

FIRES, EPIDEMICS, NATURAL DISASTERS, & HIGHER EDUCATION: A BRIEF SKETCH Virginia Sapiro¹

The coronavirus pandemic will leave deep marks on colleges, universities, and higher education more generally. In this era of a steeply shrinking “college aged” constituency, the impact will no doubt push many institutions over the precipice to failure. The economic toll will affect the future of many that survive. Institutions and their faculty who adjusted their educational and research programs in response to the need for physical distancing will carry lessons about pedagogy with them in the future. And a generation of students will be affected in many, and many unpredictable ways by this experience.

The challenges posed by the spread of this virus are likely unprecedented in many ways. This will be the largest world-wide pandemic affecting the history of modern higher education, surpassing the influenza epidemic of 1918-20. But, thinking about the larger picture of the history of American higher education, it is worth reflecting on how often American institutions of higher learning have been rocked by major threats not of their own making, facing what seemed like insurmountable odds created by destructive forces such as fires, natural disasters, and epidemics. These events have been so common in higher education history, that they must be considered part of the normal course of circumstances that shape it. To understand the history of American higher education requires reflecting on the impact of these periodic disasters in its environment on its institutional life course.

This working paper provides only a sketch of the prevalence of disaster in the history and existence of higher education. The point here is not deep analysis, but providing a portrait of the role of particular types of disaster in the life of higher education. It is a reality check against what might otherwise be an unrealistic pastoral view of higher education as extracted from “the real world.”

Fire

It is difficult to imagine back to the time before massive campuses containing not just multiple buildings, but multiple neighborhoods. Throughout much of the history of American higher education, a college’s activities took place within the walls of a single building – the iconic “Old Main” – and certainly, never more than two, or maybe three buildings, not counting the president’s house. Consider, then, the impact of a major fire on the life of a college or university under those conditions.

I have identified at least 129 instances at 115 different institutions in which the main building – often the only building on a college campus -- was destroyed by fire.² Most colleges and universities

¹ Professor of Political Science and Dean Emerita of Arts & Sciences, Boston University; Sophonisba P. Breckinridge Professor Emerita of Political Science, University of Wisconsin – Madison. This working paper is a small sketch from a larger study of the history of higher education in the United States. Thank you for citing appropriately and for comments and suggestions. March 30, 2020.

² A first stage in this research project was to develop a genealogy and timeline of the major institutional life course events of all institutions of higher education in the United States that were ever accredited at the bachelors, masters, or doctoral level. The enumeration of events listed as “Threats and Opportunities” in that timeline could never be complete, and requires judgment calls, but it provides the data on which this working paper is based.

have always lived on the knife edge of solvency. To become institutionally homeless and to have libraries and laboratories destroyed, often threatened the very existence of these institutions. For those that did survive such a conflagration, no doubt changed their life courses in many ways.

In most cases destruction by fire affected institutions one by one, but the notable large-scale urban fires in American history took in multiple institutions. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 had a major impact on at least five institutions of higher learning that were then or eventually became colleges or universities. The old University of Chicago suffered the worst – still limping from the Chicago Fire, it could not survive the Panic of 1873 and closed, leaving its name to be picked up at the founding of what we now know as the University of Chicago. The Rush Medical School (now Rush University) was completely destroyed and moved to a new location. Others were able to rebuild.

The Great Boston Fire of 1872 had a very different impact on the development of two institutions that survive today. A trustee of little Boston University had just left a bequest of \$1.5 million in Boston properties to the institution. This was to be the largest donation to any American college in history up to that time and would have recreated Boston University as a major force in American higher education. But those properties burnt to a crisp and the insurance companies that held the policies for those properties went bankrupt as a result of the fire, completely wiping out the value of the bequest.

Similarly, John Simmons had intended the proceeds from much of his Boston property following his 1870 death to establish the Simmons Female Seminary. Eventually, in 1899, the estate contains sufficient funds to establish the forebear of Simmons College.

Fire, of course, was a constant danger when heating and lighting depended on fire. But it remained so through the early decades of gas lines and electrical heat and light until local and state authorities instituted adequate building codes. It is clear that fire was a constant threat to the stability of higher education institutions until the post-World War II period, afflicting the higher education institutional community nearly every year.

