

Eau Claire, College Dear:

Examining the History of the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

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## Introduction

The first History class of my college career was in no way different from what I imagined it would be like before I had ever attended college. I sat in a large room at 9:00AM very nervous. In the front of the room was a towering, bearded man in a suit who was ready with an agenda to get through. This was Western Civilization and our class was going to learn everything important about Europe from the French revolution to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Two years later, I took a class at the same catalogued level about the history of the world; to my surprise, a petite woman in a sweater carrying a cup of tea walked into the classroom five minutes late asking “what are we going to learn today.” Everyone has a different story when it comes to history. Every history is different based on who is telling that story. Many of us get this story from historians. And most people encounter historians in education, be it in high school or higher education. All of these people we encounter are certainly experts, but usually in different areas of the field. Because of the structure of education many of these specialists will instruct us in other fields as well; trying to explain to us everything we need to know about everyone from Marcus Garvey to Nikita Khrushchev. With these specialists being busy telling the stories of people from the past, who is going to tell the stories of academics? Who is going to tell the story of historians themselves and their contributions to history?

In this paper I examine the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. The history department at the school has existed through most of the school’s existence. The school and the official department of history have not been around the same length of time. The school itself has gone through many transformations, first as a teachers college, a state school, and presently as a public system school. By examining the records available I will look at how the school has changed and specifically watch the development of the history department over time. This will be done by

researching what the faculty have to say about the department, the entire school, and the students here at the university. There is a limited amount of information and those who were alive in the early years are becoming harder to find. Information gathered for this paper comes from interviews with available faculty and records from the university. Major limitations of this project are the lack of comprehensive materials available from all eras of the school and the few faculty emeriti in the area that responded when asked to perform an interview.

### The History of History

When we read about the past and try to understand what we know about the past, there are several things we must remember as readers. Who is this work written for, who was doing the writing, and what message is the piece trying to convey? These questions make us sound more like detectives than scholars. History may be described easier using just that analogy; historians are the detectives of the past. When a historian asks the question of why a belief exists in the way it does today, they search through the past and find the roots of where it came from and find the reason that idea came to be.

The way we understand history has not always been the same for all people in all times. Professional history in America was the result of apprehension in the way history was being conducted in Europe. The late 1800s saw the birth of professional history in America, and with that, the beginnings of their set of values for this country's historians.<sup>1</sup> The popular conceptual model to follow at that time was the scientific model. Science was not biased and could not be forged by people seeking to prove a certain ideal. Too often in the past kings and nobles influenced the history books making themselves look favorable with no one to prove them wrong. We suffer now because our views of the past are therefore skewed from the reality that

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<sup>1</sup> Novick, Peter, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 21.

once was. In adhering to the scientific model, American historians have chosen to make objectivity their highest concern in professional circles.<sup>2</sup>

With time these changes have transcended the boundaries that surround professional historians. As popularity in science grew throughout the country, there came a point where not just academia but even popular circulations, like the *New York Times*, began writing only what was deemed “information” and not stories.<sup>3</sup> With this new scientific approach, more definitions were needed to allow an understanding of what professional action was and how it could continue. The first definition used for professionalism was standardized techniques; the ability to replicate with different sources and find similar results.<sup>4</sup> It is sometimes difficult to imagine a world where mainstream opinion is based on mere ideas and did not need to be tested. The privileges of the information age have made it easy to forget the difficulty of conducting initial research. There is often past research we can easily find and read in databases on the internet. If someone publishes something that is falsifiable today, it would not take long for someone to quickly make a general search of available resources and pursue a counter argument. But, in the past it would have taken an expert with a lot of time to study the limited materials available and conduct grueling research to prove the original person wrong. The incentive to create facts would save time and energy, and nobody would be the wiser. American historians wanted to break away from these deceptive ways and start their history using empirical work.

