FROM THE MANSION TO THE UNIVERSITY

A History of Armstrong Atlantic State University

1935–2010
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Janet D. Stone
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Janet D. Stone
INTRODUCTION

Anyone seeking a short summary of Armstrong’s history can find it in the university’s catalog. In 1985, longtime faculty member Orson Beecher wrote the first real history of the college as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations. He did so with enviable brevity. This present account offers a long version of the Armstrong story. It is a Savannah story, an institutional story, and a personal story of individual men and women who were part of the life of the college during its first seventy-five years.

For its first twenty-four years (1935–1959), Armstrong was a two-year college of the city of Savannah, and until 1965 it was located in the city’s historic district at the corner of Bull and Gaston Streets. Those early years were closely connected with local Savannah history, especially the Depression during which the college was founded, the experience of World War II, the return of the veterans, and the growth of the historic preservation movement. Beyond local history, Armstrong’s story also offers a perspective on higher education in Georgia, both before and after Armstrong became part of the University System in 1959. This part of the story involves the transition from a two-year college to a four-year college, the development of graduate programs and specialization in health professions, the relationship with other colleges in the University System, and the designation as a university in 1996. The desegregation of higher education in Georgia is a distinctive feature of the Armstrong story during the 1970s, and the remnants of that issue reappear periodically thereafter.

The personal side of the story tells of presidents, faculty, students, staff, and members of the community who shaped and shared in the life of the institution. Their voices and personalities rise out of archival material, newsprint stories, formal interviews, and many conversations; and they take the narrative into the rhythms of campus life as each generation experienced it. The story includes high moments, low moments, and ordinary moments. It does not hide the hard parts. In general, the narrative is organized around decades that offer a close examination of particular times or special topics.

In 1936, the early students of the college decided that they needed a school song. A faculty member and a student composed two rhymed stanzas to be sung to the soaring music of Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy.” The opening lines claimed an ambitious future for the young, two-year college in a small southern city:

Alma Mater, through the ages,
Singing thy undying fame,
Will thy sons and daughters cherish
And defend thy golden name.

The language reflected the exuberance of youth and a hasty composition that reached for familiar phrases of lofty rhetoric. We may smile at their language but this narrative honors the enthusiasm and vitality with which that first generation launched their history. This is their story and the story of those who came before and after them.
1936—1937

BULLETIN OF
Armstrong Junior College
A City supported Junior College of Savannah, Georgia

“Education is a companion which no misfortune can depress—no crime destroy—no enemy alienate—no despotism enslave. At home, a friend; abroad, an introduction; in solitude, a solace; and in society, an ornament.”

Armstrong Archives.

CHAPTER 1
Before the Beginning: The Junior College Movement in Savannah, 1926-1930

IN THE EARLY EVENING of Wednesday, November 13, 1929, a voice familiar to many Savannah students crackled through the static of radio station WTOC. “In surveying the history of Savannah and in contemplating the location of the city,” said the voice, “one cannot help but wonder why Savannah has not long ago had an institution of learning more advanced than a high school.” The radio station was new but the question was not. The idea of establishing a college in Savannah had been a topic of local interest and activity for more than two years. The most persistent effort, which came to be known as the Junior College Movement, hummed and hovered over Savannah like a Low Country mosquito throughout the late 1920s, repeatedly raising the question quoted above. With the city’s colonial heritage, her history of political and economic prominence, her social and cultural pride, why had a school of higher learning not been established there? In the eighteenth century George Whitefield had wanted to found a college in connection with the Bethesda orphanage but failed to get the support of authorities in England who did not share Whitefield’s particular brand of enthusiasm.1 In the late nineteenth century the Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youth opened its doors in nearby Thunderbolt, but its name clearly limited its primary purpose to a particular kind of training for a particular racial group. The vast majority of its students were at the elementary and secondary level; only a few followed a college curriculum.2 Neither public initiative nor private interests, neither philanthropy nor sectarianism had planted in Savannah a traditional college for the white youth of the city.

Perhaps, said the voice on the radio, the lowly mosquito was part of the problem, since early histories of Savannah always noted the unhealthy climate. Whatever the reasons may have been, during the late 1920s a strong current of ideas about higher education began to circulate through the city. Among them, the junior college idea was the one that never quite went away. The initial wave of interest subsided in the early 1930s without success. Not until 1935 did a city-supported junior college actually come into being through the work of Mayor Thomas Gamble. Climaxed so dramatically and elegantly in the acquisition of the imposing mansion of George Ferguson Armstrong to house the college, Gamble’s success completely overshadowed the period of activity that preceded it. The earlier effort, however, provided important background for Gamble’s achievement in 1935. The establishment of a junior college in Savannah has a story before the beginning, and that story begins at the Savannah Senior High School.

The voice on the radio was that of Lowry Axley, head of the English department at Savannah High School and the central figure in the effort to establish a junior college in Savannah prior to 1935.4 In 1929, when he spoke over the radio, he was not quite 40 years old. A native of Murphy, North Carolina, he was a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a World War I veteran with the rank of captain. In the late 1920s he spent his summers at Harvard working on his master’s degree in education, which he received in the summer of 1931. During the school term, he devoted his time to teaching and to a variety of civic and educational issues, most notably the cause of good writing, good teaching, and good education. He patiently corrected the frequent misspelling of his name whenever it appeared in print. As the major
In the late 1920s, Lowry Axley was a strong advocate for a junior college in Savannah and laid the groundwork for the founding of Armstrong in 1935. The Savannah High School Bluejacket 1926.

In the Bluejacket, Axley wrote, "In Savannah, the school board's response was mixed. A formal public relations office could not have succeeded in gaining more or better publicity for the junior college idea. Bold headlines and enthusiastic editorials promoted a junior college with every possible argument, adjusting the emphasis to fit the flow of events in the city and the region."

The third component of the Junior College Movement was the network of civic clubs throughout Savannah, most notably the Junior Chamber of Commerce and, later, the Chamber of Commerce. These two bodies provided the contacts through which the movement attempted to develop a broad base of support. It was a good team: Axley, the newspapers, and the civic clubs. Together these three champions informed, organized, exhorted and occasionally berated the citizens of Savannah to establish a junior college.

The model that inspired their efforts was the Junior College of Augusta, established in 1926 as an extension of the Augusta public school system. As described in the November 1926 issue of the Georgia Education Journal, the Augusta public schools offered eleven grades of work: seven years of grammar school, followed by four years of high school in either the Richmond Academy or the Tubman High School for Girls. A fifth year, comprising college work, was added to the Academy in 1910; and in 1926 an additional year of college work created the Junior College of Augusta. The coeducational junior college and Richmond Academy shared a newly constructed facility, planned with the dual role of high school and junior college classes in mind. The teachers taught at both levels. The Richmond County School Board paid for the first year of college work and relied on tuition to pay the costs of the second year. The high school connection, therefore, provided the community with two years of college at a minimum cost.

Unlike Augusta, the Chatham County school system offered and paid for twelve years of education, not eleven. The idea of extending that financial responsibility to two more years raised serious questions. At the high school building at 208 Bull Street where Axley taught, class size and teaching load already exceeded accreditation standards. The need for more teachers and more classrooms meant that a new high school facility would have to be built, and the school board had already gained possession of a site at 47th Street and Atlantic Avenue, where the foundations of the unfinished Georgia Hotel stood in deteriorating condition. The Augusta example and the prospect of a new high school building prompted Axley into action. The new building could be planned to include a junior college.

Axley clipped the article describing Augusta’s College, and in the spring of 1927 he began promoting the idea of a junior college for Savannah, starting with the two community groups with which he was affiliated, the Civic Club and the Chatham County Teachers Association. Both groups gave their support, as did a newspaper editorial. Axley also initiated correspondence with Lawon B. Evans, superintendent of the Augusta public schools, and George P. Butler, President of the Augusta Junior College and Secretary of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States. Not surprisingly, Butler recommended the Augusta model that linked a junior college with the high school.

In Savannah, the school board’s response was mixed. Savannah needed a new high school, but it also needed a new elementary school and a new school for black students. School board member Martha Gallaudet Waring was opposed to any action for a junior college before providing adequately for the elementary schools of the city. Axley agreed, but he suggested that the board’s planning should look to the future as well as address the needs of the present. Board member Walter Wilson supported the junior college idea enthusiastically as an opportunity for children of nonwealthy families, in contrast with colleges that served only the well-to-do.

In 1928, the junior college advocates increased their efforts by gathering comments and persuasive information from educational experts. In March, President Harvey W. Cox of Emory University passed through Savannah and spoke at length on the benefits of a junior college. M.M. Phillips, principal of Savannah High School, told the Lions Club that the $120,000 spent by Savannah parents to send their children away to college for one year could easily start a junior college. The newspaper added more editorial comment throughout the spring; and in May and June Axley wrote five major by-line articles to inform Savannah readers about the purpose and possibilities of junior colleges. He reviewed the support given by the newspapers and civic groups. He projected the possibility of a future four-year institution. He described the national trend toward public junior colleges as “a natural reorganization of the public school system.” He discussed Leonard Koos’ book, The Junior College Movement, which saw junior colleges as the solution to the growing flood of college freshmen. He cited Ray L. Willbur, president of Stanford University, who thought that junior colleges could relieve universities of providing basic coursework. He pointed to the junior colleges that had been established in Augusta and Waynesboro. His final article identified the junior college as the logical next step in the "Democratization of Education." Savannah, he concluded, “could make no greater investment in her future than the building of a junior college.” He then surveyed 119 June graduates of Savannah High School about their college plans: seventy-nine intended to go to college; twelve stated a desire to go but would not be able to do so; sixty-three indicated they would attend college in Savannah if they could. Axley pressed further. He estimated that $30,000 could start a junior college, and the ongoing costs after start-up could be equally split between tuition and support from the local school system. "The question then is not, Can Savannah afford to have a junior college? It is rather, Can Savannah afford not to have a junior college?"

His final article listed all of the standards required for accreditation. Throughout the series, the newspaper provided continuing editorial comment.

The newly formed Junior Chamber of Commerce announced its formal endorsement in July 1928, and the newspaper promptly saluted the strength that the group brought to the cause: "Junior Chamber of Commerce" and "Junior College" sounded well together. No other project undertaken by the Junior Chamber was more important than their effort "to conduct a general, intensive, aggressive campaign to arouse sentiment...for a junior college." President William T. Knight and Secretary Nelson Stephens spurred the Junior Chamber’s education committee to action. The plan should be "to agitate the subject…and place before the public as much educational propaganda as we can collect." Finances or buildings were not the issue. The aim was to "sell the desire."
The Exchange Club added its support and declared that its members would become “walking delegates” for the junior college idea, which they believed offered both economic and educational value to the city. It was a big project, they admitted, too big for one group or even for the Board of Education, “but it is not out of proportion for a well-organized group of citizens to promote and push to completion.”

The role of the school board, however, would be important, and the newspaper again urged serious attention to a junior college.

It is most earnestly hoped that, with good management and unaninmous support from the people, the board may be able in a very short time to get into definite shape and consider as a serious project for the next step forward the provision for a junior college in connection with the high school of the city. The junior college is the next step — in both economy and service.

Discussion of junior colleges occupied the attention of the National Education Association at its December 1928 convention; and when school superintendent Ormond Strong returned from the meeting, he presented his findings to the school board.

In many cities this has been done with excellent results. In a number of cases, however, superintendents (sic) who had inaugurated junior colleges in their systems reported the results were far from what they had anticipated. There is no doubt that the overcrowded conditions of all colleges today and with the increasing number of young men and women who are eager to continue their education beyond the High School and for a fraction of the cost necessary in going away to college that this question must receive our earnest attention before long. [sic]

He added that he was already receiving visits from civic groups wanting to know school board opinion on the possibility of a junior college for Savannah. The board remained cautious, however; and a formal motion to express support of a junior college was referred to a committee, with the clear reservation “that the board was merely expounding a new educational movement, but not with any idea of action at the present time.”

In January 1929, the Junior Chamber invited ten other civic groups to appoint representatives to a general Citizens Junior College Committee. Axley accepted the position of chairman. Newspaper editorials pushed for community action. “The sooner Savannah has a junior college, the better it will be for Savannah…. Savannah has talked about this matter a long time; now is the time to see if a plan cannot be worked out for putting the idea into effect.”

A junior college for Savannah is much like a good road — the longer you put off having it the more money you lose. A good road is a money maker and a money saver. So is a junior college. There should not be any more waiting about it. It is needed and needed now.

At the end of January 1929, Nelson Stephens wrote to Major Butler at Augusta Junior College to ask if a group of Savannahians might visit his school. He also invited Butler to come to Savannah, and on March 2 Butler arrived with charts and figures to describe the financial prosperity of Augusta and its junior college. School board president Charles Ellis listened with interest but commented that a three-year school budget was already in place and funds were still lacking to complete the construction of the new elementary school on Barret Street and the new school for black students on Florence Street.

The junior college advocates were not deterred. The Junior Chamber ordered books about junior colleges to distribute to the school board members, and city librarian Ola Wyeth compiled a list of helpful magazine articles. Axley stressed the benefit that a junior college could bring to the city’s efforts to attract new industry.

Proper planning will show prospective investors that this city is a city that lives not merely from day to day but looks to the future, that it is interested in the development of its material resources. Perhaps no one thing will do more toward the progressive expansion of Savannah than an adequate educational system capped by a junior college.

But the public reports did not tell the whole story. Besides Axley, only three people actually made the trip to Augusta. Axley was furious at the poor turnout.
we show more interest and sacrifice time and effort in bringing about this project.”44 Axley’s own zeal did not flag, but the Augusta trip revealed a telling weakness in the movement. The names of groups and individuals that appeared so frequently in the news reports suggested a network of community support that had more breadth than depth, more appearance than substance. Most of the momentum for the effort came from Nelson Stephens, the newspapers, and Axley himself.

During the first half of 1929, several other college-related developments entered the scene. In early February 1929, Olin F. Fulmer, a prominent Savannahian and a trustee of Newberry College in Newberry, South Carolina, told the Exchange Club that Savannah was under consideration as a possible new location for that college. Savannah Lutherans welcomed the idea enthusiastically, and news reports described Newberry as “an A grade college.”45 During the first half of 1929, several other college-related developments entered the scene. In early February 1929, Olin F. Fulmer, a prominent Savannahian and a trustee of Newberry College in Newberry, South Carolina, told the Exchange Club that Savannah was under consideration as a possible new location for that college. Savannah Lutherans welcomed the idea enthusiastically, and news reports described Newberry as “an A grade college.”45 The Newberry project flickered out almost as quickly as it had flared, as South Carolina supporters mounted a successful campaign to keep the school where it was.46 But it suggested that public interest in Savannah might favor a traditional four-year college rather than a junior college. As if to address any reservations about the quality of education offered by junior colleges, Axley wrote a by-line article in April in which he explained that the term “junior college” should not be taken to imply inferiority. On the contrary, he stated, junior colleges provided work clearly as good as four-year schools and often better, since large four-year institutions frequently assigned freshman and sophomore classes to less experienced teachers or to graduate students.47 Axley’s conviction about the value of a junior college never wavered. In other Georgia communities, similar efforts were underway. Valdosta and Brunswick were interested in a junior college and Waynesboro in rural

Burke County had already established one that used the same building and teachers as the consolidated high school.48 If Burke County could have a junior college, surely Savannah could.

The examples in Georgia reflected a broad nationwide interest in establishing junior colleges. Between 1920 and 1936, the number of junior colleges increased 200% across the country to reach a total of 520. The period as a whole has been characterized as “a college building binge,” especially for junior colleges.49 Georgia had five private junior colleges prior to 1925, and three state-supported ones by 1932; but local politicians, especially in rural areas, were eager to bring educational opportunities closer to their constituents.50 Financing these undertakings remained a major concern. In Savannah, Axley had a “special problems” committee assigned to study the prospects of a bond issue in connection with the construction of the new high school. The chair of the subcommittee was George L. Googe, head of the Labor and Trades Assembly, which had already stated its belief that the county could handle a $2 million bond for construction of a courthouse and a new high school building that would include a junior college.51 Both of Savannah’s newspapers also supported the use of bonds to help with construction costs.

Local bond discussions and the widespread booster efforts to establish junior colleges may have contributed to a strongly critical statement from Dean Steadman V. Sanford of the University of Georgia in May of 1929. As the state considered its own bond issue for educational purposes, Sanford deplored the “epidemic of civic pride” that was creating a “stampede to establish junior colleges regardless of the need for them” and using public funds to do so.52 Stanford’s natural priority would be for Georgians to invest in the state’s existing institutions.

In the spring of 1929 one of those state colleges in nearby Statesboro prepared to award its first four-year degrees. Established in 1906 as an A&M school for the first district and then re-named and re-defined as a two-year teacher’s college (Georgia Normal School) in 1924, the Statesboro school had changed its name and status once more and, as South Georgia Teacher’s College, now offered a four-year curriculum.53 A large delegation of legislators, trustees, and notables from Savannah gathered in Statesboro for the graduation celebration, and the Savannah newspaper hailed the moment for “our college” and for “the first college graduates finishing their four years’ collegiate work in a great section of the state comprising a third of its area.”54 Yet Statesboro was sixty miles away and the college there was not exactly a local college. The newspaper cast its editorial eye on the seniors at Savannah High School and asked, “What is Savannah planning for the increase of this class? When is the junior college to begin?”55 As the school term ended, Axley held the last meeting of his committee and headed off to summer school at Harvard, promising an “intensive campaign” by the junior college advocates in the fall.56 In October 1929, the stock market plummeted, and Savannah turned its full attention to the economic needs of the community. The city’s economic center lay in the port and the shipping traffic in agricultural products from inland regions, most notably cotton and naval stores of turpentine, rosin, and lumber. Savannah’s manufacturing sector was small, and the city had long sought to increase the presence of major industry in the community.57 City leaders now redoubled their efforts. Mayor Gordon Saussey organized the Savannah Forward Movement composed of 100 leading citizens and proposed a three-year budget of $100,000 for economic development.58 Axley responded to the new circumstances in an article entitled “Public Schools and Industries,” in which he asked, “What will it avail the city to gain...? (new) industries without provision to take care of the increased population with adequate educational facilities?”

Many great industrial cities of this present day can offer educational opportunities to meet any demand. Beyond the high school, there are opportunities for college training, or at least junior college training... With an educational system that would include at least a junior college, Savannah would not need to be ashamed to compete for industries with any other city of the South.”59 Axley also took his message to the new medium of radio, delivering three radio addresses during the six weeks between mid-November and the end of the year.60 Two years of effort now spoke directly into Savannah living rooms with the personal persuasion of the human voice. The newspaper printed the texts in full. In each presentation, Axley reviewed the basic
facts about junior colleges and pointed to the example of Augusta. But he also spoke directly to the economic concerns that now weighed so heavily on the city. I do not believe there is any other investment for the good of the city that could possibly be expected to yield the large returns, both in educational advantages and in hard cash, than this. What then are we going to do about it? There is but one answer: Savannah must have a junior college.14

Even Christmas Eve found Axley at the radio microphone, with a seasonal reflection on his hopes for a junior college. In hundreds of homes throughout the city tonight, parents are joyously active with preparations to provide their children a merry Christmas on theorrow. Would it not be fine if they should become just as active next year to assure the children of Savannah the best kind of Christmas present next Christmas—the present of a junior college?15

Other voices joined the radio campaign. Savannah attorney Meyer Cherkas listed the ways in which a junior college could attract residents to the community and prevent them from drifting away.16 A.K. Hancock, a longtime member of Axley’s committee, described “the red hills of the northern portion of the state,” where most of Georgia’s colleges were located. “Perhaps,” he said, “it was thought that the clay made the students well read, or the hills gave them a higher outlook.”17 But the distant inland sites left many Savannahians handicapped in their ability to compete with other Georgians. The disadvantage was “damnable unfair” and one that should not continue for future Savannah children.

