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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the history of the growth, development, and failure of Henrico College (Virginia), the first planned college in colonial America, and draws implications for contemporary higher education. It considers the role of the Virginia Company of London during the early 17th century in the college's early planning, the school's purpose (to educate and evangelize Native Americans), the planning process (involving the English government, local officials, and the Virginia Company), and its failure just prior to opening (following an Indian uprising). The Henrico experience is evaluated in terms of four precedents for consideration by contemporary higher education: (1) the view of education as a means of social reform; (2) the heavy involvement and control of the government; (3) the importance of fund raising; and (4) the development of an early form of seamless education from the elementary level through college. (Contains 26 references.) (DB)

Development and Planning Perspectives on Virginia's Henrico College

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Running Head: Henrico College

Abstract

The current study provided an examination of the history of the growth, development, and failure of Henrico College, the first planned college in Colonial America. The failed Henrico project, under the auspices of the Virginia Company of London, began a national effort to establish higher education in the New World, both for Native Americans and for the Colonists. Included in the current discussion are implications for contemporary higher education, noting the many similarities between the Henrico project of the early-1600's and contemporary higher education in the United States.

Higher education institutions are undergoing substantial changes, both in terms of their role and mission and in the internal operations and behaviors required of various divisions. These changes have developed largely due to special interest groups which seek to dominate the academy's agenda by pressuring senior administrators and legislators. The complexity of the change currently facing higher education demonstrates the need for higher education administrators and faculty to reflect on past decision-making criteria and outcomes.

Hawley (1981) demonstrated the value of historical examinations. Employing economic wave cycling theory, he suggested a pattern to higher education's growth and development. Although efforts such as this have not generated strong support and administrative enthusiasm, they prove valuable in understanding change in the formal education process, how higher education has philosophically developed, and perhaps more importantly, where higher education is headed.

The history of higher education is replete, to a large degree, in the study of the American Colonial Colleges. Many all-inclusive articles and monographs have been produced which have dealt with the form, substance, and mission of the Colonial Colleges and their relationships to the settlements and, to some degree, the natives (Tewksbury, 1932; Rudolph, 1962; Bell, 1969; Cremin, 1970; Wright, 1988; Lucas, 1994). Interestingly, existing literature has largely neglected to provide a serious treatment to Henrico College in the Virginia Colony, the first

Protestant college planned in the New World. The purpose for the current discussion is to examine the development and failure of the first college to be established in North America, its uniqueness of purpose, and the impact that the failure of the college had on the future of American higher education.

Development and Planning of Henrico College

The Virginia Company of London

During the period 1555 to 1698, English business activity, foreign and abroad, was controlled by the new corporations, or "companies," which emerged under the auspices of mercantilism. Capital, which had been so tied to continental war efforts before 1555, became more available for investment in peaceful ventures, especially those associated with colonization (Andrews, 1933). Following the initial English settlement at Jamestown in 1607 (Wertenbaker, 1914), an existing corporation was reorganized by royal charter in 1609 for purposes of colonization, The Treasurer and Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of London for the first colony of Virginia, or the Virginia Company of London, as it is more commonly known (Andrews, 1934).

Of all the English colonies, Virginia was the best known by government officials, and most highly-prized by existing royalty. Virginia represented the dynamic new economic spirit England hoped to sustain and spread through the management and supervision of its colonies (Andrews, 1933). And although unquestionably a commercial venture, the Virginia Company, in

both written and oral statements concerning American colonization, placed the conversion of the native Americans as a high priority in the settlement of Virginia (Doyle, 1882). This missionary zeal is at the heart of the Virginia Company's attempt at establishing Henrico College, the first Protestant college in the New World.

Social Context of Henrico

The Henrico settlement was the third attempt by the English, under the auspices of the Virginia Company of London, to establish a permanent settlement in close proximity to the mouth of the James River in Virginia. The first two efforts, under the leadership of Francis West and Lord Delaware, respectively, were noted failures (Land, 1938). These attempts at settlement were not purely for economic reasons. The English, ever fearful of the Spanish presence in North America, sought a "look-out point" and stronghold against any potential aggression. Spain considered the territory claimed by the Virginia Company to be its possession under the conditions of the Papal Bull (e.g., Papal law) of Pope Alexander VI in 1498 which included the infamous "line of demarcation" that separated the new worlds into two spheres of religious influence, one for Spain and one for Portugal (Weber, 1992). Thomas Gates, the colonial governor in 1609, was even commanded by the Virginia Company to continue the earliest English settlement at Jamestown, but that it could not serve as the "principal seat" because it was not a reasonably

defendable position (Land, 1938). Therefore, the need arose for a settlement at Henrico, also called Henricopolis in honor of England's Henry, Prince of Wales, son of James I, and grandson of Mary, Queen of Scots (McCabe, 1922).

