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“Strength Through Union”: Exploring the Consolidation

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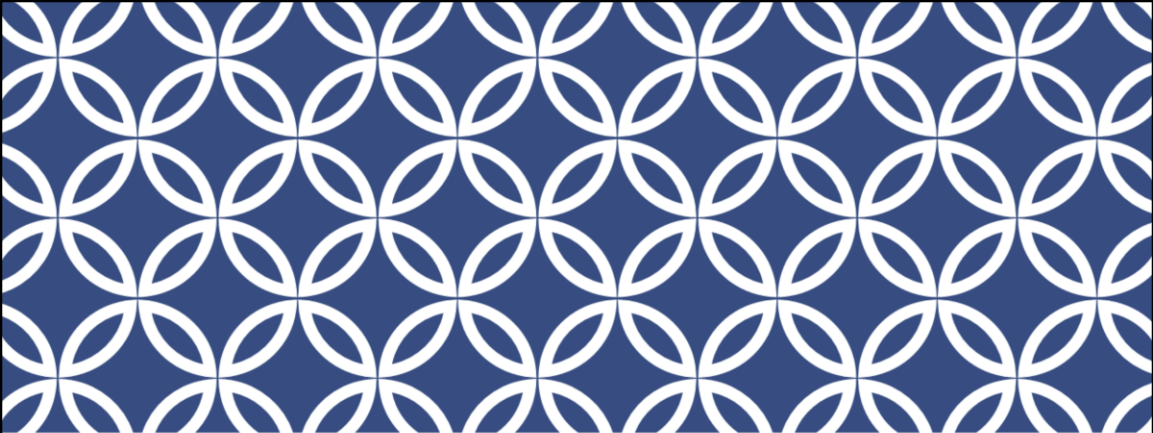
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**“STRENGTH THROUGH UNION”:
EXPLORING THE CONSOLIDATION**

Erin Dix '08
University Archivist

Friday, June 20th, 2014

Welcome! The goal of this session is to explore the history behind the consolidation – why it happened and how it happened. I understand that many of you here personally experienced the consolidation, but I think there are others here who don't have the same level of background knowledge, so I'll do my best to accommodate all perspectives here.

SOURCES CITED

Secondary:

- Breunig, Charles. "A Great and Good Work": A History of Lawrence University, 1847-1964. Appleton, WI: Lawrence University Press, 1994.
- Howard, Sherwin W. "Prelude to Merger: An Historical Case Study of Trustee Decision-Making Leading to the Merger of a Small College." PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980.
- Kleinman, Lynne H. "Milwaukee-Downer College: A Study in the History of Women and the History of Higher Education in America, 1851-1964." PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1991.

Primary:

- Records of the Boards and Presidents of both Milwaukee-Downer and Lawrence
- Local newspaper articles
- Milwaukee-Downer publications, including *The Dial* and *Hawthorn Leaves*
- Oral history interviews with Downer alumnae and faculty

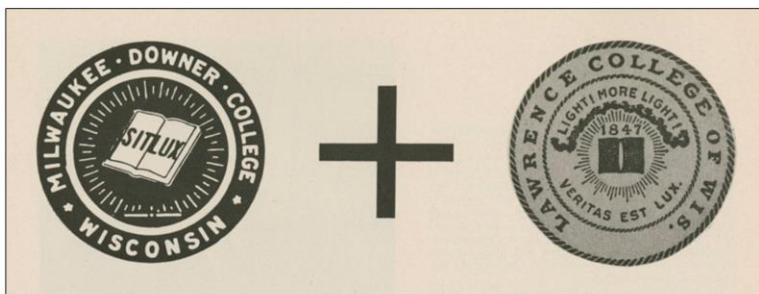
I used primarily sources from the Archives (including documentation from the presidents and boards, local newspaper articles, student newspapers, and other sources from alumnae) as well as the few published sources on this topic to research this.

OUTLINE

- I. Brief histories of Milwaukee-Downer and Lawrence
- II. Struggles faced at Milwaukee-Downer leading to the consolidation
- III. Consolidation negotiations
- IV. Carrying out the consolidation
- V. Fifty years later: where are we now?

We should have time for questions at the end, or you can ask questions as we go along – but there's a lot of information to cover.

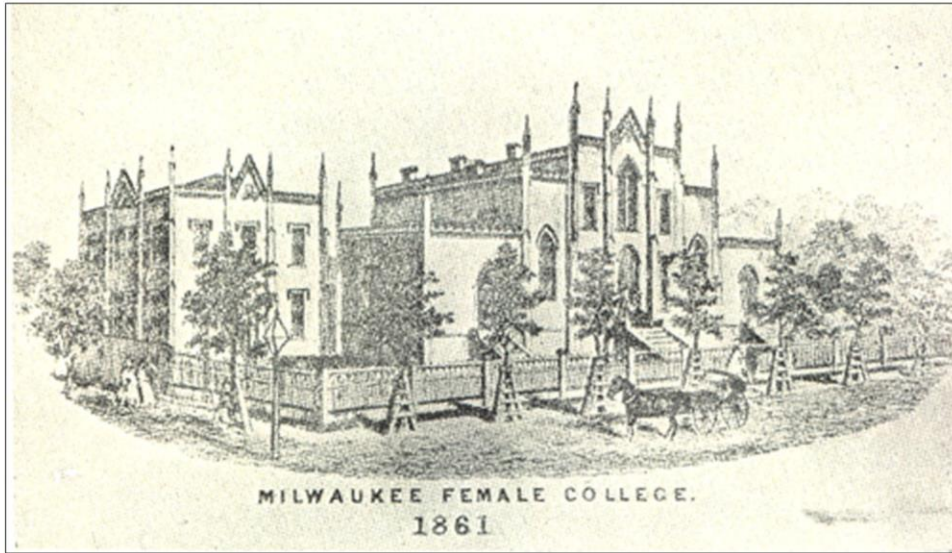
I: BRIEF HISTORIES OF MILWAUKEE-DOWNER AND LAWRENCE





Lawrence University Main Hall, circa 1854

Lawrence, Milwaukee College and Downer College (initially Wisconsin Female College) all founded within the same pre-Civil War time period (1847, 1851, 1855). Lawrence was founded in 1847, one of the earliest colleges to be founded coeducational in the country.



