

2017

# The State of Bridgewater: Developments in the Bridgewater State College Campus Through Undergraduate Student Activism

Kayla Jane Hoyt

Follow this and additional works at: [http://vc.bridgew.edu/undergrad\\_rev](http://vc.bridgew.edu/undergrad_rev)



Part of the [Social History Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Hoyt, Kayla Jane (2017). The State of Bridgewater: Developments in the Bridgewater State College Campus Through Undergraduate Student Activism. *Undergraduate Review*, 13, 117-130.

Available at: [http://vc.bridgew.edu/undergrad\\_rev/vol13/iss1/15](http://vc.bridgew.edu/undergrad_rev/vol13/iss1/15)

# The State of Bridgewater: Developments in the Bridgewater State College Campus Through Undergraduate Student Activism

KAYLA JANE HOYT

## Introduction

**W**ho gets to decide? Throughout history, this question is the root of all conflicts, whether it is the Han Dynasty in the second century BC expanding its boundaries into southern China or a teenager fighting her parent about wearing eye make-up. The critical points of the transition of power shape the development of the involved parties. Broad generalizations do not display the localized challenges. History is instances of change and when a pattern of reoccurrence emerges, it then becomes a national issue used to speak for all Americans. When looking at the United States, a diverse nation of people, finding those perfect instances of change that can represent all America is quite the undertaking. Nevertheless, people portray the past through the instances done by the few. People pull moments from history and say “The

Brady Bunch was a popular TV show in the 1960s so American families were fascinated with the storyline of families and everyday challenges.” However, how can you try to express the entire national experience into one formidable argument? Rather, it is more effective to overview the experiences at a local level to understand the experiences of people in the historical context and then compare them to the national discussion.

Culling student and college publications for the words, images, and activities of undergraduate students who attended Bridgewater State College campus, this study highlights how they defined and responded to issues in their day. Stepping into the Bridgewater State University Archives, we find materials that allow us to tell this story. While building on the work of historians who have studied prominent national activists, this study tells another story: the most ordinary, far more common, and thus even more telling experience of undergraduate students at a small, public, state college. By tracing local student activism at a small college campus, we gain an understanding of how and why the national movement had such a profound impact on American society. What we find is that undergraduate students at Bridgewater State College from 1960 to 1975 used various campus platforms to obtain state funding, reproductive rights, and alcohol consumption guidelines. In doing so, students developed sophisticated political and leadership skills.

Founded in 1840, Bridgewater Normal School opened with the purpose of training Massachusetts’s teachers. Housed in the old Bridgewater Town Hall, 28 students enrolled hoping to become predominant members of the educational community. Six years later, the

Bridgewater State Normal School opened a new school building, becoming the first in America that was built for this reason.

Often called the home of teacher education in America, the institution sought to prepare young educators not only through the educational curriculum but also through leadership development. With the institutional motto “Not to be ministered unto, but to minister,” the institution challenged the faculty and students to seek deeper meaning in their time at the school than simply a place for classes. Since its founding, the administration and students have aspired to do just that.

When reading through historical documents and preserved archival material on the institution, the name was not the only aspect of the institution that transformed. Originally named Bridgewater Normal School, the institution has since undergone six name changes in its history: Bridgewater Normal School, Bridgewater State Normal School, Bridgewater Teacher College, State Teachers College at Bridgewater, Bridgewater State Teacher College, Bridgewater State College, and Bridgewater State University.

In addition, as the name of the institution changed, so did administrative involvement. With head administrative positions transforming from principal to president, faculty members from teachers to professors, and students developing from students to leaders, the institution transformed with the national society. In physical appearance, the institution grew in land and buildings to accommodate the growing development in student pursuit of higher education. Additional administrative, academic, residential, and recreational buildings were

constructed to provide a well-rounded institution for students to live and learn. Student and faculty enacted changes in the educational system to adapt to the growing societal developments.

### **Alcohol Consumption**

In the early 1960s, the societal roles carried through from the 1950s, including the role of women as subservient to men and elders given a high level of respect, were emulated in the administrative powers at the institution. The undergraduate students were provided a student and dormitory handbook that outlined the expectations of the students during their undergraduate careers. In reading these policies, the gender ideals and power dynamics are shown. In the 1961-1962 *Bridgewater State College Dormitory Handbook for Women*, under the subsection entitled “Concerning Eating Places,” the handbook outlines the regulations for undergraduate women. It is written, “no girl may go to any place in the Bridgewater where liquor is served... the possession or use of liquor on this campus is STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. Failure to observe this ruling will be considered sufficient cause for the dismissal of a student from the College.”<sup>1</sup> Any female undergraduate student, according to this administrative regulation, was not permitted to enter any premises in the town of her educational institution in which alcohol was served, regardless of her age. Furthermore, if a student was found in violation of this regulation, it was punishable by expulsion from the institution. In 1961, the undergraduate students did not have autonomous control over their bodies. Wording such as “STRICTLY FORBIDDEN” enforced the severity and threatening nature of power the administration held over its students. Undergraduate students, who range in average ages of eighteen to twenty-five

were being disciplined and instructed to abstain from alcohol consumption and boycott any location in which alcohol is consumed. Surveying further through the institutional regulations on alcohol consumption, this policy did not remain much longer.

