

## How should the pre-Lee days at Oyster Bay be presented?

1. We need to get more information on background on Olsen and others he worked with at Chicago and Albany.
2. At what point was the determination made to orient the College at Oyster Bay in the direction of a strict Chicago undergraduate program?
3. Who were those from Chicago to make that determination? What background did they have? What were their previous experiences as teachers, as administrators -- where and at what levels?
4. Although all those recruited in 1957, 1958 and 1959 appear to have been assured of a University that was in the process of being created (see various tapes) yet was not Melville already committed to the prospect of a four-year college at Stony Brook? Was not Melville upon creation of the Oyster Bay college appointed as first Chairman of the newly appointed Council for the College?
5. What group on campus at Oyster Bay made the determination as how the college was to be organized? What was to be taught and how? Was the critical responses of Bowen, Chill and Fleisher responsible for their demise? Were they hired -- somewhat cynically -- to indicate an openness towards different systems of education that would help determine the proper collegiate organization for Oyster Bay? Why so quickly did they lose out and were no longer needed to be present to represent their so-called "intellectual position." It was known that Olsen visited Columbia and met with Justus Buchler, who as head of the Contemporary Civilization program at Columbia was well known to the key people in Chicago. As a matter of fact, Buchler and some of the key pioneers at Chicago had important interactions over the years. It was through Buchler's recommendations that Bowen, Chill and Fleisher were recommended to Olsen.

As a matter of fact the Oyster Bay version of the Chicago orientation exhibited an intellectual intolerance for alternative arrangements and for a pluralistic point of view. This many not be disconnected with Bloom's intransigence to real intellectual pluralism. The persons running the program at Oyster Bay were fortunately no in the front ranks of the teaching or administrative works of Chicago and were vested with very little responsibility in that regard. At Oyster Bay the Chicago system was an intense, single-minded, focused approach to the "right way" to look at issues intellectually. In this regard ending up with a severe kind of isolation from other models of intellectual orientation. In the regard it was *a priori* in opposition to the character, constitution and actual activity that characterized the pluralism of a university. The Oyster Bay group were in effect incapable of orienting themselves to the nature and structure of the University. The insistence upon a divisional structure and avoiding the departmental structure of college of arts and sciences -- associated with other colleges and schools as part of the University -- was a difficult concept to grasp and to contend with.

A most significant problem relates to the issue of why was Olsen chosen to create and develop a new intellectual enterprise? this issue becomes even more dramatic when the qualifications of the college's mandate early on appear to be in the areas of science and math teaching. Olsen had no established credentials as an administrator of any college of any size. He had no experience working in the trenches of curricular development and planning as an active faculty person over any period of time. Yet he was chosen without any committee to evaluate possible candidates; without any evidence of a search of any kind; he was chosen in what appears to be a purely arbitrary fashion. And if we are to believe the words of Elwin Stevens, it was a chance encounter he had with someone in central administration to put to more active work someone (Olsen) who

was sitting and reading books most of the day. It should also be noted that after his appointment no overseeing committee of academics drawn from other institutions was created as a resource group that would have prevented Olsen from developing the kind of recruitment of faculty he relied upon as well as his narrow-minded approach to higher education. This has to raise basic questions, given this evidence, what was the position of central administration and the Board of Trustees? If there was a determination already made to create a Chicago-style education in SUNY, then one could understand the appointment of Olsen as one who could be counted on to deliver on such a promissory note. On the other hand what might be more likely was that Olsen had no conception, understanding, experience or commitment to the creation of an institution *de novo*, the first of its kind in SUNY higher education since 1948. In other words, how could such a serious and important first step be made in such a haphazard fashion or in such a lack of concern for such issues as the integrity of the educational process, the quality and experience of the faculties, and the overall *raison d'être* in the academic program. Where was the Chancellor (the President) of SUNY in all of this? Carlson was on the way out having brought in Blegen only to be repudiated for this by the Trustees. Yet, we find in the files as the Trustees are moving towards more comprehensive plans, Olsen looks forward to the possibility that if the Blegen plan were to be developed Carlson could be President (apparently he expressed some interest in that at some time) and Olsen Academic Dean.

Even though a university was mentioned prior to the Heald Commission and the Blegen Report, one has to still realize that the Blegen Report was repudiated by the Trustees and Carlson was fired by them.