Milwaukee College was founded in 1851 – had roots as a seminary founded in 1848.



Downer College in Fox Lake, Wis.

Downer College was founded as Wisconsin Female College in Fox Lake in 1855.

Broadly speaking, the 19th century was not a great time for any of these institutions. Each was dealing with limited means and financial precariousness, there were frequent changes in leadership at all three, and there were national sources of instability like the Civil War and a financial panic in the 1870s. So, 19th century, hard times for everyone.



Downer College Band, circa 1895

The students made do.



Lawrence University Mandolin Club, 1900



Ellen C. Sabin
President, Downer College: 1891-1895, Milwaukee-
Downer College: 1895-1921



Rev. Samuel Plantz
President, Lawrence University/College: 1894-1924

The turn of the century was a turning point in the fortunes of both Downer and Lawrence. Milwaukee College and Downer College merged in 1895 under the leadership of Ellen Sabin, who remained president until 1921. At about the same time, Lawrence received a new president, after a series of shorter-tenured leaders, Samuel Plantz. Both were very strong leaders who presided over a period of great growth for each institution.



Presidents of Wisconsin independent colleges, circa 1915

During the early decades of the 20th century, large, research universities were really exploding, and this shaped the character of small liberal arts colleges who had to differentiate themselves. This led to Lawrence changing its name. It had been Lawrence University from the founding until 1908, when Plantz argued to change it to Lawrence College.



Barracks under construction next to the Chapel, 1946

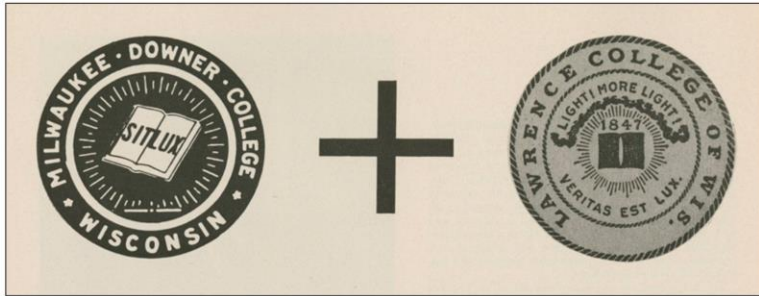
Following wider trends in higher education, enrollments at both Lawrence and Milwaukee-Downer hit peaks during the 1920s then decreased during the Depression. Enrollments at Lawrence were in flux during the war then increased dramatically post-war with the G.I. Bill.

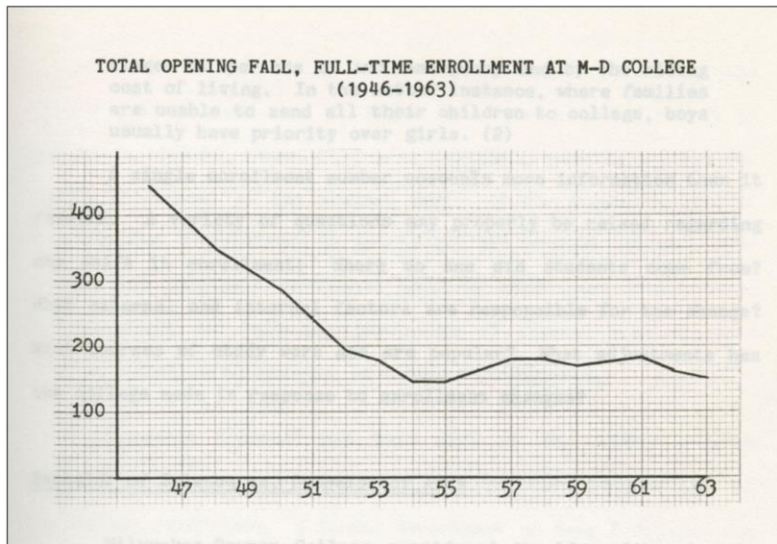


Colors Day at Milwaukee-Downer, 1946

At Milwaukee-Downer, enrollment peaked again during the 1940s under the tenure of Lucia Briggs, topping out at 444.

II: STRUGGLES AT MILWAUKEE-DOWNER





Howard, p. 12

After Downer hit its peak enrollment in 1946-1947, it declined precipitously to 287 by 1950-1951. So this was the situation into which the new president, John B. Johnson, entered.



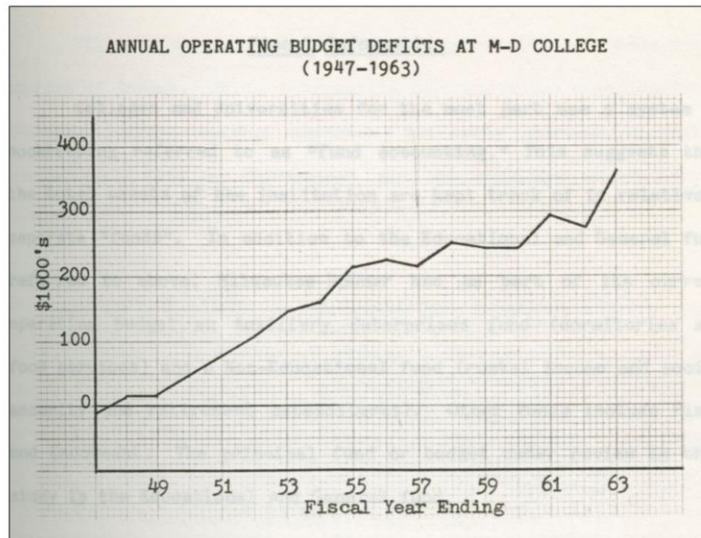
John B. Johnson
President, Milwaukee-Downer College: 1951-1964

Theories for enrollment decline:

1. Demographic reasons
2. Increased competition for women students
3. Earlier marriage
4. Higher costs of living affected college affordability

Johnson offered a few theories to explain this drop: there were fewer 18-year-olds in the demographic pool due to the low birth rate in the 1930s; increased competition for women students as men were drafted for the Korean War; women were marrying earlier during and after the war; and the higher cost of living post-war made college harder for some parents to afford.

Johnson invested new staff and resources into Admissions, with eventually a particular focus on recruiting more women from the East. But these efforts did not improve the situation. Enrollment bottomed out at 147 students in 1955-56 and stayed in that range until the consolidation.



