FOUR

Admissions
Geography, Service, Morality

William H. Lynch, a lieutenant in the Thirty-second Missouri Volunteer Infantry (USA), returned to his home state in August 1865. But instead of going to his hometown of Houston, he headed one hundred miles north to Columbia. There he enrolled at the University of Missouri. He spent the next year studying Greek, Latin, mathematics, and surveying. He won election as an officer in one of the student literary societies. He attended local churches and a Sunday school. He paid university tuition with his army wages.

In several ways, Lieutenant Lynch was a typical student of post–Civil War America. He appears not to have had much money; in his diary he listed army wages as his only financial resource.[1] He also joined many veterans who went to college after the war. His church attendance fit with the religious atmosphere and requirements of many colleges. Finally, he made an increasingly common choice when he enrolled at a university in his home state.

The Civil War influenced more than the racial, gendered, and class makeup of college students. It affected two other social facets of admissions. By making travel difficult, raising the cost of housing, and promoting the establishment of modern state universities, the war led students more often to select institutions in their own states. The growth of institutions in the West also enabled more young people to attend college near home. Complicating the usual image of the war's nationalizing American culture, colleges became more locally based, their students less geographically diverse. Meanwhile, by creating a large population of veterans, the war raised the question of how they would readjust to civilian life and rejoin the civilian economy. Both college leaders and state legislators

saw higher education as one solution, especially for veterans who had suffered injury or illness on the battlefield. So, much as they partnered to create universities for farmers and engineers, colleges and governments also partnered to provide and pay for higher education for veterans. By rewarding military service with educational opportunity, they attracted men who shared the maturing experience of war and who often were older than traditional students.

The war brought localized enrollments and veteran students to all parts of the country. Until 1860 colleges in some areas had been drawing increasing numbers of students from a distance, but the Civil War ended those regional trends. Thereafter colleges everywhere attracted more of their students from within their own states. The influx of veterans, of course, was a national phenomenon. Men from all states had fought in the war—on one side or the other—so colleges everywhere welcomed veterans as students after 1865. Both Northern and Southern state governments helped the veterans to attend.

As colleges admitted new types of students, they faced the question of whether to hold these students to the same moral and religious expectations as their relatively homogeneous antebellum populations. On these moral criteria for admission, in contrast to social criteria, college leaders decided against change. They continued to require applicants to prove their moral character. Denominational colleges also continued to stress their Christian mission. Nonreligious youths could attend, but they knew to expect attempts at conversion. Even as students arrived with nontraditional class, gendered, and racial backgrounds, more local origins, greater maturity, and the experience of fighting in a war, professors and trustees expected them to behave and believe as college students always had.

Geography: The Emergence of the Local College

Historians often emphasize the Civil War's nationalizing impact on American life. Secession forced the Union to build a stronger federal government that could win a difficult war and that afterward would play a much more visible role in states' and individuals' activities. The experience of fighting the war, the Union's military and ideological victory, Lincoln's idea of a free nation premised on the Declaration of Independence, and the project of reincorporating and reconstructing the former Confederacy promoted a new national identity. Americans began to see themselves primarily as Americans, rather than as Missourians or New Yorkers, and to use *United States* as a grammatically singular term: this was one nation,

not a union of independent states. The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution made that vision official, declaring Americans to be citizens of the nation, not just of their states. Meanwhile, the citizens who had rallied around the federal government during the war looked on it afterward with more favor and less suspicion than before.[2]

The nationalization of American life had important consequences for higher education. The curricular and admissions reforms discussed in chapters 2 and 3 reflected colleges' increasing attention to the needs of the nation as a whole. Chapter 5 discusses additional consequences of nationalization, and especially the expansion of the federal government, for colleges. But a look at where Americans chose to go to college reveals a simultaneous and paradoxical trend: the localization of higher education.

Localization went hand in hand with nationalization. The national government expanded after the war, but so did state governments. Educational and entrepreneurial institutions spread across the country, but by doing so they made each community more self-sufficient. Federal and Confederate troops crisscrossed two nations, but the consequent difficulty (and the expense) of civilian travel encouraged many men and women to stay where they were. All these factors led colleges after the war to draw their students increasingly from their own communities and states. Robert H. Wiebe, in an alternative narrative to postbellum nationalization, has described America through most of the nineteenth century as a collection of "island communities." He argues that even in the 1870s, despite economic and political threats to those communities' autonomy, their residents nostalgically celebrated that autonomy.[3] College enrollments show further that during the 1860s and 1870s higher education became more of a local activity than it had been before.

Before the Civil War, American colleges drew their students from a broad geographic base. Although nearly all colleges had been founded by local communities and congregations or by state governments, they did not remain local or state institutions. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, colleges in the South and in New England attracted increasing numbers of students from outside their states. The historian Colin B. Burke, though he does not continue his analysis past the Civil War, documents the earlier shift in his thorough statistical study of antebellum higher education.[4]

Antebellum Southern colleges were growing more geographically diverse. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, only 14 percent of students in Southern colleges came from beyond state borders (fig. 8). By the 1850s the figure had risen to about 33 percent.[5] Few of these traveling

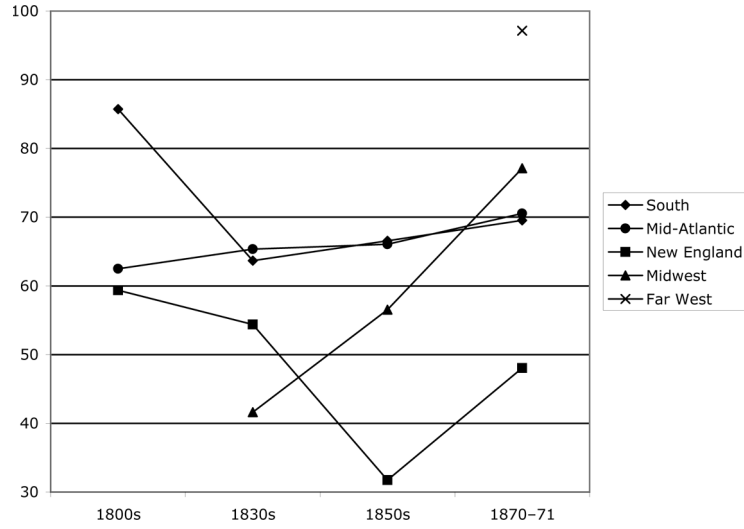

Fig. 8. Percentage of in-state college students in the South, the Mid-Atlantic, New England, the Midwest, and the Far West, 1800–1871. (Data derived from Burke, *Collegiate Populations*, 109, 117, 121, 123, 128; and U.S. Bureau of Education, *Inquiry*, 45–58)

scholars came from the North, but many came from distant parts of the South. South Carolina College and Wesleyan Female College, for example, enrolled students from Mississippi, Louisiana, and other distant Southern states but none from any Northern state.[6] Southern colleges were not national institutions, but they were regional.

