

3 The Morrill Act of 1862 and Coordination

Shaping the American University and the American State

A variety of forces drove the emergence of the American university, the expansion of the American national state, and their shared development. While no single event was the catalyst, the origins of such development can be traced to the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862. Beyond being the most extensive and ambitious federal education program undertaken to that point in time, the Morrill Act helped spur the coordination and entrepreneurship that would be essential for the formation of research universities and for these universities' evolving service both to and with the national state.

The Morrill Act and the Origins of Entrepreneurship

The American university's fundamental contribution to policy and governance stemmed from institutional coordination and entrepreneurial maximization of resources. The roots of this contribution lay in a Vermont congressman's stubborn pursuit of agricultural legislation. A shopkeeper from Burlington, who received no formal education beyond the age of fifteen, Justin Morrill originally introduced his plan to establish agricultural colleges in 1857. The legislation passed both houses but was vetoed by President James Buchanan. Five years later, Morrill tried again. With the southern delegations having already seceded, Morrill's legislation this time passed as the first piece of an extensive Republican development program.¹

The Morrill Act provided land grants within each state and required that the funds from sale of these lands

be inviolably appropriated by each State . . . to the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture, and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.²

Morrill was not necessarily a visionary. He was not seeking to build large research universities, nor was he seeking to create a national system of schools that would develop multifaceted expertise. In fact, early proponents of academic research, such as Henry Tappan of the University of Michigan, dismissed Morrill's legislation. Interestingly, funds were not dispensed by a national agency that standardized the land-grant colleges and their curriculum. Nor were the funds spent on establishing a federally run college of agriculture. State governments were responsible for surveying the lands, selling the tracts, collecting the proceeds, and establishing the colleges.

Each stage in the development of the Morrill institutions was fraught with opportunities for political intrigue. In most every state, competing local agricultural groups, religious groups, and others sought to secure funds for their particular vision of higher education. The act was vague, leaving the actual design of colleges to individual states and institutional entrepreneurs. A primary challenge to building institutions dedicated to an expanded curriculum and research was the expense of the laboratories, libraries, faculty, and other resources.

The land grants provided by the Morrill Act were to raise funds for colleges offering instruction in agriculture and the mechanic arts. Many university presidents, led by George Atherton of Pennsylvania State University, developed schools that fulfilled Morrill's legislative vision.³ Other institutional entrepreneurs, with the help of cooperative legislatures, attempted to use the grants as seed for an institutional expansion of service and mission much broader than Morrill had intended. Cornell in New York, Yale in Connecticut, and the University of California, Berkeley, represented various approaches available to states for those utilizing the resources the act generated.

Maximizing Implementation: Andrew Dickson White and Cornell

In New York, Andrew Dickson White parlayed a federal grant and funds from a private benefactor into what many educational historians

describe as America's first research university. The founding of Cornell has been labeled "the best use of the funds made available under the act."⁴ New York State maximized its public funds by combining them with the private gift of philanthropist Ezra Cornell, who hoped to "found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." White's efforts are significant not only because they created, arguably, America's first research university but also because they reflect broader trends in universities' contribution to American political development. Specifically, the story of Cornell's founding underscores the importance of institutional entrepreneurship by and coordination between academic leaders. The federal government did not systematically pursue research and expertise with the Morrill Act. Rather, institutional entrepreneurs took a simple educational subsidy and shaped institutions of learning with a new notion of service to the national state. In other words, while the federal government was a patron of university-based research and expertise from the outset; it was not necessarily involved in defining the nature and structure of its pursuit.

The son of a wealthy Syracuse banker, White graduated from Yale in 1852 and then traveled extensively throughout Europe, accompanied by his good friend and classmate Daniel Coit Gilman, the future president of Johns Hopkins University. While overseas, White studied for a semester at the University of Berlin. Upon his return to the United States, White went back to New Haven for a year, before securing a professorship at the University of Michigan. In Ann Arbor, he taught under the highly influential Henry Tappan. White would later write in his autobiography, "to no man is any success I may have afterward had in the administration of Cornell University so greatly due as to him."⁵

White left Ann Arbor in 1862. After a brief sojourn to Britain, he returned to his family home in upstate New York. He was the Republican nominee for that state's senate soon thereafter, in November 1863. White won election easily and took his seat in January 1864. Among those joining him in the state senate was fellow Republican Ezra Cornell, who had served the previous two years in the state assembly. Though raised on a small farm and without formal education, Cornell was also exceptionally wealthy, from having helped develop the telegraph with Samuel Morse. In the senate, Cornell was made chair of the Agriculture Committee, and White was made chairman of the Literature Committee, which included education.

While the Morrill Act was a federal initiative, responsibility for implementing its provisions and establishing an educational institution

dedicated to agriculture and the mechanic arts fell to state legislatures. The act provided a grant of thirty thousand acres for each senator and representative a state had in Congress. New York's share was thus by far the biggest, but it was also highly contested. Two upstate schools, New York Peoples College in Montour Falls and New York State Agricultural College in Ovid, claimed to be the most deserving schools for receipt of the grants.

Founded in 1853 by Charles Cook and counting Horace Greeley among its initial supporters, the Peoples College was founded to train students in "practical" arts and sciences. The college opened in 1860, with an impressive main building donated by Cook. However, it had four professors, no endowment, and no students of college age.

Also founded in 1853, the Agricultural College was similarly struggling. Established with a decent endowment of forty thousand dollars, generated through local fund-raising, it began offering classes in December 1860, with four faculty and twenty-seven students. The advent of the Civil War called away the institution's president as well as most of its students, and the school closed its doors in November of 1861.⁶

The leaders and many well-placed supporters of these two institutions—one struggling and one dormant—saw the Morrill monies as an opportunity to ensure what had been a questionable existence. Land grants provided a means for raising funds but were not direct revenue. In fact, for New York and most eastern states, there were not enough public lands to satisfy the grant. Instead, the grant served as scrip for acreage that was in the western territories.

Nonetheless, the promise of revenue from 989,920 acres, whatever the form, was highly coveted. Charles Cook—who had been elected to the state senate in 1862—and the supporters of Peoples College possessed a fair amount of influence within the legislature. In March 1863, the institution was given the rights to the grant. However, this victory was not absolute, as skeptics of Cook's college required that the grant be presented only when his institution had hired ten full-time professors, attracted 250 students, and built a 250-acre farm. These conditions might possibly have been met, but in January 1864, Cook had a stroke, and doubts regarding the Peoples College's ability to meet its obligations grew. These doubts meant that as White and Cornell took their seats in the state senate, the legislature began considering alternatives.

