

## **PERSONAL THOUGHTS AND RECOLLECTIONS: HUMBOLDT STATE**

### **THE ERA OF PRESIDENT GIST: The World War II and Post-War Years**

HOMER P. BALABANIS, *Faculty Emeritus*

#### **War Time Developments**

World War II, in which the United States was involved, affected adversely both the size of student enrollment as well as the faculty. Many of the men students joined the armed forces, until the enrollment reached the low level of 162, in the fall of 1943. Humboldt now became a women's college. With the dropping of student enrollment, many male members of the faculty, both in response to the lesser need for their services on the campus, and the greater need of trained personnel in the armed forces or in the government service, obtained leaves of absence and enlisted, or offered their services to the Government. In 1942-43 I found myself working as an economist in the office of Price Administration in Washington D.C., and at the State Department the following year.

A lookout station was built on top of the old cafeteria, on the site now occupied by the Engineering Building, and was manned by the faculty twenty-four hours a day to warn the people and authorities of possible Japanese air attack. Also to guard the Founders Hall from being used as landmark by Japanese planes, the Hall was camouflaged green.

A United States Navy Air Base and Experimental Fog Dispensing Station were built and manned during the War at what is now the Arcata-Eureka airport, and under the auspices of local Navy officers two commando courses, Navy V1 and V5 were introduced at Humboldt. Professor

Maurice Hicklin, a former Army officer, offered a Rifle Range course.

President Gist had always taken pleasure in keeping in touch with students in the era of close college personal relationships, and often he would go to the "co-op" for a cup of coffee and visit with them. Now, with the low tempo of activity on the campus, he devoted more and more of his time to corresponding with our students in the armed forces by means of post cards, letters and a news bulletin reporting on the life of the institution.

War's end marked the sudden inflow of many veterans (around 200 by 1947) and of other students, so that by 1946 student enrollment jumped to 624 and by 1947 to 750. The old faculty returned to the campus, new teachers were hired to take care of the increased enrollment, and each year the instructional program was expanded in both the Teacher Education and Liberal Arts fields. By 1947, we were also authorized to offer graduate work leading to teaching credentials. By the closing of the Gist administration, the 1949-50 catalog listed: (p. 38) seven curricula leading to the General Secondary Credential; five leading to the Special Secondary Credential; three curricula leading to the Administration and Supervision Credential; three leading to the Elementary Credential; eighteen programs leading to the A.B. degree in Liberal Arts; five leading to the B.S. degree; and many two-year vocational or university preparatory programs. Around fifty faculty members were employed.

## Administrative Organization

The year 1946 saw the implementation of an administrative organization for all the State Colleges which established three key positions, of General Education, Dean of Professional Education, and Dean of Students. Now, in addition to my functions as Vice President and Professor of Economics I was appointed to the position designated by the State for the Dean of General Education, but in view of the fact that we now offered a great variety of liberal-arts curricula and a large number of our students were not working for credentials, the President approved my title as Dean of Arts and Science. Dr. Ivan Milhous, who had recently joined the faculty from Monmouth College, was appointed Dean of Professional Education, in charge of teacher-education and credential programs, and Dr. Kenneth Bailey was appointed as Acting Dean of Students. Dr. Eugenia C. Loder succeeded Monica Hadley as Dean of Women. Mrs. Hadley had served for a number of years as Professor of Physical Education for women as well as Dean of Women. George Murphy acted as the Dean of Men, and Harry E. Griffith took the position of Principal of the College Elementary School.

Following my new appointment, I undertook to work out a functional organization of the Liberal-Arts instructional program by grouping related curricula under five Instructional Divisions. I recommended the plan to President Gist, and he accepted it only reluctantly because he was desirous of maintaining his direct command over the individual faculty members; but I convinced him that the lines of communications with the faculty would remain unimpaired.

Each Division was to be administered by a Chairman, appointed with the approval of the President, directly responsible to the Dean of Arts and Sciences. The five Divisions would constitute a "School" of Arts and Sciences.

The Division of Fine and Applied Arts, embracing Art, Music, Home Economics and Industrial Arts, chaired by Don Karshner.

The Division of Health and Physical Education, including Athletics, chaired by Joseph Forbes.

The Division of Language and Literature, including Foreign Languages, chaired by Maurice Hicklin.

