

The Evolution of Teaching of Economics at KU

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Economics has the distinction of being a "charter member" of the University of Kansas. In the one curriculum announced by the 1866 catalog, a general course, designated simply as "Political Economy," was required in the senior year with Francis Wayland's *Elements of Political Economy* as the text. But, while the course was listed, there were no seniors to take it.

In 1867-8 the text was changed to Perry's *Elements of Political Economy* and the subject was made a requirement in the junior year in the scientific course, but there were no juniors. The next year—when a junior was actually enrolled—political economy was shifted to the senior year to share a semester's work with rhetoric.

The seniors finally arrived in 1872-3. Since the subject was required in both the scientific and classical courses, this may be taken to be the first year when political economy actually was taught. The instructor was Chancellor John Fraser who held the chair of mental and moral philosophy. Thus the University followed the traditions laid down from the days of Adam Smith, who developed his treatise on *The Wealth of Nations* in part from his lectures on moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

Chancellor Fraser was followed in 1874 by James Marvin who, like his predecessor, held the chair of mental and moral philosophy with which political economy continued to be associated. At this time the subject was required of seniors in all the liberal arts curricula then existing, and in civil engineering, as well. The Chancellor used as texts and reference books the treatises by R. R. Thompson, an American protectionist, John Stuart Mill, and John Locke. That the course was laborious may be noted from the announcement that "each member of the class is required to write a critical review of the whole subject." During all these early years it was not a "full course," but shared a "session" or semester with moral philosophy.

In 1877 James H. Canfield, a Williams graduate, was appointed professor of history and English language and literature. Four years later, when his title was changed to that of professor of history and political science, he relieved Chancellor Marvin of the instruction in political economy. In his new jurisdiction, Canfield became the guardian of all the social sciences. Under his leadership work in American history took on a new significance, economics was expanded, and political science was introduced. While he did not teach the first course to be labeled as sociology, he directed some of his students in the study of sociological problems. In one of his characteristically vigorous statements he announced that the purpose of his courses was "to give to the discussion of all historical and economic topics that which is their chief value—a practical bearing on the present."

In 1883-4 the need for additional instruction in political economy was recognized by the offering of a second course, called "Special Studies in Economics." We have here the first use of the term "economics" in the University publications. The new course was operated as a seminar with a 20,000 word thesis requirement. Among the topics approved for the individual study were migration, capital and labor, the distribution of wealth, tariffs, banking, commercial depression and poverty, transportation, socialism and communism, the history of industrial society, vital statistics, and criminology. This list was a forecast of many future courses, not only in economics but also in other social sciences. In 1886 economics was temporarily dropped as a required course for civil engineers.

In 1887-8 an expansion program of major importance was inaugurated with the offering of new courses in banking and finance, land and land tenures, tariff legislation in the United States, the financial history of the United States, and industrial history. In addition to seven courses in economics (as we may now call it), Mr. Canfield was scheduled for nine courses in history, and seven in political science, or twenty-three courses in all! However, there apparently was no time when he actually gave more than fifteen courses in any one year! Even though he was obviously a teaching genius, he must have staggered at times under such a program. In all his courses Mr. Canfield was accustomed to state his convictions very positively. In dealing with the tariff he was such a staunch free trader that he created bitter personal opposition among

protectionist groups in the state. We have his own word for it, however, that none connected with the University ever attempted to dictate his views.

It is no coincidence that the expansion in economics followed close upon the organization of the American Economic Association. An examination of the records shows that Mr. Canfield was the "far western" member of the small group of men with whom Richard T. Ely corresponded about the practicability of forming the Association. While Mr. Canfield did not attend the organization meeting of the Association at Saratoga in 1885, he was elected to the council and was made chairman of the committee "On Trade," with Jesse Macy, Albert Shaw, and W. W. Folwell as the other members. It confers real distinction upon our University for one of its faculty to have had an active part in forming the association which has been the largest factor in the promotion of economic science in America. Mr. Canfield tells us in one of his reports that in the "social studies" course he made immediate application to the Association's historical method of study based on "investigation of ascertained facts."

In 1889, Frank W. Blackmar came to Kansas, fresh from his doctorate at the Johns Hopkins. Contrary to a recommendation that separate departments of history and of political science be created, Mr. Canfield now became a professor of American history and civics while Mr. Blackmar held the title of professor of history and sociology. While the former took all the courses in government and the latter introduced a course in the elements of sociology, the two men divided the field of history and economics. Thus Mr. Canfield taught banking and finance while Mr. Blackmar gave the elements of political economy, and land and land tenures. The two men shared the practice course in economics, as the special studies course was now called.