How could the Trustees not have known what was “in the work” with respect to Blegen? Why were they distrusted? The “official” response was given by Moore to the SUNY Faculty Senate that Carlson’s adoption of the Blegen plan could have endangered the bond issue that was to go before the voters in November. Also it was publicly stated that Carlson had distributed the Report prior to the Trustees having any knowledge of it. This did not happen. Why could the Trustees not have accepted some part of the Blegen Report -- such as the mandate to be assigned to an institution to create *de novo* a university center in Oyster Bay (or Stony Brook)? At the time they could have indicated they were going to help develop a pluralistic system of university centers in other parts of the State. Why the overwhelming reluctance to make this move with respect to Oyster Bay? What was at work, in effect, that deterred them from this move? Was it right for it to be a college but not a university? Whose decision was that? Was Frank Moore alone responsible for it? yet we also hear from other sources that it a Board meeting Moore got everyone to agree that there would be support for a university center somewhere in the State. If so, then the idea of multiple centers was not high on the agenda and a university center was apparently agreed upon in secret. Yet, when and where was it to be? When was it to see the light of day? What were the Trustees of SUNY waiting for? One could empathize with the limited and ambiguous authority assigned to the Trustees for a five-year period as agreed upon by the legislation creating SUNY in 1948. But the period of time we are referring to is now in the late 1950’s. What was the role of the central administration staff -- Reuben Freuden, John Slocum, etc. -- in not pushing for the establishment of a university center as soon as possible? What was Olsen’s role in this? What assurances were interchanged among these persons to cap the lead on this issue of university? What really happened to Carlson? Was Carlson’s own central administrative staff with Moore and several members of the Board out to undermine and sandtrap him? It is interesting to not that the same kind of swift retribution which was given to Bowen,

Chill and Fleisher, also accedes to Carlson and in a few years to be repeated with respect to Lee. In a certain sense Lee could be seen as intuiting from the start that he had little time to gain approval and support for Stony Brook as a major university center in SUNY built *de novo*. He tried to capitalize on the Heald Commission Report and on the Board's own development of a master plan. However, it appears probably now that were it not for the Governor's influence -- unfortunately coming after Lee's firing -- Stony Brook might have continued to be the same sort of nondescript special undergraduate college, with some graduate work extended to a few departments as a political payoff.

Therefore, the likely expectation that with Lee's firing and Sidney Gelber's removal as the first Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences -- encompassing departments involved with simultaneous development of undergraduate and graduate programs across the disciplines -- the expectation that there would be a reversion to the Olsen-Austill plan and the structure of the Chicago model on divisional basis with divisional deans owing their allegiance to a pattern of education that would be validated by the administrative upheaval created by Slocum and others. By this did not happen. The die was cast, the publicity and public attention at what was happening at Oyster Bay shifted with the recognition that the actual majority of the faculty was in full support of a *bona fide* university and discredited the narrow educational structure of Chicago. All of these forces conspired to assure, with the awakening finally of the Governor and the Commissioner of Education that the objective for a major university was the destiny of Stony Brook. But along the way during a difficult interregnum period -- about three and a half years -- both at the SUNY Chancellor level and at the Stony Brook presidential level during lengthy searches for persons to head these positions, the vacuum was taken over by the role of the faculty committed to university development with leadership basically exerted by department chairs. It is clear now that the events at Oyster Bay

created by these firings forced a house cleaning by Rockefeller and Allen to seek persons with strong credentials exemplifying quality in both the Chancellor position and that of the President at Stony Brook. The interregnum was helped at first with the benign administration of the College of Arts and Sciences by Harry Porter (the Provost of the SUNY system) to assure the smooth transition of the campus to university status. Both Porter and subsequently Karl Hartzell were conservative in their actions and ultimately allowed the campus to cool off from the antagonistic forces that had developed at Oyster Bay. The basic structure for the university was in effect advanced both at Stony Brook and in Albany.

In effect the faculty rejected the idea of having Albany “find” a President for Stony Brook. There was a direct and clear rejection of Oscar Lanford. Once again, an individual who had come out of the system and not possessed with the background to assume the energetic and creative role of creating a new university of quality. John Toll was chosen, coming from the University of Maryland to Stony Brook and Gould from the California system.



