

HANDBOOK  
OF  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

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## THE EXTENSION WORK OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.

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**I**N the catalogue of the University of Wisconsin for 1888-9 appeared these words: "It is no more impracticable to extend the popular range of University education than to extend the sweep of the University courses. It can scarcely be more prophetic to contemplate the higher education of the masses to-day than it was to look forward to the common education of the masses a few centuries ago. \* \* \* There has recently been a very significant movement in this direction in England known as "University Extension," the salient feature of which lies in carrying forth to the people the instruction of the University by the means of lectures and local organizations. It is an effort to render available to the masses certain elements of the higher education.

"Some features of the English system are impracticable for us at present but the University of Wisconsin has independently become a pioneer in an analogous movement, that may in its full organization and development, be not less conducive to the common end sought. This embraces two co-operative phases: First, original investigation and experimentation for the purpose of discovering and proving new truths; and second, a series of publications and a system of local professional institutes, by means of which certain available aspects of the latest knowledge are communicated directly to the people. In other words, advanced knowledge is developed and prepared expressly for the people and conveyed directly to them. The effort has its manifest limitations, but thus far has proved eminently satisfactory. It is to be remarked

that the line in which this has been chiefly developed is that in which previous educational effort has proven least successful—that of agriculture. The system as here developed consists of a co-ordination of agricultural experimentation and Farmers' Institutes."

These words of President Chamberlain may be supplemented by the comment of Charles Dudley Warner in *Harper's Magazine* for April, 1888. "Wisconsin is working out its educational ideas on an intelligent system, and one that may be expected to demonstrate the full value of the popular method—I mean a more intimate connection of the University with the life of the people than exists elsewhere. \* \* \* The distinguishing thing, however, about the State University is its vital connection with the farmers and agricultural interests. \* \* \* I know of no other State where a like system of popular instruction on a vital and universal interest of the State, directed by the highest educational authority, is so perfectly organized and carried on with such unity of purpose and detail of administration; no other in which the farmer is brought systematically into such direct relations to the University."

Although Wisconsin has, during the past year, developed University Extension of the English type on an extensive scale, as will be shown in a later part of this article, it is evident that her system of Farmers' Institutes above mentioned is of such importance that it requires preliminary attention. This is her original contribution to University Extension. Wisconsin is predominantly an agricultural State and a State in which there is a very large proportion of foreign-born citizens. Therefore, whatever is of service in fostering the interest of the farmer and bringing to him the higher educational influences is of peculiar importance in this State.

The Farmers' Institutes seem to have originated in the conversation of the late Hiram Smith, a regent of the University, a practical farmer and public-spirited citizen. Suggestions dropped by him resulted in the drafting of a wise bill by Charles E. Estabrook, recently Attorney-General of the State, and this bill became a law in 1885. Under the law as it exists at present the University is given \$12,000 annually for conducting Farmers' Institutes, which are managed by a superintendent (Mr. W. H. Morrison), who is employed as any other member of the faculty, and has his office in the Agricultural Building on the University grounds. These institutes are held at various parts of the State throughout the winter months. About sixty regular institutes are held annually, at as many places, each lasting not less than two days. The University, through its superintendent provides four instructors for each institute, one of whom is usually some professor or instructor from the Agricultural Department, the others being selected from the intelligent practical farmers who have achieved marked success in some special line of agriculture. Besides the speakers furnished by the University, persons selected by the local committee assist, and free participation is encouraged on the part of all who attend. No political or religious questions are allowed. The day sessions are made as practical as possible. The University experts bring the fruit of their researches to the practical farmers, and in this way the most recent additions to agricultural knowledge are placed directly before the people and made available for their local needs. The evening sessions are given to such subjects as public school education, travel and other questions of common interest. The subject of better roads, for example, is beginning to receive much attention at the institutes. Lectures have been given by the professor of English literature on the agriculture of Holland, and President Chamberlin frequently addresses these farmers' meet-

ings. The attendance varies from fifty, in very poorly attended meetings, to fifteen hundred in the best attended ; but the usual attendance is from two to four hundred. It is not an unknown thing for a farmer to walk twelve miles to one of the institutes. Stimulated by the system, independent local organizations have been formed in many cases, which with assistance from Superintendent Morrison, hold institutes in addition to the sixty regular sessions. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* and the *Milwaukee Journal* have special correspondents to report the sessions of these institutes.