On September 16, 1971, the institution's student newspaper, *The Comment*, published an article "Rathskeller Underway," which can be viewed in Figure 1. This article outlines for the student readers the progress in the construction of an on-campus bar which served alcohol to students. The construction of the on-campus bar was funded by several campus-based organizations. The Student Government Association, a student body dedicated to serving the collective interests of Bridgewater State College, was funded by the campus community for effective living in a democratic society, advocating for the students' rights and needs and encouraging self-reliance in the Association's search for truth and justice. As

the largest and longest standing organization on campus, the SGA donated \$10,000 for the construction. In addition to this, the Day Student Organization, a student body of undergraduate students primarily focused on the enhancement of the undergraduate experience for students whose academic time at the institution was during the day, donated \$3,000 to the cause. And lastly, the Student Union Building Funds provided the remaining costs for the project, which totaled over \$30,000. The students of the institution initiated a campus-wide reformation of policy and campus dynamic through the budgeting of their finances and on-campus action.<sup>2</sup>

The aspiration for equity in the institutional administrative policy on alcohol consumption, regardless of student gender identity and changes in alcohol consumption, resulted in the creation of a campus-based bar based on student organized funds. When the bar was finally opened, primarily female students served as

bartenders. Within ten years the female undergraduate students enrolled at Bridgewater State College went from being unable to step foot into a building where alcohol was served in the Bridgewater area to then being paid to serve alcohol to Bridgewater State College students. The students took the initiative to enact a localized change in power and autonomy. The right and ability to control individual alcohol consumption as young adults of legal

**Rath Skeller Underway**

The COMMENT has learned from Mr. Edward Meaney, Director of the Student Union that the specifications for heating and ventilation in the Rathskeller are now out to bid. This is the first evidence that the long talked about Rathskeller will become reality.

The idea for a Rathskeller was formulated two years ago under the original Building Committee for the Student Union. The Student Union Building Committee originally decided to place the bar in the Music Lounge. But it was decided that with the rapidly expanding student body the Music Lounge would be inadequate for the demand. After the establishment of the Board of Governors it was felt that the area designated for bowling alleys would better serve the college community as a rathskeller. The Interior Decorator was then instructed to prepare a scheme for the area which was then approved by the Rathskeller Committee of the Board of Governors.

Mr. Meaney explained the reason for the lack of heating and ventilation in the 2400 sq. ft area. In the original building plans the area was designated for bowling alleys which were to be sent out for bid and leased to a concessionaire much in the same manner as the food service is handled. The concessionaire would have been responsible for the installation of the ventilation as well as the completion of the entire area.

Mr. Meaney further explained to The COMMENT that the ventilation must be installed before work can proceed on painting wiring and installation of heating ducts.

Mr. Meaney explained the delay in the completion of specifications from the original deadline of March. Mr. Meaney approached campus engineer, Mr. James Cummings, asking him if he could be of any service in the completion of specifications for the Rathskeller area. Mr. Cummings agreed to offer his services since the savings to the student body would amount to between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Mr. Meaney called Mr. Cummings several times during the summer months asking for the specifications -- the deadline was pushed back several times. The original deadline for the specifications for heating and ventilation was July 1, the plans were finally submitted on September first and sent out for bid on September 14 after review by the Student Union Staff.

Mr. Meaney said that he realizes that Mr. Cummings staff is under-sized and overworked and were caught up in the final rush to complete the new library in time for the opening of the academic year.

The minimum time for bid is two weeks according to state regulations. With this in mind Mr. Meaney said the bids are due back in his office by September 29. Schaefer Brewery and their affiliates are designing the bar, which will be ready for construction upon completion of the plumbing installation.

The Rathskeller is to be funded through donations of several organizations. The S.G.A. Council has donated \$10,000.00 from the S.G.A. Facilities Fund, the now defunct Day Students Association donated the balance of their treasury amounting to \$3,000.00. The remainder of the necessary outlay has been budgeted by the Board of Governors through the Student Union Building Fund. Mr. Meaney estimated that the entire construction package would amount to some \$30,000.00.

Fig. 1. *The Comment*, September 16, 1971.

age were the fights these students took over, regardless of the gender of the consumer. Before, the administration was the governing body controlling their ability to decide whether they could drink alcohol. The students changed this. The undergraduate students at Bridgewater State College challenged the administrative control regarding the student's decision-making abilities over their choice of alcohol consumption. This change gave students the power to decide when and where they consumed alcohol. Through the initiative to bring about an on-campus bar and work on proposing new administrative policies, students' efforts set in place a change in the campus cultural acceptance of women's alcohol consumption. The students seized control of their own bodies and decisions. This localized transformation of power from administration to students shaped the progress of the institution. This displayed the undergraduate student desire to be responsible for making decisions about their wellbeing, rather than continue in subservience to the administrative ruling. Students gained the right to control their own bodies through their efforts in constructing an on-campus bar.