The Division of Natural Sciences, embracing Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering, chaired by Harry MacGinitie.

The Division of Social Sciences serving Business, Economics, Geography, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology,

chaired by Kenneth Bailey, to be succeeded the following year by Hyman Palais.

Later, a sixth Division organized to serve Game Management, Fisheries and Forestry, chaired by Charles Yocom.

Dr. Milhous, the Dean of the "School" of Education had working under him, the Director of Elementary Education, the Director of Secondary Education, and the Principal of the College Elementary School, serving the entire Teacher-Education program.

Leonard Christensen, who succeeded Kenneth Bailey as the Dean of Students, now Dean of Personnel and Guidance, supervised the work of Dean of Men, Dean of Women, the Registrar's office, the Student Health unit, the dormitories and athletics.

Mrs. Helen Everett, the Librarian and her assistants were in charge of the library services. Mrs. Everett, now retired, has given many years of devoted and efficient service to the institution, and she is the best qualified to report on library developments. During her career at Humboldt the library moved to three buildings.

This was the organization of the academic life of the institution when President Cornelius Siemens took over in 1950.

## Student Housing

Up to 1946 Nelson Hall was the only student residence on the campus. In that year, Dean Bailey, a dynamic and resourceful man with prodigious physical and mental energy, undertook to meet the new and acute need for student housing, especially for veterans.

In cooperation with the federal government, Dean Bailey proceeded to procure an army barracks, had it set up on the site now occupied by the Wildlife Building, and had it remodeled to provide rooms for students and a recreation lounge. This was the original Redwood Hall. He was also able to procure a number of house trailers and establish the Humboldt Village to house married veterans on a lot southwest of the College Elementary School. Shortly thereafter the house, formerly belonging to Reese Wiley, across from Nelson Hall, was converted into the Varsity House to accommodate, primarily, student athletes.

The October 1975 issue of the *Lumberjack* reported that 173 students were living in the Humboldt Village. It also reported that plans were under way to convert the space occupied by the Village to a parking lot in three years--always to make room for a parking lot. A wrong conception

of progress. This past summer work began to establish an all-weather sports facility.

Nelson Hall, which had been operated by the Humboldt State Teacher College Improvement Association, now came to be administered by the College.

Dean Bailey also obtained gifts of lumber from local firms, and with the assistance of faculty, students, and the College maintenance staff, built the stands on the east side of the football field. The field was named Redwood Bowl.

### Financial Problems

The sharp increase in student enrollment, the hiring of new faculty, and, on the whole, the crash program undertaken to meet new needs, created embarrassing financial difficulties for the institution and for its President.

President Gist had little interest in fiscal affairs, leaving budget making and the administration of the finances of the college in the hands of his financial secretary. During the 1946-1947 academic year, Mrs. Woodcock, probably due to some difficulties with the President, left her job, and Mr. Gist appointed a Mr. Tinsley, a man of limited experience and talent to succeed Mrs. Woodcock. Within six months, the President recalled Mrs. Woodcock and named her as College Comptroller. According to the President, Mr. Tinsley "was unable to cope with the rapid growth of the school." In extenuation of Mr. Tinsley's record, one must note that he was to carry a heavy load "in the middle of the stream."

In November 1947 President Gist sent Mrs. Woodcock and me to Sacramento to attempt to raise funds in order to clear the deficits accumulated during 1946-1947 fiscal year. Up to that time I had no managerial responsibility for state finance. When we presented our needs to the Departments of Education and Finance, the latter, after long deliberations, offered to help us only on condition that some action was taken by the Department of Education establishing new controls for the future. Thereupon Superintendent Simpson, Dr. Aubrey Douglass, Associate Superintendent, and Dr. Joel Burkman, Assistant Chief of the Division of State Colleges, met with me and asked me to assume responsibility "for the internal administration of the College budget, especially as it affected the instructional program." Reluctantly, I accepted, and both Mrs. Woodcock and I promised that we would do all we could to live within our budget and to effectuate all possible economies. This was accomplished in the years following.

When this arrangement was reported to Finance, an emergency appropriation was approved to cover all the bills were presented. However, when we returned to the campus, other unpaid bills were discovered. In the days following, Dr. Douglass, Dr. Burkman, and their assistants came to the campus to clear the financial affairs that were criticized in the State Auditor's report.