Axley spoke again in March on “Educational Needs and Industrial Possibilities,” arguing that strong educational opportunities not only attracted new business but also trained local people for employment in local research fields, such as Dr. Charles Herty’s work in the chemistry of wood products.18 But despite this barrage of broadcasts, the momentum of the Junior College Movement had begun to subside. Axley seemed to be aware that the city’s attention was shifting elsewhere, even as he reminded his listeners of the two vital components for the success of the junior college cause. 19 Education is the business of all the people and not just a few. Without proper leadership there can be little accomplishment, but without the sympathetic interest of the great mass of people leadership can do but little.19 After the radio broadcasts in early 1930, news of the junior college effort all but disappeared.19 Savannah leaders were still thinking about higher education for the city, but their thinking now took a new direction. A revitalized Chamber of Commerce named its new educational council the University Council and from January to May 1931 began to promote the idea of a four-year institution. Most probably, the new thinking about a “university” reflected the language and activity involved in organizing the University System of Georgia. A plan for simplifying and coordinating the separate governing bodies of the state-supported institutions of higher education had been under discussion throughout the 1920s.20 The initial legislation in 1929 was another attempt to pass but educational thinking was certainly stimulated by the prospect. In Savannah, the Chamber of Commerce held a public discussion of higher educational opportunities, and a variety of voices and reasons came forward in favor of a four-year school.21 A senior college would attract more interest and support than a two-year college. A junior college connected with the public schools could not have an endowment. A four-year college could grant degrees, whereas a two-year college could not, and students wanted degrees in order to get good jobs. Axley was present for this discussion and acknowledged his own personal preference for a four-year institution; but “practical reasons,” he said, still made a junior college the better option. The Chamber’s University Committee, chaired by Robert M. Hitch, was confident that the junior college advocates and the supporters of the brief Newberry prospect could now work for the university idea, and Axley was appointed to serve on the committee. But unlike Axley’s project, which had always envisioned the junior college as part of a new high school building, a four-year college would need its own site. Hitch and his committee began to consult with real estate agents and to gather information about the experience of other municipal universities. On May 12, 1931, the committee’s “Detailed Report” emphasized the economic benefits to be expected from a university: money spent by students and their visitors; an increase in property values and in permanent population; a boost to construction, industry, and municipal services; and, finally, “the economic value of Educated Men and Women.”21 The report climaxd the university initiative that had begun in January.

A strange silence followed. News reports now turned again to “The Statesboro College.” A July editorial entitled “Our College” urged the state’s first district representatives to join with Bulloch County representatives in supporting the Georgia State Teacher’s College in Statesboro as “our one and only college” in this part of the state.22 An August editorial identified the Statesboro institution as “A College Close To Our Own People” and affirmed that “This section of the state is proud of ‘our college.”23 In September, another editorial described the extension course work available in Savannah through the University of Georgia as an opportunity for those in the community who would otherwise be unable to attend college.23

What had happened to the university movement in Savannah? It is probable that, like its predecessor, it fell victim to the economic problems enveloping the city. During the summer of 1931, the economic and political picture in Savannah changed sharply. New mayor Thomas Hoynes, who had supported the university project as president of the Chamber of Commerce, now turned his attention to the increasing impact of the Depression on the city.24 Cotton prices dropped steadily throughout the summer and unemployment mounted. Hoynes launched a major effort to provide relief assistance to the unemployed, restore confidence to the city’s sagging economic spirits, and encourage new economic development. Both the university project and the junior college idea fell by the wayside. The latter was not dead, but it slipped from the scene for the next three and a half years. From the beginning, the idea of establishing a junior college in Savannah had been linked with Savannah High School. The Augusta model pointed to that connection, as did Axley’s belief that the first two years
of college work were a natural and democratic extension of the school system. Construction of a new, shared building offered an efficient and logical plan for bringing higher education to Savannah. A university was a more ambitious and expensive project. But the worsening Depression now undermined the public tax base and shifted attention away from higher education. Superintendent Strong submitted his proposal for a new high school building in January 1930, but by May of 1931 he had to report that the lack of city and state funds would delay the plans indefinitely. In September 1932, the school board cut teachers’ salaries by 5%, and the following June of 1933, salaries were cut again by 12.5%. City revenues from 1933-1935 declined by $600,000. Relief expenditures doubled during the same period. The city payroll underwent a 10% cut in 1932 and again in 1933. In that same year, the city ended all financial support for public schools, claiming that the schools were the responsibility of the county and that the city had no legal authority to make appropriations for them. In such economic circumstances, the idea of a junior college seemed very remote.

The question raised by the voice on the radio hung in the air like a fading echo. For over four years, a chorus of voices and columns of newsprint had addressed the issue of a college of some sort for Savannah. The onset of the Depression terminated the discussion, although the financial picture was arguably no better in 1935 when Thomas Gamble revived the junior college idea so successfully.

A variety of other factors may also have hampered Axley’s efforts. His repeated explanations about the role of junior colleges point to the fact that such institutions were still fairly new phenomena, and educational opinions differed strongly on their purpose. Were they an alternative to the four-year degree, or were they a first step toward one? If they did not prepare students for professions, did they provide sufficient preparation for other kinds of jobs? Public sentiment generally thought of “college” in terms of traditional four-year institutions. A two-year college was something different, and the link with the high school blurred its place in higher education still further. The high school connection required the support of the school board, where opinion remained guarded. The development of a four-year college program in Statesboro may also have sapped some of the strength of the junior college movement. Did “our college” reside in Statesboro, or did Savannah need one of its own?

The basic character of Axley’s effort may have been another reason for its failure. Axley’s approach was fundamentally that of a grassroots movement. He relied on the power of publicity and articulate persuasion. His civic groups reached a broad spectrum, but the junior college idea did not attract major political support until Thomas Gamble. When Gamble revived the idea in 1935, he was aware of Axley’s radio talks and consulted with him at the beginning of the new campaign, as well as through the months that followed. No one in Savannah knew the junior college idea better than Axley. But it would take a politician’s push to bring it to pass. As the Armstrong story was told and retold, it became the mayor’s story. But the teacher preceded the mayor, and it was the teacher who gave Savannah a thorough education on the subject of junior colleges. Because of the teacher, the mayor’s proposal did not sound new to Savannah ears. Indeed, it had the familiar hum of a Low Country mosquito that would not go away.
Three men in light-weight summer suits stood in the doorway and squinted into the sunlight as a photographer recorded the mid-morning moment on June 25, 1935. In the middle of the photograph stood Ernest A. Lowe, the thirty-five year old new dean of Armstrong Junior College. To his left, tall and straight, stood Ormond B. Strong, superintendent of the Savannah-Chatham County public schools. On the other side, at Lowe's right hand, stood distinguished Savannah attorney A. Pratt Adams, the new chairman of the Armstrong Junior College Commission and a past member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The doorway behind them led into the cool marble entrance hall of the grand mansion built by George Ferguson Armstrong.

The three men and the mansion stand at the center of the events of 1935 that culminated in the establishment of a junior college in Savannah. The place of the mansion was crucial, but the two men flanking Lowe represented the two educational currents that flowed around the college's beginnings: the Savannah public schools and the University System of Georgia. Junior colleges in the 1930s stood ambivalently between "lower" education and "higher" education. Some advocates saw them as an important extension of high school training into a thirteenth and fourteenth year, following the model of the German gymnasium. Others saw them as offering a college experience that might be sufficient in itself or that might lead to university or professional training. The junior college movement of the 1920s in Savannah had been closely aligned with secondary education. Spokesmen for senior institutions frequently favored that role, preferring to emphasize research and the professions as the distinct purpose of higher education. In 1935, the new effort to establish a junior college in Savannah looked to both the secondary schools and the University System for support, and both of these entities looked at the junior college in terms of the effect on their own interests. Both groups were very much "in the picture" in the early months of 1935.

Missing from the June 25 photograph was Mayor Thomas Gamble, the key figure in bringing a junior college to life in Savannah. Sixty-seven years old in 1935, Gamble was a tiny man with enormous energy. His grandson, Thomas Carr, chauffeured him around town in the family car since Gamble did not drive. But the mayor knew well enough how to make his way through a school board and how to get to influential offices in Atlanta. From an early career in newspaper work, Gamble entered Savannah politics as secretary to Mayor Herman Myers in 1899 and was a member of the Citizen's Club, which was a powerful force on the local political scene. For eighteen years he served as secretary to various Savannah mayors, and as a result he knew Savannah's political establishment well. During the 1920s, he went into semi-retirement from city politics, serving as mayor of Tybee until he ran successfully for mayor of Savannah in the fall of 1932. Described as a "political strategist" by a long-time associate, Gamble succeeded in establishing a junior college in Savannah by using his skills to steer his way through the obstacles that had frustrated earlier efforts. Gamble had not been identified with the earlier effort to establish a junior college during the 1920s. It is difficult to imagine that he was unfamiliar with that earlier movement, but he always claimed that his inspiration came from a visit to St. Petersburg, Florida in December 1934, a trip prompted by a desire to

CHAPTER 2
Between City and State: The Founding of Armstrong Junior College, 1935
investigate Florida’s “tourism, taxes, and transients.”

In St. Petersburg, Gamble observed the city’s junior college and discussed its operation with Mayor Blanc and the college dean, Robert D. Reed. Gamble was sufficiently impressed and interested in what he learned that he continued a correspondence with the St. Petersburg gentlemen after his return to Savannah. He also began gathering information on junior colleges with the help of the city librarian, Ola Weyer. On February 17, he made his plans public and asked State Senator David S. Atkinson to prepare a bill for the Georgia legislature to grant the city of Savannah the legal authority to “own, build, establish, maintain, and operate” a junior college.

The St. Petersburg school was a private institution founded in 1927 by the local superintendent of public instruction, Captain George M. Lynch, who continued to supervise the public schools at the same time as he served as president of the college, gathering the support of a number of leading citizens to underwrite the college until tuition fees could be collected. The college, although privately initiated and supported, maintained an informal relationship with the public schools through the person of Captain Lynch and at the outset held its classes in the St. Petersburg high school. Within a few months it moved to occupy another building formerly used as a public school.

Lynch’s connection with the public schools was obviously an important asset to the success of the venture.

In Savannah, Gamble saw Lowry Axley as a natural contact with the public schools and invited him to city hall to discuss the previous junior college effort.

Axley had been aware of the probable need for an enabling act by the state legislature, but no such bill had come out of the work of his committee. Gamble, perhaps because of his political consciousness, initiated the legal process at the very beginning. Gamble also preferred for the junior college to be distinct from the high school, but he announced that he anticipated the “hearty cooperation of the Board of Education.”

For his major support, however, Gamble looked to the University of Georgia System as the way to promote the idea of a junior college in Savannah. The existence of the University System of Georgia, established in 1932 to coordinate the various state-supported colleges through a central Chancellors and a Board of Regents, was the major difference in the environment of higher education in the 1920s and the 1930s. Gamble promptly contacted Philip Weltner, Chancellor of the University System, who provided information about the System’s junior colleges. Weltner, an Augustan, pointed to Augusta’s junior college as “one of the best junior colleges anywhere conducted by a municipality.” Gamble then contacted Augusta president James I. Skinner, who sent the mayor a history of the college, along with a pamphlet from the American Council on Education which supported the idea of linking a junior college with a high school.

According to the pamphlet, junior college work was “closely related to high school and therefore may be developed [as] upward extensions of high schools in response to local demand for college training.”

Although Weltner pointed Gamble to the Augusta example, the Board of Regents of the University System had firmly rejected the idea of transferring its own junior colleges to local boards of education, insisting on retaining them as “a substantial and permanent part of our University System.” Gamble was not deterred by the conflicting views on the place of the junior college; he pursued them both, inviting Weltner to come and speak in Savannah and making plans to visit Augusta.

The endowment of university men was Gamble’s most useful tool in the new junior college campaign, but it was a tool that had a double edge. President Sanford of the University of Georgia, visiting his adult sons in Savannah, declared that “a junior college in Savannah would be an ideal situation,” and added that it should be an extension of the existing, well-respected local school system, as was the case in Augusta. Chancellor Weltner made similar comments to his Savannah audience on March 12:

“The junior college is not part of a university education but is really a branch of secondary education. It is really an extension of the high school job, completing the purposes, aims, and objectives that were left unfinished, and many universities throughout the country are changing their programs so as to differentiate between the two.”

Weltner went on to identify the junior college as “the most hopeful influence in America today,” adding a note of friendly urban rivalry: “If Augusta can do it, Savannah surely should be able to.” A third University System voice supporting Mayor Gamble’s idea came from Samuel Hill Morgan of Guyton, member of the Board of Regents for the first district. Morgan accompanied Gamble to Atlanta for further conversations with Weltner and announced his intent to stay “in close touch” with the junior college project: “As Regent from the first district, I would see it his special duty to assist in coordinating it with the State University System.”

From this second conversation with Weltner came the Chancellor’s offer to recommend “a competent educator” to go to Savannah and assist in the planning for a junior college.

The University System connections gave the junior college movement a major boost, but the high school connection continued to be a prominent theme in the discussions. The situation in the high school, and in the local public school system as a whole, had not improved since the 1920s, prompting Principal M.M. Phillips to issue a formal statement of his concerns about the revival of the junior college idea. Although voicing support for a junior college, Phillips insisted on the need for a new high school building as the first priority for the community. A new building might be able to include space for a junior college, as in Augusta, but he believed that building a junior college instead of a high school would be a serious detriment to Savannah’s educational system. Phillips was unwilling to endorse a junior college “provided that provisions are made to remedy the crowded conditions existing in the high school.”

A recent proposal by school board president Henry Blun outlined a million dollar program for the educational needs of the community, with an additional $125,000 annually to operate an expanded system, and Phillips agreed that such a plan
in attracting a new industry, and it would be an outlay of money would be comparable to that involved of the college for the most part. The city's initial the editorial, was that tuition would fund the opera financial problems and the obligation to the non-

The high school-junior college debate sparked public the plan suggested, if put into operation, nienced by the plan suggested, if put into operation, but that is not a valid reason for not going ahead.23

The high-school-junior college debate sparked public attention, and at a Forum on Education, convoked by the local teachers' association, discussion was "lively." The editorial picked up the questions concerning financial problems and the obligation to the non-college bound student and then went directly to the heart of the issue. The argument that if the city can appropriate money to establish a junior college, it should be able to assist in the amelioration of conditions in the school system generally, seems to be an unfortunate confusion of the whole issue. The problems are entirely different.24

The difference, explained the editorial, was that tuition would fund the opera- tion of the college for the most part. The city's initial outlay of money would be comparable to that involved in attracting a new industry, and it would be an equally valuable investment in drawing money into the city.

Gamble clarified the financial picture the following day, March 18, when he appeared before the school board to present his proposal. Looking at the experi- ence of the junior colleges in Augusta and St. Peters- burg, the mayor expressed his confidence that tuition would cover the bulk of expenses. The Board of Education, for its part, was equally clear in declaring that it could provide no funding for the junior college. Gamble replied "that the city expected to underwrite the college," with the school board providing only buildings and equipment.25

The board agreed to appoint a committee to work with a committee set up by the mayor. The joint group consisted of Martha Waring, W.G. Sutlive, and Fred G. Doyle from the school board; and Samuel Horn- stein, Herbert F. Gibbons, and H. Lee Fulton from the city council, the last named being the chairman of the council's finance committee. Gamble served as an ex officio member and declared himself confident that "the board [of education] would be found sympa- thetic and cordial in its cooperation in promoting the plan for the Junior College." The committee quickly expanded its membership with the appointment of school board president Henry Blun, four educators (including Principal Phillips and Axley), and others with educational interests: the president of the Georgia Club; the president of the local chapter of the Amer- ican Association of University Women; the president of the PTA; the head librarian of the public library; and eight more, including Frank Spencer, another member of the school board.26

The most important person to work with the committee was the advisor from Atlanta recommended by Chancellor Weltner. Ernest A. Lowe, known as "Rastus," was a native of Hancock, Georgia and a 1923 graduate of the University of Georgia. After gradua- tion he became alumni secretary at the university and during the next ten years held a variety of positions at the school, establishing a department of student personnel as well as an office of public relations. He was described as "a good organizer," "the right-hand man of President Sanford," and a consultant for Chancellor Weltner.27 When Weltner introduced him to Mayor Gamble, Lowe was on leave from the univer- sity and working in Atlanta for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. In accepting the offer to come to Savannah and serve as advisor for the junior college plans, he brought with him a good knowledge of the

Meanwhile, the omnibus bill giving the city the authority to establish a junior college lay on the desk of Governor Eugene Talmadge awaiting his signature. Indeed, Gamble went to Atlanta not only to confer with Chancellor Weltner but also to be available should the governor have any questions about the bill, particu- larly about the junior college provision.22 In fact, the governor raised a question about a statement whereby the city pledged its credit to support the college. In the opinion of the state attorney general, the city could not assume an indebtedness that exceeded one year's revenue without holding a referendum. Gamble agreed and explained that the city's support for the junior college would come from its annual income. The governor signed the bill with a personal addendum noting the limitation.28

On April 2, Gamble led a delegation of Savannahians to visit the junior college in Augusta. The group of twenty-one people included Principal Phillips of Savannah High and Regent Morgan of the University System. Gamble's group was larger than the one that had accompanied Axley on the earlier trip. The fact that the date coincided with the Augusta National Golf Tournament did not hurt, and several members of the group spent the afternoon watching Bobby Jones play. The delegation returned impressed and enthusiastic about the Augusta school and about the possibility of a similar endeavor in Savannah. The news report highlighted the minimal cost involved in oper- ating Augusta's junior college.31

Two weeks later President Skinner came to Savannah for further consultation on "practical" matters such as the use of the high school building where Gamble wished to schedule the junior college classes in the afternoons.32 During the Augusta visit, Skinner had conceded that double use of the same building by a high school and a junior college was not ideal, but he considered the arrangement adequate.33 An editorial comment in Savannah's evening paper advised careful attention to the question of space so as not to infringe on the local school but considered the matter a small detail easily addressed.34

Skinner looked at the facilities at Savannah High School and found that the labs were too small and needed upgrading and the high school library lacked adequate reading space, although removing the wall of the adjacent study hall might solve the problem. Skinner advised the city to boost its initial funding from $15,000 to $25,000.35 Martha Waring again questioned the wisdom of proceeding toward a junior college in view of the crowded conditions at the high school, but Skinner urged the junior college movement to proceed. Regardless of the difficulties, he believed that the city's offer of financial support was an advan- tage not to be lost.36

Gamble was also looking at other possible sites, including the Georgia State Savings Association at Bull and York Streets, which had space on the second and third floors and offered the advantage of being close enough to the high school to attract the older science labs.37 He showed Skinner two other sites under consideration, the W.W. Owens house at Abercorn and McDonough and one other, neither of which was found fully favorable, but Skinner urged Gamble to continue his efforts.

After Skinner's departure, Gamble and Virginia Heard, Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools, investi- gated three more locations: a building on the northeast corner of Bull and Liberty, the Waring home at Bull and Perry Streets, and the McAlpin house on Barnard Street, facing Orleans Square. Gamble pronounced them all "easily adapted to the early needs of the
Gamble committed $15,000 from the city for the support of the college during its first year, predicting that the cost to the city would steadily diminish thereafter. He requested that the junior college’s fall session begin on the same date as the public schools and that all pertinent information be made available before schools closed in June, including an announcement about the site of the college. All of the above appeared in an official letter to school board president Blun.

