

THE NEW DEAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN FLORIDA, 1933-1939:
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE AND TACIT PROMISES

By

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During the Great Depression, New Deal reformers within President Roosevelt's Administration aligned their strategies with both white and black colleges to provide emergency relief within the states. This thesis focuses on two Florida colleges involved in New Deal programs between 1933 and 1939. The major emphasis centers on the University of Florida (UF), which at the time enrolled only white males. In addition, a minor theme examines the New Deal activities of Bethune-Cookman College (BCC), a private, black, coeducational college. New Dealers used these joint ventures to funnel temporary funding to targeted constituencies within the population. Although these New Deal programs were short-lived emergency measures, their legacy transformed the federal government's relationship to both its citizens and higher education. These partnerships also contributed to the material and intellectual environments of the colleges themselves.

This study highlights the federal agencies involved in higher educational activities, particularly the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), and its successors, the Works Project Administration (WPA), and the National Youth Administration (NYA), and it casts reflection upon the implementation of the agencies' programs through UF and BCC. In contrast to the well-documented conflict between the public school establishment and the federal government over the issue of local control, the federal relationship with higher education was congenial and mutually beneficial. As a land-grant institution, UF had an affiliation with the federal government throughout its history, and due to retrenchment measures imposed by the state, it welcomed further federal assistance. BCC had traditionally relied on philanthropic contributions, which diminished considerably during the hard times, and it too was desperate for relief and amenable to federal involvement in its affairs.

UF and BCC benefited from the leadership of their presidents, John J. Tigert and Mary McLeod Bethune, who each had significant political connections in Washington. Tigert had been Commissioner of Education during the 1920s, and Bethune became the highest ranking African-American in the New Deal. A review of the correspondence of Tigert, Bethune, and their staffs reveals that the two colleges were both producers and consumers of New Deal programs, and that the presidents were among the architects and administrators of the programs. As well as delivering relief to Florida's citizens and helping the colleges cope with their funding woes, the New Deal partnerships with UF and BCC also extended their reach into the community and expanded their mission.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

During the Great Depression, the United States of America experienced national trauma and social convulsions unparalleled since the Civil War. Concomitant with widespread deprivation and dislocation due to the collapse of the economy, the era of hard times also produced a dramatic sociological and psychological impact upon the population. Contemporary accounts of the era noted a wide-spread sense of dispiritedness among the masses, an erosion of democratic values, and disillusionment with many American institutions.

The magnitude of the socio-political upheavals during the 1930s generated a roller coaster-like terrain of societal change, and historical focus is easily obscured by the broad array of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's transient innovations, and the overlapping activities of his alphabetized New Deal agencies. The understanding of this tumultuous period is further complicated in that it melded into the nation's next major trauma, World War II, which both terminated and overshadowed the prior depression decade. Although the varied New Deal programs were short-lived emergency relief measures, they transformed the federal government's relationship to both individuals and institutions.¹

Administrators of Roosevelt's relief programs formed *ad hoc* partnerships with a variety of existing educative institutions to implement these relief programs throughout

¹ For a comprehensive history of the Great Depression see: William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

the body politic.² Liberal New Deal reformers within Congress and Roosevelt's Administrations also systematically aligned their strategies with the presidents of land-grant institutions and other colleges, including black colleges. Through these joint ventures with higher education, New Dealers funneled massive funding through temporary programs that were targeted to aid multiple constituencies within the states. At the same time, these partnerships contributed to the material and intellectual environments of the colleges themselves.

The major theme of this thesis explores the nature of the New Deal assistance administered through the University of Florida (UF). As a land-grant institution, and the largest school in the state, it figured prominently in New Deal schemes throughout the Great Depression. In addition to the exclusively white, male university, a minor theme examines the similar but comparatively miniscule interactions between the New Dealers and Bethune-Cookman College (BCC), located in Daytona Beach, Florida. Including this small, private, black college allows for the development of the *leitmotiv* of racial segregation--at the time endemic to Florida's educational system--and its correlation to New Deal operations in the state.

The intent of the thesis is to highlight the programs and federal agencies involved in higher educational activities, and to cast reflection upon the actions and motives behind their creation and implementation. Within this context, it attempts to disclose the participation of the two institutions—both as factors and consumers—with New Deal agencies. Instrumental to this task is the correspondence of their administrators,

² The most thorough account of the New Deal's wide-angled assistance to cultural institutions is: Doak S. Campbell, Frederick H. Bair, Oswald L. Harvey, *Educational Activities of the Works Project Administration* (Washington: USGPO, 1938).

particularly their presidents, UF's John J. Tigert and Mary McLeod Bethune of BCC. Finally, the paper explores the impact of the participation upon the institutions, as well as the ramifications for subsequent generations of Americans. The period of time in this investigation begins with the Roosevelt Presidency, in the spring of 1933, and runs through 1939, by which time the encroaching world war had redirected the energies and concerns of the entire nation.

The New Deal programs that affected UF, BCC, and their surrounding communities appeared in three waves: the 1933 New Deal of the "First Hundred Days" of Roosevelt's presidency; the "Second New Deal," launched after Democratic Congressional victories in 1935; and the so-called "Federal One" initiatives between 1936 and 1939 that sponsored cultural and historical projects.

When the first New Deal initiatives were unveiled, the collegiate community had various concerns. Would participation in the proposed programs affect control of policy or content of curriculum? And would permanent federal strings be attached to the emergency assistance? This thesis argues that tacit safeguards were imparted within the partnerships which quickly allayed such fears. President Roosevelt and his allies enjoyed a rapport and a mutually trusting relationship with leaders of higher education that did not exist with the public school establishment.³ They also recognized the centrality of colleges and universities in their communities, as well as their importance to the national economy. Along with their support other educative institutions, such as libraries and museums, New Dealers desired to augment the health and confidence of higher education. However, as historian Paula Fass points out, Roosevelt consciously avoided

³ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 953.

creating educational policy, offered only temporary aid, and gave the participating institutions wide discretion in its use.⁴ Moreover, the fears of these educators were assuaged by the fact that leaders from the collegiate community, including Tigert and Bethune, were among the architects and administrators of these programs.

Fass contends that implicit assurances to the American people were also born of the New Deal legacy of federal intervention. Among these was a guarantee that the issues of poverty and race, and the relationship of these social issues to educational opportunity, would be raised to national prominence. There likewise emerged a political consensus on the value of higher education, and that it should be a possibility for all citizens. Fass furthermore claims that these assurances were accompanied by a public awareness of the federal government's responsibility to promote equality in education, as well as an obligation to assist all Americans in achieving their educational goals.⁵

In Florida, UF and BCC were key elements in the New Deal strategy to deliver emergency relief through programs targeted to diverse publics, including the rural poor, blacks, females, and semi-professional workers. The colleges' participation in delivering temporary assistance was instrumental to the New Deal legacy and its tacit promises of educational opportunity and social uplift for all members of society.

⁴ Fass, Paula, "Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal," *American Journal of Education* Vol. 91, No. 1 (Nov. 1982): 36-64; Paula Fass, *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 115-155.

⁵ Fass, "Without Design," 36-64; *Outside In*, 115-155.

CHAPTER 2 THE FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

Historical Overview

Both UF and BCC participated in various joint ventures with the federal government that involved innovation and experimentation in the effort to expedite emergency relief—broadly defined by New Dealers to include numerous societal benefits—to as many needy citizens and groups as possible. The federal partnership with UF consisted in part of temporary emergency measures, but in part it merely bolstered affiliations that had accrued via the First Morrill Act and subsequent land-grant legislation.¹ The New Deal bequeathed the university a legacy of more than bricks and mortar, although solid New Deal architecture remains conspicuous on the campus. While there was a tremendous expansion of the physical plant, the active participation in the federal relief programs also challenged the horizons of faculty and administration--intellectually, logistically, bureaucratically, and racially. In fine, it broadened the operative base, and expanded the social milieu of the university, as it also did to a lesser extent for BCC.

Though they shared similar philosophies and goals for developing sound educational institutions, the daily priorities and concerns of President Mary McLeod Bethune and President John J. Tigert were dramatically dissimilar. The depression never seriously threatened the continued existence of Florida's premier state university. The

¹ George A. Work and Barton Morgan, *The Land Grant Colleges* (Washington: USGPO), 13-15.

reductions in state support caused by the economic collapse mostly posed a threat to its further growth and development as a prestigious institution. However, BCC was a small school with meager resources which relied predominantly on private donors, and the depression stifled the philanthropic contributions. By providing assistance in a time of fiscal crisis, and by raising its profile in the community, participation in federal programs helped insure the survival and continued growth of the struggling black institution.²

Land-grant UF prospered in many ways through its cooperation with the federal relief agencies; whereas, the New Deal's impact upon the private black junior college proved less tangible. Yet BCC's role in the New Deal is arguably fraught with more profound implications. As a result of President Roosevelt's elevation of Bethune to a high profile New Deal position—and by association featuring her school as an inspirational example—black schools and colleges benefited throughout the nation, both fiscally and socially. That Bethune and what she called her “little school” provided hope and inspiration is attested to by the voluminous correspondence she received both in Washington and Daytona. Nationally, black educators and students were buoyed not only by the financial assistance, but also by the government's display of interest in their plight.³

² *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World, Essays and Selected Documents*, eds. Audrey Thomas McClusky and Elaine M. Smith (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 2.

³ Nancy J. Weis, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 74; Clark Foreman, “The Decade of Hope,” in *The Negro in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution, 1930-1945*, ed. Bernard Sternsher (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 155.

President Roosevelt and his allies attempted to provide relief not only for basic wants, but to enrich the social welfare of Americans who had not historically participated in the nation's social and cultural bounty. The decision to seek the assistance of the land-grant universities and black colleges in this gargantuan task did not arise *sui generis* within the reformers' schemes. Conversely, it was part of a broad-based socio-political agenda to enable public and cultural institutions, to elevate civic awareness, and to fortify democracy. By aligning with colleges and universities, the New Deal agencies were able to tap into the states and constituencies which they served, and the federal partnership with UF and BCC amplified its relief efforts among Florida's suffering populace.⁴

Also, as the New Deal programs appeared at a time of insecurity for higher education, when colleges were reeling from drastically reduced endowments and appropriations, the federal agencies were generally welcomed by the fiscally strapped college presidents. Colleges and universities benefited in numerous ways: students received work-aid to continue their education, thus supplementing the labor pools; faculty members generated extra income, which helped offset their losses from retrenchment; funds were granted for research, community programs, physical plant additions, and campus improvements.

Colleges were held in high esteem by the public, and both state land-grant universities and struggling black colleges were considered to be pillars of opportunity and democracy.⁵ Therefore, the campus-centered strategy served to legitimize the president's

⁴ Morison, *Oxford History* 986-7.

⁵ Joseph F. Kett *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 400.

controversial relief policies. In addition, the collegiate environment proved conducive to the experimental nature of the New Deal programs. Although terminated upon expiration of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Acts that created them, the social reformers' short-lived programs etched lasting contours across the entire landscape of higher education. As Fass explains, the expansive, and at times, precedent-setting model of educational accessibility exemplified by these depression-era partnerships modified the behavior of the federal government toward higher education, while at the same time, it altered the public's outlook toward both college and government. Furthermore, New Deal educational activities anticipated and eased the acceptance of the increasing federal role in public education during the following decades.⁶

Review of Literature

Historical studies dealing with the Great Depression's impact upon education generally focus on the public schools. According to educational historian, Jeffrey Mirel, this is an area of the history of education discipline which remains relatively uncharted.⁷ However, the body of literature pertaining to the era's impact on higher education is unfortunately even less developed.

A central theme in the accounts of public education during the depression era regards conflict concerning federal assistance and local control of the schools. President Roosevelt's bold proposals for emergency relief immediately produced a spasm of fear in the nation's primary and secondary school establishment. The *Journal of Education*

⁶ Fass, "Without Design," 36-64; *Outside In*, 115-155.

⁷ Jeffrey Mirel, Review of *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* by David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elizabeth Hansot, *Educational Studies* 16 (Summer 1985) pp. 156-64.

reported in 1933 that the president’s criticism of the quality of education “struck the ears of school people with stunning force.”⁸

Robert Sperber cites historical precedents for these fears. Numerous educators believed that legislation conceived during other national emergencies—such as the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917—had been hastily conceived wartime measures. Nevertheless, these acts became permanent features of the educational landscape. The Second Morrill Act of 1890 especially chafed educators in the South, as it contained provisions to withhold federal funds if black and white students were not treated equally.⁹

Similarly, some educators feared that alternative New Deal educative activity, such as nursery schools and literacy classes, would be continued after the depression, creating a new bureaucracy of federal education employees. A 1941 report sponsored by the National Education Association (NEA) warned that the popular youth programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the National Youth Administration (NYA), were moving towards permanence.¹⁰ At times the public school establishment even criticized the federal government’s delivery of assistance to education, arguing that school construction often proceeded with insufficient input from the state departments of education. A further point of contention in the debate concerning emergency relief and

⁸ ...News of the School World: “President Roosevelt Urges Higher Quality of Teaching,” *Journal of Education* (Nov. 6, 1933): 452.

⁹ Robert I. Sperber, “Federal Aid and Federal Control of Education,” *Teachers College Record* Vol. 61, No. 6 (March 1960): 331-338.

¹⁰ John K. Norton, “The Civilian conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the Public Schools,” *Teachers College Record* Vol. 43, No. 3 (Dec. 1941): 174-182.

federal control in education was Washington's appointment of state directors for its New Deal agencies.¹¹

Such contentious conflict did not exist between the New Dealers and the leaders of higher education. Mirel, David Angus, Edward Krug, David Tyack, Robert Lowe and Elizabeth Hansot detail the continuous antagonism that the public school crowd displayed towards Roosevelt's programs, but they agree that college administrators were generally congenial to New Deal initiatives.¹² Hugh Hawkins notes that the administrators of land-grant institutions were especially agreeable to the federal proposals, and lauded New Deal leaders, such as Harry Hopkins and Henry Wallace, at their conventions.¹³ Although colleges too had been racked by the hard times, a 1935 survey of college presidents indicated that they were adapting to the changing economic and social conditions.¹⁴ In a display of cooperation with the government, one educator called upon college presidents to exert their strong executive leadership in order to propel President Roosevelt's expansive social legislation in the proper direction. Moreover, the majority commended the recent work-aid to students for opening the doors of higher education to those who otherwise could not have attended. The *Journal of Higher Education* reported

¹¹ Sperber, "Federal Aid and Federal Control of Education," 336.

¹² David L. Angus & Jeffrey E. Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890-1995* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 57-70; Krug, Edward A. *The Shaping of the American High School, Vol. 2, 1920-41* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 319-323; David Tyack, Robert Lowe, Elizabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 28-43.

¹³ Hugh Hawkins, *Banding Together: The Rise of National Associations in American Higher Education, 1887-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), 127.

¹⁴ Martha T. Boardman "The College Presidents Call It a Year," *Journal of Higher Education* Vol. 7 (June 1936): 287-295.

in 1935 on higher education's overall consent of this aid. By their count, all but 339 of 1662 white colleges participated, and all but 13 of 107 black colleges participated.¹⁵

Especially in the early years of the depression, the nation's colleges and universities were hit hard with severe cutbacks in state government support. Faculty and other personnel suffered from decreased salaries and morale, and students suffered when tuition was increased to offset the cuts. Tuition at public colleges and universities, for example, increased 60% between 1932 and 1940. Richard Novak and David Leslie assert that the financial crisis forced college administrators to become reluctant advocates of an enlarged federal involvement in their affairs, despite the "specter" of federal control. At the same time, they note that state supported colleges, especially land-grant institutions, had been reliant on massive federal subsidies since their inception.¹⁶

These authors contend that the desperate financial situation also created a crisis in confidence among administrators of higher education. The depression fostered awareness that colleges were businesses competing with other businesses in a free market. The severity of the retrenchment measures illumined the need to demonstrate greater fiscal responsibility, as well as the need to garner greater support from taxpaying citizens. David Henry reinforces the argument that the depression had a psychological component which induced higher education to perceive itself in its socio-political context. In his opinion, these institutions were obliged to shed their illusions of political purity and professional autonomy, and to pursue a more pragmatic approach that included

¹⁵ William Bennett Bizzell, "The Social Inadequacy of Education," *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 8 (May 1937): 233-240.