New England followed a similar pattern. Colleges there began the century with far more students from out of state than those in the South, about 41 percent. The small geographic size and hence closer proximity of states in the region help to explain the higher figure. But by the 1850s that figure had risen substantially, to about 68 percent. Right before the war, Mount Holyoke Female Seminary drew 70 percent of its students from outside Massachusetts. Harvard drew 42 percent from outside the state, a major shift at a school that in the first decade of the century had drawn 82 percent of its students from within it. Some students at both schools even came from states about to secede from the Union. One hundred eighty future members of the Confederate military attended Harvard in the 1850s, and another seventy in the early 1860s; the large majority of these came from the future Confederacy.[7] As in the South, in New England colleges increasingly attracted young people from distant locations over the antebellum period.

The shift did not extend elsewhere. Out-of-state students in Burke's sample for mid-Atlantic colleges fell from about 37 percent in the first decade of the nineteenth century to 34 percent in the 1850s, a statistically insignificant change. In the Midwest, student populations actually become more local. Too few colleges existed there in the first decade of the century to form a statistically useful sample, but between the 1830s and the 1850s the proportion of students from *within* the states of their colleges rose from about 42 percent to about 57 percent. Cornell College was an extreme case. During the 1858–59 academic year 90 percent of its collegiate and preparatory students listed Iowa as their home (excluding preparatory students, as Burke does, reduces the figure to 89%).[8] The explanation for the midwestern exception is simple: more colleges existed there by the 1850s. With hundreds of college foundings in the antebellum period, many students for the first time had the *option* to attend an in-state school.

During and after the Civil War, colleges everywhere became more local. In 1872 the newly established federal Bureau of Education published data it had collected on the geographic origins of college students during the 1870–71 academic year. The contrasts with the numbers for the 1850s are striking. The Midwest had continued its trend toward localization: now 77 percent of students came from within the states of their colleges. The figure for mid-Atlantic colleges, barely rising before the war, now crept up to 71 percent.

More surprisingly, the South and New England also grew more local, reversing their antebellum trends. Southern colleges in 1870–71 attracted 70 percent of their students from within their own states, an increase of about 3 percent over the 1850s; New England colleges, 48 percent, an increase of about 16 percent. Put another way, 76 percent of students from the Midwest now attended college in their home states, 67 percent from the Mid-Atlantic, 65 percent from the South, and 67 percent from New England. (With both miles and mountains separating them from the rest of the nation, the new colleges of the Far West drew 97% of their students from their own states, and 88% of students from the region attended colleges in their home states.) Nationally, 69 percent of students attended colleges in their home states in 1870–71, compared with 56 percent in the 1850s.[9] After the Civil War, students across the country increasingly chose colleges near home.

The shift toward in-state college attendance, especially at Southern and New England colleges that before the war had been growing more cosmopolitan, had several causes. For one, new colleges in the West affected

old ones in the East. The frenetic pace of college founding between the Revolution and the Civil War continued after 1861. Some states and territories, such as Nebraska and Idaho Territory, built their first colleges in the 1860s and 1870s, making it possible for men and women on the frontier to enroll at nearby institutions.[10] As a result, formerly diverse eastern colleges had to fill their classrooms with eastern students.

The Civil War also promoted localization, in part by fostering the development of universities. As universities added scientific and occupational schools to their classical colleges, practical job training became one of their major activities. As chapter 3 shows, these new schools attracted nontraditional students. Less affluent men and women who aspired to (or already had begun) occupations in such fields as small-scale agriculture, engineering, mining, and teaching began to enroll. These students, more than their antebellum predecessors, tended to come from the local area. First-generation college students unaccustomed to the tradition of traveling far for their education had little reason to do so—or to spend money on room and board—when they had an adequate school nearby and could live with their families. The same was true for working adults who wished to improve their vocational knowledge or qualifications, especially if they needed to continue working while attending classes.

Local residents, consequently, made up a particularly large portion of the new schools' student populations. During the 1870–71 academic year 97 percent of normal, agricultural, and mining students at the University of Missouri hailed from Missouri, compared with 91 percent of academic students. In 1876–77 all six students at Harvard's agricultural college lived in the Boston area.[11] And when the University of California opened its Mechanic Arts College in the Mechanics' Institute of San Francisco and scheduled classes on evenings and weekends, the board of regents was deliberately making that college accessible to the working men and women of the city. Though the university did not record the hometowns of the five hundred–plus students who flooded the lecture hall, undoubtedly they lived and worked nearby. The first graduating class pointed to its local roots when it wrote to the regents thanking them for having "displayed a knowledge of the needs of the community."[12]

Besides offering practical curricula and flexible schedules that appealed to local residents, many of the new universities were *state universities*. Antebellum state universities, though founded by state governments, had operated independently of legislatures and survived primarily on income from tuition and philanthropy. They had charged the same tuition to all students, sometimes at rates higher than many denomina-

tional colleges'.[13] But after the war the state designation began to mean something. We saw in chapters 2 and 3 that wartime damage, financial ruin, and the politics of Reconstruction and Redemption led Southern state governments to take a much more active role in funding, shaping, and regulating their state universities. The passage of the Morrill Act and the emergence of research universities led some Northern states to do the same. In developing these institutions after the war, state governments saw their own constituents as the logical beneficiaries. No state actually barred nonresidents from its university, but universities and governments did adopt the rhetoric of educating their own citizens and sometimes adopted tuition policies that favored those preferred students.