Howard, p. 34

The enrollment problem had a predictable effect on Downer's finances. Like all small liberal arts colleges, Downer relied heavily on tuition. So you can see here that the last year Downer had a surplus coincided with the enrollment peak in the late 1940s – deficits rose every year until they were over \$350,000 in 1963. Deficits were financed with appropriations from the endowment – not a sustainable situation.

Other factors affecting enrollment:

1. Shifts toward public and coeducational institutions nationwide
2. Kleinman's thesis: administration did too much modernizing
 - Faculty changes
 - Emphasizing liberal arts over O.T. and Home Ec.
3. Or, did the administration not do enough to respond to challenges?



Milwaukee-Downer Commencement, undated

So in addition to the demographics and other factors, what else was going on that negatively affected Downer's enrollment?

At this time, there was really a shift away from enrollment in private institutions and toward public institutions, and away from single-sex education and toward coeducation, especially in the Midwest, eventually filtered over to the East. So the higher education trends were not in Downer's favor.

Lynne Kleinman offered an interesting hypothesis: "the effort to modernize Milwaukee-Downer, to make it more generically Midwestern, substantially altered the institution's historic character and constituted a major challenge to its longevity." (56) Prior to Johnson's arrival, under the tenure of Sabin and Briggs, faculty were mainly women, were not paid very highly, and often lived on campus. This contributed to the strong sense of community between faculty and students, but Johnson saw these things as antiquated by the time he arrived in 1951. So he raised faculty salaries substantially (enabling them to live off-campus) and hired a number of men on the faculty. He also made efforts to deemphasize programs in occupational therapy and home economics, feeling that Downer needed to focus efforts on the liberal arts – and he succeeded with this. (In 1952, only 40% of graduates received

the B.A. Ten years later in 1962, 78% received the B.A.) So Kleinman argues that these things changed the character of Downer so much that they had detrimental effects on enrollment.

On other hand, others have suggested that Johnson and the Board of Trustees actually didn't do enough to "modernize" the college during the 1950s, that they didn't respond to the challenges that were evident. Howard characterizes the board of the 1950s as waiting patiently for enrollments to rise – President Johnson reported every year that higher enrollments were projected, but they never came.

UW-Milwaukee: A Brief History

1885: Milwaukee State Normal School opens

1909: Moves adjacent to Milwaukee-Downer

1927: Becomes Milwaukee State Teacher's College

1951: Becomes Wisconsin State College, Milwaukee, with the authority to award liberal arts degrees

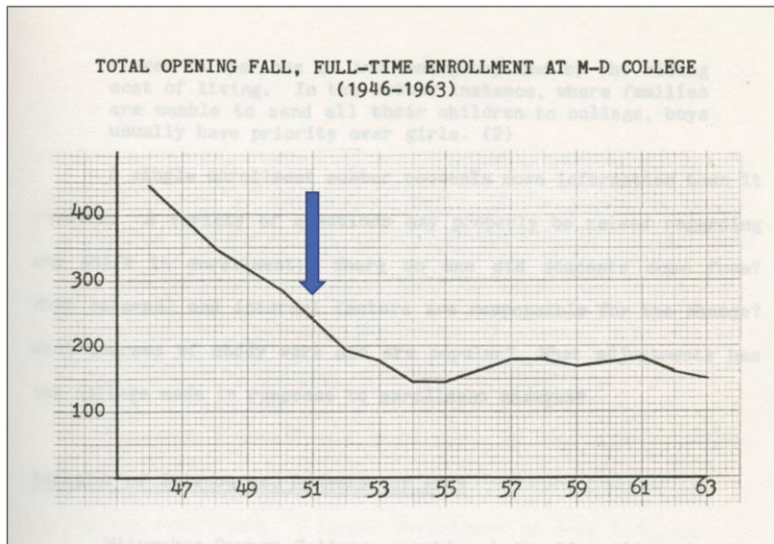
1956: Combines with Milwaukee Extension to form UW-M



New student week at UW-Milwaukee, 1960

And then there was UW-M. There's a timeline here, but I won't read it to you. Suffice it to say, the UW-M had a history dating back to the 1880s, and its predecessor had been located in the block across the street from Milwaukee-Downer since the early 1900s.

In 1951, all of Wisconsin's state colleges, including what was then called Wisconsin State College, Milwaukee, started offering liberal arts degrees. Until that time, Downer had been the only non-sectarian college granting liberal arts bachelor's degrees in Milwaukee, and a large percentage of Downer's students came from Milwaukee and the surrounding area. (56% in 1951.)



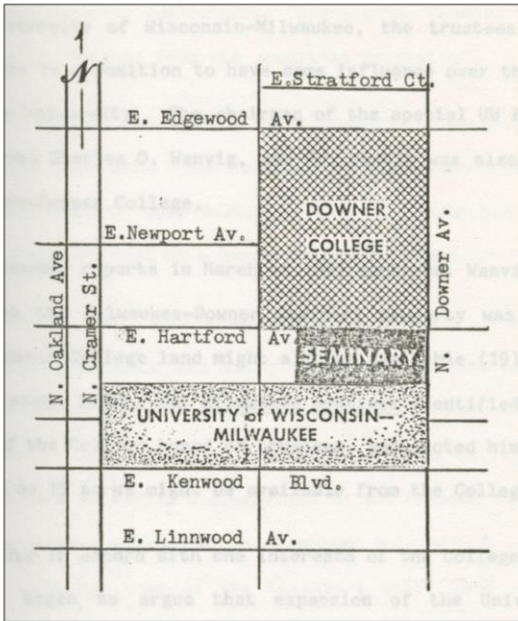
Howard, p. 12

I do want to point out here, if we look at this enrollment graph again, that the Wisconsin State College, Milwaukee did not represent direct competition with Downer until they started offering liberal arts degrees in 1951, several years after Downer's initial decline in enrollment. Certainly once this had started, UW-M became a serious source of competition that perpetuated enrollment problems. But, that was not the only thing going on here.



Aerial view of Milwaukee-Downer campus, undated

That said: by 1957, UW-M was looking to expand the existing Kenwood campus adjacent to MDC.



