

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 471 733

HE 035 566

AUTHOR Denham, Thomas J.
TITLE A Brief History of Higher Education in New York State.
PUB DATE 2002-07-00
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational History; *Higher Education; Private Colleges; Proprietary Schools; *State Colleges; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS Ivy League Colleges; *New York

ABSTRACT

This paper traces the history of higher education in New York state and discusses the role of Siena College, a small liberal arts college, in the New York higher education picture. New York has 194 nonprofit private institutions of higher education, 91 public institutions, and 37 for-profit postsecondary education institutions. The State University of New York, founded in the 1780s, with its 64 campuses, is the major player in public higher education in the state, although the Ivy League colleges may be more well known. New York has a number of small, liberal arts colleges, military and technical institutions, agricultural schools, and colleges and universities that are characterized as urban. Often overlooked in higher education are the proprietary, vocational career, and other noncollege for-profit institutions. Siena College shares many of the issues facing higher education as a whole, notably the need to provide an affordable quality education. More than 80% of its students receive some form of financial aid, and the college is collaborating with other institutions to leverage existing resources to enhance the academic climate and experience. (Contains 17 references.) (SLD)

ED 471 733

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION
IN NEW YORK STATE

Emergence of Higher Education in America

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A course paper presented to Programs for Higher Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

July, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

New York state has played an important role in the history and development of higher education in America. Its patchwork quilt of three hundred and twenty two diverse colleges and universities encompass many types of institutions. Some of these campuses include The State University of New York, community colleges, Ivy League schools, small liberal arts colleges, technical institutes, New York City institutions, Catholic colleges and universities, graduate and professional schools, non-traditional colleges, and non-college institutions of higher education. New York state has total population of almost 19 million people comprising a rich array of ethnic, political, socio-economic groups. In terms of sheer numbers, the State has 194 non-profit private schools, 91 public schools and 37 for-profit institutions; only California has more institutions with 411 (“Chronicle,” 2001).

Recent statistics from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* indicate the significance of New York state higher education. It has the second highest share of total U.S. college enrollment (6.9%) next to California at 13.6%. Fifty-five percent of students enrolling at New York state colleges and universities attend public institutions and 45% attend private institutions. In-state residents make up 80% of all freshmen enrolled in New York State schools. More women than men attend New York state institutions (58%), and the majority of students are full-time (67.4%). Minority students represent 33% of total enrollment, and foreign students comprise 5.4% of the population. In terms of dollars and cents, it is worth noting that last year’s expenditures of public institutions was \$6.8 billion while private institutions was \$11-billion (“Chronicle,” 2001).

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

The State University of New York - SUNY

The State University of New York is the major player of public higher education in the state whose origins date back to the colonial era. “In New York, an attempt was made to create a comprehensive State system of education along the lines of Condorcet’s “University” in France, when in 1784 and 1787 the legislature founded the University of New York under a Board of Regents, to be responsible not only for Columbia College but also for associated academies to whom financial aid was made available” (Gwynne-Thomas, 1981, p. 194). “In 1915 only two states (California and New York) attempted to coordinate the activities of their tax-supported institutions of higher learning. However, the trend was toward greater coordination and higher degrees of integration. In 1948 SUNY, the State University of New York was established to take

charge of 46 existing public institutions and to set up as many new ones as its overall blueprint would prescribe” (Altbach & Berdahl, 1981, p. 67). “As of 1987, the prevailing governance pattern for state colleges was the multi-campus structure which embraced two or more “flagship” institutions. Perhaps the best known of these multi-campus systems were the University of California, California State University, the State University of New York and the City University of New York” (Altbach & Berdahl, 1981, p. 201). In addition, the 44 community colleges such as Mohawk Valley, Hudson Valley, Adirondack, and Fulton Montgomery are a major component of the SUNY system.

Ivy League Schools

“Chartered by King George II of England, Columbia University opened its doors in 1754, originally as King’s College for the Instruction and Education of youth in the Learned Languages, and Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Province of New-York, in the City of New York, in America” (Cowley & Williams, 1991, p. 82). Columbia adopted the curricular pattern of Princeton, which had been built upon that of Harvard and Yale (Cowley & Williams, 1991, p. 83). Today as an Ivy League institution, Columbia has a \$4.2-billion endowment making it the largest of any college or university in the state. In 1865 the New York legislature chartered Cornell University, turning over to it New York’s share of the federal land grants of 1862 and applauding the \$500,000 benefaction of Ezra Cornell, which justified its name and the controlling role which he would play in shaping the institution (Rudolph, 1962, p. 266). Located in Ithaca, Cornell boasts 15 colleges including an agricultural school, business school, medical school, school of industrial and labor relations, and a school of hotel administration. Last year, Cornell University raised \$308-million, making it the number one fund-raising school in the state (“Chronicle,” 2001).