Epidemic

There is not an institution of higher education in the United States – or probably the rest of the world -- that has been left untouched by the coronavirus pandemic. The short-term impacts are obvious; the longer-term impacts will not be fully understood for a very long time.

Only once before did American higher education suffer from the results of a nation-wide epidemic: the 1918-20 influenza epidemic, also known as the Spanish flu. An estimated 675,000 Americans died from the flu, and the deaths tended to be more concentrated among young people, perhaps in part because earlier, less vast outbreaks left many people who lived through those immune. Thus college populations were vulnerable in a variety of ways. Young people are clustered in close conditions on college campuses, of course. But also, the virus travelled widely through military encampments. Many campuses had turned their facilities over to the U.S. military to house the new Student Army Training Corps, through which colleges and universities were paid to host these programs, designed to ramp up American military capability during World War I. As young trainees arrived on campuses around the country, they brought the viruses with them.

Colorado State University (then the Colorado Agricultural College) is just one of many examples. In the summer of 1918, 750 new residents – trainees, officers, and enlisted men – arrived from different locations. The first cases of flu – and the first death – occurred within a week of their arrival. Trainees who were not symptomatic were required to attend class, likely spreading the virus further. By the end of the first month in residence, the College had set up separate infirmary facilities for the military men and for civilians, the Department of Home Economics was running a kitchen to feed the sick (although the faculty did some of the work most likely to expose them to the illness in order to protect the students), and then the campus was temporarily closed to civilians (Jeracki 2020).

Although many cities and other local communities barred large entertainment gathering and many closed schools, colleges and universities by and large made their own decisions. Some closed and some did not, while many limited access to certain parts of campus or changed campus activities, such as suspending athletic activities or barring large lectures (Dodge and Miserez 2018, Winter 2018). Despite the fact that the disease spread far and wide, its mortal effects were widely divergent. The University of Michigan lost 59 students to the flu, while Princeton lost none (Bernstein 2008). Recognizing the importance of understanding the different impacts of the epidemic, in 2005 the Defense Threat Reduction Agency commissioned a study of communities, including colleges and universities, that survived the 1918-20 epidemic well in order to learn what strategies might be most effective in saving lives. The conclusion was that aggressive physical distancing and sequestration of the ill from the healthy work (Markel, Stern, Navarro, and Michalsen 2006) But American higher education was already being transformed by World War I, so it is not always easy to distinguish impact, especially long-term impact, if any, of the epidemic.

The relationship of the history of epidemics to higher education goes back to the earliest days of American history. The smallpox epidemic of 1721 reached Cambridge, Massachusetts, where disputes erupted between the proponents of the new strategy of vaccination and the opposing forces, who rested their case on theology (Burton 2001). Thirteen Harvard students volunteered to be inoculated, along with some other people, and they all lived through the epidemic. More students underwent immunization in the recurrence of late 1721-22. (This was not a modern procedure; it involved making a little cut in the patient's arm, into which they put some live virus.) During recurrences, for example, in 1730, some students left campus, and were later allowed to return. In later outbreaks, Harvard asked students to leave campus when outbreaks approached.

In 1864, the same year Harvard lost Harvard Hall and the library it contained to fire, smallpox arrived again, and Harvard closed. Even when the Corporation voted to reopen, students refused to comply and the Overseers overruled the Corporation, keeping the institution closed.

As successive waves of smallpox ravaged Boston and Cambridge, Harvard developed more procedures for immunization, institutional closure, and enforced quarantine, including prohibiting previously ill students from bringing their clothes from the hospital to campus. Harvard closed once again due to smallpox in 1792. John D. Burton (2001) argues that one important characteristic of the period was the development of cooperative arrangements between Harvard and Cambridge around resisting smallpox epidemics.

An international cholera epidemic spread across the country multiple times in the 19th century, including in 1832-35, 1849-1851, and 1866 (Rosenberg 1962/1967) Major midwestern cities, for example, lost hundreds of people and in the case of St. Louis and Cincinnati, thousands. Indiana

College (Indiana University) closed in 1834 due to the epidemic, and some students who had to walk all the way home died along the way (Daly 2008). In 1849 Hanover College closed for several weeks following the death of its president and some students. When the cholera epidemic approached Catholic St. Louis University in 1849, students were first asked to pray to ward off the disease, then they were called to meet together to pray to Mary for protection. They placed medals of the Immaculate Conceptions on school doors and gates for added help. Nevertheless the students were sent home and the university closed for some months.

