

Protests and Pushback: Women's Rights, Student Activism, and Institutional Response in the Deep South

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Pivoting around two sit-ins at the University of Georgia, this article examines student activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the US South. The first sit-in, at the conclusion of the spring 1968 March for Coed Equality, was part of the effort to overcome parietal rules that significantly restricted women's rights but left men relatively untouched. The second occurred in 1972 when the university responded to salacious allegations of immorality in women's residence halls by replacing progressive residential education programming with the policing of student behavior. This article centers student efforts for women's rights, demonstrates how students and administrators shifted tactics in reaction to external stimuli, and explores the repercussions of challenging the entrenched patriarchal power structure. In so doing, it joins the growing literature complicating understandings of student activism in the era by focusing attention away from the most famous and extreme cases.

Keywords: higher education, student protest, activism, parietal rules, women's rights

In April 1968, approximately five hundred students marched across the University of Georgia (UGA) campus in what was then one of the largest protests in the institution's history. Instigated by an offshoot of the local chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the march was not aimed at stopping the war in Vietnam or promoting Black Freedom in the days after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Rather, it was in protest of the parietal rules imposed upon female undergraduates, including required campus residence, prohibitions against alcohol use, and tight restrictions on travel. The protest

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included a multiday sit-in of the president's office, a restraining order against the students, and punishment for students the institution claimed were leaders of the March for Coed Equality (MCE). University administrators soon relaxed regulations (denying that this was connected to the protest) and UGA earned a reputation for liberality in its student code and progressiveness in its residential programs. Four years later, a smaller group of students undertook a sit-in of the president's office to protest a crackdown on student behavior following allegations of immoral conduct in a women's residence hall. When the students (and an instructor there to support them) refused to leave, they were arrested. The university stripped the students of their financial aid and aggressively pursued charges against a subset that became known as the "Athens Eight."

This article explores the buildup to, issues surrounding, and repercussions of these two sit-ins at a striving university. In so doing, we highlight student agency, political interference, and the institution's retreat from progressive policies due to public pressure. We do so considering the politicized context of the late 1960s and early 1970s South, where student protesters were often viewed harshly, both on campus and off. By focusing on campus issues, especially those related to residence halls, we highlight a key feature of southern student activism and student activism more broadly. While scholars have long recognized the centrality of student power, many existing published institution-level studies on the South center national and international issues.¹ By undertaking a detailed study of internally focused activism, this article contributes to the growing understandings of campus-based activism away from what Doug Rossinow called the "northern rim," stretching from Morningside

¹See, for example, Christopher Broadhurst, "There Can Be No Business as Usual: The University of North Carolina and the Student Strike of May 1970," *Southern Cultures* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2015), 84–101; Christopher J. Broadhurst, "We Didn't Fire a Shot, We Didn't Burn a Building': The Student Reaction at North Carolina State University to the Kent State Shootings, May 1970," *North Carolina Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (July 2010), 283–309; and Mitchel K. Hall, "A Crack in Time': The Response of Students at the University of Kentucky to the Tragedy at Kent State, May 1970," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83, no. 1 (Winter 1985), 36–63. Campus-focused studies emphasizing institutional issues include A. J. Angulo and Leland Graham, "Winthrop College in the Sixties: Campus Protests, Southern Style," *Historical Studies in Education* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2011), 113–128; Ruth Anne Thompson, "A Taste of Student Power': Protest at the University of Tennessee, 1964–1970," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (April 1998), 80–97; and Christopher A. Huff, "Radicals between the Hedges: The Origins of the New Left at the University of Georgia and the 1968 Sit-In," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 94, no. 2 (July 2010), 179–209.

Heights to Cambridge, across to Ann Arbor and Madison and then to Berkeley.”²

In 2018, Joy Williamson-Lott argued that despite important recent scholarship, the “narrative still often starts at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964 and ends at Kent State University in Ohio in 1970” and that “southern student activists are almost wholly invisible in the literature.”³ Through her examination of student and faculty activism at a range of institutions, Williamson-Lott offers significant contributions to overcoming these conditions while demonstrating that the specifics of the southern context are necessary considerations. In so doing, she points to “something fundamentally different about southern higher education in the mid-twentieth century” and argues that colleges and universities were explicitly used to “police and maintain the existing social order.”⁴ Williamson-Lott reveals the competing pressures on college and university administrators as they sought to navigate regional racial and gender structures while increasingly looking to enter the larger national system of higher education. In offering a regional view, she argues that “women and their male allies considered the *in loco parentis* regulations doubly infantilizing for women.”⁵

Williamson-Lott’s work joins several books that have complicated understandings of student activism by focusing attention on the South. Gregg Michel examined the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), a White organization that sought to change the region from the inside. SSOC’s use of southern culture in its imagery and approach was intended to make its activism palatable in the region but also evinced regional pride and distinctiveness.⁶ In *Sitting In and Speaking Out*, Jeffrey Turner emphasizes gaps in understanding caused by a focus on northern students and national organizations. He provides the first overarching treatment of 1960s student protest in the South, arguing that it was “liberal in the sense that the activists pushed primarily for the reform rather than destruction of existing institutions. Southern student activism also demonstrated a tendency to concentrate

²Doug Rossinow, “Historiographical Reflections,” in *Rebellion in Black & White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s*, ed. Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 307.

³Joy Ann Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Struggle for a New Southern Social Order* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018), 4.

⁴Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus*, 7, 8.

⁵Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus*, 88.

⁶Gregg L. Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964–1969* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

on ‘safer’ issues with broad appeal, such as curfews or student participation in campus governance.”⁷

Like Turner and Williamson-Lott, Robert Cohen and David Snyder’s edited book considers both Black and White student activism in the region, showing how they converged and diverged relating to contexts, power structures, and purposes. The volume argues for understanding the South in its own terms, rather than merely incorporating it into a narrative of the New Left focused elsewhere. As Cohen writes in his introductory chapter, it is important to overcome the tendency to focus on campus-based protest in the North and off-campus activism in the South.⁸ Several of the chapters in Cohen and Snyder’s work are particularly relevant, including Gary Sprayberry’s identification of the University of Alabama as an institution undergoing political and cultural changes in the late 1960s. Sprayberry focuses on antiwar protests but notes that both parietal rules and racial inequality were important to the activists. Kelly Morrow’s examination of efforts for sexual liberation at the University of North Carolina similarly highlights a campus scene that would not have been imagined less than a decade earlier, despite the institution’s relative progressiveness. Yet Christopher Huff’s study of conservatism at UGA demonstrates the entrenched values that were prevalent throughout the region and, indeed, other rural parts of the country.⁹

In a study of student power across Tennessee in the 1960s, Katherine Ballantyne joins Turner in explicitly challenging the declension narrative—that left protest fractured, radicalized, and was in decline after 1968—as too focused on national organizations and the North. A southern focus challenges the timeline and tempers the radicalness.¹⁰ Robbie Lieberman and David Cochran similarly call for a rethinking the narrative, contending:

⁷Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movements in the American South, 1960–1970* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 7.

⁸Robert Cohen, “Introduction. Prophetic Minority versus Recalcitrant Majority: Southern Student Dissent and the Struggle for Progressive Change in the 1960s,” in Cohen and Snyder, *Rebellion in Black & White*, 7.

⁹Gary S. Sprayberry, “Student Radicalism and the Antiwar Movement at the University of Alabama,” in Cohen and Snyder, *Rebellion in Black & White*, 148–70; Kelly Morrow, “Sexual Liberation at the University of North Carolina,” in Cohen and Snyder, *Rebellion in Black & White*, 195–217; and Christopher A. Huff, “Conservative Student Activism at the University of Georgia,” in Cohen and Snyder, *Rebellion in Black & White*, 171–91.

¹⁰Katherine Ballantyne, “Students Are [Not] Slaves’: 1960s Student Power Debates in Tennessee,” *Journal of American Studies* 54, no. 2 (May 2020), 295–322.

Local histories do far more than fill in pieces of the national story of 1960s protest. Accounts of the movement on a local level, in particular at mid-western and southern state universities in the later part of the decade and into the 1970s, alter that larger story and challenge the standard narrative in significant ways.¹¹

Drawing on Rossinow's work, they argue that focusing on these cases complicates understandings by demonstrating "the style of protest may have changed, but it was still going strong on the national level."¹² Here, we agree that sites beyond those most studied are revealing and extend our considerations further by moving beyond fall 1970, when, in Turner's terms, "activism generally sank back to its pre-1970 level . . . [and] tapered off."¹³

The two protests around which this article pivots were not just about women's issues, although they certainly involved them. Amy Thompson McCandless provides the most thorough history of twentieth-century women students in the South, arguing that the region's racial, gendered, and class-based past affected higher education throughout the century. Moreover, "Prescriptions for dress and behavior; membership criteria for clubs, sororities, and other organizations; the nature of residential life; and the conservatism of Southern institutions—all made it difficult for Southern women to question tradition and to assert their individuality."¹⁴ The same conditions, though, encouraged women to work together for change. Lynn Peril, in a more light-hearted treatment of the national situation, notes the pushback against parietals in the 1960s, including that UGA was among the "less enlightened" institutions.¹⁵ Kelly Sartorius's study of Emily Taylor, the dean of women at the University of Kansas, shows attempts to overcome rules and norms that restricted college women. Included were efforts to replace governance organizations—typically a source of both leadership opportunities and disciplinary

¹¹Robbie Lieberman and David Cochran, "We Closed Down the Damn School': The Party Culture and Student Protest at Southern Illinois University during the Vietnam War Era," *Peace & Change* 26, no. 3 (July 2001), 318.

¹²Lieberman and Cochran, "We Closed Down the Damn School," 318; Doug Rossinow, "The New Left in the Counterculture: Hypothesis and Evidence," *Radical History Review* 67 (1997), 79–120. See also, Douglas C. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

¹³Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out*, 11.

¹⁴Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 121.

¹⁵Lynn Peril, *College Girls: Bluestockings, Sex Kittens, and Coeds, Then and Now* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 172.

control—with Commissions on the Status of Women, which emphasized feminist advocacy.¹⁶

Deirdre Clemente's examination of college student dress includes considerations of the rules governing women's attire over time, including how they were generally stricter at coeducational institutions in the South and at historically black colleges and universities. Clemente notes that "victories" in overcoming dress codes were "piecemeal" and cautioned against "lump[ing] together the many forms of protest and activism into 'unrest.'"¹⁷ We agree that efforts for change took on multiple forms and addressed numerous issues that should not be conflated, which is why we are focusing on parietals. Moreover, part of our discussion of UGA indicates a larger trajectory and shifts from activism to protest and back. At the same time, building on Huff's work "Radicals between the Hedges," which emphasizes SDS's role in the MCE, we argue that overcoming these restrictions at UGA was part of a larger effort to create an activist culture on campus.¹⁸ The liberalization of campus policies, though, soon met with a backlash that had significant consequences.