1958: Milwaukee-Downer College trustees sell the Milwaukee-Downer Seminary land to the Seminary

1959: Seminary sells the land to UW-M

Spring, 1959: Downer trustees send letter to UW regents

Howard, p. 93

They first acquired the Seminary property in 1959 – Seminary had wanted to relocate anyway. But this was only 8.5 acres – more expansion was inevitable. Downer owned 40 acres of land right across the street. UW-M started making requests for parts of Downer’s land, for parking or other facilities.



UW-M students in front of Garland and Pearse Halls, formerly of the Milwaukee-Downer Seminary, circa 1961

Meanwhile, UW-M was rapidly expanding. Here is an image of UW-M students in front of the former Milwaukee-Downer Seminary buildings in 1961.

**UW Regents
Keep Downer
Site in View**

Acquisition of the 40-acre Milwaukee-Downer College property was kept alive by the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents Saturday as a future possibility.

Milwaukee Sentinel, April 10, 1960

**Downer Looms
in UWM Plans**

Regents Hint Site Needed in Expansion

Werner Makes First Public Statement on Likelihood of Eventual Purchase

By ROBERT L. DISHON
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF
Milwaukee-Downer college

The institutional district defined by the plan is bounded by E. Capitol dr., E. Locust st., Milwaukee river and Lake Michigan. Kenwood campus is bounded by N. Downer av., N. Gramer st., E. Kenwood blvd. and N. Hartford av.

That area includes the eight-acre Milwaukee-Downer seminary lying along the south side of E. Hartford av. It is being purchased by the university.

Downer college is on the north side of E. Hartford av. and bounded further by N. Downer av., N. Maryland av. and E. Edgewood av.

"A Great Surprise"
Ralph M. Hoyt, chairman of

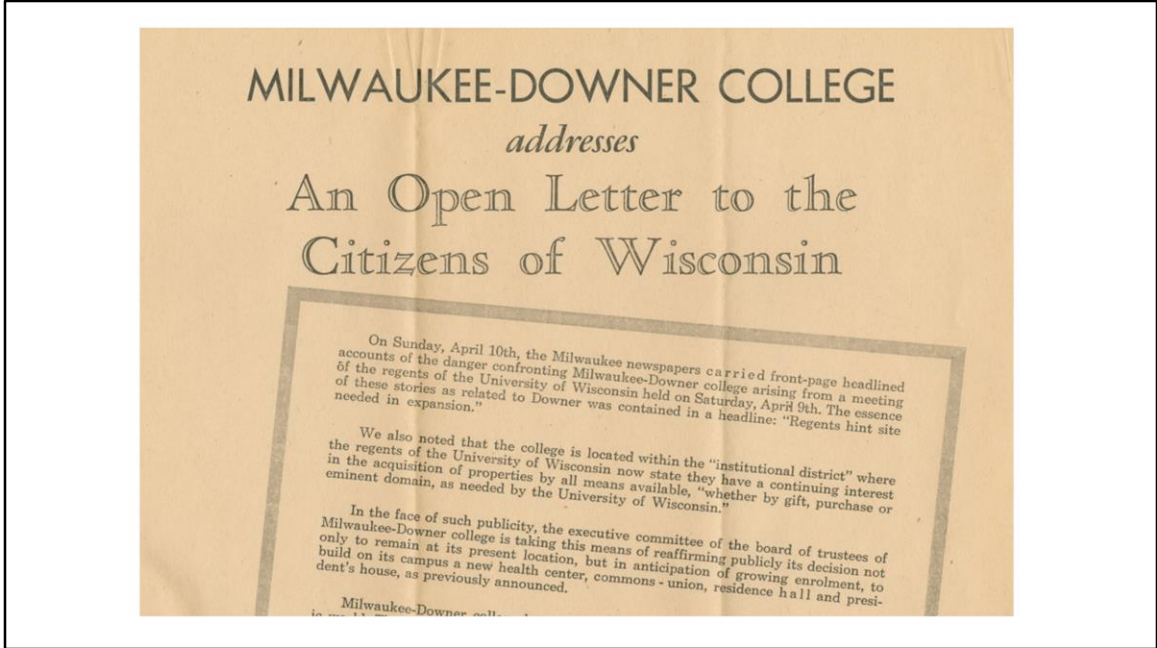
The possible acquisition of the college, he added, would give the board an alternative to buying a strip of residential blocks along the Milwaukee river, bounded by E. Linwood av., E. Newport av., N. Cambridge av. and N. Bartlett av. for the UWM physical education program.

\$3,500,000 Price Tag
Wendt told the regents it would cost up to \$3,500,000 to buy the 23.6 acre tract of residences along the river. He did not mention any price for the 42-acre college property.

He added, in answering a question from Charles D. Gelatt, La Crosse, that the campus

Milwaukee Journal, April 10, 1960

In April 1960, Milwaukee papers had front-page headlines about a meeting of the UW regents. This was one of the first times that the "eminent domain" possibility was publicly hinted at. Downer trustees responded with a full-page ad in the papers...



“An Open Letter to the Citizens of Wisconsin” stating that the college was “determined to retain its present campus and to expand its facilities on this campus to the fullest extent dictated by future enrollment and by its educational philosophy.” A strong statement.

But the state had the legal power to invoke eminent domain. It had rapidly increasing enrollments, Downer did not and it had lots of “unused” property. So this tension was not going away.



1962: Charles Stone, “no-nonsense businessman,” takes over as Chairman of the Downer Board of Trustees

Fall, 1962: Executive Committee considers the question of Downer’s future

Spring, 1963: Committee begins discussing options, reopens negotiation for sale of property to UW

Charles Stone was named Chairman of the Board in 1962. Howard refers to him as a “no-nonsense businessman” and argues that his leadership style was very different than the previous board chairman. Stone felt that the Board had been sort of dithering around and set out to address these problems head-on.

Executive Committee meetings in the fall of 1962 began to consider seriously the question of Milwaukee-Downer’s future. They felt that the full 32-member board was too large to work through the details of considering what to do, let alone initiating discussions with faculty, students or alumnae. They felt that the situation required urgency.

By the spring of 1963, things had deteriorated enough that the Executive Committee started discussing options.

Dwindling Enrolment a Threat to Downer College

By DAVID F. BEHERNDT
Of The Journal Staff

Milwaukee-Downer college, one of the oldest nonsectarian women's colleges in the country and long recognized for academic excellence, is in serious trouble. The next three years are likely to determine whether it continues to exist in its present form.