¹⁶ Richard Novak, & David Leslie, "A Not So Distant Mirror: Great Depression Writings of the Governance and Finance of Public Higher Education," *History of Higher Education Annual 2000*, 59-74.

active participation in New Deal programs. At the same time, however, the emergency relief efforts of the federal government offered higher education the opportunity to build bridges to the vested interests of the community, and also to the state and national political establishments.¹⁷

Hawkins cites the depression-era ascendancy of associations of higher education as effective instruments for building these bridges to other sectors of society. College administrators also utilized associations to lobby for funding and other assistance. In 1933, for example, the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities (ALGCU), of which President Tigert was an active member, vigorously moved to counteract a presidential order cutting land-grant funding by 25%. The funds were later restored. ALGCU also lobbied for the passage of the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935, which authorized increased appropriations to land-grants, and required equitable distribution among black and white land-grants in the 17 southern states with segregated education.¹⁸ In reaction to the dire financial conditions, college educators formed an umbrella group for their associations, the American Council on Education (ACE). ACE closely aligned with New Deal administrators, and was vocal in favor of federal programs in higher education. ACE had a larger budget than the Office of Education (USOE), and it co-sponsored groundbreaking studies on the educational obstacles faced by the nation's youth. In fact, Commissioner George Zook, who had directed the higher education division while Tigert was USOE commissioner, departed the Office after one year for a

¹⁷David O. Henry, *Challenges Past, Challenges Present: An Analysis of American Higher Education Since 1930* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975), 12-37.

¹⁸ Hawkins, *Banding Together*, 78.

more lucrative and influential position at ACE, where he worked to advance the interests of the nation's collegiate network.¹⁹

Associations were also potent tools in the black educational community. Bethune proved adept at using such organizations in her dramatic rise to national prominence. Beginning with black women's clubs in Florida, she moved to representing black southern teachers, and in 1935 she founded the politically activist National Council of Negro Women in the nation's capital. From this advantageous position Bethune maneuvered an appointment to the so-called "back cabinet" that advised the Roosevelt Administration on racial matters, and then she was employed as director Negro Affairs Division in the National Youth Administration (NYA).²⁰

In his comprehensive assessment of the National Youth Administration, Richard Reiman documents the maneuverings of a cadre of New Deal social reformers who developed youth programs with the explicit support of both the President and Eleanor Roosevelt. Although NYA was part of overall emergency relief intended to reduce pressure on the labor market, this reformist wing crafted the agency with the dual objectives: they sought to advance the cause of democracy among youth, and they wished to equalize educational opportunities for all citizens. Reiman also avers that the reformers attempted to shock the public education establishment, which they considered elitist, into adapting its curriculum to serve a diverse population in a changing society.²¹

¹⁹ Hawkins, *Banding Together*, 68-126; Angus & Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School*, 63-65.

²⁰ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 5-6.

²¹ Richard A. Reiman, *The New Deal & American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 44-48, 104-110.

A number of historians have reflected on the New Deal legacy in education. Mirel avers that New Deal reforms affected educational policy in the public schools for many years.²² Dominic Moreo asserts the programs had a holistic, family-centered approach, and that the WPA nursery schools anticipated the Head Start program of the 1960's.²³ Tyack, Lowe, and Hansot argue that NYA and other programs set the course for the subsequent G. I. Bill, work study programs, and opportunity grants to the poor that dramatically increased college accessibility in the latter half of the 20th century.²⁴ Similarly, Leslie, Novak and Henry contend that during the New Deal, colleges and universities forged a new alignment with the federal government, which in turn set the stage for their tremendous growth in the post-war decades, as well as for the successful implementation of numerous federal educational and social initiatives.²⁵

As an example of the New Deal attitude towards the accessibility of a college degree, historians often cite the declaration of Roosevelt's powerful advisor and WPA administrator, Harry Hopkins, that "college is not to be confined to the people that have an economic status at home that permits them to do it."²⁶ However, as Paula Fass elucidates in her studies of minorities during the depression, President Roosevelt never had an educational plan for colleges or the public schools, and he consistently declined the opportunity to create educational policy.²⁷ Aside from construction projects and

²² Mirel, Review of *Public Schools in Hard Times*, 156-64.

²³ Dominic Moreo, *Schools in the Great Depression* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1996), 126.

²⁴ Tyack, Lowe, Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times*, 127.

²⁵ Novak & Leslie, "A Not So Distant Mirror," 59-74; Henry, *Challenges Past*, 12-37

²⁶ Quoted in Tyack, Lowe, Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times*, 127.

²⁷ Fass, "Without Design," 36-64; *Outside In*, 115-155.

teacher employment, educational activities such as classes in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps and literacy programs for southern blacks evolved as New Dealers responded to the pressing needs exposed in administering the relief.

Fass stresses that the intent of New Deal programs must be separated from the consequences. The educational programs originated under the rubric of emergency relief. This, in combination with the choice to use higher education as a vehicle of this relief, indicated the importance New Dealers accorded education's role in the national economy. However, the educational programs were primarily designed for rehabilitation of the masses of unemployed. They were intended to be parallel to, and not to compete with, existing educational structures. Adult education initiatives, for example, often extended alternative, avocational programs beyond the campus without competing with the college agenda. Most importantly, they were all temporary relief measures that precluded instituting policy, or creating a permanent bureaucracy.²⁸

Nevertheless, Fass argues that the New Deal fundamentally altered the relationship between education and the federal government, and this in turn set important precedents for post-1960 developments in education at all levels. Furthermore, she insists that it elevated the public conception of education as an entitlement. Fass contends that the operations of the relief agencies exposed social and educational deficiencies which necessitated and legitimated federal intervention for remedy. The extent of social misery revealed in administering relief at times shocked New Dealers, and their raised awareness prompted them to focus on the special needs of targeted constituencies.

²⁸ Fass, "Without Design," 36-64; *Outside In*, 115-155.

The original thrust of the emergency relief was at the lower third of the economic scale. This in turn exposed the special needs of the South and its black population.²⁹ By this means, a special focus shifted to the needs of black schools and colleges, and Bethune at NYA eventually controlled a discretionary fund earmarked for black graduate students.³⁰ Such liberal measures endorsed an ideology of equality that co-existed with the New Deal acceptance of segregated education, and when the temporary relief ceased, these advances in black education were stalled by the realities of the social environment. Yet despite the fact that the administrative instrumentalities did not endure, Fass believes the New Deal bequeathed a profound legacy of principles regarding the role of education in the national welfare, and the responsibility of the federal government in promoting education for all its citizens.³¹

Regina Werum echoes Fass's contention that relief programs, especially in the South, had unintended consequences. Roosevelt proposed to relieve the impoverished South, but he was beholden to southern congressional Democrats, suspicious of federal intervention, for support of his programs. Consequently, except for a cadre of interracialists within the reformist wing, notably, NYA's Aubrey Williams, New Dealers did not challenge Jim Crow separation of education in the South. Nevertheless, at the same time they subverted the *status quo* by including blacks in education programs,

²⁹ Tyack, Lowe and Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times*, 106.

³⁰ John B. Kirby, *Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 116.

³¹ Fass, "Without Design," 36-64; *Outside In*, 115-155.

supporting the Bankhead-Jones Act, and appointing Bethune to the high profile NYA post.³²

Werum explains that southern politicians were not entirely against federal education programs, and, in fact, they played a significant role in developing the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act, which set the stage for school-based vocational training. However, the plantation elite that controlled southern society successfully employed states-rights arguments to ensure local control, and they refused to provide equitable funds for blacks. Southerners were likewise niggardly in their funding of black colleges. Black population was 29% in the 17 southern states, but the black land-grants received only 6% of federal funds apportioned to the states. For each tax dollar that Florida spent on UF, it spent 66 cents on Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College (FAMC). These funding disparities primarily confined black colleges to providing teacher training.³³

As James D. Anderson and Reginald Wilson point out, these institutions were colleges in name only. FAMC, for example, had only 12 students at the college level in 1917, and in 1929, BCC's enrollment ranged from eighth grade through junior college. The systematic lack of state funding cast the burden of support on private philanthropy for both public and private black colleges. However, Anderson acknowledges that the condition of black colleges improved financially and materially during the 1930's, and Wilson insists that it was an era that transformed southern black colleges. Especially public black colleges experienced phenomenal growth. Not only were they assisted by

³² Regina Werum, "Housing the Unemployed? Federal Job Training Programs in the Depression Era South," *American Journal of Education* 109, No. 2 (Feb. 2001): 228-237.

³³ Werum, "Housing the Unemployed," 228-237; Doxey A. Wilkerson, *Special Problems of Negro Education* (Washington, USGPO, 1939), 24.

federal expenditures, they also improved their standards and upgraded their accreditation ratings. In fact, both BCC and FAMC received improved their accreditations during the decade.³⁴

State support for white education in the South, and in Florida, though comparatively well funded, was anemic as well. The 1938 *Report on Economic Conditions in the South*, prepared by Chapel Hill-centered “Regionalists” including Howard W. Odum and Rupert Vance, presents a view of deep-rooted southern poverty, social and intellectual, as well as economic. In a letter upon reception of the *Report*, Roosevelt declared his “conviction that the South presents right now the Nation’s No. 1 economic problem.—the Nation’s problem, not merely the South’s.” Illiteracy rates far exceeded other regions, and the South’s meager tax resources prohibited proper funding for schools, even though it spent a greater share of its tax dollars on education than other regions. It was populated with one-third of nation’s children, but it only collected one-sixth of the nation’s school resources. Higher education also lagged well behind other regions, and the *Report* noted that the endowments of all southern universities were less than that of Harvard and Yale combined.³⁵

The New Deal, the South, and Florida

The crash of the stock market in October 1929 represents a turning point in American history, a dramatic event that divided two eras and heralded the Great Depression. However, the pall of hard times did not descend uniformly upon all parts of

³⁴James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 238-275; Reginald Wilson, “Can Black Colleges Solve the Problem,” *American Journal of Education* Vol. 98, No. (August 1990): 443-457; McClusky & Smith, *Building a Better World*, 96.

³⁵ *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression: The Report of Economic Conditions in the South, With Related Documents* ed. David L. Carlton (New York: Bedford Books, 1996), 42-58.

the nation; nor did it fall with equal fervor upon all groups. After decades of economic malaise, the South was ill-prepared to weather the downturn in demand for its extractive products, and Florida had experienced failed banks and bankrupt municipalities since the end of its speculative real estate boom in 1926.³⁶ And while the South suffered the depression's effects more than other regions, many in its habitually deprived black population were driven to destitution. Federal relief workers were especially appalled by the impoverished conditions of Central Florida's predominantly black agricultural workers. Citrus and cane growers, for example, relied on seasonal migrants for labor, not even offering shelter or other rudimentary benefits common in post-plantation society.³⁷ Nearby BCC in the Daytona Beach area, yachts of wealthy northerners—some of whom Bethune tapped for contributions to her school--moored in the rivers and skirted along the Atlantic coast. Yet a few miles west, those who were employed toiled for pitiful wages in citrus groves, on turpentine plantations, and building railroads through the swampy interior.

In 1933, Florida had the highest unemployment rate in the Southeast, and per capita income in plummeted from \$510 to \$289 between 1929 and 1933. When federal assistance began, the state's rate of recipients was 26% was the highest in the nation, and in the black community the rate was 36%. Federal relief funds were intended to supplement aid from the states, but in Florida, as in much of the South, the government paid 100% of the costs. In Gainesville, home of UF, an unfinished skeleton of a planned

³⁶ Gene M. Burnett, *Florida's Past: People and Events that Shaped the State, Vol. 1* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 1986) 38-41.

³⁷ Paul Mertz, *New Deal Policy and Southern Rural Poverty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 45-55.

hotel dwarfed the small downtown's other buildings, and served as a looming reminder of the speculative mania that had caused the busted economy. The cash-strapped city government even rented city hall to the federal relief officials and took cheaper lodgings across the street, and it discontinued providing light and water to charitable organizations. Yet Alachua County never had a bread line, and its diversified agricultural base coupled with the university's presence allowed it to fare better than surrounding counties.³⁸ Due north in Columbia County, the United States Farm Board delivered barrels of flour, bags of which were distributed free of charge by a local grocery and the Elks. Families were limited to 24 pounds every two weeks so as to spread it among as many of the needy as possible. The county's important timber industry was hit hard, and the state's first CCC camp was established in the nearby Osceola National Forest.³⁹

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), established in 1933, became the locus of the influential reformist wing within the administration. Headed by Harry Hopkins, a sharp-witted and eclectic social worker who had served in Roosevelt's administration as New York governor, FERA replaced federal employees on New Deal projects by utilizing personnel derived from the relief rolls. By 1934, it began soliciting local sponsors for socially desirable projects that would fuel the labor market, while providing permanent assets for the communities involved. Throughout its two year existence, FERA reformers employed ingenious strategies to deliver wide ranging relief

programs to diverse publics, including laborers and professionals, youth, women, the South and blacks. Furthermore, these temporary programs consisted of far more than

³⁸ Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), 400; Charles Hildreth, "History of Gainesville, 1854-1954" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1954), 200-242.

³⁹ Edward F. Keuchel, *A History of Columbia County, Florida* (Tallahassee: Sentry Press, 1981), 190.

public works, as FERA initiated scores of educational activities that aided schools, colleges, libraries and museums.

Concurrently, the popularity of the President and his programs with voters increased Congressional support for the socially liberal New Deal activities. With the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of May, 1935--the largest single appropriation in world history--the President and his allies succeeded in expanding both Legislative and Executive power to implement their objectives. Moreover, the President was granted unprecedented "discretionary control" of the lion's share of relief funding. These discretionary powers devolved to the social reformers within the President's Administration, and their chief vehicle became the agency created by that act, the Works Progress Administration (WPA)--also headed by Hopkins. The following month, President Roosevelt, by an Executive Order, created the National Youth Administration (NYA), an autonomous adjunct within WPA, with the idealistic Aubrey Williams as its director.⁴⁰

WPA and NYA continued the educational activities which had originated within FERA. Originally, FERA attempted to aid rural elementary schools that had been closed for lack of funds by employing laid-off teachers, and by providing employment for instructors to teach adults literacy. Soon, however, state and federal administrators became acutely aware that educative relief was desperately needed by multiple publics. FERA adopted a more polymorphous approach, extending relief services in the form of vocational training, rehabilitation of the handicapped, citizenship training, resident camps for young women, parenting classes, prisoner education, employment of artists and

⁴⁰ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 118-130.

musicians, and assistance to college students. By spring of 1935 when WPA and NYA supplanted FERA, the major fields of educational activity had already been defined and were transferred intact to the new agencies, where they continued their evolution and growth.⁴¹

WPA stated as a general principle that the essential administrative focus of the relief program should reside with the States--coordinated "in the interests of efficiency...under Federal auspices," and that WPA and NYA projects "should be sponsored, as far as feasible, by state and local governments." Basic educational relief goals of the agency included reopening schools, restoration of facilities and teacher pay, providing teacher assistants, and constructing additional classrooms, libraries and recreational facilities.⁴²

Central to WPA's mission was the rehabilitation of the large mass of unemployed, including white-collar workers, by means of numerous work and training programs. Furthermore, characteristic of the New Dealer *modus operandi*, WPA projects were experimental and flexible in their approach to problem solving, and reflexive in adapting to the shifting economic and political realities in which they operated. They ultimately sought to accommodate the local needs and customs of their co-sponsors and the local communities.⁴³

Additionally, WPA broadly redefined adult education by encompassing an ambitious agenda that offered vocational, social, civil, recreational and aesthetic relief to

⁴¹ Cambell, Bair & Harvey, *Educational Activities of the WPA*, 6.

⁴² Cambell, Bair & Harvey, *Educational Activities of the WPA*, 7.

