
Contents

List of Illustrations	viii
List of Tables and Graphs	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction	1
1 Making a Welcome for Women Students: <i>The Discourse of Coeducational Inclusion by Administrators and Students</i>	21
2 The Place of Women Students: <i>Reading the Language and Practices of Gender Separation</i>	48
3 The Early Practice of Coeducation: <i>Literary Societies as Laboratories for Separation and Inclusion</i>	79
4 Women Students' Sociality: <i>Building Relationships with Men and Women</i>	102
5 Women's Course Work: <i>Farm Wives, Finished Ladies, or Functioning Scientists?</i>	143
6 Under the Gaze: <i>Women's Physical Activity and Sport at Land-Grant Colleges</i>	190
7 "The American Eagle in Bloomers": <i>"Student-Soldieresses" and Women's Military Activity</i>	223
8 Challenging Political Separation: <i>Women's Rights Activism at Land-Grant Colleges and Universities</i>	252

Conclusion: Bright Epoch:	
<i>When the Fair Daughters Joined the Ranks</i>	289
Notes	305
Bibliography	331
Index	343

Illustrations

1. UAC students in chapel, ca. 1900	52
2. “The Way We Are Separated”	59
3. “Coeds Smoking at University of Nebraska”	72
4. “Dandelion Day at the University of Nebraska,” ca. 1910	74
5. Student bicyclists at the University of Nebraska, ca. 1898	124
6. Male and female students socializing, ca. 1900	126
7. Women students in front of Benton Hall, ca. 1898	133
8. Willa Cather at University of Nebraska, 1891	139
9. Mary Beaumont Welch, ca. 1890s	148
10. OAC domestic science class, ca. 1905	150
11. First OAC graduating class, ca. 1870	154
12. OAC horticulture students, ca. 1900	158
13. “Plumbing 101,” ca. 1915	162
14. UAC botany lab, ca. 1900	173
15. UAC commerce class, ca. 1900	182
16. Cyclone Bicycle Club, ca. 1892	199
17. Ina Gittings in mid-pole vault at the University of Nebraska, ca. 1906	201
18. “Silhouetteograph,” University of Nebraska, ca. 1890s	205
19. Adelloyd Whiting’s friends in the gymnasium showers, ca. 1898	207
20. OAC women’s basketball team, 1900	214
21. Field hockey game at the University of Nebraska, 1913 or 1914	217
22. IAC women cadets, ca. 1893	226
23. IAC men and women cadets, ca. 1890s	233

24. IAC women military officers, 1894	234
25. “The American Eagle in Bloomers”	238
26. IAC women military officers, 1893	239
27. UAC military and physical culture class	240
28. University of Nebraska World War I-era cartoon, ca. 1918	248
29. Carrie C. Lane, 1880	283

Tables and Graphs

TABLES

1. UAC women graduates, 1896–1909	168
2. OAC and UAC Sorosis Society debate topics, 1897–1908	261
3. OAC Adelpian Society suffrage debates, 1885–1889	272
4. Woman suffrage and education in western states	273

GRAPHS

1. OAC male and female student enrollments, 1888–1905	290
2. IAC male and female student enrollments, 1879–1904	291
3. IAC persistence rates, 1882–1919	292
4. OAC persistence rates, 1894–1918	292
5. IAC male and female student enrollments, 1879–1918	294
6. OAC male and female student enrollments, 1888–1919	295
7. Female students by institution, 1879–1920	299

Introduction

PROLOGUE

With the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862, many states in the Midwest and West chartered land-grant colleges following the Civil War. Because of both progressive ideologies and economic necessity, these institutions admitted women from their early beginnings. Although some historians have downplayed coeducational experiences at land-grant colleges as mere reinforcement of women's traditional roles through domestic science course work and exclusion from male clubs and activities, this study shows that women students took a much more proactive role regarding their own inclusion on these campuses. Although women students did not feel complete acceptance by their male peers and professors in the land-grant environment, many of them successfully negotiated greater gender inclusion for themselves and their fellow female students.