Yellow fever broke out numerous times in different places between the late 18th and late 19th centuries, severely impacting colleges such as Beaufort College in 1817. Typhoid fever travelled the United States numerous times. In 1856 it led to the Hollins Institute (Hollins University) closing for 2 years. In 1874 it took the lives of several students at Mansfield Normal School (Mansfield University of Pennsylvania). In 1899 13 students and 1 staff member died of typhoid fever at North Carolina State Normal and Industrial College (University of North Carolina at Greensboro), which then closed for 2 months and was subsequently connected to the city water system to ward off future outbreaks. Typhoid fever reached epidemic proportions at the Iowa State College (Iowa State University) in 1900. A major typhoid outbreak at Cornell University in 1902 led the institution to plan for increasing on-campus student residences when they realize that only students living off campus were affected. Andrew Carnegie agreed to pay for a water filtration unit on campus, and he paid the medical bills for Cornell students.

These are only some examples of the impact of epidemics on college campuses and higher education. No doubt a closer look would show that nearly every one of the many national and regional epidemics of American history touched the colleges and university in their territories, and in many cases institutional operations and the college careers of students were disrupted and in some cases the institutions were affected in longer-term ways, for example when they responded with policy or infrastructural changes or when the impacts of the epidemic made already financially vulnerable institutions even more vulnerable.

Beside the various regional and national epidemics, colleges and universities are fertile material for outbreaks of localized epidemics such as meningitis or other diseases. In 1969 Holy Cross College famously lost much of its football team to hepatitis A because of a tainted water source. (Neagle 2004).

I have not touched on one of the major, more positive impacts of epidemics on college and university operations: the generation of research in medical (and related) colleges and department to inspired by the need to combat disease and epidemics.

Natural Disaster

Floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, volcano eruptions – when a college or university lies in their path, the size of an institution's endowment and enrollment may affect its resilience and recovery, but it will not save the institution from impact. In some cases the natural disasters that have shaped individual college histories were so large that they took in many different colleges and universities. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake had major debilitating effects on many institutions. The San Francisco State Normal School, founded in 1899, was destroyed and relocated to its current location, now renamed San Francisco State University. Other affected institutions included the California School of Design (later the San Francisco Art Institute, now closed), the YMCA Evening

College (Golden Gate University), California Theological Seminary, Stanford University, and St. Ignatius College (University of San Francisco), among others. A 1934 earthquake destroyed the Pacific Bible Seminary, which moved and rebuilt as a result, later becoming Hope International University. The 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake again inflicted severe damage on Stanford University, as well as other area institutions. In 1994 the Northridge earthquake wreaked substantial damage on the California Institute of the Arts.

Campuses on the eastern and southern coastal regions have been repeatedly affected by hurricanes. The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 made an unusual turn inland. It destroyed the forests owned by Yale and Harvard Universities. The vault holding the original 1764 Brown University charted was flooded, destroying the historic document. Amherst College, normally too far inland to suffer from hurricane damage, suffered significant damage to its campus. Hurricane Hazel, the severe storm of 1954, whipped up the east coast, hitting many college campuses hard. The landscape was altered at Duke University and Wake Forest College (Wake Forest University).

The massive hurricanes of the first decade of the 2000s made major damage at many colleges and universities. Five major hurricanes made landfall in 2004, four of them in Florida, causing extensive damage at Florida Atlantic University, Palm Beach Atlantic University, Pensacola Junior College (Pensacola State College), and Seminole Community College (Seminole State College). Hurricane Katrina, in 2005, had impacts on colleges and universities around the country, as they accepted students from the Louisiana institutions that were substantially destroyed or shut down by the storm – Dillard University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern University New Orleans, Tulane University, and in Mississippi, Xavier University and the University of Southern Mississippi. Hurricane Sandy in 2012 did damage at many colleges and universities, but caused temporary closures at many -- including Rutgers University, Yale, and Harvard. Many colleges and universities altered their application deadlines because of the storm. A tropical storm in 2009 nearly destroyed Somerset Christian College (Pillar College) in New Jersey, requiring it to be rebuilt. The increasingly extreme weather caused by climate change is likely to continue to play a major role in higher education planning.