Downer's crisis results from constantly dwindling enrolment. The number of full time students has dropped 60% since a peak just after World War II. Virtually every other college in the state, and most in the nation, has set repeated records in the same period.

"We could probably load the property if we just wanted to deliver students," said Charles W. Stone, chairman of the Downer board of trustees. "But if we went out to lick this numbers problem and got 500 students by lowering standards, we'd have to go out and buy a whole new faculty."

The cause of Downer's decline has been a drastic drop in the proportion of its student body from the Milwaukee area. Downer has not been able to make up this loss with increases from outside the area. Within the last year, however, the college has begun its greatest recruiting effort ever.

The existence of another liberal arts degree granting institution just across the street, which

Only the infirmary has been built, although the old Johnston hall, closed in 1949, was remodeled and opened in 1961 as a dormitory for about 55 girls.

The other two buildings are fully planned, but construction has been held up.

Most of the college's 12 buildings are more than adequate. Its science hall, opened in 1928 with five floors of classrooms and laboratories, would ac-

commodate a student body of 1,000, Johnson estimated.

What caused Downer's difficulties?

Johnson and Stone discussed this with a reporter last week.

For 100 years until 1951, Downer college was, with the exception of Roman Catholic institutions, the only Milwaukee area liberal arts college granting the bachelor of arts degree.

In 1951 Wisconsin's state colleges, including Milwaukee State Teachers college began offering a liberal arts degree.

"This, in a nutshell, is the whole cause of the problem of our local enrolment and the serious implications of that on our

"You name it, we've talked about it," Stone said. "I don't think we can tell until next year, and we see the enrolment, just what we'll do after that. Up to this point, there isn't any disposition by any majority of the trustees to do anything other than try to continue."

How long can Downer continue to operate with its present enrolment level? Is there a deadline?

Purposes Might Shift

"I don't see it in that kind of black and white context," Stone said. But he added that this was a point on which there was disagreement among

\$3,200 was the average—to remain as competitive as possible with public colleges.

Johnson said he was about to propose increases with a goal of reaching a \$10,000 a year minimum for full professors four years from now. (Salaries for full professors averaged \$12,500 at UW in the 1962-63 school year; \$9,834 at the state colleges.)

Stone and Johnson are well aware of Downer's strategic position adjacent to UWM's growing campus and student body, and of the state's power to get land by condemnation.

"We don't need this acreage to serve this number of people,"

Milwaukee Journal, June 30, 1963

This article published in the Milwaukee Journal in June, 1963, outlined the issues Downer was facing. Stone was interviewed and he outlined four options the Board had discussed – at this time, consolidation or merger was not one of the options.

On the basis of these comments and the discussion that followed, five possible alternatives to the present operation, should a change become necessary, were identified: (1) dissolution and distribution of assets to another "similar charitable organization"; (2) consolidation or merger with another college (in Wisconsin or in another state); (3) establishment of a college within the University of Wisconsin system (specifically permitted under a 1849 statute); (4) disposition of present property and relocation outside Wisconsin, possibly in the east; (5) disposition of present property and use of funds to create a foundation for the advancement of women's education.

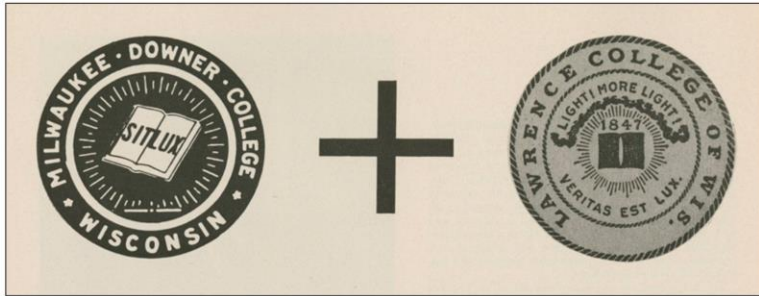
Minutes of the full Downer Board of Trustees, July 1963

Stone called a special meeting of the board in July, at which five options were presented:

1. Dissolution and distribution of assets to another similar charitable organization
2. Consolidation or merger with another college
3. Establishment of a college in the UW system
4. Disposition of property and relocating outside of Wisconsin
5. Disposition of property and using funds to create a foundation for the advancement of women's education

So these were the options they were considering. All of our records indicate that there was not much serious discussion devoted to any option other than consolidation – that appeared to be the most attractive option. But to consider it as a viable option, they needed contenders for institutions to merge with.

III: CONSOLIDATION NEGOTIATIONS



September, 1963: Seeking merger with
“another Wisconsin liberal arts
college of high educational quality,”
Stone had made overture to
Lawrence trustees

October 2, 1963: President Curtis Tarr meets
with Lawrence and Downer trustees

October 17, 1963: Basic agreement signed

October 20, 1963: News release finalized



Installation of Curtis Tarr, October 17, 1963

The board was looking for “another Wisconsin liberal arts college of high educational quality.” Lawrence was the first choice. Beyond two shared trustees, Frederic Sammond and Donald Schlichter, we don’t really know why Lawrence was chosen.

By September, Stone had already made an overture to Lawrence trustees. He told the Downer board that their reactions had been “enthusiastic.” In that September meeting, it was decided to go ahead with the negotiations for consolidation and sale of the property.

President Curtis Tarr first met with some Lawrence and Downer trustees on October 2, 1963 to talk about a potential consolidation. He learned the next week that Downer trustees were displeased, particularly unhappy that Lawrence would not agree to a hyphenated name, so they had made plans to pitch a deal to Ripon. But Lawrence intervened before that could happen. According to Tarr, it was his idea to establish Downer College as an entity within Lawrence. John Strange, president of the Institute of Paper Chemistry, built on this for the fully formed idea: Lawrence would change its name back to Lawrence University, consisting of Lawrence College for men and Downer College for women, the Conservatory of Music, and the affiliated Institute of Paper Chemistry. That proposal was met favorably by Downer trustees.

Throughout this time, they were using telephones at night to communicate back and forth to keep things secure – lots of precautions.

Once the basic agreement had been reached, people moved quickly so that the announcement could be made. Representatives of the Lawrence board signed an agreement drafted by the Downer board on Thursday, October 17th, in the midst of installation festivities. That Saturday, Tarr told his closest staff about the news. Sunday evening, they finalized the news release. I'm including these details just to emphasize how quickly this all came to pass.