The University of California illustrated the change in geographic rhetoric that accompanied the transition to modern public higher education. The old College of California, founded and controlled by the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, not only attracted students from many locations but even celebrated the diversity of culture and experience they brought to the campus. An advertisement for the college's preparatory school in 1868 quoted California newspapers that lauded the presence of young people from multiple states and nations. The *San Francisco Mining and Scientific Press,* for example, in an endorsement quoted in the *Placer Herald,* argued that "the advantage gained by sending a son where the thoughts and experiences of students from Washington Territory and Idaho, from Nevada, Mexico and the Sandwich Islands, are intermingled with the fertile minds of those from every county of California, is incalculably great."[14] The college took advantage of students' varied backgrounds through the Sociedad Literaria Castellana de California. This faculty-led student organization brought together students from Latin America and the United States to study Spanish literature.[15] It also suggested an openness to the substantial Spanish-speaking population of California, a state that until 1848 had been part of Mexico. College leaders used students' geographic and cultural diversity to enrich the education of all students.

When the College of California became the University of California in 1869, the rhetoric changed. Although the first catalogue of the preparatory school after the transfer of authority from church to state did promote the school's multistate and multinational student body, support for geographic and cultural diversity ended there. Dean Martin Kellogg explained in a speech in 1876 that the state university "was of and for the people of the whole State [of California]."[16] The new rhetoric translated into new policy. When, in 1870, the legislature created five scholarships for needy and talented students, it stipulated that recipients must "be

bona fide residents of California" who had attended school in the state. In addition, the Sociedad Literaria Castellana disappeared when the state took over.[17] Its elimination signaled a discounting of the cultural contributions of both Latin Americans and Spanish-speaking Californians. The university now existed to educate the people of one state and one native language, not to facilitate or draw on a geographically and culturally diverse learning community.

The effects on enrollment were stark. In 1867 the College of California had drawn 15 percent of its students from outside of California. Nearly half of those had come from foreign nations, including nineteen students from Mexico and one from Panama. By the 1872–73 academic year, with the new state-university rhetoric, the in-state scholarships, and the closing of the preparatory school (a move that favored applicants who had attended California's English-language high schools), out-of-state enrollment had fallen to 4 percent and international enrollment had ceased altogether.[18] The state university truly had become an institution "of and for" Californians.

The University of Missouri introduced similar, pro-Missourian policies. Though it always had been technically a state institution, only after the war had damaged its campus and decimated its student body did President Daniel Read convince the legislature to fund it. Read also argued, in a speech in Indiana in 1869, for a state's special commitment to educate its own citizens in its state university. For young people to seek an education in another state, he believed, was shameful to their own. The board of curators evidently agreed that a university funded by Missouri tax dollars should serve primarily Missouri citizens. In 1872 the board introduced an unfamiliar concept: different tuition levels depending on one's home state. Students from outside Missouri paid forty dollars, as before. Missourians, however, paid only twenty. This new policy at first glance appears to have had a major effect on the student population: out-of-state enrollment instantly dropped from 7 percent to 3 percent. The drop, however, included some unscrupulous students from outside the state who simply began listing Missouri as their home. Unable to distinguish true Missourians from imposters, the curators abolished the new policy after five years.[19]

The Civil War and Reconstruction also promoted the localization of college attendance in more direct ways than through supporting the growth of universities. For one thing, secession and the war hardly fostered friendship between the North and the South. Students from the Confederate states left Northern colleges as soon as the war began. They

were not likely to return after their defeat, nor were Northerners likely to march into once-enemy territory to attend college. But beyond sectional animosity, the war and Reconstruction impacted students' college choices in ways that primarily affected the South. There, the military battles and economic hardships that accompanied the war prevented students from traveling long distances for their education, even within the Confederacy. Sallie Love's experience, chronicled in chapter 1, illustrates the war's impact: with travel increasingly dangerous and colleges continually closing because of troop movements, she journeyed to five colleges in four states before graduating from one in her home state of Mississippi. The resulting hesitancy to travel far to attend college lasted beyond the end of hostilities. Reconstruction politics also sometimes contributed to localization. The war's direct impact on the geography of college attendance is best seen through the stories of individual institutions. Wesleyan and South Carolina are excellent examples.

Like other Southern colleges, antebellum Wesleyan educated a mostly in-state but broadly Southern student population. On the eve of war, during the 1860–61 academic year, 21 percent of students came from Macon; 62 percent, from elsewhere in Georgia; and 18 percent, from the rest of the South (fig. 9). Not surprisingly, given both cultural differences

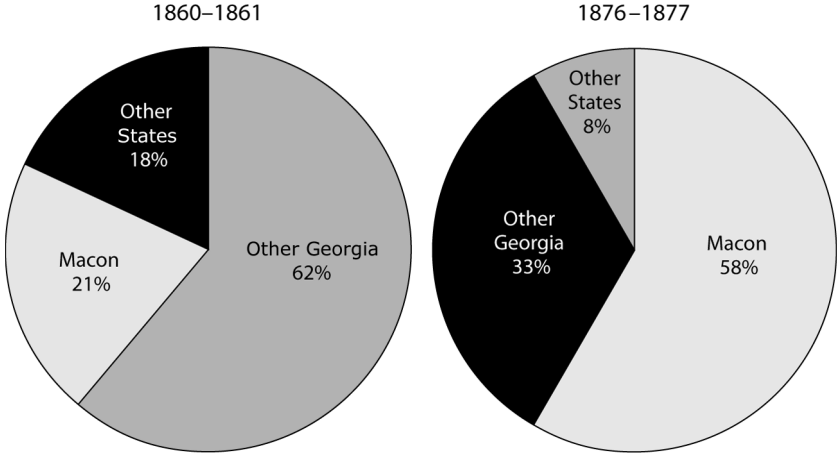

Fig. 9. Geographic origins of students at Wesleyan Female College at the beginning and end of the long Civil War era, 1860–61 and 1876–77. (Data derived from catalogue of Wesleyan Female College, 1860–61, 13–21, and 1876–77, 13–17; data for 1860–61 exclude students who studied only music, drawing and painting, or ornamental work, whose place of origin the catalogue did not identify)

and the existence of female seminaries and coeducational colleges in the Northeast and the Midwest, none came to Wesleyan from states that were to remain in the Union. Three years later little had changed: 30 percent came from Macon; 52 percent, from elsewhere in Georgia; and 18 percent, from everywhere else. Aside from one Missourian, they all called the Confederacy home.[20]