Purpose of Henrico College

The mission of the college at Henrico was primarily to educate and evangelize the Native Americans (McCabe, 1922; Manarin & Dowdey, 1984). In 1610 the company went on record as stating that it was their distinctive mission

> to preach and baptize...and by propogation of the gospell, to recover out of the armes of the divell, a number of poore and miserable soules, wrapt up unto death, in almost invincible ignorance. (Wertenbaker, 1914, p. 31)

As the "project" of settlement became more comprehensive, education of the Natives became a "company" goal. Under the leadership of Edwin Sandys, the ultimate plan was to institute a "systematic scheme of education for Virginia, leading up from free-school to college, and, in further time, a university" (McCabe, 1922).

Following initial contact between the natives and the English which was tumultuous (Land, 1938), an uneasy peace emerged among the inhabitants of Virginia (Hawke, 1966). Some Englishmen, especially the Reverend Alexander Whitaker, first rector of the Henrico parish (Burton, 1904), saw the natives as souls to save and to anglicize, and he succeeded in converting numerous natives to the Christian faith in the early days of the

settlement (Chitwood, 1948). Whitaker, throughout his communication with the counsel of the Virginia Company, urged the entire English nation to be about the salvation of the "naked slaves of the devill" (Whitaker, 1613, p. 24), calling on national pride to care for these lost souls. Beyond mere "spiritual salvation," the Virginia Company envisioned "cultural" salvation. An excerpt from a company tract written in 1612 furthered the point.

> And for the poore Indians, what shall I say, but that God hath many waies shewed mercie to you, make you shew mercie to them and theirs...Take their children and traine them up with gentlenesse, teach them our English tongue, and the principles of religion; winne the elder sort by wisdome and discretion, make them equal with your English in case of protection, wealth and habitation, doing justice on such as shall doe them wrong. Weapons of warre are needful, I grant, but for defence only, and not in this case. (p. 18)

The impetus for a college at Henrico, however, really emerged once the English mainland envisioned the fruits of their missionary labor in the person of Rebecca Rolfe, better known as Pocahontas (Hawke, 1966).

Pocahontas, daughter of the chief of a tribe of Native Americans, was captured in 1613 by a Captain Newport. In Jamestown, a 29 year-old widower named John Rolfe fell in love with the young girl and asked permission to marry her (Hawke, 1966). Following her conversion to Christianity and marriage to Rolfe (Burton, 1904), Pocohontas and her husband, a tobacco farmer, moved to Henrico where they established residence. Sometime during 1615 or 1616, Pocahontas and John Rolfe made a trip to England. On this trip, Pocahontas charmed all the

English she met with her poise and dignity. In 1617, as she and her husband were preparing to return to Virginia, Pocohontas became sick and died. Her life and untimely death set into motion a national project, as opposed to a simple company project to establish a college at Henrico for the conversion and education of Virginia's Native Americans (Hawke, 1966). These Native Americans educated at Henrico would then return as missionaries to their own people, further spreading Christian faith and English culture (Chitwood, 1948). According to Land (1938), this may be the first example of planned, formalized vocational education in that Henrico College "was to have been somewhat like an industrial school with the purpose of making Indians useful members of society" (p. 487).

Development and Failure of Henrico College

In the fall of 1618, then Governor-Elect George Yeardley was given instruction by the Virginia Company concerning the schools planned for the colony. The records of the Virginia Company from November 18, 1618 read:

> We do therefore according to a former grant and order hereby ratifie confirm and ordain that a convinient place be chosen and set out for the planting of a university at the said Henrico in time to come and that in the mean time preparation be there made for the building of the said College for the Children of the Infidels according to such Instructions as we shall deliver And we will and ordain that ten thousand acres partly of the Lands they impaled and partly of other Land within the territory of the said Henrico be allotted and set out for the endowing of the said University and College with convenient possessions. (p. 102)

The original endowment of land, 10,000 acres was bounded on one side by Farrar's Island and water falls (i.e., "the Falls") on the other (Land, 1938). On this land three schools were to be established: one for the children of the English settlers, one for the Native children, and a university (Ward, 1991). Of the 10,000 acres, one thousand was specifically set aside for instruction of the Native Americans at Henrico College (Land, 1938). The school for the children of the settlers was determined in 1621 to be built at Charles City, in close proximity to Henrico, and called the East India School (Land, 1938). The East India School would serve as a "feeder" school for Henrico College, and Henrico would endow scholarships and fellowships for those scholars to matriculate from The East India School to the College (Kingsbury, 1933).