After the letter was read, Gamble announced that a site had been selected—the McAlpin house at Barnard and McDonough, a location convenient to the city auditorium, which could provide space for lectures and for student assemblies. The newspaper reported that “some sort of option had been taken” on the McAlpin house, which would need an estimated $11,805 for renovation.

When Gamble finished his remarks, President Blun and Superintendent Strong “levelled their guns” at various points in the mayor’s plan. Blun asked if the McAlpin house had room for the second year’s expansion of the college, and he questioned the constitutionality of the legislative act giving the city the power to spend city revenue on education. Strong also had questions about the McAlpin house, especially its need for artificial lighting “through the day in every room,” a circumstance not allowed in the high school. He also doubted the adequacy of the heating system. And he “vigorously opposed the idea of making use of the McAlpin house,” a circumstance not allowed in the high school.

Still another question came from board member John S. Wilder, regarding the legality of the school board serving as the governing commission of the college. Strong proposed that faculty selection follow the board’s established procedures, with the board retaining “absolute control of the college.” The city, however, would have to guarantee all finances since, Strong insisted, “I do not believe one penny can be spent by the board in the matter.”

In the midst of all this encouragement, the school board raised a dissenting voice when Gamble made his formal presentation on Monday, May 20. His proposal described a very mixed arrangement that involved both the public schools and the University System. Almost every news article included a refrain that “courses of study and all other details will have the approval of the University of Georgia.” President Sanford, the recently announced successor to Philip Weltner as Chancellor of the University System, affirmed his support and willingness to “give all the information, advice, and assistance possible.”

In promoting the Savannah Junior College, it is the desire of the Mayor and Aldermen that the Board of Education be entrusted with the operation of the College as we feel that the College is to be co-ordinated with the High School and the University System and that it is to be a part of the general education system of Savannah and that as such should have the superintendence [sic] of those charged with the conduct of our public school system…. It is our understanding that the Junior College courses of study and its faculty membership and other details will all be submitted to and approved by the boards of the Georgia University System.”

Gamble’s plan outlined a confusing mix of authority for the junior college, and the school board’s questions compounded the confusion with various opinions about who would actually own, operate, and pay for it. Blun did not think the city had the legal authority to finance the junior college, and Strong did not think it was legal for the school board to do so. Strong wanted the school board to have “absolute authority,” but he wanted the city to pay the bills. Wilder thought that school board members could not serve on two
governing boards. Clearly issues of disagreement existed. On Tuesday, May 21, Gamble and Strong met at length at City Hall and emerged in agreement that the McAlpin house would not be used. Strong denied any intent to obstruct the mayor's plans and insisted that such a large decision required time for careful attention to details. He expressed confidence that a plan would be available shortly. On Friday, the school board's attorney, T. Mayhew Cunningham, reported to president Blunt that the school board had no authority under its charter to operate a junior college nor could the public funds that the board administered be used for the operation or maintenance of the Junior College.” Cunningham believed, however, that the city could appoint individual members of the school board to serve on the college's governing commission without that commission actually being the board of education. Strong met again with Gamble, who convened a special meeting of city council and then announced that the college commission would not be limited to school board members but would include others as well. As the Friday evening paper reported all of these developments, it noted that the search for a site continued, and it listed superintendent Strong's telephone number for anyone who might have a suitable location to offer. And thus matters rested at the end of a very active week on the matter of the junior college.

The Sunday morning paper broke the dramatic news: “Armstrong Home Is Given To City For Its Junior College.” The story of the gift quickly became a beloved and often-told tale, according to which Mayor Gamble approached Robert Groves, former business associate of the late George Ferguson Armstrong at the Strachan Shipping Company. Groves was asked to intercede with Armstrong's widow, now Mrs. Carl Molz, and her daughter, Lucy, to give their home to the city as the site of a junior college. Mrs. Molz, however, was on a world tour and could not be reached “to place the matter before her in a proper way to enable her to pass upon the merits of the proposed college and decide as to her course in the matter.” She returned to New York early in the week of May 23rd and was in Asheville, North Carolina by Friday, where her real estate agent, L.H. Smith, contacted her with the mayor's proposal. Mrs. Molz agreed to discuss the matter with her daughter “as promptly as possible.”

On Saturday, Gamble put his proposal in a lengthy letter to Mrs. Molz and offered to come to Asheville to discuss the matter with her personally. On Saturday afternoon, Gamble and superintendent Strong inspected the Armstrong mansion in the company of agent Smith, and on Saturday evening Mrs. Molz telephoned Smith accepting the mayor's proposal. The Sunday announcement identified the new college as Armstrong Memorial Junior College.

Located on the corner of Bull and Gaston Streets, the imposing house had been unoccupied for a number of years, left to the ministrations of a long-time family servant as caretaker. Mrs. Molz and her husband made their home at Lake Toxaway, North Carolina, in the mountain residence that the Armstroungs built shortly before they began construction of the house on Bull Street. Described as the last great mansion built in Savannah's historic district, the Armstrong home with its gray brick grandeur bespoke a dignity and respect appropriate to an esteemed and successful family and equally appropriate to an institution of higher learning. If Gamble had been holding this trump card since February when he began working on the junior college project, he had held the card very close to his chest. The timing of Mrs. Molz's return from her travels, coinciding with the difficulties raised by the school board and the pressing need to announce a site, allowed Gamble to play his trump at exactly the right moment and to play it in a way that allowed everyone to win. On Monday, May 27, 1935, the day that became celebrated as the college's official birthday, the editorial in the Savannah Morning News trumpeted "A Magnificent Gift," while the mayor declared that the city would have a college "housed as no other." The gift of the house solved an immediate problem, but perhaps more importantly it gave the junior college idea legitimacy and prestige in very solid form. The building promptly became the centerpiece of the college's identity. Mrs. Molz arrived in town on June 6 and escorted the newly appointed members of the Armstrong Commission through the building on June 7. Five days later, she was the honored guest at a Rotary lunchon, where Dr. George Works spoke on the educational purpose of junior colleges.

Works, a University of Chicago educator, had served as a consultant to the University System of Georgia, and his remarks described for Savannahians, once again, the various models and roles of junior colleges. Some of the ambivalence of that role, between high school and university, now began to disappear in Savannah's case. The junior college was not part of the high school, but the language of the city ordinance that created the college continued to describe a mixed relationship, putting the president of the school board and three school board members on the college Commission and specifying that the Commission would "cooperate with the Board of Education and the Superintendent of public schools in coordinating said Junior College with the High School of Savannah and the University System of Georgia." Despite that language and the presence of school board representatives on the Commission, the junior college actually leaned in the other direction. President Cox of Emory advised Mayor Gamble that the junior college should be "severed from the high school" from the beginning and should have a different atmosphere and pursue a different mission from secondary education. That difference became personified in the appointment of A. Pratt Adams to be chairman of the Commission. A former member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, Adams had close connections with the University of Georgia. He was the current president of its Alumni Association and president of the Georgia Club in Savannah. He was also a close friend of Mrs. Molz and the late Mr. Armstrong, who had been a client of his law firm. Adams accepted the chairmanship only on the condition that he and the Commission would defer to Chancellor Wiltmer and University of Georgia President Sanford on the choice of the person to lead the college. Because the college would have only one class of students at the beginning, the administrative head would carry the title of dean rather than president. The selection of that person was the next major decision to be made. The newspaper had already made its argument for the appointment of someone local:
The local field should be thoroughly combed and unquestionably it will be unnecessary to go beyond the immediate environs of Savannah to find a man adequately and admirably qualified for the important post. It is both wise and fair that, whenever possible and all the requirements can be fully met, the honor be bestowed upon some local man whose natural attributes and years of training have especially fitted him for such an opportunity when it presents itself.\(^6\)

Not surprisingly, the name of Lowrey Axley came up as friends actively promoted his appointment in letters and personal visits to Mayor Gamble. They recognize his training and experience, which have been extensive and practical, and urge his selection as a Savannahian.\(^7\) Whether Axley was interested in the position and applied is not known. His papers contain no evidence on the subject aside from a clipping of the article quoted above. No names of any applicants were published, although reportedly some twenty applications were received.

After Pratt Adams accepted the chairmanship of the college Commission, however, it was clear that the appointment would be based on the opinion of Welterm and Sanford of the University System. The announcement of the selection of Ernest Lowe came on June 20 and provided still another important link between the college and the University System. Lowe was clearly connected with higher education rather than with high school education, and he brought the junior college the academic credibility and prestige of Georgia’s senior institutions. The report of his appointment highlighted his contacts in and beyond the University System: "Perhaps almost as well known as any person in the university system...he has come into contact with large numbers of undergraduates, alumni, and persons not connected with the university during his connection with the institution."\(^8\) Lowe had not applied for the position and had told Adams in an early conversation that he was not interested in becoming the head of the junior college because of the unresolved question of a location and because of his concern about political entanglements.\(^9\) The Armstrong house took care of the first question, and Lowe subsequently became satisfied that Gamble’s plan would avoid any political interference from the community in college operations. The newspaper gave Lowe a warm and diplomatic editorial welcome, describing the appointment as a good one despite hopes for a local choice. "If reports are correct," said the editorial, "it was a case of the position seeking the man, rather than the man seeking the position."\(^10\)

Five days after his selection, Lowe stood in the midday sun between Adams and school superintendent Strong to mark the beginning of preliminary registration for the junior college. Standing like godparents to the new institution, Adams and Strong then moved inside to watch as Lowe enrolled the college’s first students. Adams had played a major role in the final developments concerning the college, and Strong could give his blessing in good conscience now that the college would not crowd into the high school, physically or administratively. The city ordinance that created the college included a specific disclaimer stating that the school board carried no financial responsibility “of any character whatsoever” for the junior college.\(^11\)

Lowe, the man in the middle, immediately began to use his university connections to find his faculty. He was not an academic himself, since his various positions at the University of Georgia had been administrative rather than instructional; but during the summer he consulted frequently with Harmon Caldwell, the new president at Georgia, and Steadman Sanford, now Chancellor of the University System.\(^12\) By August 14, the faculty appointments were complete, and Caldwell and Sanford announced their enthusiastic endorsement of all the choices.\(^13\) In addition to Lowe, five of the nine faculty members received either their undergraduate or graduate degrees from the University of Georgia. Thomas Askew, social sciences, held his master’s degree from Georgia and had been teaching there for six years as Assistant Professor of Political Science. William Boyd, biology, received his undergraduate degree from Georgia and his master’s degree from Emory. His brother was dean of the graduate school at Georgia. Margaret Fortson, English, earned her undergraduate and master’s degrees and also a law degree from Georgia and was teaching there as an instructor in English and French. Arthur Gignilliat, mathematics, was the son of a respected Savannah attorney and had received his baccalaureate and master’s degrees at Georgia. Margaret Spencer, who held a baccalaureate degree from Georgia and a master’s degree from Columbia, was the daughter of Frank Spencer, who along with his wife Lillian, was well-known and active in many Savannah circles. The three “outsiders” on the faculty were Reuben Holland, who held his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in French from Emory; Frances Ennis, a graduate of Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville with a master’s degree in home economics from Columbia University; and Dorothy Miller, librarian, who received her undergraduate degree from Oglethorpe University and her master’s degree at Emory. With the exception of Lowe, all of the faculty had two degrees;
and all had teaching experience, five at the college level and the rest in high schools. Four (Askew, Gignilliat, Fortson, and Holland) were members of Phi Beta Kappa. Except for Dorothy Miller, all were native Georgians.73

While Lowe was gathering his faculty, the mayor and his finance committee were studying the Armstrong building. Mrs. Moltz had specified that no changes be made in the exterior facing Bull Street or Gaston Street and that no changes be made in the rooms on the first floor without the consent of her or her daughter.74 In actuality, few structural changes were needed anywhere in the house except for some plumbing work. The only classes that would require special space would be the science laboratories, and the first thought was to convert an outer building behind the mansion on the north end for that purpose “so that none of the fine rooms in the main college building would be stained by chemical experiments.”75 But the college also needed some sort of auditorium, and the logical place to build it was on the west side of the mansion in the area of the garden and garage. The auditorium was expected to require alterations in the original plan for the laboratories and bringing them back into the main building.76

To help pay for the construction of the auditorium, Gamble looked to the New Deal agencies of the Roosevelt administration, which offered funding for construction projects that would spur employment. Educational buildings were particularly encouraged. Gamble quickly applied for assistance for seven city projects, four from the Public Works Administration (PWA) and three from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The application for the junior college’s “auditorium and classroom building,” as submitted to the PWA, called for a $60,000 building of which the federal government would pay 45% ($27,000) and Savannah would pay 55% ($33,000).77 The city would cover its obligation by the sale of bonds, paying them off with money recovered as earlier bonds matured, thereby avoiding new taxes. Gamble announced his financial plan with his usual optimism and enthusiasm, except for one pointed reference to the local public school system, which was also in need of construction funds.

Presumably everyone knows that the municipal government cannot call an election for a bond issue for public schools. . . . The municipal government has no voice in school matters. It is not charged with the duty, nor has it the authority, to call a school bond issue or provide funds in any way for school purposes; that is entirely and distinctly the responsibility of the Chatham County Commissioner and the Board of Education.78

Both the city and the county proceeded with referendums for bond issues for their respective needs, and both referendums gained approval. The smaller project of remodeling the mansion to accommodate the science laboratories involved relatively little in the way of money and construction, but it unleashed a small tempest among the local building trades. Gamble contracted for the work to be done by design architect Henrik Wallin and the construction firm of Olaf Otto. Mrs. Moltz had requested, though not required, that any work on the house be done by these two individuals since they were the original architect and contractor for the building. Gamble wanted to respect her wishes, but to do so meant circumventing the usual practice of submitting city work to public bids. Gamble and the city council, therefore, included in the contract with Otto a special “repealing clause” that repealed anything in conflict with the ordinance that awarded the contract. Plumbers, electricians, and other contractors in the city protested the action and filed suit for an injunction to stop work. The evening newspaper gave the issue two days of sharp publicity.79 Gamble came out fighting, denouncing the paper’s report as “entirely erroneous” and insisting that no city ordinance required public bids. It was only a “rule of council” which it was the council’s custom to observe. He declared that the Armstrong house represented an emergency situation, considering the short time span available for the work to be done and in view of the “implied moral obligation on the part of the municipality” (to Mrs. Moltz) with regard to these alterations in this special building.80 The mayor made no apology for his actions, and the work on the house continued uninterrupted. Gamble’s only concession was to announce that an ordinance requiring bids for future city work would be enacted in view of the anticipated PWA construction projects.

The brief construction furor quickly disappeared under a general outpouring of good will and enthusiasm for the new college. Various city groups (especially women’s groups) announced the award of scholarships for prospective students. The Junior Chamber of Commerce launched a public drive for “patriotic citizens” to donate books for the college library, and the newspaper published the names of all donors.81 Dean Lowe, when he was not consulting in Atlanta or Athens, kept an active schedule of public speaking engagements to the Exchange Club, the Pilot Club, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, the Salzburgers, the Sunday evening youth group at First Christian Church, and the summer graduation exercises at Savannah High School. In the Sunday paper on July 14, an impressive half-page advertisement announced the college’s opening date and all pertinent information.82

The college actually opened on September 17.
On the day that Lowe, Adams, and Phillips presided over early registration, sixty-five students signed up for fall classes; some of them asked about a football team. In the days that followed, enrollment climbed as steadily as the summertime temperatures. The newspaper recorded each new name as the count inched upward. The reading hit ninety-one by July 17, ninety-seven by July 23, and then left the thermometer behind as the numbers passed the 100 mark on July 30. Furnishings were ordered, and Savannahians could watch from the sidewalk or through their newspapers as each item arrived: tables and chairs for the library, blackboards, student desks, faculty desks, with special attention given to the arrival of the “Dean’s Desk and Chair” – both made of walnut to blend with the building’s “luxurious interior.” Along the way, the college adjusted its name from Armstrong Memorial Junior College to Armstrong Junior College. As the faculty moved to town and began to prepare for the first faculty meetings, one last staff appointment was announced. William Henry King, the longtime caretaker who had served the Armstrong family since he was a teenager and who knew the building better than anyone, would continue as janitor, or, as he modified the title given him by Dean Lowe, he would be the college’s “Vice President – after the dust.”

The story that began at Savannah High School came to an end, or rather to a new beginning, at the ornate front door of the Armstrong mansion. The path that had met only dead ends in the early years finally found an opening through the efforts of a highly motivated mayor who used the influence and connections of his office to give Savannah a junior college. He did so in less than six months, and the college opened its doors within four months after its founding in May. It is not surprising that Gamble’s work overshadowed that of Lowry Axley. They shared the same conviction about the benefit that a junior college would bring to Savannah; they differed in the way they envisioned such a college and in the means they had to bring one into being. Axley looked to a high school connection, and Gamble looked to the new University System. Gamble cultivated and received strong support from that System, while Axley met only reluctance and resistance from local school authorities who were struggling to carry their existing educational responsibilities. Gamble also rallied greater support among Savannah citizens than Axley had been able to muster, although the newspapers gave equally strong coverage to both efforts. The mayor found a home for the college and offered the financial backing of the city (within limits) to pay the initial expenses. No private citizen could make such a pledge of municipal support.

In only two ways did Gamble fall short of his aim. He wanted Armstrong to be a part of the University System from the beginning but, unable to consummate that union, he settled for an arrangement whereby the college and the System remained close friends. The friendship brought the college useful university endorsements and connections, all well publicized. At one point, after Lowe announced that Armstrong students would be measured by the same tests as students in the University System, he felt it necessary to clarify that “this does not mean our program is in any way linked with the University System.” Armstrong stood as close as it could to the University System, but it remained outside.

The result was that Armstrong continued to be exactly where the picture of June 25 showed it to be, in the middle. It was a city college, not under the state system of higher education nor under the county system of secondary education. The college catalogs carried the city identity proudly. The city had founded the college and provided a portion of its funding. Gamble had always predicted that the college would become self-supporting, and that forecast was the second area in which he missed his mark. But the college found good and generous friends in Savannah, and as long as Gamble was mayor only the most benevolent kind of politics would intrude behind the doors of the great gray mansion on the corner of Bull and Gaston Streets.
The youngest of them was only fifteen years old when the members of the first freshman class entered Armstrong Junior College on September 17, 1935. Most of the students were the usual college age, but several of them were in their twenties, having been caught by the Depression in a no-man’s land of no jobs and no money to pay for college. If any of them glanced at the morning newspaper on the day that they began their college education, they saw a headline that announced the mounting crisis between Mussolini and Ethiopia. A small article on an inside page described the closing ceremony of the annual Nazi party rally in Nuremberg. War would come in the middle of Armstrong’s first decade, but on that September morning in 1935, Savannah and the rest of the country were preoccupied with the Depression. Mayor Gamble believed that the college would play an important role in the city’s economic recovery by providing educated men and women to serve local business and industry. The college would teach its students about America’s economic problems and equip them to provide solutions.

As war approached, Armstrong added courses appropriate to military preparedness, and when war came, the college watched its young men leave for training camps and then move on to the Pacific and European fronts.

CHAPTER 3
Coming of Age:
September 1935 – August 1945

Armstrong came of age during the war, but during the college’s first five years the only battles that students fought were on the basketball court, the football field, or at the tennis nets. Administrators waged their skirmishes with budgets and building needs. And the trumpet that Armstrong remembered best from those early years had no association with war but came from the Jimmy Reed Family Orchestra at the Tuesday afternoon tea dances. Jimmy, a Rotary scholarship student, played the piano and his mother, father, brothers, and sisters added drums, banjo, guitars, and a saxophone to the bright brass notes pushed through brother Sammy’s horn.