Parietal Rules and Unequal Treatment

A tradition-bound institution in the rural South, UGA had a reputation as a sleepy college for wealthy White students. Although institutional leaders sought coeducation at the turn of the twentieth century, the trustees refused to admit women as regular students, concerned that, as an editorial claimed, it would bring about "the destruction of that modesty and real refinement, which makes them so attractive to men."¹⁹ World War I shortages finally caused them to

¹⁶Kelly C. Sartorius, *Deans of Women and the Feminist Movement: Emily Taylor's Activism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 135–44, 153–64.

¹⁷Deirdre Clemente, *Dress Casual: How College Students Redefined American Style* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 45. For a recent treatment of the dangers of conflating separate events under one framework, see Nancy K. Bristow, *Steeped in the Blood of Racism: Black Power, Law and Order, and the 1970 Shootings at Jackson State College* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). For a discussion of ways scholars have differentiated types of campus activism, see Jana Nidiffer, "Corrective Lenses: Suffrage, Feminist Poststructural Analysis, and the History of Higher Education," in *Reconstructing Policy in Higher Education: Feminist Poststructural Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth J. Allan, Susan Van Deventer Iverson, and Rebecca Ropers-Huilman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 41–62.

¹⁸Huff, "Radicals between the Hedges," 194–201, 205–208.

¹⁹As cited in Aaron Hale, "Opening a Door: UGA Marks a Century of Coeducation," *Georgia: The Magazine of the University of Georgia* (Fall 2018), 21. Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz show a relatively steady rate of coeducation adoption from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s, when a number of private

relent.²⁰ The first group of twelve women formally admitted in September 1918 were greeted by placards bearing “Give us back our university,” hot water poured on them from windows, and demonstrations to end coeducation. They were also shut out of male organizations, leading them to form their own, including the Women’s Student Government Association (WSGA) in 1920—which became a key instrument in efforts to control their behavior.²¹

As McCandless details, female students’ morality was a pressing worry throughout the South, even as students in the North rejected some restrictions that had been placed on their behaviors.²² At UGA, concerns about the appearance of impropriety informed the tightening rules for women. In 1922, UGA mandated that “conduct must at all times be prudent and becoming to a woman” and “improper dancing must be prohibited.”²³ By the end of the decade, women were forbidden to drink alcohol, wear “masculine attire,” and, after a professor complained, “powder their noses” in public.²⁴ Women had also started to question why they were subjected to rules that, as one articulated, seemed “directed to reform wayward wantons.”²⁵

institutions in the Northeast went coeducational. Rates of coeducation differed by region, with the South trailing the Midwest and West in percentage of students in coeducational institutions until the second half of the twentieth century. Nancy Weiss Malkiel broadly, and Anne Perkins specifically about Yale University, recently demonstrated the depth of resistance to coeducation at elite institutions in the U.S. North and the United Kingdom. Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, “Putting the ‘Co’ in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present,” *Journal of Human Capital* 5, no. 4 (Winter 2011), 381, 391–92; Nancy Weiss Malkiel, “*Keep the Damned Women Out: The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); and Anne Gardner Perkins, *Yale Needs Women: How the First Group of Girls Rewrote the Rules of an Ivy League Giant* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2019).

²⁰Sara Bertha Townsend, “The Admission of Women to the University of Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (June 1959), 156–69. Despite its short duration, World War I offered women academic opportunities not previously present. McCandless, *Past in the Present*, 88–89.

²¹Townsend, “Admission of Women,” 167–79; Alice W. Stancil, interview by Ray Moore, WSB-TV, Atlanta, GA, Jan. 1961, http://crdl.usg.edu/cgi/crdl?format=_video;query=id:ugabma_wsbn_69562; and “Co-eds Formulate Own Student Council,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 8, 1920, 3.

²²McCandless, *Past in the Present*, 123–24.

²³David C. Barrow, “Co-Education at the University; An Address Before the Georgia Federation of Women’s Clubs, at the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention,” *Bulletin of the University of Georgia* 23, no 3 (1922), 8.

²⁴“Women Students Discuss New Law,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 8, 1929, 5; and Wylly Folk, “Co-eds Requested Not to Appear in Masculine Attire,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 22, 1926, 5.

²⁵Campaspe Davis, “What Price Co-Education,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 19, 1926, 5.

Indicative of the White, male power structure, protests against coeducation and desegregation were among the most prominent instances of student unrest until the late 1960s. UGA students were largely absent from the widespread protests of the 1930s but were galvanized to action in 1941 when the institution's accreditation was threatened by Governor Eugene Talmadge's removal of Walter Cocking, dean of the College of Education, whom he accused of being a communist and integrationist.²⁶ The largest protests of the 1950s occurred in response to Governor Marvin Griffin's attempt to prevent college athletic teams from competing against integrated opponents.²⁷ Otherwise, mass demonstrations were almost nonexistent, although four thousand students did once rally in hopes of canceling classes the day before a football game.²⁸ Significant unrest did not occur until January 1961 when students protested UGA's court-ordered desegregation; the volatile events included threats, intimidation, and violence. On January 11, students and others lit fires, chanted slurs, and hurled debris at the residence hall of Charlayne Hunter—one of the two Black students desegregating the institution. The riot led to multiple arrests, the temporary suspension of Hunter and Hamilton Holmes (the other student desegregating UGA), and a ban on demonstrations.²⁹

In the late 1940s and 1950s there were occasional murmurs over individual rights and complaints about regulations imposed on students. The university newspaper, *The Red and Black*, for example, editorialized against dining requirements by noting, "If by the time a person is of college age he isn't mature enough to eat properly, where he pleases, little will be gained by imposing a ridiculous regulation."³⁰ The increase in restrictions was troubling to some, including a *Red and Black* editor who, in 1953, claimed "the rule book . . . is turning into a multi-volume set of do's and don't's—mostly don't's."³¹ Beginning that year, students had to receive approval for all social gatherings and first-year male students were required to live on campus. Four years later, all weekday social activities were banned and, after complaints of students wearing sloppy attire in town, dress was

²⁶Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785–1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 222–40.

²⁷"University Students Hold Two Mass Demonstrations," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Dec. 8, 1955, 1; and "Ridiculousness," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Dec. 8, 1955, 4.

²⁸"Students Parade for Holiday in Demonstration after Rally," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 19, 1959, 1.

²⁹Robert A. Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 93–107.

³⁰"Petition Denied," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 26, 1953, 4.

³¹Bill Shipp, "On Rules," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 22, 1953, 4.

further restricted. The university also prohibited “secret” marriages—those without both parental and university approval.³²

The regulations imposed on women surpassed those applied to men. Enforced by the WSGA beginning in 1948, they included restrictions on dating, alcohol, and smoking both on and off campus. Many related to residence halls, including limited visitations, curfews, lights-out times, and restrictions on leaving campus. As was the case at other institutions, attire was an area of special interest, and women were instructed about what to wear to specific events and locations. In 1951, these included:

Slacks, jeans, shorts, gym suits, and riding habits must not be worn in parlors, halls, on porches, or lawns, or in the University dining halls. Gym suits are worn only in the Physical Education classes. Skirts or coats are to be worn over gym suits, jeans, or slacks at all times when girls are leaving University residences.³³

In order to maintain propriety, women were required to use the side doors, even when wearing their mandated raincoats or skirts over athletic attire. Defending the restrictions, Dean of Women Edith Stallings noted, “The University wants its women to possess charm, gentility, poise, and feminine modesty.”³⁴ The juxtaposition of such tight restrictions on women with freedom for men, as Clemente claims in her history of campus dress, “sheds light on the gendered nature of higher education.”³⁵ Moreover, as McCandless argues, the rules were especially important in the South, where they “assured southern conservatives that the next generation would help preserve the stability and order they held so dear.”³⁶

Incremental Advances

The US Supreme Court’s 1960 *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* ruling signaled the beginning of the end of *in loco parentis* but,

³²“Aderhold Approves Living, Dining Plan Affecting Freshman,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 8, 1952, 1; “Cox Tightens Authorization,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 22, 1953, 1; “Williams Cites Stricter Rules as Study Aid,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 4, 1957, 1; and “Stallings Publicizes Policies on Proper Student Clothing,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 4, 1957, 1.

³³“Stepped-Up WSGA Program Includes New Discipline Plan,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 12, 1948, 5; Women’s Student Government Association, *Through the Arch*, 1951–1952, 16, folder 2, box 3, Edith L. Stallings and Louise McBee Papers, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (hereafter cited as Stallings/McBee Papers).

³⁴“Dean Explains Rules to Group,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 31, 1957, 1.

³⁵Clemente, *Dress Casual*, 43.

³⁶McCandless, *Past in the Present*, 147.

nationally, change was not immediate.³⁷ At UGA, sporadic commentary on restrictions continued, including criticism of the dean of men's right to search men's off-campus apartments for alcohol. Of course, women were not allowed to live off campus. Concerns over women's regulations caused class officers to examine other schools' policies; they were surprised to find that UGA's rules were, in junior class Vice President June Whitehead's terms, "amazingly similar" to others in the South.³⁸ The one exception was in the more onerous dress code for women at UGA. Two 1963 surveys of UGA women revealed dissatisfaction with the restrictions; one female student responded, "I suggest that girls be given a little more credit for their ability to discriminate regarding good taste in both dress and morals."³⁹ Yet while incremental change occurred—the loosening of curfew by thirty minutes, for example—there were also limitations on how far the administration would go. As Dean of Women M. Louise McBee noted shortly after her 1963 appointment, "Parents who send their daughters to the University want the rules and I think that after consideration the girls do too."⁴⁰

The parietals restricting women were joined by broader limitations, such as bans on racially mixed entertainment at UGA. North Carolina's legislature famously passed its so-called Communist Speaker Ban in 1963, and Mississippi's higher education governing board followed suit in 1966.⁴¹ The issue played out in Georgia in a more typical way. In early 1964, a few months after UGA officials prevented a communist from debating a faculty member at a campus literary society, the Georgia House of Representatives introduced communist speaker ban legislation. As would happen in numerous southern states, both student and university leaders opposed the effort, and its sponsor withdrew it after being assured that the University System of Georgia Board of Regents would handle

³⁷ *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education*, 294 F. 2d 150 (5th Cir. 1961), cert. den'd 368 U.S. 930 (1961); Philip Lee, "The Case of *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education*: From Civil Rights to Students' Rights and Back Again," *Teachers College Record* 116, no. 12 (Dec. 2014), 1–18.