In 1891 Mr. Canfield resigned to become Chancellor of the University of Nebraska. All the work in social science was then combined into the single department of history and sociology under Mr. Blackmar. To assist him the Regents elected Frank H. Hodder and E. D. Adams, both graduates of Michigan. While Mr. Hodder was originally scheduled to teach public finance he informs me that he never handled any courses outside history and government. Mr. Blackmar gave the elementary political economy, the work in finance, and also one advanced theory course. Mr. Adams was scheduled for land tenures as well as two courses which were radical innovations, namely, statistics and journalism. The course in journalism remained in the departmental announcements only one year so it probably was not actually taught. Statistics fared but little better, being transferred in 1893-4 as an appendage to a course in unsettled questions in economics offered by Mr. Blackmar. One notable development was the creation in 1892-3 of separate courses in money and banking and in public finance. Extension courses at Topeka and Kansas City, Missouri, were started in 1891 as one of Mr. Blackmar's projects and were continued at these two cities and near-by towns for several years.

Established Graduate School

As the social sciences were brought to the estate of a bona fide department by Mr. Canfield in 1881, so in 1896 they had grown to a point where a division seemed advisable. Consequently, Mr. Blackmar became the head of sociology and political science with Mr. Adams as his assistant. In 1897, when Mr. Blackmar was made the first dean of the Graduate School, he offered six courses in economics and two in sociology. With the establishment of the Graduate school, Blackmar's department, along with others, announced a program for Ph.D. candidates. Down to date, however, no Ph.D. has been granted in economics although there are some candidates now qualifying.

In 1899 the instruction in both economics and sociology was advanced by the employment of Ralph Waldo Cone (A.B., 1895; A.M., Harvard) as assistant professor. Mr. Blackmar thereupon devoted his entire time to sociology, which now had become his favorite field, and Mr. Cone, much to his satisfaction, was permitted to give his attention solely to economics. At this time the term "political economy" disappeared from the University's announcements in favor of the shorter and more appropriate term "economics."

Another marked advance took place in 1903 when Arthur Jerome Boynton came from Harvard and Columbia to become assistant professor. Mr. Boynton at once developed the work in economic history upon a new and more general pattern, introduced a course in economic geography, and taught for a time two courses in sociology, including one in social and economic statistics. Mr. Cone developed another present day standard course by offering work in

transportation which was soon transferred to Mr. Boynton. A general graduate seminar for students in sociology and economics was handled by Mr. Blackmar. Economics courses were offered in the first summer session, in 1903. In 1904 Richard T. Ely gave a series of lectures on industrial revolution at Kansas in exchange with Mr. Blackmar who had previously lectured at Wisconsin.

Another significant event took place in the year last mentioned when the Regents authorized the announcement of four "suggested" curricula under the heading "Courses in Business in its Higher Relations, Leading to General Business, Banking, Insurance, and Journalism." Credit for the promotion of the new program is due largely to Chancellor Frank Strong who had built up business studies at Oregon only two or three years previously and who had repeatedly urged the case for business education at K.U. He was ably seconded by Thornton Cooke, '93, who, in the *Graduate Magazine* for April, 1903, proposed going the full road and starting a "school of commerce." Although the Wharton School at Pennsylvania had been established as early as 1881, the business school idea did not really begin to get under way until the period 1898-1902 when collegiate business training was established at California, Chicago, Dartmouth, New York University, and Wisconsin. The Kansas development, therefore, was in line with educational movements in other leading universities and may have been inspired by them to some extent.

Care was taken to state that the new group courses did not "in any sense form a school of commerce or business," and that such a school was not contemplated. However, the program was designed "to offer to the large number of men who enter business from the University somewhat the definite assistance that it gives to those who are to be engineers, lawyers, etc." The courses were not to take the place of practical experience but were to "illustrate the economic forces which control the business world" and to give "the cultural training which is indispensable to the thoroughly enlightened citizen." Graduates from all the curricula were to receive the A.B. degree.