The President was notified of the arrangement. Obviously he was not happy about it. To confirm the plan, on January 22, 1948, Mr. Gist, Mrs. Woodcock and I met in Mr. Simpson's office, and a document was drawn up and agreed upon defining the responsibilities of each one of us. The use and maintenance of state property were left outside of my province. In letters that followed, I was specifically instructed to initial documents that had my approval, documents "ordinarily signed by the President." Further, the latter was asked to make this plan known to the faculty and other employees of the College "so that motives and actions of no one will be misunderstood."

This arrangement was in effect until November 1, 1949, when I was appointed Acting President.

Apparently the faculty understood the problem and were in accord with my new role, for on November 22, 1949, Dr. Douglass wrote me that he was informed "that the affairs of the College are running well. I have also been assured that you have the support not of a few members of the faculty, but of all of them."

By accepting the assignment discussed above, I placed myself in an awkward and trying position. Viewed in retrospect, I should have refused to assume responsibilities which the President must have interpreted as infringing upon his prerogatives, for, logically, the President as the chief executive had the right of final decision in all matters affecting the institution. But in that crisis I judged that I was acting for the welfare of the institution, and there seemed to be no other way, especially when the new controls were required as a condition for approving the College budgets. For all this extra work, I received no extra pay.

### Work Accomplished

Meanwhile there was work to be done and the College Comptroller and I undertook to clear the deck. The Report of Examination of the Books and Records of Account of Humboldt State College for the period of August 1947, to August 31, 1948, was still critical of a number of practices, but it noted that "improvement was observed in the administration of most business activities and the accounting of financial transactions during the

period under review...In contrast to the preceding period, regular reconciliations of resources with accountability were made."

Subsequent Auditors reports for the period of September 1, 1948, to January 31, 1950, called attention to some remaining deficiencies, but I was pleased to read: "The administration of financial transactions and the condition of the accounting records were found to be more satisfactory than in the period covered by the preceding examination...Our review indicated a greater degree of compliance with state fiscal procedures...thus providing a more accurate basis for recording financial transactions."

To comment on the auditors reports, one must say that, philosophically, the administration of the resources of an educational institution by academic personnel cannot in all respects be compatible with the standards of the auditors in the Department of Finance. College administrators are more liberal in their interpretation of state regulations and more flexible in their implementation than state technicians. Although, of course, accountable for the overall management of the institution, academicians conceive their primary function to educate, and in the process, at times, they risk criticism on what they consider minor details, in order to serve a higher purpose. I hasten to recognize however the value of factual auditing considering the dangers inherent in the expenditures of public funds.

### **College Budgets for the Period**

Our 1948-1949 budget proposed the expenditure of \$447,102 to serve an estimated enrollment of 750 F.T.E. Actual enrollment for the period reached 673 giving us 41.8 teachers on a ratio of 16 to 1. For 1949-1950 we asked \$488,631 to serve 782 F.T.E. Actual enrollment for that year reached only 700 F.T.E. (we have always been over optimistic) giving us 43.8 teachers on a ratio of 16 to 1.

For 1950-51, the last budget for which I shared responsibility in preparing, this time as Acting President, we asked \$552,030 to serve 750 F.T.E. The Department of finance reduced it to \$503,480 which was recommended in the Governor's budget, giving us 43.8 teachers on a ratio of 17 to 1, now required by Finance.

As long as we were the smallest state college in terms of student enrollment among the eight state colleges then in operation, our per capita cost was the highest, and we had to be conservative. It was

particularly difficult to justify appropriations for the College Elementary School, because, as explained before, such schools did not function on every state college campus.

### **The First Master Plan**

Around the middle of December 1949, when I was at Superintendent Simpson's office, I was surprised to see on his desk a stack of master plans submitted by all the other colleges, but not one from Humboldt. I knew nothing about such plans, and I felt indignant that the Department of Education had failed to advise me about this important matter, especially when I was now serving as an Acting President. Later I found a carbon copy of a statement, dated March 17, 1949, obviously prepared by the President, which listed "proposed suitable buildings to house the instructional units," and a letter dated June 21, 1949, addressed to Mr. Gist by Ruel F. Taylor, College Plant Adviser, attached to the Department of Education, in which Mr. Taylor repeated the list, and offered clarifications. Neither of these communications reached Superintendent Simpson. At least that is what he told me. It is possible that the President's illness was responsible for the breakdown.