FIRST THINGS

The opening exercises for the new junior college took place on September 17 in the Lawton Memorial building several blocks south of the Armstrong mansion. On the stage sat the key figures in the effort of the past nine months: Mayor Thomas Gamble, Ernest Lowe, Pratt Adams, and Philip Weltner, the former Chancellor of the University System. Weltner delivered the major address, reminding his audience that education did not consist of buildings alone, but he and everyone else knew that the Armstrong building was central to the birth of the college. Mayor Gamble delivered the official welcome with his usual themes and Victorian prose:
For the first time in the more than two centuries of Savannah's history, an institution of learning beyond the high school grades is being launched. It starts under exception- tionally bright auspices, and on what we all believe will be a continuous and constantly expanding life. While it will unquestionably and wisely adhere to all that has been proved sound and wholesome in education, it has no demoralizing landscape of prejudice, no high hurdles of obsolete theories to overcome. When it finds new avenues of knowledge opening, new fields of thought developing, new paths of opportunity revealed by time's changing currents, no hands can stretch forth from forgotten graves of knowledge opening, new fields of thought developing, new avenues to serve local students who could not afford to go away to college. Every memory of those early years highlighted the fact that "Nobody had any money." According to Lowe's tally of the first three years, only about 10% of Armstrong students came from families of "low to moderate income," in which neither parent had a college education. Tuition at the college was $35.00 per quarter. Various civic groups offered schol- arships or loans, and Mayor Gamble and Dean Lowe applied for work scholarships from the National Youth Administration. They obtained fifteen such awards for the college's first year. One Savannah matron marched directly to City Hall to demand a scholarship for her niece, and the mayor complied. Bartering was also a possibility. Delores Cowart presented herself at Dean Lowe's office and announced that she could not pay the tuition but she could play the piano. Lowe enrolled her and made her the college pianist. Many of the college's students held after-school jobs, selling cars or serving sodas. Most of them came from homes in the neighborhoods around 37th Street. A few lived in the new Ardsley Park suburbs. One lived in an elegant Victory Drive mansion. The mayor's grandson, Tom Carr, came from 41st Street, and Ed Morgan, grandson of University System regent Samuel Morgan, drove in from Guyton every day with his father. The daughter of the city Superintendent of Recreation came, as did the son of a wholesale grocer, and the twin daughters of a modest railroad family. One way or another, 168 students found a way to enroll for Armstrong's first fall term in September 1935. Lowe also tallied the students' academic skills, using the entrance tests of the University System not as an admission requirement but for comparison with the scores of students entering state colleges. In fact, many Armstrong courses used the same syllabi and tests as those used in University System schools. After four years of testing, University System examiner F.S. Beers reported to Lowe that: In its selection of entering freshmen, the level of accomplishment of sophomores, and the quality of work done in survey courses, Armstrong Junior College is considerably above the average of the University System. Few if any junior colleges in this region exceed Armstrong in quality of students selected and the thoroughness of the academic work accomplished.

Lowe personally reviewed the progress of students every two weeks and invited those who were performing poorly to meet with him in conferences known as "pink tea parties," from the tell-tale tint of the summons. The small group of first faculty offered courses in history, government, biology, math, French, English, and home economics. The students found their instructors to be very young, much younger than their high school teachers; but they also saw them as "very proper people," the sort of individuals that later language would label as good role models. Miss Fortson, tall and statuesque, taught English and was a universal favorite. The boys considered her a Greek goddess, and a small band of admirers unabashedly identified themselves as "Miss Fortson's Fan Club," besieging her with requests to form a reading club and a poetry club. Mr. Boyd, biology instructor, newlywed and very bald, taught "real" science, with microscopes and experiments such as the students had not known in high school. A steady succession of stray cats provided opportunities for dissection. Human reproduction received frank discussion, but the lectures on evolution created the greatest stir and prompted comments that Mr. Boyd's classes stimulated more Bible reading than the city had seen in a good while. A few murmurs surfaced about Christian dollars paying for un-Christian instruction.

Science classes met in the kitchen of the Armstrong house during the first year. A huge walk-in refrigerator, now disconnected, served as a storage room. It was one of many features that the new occupants observed with fascination and awe. White marble greeted them everywhere from the moment they entered the building; on the floor of the large entrance hall, on the fireplace mantles, and on the steps of the wide stairway curving up to the second floor. The basement contained two vaults, one for silver and one for wine. The third floor ballroom had aparquet floor. An immense bathroom on the second floor included a shower with spray jets on three sides. Bedrooms now became classrooms, with the addition of desks and portable blackboards, and, in some instances, domestic features adjusted nicely to academic use. Shoe shelves in bedroom closets served perfectly as pigeonholes for homework assignments and mail, and a bathub became a horizontal filing cabinet.

In January 1936, Mrs. Moltz and her daughter came for a visit and presented the college with a formal portrait of George Armstrong to hang in the entry hall. The plaque beneath the portrait genereously identified Mrs. Moltz and her daughter as the founders of the college. But the real founder of the college, who probably composed the statement on the plaque, was home sick with a winter cold and was not present for the dedication ceremony. Mayor Gamble, however, was never one to miss a speaking opportunity where Mayor Gamble and Honors Day procession. "Geechee 1938. Biology class. "Geechee 1941."

The college was concerned, and he sent his prepared remarks to be read by a city alderman. Gamble loved nothing better than making speeches at Armstrong occasions. When he mounted the platform to introduce a speaker and reached slowly inside his jacket to pull out his text, the faculty settled back, knowing that the mayor's introduction was likely to be as long as the speech of the person being introduced. When he finished, Gamble would pass a copy of his remarks to the news reporter, and the full version would subsequently appear in the newspaper.

Even as the portrait of George Armstrong was being dedicated in the entrance hall, an auditorium financed by the PWA and city bonds was rising in the back yard on the site of Mrs. Armstrong's formal garden. The new building blocked the natural daylight on the western side of the mansion, throwing the rooms on the back of the building into the shadows, but the additional multi-purpose facility was essential. Its construction was a primary item of business at the meetings of the Armstrong College Commission, said the mayor, as long as the speech of the person being introduced. When he finished, Gamble would pass a copy of his remarks to the news reporter, and the full version would subsequently appear in the newspaper.

Gamble received his special tribute on February 11, 1936, in the form of the Lucas trophy presented each year to a person responsible for a major achievement for the city. The presentation occurred at a Rotary luncheon at the DeSoto Hotel before a crowd of 250 guests, with the Armstrong faculty seated together at a special table. The occasion was made to order for Gamble's love of speeches and surprises. After setting forth a stirring portrayal of the "Spirit of Savannah," he began to point to greater things yet to rise from Savannah, a dream that was no longer a distant possibility but one that would be a reality in the fall term at the junior college. Through an intermediary, the mayor had brought his idea to the attention of a generous Savannahian, who promptly requested the mayor to find a suitable building, which the donor would purchase and remodel as needed. Gamble had found the place just west of the new auditorium in the former home of Judge George T. Cann. Slowly Gamble recounted each step of the story, leaving the donor unnamed until at last he pronounced that the new addition to the junior college would be the Mills B. Lane School of Finance and Commerce. The announcement turned the Lucas luncheon from a predictable ceremony into "a 'wow' of a meeting." It also aptly mirrored Gamble, the public man of many words, and Lane, the private man of few words. According to Gamble, Lane's only instructions were "proceed with the plan." The idea that a junior college could have a School of Finance and Commerce did not seem at all odd to the mayor, who described it in the same breath with the Wharton School of Business and the business school at the University of Georgia. In fact, it exemplified exactly the attributes that the Lucas trophy honored: a pride in Savannah, its people, and its possibilities.
distinct programs of study: a two-year certificate in liberal arts, a two-year certificate in home economics, and a three-year diploma in finance and commerce.

Students began to establish their own “first things.” As Gamble reminded them repeatedly, their new college was free from the shackles of history and had “no moss grown traditions…no ancient inherited prejudices, no old patterns.”

The students expressed the same sentiment in their own language: “everything we do is a first.” In October 1935 they adopted maroon and gold as their school colors and began to discuss a name for their newspaper. Their first choice, The Strong Arm, was too sophomoric for the faculty, who thought it suggested the Arm and Hammer baking soda emblem. After further consideration, the students decided on The Inkwell. The first issue appeared November 15, 1935. When a new freshman class arrived in the second year, rat caps appeared as required headgear from September until the Christmas holidays; and during that same period of time, freshmen could enter and exit only through the rear door of the Armstrong building, leaving the front steps reserved for sophomores alone. A school song emerged haltingly. The first effort, a marching song to the tune of an old Welsh air, “March of the Men of Harlech,” did not seem quite right to the college's music instructor, Miss Spencer, who challenged student Doris Falk to compose a set of words for Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy.” She did, and the results took root. As the first class of students approached graduation in 1937, they created their last new tradition, a yearbook. The Inkwell sponsored a contest to select a name, and perhaps remembering the experience of naming the newspaper, suggested a “return to simplicity,” as in The Armstrong Annual. Regionalism prevailed instead, and the yearbook became the Geechee.

Along with these formal features, other informal rituals took shape. Although the grassy expanse of Forsyth Park lay just across Gaston Street, the students considered the front steps of the Armstrong house as

provoked his students with ideas not usually heard in conservative Savannah circles, ideas such as workers having a right to their jobs. Lowe found other new faculty during a summer trip to universities in the midwest. John W. McNeill came from Ohio State University to be instructor in commerce, and from Northwestern University came a young dramatics teacher named Stacy Keach to teach English composition and “oral English work,” i.e., theater. By the second year the Armstrong curriculum offered three

University to be instructor in commerce, and from Northwestern University came a young dramatics teacher named Stacy Keach to teach English composition and "oral English work," i.e., theater. By the second year the Armstrong curriculum offered three...
and playing badminton in their shirtsleeves. The most popular gatherings for the Armstrong community were the informal Tuesday afternoon tea dances, when the folding chairs were cleared from the auditorium and students came to “shake a leg” or “cut a rug.” During the first two years, Delores Cowart played the piano for these occasions, and for later classes Jimmy Reed and his family orchestra provided the music. Even if it was only a record player, on Tuesday afternoons the music went round and round and Armstrong students danced. Formal evening dances initially took place in the third floor ballroom of the mansion, but at that space adapted to other college needs, the large entrance hall on the first floor became the scene for college receptions and other grand occasions, with Mayor Gamble, President Lowe, and other dignitaries in tuxedos, the girls in long dresses, and the boys in their best suits.

And there was football. The arrival of Chick Shiver put the college’s athletic program in the hands of a popular four-letter star who had been captain of the baseball and football teams at Georgia. In the fall of 1937 he led Armstrong’s first football team, the Geechees, onto the gridiron. Football gave Armstrong banner headlines on the sports page, days of pre-game coverage, and lots of college hoopla. For the 1938 homecoming game with Belmont Abbey, students paraded down Bull Street behind a borrowed band from Savannah High and built an evening bonfire in the park extension. The post-game celebration gathered alumni and students for a traditional Shiver reception and other grand occasions, with Mayor Gamble, President Lowe, and other dignitaries in tuxedos, the girls in long dresses, and the boys in their best suits.

Recognizing the limitations that a small student body presented for a theater program, Keach opened his productions to the talents of the community, as he had been his experience at Northwestern. Students and non-students served on the theater board, and every phase of production mixed townpeople with students in a forty-sixty ratio tilted toward the college. The curtain rose on February 4, 1937, for the opening performance of Three Cornered Moon. A small audience, elegantly attired in black tie and evening dress, found their seats with the assistance of student ushers in tuxedos, and the word began to spread about Armstrong’s talented drama instructor. Playhouse productions became a community highlight. Keach made full use of Mrs. Troxid’s light board and from the beginning presented a repertoire that included unconventional and experimental techniques. In the spring of 1938, he selected The Summation of Everyman to introduce Savannahians to the starkness of “space stage” theater, using lights alone to define space and circumstance with minimal sets or props. A medieval morality play that Keach deemed appropriate to the Lenten season, the drama used only a Gothic arch and black drapes to set the stage, while lighting created all other effects. Keach’s wife, Mary Peckham Keach, also directed Playhouse performances, making her directing debut with the chilling psychological mystery drama, Night Must Fall, in which Keach himself made his first acting appearance at the Playhouse. For years afterward students shuddered to remember the tension and terror created by his portrayal of Danny the bellhop. By 1941, the Playhouse had 3,000 season ticket holders for its productions. With the technical skills of his craft and an engaging manner of showmanship,

Basketball proved to be much more successful. Shiver had never played it, but he studied it and coached his Armstrong players “by the book.” His 1938 team won the State Junior College Championship in Douglas, Georgia and brought home a proud pair of trophies for display in the college library. Tennis was Armstrong’s third major sport, and was the most successful of all. The early netmen, with their long trousers and wooden rackets, won the Georgia Junior College title three years in a row from 1937–1939. Out-of-town travel for all of the teams carried its challenges as most of Georgia’s roads remained unpaved. Three flat tires on a trip to Douglas required a call to President Lowe to wire money for repairs. Other athletic activities included Armstrong students all around Savannah to find suitable playing facilities: to the city parks for tennis and softball; to the Benedictine gym, the Knights of Columbus Hall, the YMCA, or the Jewish Education Alliance for basketball and indoor track; and to the pool at the DeSoto Hotel for swimming. Students also engaged in boxing, ballet, riflery, and fencing. The auditorium space could accommodate some of these activities, but it was not a standard gymnasium. It served well for the tea dances and for the Friday assemblies called “chapel,” and the larger Savannah community used it for visiting speakers or rented it for sweet sixteen parties or other special occasions. But Savannahians came to know the auditorium best as the home of The Savannah Playhouse, the college-community theater group initiated and directed by Stacy Keach.

By 1941, the Playhouse had 3,000 season ticket holders for its productions. With the technical skills of his craft and an engaging manner of showmanship,
Pre-War Sports at Armstrong

Swim class at the DeSoto Hotel pool. "Geechee 1941.

Basketball team. Bullets 1957.


Tennis team. Bullets 1957.
Keach enjoyed great popularity with students, colleagues, and Savannahians. When theater-goers arrived in the lobby of the auditorium, he would often be present to greet them; and after the performance, a radio reporter would gather comments from the audience and from the actors, using questions and a script prepared in advance by Keach.11

The academic life of the college centered on the general education curriculum of the humanities and the sciences with home economics and the finance program in place around the edges. Miss Ennis had a broad view of home economics. In addition to sewing and cooking and hosting the college’s receptions, she asked the ladies on the Commission to help her students visit the fine homes and gardens of Savannah.12 And each year she led a caravan out of town to view homes in Milldegeville, Charleston, or St. Augustine. For balance, she took her sociology class on a weekend trip to see the Norris Dam TVA project near Knoxville and the Technical Housing Project in Atlanta.13 In 1940 and 1941, Tom Askew’s course in Contemporary Georgia sent students to photograph the full range of housing in Savannah, from the homes of Ardsley Park to the slum tenements of the inner city. The resulting album, “Living in Savannah: A Survey in Pictures,” gave the students a close look at poverty in Savannah.

In 1936, Armstrong introduced an evening program for adults that provided general education courses from the daytime curriculum as well as courses designed for employees of local banks and insurance companies. The daytime faculty taught the basic courses, and Mr. McNell covered the business offerings. The banking classes, endorsed by the local chapter of the American Institute of Banking, attracted a particularly strong cohort of evening students.14 The additional revenue helped the college budget, and Lowe considered the enrollment a gratifying indication of support from the city’s businesses, which encouraged and often paid for their employees to attend.15

The spring enrollment of 1937 showed 214 day students and 125 evening students. By the fall of 1938, the enrollment of day and evening students, excluding the bankers, was 394, the highest number for the pre-war years.16

In the spring of 1937, Gamble announced that Charles Holmes Herty, a pioneer in industrial chemistry for wood and paper products, would help the college develop its chemistry department (which consisted of Mr. Hawes) and also offer general lectures on the importance of chemistry to the South. Savannah and the whole southeastern region of the United States, said Gamble, stood poised on the brink of enormous industrial development. To support this new industrial growth, Armstrong could develop a major School of Chemistry comparable to the Lane School of Finance. Gamble invited Savannah’s industrialists and others interested in education to step forward with suggestions and financial assistance.17 Over the course of the next year, Herty became a familiar sight at the college, speaking to student assemblies, visiting Mr. Hawes or President Lowe, presenting the awards at the Honors Day ceremonies in June 1937 and June 1938, and generally providing the inspirational presence that Gamble envisioned.18

But laboratory science courses required more than encouragement and inspiration. They required specialized facilities and equipment not well suited to the existing college buildings. The Commission had decided against outfitting any of the classrooms in the auditorium building for laboratory use, leaving science instruction to the various rooms of the Armstrong and Lane Buildings. Each year the first challenge for science students was to find the new location of their science classes. Lowe told the Commission in July 1937 that the biology lab had moved three times in two years in an effort to find an appropriate home. A year and a half later he brought the problem up again and reported that chemistry was being taught in two small, inadequate labs located over the garage and in the former kitchen of the Armstrong mansion.19 The college needed a science building.

The college also needed a better library. Like the science classes, the college library moved continuously Armstrong’s early years. From a first floor reading room to the third floor reading room and then into the Lane Building. Both the collection and the budget remained small. The initial outpouring of book donations from the personal libraries of Savannah’s citizens established an opening day collection, especially in literature, but many of the gifts were more suitable for recreational reading than for academic studies and ended up in the basement activity room of the Armstrong building.20 As Lowe looked toward accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the three primary issues would be a science building, library resources, and financial stability.

Mayor Gamble had procured the college’s first three buildings: the mansion given by Mrs. Moltrz, the auditorium built with WPA funds, and the residence purchased by Millis B. Lane, Sr. for the program in finance and banking. All three buildings extended college property westward on Gaston Street, and only the auditorium required additional funding from the city. Maintenance, of course, especially for the mansion, became a major budget item along with operational expenses for salaries, equipment, and library books. Gamble always predicted that the college would become self-supporting, but President Lowe saw a different reality. In the first year of operation, from August 1935 to September 1936, the city spent $30,745.87 on the college. For continuing operations and for growth, Lowe told the Commission that the city’s portion of future college budgets would have to exceed the initial estimate of $10,000 a year: “an outstanding junior college cannot be established and maintained on the present budget expenditure…you should know that if we are to remain progressive and take our proper place in the family of Georgia colleges, the institution will properly cost the City substantially more than it is now costing for salaries and operation.”21 As the college’s budget rose during its first five years from $58,625 for 1936 to $51,542 for 1940, revenues from tuition and other fees provided roughly half of the needed amount. The rest came from the city.

Even as Lowe made his prediction of the college’s future needs, overall city spending came under attack in the fall of 1936. The college was not the target of the attack but the mayor was, as Gamble found himself on the wrong side of local politics. In October 1936, former city attorney Marvin O’Neal sued the mayor and the city for spending beyond the legal limit.22 Gamble justified the city’s borrowing by pointing to decreased income from real estate taxes and increased spending for unemployment relief, care for the sick and disabled, and the city’s share of WPA projects. The heated exchange between the mayor and his critics occurred just as the college completed construction of the auditorium building, and the college Commission quietly decided that it was “not desirable at this time to dedicate the new building.” Gamble considered the attack as a ploy coming from the political machine of John J. Bouhan, which was supporting incumbent U.S. Senator Richard Russell in the fall primary. Gamble had broken ranks with the local power brokers by publicly endorsing Governor Eugene Talmadge’s bid for the office.23 When the Bouhan group nominated Robert Hitch for mayor in the upcoming election, the newspaper observed that the
The Savannah Playhouse

Stacy Keach, Sr. initiated The Savannah Playhouse as the Armstrong theater program. It combined student and community talent.