³⁸ "Class Officers Investigate Mixed Entertainment Ban," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 22, 1962, 1.

³⁹ Janet McPherson, "Freshman Women See Room for Regulation Improvements," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 16, 1963, 6; and Nick Dunten, "Students Voice for Rule Changes," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Aug. 1, 1963, 6.

⁴⁰ Gail Carter, "Dean of Women Believes All Students Want 'Best,'" *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Sept. 20, 1963, 2.

⁴¹ William J. Billingsley, *Communists on Campus: Race, Politics, and the Public University in Sixties North Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); and Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus*, 81–85. The North Carolina bill was passed just days after the University of California Regents rescinded their own prohibitions.

the situation.⁴² A similar bill introduced two years later—this one targeting folk singers, whom its sponsor termed “the slickest piece of Communist propaganda”—died in committee.⁴³

Beginning in September 1964, the Free Speech Movement (FSM) was a dramatic effort to liberalize regulations on student organizations at Berkeley. Informed by students’ experiences registering voters in the South, the FSM’s large-scale protests and sit-ins at academic buildings led to significant concessions and garnered national attention, both positive and negative. Turner argues that southern campuses’ relationships to the FSM were complicated. The FSM ultimately contributed to southern student activism, with student power a key rallying point, but significant resistance existed and it took time for the seeds of protest to take hold.⁴⁴ At UGA, a 1965 editorial titled, “The Children at Berkeley,” for example, claimed that the protesters were “agents of communist propaganda” and, in response to criticism of his stances, the editor suggested those who disagreed should transfer there.⁴⁵ Even many of those who pushed back on the editorial largely did so in support of the content of the Berkeley activism, but not its form.⁴⁶ Instead, students endorsed the status quo, broke rules they disliked, or worked within the system for change, including through a new student government. In 1965, John Rhodes, the first president of the body, distanced UGA from protests while celebrating cooperation with administrators: “Good communications such as we have can prevent such things as in California.”⁴⁷

⁴²“No Red Debate, Committee Says,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 8, 1963, 1; Nick Dunten, “Students to Fight Bill,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 21, 1964, 1; “Pickard Asks Ban on Red Speakers,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jan. 16, 1964, 8; and Billy Mann, “Anti-Communist Bill: 737 Killed in Committee,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 6, 1964, 1. Alabama, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Tennessee likewise considered bans but acquiesced to institutions invoking their own rules. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out*, 143–51; and Henry H. Lesesne, *A History of the University of South Carolina, 1940–2000* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 201–203.

⁴³“Bill to Bar Red Speakers Still Alive, Miller Holds,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 16, 1966, 8.

⁴⁴Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out*, 138–143.

⁴⁵Carlton Brown Jr., “The Children at Berkeley,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 26, 1965, 4. See also, Landi Branham, “War Demonstrations Opposed by Students,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 26, 1965, 2; and Harold Black, Letter to the Editor, *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 2, 1965, 4.

⁴⁶See “Letters to the Editor: Stupidity, Unconcern, Apathy Discussed,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 9, 1965, 4.

⁴⁷Nellie Fowler, “Rhodes Says Rules Unfair to Women,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 29, 1965, 1, 8.

Rhodes's comments came at a meeting between student leaders and the residents of a women's dormitory. In them, he called for the liberalization of women's rules while identifying the challenges that such efforts faced. He noted that both McBee and Dean of Men William Tate had cautioned that a public institution "reflects the morals of the state . . . and wishes of parents." Yet, at the same event, student body secretary Shell Hardman maintained that McBee sought change, noting McBee's belief "that the University has tighter rules than others she has known."⁴⁸ As Sartorius demonstrates, deans of women could play crucial roles in promoting or forestalling institutional change.⁴⁹ McBee helped the institution navigate significant changes, though more slowly than some students desired. In early 1966, she acknowledged "the movement from the concept of *in loco parentis* to due process" would soon accelerate.⁵⁰ Shortly thereafter, she announced a significant relaxation of the rules: upper-class women would be permitted to visit men's apartments with parental approval and a companion.⁵¹

SDS's late-1966 arrival in Athens tested the "good communication" that Rhodes had noted. As the largest predominantly White activist student organization, SDS played a large national role in the 1960s and has played an outsized one in recollections of it. Yet, despite being informed by southern civil rights activism, only a few chapters existed in the region before 1968.⁵² The UGA chapter was organized by David Simpson, a married navy veteran who later recalled, "Georgia was five or 10 years behind the times. They still spelled out the students' lives. . . . I was treated as if I was 14 years old."⁵³ The chapter's early activities included a February 1967 petition for student power and then a protest of Vice President Hubert Humphrey's campus visit. The latter action included counterprotesters but was small enough that Humphrey lauded students' politeness.⁵⁴

⁴⁸Fowler, "Rhodes Says Rules Unfair to Women," 1, 8.

⁴⁹Sartorius, *Deans of Women*. On the shifting role of student affairs officers more broadly, see, Joy L. Gaston-Gayles et al., "From Disciplinarian to Change Agent: How the Civil Rights Era Changed the Roles of Student Affairs Professionals," *NASPA Journal* 42, no. 3 (July 2005), 263–82.

⁵⁰Louise McBee, "Annual Report, Office of the Dean of Women, 1965–66," 37, folder 22, box 1, Stallings/McBee Papers.

⁵¹Don Rhodes, "Dean McBee Approves Visits in Men's Dorms," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 21, 1966, 1; and "WSGA Secures Change: Dean McBee and Staff Join in Announcement," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 19, 1966, 1.

⁵²Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out*, 129–31.

⁵³Joe Krakoviak, "Simpson Recalls Days of Sit-Ins, Protests," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 1, 1980, 3.

⁵⁴Joseph A. Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War: Belligerence, Protest, and Agony in Dixie* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 302.

The chapter demonstrated for civil rights and against both intervention in Vietnam and the ROTC on campus. Still, much of its effort focused on students' rights, including printing an off-campus newsletter, which violated university rules.⁵⁵ Many on campus agreed on the issue but derided SDS's tactics; a law student argued "bearded, sandal-wearing demonstrators really accomplish very little," even though SDS members took care to dress in suits or dresses.⁵⁶ In a typical response that conforms with the national tendency to blame outsiders for agitation, SDS was condemned as a northern group and, by a local newspaper, "un-Georgialy."⁵⁷

SDS was not the only advocate for liberalizing regulations; McBee noted "a rising tide of interest in student rights and student autonomy coupled with a demand by students for a voice in policy making."⁵⁸ As happened at other southern institutions, the Student Government Association (SGA) passed a moderate "Bill of Rights," while simultaneously denouncing student demonstrations.⁵⁹ The calls for more liberty for women were met with the April 1967 creation of a women's honors dorm with fewer rules than other women's residences. According to McBee, it provided "comparative freedom" for responsible women; the *Red and Black* praised it as a "a radical change."⁶⁰ Revisions to WSGA rules announced shortly thereafter pushed curfews back another half hour, allowed upper-class women to leave campus for local destinations, and ended the requirement that women wear raincoats over their shorts in direct transit to approved events.⁶¹

⁵⁵Huff, "Radicals between the Hedges," 183–86; and "Why?," *SDS Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (March 31, 1967), 1, folder 41, box 93, Frederick C. Davison Papers, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (hereafter cited as Davison Papers).

⁵⁶"University Moot Court Argues Rules' Legality," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 9, 1967, 1; and Krakoviak, "Simpson Recalls Days of Sit-ins, Protest."

⁵⁷"Un-Georgialy????!!," *SDS Newsletter* 1, no. 2 (April 20, 1967), 2, folder 41, box 93, Davison Papers.

⁵⁸Louise McBee, "Annual Report, Office of the Dean of Women, 1966–67," 1, folder 23, box 1, Stallings/McBee Papers.

⁵⁹Butch Scott, "Senate Passes 'Bill of Rights'; Constitutional Rights Demanded," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 30, 1967, 1; "Saunders Honored by Student Senate: Statement of Rights for Students Passed," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 10, 1966, 1; and "Rights Presented," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 10, 1966, 1.

⁶⁰Louise McBee, "Annual Report, Office of the Dean of Women, 1968–69," 31, folder 25, box 1, Stallings/McBee Papers; Claire Spiker, "Women's Honor Dorm Draws Large Support," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 4, 1967, 1; and "Coeds Respond," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 4, 1967, 4.

⁶¹"Women's Rule Changes Adopted by University," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 20, 1967, 1.

Major changes came in the 1967–1968 academic year through both deliberate processes and surprise events. In November, WSGA announced it had eliminated all dress restrictions, effective immediately. The acting dean of women, who was serving while McBee was in Europe, praised the group, noting, “This was done completely by student government.”⁶² The *Red and Black* editorialized that it was “ecstatic, jubilant, and almost speechless” at “one more small step on the way to constitutional freedom for students, both male and female.” It continued, “WSGA, whom we have often vilified as champion campus do-nothings, have made us eat crow. But it was delicious.”⁶³ Nationally, WSGAs, in Williamson-Lott’s terms, “tapped into and expanded the burgeoning feminist movement that sought to end legal and *de facto* gender inequality.”⁶⁴ Evidence from UGA indicates that its WSGA sought some easing of restrictions but had no authority to make such a change. When administrators admitted that they were, in fact, responsible, SDS called the original attribution an “inexcusable act of dishonesty” that “tarnished the first sign of responsiveness on the part of the administration.”⁶⁵ McBee likewise criticized the action after her return, noting that the change by “administrative fiat” had undermined the WSGA and threatened its legitimacy.⁶⁶

A broader inquiry launched by Counselor to Men Harry Cannon, over objections by McBee and Tate, further endangered WSGA’s influence. Noting the national “ferment” over student regulations, Cannon worked with the SGA to consider the legality and value of campus rules.⁶⁷ The SGA held forums on both existing and potential regulations, though with only limited student engagement, as most simply broke rules they disliked. Significantly, women were largely missing from the conversation, despite the more onerous restrictions

⁶² Sharon Tate, “WSGA Announces End to Women’s Dress Rules,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 9, 1967, 1.

⁶³ “We Love You WSGA,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 9, 1967, 4.

⁶⁴ Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus*, 88.

⁶⁵ “The WSGA Stir,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 14, 1967, 4; and “Who Made the Decision,” *SDS Newsletter* 2, no. 2 (Nov. 13, 1967), 1, folder 11, box 55, Davison Papers.