To this point, White had been an active outside observer. He wrote about the general need for a "truly great university" modeled after those in Germany in the breadth and depth of its work, and he corre-

sponded at length with his good friend Gilman about the higher education opportunity that he feared his state was missing. Cornell was more intimately involved. Since he served on the Agriculture Committee of the state assembly, he was also on the Agricultural College's state Board of Trustees and had signed a petition supporting the school's efforts to obtain the Morrill funds.⁷

After Cook's stroke, Ovid's supporters mobilized. In the spring of 1864, Cornell introduced a bill proposing that the funds be split between the two institutions. He also offered to supplement Ovid's funds with a sizable personal donation. As chair of the Literature Committee, White buried the bill, arguing that the funds should not be split and that neither of the "existing" institutions would be an appropriate recipient of the money. Detailing his efforts, White wrote to Gilman: "I am fighting like a terrier against those who would tear that noble donation into bits. I do so for a good college in this state."⁸

With White stubbornly refusing to release Cornell's bill, the trustees of the Agricultural College met in September, ostensibly to bury their dying institution. Before the meeting, White had heard from Cornell that an alternative would be suggested. White appealed to Cornell to use his proposed gift to the fullest and create a university that pursued the finest scholarship in not only technology and science but also literature and the arts, encouraging him to use the full share of the state's Morrill funds as support.

Following much lobbying and debate, White succeeded. He wrote Gilman, "You will be glad to hear that Sen. Cornell offered \$300,000 on condition that the whole Agricultural fund go to the Ag. college and that it be placed in his part of the state." White, recognizing that the "fate of the grant" depended on strong leadership, asked Gilman for his suggestions.

Do you know any first rate man or do you know any one who knows such a man to take the presidency of the NY State Ag. Coll. Said institution will probably be a consolidation of Agricultural and Peoples College and will have besides other funds the \$800,000 land grant. A first rate man who understands agriculture and something besides. Salary whatever is necessary to get and keep such a being.⁹

White had been trained as a historian, so he turned to Gilman, who, as a member of the faculty at Yale's Sheffield Scientific School, was more familiar with the practical implementation of the Morrill grants. Reflecting the origins of coordination, White asked for his good friend Gilman's assistance in finding a leader for New York State's land-grant college, and he also requested that Gilman pass along "any document

useful in relation to Agricultural colleges."¹⁰ At the meeting of the Agricultural College's Board of Trustees, Cornell solidified his commitment of three hundred thousand dollars, and the consolidation plan was formally approved.

White was elated, his efforts to use the Morrill monies for something more than an agricultural college were moving forward. He also realized that the consolidation proposal needed more detail, and he turned to Gilman for help incorporating instruction in agriculture and the mechanic arts into his grand scheme. Declining an invitation to accompany Gilman on a visit to Ann Arbor, White stressed his eagerness to meet with Gilman to discuss the proposed college at length. White noted that Ezra Cornell had offered three hundred thousand dollars for the college to be located in Ithaca, which would bring the available funds to \$1.1 million. Reiterating the resources available and the opportunity presented, White concluded: "it is in reference to this whole thing that I wish to talk with you. I hope to see a state university come out of it."¹¹ White asked if Gilman might come up to Syracuse sometime before the Christmas season. At their meeting, the two men not only laid out plans for a university in Ithaca; they also agreed that White should accept the challenge of heading the new institution.

White was optimistic. However, the approval of the Agricultural College's Board of Trustees was only the first step. In February 1865, Cornell introduced a bill for the founding of a new institution in Ithaca based on a proposal he and White had constructed. Realizing the challenge presented by the supporters of Peoples College and other higher education institutions, who attacked their proposed university as "godless," White and Cornell played what modern observers might describe as "hardball" politics. They used their powers as committee chairs to the fullest, with White holding bills for the construction of a new state capital until the Cornell University proposal was considered.¹²

Additionally, a well-timed gift from Cornell to Genessee College, a struggling Methodist institution with a number of friends in the state legislature, garnered key support when the vote was finally taken.¹³ In May 1865, the state legislature approved Cornell's charter. White was elated and began to undertake plans for the new university.

I did the most work and the hardest I have ever done in this fair office fighting rogues and dispelling the prejudices of honest men. I have been drawing up plans of buildings, schedules of professorships, etc., courses of study and though I have much aid from books, observation, experience and thought, I feel greatly the want of conference with men of strength.¹⁴

Attempting to build a research institution, White made creative and maximizing use of federal funds. Seeking the counsel of such men as Gilman, whose advice he sought in regard to the selection of faculty, the acquisition of books, and the building of laboratories, White also began the process of loosely coupled coordination among proponents of the research university. Such coordination would help define the specific usages of funds as well as the general parameters of institutional development.

White was most vociferously criticized by those who feared that New York's public institution would be too focused on agriculture and the mechanic arts. Responding to the *New York Tribune's* criticism that the school would not offer a "classical education," White stressed that the institution was committed to providing education in all its forms.

The act of the Congress, and the charter from the State of New York, which created the original endowment, while laying stress upon agriculture and the mechanic arts, are careful to name "other scientific and classical branches" and "military tactics" as subjects of study.

Mr. Cornell in his endowment used these words "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." With such muniments as these, it will be seen at once that while the Trustees are bound to do all in their power to promote through special education in agriculture, the mechanic arts, etc., they are also bound to promote thorough general education; and certainly they are bound not to "discourage" any study whatever.¹⁵

For White, the Morrill Act provided an opportunity to create a university that provided the "liberty of choice." The act and Mr. Cornell's gift meant not only that the school could pursue multiple areas of study but, in keeping with White's ambition, that the school could pursue multiple areas of study in a detailed and thorough manner.

The Morrill Act did not create the ambition of such university builders as Cornell and White. However, as the tale of Cornell's founding represents, for institutional entrepreneurs, federal investment in the Morrill Act was well timed. The act encouraged and employed the nation's growing material wealth, as well as its young German-trained, research- and university-oriented scholars. It fostered partnerships between wealth and scholarship, creating Cornell; inspiring Johns Hopkins, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other new institutions; and prodding Yale, Harvard, and other existing institutions to pursue a research-based model of higher education.

*The Early Limits of Implementation: The Cases of
Yale and California*

The politics surrounding the Morrill Act did more than just lead public institutions beyond the desire to instruct and train in agriculture and the mechanic arts. In some instances, the act also gave classically focused private institutions the opportunity to expand into the more applied areas of science and technology. Most notable among these institutions was Yale, whose Sheffield Scientific School served as the state of Connecticut's Morrill institution for more than thirty years.

