



Ask the Archivist: Whither the 'general studies' program, aka 'University College'?

*A question for Melissa Mead, the John M. and Barbara Keil
University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian.*

How long did the UR offer the University College program?—Charles Masick '65, '68 (MS) (both through University College), '70S (MBA)

For more than 65 years, from 1916 to 1982, the University College—as the program for students who enrolled as part-time students and those who took classes in the evenings and on the weekends was eventually known—was an integral academic division operating alongside the regular undergraduate College and graduate schools. With an enduring

Montgomery, who was designated an “Extension Lecturer on History”; in this role, Montgomery predates Elizabeth Denio, who is generally credited as being our first woman instructor, by almost a decade.

Montgomery was a strong proponent of the admission of women to the University, and she was the first woman elected to the Rochester School Board in 1899, a remarkable accomplishment given that her election was 20 years before women had the vote.

This effort ended in 1902, but an extension division was re-established in 1916. Many of its enrollees entered the workforce directly from high school and were interested in taking college-level courses “with a view to increasing their knowledge and individual economic value,” according to the *Bulletin*. As before, the classes were coeducational and taught by University faculty, usually during the late afternoons and evenings, and on Saturdays.

By 1944, the utility of the division for educating returning service men and women was self-evident, and it was reorganized to give it equal standing to other divisions in the University. Renamed “the University School of Liberal and Applied Studies,” its students would earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees in general studies, business administration, accounting, and nursing, and they could take a full-time course load. Students in the school had their own government, held events and dances, and published their own newspaper called the *Campus Crier* and a news-sheet called the *Chanticleer*.

In 1958 the schools of business, education, and engineering (today the Simon, Warner, and Hajim schools) opened and began enrolling “both full-time and part-time evening session students” in classes relevant to their disciplines. The school became the University College of Liberal and Applied Studies in 1972; a final *Course Bulletin* was issued for 1981–82, after which the school was fully absorbed into the other divisions and schools of the University.

The opportunity for “all who find life interesting and desire better to understand it” that was heralded in 1916 continues today through the Office of Part-time Studies, which provides “students, adult learners, business professionals, educators, and the community the opportunity to take classes on a part-time basis for intellectual enrichment or professional development.”



ECLECTIC EDUCATION: Students enroll for classes during registration for the University College of Liberal and Applied Studies, circa 1960. The program, which traces its roots to the early part of the 20th century, existed until 1982, when its courses were absorbed into other schools and units.

legacy of thousands of alumni in the Rochester area and beyond, it has existed in various forms throughout our history.

In 1850, it was possible for qualified students—later given the designation “eclectics” and what today might be called “nontraditional students”—to take courses at the University as nondegree, “partial course” candidates. With the encouragement of our second president, David Jayne Hill, an “Extension Department” was organized in 1894 to offer evening and Saturday lectures “to bring systematic university instruction within reach of all classes of men and women . . . without interfering with their daily work.”

Lectures in the sciences and humanities were offered, taught by University faculty, including Professors Burton, Lattimore, Fairchild, Forbes, and Shedd. Several courses were taught by Helen Barrett

Need History?

Do you have a question about University history? Email it to rochrev@rochester.edu. Please put “Ask the Archivist” in the subject line.