⁶⁶ Louise McBee, “Annual Report, Office of the Dean of Women, 1967–68,” 16, folder 24, box 1, Stallings/McBee Papers.

⁶⁷ Larry Shealy, “Dean Cannon Initiates Rules Evaluation; Stresses Necessity of Students’ Support,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 3, 1967, 1; Minutes of the Faculty Committee of Student Affairs, Aug. 14, 1967, folder 26, box 19, Davison Papers; William Tate to Walter Martin, April 23, 1973, folder 1, box 78, William Tate Papers, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (hereafter cited as Tate Papers); and Harry Cannon to D. J. Sorrells, July 21, 1967, folder 1, box 78, Tate Papers.

they faced.⁶⁸ In January 1968, the SGA proposed substantial changes, including relaxing women's curfews and allowing legal-age students to drink alcohol. The SGA also proposed an independent judiciary that would cover all students—hence eliminating a prime WSGA role—and scheduled a nonbinding referendum on the revisions for late April.⁶⁹

Amid these developments, a minority demanded more, pointing to unfair rules, criticizing inconsistent enforcement, and questioning whether change was truly forthcoming. *Red and Black* news editor Sharon Tate, for example, asked, “Will the dean of women’s office really relinquish any of its powers?’ ‘Will WSGA become a true democratic government instead of a figurehead?’⁷⁰ Shortly thereafter, she wrote, “I have been asked to write something positive for a change. . . . I move that we positively do away with WSGA.”⁷¹ In hopes of spurring further action, some SDS members proposed a march for women’s rights to be held before the planned referendum. With the organization split over whether to focus on these parietal issues or on larger antiwar and civil rights efforts, a subset formed a separate Movement for Coed Equality and planned a demonstration for early April.⁷² The day before the event, group leaders met with President Frederick Davison and shared the draft of a petition that they intended to present to him after their march. It argued that men and women had the same duties and were entitled to the same rights.⁷³ Davison responded that he intended to formally receive the petition the next day, and student Robert Clark announced that the group “would not be pacified by a few rule changes.”⁷⁴

The March for Coed Equality

Late afternoon on April 10, approximately five hundred students marched roughly a mile across campus bearing signs demanding equality and singing “We Shall Overcome.” When they reached the

⁶⁸See, for example, Claire Spiker, “To Sneak Is Degrading,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 22, 1968, 4; and Cherri Van Hooven, “Students’ Apathy Poses Problems—Says Pedrick,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 13, 1968, 1.

⁶⁹Sharon Tate, “SGA Suggests Major Rule Changes,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 23, 1968, 1.

⁷⁰Sharon Tate, “Waiting . . . and Wondering,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 4, 1968, 4.

⁷¹Sharon Tate, “A Positive Request,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 20, 1968, 4.

⁷²Huff, “Radicals between the Hedges,” 194–95.

⁷³Jo Ann Crowley, “Women’s Rights Group Plans March Tomorrow,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 9, 1968, 1.

⁷⁴Crowley, “Women’s Rights Group Plans March Tomorrow.”

Administration Building, Katherine Omelanuk read the petition demanding “that the rules governing the activities of women students be revised to eliminate all restrictions which do not apply equally to male students,” and several students and faculty members spoke to the crowd. Biology professor John Kerr dedicated his talk to Martin Luther King Jr., who had been buried in Atlanta the day before, and linked his participation to a broader struggle for human rights. MCE leader Diana Wygal drew on her own pending disciplinary case to call on women to stand up for themselves. She had appealed a WSGA conviction for breaking curfew, claiming a violation of due process as the hearing was held in a women-only dormitory, preventing male faculty testifying on her behalf.⁷⁵ When the time came to present the petition, Davison was absent. In his place, Vice President George Parthemos accepted the petition and Acting Dean of Students O. Suthern Sims Jr., announced that students needed to work through proper channels. Roughly three hundred students then occupied the building, where many would stay for almost forty-eight hours.⁷⁶

At first, administrators treated the sit-in as a “novelty,” but as curfew neared they warned that students would face disciplinary action.⁷⁷ The following day, they again advised students of potential consequences and the danger posed by their violation of fire codes. A marshal’s warning that there would be “a lot of dead students” if a fire broke out caused the protesters to split into groups. Some remained but others moved their protest to adhere to codes.⁷⁸ Students distributed leaflets declaring “Apathy is Dead!!!” They enumerated their demands, explained their actions, and highlighted that the sit-in was a rules violation for women but not men; by spending the night, the women had broken the curfew that they found so demeaning.⁷⁹ Students met with Davison and justified their actions to the press. Junior Flinn Dallis stated, “We take it as a personal affront that we’re not considered to

⁷⁵Jo Ann Rock, “Case Tests WSGA Restrictions,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 25, 1968, 1; and “Wygal Case Thrown Out by Faculty,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 16, 1968, 1. Wygal won her appeal the next day.

⁷⁶Huff, “Radicals between the Hedges,” 198–200 and “Coeds March; Sit-in Academic Building,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 11, 1968, 1.

⁷⁷Richard Moore, “UGA’s Sit-in,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 16, 1968, 4.

⁷⁸Philip Gailey, “Coeds Stand Pat in Athens Sit-In,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 12, 1968, 1.

⁷⁹“Apathy Is Dead!!!,” n.d. [April 11, 1968], folder 40, box 93, University of Georgia Ephemera Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (hereafter cited as Ephemera Collection). UGA women were not the only ones to violate curfew as a protest. At Gettysburg College, for example, students held a “sleep-in” to prove a similar point. Peril, *College Girls*, 172.

have enough discretion to act maturely.”⁸⁰ Susan Carroll, a sophomore from Miami, declared “We’ve been kept down too long. We’re women, and we intend to be treated like adults.”⁸¹

After a Friday prayer service, the protesters suspended their demonstration for Easter weekend. Within hours, administrators announced that they had received a restraining order forbidding any demonstrations on campus except during the fifteen-minute breaks between classes. Large gatherings inside administration buildings were banned altogether. Although the students obtained legal counsel to fight the injunction, almost all soon relented and agreed to the enhanced restrictions.⁸² The university’s pursuit of legal orders against student protesters would be locally praised as an innovative turn in handling student protests; it also foreshadowed actions UGA would take in later years.⁸³

Smaller rallies took place over ensuing weeks as students continued to pursue student rights and a broader activist agenda. They marched with a coffin to mourn the death of speech and assembly rights. They taunted the dean of women with flyers mockingly asking her advice on sexual issues. UGA’s SDS hosted the SSOC’s annual meeting in May over university objections. Still, the university declined to act against protesters until Simpson and two other students unfurled a protest banner at Davison’s formal inauguration ceremony, declaring “The Emperor Has No Clothes.” The banner was visible for less than a minute, but the university charged the three for both the inauguration protest and for activities during the sit-in, despite none being leaders of the MCE and one being barely involved.⁸⁴

Over five days in late May, large crowds witnessed Dean Tate presiding over proceedings against the students. Indicative of the

⁸⁰Sam Hopkins, “‘We Won’t Give In,’ Vow Militant University of Georgia Coeds,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 12, 1968, 54.

⁸¹“Georgia Co-eds Continue Sit-In,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 12, 1968, 3.

⁸²Huff, “Radicals between the Hedges,” 200 “A Report on the Demonstrations in the Administration Building,” n.d. [April 1968], folder 40, box 93, Ephemera Collection; Bob Ingle, “Consent Order Limits U. Ga. Protest Group,” *Athens (GA) Banner-Herald*, April 23, 1968, 1; and Bill Cozzens, “UGA Sit-In,” *Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta, GA), Oct. 7, 1968, 6.

⁸³N. S. Hayden, “Handling of Protest at U. Ga. Significant,” *Athens (GA) Banner-Herald*, May 12, 1968, 4. Scott Gelber demonstrated that, in the half century prior to *Dixon*, judges overwhelmingly sided with institutions in expulsion cases. Scott M. Gelber, *Courtrooms and Classrooms: A Legal History of College Access, 1860–1960* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 96–110.

⁸⁴“U. Ga. Wake Staged,” *Athens (GA) Banner Herald*, April 18, 1968, 1, 2; “Dear Queen Bee,” n.d. [April 1968], folder 40, box 93, Ephemera Collection; “Free Speech, SSOC Banned, Rusk Invited,” *Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta, GA), May 10–23, 1968, 10; and “The Chosen Trinity,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 16, 1968, 4.

post-*Dixon* rise of due process, they were UGA's first hearings of their kind. Represented by lawyers secured with help from the American Civil Liberties Union, the students made claims for the righteousness of their cause and their peaceful actions.⁸⁵ A state assistant attorney general representing the university argued, "These students wanted to be martyrs and if they want to be martyrs they should pay the price."⁸⁶ Ultimately, Tate handed down a one-year suspension for Simpson and lesser punishments against other charged students, including two additional students added as defendants after the hearings had started. Supporters argued that Simpson was unfairly singled out, staged a brief sit-in of the president's office, and occupied an encampment that they labeled "Persecution City" that failed to garner widespread support.⁸⁷

Throughout, these events received significant attention. Letters to the student newspaper frequently supported the protesters' cause, though not always their actions. Even some who had participated in the initial sit-in questioned the ongoing activities. Becky Leet, who had supported the MCE, wrote "The post-march demonstrators not only hurt themselves personally with their continued and juvenile antics, but hurt every University student who favors rule liberalizations."⁸⁸ The SGA resolved against the protesters and in support of Davison.⁸⁹ Faculty views were polarized. Several had joined the march and three testified on behalf of the students at the disciplinary hearings, arguing that the protest would actually improve the institution's image by showing it was more than just a "football and party college."⁹⁰ Still, the overwhelming faculty sentiment was against the

⁸⁵Jo Ann Rock, "Coed Rights Trio Face Misconduct Hearings Today," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 21, 1968, 1; and Ron Taylor, "Crowd Views Hearings Opening," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 23, 1968, 1. While the 1960s saw a rise in due process, the use of legal counsel and trappings of a court hearing exceeded legal requirements. Donald D. Gehring, "The Objectives of Student Discipline and the Process That's Due: Are They Compatible?," *NASPA Journal* 38, no. 4 (July 2001), 474.

⁸⁶Philip Gailey, "Student Hearing Ends on Generosity Bid," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 29, 1968, 14.

⁸⁷Gailey, "Student Hearing Ends on Generosity Bid"; "Leader Suspended, Students Sit In," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 31, 1968, 1; and "10 Continue Athens Protest Despite Rain," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 3, 1968, 3. "Georgia Students Call Off Protests on Women's Rules," *New York Times*, April 13, 1968, 11.