Yale alumni held great sway in the state legislature at the time of the Morrill Act's passage. The Sheffield Scientific School was just beginning to take shape as an alternative to the classical curriculum of Yale College. While not readily accepted as an equal partner by some students and faculty, the Sheffield School was essential to the development of Yale as a true university, and Morrill funds were essential to the development of the Sheffield School. Not only did the state help fund the school's daily operations by giving the school interest on funds raised through the sale of land grants; it also provided scholarships for students who would not otherwise have attended.¹⁶

Eventually, the school's commitment to teach "principles rather than details" and to succeed "not so much by offering particular attractions to farmers as a class or to mechanics as a class, as by inviting students who wish to become scholars in science, well-trained in the higher departments of investigation, able to stand unabused by the side of scholars of letters,"¹⁷ lost favor with the state's growing agricultural lobby. In 1887, an effort was made to rescind the grant; and by 1892, the proceeds of the original Morrill Act and of the second one, passed in 1890, were used to establish the new State Agricultural School in Storrs. Yale's loss of the grant is no more remarkable, however, than its receipt of it. Though the state's agriculture interests would later complain that it had cost twenty-five thousand dollars per student for the only six graduates of the agriculture program,¹⁸ Yale admitted 241 state scholarship students. More important, it found a steady source of funding that allowed its fledgling and slightly embattled scientific school to weather the challenges and to become an integral part of the university by the end of the century.

Interaction between institutional entrepreneurship and political savvy were not unique to the East Coast. The University of California was born of similar circumstances to Cornell and Yale's Sheffield Sci-

entific School: a struggling Presbyterian college's offer of acreage in the Berkeley hills and the crafty politicking of the governor and state legislature combined to establish the university. Higher education was a concern in California from that state's very acceptance into the Union. The state constitution of 1849 pledged to build a public university. By the time Congress passed the Morrill Act thirteen years later, this pledge remained unfulfilled. In drafting its constitution, California had borrowed heavily from Iowa's state constitution, adopting verbatim its provisions regarding education. California thus adopted the same Northwest Ordinance rhetoric that had helped found the University of Michigan and other midwestern state universities—regarding the necessity of education for the furtherance of religion and morality and the desire to establish a state-run “seminary of learning.”

Higher education was only one of many public priorities in California, and for a number of years, a state university existed there only in rhetoric. In 1861, Governor Leland Stanford established a committee to advocate for a state university comparable to the finest in the country. The committee disappointed Stanford, however, by reporting that such ambition was futile because the state lacked the funds necessary to create “a University in the proper sense of the term, a worthy rival of the world-renowned European universities, placing California where she should be at the educational centre of the states bordering the Pacific.”¹⁹ Without sufficient funds or particular enthusiasm for any one plan, California remained without a state-run university.

When the Morrill Act was adopted in 1862, it not only provided additional funds; it also reinvigorated the debate over what type of higher learning institution the state of California should create. In the fall of 1864, the state legislature officially accepted the Morrill monies. The state did not, however, have an agreement on a plan for the institution to receive these funds. Acceptance of the Morrill grant meant that the state would need to establish a college within two years or forfeit the funds.

In March 1866, a little more than six months before the deadline, the state legislature smoothly passed legislation creating a college that would “carry out the provisions for maintaining an Agricultural and Mechanical Arts college.” The bill pleased the large agricultural and mining interests, allowed for any location to vie for the campus, and left open the prospect of a broader curriculum. The only interests dissatisfied with the legislation were those from existing institutions, as the legislation required that the funds “not be united or connected with any other institution of higher learning in this state.”²⁰

The state's Republican governor Frederick Low was made chairman of the new institution's board, and by September of 1866, solicitation of lands for prospective sites began. The committee agreed that a college dedicated to agriculture, mining, and the mechanic arts would be built first, potentially followed by a campus dedicated to broader education. While spearheading the move to place the new state institution in Alameda county, Governor Low developed reservations about the limited scope of the project, after attending a June commencement address at the College of California by Yale professor and leading scientific scholar Benjamin Silliman. Low was struck by Silliman's criticism of the current plan as shortsighted and as a setback to efforts to create a true university in the state. In the late summer of 1867, after further discussion with Silliman and others, Low introduced a plan to revise the legislation creating the college. Low's plan called for a new college of agriculture, mining, and the mechanic arts to be augmented by a college of letters that would be formed from the existing College of California.

In October 1867, the College of California's board accepted Low's proposal and agreed to disband and turn over their campus to the new institution once it was established. In November 1867, the board planning the agriculture and mining college adopted a resolution accepting the College of California's offer of land in return for help in retiring its debt. With both parties in agreement, convincing the legislature was a relatively easy task, as the College of California offer was seen as a cheap addition that took nothing away from the proposed agricultural college.²¹ State assemblyman John Dwindle, who was also a member of the board planning the agricultural college, drafted a new university bill formalizing the agreement, and in March 1868, the University of California was created.

Though building in Berkeley would be slow and though controversies over presidential leadership and local politics would hamper growth, the University of California originated in the politics and coordination surrounding the Morrill Act. The initial legislation simply called for an institution to instruct in agriculture and the mechanic arts, but the fight over such federal largesse demanded that greater constituencies be served and that broader ambitions be undertaken. The university would later establish a farm at Davis and eventually move all its agricultural teaching and training there; however, the Morrill Act gave birth to the diverse, research-based curriculum that the university attempted to undertake from its earliest stages.

The Morrill Act, Institutional Entrepreneurs, and the Origins of Coordination

The execution of the Morrill Act was not the first time the federal government had provided a source of revenue for education. Michigan, Iowa, and other states developed their flagship universities by using “seminary of learning” grants drawn from the Northwest Ordinance’s provision that with “religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government, and the happiness of mankind, schools and means of education shall forever be encouraged.” In some ways, the Morrill Act can be seen as an extension of these early grants. Though formally geared toward higher education, the Morrill Act also represented an effort to universalize education.

The Morrill Act was more significant for how it looked forward than for how it reflected back. The act provided resources and allowed leeway for institutional entrepreneurs seeking to develop “true” research universities. White was not alone in seeing the Morrill Act as an opportunity to develop research universities. Daniel Coit Gilman (who served briefly as president at Berkeley), Benjamin Silliman (who served as dean of Yale’s Sheffield Scientific School), and others sought to use Morrill funds to extend the application of scientific and rational principles to multiple fields of endeavor.

The infant nature of instruction in agriculture and the mechanic arts fostered early coordination between university leaders throughout the country. Educators at institutions that received Morrill funds and educators at those that did not corresponded with one another regarding the best faculty, courses, and research apparatuses for meeting the varied demands and expectations of the act. Additionally, educators sought to clarify their mission, define their relation to the national state, and develop standards for their institutions.

Of course, such informal coordination, built on personal and professional ties, was not unique to the Morrill Act. However, the political challenges the act posed, the material resources it provided, and the potential for institutional reforms it offered meant that university leaders sought advice and counsel from their peers. In the years right after the act’s passage, coordination of leading institutions was driven by the entrepreneurial activities of Daniel Coit Gilman, who was among the founding faculty of Yale’s Sheffield Scientific School and was a classmate and close friend of Cornell President Andrew Dickson White. Gilman proposed to undertake a survey of existing colleges to assess

how Morrill funds were being spent. The U.S. commissioner of education agreed to fund Gilman's study. Visiting Berkeley in 1870, Gilman so impressed the faculty and regents that he was offered the presidency of the institution. Hopeful that he might replace the soon retiring Theodore Woolsley at Yale, Gilman declined. However, when he was passed over at Yale for the clergyman and academic traditionalist Noah Porter, Gilman accepted the California position.