The deadline for approving the Master Plans by Education was December 12, and already it was past this date. So I asked the Superintendent to give me time to return to Arcata and to prepare a plan. He agreed. I rushed back, called a meeting of our Registrar, Mrs. McKittrick, upon whose judgment I relied a lot, of the Division Chairmen, and of the other officers, and we worked out a Master Plan, listing our needs for major construction.

I rushed back to Sacramento, worked with Mr. Taylor and three members of the Division of Architecture, who examined the need for each proposed project and assigned cost estimates to each project. In the final document, the footage of some projects was reduced, of others was augmented, a swimming pool was added, the marine station was deleted, but on the whole our plan was changed but little.

On December 16, I presented the amended Master Plan, covering thirteen pages of cost data -the first one in the history of Humboldt - to Mr. Simpson. With his permission, I pre-dated the document as of December 12, 1949, and he approved it the same day. It appears on the next page.

*College*

# HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

## Minor Construction and Improvements

### MASTER PLAN - MAJOR CONSTRUCTION

*Estimates submitted to the Department of Education and approved December 12, 1949.*

#### Financial Summary

Fine and Applied Arts Building and Auditorium	\$876,000
Site Development and Utilities	443,000
Wildlife Building	190,000
Cafeteria and Student Activity Building	484,000
Swimming Pool	135,000
Addition to Science Building	339,500
Gymnasium	706,600
Health Service Building	79,500
Metal and Industrial Shops Building	144,000
Administration Building	211,000
Completing Elementary School Building	46,000
<b>Total Outlay</b>	<b>\$3,654,800</b>

Our Master Plan was included in the composite report compiled by Department of Education listing the major construction needs of all the California State Colleges and attaching a priority to each project. Our site development project received priority 11; the Fine and Applied Arts Building 59; others lower priority. On the whole, the report listed 163 projects. In the years that followed this composite Master Plan served as a basis for budgetary appropriations.

During World War II, actual expenditures for maintenance and improvements on the campus were narrowly limited, because all available labor and materials were to be used in the prosecution of the war. Therefore, the campus suffered from gradual deterioration. During the period various sums had been appropriated for a number of deferred maintenance projects and these sums were transferred to the State Division of Architecture that controlled construction projects. On May 12, 1948, I wrote a letter to Dr. Burkman asking for supplementary funds to complete a number of maintenance projects, because by that time the increased cost of construction had rendered the funds already appropriated insufficient to complete these projects.

At his request we made a survey of the physical plant, the athletic field and the grounds to determine the work necessary to bring them up to a proper standard of maintenance. All these projects were to be described and justified, cost estimates verified by the Division of Architecture, and forwarded to the Department of Education for their approval.

Although the supervision and maintenance operations were in the hands of the Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, since the Department of Education looked to me for controlling the finances of the College, I became deeply involved and had to serve as the link between the College and the Division of Architecture. Here again division of responsibility created difficulties.

I proceeded to canvass our needs, and on June 4, 1948, I submitted a report to Dr. Burkman, listing twenty-seven projects at the total cost of \$38,288. The list was approved. Subsequently, several other projects, particularly those dealing with improvements and lighting of the athletic field were submitted and approved.

Armed with a number of "horror" photographs furnished me by Dr. MacGinitie depicting the decaying conditions on the campus, I went to see Mr. P. T. Poague, Assistant State Architect, and in the ensuing weeks he and his assistant John Moore and I held several meetings to evaluate our projects. I must add at this point that, perhaps because I was carrying a burden that was not my responsibility, all officers of the Department of Education, especially Dr. Burkman as well as Mr. Poague, were extremely cooperative and helpful. Also, through this entire period Mrs. Woodcock and her assistant Eugene Flocchini, now Associate Business Manager, worked tirelessly and diligently in compiling data and preparing documents.

Through the cooperation of the Sacramento authorities, almost all the projects we submitted were carried out to completion. Still there were many deficiencies which caught the eye of President Siemens when he and Dr. Douglass surveyed the campus shortly after Dr. Siemens' appointment as President.