This is not so much the story of the access to higher coeducation as it is the practices of coeducation at land-grant colleges. Regarding the interplay between separation and inclusion for women students, this book examines various areas of contested gendered space, including course work, hetero- and homosociality, athletic and military activities, and feminist reforms such as suffrage activism, journalism, and political leadership. Rather than being venues for female exclusion, western land-grant colleges offered opportunities for women students to determine new areas of participation and inclusion for themselves within traditionally male environments. As a result, women land-grant students were able to effect change on many fronts of feminist reform by challenging gender restrictions both on campuses and in the nation at large.

Land-grant colleges in the nineteenth-century American West were among the first public institutions in the world to practice coeducation. The admission of female students was a new and revolutionary experiment,

heralded by progressive reformers as a balanced and healthy educational ideal, as opposed to the gender-segregated colleges and universities of the East. Land-grant colleges began educating men and women together at a time when coeducation still endured a heavy debate, especially by critics such as Dr. Edward H. Clarke, whose anti-coeducation treatise *Sex in Education; or a Fair Chance for the Girls* (1873) argued that women could not endure the strain and stress of higher education with men because increased blood flow to the brain would deprive female reproductive organs of needed circulation.¹ The book went through seventeen printings between 1873 and the end of the century. In spite of objections by Clarke and others who believed that women were not intellectually or physically suited for mixed education, the land-grant institutions proceeded to enact coeducation with enthusiasm.

Land-grant participants accepted women's intellectual equality, at least in general, but they nevertheless struggled to work out the actual practices of mixing the sexes. In examining land-grant college environments between 1870 and 1918, one might expect to encounter either incredible progress for women or conservative attempts to limit their activities and participation to a traditional female sphere. The surprise would be in finding neither, and both. While land-grant women encountered a culture of ideological and physical separation, especially through the reinforcement of the traditional feminine expectations, these women also found ways to challenge the separation by rejecting traditional roles or simply adapting them to their own purposes. Out of this interplay between separation and inclusion, women students succeeded in negotiating new spaces of gendered inclusion and equality at land-grant colleges.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

On a windy March day in 1869, twelve hundred people met on the treeless campus of the new Iowa Agricultural College. A few buildings and the small village of Ames, population 650, served as a backdrop to the gathering of students, farmers, politicians, and reporters. Hosts and hostesses of this inaugural gathering of the college had prepared food for the visitors, but the turnout greatly exceeded expected attendance. The mood was electric as locals, visiting reporters, and politicians waited to hear Pres. Adonijah Strong Welch's inaugural address. Iowans also looked forward to meeting

Welch's wife, Mary Beaumont Welch, an educated and cultured woman who came to Ames with ideas about the need to provide women with practical and scientific education in the West.

President Welch began his speech with a recognition of the great experiment that was about to unfold at Iowa State. He committed the college to "two great and salutary educational reforms." First, instead of focusing solely on the classical curriculum of traditional European and eastern universities, Iowa Agricultural College would fulfill the purposes of higher education outlined by the Morrill Act of 1862, to teach "those branches of natural science which underlie the industries of this beautiful state."² In other words, this was to be an agricultural and industrial school, training students in the useful mechanical and engineering arts relative to the working classes, especially in scientific agriculture for the state of Iowa.

The other "great educational reform" was the "free admission of young women, on equal terms with young men, to all the privileges and honors which the institution can bestow."³ Welch devoted two-thirds of his address to the topic of coeducation. He recognized women's legal right to equal higher education, and he also acknowledged women's potential for intellectual compatibility with men, once given the same opportunities as male students. In a kind of Shylockian speech, Welch asked, "Can she not see and hear, and smell and taste? Does she not apprehend and analyze, abstract and imagine, classify, generalize, judge and reason?"⁴ Welch's speech called attention to the broadening ideals of feminine intellectual equality. His ideas represented an important progressive notion relative to the education of women in the new land-grant institutions. Iowa Agricultural College became one of the first schools to accept the conditions of the land-grant system under the Morrill Act. Accompanied by land-grant institutions all over the West and Midwest that also admitted women, Iowa Agricultural College was one of a handful of public, collegiate institutions in America to offer mixed education to women in the late nineteenth century.