Then the war arrived. The Union army began to threaten Macon, home to a Confederate armory and arsenal, in the summer of 1864. On July 30 and 31, while students were away on vacation, defenders repulsed a Union raid on the city led by General George M. Stoneman Jr. Meanwhile, General William T. Sherman laid siege to Atlanta, which fell on September 1. By Wesleyan's opening day, October 3, Confederates were destroying Union depots near Atlanta and Sherman was contemplating a march of destruction toward the coast that would bring his forces perilously close to Macon. Though Sherman did not attempt to capture the city when he reached it in mid-November, he did order a diversionary attack while troops destroyed nearby railroad tracks. Wesleyan closed for two or three weeks amid the turmoil. Parents had reason to hesitate before sending their daughters to college in Georgia that fall.[21]

If the military danger did not dissuade parents from sending their daughters to Wesleyan, the financial danger did. Responding to rampant inflation, the trustees raised costs in 1864. Tuition rose, but room and board rose far more. Because Macon residents could live at home with their families, the increase disproportionately affected those from out of town or out of state. The military and financial barriers thus combined to keep away long-distance students. The percentage of students from Macon now increased from 30 to 51; the percentage from outside Georgia fell from 18 to 6. Put another way, although the total student population fell by slightly more than half in 1864, the attrition was not even: the number of students from Macon dropped from seventy-four to fifty-seven, while the number from out of state plummeted from forty-three to seven.[22]

After the war ended, the difficulties of getting to and paying for Wesleyan eased. Battle had ceased by the summer of 1865. Families no longer needed to worry so much about the hazards of travel. Meanwhile, the trustees lowered costs to only slightly above their prewar levels. By the fall of 1865 tuition was $60, the same as five years earlier; room and board, at $165, exceeded prewar rates by only $15. Prices gradually increased as time passed, but even in 1876–77 costs were only $80 for tuition and $200 for room and board. Cost did not seem to prohibit those from far away from enrolling. In addition, while the provision for free tuition for

clergymen's and (until 1875) fallen soldiers' daughters did not include free housing, neither did it restrict tuition waivers to local residents.

Yet those from afar still did not come (see fig. 9). The proportion of Wesleyan students from Macon, 21 percent right before the war, fell below 50 only twice in the twelve years of Reconstruction. Those from outside Georgia, 18 percent before the war, only twice surpassed 10.[23] It became the norm for students to call Macon home and reside in town with their parents; students now referred to the "walk home from school" as a daily trek.[24] Wesleyan had to some extent become, to use a modern term, a commuter college. The women of the South, who had grown accustomed to attending college near home, maintained this new preference. The Civil War, having cut Wesleyan off from its Georgian and Southern clientele, left as its legacy a more local orientation of the nation's oldest college for women.

The difficulty of traveling in wartime and Confederate inflation had a similar impact on the University of South Carolina. But there postbellum politics also helped shape the student body. Attempts to expand access with regard to race and wealth level had an unintended consequence. They combined with wartime challenges to make the university *less* diverse geographically. By the 1880s South Carolina College had acquired a state, even local constituency.

The old South Carolina College followed the antebellum pattern with a primarily South Carolinian but still broadly Southern constituency. During the 1859–60 academic year 16 percent of the student body came from outside the state—below average, but still significant (fig. 10). The following year, the number fell slightly, to 12 percent. These students came to Columbia from as far away as Florida and Louisiana, but none came from any Northern or border state. On the other hand, only 2 percent of the student body—that is, three students—resided in Columbia itself. The great bulk of students came from elsewhere in South Carolina; nearly all of them lived in the dormitories.[25] Higher education merited a short journey and the cost of a room, but most young men did not need to stray far from their families. Representatives of the rest of the Deep South and the emerging Confederacy provided diversity within class and ideological bounds.

When the war began, the student body changed less in its makeup than in its size. Enrollment fell by half in 1861, from 143 to 72, as young men volunteered for the Confederate military. In terms of geography, students' origins became somewhat more local. Now 10 percent came from

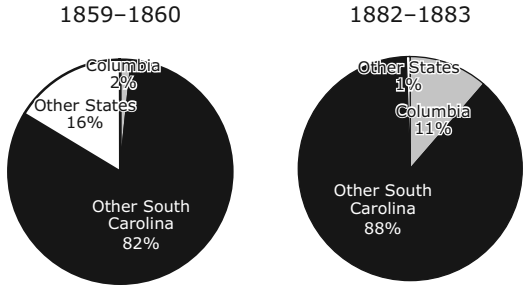

Fig. 10. Geographic origins of students at South Carolina College before and after the long Civil War era, 1859–60 and 1882–83. (Data derived from catalogue of South Carolina College, 1860, 12–17, and 1882–83, 18–23)

Columbia, 83 percent from the rest of South Carolina, and 7 percent from elsewhere in the Deep South.[26] The hazards of traveling through a war zone no doubt kept some long-distance students away. In addition, many young men who had not yet enlisted likely preferred to return home to protect their families or fill in for relatives or overseers who had joined the military. In any event, the war soon became such a priority that few young men from anywhere in the South could justify academic study. South Carolina's military draft in the spring of 1862 and the college's conversion into a hospital that summer shut down the school.

When it reopened in 1866 as the University of South Carolina, despite the grander name it was a more local institution, with 18 percent of students hailing from Columbia and only 3 percent from outside the state. The trend continued through the early years of Reconstruction. By 1869–70 Columbians made up 48 percent of the student population, and non–South Carolinians only 2 percent—a single student. As at Wesleyan, the rising cost of room and board likely discouraged out-of-towners from attending. Young men from Columbia, living with their families, could more easily afford to come. In fact, room and board apparently were such a financial strain that, despite the law permitting each county to send one student to the university free of tuition, many counties in the late 1860s and early 1870s did not.[27] Merely the cost of living in Columbia, never mind studying there, prevented distant young men from attending. Financial barriers had made the university a local institution.

In the early 1870s students from a distance began to make a comeback. In 1870–71 out-of-state students made up just over one-quarter of the student population and included young men from as far away as Texas and Pennsylvania. Columbians, meanwhile, dropped below one-third of

the total. Why this happened is unclear, but whatever the reason, the new trend did not last. Just as the school at Columbia was again starting to become a regional, and potentially national, university, changes to the admissions policies abruptly halted and reversed that trend.