From his time at Sheffield Scientific School and his survey of Morrill institutions, Gilman had developed the belief that in addition to including colleges dedicated to the study of agriculture and the mechanic arts, Morrill institutions should use the grants as seed money to pursue research in a variety of fields. Gilman actively promoted this position, and along with like-minded and similarly stationed men, such as White, he encouraged others to do the same.

Before even being formally inaugurated as the University of California's president, Gilman articulated his desire to develop in the distant West a full-fledged university with Morrill funds as its basis. Addressing the San Francisco Academy of Sciences at a September 1872 meeting honoring Professor Louis Aggasiz, Gilman stated:

He [Aggasiz] has told you that the museum at Cambridge [Harvard] is distinguished as the museum of today. Should it not be so with the University? Should it not be the University for the wants of today? Should we not use it for the great problems which belong to this generation, for the great future that is opening upon us? Should we not all unite to gather up the best of the past experience of every nation, the accumulations of all men before us to bring them to bear upon our society, and upon, I will trust you will allow me to say it, our own State of California?²²

Gilman continued these themes at his inauguration in November. Addressing his audience on the "building of the university," Gilman emphasized the larger relation between schools and society.

Everywhere among civilized people, universities in their comprehensive scope are in this year of grace receiving impulses which are creditable to the spirit of the age as they are hopeful for years to come. Our state and national governments see that the questions of higher education must be met in the public councils, and in many places are vying with one another to devise wise schemes of educational development.²³

Gilman went on to list a variety of programs in research and professional schools at other institutions around the country and ended this enumeration by stating that these represented fruitful "devises and arrangements to allure young men to higher attainment and to aid them in their onward steps." "Such," he maintained, "is the hopeful

aspect of university education elsewhere.”²⁴ Gilman recognized the promise of the university in its relation to the “spirit of the age,” a spirit that valued the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, as well as the application of knowledge to issues of society and governance.

In his inaugural address, Gilman pronounced more than the potential of the university in general. His emphasis was on the potential of the university he was to guide. Though it might have seemed a bit ambitious considering the age and location of the institution, Gilman stressed that Berkeley was as full of promise as any established university.

First it is a “University,” and not a high school, nor a college, nor an academy of sciences, nor an industrial school which we are charged to build. Some of the features may, indeed, be included in or developed with the University: but the University means more than any or all of them. The University is the most comprehensive term which can be employed to indicate a foundation for the promotion and diffusion of knowledge—a group of agencies organized to advance the arts and sciences of every sort, and to train young men as scholars for all the intellectual callings of life. . . . It is “of the people and for the people”—not in any low or unworthy sense, but in the highest and noblest relations to their intellectual and moral well being.²⁵

The university was thus to serve the state by pursuing knowledge that was both useful to and elevating of its people. This knowledge, this expertise, was essential for educating students to serve.

Gilman’s ambition was not enough to overcome a lack of support from the state legislature and the general public. Responding to Gilman’s complaints about political meddling and a lack of public support, his friend Andrew Dickson White sympathized with his plight.

Among the great branches of education in this country perhaps the greatest is the education of the people to the idea of their responsibility for public education in all its parts. It is hard at first but the idea will be developed in California as it has been in Michigan, so that the time will come, and that I think at no very distant day, when its state university will be safer in the control of the people than if it excluded them from any connection with it.²⁶

In his expression of support, White articulated the often felt but rarely articulated belief that public universities were best off when safe from popular control. This idea was not only crucial in defining the development of the university’s mission and tasks in the abstract but also fundamental to its selection of leadership, as we will soon encounter.

White hoped public support would benefit universities in “no very distant day,” but he also acknowledged that such a day would still be too far off to help Gilman at Berkeley. He encouraged Gilman to consider the newly established Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Writing Gilman in September 1874, White mentioned that the trustees of Johns Hopkins had just finished “a very thorough inspection” of Cornell, having previously been at Harvard and Yale, and were moving on to Michigan. White described them as “men of cultivation and gentlemen.” He concluded by confiding in his good friend:

Between ourselves, I think that you are to be called there, for I find that Eliot, Porter, and myself thoroughly agreed upon you as the man to organize the Institution for them. From the questions asked I judge that your organizing of faculty, your knowledge of educational matters at home and abroad, your catholicity in regards to all departments of knowledge and your liberal orthodoxy in religious matters gives them a great deal of confidence in you.²⁷

The coordination between leading academics was as notable as White’s lobbying. It was only natural that since Johns Hopkins was modeling itself on the “leading” institutions of higher education, it should ask for their guidance in selecting its leadership. This process helped lead, if not to uniformity, then to a consensus of opinion regarding the development of higher education. White continued to lobby his friend regarding the Johns Hopkins position, highlighting the opportunity it provided. Writing Gilman in December 1874, he stressed, “My general opinion is that the chance is a grand one—that there can be built up there a University in the highest sense—and I know of no one who can do it as well as yourself.”²⁸

Gilman’s prominent role in developing coordination between institutions would continue and in fact increase as he became founding president of Johns Hopkins University. Endowed by the Clifton family that had made its fortune as a primary owner of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, Johns Hopkins might seem a peculiar institution to have a fundamental effect on the evolution of federally sponsored education in agriculture and the mechanic arts. It was private and did not possess an agricultural college. However, Gilman worked closely with White at Cornell, his successors at California, the faculty of Yale’s Sheffield Scientific School, and James Burrill Angell at the University of Michigan (while Michigan was not a land-grant institution, Angell’s influence would help shape all the universities of the developing Midwest and Pacific Coast) to expand the scope of the Morrill Act to focus on research and its application.

More important, the Morrill Act’s influence lay not necessarily in the institutions it created as much as in the creative freedom it provided institutional entrepreneurs, such as White, to develop models of higher education and public service for other universities, both public and pri-

vate. These institutions and those educated at them would define the parameters and expectations of research and its application, often supplying the first faculty of the post-Morrill era. By defining such parameters and expectations, these institutions—not the federal government—became primarily responsible for determining how the Morrill Act would be implemented and how its monies would be employed.

These loosely coupled institutions worked to define the role of expertise not for colleges of agriculture but for the federal government itself. The immediate place of emerging research universities in the implementation of the Morrill Act is fairly straightforward. They defined academic standards and approaches, trained faculty and researchers, and developed techniques and methods for these colleges. The long-term impact is less obvious but just as clear. As Daniel Carpenter notes, the development of scientific agriculture significantly altered the culture of the Department of Agriculture at the turn of the century.²⁹ Though instituted by agency head Jeremiah Rusk, this dedication to applied research was largely grounded in universities that had taken Morrill's legislation and independently extended its reach beyond his intentions.