THE MORRILL ACT AND THE WEST

President Welch's goals for Iowa Agricultural College fulfilled the dreams of Sen. Justin Morrill of Vermont, who had sponsored the original Morrill Act, and succeeded in seeing it signed into law by Pres. Abraham Lincoln in 1862. Desiring a greater democracy for a growing nation, Morrill eschewed

the nonpractical and elite education of the East and sought to empower the working classes of North America through access to free and public higher education. Land-grant colleges would eventually be chartered in every state of the union, and some states would even claim more than one. Perhaps Morrill did not anticipate the great impact that his bill would have on thousands of American college women. Indeed, the Morrill Act itself made no mention of women students or their equal education. Thus, the decision to implement coeducation was left to individual states that chose to charter land-grant institutions; and many states in the West pursued this first experimentation with coeducation after the Civil War. The land-grant mission was important to western states for its ideals of providing practical and scientific agricultural knowledge to the children of rural farmers. Further, the founding of these colleges offered a regional and inexpensive alternative to sending children to distant and costly eastern schools. Land-grants could also contribute to the goals of encouraging companionate marriage and family settlement that would foster the agricultural and resource development of the American West.

This is a study of the American West, in that the institutions studied herein are located in Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, and Oregon, and peripheral references are made to other land-grants in Colorado, Kansas, California, and South Dakota. The main reason for this emphasis on American West institutions is to fill an important void in the historiography of women's higher coeducation, which has so often focused on elite colleges in the East or on the West Coast and has ignored the state institutions of lesser renown in the Midwest and West. As such, a study of these institutions allows for the voices of young western women to be heard.

This work is not trying to argue for western exceptionalism by suggesting that western land-grants were the "first" to implement coeducation, or that they did it in a more progressive fashion than eastern coeducational institutions. Indeed, they simply were not the first, being preceded by Oberlin College (1833) and other denominational colleges in the Midwest throughout the 1840s and 1850s, as well as state universities in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Michigan. This is not to say that the East made no claim to co-educational practice; for instance, even New York's own land-grant, Cornell, implemented coeducation in 1872, around the same time that its western counterparts were also going coed. However, the openness of newly founded

institutions in the post–Civil War West more easily implemented coeducation, as opposed to the greater numbers of older institutions in eastern states that held out against the admission of women. Regarding the ease with which new institutions were able to practice coeducation, historians Rosalind Rosenberg and Leslie Miller-Bernal have both successfully argued that older and established all-male institutions that had to admit women after the fact—usually for financial reasons—often did so with resentment and prejudice against new female students.⁵

Historian Julie Roy Jeffrey described the West’s perceived progress in coeducation, stating that in 1872 “there were ninety-seven major private and public coeducational institutions in the country, and a majority of them, sixty-seven, were located in the West.”⁶ This contrast between the gender-segregated East and the mixed-gender West received greater emphasis with the founding of numerous elite women’s colleges as “sister” institutions to the male-only Ivy Leagues in the 1870s and 1880s. Not even all land-grants readily accepted coeducation, as many Morrill Act institutions in the South and a few in the East also resisted the admission of women. The argument for an exceptional West has more to do with how westerners perceived themselves in relation to the East rather than quantifiable comparisons. Indeed, this book shows that western land-grant students and administrators viewed their own experience as unique and set themselves against the stereotypes of eastern institutions for their conservative and more rigid restrictions on social interactions. Because western land-grants often implemented coeducation reluctantly, they certainly were not immune from similar acts of gender discrimination that occurred elsewhere. However, the land-grant culture of the American West represented an environment of acceptance and promotion of the widespread practice of state-supported coeducation.

A few important factors led to the West’s progress in land-grant coeducation. Jeffrey has argued that the “founding of new colleges and universities was part of the frontier experience. Fears that the new society would sink into barbarism stimulated missionaries to establish colleges as an ‘important part in Christian strategy.’”⁷ The first and most practical reason was economic necessity. It was simply less expensive to educate men and women together. Early land-grants did not require tuition fees, but the expense of hiring staff for one coeducational institution was considerably less than

for two sex-segregated schools or classes. Larger numbers of students also brought added economic stimulus into college communities through boarding, transportation, and local consumerism. A second reason for implementing coeducation included the increasing post-Civil War demand for female teachers to fill the gaps in public education left by the war generation. Third, many administrators and reformers argued that women students' presence would be a refining and softening influence on the rough-and-tumble world of male college life. Harkening to nineteenth-century notions of women's essentially pure and civilizing roles, educators hoped that the mere presence of women students would end the rivalries, practical joking, and interclass violence that plagued many campuses.