⁸⁸Becky Leet, "Absurd, Juvenile Antics," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 14, 1968, 4.

⁸⁹Sharon Tate, "Williams, Senate Commend Davison," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 23, 1968, 1.

⁹⁰Philip Gailey, "3 Professors Back Athens Protests," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 25, 1968, 3.

disruption. Numerous department-wide petitions backed Davison, as did many more individual letters; one tally indicated ninety-four faculty letters supporting Davison and one opposing his actions.⁹¹

While protestors' supporters emphasized student rights and responsibility, those opposed focused on women's morality. National coverage claimed that the demonstrations were specifically to allow women to drink and stay out all night, including the *Sacramento Union's* front-page banner headline "Coeds Carry 'Booze Banner.'"⁹² Atlanta newspapers, though, offered some support for the protestors' cause. The editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* juxtaposed the peaceful nature of the UGA protest with more volatile ones at Columbia University while acknowledging the legitimacy of both the students' efforts and administrators' responses.⁹³ The *Atlanta Journal* noted, "A big state university cannot be a nursery."⁹⁴ Highlighting the divide between the increasingly cosmopolitan metro-Atlanta area and the rest of the state, other newspapers were not as sympathetic. A Savannah paper, for example, conceded that UGA should not be a nursery, but countered that "neither should it be a saloon."⁹⁵ A *Lavonia Times* editorial proclaimed "disgust" at the sit-in and argued, "Woman was made to be subservient to man, and when she steps out of the role, she is treading on dangerous ground." It warned UGA women against premarital sex and "unladylike" miniskirts, while calling on them to "learn how to cook and serve a meal like a man likes it."⁹⁶

As was a common response to civil rights activism and to student protests, many observers blamed outsiders for the demonstration. The Douglass County, Georgia, Chamber of Commerce unanimously adopted a resolution requesting that UGA remain a place where "thousands of nice young ladies in Georgia can continue their education without undue influence from the un-Christian, un-American element that is predominant on some American campuses."⁹⁷ An alumna

⁹¹For numerous examples of letters and petitions, see folder 16, box 54, Davison Papers. The tally is on a hand-written note clipped to materials received from faculty and departments.

⁹²"Coeds Carry 'Booze Banner,'" *Sacramento Union*, April 12, 1968, 1, folder 16, box 54, Davison Papers; and "Georgia Students Call Off Protests on Women's Rules," *New York Times*, April 13, 1968, 11.

⁹³Eugene Patterson, "The University Had the Right," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 1, 1968, 4.

⁹⁴"Turn 'em Loose," *Atlanta Journal*, April 13, 1968, 2A.

⁹⁵"Will the Profs Flunk?" *Savannah (GA) Morning News*, April 18, 1968, 4A.

⁹⁶Mrs. Dewey Holland, "Sit-Ins Disgusting," *Lavonia (GA) Times and Gauge*, April 25, 1968, 2.

⁹⁷K. B. Fincher and Joan Roberts to Fred C. Davison, April 25, 1968, folder 16, box 54, Davison Papers.

warned of the “immoral influence of transients” from out of state and argued that students who did not want to follow rules “should leave and make room for the decent, wholesome girls who are waiting to take their place.”⁹⁸ Another highlighted that protester Carroll “hails from Miami Beach where decency and moral standards are of no importance.”⁹⁹ The institution, too, was interested in student protestors’ origins, with Sims reporting that eighty-five of the 362 identified students were from out of state, including thirty-five not from the South.¹⁰⁰

This public reaction was a primary consideration in how the university responded. In a widely distributed piece, Davison critiqued the media coverage and highlighted the 15,500 students “sitting-in” their classrooms.¹⁰¹ Elsewhere, he emphasized the importance of appearance, including lamenting that the administration had “worked hard to put our image into proper perspective and these events took that image out of proper perspective before the public.”¹⁰² In a newspaper interview, Regent Roy V. Harris revealed both his own views—communists were at fault—and the pressure facing the institution. When asked if he thought that most Georgians believed that UGA women were “basically promiscuous and alcoholic,” he responded that he was unsure but that “men were entitled to a monopoly on a few of the vices.” Indicative of the policing roles of southern universities, he argued that the institution could not “go on record as encouraging” student drinking and that leaders would be “run out of the state” if they removed restrictions on women. When pressed if financial concerns prevented equality, he confirmed that if women were given freedom, “we won’t get the money.”¹⁰³

Toward Equalization

Despite Harris’s concerns, significant rule changes ensued. In late April 1968, students overwhelmingly approved the SGA proposals for the

⁹⁸Mrs. Barnett A. Bell Jr. to Fred Davison, May 8, 1968, folder 16, box 54, Davison Papers.

⁹⁹Vera Featherree to Fred C. Davison, April 12, 1968, folder 16, box 54, Davison Papers.

¹⁰⁰O. Suthern Sims Jr. to Boyd McWhorter, April 17, 1968, folder 9, box 55, Davison Papers.

¹⁰¹Fred Davison to U. GA Foundation Trustees, n.d. [1968], folder 9, box 55, Davison Papers.

¹⁰²Ober Tyus, “Davison Reviews Year,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), July 17, 1968, 1.

¹⁰³George Harper and Gary Yetter, “Harris Gives Views on Rights,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 14, 1968, 4; On the higher education and social control in the South, see McCandless, *Past in the Present*, and Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus*.

equalization of regulations. The suggested revisions then worked their way through institutional processes, with slight alterations along the way. In early July, the University Committee announced its approval of a new student judiciary, which would consolidate all disciplinary procedures under a single student-run body, signaling the coming end of the WSGA. A few days later, McBee announced additional “sweeping changes,” while noting, “I am old-fashioned enough not to like some of them, but young enough to accept the inevitable.”¹⁰⁴ The new rules ended the ban on off-campus drinking by females of legal age as well as the curfew for senior and other women who were twenty-one. Sophomore and junior women could also be exempted from curfew with parental permission. Broader revisions, such as the equalization of residency requirements, were underway but not finalized, as it was too late for fall implementation. With these changes, papers across the nation trumpeted the institution’s claim that it had gone from being one of the most restrictive schools in the South to one of the most liberal in the nation.¹⁰⁵

The university explicitly disassociated the rules revisions from the protest, pointing instead to legal considerations and concerns that the tremendous growth of the institution impeded its ability to perform a parietal role.¹⁰⁶ Some contended that the publicity caused by the protest had made the institution’s actions more remarkable, but others argued that the MCE had helped provide momentum for change. Among them was math professor Tom Brahana, chair of the Faculty-Student Committee on Student Affairs, who argued that the demonstration had emphasized the importance of the issue.¹⁰⁷ Simpson conceded that the true impact of the protests was unknowable but asserted “I don’t think anyone will say they did not help.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴“Faculty Committee Motions Ok’d by University Council,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), July 10, 1968, 2; and “Administration to Make Major Changes in Rules; New Coed Staffers Due,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), July 10, 1968, 1.

¹⁰⁵See, for example, “U. of Georgia Eases Rules on Curfews and Drinking,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1968, 28; Philip Gailey, “Athens Coed Restrictions Liberalized,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 20, 1968, 1; and “Student Power: No More Curfew for Dixie Belles,” *National Observer* (Washington, D.C.), July 29, 1968, 1.

¹⁰⁶Thomas Brahana and David Meade Feild, “A Report to the Faculty by the Student Affairs Committee of the AAUP,” May 27, 1968, folder 58, box 41, Tate Papers.

¹⁰⁷Rebecca Leet, “Work Produced Changes,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Sept. 27, 1968, 5; and Bob Ingle, “Never the Same,” *Athens (GA) Banner-Herald*, April 28, 1968, 1, 6.

¹⁰⁸Gailey, “Athens Coed Restrictions Liberalized”; and Ginger Hames and Clark Goodwin, “Coeds Hail Relaxed Rules,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, July 21, 1968, 25A.

In fall 1968, students returned to liberalized parietal rules but also reprimands for 350 students who had participated in the sit-in. Some claimed the reprimands would galvanize students, but others were worried about their long-term effects. Two female students, for example, criticized the reprimands in the *Red and Black*—one called it a “farce” undertaken to appease University System of Georgia administrators—but only did so anonymously for fear of further punishment.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as a direct result of the sit-in, the system office developed new regulations forbidding any attempted disruption of university operations through force, violence, or threats; sit-ins were explicitly identified as “acts of force.”¹¹⁰ Against this backdrop, and with the distraction of college football—which activists noted was hard to overcome—campus was largely quiet in the fall. The biggest issues involved mandatory ROTC and the campus’s charitable giving program support of segregated organizations. Many were apathetic and others were satisfied by the changes.¹¹¹ The quiet was broken in February 1969 by a failed attempt to burn down the ROTC building and then by Black Student Union (BSU) protests to end racism at the institution. The BSU activities were met with resistance, including a “Pro-UGA” petition signed by more than 3,300 students calling on Davison to dismiss the protesters and pursue charges against them.¹¹²

Additional revisions worked out over the ensuing year provided students with more power through a strengthened SGA, including its assuming control of the student activities budget.¹¹³ The institution, needing to fill residence halls, required both men and women to live

¹⁰⁹John S. Conwell, “Protestors Comment,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Aug. 7, 1968, 4.

¹¹⁰“Statement on Disruptive and Obstructive Behavior,” folder 15, box 128, Davison Papers; Achsah Nesmith, “Disruptive Protests Banned at All Colleges by Regents,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 10, 1968, 1; and “Georgia Colleges Quietly Take in Stride Regents’ Ban on Disruptive Protests,” *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 1968, 49.

¹¹¹See, for example, Jo Ann Rock, “Campus Chest Drive to Face Opposition,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 3, 1968, 1; and Philip Gailey, “Activists Getting Ready for Next Confrontation,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 10, 1968, 21.

¹¹²See, for example, “Vandals Strike Building,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 11, 1969, 1; Jon Ham, “Police Seek ROTC Arsonist,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 8, 1972, 1; Phil Gailey, “Blacks List Demands in University Rally,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 18, 1969, 6; and “Pro-UGA Petition,” folder 6, box 54, Davison Papers.

¹¹³See, for example, Steve Stewart, “Students Can Regulate Activities Fund—Barber,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 28, 1969, 1; Steve Stewart, “Increased Responsibility Given to SGA This Year,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 28, 1969, 1, 10; Christopher Bonner, “Faculty Approved Housing Changes Set Fall Quarter,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 6, 1969, 1; and “Proposal for Changes in the Regulatory System at the University of Georgia,” folder 59, box 41, Tate Papers.

on campus, but only for their first two years. The SGA then worked with administrators and faculty to further equalize residential policies, including eliminating curfews for all but first-year women (and allowing for further waivers for most of them). Sign-outs for women were likewise eliminated and new “open house” policies allowed men and women to visit each other’s rooms during assigned hours.