It would be extreme, however, to suggest that universities simply grabbed Morrill monies and applied them as they wished. Programmatically, the Morrill Act fostered numerous partnerships. Among the most prominent partnerships stemming from the act were agricultural experiment stations. The state of Connecticut used Morrill funds to establish the first such station in Middletown in 1875. While the Connecticut station was not formally affiliated with an agricultural college, others soon followed at such institutions as Cornell and the University of California. Funded through Morrill grants and often staffed by professors and researchers from the Department of Agriculture, these stations were a creative attempt to maximize resources.

The Morrill Act did not require experiment stations. However, such stations were a means to address concerns about limited attendance that had plagued the colleges since their beginning and to develop an audience for the expertise such colleges could provide. In New York, Connecticut, and California, experiment stations proved such a successful adaptive use of Morrill funds that it inspired the Hatch Act of 1887, which provided funds for the establishment of an experiment station at every land-grant college. Reporting on the role of experiment stations in his annual report of 1882, the head of Berkeley's agriculture program since 1875, E. W. Hilgard, gave a sense of its creative use.

While the performance of the work of agricultural surveys and experiment stations by the colleges is not prescribed as a fundamental function by the Act, experience has shown it to be one of the most important means at their command for benefiting agriculture at the present, not only by the actual demonstration of the best methods of treating soils and crops under endlessly varying local conditions, but also in showing farmers the advantages to be derived from an intelligent observation of facts, and from application of scientific knowledge and principles to their pursuit, thus inducing fathers to give their sons the opportunity of acquiring such knowledge for themselves in the institutions created for that purpose.³⁰

“Selling” the benefits of the Morrill Act to farmers was a basic responsibility of universities’ partnerships with the federal government. More significantly, as Hilgard understood, the university was not only seeking to convince skeptical farmers of the value of the Morrill Act; it was attempting to show the value of expert knowledge and scientific techniques.

Buoyed by an entrepreneurial effort to establish multiple experiment stations and conduct multiple surveys, the University of California would have relative success in attracting farmers and their sons. However, though students from farming communities would take an agricultural course or two, they usually focused on other courses of study. For a school that had gained much of its initial funding from a grant designated for education in agriculture and the mechanic arts, the University of California had a strikingly low number of students enrolled in its agricultural college (see table 1). This pattern of enrollment did not eliminate the need for experiment stations. In fact, it simply enhanced the demands on the stations by the university, as they were seen not only as an effective tool for increasing opportunity and awareness of the institution but also as a means for pleasing the agricultural interests in the state.³¹

Like many major policy initiatives, the implementation of the Morrill Act was far more significant than its development, introduction, or adoption. Its impact was far from immediate. Five years after its passage, only twelve states had chartered schools to accept funds. Twenty-seven years after its passage, legislative squabbling or lack of initiative meant that some states had only limited collegiate education available in agriculture and the mechanic arts.³² Such shortcomings as these led to the passage of the second Morrill Act in 1890. The second act supplemented the funds of the 1862 act and required that African Americans be granted access to such education. In the southern states, a policy of “separate but equal” education led to the creation of distinct land-grant

TABLE 1. Students at the University of California, 1884–95

	1884–85	1885–86	1886–87	1887–88	1888–89	1889–90	1890–91	1891–92	1892–93	1893–94	1894–95
Agricultural students	8	7	6	6	10	9	NA	NA	NA	17	17
Total students	241	250	288	306	363	401	NA	NA	NA	753	1,024

Note: Figures are not available for 1891–93. Owing to the university having no president at the time of submission, the university did not file a report between 1890 and 1892. However, even without these figures, the pattern seems quite clear.

institutions for African Americans. These schools formed the core of what today are known as historically black colleges and universities.

While the first Morrill Act of 1862 might not have provided for the universal education its author desired, the act was highly influential and helped facilitate a fundamental evolution in the nature and purpose of higher education. The act was so broad in scope and so open to interpretation that all potential for university relations with the national state were incorporated within it. Seeking to implement the act, university leaders often acted as institutional entrepreneurs, demonstrating the capacity of the university to coordinate policy and maximize resources as both active partner with and independent agent for the developing national state.

Defining Their Public: Universities and Presidential Selection

Universities were public institutions in their service and often in their funding. With the passage of the Morrill Act, the meaning of public service was being redefined. The development of a loosely coupled but highly coordinated group of academic elites meant that national standards for universities and expectations of service began to evolve. The selection of leaders for these developing research universities was instrumental to defining these standards and expectations. Considering the typical presidential selection processes at two institutions seeded with Morrill funds, Cornell and the University of California, we find that while universities might have seen themselves as partners with government in terms of serving the public good, their selection of leaders was a very closed and tightly controlled process in which the heads of national academic institutions would hold as much, if not more, influence than the heads of local political ones. Thus, in one of their most fundamental institutional functions—that of selecting leaders—even those institutions considered to be state schools were not publicly controlled.

Personality and Coordination: Presidential Selection at Cornell

While relatively successful in his efforts to build a university in Ithaca, White found battles with various critics—namely, state legislators and the populist newspapers—highly taxing. Similar to James Burrill Angell at the University of Michigan, White offered his resignation only to have it declined. As an alternative, White took various leaves of absence. For his first leave, in 1873, White sought to have Gilman serve as interim president. Upon his eventual departure twelve years later,

White arranged to have Charles Kendall Adams chosen as his successor. Both efforts represented a politicking reflective of the very close-knit community of higher education in this era. White's lobbying was not necessarily directed at the trustees who formally chose his replacement. His stature at the institution and the traditions of the time meant he could essentially choose his successor. Rather, White's lobbying was directed toward his colleagues and regarded his visions for the university in particular and for higher education in general.

In a lengthy letter to his best friend, dramatically tagged with the word "Confidential" across each page, White complained about the toll his work at Cornell had taken on his health and discussed the possibility of taking a leave from the post. He complained, "my repugnance to office work, to traveling in cars, to discussing educational subjects, to hearing statements made and passing judgment upon them, to selecting professors, etc., is rapidly becoming invincible." However, he also spoke of how the university, in many ways, had succeeded "beyond his dreams." White outlined what had been developed in Ithaca. He ended by asking if Gilman would be willing to serve as acting president, with the promise of his eventual placement.

Now my dear friend you seem to be the best man to take over this work. You have just what is necessary to make a success of it. You enjoy educational work. You enter heavily into the grapple with public officials over educational questions—the office work that is burdensome to me, you do with ease.³³

Needless to say, White's complaints were the product of frustration. He would remain at Cornell for another twelve years. White did not simply endure public grappling over educational questions; rather, he welcomed it. In his tenure at Cornell and beyond, White remained one of the leading figures in American higher education, authoring numerous speeches and articles on a wide array of issues.

