting a strategy for local economic development. As faculty members work with local citizens to collect and analyze information and explore the implications of possible solutions, conclusions are reached that are relevant to communities facing similar problems in the future.

Outreach service is a third way in which faculty members benefit the state through their activities as advisors, consultants and counselors. Examples include recommendations for governmental reorganization, actual counseling services or the medical services to the public that occur as faculty members help graduate student interns gain valuable practical experience in a professional setting. Faculty members may also offer advisory assistance to policy boards, professional assistance to targeted minority groups to facilitate integration, or expert testimony to public agencies. A century-long tradition continues as faculty members sometimes take leaves of absence to serve state government.

4. THE WISCONSIN IDEA WITHIN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Attempting to limit the Wisconsin Idea to the state's boundaries would only serve to constrict its future. Neither the state nor the university can ignore the reality that daily life in Wisconsin is affected by the entire world and its rapidly evolving technologies. The sources of knowledge are as international as consumer goods.

The State of Wisconsin is already participating in the international arena. In its development efforts of the past 15 years, the state has clearly recognized the need to assist Wisconsin businesses to compete in an increasingly global economy. The state currently employs experts in several foreign countries to facilitate its global commerce and attract business to the state. Throughout the second half of this century, the UW-Madison set an example for American higher education as an active participant in international research and assistance programs, directed by faculty and staff and supported by the federal government and major foundations. It has attracted international students to its campus and provided international study programs abroad for its students. All institutions within the UW System engage in similar programming.

To operate effectively in a global context, our citizens need to constantly enhance their proficiencies. A steady stream of continuing education opportunities is an absolute requisite in the years ahead so that the Wisconsin workforce, at all levels of responsibility, can achieve a competitive edge; an edge that must be maintained in the midst of constant change.

The state has a proud record of innovative governmental agencies, enterprising businesses, and unique contributory community institutions. But each of these sectors needs the vitality of continuously improving performance to stay their leadership courses. The essence of self-improvement through continuous education as embodied in the Wisconsin Idea is essential to achieving 21st century leadership in these important areas.

At the present time, the State of Wisconsin has a high percentage of well-educated citizens in government, education, and business roles, thanks to its historically strong commitment to higher education through tax dollars and private support for its public and private institutions. This sector of the population must be recognized and utilized through innovative partnerships, consortia, and cooperatives.

For its part, the university must recognize that it will play a vastly changed role from the one it played when the Wisconsin Idea was first developed. Though a leader, the UW-Madison was never the sole provider of extension and outreach education. All the campuses of the current UW System have extended this resource base and provided regional access. However, the task to keep Wisconsin a dynamically suitable place to live and work is so daunting and so vast that the total

base of the state's resources must be engaged in this effort. Each of the potential players – large and small business, government, labor, community groups, and education – must have a role.

5. RESPONDING TO EMERGING TRENDS

The university will continue to direct the major portion of its efforts to its teaching mission and its role in research. No enterprise, whether public or private, succeeds in our fast changing society without a solid, engaged research program that provides the new knowledge needed to stay on the cutting edge. This was part of the historic outreach mission and for many enterprises, the university continues to be a crucial source of new knowledge.

As the Wisconsin Idea evolves in the 21st century, new resources and talents will develop. A key tool at the disposal of these partnerships will be the seemingly endless array of new inventions. Without trying to forecast any of the specific technology of the future, it is apparent that with the technological tools already available, distance is diminishing daily as a barrier to interaction among teachers and students and, most importantly, among partners in any given enterprise.

Another key factor in Wisconsin's arsenal of resources will be the pool of human talent that exists in state agencies, businesses, and the educational sector. This is a legacy of the state's long commitment to education.

University commitment to educational programs for the 18- through 24-year old age cohort is certain to remain strong in the next century. Increasingly, however, younger students will be taking university courses before formally matriculating at the institutions. Similarly, a much larger number of adults over age 24 will remain in contact with the state's universities and other educational providers throughout their lives.

As part of this total effort, all institutions of higher education will have to devote some portions of their resources to outreach activity. Motivations will range from simple self-interest to assure the future of various academic disciplines to a commitment to enhance the lives of people located beyond the campus.

An increasing number of outreach programs are likely to be multidisciplinary. A current example of multidisciplinary outreach is the Wisconsin Area Health Education Center (AHEC), which creates partnerships between health professions education programs and Wisconsin's underserved communities. The Medical College of Wisconsin, Inc., the UW-Madison Medical School, the more than 30 nursing schools, the UW Schools of Pharmacy and Social Work, and the Physician Assistant program are all involved in the Wisconsin AHEC system.