The SGA’s early 1969 finalization of the new student judiciary played a role in UGA’s version of the larger national shift away from women’s governance organizations. Long important at coeducational institutions, by the mid-1960s, the WSGAs’ enforcement functions were widely questioned.¹¹⁴ At UGA, one critic called the WSGA a “Gestapo force for the nebulous ‘administration.’”¹¹⁵ With a new judiciary in place, its primary function had ceased to exist and it was rebranded as the Associated Women Students (AWS). The AWS’s first president, Teri North, noted that it benefited from not “being known as ‘policemen,’” but the AWS struggled to find a purpose.¹¹⁶ Initially serving as an interdormitory council for women, its role diminished with the creation of a coeducational Residence Hall Association (RHA) and the university’s launch of a massive residence hall program.¹¹⁷ The AWS disbanded the next spring, reflecting a situation similar to that at the University of Tennessee, where the AWS president declared, “If to continue existence we must search for a function to fulfill, our uselessness is apparent.”¹¹⁸ Tennessee would follow the national trend of replacing a women’s governance organization with its own Commission on the Status of Women, leaving behind enforcement and putting forward a liberal feminist agenda.¹¹⁹ At UGA, the AWS simply folded.

These fundamental changes in the code and enforcement were joined by changes in the organizational structure of student affairs, including eliminating the positions of deans of women and men—a

¹¹⁴Sartorius, *Deans of Women*, 147–62.

¹¹⁵Mike Howell, “Judiciary Results from Hard Work,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 14, 1969, 4.

¹¹⁶Lyn Battey, “Judiciary Shift Leaves WSGA without Function,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 10, 1968, 9; and Donna Collins, “North Advises Coeds to Take Active Part,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 8, 1969, 8.

¹¹⁷Larry Mitchell, “11 Dorms to Get Women Assistants,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 8, 1969, 1; and Steve Stewart, “Dorm Council Working,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Dec. 4, 1969, 5.

¹¹⁸Kay Giese, “More Funds Sought for Women’s Sports,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 18, 1971, 1; and “Exchange Corner: Three on Board,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 3, 1970, 2.

¹¹⁹Sartorius, *Deans of Women*, 147–62; and Carol Roberts, “Women’s Lib: UGA Men for It,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Dec. 2, 1971, 1.

change that had already stripped female leaders of responsibility at many institutions. The changes evinced both a modernization of the unit and a philosophical shift in its relationship with students.¹²⁰ At UGA, housing director Richard Armstrong highlighted that residence halls were no longer simply to house students but were designed for educational purposes. Indeed, the recent building of high-rise residence halls accommodating a thousand students each spurred UGA to start living learning communities and forward-looking residential education programs focused on personal development. With its residential communities, resident assistants (RAs) focused on student development, and programs on topics such as women's liberation and human sexuality, the residential education program was nationally praised for its progressivism but also caused controversy.¹²¹

Sporadic protests continued over the next few years. As happened elsewhere, many of the largest events involved opposition to the Vietnam War, including participation in local versions of the national moratoriums in fall 1969. At the first, 1,500 students, faculty, and others rallied against the war, gave and heard speeches, and listened to musical performances.¹²² While among the largest in the state—and bigger than those at nearby southern flagships—the moratorium was a minority event that also attracted prowar counter protesters. The second moratorium, held in mid-November, was much smaller.¹²³ Larger demonstrations occurred after the killing of four students at Kent State University on May 4, 1970. On May 6, a small protest grew to include an attempted takeover of the ROTC building, four thousand people marching to the president's house, and damage to several buildings.¹²⁴ The killings of young Black men at Jackson State

¹²⁰Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle, *What Became of the Dean of Women? Changing Roles for Women Administrators in American Higher Education, 1940–1980* (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1996), 326–54; and Gaston-Gayles et al., “From Disciplinary to Change Agent.”

¹²¹Larry Mitchell, “Office to Begin Housing Survey; Armstrong Says,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 23, 1969, 1; Judy Bateman, “Resident Assistants Offer Valuable Aid to Students,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Dec. 4, 1969, 6; Pete McCommons, interview by Fran Lane, Athens, GA, Nov. 30, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aRkX_7ijj4; and Pete McCommons, interview by Rachael Dier, Athens, GA, November 28, 2018. UGA student Cindy Luke later claimed that the program presaged the national calls for residential reform by the President's Commission on Campus Unrest. Cindy Luke, “Athens Housing Like a Community,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 21, 1970, 12T.

¹²²Phil Gailey, “Athens Protest ‘Like a Rock Festival,’” *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 16, 1969, 7A.

¹²³Robinette Kennedy, “SMOSS Group Organizes to Support Nixon Policies,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 11, 1969, 1.

¹²⁴Dyer, *University of Georgia*, 349–52.

College and in Augusta, Georgia, the following week received far less student attention.¹²⁵

Small but concerted efforts for broader change also existed. The Free University of Georgia, founded by SDS in late 1968, offered an alternative, anticorporatist education.¹²⁶ The BSU rallied multiple times in its continuing efforts for more equitable treatment.¹²⁷ In fall 1971, students organized the Committee on Gay Education (CGE) and then, in March and November, sued to hold a landmark dance in the student union. Women's Oppression Must End Now (WOMEN), also founded in 1971, promoted an activist agenda, supported abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment, and used legal and regulatory strategies to change institutional policies for women, including funding for and access to athletics.¹²⁸ These groups constituted and were supported by a new campus political party, Coalition, which sought to unsettle the conservative institution. As Linda Chafin, a leader of the party and of WOMEN, recalled:

Coalition was a number of liberals on campus from different student activist organizations—Black Student Union, antiwar, women's movement, . . . gay men and women—who came together to get control of student government and make it a real government. Up until that time, it was something fraternities and sororities did. And we wanted to change that.¹²⁹

As WOMEN and Coalition exemplified, activism at UGA did not end after 1968, or even May 1970, though it did take a different form.

The Polluted Mainstream

As leftist activists pursued change and the RHA helped liberalize residential policies, conservative students pushed back. Founded in fall

¹²⁵Janet Summers, "Social Responsibility—One Indivisible Entity; Not Divided Crusade," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 21, 1970, 4.

¹²⁶See, for example, "Free University Presents Alternative to Students," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Sept. 27, 1968, 2; and "Free University Plans Discussion," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 1, 1968, 1. Jane Lichtman argues that free universities were less prevalent in the South than elsewhere but attributed that difference to institution size more than regional factors. Jane Lichtman, *Bring Your Own Bag: A Report on Free Universities* (Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, 1973), 23.

¹²⁷See, for example, Carol Roberts, "Blacks Here Demand More Representation," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 11, 1971, 1; and Bob Dart, "Black Leader: Change Now," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 21, 1971, 1.

¹²⁸See, for example, Velma Smith, "Lib Group Looks for More Members," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 25, 1971, 7; Carol Roberts, "Women's Lib Says Yes: Discrimination Here?" *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Dec. 1, 1971, 1; and Carol Roberts, "Women's Lib: UGA Men for It," *Red and Black*, December 2, 1971, 1, 2.

¹²⁹Linda Chafin, phone interview by Rachael Dier, Athens, GA, June 19, 2020.

1970 as a reactionary offshoot of the local Young Americans for Freedom, the Campus Conservative Club (CCC) lambasted student radicals and claimed the racial inferiority of Blacks. It warned of the repression of conservative students and alleged that administrators sided with “hip degenerates against normal people.”¹³⁰ A fringe group rejected by mainstream conservatives, the organization initially distributed its newsletter, *Right On!*, through residence hall mailboxes. When, in 1971, administrators banned political materials from the mailboxes, CCC claimed it was being attacked and asserted that housing’s own progressive propaganda was still being distributed. Particular concerns included literature and programming that sought to promote racial integration, women’s liberation, and tolerance for homosexuality.¹³¹ In January 1972, CCC complained to state legislators and university regents of discrimination. It shared both *Right On!* and a pamphlet distributed as part of housing’s Growth Groups Awareness Program, a residential program designed to help students explore relational and identity issues. CCC alleged that, through the program, housing was “advocating a permissive attitude toward homosexuality and other hip culture vices.”¹³²

CCC’s attacks were bolstered when Carl Savage Jr. called his daughter in Brumby Hall late on January 7, 1972, five days after he had transferred her to UGA due to his concerns about immorality at her previous college.¹³³ He was certain that universities “supported by the taxpayers of Georgia, necessarily were more conservative of the traditional values of our society.”¹³⁴ During the call, when he learned that UGA also allowed men to visit women’s rooms during “open house” hours, he became irate. He was on the phone with senior university officials until 3:30 a.m. attacking the policy and demanding redress. He visited his daughter the next night and was further distressed by what he found: men and women listening to music, alleged drunkenness, and what he considered lewd dancing in a hallway. Enraged, he refused to leave Athens until his daughter was relocated off campus.¹³⁵

¹³⁰“Continued University Repression,” *Right On!* 5 no. 1 (1972), 1, folder 3, box 53, Davison Papers.

¹³¹Huff, “Conservative Student Activism,” 175–80; “CCC Prints ‘Right On!’” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 28, 1971, 2; “Continued University Repression”; “Big Brother at Work,” *Right On!*, 5, no. 1; and Jon Ham, “Dorm Program Halted Under Fire,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 4, 1972, 1, 5.

¹³²Ham, “Dorm Program Halted Under Fire,” 1, 5.

¹³³Carl P. Savage Jr., “Communal Life at the University of Georgia,” n.d. [Jan. 1972], folder 9, box 54, Davison Papers.

¹³⁴Savage, “Communal Life at the University of Georgia,” 2.

¹³⁵O. Suthern Sims Jr. to Fred C. Davison, Jan. 21, 1972, folder 9, box 54, Davison Papers; M. Louise McBee to O. Suthern Sims, Jan. 21, 1972, folder 9, box 54, Davison

Savage dominated administrators' time for days, moved his daughter, and met with university system leaders, but he was unsatisfied. On January 15, he released a twenty-six-page attack on the university, "Communal Life at the University of Georgia," which began: "Perhaps it would not be exact to call them whorehouses, because whores usually charge fees for their services and usually work at their ancient calling on a full-time basis."¹³⁶ Savage alleged an array of moral indiscretions and called for the removal of Davison and other administrators. He had expected that most students were moral but found that "the mainstream is polluted."¹³⁷ His wide-ranging attack alleged that residential policies abridged constitutional rights and contended a national effort to corrupt women that had arrived in Georgia sooner than expected. And he claimed that high-rise residence halls were akin to rabbit warrens that promoted promiscuity and would lead to the end of family units and civilization.