Each year at the closing meeting special preparation is made, and all of the papers and discussions are gathered up for publication in the annual Institute Bulletins, thirty thousands copies of which are printed and distributed gratis. In this connection it should be noted that the agricultural experiment station conducted by Professor Henry sends out fifteen thousand copies of its annual report, and four quarterly bulletins of ten thousand copies each. The station has a mailing list of eight thousand Wisconsin farmers. By this means the University brings its work directly to the farmers. The improvement of the agricultural condition of the state effected by the University in thus extending its activity is remarkable. Many cases can be noted in which the industries of communities have been changed from unprofitable grain raising to horticulture, dairy farming, etc., with accompanying prosperity and a rise in land values. It is not too much to say that the rapid progress made by the State in the direction of dairying, horticulture and improved stock raising, is in no small degree owing to the work of the Institutes. The farmers are becoming more intelligent and more prosperous. They participate freely in the discussions, they learn self-help and co-operation at the same time, and become interested in public concerns.

As yet the full possibilities of the Institutes have not been realized, however. With increased means, and with the training of instructors who shall be at the same time scientific and popular, it is believed that the University can do even more effective work in the purely practical meetings of the Institutes. As yet its connection with the evening sessions has been far too limited. When the University shall be ready to offer to the farmers who attend these meetings, "education not only as a means of livelihood, but as a means of life" as well, then this great popular organization, extending to every part of the State, and reaching classes greatly needing such influences, will prove of inestimable service. There is in this machinery a means for exercising a most quickening and elevating influence upon the village life of the State, and for carrying irrigating streams of education into the arid regions of the State. That the time for this work is near at hand is shown by the success of the University Extension work of the English type.

It was not until the present year that this side of University Extension work was entered into systematically by Wisconsin, but the germs of the movement had existed for some time. There had been, of course, many lectures given about the State by individual members of the faculty, and work had been done closely allied to the Extension movement. In January, 1888, the Contemporary Club, of Madison, acting on the suggestion of the late William F. Allen, professor of history in the University, arranged a course of free lectures upon the history of the Northwest. The list of lecturers included six historical investigators of Madison; two of them, Professor Allen and the writer, were of the University faculty, and one other, Dr. J. D. Butler, had formerly held a chair in the institution. The course was suggested by the Old South work, of Boston, and the success of the course was in a considerable measure due to the

active interest of Mr. R. G. Thwaites, Secretary of the State Historical Society, one of the lecturers in the course. A syllabus was distributed, and courses of reading suggested. The following year a second course upon the history of the Far West was given. Of the six lecturers three, President Chamberlain, Vice President Parkinson, and Professor E. A. Birge, were of the University faculty. This course as well as the first course was afterward given in Milwaukee, and calls for it were received from other portions of the State. In 1890 a third course was given upon the history of Kentucky and Tennessee, and two of the faculty were among the lecturers. The movement was eminently successful, and doubtless was instrumental in paving the way for the Extension work of the present year. In the winter of 1890-91 the writer, who had given Extension lectures while a student at the Johns Hopkins University, conducted courses of six lectures upon the Colonization of North America at two centres in the State. At the close of December, 1890, President Chamberlain delivered an address before the State Teachers' Association at Madison, upon University Extension, in which he indicated the intention of the University to enter upon the work. The interest in the movement was increased by the address of Dr. H. B. Adams, of the Johns Hopkins University, before the State Historical Society two weeks later upon the Higher Education of the People.

At the opening of the academic year in 1891 the University issued circulars offering lectures by ten members of the faculty. The unit lecture course was made to consist of six lectures. Upon completing the course and the required reading, and passing a satisfactory examination, candidates were promised certificates entitling the holder to credit equivalent to one hour a week extending through one University term. The fee demanded was sixty dollars and the expenses of the lecturer (that is, ten dollars

a lecture and expenses). This small charge was chosen in order that the smaller towns might not be cut off. The local centres were required to supply the hall and pay the expense of furnishing the syllabus to the entire audience. The cost of these ranged from five to ten dollars per course. The syllabi were carefully prepared with bibliographies, topics for reports, etc. Applications were considered from any suitable local organization. In many cases special Extension societies were formed. In the larger cities this was the usual organization. In Milwaukee the movement was particularly well organized, largely through the influence of Mr. R. C. Spencer, working through the People's Institute. The courses were guaranteed by prominent citizens, and nine courses were given there.

The following list shows the courses offered by the University of Wisconsin and the number of centres at which each lecturer gave courses: Physiology of Plants, Prof. Barnes, two; Bacteriology, Prof. Birge, six; English Literature, Prof. Freeman, seventeen; Electricity, Dr. Loomis, two; Scandinavian Literature, Prof. Olson, two; Economics, Prof. Parkinson, three; Landscape Geology, Prof. Salisbury, seven; Antiquities of India and Iran, Dr. Tolman; American History—Colonization, Prof. Turner, eight; Greek Literature, Prof. Van Cleef.