The system has three major foci: 1) to promote health career opportunities programs in the health professions for underrepresented populations, such as rural and minority students; 2) to provide off-campus single discipline and interdisciplinary training and education experiences for health professions and students at the graduate and undergraduate levels; and 3) to provide continuing education and career ladder opportunities to health professionals practicing in underserved areas in Wisconsin, often by means of distance education.

In contrast to the 36 other states with AHEC programs, Wisconsin has a strong emphasis on multidisciplinary, community-based educational experiences. Many physicians and other health professionals are dissuaded from working in rural and urban underserved areas because they feel that working alone they cannot provide comprehensive care to a population in great need. By showing students, early in their educational experience, that comprehensive care may be provided through an interdisciplinary team, they may be more inclined to settle and practice in underserved communities.

6. SOCIETAL INFLUENCES

Broad societal influences are likely to affect the transformation of the Wisconsin Idea. Outreach leaders should be responsive to these influences and concerned with the university mission.

One fundamental influence is economic restructuring. Widespread technological and related social change is reflected in the shifting job market, supply and demand for labor, and the types of occupational tasks that people perform. Rapidly changing knowledge and skill require-



Classroom walls can be broken down with the aid of computer-assisted distance education. Audio-graphics teleconferencing permits UW-Madison Engineering Professor James Davis to teach students technical Japanese at six sites in five states (photo courtesy of Bruce Fritz).

ments place a premium on adaptability. Growing workplace requirements include learning and technology transfer.

Another influence is Wisconsin's populist political tradition that values public understanding of and participation in policy making. This tradition contributes to commitment and support for university outreach related to a person's role as a citizen, as well as a worker.

A recent trend likely to continue into the next century is quality improvement in public and private organizations. A fundamental concept is that through teamwork, employees seek ways in which to continuously improve the quality of their job performance. International competition stimulates this attention to quality.

Global interdependence also increases the importance of learning about international affairs. In Wisconsin and other midwestern states, many aspects of economic and community life reflect international influences, especially agriculture and manufacturing. Midwestern universities are increasingly cooperating with each other to enhance their contribution to the region and the world, in part through outreach activities.

Policy makers are increasingly recognizing that quality of life makes an important contribution to personal, organizational, economic, and community development. This recognition has been reinforced by social and demographic trends that have heightened attention to youth, family, diversity, equity, and the contribution of education. The trends are associated with issues such as alcohol and drug addiction, violent crime, overcrowded prisons, dysfunctional families, school drop-outs, and discrimination against minorities. Improving public understanding of these issues, including preventive as well as corrective measures, is a challenging task.

7. VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Fortunately, the commitment to university outreach, which dates back to the land grant tradition of the 1800s, is still supported by national, state, and local public policy. Private enterprise also affirms its commitment to human resource development by enabling its members to participate through released time and financial reimbursement.

The fate of the Wisconsin Idea in the 21st century is likely to depend on two key factors: one will certainly be the effectiveness of leadership demonstrated by outreach proponents; the other will be the recognition by political leadership that the combined efforts of university, private, and state agencies can offer an improved future to the citizens of Wisconsin. Leadership will depend on a shared vision that can galvanize support for the benefits of outreach. It will be necessary to consider outreach in terms of mission, scope, access, responsiveness, planning, and collaboration.

Mission – In recent years, the University of Wisconsin has moved beyond the traditional description of the triad of functions in an institution of higher education – teaching, research and service. It has begun to express its mission in terms of four interrelated functions – creating, integrating, sharing, and applying knowledge. Outreach teaching, research and service also reflect these four functions, especially in sharing and applying knowledge. As members of the university community accept the broader mission perspective, outreach will be increasingly recognized as part of the core university mission and, therefore, a valued faculty activity. A growing number of leaders in higher education are calling for an increased priority for university service/outreach to the state and nation.

Outreach activities demonstrate to the public that universities address societal needs. Recognition of this growing centrality of outreach provides a promising foundation for further strengthening the Wisconsin Idea in the coming century. Leadership on behalf of outreach can build on this foundation in several ways. Because community requests for assistance far exceed institutional capabilities to fulfill them, leadership will have to set priorities for outreach activities that fit both institutional mission and societal needs.

The UW System is currently building on all of these points through a UW Task Force on Business and Industry. Representatives from the UW System Administration, UW-Extension, and UW institutions at Madison, Milwaukee, Platteville, Stevens Point, Stout, and Whitewater serve on the task force and plans are underway to create a Business and Industry Network that will in-



The tradition of summer high school institutes continues today as these Madison East High School students participate in the Wisconsin Fast Plant Program, which provides kits of rapid-growing plants for genetic experiments (photo courtesy of Wolfgang Hoffmann, UW-Madison, Agricultural Journalism).

clude the UW institutions, representatives of the engineering programs at Milwaukee School of Engineering and Marquette University, interested state agencies, and most importantly, representatives from business organizations and trade associations.

