

## CHAPTER ONE

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# THE MILITARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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This chapter traces the principal evolving relationships between the U.S. military and U.S. higher education, beginning with the Morrill Act of 1862. The impact of military-sponsored research and development on U.S. higher education is discussed, with particular attention to the World War II and post-World War II eras. The chapter also explores the impact of consecutive GI Bill programs on individuals and society, as well as the influence of student veterans on colleges and universities and on higher education as a social institution.

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### The First Morrill Act and Military Training

Government land grants for U.S. higher education did not begin with the first Morrill Act; however, the 1862 Morrill Act provided impetus to agricultural and technical education. The “M” in the “A&M” colleges founded with funds derived from 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act land and warrant sales provided needed education in mechanics, mining, and military education, while the “A” provided the opportunity for scientific instruction in agriculture.

Higher education in the United States, including provision for military education, was a beneficiary as a *secondary* consideration in major national



legislation involving the sale and settlement plans for large expanses of western lands as part of the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 (Key, 1996). The U.S. government devised a sophisticated formula for a partnership with each state in the sale of lands, with proceeds designated for each state to teach “agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and professional education of the industrial classes” (Williams, 1991, p. 12). Although this was a significant event for higher education, the foremost concern of the first Morrill Land-Grant was orderly sale and settlement of land. The educational provisions were incorporated in deference to Senator Justin Morrill’s long and persuasive advocacy. A further irony of the landmark legislation was that it had been stalled in Congress and by two presidents between 1850 and 1861, in large part due to strong objections by senators and congressmen from states in the South. The secession of these states from the Union negated the congressional voting power of this Southern bloc and thus allowed the Land-Grant Act finally to gain Congressional approval. At the same time, this turn of events in combination with the outbreak of the Civil War meant that the educational provisions were obscured by the national war effort and hence were essentially dormant until the end of the war in 1865.

When Justin Morrill introduced his bill in the House of Representatives on December 16, 1861, Ulysses S. Grant had not yet won the battles at Forts Henry and Donelson. George McClellan was still building his grand army (a showpiece organization he was reluctant to test in battle). By the time President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act into law on July 2, 1862, the massive Shiloh battle was recent history and the newly appointed commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee, had pushed George McClellan away from Richmond, Virginia. From Washington’s perspective, the war news was not good (Eddy, 1957).

Due in part to the superior military skill of generals and officers in the Confederate army, defeats suffered by Union forces in 1861 and 1862 led to post hoc speculation that perhaps one aim of the Morrill Act was to offset the defection of numerous West Point graduates to leadership roles in the Confederate States of America military service. This has dubious historical plausibility because it suggests that there was a long-planned move by active duty officers in the U.S. Army to change allegiance. The tenets of the proposed land-grant legislation had been in place for years prior to the outbreak of war in 1861. Furthermore, the situation was not merely one in which all U.S. officers with roots and family in Southern states declared for states’ rights. Equally important to note was the reverse, such as rising



U.S. officer General George H. Thomas of Virginia, who sacrificed his land holdings, family, and state heritage with a thoughtful, deliberate decision to remain willfully and loyally an active duty commissioned officer in the Union army. Besides, since the early nineteenth century, privately owned military academies had been a staple of the educational landscape in all regions of the young United States, separate from the federally chartered academies at West Point and Annapolis. In sum, there is little evidence to suggest that Senator Morrill or anyone else regarded the military education provisions of the Land-Grant Act as a means to counteract what would be a future loss of military talent to a yet nonexistent Confederate States of America.

Although the notion of agricultural and mechanical education might have been new at that time, the idea of endowing enterprises with public lands was not. Congress had made federal land grants to improve the land, to compensate soldiers, to encourage frontier settlement, and to support education. By 1862, Congress had given land grants to fund construction canals, highways, and railroads. Revolutionary War soldiers had received land grants in compensation for their service to the nation. Congress made section and township grants for common schools and state universities (Edmond, 1978). By 1857, governments at all levels had distributed more than six million acres for educational institutions (Williams, 1991). Furthermore, the first Morrill Land-Grant Act was not the largest distribution of land Congress had made. In an 1873 address to the National Education Association, future Penn State University president George Atherton noted that since 1859, Congress had given railroads 186 million acres compared with 17.4 million acres distributed for colleges and universities under the 1862 Morrill Act (Williams, 1991).