White eventually found the administrative chores of the presidency burdensome, and in 1885, he chose former pupil Charles Kendall Adams to be his replacement and the next link in the legacy of academic leadership and institution building that White and Gilman had defined. C. K. Adams, the first dean of Michigan's School of Political Science, was a student of White's as an undergraduate at Michigan, graduating in 1861. Remaining in Ann Arbor after graduation, Adams did an additional year of study (earning a master's) and took charge of White's courses while he took a leave of absence. When White left Michigan to return to his native New York in 1865, Adams replaced

him on the Michigan faculty. A little over twenty years later, Adams would succeed White as president of Cornell. Only a few years younger than White and Gilman, Adams did his graduate work in Germany. However, as dean of Michigan's School of Political Science, he extended the influence of White and Gilman, working closely with Thomas Mortimer Cooley and Henry Carter Adams before their work for the Interstate Commerce Commission. C. K. Adams was White's seemingly natural successor.

Adams selection was not without its detractors, however. Early in his academic career, in 1875, Adams had been involved in a relatively minor controversy in which a letter in *The Nation* accused him of plagiarism. The letter claimed that Adams's *Democracy and Monarchy in France* had lifted certain passages from an earlier work. The letter's author gave his initials rather than his name. Adams's response and explanation of the similarity were more than adequate for his colleagues at Michigan as well as elsewhere. But upon the announcement of Adams's selection as president of Cornell, the issue was revisited by foes of White, mainly those with agrarian interests, who saw Cornell as too elitist. In a highly critical editorial, the *Brooklyn Eagle* asked, "Should a plagiarist professor be made a college president?" and the *Syracuse Standard* referred to Adams as "that literary thief."³⁴

Adams was initially taken aback by the severity of the criticism. However, as others—such as the *New York Times*—came to his defense and as he received reassurances that Cornell's trustees and faculties supported him, Adams gladly accepted the offer. He wrote to James Burrill Angell:

I find not the least evidence that the NY attacks have made any impression whatever in Ithaca, either on Trustees or Faculty or on the people. On this point the assurances are most gratifying and ample. Everybody seems to be enraged that the same knot of fellows which twice before had made gross assaults on White should now open their guns on me. I have been waiting to see what effect the election would have on them and I now infer that there is nothing to fear from them or from any influence they can exert. Tomorrow, therefore, I shall probably mail in my letter of acceptance.³⁵

Ironically, as Angell would soon learn, Adams's selection was not as straightforward as all would believe.

Reflecting the close-knit nature of the academic community at the time, Angell would learn that Adams appointment was almost undone by a rumor of Angell's own selection. Moses Coit Tyler had taught at Michigan until 1881, when he was hired away by White to spearhead a course that combined history with political and social science and gen-

eral jurisprudence. He was still friendly with Angell in 1885, and when he heard Angell might accept the Cornell presidency, he wrote immediately to express his surprise and explain that he had not been part of the effort to draft him for the position. Angell wrote back shocked at the suggestion that he might usurp his colleague Adams.

Chastised, Tyler sought to explain himself. In a confidential letter to Angell, Tyler explained that after nominating Adams on June 17, White came to Tyler on June 20 expressing doubts about the nomination. As Tyler described the meeting, White proposed withdrawing Adams's nomination, "then, drawing his chair close to mine, he said in a very confidential tone, 'What would you say, if on Monday morning, I should tell you that Angell could be had at the same terms as Adams?'" Tyler expressed surprise, saying, "I have never thought that for any inducement which we could offer, Angell would leave Michigan." White insisted that it was true. Tyler decided to abstain out of loyalty to both candidates. He sought to avoid White but encountered a trustee who had been lobbying actively against Adams and who insisted that he "personally knows that Angell could be got and would like to come here." Believing the trustee and White to be correct and believing that White would announce Angell as his choice, Tyler "rushed off to write [Angell], a letter I now regret."³⁶ In the end, according to Tyler, White felt he could not in good conscience rescind the nomination.

All of this was news to Angell, for there is no indication that White even informally asked if he were interested in the position. Adams, as mentioned earlier, did accept and was inaugurated in November 1885. White had left for Europe almost immediately upon resigning the presidency and did not attend the ceremonies. However, when he finally received a copy of Adams's address, he was outraged. In his diary, White vented:

This day came upon me one of 3 great disappointments in my life and in some respects the most cruel—Pres. Adams inaugural. It has plunged me in a sort of stupor—have I been dreaming 30 years?—ever since I began working for a university—or am I dreaming now? Not the slightest recognition of the Univ. or my work or Gilman and above all Mr. Cornell's name not mentioned and this is a man who owed his start in life to me—whom I made President of Cornell Univ. against fearful odds—defended him at cost of my health and reputation and the good will of friends—stood by him thro the worst of attacks and now! He praises unjustly the worst enemy of all my efforts [Charles Eliot] and ignores my work utterly—and solely to curry favor with Harvard University and the men who have lashed him to the Harvard set. There is no other explanation. They are living and active and can do him more harm—I am supposed to be declining in health and can do

him no more good. This is the hardest blow I have received. Yesterday my friend as I thought—today what? Yet I was warned by many.³⁷

White's outrage was both surprising and in many ways unfounded. In Morris Bishop's *A History of Cornell*, White is criticized for being unreasonable: "He had complacently expected a glorification of his own work, which he could then gently, unconvincingly deprecate. Naturally, he was disappointed."³⁸

Additionally, White's characterization of Harvard president Charles Eliot as his "worst enemy of all my efforts" strikes one as silly in light of their similar efforts to develop elective courses and encouraged specialization (all with an eye toward "public service"), their mutual friendship with Gilman, and their cordial communication. A rivalry no doubt existed between the two, but it did not deserve such an outburst. The relative merits of White's complaint are certainly debatable. However, White's outburst as well as the nature of his attempts to secure a successor highlight issues fundamental to our understanding of the university and its efforts to define its service to the public, the question of democratic participation in ostensibly public institutions, the nature of academic mentorship, and the relationship between mentorship and coordination.

Though Cornell was a public institution, its leadership and direction were not issues for democratic debate. White expected and received the privilege of anointing his successor. (This was not unusual; at Michigan, Angell was allowed to choose those who replaced him while he was on his various leaves.) Owing to the unique nature of its structure, once the New York state legislature had founded Cornell, its control over implementation of the Morrill Act and the use of public funds became minimal. The entrepreneur White had co-opted funds directed for education in agriculture and the mechanic arts and began a research university. In theory, the opportunity to select White's replacement might have allowed for a public assessment of the path he had taken. There was to be no such reflection.

White's entry also underscored the assumption, rarely articulated, of academic mentors in regard to their anointed successors. White assumed Adams would pursue a course of research and service similar to the one White had begun. Despite White's dismay at the text of Adams's inaugural address, the development of Cornell under Adams's leadership proceeded along the lines White had desired. This is not altogether surprising, the institution had developed schools and methods of operation that would have been difficult for Adams to rad-

ically alter even if he had desired to do so. However, the extent to which homage and compliance were expected by White strike one as remarkable and underscore the limited leeway allowed to those who succeeded leaders in the "golden age" of university presidents.