Prior to World War I, new traditions began to expand the recognizable area valuable to historians.<sup>5</sup> Objectivity itself was not lost during this transition. The focus now was examining

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid,21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid,43.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid,87.

how important social, economic, and intellectual histories are when deciphering the past of common people, not just kings or lords.<sup>6</sup> This shift led to what many consider the “new” history. The works of history philanthropists James Harvey Robinson and Charles Beard initiated the new ideology of progressive history; which itself is nothing more than a revolution of the conservatively reported histories given before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> In short, the old ideas were losing favor as historians were discovering the extensive lack of information that existed on several significant events of the past. Despite what common folk may have recognized as daily life during these periods, if kings and nobles did not wish to record elements of society then they simply were not recorded. This is difficult for historians because not everything we should like to know about the past will ever be provable.

The change in historical ideology was made during this time, but the real transition did not come until the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> From that point, history years conservative viewpoints are held and other years the liberal-progressive majorities of people control in America enters the same battle we see on the political platform. Some what is known about who and where. An issue historians face today is tracing these inequalities as they have occurred. If it were to happen again, historians should be prepared to stand against the leaders who are marginalizing information for their own personal gain.<sup>9</sup>

#### The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire has not always been a school in the state’s public University System. In 1916, at the site where the university now stands, the first higher

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid,87.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid,93.

<sup>8</sup> Kaye, Harvey J, *The Powers of the Past: Reflections on the Crisis and the Promise of History*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 148.

education building there was the Eau Claire State Teachers College. In June of 1927, the school delivered its first set of bachelor degrees to nine students<sup>10</sup>. These degrees were all in education, but this does not mean there was a limit to the subjects reviewed. Instructors at the Eau Claire school taught freely between all disciplines, including English, fine arts, mathematics, science, physical education, and arts and social sciences<sup>11</sup>. Specialists in the fields were not as important as they are today; rather, quality people who could fill multiple roles and handle the classroom were the favored choices for these positions.

In 1948 the Eau Claire school was divided into different departments. These departments were called divisions at that time. The official divisions were the Division of Education and Psychology, Division of Humanities, the Division of Natural Sciences and Physical Education, and the Division of Social Sciences<sup>12</sup>. Many departments consisted of one instructor and each department would elect a chairman for their respected division<sup>13</sup>. This would sometimes mean the only member of the department would sit as the chairman indefinitely as there were no other people to fill the role. The chairmen were very similar to the Deans of the Colleges today in responsibility and their role at the university.

The social sciences, in their first division meeting, elected Dr. John S. Schneider in September 1948<sup>14</sup>. While serving in this position, Dr. Schneider was very active in the university. Some of the ideas Dr. Schneider wanted to accomplish were to file syllabi with the

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<sup>10</sup> Carter, Hilda R. and John R. Jenschold, *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A History, 1916-1976*, (Stevens Point, WI: University of Wisconsin--Eau Claire Foundation, 1976), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 58.

Dean of Instruction, at that time Dr. Leonard Haas; and to push for eighteen percent of the school's library's resources be related to the social sciences<sup>15</sup>. The division of social sciences at that time also started to define how it wanted its own students to attain their degrees. The agreement through the division was that six hours should be dedicated to the study of history and three hours should be spent in political science, economics, and sociology.<sup>16</sup> Although this was not a mandated school policy, the guideline was encouraged by the division.

By 1951, another change came as the school was declared the Wisconsin State College at Eau Claire<sup>17</sup>. The change came when the school was allowed to grant Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees<sup>18</sup>. The school had been lobbying for this authoritative change for some time and was finally able to get approval based on the existing liberal arts education that was available at the school to serve the large number of military barracked at the university during the World War II era.<sup>19</sup>

In 1971 there were several meetings between the educational bodies around the state for an official title for all the universities in the state of Wisconsin. The two prominent groups were the Wisconsin State University, comprised of schools at Eau Claire, Oshkosh, Platteville, Stevens Point, River Falls, Whitewater and Superior. The University of Wisconsin schools were in Madison, Parkside, Green Bay, and Milwaukee (a former Wisconsin State College). The fear of the Wisconsin State University schools was that the name change would indicate submission to the university campus located in Madison. After months of debate on the issue the governor

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 67.

signed a bill brought forward that would merge the two systems together under one agreed upon name on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1971.<sup>20</sup> The merger included a change in the makeup of the Board of Regents of the State of Wisconsin, the highest supervising layer of the Wisconsin public education system. The name chosen for the system was the University of Wisconsin System.