⁴³ Fass, *Outside In*, 125.

multiple populations. College and university involvement in Emergency Adult Education Programs—which employed both college-aid recipients and under-employed educators—was instrumental to their operation. For example, UF’s General Extension Department cosponsored an ambitious WPA adult education program on Federal property near Ocala, Florida, that became a model for adult education nationally.

WPA expenditures in Florida through March 1938 totaled \$1.5 million; approximately two-thirds of which went to adult education, and one-third to nursery schools. Local school boards coordinated WPA’s Emergency Nursery Schools. By January, 1935, there were 79 nursery schools, with 2,294 pupils in the state, employing 239 teachers. There were roughly equal numbers of boys and girls in the schools, most of who were between three and five years of age, and during that month, 55 parent meetings had been held. Nutritional education was central to these schools, and the nursery schools spent nearly a dollar a day per person for meals.⁴⁴

Florida’s faltering economy and rapidly expanding population placed the state in dire need of relief, and Governor Sholtz and other politicians were quick to support President Roosevelt’s New Deal. Public works assistance in Florida began in early 1933, and throughout the decade, an incalculable amount of funding was channeled through numerous New Deal programs. Within the state, public higher education suffered from cuts in appropriations, and private institutions were imperiled by reduced philanthropy. Yet, whereas federal funding and control were divisive issues in the public school community, the leaders of higher education favored federal assistance. While land-grants such as UF had historical federal connections, southern black colleges necessarily looked

⁴⁴ Cambell, Bair & Harvey, *Educational Activities of the WPA*, 44.

to the federal government to provide more equitable funding than the states would allow. UF's Tigert and BCC's Bethune welcomed the federal partnership, and along with their institutions, they were pivotal in the distribution of relief throughout the state and the nation.

CHAPTER 3
NEW DEAL PROGRAMS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA AND
BETHUNE-COOKMAN COLLEGE, 1933-1939

Central to the involvement of UF and BCC in New Deal educational activity were their dynamic chief executives, Presidents Tigert and Bethune. Both presidents were vigorous supporters of the New Deal, and welcomed the federal assistance during the depression. Also, they each participated in planning, administrating, and implementing the programs that affected their institutions.

John J. Tigert

John James Tigert IV came to Gainesville with a distinguished academic pedigree. His grandfather, Bishop Holland N. McTyeire, was instrumental in acquiring funds from Cornelius Vanderbilt to establish Vanderbilt University, and although never its president or chancellor, he was entrusted by Vanderbilt to oversee the school's affairs for the remainder of his life. Born in 1882, Tigert graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Vanderbilt in 1904, where he was also All-South fullback in football and captain of the basketball team. He became Tennessee's first Rhodes Scholar, and held both teaching and coaching jobs at colleges in Missouri and Kentucky. While at the University of Kentucky, Tigert also pursued an ancillary career as a lecturer, and during the summer of 1920, he delivered 87 lectures in three months on the Radcliffe Chautauqua circuit. His lectures on Americanism and other civic themes attracted the attention of the American Legion,

which prevailed upon President Harding to appoint him as United States Commissioner of Education in 1921.¹

As Commissioner, he considerably enlarged the Bureau of Education, and he initiated studies of both land-grant and Negro colleges. In 1922 he organized a bi-racial conference of college educators to explore ways to improve the education of Negro vocational, agricultural, and home economics teachers. He also used the largely exhortatory position to stress the importance of libraries in a democracy, and urged that libraries be established in every school, and branch and traveling libraries in every community.²

When he left the Federal post in 1928 to become president at the all-white, all-male University of Florida, his departure was lamented by progressive educators, notably by Negro college leaders who valued his inspirational leadership, and insistence on more funding and higher standards for their institutions. However, the distinguished scholar and Washington insider's arrival was much heralded in by educators in Florida, including the state's leading African-American educators. Mary McLeod Bethune expressed "appreciation for the rare good fortune of having a man of your ability to enter the educational life of our state," and FAMC's J.R. E. Lee voiced similar sentiments.³

Tigert met the challenge of the growing, yet chronically under-funded, university with enthusiasm. He immediately demonstrated modern management techniques by restructuring the administration, and taking effective cost-cutting steps that allowed

¹ George Coleman Osborn, *John James Tigert: American Educator* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press 1974), 3; Hawkins, *Banding Together*, 133.

² Robert C. Beaty Biographical, p. 21, Beaty Collection 95, Box 1, biographical, P. K. Yonge Library, UF; Osborn, *Tigert*, 149-166.

³ Quoted in Osborn, *Tigert*, 219.

modest growth in spite of state appropriations that had been reduced from \$748,000 to \$561,000 in his first several years at UF. During his 19 years at UF's helm, Tigert created a General College for freshman and sophomores, a separate graduate school, and he oversaw its emergence as a modern, co-educational university.⁴

Mary McLeod Bethune

Mary McLeod Bethune was born 1875 in South Carolina, the fifteenth child of former slaves. Her formal education consisted of several years of primary schooling at a Presbyterian mission school near her birthplace, six years at the Scotia Seminary in North Carolina, and a year at the Moody Bible School for Home and Foreign Missions in Chicago. Bethune's education molded her as a proponent of a Progressive Social Gospel that centered on Negro women, and on their role in providing Christian homes and community leadership. She longed to go abroad as a missionary educator, but as a single, Negro woman, she could find no sponsor. After apprenticing for a year with Lucy Croft Laney at the Haines Normal and Industrial School in Augusta, Georgia, Bethune moved to Palatka, Florida, where she briefly operated a mission school. After a fire destroyed her home, she relocated to Daytona, a vacation destination for wealthy Northerners, which constituted a healthier economic milieu for her educational dreams.⁵

In 1904, with five students, she opened the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls. In 1923, with the sponsorship of the Methodist Episcopal Church's Board of Education for Negroes, the school merged with the Cookman Institute in Jacksonville, Florida, and became the co-educational Bethune-

⁴ Osborn, *Tigert*, 282.

⁵ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 1-7.

Cookman College. This consolidation of resources fortified the school's foundations, but due to the collapse of Florida's economy 1926, and the national economy three years later, BCC's future funding was in doubt. In 1929, faced with "almost insurmountable financial difficulties," operating on a paltry endowment of slightly over \$9000, with receipts totaling \$98,000 and disbursements totaling \$96,000, 25 teachers were employed instructing 235 boys and girls in "departments ranging from the eighth grade through Junior College." President Bethune noted in her twenty-fifth report that Florida educational authorities had provided "valuable instruction and advice to insure (BCC's) continued progress," and that the college was becoming "more closely affiliated with activities, educational, civic and social, in the State."⁶ This elasticity of its institutional boundaries, as well as its credibility and prestige, would soon be accelerated by participation in New Deal programs.

Over the years, Bethune plotted multiple strategies on varied stages in an extraordinary career that took her from humble roots to advising presidents of the United States. Via her activism on behalf of Negro women, her perennial fundraising for BCC, and her NYA position, Bethune emerged as the most popular Negro woman in America. Bethune displayed considerable political prowess, and was not reluctant to shift her tactics with time and location. Nor did she hesitate to switch her political allegiance from Republican to Democrat when the New Deal commenced. Her vigorous participation in associations of Negro women and Negro teachers—which became more politically attuned over the years--provided expanding platforms from which to launch her agenda. In 1917, she was elected president of the Florida Federation of Colored Women's Clubs;

⁶ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 96.

in 1923, she became president of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools; and then in 1924, she assumed the presidency of the National Association of Colored Women, which soon established headquarters in the nation's capital. As John Tigert was concluding his duties as U. S. Commissioner of Education, preparing to decamp to a small Southern university in Gainesville Florida, Mary Bethune's ever widening circles of influence and prestige had carried her from the diminutive BCC to the threshold of federal power.⁷

Prior to her involvement in the New Deal Administrations, Bethune had penetrated the Washington establishment and gained national recognition. Herbert Hoover invited her to attend a White House conference on the welfare of Negro children in 1928. The journalist, Ida Tarbell, listed her eighth on a 1930 list of "Fifty Great Ones." The NAACP awarded her the Springarn Award for meritorious service in 1935. Her first New Deal activities were of an advisory nature, as a member of Roosevelt's so-called "Black Cabinet," but in June of 1936, upon assuming the directorship of NYA's newly created Division of Negro Affairs—a post which she held until 1944--she became the highest ranking, and highest paid, black woman in government.⁸

Bethune had a unique relationship with the Roosevelt family. She first became an acquaintance of the president's mother, via her intertwined association and college fundraising activities. In both the years before and following her New Deal directorship, she and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt were steadfast allies. Moreover, during her tenure in Washington, she had numerous personal audiences with the president, during which

⁷ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 6.

⁸ Kirby, *Black Americans*, 77-111.

she expressed her opinions with bold frankness. When FDR died in 1945, Mrs. Roosevelt sent Bethune his silver banded cane—a practical gift for the aging woman, who declared: “I swagger it sublimely.”⁹

Though volumes have been published about Bethune, most have exalted her as an inspirational leader and mother-figure image. As the educational historian Audrey Thomas McClusky points out, even the black and women’s study movements of the 1960’s through the 1980’s produced scant historical assessment of the complexity of her manifold roles as educator, organizer of public affairs, and public servant. Lionized in her lifetime, her memory has often been cloaked in a modest hagiography. Bethune’s acute consciousness of her role in history—which she considered to be charted by divine will--complicates this understanding. She was inclined to invent aspects of her life story as she went along—over-dramatizing the poverty of her childhood or the dire straits of BCC’s genesis--to amplify the underdog myth which she cultivated. Furthermore, the first biographies, written by white female journalists, cited few attributed sources, relying instead on anecdotal and secondary literature, as well as Bethune’s faltering memory.¹⁰

Scholarly examination began in 1975 with B. Joyce Ross’s detailing of Bethune’s role in the Roosevelt administration, which critically pierced her saintly image, depicting her as too willing too compromise with white power.¹¹ Jack B. Kirby and Elaine M. Smith each offered more charitable views, emphasizing her adept negotiation of the federal power structure in the age of *de jure* segregation. And Booker T. Washington’s

⁹ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 15.

¹⁰ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 9-19.

¹¹ B. Joyce Ross, “Mary McLeod Bethune and the Administration of the National Youth Administration,” *Journal of Negro History* 40, No. 1 (January 1975): 1-28.

biographer, Louis B. Harlan, praised her in 1977 as a “gadfly” to New Dealers for her persistence in exacting funding for Negro programs. In the years since, scholarly articles, encyclopedia entries, and internet sites have abounded with literature portraying Bethune as an educator, politician and public servant who defies sociological stereotyping, a complex but pragmatic figure with astute political skills at implementing her multiple agendas, and as the greatest Negro woman of her generation. Indeed, twenty years after her death, she became the first African-American, as well as the first woman, to have a statue erected on federal land in her honor.¹²

Retrenchment and Recovery

A violent incident occurred in Florida on February 15, 1933 that nearly forestalled Franklin D. Roosevelt’s entry into the White House, and the subsequent enactment of historic New Deal measures. The President-elect, having just returned from a fishing vacation with friends, was riding with other politicians in an open motorcade through Miami, heading for the railway station to return home to New York. A naturalized citizen with a history of hatred for ruling figures purchased a hand gun in a pawn shop and attempted to assassinate Roosevelt. Although he missed his primary target, Chicago’s reform mayor, Anton Cermak, was killed, and two others were seriously injured.¹³

The little-known incident reflects the quickened pace and dramatic changes that were shaking Florida from its deep-South slumber. Not only were immigrants arriving from abroad, but automobiles and trains were swelling the population with migrants from

¹² McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 10-13.

¹³ Burnett, *Florida’s Past*, 94-97.

the North, and the State was awakening to a new roles and lifestyles. In fact, the 1930s was for Florida a period of rapid transition, during which it became the South's first urbanized State, and witnessed the nation's most rapid growth. Moreover, the "Sunshine State" became more attractive as a place for tourists and retirees, and they proved instrumental in resuscitating its economy. Miami and other tourist destinations even showed remarkable signs of recovery by 1936. In rural North and Central Florida, however, economic conditions recovered more gradually. The grim socio-economic realities were more akin to the post-plantation South than the high-rolling glitz of Miami Beach. The *Gainesville Daily Sun* lamented the long trains that rolled through the "University City" without stopping, and began a campaign of city beautification in the hopes of enticing Miami-bound big-spenders to disembark and spread their wealth locally.¹⁴

Out of the dark days of the early depression, hope came to Florida, not only in the form of President Roosevelt's New Deal, but also in the personage of Governor Dave Sholtz, a Democrat, whose dark-horse candidacy focused on replacing relief with jobs, reviving the state budget, and relieving municipalities of their deficits and defaults. His campaign championed public education, and he advocated free textbooks and better pay for teachers. In spite of a campaign that attempted to smear Sholtz as a Northern Ivy-Leaguer, and an immigrant with Jewish ancestry, he surprised the pundits by beating two former governors to win the office in 1932. Immediately, he aligned with the New Dealers, and his strong support for Roosevelt quickly redounded in the form of federal expenditures for state projects. Sholtz made good on the promise of free textbooks, and

¹⁴ Paul G. Ashdown, "An Historical Study of Florida Journalism and the Great Depression" (Master's Thesis, UF, 1969), 13.

he instituted a five dollar auto tag fee that raised revenue to pay teachers cash instead of script. By the time he left office after his constitutionally mandated one term in 1936, the deficit had been turned into a surplus, and Florida was on track to a speedier recovery than most of the beleaguered nation. Moreover, he soon proved to be a friend of UF. Tigert telegraphed Governor Sholtz in May of 1933: “I understand House voted to restore University appropriation to \$561,000. We are deeply grateful for your assistance. Hope appropriations for College of Women are restored to \$360,000. We can live if these appropriations are made.”¹⁵

In 1933, a few days after Roosevelt’s Inauguration, Tigert replied to a correspondent that he shared his “spirit of optimism” regarding the new administration, and added that “Mr. Roosevelt seems to have courage and a definite program [and] I hope that we shall be out of the woods shortly.”¹⁶ However, at the same time, his colleagues within the Association of Land-Grant Colleges & Universities were sending dire communications to one another concerning the potential effects of further reductions in funding. Tigert received a telegram warning that “some foundation” existed for newspaper reports “suggesting complete elimination or drastic cuts in federal appropriations to land grant institutions...Morrill and Research Funds in greatest danger but nothing secure...some institutions might be forced to close.” The cable included an urgent plea to inform the State Congressional representatives who “may best present the matter to President, [as] this is non-political and should be handled on its merits.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Tigert to Governor Sholtz, 26 May 1933, general correspondence(gc)-1, box 2, Office of the President, series p7b, Administrative Policy Records (APR), P. K. Yonge Library, UF.

¹⁶ Tigert to Raymon Robbins, 8 March 1933, gc-1, box 2, p7b.

¹⁷ R. A. Pearson to Tigert, 12 April 1933, gc-1, box 2, p7b.

The college presidents voiced their opinions, and both personally, and through their associations, lobbied their cause with Congress, and with New Deal officials.

Meanwhile, Florida's educational authorities were yielding to the new political winds issuing from the nation's capital, and the Board of Control, UF's governing body, proclaimed in December, 1933: "Blanket authority was given the president [Tigert] to approve all CWA projects as he deemed for the best interests of the University, provided this could be done without expenditure of any State Funds."¹⁸

In addition, by the beginning of 1934, the college presidents were recognizing that they had a friend in the White House. Beneath the gaze of a "very nice looking autographed photograph of President Roosevelt," Tigert wrote in February 1934: "Permit me to thank you for revoking the Executive Order which reduced appropriations to Land Grant Colleges and Universities." He explained to the President that due to State funding cuts, UF had "found it necessary to eliminate more than one hundred of its staff," and further federal cuts would have been devastating. Tigert closed with words of encouragement, informing Roosevelt that "we are supporting all of your measures vigorously and this recent action gives us additional satisfaction in the great constructive things that you are now doing for the American people."¹⁹ Since assuming UF's presidency in 1928, Tigert had been "compelled to make reductions in its budget since 1929 amounting to approximately 35%." However, by the end of 1934, as federal

¹⁸ Board of Control Meeting Minutes, 2 December 1933, gc-1, p7b.