“A Night Must Fall,” with Stacy Keach, center, as Danny the Bellhop.

“Paths of Glory.”

Mrs. Trosdal’s light board.

A full house at The Playhouse.

Stacy Keach, left, in “You Can’t Take It With You.”

Scrapbook of the Savannah Playhouse at Armstrong Junior College, 1939. Special Collections, Lane Library, AASU.
nomination was one “which no politically informed observer doubted would make him [Hitch] the next mayor of Savannah.” Gamble accepted the political realities and published a farewell statement reviewing his efforts to improve the life of the city. The establishment of the junior college naturally appeared on the list, with a note of cautionary optimism: “If politics is not permitted to intervene in any way with the Junior College, it will become one of the outstanding higher educational institutions of the South.”

To distance Armstrong from Savannah politics, Commission Chairman Pratt Adams proposed that the Commission become the governing authority of the institution rather than the city. Although no political influence had yet been brought to bear on the college, Adams felt that “under our present organization such influence would be inevitable at some future time.” Under new legislation that revised the original act empowering the city to found the college, the Commission now became a smaller body of eight members and handled all college funds. The college president submitted an annual budget to the Commission indicating projected expenses and the amount of funding needed from the city, and the Commission then sent a proposal to the mayor and aldermen for approval. The city distributed an allocation to the college at designated intervals throughout the year.

At Armstrong's first graduation exercises in June of 1937, Robert Hitch sat on the stage as mayor while Gamble took his seat as the newly elected chairman of the Commission. In January 1939, Gamble returned to city hall as mayor once more.

Early in 1939, President Lowe began the process of getting Armstrong accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). A college could not be accredited until it had graduated three classes, and Armstrong would meet that goal in June 1939. The accreditation announcement arrived in the spring of 1940, with a comment that SACS considered Armstrong the best junior college reviewed in 1939, but the report expressed concerns about the three troublesome issues: financial stability, library holdings, and science facilities. Lowe renewed his request to the Commission for a new science building.

Lowe opposed the purchase of any more residential buildings as inappropriate for the needs of science instruction. In fact, two other buildings had been donated to the college but had not been found suitable to its purposes. In 1937, the college had received a bequest of a home on the southeast corner of Jones and Drayton Street, but the distance from the core of college buildings and legal difficulties with the bequest resulted in the property being sold and the funds held in trust until the court proceedings were resolved. Also in 1937, the trustees of the Lawton Memorial building offered to donate that facility to the college. But again, it was some distance from the site for a science building and physical education building. The Confederate Veterans Association and others objected, and the college judiciously withdrew the proposal. Monterey Square offered a more promising prospect on the trust lot occupied by First Presbyterian Church. The church building had not been used for services since 1935 when the congregation moved to Washington Avenue. In June 1940 Gamble raised the idea of acquiring the site for a science building. He proposed to ask for a $125,000 bond and for federal assistance to purchase the lot and construct the building. The bond issue passed in December 1940, and in May 1941 Levy and Clarke architects presented plans for a three-story brick building that would “fit in with Middle Savannah or Early Savannah types” and would be “in harmony with the surroundings.” When the first bids exceeded the funds available, new plans cut the length of the building by about a third, leaving the east end of the lot for future expansion, and reduced the height to two floors, still designed to be in keeping with the three-story residences of the neighborhood. The revised building, said the newspaper, would present “a handsome appearance.”

The expansion of the college beyond its initial core of adjacent buildings marked a small rite of passage as Armstrong entered its sixtieth year in the fall of 1941. Other changes were in evidence as well. In June 1941, President Lowe announced his decision to accept a position with the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company in Birmingham. He had served the college for its first five years and in 1939 had received the Lucas Trophy in recognition of the contributions that he and the college made to the life of the city.

At Lowe’s departure, Thomas Askew assumed the office of president. The Student Senate .
and persuaded the altered Board to remove ten persons of various ranks from System institutions, including a college president, two deans, three faculty members and a vice chancellor. The Southern Association issued its scathing report on December 3, 1941. The Savannah newspaper assured its readers that Armstrong would not be affected by the upheaval since the city junior college was not part of the University System. The announcement appeared in the Sunday morning newspaper on December 7, 1941.

WAR

Like everyone else, Armstrong students remembered exactly where they were and what they were doing when news of Pearl Harbor transfixed the country. They were doing the things that students did on a Sunday afternoon, winding up the weekend’s social activities or finishing homework assignments for Monday. One student learned the news as she walked down the curved stairway of the Armstrong building after an afternoon of studying in the third-floor library. On Monday, December 8, students and faculty crowded into The Nut to listen in silence to the radio broadcast of President Roosevelt’s address to the joint session of Congress. In the days that followed came the news that a young Savannahian was among those killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor. His younger brother was a student at Armstrong Junior College.

The possibility of war had hovered around the edges of college life ever since the opening day, and small steps toward military preparedness began to appear early. After the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, the Civil Aeronautics Authority offered to pay the college to provide a program of flight instruction by an approved instructor consisting of one month of ground school followed by the required number of hours in the air. The program took off in the late fall of 1939, and by January the students were ready to fly, with President Lowe and Dean Askew on hand to watch. In the fall of 1940, the city leased its airport to the government for an army airfield; and three nights a week, large army trucks rumbled up to the front door of the college to unload their passengers for classes in math and English. Lowe reported to the Commission that a mood of restlessness prevailed among the male students.

Stacy Keach chose a war drama, Paths of Glory, for the first production of 1940. Based on a novel by Humphrey Cobb and adapted by Sidney Howard, the play presented an anti-war statement and drew its title from a line in Gray’s Elegy: “paths of glory lead but to the grave.” The drama recalled an actual World War I court-martial of French soldiers whose failure to capture an assigned objective frustrated their commanding officers’ greed for glory. Keach’s “space stage” technique used no curtain and no props other than steps leading up to an immense stone monument. On the dark stage, a spotlight moved slowly up the monument to reveal the words “To the War Dead.” The drama took place under the shadowed inscription. Keach ordered authentic military uniforms from a theater in New York and borrowed guns and other equipment from Camp Stewart. He told an interviewer, “I don’t believe Savannah audiences have ever seen anything quite like it, its dramatic punch, its human appeal, the

of president, which he combined with his duties as dean. By the summer of 1941, many of the first faculty had left for other positions or for marriage. Coach Shiver had become head coach and social science teacher at Savannah High, and Armstrong dropped its football program along with credit courses in physical education. Stacy Keach took a year’s leave of absence to accept a scholarship from the National Theater Conference to direct the Pasadena Playhouse. New faculty arrived to fill the vacancies: tall Bill Dabney from the University of Virginia to teach history, Kenneth Duffy with a Ph.D. from Pittsburgh to teach Spanish and Latin American history, and Ben Painter with a Ph.D. from Harvard to teach biology.

All of the changes occurred smoothly, and the college even experienced a happy moment of national publicity when student Maree Helmken appeared on the cover of Life magazine, as part of a feature story on “stylish cotton.” Elsewhere in higher education in Georgia, the news was not good. In 1941, the Southern Association removed the accreditation of ten institutions in the University System, including the University of Georgia, because of Governor Eugene Talmadge’s “unprecedented and unjustifiable interference” in the state’s schools. Talmadge had forced the resignation of three members of the Board of Regents and persuaded the altered Board to remove ten persons of various ranks from System institutions, including a college president, two deans, three faculty members and a vice chancellor. The Southern Association issued its scathing report on December 3, 1941. The Savannah newspaper assured its readers that Armstrong would not be affected by the upheaval since the city junior college was not part of the University System. The announcement appeared in the Sunday morning newspaper on December 7, 1941.

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pursue and protect her economic interests. The United state in eastern Europe. The war, Dyer declared, was abandoned Czechoslovakia, the only really democratic invasion of Poland, said Dyer, did not. History professor John Dyer offered his opinions on newspaper, only out of consideration for the college and for the students in the performance did he refrain from recalling the borrowed material.67

History professor John Dyer offered his opinions on the war to his Armstrong classes and to the Savannah Rotary Club and the Exchange Club. Germany’s invasion of Poland, said Dyer, did not bring France and Britain into a war for democracy since Poland was not a democracy, and France and Britain had abandoned Czechoslovakia, the only really democratic state in eastern Europe. The war, Dyer declared, was an economic war in which Great Britain intended to pursue and protect her economic interests. The United States should have no part in it.89

Dyer also expressed his views in the columns of The Inkwell, but the Armstrong students who wrote for the college newspaper had been expressing their own opinions about war since the second issue of the publication in December 1935, before either Dyer or Keach had been hired. Perhaps because the first class at Armstrong included a number of older students in their mid-twenties, many of the early Inkwells often carried serious articles, such as the December 1935 editorial entitled simply “War.” It is the young men, the college men, who give their lives in war in order that a few financiers and munitions makers, sitting back in easy chairs, can make their six or eight million and retire. It is the young men of America who come back from war, horribly maimed, ruined in mind and body, to live out their remaining years in poverty and hardship. It is the young men who in the “glory” of war, live in mud-filled trenches and eat food not fit for rats. It is high time that American college students should make their influence felt, and force the nation to realize that the men who will have to fight the next war are in favor of peace.89

In the March 27, 1936 Inkwell, student editor Hinckley Murphy reviewed the anti-war novel All Quiet On The Western Front, and told his readers that it would cause them to “ask questions for which there are curious answers.” In the fall Murphy published an imaginary dialogue entitled “Oscar and the Unknown Soldier,” describing the senselessness and callousness of war. And for the Christmas issue of 1936, he chose the title “Holy Night, Silent Night” for a series of images of Polish peasants, newsmen of the civil war in Spain, country barns, southern hymns, and always the dark ships at sea. He opened the new year with thoughts of a play that might be entitled “We Who Are About to Die.”91

Other opinions about the war came from the stage of the Armstrong auditorium in the annual Institute of Citizenship initiated by Dean Askew as a two-day forum of presentations by noted speakers on various topics of interest. Members of the Savannah community shared the stage with visiting dignitaries and served as moderators or participants in the discussion. In February 1940, immediately preceding Keach’s anti-war production, Assistant Secretary of State Henry F. Grady spoke on the topic, “The United States in a World at War.” Isolationists and anti-isolationists aired their opinions in the comments that followed.95

In the spring of 1941, an Inkwell reporter drove to Hinesville to see the new army installation at Camp Stewart. He described for his readers the rows of tents constructed on wooden bases, housing six to eight men each, and he watched as an air raid drill threw searchlight beams against the night sky to practice spotting intruding aircraft.96 After Pearl Harbor, the fear of air attack shaped the college’s actions of military preparedness. A “Defense Committee” identified safe areas. The Inkwell urged students to “Know Your Air Raid Rules” and published instructions on what to do in the event of incendiary bombs. Each building had a designated air raid warden, a first aid kit, and a flashlight. Three short rings on the bell would sound an alarm. The faculty learned how to use gas masks.98

Along with the rest of the country, Armstrong offered its full resources to serve the war effort. Its greatest resource was its men and women. Even before Pearl Harbor, four former Armstrong students were flying military aircraft, two in the U.S. Army Air Corps and two in the Royal Air Force.97 Mr. Guggiullati was the first faculty member to leave the college for military service, having been called to active duty by the Army Reserves before the fall term of 1940.98 Six months into the war, The Inkwell paid tribute to the first two alumni to die in the war.99

For those students who were still in school when war broke out, selective service registration forms arrived in February 1942.100 In April, the Navy announced the V-1 program under which college freshmen and sophomores seventeen to nineteen years of age could enlist as apprentice seamen in the Naval Reserve with a two-year deferment from active duty.101 By September 1942 all of the service branches were sending recruiters to the college to explain the requirements and options of their different reserve programs.102 Seventy percent of the male students enrolled.103 When the first anniversary of Pearl Harbor came around in December, the call-up age had dropped to eighteen. Winter registration proceeded with the hope that students would be able to finish the winter term before being summoned, but for many the notices came early. The major exodus began in the spring of 1943, and the editors of the Geechee dedicated the yearbook to the 218 Armstrong alumni in the various branches of military service.104 In addition to sending her men and women to war, Armstrong adjusted the curriculum and the calendar to serve the needs of the country. Summer vacation was no longer justifiable. In May 1942, Askew told The Inkwell bluntly that “our enemies will not play this summer.”105 The college Bulletin for 1942-1943 delivered the same message in the words of the Secretary of the Navy: “The country can no longer afford to have young men proceed with their education at a moderate tempo.”106 Two new programs appeared in the catalog (Liberal Arts: Pre-Med or Scientific, and Liberal Arts: Technical), and new courses for summer and fall of 1942 included stenography, physics, navigation, map reading, mechanical drawing, trigonometry, and quantative analysis.

The new science building, dedicated as Thomas Gamble Hall on June 16, 1942, opened just in time. Here at last were laboratories designed to be
A. Candler Hospital came for science instruction. Mathematics courses emphasized math needed by aviators. Meteorology and nautical astronomy joined the curriculum. French classes added “wartime French” to the syllabus, and English classes included the study of military terminology.

Lowe had expected that war would steer junior colleges toward vocational training, but he consistently maintained that Armstrong should stress a general education program. Special courses might develop as additions to the general education curriculum but they should not replace it. President Askew affirmed that opinion and renewed the college’s commitment to the liberal arts. Armstrong’s primary purpose, he told the Commission, would continue to be “to help preserve the best thoughts and traditions of our age in the face of war.” The person who most clearly embodied that liberal arts commitment joined the college faculty in the summer of 1942. Holding two master’s degrees from Emory University, W. Orson Beecher became a mainstay of the liberal arts at Armstrong for the next forty years. In the memories of the wartime students, “Mr. Beecher taught everything.” Most often, he taught French, Spanish, and history. The history courses naturally turned toward recent events, with special emphasis on preparation for officer candidacy tests. The School of the Citizen Soldier became a primary text in the required class in American history, and wartime topics dominated the lectures of the Institute of Citizenship, which Beecher now directed. In January 1943, President Askew was called to active duty by the Navy Reserves. The Commission granted him a leave of absence and appointed chemistry professor Foreman Hawes as acting president with Reuben Holland as his assistant. Holland also became registrar and treasurer as the college began to economize its staffing of administrative and instructional positions. When Stacy Keach decided not to return to Savannah, the Playhouse was suspended until the end of the war. Physical education courses returned to serve the wartime priority for physical fitness, but classes were taught by instructors at the YMCA and the YWCA. When the business professor left for active duty, part-time instructors from local banks and businesses taught the courses as needed. The various staffing adjustments helped the college maintain a balanced budget, but they could not address the problem of the plummeting enrollment.

Enlistments and new wartime job opportunities cut deeply into the college age population. One of the early concerns of college administrators was to counsel students to stay in school in order to acquire the skills that would be of greatest benefit to their military service and their future employment. That argument lost its persuasiveness as the draft age dropped to eighteen and the war effort intensified. In World War I, colleges had opened their doors to high school students who passed admission tests after completing their junior year. The Armstrong Commission looked at this option in early 1942, and when the lowered draft age brought matters to a critical point in the fall, the Commission entered into discussions with public school officials to consider the possibility of admitting qualified high school students into Armstrong classes. The school board rejected the proposal in December 1942, and enrollment at Armstrong continued to fall. After the spring exodus in 1943, acting president Hawes presented the Commission a sobering chart showing the decline. The enrollment for spring was at an all-time low of 101 students. Hawes’s conclusion was grim: “If the present trend continues, the college has one more year to operate.” An enrollment of less than 100 students would create serious morale problems. Teaching four to five students in a class did not stimulate either the students or the teacher. To keep the college alive, the Commission launched a major recruitment effort. During four midsummer weeks, the newspaper carried a quarter-page Armstrong advertisement provided by publisher Herschel Jenkins at no cost to the college. It worked – or something worked. Fall enrollment took an upward turn and 311 students registered for classes in September 1943. That number remained stable for the following fall as well. But the number of male students remained down, way down. Only four men graduated with the class of 1944. The change in Armstrong’s social life was dramatic. For the first two years of the war, the social events of the college followed the general pattern of the pre-war years, with the addition of patriotic banners.
and themes. The attack on Pearl Harbor did not deter Armstrong freshmen from electing a freshman Queen, and the homecoming festivities included the usual Christmas reception even in the absence of football. In March 1942, the students dressed up for the first formal dance in two years to honor a King and Queen of the college. The Jimmy Reed Orchestra played, and admission cost twenty-five cents, a “defense tax” to support the war effort. Marine posters, tacked to the auditorium walls, added a patriotic tone.

In April 1942, Mayor Gamble organized a Marine Appreciation Week. Three Armstrong co-eds, a queen and two maids of honor, all identified as “Marinettes,” rode in a motorcade that drove from the college to the Lucas Theater, where speeches and patriotic music by the Marine Corps band from Parris Island led up to the coronation of the queen by none other than Governor Talmadge, an unexpected guest to whom Gamble yielded the honor.

Two-class presidents for 1943 and 1944 reflected the varied experiences and backgrounds of Armstrong students during the war years. The president of the sophomore class of 1943 was Alvie Smith, a small, wiry student whose prospects for college had been virtually non-existent. His father was a double victim of the Depression, jobless and alcoholic. The family tumbled into the welfare caseload of Lillian Spencer, an activist social worker who, with her husband, Frank Spencer, spoke out strongly on behalf of the needy citizens of Savannah. For Alvie Smith, the Spencers offered a lifeline to college. They personally intervened to secure for him a two-year Pilot Club scholarship to Armstrong. He had to take additional course work during the summer to meet admission requirements, but Mrs. Spencer told him that on the basis of need he had won the scholarship “hands down.” Smith’s classmates knew or guessed the severity of his personal circumstances, but his energy and talent for leadership led to his election as class president during his sophomore year. Lacking any family assistance at home, he supported himself by working forty hours a week for the Savannah Morning News as a cub reporter, and his by-line articles about the college appeared frequently in the columns of the newspaper. It was only natural to expect such a president to be self-sufficient and resourceful, and Smith’s talent for leadership proved equal to the need. The war made its presence felt in other ways as well. In the library, a large map of the Pacific theater of war hung on the wall, and pamphlets on a display table described the various branches of the service: “Navy Wings: What Do These Mean To You?” Early morning classes began in the dark as the country adopted Daylight Savings Time. Rayon replaced nylon in the girls’ stockings. Cloth shortages meant shorter skirts. Athletics dwindled to coachless basketball, voluntary clubs for tennis or riding, and pick-up games of touch football or softball in the park extension. The Nut closed for lack of business and then reopened to accommodate students taking afternoon labs. Other routines remained unchanged. Sophomores still insisted that freshmen wear rat caps and channel their comings and goings through the back door until Christmas. And students still staked out their favorite gathering spots for endless games of bridge, around a table in the front lobby or in the first floor faculty room, until evicted by a curt notice posted on the closed door.

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that he should also work on The Inkwell. Along with many of his classmates, he went to war in the spring of 1943, two and a half months shy of his diploma.135

The sophomore class president for the following year, 1944, did not enter military service but embodied the distinctive qualities of the war years in other ways. In fact, he carried the same distinctive physical characteristic as wartime President Franklin Roosevelt: the heavy leg braces of polio. Frank S. Cheatham had been stricken with infantile paralysis when twenty-one months old. As a child he had met Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia, where the president joined the children in the pool for therapy or came to their birthday parties. Outside of Warm Springs, Cheatham’s parents dedicated themselves to helping their son develop the social and intellectual skills he would need to replace the use of his legs.136 Cheatham entered Armstrong in the fall of 1942 and was elected president of his freshman class and again of his sophomore class. He brought to the student body the same kind of steady confidence and good humor that Roosevelt portrayed to the country at large. Supported by his crutches and braces, he climbed to the third floor library and trekked to the new science building. He stepped in to attend social functions where he could move about strength of character undeterred by physical disability.