### **Reproductive Rights**

The impact of the national second-wave feminist movement is evident at Bridgewater State College in reviewing student-generated writings. Nationally, it is accepted and understood that the first wave of the feminist movement was the suffrage movement of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The second-wave feminist movement took place in the 1960s. With a broad range of issues, from sexuality, marriage rights, workplace equality, and reproductive rights, the second-wave feminist movement sparked a national debate on the rights and treatment of women in the nation.

When reviewing the college newspaper *The Campus Comment*, we find that the phrase “the political is personal” was often reflected in front-page news. The first instance this occurred was during the 1965 Bridgewater State College Anniversary Symposium. At this 125th Anniversary celebration, notable speakers presented to the student body on various topics. As seen in Figure 2, the primary symposium discussion of this event was for the division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. In this speech, the discussion on population control and its global impact focused the dialogue. Dr. Marshall C. Balfour, consultant to the Population Council of New York, for his topic focused on the need for population control and the governmental impact of birth control. Notably, the author stated there was a “greater percentage of student attendance at this symposium.”<sup>3</sup>

With an array of undergraduate students amongst a presentation on the positive global impact of birth control, the dialogue for birth control use then began to grow.

*The Campus Comment*, as the student-run newspaper, published material not only of student interest, but also provided the voice for student concerns. When reading these issues, repetitive patterns in the dialogue of student concerns around birth control surfaced in the articles published.

Richard Rosenberg, in the May 3, 1967 issue of *The Campus Comment*, as seen in Figure 3 published an article entitled “BIRTH CONTROL: A Hushed Problem.” In this article, he did not discuss the argument itself, but rather challenged the readers to admit that reproductive rights were an issue. The discussion of sexual relations, pregnancy, and contraception was a “hushed” topic and undergraduate student Richard Rosenberg

## SYMPOSIUM SCORES POPULATION PROBLEMS



"Problems of Expanding Population" was the title of Symposium #2 in a series of four symposia celebrating the 125th anniversary of B.S.C. This symposium held on November 3rd was sponsored by the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, under the direction of Dr. Frank Hilferthy.

### Verse Choir Composed

Dr. DuRin of the speech department has announced the formation of a Verse Speaking Choir. Dr. DuRin, who has directed speech choirs at several other colleges, said that the main purpose of the group is the appreciation of the emotional and the dramatic voices of poetry as interpreted through the spoken word.

The Verse Speaking Choir will give several concerts during the year, the first being at Christmas. In connection with the 125th Anniversary of Bridgewater, Dr. DuRin is writing a lyric based on the significant and dramatic incidents drawn from the history of the college to be performed at the ground-breaking ceremonies next spring. The group will also perform at a Greek drama to be presented in May. Anyone interested in joining the choir should see Dr. DuRin in the Speech Office.

Structurally, a speech choir is similar to a singing choir with the parts, alto, bass etc, assigned according to voice quality. Although a choir was essential to Greek Drama, the idea of a verse-speaking choir as a separate performance group is relatively new. In its modern form, choral speaking sprang up spontaneously in pre-war Germany. Various revolutionaries began calling out sentences which were picked up by the crowd and turned into popular chants. Hitler, seeing the effects that these chants had on the people, soon suppressed choral-speaking.

Dr. Burns began by saying that "There is no problem, only problems" and these problems concern three general fields of inquiry: 1. the use of terrestrial space so that there would be room for an "infinite increase of people on the finite earth" 2. the quality of urban life made to improve because now there is not "one major industrial complex in which it is a joy to live" and 3. the emphasis must be changed from production to control because there have been enough "homicidal forecasts" about "worlding years only."

Dr. Burns emphasized that the crucial question is "the application of answers, not their formulation." He felt very optimistic about the future because man has the answers to control population growth and to apply technological skills to underdeveloped areas.

Dr. Balfour was also optimistic, but not for the same reasons. He placed his faith mainly in the people. He felt that there has been a great awakening in the past six or seven years that has resulted in a change of government policies regarding birth control. He felt that this family planning will lay the basis for the needed agricultural improvements. Both men agreed that economic development without fertility control is inadequate and that a decline in the birth rate must necessarily precede any state of economic harmony in most countries.

There was a greater percentage of student attendance at this symposium than at the last one and it is hoped that student interest will continue to grow.

# BIRTH CONTROL: A Hushed Problem

by Richard Rosenberg

Scientists have worked throughout the centuries on various experiments and have made numerous discoveries. The results of their findings have often caused heated arguments and debates. We are in the midst of various controversies in our times; one of the most vehement of these quarrels is over Birth Control. This article doesn't concern itself with the rightness and wrongness of birth control but only asks that people face the fact that the problem exists and some solution must be reached.

Recently we have seen three events that have shown the archaic belief that if you don't face up to a problem it will disappear. Approximately two weeks ago at Boston University, a gentleman from New York, William Baird, was arrested for lecturing on birth control and distributing birth control devices to the students. He was charged with breaking a Massachusetts law that only a doctor can give birth control advice and that advice only can be given to married people.

Fig. 3. *The Campus Comment*, May 3, 1967

ment, women and feminist movement advocates not only challenged the societal norms, but they shouted the reality of the unjust treatment and quality of life for women. Change cannot come from silence, and avoidance of the issue will not make it go away. Localizing the issue of birth control and contraception, the article moves on to discuss the events at Boston University involving William Baird.