In 1873 the trustees opened the university to African Americans. In doing so they effectively closed it to non–South Carolinians. We might expect otherwise. Although racial prejudice ensured the withdrawal of most white students, blacks from across the South might have enrolled. Probably many non–South Carolinian freedpeople with some education and an intellectual inclination would very much have liked to enroll. Indeed, Grandison Harris, the justice of the peace who wanted to send his son to the law school, hailed from Georgia. But the attractions for South Carolinians and the barriers for most others were too great. First, like Missouri and California, South Carolina made it clear in promotional literature that it intended this free university for the citizens of South Carolina.[28] Second, travel expenses kept others away. Finally, African Americans were making great efforts to reconstitute families that slavery had dispersed.[29] Unless they could bring entire kinship groups to Columbia, those from far away were unlikely to go themselves.

When the trustees instituted free tuition and housing in 1873, they did more than open educational opportunities to lower-class and black Americans. They created a new relationship between the state and individuals' education. Just as California and Missouri were doing in different contexts, South Carolina was developing a modern state university. No longer an independent college with state funding, it now became a mechanism through which South Carolinians funded one another's education. This new conception of higher education accompanied the construction of a public school system in South Carolina; legislators described the university as the "crown" on that system. One scholar has noted that the Reconstruction university embodied "the nation's first attempt to educate Negroes from the level of the 'A-B-C's' all the way to the classics." In fact few states, and none in the South, had ever set out to educate *any* of their citizens that fully.[30] Now it was being done in California with the Morrill Act funds and in South Carolina with state revenue alone. Reconstruction politics in South Carolina gave birth to a new state role in education.

With the university refashioned as part of South Carolina's public school system, the incipient trend toward a regional student body reversed. By the mid-1870s the university had again become a state and largely local institution. In 1875–76, with nearly two hundred students,

it had its largest student population in more than twenty years. Of those, 37 percent came from Columbia; 59 percent, from elsewhere in South Carolina; and only 4 percent, from the rest of the country.[31] The university had once again become a local and state institution, as well as, in a sense, one of the first modern public universities.

Though the Redeemers expelled African Americans from the university in 1877, they retained the principle of a free state college. They also continued to educate South Carolina citizens almost exclusively. In 1881–82, a year after the school reopened as the South Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanics, not one student came from out of state. Only one did the next year, a Marylander who "came to Columbia with a Circus that disbanded," leaving him stranded and in need of a new career (see fig. 10).[32]

South Carolina College too had embarked upon a new career. It had entered the Civil War as a cultural training ground for an economically narrow but geographically broad Southern class, and it had emerged from the war, Reconstruction, and Redemption as quite the opposite: a source of educational and occupational opportunity for a relatively broad economic stratum of South Carolina's white male citizens. Throughout the country, colleges during and after the Civil War increasingly educated local student populations. Men and women interested in a college education increasingly selected colleges near their homes.

The GI Bills of the 1860s

The localization of college enrollments after the Civil War had exceptions. Cornell College was one. There, after a dip during the war, enrollment from outside Iowa during the late 1860s and 1870s exceeded prewar levels. More than twice as many non-Iowans attended Cornell in the late 1860s as had a decade earlier. The increase was even higher for male students.[33] Cornell's anomalous pattern points to another nationwide change in college student populations. The Civil War created a sizeable population of veterans ready to return to civilian life. It also left many children fatherless and without the support of their fathers' income.

Some veterans now looked to colleges to prepare them for new careers. These included former students who returned after fighting in the war. Cornell College and New York's Union College were among those that welcomed back men who had interrupted their studies for military service.[34] Other veterans saw their return to civilian life as a reason to attend college for the first time. Confederate veterans, most of them with

little prior education, made up the majority of the University of South Carolina's students after the war. William Lynch headed directly from the battlefield to the University of Missouri. Cornell University's earliest classes included veterans wearing military coats dyed to resemble civilian garb. And postbellum Harvard enrolled veterans of both the Union and Confederate armies.[35] These men found attending college attractive solely because of the potential intellectual and professional rewards. But some colleges and state governments created additional financial incentives. They made it easier for veterans, and sometimes orphans of veterans, to get a college education.

The GI Bill of Rights famously offered free college tuition to veterans of World War II. When Congress passed that law in 1944, it demonstrated national respect for those who had served their country. But eighty years earlier, governments and colleges had established similar policies that revealed a heightened respect for veterans after the Civil War. Veterans of even earlier wars had received some government benefits, but those had been inconsistent and almost entirely confined to money or land. Between 1776 and 1832 Congress passed a series of laws granting pensions to Revolutionary War veterans or their widows. Most states gave land bounties to Revolutionary soldiers, usually in an attempt to spur enlistments. Congress awarded federal land to those who had fought in the War of 1812 and the Mexican War but did not offer them pensions until many decades later. It did establish a home in Washington, DC, in the 1850s to care for disabled veterans, but that served only a small number of men.[36]

The Civil War led to a vast expansion of veterans' benefits. Far more Americans had participated in that war than in any before it. The country developed a stronger sense of the military's importance—a sense that prompted the growth of military courses in colleges—and began to value war veterans' service more highly. The federal government built a much larger pension system than it had before, first for disabled veterans and survivors and eventually for all who had defended the Union. Between 1861 and 1890 the Pension Bureau dispersed more than seven hundred thousand pensions, more than five times the total dispersed before then; in 1893 pensions accounted for more than 40 percent of the federal budget. With its newfound generosity Congress finally established pension systems for veterans of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War in 1871 and 1887, respectively. And this time veterans' benefits included services in addition to money. Congress created a much larger system of homes for disabled, elderly, or otherwise unhealthy Union veterans. Across the

country these homes ultimately served more than one hundred thousand Civil War veterans. Former Confederate states, meanwhile, built homes for their own veterans; Virginia also provided artificial limbs to amputees. In the late 1880s and 1890s these states began awarding pensions to the Confederate veterans excluded from the federal bounty.[37]