Armstrong’s greatest symbol of upbeat confidence during the war continued to be Mayor Gamble, and Christmas homecoming for 1943 saw the mayor in attendance for the festivities in the lobby as usual. He came prepared with a surprise Christmas gift. Creating a special moment as he loved to do, he called the crowd to a hush and built the suspense of his announcement. A generous donor had requested that the mayor suggest a suitable memorial for her husband, “a memorial that would not be of transitory nature; a memorial that would serve Savannah in a genuinely worthwhile way; a memorial whose value would not lessen as the years pass; a memorial whose fruits would serve to continuously enrich the life of our city.”137 Gamble suggested that no memorial could be more fitting than the establishment of an Armstrong Scholarship Fund. Other donors, he reminded his listeners, might consider the satisfaction to be gained by making similar gifts. Building to a climax, Gamble revealed the identity of the generous benefactor, Mrs. Arthur Lucas, whose gift of $10,000 would provide student scholarships in memory of her husband.

The gift was not only a vote of confidence in the college’s future but also a practical aid for recruitment as enrollment hovered around the 100-student danger mark. Gamble’s optimism about Armstrong never wavered. In the summer of 1944, an un-named friend of the college commissioned a portrait of the mayor to be hung over the mantle in the lobby of the Armstrong house. Painted by Savannah artist Emma Wilkins, the portrait showed the mayor with two books on a table by his side and a rolled manuscript in his hand, portraying him as a scholar, researcher, and historian. The rolled manuscript looked suspiciously like a speech ready to be delivered; but the portrait took its place above the great fireplace without any ceremonial occasion at all.138

In September 1944, Armstrong began its tenth year with 139 students.139 The numbers suggested that the college would be able to survive the war. When Tom Askew, who had been on leave since January 1943, submitted his resignation as president, the Commission appointed Foreman Hawes to become his official successor.140 Hawes and the Armstrong faculty renewed their discussion of the post-war direction of the college. What kind of programs would work best for veterans and their needs? Should the college continue its liberal arts emphasis or develop technical and terminal programs not directed toward senior college work?141 Union Bag and the Herry Foundation were interested in courses for pulp and paper technicians.142 Could the college support technical programs and also maintain its general education emphasis?

Financial resources and expanded physical facilities would be necessary for either eventuality. Christmas 1944 brought a $20,000 gift from the Savannah Morning News for the Armstrong Endowment Fund, and Mrs. Lucas added $5,000 to her previous year’s gift.143 In June of 1945 the college acquired its fifth building, the large Dub residence just north of the Armstrong house on the corner of Bull and Gordon Streets.144 The returning veterans would need all of the space that the college could find.

At Gamble’s death the war in the Pacific was not yet concluded. Scores of Armstrong students came of age, figuratively and literally, while fighting in that conflict. Twenty-three of them did not return home.145 Sammy Reed, the trumpet player with the Reed family orchestra, was one who did not return. On a bombing mission near Okinawa just before the end of the war, his plane flew in low to target a Japanese ship. But the bomb hit the water at a freak angle, skipped up like a flat rock and exploded, taking the aircraft with it. Twenty-two year old Sammy was the plane’s bombardier and navigator. He had enlisted on his twentieth birthday in December 1942, at the end of his fifth quarter at Armstrong. Assigned to basic training at Keesler Field near Biloxi, Mississippi, he took his trumpet with him. There, in the swamps and pine trees of southern Mississippi, the last sound to be heard at the end of the day came from Sammy Reed’s horn, echoing across the empty evening air.146
The crowd poured into the Armstrong auditorium in the early evening of September 11, 1946. Red flares burned. A brass band played. Those who could not find seats in the building or who preferred the late summer heat outside to the stuffy heat of the full house inside sat in their cars or on benches in the park to listen to the speeches broadcast through a public address system. It was not a college event. The G.I. People’s Party had rented the auditorium to make its appeal for the votes of Savannah veterans in the city’s upcoming primary election. A host of newly organized political groups claimed to represent the interests of the returning servicemen, though each group also held connections with various power centers in the city. The speaker at the microphone assured his listeners that the G.I. People’s Party stood for progress and good government and served as no “stooge” for any particular political group. Out of the audience, the president of the Veteran’s Progressive Club rose from his seat and strode to the stage. Was it not true, he asked, that the G.I. People’s Party was in fact dominated by the city administration, which had let its police officers off duty to attend the rally and swell the numbers of the crowd? The questioner and his group supported the new Citizen’s Progressive League, a challenger to the present city administration. The heat in the room rose higher with the exchange of charges and counter-charges. The spokesman for the G.I. People’s Party denied the accusation and warned his listeners that the promises of the two “Progressive” groups most likely meant only what veterans usually found when they came home from war, that “a broom and a rake are good enough for a veteran.”

The boys came back like an invading army. Demobilizations began in the fall of 1945, and by August 1946 the Chatham County Superior Court reported 19,000 registered discharges and 13,000 veterans of World War II residing in Chatham County. They were looking for jobs, and those who wanted more than a broom and a rake flooded onto college campuses, either to resume an interrupted education or to enter as freshmen. The G.I. Bill (Public Law 346, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944) opened the doors of higher education and, to the great surprise of the lawmakers, veterans leaped at the chance. Designed primarily to provide a smooth transition into the peacetime economy and protect the job market from being overwhelmed by servicemen, the G.I. Bill cushioned the country against the volatile political consequences of unemployed veterans by channeling them into higher education. The Roosevelt administration did not want to see any Hooverville tents pitched on the grounds in Washington, D.C., as had occurred after World War I. But the broader effects of the act were enormous. By 1950, eight million veterans had entered college under the provisions of the G.I. Bill. It paid for tuition, books, room and board, and included an expense allowance. By some estimates, one out of every two college students in 1946 was a veteran. Armstrong received its share.

Every college in the country rode the enrollment roller coaster from 1946 through the early 1950s: the great peaks of 1947 and 1948, followed by the sharp drop before the smaller peak of veterans from the Korean War, and then the slow rise until the post-war babies reached college age in the mid-1960s. The test for a small city college like Armstrong was to survive both the ups and the downs. Even the high enrollment periods presented problems beyond the obvious ones of size and space. President Hawes constantly warned
the Commission about the danger of expanding into bankruptcy. Tuition, he repeated time and time again, never covered the cost of a college education. Endowment or public funding always had to make up the difference. Increased numbers of students did not change the hard reality of that fact. As a result, Armstrong found the rumors amusing. The veteran's story bulged with larger issues of the college's second decade; but it was not the only story, and around its edges lay endless issues of the college's future direction and purpose.

POST-WAR PEOPLE AND PLACES

In 1946, Foreman Hawes was in his tenth year at Armstrong. He had been sitting in the president's chair for four years, and he would carry that responsibility for almost twenty more. A chemistry professor by training, he gave the impression of being somewhat surprised to find himself a college president. His manner was quiet and reserved, slightly formal but not stiff. He brought to his office a sense of dignity and an unexpected sense of humor. On most days, he walked across Bull Street to the Oglethorpe Club to have a tomato sandwich and a martini for lunch, often inviting a faculty member to join him. When he interviewed prospective faculty and took them to lunch, he expected them to order an alcoholic beverage to accompany the midday meal. He frowned on teetotalers.

NEW FACULTY

In 1946-1947, the University System would work in conjunction with Armstrong or would become a competitor. There was also the question of whether the Armstrong curriculum would expand in new directions or maintain a liberal arts tradition of preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions. The veteran's story bulged at the center of Armstrong's second decade; but it was not the only story, and around its edges lay larger issues of the college's future direction and purpose.

New faculty were also in place. Martha Fay arrived from the Midwest as a godsend for the sciences, which became particularly thin when scientists entered war-related services. Her field was genetics, but with the versatility typical of Armstrong faculty, she relieved Hawes of a chemistry class, learned coastal biology, and coordinated the science classes for the Candler Hospital nurses who took their pre-clinical work at the college. She was amazed to find that lab chemicals in storage would melt in Savannah's heat and humidity. Lee Goodwin came from Duke to teach English and was surprised to discover a college housed in old residences rather than on a broad green campus of Gothic and Georgian buildings. From St. John's College in Maryland, a young Savannahian returned
home with his baccalaureate degree to apply for any position that might employ the liberal arts skill that the St. John’s curriculum instilled in its students. His name was Joe Killorin. President Hawes hired him to teach German, the last (and least) of the fields that the young applicant listed in his résumé. He joined Mr. Beecher in covering a whole range of courses in the humanities, and for Lee Goodwin and faculty and students over the course of the next thirty-five years, he was “a scholar the likes of which most of us had not encountered.” Students found an equally inspiring young instructor in one of Armstrong’s own alumni who returned to join the English faculty. Hinchley Murphy, the first editor of the Geocbee and a frequent columnist in the early Inkwells, came back from the war to teach in the mansion that he had entered as a student with the first class of 1935. With a dry wit, brilliant blue eyes, and rumpled suits that “looked like he kept them in a mayonnaise jar,” he engaged the minds of veterans and non-veterans alike. Beecher, Killorin, Dabney, and Murphy pooled their talents in an experimental curriculum that coordinated history and English classes around the “Great Ideas” of major authors of western civilization. The reading was heavy. Classes followed a seminar format, with discussion often led by the students. Murphy frequently went beyond the written word and brought in pictures of art works or recordings of operas to illustrate a particular literary or historical theme. If students complained that he expected too much, he simply replied that there is “no recommendation to develop new areas of voca-

tional or technical training.” Home economics would remain and would need more space. The Playhouse should reopen, and the Institute of Citizenship should continue its series of public speakers. In 1944, the vision for Armstrong’s academic future appeared very similar to what it had been before the war.

To accommodate the post-war enrollment, however, Armstrong needed more classrooms and more recreational areas. Luck and ingenuity helped a lot. Just at the end of the war, the large, four-story residence just north of the Armstrong building came up for sale. Known as the Dub residence, it was a convenient and logical acquisition for the college. Commission Chairman Herschel Jenkins put a temporary loan down on the building until he could find the money to purchase and remodel it. He found the funds in the estate of John W. Hunt, who had left a $50,000 trust for the establishment of a charitable or benevolent institution. Jenkins petitioned the court, which ruled that since the money in the estate was insufficient for the purpose the funds could be used to purchase the Dub residence for Armstrong as a distribution “most similar” to that intended by the will. The house became the John W. Hunt Memorial Building.

In its first occupant was the Veteran’s Guidance Center, which hung out its sign on the ground floor of the Bull Street side in December 1945. The Center offered a battery of psychological and aptitude tests to help veterans make job decisions and determine their future direction. By contractual arrangement, Armstrong provided part of the staff and the Veteran’s Administration provided the rest. The college received $20 for each veteran counseled by the Center, and more than 2,000 veterans took advantage of the Center’s services prior to its closing in March 1948. It was a major part of the college’s life, strongly emphasized in the Bulletin. Armstrong’s non-veteran students could also receive job counseling at the Center for little or no extra expense, and schools and physicians in the community recommended its services to the general public.

The Guidance Center sign pointed to more than a place. It pointed to psychology as a new way of looking at life that could be helpful for everyone; veterans, students, faculty members, even Commission members. Armstrong had taught psychology before the war, relying on the versatility of social science instructors, but in May 1946 Dorothy Thompson joined the faculty as a trained social psychologist of the Freudian persuasion. She encouraged her students to write about their dreams, and she brought a calm, soft-spoken presence into the life of the college. The new awareness of psychology permeated everything, even the language of the college’s Bulletin. The Bulletin for 1949 declared that Armstrong would help students “find themselves,” and the Bulletin for 1952-53 described a “mental hygiene program for the students” that would enable them “to explore themselves and develop their capacities...to get more out of their everyday inter-personal relationships and to assume their personal responsibilities as citizens of the commu-

nity.” Only the final phrase would have been familiar to Mayor Gamble’s outlook on life.

The Veteran’s Guidance Center shared the Hunt Building with other college activities. The home economics department occupied several rooms. The large parlor became a conference room for student groups, and eventually the faculty held its meetings there when the sun porch of the Armstrong building became too small for their numbers. College receptions could gather there as an alternative to the mansion; and various rooms served the glee club, dance classes, and other needs.
complete. According to the agreement, the Armstrong match it. City Council met the challenge with a special Commission Chairman Jenkins promptly volunteered Lane Building, would amount to a total of $10,000. The result of the Savannah Public Library, which operated a Lane Building into Hodgson Hall with the Georgia fire escape. Among the alterations to the space vacated in the Hunt Building helped, but the college still needed fire escapes at $2,000 each. The ground floor of the Hunt Building took on new life as a student snack bar with tables and booths able to seat 100 students. The essential ingredient was the jukebox. In January 1949, “The Dump” opened its doors to the sound of Dinah Shore singing “Buttons and Bows.” The records dropped and the songs and singers of the 1950s followed: Eddie Fisher with “O My Papa,” Doris Day and her “Secret Love,” Dean Martin’s “Amore,” and others. And always beneath the music lay the soft slap of cards in endless games of bridge. With the addition of the Hunt Building and Hodgson Hall, Armstrong had the campus it would keep for the next fifteen years: three converted residences, two buildings constructed for academic use, and one library, rented and shared.

### VETERAN’S AFFAIRS

The great wave of veterans arrived too late to have their pictures in the 1946 ‘Geechee’ but their faces filled the yearbooks for 1947 and 1948 with photos in which leather flight jackets replaced the formality of coat and tie. Some of them might not have attended college at all except for the war and the G.I. Bill, but here they were and they immediately made their presence felt in every phase of life at Armstrong. They swooped down and took over the class offices and other uses, the students found their lounge relegated to the third floor ballroom-recreation room was reassigned to traffic and an informal social center throughout the day. The resulting noise and litter in the lobby were considerable. Hawes calculated at least 1,200 comings and goings through the front hall each day. When the third floor balcony-room recreation room was reassigned to other uses, the students found their lounge relegated to the basement, which they claimed was “a scandal – too small, no victrola, no room to dance, no place to play cards.” After the library moved to Hodgson Hall, the Guidance Center occupied the vacated rooms in the Lane Building, and the empty space on the ground floor of the Hunt Building took on new life as a student snack bar with tables and booths able to seat 100 students. The essential ingredient was the jukebox. In January 1949, “The Dump” opened its doors to the sound of Dinah Shore singing “Buttons and Bows.” The records dropped and the songs and singers of the 1950s followed: Eddie Fisher with “O My Papa,” Doris Day and her “Secret Love,” Dean Martin’s “Amore,” and others. And always beneath the music lay the soft slap of cards in endless games of bridge. With the addition of the Hunt Building and Hodgson Hall, Armstrong had the campus it would keep for the next fifteen years: three converted residences, two buildings constructed for academic use, and one library, rented and shared.

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The extra space was timely and helpful in many ways, but the building posed all of the problems of converting an old residence to institutional use. The issue of fire escapes illustrates the point. The structure had none. In February 1947, after the college had been using the full building for six months, Hawes informed the Commission that a fire escape would cost $1,200, which was not in the budget. At present, he said, “a large, stout, grass rope” served as the escape route for the upper floors. A year later he reported that a steel ladder was in place from the third floor to the ground as a temporary arrangement, but it did not meet the insurance requirements of the building code. The structure needed additional exits and one or two fire escapes at $2,000 each. Finally, by November 1948, the building had three new exits and a proper fire escape. The front doors still opened the wrong way, but with the other exits in order, that detail escaped correction.

The Hunt Building helped, but the college still needed more space for classes and offices. In October 1947, Hawes proposed to move the college library out of the Lane Building into Hodgson Hall with the Georgia Historical Society. The Society struggled with financial problems and only stayed afloat with the help of the Savannah Public Library, which operated a branch library on the premises. Hawes proposed that the college share the building with the Society and assume responsibility for utilities and maintenance and pay an annual rent sufficient to cover the salary of the Society’s librarian. The cost of modest remodeling, along with alterations to the space vacated in the Lane Building, would amount to a total of $10,000. Commission Chairman Jenkins promptly volunteered $5,000 from the newspaper and challenged the city to match it. City Council met the challenge with a special appropriation. By the fall of 1948, the move was complete. According to the agreement, the Armstrong library occupied the ground floor and the main floor of Hodgson Hall. Researchers and members of the Society used the balcony area. Armstrong students became non-voting, non-dues-paying “members” of the Society, with full access to its materials. Again, the college had expanded its facilities at minimal cost.
Savannah carrying torches and placards and an effigy of “Herman the hoodlum” to protest the young Talmadge’s attempt to seize the governorship after his father’s death in office. Student elections changed from the benign politeness of the pre-war years to high-energy campaigns led by veterans and their newly formed political organizations. First on the scene in the fall of 1945 was John K. McGinty and his Revolutionary Party, which came fully equipped with a newspaper, *The Revolute*, a seven-point program, and a clarion call: “Freshmen, Unite, Join the Revolution.” McGinty called himself the “Generalissimo” and listed his cohorts as “Generals of the Staff.” Their aim, they said, was “not to rest [sic] power from the worthy hands of the sophomores but to give freshmen the opportunity to be leaders in the school also.”

Their first effort was to revive intramural sports for boys, naming their teams the “Socialists” and the “Revolutionists.” The contentious language captured campus attention, and the second issue of *The Revolute* carried endorsements from several faculty members and an encouraging statement from President Hawes. “Any class or club has a perfect right to publish a news sheet of its activities and if the ‘Revolute’ continues as successfully as it started, it should be a great newspaper.”

Other political parties joined the scene. In the fall of 1946, “boss” Donald Austin led the Progressive Political Party (PPP) in a campaign that “turned the school inside out, upside down, and several other ways” in “the hottest election the Armstrong’s granite walls have ever seen.” The party platform demanded a cafeteria, water coolers in each building, a victrola and radio for the student lounge, a telephone for student use in the Armstrong Building, an endowment fund, and a *Geechee* published on time.

McGinty and *The Revolute* accused the newcomers of undemocratic practices and hurled a shrill headline against the PPP machine: “Pressure Politics Invade Armstrong.” The “Generalissimo” took his stand in behalf of “the ordinary student” and vowed to fight against any organization or policy not beneficial to the college. In the fall of 1947, Grady Dickey’s Free Party slate swept into office. In the fall of 1948 an Independent Party ran candidates for the sophomore elections, while
an Armstrong Democratic Club presented a slate for freshman elections. The names and the name-calling echoed the raucous sound of Savannah politics.

The most free-wheeling group on campus was the Terrapin Club. Officially an intramural sports team, it too published a newspaper, _The Turtle Times_, but now President Hawes changed his mind and the college changed its policy about unauthorized student publications. The ringleader of the group was Joe Magee, editor of _The Turtle Times_, a veteran, and someone who brought more than a little spice to campus life. His newspaper published mildly racy jokes and slightly suggestive cartoons. The material passed through the amused and light-handed censorship of advisor Freerwell Cvider, himself a veteran and an Armstrong alum now returned to teach chemistry, but Magee acknowledged that some students and faculty might find the paper offensive. He particularly enjoyed needling _The Inkwell_ for its slow and haphazard publication schedule, "tomorrow, or next week, or whenever it comes out." The Terrapins could be constructive as well as snappish, however. They served as ushers for the theater productions. They sponsored a shrimp dinner open to all students with lots of eating, dancing, and drinking. They put on a variety show to raise money for scholarships, and they presented the sophomore class with an ivory and silver gavel to conduct student government meetings. But the editorial policy of _The Turtle Times_ did not hesitate to cross the lines of conventional good taste. The editor's opinion on the matter was blunt: "If perchance you run across some little item you don't appreciate and you are NOT a Terrapin – then GET A SMILE ON YOUR FACE AND KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT." And relentlessly the paper nagged and goaded _The Inkwell_. "[W]e stuck our necks out of our shells to awaken the school and the staff of _The Inkwell_ to the fact that if people entrusted with a job can't handle that job – then public opinion will see to it that someone else gets that job."