The “proportional or quantity grant” established by the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act was a new type not used in previous U.S. public land distributions. The states were to receive land grants based on the size of their congressional delegations, and the more populous states received proportionately more land. Each state received 30,000 acres in land or land scrip for each member of Congress from that state. States without public land available for grants were given transferable certificates, called land scrip, for public land in other states. Each state was then to sell the land or land scrip and use the proceeds to endow an agricultural and mechanical college. No state in rebellion against the central government could receive a land grant (Williams, 1991). This provision changed in 1890 with the passage of the second Morrill Act in which each state previously excluded

from the legislation received funding plus the option to maintain racially segregated land-grant institutions on the condition that the state establish a historically White and a historically Black land-grant college. This meant that a southern stretch of 15 states, ranging from Delaware to Oklahoma, gained inclusion in the network of state land-grant institutions (Thelin, 2004).

Although the federal government distributed 17,430,000 acres of land under the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act, most of that land was in the states west of the Mississippi River. Of the states east of the Mississippi, only Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin had any public land remaining in 1862. Congress authorized land scrip, or “land procurement certificates,” for distribution to states without public lands. These states could not hold titles to land in other states, but individuals who bought the land scrip could purchase federal land wherever it was available. Generally, a state’s governor appointed a commission to advertise and receive bids for the sale of land scrip, and the purchasers were usually “private citizens or land companies that dealt in large blocks of scrip” (Williams, 1991, p. 46). Each state had to accept its grant within two years and establish its college within five years, so states were under pressure to sell their land and land scrip quickly (Williams, 1991).

Congress effectively depressed the value of the 1862 Morrill Act land grants by passing the 1862 Homestead Act, which transferred approximately 234 million acres of public land to private ownership—at 160 acres per individual homesteader—free of charge (Edmond, 1978). Consequently, the total sales of 1862 Morrill Act land and land scrip raised only \$7,545,405 (approximately \$164,844,463 in 2010 dollars), slightly less than 35 percent of what was expected. In total, the 17,430,000 acres of Morrill Act land grants raised an average of 43 cents per acre (approximately \$9.40 per acre in 2010 dollars) (Williams, 1991). However, a surplus of land was not the only thing that drove down the state A&M colleges’ total endowments. Negligence, speculation, and corruption contributed to the poor return on Congress’s gift to higher education.

The landmark legislation did not lead to immediate success in enrolling or educating students. For example, 1890 enrollments at most of the land-grant colleges in the Midwest were 1,000 to 2,000 students at most, often lower than those of “small” liberal arts colleges in the Northeast (Axtell, 1971). Nor did the explicit curricular provisions such as agriculture and military education gain widespread favor among undergraduates. Mandatory military training required of all male students at land-grant colleges was universal, but not universally appreciated.



In his 1934 memoir, James Thurber, a humorist who wrote for *The New Yorker*, described his military training experience as a freshman at Ohio State University during World War I:

Ohio State was a land-grant university and therefore two years of military drill was compulsory. We drilled with old Springfield rifles and studied the tactics of the Civil War even though the World War was going on at the time. At eleven o'clock each morning thousands of freshmen and sophomores used to deploy over the campus, moodily creeping up on the old chemistry building. It was good training for the kind of warfare that was waged at Shiloh but it had no connection with what was going on in Europe. Some people used to think that there was German money behind it, but they didn't dare say so or they would have been thrown in jail as German spies. It was a period of muddy thought and marked, I believe, the decline of higher education in the Middle West. (Thurber, 1934/1958, pp. 439–440)

Thurber, of course, was not necessarily the typical student of his era. Despite the snags and problems he observed, the required military training persisted as an enduring feature of state land-grant education well into the mid-twentieth century. Thurber made an invaluable point about a problem in any campus-based program of professional training: without state-of-the-art instruction and equipment, future leaders (whether army officers or engineers) would not be optimally prepared for new demands of decision making. Discarded Springfield rifles had no place in the education of officers in the armed services of the twentieth century.