Included Accounting

A "pre-Business" course of two years in the College consisted of required work in English, foreign language, physical and biological sciences, mathematics, and European history or economics. The junior-senior years drew principally upon courses in economics with some use of other departments. A course in newspaper writing, given by Professor E. M. Hopkins, was utilized for the journalism curriculum. New economics courses in accounting, labor problems, corporation finance, insurance, and foreign commerce and economic statistics were also added, bringing the total number up from eight in 1902 to twenty in 1905. The accounting course was originally entitled "Theory of Accounting, Auditing, and Adjusting" and as such was first employed only in the insurance curriculum. The second year, under the abbreviated title of "Accounting," it appeared in all curricula except journalism.

Except for accounting, and possibly corporation finance, all other economics courses in the various curricula were of the so-called "orthodox" type, that is, courses which dealt with economic theory and history or descriptions and interpretations of various phases of our economic organization. In the early stages of practically every collegiate school of business the required work dealt largely with social organization and analysis and little, if at all, with management.

The business curricula continued to be announced until 1909 when they were dropped from the catalog. No explanation of the change in policy can be found in any of the official statements of the time. That considerable success attended the experiment is shown by a hundred percent increase in the economics enrollment from 1906-7 to 1909-10, following the disappearance of the business curricula, the enrollment promptly fell of thirty percent. The probable reason for dropping the courses were that they were only suggested outlines, that the department head was engrossed in the teaching of sociology and in the administration of the Graduate School, and that there was general reluctance on the part of the University group as a whole at the time to accord academic recognition to business training.

From 1910 to 1913 economics instruction went into a slump. While a new course in business organization and management was given once in this period, both insurance and accounting were temporarily dropped, leaving the theory and history courses as practical the only

ones to be offered. In two years time the enrollment fell of almost fifty percent. During this period economics found its way back into the engineering curriculum when the economic history of the United States was required of mechanicals. Mr. Cone resigned in 1910, to be succeeded for one year by H. A. Hubbard (A.M. Ohio State) and then by G. E. Putnam (A.B., '07; A.M., Yale; B. Litt., Oxford) who remained until 1916.

In 1913 – 14 there was a notable upswing in enrollment accompanied by an increase in staff and in courses offered. This development was due to the fact that in 1912 economics finally achieved its full stature as a department by the appointment of Harry A Millis (A.B., Indiana; Ph.D., Chicago) as professor and department head. Mr. Blackmar then relinquished all connection with economics to become head of the new department of sociology.

Blackmar's Influence Great

It would be difficult to overrate the influence of Mr. Blackmar upon the teaching of economics in the University, especially in the period prior to 1900. While he is nationally known for his work in sociology and was president of the American Sociological Society in 1919, he contributed much to economics by his spirited teaching, by his public addresses, by his textbooks, by his membership for a term on the council of the American Economic Association, and by his genuine zeal for the local economics program. He was a firm believer in the idea that the other social sciences had their groundwork in economics. He was a real force in promoting sound social legislation in the state and was thoroughly at home in the field of Kansas history, which he helped to make and to write. In connection with the memorials which are gradually being built through scholarships and commemorative tablets, Mr. Blackmar, along with other outstanding figures in the University's history, deserves tribute from his former students and associates.

Mr. Millis remained as head of the department of economics until 1916. During his regime progress continued apace. The work in economic theory, banking, labor economics, and public finance was expanded; that in business organization, accounting, and insurance was re-established. Business law, marketing, investments, municipal industries (now public utilities), statistics, and an elementary economics course for engineers were added. Economics 1, economic history, and elementary accounting were required of all economics majors in 1914-15. In the same year the department suggested certain groups of courses be taken in preparation for nine objectives, namely, commercial teaching, general business, banking, railway administration, commerce, accounting, public service, social service, and the study of law. New men added to the staff were Victor N. Valgren, William M. Duffus, and Albert C. Hodge. All were young men who contributed to the department the same vigor and enthusiasm that characterizes our staff members today.

Following his resignation in 1916, Mr. Millis became professor of economics at the University of Chicago where he still serves with distinction as an outstanding authority on labor economics. While his connection with Kansas was relatively brief, it came at a turning point in the tide of affairs which gave his work here great significance. His sound scholarship, his administrative qualities, and his teaching ability joined to launch the new department in a way to command respect throughout the country.