Small Liberal Arts Colleges

Small and often highly selective liberal arts colleges represent another element of higher education in New York. For example, Union College became the first college chartered by the Regents of the State of New York in 1795. In 1845, it became the first liberal arts college to include engineering in its curriculum. Additional colleges in this category include St. Lawrence University, Hamilton College, Colgate University, Skidmore College, Hobart and William Smith, and Vassar College. Originally, Vassar College was founded in 1861 to train women, but has evolved into a co-educational institution today (Cremin, 1977, p.54). David Breneman (1994), former president of Kalamazoo College in Michigan, was on target when he said “at their

best, I believe that private liberal arts colleges provide the finest undergraduate education in available in this country” (p. 4). In their role as institutions that educate rather than train, New York state is fortunate to have these educational option for students (Breneman, 1994, p. 13).

West Point, RPI and Technical Universities

Engineering and technical universities represent another dimension of higher education in New York. “The United States Military Academy at West Point was established in 1802 to train officers for the armed services, and ended up also training most of the pre-Civil War engineers in the United States who did not come solely via the route of apprenticeship” (Cremin, 1977, p. 54). Farther up the Hudson River, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute opened in 1826. Stephen Van Rensselaer financed and organized RPI “to qualify teachers in the application of experimental chemistry, philosophy, and natural history to agriculture, domestic economy, the arts and manufactures” (Cowley & Williams, 1991, p. 115). In 1850, since many of its students had previously graduated from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and other “literary seminaries,” this in a sense made Rensselaer in fact, if not in name, the nation’s first graduate school outside the traditional professions (Cowley & Williams, 1991, p. 115). Clarkson University and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) are other examples of leading technical universities.

Agricultural Schools

New York state is rich in farmland and agriculture. With the founding in 1791 of the New York Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts and Manufacturers, another type of occupational college appeared: the agricultural school. “These societies became earnest advocates of manual-labor schools and colleges in which students would both study and do farm labor, and they attracted much support” (Cowley & Williams, 1991, p. 115). SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Canton are two examples of agricultural and technical colleges. Today, the agricultural schools go beyond studies in floral design or animal husbandry with their curriculum extending to health, medical technologies, human services, science, and the liberal arts.

New York City Institutions

Given its diverse demographic base including an enormous influx of immigrants, New York City developed a complex and specialized educational configuration (Cremin, 1977, p. 114). For example, The College of the City of New York (CUNY) was created in 1847 to train New York City youngsters who could not afford to pay for higher education (Cremin, 1977, p. 54). “After expanding rapidly in the 1960s, the CUNY system was sharply cut which followed the New York City fiscal crisis of the 1970s. Over 1,000 full-time and 5,000 part-time faculty

were let go in August of 1975” (Altbach & Berdahl, 1981, p. 175). In recent years, CUNY has been plagued by low admissions standards, inadequate funding and remedial education in its curriculum, which all have contributed to its tarnished reputation. “By 1937, when Queens College was founded, there were four city colleges offering tuition-free undergraduate education. In addition, there were the two older independent universities, Columbia University and New York University, several church-related institutions such as Fordham University, Jewish Theological Seminary, and Yeshiva College, as well as a number of specialized colleges such as John Jay School of Criminal Justice, Parsons School of Design, the Julliard School of Music, and the Rockefeller Institute” (Cremin, 1977, p. 115).

Catholic Colleges and Universities

Another type of institution that has contributed to the landscape of higher education are the catholic affiliated institutions. New York has a large catholic population and these colleges and universities provide further education in the Franciscan, Jesuit, Dominican and Catholic traditions. Some of these include Iona College, Manhattan College, Marist College, St. John’s University, and St. Thomas Aquinas College. Siena College was founded in 1937 by seven friars to provide an education for students in the surrounding community of Albany and beyond. In 1997, the Siena College Career Center formed an alliance with seven other similar institutions in upstate New York to share resources and solve similar departmental issues facing career services. Currently, the Upstate Eight Career Alliance meets bi-annually to foster collaboration among Canisius College, LeMoyne College, Nazareth College, Niagara University, St. Bonaventure University, St. John Fisher College, Siena College, and The College of Saint Rose.