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## Post-Morrill Act Military-Related Activity at Colleges and Universities

The range of collaborations between the military and institutions of higher education have included ROTC programs and sponsored research and development. In addition, military service and sacrifice have been memorialized in various ways on university campuses.

### Reserve Officers' Training Corps

The U.S. Government initially established a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in 1916 to provide Reserve Army commissions to male students who completed prescribed courses of military study at universities and colleges, including, but not limited to, 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act





institutions (U.S. Army Cadet Command, n.d.). The U.S. Navy created a Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps (NROTC) in 1926 that offered male university and college students opportunities to obtain Reserve commissions in the Navy or, beginning in 1932, the U.S. Marine Corps (NROTC, 2011a). The Army Air Service created Air ROTC units at seven universities beginning in 1920, which lasted until 1932, when funding problems forced the programs to be abolished (U.S. Air Force ROTC [AFROTC], 2011b). The AFROTC was created after the U.S. Air Force was established from the U.S. Army Air Force in 1946 (AFROTC, 2011b). The U.S. Coast Guard does not offer ROTC (U.S. Coast Guard, n.d.).

In fiscal year 2009, ROTC programs provided 30 percent of the newly commissioned active duty officers in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force combined (U.S. Department of Defense, 2010). The development of ROTC programs is a good example of a mutually satisfactory "great American compromise." ROTC programs' reliance on established colleges and universities to educate students for commissioned officer status has satisfied the demand for a military leadership closely associated with civil society; this is distinguished from the approach in nations with closed military oligarchies and, all the while, provides reasonable assurance for national defense that remains fluid and not crystallized.

**World War I.** The United States' entry into World War I in April 1917, and the institution of the military draft in May 1917, accelerated a decline in male higher education enrollment that began before the United States declared war against Germany. Decreased enrollment in colleges and universities created fear in the academy of institutional closings (Levine, 1987). In response to the concerns that the higher education establishment conveyed to President Woodrow Wilson and the Congress, the federal government created a series of War Department training units on campuses throughout the United States. Initiated in May 1918, the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) established training units at 525 universities and colleges, which were "full-time army training facilities . . . [that enlisted] more than 140,000 male students" into the U.S. Army on October 1, 1918 in "simultaneous ceremonies at 525 colleges" (Levine, 1987, pp. 27–28.) The November 11, 1918 Armistice ended this brief experiment of partnership between the colleges and the military before its military efficacy could be tested in combat (Levine, 1987).

**World War II.** U.S. universities and colleges were mobilized to assist the war effort during World War II. Buildings and grounds became War





and Navy Department facilities for technical training of soldiers, sailors, and airmen. Dormitories, lecture halls, laboratories, gymnasia, dining halls, and athletic fields provided the necessary space, structures, and equipment for these new programs and nontraditional students. The U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Air Corps trained service members on college and university campuses through the Army Air Corps Air Crew Training Program, the Army Specialized Training Program, and the Army Specialized Training Reserve Program. Partnerships between the U.S. Navy and higher education included temporary wartime programs, such as the V-5 (Aviation Cadet Pilot Training Program), V-7 (Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School), and V-12 (Navy College Training Program). The V-12 program included 131 U.S. colleges and universities, and from April 1943 to June 1946, producing more than 60,000 Navy and Marine Corps officers (Cardozier, 1993).

