

HISTORY AND MISSION OF BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY

A. HISTORY

Initially called the University at Lewisburg, Bucknell was founded by a small group of Baptists who deemed it “desirable that a Literary Institution should be established in Central Pennsylvania, embracing a High School for male pupils, another for females, a College and also a Theological Institution.”¹ In 1845, this group began organized efforts to bring a university into being and Dr. Stephen William Taylor, a professor at Madison University (now Colgate) in Hamilton, New York, was engaged by the founders to prepare a charter and to act as general agent for the University’s development.

The charter for the “University at Lewisburg” was granted by the Legislature of Pennsylvania in an act approved by the Governor on February 5, 1846. In that year, “a school preparatory to the University” was opened in the basement of the First Baptist Church in Lewisburg and, in 1850, the school moved into the first building completed on the campus, now called Stephen W. Taylor Hall. The first collegiate commencement was held for seven graduates on August 20, 1851. One day earlier, the trustees had elected Howard Malcom as the first President of the University.

Young men and women recited together until the opening of the Female Institute in 1852 and, in 1883, college courses were opened to women. The first woman graduate of Bucknell, Chella Scott, received a B.S. degree with honors in 1885. Even before that date, the university was committed to equal educational opportunities for women. In the words of David Jayne Hill, Class of 1874 and President of Bucknell from 1879 to 1888: “We need in Pennsylvania, in the geographical centre of the state, a University, not in the German but in the American sense, where every branch of non-professional knowledge can be pursued, regardless of distinction of sex.” In the early years of the 20th century new course offerings were added and the university’s fourth president, John Howard Harris, oversaw the institution of some professional and pre-professional programs. The first elective course in Civil Engineering, for example, was offered in the academic year 1893-94. Today approximately 80 percent of the students are enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences and 20 percent in the College of Engineering.

In 1886, the name of the institution was changed to Bucknell University in honor of William Bucknell, a trustee and benefactor whose generous monetary gift delivered the University from financial distress. Mr. Bucknell served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees from 1882 until his death in 1890. The forty years from 1890 until 1930 showed a steady increase in the number of faculty members and students and in the academic programs appropriate to a small university. The early years of the Depression, however, brought a drop in enrollment. In 1933, several members of the Faculty were “loaned” to found a new institution: Bucknell Junior College in Wilkes-Barre. Today that junior college is a four-year institution, Wilkes University, independent of Bucknell since 1947.

Reflecting the university’s emphasis on the liberal arts, a Phi Beta Kappa chapter was approved for Bucknell in 1940. Bachelor of Science degrees in Education were awarded for the first time in 1925 and a degree program in Commerce and Finance was offered for several years in the middle of the 20th century. The University was reorganized briefly into three colleges: Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Business Administration but in 1970 the latter was replaced by the Departments of Management and of Economics within the College of Arts and Sciences.

The period since 1965 has been characterized by a strong interest in interdisciplinary studies, including the establishment of the College Major, and the addition of new and interdisciplinary programs. Residential

¹ Northumberland Baptist Association, *Minutes*, 1845. The history of the first one hundred eighteen years of the institution [1846-1964] is described in detail in J. Orin Oliphant’s *The Rise of Bucknell University* (Appleton-Century Crofts, 1964) a major source for the information presented here.

Colleges were also instituted, each distinguished by a common theme and an interdisciplinary course designed to introduce issues inherent in the theme.

Bucknell awards bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees in the College of Arts and Sciences in many traditional and interdisciplinary fields, including professional degree programs in Education, Management and Accounting, and Music Education. The College of Engineering awards bachelor of science degrees in a wide range of engineering disciplines, and dual-degree programs combining a bachelor of science degree in an engineering discipline with a bachelor of arts or bachelor of management for engineers degree from the College of Arts and Sciences are offered as well. In addition, many academic programs offer degrees at the master's level.

Since its founding, Bucknell has been served by fifteen presidents and seven acting presidents. Under their distinguished leadership, Bucknell has grown from a "Literary Institution and Female High School" to a coeducational independent university of national stature, with more than 3250 undergraduate students, close to 200 graduate students, and 285 full-time Faculty members. Through the years, hundreds of teacher/scholars and administrators have devoted their professional lives to Bucknell, helping it to develop traditions that have strengthened and sustained its mission as an institution of higher education. The presence on campus of a broad spectrum of political, religious, and intellectual opinion challenges students to define their ethical stance and to develop the habit of moral, as well as intellectual, inquiry. With the graduation of the Class of 2002, Bucknell has issued degrees to more than 40,000 graduates. Their successful lives and personal achievements are a testament to the vision and perspicacity of the University's founders.

B. MISSION STATEMENT FOR BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY

Bucknell University is a highly selective, primarily undergraduate institution offering a broad curriculum of studies in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, as well as professional studies in engineering, education, and management. Bucknell benefits from its focus on the liberal arts and the professions, its modest size, its location, and the large number of qualified applicants attracted by the competitive environment of the private colleges along the East Coast. The University's primary responsibility is to provide wide educational opportunities within a collegiate setting to a controlled number of talented men and women.

Bucknell expects its students to be concerned with two closely related types of development: that of the productive citizen and that of the person working toward intellectual maturity and self-awareness. Bucknell's educational program stresses the preparation of its students for the exercise of high responsibility in all phases of society. The undergraduate experience serves as a catalyst for the student's intellectual development and as a means of fostering the growth of each individual's capacity for self-awareness and sustained commitment to learning.

Because our society presents continuing challenges to values, students are encouraged to cultivate respect for other individuals and cultures, enhancing in the course of this pursuit their own moral sensitivity, personal creativity, and emotional stability. At the same time, Bucknell's residential character provides a matrix within which institutional programs and practices that exemplify compassion, civility, and a sense of justice form an aspect of the educational experience.

C. BUCKNELL'S GOALS²

Goal 1 To provide a broad curriculum which includes the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and professional studies in engineering, education, and management.

Goal 2 To recruit a diverse student body of controlled size composed of talented men and women.

Goal 3 To educate students for the exercise of high responsibility in all phases of society.

Goal 4 To develop in students the qualities of self-awareness, personal creativity, and a life-long interest in learning.

Goal 5 To develop in students broad analytical and transferable habits of thought.

Goal 6 To develop new experiences that will enable students to grow in moral sensitivity and in respect for other persons.

Goal 7 To engage in institutional programs and practices that exemplify compassion, civility, and a sense of justice.

² Approved by the Board of Trustees on November 7, 1981, after consultation with academic and administrative department heads.