Politics and Coordination: Presidential Selection at Berkeley

Coordination among a select group of academics helped define the path universities would take. For public universities, such coordination not only allowed leading institutions to define standards; it also permitted circumvention and avoidance of obstacles presented by the meddling of local political officials. Cornell largely avoided such meddling through the force of White's esteem and acumen. The fledgling University of California did not immediately find a president whose commitment to their school and influence in the state could smooth the process; thus, it had to rely heavily on the guidance of leading academics elsewhere, with varying degrees of success.

Initially, California seemed to have selected a skillful institutional entrepreneur when Daniel Coit Gilman took the university's presidency, with great enthusiasm and expectation. But Gilman soon grew discouraged by California's geographic isolation, struggle for resources, and local political intrigue. With the coordinated help of colleagues in the East, he secured the presidency at Johns Hopkins.

With a vacuum at the top of the institution, the politicking that had discouraged Gilman only intensified. Grangers and others with agricultural interests expressed displeasure with the university's use of the Morrill grant and claimed that it was pursuing an elite agenda free from public control and oversight. Advocates for a first-rate research university argued that though the university was a public institution, it must be unfettered by the petty demands of politics and free to pursue knowledge and expertise.

It was hoped that an appointed board and a strong president would keep the university free from political meddling. This freedom from meddling would allow the university to pursue its multiple missions, including educating the citizenry in such a way as to "enable . . . graduates to formulate and defend, or combat with intelligence and force, new views affecting the public interest."³⁹ All elite universities desired to be relatively free from popular control. Initiating a standard that many other Progressive political institutions would follow, leaders and friends of the university argued that to best serve the public interest, the university needed to shield itself from the direct input of the people.

Appointed regents did not free Berkeley from political intrigue, however. Unlike Cornell University (which was able to bolster its resources through the generosity of its namesake) or the University of Michigan (which was constitutionally autonomous and, during Angell's tenure, was able to count on solid support from the state as well as a healthy income from the original "seminary of learning" grants), Berkeley did not garner much support from the state legislature in an effort to supplement its Morrill funds. The lack of resources and pitched battles with the state legislature hamstrung the university's presidents and frustrated their efforts to establish an elite institution on the West Coast.

President William Reid examined such difficulties at length in his report to the regents for 1882. He stressed: "the needs of the University are many and great. First among them, and including most of them, is the need of a large endowment." For Reid, endowing the university would not only help produce graduates concerned with the public interest; it would also further the development of the state itself.

Indeed, I am of the opinion that, as a purely commercial enterprise, the ample endowment of the University would be a wise investment. We have only to add to our material advantages the best educational advantages to make the attractions of our state equal to those of any other state, in the eyes of people that we should most care to have settle among us. No material advantages compensate, in the eyes of a desirable population, for the loss of educational opportunities.⁴⁰

An institutional entrepreneur seeking to secure support for his school, Reid linked the school's well-being to the state's ability to formulate effective and efficient policies and to recruit settlers from other regions. For Reid, the ability of the university to provide such public service and assistance in the growth of the state depended on politically detached, but financially extensive, support from the state.

There must be withal a feeling of confidence in the stability and permanence of the institution; a feeling that whatever fluctuation of opinion there may be on matters of State policy or local interest, the University will always be the center of a common interest, and the common object of a hearty and liberal support.⁴¹

Yet Reid was unable to stir common interest or develop hearty support. Frustrated by the political bickering that undid his efforts to secure a steady source of income from a mill tax, he resigned in 1885.

Following Reid, in October 1885, the regents selected Edward Holden as both president of the university and director of the univer-

sity's newly established Lick Observatory. A somewhat absentee president, Holden resigned at the end of the 1887 academic year, to devote his full attention to the observatory. In February of that year, through extensive lobbying efforts on the part of the regents, the university had secured from the state legislature a mill tax that nearly doubled the college's operating income. Believing that their concerns regarding finances and political intrigue had been basically solved, the regents desired a strong president to maximize the new resources available to the university. In this effort, the regents sought the counsel of academic leaders. These leaders in turn corresponded with one another in a coordinated response to select who would lead the nascent institution.

Former University of California and current Johns Hopkins president Daniel Coit Gilman was among the first the regents contacted. He soon turned to Michigan's Angell. Writing to ask if Angell would attend the Johns Hopkins commencement, he concluded by inquiring about the Berkeley position: "California is seeking a President in Holden's place, who will go? I suggested [Franklin] Carter of Williams College but he will not accept. Do you know any college President who would like a 'milder climate.'" ⁴² Gilman's tone does not suggest a discussion between two men simply offering advice to a fellow institution. As leaders of elite universities, Gilman, Angell, and others were often asked to pass judgment on the quality of fellow academics, not just for professorships, but for leadership positions as well. Thus, while not formally standardizing procedures and approaches, peer institutions helped define one another's development.

For the University of California, a developing western state institution, the University of Michigan was a model and aspiration. Michigan reciprocated by looking to California as a touchstone, comparing the development of academic programs or the nature of state support. Seeking advice on how to fill their presidency, Berkeley turned directly to Angell. John Swift, a member of the regents' search committee, wrote Angell in May 1887.

We are very much in want of a President for our University and [are] engaged in seeking out one with the knowledge of the active members of the community. . . . Can you suggest anybody? In the first place would you entertain the position. It seems to be generally agreed that you would not; but still there can be no harm in asking you and I do it. Secondly, do you know a good man for the place. And if so who is he and where?⁴³

Swift's bluntness illuminates the limits of loosely coupled coordination for those attempting to build elite universities. Without a formal orga-

nization to share information and define standards, such a university as Berkeley, which was somewhat isolated geographically and institutionally, did not readily know where to turn.

Building from the suggestions of Gilman, Charles Eliot (of Harvard), and others, Swift asked about various candidates, including the U.S. commissioner of education, William T. Harris; Williams College president Franklin Carter; and Angell's former colleague Moses Coit Tyler. Swift ended by stressing the benefits of the position: "You know pretty well what we have to offer. [The university is] . . . an institution now at last established and endowed with all the means that can be used advantageously. We feel that we are now in condition to offer to any man a reasonable opportunity."⁴⁴ For Swift, it was hoped that Angell and his fellow university presidents would tap someone to make the most of the opportunity.

Berkeley's search did not go smoothly. Angell and Gilman both recommended President Carter of Williams College. Swift and his fellow regents accepted this recommendation and pursued him. As the summer continued, the regents grew anxious. Swift wrote to Angell again, practically pleading for assistance.

. . . as your university is like ours a state institution we would take your opinion before that of anybody. . . . But can't you find us a President. Can't you persuade Carter of Wlms. to come. Gilman has seconded him but I think I wrote you about that before. Harris can be had and possibly is good but you know how proud we are to think that what is only to be had is not worth having. . . . If you can think of anything in the way of a President don't fail to write and let us know as the time is approaching near when we shall surely be in need.⁴⁵

California's desire to emulate Michigan, Angell's personal stature, and the need to rapidly fill the position meant that Angell could essentially choose Berkeley's next president.