#### University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire - Today

The University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire holds to its values and has committed itself to student excellence since its very beginning. The goal of higher education is to make people better prepared for the lifestyles they chose to pursue after receiving an education. Eau Claire has always strived to keep personal relationships possible between students and faculty. To maintain that relationship the university keeps student to teacher ratios at one-to-twenty, with an average class size of twenty-eight.<sup>21</sup>

Over the past thirty-six years as a university school and in the ninety-one years prior to that, the school has seen many leaders on campus. One of the striking repeat occurrences in the leadership of the school is the number of social science Chancellors/Presidents and executive board members through the years. The current Chancellor of the school is Dr. Brian Levin-Stankevich, earning his Ph.D. in Russian legal history. The standing university mission statement he endorses reads as follows:

1. to provide undergraduate education in a broad range of programs, based on a strong general education component emphasizing the liberal arts and sciences, offering degrees in the arts and sciences, allied health fields, business, education, nursing, and other areas that grow clearly from university strengths and meet identifiable regional and state needs;
2. to provide graduate education, at the master's and specialist levels, in select programs that grow clearly from undergraduate strengths and meet identifiable regional and state needs;

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>21</sup> University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire. "About UW-Eau Claire." <http://www.uwec.edu/home/aboutUs.htm#fastFacts> (accessed 25 April, 2007).

3. to support and encourage scholarly activities, including research and creative endeavors, that enhance its programs at the associate and baccalaureate level, its selected graduate programs, and its special mission; and
4. to support the cultural, educational, and economic development of the immediate region in a variety of ways, including its outreach and community service programs.<sup>22</sup>

Eau Claire has a conviction for tradition and maintaining its reputation amongst the other schools in the state. Dr. Levin-Stankevich's mission statement is not surprisingly composed of several leaders' ideas from the past and present. By looking at what others have said in the past about the university, we will see the tradition in Eau Claire is to focus on one set of goals and never rest no matter how far along they have come. By adhering to new history ideology by being honest about our progress we can highlight our progress and realize our potential weaknesses. This allows the university to serve students better.

#### John Schneider

The beginning of the History Department at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire does not begin with any great surge of faculty or information. Rather, the department grew out of one person and his ability to teach in the category of social sciences. Dr. John Schneider was a faculty member of the Wisconsin State College from the years 1930 through 1960.<sup>23</sup> Dr. Schneider was a fortunate addition to the school at Eau Claire; he was the second member of the staff to hold a doctoral degree at the school during that time.<sup>24</sup> He received his Ph. D. from the University of Wisconsin Madison in Greek and Roman history and then pursued employment at

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<sup>22</sup> University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire. "Academic Affairs/Provost: Policy Documents." <http://www.uwec.edu/acadaff/policies/mission.htm> (accessed 25 April, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Schneider, John S. Papers. Historical Memorandum on Dr. John S Schneider: Notes on an Interview with Josephine M. Schneider by Orry C. Walz. Special Collections, University Archives, Eau Claire, WI.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Eau Claire.<sup>25</sup> It is interesting to note that even though he was such a celebrated faculty member for history, his favorite classes to teach were courses in sociology.<sup>26</sup>

From his arrival in 1930 until 1956, Dr. Schneider taught all sociology courses except for Rural Sociology and Educational Sociology.<sup>27</sup> Still, Dr. Schneider became the chair of the history department, where he served until 1948 and followed by serving as the Chairman of the Sociology Department and the Chairman of the Social Sciences Division until he retired.<sup>28</sup> During the 1950s, Dr. Schneider taught several history courses on a rotation. These classes included Greek, Roman, and Latin American history.<sup>29</sup> His lecture notes are on file at the University Archives at Eau Claire and tell a different kind of history than we would be accustomed to seeing today. One of the main differences found in his work is the repeated use of Christ. In his History 135, History of the Later Roman Empire, it is clear that politically correct language and separation of church and state were at an entirely different level, perhaps non-existent. Other details of this can also be seen in Dr. Schneider's grade book. Looking back at this we see first hand the change in history at Eau Claire. The metamorphosis occurred during the time of Dr. Schneider. We can see that Eau Claire was committed to staying with the evolving culture of history even in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Dr. Schneider's grade books are also on file at the archives and they tell vague stories of the class work assigned in the margins between students' letter grades. In the grade books from the middle 1930s, we find student names, addresses, and what appears to be the occupation of

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

the parents of the students.<sup>30</sup> The grade books from the early 1940s hold the name, hometown, address, parent occupation, and the religion of the student.<sup>31</sup> There was no apparent necessity for the religion of the students being recorded in the grade book; but, it shows the dedication to know the students on a more personal level at the beginning of the school's history.