"Communal Life" attracted media attention and calls for investigation. It also received significant pushback from the institution, the residents of Brumby, and the parents of those residents. Savage's tone was condemned, and specific allegations were challenged and refuted—the women dancing lewdly, for example, were rehearsing for a campus performance of the musical *Gypsy*. Still, "Communal Life" spurred a state senate committee to undertake an investigation and to threaten surprise inspections of residences halls.¹³⁸ At a legislative hearing, Savage reiterated his arguments, shouting, "This is wrong, so wrong. It will destroy the state." Such claims, though, were countered by university administrators and Brumby residents. They defended the morality and maturity of the students, as well as the university's policies. Residents submitted petitions and numerous letters, many of which explicitly mentioned resentment. As Brumby Hall resident Janet Piede wrote, "I resent our party being called a 'drunken party.' I resent our party being called an 'orgy.' And most of all I resent the fact that Mr. Savage has prejudged and generalized the morals of all University coeds."¹³⁹ The senators so openly sided

Papers; and O. Suthern Sims Jr. to Fred C. Davison, Jan. 29, 1972, folder 9, box 54, Davison Papers.

¹³⁶Savage, "Communal Life at the University of Georgia," 1. Florida universities experienced a related controversy the year before after a regent, opposed to open visitation, alleged the dormitories were "taxpayer's whorehouses." Ben B. Ross to Chappelle Matthews, n.d. [1972], folder 15, box 128, Davison Papers; and Stephen Eugene Parr, *The Forgotten Radicals: The New Left in the Deep South, Florida State University, 1960 to 1972* (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2000), 331–38.

¹³⁷Savage, "Communal Life at the University of Georgia," 2.

¹³⁸"Solons Plan Pop Dorm Visits," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 1, 1972, 1.

¹³⁹Sims to Davison, Exhibit 0, Jan. 21, 1972, folder 9, box 54, Davison Papers.

with the university that a state House of Representatives committee canceled its own planned hearings.¹⁴⁰

Still, the attacks prompted a review of the housing program and a broader response.¹⁴¹ Appearing at a February 8 Board of Regents meeting to defend the institution, Davison announced changes. The university would set aside some women's dormitories that would prohibit visitation altogether and would reform the voting process by which other halls determined their open-house hours. Student mailbox distribution privileges and the Growth Groups Awareness Program had already been eliminated.¹⁴² As described in the minutes of the February housing meeting, there was a new "repressive" climate and "no use in wasting what little credit we have left" to maintain the Growth Groups Awareness Program. To continue it would need a "white coat or academic protection."¹⁴³ Its cancellation elicited criticism, including from a student who wrote to Davison, indicating that she was "greatly upset, disappointed, and grieved."¹⁴⁴ A faculty member raised academic freedom and argued that UGA had fallen behind by allowing "the ignorant, the bigoted, or the ill-intentioned to force it to close down a program."¹⁴⁵

In a memo to RAs dated the same day Davison appeared before the regents, the housing department warned of the "current public and political questioning of student life" and outlined four areas that were of special concern: noise, open house, drugs, and alcohol use. The memo did not introduce new regulations but emphasized that existing rules would be strictly enforced. It was understood as a politically motivated crackdown and evidence of a shift from a counseling-centered to enforcement-centered approach to student housing. Chafin would note, "I've seen my R.A. in tears because of the conflict. The threat has been made to her that she has to conform to someone

¹⁴⁰Tom Linthicum, "Georgia's Davison Denies 'Drunk' Parties," *Atlanta Constitution*, Jan. 27, 1972, 12A; Ken Willis, "'Commune' Charge Dealt Severe Blow," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Jan. 27, 1972, 1; and Sims to Davison, Jan. 29, 1972, Davison Papers.

¹⁴¹O. Suthern Sims Jr. to Richard Armstrong, Jan. 7, 1972, folder 3, box 53, Davison Papers; and O. Suthern Sims Jr., "Chronology of Events," Dec. 12, 1972, folder 10, box 53, Davison Papers.

¹⁴²Ham, "Dorm Program Halted Under Fire," 1, 5; "Regents Hear Literature Grips," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 9, 1972, 1; and Richard C. Armstrong to O. Suthern Sims Jr., Jan. 28, 1972, folder 10, box 53, Davison Papers.

¹⁴³Minutes, housing meeting, Feb. 4, 1972, folder 10, box 53, Davison Papers.

¹⁴⁴Alice Lovejoy to President Davison, Feb. 3, 1972, folder 2, box 53, Davison Papers.

¹⁴⁵Michael J. White to Fred C. Davison, Feb. 8, 1972, folder 9, box 54, Davison Papers.

else's idea of an R.A."¹⁴⁶ Housing director Armstrong maintained, "It will not be a slight alteration, but an enforcement of regulations as opposed to emphasis on the individual."¹⁴⁷ The concern only magnified in ensuing weeks due to widespread resignations of housing officials, many of which were tied to the shift.¹⁴⁸ Associate Director of Housing Robert Krause claimed the pressure caused by Savage led to changes in housing with which he disagreed, noting, "I can't compromise the things I believe in . . . I have to get out."¹⁴⁹ One quit because of the crackdown but left early due to vandalism of her apartment and harassing phone calls centered on her Growth Groups Awareness Program work.¹⁵⁰ When Armstrong quietly resigned over the summer, the top nine housing staff members from the previous year were gone.¹⁵¹

The May 1972 Sit-In

As the resignations unfolded, Sims denied significant changes while students petitioned for a return to previous policies. Then, on May 3, after a morning rally against the crackdown, roughly forty students went to the Administration Building and demanded to speak to Davison. Informed that he was in Atlanta, they announced that they would wait for him and moved into his office. Some students heeded the university police's call to disperse, but thirty-two voted to stay. They were joined by instructor Pete McCommons, who hoped to protect students from retribution. All thirty-three were arrested and taken

¹⁴⁶"Police Arrest 33 at Sit-In," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 4, 1972, 1.

¹⁴⁷Fran Fulton, "Taylor, Goad Resign as Area Coordinators," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 25, 1972, 1.

¹⁴⁸"Dorm Crackdown Set," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 11, 1972, 1; Fran Fulton, "Crack Down, Memo Orders," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 15, 1972, 1; Fran Fulton and Sam Farris, "Misunderstanding Spurs Resignations," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 22, 1972, 1; Fulton, "Taylor, Goad Resign as Area Coordinators"; and "Sixth CRE Quits, Was Last One Left," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 20, 1972, 1.

¹⁴⁹Fran Fulton, "Four Quit Housing," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 18, 1972, 1.

¹⁵⁰Joyce Taylor to Richard Armstrong, March 15, 1972, folder 10, box 53, Davison Papers; Fulton, "Taylor, Goad Resign as Area Coordinators"; and "Vandals Hit Official's Apartment," *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 1, 1972, 1.

¹⁵¹See, for example, Nick Curry, "A Dean of Student Control?" *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 6, 1972, 3; and Scott McLarty, "Promises, Promises!" *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), June 28, 1972, 4. Student affairs administrators in the era were often in difficult positions, forced to enact administrative mandates for control despite their desires to support students. Gaston-Gayles et al., "From Disciplinarian to Change Agent," 268–275.

to the county jail as several hundred supporters demonstrated in front of the Administration Building.¹⁵²

Supporters rallied for several days, but the university insisted on pursuing charges. Those charged received support from the local progressive community, but in state court a few months later, all but seven students and McCommons pleaded guilty to trespassing.¹⁵³ Chafin, the leader of WOMEN, did so, noting that the “housing issue is one brick in a great wall of resistance and education on this campus. And to jeopardize that wall for one brick is a waste of time, energy and money.”¹⁵⁴ In pleading, the students accepted \$75 fines and probation. The university then used the guilty pleas to strip them of eligibility for federal financial aid, citing recent legislation aimed at student protesters. Despite numerous appeals, it was only restored when the federal government invalidated the provisions in late 1973.¹⁵⁵ The students were also brought up on charges before the student judiciary, with the institution claiming that it could do nothing to prevent it despite earlier precedents and claims of double jeopardy. Belying this hands-off approach, when the judiciary declined to punish the students, Sims was irate. He demanded reconsideration, lambasted the court’s independence, and launched an inquiry into its effectiveness.¹⁵⁶

The legal proceedings for the Athens Eight who declined to plea played out over several years. After the first trial in November 1972 ended in a hung jury, administrators ensured that the charged were retried. The second trial in February 1973 seemed destined for the same conclusion until the judge told the jury that they were guilty if

¹⁵² See, for example, Jim Corbett, “RHA Petition Protests Dorm Rule Crackdown,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), April 11, 1972, 1; O. Suthern Sims Jr. to David Bell and Stephen Patrick, May 1, 1972, folder 10, box 53, Davison Papers; RHA, “The Crackdown Poses Real Threat,” folder 2, box 32, Davison Papers; “Protesting Students Meet with Davison,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 5, 1972, 1; Linda Beasley and Toddy Horton, “2 Students Indicted for Protests,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 24, 1972, 1; Pete McCommons, “All My Trials, Pt. 1,” *Flagpole*, March 6, 2013, 1. <https://flagpole.com/news/pub-notes/2013/03/06/all-my-trials-pt-1-1>; and McCommons, interview by Dier.

¹⁵³ Chafin, interview by Dier.

¹⁵⁴ Leslie Thornton, “Innocent Plea Set in Trespass Trial,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA) September 29, 1972, 1,

¹⁵⁵ See, for example, Leslie Thornton, “Last Year’s Protestors Lose Financial Aid Here,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Oct. 27, 1972, 1; Joyce Murdoch, “Federal Funds Denied to Students in Sit-In,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), May 25, 1973, 1; and Ken Elkins, “Eligibility for Aid Restored,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Sept. 20, 1973, 1.