¹⁹ Tigert to FDR, 19 February 1934, gc-1, box 2, p7b.

initiatives began to impact the university, Tigert noted that the “general economic outlook for the future is appreciably improved.”²⁰

From the beginning of the New Deal, UF’s Dean of Engineering, Blake Van Leer, continually presided over the voluminous application process for federal relief funds. The College of Engineering was an apt liaison for to coordinate public infrastructure projects in the state, and as the University Engineer, Van Leer was poised to represent the university in negotiations for the public works funding that characterized Roosevelt’s initial programs. Van Leer’s position as point man for UF prompted extensive communication with government, business and citizen interests throughout the state and the nation. As early as November 1933, he was actively associated with a host of Civil Works Administration (CWA), and Public Works administration (PWA) projects, on and off campus. Alachua County already had 78 CWA initiatives employing 1,749 men on diverse projects that included roads, schools, mosquito control, and providing fuel wood for the sick and destitute. At UF, 31 projects were underway that provided a golf course and a rifle range, a flag pole, shelving, stenographers, and the cleaning of chemistry glass.²¹ By December 1934, 2200 federal relief projects were active in the state, and FERA began elucidating its policy of discontinuing “the principle of the dole, or direct relief” by substituting “work relief in all cases.”²²

Van Leer continued his participation as a consultant to FERA, and then to WPA, and he chaired the Advance Planning Committee which had been organized by Tigert to

²⁰ Tigert to Julian Burruss, 28 December 1934, gc-1, box 2 p7b.

²¹ FERA-projects and staff, box 41, subseries 19a, College of Engineering, Office of the Dean, 1930-1966, APR, UF.

²² A. F. Perry to Blake Van Leer, FERA correspondence, box 12, 19a.

facilitate the potential infusion of federal funds. At the beginning of 1934, the Committee enunciated as a fundamental principle that it was “not executive in any sense,” but rather it existed to “assemble, study, arrange and coordinate facts and data,” and that the “final adoption and execution...rests with the President of the University and the Board of Control.”²³

The preparation of lengthy and detailed applications, along with the accompanying planning and organizing, was a job in itself. FERA, for example, required a rating of projects as per “social desirability, their preference as direct labor producing projects, and their importance as permanent physical assets.”²⁴ Van Leer apologized to a contractor for a tardy response, explaining that he had been busy with “preparation of reports to PWA and FERA for several million dollars worth of relief projects which we hope to secure here on the (UF) campus.”²⁵ In the spring of 1935, UF presented the federal government with 36 applications, “arranged in order of importance to the University,” that requested relief aid for dormitories, a dairy unit, radio station improvements, heating and steam lines, and numerous other upgrades and amenities.²⁶

In September of 1935, as FERA folded its tents and faded into WPA and the emergent NYA, an enthusiastic Van Leer informed his faculty that during the next year, UF, “and especially the College of Engineering, will have the greatest opportunity in its history for research work.” He cited three strong indicators: “numerous WPA projects...notably the Mapping Project, the Beach Erosion Project, the Hurricane

²³ Tigert to Van Leer, 26 January 1934, gc-1934-1, box 2, P7b.

²⁴ Van Leer to Tigert, 12 February 1935, FERA correspondence, box 12, 19a.

²⁵ Van Leer to James T. Machen, 15 February 1935, FERA correspondence, box 12, 19a.

²⁶ Van Leer to C. B. Treadway, 14 March 1935, FERA correspondence, box 12, 19a.

Research Project, and the General Research Project;” the number of graduate scholarships which the “Federal Administration is going to subsidize this year;” and the continuance of undergraduate subsidies, the number of which “will be greater than it was last year.” Also, WPA was contributing nearly \$70,000 for a hydraulic laboratory at the College of Engineering.²⁷ In less than two years, New Deal initiatives had aroused the relatively quiescent university to a heightened level of research that extended its influence throughout the state.

Simultaneous with this good news, the dean chided his faculty for not being “productive of very much work in the field of research” during the past few years, noting that “only one or two papers have received national recognition and publication.” He insisted, however, that they “be prepared for this coming program” by compiling “a brief but complete summary of all possible and proposed research projects which the College of Engineering can sponsor during the next year or two.” The engineering projects meant more work for the dean and his colleagues, but the projects provided a great deal of labor as well, and during the fall semester of 1935, 36 NYA students were assigned to various departments within the college. However, Van Leer admonished his department heads to say “no” to proposals “which have for their sole purpose the making easier and lighter the work of the professors.”

The mapping project, like many New Deal endeavors, changed sponsors and missions during its history. Originally sponsored by CWA, it then moved to FERA only to be discontinued in 1934. It was the first statewide project submitted to WPA, and it soon became a major undertaking that employed 134 students and 29 non-students during

²⁷ Van Leer to College of Engineering faculty, 6 September, 1935, box 12, 19a.

1934-35. Its mission consisted of “the making of an accurate map of property and improvements at the different state institutions,” with the UF College of Engineering as the prime mover. An official sent Van Leer a list of nine state facilities—comprising thousands of acres--including prisons, colleges and hospitals, the superintendents of which were “extremely grateful that such a map can now be prepared and seem to think that it is something that they have badly needed for many years.”²⁸ Van Leer concurred, labeling Florida “the most backward state...on topographic matters.”²⁹ He worked successfully to secure state and federal aid to utilize unemployed engineers and survey crews, arguing that it required little capital outlay, and presented no competition to private interests.

Not all research proposals were related to engineering, and the New Deal funding motivated all departments within UF. Of the 39 “consolidated research” applications that Van Leer--“assisted by thirty members of the faculty”-- submitted to WPA in September 1935, ten were to improve UF research facilities, 13 were for improvements in agriculture, six involved educational research, six researched the development of natural resources, and four were statistical studies.³⁰ Van Leer’s close contact with New Deal program administrators enabled him to advise his fellow deans of the WPA trend to accept smaller projects, and sub-projects, which should be “reasonably practical,” and to follow NYA guidelines that required projects to have both group and permanent value.³¹

²⁸ M. Ross Watson to Van Leer, 19 February 1936, correspondence ABC 1933-56, box 12, 19a.

²⁹ Van Leer to E. A. Pychon, 13 November 1935, correspondence, box 30, 19a.

³⁰ WPA Application, 5 September 1935, Project Proposals, box 30, 19a.

³¹ Van Leer Memo to Deans, 9 September 1935, Project Proposals, box 30, 19a.

In September, 1935, Jacksonville's *Florida Times Union* reported that statewide, 158 applications had been recently approved by various New Deal agencies, with more projects in the works—the deadline for Florida had been extended due to a hurricane).³² UF contributed expertise to local projects including drainage of the fair grounds and development of athletic fields, but it also directed projects for remote locations that involved the welfare of the entire state, such as the study of beach erosion, and the development of hurricane tracking and warning systems.

Van Leer asked Tigert to note that UF “has received projects of more value in total cost than all the other Board of Control Agencies put together. Yet, the contribution which we have made to obtain these projects has been just about half of what the others combined have contributed.” Van Leer, whose work as “technical consultant” proved critical in obtaining the funding, observed that Tigert had made a “wise move in permitting me to be associated” with the agency, though he “did not care to have this fact advertised.”³³ Tigert agreed that Van Leer’s work at FERA “has been quite worth while to them and has been decidedly advantageous to the Board of Control.”³⁴

Camp Roosevelt and the Civilian Conservation Corps

As a retrenchment measure, the Board of Control notified the university in 1932 that “all classes put on by General Extension Department shall be self-sustaining.” A few months later, UF was advised “to give whatever courses it finds desirable and to use what fees are collected for such courses even though the amount of fees collected far exceeds

³² *Florida Times Union*, 9 November 1935, Project Proposals, box 30, 19a.

³³ Van Leer to Tigert, 14 November 1934, gc 1934-35, p7b.

³⁴ Tigert to Van Leer, 14 November 1934, gc 1934-35, p7b.

the amount placed in the budget.”³⁵ So it was perceived as a boon when on July 7, 1936, the *Jacksonville Journal* reported remarks made by President Roosevelt to members of the State’s Congressional delegation. Not only did he express his belief that Congress would continue to appropriate funds for the Florida ship canal, but also that unused buildings would be “turned over to the University of Florida for extension education uses.”³⁶ That same day, UF’s Tigert sent a letter to the President, informing him that his “action makes it possible to do something outstanding for the ‘forgotten man’ in the professions, industry, and agriculture and to do real research in adult education.”³⁷

The news elicited positive public reaction as well. Beatrice Parvin, head of the Florida Congress of Parents and Teachers, wrote Tigert, gushing with appreciation over what she considered to be “the most progressive step in education Florida has ever taken,” and her association was “filled with pride that our own Dr. Tigert saw the need and seized the opportunity so promptly.” Parvin also wrote to President Roosevelt that “Florida is fortunate in having a President who recognizes individual state needs and makes provision for the solution of their problems.”³⁸

Later that month, Camp Roosevelt became official when FDR directed the Secretary of the Treasury “to allocate funds for the prosecution of non-Federal public project within Florida involving assistance for educational, professional and clerical

³⁵ Board of Control to Tigert, 17 February & 18 May 1932, University Policies-1, box 5, series p1, APR, P. K. Yonge Library, UF.

³⁶ *Jacksonville Journal*, 7 July 1936, Camp Roosevelt, box 41, p7a.

³⁷ Tigert to FDR, 7 July 1936, Camp Roosevelt, box 41, p7a.

³⁸ Beatrice Parvin to Tigert, FDR, 11 July 1936, CR, box 41 p7a.

persons.”³⁹ Tigert informed the Board of Control that an “agreement was entered into between the President of (UF), the (WPA) Administrator for Florida and the United States Engineer in Florida.” A total of \$150,000—distributed over 12 months--was to be allocated through the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1936.

Although the Ocala Engineer Division would leave a small detachment to maintain the camp, UF’s Adult Extension Service was to coordinate the relations of these three organizations, and to oversee the general “conduct of the Official Project 165-35-6000,” including educational policies, faculty, students and assistants. WPA was to “furnish a business manager” who would report to the UF official in charge, General Extension Dean B. C. Riley, and the WPA state director would act as liaison between the agency and the university. Additionally, the buildings would be remodeled to suit UF, with the “household equipment...turned over with the houses; dormitories and mess...turned over furnished as they are.” Tigert noted in conclusion that “Camp Roosevelt takes no money from the University budget.”⁴⁰ Thus, in spite of reduced state appropriations, UF’s Extension Division was able to sustain its program, and even expand its service to an extended community.

In mid-August the state administrator allotted UF \$50,000 draft, WPA workers at Camp Roosevelt soon were in the process of manufacturing furniture, and participants in the Woman’s Work Division were preparing “to make mattresses, bedspreads, necessary cushions for the furniture, etc.”⁴¹ The camp opened Oct. 5, 1936, and before the end of

³⁹ FDR to Secretary of Treasury, 25 July, 1936 CR, box 41, p7a.

⁴⁰ Tigert to Board of Control, 26 July 1936, CR, box 41, p7a

⁴¹ B. C. Riley to Tigert, 10 September, 1936, CR, box 41, p7a

the year, the camp was mailing two-color stationery with the UF logo and the bust of President Roosevelt on the banner.

Riley, Extension Dean from the program's inception in 1919 until his death in 1962, informed Tigert that he was keeping costs down by sacking "shovel-leaners (and) bench critics," and that "unemployed spouses of otherwise dependent adults" were not permitted to live at the camp. The Ocala Engineer, Brehan Somervell, passed on to Tigert "a grapevine rumor" that one of the camp's courses was training labor organizers," which he added, had been interpreted by some as training labor "agitators." Dean Riley quickly reported to his boss "that there is absolutely nothing to the rumor," adding, that as long as he was in charge, "the place will be too hot for radicals."⁴²

Along with its numerous adult "short-courses," Camp Roosevelt co-sponsored seminars and conferences designed to boost civic, economic, and social awareness. A *Florida Times Union* article proudly announced that Jacksonville's mayor had been named chairman of "Good Neighbor Conference." The conference was convened at Camp Roosevelt "to determine how communities may better aid each other in directing tourists to their various points of interest and help each other disseminate information on their recreational, entertainment and housing facilities." The conference featured figures of national prominence, including "mayors of a number of large northern cities," gathered to raise awareness of the "good neighbor" feeling which was increasingly important if Florida was to realize her potential" in securing the interest of tourists.⁴³

⁴² Brehan Somervell to Tigert, 5 September 1936, & B. C. Riley to Tigert, 21 September, 1936 CR, box 41, p7a.

⁴³ *Jacksonville Times Union*, 10 November 1936, CR, box 41, p7a.

Another conference involved “200 ministers belonging to 20 different denominations,” who wrote a letter of appreciation to Tigert, and a request that he pass on their gratitude to President Roosevelt. Tigert, son of a parson, grandson of a bishop, and a lay-minister himself, imparted to the president that he was “particularly proud of the success” of this course, as it “has been my feeling that our depression contained spiritual and moral, as well as economic elements.” It was fortunate, he continued, that in the New Deal recovery policies, “the intangible aspects have not been buried in blind adherence to mere material values.”⁴⁴

After the success of the ministers’ short course, Tigert responded to H. Stewart Austin, a representative of the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who had broached the idea of a similar course for black ministers. Citing the Florida State Constitution, which specifically forbade the racial integration of education, Tigert claimed that if Camp Roosevelt was successful, “I am sure I can get the President’s sympathetic interest” in getting money for FAMC to sponsor a residential camp. He further explained that “the Administration in Washington is quite interested in Negro problems. One high official...suggested that we might use Camp Roosevelt for Negroes. Of course, this is out of the question and would break up everything that we are trying to do there.”⁴⁵ In line with other socially progressive educators in the South, as well as with New Deal policies, Tigert was concerned with improving race relations, but at the same

⁴⁴ Tigert to FDR, 13 August 1937, General Extension correspondence, box 33, p7a.

⁴⁵ Tigert to H. Stewart Austin, 26 January 1937, general correspondence, box 3, p7b.

time he was cognizant of the social and political costs of challenging the Jim Crow System.⁴⁶

For example, a few months later, FAMC's President Lee requested permission for his photography professor to take a course. Tigert responded that it was "a matter of serious regret to me that we do not have facilities for taking care of your people." He told Lee he could not "divert" any WPA money from the camp, but he would do what he could to assist FAMC in establishing its own camp.⁴⁷ Lee informed Tigert that his college was making the necessary preparations, arranging to accommodate "as many as will come to us [and] to room and board them at practically no cost, provided they will furnish their own bed linen."⁴⁸

A few of Camp Roosevelt's courses elicited pointed remarks from the public. A Jacksonville lawyer sent a testy letter to Tigert, enclosing a pamphlet advertising "Two Short Courses in Personal Grooming" that were held in January 1937. Programs included: "What is a Well-Dressed Woman; Anatomy of Skin and Hair; Line and Design; Budgeting and Buying." In the lawyer's opinion, the course was "an attempt to make silk purses out of sows' ears and is a fine illustration of modern trends." He pointed out that the "circular does not indicate that persons of color are eligible, but I should think that several of the courses would be of particular interest to them." Indeed, the pamphlet listed "Comments on the Course by Prominent Citizens" which noted that the courses "are offered to all women in Florida, regardless of social standing or economic status,"

⁴⁶ Ronald K. Goodenow, "The Progressive Educator, Race and Ethnicity in the Depression Years: An Overview," *History of Education Quarterly* 15, no.4 (Spring 1975): 365-394.

⁴⁷ Tigert to J.R.E. Lee, 6 February 1937, gc, box 3, p7b.