Finally, progressive ideology that favored legal rights for women certainly played a large part in the pioneering efforts of leaders in the West to establish coeducational colleges. Land-grant administrators often had cut their teeth at institutions in the Midwest, where mixed-gender education had already gained widespread acceptance at denominational schools. Upon arriving in the West, legislators and educational leaders found environments favorable to trying new ideas. According to Sandra Myres, "because the trans-Mississippi states were relatively new, . . . [they] had no deeply entrenched tradition of restriction, [and] it was easier to convince Western legislators to pass women's rights legislation."⁸ Thus, western coeducation was imitative, especially as it borrowed ideas from a growing culture of educational reform and women's rights in America. But the West was also innovative, as western educators took the idea of coeducation and adapted it to fit their own unique needs.

The innovative impulse toward coeducation received further stimulus from the Morrill Act itself. Because the land-grant mission sought to provide scientific and practical training to the agricultural and mechanical classes, educators naturally translated this need for women to gain scientific training in their sphere of life. Domestic science education for female students fit well within the purposes of the Morrill Act, and the western environment particularly demanded a need for educated farm wives. According to Virginia Gunn, "life on the Plains worked best as a cooperative venture between the sexes."⁹ Pres. John Anderson of the Kansas State Agricultural College in 1875 tried to convince reluctant easterners about the importance of a revolutionary new women's course in domestic science. According to

Anderson, eastern educators could “purse their classic lips at the idea of including such topics in a collegiate course,’ but they made sense in a Kansas girl’s education.”¹⁰ A western woman needed education to help her better withstand the trials of rural western life. But collegiate expectations also determined that young women needed education for its refining effects in creating proper Victorian wives. And herein lay one of the paradoxes of western land-grant education for women: that women should be practical farm wives while also developing proper middle-class virtues of refinement and cultivated behavior. Even though westerners did not have many of the conveniences and luxuries available in the East, they still felt the importance of subscribing to dominant American cultural expectations. By combining the need for scientific domestic training with the notion of women’s moralizing and refining influence, land-grant colleges provided an environment favorable to the implementation of coeducation, at least in theory. In practice, these institutions serve as important laboratories for understanding changing gender dynamics in nineteenth-century America.

INSTITUTIONS CONSIDERED

The experiences of women students at four land-grant colleges stand central to this study—Iowa Agricultural College in Ames, (referred to herein as IAC), the Oregon Agricultural College in Corvallis (OAC), the University of Nebraska in Lincoln (Nebraska), and the Utah Agricultural College in Logan (UAC). Although each was chartered as a land-grant institution, each differed in its evolution over time, especially regarding the emphasis on course work, the conflict between scientific training and traditional classical education, and the duration of time that it took each institution to implement the full purposes of the land-grant mission. In each case, these land-grants were founded by transplanted easterners from New York, Ohio, Illinois, or Michigan who brought with them prior notions of the importance of classical education that was so common to denominational colleges in the East. Even with the agricultural emphasis, many land-grants also offered students traditional education in Greek, Latin, literature, history, and philosophy, showing how the Morrill Act institutions still struggled over how to incorporate their two ultimate aims. Indeed, land-grant education required an uneasy marriage between classical education and practical agricultural or industrial training.

1

Making a Welcome for Women Students

*The Discourse of Coeducational Inclusion
by Administrators and Students*

You have done well to open the doors of the University as wide to your daughters as to your sons; and I doubt not that they will, by their scholarship in every department, abundantly justify your wisdom.