Dr. Schneider was not only an outstanding member of the university staff, but also important in the greater Eau Claire community. When in Eau Claire, one can easily find the name of L. E. Phillips on many buildings, but not too many with John S. Schneider. This is likely because many of the accomplishments Dr. Schneider holds are on a grander scale than within the city of Eau Claire itself. Some of his achievements at the city level included being a member of the American Federation of Teachers and organizing Local No. 917 for college teachers with the help of Dr. J. R. Wallin.<sup>32</sup> His state accomplishments included being an active member of the Association of State College Faculties, serving several terms as a member of the Board of Directors and also as the Vice President.<sup>33</sup> Further more, a regional accomplishment involved the start of the Consumers Cooperative Credit Union along with six students on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Eau Claire.<sup>34</sup> The company is now estimated ninety-five million dollar financial institution.<sup>35</sup>

Although his life within the history department is not often celebrated; as he is credited as being a sociology professor today, and his academic accomplishments outside the classroom appear short on paper; Dr. John S. Schneider embodied everything that the University of

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<sup>30</sup> Schneider, John S. Papers, grade books, Special Collections, University Archives, Eau Claire, WI.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Orry C. Walz. "John S. Schneider Papers; Historical Memorandum on Dr. John S. Schneider." Special Collections, University Archives, Eau Claire, WI.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Wisconsin- Eau Claire wanted to be from its very beginning. His close, collaborative work with students along with his dedication to excellence in the community demonstrates the goals still set today by the university. These qualities embody the university's established fourth mission statement goal for the university today.

### Reflections from Other Faculty

An interesting way to study the history of an area or institution is to examine what is said and by whom. One of the greatest arguments we find in history is following where our sources of information come from. When we limit the number of perspectives that we use, we also then limit the overall picture we can provide for the future. The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire observed its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary observance in 1992. During that time several forums were held to talk about the university, its state, and where it was heading. Many of the speakers were history faculty or history faculty Emeriti. By using this resource, we can utilize more than just the perspective of those around the department today, hopefully opening up more doors about the feelings about the university that have been lost or forgotten today. Here are what several of them had to say about the state of the university at that time.

Dr. Ron Mickel served as a member of the History department from 1961 – 2003 and rose to the position of department chair during that time.<sup>36</sup> His first concern was the university's approach to the Interdisciplinary studies. Dr. Mickel believed that the best way to learn and expand how we learn would be to cross areas of study. Dr. Mickel said that he had seen its effects in his field of history, but not in enough ways to feel it was making a big difference on the current level it was used at.<sup>37</sup> Second was the delivery of materials to the students using the

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<sup>36</sup> University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. 2006 – 2007 Catalogue.

<sup>37</sup> *75th Anniversary of UW-Eau Claire. Session I*, prod. University Archives, 57 min., Special Collections, 1992, videocassette.

“old-fashioned” lecture format; Dr. Mickel suggested moving to more seminar and professor symposium as an alternative method to help engage students.<sup>38</sup> Lectures were seen by Mickel as an outdated version of learning that needed to change with the changing world. Another area Dr. Mickel was especially excited about seeing change was in personnel and field expertise. Many of the faculty at the university that taught during his time were reaching retirement age. The younger age faculty coming in to the university therefore may have new areas of expertise and interest like Asia, women’s history, and ethnic histories.<sup>39</sup> This follows the university’s first mission statement goal about keeping broad studies available to allow students a greater knowledge base for learning.