Boynton Took Charge in 1915

Mr. Millis was followed as head of the department by Arthur J. Boynton, who had been raised to a full professorship in 1915. This position Mr. Boynton continued to occupy until the organization of the School of Business in 1924. During his administration the departmental enrollment increased nearly fifty percent. With few exceptions the teaching personnel had a rapid turnover among the junior ranks, a feature which characterizes the present staff. Robert M. Woodbury, Harry D Harper, Samuel S. Catell, Andrew J. Newman, Hugh M Fletcher, Milton S. Heath, Algo D. Henderson, Herbert Feis, Herbert F Taggart, and Robert Montgomery all served for comparatively short periods of time. Mr. Heath and Mr. Henderson were the first members to be originally appointed (1920-21) with the rank of instructor.

John Ise Came in 1916

In 1916 John Ise became a member of the department where his unique teaching ability, his scholarly contributions to economics, and his uncompromising attitude toward shams and fallacies quickly gained for him recognition throughout the whole University. His selection for membership on the editorial board of the American Economic Review and on the executive committee of the American Economic Association indicates the regard in which he is held nationally. In 1919 Jens P. Jensen became an assistant professor, a grade from which he had a rapid rise. Today he is considered one of the five or six outstanding men of the country in the field of public finance. His services as an expert in taxation have been widely recognized and whatever he writes is accepted as authoritative. Other faculty members originally selected by Mr. Boynton who carried over into the Business School period where J. Wesley Sternberg and Edmund P. Learned; also Emil B. Dade and Domenico Gagliardo, both of whom are now associated professors on our staff.

There were several significant developments that took place while Mr. Boynton served as department head. In the fall of 1918 a course in the economics of war was given to 416 S.A.T.C. students. Various other war services were also rendered. In 1919 the name of the department was changed to "Economics and Commerce" in recognition of the gradual growth of courses in the management field. The new name was continued until 1925, when the title "Economics" was resumed to avoid confusion between the use of "Commerce" in the designation of a department and of "Business" in that of the new School. Accounting was dropped as major requirement in 1917 and in 1920 the major list was changed to economic history, money, banking, public finance, and the advanced principles of economics.

Added New Services

In conjunction with the Extension Division, the department in 1919 established special correspondence courses for retail merchants to supplement the merchants' short courses which had been started in 1915. In 1920 the department added marketing, insurance, secretarial work, and employment as professional economists to the 1914 list of fields for which it offered preparation and dropped general business, social service, railway administration, commerce, and the study of law. In 1922-23 the department of economics, politician science, and sociology prepared "Suggested Curricula in Applied Social Economy." A list of fifteen "classified studies" was prepared for the following lines of work: social case worker, community organizer and surveyor, medical social worker, personnel officer, social science teacher, city manager, commercial organization secretary, consular service, legislative reference and bill drafting service, accounting and certified public accountant, expert labor adjustor, statistician, public utility expert, economic advisor, commercial teacher. While this ambitious professional program was presented with a social service approach, at least eight of the curricula were in fields now covered by the School of Business. The program failed of realization because there was no centralization of administrative responsibility.

Original School of Business

In 1924 the school of Business was organized upon the recommendation of Chancellor Lindley. In view of the forces that apparently had been at work in the teaching of economics at Kansas, the ultimate establishment of a collegiate business school seems to have been a foregone conclusion. Several changes in economics courses have necessarily been made in the last eight years to provide satisfactory business curricula. At the same time every effort has been made to provide the College and the other Schools with such instruction as they desire. I would like to emphasize the point that the School of Business and the Department of Economics are not identical; one is a degree granting division while the other is an all-university teaching unit.

The department and the whole University suffered an irreparable loss in the sudden and untimely death of Arthur Boynton in March, 1928. He had come to the University when economics had but two instructors; he lived to see it grow into one of the largest departments. His contribution to that growth and development cannot be measured. He was one of the most forceful teachers in the history of the University and at the same time he administered his department in a way that was soundly conservative while it was also thoroughly progressive. The Boynton Scholarship, created in his honor, is indicative of his place in the memory of his students.

All of us who are now serving in the economics field at K.U. have a right to be proud of our heritage. Our predecessors have been men who have enjoyed wide recognition throughout the country and who have played important parts in the internal affairs of the University. They built well because the University, following a policy which characterizes it so markedly today, protected them against attacks from prejudiced private interests when controversial matters were under discussion. The many changes they instituted show clearly the dynamic nature of economics. That there will continue to be changes to keep pace with the progress of the world may well be expected.

Professor Stockton's history of the Economics Department appeared in *Graduate Magazine*, K.U., April, 1932. From the University Archives, University of Kansas Libraries, Spencer Research Library.