Shortly after the silver gavel gift, _The Turtle Times_ stuck its neck out a little too far. Something it printed hit a nerve. In October 1948, the student senate received a scathing letter from an unnamed "prominent AJC alumnus," who castigated the renegade newspaper as "unfit in its present state to be distributed on campus." The letter writer vehemently protested the association of Armstrong's name with such "filth." A Terrapin representative appeared before the senate to hear the reading of the letter and to present a formal apology of Armstrong's name with such "filth." The _Inkwell_ headlined "Heltzoppin", as charges fired back and forth that a "sophomore syndicate" was controlling all campus elections. The spark for the new outburst came from Ned Fogler and a new, rogue publication, _The Divisifer_.

_The Divisifer_ was only mildly iconoclastic as compared with _The Turtle Times_, but its printing and distribution could be extraordinarily imaginative. Its first issue came off the press at Wesley Monumental Church. Fogler identified himself as a student from Armstrong's "publication's department" and asked the church secretaries if he could use their mimeograph machine while they went to lunch. The secretaries generously provided the paper and everything. The next day, Fogler and accomplice Archie Whitfield carried their bundles of news sheets to the third floor terrace of the Armstrong building and dropped them over the balustrade to flutter gently down into the yard below as students exited from the building at noon. Fogler bore no animosity toward _The Inkwell_ and was quite willing to use its columns as well as those of his own newspaper, which seemed to have been fairly short-lived. And he set his sights on other issues besides student elections. He took up the cause of the nursing students and the medical students. The纸质 soldiering _The Inkwells_ to write an article entitled "Anesthesics and War" and compared the benefits of novocain with the new magnitude of death and destruction. "What Price Success?" asked Mark Steadman, when guided missiles and other military technology made it possible to kill two million people at a time. Arthur Chandler, the Bataan survivor who had seen the deepest horrors of war, wrote in the voice of war itself: "I am the juggernaut that levels mankind to nothingness."

The issue of Universal Military Training drew heated debate. An _Inkwell_ editorial opposed it, and Joe Magee took _The Turtle Times_ into the discussion with an article entitled "UMT – Or Not To Be," in which he denounced _The Inkwell's_ position (as usual) and declared that he would post a petition on the bulletin board to gather signatures in support of universal military training. When the petition disappeared, he set up a ballot box in the lobby with Terrapins standing guard.

In early February 1946, a college-sponsored public forum invited Associated Press correspondent Anna Louise Strong to speak on the subject of "Post-War Russia." When she proposed that the Soviet Union wanted only peace and a chance to build its own system and show the world what it was like, a uniformed member of the audience stood up and vehemently challenged her remarks. Student articles in _The Inkwell_ expressed various opinions about the Soviet Union, and classroom discussions of the subject prompted rumors that Armstrong's teachers were introduced Pioneer Days in an effort to enliven the campus routine with a few days of Wild West frivolity. Students wore blue jeans and western wear to school, the guys gave up shaving, and a hillybilly band provided picking and singing from the third floor terrace. A man of causes, with a veteran's "attitude" and a very large cigar, Fogler became by the end of the year "everyone's favorite enemy." _The Inkwell_ claimed that it signed him up as assistant editor in order to transform him into a conservative.
“ruining the youth of Savannah by teaching them to believe in atheism and communism.” Hawes assured the Commission that the allegations were absurd. But on several evenings during the fall of 1948, Armstrong alumnus Carlton Kimberly gathered a group in Jenkins Auditorium to discuss the need for a world government to take control of all atomic weapons and prevent the possibility of future atomic warfare. These United World Federalists announced their meetings in The Inkwell and invited students and faculty to participate and help establish a Savannah chapter of the organization. Their slogan was simple: “One World or None.” A few students and faculty were daring or curious enough to attend.

The veterans held strong opinions about war, past and future, but they were primarily interested in jobs. Science and engineering were in strong demand in the post-war period and Armstrong added specialized programs to meet the need. Between 1949 and 1956, the majority of Armstrong graduates, however, like their pre-war predecessors, received the traditional Associate Degree in Liberal Arts to carry them on to baccalaureate programs elsewhere. Specialized programs and staff were expensive, and the college did not revive the pre-war program in commerce and finance until 1949, after the first wave of veterans had come and gone.

For both the sports-minded veterans and the traditional students, President Hawes hired Carmen Torrie as a new full-time physical education teacher and coach in the fall of 1946. Torrie had the dark good looks of a matinee movie idol, and he liked to roll up his sleeves and flex the muscles he had developed in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. Sharp knives, he declared, would bounce off those biceps. The boys were duly impressed. Under his direction in 1947, a varsity basketball team took to the courts for a nine game winning streak in the college’s first basketball season since 1942.

The following year the team won the state junior college championship, and for the next three years they placed as either finalists or semifinalists. They played their games at the gymnasium at Hunter Field, since the college still had no sports facility of its own. For regular physical education classes, the students continued their well-worn paths to the YMCA and the YWCA, or they drew chalk lines on the floor of Jenkins auditorium for handball and deck tennis. The arrangements worked but not very well.

Hawes brought the matter of a gymnasium to the Commission’s finance committee in the spring of 1947. Committee chairman William Murphy suggested that Hawes publicize the need to the community at large. The following week a major article appeared in the morning newspaper in which Hawes proposed that the college purchase a B-29 airplane hangar and move it from Hunter Field to the south end of Forsyth Park to house a multi-purpose gymnasium. The hangar, Hawes wrote, could accommodate one large gym and two small ones, or two large gyms. With a seating capacity of 2,500-4,500, the building could attract high school tournaments and provide drill space for the Chatham Field Artillery. It could also serve as a rainy day play area for children. Hawes estimated that it would cost $30,000 to purchase, move, install, and floor the proposed structure.

The park extension beyond the Confederate monument was not landscaped or developed as the north end of the park was, but a B-29 hangar would certainly have changed the character of the neighborhood. The idea disappeared quickly. As with President Lowe’s suggestion for a science building on the site of the dummy fort, Forsyth Park was a continuing temptation for Armstrong expansion, but it was forbidden ground.

After the Armstrong team won their 1948 championship, the issue of a gym surfaced again. This time Hawes petitioned the city to purchase the gymnasium abandoned by the army at Hunter Field. It could stay at its existing location and Coach Torrie could live in one of the nearby housing units to oversee the activities and security of the building. The details were approved, and with the help of a modest scholarship program, Torrie began to recruit out-of-state players to supplement the local talent of Bobby Gunn, Walt Campbell, and John Rousakis. Torrie and his team spent $5,000 and the summer of 1949 reworking the gym’s interior.

During the night of Thursday, December 1, following the first home game of the season, the building burned to the ground. The students were stunned. As noon the next day, they crowed into Jenkins auditorium for a rousing rally of school spirit led by the college cheerleaders. Torrie already had pledges of help from the community. Sears and Roebuck offered to donate $100 worth of athletic gear. Stubbs Hardware volunteered either new shoes or new uniforms. The college intra-mural clubs caught the spirit, with the Eager Beavers first on their feet to pledge $10 toward replacing lost equipment. The other clubs followed their example.

The rally then took to the streets with drums and cymbals as 250 students marched down Bull Street to City Hall carrying signs that proclaimed “Our team is red hot; our gym is burned up.” At Broughton Street they borrowed the loudspeaker of their police escort, and beneath the balcony of City Hall, they chanted their demands to Mayor Fulmer: “We want another one better than the other one.” They were zealous, exhalted by a cause and the excitement of being part of a mob. It was heady stuff.

Far more students marched than ever attended a basketball game. Basketball held a high profile, but attendance at games was always low. The Inkwell constantly lamented the low turnout, whereas local high school rivalries continued to draw a large attendance from Armstrong students. After the fire, Armstrong’s games moved to the new Hellenic Center gym at Whitaker and Anderson Streets, and physical education classes continued to use facilities at the Y.

The most active part of the college’s athletic life centered on intra-mural sports. The Terrapins were primarily an intramural club, and they faced off against rivals with names suggesting various degrees of strength and energy: Gators, Scholars, Loafers, and Eager Beavers. On most afternoons they played out their rivalries in Forsyth Park where, as long as there was no B-29 hangar, nobody minded if they scrimmaged on the grass. The women fought their intramural contests as Slick Chicks, Sassy Strutters, and Glama-zons. They petitioned the college for a women’s basketball team in
the spring of 1949, and when they were turned down, they took their revenge through the female-dominated student senate by denying the men’s request for a baseball team. They relented after reviewing the request a second time.

97 The formal campus organization for veterans was the Veteran’s Social Club, formed in April 1946, and numbering sixty members by April 1947. For the 1948 ‘Geechee, eighty-two of them lined up on the front steps to have their picture taken. The purpose of the club, as clearly stated in the name, was social, with one formal dance a year, three informal dances, and a June banquet.99 Homecoming in December was still the primary campus celebration, and in 1948 Joe Magee described its various events: students shivering on the back of flat-bed trucks decorated with paint and props and crêpe paper for the parade, the post-parade gathering in the Armstrong lobby, the early evening basketball game, and the formal dance that crowned the freshman king and queen at midnight.99 It was all a bit much to cram into one day, and in 1950 the schedule spread the activities across a weekend.100 Dance music still carried the big band sound played by students like George Doerner or other local musicians; and when they opened up with “Begin the Beguine,” Armstrong couples would swing and sway and glide and slide across the well-waxed floor of Jenkins Auditorium.101 Dances observed carefully defined “corsage” rules. Formal dances required corsages, evening gowns, and tuxedos. Semi-formal dances came in two varieties, with or without corsages, always clearly specified. Informal dances came in any number of forms. A Shipwreck Dance in the entrance hall of the Armstrong building pinned a pirate’s patch over one eye of Mr. Armstrong’s portrait, set out whiskey bottles with dripping candles on the tables, and sold fifteen-cent beer (root beer) to thirsty dancers. Real beer at a college dance was, in the words of the ‘Geechee, “the students’ dream” and “the Commission’s nightmare.”102

The return of the veterans and the rise in enrollment allowed the college to revive the Savannah Playhouse. Described by President Hawes as “probably the most popular project ever initiated and promoted by the college,” it came back to life in August 1947 under the direction of newly hired Carlson Thomas.103 Thomas sorted out the dust and debris that had accumulated backstage during the war years and set up his “green room” in the carriage house formerly occupied by The Nut. He rearranged the seating plan for Jenkins auditorium and revamped the backstage area to provide greater stage space and permanent rigging for major scenery pieces.104 Outside the auditorium, he constructed a new, lighted marquee to announce that theater was back at Armstrong. On November 17, 1947, the first-night audience walked down a red-carpeted center aisle to watch new red velvet curtains rise on the opening production of My Sister Eileen, in which Thomas himself took a substitute role in a last minute emergency. At the end of the six-night run, 1,500 people had come to see the performance.105 Thomas was less of a showman than Stacy Keach, but he was a genius at the technical side of theater productions. He could build anything, and what he could not build he could scrounge up from somewhere. He scavenged the city’s second-hand stores and gained access to the treasures in the attic trunks of some of Savannah’s leading matrons.106 Inevitably, he worked in Keach’s shadow, but the revived Playhouse successfully carried forward the earlier tradition of the college-community theater. Probably the most popular production appeared in 1949, when Green Grow the Lilacs delighted Savannah audiences in the same way that it charmed other audiences under the name of Oklahoma! The sell-out performance issued standing-room tickets at the end of the week’s run and


Slick Chicks. ‘Geechee 1949.

Carlson Thomas and Playhouse performers. ‘Geechee 1949.
then extended the show into the following week.107 Thomas concluded his season in May with *Taming of the Shrew*, putting Joe Killorin in tights to play Petru-
chio. He then staged a six-day drama festival featuring the three plays of the year with afternoon and evening performances and a forum in Hodgdon Hall to discuss different aspects of theater production. The whole was a tour de force of staging and organization.

December of 1949 was a jinxed month. It was the month that the Hunter gym burned, and Thomas was badly injured in a car accident during the Christmas holiday. With two cracked vertebrae in his neck, he did not return to campus until spring and even then still wore a twelve-pound plaster cast from his neck to his waist.108 In the best stage tradition, his troupe carried on without him and presented *Charley's Aunt* as sched-
uled, directed by Ross Durfee, a talented older student and veteran who had professional acting experience. At the end of the school year, however, the college decided to discontinue the Playhouse as a joint college-
community venture and replace it with a student-
only theater program. Hawes cited “financial reasons” and told the Commission that the revised arrangement would involve less of a time commitment and would “not interfere with the students’ academic program.”109

The new theater group, The Masquers, made its debut in the fall of 1950 just as the enrollment roller coaster turned downward behind the departing World War II veterans and the Korean War added its effect on the declining numbers.

**AROUND THE EDGES**

As enrollment rose and fell with the comings and goings of military service, other developments circled around the edges of the Armstrong story. Two major issues concerned the relationship with the city and the relationship with the University System. Within these two matters lay two others: finances and four-
year status. The presence, or absence, of the veterans affected all of these questions.

In January 1946, when the trickle of returning soldiers became a steady stream, the Savannah Jaycees asked the city to look toward Armstrong’s expansion into a four-year college.110 The request came after a month of study and discussion with Commission Chairman Jenkins and President Hawes. Jenkins endorsed the idea as a long-term goal, but Hawes expressed strong reservations. A four-year college would need a library with twice as many volumes as Armstrong currently held, and it would need a budget more than double Armstrong’s current budget of $65,000, of which the college provided $31,500. He calculated that a four-year college of 300 students could expect a normal attri-
tion that would produce twenty-five seniors, for which the city would pay the rather costly sum of $75,000. A larger enrollment would not change the basic ratio. Hawes declared that he did not wish to “throw cold water on a worthy object,” but he felt that the trend in higher education pointed away from four-
year colleges: “The junior college and the university are the promising institutions of the future.”111 He saw Armstrong continuing as a junior college with a broad-
casting base of service to the community.

In the summer of 1946, Mayor Peter Roe Nugent took a different direction. He contacted President Harmon Caldwell of the University of Georgia and asked about the possibility of establishing a branch of the Univer-
sity of Georgia in Savannah. Nugent explained that a number of veterans had appealed to him person-
ally after being turned down by colleges that had no room for them. A Savannah branch of the University of Georgia could solve the problem by occupying the now vacant facilities of Hunter Field. The build-
ings were well-suited for classes and included housing facilities, a theater, a chapel, and a gymnasium. “All you have to do is come in and turn on the lights.”112 President Caldwell flew to Savannah to tour the grounds with the mayor’s committee, which included President Hawes. Nugent was ecstatic at the prospect of a Savannah branch. The newspaper leaped to predict that “a full-blown, four-year college will be established at Hunter Field to accommodate from 1,000 to 3,000 veterans and other young people from this area and possibly from beyond the state.”113 The newspaper did not have it quite right. The next report explained that the Savannah Branch would serve only freshmen and sophomores who were veterans. Nevertheless, the story conveyed what many Savannahians wanted to hear: “Savannah has landed a branch of the Univer-
sity of Georgia.”114 The Savannah Branch opened in September 1946 with 536 students.115

At first, of course, there were more than enough veterans to go around, but Hawes remained concerned about the long-term effects of the Savannah Branch on Armstrong. Both he and Chairman Jenkins wrote to President Caldwell and to new Chancellor Raymond Paty to ask about the Regents’ intentions. Rumors in the community talked about the possibility that the Savannah Branch might become a permanent presen-
tence as a two-year or even a four-year institution. Paty assured the Armstrong leaders that the Hunter arrange-
ment was purely temporary.116

In July 1947, new mayor John G. Kennedy resumed the call for a four-year institution. There was no reason, he insisted, for all university education to remain concentrated in Athens and Atlanta.117 He appointed a study committee, but the committee’s conclusions were cautious. The easiest way to get a four-year college in Savannah, they admitted, would be for the Regents to continue and expand the Branch Campus at Hunter, but that decision would have to come from Atlanta. For the city to expand Armstrong to a four-year institution was out of the question at present. Funding simply did not permit it. Until that picture changed, Armstrong fulfilled its primary purpose of serving local educational needs through its own courses and through others that might be offered in collaboration with the Extension Division of the University of Georgia.118

By January 1948, the number of veterans had peaked, and new rumors circulated that the Regents were ready to close the Hunter Branch. Mayor Kennedy and other community leaders protested vehemently.119 The presi-
dent of the Chamber of Commerce and the dean of the Savannah Branch traveled to Atlanta and engaged in “spirited debate” with the Regents, imploring them not to close the school, or at least not yet.120 They won a brief reprieve, but declining enrollment was a financial liability and the Board of Regents closed the Branch in June 1948.121 Several students remained for summer courses offered at Armstrong by the University of Georgia Extens-
ion Division under a special “temporary plan.”122

The director of the Extension Division, whom Hawes presented to the Commission at its May meeting, was none other than Ernest Lowe, Armstrong’s first presi-
dent, now back at the Athens campus. To help work out the details for the summer program, Lowe brought with him the university’s registrar and director of admission, Thomas Askew, Armstrong’s second presi-
dent. The planning session must have felt like a presi-
dential reunion. The summer arrangements provided that Armstrong faculty would offer most of the instruction for the Extension Division, and Armstrong would receive any money left over after salaries were paid. The experience proved successful enough for the university to propose to locate an Off-Campus Center in Savannah, renting Armstrong’s buildings for evening courses and offering some junior-level courses in the afternoon. It did not give Savannah a four-year college, but it provided additional college-level work that served local educational needs and thereby fulfilled much of the mission identified by Mayor Kennedy’s committee. It also helped Armstrong’s finances.123