The isolation of California and the uncertainties associated with a newly developing public institution led Angell's first recommendation, Carter, to politely decline inquiries made by Angell and Gilman. So, too, Angell's friend Tyler declined. Angell could appreciate their hesitancy, as he himself respectfully declined the offer to move west. Angell's friends in California still persisted in asking that he consider the opportunity to rescue the university from its many challenges or, at the very least, find them somebody who would. E. W. Hilgard wrote that while he was happily enjoying his time out west. He eventually hoped to "sell out to some bloated eastern capitalist and take that long desired trip East, and to Europe, and bid good bye to kantankerous

Regents and inquisitive grangers for a while." For Hilgard, the university needed strong leadership, but circumstances had driven qualified men from the presidency and left the university in its current state.

That hornets nest, to which you predicted I was going, has turned out quite habitable for me, but seems to be hard on Presidents generally. Holden seems to be about as glad to get out his thorny chair as some others are anxious to get into it, and we who know all about it wonder who will try next. Gilman evidently has no leaning that way, having been there before. If you cannot be induced to change your mind and try to kill the hydra of 23 heads that threatens to swallow the U of Cal. from time to time cannot you suggest some other Hercules that will?⁴⁶

Hilgard was not personally threatened by the hydra he described; his position as head of California's Agricultural College assured him relative autonomy. Yet he recognized that if the university were to develop overall, it needed a strong leader who would remain in office for a lengthy tenure.

Nearing the end of that summer, Swift became more anxious. The academic year was about to begin, and Berkeley still did not have a president. Disappointed that long-shot efforts to recruit back Gilman had failed, Swift wrote to Angell again.

We are in not a little perplexity, as our president goes out with the academic year, and as yet we do not see much light ahead. We were somewhat in hopes that Mr. Gilman who has just paid us a visit and gone away to Alaska would or might be induced to stop with us and take hold again, but he went, and so that has to be given up.

Swift reiterated that anyone who received a stamp of approval from the leading university presidents would be offered the position.

There is no sort of doubt that if you, for example, or indeed President Eliot, or President White, or any of you first rate men, could see your way to recommend any gentleman to us, as unqualifiedly and without reservation the man we are looking for, he would be upon the receipt of that certificate, as good as elected to the place, if he would allow us to think he would accept.⁴⁷

Swift's anxiety provoked him to articulate the often unspoken influence of Angell, Gilman, White, and their colleagues. As the heads of the nation's leading universities, these men not only defined the development of their peer institutions; they also acted as gatekeepers, literally defining who would join their ranks.

Swift desired to have a president whose skills and expertise met with the approval of Angell and his colleagues and who could, as was the tradition of the time, be the face and voice not just for the university but for all public educational enterprises in the state.

We want a good executive head, a man of "Savoir faire," some education, the more the better, with political and practical sense, capable above all things of making the general public believe that he is the right man for the place, and you know to do this he must not only have considerable ability but he must look like a president.⁴⁸

Swift's desired leader would have to govern not solely on the basis of expertise and rationality but on the basis of charismatic appeal as well.

With the leading choices of Angell and others uninterested, Berkeley eventually looked internally and selected former congressman and Hastings College of Law faculty member Horace Davis to head the institution. A compromise selection, it was hoped that Davis could both appear and actually be "the right man for the place." Davis, however, was less interested in the university than in using it as his pulpit. He never moved from his home in San Francisco, across the bay; and after a year and a half, the university was again searching for someone to guide it.

Writing from his position as head of a preparatory school in Belmont, California, the university's former president William Reid sardonically bemoaned the difficulties faced by leaders of the institution.

If you have an enemy who is in the line of promotion send him as Pres. to the Univ. of Cal—I wonder if I have a thicker skin than most other men. I held on for four years—my two successors lived only two years each. I thought that Davis would hold the place. I doubt now however whether any self respecting man who knows what an institution needs can secure the position.⁴⁹

While Reid might have been overstating the case, his concerns regarding the fate of California's state university seemed justified. As an institution concerned with establishing itself free from the demands of local politics, Berkeley needed strong leadership of a lengthy tenure. As an institution interested in pursuing expertise and developing partnerships with the national state, Berkeley needed a president who was respected by and could work with the leaders of other elite institutions. Swift's letters to Angell reveal that these attributes were not mutually exclusive.

Berkeley would not find such leadership until 1899, when it secured the highly ambitious Benjamin Ide Wheeler from the Cornell faculty. In the context of the developing community of scholars, the 1887 search demonstrates clearly the limits to coordination. The leading academics of the day could not overcome Berkeley's perceived institutional deficiencies. Despite relying on assistance from peer institutions, Berkeley found itself with third- and fourth-choice candidates.

Implementing the Morrill Act: Presidential Selection and Institutional Autonomy

When considering the development of the fledgling university, the process of leadership selection is just as significant as who was selected to lead. The emerging universities, even those that were privately funded, viewed themselves as public institutions, dedicated to serving their community and the nation. However, these institutions, even those run by the state, sought to choose their leaders in a very private fashion, by coordination among a small group of elites. Similar to the development of university-based expertise itself, presidential searches depended on a newly defined standard of knowledge and ability. The desired goal of these evolving public institutions was to serve the nation. Such service did not, however, mean responding to the whims of the people. University leaders had witnessed and still feared the inefficiency and corruption of the patronage state. These institutional entrepreneurs felt a need to protect their schools and their programs from the morass of electoral politics. Presidential selection was exceedingly significant, for it underscores the fundamental, but often unstated, belief that only through freedom from the popular masses could these institutions develop a national state and serve the public good.

The selection of university presidents possessed a subtle but major influence on relations between the university and the national state. No one would expect universities to allow the federal government to have a say in their leadership decisions. Additionally, state universities sought to avoid the partisan politics and bickering of local political influences by keeping the process closed to those outside the academic community. Yet the choice of university leader would define the relationship the institution pursued with the national state. University presidents were instrumental—often solely responsible—for choosing with which agencies their institution would work and for selecting the faculty who would teach at their institution. In selecting their presidents, universities established their public agenda and defined their role as potential partners with and agents of the national state. On the state level, university leaders were seen as *de facto*, if not *de jure*, heads of education. On all levels, they exerted a fundamental influence on the development of higher education.

As in their implementation of the Morrill Act, the institutional entrepreneurs who ran the nation's leading universities sought to define the development of their schools and mitigate the influence government

would have in this process of definition. In seeking autonomy from government, universities depended on one another. While the heads of the nation's leading universities would not formalize relations between the leading higher education institutions until the establishment of the Association of American Universities in 1900, these leaders, by recommending scholars they had trained and mentored, were able to help establish standard expectations and parameters for universities and for their relationship to the developing national state.