In addition to pensions and healthcare, veterans for the first time received educational benefits. Three states passed laws offering at least some veterans a free college education. In 1864 Virginia awarded free tuition, housing, and laboratory use at the state university to any disabled Confederate veteran of good character from the state who could not afford those expenses. The same year, Ohio's legislature passed a law providing free tuition at state-supported colleges for Union veterans from Ohio who had enlisted as minors. They could study without cost for the length of time they had served in the military before turning twenty-one. Two years later Ohio extended this program by offering public funding to any college that gave free tuition to veterans. Georgia passed a law in 1866 providing free clothing, books, board, and tuition at the University of Georgia or any of four other colleges to indigent disabled Confederate veterans from Georgia under the age of thirty. In exchange, recipients promised to teach in the state's public schools for the length of time they had studied at taxpayers' expense. Veterans accepted the offer, leading a student to remark that the state university's campus resembled a military camp. A fourth state took similar but abortive action on behalf of another constituency affected by the war. In 1868 Arkansas's Reconstruction legislature voted to give scholarships to the *children* of Union veterans at the yet-to-be-formed state university. Because the university did not open until after a new legislature had redesigned its charter, this provision never took effect.[38] But in Virginia, Ohio, and Georgia, taxpayers rewarded men for their service with an advanced education.

The increased respect for veterans and the desire to help them were not confined to politicians. Individual colleges established similar policies without state compensation. Indiana-Asbury College offered free tuition to all veterans "who come well recommended." Valparaiso University in Indiana admitted wounded veterans free of charge. The University of Virginia, Ohio University, and Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, did the same even before the new state laws required or publicly funded the programs. And while Mercer educated disabled veterans for free, Macon's other college educated their departed comrades' daughters: Wesleyan offered free tuition to the indigent daughters of men who had died fight-

ing for the Confederate cause.[39] No public funds supported that effort. The Methodists who ran the college evidently thought it the right, or at least the popular, thing to do.

Cornell College took a more active approach to attracting and supporting veterans. In 1864 the trustees voted to establish a Soldiers Fund to pay for disabled veterans and soldiers' orphans to study at Cornell. But they did not simply ask local citizens to donate. At the suggestion of some Iowa soldiers, the trustees sent the college's president south collecting subscriptions for the fund from the soldiers themselves. With the permission of the War Department and possibly even the blessing of President Lincoln, President William F. King met with eighteen Iowa regiments in General Sherman's army. The troops pledged about thirty thousand dollars to support their comrades' education. Amid soldiers' rush to return home when the war ended, the college managed to collect only about fourteen thousand. But that sum lasted more than a quarter-century, paying veterans' and orphans' tuition and, when necessary, the cost of board and books. The college did not record the number of veterans who attended, but the amount spent from the fund by 1878 would have covered more than 360 years of tuition or more than fifty years of tuition and board. King recalled that "numerous" veterans took advantage of the fund. Cornell's postbellum classes thus included both former students who returned after the war and men who had not attended college before and without this aid probably never would have.[40]

Besides the financial incentive for the wounded, another factor brought veterans to Cornell after 1865. According to the president and a student turned soldier, Cornell students and alumni who served in the army spread their college's reputation among the troops. These soldiers' and officers' "splendid record, their education and social quality, united to make the college favorably known to their comrades, and they thus drew to its halls many gallant fellows who wanted a higher education, when their army life was over."[41] Evidently the war gave Cornell a national reputation. This helps to explain the increase in male enrollment from outside Iowa. Having learned about Cornell from its students around the campfire, discharged veterans headed to Iowa for college; the Soldiers Fund, which was not restricted to Iowans, made their attendance possible. This also suggests that many of those veterans who enrolled in college after the Civil War, at Cornell and elsewhere, may not have considered doing so before the war. Military service brought together the well educated and the uneducated, those who talked about their college experiences and those who listened with interest. Army campfires,

where some American men heard about college life for the first time, likely served as recruitment sites both for specific institutions and for college in general. In yet another way, the Civil War facilitated new diversity among college entrants.

The enrollment of veterans affected the age distribution on college campuses. Antebellum colleges had enrolled students from a wide range of ages. Twenty-three percent of midwestern students in the 1850s began college after their twenty-first birthday; another 23 percent, before turning 17. The figures for New England were about 17 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Now, at some colleges veterans temporarily tilted the age scale upward. By 1869 the average age for Cornell men at graduation was twenty-four, with the oldest male graduate twenty-eight years old and the youngest twenty-two. (Unfortunately, Cornell did not record age figures for earlier years.) Three years later, with veterans' enrollment apparently winding down, the average age at graduation (for all students, including women) fell to just under twenty-one years, the lowest in Cornell's history.[42]

At the same time that veterans were arriving on campuses, some colleges began to seek out older students for academic and political reasons. Mount Holyoke's faculty, convinced that older students did better in school and were more likely to graduate, encouraged young women to wait before applying to the seminary. The principal happily reported in 1876 that the average age at graduation had increased to twenty-two years and four months, though like Cornell College, she did not provide any earlier figures for comparison.[43]

The University of South Carolina faced particular pressure to maintain a mature student population. When that university became a tuition-free, primarily black institution in the 1870s, it easily could have become a school for young teenagers. Drawing its students from a recently enslaved people, it could not rely on an established network of secondary schools or private tutors to provide cohorts of well-prepared, traditionally aged applicants. Thanks to antebellum prohibitions against slave literacy, most adult freedpeople had no more education than children. Indeed, the legislature accused the university of awarding scholarships to a "crowd of youngsters." But the faculty disputed the criticism. They pointed out that not only did the university have a minimum graduation age of nineteen but its students surpassed that by several years. The average age of seniors on scholarships was twenty-two; that of freshmen on scholarships, eighteen and a half. Even the preparatory school enrolled students as old as twenty-three.[44] Under pressure to make the school a real university

with real university students, the faculty awarded scholarships to mature men. For several reasons, including the recruitment of veterans, mature students became a larger part of college populations right after the war.

