

In 1783 a brilliant twelve-year-old student was presented to President Ezra Stiles for examination in Latin and Greek. The Yale President was astounded at the genius who stood before him, who could translate the orations of Cicero and the Greek Testament. There was one serious drawback, however, as indicated when Ezra Stiles wrote, "I testify that were it not for her sex she would be considered fit to be admitted as a student of Yale." Thus, by not admitting Lucinda Foote, Yale missed an historic opportunity to become the first coeducational college in the United States.

Although, over the succeeding years, there were others who supported the idea of offering women the same educational opportunities as men, it wasn't until the fall of 1956 that the subject of was formally discussed. Arthur Howe, then Dean of Admissions, briefed the Yale faculty in a private meeting about future trends in college enrollment, and recommended that Yale think seriously about admitting female undergraduates. Though not a popular student issue at that time, increasing numbers of the faculty were advocating *education, and thought the presence of women on campus would improve the general atmosphere, both in and out of the classroom.

In 1961, President Griswold appointed a special faculty committee under the chairmanship of psychology Professor Leonard Doob to study the freshman year. In 1962, the committee presented a report that incorporated the first formal proposal regarding the enrollment of women undergraduates:

Ultimately, we believe, Yale should concern itself with the education of women at the undergraduate stage. In the young women of the nation we have a huge supply of talent for which our educational institutions have insufficiently provided, and which our country has imperfectly utilized. We think Yale has a national duty, as well as a duty to itself, to provide the rigorous training for women that we supply for men, and we recommend that the University keep in its view for ultimate adoption the entrance of women to the freshman

class. Two qualifications seem to us important: first, women should not be admitted on a token basis, but as a substantial proportion of each class; secondly, there should be no reduction in the number of men admitted to Yale College. We make this long-range recommendation mindful of the many and expensive requirements the admission of women will impose upon the university. 1

The report was unanimously endorsed in principle by the Yale College faculty under the deanship of William Clyde DeVane, thus opening the door to future specific proposals. It was understood at that meeting that although all the proposals were accepted, some were assumed to be approved for immediate action and others for ultimate action. It was evident at the time that the recommendation on the admission of women to Yale College would fall into the latter category because of the complexities involved and the necessity for new capital resources in order to implement.

This time student interest began to generate and undergraduates joined with the faculty to support the cause of women. However, matters did not move rapidly in this particular area, and it wasn't until March 1966 that the Corporation indicated a willingness to consider the establishment of an independent coordinate college for women. A third party had suggested that Yale and Vassar might wish to discuss the possibility of merger and, as a result, the trustees of both institutions in December 1966 authorized a study of the feasibility of moving Vassar to New Haven. The study was undertaken immediately, but as it progressed, substantial Vassar opposition to the move began to develop and in November 1967 the Vassar College Board of Trustees voted to reject any idea of a mutual venture.

Following the Vassar decision, President Brewster stated publicly that Yale would actively pursue other possibilities. During the ensuing months, consultation with individuals and groups was sought, and although no further reports were presented, papers generated by these discussions became a supplement to the Vassar study as background for the consideration of the Yale Corporation. Also, an exhaustive study released in September of 1968 by a Princeton committee provided additional data and argument which were pertinent to the Yale situation. A survey by Princeton of 4,680

The Report of the President's Committee on the Freshman Year
(New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press), April 1962, p. 12.

secondary school students showed that 81% of the upper two-fifths by class standing felt that coeducation increased the attractiveness of a college; and, only 3% of the men and 5% of the women thought that coeducation would decrease it.

At its October 1968 meeting, the Yale Corporation discussed the prospect of coeducation at Yale in the light of the studies and materials mentioned above. It was the unanimous view of the Yale Corporation at this meeting that coeducation would improve the quality of Yale College and Yale's ability to attract the students it most wanted. It was felt that coeducation should be undertaken in a way which would permit flexibility for the future and that the degree of residential, social, and educational integration of men and women students should not be prejudged or precluded by the location, design, or administration of the facilities and programs for women. Also, it was the unanimous opinion that any long range plan must assure that women students would be treated as well as men students in terms of facilities, arrangements, and programs suited to their needs.

Against the background of these decisions, the administration was instructed by the Corporation to come up with an appropriate plan. Almost immediately following the October Corporation meeting a group of students led by the Student Advisory Board proposed that women from other colleges and universities be invited to reside at Yale for a week in order to participate fully in the curricular and extra-curricular life of Yale College. It was hoped that this would demonstrate the educational and social advantages of coeducation at Yale and that would persuade the administration to hasten its advent. In early November Yale undergraduates invited 750 women from nearby institutions to spend a week at the University.