¹⁵⁶ “Double Jeopardy,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Sept. 27, 1972, 4; O. Suthern Sims Jr. to Albert Jones, Nov. 29, 1972, folder 10, box 53, Davison Papers; and Leslie Thornton, “No Sentences for Protestors,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 30, 1972, 1.

they had been in the building. The protesters were then convicted of criminal trespass, with most being fined \$1,000 and given probation. They appealed up to the state supreme court, and one, Scott McLarty, sought a hearing before the US Supreme Court. That hearing was denied, but confusion in its aftermath led McLarty to be sentenced to a year in jail in 1975. He only spent one night in prison, but the situation was not resolved until 1978.¹⁵⁷

These events had significant repercussions for the institution and its constituents. In addition to the mass departures from housing, McCommons lost his position in a move he linked directly to the sit-in.¹⁵⁸ When Sims resigned his deanship in 1973, a finalist to replace him withdrew over the climate in the department, specifically pointing to the Savage charges and their aftermath: “The Staff refers to it regularly as the critical incident which created many of their internal difficulties and which contributed to the demise of Dean Sims.” The staff claimed that senior administrators supported the progressive program until they were cowed by negative publicity.¹⁵⁹ Twenty faculty condemned the administration, argued that its actions “displayed an attitude of repressiveness,” and warned of reputational repercussions.¹⁶⁰ McCommons asserted, “The heavy-handedness in pursuing the case through the state courts shows how insensitive and vindictive the administration is.”¹⁶¹ At the same time, that heavy-handedness successfully tempered enthusiasm for protests on campus. Chafin focused on other activist work, for example, and Athens Eight member David Alonso noted, “We cannot

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, “Guilty: ‘Athens Eight’ to Be Sentenced,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 20, 1973, 1; Michael Simpson, “The First and Second Trials,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Feb. 22, 1973, 4; Laurie Gregory, “‘Athens Eight’ Retrial Denied,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), Nov. 13, 1973, 1; Pete McCommons, “All My Trials, Pt. 2,” *Flagpole*, March 13, 2013, <https://flagpole.com/news/pub-notes/2013/03/13/all-my-trials-pt-2/>; McCommons, interview by Lane; and McCommons, interview by Dier.

¹⁵⁸ Steve Stewart, “Professor Links His Firing to Sit-in,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 29, 1973, 5B; McCommons, “All My Trials, Pt. 2”; and McCommons, interview by Dier. McCommons’s dismissal fit a larger pattern where untenured faculty who combined activism and defiance of administrators faced dismissal. Lionel S. Lewis, “Academic Freedom Cases and Their Disposition,” *Change* 4, no. 6 (Summer 1972), 8, 77–78.

¹⁵⁹ Gary North to Frederick Davison, Nov. 14, 1973, 5, folder 9, box 53, Davison Papers.

¹⁶⁰ Mitchell Shields, “Faculty Protests Handling of Eight,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 6, 1973, 1.

¹⁶¹ Mary Swint, “Reactions Vary: Participants Reflect on Effect of Sit-In,” *Red and Black* (Athens, GA), March 23, 1973, 3.

afford to jeopardize the student leadership to an administration with no qualms about arresting people.”¹⁶²

Indicating the end of an era, McCommons later referred to the protest as the “last of the big-time college sit-ins.”¹⁶³ Yet while the spectacle wasn’t repeated, significant activism—though not widespread protest—remained on campus, including student activists using legal efforts to force the university to move toward equitable treatment.¹⁶⁴ Another major shift also featured in the 1972 sit-in—the leaders of the protest were leaders of Coalition, the campus political party created the previous fall. Their efforts were, in part, designed to demonstrate the activist nature of the party in the weeks after they lost elections for control of the student government. The following year, Coalition broke the stranglehold that conservative students had on the SGA, with the intent of using the mechanism to promote progressive change.¹⁶⁵ The campus remained conservative but Coalition brought its emphasis on racial equality, student rights, and liberalized housing policies to the center of campus concerns and student political action. With that power—and diverse party tickets that drew from multiple progressive groups cutting across racial, gender, and sexuality lines—Coalition used control of the activities budget to pursue an activist agenda.

Conclusion

In early 1975, the *Athens Observer*, an alternative newspaper McCommons cofounded after he was dismissed from UGA, profiled McBee. Reflecting on the events described in this article, she commented, “An institution tends to reflect its constituency and the area in which it is located. The southeast tends to be more conservative. Although we had some radical students, they were not as radical, nor did they have as much support as they did on other campuses.”¹⁶⁶ McBee’s comments reflect both conditions of higher education in the region during the long 1960s and the tendency to privilege certain referent groups. When compared to understandings derived from protests at “northern rim” institutions at the end of the decade, activism

¹⁶² Swint, “Reactions Vary.”

¹⁶³ McCommons, “All My Trials, Pt. 2.”

¹⁶⁴ Timothy Reese Cain and Michael S. Hevel, “Dances, Lawsuits, and the Struggle for LGBTQ College Student Rights in the Deep South.” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 2020.

¹⁶⁵ Swint, “Reactions Vary.”

¹⁶⁶ “Closeup: Louise McBee,” *Athens (GA) Observer*, Feb. 13, 1975, 3.

at UGA seemed timid. But activism at other institutions in the South and elsewhere did so as well. The narrative of radical protests that typifies understandings of the late 1960s can obscure other efforts for change when applied too broadly. Many campuses were not engulfed in conflict, and many that saw activism or protest—two related but distinct terms—eschewed radicalism. And yet, as Joseph Fry argues, even mild protest could be viewed as dangerous in the South.¹⁶⁷

Context is crucial to understanding both the issues that the students were protesting and the institutions' responses. As McCandless and Williamson-Lott argue, the South held on to rules governing women's lives as part of a larger resistance to changes threatening the entrenched White, male-dominated power structure. Indeed, in some ways the rules were more important amid desegregation. Yet, at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, these rules, if not the overarching structure, were overcome at many institutions in the region.¹⁶⁸ At UGA, the shift from rules that were restrictive even for the region took place more rapidly and completely than some of its near peers, which saw the changes spread out over longer periods. UGA did not have, nor deserve, the more liberal reputation of the University of North Carolina, but for a short period it eschewed its conservative residential policies for those that were more progressive than outsiders would have expected.

The broader fissures between traditional values and more cosmopolitan tendencies were significant. In Georgia, they implicated the rural-urban divide amid the "Atlanta-ization" of the state.¹⁶⁹ The university's challenge to navigate the divide can be seen in Harris's commentary on trying to maintain a tax base by catering to conservative values regardless of student demands. More directly, in their 1968 report on rule changes, Tom Brahana and David Feild explain, "The state of Georgia is at the present time the scene of a dramatic confrontation of two quite different cultures. Thus, the customs and behavior of one portion of our student body is that of rural Georgia, while another sizeable group comes from urban communities."¹⁷⁰ The rules needed to be written for conservative legislators but enforced in ways that did not alienate the socially liberal students.

¹⁶⁷ Fry, *The American South and the Vietnam War*, 285.

¹⁶⁸ McCandless, *Past in the Present*, 245–48; and Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus*, 88.

¹⁶⁹ Bradley R. Rice, "Urbanization, 'Atlanta-ization,' and Suburbanization: Three Themes for the Urban History of Twentieth Century Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (April 1984), 40–49.

¹⁷⁰ Brahana and Feild, "A Report to the Faculty by the Student Affairs Committee," 5.

In 1970, Tate noted that sectional differences were not as pronounced as they had been, but two years later the explosive Savage situation and its aftermath demonstrated that they were still formidable and had repercussions.

To be clear, these are not just southern issues. Rural-urban and local-cosmopolitan divides exist more broadly and, as Nancy Weiss Malkiel demonstrates, resistance to coeducation in the Northeast and beyond could be extreme.¹⁷¹ Moreover, the broader reaction to student protest that saw the threatening of institutions and the reduction of funds was a national phenomenon—perhaps most famously, Ronald Reagan rose to political prominence by attacking Berkeley protestors. Yet southern context remains important, including the roles of colleges and universities in maintaining social structures and the racist fears involving access to White women. The ongoing modernization of southern higher education in the areas of student and faculty freedoms that Williamson-Lott identifies were real but could be halting and inconsistent.¹⁷²

This case also substantiates that the growth and perceived impersonalization of institutions was also an important factor fostering student protest more broadly.¹⁷³ UGA nearly tripled in size during the decade, leading to new high-rise residence halls and other changes that transformed the institution, made *in loco parentis* less plausible, and furthered concerns about students' relationships with their university. These factors contributing to student dissatisfaction also caused the institution to reconsider how it was dealing with students' personal needs. Part of its response was the Growth Groups Awareness Program, which was soon shuttered due to political pressure. Another was institutional recognition that the previous approach of informal counseling and personal contact by the deans of women and men was no longer viable; student affairs was fundamentally changing. Moreover, institutional change extended beyond the size of the student population, as UGA sought to modernize and to improve its academic reputation. As McCommons recalled, Davison's charge to vitalize the institution led to the hiring of numerous young professors from outside the region, professors who clashed with traditional southern norms, institutional cultures, and older

¹⁷¹ Malkiel, "Keep the Damned Women Out."

¹⁷² William Tate, Semi-Monthly Report, Oct. 15–31, 1970, folder 58, box 41, Tate Papers; and Williamson-Lott, *Jim Crow Campus*.

¹⁷³ Peter M. Blau and Ellen L. Slaughter, "Institutional Conditions and Student Demonstrations," *Social Problems* 18, no. 4 (April 1971), 479–80; and Nella van Dyke, "Hotbeds of Activism: Locations of Student Protest," *Social Problems* 45, no. 2 (May 1998), 205–20.

colleagues. Not all lasted but they contributed to and supported the student protest efforts.¹⁷⁴

The institution's evolving reaction to demonstrators also warrants highlighting. In 1967, Davison minimized SDS and wanted to avoid providing opportunities for martyrdom; the following year, his administration did not act on the initial sit-in but responded only to the disruption of his inauguration. The administration's turn to the courts was partial in 1968, as an injunction against the students inhibited further protest. The disciplinary action was internal, though it had trappings of a legal hearing indicative of new concerns for due process. By 1972, the institution was committed to using the full mechanisms of the law to maintain order on campus. It wielded influence in a small town to press the prosecution of the Athens Eight, in addition to pursuing campus disciplinary hearings. This turn away from an older model of intervening with police to protect students to intervening to ensure prosecution exemplifies the changing nature of campus relationships in this period. It also aligns with Roderick Ferguson's argument that after May 1970, institutions extended the criminalization of student behavior.¹⁷⁵ At UGA, such action was variously praised and derided but worked to squelch large-scale student protest. Yet while the 1972 sit-in was the last protest of its type, it was not the end of activism at UGA. Rather, it marked a shift in strategy, as students advocated for change through student government, legal challenges, and educational campaigns.

¹⁷⁴McCommons, interview by Lane.

¹⁷⁵Roderick A. Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 14–31.