In Massachusetts, a man by the name of William Baird was a leading activist for reproductive rights. Given the name "Father of Birth Control," Mr. Baird was

Fig. 2. BSC Anniversary Symposium, *The Campus Comment*, November 15, 1965.

challenged his peers to open the dialogue on this issue.<sup>4</sup> With the generation prior raised upon the ideals that a proper woman did her due diligence in the household for her husband and was the height of perfection, the discussion of any displeasure from the woman was a taboo thought. With the second-wave feminist move-

Bridgewater State University

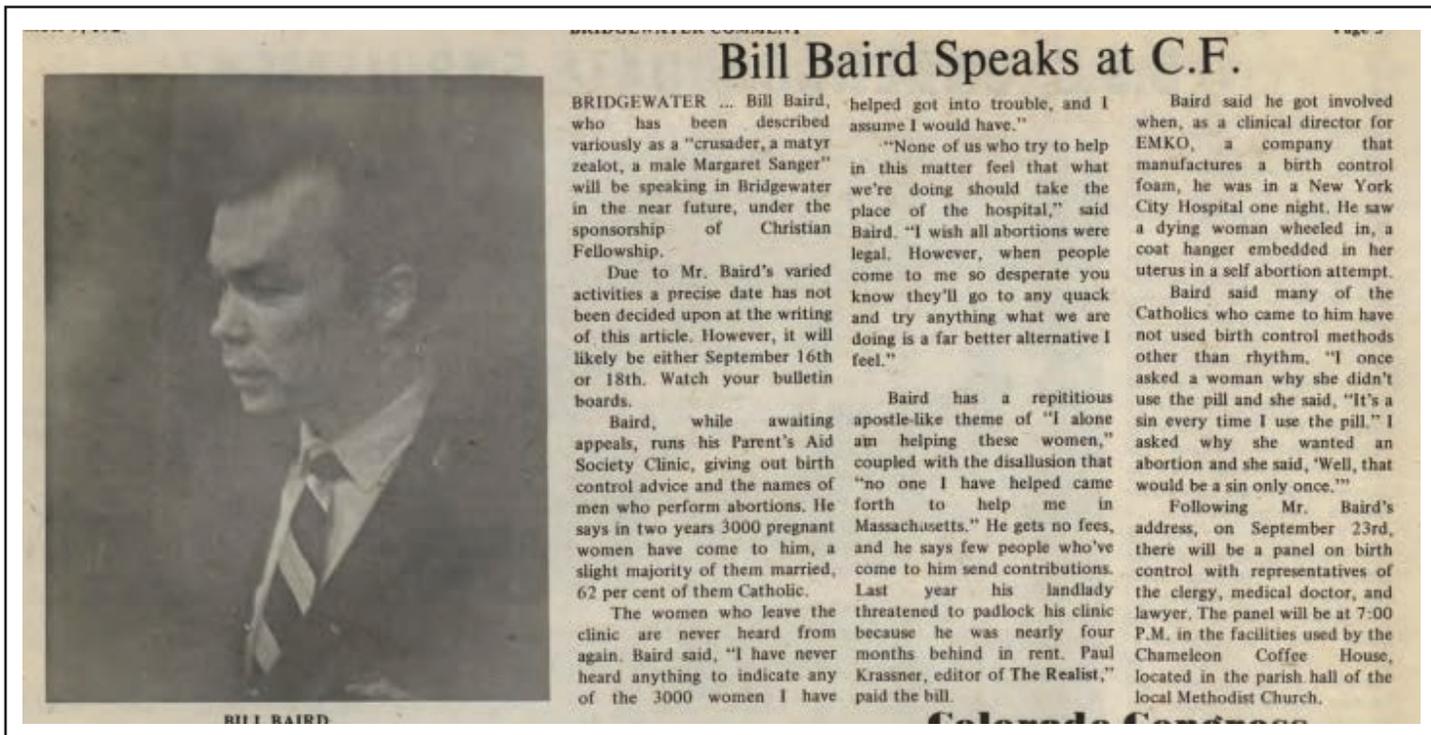


Fig. 4. *The Comment*, September 9, 1969.

arrested eight times during the 1960s for conducting lectures about birth control and abortion. One such arrest occurred following a lecture he conducted on April 6, 1967, at Boston University. In the state of Massachusetts at the time, it was prohibited to provide contraception to an unmarried person.