Another past member of the history department speaking in the Anniversary collection was the late Dr. Ronald Satz. Dr. Satz served the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire from 1983 until 2005, ending his career at the prestigious position of Provost. A soft and gentle speaker, Satz was recognized on many levels for his work with Native American history. Like his colleague Dr. Mickel, a main issue Dr. Satz discussed was the old faculty. The other important point he discussed was the inherent sense of tradition.<sup>40</sup> He also commented on the campus physical structure and its lack of support for interdisciplinary study or social access.<sup>41</sup> Dr. Satz focused on one topic specifically which was what do students learn from the university.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *75th Anniversary of UW-Eau Claire. Session 4*, prod. University Archives, 56 min., Special Collections, 1992, videocassette.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

One of the most difficult lessons Dr. Satz encountered during his time as a professor was learning how many rousing things students were learning outside of the classroom.<sup>42</sup> One of the issues all Professors were facing during the early 1990s was the developing idea of political correctness and limits on free-speech. Dr. Satz explains how students are not as shy about expressing themselves though, and that is how they teach and learn from one another.<sup>43</sup> In the same vein, Dr. Satz expressed his honest repute for non-traditional students who seem to respond first and most often in any situation in the class or not.<sup>44</sup>

The best place Dr. Satz felt the university put itself forward was in its work involving collaborative study between students and faculty.<sup>45</sup> Many of the people who speak to the accolades of this school talk of how much attention is put into this process. Part of what gives it the strength it has is because the ability to do this is funded and approved by students. The university's Student Senate passes the allocated funds to allow research like this to continue from year to year. This follows the university's third mission statement goal about encouraging scholarly activities for students, with the help of faculty.

#### Leonard Haas

Another distinguished figure in Eau Claire's history is Leonard Haas. Haas probably has the most experience with the university over any of the other faculty listed in this paper. This is because Haas was also a graduate of the Eau Claire school in 1935.<sup>46</sup> By 1959 he climbed the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> *75th Anniversary of UW-Eau Claire. Session 9*, prod. University Archives, 118 min., Special Collections, 1992, videocassette.

faculty and staff ladder and was selected to serve as the President of the university where he remained, albeit the title's name change to Chancellor, until 1980; the highlight of this long career was serving as the Chancellor of the university. This amount of time spent with Eau Claire makes him somewhat of a resident expert on all things over time at the school.

Dr. Haas began his career at Eau Claire in 1931, a time before World War II, before the lowest point in the Great Depression, and well before Hawaii or Alaska were even states. When discussing growth and change at the university, Dr. Haas explained how there were still mainly original faculty from 1916 teaching when he arrived.<sup>47</sup> Great changes in departments were not originally being made because there was no reason to try to replace or expand faculty at that time. After World War II, changes occurred as the population of the university diversified and expanded beyond young adults from western Wisconsin.<sup>48</sup> Because of the war, many military personnel assigned to Eau Claire took classes while there serving on active duty. At the time, the university was not a liberal arts school and it was depending more and more on the liberal art studies to keep up with the demands of new students.<sup>49</sup>

In 1951, the liberal arts program was approved for Eau Claire at the state level.<sup>50</sup> The classes already existed and now they could be appropriately rewarded. This growth continued into the 1960's. As universities grew in popularity, Eau Claire attempted to keep up by hiring 150 new faculty members each year from 1960 through 1970.<sup>51</sup> This was considered quite an achievement as Eau Claire was competing with schools all over the nation for top tier faculty.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Other schools in the system, at that time, were specializing in specific areas to keep their enrollment high. Eau Claire chose to start with education, but then expand into business and then into nursing.<sup>52</sup> A true liberal arts degree at Eau Claire was proving redundant as expansion continued and more fields were appearing all at one school. Providing several different specialty areas was not available at other schools in the state. This follows the university's first mission statement goal about broad liberal education being available at Eau Claire.