### Monuments and Memorials

In her book *This Republic of Suffering*, historian Drew Gilpin Faust (2008) quoted a Confederate enlisted soldier from Texas on the subject of monuments and memorials to combatants killed in action during the Civil War: "The officers get the honor . . . you get nothing. They get a monument, you get a hole in the ground and no coffin" (p. 80). In the post-Civil War era, universities and colleges in the North and the South often named buildings after prominent Civil War officers. For example, the University of Kentucky's (UK) Buell Armory is named for Union General Don Carlos Buell (University of Kentucky, n.d.). Furthermore, some institutions were named for favored sons, such as Washington and Lee University, which honors George Washington and Robert E. Lee (Washington and Lee University, n.d.). Yet the common soldier's contribution to the Civil War remained unmarked in higher education, with the exception of a few monuments, such as Harvard University's Soldiers Field, which was dedicated in 1890 to memorialize six friends of the land's donor, Civil War veteran Henry Lee Higginson (Hannon, 2005).

Prior to World War I, the historic colleges of the Northeast tended to dominate the national rankings and media coverage of intercollegiate football. After World War I, however, there was a discernible geographic and demographic shift westward in support of local teams by spectators, donors, students, and college officials. The emergent large state universities of the Midwest, especially members of the Big Ten Conference, seized the opportunity to combine honoring veterans with the construction of new, large sports facilities.





At the University of Illinois, for example, patriotic rhetoric was fused with state pride and historic memory. A fundraising booklet published for the new campus stadium cautioned readers and prospective donors, “Lest we forget those Illini who died in the war” (University of Illinois Athletic Association, 1921, p. 25). Among the thousands of Illini students and alumni who were World War I veterans, special attention was bestowed on the 183 who died in military service. The fundraising brochure emphasized that “the spirit that sent them into action, the spirit which brought 183 of them forever out of our vision and understanding, is still with us. It is a living thing, and the Stadium will exist to keep that living thing before the eyes of future generations, of the hundreds of future generations who will walk through its archways, sit in its seats and move strenuously on its fields” (University of Illinois Athletic Association, 1921, p. 25). During the 1920s, there were variations on this theme and related initiatives at several state universities, especially as college sports and national service became indelibly linked with state boosterism for public higher education (Thelin, 2004).

The large number of campus facilities named to honor World War I veterans and alumni was due in part to timing and opportunity. State universities, especially those in the Midwest, were growing and were pre-disposed to construct new buildings and stadia. Most of these universities were located in rural areas and had abundant land that provided inexpensive sites for large memorials. After World War II, colleges and universities continued the tradition of honoring veterans through memorials, but often these were supplements and upgrades to the incumbent memorial buildings constructed in the 1920s. Yet there are relatively few memorials on college campuses for veterans of the Korean War, perhaps due in part to its official status as a “police action” and its proximity to World War II. In the case of the Vietnam War, the lack of support for the war, especially in higher education communities, fostered an atmosphere of contention or opposition that dispelled any patriotic monuments comparable to those created after World Wars I and II. Indeed, national service of any sort tended to be trumped by philanthropy as a new generation of campus buildings immortalized major donors rather than soldiers and statesmen.

### **Military-Sponsored Research and Development**

Starting in the early nineteenth century, U.S. colleges and universities demonstrated—and hosted—a substantial and historically enduring overlap of military education with the professional education of skilled, trained engineers. Military instruction, including that offered at colleges and





universities, incorporated mathematics, such as trigonometry and algebra, for application to surveying, cartography, and artillery, and eventually to engineering (Cipolla, 1969). Additionally, the United States found in its military ranks a readily available source of dedicated expertise to design and build bridges, canals, forts, dams, and other parts of a growing infrastructure that would help realize the creation of what was called “The American System” (Baxter, 1995). The demand for technically skilled engineers in that era represented a national need for a “public good” that could best be provided by a substantial national and public entity such as the military, rather than by a fragmented and uneven private enterprise.