Announcement, October 22, 1963

ANNOUNCEMENT

MADE BY CHARLES W. STONE,
CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES, MILWAUKEE-DOWNER COLLEGE

October 22, 1963

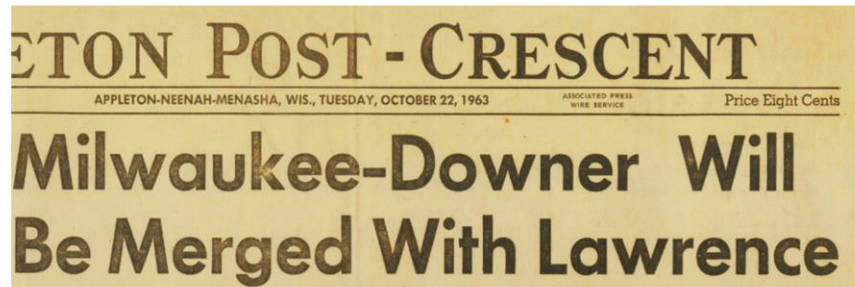
We have asked you to gather here at this time so that I may announce on behalf of the trustees an historic decision for the future of Milwaukee-Downer College. The Trustees of Milwaukee-Downer College and of Lawrence College have agreed to join together in the establishment of Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. The new University will be comprised of three coordinate colleges: Downer College for the education of women, Lawrence College for the education of men, and a Conservatory of Music.

You students who elect to continue your education next fall as members of the Downer College of Lawrence University will retain your academic standing as it would have been if this consolidation were not taking place. You members of the faculty and administration will be offered the opportunity to continue your work with Lawrence University with full protection of the rights to which you are entitled as members of the faculty and administration of Milwaukee-Downer College. All members of the Milwaukee-Downer Alumnae Association will have full membership in the Lawrence University Alumni Association.

I wish further to announce that this campus has been offered for sale to the University of Wisconsin for \$10,000,000 to permit expansion of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I have every reason to believe that this offer will be accepted. If it is, occupancy of the campus is proposed to take place as soon as practicable after commencement in June, 1964.

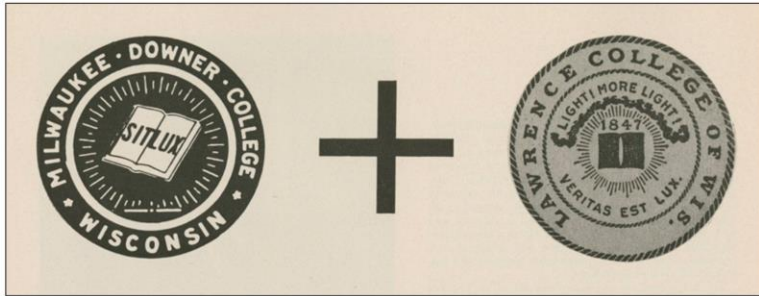
The proceeds from the sale of the campus will be combined with Milwaukee-Downer's endowment fund to create for Lawrence University a Downer Trust Fund for "the promotion of academic excellence in private education for women in a free society."

The announcement was made on Tuesday, October 22, 1963. Students, faculty, and staff were gathered for a special convocation at which Charles Stone read the announcement. Meanwhile in Appleton, Curtis Tarr had gathered the faculty in Harper Hall to announce the consolidation. He told Lawrence students shortly thereafter. The press release was sent out to the papers and radio stations at the same time as the meetings, and the news dominated the headlines in both Milwaukee and Appleton.



At the Milwaukee announcement, reporters and photographers from the Journal were on hand. This was because the Downer board had opted to inform the Journal ahead of time, as early as the late spring of 1963, in exchange for not leaking the news early. But the papers included front-page photos of students in tears and exploitative coverage of the reactions of the students and faculty. Everyone was shocked. Faculty were upset that they had not been informed ahead of time – they had made overtures to the trustees but were basically rebuffed. Students in particular had little idea of the difficult straits that the College was in. This wasn't a discussion that the college was having, and students and faculty alike were mainly upset that there hadn't even been a general discussion of matters before this sudden announcement. The trustees felt that the decision was too big and complex for the college as a whole to discuss. But this process was handled poorly – no question.

IV: CARRYING OUT THE CONSOLIDATION



Downer Girls Cooly Eye Lawrence (Boys)

Appleton Tour Shows Coeds Site of New Campus Resulting From Merger

By DAVID N. BEYERL
Of The Journal Staff
Appleton, Wis.—The once dis-
traught damels of Milwaukee-
Downer college met the likable
lads of confucational Lawrence
college here Saturday.

Both seemed to like what they saw.

The calm, collected Downer girls were the same girls who wept and wailed at the Oct. 22 announcement that Milwaukee-Downer was selling its campus to the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee and was merging with Lawrence.

Saturday, however, they didn't cry and they didn't laugh. They just looked.

The marriage, dictated in part by Downer's economic difficulties, will produce an offspring to be known as Lawrence university.

Shown Campus

About 65 girls, accompanied by their parents and Downer faculty members, came by bus for a two-hour tour of the Lawrence campus.

They heard a warm greeting from Lawrence student body president Stephen R. Elliott, 21, of Fond du Lac, who told them that the merger did not mean the swallowing up or melting down of either school. He added:

"We are genuinely interested in you."
"We need you."
"We welcome you wholeheartedly."

The girls and their parents

then set off on a tour of the campus. The tour, conducted by 30 Lawrence volunteers, ended in the student union with coffee and questions.

Parents Tagged Along
The parents tagged along. A typical parent was Leslie Vallentyne, a Manitowish attorney, whose daughter, Barbara, 19, attends Downer.

"When the merger was announced, she wrote me a 10-page letter of woe about the loss of tradition," Vallentyne said. "Now she's planning to transfer to Lawrence, and I think she's a little bit enthusiastic about it."

Most of the Downer girls, however, remained noncommittal.

Miss Mary Morton, dean of women at Lawrence, said: "I get the impression that some of them are enthusiastic, but most are curious."

Lawrence students were unreserved in their appreciation, however.

Males Like Idea

Richard Stuart, 20, of Lexington, Mass., chairman of the prospective student committee, commented: "The males love the idea."