### **Dr. Balabanis Becomes Acting President**

Toward the end of October 1949, Mrs. Arthur Gist, wife of the President, notified the State Superintendent that President Gist had suffered a serious illness and would be unable to carry out his duties for awhile. On November 1, I received a wire from Mr. Simpson asking me to assume duties as Acting President during the President's absence. I wired back my acceptance, called a meeting of the faculty and announced Mr. Simpson's decision. As I recall, the faculty readily accepted my new status, and cooperated fully. Now I had more freedom in decision making; still after Mr. Gist came home from the hospital, I would visit him often, keeping him in touch with day-to-day developments and asking for his counsel. He was friendly and cooperative.

A month passed and I received a letter from Dr. Burkman who wrote: "I have reason practically every day to appreciate the fact that you are now in administrative charge of the College." An atmosphere of good will seemed to prevail on the campus.

At the beginning of 1950, President Gist announced his intention to retire at the end of the 1949-50 academic year. On March 3, 1950, in a memorandum to the faculty he announced his return to the office, with the concluding sentence: "It is my hope to conclude my twenty years of service at Humboldt State in an atmosphere of peace and good will among us." And he did.

On February 7, Dr. William Lanphere, Professor of Botany and currently President of the Association of California State College Instructors, then the only organization of the state college teaching faculties, wrote to Superintendent Simpson, asking him whether the Humboldt faculty would participate in the selection of the new President. The latter suggested that a "faculty group review the criteria for the selection of a President of a state college which was prepared by a committee from the Fresno State College faculty" when a President for that institution was to be selected. "I am enclosing," said Mr. Simpson, "a copy of the criteria and suggest that you review it, make any suggestions or additions that occur to you, and pass them along to me for our evaluation."

In the process Dr. Lanphere canvassed the faculty with respect to my possible candidacy for the presidency, and told me that the faculty by more than three-fourths majority favored my appointment. The information went to Mr. Simpson. How accurate this poll was, I do not know.

Soon many business and professional people and some organizations wrote recommending me to Mr. Simpson and a delegation from the College Improvement Association, the forerunner of the present Advisory Board, along with Senator Arthur Way of this district met with Mr. Simpson and supported me for the Presidency. I am fairly certain that the attitude of President Gist, and of his friend, Don O'Kane, publisher of a Eureka newspaper, toward me was negative.

Those were the days, however, when the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Director of Education, which meant Director of the State College System, held that the selection and appointment of a College President was his sole and special prerogative. Also up to this time, the state colleges, which now are liberal arts colleges, were still considered as adjuncts to the public school system, training teachers for the system, and no one who did not have his doctorate in Education could be a suitable choice for a state college president.

Mr. Simpson's reply to me was: "I want again to express to you my thanks and of the entire State Department of Education, as well as the community in which you are located for the excellent manner in which you have conducted the affairs of the College during the absence of President Gist."....but he then added: "Many issues that have been under consideration at Humboldt State College during the past years impell me to say...we should go outside when we secure a replacement for President Gist."

Thus ended the career of Arthur Gist. He and his family moved to Piedmont, California, and not long afterward he died. Mrs. Gist and her daughter and family still live at Piedmont.

The first decade of the Gist administration, when the College was small, the faculty numbered between thirty and thirty-five members, and everybody knew everybody else, though we worked with very limited resources, we felt as one big family pursuing a common end. The President made it his job to keep in close touch with all students and all faculty members, and Mrs. Gist, a beautiful, kind, and gracious lady, went out of her way to assist and to make friends with the faculty families. Often the President and I would meet at his house to play backgammon while discussing college affairs.

Basically, President Gist was a good man, and those were happy years. But when the College grew, problems became more complicated, and relations became less personal, the President must have felt either somewhat inadequate, or saw his ideal vanishing. His ideal was "our small, friendly college"; and, especially after 1946, the college was neither small, nor as friendly. He must have sensed that he was losing his former intimate control, and that made him defensive and suspicious. He was particularly suspicious of the growth of the liberal arts program and of its faculty, as undermining the

main function of Humboldt State College, that is, Teacher Education, a field that was the President's specialty.

It is unfortunate that the last three years of his presidency should have been trying years for him and for others. But the time had come when the institution needed a man of the caliber, energy and dynamism of President Siemens to work for its growth and to put it on the road to university status.

This has been the history of Humboldt. Each new President found a new task facing him.