As students got older, they presented colleges with a new and probably unexpected question: might college students wed? Some did, or else they arrived already married. As early as 1863 a Mount Holyoke senior wed during spring vacation, just before her husband joined the army as a chaplain. She stayed through graduation, then joined him on the front. The next year, a twenty-five-year-old woman enrolled while her husband served in the navy. Her letters mentioned no difficulty gaining admission. A married woman enrolled in Harvard's coeducational lecture course in philosophy in the fall of 1869. And for the 1871–72 academic year a married woman, possibly along with her husband, enrolled as a preparatory student at the University of Missouri.[45]

At Cornell College, however, the question of married students raised qualms among the faculty. With students well into their twenties by the late 1860s, some chose to marry before graduating. But at a school that still strictly limited social interactions between male and female students, student marriages were bound to cause problems. When the faculty learned in March 1868 that a male junior intended to marry, they resolved—after reaffirming the rule prohibiting men from escorting women to public events—that if he did so, he would face expulsion. The junior married anyway; the faculty rejected a petition by students that they reconsider his dismissal. By late 1871 the prohibition of married students had become "the usual law." The faculty did grant an exception that year, but they granted no exception a year later when younger students followed their older schoolmates' example. On learning that two students "of tender years and immature judgment" had "by a matrimonial alliance contrary to the common law of College life, brought disrepute upon the College and virtually placed themselves outside of the relation of students," the professors immediately dropped them from the rolls.[46] The faculty expected students to postpone marriage until after college. They welcomed older students and veterans, but when it came to students' behavior, they were far less flexible. Antebellum expectations of students' behavior survived.

Science, Virtue, and Christ: Morality at Postbellum Colleges

Besides an academic examination, colleges in the nineteenth century relied on two types of criteria for selective admissions, which I call social

and moral criteria. Social criteria for admission related to who a potential student *was*. These restricted or encouraged entrance according to class, race, gender, geography, veterancy, and age. Moral criteria, on the other hand, related to how an applicant *behaved* and what he or she *believed*. These criteria fell into two intertwined categories: moral character and religion. Antebellum colleges usually required each applicant to present evidence of good character in the form of a testimonial from a teacher, tutor, clergyman, or other authority. Because colleges were in the business of training the whole student—of preparing a mature, intelligent, and moral adult—they wanted to begin with youths who showed promise in all respects.

Most antebellum colleges also had a strong religious tone. Christian denominations had founded the large majority of colleges during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These institutions hoped to train good Christians. College life involved mandatory church attendance, classes in religion, and the expectation that students imbibe the laws of Christianity. They might not require a declaration of faith from matriculates, but young people who were not prepared to devote a large portion of their days to worship and Bible study would not find most colleges to their liking. The extent to which denominational colleges taught those denominations' specific principles varied; over time, colleges found that they needed to remain *broadly* Christian in order to attract enough students to stay solvent.[47]

State universities gave religion a smaller role in their curricula and general tone. All colleges were Christian institutions, but the universities that Southern states founded in the first half of the nineteenth century did not require the same religious commitment of their students, or even of their faculty, as the denominational colleges. The University of Virginia had no religious observances at all. An early president of South Carolina College publicly criticized church authority. South Carolina did require evidence of "good moral character" from its applicants, but unlike with denominational colleges, prospective students did not need to consider their level of Christian devotion when selecting a state university.[48] The division here lay not along regional boundaries, as with social criteria for admission, but instead along lines of governance.

Unlike social criteria for admission, moral requirements did not change in the 1860s and 1870s. They might well have. Colleges in the South that had educated socially uniform student populations now attracted economically, sexually, and sometimes racially diverse clienteles. Older students, including veterans, began to enroll all over the country. Some institutions

drastically expanded their curricula, adding a variety of professional and practical schools to their old classical colleges. Their introduction of the elective principle suggested an acknowledgment of postbellum students' relative maturity. Colleges, then, might have reformed their moral and religious character to fit the educational goals of their new students and new curricula. But they did not. Just as Cornell's faculty admitted adult students but did not let them marry, colleges everywhere admitted new social types of students but retained the traditional moral and religious expectations. The old division remained: denominational colleges were broadly Christian in their curricula and tone, while state universities were committed to moral character but only minimally religious. This was one facet of higher education that the Civil War did not change.

Colleges continued to require evidence of good moral character from their applicants. Cornell and the College/University of California required written testimonials. The University of South Carolina did too in the 1860s, then possibly let the requirement lapse until reinstating it for preparatory students in 1875. Harvard required testimonials at its new mining and agricultural colleges. Mount Holyoke practiced an even more thorough method of moral selection: the seminary admitted all students on a "probationary" basis. During the first three weeks of the school year they had to demonstrate "maturity of character." If they did not, they faced removal.[49]

At state universities the moral part of admissions remained relatively small. At some it included little more than the character testimonials. Students at South Carolina took the standard "evidences of Christianity" course, but catalogues and other promotional literature said nothing else about religious life. The by-laws approved by the trustees in 1866 and 1869 required students to follow "the obligations of morality and religion" and affirmed the university's goal of producing "refined and elevated Christian gentlemen," but the trustees did not consider that goal important enough to put it in the catalogue.[50] Students' rushing off to war against the faculty's wishes and returning as matured veterans may have tempered the adults' attempts to police their morals. The new normal school required testimonials of good character as well as aptitude for study, but its circular and catalogue renounced any "religious test" for admission. The state's future teachers did not need to declare their faith.[51] Moral and religious expectations were somewhat higher at the University of Missouri. It required daily chapel worship, at least for men, until 1876, when the faculty began to exempt some students "for various reasons."[52] But as before the war, these policies were mild compared with those at denominational colleges.

Colleges founded under religious auspices remained committed to their students' moral and religious condition. Although Harvard reformed its religious requirements in 1869, it merely reduced the Sunday church requirement from two services to one and allowed parents to monitor their own sons' church attendance if they spent Sunday together. Harvard's monitors continued to check all other students' attendance at church. Mandatory daily prayers also continued. In 1870 the faculty decided to exempt students living two-fifths of a mile or more from campus from daily morning prayers, a significant change.[53] But religion remained important enough for prayers to be required of the rest.

Cornell's founders had built the college to do God's work, and Christian lessons continued to permeate its campus. Students had to attend daily chapel and Sunday morning church. Professors also led Bible classes on Sundays. In some years professors led an additional weekly prayer meeting and students led another daily prayer. On top of all that, revivals enlivened campus nearly every year from the 1850s to the 1880s—more often and more successfully "than in any non-college community in Iowa," according to a former professor and trustee. Each February, Cornell observed the national prayer day for colleges.[54]

Because religion was central to life at Cornell, it attracted students who were either religious already or open to conversion at the revivals. Of the fourteen men in the class of 1869, four were sons of ministers, and all professed religion by the time they graduated. Students showed their religious commitment by incorporating it into extracurricular activities. The meetings of the student literary societies, especially the women's, regularly included prayers, devotional exercises, scriptural recitations, and addresses by invited clergymen. Students did question the large number of mandatory religious services, but they revealed in their own activities a shared commitment to Christian observance.[55] Cornell remained, in its rules and its students, a devotedly Christian community.