Concurrent with Coeducation Week, the Provost, Treasurer, and Development Office estimated that the increased operating costs of absorbing 1500 additional students in Yale College would be equal to the income on an endowment of roughly 55 million dollars. Conversely, if the operating costs were assumed to be covered by tuition and fees, it would take about 55 million dollars to provide residential facilities and to endow the appropriate level of financial aid to students.

Two possible courses of action became apparent: one was to continue to study and sample opinion among potential applicants, and to inaugurate a fund drive; the other was to proceed at once to admit a sufficient number of women undergraduates so that their experience and their views and interests might provide a basis for the evolution of full coeducation. Finally, it was agreed that no matter how many studies and inquiries might be undertaken practical experience would provide the best information. Encouraged by the success of Coeducation Week, and in the context of all previous considerations and deliberations, the Yale Corporation at its November meeting recommended that Yale proceed to admit the following fall as many women as could conveniently be accommodated without reducing the number of men. The total number adjudged to be feasible was 500, and in order to have a reasonable distribution among classes, half were to be freshmen, half transfers. The original plan would have housed all freshman women in one residential college and women transfer students off-campus. However, this plan was changed after students, then living in the "selected" residential college, protested that they did not want their "community" broken up. Also, it was pointed out that if the women were to live off-campus, they would be excluded from one of the most important aspects of life at Yale; consequently the plan was modified to have all live on campus.

General planning for the admission of the first women was delegated to a Planning Committee on Coeducation composed of members of the faculty, administration, and student body, and chaired by Mrs. Elga R. Wasserman, who had previously served as Assistant Dean of the Graduate School. Henry Chauncey, Jr., Special Assistant to the President, joined Mrs. Wasserman as Director of Administrative Planning for Coeducation.

The Planning Committee was charged with the responsibility of implementing the decision of the Corporation and was instructed to consider all matters relating to admissions, housing, health and athletic services and facilities, security measures, as well as academic programs. It was agreed from the outset that initial plans would most probably need to be reevaluated and changed, but the Committee felt it was essential to obtain some actual experience before making any specific long-range recommendations.

The 1969-70 academic year began with 230 freshmen, 154 sophomores and 204 junior women (because Yale has a two-year residence requirement, no seniors were admitted). The freshman women were housed in one building on the Old Campus (Vanderbilt), and transfer students were distributed among the twelve residential colleges in groups of 30 and housed in separate entryways within the colleges. The Planning Committee was renamed the University Committee on Coeducation with Mrs. Wasserman remaining as Chairman, and in addition, assuming the position of Special Assistant to the President on the Education of Women.

At the end of the first year, it was apparent that including women as undergraduates was generally a success, but obvious also that problems existed. Although earlier recommendations stressed the importance of admitting women as a substantial proportion of each class, the degree of student unhappiness that arose as a result of the serious imbalance in numbers between the men and the women had not entirely been anticipated. That year the overall ratio was 7:1, and pressures arose both in the classroom and out. Within the classroom, many course sections had no women at all, or possibly only one or two. In consequence, women were treated as representative, and continually asked to give "the woman's point of view". In the residential colleges, each with only thirty women in residence, the women found it extremely difficult to find female friends with whom they felt compatible. Even male-female relationships experienced considerable strain because of the imbalance in the ratio, and the result led to anything but natural social interchange. The total atmosphere was hardly "coeducational".

The 1970-71 academic year began with additional 230 women; leading to further overcrowding, but slightly better numbers. As the year progressed students and faculty alike became increasingly concerned about the progress of coeducation, particularly with "the ratio". For some this meant a better balance in the makeup of the undergraduate student body for others a desire for a truly non-discriminatory policy in admissions.

Throughout all the deliberations leading to the admission of women to Yale College, everyone had assumed that ultimately coeducation would be accomplished by expansion of the residential facilities of

the college, and that the total student population would probably increase overall by about 2000, with the eventual ratio about 2:1 (approximately 4000 male and 2000 female undergraduates). Yale was tremendously encouraged by the generous gift of 15 million dollars by Mr. John Hay Whitney in September 1970 for the purpose of building two new residential colleges, and steps were immediately taken to determine the site and design of these units. As experience with the enlarged student body grew, however, questions began to be raised about the eventual size of Yale College, and it became increasingly apparent that in order to establish long-range goals, it would be necessary first to consider some very basic questions about the size and organization of Yale College.