Dr. Haas felt that these contributions were good and he was sure the growth seen over these years was in the university's best interest. He feels Eau Claire hit its mark on several occasions; as the first school to offer Kindergarten training and as the first Wisconsin school to offer a study abroad program in Japan. Yet, Dr. Haas also weighed in with what he felt was the most important part of Eau Claire and academics. This is the freedom of any expression.<sup>53</sup>

The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire Forum Series is the longest standing Forum Series in the country and has always made the point to protect freedom of expression.<sup>54</sup> Similar to the opinion Dr. Satz made about students getting the best learning experiences outside of the classroom, Dr. Haas felt this expression added to the character of Eau Claire students. The pivotal moment came in the 1960s when an American Nazi came to the Forum Series. Many complained and shied away, but the university pulled through and put the event on. There will always be certain limits on expression though, which Dr. Haas recognized. This follows the university's fourth mission statement goal because the event served to help students and the greater community understand freedom of expression.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

## Earl Shoemaker

Earl A. Shoemaker shares a rare relationship with Dr. Haas; both have the experience of being a student of the university first and then return to teach at the university. This ability to see the department from both perspectives bodes with the idea of objectivism in history. By recognizing the past and where things were, we can evaluate some level of understanding of where we should be today.

Although he came to college at the end of high school, Mr. Shoemaker spent seven non-academic years getting a bachelors degree from Eau Claire. This was from the mid-1970s through the mid1980s. During those times, most people were going to school because even though Vietnam had just ended the other option for young men at that time was to join the military.<sup>55</sup> The draft was abolished in 1973 and the government did not actively seek able-bodied men until 1980 when the Selective Service System returned. Eau Claire had an open admission policy at this time to accept as many people that wanted to go stay and go to college; the real struggle was not getting in but who would be able to remain in college after getting in.<sup>56</sup>

Mr. Shoemaker was not originally interested in history when he started college. Rather, he declared a philosophy and political science double-major.<sup>57</sup> After taking Western Civilization with Dr. Jack Lauber, then Mr. Shoemaker developed an interest for more history courses. This theme of professors who had profound affects on Mr. Shoemaker continued over the years while an undergraduate at Eau Claire. Ronald Warloski and Ed Pond were very influential to Mr.

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<sup>55</sup> Prof. E. A. Shoemaker, faculty of the History Department at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, interview by author, 6 March, 2007, Eau Claire, WI.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Shoemaker's development into the lecturer that he is today.<sup>58</sup> Mr. Shoemaker did not have the desire to teach until his graduate studies at Kansas State University. When asked where he learned what to teach he accredits his graduate school experiences, but for what he considered proper lecturing techniques Mr. Shoemaker was quick to indicate his undergraduate professors at Eau Claire were his inspiration.<sup>59</sup> Their presentation on blackboards, their mannerisms in front of class, and their attitude for teaching was much more engaging and inspiring. In the moment the professors at Eau Claire were better at making the materials attractive to students.

As a student, Mr. Shoemaker was able to earn the Edward Blackorby Award for Outstanding Writing. This accomplishment is not easily forgotten as it still sits in the hallway of the history department for all to see, and has engraved plaques after plaques indicating the winners over the past many years. Mr. Shoemaker saw the award as a great way to build credentials to help him get into graduate school.<sup>60</sup>

#### Kate Lang

Dr. Kate Lang is the current chair of the history department at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire. A Ph.D. graduate from the University of Chicago, it seems fitting the chair of history would have some kind of academic connection to Kate Turabian herself. Dr. Lang did not actually have aspirations of becoming involved in history education at the beginning of her academic career either. After her bachelor's degree, she went straight into her Ph.D. program in Middle Eastern studies.<sup>61</sup> After receiving her degree, she came to the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Kate Lang, Chair of the History Department at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, interview by author. 1 February, 2007. Eau Claire, WI.

University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire in 1996. At that time, Dr. Carl Haywood was the Middle Eastern specialist and also the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.<sup>62</sup>

As far as her experience at Eau Claire, Dr. Lang takes a very utilitarian approach to how the department is run and is modest when talking about department distinctions. Dr. Lang does not engage questions as strongly as her predecessors have. When asked directly she would respond accordingly based on her feelings about the current situation. She admits that the department awards in the hallway are not great but are recognition for students, and explains how the Greek societies tied to the department fluctuate year to year, as all things do.<sup>63</sup> One may assume it could be a conflict of interest for the chair of the department to have said anything other than those statements. Being upfront about ebb and flow of these honors and programs proves Dr. Lang's greater understanding of the department and its overall role in academics at Eau Claire is mature for someone so new to the position. This accuracy leads one to assume that the department has done an appropriate job keeping their history professional.