Following his lecture, he provided condoms and packages of contraceptive foam to the students in the audience. For this, William Baird was then arrested. In 1972, he appealed his sentencing to the Supreme Court. Following his case, *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, all persons gained the right to possess contraception, regardless of their marital status.<sup>5</sup>

Two years following the *Eisenstadt v. Baird* Supreme Court case, William Baird made local Bridgewater State College news. As detailed in Figures 4 and 5, Wil-

liam Baird was featured in *The Comment* advertising and discussing his guest presentation to the institution. Sponsored by the Bridgewater State College Christian Fellowship, the primary focus of his presentation was the discussion of illegal abortions. The article proceeds to describe Mr. Baird's experiences with illegal abortion issues. Bill Baird is quoted as witnessing in a New York hospital "a dying woman wheeled in, a coat hanger embedded in her uterus in a self-abortion attempt."<sup>6</sup> This chilling reality of the dangers of illegal abortions and the epidemic society was facing was a front-page topic at Bridgewater State College. This otherwise hushed issue hidden from the forefront of societal view and the cultural conversation was therefore challenged by the second-wave feminists. The national picture of abortion previously was tucked away in a back closet inside of a box buried in a hole in the wall. Now those pictures were one by one being unboxed and put

# Bill Baird At BSC

by Greg Lee

BRIDGEWATER. . . "Most college students are behind me, so far behind me that I can't see them." With these words, Bill Baird, in his second appearance on the Bridgewater campus, challenged the audience to take a stand and fight against the antiquated and totalitarian sex laws of Massachusetts.

Baird, who is an advisor to the Senate of New York and who has been asked by President Nixon to advise the President's Commission on Birth Control, is now facing a three month jail sentence for giving a can of contraceptive foam to a 22 year old Boston University coed, last year. (The same type of contraceptive may be bought by anyone in Zayre's department stores and carries a nine-cent state sales tax. . . HYPOCRISY?)

"8000 babies are born every hour, 70 million are born every year, and within the next 100 years there will be one person for every square foot of land in the world. When two-thirds of the world is hungry, now, what will happen to these people? There are simply too many people and not enough to feed them."

It was a grim and ugly picture that Baird drew for the audience, but he brought the issue close to home when he explained that the birth rate in Harlem, Roxbury, and other under-privileged areas was the same as India's or Pakistan's.

"We spend millions", Baird pointed out, "on developing birth control plans for India and other Asian countries, but it is still a crime to talk about it or practice it here in Massachusetts."

But, as Baird pointed out, the whole issue of birth control will become academic, because there will be so many people in this country that the government will have to take



steps to cut and regulate the birth rate. Then birth control will be required of everyone for national survival. (What we don't do on our own, the government will have to do for us, later, and not always to our liking or our control. . . 1984)

The Massachusetts law reads that, in part, no one may "sell, lend, exhibit, advertise, or cause to be manufactured" any birth control device or information.

This includes Life, Look, or any other magazine's advertising of the "pill". It also includes Cardinal Cushing and Monsignor Conway who authorized a pamphlet for Catholics entitled *The Rhythm Method*. It includes Zayre's department store and countless drug stores that exhibit and sell birth control devices. Yet, Baird is the only person to be prosecuted under

this law. Why? To use Baird's own words,

The rich may purchase abortions. They can travel to where they are legal, or bribe their way into hospitals under false pretenses, but what about the poor? . . . The thousands of women, black and white, who cannot afford clinical abortions (in other countries) who die at the hands of quacks every year, what about them?

sentence "grim and ugly picture that Baird drew for the audience, but he brought the issue close to home" to describe the presentation style of Bill Baird and the reality of the issue at hand. When speaking of his actions for the rights of all people, Bill Baird argued he protested for "the thousands of women, black and white, who cannot afford clinical abortions who die at the hand of quacks every year." Bill Baird closed his presentation to the students by "challenging the audience to take a stand and fight against the antiquated and totalitarian sex laws in Massachusetts."<sup>7</sup> In a presentation to undergraduate students at an institution with over half of the student population comprised of females and with the presentation-localized with data pertaining to the area, the information provided resonated with the student body as portrayed through their writings. The undergraduate students at Bridgewater

State College in 1972 were focused on the issue of reproductive rights. But why did it take a white, middle-aged male advocate to pioneer the rights of women for women? Advocating throughout the nation on behalf of women, Bill Baird used his privilege to advocate for those in the society whose voice did not carry as much weight. Through their focus, undergraduate students coordinated the finances and scheduling to have Bill Baird present at the institution and provide an argument in favor of Massachusetts legislative reform on

Fig. 5. *The Comment*, September 25, 1969.

on display, made to be discussed and interpreted by all of the society. The dialogue for the reproductive rights of women was now open, and that was a box that could not be easily closed.

In the following week, Bill Baird came to Bridgewater State College and presented to the students on the aforementioned topic. Undergraduate student Greg Lee provided a synopsis of Bill Baird's presentation on birth control, abortion, and Massachusetts law. Providing several arguments for the cause, Greg Lee used the

reproductive rights.

With the 1960's resurgence of societal reassessment and vocalization on inequality, the issue of the inequality of women's rights surfaced. With the first national women's movement occurring in the early twentieth century, this "second-wave" feminist movement took place, beginning in the 1960s and lasted until the close of the 1980s. The primary focus of feminists in this time was the equity beyond law and into women's lives. This topic spanned a wide range of issues, including reproductive rights, legal inequality, and sexuality, to name a few. The argument for women's equality and independence was expressed through literature, legislation, and political activism. Looking at the popular literature of the time, a national bestseller in 1963 was the text by Betty Friedan entitled *The Feminine Mystique*. This text addresses "the problem that has no name" which discussed the widespread dissatisfaction amongst women who conducted traditional 1950's homemaker roles and the idealization of domesticity. Challenging the societal female ideals, *The Feminine Mystique* opened the dialogue for reevaluation of a culture of feminine inferiority and subservience to their male counterparts.