From this it appears that at the present writing forty-seven centres have been visited. Thirty-four cities are represented in these centres, five cities having taken two courses, and one (Milwaukee), nine. Invitations from twenty-four other cities were declined owing to the impossibility of meeting the calls. Of the invitations declined four came from Chicago, and three others from points in Illinois, two from Iowa, one from Minnesota, and one from Indiana. In all, seventy-eight centres, representing sixty-three communities, applied for courses. It is well under the mark to estimate that over seven thousand five hundred



people listened to the Extension courses offered by the University this season. The audiences ranged from six hundred to thirty-three (a class of physicians), but the usual audience was about one hundred and seventy-five.

The class work is difficult to determine in figures. The centres were organized contemporaneously with opening the courses in the respective places, and there has been difficulty in getting a systematic class organization and in securing text-books as well as in library facilities. As nearly as can be ascertained between fifteen and twenty per cent. have done regular reading in connection with the courses. The number reporting for examinations is much smaller, but since many of the courses are still in progress figures on this point are not available. In most of the centres the majority of the audience (in several cases the entire audience), remained to the class exercise, and the most lively interest was shown. But the number of those who took active part was somewhat limited. It has proved impracticable to secure oral responses to questions in class with any freedom, although one lecturer, Prof. Salisbury (Geology), had classes whose members answered questions as would a college class. The classes asked questions freely, and handed in written papers where these were asked, but this side of the movement was not urged as it will be next year, owing to the impossibility of correcting a large number of papers and attending to the regular University duties. Next year the class work should be more carefully differentiated and organized. Doubtless the size of the class in many cases deterred persons from asking and answering questions. The University authorities are considering the advisability of requiring, next year, a perfected class organization as a first step toward securing an Extension course from one of the faculty.

The places visited vary in size, from Milwaukee, with a population of over two hundred thousand, to Poynette,

with a little over six hundred. The latter place, a country village, supplied an audience of two hundred people. At least two other committees visited had a population of less than seven hundred. Five places had a population of under one thousand; ten, between one thousand and five thousand; four, between five thousand and ten thousand, and eleven above ten thousand. Owing to the fact that lectures could be given on but Friday and Saturday evenings, as a rule, the remoter parts of the State were not much visited. No active efforts were made to secure calls; the movement was so spontaneous and urgent that the faculty were unable to meet the demands made upon them. In most cases the expenses were met by the sale of tickets by local organizations. In seven centres admission was made free, the expenses being met by private subscriptions. Very slight deficits are reported in three centres, but in many cases a considerable surplus remains to be applied to libraries, or used as a fund for Extension work next year. In some cases the sale of tickets for one course nearly covered the expenses of a second course. Two or three cities, notably Milwaukee, secured free transportation for the Extension lecturers; in other cases the expense fell upon the centres.

The character of the audiences has been complex. They have included business and professional men, city teachers, advanced pupils of the schools, and citizens generally. Although, as a rule, the majority of the audience is made up of women, yet there is not so great a disproportion as in the usual church congregation. The workingmen have not been well represented. It will, perhaps, be necessary to offer specially adapted courses to meet their wants. Twelve of the courses were given in cities where the audience was in part composed of college or normal school students.

Some other features of the Wisconsin system remain to be mentioned. There is in connection with the Univer-

sity, and sustained in part by the State, a summer school, primarily for teachers. The sessions of this school are held in the Science building of the University during the month of July, and the laboratories and library of the University are open to the students. The school has now been in existence five summers. At its last session a faculty of eight instructors, chiefly selected from the University faculty, gave instruction in psychology, pedagogy, Latin, zoology, English literature, botany, chemistry, physics, and history. A fee of five dollars was charged to students from the State; to others the charge was ten dollars. The attendance reached about one hundred and fifty. As yet no organic connection exists between Extension work and the summer school; but the propriety of such a connection is so manifest that the union is doubtless only a question of time. The sessions of the school immediately preceded the meeting of the Monona Lake Assembly at Madison, which is attended by thousands of visitors. A connection between the Extension work of the University and this encampment will probably be brought about in the near future. The well-known beauty of the lakes of Madison—Sir Edwin Arnold has lately made us his life long friend by saying that Madison is the most beautiful city in the Union—and its libraries, aggregating over two hundred thousand volumes and pamphlets, point the city out as the future centre of the summer Extension work in the Northwest. The University also conducts a series of Saturday afternoon lectures by members of the faculty and prominent citizens of the State, which are largely attended by the townspeople.