Graduate and Professional Schools

New York state is blessed to have a number of graduate and professional schools to train students to become leaders in their professional lives beyond the bachelor’s degree. Examples of these types of schools include, Albany College of Pharmacy, Albany Medical Center, Albany Law School, Teachers College of Columbia University, New York University’s Stern School of Business, New York Chiropractic College, and the Eastman School of Music. New York state has over 200,000 graduate and professional students (“Chronicle, 2001).

Non-Traditional Colleges

Skidmore College’s “University Without Walls” is a distance-learning program that offers students the opportunity to complete a bachelors degree from as far away as Asia and Africa. Academic advisors guide the approximately 250 to 300 students through a carefully

designed individual program of study that matches the student's background, interests, and goals. Students select classroom courses from colleges in their local area or study at a distance with Skidmore or other qualified faculty. Established in 1972, Excelsior College, formerly Regent's College, is the nation's oldest nontraditional college program engaged in independent learning programs at a distance. The College evaluates credit a student has already earned and then looks for credit from the following sources: Courses already taken at other regionally accredited colleges and universities, distance education courses, college credit examinations, corporate training, and military training. There is no residency requirement. Currently serving approximately 19,000 enrolled students seeking bachelors and masters degrees, Excelsior boasts 95,000 alumni worldwide.

Non-College Institutions of Higher Education

Often overlooked in the field of higher education are the proprietary, vocational, technical, career and other non-college for-profit institutions. Although many of these types of schools can be found across in the state in its major metropolitan areas, the vast majority of them are located in New York City. A sample of the many post secondary institutions that offer certificate and degree programs include, American College of Acupuncture, Pratt Institute, American Barber Institute, The Chubb Institute, French Culinary Institute, The Barbizon School of New York, and the Model Auto Driving School Inc. In Buffalo, other schools such as Devry Institute, Technical Skills Institute, Bryant & Stratton Business Institute can be found. Bryant & Stratton, for example, is a type of career college which offers associates degree programs in the areas of business, technology, allied health, legal and hospitality based on a specialized curriculum which directly relates to real world demands and standards. Courses are offered either full-time, day, evening or on the weekends. Advisors offer individual career guidance and personalized career kits. With three campuses, ITT Technical Institute offers career education in electronics technology and provides financial aid and placement assistance to qualified applicants. Besides technical instruction, the programs of study offered at ITT Tech focuses on developing problem solving, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills. The New School of Radio and Television prepares students for careers in television and radio broadcasting. In addition, there is the New York Institute of Massage, Finger Lakes School of Massage, and the Continental School of Beauty. The New York State Department of Education is responsible for certifying, licensing, monitoring and supervising these unique "colleges."

PROGRAMS OFFERED

In terms of public education today, SUNY has over 64 campuses offering more than 5,100 courses and features university centers/doctoral granting institutions, university colleges, technical colleges, and community colleges. The State University of New York offers a variety of ways for students to pursue their studies with certificate programs of one year of study. Associates degree programs (including AAS, AS, AA, AOS) that usually take two years of full-time study and are offered at community colleges and technical colleges. Bachelors degree programs (including BS, BA, BTech) typically require a four-year full-time college experience and are offered at university centers/doctoral granting institutions, university colleges, and technical colleges. Masters degree programs (including MS, MA, MBA, MFA) can take from one to three years to earn and are offered at university centers/doctoral granting institutions, university colleges, and technical colleges. Doctorates (including PhD, EdD, MD) are the highest academic degree conferred by the University and are only granted after extensive study at university centers/doctoral granting institutions. In addition, SUNY offers a virtual university through the SUNY Learning Network and can be accessed at <http://sln.suny.edu> on the Internet. SUNY also offers a School of Forestry in Syracuse. The University has almost 2 million alumni.

Private colleges in New York offer similar programs of study as their public counterparts that lead to the associates, bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees. For example, students can earn an associates degree in business at the Sage College in Albany or Cazenovia College in central New York and then transfer to a four-year institution such as Syracuse University or the University of Rochester. Some of the more popular programs offered are computer science, law, medicine, education, management, social work, science, counseling, and public policy.