Engineering as part of campus-based military education for future officers also was fortuitous and mutually beneficial for sustaining the military as a viable profession in the U.S. economy because it provided cadets with employable professional skills during extended periods when there were no wars or military campaigns; it also provided retired or furloughed military officers civilian occupations. Hence, as one reads the diaries and journal entries of military cadets and commissioned officers, it is not unusual to find as much coverage devoted to accounts of engineering projects and problems as to drill, war games, and battle strategies (Forman, 1952/1958).

The Morrill Land-Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 formalized and increased this custom of bringing utility to higher education curricula. The acronym of “A&M” often included cadets as civil engineers since the “M” referred both to military and mechanics, with mechanics as a synonym for engineering. These courses of instruction drew from a deep strand within U.S. culture known for innovation and experimentation in design and construction. Achievements and advancements in areas such as bridge construction and ship building gained U.S. engineers the respect and envy of Europeans for cutting-edge work in what is now called “applied science” (Calhoun, 1973).

Warfare—or, rather, the quest for sophisticated and advanced tools for warfare—demonstrated in the early twentieth century the close ties between the national military effort and research, science, and institutions of higher education. James B. Conant, a prodigious young Harvard chemist who would later become the institution’s president, provided the high-level laboratory research that led to the refinement of “mustard gas” as a highly effective weapon for U.S. forces in trench warfare during World War I (Hershberg, 1995). Another initiative brought to fruition in the combination of U.S. ingenuity, campus-based scholars, and military applications during World War I was the development of, and reliance





on, large-scale testing and placement for cadets and recruits (Levine, 1987). Such assessments allowed organizations, whether large universities or military induction centers, to systematically gather information and make prompt, informed decisions about prospective matches between students or recruits and advanced training and placement opportunities. Educational psychology combined with the nascent field of statistics to epitomize another productive liaison between college campuses and the military to address “national needs” of the era.

James B. Conant expanded the military-industrial-educational compact when he was president of Harvard from 1933 to 1953, especially during World War II (Harvard University, n.d.). Notable scientists and university officials such as Vannevar Bush placed campus-based research and development programs in service of the war effort. Foremost was the legendary Manhattan Project in which a team of academic physicists, chemists, and engineers used secret laboratory spaces, including the abandoned football stadium at the University of Chicago, to collaborate with the U.S. Army and the U.S. Department of Defense to develop the hydrogen bomb (Geiger, 1993). In addition to such obvious alliances in terms of weaponry, U.S. campuses and faculty expertise were valuable sources of language instruction and cultural studies that helped equip military personnel with the backgrounds and skills necessary to function effectively in such relatively unknown areas as Asia, the Pacific Theatre, and Eastern Europe (Thelin, 2004).

One legacy of this World War II military-academic alliance was the creation and Congressional funding of enduring peacetime support for academic research and development. It was in part a sign of thanks for a job well done during the immediate wartime projects (Geiger, 1993; Thelin, 2004). This development also signaled that Congress and the U.S. public recognized that scholarly expertise had potential to solve domestic, peacetime problems in a wide range of areas of national interest (Geiger, 1993). Key contemporary legacies are the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), along with myriad projects funded by the U.S. Department of Defense (Kerr, 1963; Rosenzweig, 1982).

The appeal and tenacity of the strategy of having the military provide project funding for research and development conducted on college and university campuses continued through several decades after the end of World War II (Kerr, 1963). For example, the established plan of applied science research provided by faculty in departments of chemistry, physics, biology, and engineering eventually was supplemented to include funding for political scientists, geographers, economists, and other disciplines to





bring their expertise to bear on counter-insurgency research during the Vietnam War of the 1960s and early 1970s. In sum, the collaboration between the military and higher education had been both consolidated and expanded in the latter half of the twentieth century, especially at such high-powered centers of scientific research as Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other universities, both private and public, whose abilities to attract sponsored research grants from federal agencies led them to be known as “Federal Grant” universities (Kerr 1963; Lowen, 1997).