His committee co-chairman, Miss Kristine Sodergren, 19, of Rockford, Ill., seconded his re-
sulting up or melting down of either school. He added:

"We are genuinely interested in you."
"We need you."
"We welcome you wholeheartedly."

The girls and their parents



Milwaukee Journal, November 3, 1963

After the announcement, plans were immediately set in motion, and it was really a whirlwind through the following fall. On November 2nd, buses took Downer students, faculty, and parents up to Lawrence. (As an aside: every single news article I saw reporting on this used rhetoric of arranged marriage or mail-order brides.)

Students: 49 out of 90 eligible, combined with Lawrence's student body of 1,200

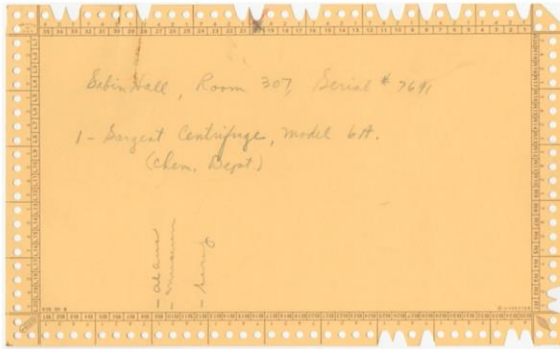
Faculty: 21 out of 30 joined with Lawrence's faculty of 120

Alumnae: 3,500 Downer alumnae joined Lawrence's alumnae body of 11,800



Some of the students and faculty who transferred to Lawrence, spring 1964

As a condition of the consolidation, all students in good academic standing were offered a place at Lawrence and promised to retain their status as if nothing had changed, and faculty were offered appointments at Lawrence based on the terms of their contracts at Downer. Number of students and faculty who transferred: 49 students (out of about 90 eligible for transfer, so slightly over half) and 21 faculty members (out of 30). One administrative staff member, John Bell, business officer at Downer, also transferred. Lawrence had a student body of about 1200 and a faculty of 120 at the time. 3,500 Downer alumnae joined Lawrence's alumni body of 11,800. (For five years after the consolidation, Lawrence and Milwaukee-Downer maintained separate alumni associations – the joint Lawrence University Alumni Association was formed in 1969, and headed by Downer alum Barbara Gray Spoerl.)



Punch card from inventory, 1964

Endowment: Downer's endowment of \$3.5 million + \$10 million for the sale of campus + Lawrence's endowment of \$8.5 million = \$22 million

Library: about 30,000 volumes from Downer joined Lawrence's library of 100,000

Other physical assets: 18 vans of instructional equipment, furniture, art

So here is the deal with the endowment: Lawrence had \$8.5 million, Downer had \$3.5 million, and the sale of the campus brought \$10 million – this added up to just about \$22 million endowment, larger than any other public or private school in Wisconsin. Because Lawrence was not looking to expand in size, remaining committed to the model of the small residential liberal arts college, these combined resources allowed Lawrence University a great deal of flexibility. So the importance of the combined financial resources for both Lawrence and Downer was huge.

Library: 30-some thousand volumes from the Chapman Library at Downer were integrated into the Lawrence library (a typical year's accession at the time was 7,000 volumes, so this was a huge, huge project for librarians. Not to mention the fact the Downer used LC cataloging and we used Dewey Decimal.)

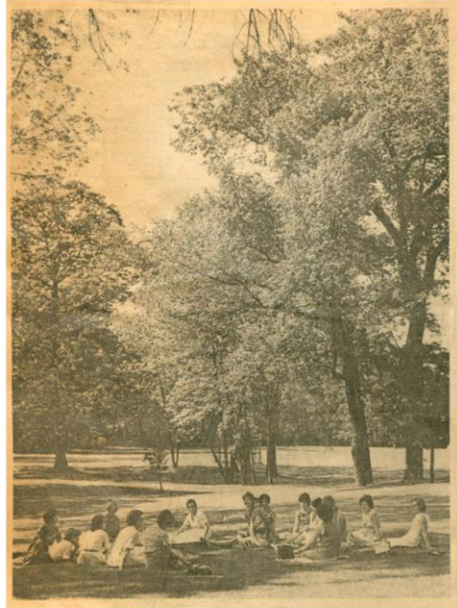
There had been a huge inventory project involving data collection on punch cards. In addition to the 15 truckloads of books, other physical assets transferred to Lawrence from Downer included 18 vans of instructional equipment, furniture, and art objects. Lawrence also took responsibility for moving the 22 faculty and staff households.

Myriad other details: I'll spare you. Could not enumerate all the logistical challenges

that this posed.

Permanent Exodus Creeps on Downer

Milwaukee Journal, May 27, 1964



Amidst all of this, the students and faculty at Downer were trying to finish up their year knowing that it would be the last for Milwaukee-Downer as they knew it. For everyone, this was difficult. There were a lot of different opinions about how best to celebrate and recognize Downer's traditions and legacy in this year, and the extent to which students should grieve the loss or look on the bright side. But, everyone moved forward, with the regatta, the Hat Hunt, Commencement and Reunion occurring in the spring.

July 1, 1964:
Lawrence University
is born

Consolidation ≠
merger

September 28,
1964: First day of
classes



First annual meeting of the Lawrence University Board of Trustees, May 17, 1965

The new Lawrence University was born on July 1, 1964. No question: this was a consolidation and NOT a merger. We followed the procedures for consolidation as required by Wisconsin statute – this means that both institutions cease to exist and a new one takes their place. So both groups of trustees had to dissolve themselves at their final meetings. A new board of trustees of 42 members was appointed – included 8 members of Downer’s board and the 2 who had been members of both.



Students plant a hawthorn tree next to Main Hall, 1965

Classes started in September. For Downer students, there were a number of adjustments. Moving to comparatively small-town Appleton was quite a change from being in the city of Milwaukee. Academically, Lawrence was on the trimester system by this time, while Downer had been on semesters. As far as student life goes, Lawrence had a long-standing Women's Association that was responsible for legislating dorm policy and other matters related to women's student governance, separate from the Student Executive Council on campus – the LWA was seen as comparable to the role of student government at Downer. (This association has changed a great deal over time, eventually morphing into today's Downer Feminist Council student group.)



Brokaw Annex housed O.T. and Home Ec. programs, 1964-1967

Home Economics and Elementary Education were continued at Lawrence on a “terminal basis” – only so long as to allow students who had already begun the programs to complete them.