Tornados are more surgical than hurricanes but they, too, have affected the histories of many colleges and universities, especially in the more common tornado alleys of the country. In 1882 a tornado killed 2 students and destroyed buildings at Iowa College (Grinnell College). Much of Assumption College (Assumption University) was destroyed by a tornado in 1953, resulting in the institution's two year closure as it rebuilt. Much of Washburn University was destroyed by tornado in 1966. The rebuilding effort took 5 years. In 1974 a tornado struck Hanover College, creating \$10 million in damage (about \$51.8 million in 2019 dollars). The trustees closed its Long College for Women and fully gender-integrated Hanover College as part of their cost savings to be able to afford reconstruction. Other major examples of tornado damage include Culver-Stockton College (2003) and the University of Southern Mississippi (2013).

Floods have often threatened colleges and universities in flood plains and near rivers. One of the most devastating examples was the 1937 Ohio River flood that created damage from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Cairo, Illinois. Numerous institutions were affected. As much as 70% of Louisville was evacuated and while Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary remained dry and sheltered others, the University of Louisville closed temporarily. In 1997 much of the University of North Dakota was destroyed by the Red River Flood, resulting in the cancellation of the remainder of that school year. In 2008 the University of Iowa sustained millions of dollars of damage to 22 major

campus building from the Iowa River flood. A decade later the University Art Museum was still without a home.

Although I discussed fire above, it is important to note that large-scale fires are increasingly becoming regular occurrences in populated areas of the Southwest and California. The major California fires of 2018 and 2019 affected many institutions of higher learning, and had to close down temporarily, including Sonoma State University and parts of Pepperdine University (2018) and UCLA and Santa Monica College (2019).

Conclusion

The idyllic view of college life pictures a peaceful green campus surrounded unperturbed by what people often contrast as “the real world” that surrounds it. Even the urban university is probably widely understood as its own little haven, somewhat immune to the forces outside.

But this has never really been the case. Colleges are part of the world. Their opportunities and challenges, choices and turning points have always been linked to social and natural environmental forces. The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic is an extreme case, in that it has emptied college and university campuses, shut down face-to-face educational and other activities, and transformed method of instruction, at least temporarily, in a matter of days. The pandemic will be deeply costly to most institutions in a wide variety of ways. It will push economically fragile institutions over the edge, and will necessitate painful decisions on the part of others as they seek to maintain sustainability.

In thinking about the meaning and possible outcomes of this pandemic, it is worth contextualizing our understanding of how higher education functions in a recognition of how much disaster is a part of its normal ecology. Colleges and universities do not – have never had – the resources to ride through the physical, enrollment, and functional damage caused by such events as major fires, epidemics, and natural disasters. And in this paper I have not touched on two other major environmental disasters that have crashed through the life of higher education with great regularity: economic dislocations such as recessions, depressions, and panics; and war, both civil and international. Almost every institution of higher education throughout the South was located essentially on a field of battle – most were occupied by one or the other military or both in succession, and they suffered other long-term damage as well. Most were closed for nearly a decade, while northern institutions were depleted of their students throughout the war effort. I will discuss this and the relationship of higher education to economic dislocation at a later date.

Some disasters are less prevalent than they were. We may assume that except for the fire-plains of regions such as the Southwest, we will continue to see relatively few devastating fires of the sort that were very common before the middle of the 20th century. On the other hand, climate change is increasing the likelihood of extreme weather events, and the rising seas are already affecting the way coastal institutions engage in campus planning and building. As we are seeing now, the advances in medicine do not mean that new viruses will not invade our lives, and the very global interconnectedness of the people of the world leave us not better off -- and maybe worse off -- than we were in the pandemics of and before 1918-20.

These days well-run colleges and universities engage in considerable disaster planning. But while that planning can mitigate some effects of “unforeseen” disasters and instill good habits of disaster

response, higher education mostly lives on a financial edge that can make post-disaster survival challenging.