During this period a fundamental conflict had begun to emerge. On the one hand many students and a substantial number of the faculty felt that a ratio approximating 50-50 would be desirable, or no fixed ratio at all, i.e., admission without regard to sex. Since a majority of this group also felt that the size of Yale College should not be increased, this inevitably would mean a reduction in the number of men. On the other hand, another group including a few students, some faculty members, and a significant number of alumni felt that the number of men should not be reduced, and pointed to a statement made by President Brewster in the fall of 1968 indicating that the number of men would remain constant. In remarks made to the Yale Development Board, Mr. Brewster had stated that coeducation should not be implemented by the reduction of male matriculants, and said that decisions were being made on an interim basis for the initial admission of women undergraduates, and indicated that based on the experience to be gained, long-term solutions were to be developed. Depending upon one's point of view this statement could be interpreted as meaning that the number of men would not be reduced in the long-range pattern; or, that after a relatively short experience with undergraduate women all such questions would be reconsidered. Those in the former group felt any change in the number of male matriculants would be a breach of faith on the part of the Yale administration; those in the latter group felt that a failure to change the admissions policy would prolong unnecessarily a plan that clearly needed to be modified.

These considerations and others led to discussions within the University Committee on Coeducation and the Steering Committee of Yale College. Dean Georges May addressed a letter to President Brewster on December 3, 1970 stating, "that the specific issue of the ratio of men and women in Yale College could not be intelligently determined without an examination of the basic assumptions lying behind our entire undergraduate educational approach." The letter continued, "Two, fundamental questions, as we see it, need to be examined and answered, at least tentatively, before we can solve intelligently the ratio problem: (1) What should be the size of Yale College? (2) What should be the length of an undergraduate career in Yale College?"

These issues and concerns led to the formation of the Study Group on Yale College which was appointed by President Brewster on April 22, 1971, and chaired by political science Professor Robert A. Dahl, with Mrs. Wasserman as one of its members. This Committee was charged with the "very broad responsibility for making recommendations concerning the future of Yale College over the next twenty years."

Against this background of continuing attempts to work out the future of coeducation at Yale, the first female Yale College students, 177 in number, were the proud recipients of B.A.'s in June 1971.

The year 1971-72 brought more women and more opinion from all elements of the University community that coeducation, even on a limited basis, was a success. This impression was strongly confirmed by a report prepared for Dartmouth College by Cresap McCormick and Paget in January 1972, which included an extensive evaluation of the Yale coeducation experience. But, as before, problems remained. With the admission of a third class of freshman women, the total enrollment of women had increased to well over 800 and two facts became extremely clear: (1) that even this small increase in the number of women in no sense made for a satisfactory ratio; and (2) that since the number of Yale admissions remained constant, the increasing number of female matriculants greatly intensified the overcrowding. It was felt that sufficient experience existed to review the initial planning decisions, and as a result, pressures continued to build to modify the admissions policy.

Responding to these concerns, President Brewster announced in February 1972 that he would ask the Yale Corporation "to reconsider the policies which govern the admission of men and women and to act on the matter no later than its November 1972 meeting." He stated that the co-education issue was tied in with "an overall reassessment of the future of Yale College," and noted that neither he, nor the corporation, nor the faculty could take any major action until the Dahl Committee report and the Broude-Cooper financial review were completed sometime in the spring. It was then anticipated that long-range plans could be formulated governing the size, residential policy, financial prospects and admissions policies of the University, but that "to reduce the number of men in any context other than an overall reassessment of the future of Yale College would be to do exactly what we said in 1968 we would not do."

The Report of the Study Group on Yale College was released in the spring of 1972, and strongly confirmed the commitment to the residential college principle for both educational and extra-curricular reasons, and strongly confirmed a commitment to coeducation, specifically recommending that:

Admission to Yale College should be granted on the basis of qualifications without regard to sex. It is our expectation that this recommendation would result in a student body of approximately 60% men and 40% women. If at any point this policy results in a student body in which either sex constitutes more than 60% of the entering class, we recommend that steps be taken to remove the imbalance through active recruitment of applicants of the underrepresented sex.

But it also recommended that Yale College remain modest in size, and stated that the accomplishment of full coeducation by expansion would make Yale too big.