Occupational Therapy was adopted on a trial basis. Mary Frances Heermans, head of the program, was confident that the program could be integrated with the liberal arts curriculum. So from 1964 to 1966, O.T. had a trial period and was housed in this house (known as Brokaw Annex – no longer standing, where Hawthornden is now). In the end, it was found that the sets of requirements for general education, major requirements, and certification in O.T. were too much. So faculty decided to terminate the program after June, 1967, by which time the students in the program would have completed all requirements.



Alice G. Chapman Teakwood Room, transferred to Jason Downer Commons, 1968



Unveiling the sundial, October 18, 1975

There were a couple of other aspects of the consolidation which took place a few years later. The Teakwood Room was identified right away as something that Downer students and alumnae wanted to see transferred to Lawrence. For logistical reasons, the transfer could not be completed right away. The room was dismantled and housed in storage for a few years until it could be brought up to Lawrence and installed in Jason Downer Commons, the cafeteria that opened in the fall of 1968.

The Merrill Hall sundial was transferred to Lawrence as a gift of the Milwaukee-Downer class of 1932 in 1973, and was formally installed and dedicated on the south face of Main Hall in October, 1975.

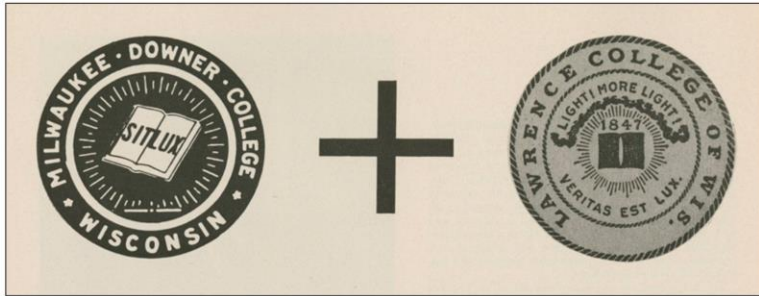


Joan Tomarkin Lucht '61 and Carolyn King Stephens '62 affix Milwaukee Landmarks plaque to Merrill Hall, May 1, 1976



The State was reportedly considering razing Milwaukee-Downer buildings in 1972-1973, and a committee of Downer alumnae as well as other members of the Lawrence and Milwaukee communities mobilized to advocate for historic recognition of the buildings. They succeeded - the quadrangle of Holton, Merrill, Johnston, and Greene Halls was designated a Milwaukee landmark in 1973 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

V: 50 YEARS LATER



Both Lawrence and Downer students will profit from an enlarged program of the most expensive but the most excellent kind of teaching — the seminar, the tutorial and the independent study project. Students from both institutions will benefit through increased scholarship funds available from the vastly enlarged endowment.

With a \$21½ million endowment, Lawrence University will be able to undertake imaginative educational programs, both on and off the campus,

Lawrence will be able to include in its enrollment students from a wider range of economic background; no institution wants to educate only those who can afford tuition, but those who can profit from its educational offerings.

Lawrence University has no large-scale plans for expansion in enrollment. It believes in the value of the small institution; it plans to use its expanded resources to pursue excellence in depth.

Excerpts from "Strength through Union," circa 1963

So, fifty years later, here we are. Hopefully you don't feel like it's been 50 years since I started this presentation. I got the title for this presentation, "Strength through Union," from a small brochure that was put together soon after the announcement of the consolidation to answer some basic questions, including what is the immediate value and the long-term value of the consolidation? I was struck by how clear-eyed the perspective was and how closely we have held to that vision. It cited as immediate values: increased resources for offering seminars and tutorials, increased scholarship funds. In the long term: "Lawrence University will be able to undertake imaginative educational programs, both on and off campus ...Lawrence will be able to include in its enrollment students from a wider range of economic background." And most importantly: "Lawrence University has no large-scale plans for expansion in enrollment; it plans to use its expanded resources to pursue excellence in depth." I think that is what Lawrence and Downer have done together and what we are continuing to do.

At Lawrence, there is an ongoing commitment to women's scholarship in the liberal arts, in a small, residential, collaborative, vibrant setting. I benefitted from this commitment myself as a 2008 Lawrence graduate. There are physical elements on campus that reflect Downer's heritage, old and new to celebrate this weekend.



Archives stacks, MDC aisle

195 linear feet (110 boxes) of
Milwaukee-Downer College
records

Large number of supplemental
collections donated by faculty
and alumnae

133 artifacts

All collections inventoried and
cataloged, selections digitized

And lastly, because this is my talk and you are a captive audience, I want to briefly highlight some tangible and less tangible aspects of Downer's legacy and our shared history that are facilitated through the Archives. Physically, we have a large collection of records, papers, photographs, scrapbooks, and artifacts from Downer. We've made a lot of progress in the last year toward making these materials widely accessible and usable, and these efforts will be ongoing as they are for all of our collections.



Milwaukee-Downer rowers with the *Katie* rowing shell, circa 1940

It's one thing to preserve this kind of stuff – preservation is a key function of the Archives – but it's not the only one, or even the primary one. An archive helps people understand and appreciate the past – this is where the value lies. I feel that this understanding is especially important for students at Lawrence. In the same way that I imagine those of you at Downer would have felt a connection to past generations of students through longstanding traditions, long-tenured faculty, and campus atmosphere, Lawrence students feel that connection when they learn about Lawrence history and Downer history, and especially when they work with original materials like papers and photographs. When the Lawrence crew team celebrated an anniversary this past fall, they compiled photographs of crew at Downer to recognize this heritage. I watched students browse and select photographs, and they were having a blast– they recognized Althea Heimbach – this was meaningful for them.



Efemmera exhibit in the Mudd Gallery, April 2014

In a more recent event, students from the Downer Feminist Council created an art exhibit using scrapbooks, artifacts and photographs from Milwaukee-Downer collections and juxtaposed these materials with art from current women students at Lawrence to explore the idea of feminism on campus – a very interesting use of materials. Other students have used Downer materials for historical research projects – interacting with original primary sources, posing unique questions, really engaging with this history – these are the opportunities that the liberal arts is all about. So when I think about Downer’s legacy, in addition to all of the other things that we are celebrating this weekend, this is something I am personally grateful for.

QUESTIONS?