This task force is a recent example of the outreach collaboration that has occurred throughout this century. The challenge for the Wisconsin Idea in the 21st century will be to create and sustain local partnerships at a time when international competition is ascendent. Leaders committed to the Idea will have to find new resources in a tight economy and develop new rules for collaboration.

Scope – Wisconsin faces urgent concerns in the daily problems associated with family life, health, environment, energy, aging, subcultures, science, computer literacy, cultural activities, and urban/rural relations. In the past, citizens turned to their government for total or partial responses in many of these areas. As we exit the 20th century, however, there is a strong movement which proclaims that it is time for government to get out of many of these activities. If that feeling continues, it will pose a major challenge for the Wisconsin Idea in the 21st century. It is not clear that these needs can be addressed without some state subsidy.

Scientific literacy is a good case in point. Education, business, and government leaders acknowledge that we have a real crisis in the number of young people, especially women and minorities, who are willing to pursue careers in science. In recognition of that problem, some of the most innovative outreach work with elementary and secondary education has been developed in the last decade by research scientists at universities across the land. The Center for Biology Education at the UW-Madison is but one of the outstanding examples. Its seminars on fast plants and bottle biology have captivated the attention of teachers throughout the United States and in

the United Kingdom. But as motivated and interested as elementary and secondary teachers are in learning these new techniques, they cannot afford to pay the full cost of continuing education.

Adults also need to be better informed about modern science as it affects their daily lives. We also know that efforts to improve science education cannot be developed without support from parents, voters, or people in the science or technology fields who must themselves pursue lifelong learning in science. The National Science Foundation has initiated a nationally significant project in scientific literacy by developing the NSF Institute for Science Education to be located at the UW-Madison. The institute's goals parallel the outreach rationale: educate for lifelong learning; ensure access for students and teachers from kindergarten to graduate school; encourage a nationwide community of science, mathematics, engineering, technology, and education researchers not only to strengthen scientific literacy but also to facilitate the sharing of information about successful programs. The institute is not designed exclusively to transmit knowledge from university researchers to the public, but rather to promote an active collaboration of K-12 teachers, business and industry leaders, visiting fellows from across the nation, leaders of national organizations, and UW researchers. It envisions an educational system that enables citizens to make informed decisions about the ways science, mathematics, engineering, and technology are important to their personal lives.

Family life is changing dramatically, and family needs are most likely to be met by practitioners in the helping professions and by community agencies. In many instances, university outreach can best serve families indirectly by backstopping and assisting these practitioners and agencies. Sometimes the university aids best through its research efforts. For example, the School of Family Resources and Consumer Sciences in its May 1994 report "Strategic Planning for the 21st Century" affirmed: "The School is compelled to respond to the ever-increasing pressure to ensure that research responds to the needs of the people of the state and that research is available and easily accessible to those who need it."

Many outreach programs are controversial, and it can be difficult to find an arena for suitable debate. Programs in environmental protection and energy conservation, for example, can increase public understanding of tradeoffs and support for sound policies, but they can usually do so only by challenging strongly held beliefs on many of these issues. The increase in the numbers of people who are from minority subcultures raises important social justice issues that university outreach can explore if suitable means for public dialogue can be maintained.

Quality of life can be enhanced by outreach cultural activities related to art, music, drama, dance, and literature that benefit both individual participants and the larger society. Outreach activities also can increase public understanding of intergenerational relations and the interdependence of urban and rural areas. Without advocacy, such topics tend to be neglected.

Access – Continuing professional education faces a dilemma in the future, which could, in turn, offer a productive challenge to the outreach mission. It is clear that professionals need to engage in lifelong learning. However, there is a wide disparity in the ability of professionals to pay for education. While doctors, businessmen, engineers, and lawyers may be able to finance the total cost of their continuing education, nurses, social workers, and teachers may not. In the 21st century, we ought not to look at those professions as islands unto themselves. They all contribute to a healthy societal fabric. It takes multiple resources to provide a full range of programs for all professions. For a relatively small amount of state investment and/or a sharing of the total revenues among the professional programs, the state stands to reap a very beneficial return with well-trained professionals in all sectors of society.

A continuing challenge to outreach leaders is to equalize access to educational opportunities. Open access to lifelong learning takes on special urgency in the face of the ominous trend toward a two-class society in the United States. There is optimism that outreach activities can make a positive difference by broadening the middle class through continuing education. Access to education can be improved through distance education programs that overcome barriers of time and space for prospective students, but outreach leaders should recognize that over-reliance on expensive information technology can also increase the gulf between the "haves" and the "have

nots". Past experience with government subsidies of public utilities, such as railroads, may provide valuable lessons about the benefits of investments in infrastructure. Responsive outreach programs must consider a variety of student needs, such as daycare, transportation, work, and schooling, that affect both attraction and retention of participants. These barriers can sometimes be reduced through cosponsorship.