In the months that elapsed while the Dahl Report was being prepared, other issues surfaced which had considerable influence on the Dahl recommendations. These included the University's growing financial problems, and the deteriorating relationship with the New Haven City administration

2 Report of the Study Group on Yale College - 1972,
Recommendation No. 17, p. 49.

which resulted in continuous delay of approval for the building of the new residential colleges (the original schedule was to have had them habitable by the fall of 1972). Although the presentation of the Dahl Committee Report was crucial, no action was taken on its total acceptance because of a series of issues unrelated to coeducation. Nonetheless, the strength of the Committee's recommendation on coeducation persuaded the administration to go ahead with its original plan to review undergraduate admissions policies no later than the November 1972 meeting of the Yale Corporation.

With the knowledge of the upcoming review, the fall of 1972 saw increased activity on the campus and meetings were held in all the residential colleges to discuss issues relevant to the future of coeducation. Student committees met and made recommendations, as did the faculty and many other University committees. The formation of the new Association of Yale Alumni, which had taken place during the first nine months of 1972 provided yet another means for polling an important constituency: Yale's 86,000 alumni.

Because admissions/coeducation had been an important issue to Yale's alumni, the AYA leadership had decided that the subject of Assembly I, held in October of 1972, would deal with the whole question of undergraduate admissions. Out of this Assembly there developed an ad hoc committee to study alumni opinion and make a considered recommendation to the Corporation as soon as possible. In order to give the AYA time to make this study, the corporation agreed to delay its decision on the ratio of men/women in the Class of 1977 until its December 1972 meeting. The AYA Assembly members polled the constituencies they represented: local associations, Yale College and Sheff classes, and the graduate and professional school alumni associations. Over 150 Assembly members responded by 30 November 1972. Particular note might be made of the fact that graduate and professional school alumni took time to respond, even though the issue directly affected only Yale College.

Finally, on December 9, after weighing all the available evidences, the Yale Corporation issued the following statement:

FROM MINUTES OF
MEETING OF YALE CORPORATION
DECEMBER 9, 1972

VMW to seek an increase in the number of women in the class of 1977 by somewhere between one hundred and one hundred thirty, depending upon whether the class size is reduced to thirteen hundred or remains at thirteen hundred and fifty. In order to achieve this objective on a non-discriminatory basis, the Dean of Admissions is requested to postpone the January first deadline for applications by two weeks.

VMED that it is Yale's objective to admit students on their merits without setting numerical quotas for the number of men and women. To the extent that there may be special objectives sought by admissions policy, including the objective of achieving and maintaining a satisfactory balance in the number of men and women in residence, these objectives should be achieved by special recruiting efforts rather than by rigid quotas imposed on the selection process.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

The Yale Corporation is wholly committed to a coeducational Yale College.

We believe that the gender of the applicant should not be the deciding factor in a candidate's chance of admission.

The Yale Corporation believes that students should be admitted to Yale College on the basis of their merit and potential in the light of Yale's faculties, programs, and facilities.

Among the most important aspects of Yale College are its residential college communities. We believe strongly that there must be a far closer balance between the number of men and women students in the residential colleges than now exists.

We are convinced that it is very important to increase as soon as practicable the total number of women in all classes in Yale College so that there are at least half as many women in the college as there are men. The immediate objective for next year should be to admit somewhere between one hundred and one hundred thirty more women than we admitted last fall. This would mean a commensurate reduction in the number of men admitted

if the class stays the same size. If it is reduced slightly then of course there would be a slightly larger decrease in the number of men. We would expect that the reduction in the number of men would be no less than ten percent, no larger than fifteen percent.

We request the Dean of Undergraduate Admissions to postpone the deadline for applications by two weeks from the usual January first deadline. This should make it more likely to receive enough applications from qualified women so that the increase of a hundred or more women matriculants next fall can be accomplished on a non-discriminatory basis.

The members of the Yale Corporation have a variety of views about what numbers of men and women would constitute the optimum for Yale College. The present view of the majority would favor something in the neighborhood of sixty percent men and forty percent women. In any case, the Corporation would prefer to rely upon special recruitment efforts as the most appropriate way to achieve and maintain a desirable balance, rather than upon rigid quotas, minimums; or ceilings described in terms of sex.

The Corporation, through its Committee on Admissions Policy, expects to monitor the effectiveness of recruiting policy as a way of achieving the objectives mentioned above. It also expects that the Dean of Admissions will consult with the Faculty Advisory Committee on Admissions Policy, the Admissions Subcommittee of the Association of Yale Alumni, and representatives of the Yale College Council in his effort to observe these guidelines.