Dr. Lang, as the chair of the department, says she looks forward to working on a global program for recruiting the next generation of the history department.<sup>64</sup> Because of the size of the department and the number of specialty courses available, there is a limit to the department's flexibility regarding new and innovative programs. There can be either a lot of specialized courses only, or a lot of general courses that can be taught by the many. The latter is what Dr. Lang plans to do. By preparing now, the specialists that will be hired over the next three to six years will also have to prove they can teach broader categories than just what their dissertations

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

consisted of.<sup>65</sup> Since a womens' studies and an American Indian studies department exist on campus, faculty for those courses in history could expand across disciplines. In theory, using these other department faculty opens up faculty slots in the history department to allow other specialists or more general faculty to exist. The balancing act between who to hire and for what reason is already the distinct challenge of Dr. Lang's rein as the chair of the department.

Dr. Lang does not give the appearance that there is any stress for her as she steps into this new role as the chair, a position she has held for less than a year. Other areas that she wishes to work with are the diversity of faculty and fight to keep the masters in education program at Eau Claire.<sup>66</sup> These are struggles that not only face Dr. Lang and the history department; the diversity of faculty is something the entire University of Wisconsin system has been working on for the last fifteen years with no widespread improvement. Keeping the masters program in teaching in Eau Claire does maintain the tradition of excellence which is the overall motto of the university. It also follows the university's second mission statement goal, which asks that graduate education growing from undergraduate strengths is an Eau Claire tradition that needs to grow.

The history department itself appears to have solidified this reputation this past year as Dr. Lang has risen to the top. Eau Claire's worth to the overall academic community rises substantially as it was the recipient of the University of Wisconsin Board of Regent's 2006-2007 Department of the Year award. This award was selected from all the departments at all the public schools in the state, including University of Wisconsin - Madison and Milwaukee. This also plays well in the university's fourth goal of culture and community in the region; this raises the bar for Eau Claire students and thus brings the best and brightest into the area.

## Conclusion

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

History is told from many perspectives by many people over time. We trust the people who tell us our history to tell the entire world what we wish to be remembered by. It is not a system where we pick who is reporting on us for the future, rather it is a system where volunteers pick subjects and tell us what they feel was the most important pieces of the story.

In cases such as universities, we are able to select who we employ to tell us what the history of a certain topic is. In this way, we get a choice in what information we are going to hear based on the credentials of the historian and/or the feedback from the students. We know what their expertise areas are and we expect them to perform very well in these areas because it is why they are employed in these various positions.

To cover the societies of old and report on what they knew then and what we know now is safe and somewhat predictable. There can be an assumption that historians will report what is known and will not be harrowed. Because those in the classroom are not suitable challengers to those who have spent a lifetime in scholarly work, it is most difficult to catch when faculty have stepped over their bounds, under stepped an important issue, or touched a subject that is taboo.

It is only in the recorded histories that we, in the future, can look back and find out who maintained a certain opinion, who argued against that opinion, and who was not siding with either opinion. One place that faculty often do not tread is into education itself, especially that of their own institution. When reviewing the academic works of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire, there was no information on faculty members working to trace the history of the department, the school, or the objectives of either. The University Archives has held forums with mixed faculty and students to allow future generations to see what was happening at Eau Claire. These recordings are of particular importance to history students because most of the people sitting on the forums were History Department faculty of past and

present. These faculty of the history department include Dr. Leonard Haas-Chancellor Emeritus, the late Dr. Ronald Satz-Provost and Vice Chancellor Emeritus, Dr. Ronald Mickel-former history department chair, and other faculty. These are the primary materials usable in finding if the university has upheld on its mission for students.

These records allow us to review what has been said about certain departments, about the university, and who was concerned with these changes. By looking at these records, papers in the archives, records located in the history department, and some face-to-face interviews with available sources, I further understand the department, the school, and its perspective on its role in educating students in the Chippewa Valley since beginning in 1916. I would like to do further research involving this topic in the future. Areas that would be of interest would be to examine what other university's archives have done to preserve their school's histories. By comparing what Eau Claire has done to its sister schools with its own history perhaps we can draw conclusions about how rich history at Eau Claire really is.

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