Ironically, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the alliances between military-sponsored research and development and official university institutes and centers led to a paradox of prosperity, and a heavy price for success. The consensus and relatively united missions of military and academe were fractured as part of the intense and growing antiwar sentiment at U.S. colleges and universities. During the late 1960s, local and national press coverage of campus demonstrations and unrest gave primary attention to such events as the burning of ROTC buildings. Less conspicuous, but nonetheless crucial, were the real and symbolic acts of defiance and destruction in which students (including some who were themselves veterans of the Vietnam War) bombed and burned research laboratories and offices that were identified as representations of the inordinate influence and presence of U.S. military policy on the funding and direction of campus-based research. Most publicized were bombings of research sites at the University of Wisconsin and the University of California, Berkeley (Rorabaugh, 1990).

These incidents were symptomatic of a widespread, albeit contentious, statement to reject and rebel against what Dwight D. Eisenhower had critically called the “military-industrial complex” in his 1961 farewell presidential address. These volatile episodes left university officials, legislators, and the U.S. public with mixed messages and images. Foremost, they showed the diversity of opinions and activities housed within a complex multiversity. For example, student antiwar demonstrations took place in Sproul Plaza at Berkeley at the very time the Livermore Laboratories hosted counterinsurgency research projects elsewhere on the same campus. Military veterans as students no longer represented a united front; their participation and ascription to war-related student activities ran the gamut from loyal support to vocal condemnation of existent national policies and campaigns, including the mandatory selective service and military draft. One consequence of these tensions was concern by federal agencies that perhaps in the future, federally sponsored research and development





projects might seek locations or sites other than university campuses to assure hospitable, supportive work environments (Rorabaugh, 1990). Thirty years later, in stark contrast to the Vietnam era, the range of campus events and activities dealing with U.S. warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan showed relatively few signs of strong polemics on one side or another. The best estimate is that the military-academic-industrial alliance for research and development has been maintained and restored.

### GI Bill Programs

The 1944 GI Bill laid a key foundation for providing educational and financial benefits to qualifying veterans and service members. The original GI Bill also led to record enrollments and campus expansions during the postwar years.

**Pre-World War II.** Before the United States' involvement in World War II (1941–1945), the federal government compensated its citizen-soldiers for military service during the nation's major conflicts. Revolutionary War (1775–1783) veterans were given land for service. The new nation awarded pensions to disabled soldiers and to soldiers' widows and orphans. The federal government also provided pensions for service to veterans of the War of 1812 (1812–1815), the Mexican War (1846–1848), and the Spanish-American War (1898). After the Civil War (1861–1865), the federal government provided pensions to Union military veterans (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2008, 2011); the former Confederate states provided pensions to their veterans (Green, 2006).

Following World War I (1917–1918), the federal government approved a bonus for veterans (World War Adjusted Compensation Act of 1924), in the form of certificates that could not be redeemed until 1945. An economy in depression led to a veterans march on Washington, DC in 1932. The “Bonus Army” marchers failed to gain early payment of their World War I compensation certificates, and were forced from the city by troops commanded by Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2008). In January 1936, Congress overrode a presidential veto and passed legislation that replaced the bonus certificates with bonds that still bore a 1945 maturity date, but that World War I veterans could redeem earlier (Bonus Bill Becomes Law, 1936).

**World War II.** The memory of the “Bonus Army” march was on the minds of federal legislative and executive branch members as planning





for post–World War II began in 1944. Some economists forecasted a return to the economic depression that had engulfed the nation before its industries turned to war material production. The productive employment of millions of young soldiers, sailors, and airmen after the war was a major concern of economic and social observers. Among the benefits offered by the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (legislation popularly known as “The GI Bill”) were payments to veterans to attend post-secondary institutions after their military service; the subsequent delay in their return to the workforce would reduce the labor surplus economists expected in the postwar period (Greenberg, 1997).