REFERENCES

- Bernstein, Mark F.. 2008. "Why Princeton was spared." *Princeton Alumni Weekly* (Dec 17), <https://paw.princeton.edu/article/why-princeton-was-spared> . Accessed 3/28/2020.
- Burton, John D. 2001. "'The awful judgements of God upon the land:' Smallpox in colonial Massachusetts." *The New England Quarterly* 74 (3): 495-506.
- Daly, Walter J. 2008. "The Black Cholera comes to the Central Valley of America in the 19th century – 1832, 1849, and later." *Transactions of the American Clinical and Climatological Association* 119: 143-53.
- Dodge, Jessi and Laura Miserez. 2018. "Looking back on Spanish flu: 'A serious epidemic of influenza is impending.'" *The Missourian* (May 3). https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/higher_education/looking-back-on-spanish-flu-a-serious-epidemic-of-influenza/article_4ac0f272-4ca9-11e8-9656-e70df72e1d73.html . Accessed 3/28/2020.
- Jeracki, Kate. 2020. "1918: When the flu came to CSU." March 23. <https://source.colostate.edu/1918-when-the-flu-came-to-csu/>. Accessed 3/28/2020.
- Markel, Howard, Alexandra M. Stern, J. Alexander Navarro, and Joseph R. Michalsen. 2006. *A Historical Assessment of Nonpharmaceutical Disease Containment Strategies Employed by Selected U.S. Communities during the Second Wave of the 1918-1920 Influenza Pandemic*. Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Threat Reduction Agency. <http://chm.med.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2015/01/DTRA-Final-Influenza-Report.pdf> Accessed 3/28/2020.
- Neagle, Michael E. 2004. "1969: The missing season." *Holy Cross Magazine* 38(4). <https://www.holycross.edu/departments/publicaffairs/hcm/fall04/features/feature1.html> . Accessed 3/29/2020.
- Rosenberg, Charles E. 1962, 1987. *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Winter, Margaux R.E. 2018. "When 'Knock-Me-Down Fever' hit Harvard." *The Crimson* (Feb. 1) <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2018/2/1/harvard-influenza-outbreak-1918/>. Accessed 3/28/2020.

APPENDIX: INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEVASTATED BY FIRE

This list is drawn from a survey of all institutions of higher education in the U.S. that were ever accredited at the bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree level. It identifies every institution we have found that suffered a major institution-threatening fire; that is, a fire that rendered the main facility unusable. Institutions are listed under the name they carried at the time of the fire (or, in the case of multiple fires, the first fire). Each institution is also identified by its most recent name.

Academy of the Sacred Heart (1889; Manhattanville College)
Asbury College (1909, 1924; Asbury University)
Austin College (1913)
Baylor College for Women (1929; University of Mary Hardin-Baylor)
Beaver College and Musical Institute (1895; Arcadia University)
Belhaven University for Young Ladies (1910; Belhaven University)
Bridgewater College (1889)
Bridgewater State Normal School (1924; Bridgewater State University)
Brigham Young Academy (1884; Brigham Young University)
Buchtel College (1889, 1899; University of Akron)
Buena Vista College (1957; Buena Vista University)
Buies Creek Academy (1900; Campbell University)
California State Normal School in San Jose (1872, San Jose State University)
Cane Hill College (1871, eventually closed)
Carroll College (1885; Carroll University)
Cherokee National Female Seminary (1888; Northeastern State University)
Chicago Academy of Design (1871; Chicago Academy of Fine Arts)
Chico State Teacher's College (1927; Chico State University)
Christian University (1903; Culver-Stockton College)
Claflin University (1876)
Clarke College (1984; Clarke University)
Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina (1894; Clemson University)
College and Seminary of Our Lady of the Angels (1865; Niagara University)
College of the Holy Cross (1852)
College of New Jersey (1802, 1855; Princeton University)
College of William and Mary (1710, 1859)
Columbia College (1909, 1964)
Concord State Normal School (1910; Concord University)
Cortland Normal School (1919; SUNY College at Cortland)
Cookman Institute (1901; Bethune-Cookman University)
Dickinson College (1803)
Duluth Normal School (1901; University of Minnesota, Duluth)
Ebenezer Mitchell Home and School (1908; Pfeiffer University)
The Ecclesiastical Diocesan Seminary of St. Vincent de Paul (1855)
Edward Waters College (1901)
Elon College (1923; Elon University)
Farmville State Normal School (1923; Logwood University)
Ferris Institute (1950; Ferris State University)
First District Agricultural and Mechanical College (1931; Arkansas State University)
Francis Shimer Academy of the University of Chicago (1906; Shimer College)
Georgia School of Technology (1892; Georgia Institute of Technology)
Greensboro Female College (1863, 1889, 1941 Greensboro College)
Harvard College (Harvard University, 1764)
Howard College (1854; Samford University)
Illinois Conference Female Academy (At least 3 times over the decade beginning 1863; MacMurray College, closed)
Indiana University (1883)
Iowa College (1871, Grinnell College)
Kansas City Art Association and School (1893; Kansas City Art Institute)
LaGrange College (1860)
Lake Forest University (1878, Lake Forest College)