⁴⁸ J.R.E. Lee to Tigert, 9 February 1937, gc, box 3, p7b.

without mentioning race. Another lawyer called the course “such a lot of foolishness (and) a waste of the tax payers’ money,” and he reproached UF, declaring that it “could use its time and money” for more constructive purposes.⁴⁹

A few public complaints notwithstanding, , the Camp Roosevelt undertaking enlarged UF’s community outreach to numerous constituencies, while also propelling it beyond its usual academic mission. Tigert wrote to the Marion County Chamber of Commerce expressing gratitude for its cooperation in establishing a vocational school at the camp, which he depicted as a “great opportunity to blaze new trails in the field of adult education,” so important “in this time of social reconstruction, unemployment, increased leisure time, and demand for better technical and professional preparation.”⁵⁰

In later years, Tigert praised Riley for heading a department that achieved national recognition “in developing the contemporary pattern for continuing education. Among Riley’s many ‘firsts,’ Tigert listed “the establishment of the first residential adult education center,” and he described Camp Roosevelt as “a 154 acre site with 100 buildings including 78 modern houses for staff and students, two dormitories, a dining hall, lecture hall, office buildings and other structures...made available by the Federal Government for the Division to operate an extensive adult education program. In all, 94 non-credit courses were offered at this facility with a total of 4,206 students in attendance.” In a statement that could easily refer to New Deal programs *en masse*,

⁴⁹ Giles J. Patterson to Tigert, 12 January 1937 & L.T. Norris to Tigert, 2 February 1937, gc, box 33, p7a.

⁵⁰ Tigert to Horace L. Smith, 15 July, 1936, CR gc, box 41, p7a.

Tigert wistfully concluded that despite the achievements, “the project was terminated upon the expiration of the Federal Grant which made it possible.”⁵¹

UF’s Extension Division also operated an educational program for the state’s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and conducted classes to train advisors and student teachers for the state’s active camps for white men. CCC, administered by the Department of the Army, was at first reluctant to initiate educational programs in their camps, and the educational activities that developed were in response to unanticipated needs. New Dealers were alarmed by the huge number of illiterate corpsmen, and discovered that eighth grade was the average academic level of all camps nationally. Consequently, the two major educational objectives, aside from schooling in forestry practices, were to eliminate illiteracy, and to remediate fundamental academic skills.⁵² The Corps in Florida found few qualified teachers in camps to meet these needs, so it solicited student teachers from UF, “juniors, seniors or else graduates” who would be paid \$60 per month by FERA. CCC’s “only obligation” to the student teacher was to provide board and lodging and “furnish him with work of an educational or recreational nature.”⁵³ The *Pine Knot Journal*, from Shady Grove, introduced a new FERA teacher from UF a “Mr. Raymond Vickey,” who, it announced, had “arrived Saturday night on the mail truck...to establish new courses” in the camp.⁵⁴

Three years into its existence, Howard W. Oxley, director of CCC Camp Education wrote Tigert in 1936 “to solicit your further assistance for CCC educational work.” He

⁵¹ Tigert notes, undated, historical data, box5, series p1.

⁵² Howard W. Oxley, “CCC Educational Activities,” *School Life* 25, no. 2, (November 1939): 58-62.

⁵³ Memo: P. G. Reynolds to Student Teacher, 9 June 1934, CCC records 1934-5, Major Manuscript Index,

⁵⁴ *Pine Knot Journal*, 29 June 1935, CCC records.

needed extension and correspondence courses, library facilities, instructors, and guest speakers. He hoped “your institution will be able to place some of its advanced NYA students as instructors in nearby camps,” urging UF to set up a scholarships “for worthy enrollees.” Tigert guaranteed UF’s continued “assistance for CCC educational work during the next year.” Pertaining to the scholarships, Tigert informed Oxley that although none were available “specifically for CCC men, we are taking care of eight or ten of these boys through NYA assignments.” He added that when possible, “we give preference to men who have been out of college two or three years.”⁵⁵

Primary among the student teachers’ duties were assisting publication of a camp newspaper, working in the camp library, and assistant teaching. The newspapers, in turn were organs for the camp’s educational advisors to promote their offerings, advertise library services, and congratulate successful graduates of the courses. In the *Crier* from Camp Carrabelle, the camp’s educational advisor asked in his column: “Have you used your 40 hours leisure time this week profitably? Have you read a paper, story, new article, or book? Have you made use of time set aside for you in the library?” The advisor also encouraged the cadets to ask “the library for special literature.”⁵⁶ The camps’ progress in combating the illiteracy and low level academic skills was also extolled in the camps’ newspapers. They heralded new programs, extended to offer more opportunities to the young men, “some who, a few weeks ago were embarrassed by having to make their mark, (X), are now proudly writing their names. Others have

⁵⁵ Howard W. Oxley to Tigert, 29 August 1936 & Tigert to Oxley, 10 September, 1936, CCC records.

⁵⁶ *Camp Carrabelle Crier*, 26 August 1934, CCC records.

learned to write their own letters home.”⁵⁷ As an acknowledgement of the importance of these publications, as well as the contribution of the student advisors, all the CCC State camps’ newspapers were kept on file at the UF library.

UF contributed as well to cultural affairs at the camps. The *Seedling Pine* of Ocala’s company #1420 announced that a “Gala Occasion” featuring a group of “Varsity Debaters, and high class, big time entertainers from the University of Florida will descend upon us tonight.” UF’s General Extension Division, the article noted, deserves the “credit and thanks for this part of the program.”⁵⁸ At the Shady Grove camp, “over a hundred men turned out to listen to a UF entomology professor discuss “Some Interesting Facts of Insect Life.”

As of August 1934, there were 25 camps in the State, with men from Florida, Georgia, Alabama, New York and New Jersey. There were “two colored camps and two veteran camps, the remainder being junior camps. The majority of the enrollees attended regular classes, and more than 5,000 young men completed the eighth grade, over 1,000 earned their high school diplomas, and nearly 100 graduated from college.”⁵⁹ In 1937, Major Gen George Van Horn Mosely wrote appreciatively to Tigert about the “manual training school” conducted by UF’s Extension Division, and he predicted that the “knowledge of tools and methods so ably presented to our men will be transmitted to

⁵⁷ *Ocala Seedling Pine*, 16 February 1935, CCC records.

⁵⁸ *Ocala Seedling Pine*, 23 February 1935, CCC records.

⁵⁹ Jerrell H. Shofner, “Roosevelt’s Tree Army,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* LXL, no. 4 (April 1982): 444-452.

hundreds of our CCC lads and will probably have its good effect upon the lives and homes of many of our future citizenry.”⁶⁰

The successful association with the Corps provided UF a unique opportunity to expand its educative assistance to a marginalized sector of Florida’s population. The CCC camps presented university personnel with a radical change of venue and clientele that was undoubtedly instructive to themselves as well as to the cadets. Moreover, by its alignment with this colossal national experiment that proved so popular with the president and the American public, UF magnified its profile and enhanced its prestige with the citizens of Florida.

National Youth Administration: College Aid and Residential Camps

There evolved among the zealous social planners in FERA, a fresh perspective on what they targeted as the “youth problem” that the Depression had either caused or exacerbated. Focusing on the difficult transition period between school and work for those aged 16-24, the planners found that many in this age bracket either could not afford to attend school or college, or had left school with insufficient skills to acquire work.⁶¹ This new outlook on youth was notably influenced by progressive social research conducted by the American Youth Commission (AYC), and sponsored by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the General Education Board (GEB). The 1935 study focused on the young vagrants then roaming the country in large numbers, as well as those swelling the ranks of public education—both secondary and college level--during a time of unpaid taxes and eviscerated school budgets. The AYC’s reports, which set a

⁶⁰ George Van Horn Mosely to Tigert, 7 April 1937, gc 1937-2, box 33, p7a.

⁶¹ Palmer O. Johnson and Oswald L. Harvey, *The National Youth Administration*, (Washington: USGPO, 1938) 6-7.

new standard for youth-serving agencies, included several ground-breaking studies on the dire impact of segregation on young Negroes. The social planners were shocked by the magnitude of the youth problem that the various studies revealed.⁶²

Another 1935 report was prepared for NYA by the Department of State, which gathered “whatever material was available on youth conditions and programs in foreign countries.” The report’s tone was sober, even ominous. It cited idleness as the root of “youth pushing itself into the consciousness of the world,” and made references to Italy and Germany where youth “march in uniform to martial music.” Its viewpoint elucidated the crisis of youthful anomie, and it suggested that in the midst of global economic depression, this posed the problem of foreign governments’ attempts at harnessing the energies of youth “by the teaching of a definite political ideology.”⁶³

Florida’s first NYA State Director, UF’s Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Robert C. Beaty, echoed the report, lamenting that “the stream of youth of the Nation has been dammed up,” and warning that if young people are wasted “in idleness” and the nation develops “a generation of hitch-hikers and drifters,” then “society will have to expend its agencies for taking care of the anti-social as it has never done before.”⁶⁴ The youth problem that concerned national leaders was likewise endemic to Florida. Four years before she became an NYA official, Bethune worried on behalf of “one third of the Negro school population of the state...wandering about the streets and alleys of our

⁶² Angus and Mirel, *Failed Promise*, 63-66.

⁶³ Department of State Report for NYA, “Youth: A World Problem,” (Washington: USGO, 1935), xi-xv.

⁶⁴ Robert C. Beaty, reprint of *Florida Educational Journal*, October 1935, biographical, box 1, Beaty Collection 95, PKY Library, UF.

cities, loafing about the railway stations and vacant lots of various villages, drudging out a dreary existence in rural places.”⁶⁵

The president and his youth program advocates, notably his wife Eleanor, Williams, Hopkins, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, and Charles W. Taussig of the “brain trust,” were well aware of the social and political tightrope upon which their embryonic NYA plans balanced. Among fiscal and other constraints, they worried that any new federal agency with enormous nationwide funding ran the risk of being branded the “Roosevelt Youth,” thereby evoking images of Fascist European youth organizations. To protect the president from such a charge, as well as to mitigate the impact of federal intrusion in the nation’s educational system, the New Dealers created a program designed to be administered in a democratic, decentralized manner, with a restrained budget.⁶⁶ Florida’s NYA director, Dean Beaty, adamantly argued that there was not an ideological dimension to NYA. It “is not a Youth Movement,” he wrote, and there would be “no attempt...to regiment youth or to crystallize the sentiment of youth into a body of propaganda to be used to promote any form of political, social or economic philosophy.”⁶⁷ Similar proclamations by other New Deal youth advocates did much to assure educators that NYA participation would not politically ensnare their institutions.

From the inception of the college-aid program in 1934, FERA planners turned to the presidents of state land-grant universities and colleges for expertise and support. The presidents were both co-formulators and outspoken supporters of the program. Their

⁶⁵ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 105.

⁶⁶ Reiman, *New Deal and American Youth*, 97.

⁶⁷ Beaty, biographical, box, Collection 95.

overriding goal was to increase enrollment to counterbalance the effects of decreased endowments and appropriations. While the depression's paucity of youth employment pushed young people towards more schooling, federal assistance to the students enabled them to attend. Additionally, as retrenchment had severely reduced institutional payrolls, federal assistance that would increase their labor pool was a potential boon. College presidents were anxious to cooperate.⁶⁸ The program was authorized on February 2, 1934, and within three days, UF's president sent the following memo to all deans:

"Recent action of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration makes it possible to employ a number of college students who find work necessary to stay in college."⁶⁹

Growth was foremost in the calculations of Florida's college presidents. The state's population was soaring, and hard times notwithstanding, more students were seeking college educations. In the increasingly competitive market of higher education, the colleges had to increase their market share if they were to survive and prosper. Relief in the form of federal college aid proved effective in this regard. By the end of 1934, Tigert observed that in spite of the economic situation, UF had witnessed an "increase in the number of students in excess of 25%," during the past three years. "Undoubtedly," he concluded, "a part of our increase...is explained by the use of FERA funds."⁷⁰

College presidents and their associations vigorously lobbied for continued expansion of this funding. In May of 1934, Tigert sent a letter soliciting Senator Duncan U. Fletcher's support for increased college aid program legislation. Tigert informed the

⁶⁸ Reiman, *New Deal*, 59-60.

⁶⁹ Tigert memo to Deans, 5 February 1934, Dean of Student Affairs, gc-1928-35, box 42, p7a.

⁷⁰ Tigert to Julian Burrass, 20 December 1934, gc-1, box 2, p7b.

senator that “more than two hundred boys have been assisted during the semester just closing,” and offered assurances that the university was “taking every precaution to see that these boys are not pauperized and that funds are used only in cases of genuine need, where there is a reasonable expectancy that the boy will profit by staying in college.”⁷¹

When the economic recovery faltered in 1938, NYA’s college aid program was threatened with a severe cut in funding. As a representative of ALGC&U, Tigert testified before Congress, and not only were the cuts forestalled, but the program’s funding was boosted from 79 to 97 million dollars.⁷²

Even private white colleges in the state were activist toward the federal assistance. Hamilton Holt, president of Rollins College in Deland, Florida, where “fully half of our students require financial help,” sent a positive testimonial to Hopkins “to strongly urge that this aid to needy students be continued.” Holt opined that the college aid program allowed students “to continue their technical and cultural preparation for better citizenship while it prevented “idleness,” and relieved the burden of unemployment relief. Yet it also clearly contributed to the growth of the college, as Holt explained: “The allotment from the FERA funds will simply make it possible for us to accommodate a larger number than would otherwise be the case.”⁷³ The popularity of the college aid cut across all sectors of higher education in Florida, public and private, black and white.

For instance, BCC used FERA college aid as an expedient tool in their efforts to phase out secondary school activities and attract more college students--an important

⁷¹ Tigert to Duncan U. Fletcher, 14 May 1934, gc-1934-3, box 2, p7b.

⁷² Beaty, biographical, box 1.

⁷³ Hamilton Holt to Tigert, 23 May 1935, & Tigert to Holt, 26 May 1935, gc 1935-1, box 3, p7b.

factor both for accreditation ratings, and for qualifying for additional New Deal assistance. BCC's administration was besieged with inquiries from educators and high school students wishing to partake of the work scholarships. Bethune responded to an educator's inquiry that the school had "received so many, many applications" that she doubted whether his student could be given "any consideration or not." However, she recommended that he "fill out the blank and send it to us immediately."⁷⁴ Likewise, the pool of labor provided by FERA students was an important component in the development of BCC's print and automotive shops, and programs in mechanical arts, agriculture, food science, and beautician skills that increased its enrollment and broadened its educational mission.

New Deal bureaucrats also actively solicited the advice of both black and white college administrators to help formulate an effective program. FAMC's President Lee was the only black educator invited to serve on the national NYA Advisory Committee, and before becoming a New Deal bureaucrat herself, Bethune lobbied both through her associations and her personal contacts for assistance to BCC, and black education generally.⁷⁵ Her educational advice to presidents began in the Hoover Administration, when Bethune, at the time an active Republican, was invited to attend a White House educational conference. She also developed a close friendship and working relationship with Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the prime movers behind the creation of NYA.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Bethune to W. M. Peterson, 11 November 1934, Reel 10 microfilm, Bethune-Cookman Collection, BCC.

⁷⁵ Leedell W. Neyland and John W. Riley, *The History of FAMU* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1963), 150.

⁷⁶ McClusky & Smith, *Bethune*, 6; Eleanor Roosevelt, *This I Remember* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948) 162-163.