The convergence of two distant groups in this postwar venture was demonstrated by the nation’s oldest academic institution—Harvard University—which took the initiative to encourage and attract the nation’s newest student constituency—war veterans—who had no prior socialization to the college experience. Harvard initiated a vigorous advertisement and recruitment program among overseas servicemen before World War II ended. In projecting an official image to GIs, the university sought to stimulate interest in Harvard among those who were talented yet unfamiliar with college life. The 1945 *Official Register of Harvard University* included a small, brief brochure with photographs of campus life designed for bulk delivery and fast reading. Emblazoned on a cream-colored glossy cover in crimson letters was the title, *What About Harvard?* The university’s strategy was to make “college life” attractive to older, mature, and capable men who, prior to the war, might not have considered attending any college, let alone prestigious, historic Harvard. The preface by President James B. Conant emphasized the university’s cardinal aim of flexibility and individual consideration of the background, experience, and promise of each veteran who applied for admission.

Although the war had not yet been won, Harvard’s deans and special counselor for veterans were preparing to supply the latest information about opportunities for higher education. Along with predictable formal guidelines, the brochure set out to dispel the popular stereotype of Harvard as a college for “rich boys.” At the same time, Harvard officials did not seek mass applications and took care to emphasize that admission standards had been made more elastic, but had not been relaxed. The public relations effort gave deliberate attention to the ways in which the university was attempting to reduce “red tape” that might work against “men who have been fighting instead of studying.” Finally, the brochure encouraged applications from those who were “of serious purpose” and “who meant business . . . This does not mean that intellectual brilliance is required





for admission—or for success after admission. Character, experience, promise, all-around performance are vital . . . Harvard recognizes that the veteran of this war will expect something else from education than the ordinary peace-time student. Clearly the man who has been making life and death decisions at sea, in the air, and on the ground has other ideas than the man who comes direct from high school. The University is bending every energy to meet the needs of these men” (Harvard University, 1945, p. 4).

Some observers, including the nationally popular weekly magazine *Saturday Evening Post*, forecasted that most veterans would ignore the opportunity offered by the GI Bill to attend college. In an issue dated just days after the Japanese Empire accepted an unconditional surrender in September 1945, the *Saturday Evening Post* ran an article informing readers that veterans were rejecting the chance to go to college to return to their prewar jobs, or destinies, on farms and in factories. However, choosing to pursue different careers path than their fathers, veterans streamed into college and university registrar offices (Olson, 1974). By August 1946, a year after Japan’s surrender and the *Saturday Evening Post* article, one million veterans of the U.S. war effort had enrolled in post-secondary education paid for by the GI Bill (Kiestler, 1994).

It was no accident that the Harvard recruitment brochure referred to veterans and prospective students as “men.” Harvard College was gender exclusive, as were many of the university’s graduate and professional schools. Elsewhere, however, women veterans used the GI Bill to enroll in a variety of institutions and degree programs (Barnum, 2007). The flood of veterans brought both a rising tide of tuition money, but also the need for more student housing, classrooms, learning facilities, and professors. College infrastructure evolved to meet the new needs, but in the short term, campus administrators created temporary solutions for the enviable problems caused by the growth in student enrollment. Military Quonset huts and surplus military barracks were pressed into use for housing and classrooms. Veterans brought their families to college, a rarity on quieter prewar campuses (Greenberg, 1997; Olson, 1974). Living accommodations for veterans’ spouses and children were often provided by universities and colleges when the housing demand grew beyond what the private sectors surrounding campuses could supply. Campuses built play areas and equipment; eventually elementary schools were built in or near many of the veterans’ villages that grew on many U.S. campuses in the postwar years (Kiestler, 1994).

The influx of veterans changed the physical appearance of college campuses and affected campuses’ social cultures. Stories of college life





during the interwar period of 1919 to 1940 described an easy mood of coed parties, dancing, drinking, and occasional attendance in classes taught by absent-minded professors. Magazine articles, college-based novels, and the movies portrayed lively campuses that included ritual hazing, such as new students wearing the freshman beanie, and fixed in the popular culture university and college life as a youthful, prank-filled interlude between high (or prep) school graduation and the serious business of life, assuming father's bank presidency or marrying the college football hero, followed by mornings of bond coupon-clipping and afternoons spent on the country club golf course or in the clubhouse (Greenberg, 1997; Mettler, 2005). The postwar students who enrolled under the GI Bill—veterans of battles in Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific Rim—resisted wearing freshmen beanies or swallowing goldfish, and many college traditions established during the interwar period fell to the wayside. Veterans were building futures for themselves, their spouses, and their children, and had no time for the life of "Joe College" (Kiester, 1994).