In conjunction with literature, a new medical oral contraceptive pill brought about a social reform and controversial change. With the Food and Drug Administration's approval and availability of "The Pill" in 1961, the female sexual revolution began. With personal oral contraception, women could now take control of their sexuality. With the control of their own bodies, women could now expand further into education and the work world without the fear of unplanned pregnancy challenging their aspirations. This movement provided fe-

males an argument for equity in the workforce, with previous arguments for inequality centralized on the "deficit from female employee pregnancy and maternity." In all facets of female independence, "The Pill" provided women with a substantial basis for arguing the invalidity of inequality in employment and education.<sup>8</sup> Sexuality as a political argument went further into discussion during the 1960s. With the argument of "the personal is political," second-wave feminism also opened the dialog on abortion, sexual assault, and legislative inequality. Women hosted Speak-Outs, which were congregations of women gathered openly to discuss their experiences with illegal abortion, a topic rarely heard about, much less made the central focus of discussion. With multiple women sharing their experiences based on their pregnancy, which included rape and incest, and their reasoning for abortion, which included personal health threats and their experiences during and from illegal abortions, the argument for the need for change was indisputable. In 1971, legislative landmark change took place in the State Supreme Court case *Roe V Wade*. The case argued that the right to privacy for women to have an abortion extends under the 14th Amendment, with the primary argument being the protection of women's health and the protection of the potential human life. Regulations on abortion legalization were made, with restrictions being to the third trimester of pregnancy.

### **State Funding**

In 1964, Bridgewater State undergraduate students began to articulate specific demands for campus change. Turning first to state funding, we find evidence in student organizational meeting minutes and the student campus newspaper that undergraduate students at Bridgewater

State College championed a campus-based financial redistribution plan. Students requested that state or federal financial funds would be directed to the construction of a student union building, a centralized location for student activity and meeting. With no on-campus student building, meetings conducted by student organizations were held minimally or in smaller groupings. With the procurement of a student building, the undergraduate students could then conduct meetings of a greater size and impact.

In 1960, Bridgewater State Teachers College formally changed its name to Bridgewater State College. Shortly after this, the college underwent a change in president; when he began in 1962, Adrian Rondileau took over for the next 25 years. During his time as president, lasting over two decades, the campus increased greatly. The campus student body increased from 1,000 to 9,000 and the campus expanded from 36 to 170 acres. At the start of his presidency, the campus encompassed academic buildings, women's residence halls, and an athletic building. In 1962, the college altered its curriculum to include a Bachelors of Arts degree. From 1960 to 1975, the campus changed to incorporate a student union building, a new library, multiple new residence halls for men and women (rather than female-only residency), a gymnasium, a science and math center, and a greenhouse. National legislative and societal changes were reflected in the progression of the college campus in student activism and administrative reform. The progression of student policies and campus expansion reflected the social expansion of student enrollment in higher education.

On Tuesday, March 3, 1964, President Rondileau held

a meeting at the main administrative building, Boyden Hall, with several Massachusetts legislators.

Knowledgeable of this meeting and those in attendance, the undergraduate students organized a gathering. Over seven hundred Bridgewater State College students gathered outside of Boyden Hall, congregating at the steps of the building. The students, exercising their rights as potential voters and paying students, vocalized their desires for the appointment of funding for the institution to go towards the construction of a student union building. From inside the meeting, the hum of student voices requesting the funds could not be ignored by any in attendance. They were so effective that State Representative David Flynn, local alumnus of the Bridgewater State Teachers College class of 1958, decided to support their cause. Along with other Bridgewater alumni, Representative Flynn advised the students about how best to organize their campaign. Following this advice, activist students formed a "Student Union Committee" to pressure campus officials and the state legislature to designate funds according to student demands.<sup>9</sup>

As depicted in Figure 6, the students moved beyond the campus base in interest of attaining the finances necessary to construct the student union building. Just over a month since the first student movement, the Bridgewater State College undergraduate students gathered at the steps outside of a legislative meeting. Nevertheless, these steps were not located at the base of the campus administrative faculty building. The undergraduate students made the trip from Bridgewater to Boston. Rallying outside of the Massachusetts State House, the students gained the attention of state legislators. With students rallying outside of the state

house, student action was seen as one entered the building, looked outside the windows, or walked the streets. In conjunction with this, the undergraduate students and graduate students, totaling over three thousand in number, gathered to complete personalized letters and phone calls to lawmakers vocalizing their request and their position as potential voters.

With their movement gaining regional attention, the actions of the students gained the attention of Massachusetts Governor John Volpe. Governor Volpe, a Massachusetts native and son of Italian immigrants, notably fought for equality issues for minorities.