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

In 1784, the legislature enacted the first University of the State of New York to act as governing body of King's College, later renamed Columbia College. This act designated the governor, lieutenant governor, president of the senate, speaker of the assembly, mayors of Albany and New York, attorney general, secretary of state, and twenty-four other persons as the Board of Regents. Three years later the board reorganized and membership was changed to the governor, lieutenant governor, and nineteen members appointed by the legislature. It was authorized to charter new colleges, to exercise general supervision over Columbia and any new colleges, and it was empowered to make monetary grants to colleges and academies. Since 1894 the University of the State of New York has been continued by the Constitution, which states

that its corporate powers “may be increased, modified, or diminished” by the Legislature (Folts, 1996, p. 1).

In 1904, the State Education Department was created with one of its responsibilities being the general supervision of all educational institutions in the State, including higher education. It was governed by the Board of Regents. This board is also the head of The University of State of New York. In 1948 when SUNY was established, the Regents were to have “general supervision and approval” of SUNY’s budget, planning, and administration. In 1961, the State University system was made independent of the Regents, except as a part of the larger University of the State of New York. (Folts, 1996, p. 1).

Private college and university structures vary, but typically have at the helm a President that reports to the Board of Trustees that is often elected by the alumni of the institution. The New York State Department of Education monitors and supervises private colleges and universities. In addition, founded in 1956, the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (cIcu) is a statewide association representing the public policy interests of the chief executives of more than 100 independent (private, not-for-profit) colleges and universities in New York State. Although not a government agency, cIcu received its charter from the State Board of Regents. Its mission is to develop consensus among a diverse membership and to advance higher education public policy. The Commission is the formal organizational liaison with the New York State Board of Regents, the State Commissioner of Education, and the chancellors of the State University (SUNY) and City University (CUNY); and with the proprietary sector.

ISSUES FACED BY THE STATE SYSTEM

There are a number of key issues facing the state system; number one on the list of many with a stake in the health of SUNY involves adequate funding. “In December 2000, the Chancellor of the State University at New York, Robert L. King, announced a plan to pump \$5-billion into SUNY programs over the next 5 years, to bolster the system’s national reputation. His plan envisioned the money coming from four sources: New state expenditure on construction at SUNY \$2-billion), federally sponsored research (\$1.5-billion), private donations (\$1-billion), and additional revenues collected by campuses, partly as a result of enrollment growth (\$500-million) (“Chronicle,” 2001).

Increasing linkages with industry especially in the high tech sector is another issue. IBM gave fund-raising efforts a jump-start by pledging to the University at Albany campus its biggest

gift ever: \$100 million in cash and equipment. A primary objective of these funds is to support the efforts of the Center for Nanotechnology that hopes to develop the next generation of computer chips. In the Capital Region of New York State, the Tech Valley Initiative is partnering with Albany area higher education institutions and emerging technical companies to foster and develop a high tech center similar to Silicon Valley. The goal is to have the local colleges and universities, especially the University at Albany and RPI, supply the necessary technical labor to assist computer companies reaching the strategic objectives of combined sales revenue of “a billion or more by 2004.”

Another major issue facing the SUNY system is providing an affordable education. This past June, Governor George E. Pataki announced free college tuition for children of New Yorkers killed in War on Terrorism. In addition, New York’s College Saving Program was set up as a way for residents to save for the rising cost of a college education. Since 2000, over 220,000 have been opened totaling more than \$1-billion. Money withdrawn to pay for qualified higher education expenses is not subject to federal or New York income taxes and annual funds contributed to the program receive a New York income tax deduction. An account can be opened with as little as \$25.

RELATED ISSUES FACING SIENA COLLEGE

Siena College plays a role in the composition of higher education institutions in New York state. As a small liberal arts college, Siena offers bachelors degrees in Liberal Arts, Science, and Business in the Franciscan tradition. With 2800 students and 689 employees, Siena is an “academic and religiously appreciative community wherein students, faculty, staff and alumni collaborate with respect, with friendship, and with joy” (Siena College, 2001, p. 8). Providing an affordable education for Siena students is a perennial issue. With the cost of a Siena education escalating, the demand for financial aid has never been greater. Over 80% of Siena students are on some form of financial aid. The College needs to offer generous packages to compete with the public colleges and universities which puts a strain on institutional resources. Siena is also involved with the Tech Valley initiative and seeks to promote the advancement of computer technology in the region. Linkages with high tech employers can assist the institution in its fund-raising and career development goals. Siena is also collaborating with the Hudson Mohawk Association to leverage existing and limited resources to enhance the academic climate and experience for students, faculty and alumni.

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