We recognize that the new colleges, calendar changes, accelerated baccalaureate programs, or other educational changes may affect the extent to which the number of men would have to be reduced in order to achieve a better balance between the number of men and women students. However, the corporation believes that these decisions should be made on the basis of what is best for the quality of Yale education the University's ability to pay for that quality without short-changing future Yale generation. Therefore, the Corporation would not now make or prejudice any decision about future calendar changes or expansion. On those issues we defer our decision until we can have the benefit of recommendations from the appropriate faculties.

With this critical decision on an admissions policy finally resolved, there was general feeling that one of the most important issues in Yale College had been settled. The University Committee on Coeducation, in light of the above and after a thorough evaluation, recommended that the Coeducation Office be phased out at the end of the academic year, and that its programs be transferred to existing offices throughout the University so that all planning, whether curricular or extracurricular would be carried out within a coeducational framework. However, it was recommended that a Committee on the Education of Women be retained which would serve as an advisory group to President Brewster and which would oversee the transition of the programs originally initiated by the Coeducation Office. In addition, the Committee was to serve as a resource for individuals and groups and was to consider issues relating to the education of all women students at the University. This past year such a committee was appointed and has functioned as described above. In evaluating this year's structure and its effectiveness, it became apparent as the year progressed that a modification for the future would be desirable. Therefore next year (1974-75) the office function will be strengthened and the advisory committee structure will be revised to better meet the needs of the women students throughout the University.

It is now five years since the admission of the first women to Yale College. In June 1973 the first group of women educated totally at Yale was graduated, and with the Class of 1974, over 750 women have now received Yale B.A.'s. Next year's freshman class (1978) will be the first to matriculate under an admissions policy that has eliminated numerical quotas for men and women. The overall ratio for Yale College which was 7:1 in the fall of 1969, is anticipated to be approximately 2.5:1 next year, with a total enrollment of about 3600 men and 1450 women.

Without question, the early problems of coeducation at Yale have been overcome and Yale College is well on its way to becoming a truly co-educated institution not only in theory, but in practice. Although in any complex social structure it is difficult to pinpoint exact reasons, the current student body seems to exude a kind of spirit and enthusiasm in

ways that suggest that the initial reasons for proposing and implementing coeducation have been justified. Classroom discussions have become more diverse, and as a result, more stimulating. The self-conscious atmosphere that existed when women first arrived, has now abated. Academically, the women have excelled and have consistently captured a higher percentage of the honor grades. In addition, an increasing number of prestigious fellowships are being awarded the Yale women. In the area of post-graduate plans, relatively few marked differences emerge between the vocational goals of the men and women, with the most notable exception that women appear to be less attracted to business and finance. However, Yale women are highly motivated group, and have every expectation of contributing to society, just as their male classmates. In the extracurricular arena, women are enthusiastic participants. Art, music and drama are thriving and women students are to be found in all the major organizations. In athletics, two-thirds of the undergraduate women participate in same kind of program; and, as a result an increasing number of varsity sports have been approved; and an increasing number of opportunities have become available.

Although many of the problems related to coeducation have been resolved, some remain. Inevitably, subtle attitudes exist in an institution that has been male as long as Yale, and these attitudes do not evaporate overnight. For example, the "idea" of women's courses or the incorporation of related materials may be readily accepted in principle, but is not so quickly adopted or developed. Although almost all student activities are coeducational, most still remain male dominated; and, although a large number of the women participate in athletics, many inequities still exist in the scheduling of practices and in the use of facilities.

One area of particular concern to the women students today, and one that will intensify as the numbers of undergraduate women increase, is the relatively small number of women on the Yale faculty and in administrative positions. Obviously, this situation takes longer to change because the natural turnover in faculty and administrative positions is much slower than in the student body. Important appointments, however, have been made on the Corporation and in the offices of the Provost, the Dean

of Yale College, and the Dean of Admissions, as well as in the Department of Athletics. Significant progress also has been made in the appointment of women in the lower faculty and administrative levels. This whole problem becomes an important factor in a student's perception of the institution and how that institution views the role of women. For Yale University to be truly coeducated, it will mean not only a coeducated student population with equal educational opportunities but also a commitment on the part of the total University community to provide women the opportunity to participate at all levels within the University structure on an equal basis with men.

Women have had their champions at Yale as far back as the colonial period. Nathan Hale at his Yale commencement in 1773, won the "forensic debate" on the subject of "Whether the education of daughters be not without any just reason, more neglected than that of sons." Hale, wrote one of his classmates, "...was triumphant. He was the champion of the daughters and most ably advocated their cause."

Nathan Hale--and Lucinda Foote--would no doubt be pleased with Yale College today.