The women's colleges remained at least as focused on religion as Cornell. Wesleyan's catalogues of the 1870s announced the college's "most constant attention to the moral and religious training of our pupils." Professors could not watch them all quite as constantly as before, because more students now lived with their parents and commuted, but when they were on campus, students submitted to strict religious requirements. They had to take six years (including the preparatory year and the five-year collegiate program) of courses in the Bible or the evidences of Christianity. They also began and ended each day with a prayer service. As at Cornell, revivals were a part of college life, and students endeavored to

convert their classmates. Sallie Love became one such convert, baptized a Methodist while at Wesleyan. The religious curriculum inspired many Wesleyan alumnae to embark on missionary careers. As one woman wrote gratefully in the student newspaper, the professors "assist us in the prosecution of virtue and science."[56]

Religion formed an even larger part of life at Mount Holyoke. As we saw in chapter 1, students at the seminary constantly prayed, both in private and in formal gatherings with teachers. In 1862 a student complained in her diary about having attended nine religious meetings and a church service in one day—"too many meetings for profit"—and having endured no fewer than twenty-three prayers. Worries about the nation and its soldiers motivated many of those prayers, but the religious curriculum hardly abated after the war. In the 1870s and 1880s every day still began with mandatory devotionals and ended with an optional prayer meeting. On Sundays students had to attend church services (the seminary reserved one-third of the seats in South Hadley's church) and Bible lessons. The faculty made Sunday Bible study optional in 1870 but also instituted six weeks of mandatory daily Bible study. The seminary hired its teachers based primarily on their religiosity.[57] In the words of one alumna, a central lesson of a Mount Holyoke education was "to believe in a wise and loving Creator" and not "to question God's beneficence." Or as the president of the board of trustees succinctly told the students, "This is a school for Christ."[58]

Mount Holyoke did not exclude non-Christians. On the contrary, the faculty welcomed them—as potential converts. Students announced their religious views at registration; the teachers used this information to proselytize. They held some prayer meetings exclusively for the nonreligious and others integrating them with Christians. Religious students, encouraged by their teachers, tried to convert their classmates. As elsewhere, formal revivals swept through the town and the campus. Altogether, Mount Holyoke achieved an excellent rate of conversion, which the principal reported each year to the trustees. It began the fall term of 1869, for instance, with fifty non-Christians. After a year of constant effort that ended with a "deep and general" revival, three-fourths of those had converted. The next year, even without a revival, the community converted thirty-five of fifty-one non-Christians.[59]

Each of these colleges, despite changes at most of them in curricula and admissions, retained its secular or religious character. One college in this study did not. The University of California, the only one of the seven

colleges to undergo a major change in governance, was also the only one to recast the role of religion. This was no coincidence. Its experience shows the determinative relationship between a college's governance and its religious atmosphere. Before 1869 religion was central to the denominational College of California. Professors, the catalogue noted, aimed "to form characters sincere, manly, and unaffectedly Christian." College rules guaranteed evangelical control of the board of trustees and evangelical church membership of the president and a majority of the faculty. The college celebrated the national prayer day for colleges and held meetings at which local citizens joined students in prayer.[60] Students had to attend Sunday church, daily prayers, and biblical instruction from professors or local clergymen. As at Mount Holyoke, the faculty surveyed students' religious views. The vice president, in language similar to that used to describe Wesleyan and Mount Holyoke, asserted that the college sought through its religious and academic curriculum to produce "disciples of science, who are at the same time disciples of Christ."[61]

When the College of California became the University of California, that changed. The college's trustees began to worry when they learned the makeup of the state university's governing board: "Roman Catholics, Jews, and indifferents or Skeptics—but no minister of the Gospel." Their fears proved well founded. The university still required character testimonials, but the religious mission and curriculum evaporated once the state took over. The first catalogue made no mention of religion besides the traditional course for seniors in natural theology. Even that disappeared within a few years.[62] And with the establishment of the Mechanic Arts College in 1870 the university took on hundreds of adult night and weekend students, over whose lives outside the classroom it had no control. Unlike the denominational trustees, the state government did not require students to be disciples of Christ. Science and perhaps virtue were enough.

Religion eventually disappeared from many private colleges and universities too. But that came later. As academic leaders shaped their institutions into expansive universities dedicated to scientific, professional, and graduate instruction, they tried to incorporate the traditional religious mission of higher education into those new activities. Southern leaders, especially, tried to keep religion in their schools in order to preserve something of the lamented antebellum culture. Only at the turn of the century, when disciplinary specialization and progressive science made the unity of divine truth an untenable ideal in universities, did those at-

tempts end in failure.[63] Despite the influx of new types of students, colleges retained their moral and religious character well after the Civil War.

By the end of Reconstruction more diverse types of individuals were attending college. Very few did overall: only 4–5 percent of Americans as late as 1900.[64] Not until the twentieth century did higher education carry enough prestige and economic value to attract a large portion of America's youth.[65] But the change began in the 1860s and 1870s. College students now came from different social origins from those before the war. In 1860 Southern state universities and women's colleges still had attracted social elites from a broad geographic swath of the South. Now the state universities educated a broad economic stratum of local and state residents. Some had become coeducational or even biracial. Northern colleges, too, had become even more socially diverse than before the war, as well as geographically narrower. Colleges everywhere offered admission and, sometimes with state support, financial aid to Civil War veterans or their orphaned children. Denominational colleges, however, continued to apply traditional moral and religious expectations to the new types of students.

Colleges, in cooperation with state and federal governments, had begun to serve a more diverse group of Americans. They did so through varied curricula, university structures, financial aid, and new social criteria for admission, each of these sometimes supported by public funds. But the colleges and governments did more than this to bring higher education to the people and to public attention. During the 1860s and 1870s colleges reached beyond their gates, not only bringing in different types of students but also providing services for Americans besides their students. Meanwhile, the federal government participated in education in new ways.