Signing legislation to ban racial imbalances in education, reorganize the state's Board of Education, liberalize birth control laws, and increase public housing for low-income families, his fight for equality and localized issues was not uncommon. Upon hearing of a student movement for a local cause, the students were called for a meeting with Governor Volpe to discuss the issue. Prior to this meeting, the undergraduate student paper, *The Campus Comment*, published a political cartoon to showcase the potential impact of this meeting. As showcased in Figure 7 the meeting of the undergraduate students and the morale of the students' spirit will influence the results of the formation of the Student Union Building. Following the meeting, Governor Volpe, in collaboration with Bridgewater State College administration and faculty, ensured the allocation of state funding for the construction of a student union building. After years-long protests, the undergraduate students at Bridgewater State College had reached their goal. Through determination, political activism, and patience, the construction of the student union building



Fig. 6. *The Campus Comment*, December 14, 1964.

went underway.

The efforts of the students on the issue of construction of the Student Union Building reflected the action of the students to seize power in the institution. The undergraduate student's efforts transformed the control of funding from the administration to the students' interests. Having the power to control the funding resulted in the construction of a Student Union Building, as depicted in Figure 8. The groundbreaking construction of a building designed directly for student interests showcased the power change from administration to students. Students gained control of the progression of the institution in appearance and future development. Students gained a location for meetings, meals, and leisure. Whether the purpose was for organizational progression or simply for students to have a new place to hang out, this construction was monumental for the

school. The students seized the power. The students gained the funds. The students gained a building. At a state institution, the students procured the power to make this institution their institution.

### Conclusion

As this history of student activism at Bridgewater State College between 1960 and 1975 clearly shows, small campuses all across the country did as much to shape and enact postwar social change. Showcasing that students have a voice in their community makes the community reflect their voice. Their efforts provide a foundation for a deeper understanding of the societal transformations occurring around the nation. By stepping into the minds of those in the past, one can develop a better comprehension of the world we live in today. With this newfound knowledge of the institution, found by using archives to look into its past, students at the institution can connect with the university on a greater level, and with the nation as a whole.

The issue of decision-making at the local level influenced the transformative change of Bridgewater State College. The undergraduate students' procurement of power from the administration resulted in the transformation of the institution over ten years. Before their actions, women could not enter establishments where alcohol was served, the topic of contraception was taboo, and state school spending was the decision of the institution. Ten years later, the students were serving alcohol in an on-campus bar, the topic of contraception and sexuality were open dialogues and students had a role in the spending of the institution. Students gained the right to control their campus, their money, and their bodies.

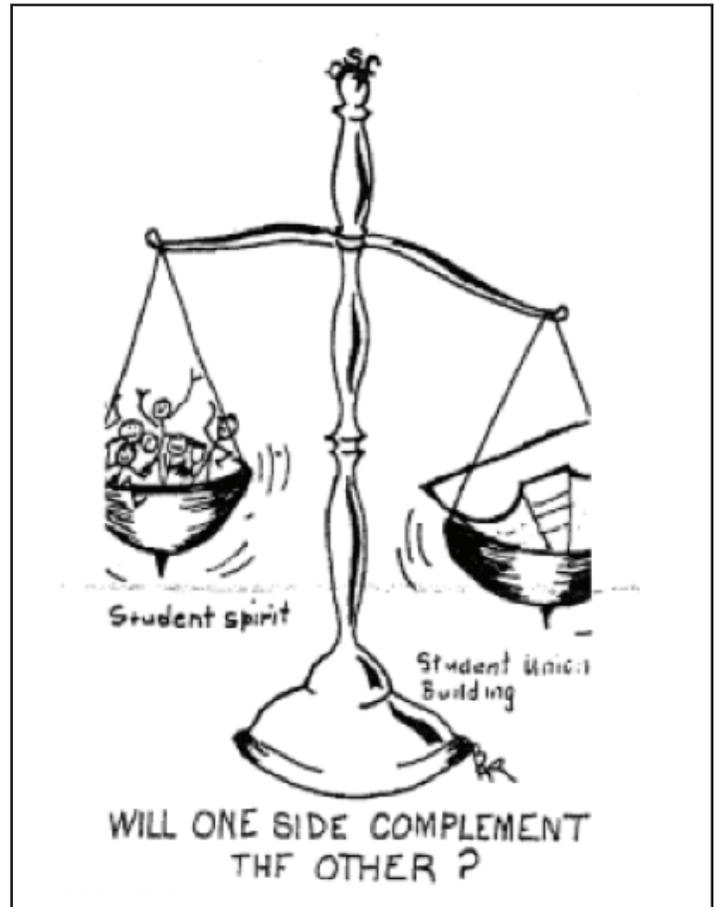


Fig. 7. "Student Union Committee Visits Governor," *The Campus Comment*, April 1, 1968.