The Henrico College "project" was not simply confined to the Virginia Company, but became a national cause with the involvement of King James I and the Church of England. In 1616, James I set into motion a fund raising effort which would last for the next two years and raise considerable funds for Henrico College. In letters to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York dated 1616, James I wrote:

> You have heard ere this tyme of the attempt of divers worthy men, our subjectes to plant in Virginia...for the propagacion of the gospell amongst Infidells; wherein there is good progress made and hope of further increase: So as the undertakers of that plantacion are now in hand, with the erecting of some churches and schools, for the education of the children of those Barbarians; which cannot be unto them a greate charge, and above the expence, which for the Civill plantacion doth come to them...Wherefore wee doe requyre

> yow...to write your letters to the severall bishopps of the Dioceses in your province, that they do give order to the Ministers, and other zealous menne of their Dioceses...to move our welbeloved subiectes...to contribute to so good a worke, in as liberall a manner as they may...(and that) the moneys collected, be retourned from tyme to tyme...to be delivered to the treasurours of that plantacion, to be imployed for the godly purposes intended and no other. (Walne, 1972, p. 260)

Private library collections were even donated to the planned College at Henrico (Burton, 1904). Approximately five months after Governor Yeardley had been given his instructions concerning the College, the treasurer of the Virginia Company, Edwin Sandys, reported that the collection on the part of the Church of England had raised nearly 1,500 pounds, with more to follow (Land, 1938). The Virginia Company played a part in raising the money as well, in that it established an iron works, at the Company's expense, of which the revenues were to be employed in educating the Native Americans (Doyle, 1882).

In July 1619, the first legislative body in Virginia met in Jamestown, at which time the matter of the College at Henrico was discussed extensively. At this meeting, a law was passed that each settlement should house and prepare certain Native children for their upcoming education at the College. The House of Burgesses also petitioned the Virginia Company in London to send workmen to begin the building of the college when the time was convenient (Tyler, 1904; Manarin & Dowdey, 1984). With support in the colony peaking, and similar sentiment expressed in England by the company and the crown, the founding of Henrico College began in earnest.

The pragmatic Sir Edwin Sandys, the treasurer of the Virginia Company, served as the coordinator of the Henrico project (Brock, 1888). His goal was to postpone the actual construction of the college until an annual revenue could be established which would be used to erect and maintain the college. To this end, Sir Sandys suggested that the Virginia Company take some of the monies collected by the Church of England and send 50 laborers to work the college lands (Land, 1938). The 50 tenants would be entitled to "one-half the product of their labor, while the other half should go for the maintenance of tutors and scholars" (Osgood, 1904, p. 84).

The company of 50 men, under the leadership of Captain William Weldon arrived in Virginia in November 1619 with the purpose of land cultivation for the benefit of the college (Brock, 1888; Manarin & Dowdey, 1984). Later, women of "good character" were persuaded to come to Virginia as wives for the 50 laborers (Burton, 1904, p. 8). Following some internal turmoil, Weldon was relieved of command in the Spring of 1620 and replaced with George Thorpe, a member of James I's Privy Council (Manarin & Dowdey, 1984). Under Thorpe's leadership, progress toward the opening of Henrico College seemingly was bright as were relations with the Native Americans (Burton, 1904; Land, 1938). By 1622, preparations were well in hand for the College. The Reverend Patrick Copeland was recently elected as first Rector of the College, the tenants were engaged in clearing and cultivating

corn and tobacco, and instructors and tutors were already engaged to teach at the school (McCabe, 1922).

All the hopes and plans of the English for Henrico College were destroyed on March 22, 1622, ironically the Good Friday before Easter. On that day, the Native Americans, under the leadership of Opechancanough, a perceived ally of George Thorpe, launched a skillful attack that nearly destroyed the entire colony (McCabe, 1922; Land, 1938). All told, nearly one-third of the entire population of the Virginia Colony was killed. So surprised by the attack, Thorpe went to meet his attackers unarmed with the hopes of reasoning with them. He was murdered and his body mutilated (Manarin & Dowdey, 1984). Although the Virginia Company of London did not entirely abandon the idea of Henrico College following the attack, the colonists' hearts were bent on revenge believing "the Indians were easier to conquer than convert" (Land, 1938, p. 494).