In the process of organizing the Master Plan of 1960 for SUNY different versions and discussions about university centers appear. The Heald Commission recommends three centers and the Trustees end up with four, although at one point presumably a fifth was actively discussed -- namely Oswego. Why was this decision to multiply university centers, surely a more complex and expensive educational operation? The Trustees had already rejected the Blegen model of Minnesota and in a sense the Heald Commission came as a compromise. The political balancing act in the State of New York clearly as

with the development of the medical school had to have upstate and downstate representation; and in the case of university centers, midstate representation -- yet was this not a retreat to the quality of what the end product would be, creating four centers simultaneously as comprehensive universities? Nowhere is there any mention made about the strategic and tactical problems associated with creating universities and maintaining them at the level of excellence. The only rationale that seems to appear is the argument given by Moore of "decentralization." this might have some meaningfulness with respect to community colleges -- that is to bring education closer to the people in a given community. But we are here concerned with universities which have national and international focus and attraction. Is this one more instance of the lack of experience, awareness or genuine concern on the part of central administration and the Trustees as to the issue of what kind of qualitative effort is needed to create such an institution and what the goals of excellence really mean. If such decentralization meant real autonomy then SUNY central would never have developed into the huge bureaucracy that came to represent it and with its crippling micro-management of matters on the campuses. In fact, one could argue that the very nature of SUNY's development in the direction of micro-management militated against qualitative development or made the achievement of excellence a much more difficult matter. One of the issues that appears to demonstrate as a justification for SUNY is the "doctrine of apparent fairness." A strong force always in the system and going back to the days surrounding the firing of Carlson was the reluctance to declare what the different missions of university centers was *vis á vis* the colleges and the different master plans for the four university centers. One must not the failure of the system to create separate overseeing bodies for the colleges and universities; failure of the system to understand and treat separately and systematically the university centers as university centers. The one exception was Gould's appointing a Vice Chancellor for University Development in the person of Sy Syrette.

The doctrine of apparent fairness prevailed instead and the reluctance and deferment of decisions based on different missions, plans and ambitions of the four university centers only by the proper support from SUNY central from the Division of the Budget was there to develop and appreciation of different missions, costs, operations and ambitions of Stony Brook. Ironically, the general methodology purported by SUNY central and the Trustees that the superstructure of SUNY was needed to assist in our own cause as *amicus curiae* and to protect us from the common “enemies” Division of the Budget, State Education Department. When the Construction Fund was created (SUNY to handle all construction plans and contracts) the campuses as a result ended up with no real involvement or input in these plans with very costly results. Actually the reverse of the expectations of central administration became true. The Division of the Budget began to act more effectively in the allocation of resources than SUNY central and they were not bound ultimately to base their budgetary estimates on the doctrine of apparent fairness. In effect the Trustees and central administration of SUNY became more “political” than other agencies and less liable as a disinterested force and became less reliable as a voice for matters intellectual. The presence the campuses had to maintain in support of the facts and circumstances of its own distinctiveness were to often seen as “resistance” by central administration and the Board. One can note in the various tapes how Toll’s stubborn persistence is viewed as a possible source for removing him (Shades of Blegen, Lee, etc.). With increased fiscal pressures in the 1970’s the role of SUNY became less open-minded and less flexible; and the full support of the university’s mandate more ambiguous. Such ambiguity became apparent all the way up to the Governor’s level as observed in both the Carey and Cuomo administration.



In turn, this role of SUNY central forced the campuses, especially those eager to pursue certain crucial objectives, to find alternate ways around SUNY to the Regents, the Governor's Office, the Legislature, etc., to accomplish their objectives.

Fundamentally as the system has matured, the campuses have gained some degree of flexibility and autonomy, particularly under the 1985 flexibility legislation. This does not appear really to alter the micro-management functions of SUNY. On the other hand if genuine flexibility and autonomy is to literally become a reality then the case can be made that SUNY central is no longer needed as the bureaucratic umbrella to dominate and coordinate the actions of the campuses. Perhaps it is time to decentralize the structure so that smaller working groups with associated Trustees will be responsible for university centers as separate groups from four-year colleges, etc. Or, perhaps it may be advisable to allow the entire central bureaucracy to collapse and just allow for a mechanism to maintain policies on the separate campuses and revise and update statewide plans. Yet, with so many campuses how would autonomy be handled? Would each campus be responsible to the Division of the Budget and the Legislature for its own budget, for example? Would academic criteria and educational programs not also require some kind of monitoring, coordination and planning?