Technology transfer to small manufacturers is an important form of access to outreach. A promising example that could become more widespread in the coming decades is the Wisconsin Technology Access Program (WisTAP). A number of the UW campuses help improve profitability for small manufacturers and technology-based companies in the state through this program. In one instance, WisTAP was credited with saving an enterprise several million dollars on its way to becoming the nation's largest manufacturer of liquid crystal displays.

Responsiveness – Another way to increase responsiveness of outreach activities is by using what we know about adult learning, needs assessment, and especially collaborative learning. Leaders can use newly acquired knowledge about the adult learning process to orient people so they can plan and conduct outreach activities that are responsive and effective. The university can draw on experts in various fields, such as adult education, communications, psychology, and education to assist in these orientations. In the coming decades, wider use of these improved teaching techniques can strengthen the planning and delivery of outreach programs and sustain the vitality of the Wisconsin Idea for the 21st century.

Planning – Effective strategic planning can strengthen the quality of outreach activities and improve the acceptance and support of stakeholders. Outreach has tended to be long on commitment and optimism and short on power and resources. This makes planning especially important. Partnerships between internal and external stakeholders can foster sound planning and commitment to implementation. Leaders who understand this will preserve time for planning, use the plans, and modify them as change becomes necessary.

Outreach activities typically occur at institutional boundaries, and this can result in instability. Outreach leaders can improve stability by using strategic planning to improve policies and organizational arrangements.

Outreach can be strengthened by broadening the range of stakeholders engaged in strategic planning and increasing their contribution to setting priorities that increase the coherence and impact of the programs. The UW Food Systems Professions project, supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, illustrates how a broad base of stakeholders can contribute to planning. The stakeholders reflect wide-ranging interests including agricultural production, nutrition and health, food processing and distribution, rural economic development and quality of life. The issues that are addressed are both rural and urban, economic and noneconomic. Many types of outreach activities are involved in the project, including Cooperative Extension (agriculture, family living, youth, and community development), continuing education (especially the health professions and food industry), and technical assistance to enterprises related to food. The challenges and opportunities facing university outreach in the coming decades warrant this type of comprehensive approach.

Collaboration – Outreach leaders should recognize the importance of many types of outreach activities, including those not provided by the University of Wisconsin. Collaboration with other outreach providers can contribute to internal strength and external service and multiply the impact of the university's activities. Other important providers include the Wisconsin Technical College System, associations, private enterprise, independent colleges, private providers, and community agencies. Improving cooperation between the university and local school districts is another major challenge.

There are many reasons why collaborative types of outreach activities should prove productive in the 21st century. Two prominent ones are the multiplier effect that can occur when several partners contribute, and the impetus for application when the various partners derive a sense of ownership. Cooperation is also valuable when outreach activities occur in a fast-changing field such as the biological sciences. Revolutionary advancements in this multifaceted field affect

food, health, education, economics, and the environment. Many parts of the university and many of its outreach partners are affected and can benefit from effective collaboration.

The School of Family Resources and Consumer Sciences addresses family life education related to nutrition and health in the schools, technical colleges, UW- Extension, and private enterprise. This is one example where a strong outreach mission benefits the public, as well as resident instruction and research. Another is the UW-Madison Department of Family Medicine's Health Education and Research Trial, or HEART Project, that focuses on prevention to reduce cardiovascular illness. Partners in this effort include individual patients, health care professionals, primary care practices, the university, and various health-related agencies and associations. Each has a stake in prevention, and their concerted effort is likely to increase the benefits while sharing the costs.

Outreach leaders can build on grouping experience with collaborative activities in several ways. One is to learn, both from successes and failures, and to develop guidelines to strengthen future partnerships. Another is to recognize the distinctive contributions that various partners can make, so that a multiplier effect is achieved. A third is to increase application, impact, and benefits of outreach activities.

8. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO STAKEHOLDERS

An attractive feature of the Wisconsin Idea, as it advances into the 21st century, is that all its stakeholders can benefit. With various forms of outreach teaching, research, and service, there are many stakeholders. Continuing education participants can achieve enhanced proficiency and well-being. Family members can enjoy improved quality of life. Organizations, including state and local government, hospitals, school systems, private enterprise, community agencies, and associations can increase their productivity, effectiveness, and member advancement. Local communities and neighborhoods can strengthen community problem solving. The people of the state can improve overall productivity and quality of life. Universities can increase societal support. Colleges and departments can engage in mutually beneficial interactions with their constituencies. Faculty members and students can engage in two-way exchanges and mutual learning. The coming century will bring many unanticipated challenges and opportunities. The Wisconsin Idea continues to provide promising ways in which partnerships between the university and the people of the state can serve us all.