The editor of *Esquire* magazine recalled veteran and famous novelist Sloan Wilson's memorable short story, *School Days*, published in the March 1946 issue of *The New Yorker*:

The author of *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* here turns his attention to those old-young men of Cassino, North Africa, Okinawa, who went back to school. They were for the most part, disoriented, too quickly and too destructively come of age, the possessors of skills in the arts of war, men who had looked on a living nightmare before fully growing out of the dreams of childhood. Returned as students to the academic world, their adjustment was—in a sense—backwards, to adolescence. Sloan Wilson, who served in the Navy during World War II and now teaches at the University of Buffalo, tells in this story about these men and about those years immediately after the war when they returned to our campuses. (Spectorsky, 1958, p. 160)

Sloan Wilson's short story effectively presented that each conventional step in undergraduate life was the source of conflict or confusion because U.S. campuses had not had sufficient time to adjust myriad details, such as registration forms, parental consent affidavits, and other recordkeeping to the realities, ages, and often the married status of GIs.

Whereas veteran and novelist Wilson was relatively sanguine about the incongruities he described, another veteran turned writer, Sylvan Karchmer (1949), left readers with no doubt about the conflicts and





adjustment difficulties veterans faced on campus—not only in navigating institutional regulations, but also in their dealings with fellow veterans whose shared war experiences did not translate into harmonious, shared experiences at college. Karchmer depicted the awkwardness of three veterans who had known each other and fought alongside one another in North Africa. Yet at the university, the protagonist is a graduate student and teaching assistant in English, whereas his comrades are, respectively, a student in physics and a bewildered freshman struggling with a basic composition course. What becomes evident is that the maturity and decisive actions that characterized them in military service did not carry over into civilian life, especially in academia. Despite their mutual experiences and good intentions, each was of limited help to the others in the alien world of postwar college life.

The complex legacy of post–World War II veterans as presented by their fictional memoirs, along with more official records, was that the 1944 GI Bill transformed more than U.S. university and college infrastructures and campus cultures; it created a generation of men and women who were the United States’ most educated and eventually its most financially successful (Hart, 1983). A society that many expected would slip back into the prewar economic depression educated those called to serve beyond their wildest dreams, and brought them from farm fields and factory assembly lines into professions that continued the economic prosperity of the World War II years into the second half of the twentieth century. Many of the new college students and graduates were the first of their families to pursue higher education. These men and women spent their youth in the depression years and their young adulthoods in combat in foreign surroundings, and passed the desire for an improved standard of living earned through college educations on to their children. The following chapter traces some of the major post–World War II evolutions of the GI Bill as well as other veterans’ benefits programs.

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## Conclusion

The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 introduced a formal tie between civilian higher education institutions and the military. The 1862 Act’s creation of A&M colleges made instruction in military tactics part of higher education curricula. The establishment of the Reserve Officer Training Corps just prior to the United States’ entry into World War I, and the implementation of the short-lived Student Army Training Corps





in 1918 further formalized the ties between higher education and the U.S. military establishment. The provision of education benefits to World War II veterans in 1944 created an enrollment boom in U.S. universities and colleges. This expansion of higher education created the solid middle-class social status of well-educated citizens who otherwise would have had few alternatives to returning to their prewar farm and factory employment. During and following World War II, higher education and the military also forged close ties in research and development. The partnership between research universities and the military continued through the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. The alliance between higher education, the military, and industry forged in World War II continues advances in science and technology that create both military and civilian applications.

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