Roosevelt's first Office of Education Commissioner, George F. Zook, who had earlier served in the Office's higher education division while Tigert was commissioner, was one of the architects of the college aid program. Zook requested college presidents to express the "most favorable (and) most unfavorable features of the plan." (With a nod to the tight-times, Zook enclosed a postage paid envelope.) Tigert replied that while FERA student employment had "not been an unmixed blessing," the favorable features "far outweigh" the unfavorable. Beside the benefits of work experience and continuing education for the students, in Tigert's consideration the plan enabled UF "to carry on certain worth while projects which would have been impossible without this aid." As to the projects student employment made possible, Tigert regretted "a certain disposition" among some faculty members who "consider the project more important than the boy." Furthermore, he observed that occasionally the aid produced some resentment among those not eligible, and that "undoubtedly, through misrepresentation," there were some undeserving students who had "secured places on the payroll." Nevertheless, in closing, he expressed optimism that "if a similar program is continued next year, we will be able to eliminate most of the unfavorable features."⁷⁷

In March of 1935, as the movement to establish a national youth agency gained momentum, FERA's educational director, L. R. Alderman, invited Tigert to become a member of a committee to study "our emergency educational program." Tigert, preoccupied with state politics, cabled his regrets, stating that the "approaching legislative session prevented" his accepting the position. The following month, Alderman wrote that he had received assurances from Hopkins that the program would

⁷⁷ George Zook to Tigert, 24 May 1934 & Tigert to Zook, 30 May 1934, gc-1934-3, box 2, p7b.

continue, and queried Tigert as to how he thought it could be enlarged. Citing a prior inquiry by the National Association of State Universities, Tigert answered that UF “could handle a quota of 50% larger than at present [and] the monthly allowance could be increased to \$25.00.” He added that “we do not favor government loans to students,” but that rather UF preferred “carefully supervised” scholarships for upper-classmen and graduates; the jobs should be awarded to “needy students who show evidence of ability to profit by college training, “ and the beneficiaries “should be required to do honest work for the money received.”⁷⁸

Shortly after the 1935 formation of NYA, Aubrey Williams requested Tigert’s recommendation for the state’s first NYA Administrator. Williams preferred a “young person who can work happily with older and younger people alike...a keen active person...a good administrator.” When Tigert forwarded him two recommendations, however, Williams retorted that he preferred Tigert to assume the post, and promised to “provide...sufficient help so that this will not materially interfere with your work” as UF president. After Tigert gracefully declined,” Williams cabled that he would “make no appointment to Florida but would like to have you come to Washington when we have the State meeting and represent the state without appointment.”⁷⁹ Beaty was subsequently appointed the first State Director for the new agency, and served for one year.

UF and BCC were primarily involved in the college aid side of the program.

College students received an average of \$15 per month—(a few graduate students at UF

⁷⁸ L.R. Alderman to Tigert, 21 March 1935 & Alderman to Tigert, 23 March 1935 & Alderman to Tigert, 17 April 1935 & Tigert to Alderman, 19 April 1935, gc-1934-3, box 2, p7b.

⁷⁹ Williams to Tigert, 17, 31 July 1935, gc-1935-1, box 3, p7b.

received \$25)--and worked a maximum of three hours per day, or ten hours per week, performing “socially desirable” tasks in their school or community. Common assignments included library work, clerical work, recreation supervision, and assisting teachers. Allocation to the colleges was based on 12% of their enrollment as of October, 1934. During NYA’s first year, Florida had a quota of 958 students distributed among 15 colleges, four of which were Negro institutions. Over one-third of the allocations to white colleges were made to UF students, while BCC students received more than a quarter of the Negro funds—quite disproportionate to its enrollment.⁸⁰

Both Tigert and Beaty were likely choices for Williams, whose socially inclusive and interracial philosophy often drew fire from Congressional critics in the South. Williams, from Alabama, administered NYA such that it was considered to be the “most racially enlightened” agency in government—especially after Bethune assumed her national position.⁸¹ Beaty, a native Mississippian, had a long and active association with the progressive Young Men’s Christian Associations, and while at Vanderbilt University, he had written a master’s thesis entitled, *The Negro Boy Problem of Nashville, Tennessee*, which revealed a sensitive sociological perspective of racism’s impact on young black males in the South, and the milieu of lynching, hanging and burning in the midst of which they come of age. As a UF professor, Beaty addressed this “cultural retardation of the South.” He introduced race relations into the sociological curriculum, and in 1932, he

⁸⁰ Florida NYA pamphlet, “Youth Opportunities: NYA of Florida, 1935-36” (Jacksonville, 1935), 3; Johnson and Oswald, *National Youth Administration*, 6.

⁸¹ Weis, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, 173.

created an extensive bibliography, *By and About the Negro*, which he shared and updated with educators throughout the South.⁸²

Even after resigning after a year as state director, he remained in charge of the program at UF, working with students whose average annual part-time earnings of \$220 amounted to a significant contribution to their families' incomes which averaged barely over \$1000. In a memo to Tigert he expressed regret that there were "at least two qualified applicants" for each of the scholarships. After his resignation in 1936, Beaty continued to be a national presence in NYA, and a spokesman for UF and other land-grants. During his tenure as state director, a national college work council of NYA was formed, and Beaty was "elected permanent chairman and served until...NYA closed at the outbreak of World War II."⁸³

NYA financed research projects that thrust UF and BCC into enhanced interaction with their communities. For BCC it significantly heightened its profile with local charities, agencies, and political forces within the white social and political establishment. The common interest in obtaining federal assistance led to the cosponsoring of projects and cooperative uses of facilities that temporarily bridged the racial divide. These temporary partnerships solidified the black institution's position within both racial communities.

At UF, however, the increased interaction was statewide. A. R. Mead, UF's Director of Educational Research, studied 7th graders in laboratory schools throughout Florida for "dominant personality traits...and the intensive study of pupil initiative." In

⁸² Beaty, biographical, box 1, Collection 95.

⁸³ Beaty, biographical, box 1, Collection 95.

keeping with NYA's racial consciousness, Mead's research included several Negro high school, as "all of us recognize their weaknesses."⁸⁴ UF's NYA students also contributed to agricultural research in Florida. For example, in a study of the state's important citrus industry, they "visited groves and packing houses," compiled material from various sources, and produced a volume entitled *Citrus Industry and Occupations in Florida*.⁸⁵

NYA college aid struck a generally harmonious balance between the college administrators and the students, and each counted on the money. BCC's Secretary, Bertha L. Mitchell anxiously awaited for the "official word from the Jacksonville office" regarding allocations, so that she could send out notices to the nervous students.⁸⁶ The funding was too important to pass up, and Mitchell solicited fellow educators "in helping us to secure some good, ambitious fellows who haven't been successful in getting into College this year." The college had secured funding for a "Special NYA Project here on the campus which will provide (fifteen) boys with training in Agriculture, Mechanic arts and Auto Mechanics. She urged her correspondents to "look around your community and see if there are any fellows who would be interested," and have them contact her office immediately.⁸⁷ Soliciting private donations, Bethune wrote that the "allocation of student aid from the NYA has been of so much help during the past few years," adding, however, that it "covers scarcely one-third" of a student's expenses.⁸⁸ The school even recruited athletes as well in its efforts to maximize participation in the program. Mitchell informed

⁸⁴ A.R. Mead to Beaty, 13 April 1938, gc, box 5, series 49a, Public Records Collection, PKY Library, UF.

⁸⁵ NYA, "Youth Opportunities," 3.

⁸⁶ Bertha L. Mitchell to Jose Planas, 2 September 1939, reel 10, BCC Collection.

⁸⁷ Mitchell to G. D. Rogers, 27 September 1939, reel 10, BCC.

⁸⁸ Bethune to Edward Thompson, 26 July 1939, reel 10, BCC.

BCC's acting president, Abram L. Simpson, that the football coach "is bringing four fellows with him and we have provided for them under NYA."⁸⁹

From her post in Washington as head of NYA's Negro Affairs Division, Bethune urged Simpson in 1938 to create a vocational workshop, and library, art, and music projects to conform to emerging NYA programs. Expecting the college to "have the help it had last year with possibly an additional amount, that will warrant your setting up such projects," Bethune was also "hoping that our student body next year will reach 225 or 250." The director further exhorted Simpson to consult with state NYA administrators so as to be best prepared, for the "stream is flowing now and only those who are on the alert can direct things their way."⁹⁰

The NYA Resident Projects for Girls—camps for females 16 to 24 years of age—were largely the contribution of Hilda Worthington Smith, who had pioneered women worker courses at Bryn Mawr. Smith had first begun the camps while part of the reformist wing within FERA, and both she and the program were later incorporated into NYA.⁹¹ In 1938, there were five camps in the state, which took young rural women from the relief rolls and provided a combination of vocational, social and recreational activities.⁹²

UF administered the largest, Camp Roosevelt, which occupied the Corps of Engineer facilities after the UF's Extension Division WPA appropriations expired. WPA continued to provide maintenance and police protection. 120 females resided for three

⁸⁹ Mitchell to Abram Simpson, 18 August 1938, reel 7, BCC.

⁹⁰ Bethune to Simpson, 20 June 1938, reel 10, BCC.

⁹¹ Reiman, *New Deal and American Youth*, 80.

⁹² Camp Roosevelt Records, box 1 of 1, m87-9, Florida State Archive, Tallahassee.

months at the camp, depicted in an NYA bulletin as having “a fine tonic effect on girls coming from financially depressed and meager surroundings.” Vocational training included commercial courses, for which a high school diploma was required, and homemaking, beautician, and catering/cafeteria service, for which a tenth grade education sufficed. The residents earned a monthly salary of \$24 for 80 hours on various work projects. The cottages, with “electric lights, modern bathrooms and showers and electric hot water heaters,” were luxurious by the standards of rural Florida.⁹³ As with the CCC camps, the Camp Roosevelt Resident Project provided UF with a unique venue, and in this case, a clientele of females which it did not ordinarily serve.

Camp Retreat at BCC provided a group of rural girls home economics and hotel service training, and offered trainees “the experience of such modern equipment as the electric washers and mangles.” Its camp director lauded “the influence of being on the campus with its cultural environment,” citing its efficacy in the social transformation of the girls “by awakening our Trainees to realize that life is worth while if only we seize its opportunities to rise to the highest level possible.”⁹⁴ It too extended BCC’s parameters beyond its campus, and connected it with a segment of the black population largely unfamiliar with the services of higher education.

Libraries, Archives and Rare Books

Library Service was one of a series of works promulgated by the Advisory Committee on Education, appointed by President Roosevelt in 1936. The volume illumines the insufficient resources of America’s depression era libraries. Its

⁹³ NYA flier, “Southern Accent on Youth” (Jacksonville, 1939), 6-9.

⁹⁴ NYA, “Youth Opportunities,” 31.

proclamation as to the library's role in American society captures the gist of the New Dealers' prevalent notions of social justice and cultural awakening. It points to "the potential contribution which the library may make to the general welfare of a democracy...to make available to all persons, regardless of race, creed, or economic status, the universal medium of education, information, recreation..." which, it declared "is a concern of the Nation as well as of the States." The reckoning of the committee amounted to "a somewhat unfavorable estimate of library activities of the State governments." However, hopeful of imminent improvement, it noted that "state aid to libraries has suddenly become the order of the day."⁹⁵

The library study further noted the "relative deficiency" of library expenditures in the South, emphasizing that segregation precluded availability to the black population. In fact, the Federal Writers Project administrators complained of inadequate library services throughout Florida, and WPA considered the "almost complete absence of library provision for Negroes" to be one of the most serious shortcomings of its program in the Southern states. The study also acknowledged the universal verity that libraries did not stand alone in a literate and cultural world, but that decent library services existed concomitant with venues such as bookstores, newspapers and other media. Historically, the South lagged behind other parts of the nation in these information outlets as well.

A 1938 Florida Library Association survey concurred with the government's assessment, considering Florida service "in the southern group which invariably falls at the bottom of the list." In fact, Florida's libraries, both municipal and educational, were among the poorest--even ranking below neighboring states which had comparatively less

⁹⁵ Carleton B. Joeckel, *Library Service* (Washington: USGPO, 1939), 20.

taxpaying ability per capita--and very few cities maintained branch libraries for Negroes. Of the 77 repositories containing over 500,000 volumes, none were in Florida, which also “lacked large private libraries that other southern states have fostered.” 41 of 67 of the State’s counties lacked library service altogether, none had county-wide service, and the State Library in Tallahassee was not established until 1925.⁹⁶

Florida’s college libraries also ranked at the bottom, and UF had fewer books per capita than other Southern state universities such as Georgia and Virginia. Florida’s college presidents of both races were acutely aware of their libraries’ shortcomings and that it stifled academic rating, while precluding membership in prestigious associations. Tigert, in fact, continually sounded this theme to the Board of Control, bemoaning that throughout “the entire history of the University, funds have been inadequate for the development of the kind of library that is required for best achievements.”⁹⁷ In 1927, registering the impact of Florida’s early entry into economic depression, UF librarian, Cora Miltimore, informed Tigert’s predecessor, President A. A. Murphree, that the “small appropriations for the last two years has crippled not only the growth of the University Library but has handicapped the work of the various colleges on campus, as adequate library facilities are necessary for all departments.”⁹⁸

However, inadequately funded, provisions at UF far exceeded the five drawer metal cabinet BCC librarian Henry W. L. James used for an index. Interestingly, UF Librarian Miltimore—in association with the GEB and the Methodist-Episcopal Church’s Board of

⁹⁶ Survey of Florida Libraries, background info, 1935-36, UF Libraries, Public Collection series 8a, APR, PKY Library, UF.

⁹⁷ *University Report 33: 1938-39*, 423.

⁹⁸ Miltimore to Mrphree, 9 April 1927, A.A. Murphree, President 1926-28, box 6, series 8a.

Education for Negroes—had for years taken a prolonged and activist approach in the improvement of Negro college libraries, especially with BCC, which she visited and corresponded with regularly to offer assistance in purchasing appropriate books and periodicals. In 1931, President Bethune, anxious over an upcoming accreditation review from the Southern Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (SASCC), sought Miltimore’s advice as to how best to spend meager resources: “We have about nine hundred dollars left...please tell me the next step to be made.”⁹⁹ The relationship bore fruit, for in early 1932, an ebullient Bethune wrote: “I know you and [assistant librarian] Miss Eddy are rejoicing, with us, in the fact that the Association...has rated our institution as an approved two year Junior College in Class B.” She expressed gratitude to UF’s library staff “who had contributed so much to our receiving this rating.”¹⁰⁰ This rating was of utmost importance in the continued operation of BCC, as it allowed the school to become a recipient of further philanthropic aid, and positioned it to be eligible for New Deal programs that would commence the following year.

There was a similar end-run around the state prohibitions of racial mixing in education when UF imparted its expertise toward improving the quality of education at the state’s black land-grant college. In 1935, FAMC’s Lee sought UF’s assistance in preparing for its accreditation review from the same association that had ranked BCC. SASCC had only been appraising Negro colleges since 1928--agreeing to rate them but not to grant them membership. Southern white educators realized that granting membership to blacks would lead to integrated gatherings, which would place them in

⁹⁹ Bethune to Miltimore, 29 August 1932, Bethune Cookman College, box 1, series 8a.

¹⁰⁰ Bethune to Miltimore, 11 January 1932, box 1, BCC.

conflict with their state constitutions.¹⁰¹ Earlier SASCC had bestowed a “B” rating on FAMC, which was currently striving to evolve into an “A” class school. Upgrading the library was foremost on Lee’s agenda. He requested that Tigert form a committee of faculty from various UF departments for the purpose of visiting Tallahassee; after a tour of the campus, they could make recommendations and perhaps donate extra scholarly journals.¹⁰² Cognizant that such an undertaking was legally problematic and socially perilous, Tigert was, as usual, cautious. However, a number of his fellow administrators, as well as faculty members, were eager to pursue the chance to participate in this rare occasion of racially comity. Tigert composed a committee of six, with deans and professors representing the Colleges of Agriculture, Biology, Education, Engineering, English, and General College. The committee visited FAMC for one day in October, 1935, and made recommendations not only for the library improvements, but for various other department upgrades as well.

Van Leer echoed Lee’s library concerns, expressing disappointment in the lack—“practically none at all”—of technical and trade association literature, and he closed his report to Lee with the hope that “you receive your accrediting.”¹⁰³ Indeed, that was the hope of all involved, and it soon became a reality. FAMC’s Biennial Report, 1936-38, announced that it was “one of the few state Colleges that has been accorded the highest ratings...’A’...accorded on the basis of the character of our work even though our facilities were limited.” This rating was essential to the success of the college’s

¹⁰¹ “Why a Class “B” Negro College?” *The Journal of Negro Education* II (October, 1933): 427-431; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *Black Colleges in the South: From Tragedy to Promise* (Atlanta: SACS, 1971), 5.