Lenoir-Rhyne College (1927; Lenoir-Rhyne University)
 Maryland Agricultural College (1912; University of Maryland, College Park)
 Maryland Institute for the Promotion of the Mechanic Arts and Schools of Art and Design (1904; Maryland Institute College of Art)
 McGee College (1859; Missouri Valley College)
 Mercer University (1843)
 Mount Angel College and Seminary (1892, 1926; Mount Angel Seminary)
 Mount Morris College (1912, 1932; Manchester University)
 New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (1910; New Mexico State University)
 New Paltz Academy (1884, 1906; State University of New York at New Paltz)
 New York State Normal School (1900; State University of New York at Fredonia)
 New York State Normal and Training School at Plattsburgh (1929; State University of New York at Plattsburgh)
 Northwestern University (1894; Martin Luther College)
 Norwegian Lutheran College (1889; Luther College)
 Norwich University (1866)
 Occidental College (1896)
 Ottawa University (1902)
 Parsons College (1902; Maharishi University of Management, now closed)
 Pearl River Boarding School (1905; William Cary College)
 Penn College (1916; William Penn University)
 Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (1845)
 Pennsylvania Military Academy (1882, Widener University)
 Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (1937; New York University)
 Randolph Normal School (1893; Vermont Technical College)
 Rhode Island College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (1895; University of Rhode Island)
 Rush Medical School (Rush University, 1871)
 Rust College (1940)
 Sacred Heart Abbey (1901; St. Gregory's University, which eventually closed)
 Saint Edward's College (1903; Saint Edward's University)
 Saint Francis Xavier Academy for Females (1871; Saint Xavier University)
 Saint Mary's Female Seminary (1924; Saint Mary's College of Maryland)
 Saint Mary's School for Boys (1860; University of Dayton)
 Santa Clara College (1909)
 Seton Hall College (3 times between 1867 and 1909; Seton Hall University)
 Southwest Baptist College (1910; Southwest Baptist University)
 State Normal School at River Falls (1897; University of Wisconsin – River Falls)
 State Teachers College at Farmville (1949; Logwood University)
 St. Catharine College (1904; St. Catharine College)
 St. John's College (1909)
 St. Meinrad College (1888; St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology)
 St. Regina Academy (1893; Edgewood College)
 Swarthmore College (1881)
 Tabor College (1918)
 Texas Christian University (1910)
 Toccoa Falls Institute (1913; Toccoa Falls College)
 Trevecca College for Christian Workers (1917; Trevecca Nazarene University)
 University of Chicago (1871; closed)
 University of Louisville (1856)
 University of Missouri (1895)
 University of Notre Dame (1879)
 University of Oklahoma (1903, 1907)
 University of Vermont (1824)
 University of Wooster (1901; College of Wooster)
 Washington State Normal School (1936; University of Maine at Machias)
 Wellesley College (1914)
 Wells College (1889)
 West Liberty Normal School (1896; West Liberty University)

West Texas Normal College (1914; West Texas A&M University)
West Virginia Conference Seminary (1905; West Virginia Wesleyan College)
West Virginia Preparatory School (1917; West Virginia University)
Western College (1889; Coe College)
Western University of Pennsylvania (1845, 1849; University of Pittsburgh)
Westminster Collegiate Institute (1861, 1909; Westminster College)
Westmont College (2008)
Wilberforce University (1865)
Wiley College (1906)
Willimantic State Teachers College (1943; Eastern Connecticut State University)