Certain problems have been presented to the University by its work this year. One of the most perplexing of these relates to the teaching staff for next year. The professors who gave courses this year were, on the whole, chosen from among the ablest members of the faculty, and

many of them were among the most experienced class-room instructors, and knew how to present a subject in a way both scientific and popular. They have given freely of their time and energy this year in order to give the movement that successful start which its importance seemed to them to demand. It is obvious, however, that the work has grown so that they will be unable, without assistance, to meet the demands of next year without detriment to their original investigations, if not to actual class-room work. President Chamberlain, in his first address upon the subject, foreshadowed this difficulty and indicated the probability that a staff of special Extension lecturers would be needed. But here some questions arise. Will the public continue to give the same hearty support to the work when the well-known members of the faculty begin to retire in favor of the special lecturers? Will these lecturers be able to continue the distinctive University tone of the work, unless they are men equal in equipment to the present body of lecturers and unless they do instructional work in the University itself? Where is this corps of lecturers to be obtained? In answer to the first question, it is to be said that it is not proposed to create an entirely new force next year; the new men will be chosen to lecture on the subjects that have proved so popular that the present faculty are unable to supply the demand. Moreover, the added attention that the special men will be able to give to class work, organization, and so forth, will in part compensate the disadvantages of their not being known at first. In answer to the second question, it is hoped that bright and well trained young men can be secured who will be competent to do instructional work at the University and Extension work at the same time. The season of Extension work is so short that they would be left a considerable part of the year to do investigation and advanced study. The University has already a system of fellowships which seems likely to afford material

for the Extension work. The fellows are required to do one hour a day of instruction in the University. At the end of two years they have frequently been chosen as assistants in the University or in other colleges. No doubt some of the future Extension staff will be recruited from the men who have held fellowships and have been trained under the eye of the faculty. The University's new School of Economics, Civics and History, under the direction of Dr. Richard T. Ely, will start next fall with a considerable body of graduate students, some of them former college instructors, or advanced graduate students. This school will also furnish some of the future Extension lecturers. A special field for those who have completed post-graduate study has been suggested by President Chamberlin in his address before the State Teachers' Association, previously mentioned. He suggests the question: "Would it be practicable definitely to supplement the high school course by systematic courses conducted on the University Extension plan? The suggestion is that a series of special lecturers, equipped in two or three particular lines, should form circuits of adjacent high schools and give their courses weekly in immediate connection with them, the teachers and the older students forming the definite working nuclei of the classes, but drawing in as many adult citizens as practicable, the course to be given in the evening, and made as broad and open as may be. If a few of the branches that can least well be taught in the high school be selected and treated in this way, the high school work could be concentrated upon the branches deemed most important and available. Without doubt, a course of twelve lectures, accompanied by collateral reading and discussions, handled by an expert, would be more effective than twelve weeks in a text-book, taught without special preparation, equipment or adaptation. On the whole, this system would doubtless be more economical when results are considered.

This suggestion is certainly worthy of careful consideration by students of Extension development. In another way President Chamberlin has proposed to utilize Extension work. By a rearrangement of the courses of the University of Wisconsin the "group system" of studies has been adopted, giving the student opportunity to specialize along a few lines of related studies after a year of broader preparation. In connection with this a requirement has been made that each department shall offer a series of "synoptical lectures," upon its subject calculated to give the student an insight into the methods and vital features of the various departments of study. Each group student will be required to take a specified number of these synoptical lectures which are also open to the public. The plan will begin next year. So far as the writer is aware this incorporation of the University Extension idea into the University itself is a new plan. It is regarded by President Chamberlin and the faculty as experimental, but it is hoped that by this means, or by some modification, students who specialize their work may not lack general acquaintance with a wider range of studies. Of course, even within the group system, it is not proposed to narrow the work unduly. To the first year students the "synoptical lectures" will be helpful in that they afford an opportunity for determining more understandingly the choice of "groups."

The University is affiliated with the Chicago Society for University Extension and with the Chautauqua movement, but so far it has found itself so fully occupied in its own field that it has been unable to supply lectures to these allied organizations. The policy of the University is to recognize its primary duty to the people of Wisconsin, by discovering new truth, and rendering it available, indirectly, by the instruction of University students, and directly, by its publications, and by operating through the various

organs of the Extension movement in the State. At the same time it throws open its fellowships to national competition, and its graduate schools seem likely to be attended by students from all parts of the Union. It is obvious that Wisconsin has the materials for an original and complete system of University Extension. The Farmers' Institutes enable the University to reach a most important field, not so well reached by any other university. Her Extension movement of the English type has been remarkably widespread and successful. When the two movements are brought into closer relationship, and the summer school work placed in organic connection with them, the University will have a system peculiar to itself. To supply the teachers for this movement she must train fellows and the students of her graduate schools. For the present year she has to report the opening of a work the interest in which has surprised even the most sanguine friends of the movement. "The great results of the Extension effort," declared President Chamberlain before the work of the year opened, "are to come not so much from what is actually taught and learned as from the spirit of inquiry and the habit of thought and study which it will promote." Judged by this test, the University feels that it has met with gratifying success. For the coming year there is the task of developing more systematic, organized class-work, stimulating the foundation of the much needed town-libraries, and co-ordinating the various branches of the Extension movement in Wisconsin.

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*University of Wisconsin, March, 1892.*