¹⁰² Lee to Tigert, 26 August 1935, gc 1935-1, box 3, p7b.

¹⁰³ Van Leer to Lee, 18 October 1935, gc, ABC 1935-56, box 12, series 19a.

graduates in gaining admission to quality graduate schools in the North, as well as attracting increased endowments and appropriations. In the same report, FAMC's library—recently made an independent division in the college—announced an increase in both volumes and seating, that it had become eligible to receive free United States government documents, and that it had borrowed books “from the Library of Congress, and the libraries of the University of Florida and Stanford University to aid several members engaged in research work.”¹⁰⁴ With this tangential approach, UF was able to join in the New Deal undertaking of assisting black higher education in Florida without challenging the *status quo*.¹⁰⁵

From the beginning of the New Deal, libraries occupied a niche in nearly all the relief programs—either directly, through PWA construction of school libraries, or indirectly, by providing CCC camps with library service. In 1936-37, WPA library projects employed approximately 15,000 workers, the majority of whom were certifiably on the relief rolls. NYA provided “employment to a large number of high school and college students in library projects, both in educational and public libraries,” and over 9 million volumes were rehabilitated in bookbinding and repair projects directed by state boards of education. An impediment to library enhancement was finding “local persons competent to do the required work,” and the library service study claimed that many librarians had come “to realize frankly” that WPA and NYA workers were “essential

¹⁰⁴ *Florida A. & M. Biennial Report: 1936-38*, 10.

¹⁰⁵ John V. Mc Qitty to Lee, 7 October 1935, gc-1935-1, box 3, p7b.

members of their staffs” who often contributed to an improvement of pre-depression service.¹⁰⁶

That libraries maintained a favored position in WPA’s relief constellation was evidenced by the attention it lavished on UF’s libraries throughout the New Deal. The UF library continually received a generous supplement of WPA and NYA workers, and the librarians were permitted to personally select and direct the labor. This aroused a modicum of envy from other departments because “a distinct impression was created in the minds of some of our faculty members” that college aid labor had been promised them, “in addition to the Library and/or its branches.” Tigert pleaded with New Deal administrators for more workers, detailing how the state had constricted the flow of appropriations while UF’s enrollment “has more than doubled.” This he called to the WPA State Director’s attention “so that you may know how acceptable some extra clerical or typist help would be in certain departments.”¹⁰⁷

While the deans presented Tigert their wish lists, WPA administrators assured UF’s acting-librarian, Miss Henrie May Eddy, that large projects such as the State Library Project-- in consultation with Eddy, and using NYA students and additional WPA workers for clerical tasks—had been approved. The librarian notified Tigert of the “large library project which will furnish workers,” and for which Eddy was “planning to use our own boys who live in Gainesville and work...on NYA funds (and) and one or two will be from the townspeople.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Joeckel, *Library Service*, 42-55.

¹⁰⁷ Tigert to Rolla A. Southworth, 17 May 1938, & Tigert to Mrs. Richard Reed, 16 May 1938, Tigert, J. J. 1937-38, box 7, series 8a.

¹⁰⁸ Henrie May Eddy to Tigert, gc-1938-1, box 4, p7b.

Florida's Writers Project also worked closely with UF on the Library Project, which began as a proposal "to employ 2700 workers (and) to provide a national survey of local archives." The co-sponsor of the inventory was the American Council of Learned Societies which desired to "equip public officials and students...with an important tool of research, and help draw more scholarship into local history."¹⁰⁹ The strengthened State Library also created a repository of material for community loans to locales where library services were lacking. Tigert and Eddy organized WPA labor and NYA students in collecting rare books and maps, mending school books, and even editing and typesetting new publications to bolster libraries statewide.

Furthermore, subsidiary projects--tasks such as repair, indexing and copying--were being written "to increase library assistance quota." Dean Beaty's NYA expertise even allowed UF to occasionally juggle the allocation of NYA and WPA workers for maximum benefit to the library so that certain projects such as mending and filing could be carried on during the summer months.¹¹⁰ WPA also supplied personnel for a library project involving UF's General Extension Division. The program encouraged Dean Riley to utilize the Extension services as "a strong factor in library development in Florida," and to deliver diversified reading material statewide. In keeping with WPA's avocational and recreational goals, administrators urged Riley to include library materials for children, "for homes as well as schools," and to incorporate a broader array of adult material, "books of a lighter nature, more fiction, biography, travel."¹¹¹ Again, as did

¹⁰⁹ Fran Joseph to William T. Cash, 12 February 1934, gc, box 3, series 1505, State Librarian William T. Cash, Florida State Archives.

¹¹⁰ Tigert to Eddy, 17 May 1938, box 7, series 8a

¹¹¹ Eddy to Tigert, 6 June 1938, Tigert, box 7, series 8a.

CCC and Camp Roosevelt's short courses, New Deal programs modified the Extension Division's mission to reach a broader spectrum of Floridians.

Two other WPA historical projects nudged UF from its campus-centered concerns, and at the same time, increased the value of the university's intellectual holdings. The State Archives Surveys project resulted from a 1936 guest editorial in the *Tallahassee Daily Democrat* on the need for such an endeavor by State Librarian, W. T. Cash. "In less than eight hours after the editorial was published," Cash was invited by relief officials to submit a plan for archival collection.¹¹² A WPA administrator informed Tigert "of a survey of Federal Archives which is now being conducted in Florida" under WPA auspices, which was seeking to form an advisory committee of historians, librarians, lawyers, and others interested in the preservation of archives of historical interest. The administrator requested Tigert to recommend a member of the UF faculty "who teaches a course in Florida history and who, by reason of such activity could logically" be considered for the "honorary and without stipend" duty. The project employed WPA and NYA workers to canvass the state's county and municipal archives, and to index historical periodicals, maps, plats and records. Bibliographies of the material were then placed at UF and other public libraries.¹¹³ In 1938, the Archives Survey was absorbed by the Historical Records Survey, and by 1939, 150 persons were employed on the Florida project.¹¹⁴

¹¹² W. T. Cash to Eddy, 13 January 1936, state library 1935-42, box 2, series 8a.

¹¹³ Kathryn T. Abbey to Tigert, 23 March 1936, gc-1936-1, box 3, p7b.

¹¹⁴ Sue A. Mahorner to Tigert, 19 April 1939, gc-1939-3, box 4, p7b.

Then in 1939, the Rare Books Project proposed the “copying and typing of rare books and manuscripts” throughout Florida, which were “to be placed at the public use.” The project’s director stated that it interpreted “public libraries to mean school and university libraries as well as libraries in various political divisions.” The project came bearing a gift of new technology for UF. It offered “a new type of typewriter” that created “a perfect block page with margins equal of four sides, eliminating thereby the usual right uneven margin of typewriter work.” More significantly, the project coordinators wished for UF to send them “a list of any rare books on the history of Florida that you may desire for your library.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, these various WPA projects increased the UF library’s acquisition of rare documents, including the “diary of Governor Wm. D. Mosely (and) a “map of the Battlefield and Hospitals of Gettysburg,” which the owners agreed to donate to UF “for safekeeping and where they will be of benefit to research students.”¹¹⁶ As well as benefiting UF materially, participation in these archival and historical projects widened its intellectual scope, and helped to set it on the course to become a nationally competitive research institution.

Federal One and the Writers Project

In 1933, one of the President Roosevelt’s classmates from Groton wrote him suggesting a national arts program. George Biddle, inspired by the famed Mexican muralist, Diego Rivera, offered to help begin such a program by establishing a team of muralists to provide wall art for the new Justice Department building in Washington, D.C. In fact, Roosevelt had some previous experience with sponsoring public art works.

¹¹⁵ Sudie B. Wright to Eddy, 21 July 1939, PWA, box 6, series 8a.

¹¹⁶ Catherine Masters to Eddy, 15 April 1938, Florida Works Progress 1937-39, box 8, series 8a.

As governor of New York he had authorized his relief director, Harry Hopkins, to allocate funds to employ artists in New York City's settlement houses. Art funding began early in the New Deal; at the nadir of the Depression, during the winter of 1933-34, a unit of CWA provided public service jobs for artists to embellish public buildings, including Congressional offices, public schools and colleges, and libraries and museums.¹¹⁷

During the "Second New Deal" at the beginning of Roosevelt's second term, WPA immediately began launching Federal Project Number One, or "Federal One," whose program directors articulated wide ranging public cultural goals. Federal One included five divisions, covering art, music, theatre, writing, and historical records.

Federal One ventures emphasized the aesthetic dimensions of public life, and UF and BCC were beneficiaries in this respect as well. UF's department of Botany and Bacteriology chairman, M. D. Cody, informed Tigert that the Florida Federation of the Arts president, Eve Alsman Fuller had recently donated to his department "two sets of paintings of Florida Wild Flowers...recently exhibited at Washington," and more were promised to be forthcoming.¹¹⁸ Fuller outlined the FERA instituted project to Tigert, explaining that its mission was "to give employment to qualified artists for the next two months...to create for the State, for placing in its public buildings, appropriate works of art, including murals, etching, paintings and sculptures." Fuller recommended that "as far as possible, the schools and universities, which are State owned, be given first choice in the allocations of the best works produced." Of course, due to the federal influx of

¹¹⁷ Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *New Deal Cultural Programs: Experiments in Cultural Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1995), 2.

¹¹⁸ M. D. Cody to Tigert, 10 September 1934, gc-1934-2, box 2, p7b.

public works funding, new halls and walls were currently being constructed on UF's campus, and a "very much interested" Tigert responded that "we appreciate the priority." Fuller also suggested a project employing students to create murals on campus. Although doubtful of its worth, Tigert was willing to experiment, and he directed "two graduates of the School of Architecture to "undertake to paint a small room in the P. K. Yonge School in order that we get a sample of what they are capable of doing."¹¹⁹

BCC participated in the New Deal art initiative as well.. In 1936, the Negro Unit of Federal Art Project was sponsoring exhibitions in institutions throughout Florida. An administrator wrote Bethune praising the "excellency of your art teacher, Miss Laetitia E. Williams (who) is to be congratulated in the fine work she is doing as the Gallery in Jacksonville has and is exhibiting her work."¹²⁰ Also, in 1937 Bethune angled for federal assistance for its embryonic drama department to develop African-American themes. Celebrating folklore and ethnic culture was central to the Federal One mission, and Daisy Dimitry, the "Drama Specialist (Colored) of WPA Division of Recreation," met with Bethune to discuss "the state-wide work in dramatics that I have been doing for the last seven months."¹²¹

The Federal Writers Project (FWP). proved to be so important to local communities that when Congress abolished most art projects in 1939, every state in the union put up the required amount to sustain its program. Under the directorship of Henry Alsberg, FWP State units produced the *American Guide* series, comprehensive guidebooks for all

¹¹⁹ Eve Alsman Fuller to Tigert, 15 September, 1934 & Tigert to Fuller, 20 September 1934, gc-1934-4, p7b.

¹²⁰ Harry H. Sutton, Jr. to Bethune, 22 October 1936, reel 7, BCC Collection.

¹²¹ Daisy Dimitry to Bethune, 15 July 1937 reel 7.

the states and territories, designed “to hold a mirror to America.”¹²² The *Guide to Florida*, upon which “all branches of Florida WPA lent their assistance,” was part of this ambitious project. Intended to raise the State’s profile as a tourist destination, it sold very well to the public. The *Guide*, which had illustrations provided by the Florida Federal Art Project, was also produced for use in the public schools.

UF faculty and administration were conspicuously involved in FWP. After gathering extensive material for the book--intended to arouse an “awakening of Florida life heretofore treated only in technical publications”--the draft was submitted to UF for the information to be verified by its faculty. Work on the *Guide* earned the professors extra income to supplement their relatively low paying (on a national scale) salaries, but it also challenged their scholarly horizons, and involved them in the public intellectual life beyond academia.¹²³

Carita Doggett Corse, Florida’s FWP director, wrote to Professor Cody, inviting his participation as a “consultant on all phases of bacteriology and botany...in the great work (FWP) has been called upon to compile: an encyclopedia of information on Florida.” Corse understood Cody was “a busy person,” but she hoped he would help “in the cause of promoting Florida.”¹²⁴ Similarly “factual detail in the field of science” was to be checked by Dean Townes R. Leigh, and Tigert was requested to send him “a letter

¹²² Jerre Margione, *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers Project, 1935-1943* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), 34-39.

¹²³ FWP, *Guide to Florida* (Tallahassee: State Department of Instruction, 1939), xii.

¹²⁴ Corse to Cody, 10 December 1935, gc-1936-2, box 2, p7b.

similar to those which you wrote to other faculty members who are to check this material.”¹²⁵

UF history professor, James D. Glunt, addressed the inadequacy of UF’s resources in meeting the challenge presented by the *Guide*. He noted “that the material necessary for an authoritative approval by this University ... is probably not in this library, and, according to the nature of the points raised, may not even be in America.” Glunt complained of being “at the mercy of such fragmentary secondary material as is available here,” which would only produce “a superficial approval” unless UF or WPA “is able to finance the research necessary.”¹²⁶

FWP also rattled the academic mindset of assistant professor of English, Alton C. Morris, who had collected folklore for three years as part of an NYA student assisted project. He complained that Corse had promised full credit would be given to him and UF, but their work was not acknowledged in the manuscript draft. The truculent Morris petitioned Tigert for permission “to hold this material until Mrs. Corse agrees to give due credit for the material which she and her workers have inadvertently or maliciously failed to acknowledge.”¹²⁷ Yet faculty complaints and concerns aside, UF made important contributions to both the *Guide*, and to the advancement of the tourist industry which was on its way to becoming the state’s greatest revenue producer.

Indeed, gratitude and acknowledgement were expressed by FWP’s principals to UF. National director Alsberg thanked Tigert for his “promise of cooperation” in the

¹²⁵ Charles R. Hughes to Tigert, 9 November 1936, gc-1936-2, p7b.

¹²⁶ Glunt to Tigert, 2 November 1936, gc-1936-2, p7b.

¹²⁷ Alton C. Morris to Tigert, 13 November 1936, gc-1936-2, p7b.

American Guide Series, expressing appreciation for his “willingness to stand by us in our rather formidable undertaking.”¹²⁸ And as the highly successful project drew close to completion, a grateful Corse thanked Tigert “for the assistance given to us by the educators” which was “a result of your pledge to (WPA) of \$30,000 worth of the (UF) faculty’s time.” Casting Tigert as “Florida’s foremost scholar,” she invited him to write the volume’s forward.¹²⁹ Corse also arranged for unpublished manuscripts to be preserved at UF’s library, and she had voluminous amounts of copy sent to Gainesville. Unfortunately, UF librarians later culled the material they wanted, but they destroyed the rest, much to the chagrin of former Director Corse.¹³⁰

Florida’s program was one of three Southern states with a Negro Writers Unit, but of course, racial segregation precluded UF from participating in its ground-breaking publication, *Slave Narratives*. Corse encouraged individuals in this unit to gather Negro folklore, and to record the narratives of surviving slaves.¹³¹ Florida native, Zora Neal Hurston, who had received two Guggenheim Fellowships, had been a student of the famed anthropologist, Franz Boas, and had published three books, was hired—from the relief roles as required--by the Negro Unit. Hurston—who had previously participated in the New York’s Federal Theatre Project--was employed to gather Afro-American folklore, and she wrote a history of the Negro in Florida going back to 1528. However, as Jim Crow conventions prevailed, Hurston was not only paid less than her white

¹²⁸ Henry A. Alsberg to Tigert, 29 October 1935, gc-1935-1, p7b.

¹²⁹ Corse to Tigert, 22 December 1938, gc-1938-2, box 4, p7b.

¹³⁰ Pamela G. Bordelon, “The Federal Writers Project’s Mirror to America: The Florida Reflection” (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1991), 253-4.

¹³¹ Gary R. Mormimo, “Florida Slave Narratives,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* lxvi, no.4 (April 1988): 393-403.

counterparts, she was also denied a position--over the wishes of the Director Alsberg--on the editorial board.¹³² Also, Florida's Negro writers suffered from lack of adequate library facilities in the state. They were barred from all but a few municipal libraries, the libraries of BCC, FAMC, and Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, and segregation denied them access to public records at county court houses as well.