CHANCELLOR EDMUND FAIRFIELD,

“Chancellor’s Address to the Board of Regents, Inaugural Ceremony, June 1876”

The land-grant experiment purposely sought to provide education as a democratic ideal, and coeducation was linked to the emerging standard for the egalitarian provision of education to men and women. When Adonijah S. Welch gave his inaugural address for the new Iowa Agricultural College in March of 1869, coeducation was still a hotly debated national topic, and much of the country, especially in the conservative East, balked at the acceptance of women students to colleges. Critics of coeducation argued that women were intellectually inferior to men and had no need for the same education in the same environment as male students. Many felt that too much education weakened women physically and mentally. Further, skeptics suggested that women distracted impressionable young men and that mixed-gender environments inevitably led to moral depravity, because young men ended up too confused to keep their minds on their studies. In the midst of this debate, land-grant administrators and students responded with overwhelmingly positive reactions to gender mixing in higher education. Thus, land-grant participants—both students and administrators—helped to foster a culture of gender inclusion through a verbal and written discourse of promoting coeducation.

The three oldest universities included in this study, Oregon Agricultural

College (OAC) in Corvallis (1868), Iowa State Agricultural College (IAC) in Ames (1868), and the University of Nebraska in Lincoln (1869), are significant as representative environments for examining early reactions to the experiment of public coeducation, simply because they were founded so early and because they were created in the midst of a heated national debate. All three were chartered before 1870, and all three admitted women students immediately upon opening. Together with Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan (1863) and the University of California (founded in 1868; coed in 1870), these were the earliest coeducational land-grant colleges in the West. In the 1870s, budding scholars at OAC, IAC, and Nebraska represented some of the first students in the world to experience coeducation in practice at public institutions of higher learning.

These early students, both men and women, seemed to accept coeducation—in theory—with very little protest. Reaction to the practical implementation of coeducation proved wide and varied, but western students, professors, and administrators alike defended coeducation as the ideal against the gender-segregated education of their eastern counterparts. Progressive ideology favoring advancements for women certainly had an influence on this discourse.¹ The ideas and practices defending coeducation included the voices of many supporters, especially administrators, who spoke openly and often about the importance of coeducation, as well as students, who expressed their reactions in a variety of media. These public expressions of language promoting coeducation constituted a major part of the “social capital” of women’s educational reform. “Social capital,” or the “organizations and connections that foster cooperation, trust, participation, the exchange of information, civil interaction, and coordinated activity in pursuit of social goals,” helped to advance the knowledge and awareness regarding women’s issues, especially through journalistic activism.² Through the “exchange of information,” the land-grant culture and its arbiters sought to legitimize the coeducational experiment by spreading positive information regarding the successes of mixed-gender education. Because social capital is especially concerned with the “achievement of political democracy,” land-grant commentators played active roles in trying to reconstruct a culture that accepted coeducation as preferable to the gender-segregated education of the East.

Land-grant educators and participants considered themselves the most

qualified to comment on coeducation because they actively lived the experience on a daily basis. The discourse of coeducation became a vital part of the language of land-grant institutions because coeducation was new and relatively untried in the national collegiate culture. Through the processes of education, public speeches, college catalogs, books, and newspapers, land-grant participants sought to impart the discourse of defending coeducation.³ These activists' purposes were twofold: first, to enlarge the public sphere of knowledge regarding women's schooling in a mixed-gender environment, and second, to reconstruct society's development. In other words, those who favored coeducation hoped that critics and skeptics would change their opinions of the system and then eventually replace outdated systems of gender-segregated instruction.

Three areas of discourse regarding coeducation emerged in the 1870s and 1880s. Together they represent a philosophical support system that bolstered the land-grant coeducation movement. First, top-level administrative voices, such as land-grant presidents and chancellors, constituted a significant part of the discourse of publicly defending coeducation. Second, student editors of college newspapers published editorials and exchanges regarding the progress of women's education. By doing so, these student editors assumed an activist role and helped maintain a public dialogue on women's rights. The printed voice of editors often represented the collective opinion of campus populations on various political issues. Third, student literary achievement—both published essays and literary society debates—often revealed students' reaction to coeducation. That coeducation was a frequent topic of discussion at all the universities' literary societies indicates its importance within the continuing public discourse of the late nineteenth century. Land-grant activists—both students and professors—played important roles in expanding the public knowledge regarding women's coeducational progress.

ADMINISTRATORS' REACTIONS TO COEDUCATION

Oregon, Iowa, and Nebraska willingly accepted coeducation in their individual charters with little debate or protest. Although the boards of regents of the various land-grant universities disagreed on how coeducation should be implemented, still they accepted it almost universally. The opinion of administrators and professors regarding the acceptance of coeducation