In 1624, in financial difficulty, the Virginia Company of London was placed under "receivership," and control of the colony reverted to the Crown (Andrews, 1933). After the colony reverted to a royal province, no further mention was made concerning Henrico College. The Crown did try to establish the East India School at a later date, but that venture also never solidified, and no record exists of an East India School ever operating in the Virginia Colony (Land, 1938). Higher education in the English colonies would have to wait for Harvard, nearly 20 years

later, at which time the ideas underlying the foundation of Henrico College had long since been forgotten.

Implications for Contemporary Higher Education

The example and lessons provided by the development, growth, and failure of Henrico College demonstrate several key implications for the contemporary college or university. In particular, the failure of Henrico demonstrates both the perception that higher education is not always a necessity, and perhaps more importantly, that society can view higher education as a social tool. This perception of the use of higher education to preserve social standing in turn illuminates the dramatic changes to higher education as an entitlement. Additionally, the Henrico example provides four precedents for contemporary higher education.

First, the founders of Henrico sought to use education as a means of social reform, giving Natives an opportunity to assimilate into the newly arriving dominate culture. In the mind set of the founders, education would be used as a means to create not equality, but nominal citizenship among Natives in their relationships with the British. In a sense, then, education was to be used as a very powerful training ground for future employment as well as social and spiritual behavior.

In the contemporary college and university, the role of the institution has not deviated dramatically from this notion of education as a key to social reform. The typical community or

junior college, for example, provides opportunities for occupational education as well as transfer programs, both aimed at providing the local citizenry with opportunities for advanced educational degree attainment and higher working wages. The traditional university similarly provides education in diverse fields, drawing students into classes both for social education (learning for the sake of learning) as well as occupational learning. The issue of education as a means to social reform is intensified in an examination of urban education where degree or certificate attainment is a necessity to avoid many of the social ills of urban life.

Second, the British government demonstrated a great deal of control on the formation of the entire Virginia colony. Not confined to the Virginia Company, King James I became intimately involved in the Virginia Colony, making its success the target of national support. Utilizing religious tentacles, King James I oversaw and encouraged fund raising activities as well as a vision for the colony. Not directly involved in curriculum or admissions, the Crown generally supervised the direction of efforts undertaken by the Virginia Company to create formal schooling opportunities. Although issues related to the continued life-span of the Crown were at stake, more immediate mercantilistic concerns provided an impetus to be involved with Virginia.

Of a very similar nature, there has been an increase in federal attention to higher education since the 1940s and 1950s

in the United States. This attention, which once focused almost exclusively on research and development activities, has now become a common component in higher education budgeting, student aid, and in many cases related to vocational and occupational education program design. This federal movement has included judicial decisions which limit the scope and nature of faculty activities (such as involvement in governance), emphasis on research (through federal support), student selection (through grants-in-aid and loan programs), and models for program design. An example of this federalization of higher education is the movement to control two-year colleges in their vocational and occupational programs, particularly encouraging specific programs and program design models through the temptation of federal funds.

Third, fund raising became a way of life for higher education. With the Henrico College movement, fund raising was seen as a vital characteristic for the creation and sustenance of the College. As a result, various philanthropic bodies, namely church congregations, worked to raise money for the education of Natives and others in the New World.

Current higher education activities have been linked to the raising of private funds, including alumni, corporations, and foundation. As state allocations decline in higher education, institutions are forced to seek additional funding from elsewhere. These funds were once considered the margin of

excellence for college and universities, but are now considered basic needs for institutions to remain open and vital.

And fourth, the Henrico College structure demonstrated an early form of seamless education. The proposed project was similar to an inter-related elementary school, secondary school, and university-level education. Those working to open Henrico saw the dependence of each level on the previous level. Although the three separate institutions had specific functions unique to them, they were designed to work together in the preparation of the entire individual.

Contemporary education is just now realizing the potential for an inter-related, inter-dependent system of education. Programs such as those in Colorado which combine community colleges with universities demonstrate the growing attention to continuous education, and the potential for collaboration between institutional topologies and missions. Many in secondary school administration are now realizing the need to work more closely with elementary and primary school administrators to develop a seamless approach to a student's educational progress. Similarly, many higher education institutions are now looking to secondary schools for greater collaboration, as evidenced by the Tech-Prep movement in vocational education.

Although Henrico College never opened, the creative approaches to funding and the philosophy for teaching and learning serve as a template for contemporary education. This demonstration of history serving as a predictor of future trends

and movements serves to remind scholars and practitioners in higher education of the value of historical research. Further research concerning the history behind various philosophical movements and institutional growth patterns may reveal additional innovations for the educational community which will prove valuable as higher education enters the 21st century.

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