Both *Slave Narratives* and *Florida Guide*, which included much material pertinent to Florida's black community, reflect the prevalent anthropological slant of FWP's work. This was concomitant with a larger movement within Federal One concerned with exploring America's multi-cultural heritage and geographical riches, and reflecting the local color, folklore and life-histories of common citizens, the lower "one-third of a nation" with which the President Roosevelt and his social reformers were so concerned. What prompted the *American Guide* undertaking was as much political as practical and economical, and the experience prodded UF's professors to include popular culture, and the commercial demands of the state, in their evolving perspective.

At the start of the 1930s, Tigert and Bethune each faced dim prospects for improving the quality of their institutions. The state's economy was cash-strapped, and few people were able to make charitable contributions. However, the presidents' national political connections helped them acquire funding for experimental programs and campus improvements from the beginning of Roosevelt's presidency. Initially, the New Deal targeted economic conditions, but over the course of the decade, it developed a wide-angled approach to relief that provided cultural, aesthetic, vocational and recreational assistance to multiple sectors of the population. While working in partnership with the

¹³² Valerie Boyd, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neal Hurston* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 319.

federal government to deliver these various forms of assistance, UF and BCC benefited materially and intellectually, and their influence was extended throughout Florida's society.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The temporary New Deal partnerships with the University of Florida and Bethune-Cookman College were a comfortable fit for both the institutions and the federal government. The university and the college proved to be reliable and versatile conduits for distributing emergency assistance to multiple publics, while they in turn benefited in numerous ways, both during the transient relief operations, and in the future, as a result of those New Deal activities.

The New Deal was not only suitable to the two Florida colleges, but to the personalities and educational goals of their presidents as well. Fundamental to the New Deal was an expansion of the public's economic, social and cultural opportunities, in concert with the regeneration of the nation's democratic institutions and ideals. Both of these motives resonated with the core values of John J. Tigert and Mary McLeod Bethune. For all the obvious differences between the two educators and their institutions, there are remarkable similarities. Both were products of a southern Progressive tradition that perceived public education as the proper vehicle for social change, and which attempted to improve the racial environment of the South without directly challenging the segregated system.

Likewise, there exists a remarkable similarity at the core of the missions of both colleges, also products of the Progressive era. Bethune founded her industrial training school in 1904, and although UF's history extends back to 1853, the institution in Gainesville was established by the Buckman Act in 1906, which consolidated six

different state institutions into the university, plus a female college in Tallahassee. The stated aim of Bethune's start-up school, to "uplift Negro girls spiritually, morally intellectually and industrially," is not so far removed from the original land-grant purpose to provide "liberal and practical education" to the "industrial classes." Furthermore, both schools advocated the acquisition of what in the 19th century was called "useful knowledge," and included extension services and community outreach as part of their function. New Deal initiatives utilized UF and BCC to breathe new life into dormant Progressive causes such as resuscitating museums and libraries, and supplementing farm and home extension services. Both institutionally and administratively, they were in harmony with the expansive and democratic spirit of the New Deal.¹

While studies exist which address various aspects of New Deal programs that affected higher education, there is a dearth of literature covering the comprehensive relationship between higher education and the federal government during the era. A possible explanation is that histories are often written about conflicts, and compared with the New Dealers' rocky relations with the public school establishment, conflict was conspicuously absent in their dealings with colleges, both black and white. Moreover, federal officials displayed sensitivity to their needs and fears. For example, in 1934-35, FERA experimented with emergency junior college that offered classes for high school graduates, but the controversy they aroused caused them to be discontinued.² Neither did federal officials attempt to make any of their programs permanent. In fact, as the General

¹ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 77, 285; *University Report 27: 1932-33*, 202; Work and Morgan, *Land Grant Colleges*, 3.

² Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties*, 397.

Extension Division's experience at Camp Roosevelt indicates, even desirable and well promoted programs were doomed to perish by the very legislation that gave them birth.

In fact, it was an amiable partnership, and the developers and administrators of New Deal programs often worked together with the leaders of higher education. The close ties to the Washington establishment that Tigert cultivated as Commissioner of Education led to his being consulted by the New Deal architects as they developed their programs. His familiarity with the federal politics allowed him to be an effective lobbyist for the collegiate community, although he would have preferred not to be labeled such. In response to a question regarding lobbying efforts in Washington from T. O. Walton, President of Texas A & M, Tigert acknowledged the importance of such representation in the nation's capital, but he advised operating "in such a way that we may not be charged with having a permanent lobby. In a sense, we have had a lobby...all these years, but I doubt if anyone could lay his hand on it, or charge that we have, [and] it is highly important to preserve this position."³

Washington's appointment of state directors for its programs was a point of contention for many who favored local control. However, UF directly benefited from the appointment of Robert Beaty as Florida's first NYA director. Even though he maintained the position for only a year, Beaty retained an official status and seniority that redounded to the University's advantage. Of course, Bethune's appointment as head of NYA's Negro Affairs Division—a post which she held for nine years—was by far Florida's most significant contribution to New Deal policies. The high profile position provided a

³ Tigert to T. O. Walton, 31 August 1935, gc-1935-3, box 3, p7b.

platform from which she directed incalculable assistance to the education of blacks at all levels, and BCC garnered a large portion of the funds spent on the state's Negro colleges.

Whereas public schooling has an adversarial history with the federal government, and "local control" has always been an issue, the federal government's relationship with land-grant colleges goes back to their inception. Several amendments to the original Morrill Act of 1862 have further modified this relationship over the years. To view its ebb and flow in context, it is informative to recall the brief but intense federal embrace of UF in the hysteria surrounding WWI, which still remains unprecedented:

Immediately after the US entered the World War the equipment of the University was placed at the disposal of the Government. During the summer of 1918 the College of Engineering was operated as the "University of Florida Army School" for the vocational training of soldiers. At the opening of the session of 1918-1919, all the regular activities of the University were subordinated to the task of training men for the armed forces of the United States. On December 14, 1918, upon mustering out of the Student Army Training Corps, the University again took up its regular work.⁴

Additionally, federal legislation such as the Nelson Amendment of the Second Morrill Act, and the New Deal's Bankhead-Jones Act, considerably affected public higher education for blacks as well. Government support for black colleges during the depression contributed to their significant growth and improvement during the period, and helped them to take the lead over private black colleges in enrollment.

Racial matters are close to the surface in any account of the New Deal. A paradox of Roosevelt's presidency is that no significant civil rights legislation was passed, nor did FDR support an anti-lynching bill—for which he was much criticized. Yet by other actions and means, he converted the majority of black voters to the Democratic Party. Roosevelt succeeded in conveying racial empathy through powerful symbols and

⁴ *University Report 19-20: 1923-24*, 20.

symbolic actions. Interestingly, he often used black females to convey this empathy: Bethune at NYA; Miriam Anderson's concert from the Lincoln Memorial; his maid, Lizzie McDuffie on the campaign trail.⁵ These acts have left not only a legacy; they have in fact become legend.

In numerous other ways, such as his "black cabinet," and his relatively equitable distribution of funds between the races, FDR used the New Deal to bring the nation's racial consciousness to the fore. For example, the series of works produced by his Advisory Committee on Education--referenced in this study--details the special needs of blacks in relation to libraries and museums, health and literacy, nursery schools and higher education. The racial tension of the times demanded that the president be masterfully diplomatic in appeasing both blacks, and white southern Congressmen upon whom he depended for legislative support. The thorny issue of segregation also required Bethune, Tigert, and FAMC's Lee to display similar diplomatic acumen. Although the New Deal temporarily conjoined the races as part of its southern relief strategy, many people in the South were not quite ready for the races to be conjoined in any matter.

Nevertheless, during the Roosevelt era, UF actively cooperated with the state's other land-grant institution, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College (FAMC), in its effort to improve its physical plant and its educational quality. Whether federal officials encouraged the spirit of sharing is unclear, yet it certainly fits with the New Dealers' mindset, and aligns with their projects. As early as the autumn of 1933, the Board of Control notified Professor Joseph Weil that "Dr. Tigert has been requested to allow you to come...to Tallahassee to make a preliminary survey of the electrical distribution

⁵ Weis, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, 201, 247.

system on the campus of the Florida A & M College for Negroes.”⁶ Although this was a state mandate, it was likely encouraged by a quest for federal grants, and state officials were undoubtedly aware of the UF committee’s visit to FAMC in 1935.

However, the southern white establishment found it in its interest to bolster Negro schools and colleges in order to relieve the pressure to integrate their system, and the infusion of funds into black education provided a means to do this. Of course, this did not necessarily imply that even white progressive southerners expected equality when it came to quality education. For example, Tigert responded to President R. A. Pearson of the University of Maryland as to how UF handled applications by Negroes for post-graduate work. Noting that Florida law forbade integrated education, Tigert wrote: “If, and when, Negroes apply...we merely cite the above law, and refer them to the Agricultural and Mechanical College. That institution does not offer work of any consequence along graduate lines but they are in a position to advise the applicant where it can be obtained.” As FAMC was the state’s premier black institution, that meant applicants must look beyond the state of Florida, and Tigert articulated the double-binding situation facing black applicants at UF, explaining that “Negroes are allowed to enroll for correspondence work through our General Extension Division but, due to the law, they are not permitted to enroll for extension class work. However, University regulations do not permit the Extension Division to offer any courses for graduate credit.”⁷

⁶ Board of Control to Joseph Weil, 14 October 1933, university policies-1, box 5, p1.

⁷ Tigert to R. A. Pearson, 9 March 1936, gc-1936-1, box 2, p7b.

Lee wrote to the President Charles Hoskins of the University of Tennessee expressing his difficulty in understanding why “17 land-grant colleges, all in the South and all dealing in a large measure with the agricultural and industrial situation among Negroes, would not be permitted to have the inspiration and encouragement” of membership in the Association on Land-Grant Colleges and Universities (ALGG&U). In contrast, Lee pointedly mentioned that he was a “life-member of NEA.” The Tennessee president asked Tigert’s opinion as to how to reply, and he responded that the subject was one which had been surfacing “intermittently for a number of years.” Tigert noted that the “Executive Body (of ALGG&U) frequently meets at luncheon to finish business at the end of an arduous session, [and if] the presidents of the White...and Negro Land Grant Colleges sat down to luncheon together, I am sure you can imagine, without any suggestion from me, the reaction of some of the constituencies of some of our institutions, not to speak of the Legislatures.” He averred that the “profound significance” of this legal predicament “does not leave us free to formulate a policy of equality, even if we desired to do so.” Tigert concluded with the wish that Hoskins “will not quote me in any reply” to President Lee.⁸

A very diplomatic Lee, cogently aware of Tigert’s advantages in accessing the white power structure, was not beyond stroking the UF president’s ego in furthering the aims of his struggling college. He congratulated Tigert on his “ability to enlist the interests of State Executives in the work of the University, noting “how adroitly you approached and succeeded in this” at a recent meeting. He appealed for Tigert to “incidentally endeavor to interest the Chief Executive in what we are doing” at FAMC,

⁸ Lee to Charles Hoskins, 9 April 1936 & Hoskins to Tigert, 12 April 1936, gc-1936-1, box3, p7b.

and he thanked him “for what you have already done...for the direct and indirect references which you are able to make on occasions such as you have from time to time.”⁹

In countless ways, it is obvious that the New Deal spirit set in motion serious conversation between the races regarding segregated education in the South. This was the sort of unexpected consequence of New Deal programs to which Fass refers. Less obvious than the racial consequences, is the indirect link between the New Deal and the ascendancy of women in the subsequent decades. The Roosevelt administrations broke new ground in the number of women it appointed, including the first female cabinet member, Frances Perkins, and many of the state and national New Deal administrators cited in the examples above were females as well.¹⁰ In fact, Bethune was primarily an advocate for females; she began her school for girls and argued for returning it to its original mission in the late 1930s. She also was an advocate for black female military officers while at NYA, and she accepted the Springarn Award from the NAACP in the “name of women.”¹¹

Although WPA and NYA included female programs—unlike CCC—as Tyack, Lowe and Hansot point out, the programs were organized along traditional gender lines that mostly relegated them to sewing, cooking, childcare and the like. Even NYA director Williams, who was so attenuated to issues of race, did not seem to recognize the importance of gender equality.¹² Yet the experiences at Camp Retreat and Camp

⁹ Lee to Tigert, 3 March 1937, gc-1937-1, box 3, p7b.

¹⁰ Leuchtenburg, *FDR and the New Deal*, 33.

¹¹ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 73.

¹² Tyack, Lowe and Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times*, 185.

Roosevelt surely emboldened the impoverished rural girls to improve their skills, while NYA work grants allowed more females to attend high school and college. Indeed, within a decade, under Tigert's guidance, even "the boys of old Florida" became coeducational.

Fass maintains that the New Deal raised the ideal of education as an entitlement for all American citizens. While New Dealers succeeded in providing temporary assistance to their targeted constituencies through educational relief for the rural poor, blacks, and females, their initiatives also legitimated the longer range aspirations of these groups. In addition, the emergency relief experiences exposed the special needs of these groups, and it underscored the importance of governmental responsibility on their behalf. Through participation with the CCC, Residential Camps, vocational, and white-collar training programs, UF and BCC assisted the federal effort to democratize educational opportunity, and therefore, they helped extend the promise of educational opportunity to future generations of Americans.

Moreover, the ideal of entitlement attached to the educative institutions that New Dealers targeted, and the central role of colleges and universities in democratizing education was explicated by the utilization of these institutions as purveyors of their programs. The administration of temporary educational assistance permanently burnished the image of UF and BCC as vital democratic and economic forces among diverse publics within the state. Public works funding through the College of Engineering involved the university in statewide matters of public safety and infrastructure, and with private industry and government bureaucracy. Research grants opened up new areas of interest which energized nearly the entire UF faculty, and set in

motion studies that were continued after federal programs ceased. *FWP Guide* verification included professors from all disciplines in a commercial enterprise to promote Florida's tourist industry, and students and faculty established and fortified library facilities statewide. The New Deal also solidified BCC's place in the state's educational community, and its mission was importantly enlarged by an NYA program that allowed the college "to blaze the trail for the training of Negroes in the skilled trades."¹³

With its population and economy growing faster than any state in the nation, the decade of the Great Depression was transformational for Florida, and Tigert and Bethune struggled to keep their institutions apace with the times. Yet as the 1930's ended and the New Deal funding ceased, each faced the same problems of a decade earlier: for BCC, reduced private charity; for UF, paltry appropriations from the state.

In a summary of the decade to the Board of Control, Tigert noted that only two state universities had a lower per capita investment than UF. He chided the state officials for only increasing appropriations 2.6% while enrollment "had increased over 50% during the last decade, and the plant more than doubled." He warned that it was time for the state to "share its increased revenues with the University, or it will be condemned to progressive deterioration, which has already begun to set in."¹⁴

Bethune characteristically made her plea directly to President Roosevelt rather than any governmental agency. In a 1941 letter she wrote of the "sacrifice of time and energy to the college" demanded by her service at NYA, and revealed that her politics had

¹³ NYA Summary, 1940, microfilm reel 11, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers: The Bethune Foundation Collection, P. K. Yonge Library, University of Florida.

¹⁴ *University Report 35: 1940-41*, 11.

caused some previous donors “who did not see as I saw” to withdraw their financial support. After nearly four decades, the college endowment was only \$143,000, and it was “in desperate need of funds.” She implored FDR “to help me through whatever channels you deem wise,” adding that “for me, you may be willing to do the unusual thing.”¹⁵

The New Deal changed neither the social realities of segregation or the underfunded educational system faced by Florida’s citizens. However, the enormous funding that the federal government filtered through its innovative programs both sustained UF and BCC through the roughest patch of the Great Depression. It provided each with a more secure foundation for meeting the educational demands of Florida’s future citizens.

¹⁵ McClusky and Smith, *Bethune*, 122-3.

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