Nationally, undergraduate students took to nonviolent activism to insight change at the local level. One of the first notable instances of this took place on February 1, 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina. In Woolworth's restaurant, several students sparked a nationwide movement for change. The black college students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University entered the restaurant and sat at the lunch counter to be served. After being refused service due to their race, the students refused to leave, peacefully protesting the segregation of service to them based on their race. From this movement, these college students then unified together with the focus on civil rights. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was

formed to provide youth blacks a voice in the movement for equality. The students then organized various peaceful movements to address the inequality, such as sit-ins and peace marches. Ella Baker, a notable local African American civil rights activist, assisted the students in the formation of SNCC. Ella Baker in 1969, in regards to the civil rights movement by students, stated “Oppressed people, whatever their level of formal education, have the ability to understand and interpret the



**Fig. 8.** “G roundbreak and Construction,” *The Campus Comment*, February 26, 1969.

world around them, to see the world for what it is, and move to transform it.”<sup>10</sup> The students gathering in protest of oppression provided a safe outlet for students to vocalize their dissatisfaction with societal issues. The students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University were the first in the student movement in the 1960s, but they certainly were not the last. The actions of these undergraduate students then inspired other undergraduate students around the nation to conduct similar political action for localized issues. Around the nation, undergraduate students utilized their institutional campuses as foregrounds to create fundamental change for the enhancement of social reform.

## Notes

1. United States, Massachusetts State College at Bridgewater. (n.d.). *Student Handbook 1961-1962* (pp. 1-47). Bridgewater State University Archives and Special Collections. Bridgewater, Massachusetts.
2. State College at Bridgewater. (1971). *The Comment*, September 16, 1971. Print.
3. State College at Bridgewater. (1960). *The Campus Comment*, November 15, 1965. Print.
4. State College at Bridgewater. (1967). *The Campus Comment*, May 3, 1967. Print.
5. *The Short History of Our Right to Contraceptives: Eisenstadt v. Baird 40 Years Later*. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Arizona Blog. Retrieved 9 May 2013.
6. State College at Bridgewater. (1969). *The Comment*, September 25, 1969.
7. State College at Bridgewater. (1969). *The Comment*, September 25, 1969.
8. MacLean, N. (2009). *The American Women’s Movement, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
9. Turner, Thomas Reed. *Not to Be Ministered Unto, But to Minister: Bridgewater State University 1840-2010*. Bridgewater, MA.: Bridgewater State University, 2012.
10. Baker, Ella. “Bigger Than A Hamburger.” Speech, *Southern Patriot*, Raleigh, N.C, June 8, 1960

## Bibliography

- Baker, Ella. “Bigger Than A Hamburger.” Speech, *Southern Patriot*, Raleigh, N.C, June 8, 1960.
- Bridgewater State College, Dormitory Council. (1962-1963). *The Bridgewater State College Dormitory*

*Handbook for Women 1962-1963* (pp. 112). Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Bridgewater State College.

Bridgewater State College, Dormitory Council. (1968-1969). *Women's Dormitory Handbook 1968-1969* (pp. 1-31). Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Bridgewater State College.

Bridgewater State College, Office of Student Services. (n.d.). *New Dimensions 1980-1981* (pp. 1-50). Bridgewater, MA.

Bridgewater State College, Residence Council. (1971-1972). *Women's Dormitory Handbook 1971-1972* (pp. 1-33). Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Bridgewater State College.

Bridgewater State College, Residence Council. (1974-1975). *Bridgewater State College 1974-1975 Women's Residence Hall Handbook* (pp. 1-32). Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Bridgewater State College.

Bridgewater State College. (n.d.). *Student Life 1971-1972* (pp. 1-58). Bridgewater, MA.

Bridgewater State College, Student Services. (1979-1980). *Bridgewater State College 1979-1980 Residence Hall Handbook* (pp. 1-34). Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Bridgewater State College.

DuBois, E. C., & Dumenil, L. (2005). *Through Women's Eyes: An American History with Documents*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Alma Mater: Design and*

*Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts, 1993. Print.

MacLean, N. (2009). *The American Women's Movement, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Massachusetts State College at Bridgewater. (n.d.). *Student Handbook 1961-1962* (pp. 1-47). Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

"The 1960s-70s American Feminist Movement: Breaking Down Barriers for Women."(n.d.). Retrieved September 15, 2016, from <https://tavaana.org/en/content/1960s70s-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women>

Poulson, S. L., & Miller-Bernal, L. (2006). *Challenged by Coeducation: Women's Colleges Since the 1960s*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Solomon, B. M. (1985). *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

State College at Bridgewater. (1960). *The Campus Comment*, March 28, 1960. 33(9) to February 26, 1969. 43(9).

State College at Bridgewater. (1969). *The Comment*, September 9, 1969. 1(1) to September 27, 1979. 53(2).

Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A History of American Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

“The Short History of Our Right to Contraceptives: Eisenstadt v. Baird 40 Years Later”. *Planned Parenthood Advocates of Arizona Blog*. Retrieved 9 May 2013.

Turner, Thomas Reed. *Not to Be Ministered Unto, But to Minister: Bridgewater State University 1840-2010*. Bridgewater, MA.: Bridgewater State University, 2012.

---

## About the Author



Kayla Jane Hoyt is a graduating senior majoring in History and minoring in Special Education, Secondary Education, and Social Studies. Her research project was completed in the summer of 2016 under the mentorship of Dr. Margaret Lowe (History) and made possible with fund-

ing provided by an Adrian Tinsley Program Summer Research Grant. Kayla Jane presented this paper at the 2017 National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in Memphis, TN. She plans to pursue a career as a history teacher at a vocational high school.