The post-war leap in enrollment raised the college’s expenses far more than its income; and when the number of veterans declined, income fell too quickly to allow for budgetary adjustments to be made. The college raised its tuition in 1946 to $40 per quarter again in 1947 to $50 per quarter, with higher tuition
rates for students outside of Chatham County and outside of Georgia.\textsuperscript{125} But tuition increases were not the answer, financially or philosophically, since Hawes and the Commission were all conscious of the fact that the college served families of modest income. Other sources of revenue were very limited. In 1949, the college endowed stood at $20,000, which provided income of $550 a year that could be used for small projects such as reopening the Playhouse.\textsuperscript{126} Hawes was not a fundraiser, and even Chairman Jenkins admitted that Savannah’s influential citizens showed little interest in contributing to the college endowment.\textsuperscript{127} The alumni had begun to organize, but they were still young and not yet in a position to offer much help. The remaining resource was the city. In 1949, the city appropriation for the college amounted to $51,000 of the college’s total budget of $158,600. Hawes anticipated that tuition, rentals, and the bookstore would bring the revenue total to $110,665, but an imbalance of nearly $28,000 remained.\textsuperscript{128} In his summer report to the Commission, he underscored the question that had to be answered: “Where can we find the funds to adequately finance the college for the academic year 1949-1950?\textsuperscript{129} Enrollment for the fall of 1949 dropped to 386, following the 510 mark high caused by the veterans in the fall of 1948. Hawes told the Commission that even though faculty and staff positions might be cut to the following year, if the budget were reduced to $100,000 the school would have to eliminate so many programs (such as basketball, physical education, the Playhouse, and music) that it would be unattractive to students and would be forced to close its doors. Faced with such a dire prediction, the Commission discussed whether Armstrong should ask to join the University System. They decided to make a special request to the city first, in view of present conditions and the problems which face us, Armstrong must operate its own evening program instead of using the college’s buildings for its afternoon and evening classes. Armstrong needed to take advantage of the large number of students in the evening program operated by the University of Georgia Campus Center that had succeeded the Branch Campus at Hunter. The Center rented the college’s buildings for its afternoon and evening courses, but its students did not pay tuition to Armstrong. A record number of 230 students were enrolled in the Center for the fall of 1950.\textsuperscript{130} Although only seventeen of those students took a full load of courses, the revenue from large numbers of part-time students would help relieve the budget crisis. Hawes told the Commission that the initial rental arrange- ment had been “mutually helpful for a while. However, in view of present conditions and the problems which face us, Armstrong must operate its own evening school. Both the students and the income are badly needed.”\textsuperscript{131} The Commission wanted to be sure that the disengagement from the University of Georgia occurred carefully and diplomatically, with the announcement of the change coming from the offices in Athens. All went smoothly and Armstrong assumed control of the evening program June 1, 1951. Armstrong had offered evening classes since 1936, and during WWII Hawes always listed Armstrong’s night students in the college’s catalog, even as the day enrollment dropped to the danger mark of 100 students. But he always evaluated the college’s viability by its full-time enrollment of traditional day students, regardless of the number of students taking evening classes. The primary role of the college lay with the credit program and its traditional day students. By 1950, however, Hawes’s remarks began to take a slightly different direction. He had always been cautious about four-year ambitions, but now he spoke of Armstrong’s future as a community college for students who did not intend to go further for a four-year degree: “On a long term basis the future of the institution lies in developing it as a community college…. Armstrong cannot adequately serve the high school graduates of this community nor can it develop much beyond its present level of operation so long as it functions largely as one-half of a four-year liberal arts college.”\textsuperscript{132} He recommended that a community advisory committee assist Armstrong to develop into a community college that would offer both a liberal education and terminal programs for practical job training. He particularly mentioned a recent report to the Board of Regents that identified adult education as an important feature of a junior college’s role in the local community.\textsuperscript{133} An enhanced evening program for adults meant additional revenue, but it could also mean a change in emphasis for the college. The faculty watched these developments warily, but their primary concern was salaries. In the spring of 1951, they presented the Commission with a formal request for a 30% raise to match the increase in the cost of living since 1946. Armstrong staff members have been surveyed to see how they are making out on their salaries. The answer: they aren’t. They are having to wear clothes in the point of shabbiness, they eat less, they entertain very seldom, they do without vacations, and worst of all they are having to work to weariness at extra jobs and to dip into previously earned life savings, savings which they brought to Armstrong but will not be able to take away from it. It is an unhappy paradox that educators must look forward to the impossibility of educating their own children in the future.\textsuperscript{134} The question is not where will teachers cut down, but how will they survive. Stretching budgets which were modest in 1946 means today less food, less clothes, less rent, not fewer luxuries. The result must be over-work, loss of morale, and ultimately loss of the most capable staff members who, however much they want to remain at Armstrong and in Savannah, however much they want to build the College into the great institution it can become, must look to earning a living wage.\textsuperscript{135} They followed eight pages of comparative statistics. The Commission referred the request to city council, where the council’s finance committee recommended a 15% raise. Discussion among the aldermen was heated at the June 2, 1951 meeting, with Hawes and faculty members present in the chamber. Opponents of the request argued that it would require a budget cut for all municipal departments. The city already carried a debt of $28,000 and was “going into the red at the rate of $100 an hour.” Money for faculty raises “is just not there.” But advocates for the college argued that existing faculty salaries between $2,600 and $5,100 a year were not enough. “Some railroad workers who sign their name with X get better pay than our professors.” Since the college “is our baby… it’s up to us to feed and clothe it…. We’ll have to find the money somewhere.”\textsuperscript{136} ‘Geechee’
of the Armstrong staff who are dissatisfied with the salary increase and/or the outlook for the future should seek employment elsewhere. The faculty made no further response.

The evening program and the Housing Authority carried Armstrong into the early years of the Korean War. In the fall of 1951, evening enrollment leaped ahead of the day students, with 428 students registering for evening classes as compared with 237 students in the daytime classes. A major boost came from Hunter Field, where the army was back in business, and “Operation Bootstrap” sent 109 soldiers to take evening courses in science and math. The army paid three-quarters of the tuition and the student paid the rest. But the revival of Hunter also revived rumors that the University of Georgia might establish an “on base” college. Hawes did not want to go that route again. “We do not want competition from the University in our own area and at our own educational level…the least the University System can do is refrain from competing with us.” President Caldwell assured Hawes that he knew of no such plans and promised to “oppose any move that might tend to injure the Armstrong Junior College.”

That assurance did not change the grim facts of the budget that Hawes prepared for 1952. A downturn in city funding and the expected end of the special support from the Housing Authority would mean a $9,000 deficit for the college. “The financial structure within which Armstrong operates,” Hawes told the Commission, “is so unstable that we are forced to plan for the college on a quarter to quarter basis.” He presented four options: 1) close the college, 2) limit enrollment and cut out basketball, the glee club, and the Masquers, 3) raise tuition, or 4) ask to join the University System. The report was so dire that Mayor Fulmer suggested that it be modified before being published in the newspaper. But the revival of Hunter also revived rumors that the University of Georgia might establish an “on base” college. Hawes did not want to go that route again. “We do not want competition from the University in our own area and at our own educational level…the least the University System can do is refrain from competing with us.” President Caldwell assured Hawes that he knew of no such plans and promised to “oppose any move that might tend to injure the Armstrong Junior College.”

In the fall of 1952, both enrollment and revenue benefited from the arrival of the first Korean War veterans who had finished their tour of duty. The Inkwell heralded their return: “The Dump looks like a YMCA again rather than the sewing circle it did last year.” The freshman class of 1952 elected a veteran as class president and another veteran was elected homecoming king. Some of the returning soldiers had served in two wars, World War II and Korea. This time, however, they did not rattle the rules in the same way as their predecessors had done. No renegade newspapers appeared. Instead, Bill Fulham wrote an Inkwell column, “Tips for Vets,” to explain the requirements of Public Law 550, the Korean War version of the G.I. Bill. There were forms and procedures and payment schedules to be mastered. But the veterans struggled with more than just paperwork; they also struggled with the readjustment to academic life. No Veteran’s Social Club emerged to provide them with the camaraderie of their collective identity. In his second column, Fulham described the frustration of veterans who found it difficult to resume study habits and who felt out of place and not well accepted in extra-curricular activities. His comments aroused considerable response and satisfied his intent “to get everybody to think about the veteran’s viewpoint on returning to school.”

One reason for the reduced impact of the Korean War veterans was that most of them enrolled in the Evening College. In the fall of 1952, for example, twenty-four Korea War veterans registered for day classes and twenty-eight registered for the evening program. Two years later, in the fall of 1954, the day program enrolled twenty-nine Korea veterans, and the Evening College enrolled 386. For 1955-56, Hawes reported an average of fifty-two veterans taking day classes and an average of 500 veterans taking night classes. Evening students generally did not take a full load, and other people besides veterans attended evening courses, but the mixed constituency transformed the Evening College into a large phenomenon. Revenues from the evening students regularly offset losses in the day program. The faculty for the evening classes came partially from the day faculty, who found it a way to supplement their salary, but also drew instructors from throughout the Savannah community. The college Bulletin for 1953-54 listed thirty-three instructors.
from the community teaching in the evening compared with nineteen full-time and four part-time faculty teaching during the day.168 Business courses, engineering courses, and a new series of transportation courses attracted evening students.169 Art courses in drawing and ceramics brought out still others for evening classes. Traditional academic classes in history, literature, foreign languages, psychology, and other disciplines were also available in the evening so that shift workers at Union Bag could switch back and forth between day and evening classes as their schedule changed.169 The University of Georgia Extension Program returned to offer certain upper-level courses through the Evening College. Theoretically, a student could complete three years of college at home in Savannah with only one year of classes required on the Athens campus to earn a baccalaureate degree.169

All of these factors led the Evening College to develop something of a life of its own. It had its own distinct title; a separate description in the catalog, and its own director, Arthur Gignilliat, Sr. Its philosophy was broad and inviting: “For those who wish to keep mentally alert; for those who are employed by day so that it was "city-supported." Yet, as Chairman Jenkins reminded the faculty, it was not like the public schools. Most Savannahians did not send their children to Armstrong in the early 1950s because they paid the taxes that helped to support the institution.170 Hawes never forgot that fact, and he regularly acknowledged it when he issued the public invitation to the college’s annual Open House. "Armstrong is supported by public funds which you provide. Armstrong is your college, no matter how many students enrolled. If enrollment went up, funding would have to go up as well."

The University System of Georgia saw the same advancing wave of students that President Hawes saw and reached a similar conclusion. The state was going to have to provide more facilities for higher education. In 1950, the System included four junior colleges, which tended to be former A&M schools located in rural areas. One way to meet the coming needs of higher education would be to extend state funding to city-supported colleges like Armstrong and Augusta College. Columbus was also interested in establishing a junior college. All three communities would welcome state funding for their educational institutions. Early in 1955, two committees at the state level began to study the possibilities.
One other issue circled around the edges of higher education in the mid-1950s. The G.I. Bill had side-stepped it, but it rose up from the public schools in the heartland of Topeka, Kansas. It concerned race. In May of 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the “separate but equal” principle of segregated public schools. The ruling did not specifically apply to colleges, but it was a disquieting decision for southern educational circles.

The Inkwell polled the reaction of Armstrong students and found a mixed response. Most students stated that they did not wish to make a comment for the newspaper. 

In the post-war decade, racial issues scarcely entered Armstrong’s world at all. African American veterans were eligible for the same G.I. benefits as white veterans; but in the south as well as elsewhere, black veterans who wished to pursue their educational options were steered to traditional black colleges. Georgia had three such colleges, in Albany, Fort Valley, and in Savannah’s nearby community of Thunderbolt. In August 1949, Hawes reported a rumor that “negroes were being urged to apply to Armstrong for the fall,” as a way to create a junior college in the city for blacks. Hawes did not identify the potential applicants specifically as veterans, but the response from University System Chancellor Caldwell reflected the answer that faced any black applicants to a white institution. Caldwell assured Hawes that “the University System and the City of Savannah could arrange to have the Georgia State College here designated as the official city college for negroes.”

Two years later in 1951, the contingent of soldiers from Hunter who enrolled for evening courses at Armstrong included an African American veteran. But in the spring of 1954, racial issues appeared unexpectedly from another quarter when Masquers director Jack Porter told a conference colleague, “What color is your Othello?”

Jack Porter, Masquers Director ’Geechee 1954.

Porter replied that Killorin’s makeup changed with the performance piece, with Joe Killorin in the leading role. The choice prompted a question from a conference colleague, “What color is your Othello?”

Porter that Armstrong students could not serve as wait staff for the luncheon; the reception could not take place in the Armstrong lobby; and he, Hawes, would not be present at any of the conference events. Porter accepted the changes and continued his preparations. He had chosen Othello as the showcase performance piece, with Joe Killorin in the leading role. The choice prompted a question from a conference colleague, “What color is your Othello?”

All materials were steered to traditional black colleges. The “separate but equal” principle of segregated public education in the mid-1950s. The G.I. Bill had side-stepped it, but it rose up from the public schools in the heartland of Topeka, Kansas. It concerned race.

In a city like Savannah in the spring of 1954, the question and answer contained many layers of meaning. The conference events took place without incident, but the issue of race would move from the edge of Armstrong’s world to the center in the coming decades.

The ups and downs of the post-war period brought various changes to Armstrong but many things remained the same. The veterans had come and gone, leaving a large boisterous memory that faded behind them as they left. In some ways, their biggest legacy would be their children who would be ready for college in the 1960s. Armstrong’s name was shorter by then. It became Armstrong College after dropping the Junior in 1948, and the evening program was larger, with a sizable roster of people who taught or took a broad range of courses. For the daytime faculty and the daytime students of the mid-1950s, the focus remained on the arts and sciences curriculum as preparation for senior college work.

Joe Killorin as Othello. ’Geechee 1954.

character was portrayed. How black should Othello be? In a city like Savannah in the spring of 1954, the question and answer contained many layers of meaning. The conference events took place without incident, but the issue of race would move from the edge of Armstrong’s world to the center in the coming decades.

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The students produced a more lively sound, but their instruments and rhythms would have been easily recognized by their predecessors: heavy on the horns, with clarinet, drums, and a piano on the side. At a popular nightspot on the east side of town, however, something different was happening. Patrons at their tables watched with amazement as a new trio took the stage. They had two guitars and a piano. There was no brass, no clarinets, no horns at all – and no chairs. The piano player stood up to play! And as his fingers pummeled the keys, out came a sound the likes of which his listeners had never heard before. The age of Elvis was about to begin. And it had a very different sound indeed.

Dorothy Thompson, Joe Killorin, and Hinckley Murphy. ’Geechee 1950.

And it had a very different sound indeed.
CHAPTER 5
JOINING THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM:
1955 – 1960

Albert Stoddard opened the front door of his home at 101 West Gordon Street to admit the two men waiting outside on the high stoop of the house. Located at the corner of West Gordon and Whitaker Streets in the block known as Gordon Row, the Stoddard residence was one of the old, high stoop, three-story homes that stood shoulder to shoulder in closed ranks above the street, bare-faced and unblinking. Gently curving stone stairways softened this outer appearance slightly, even as their iron railings marched in precision step down to the sidewalk. Built in 1854, Gordon Row exhibited a Savannah combination of old dignity and grace, with a slight shabbiness now creeping in at the far end of the block. The Stoddard family had lived on the corner since before Armstrong College opened in 1935. When the sons of the family went away to school, Armstrong faculty members occasionally took their place as boarders in the household. Albert Stoddard was the son who returned to Savannah to make his permanent residence in the family home. In the late 1950s, he made major renovations to the house and had just moved back in when the two men arrived on his stoop. They were real estate appraisers who had come on college related business. They wanted to assess the value of the house for condemnation proceedings under the right of eminent domain. The house and the adjacent row lay in the path of a major plan for Armstrong’s expansion.

The year was 1960, the midpoint of a very full ten-year period that saw Armstrong join the University System of Georgia and then become a four-year college on a distant tract of land beyond the southern limits of the city. Expansion issues were central to each of these developments. This same time frame also included Armstrong’s desegregation story. The passage through all three of these experiences was rough. Things could have been worse; they could also have been better. The college was clearly different when it reached the other side of the decade. The first step was joining the University System.

KNOCKING ON DOORS
From the beginning, Mayor Gamble wanted Armstrong to be part of the University System. Failing that union, he did everything he could to create the closest connection possible. During the college’s second decade, 1945-1955, the advantages of joining the System became a frequent topic of discussion at the meetings of the Armstrong College Commission as President Hawes and the Commission members watched the rising cost of college operations. In 1955, discussion turned into action and Armstrong began to knock on various doors in Atlanta in search of financial assistance from the state. The new initiative came from a new mayor, W. Lee Mingledorf, who took office in January 1955 and attended his first meeting of the Commission in February. Mingledorf was the first Savannah mayor to be elected by mechanical voting machines, as distinct from the other kind of political machine that had long directed Savannah elections. The voting machines and Savannah’s first professional city manager arrived in 1954. Perhaps even more indicative of a new political direction in the city was the 1953 election of Frank Cheatham to fill an unexpired term in the Georgia House of Representatives. Cheatham, now a young Savannah attorney who represented a reform element in local politics, defeated the establishment candidate in a surprising electoral victory that bolstered
The University System of Georgia in 1950

UNIVERSITIES: 3
University of Georgia, Athens
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta
Medical College of Georgia, Augusta

JUNIOR COLLEGES: 5
South Georgia College, Douglas
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Tifton
Georgia Southwestern College, Americus
Middle Georgia College, Cochran
West Georgia College, Carrollton

SENIOR COLLEGES: 5
Georgia Teachers College, Statesboro
Valdosta State College
Georgia State College for Women, Milledgeville
North Georgia College, Dahlonega
Atlanta Division (UGA)

College locations:

- Dahlonega
- Carrollton
- Statesboro
- Tifton
- Atlanta

**The University System of Georgia**

In July, the Armstrong Commission voted to take on financial responsibility for additional institutions in Georgia. The commission's decision was final enough to know that they were far from final rejection, but he told the Armstrong Commission that it was final enough to know that we are far from a decision:

Most of the Board members show little enthusiasm at the present time about the possibility of expansion in the junior college field. It is my belief that the demand for such institutions in Georgia is going to grow and that this growing demand may ultimately lead members of the Board to give more serious consideration to the advisability of having more State-supported junior colleges.

Mayor Mingleford, however, wanted to move quickly, and he asked for a personal meeting with the Regents Education Committee. Caldwell responded that the committee believed that the Board of Regents is now receiving from the State are insufficient to support adequately the existing institutions and that, under these circumstances, the Committee could not look with favor on a proposal that the Board of Regents assume the financial responsibility for another institution.

Mingleford persisted nevertheless. On October 11, 1955, he met with the Education Committee to make his case for Armstrong to receive public funds from the state either as a member of the University System of Georgia or through the proposed new arrangement for state-supported junior colleges.

The committee voted to take no action until it could review the report prepared by the study groups.

Mingleford did not consider the Board's inaction as a final rejection, but he told the Armstrong Commission that it is final enough to know that we are far from any detailed negotiations.

The timing of this first serious approach to the Board of Regents by Hawes and Mingleford coincided with a major discussion in Atlanta about inadequate funding for the University System. A special session of the General Assembly authorized an additional $3.1 million for higher education for 1956, but the Board was clearly reluctant to take on financial responsibility for additional institutions beyond the sixteen already in the System.

Local opinion in Savannah continued to argue the need for state assistance for Armstrong. Mingleford insisted that the city "technically has no responsibility to its citizens," but it was clearly an obligation that he wanted to end. Arthur Gignilliat, Sr., the director of Armstrong’s Evening College, interpreted the Regents’ action in purely political terms.

"Cracker politics keeps higher educational institutions away from our coastal aristocracy," he told the Exchange Club. He noted that no Savannahian had served on the Board of Regents since 1941 and that currently six Regents were from the Atlanta area.

For whatever reason, political or financial, the door to the University System and state money remained firmly shut.

President Hawes, meanwhile, turned his attention to Armstrong’s expansion needs. Despite the class in Jenkins auditorium and the science labs in Gamble Hall, the college still operated five laboratories and twelve classrooms in “converted bedrooms, living rooms, kithens and servants quarters.” Those facilities did not serve the present enrollment well and would certainly not accommodate the 600 day students that Hawes expected to attend Armstrong by 1959.

The most obvious site for new construction lay in the unused portion of the lot behind Gamble Hall. Hawes estimated that an addition to the building would cost $125,000, and the college had already

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Student Senate, 'Gooch 1957.
received a pledge for $25,000 from the Donner Foundation if construction could begin by October 1, 1956.39 With that deadline in mind, in the late fall of 1955 the college prepared to launch its first major fundraising campaign.

At a well-publicized meeting with alumni volunteers, Hawes laid out the facts in a litany of questions and answers. Question #10 asked, “Are building funds likely to be available from the city of Savannah?” The answer was “No.” Question #15 repeated the point: “Are public funds available from the city of Savannah to meet the above [expansion] needs?” Again the answer was “No.” Did Armstrong receive any state money? “No.” But the information sheet also stressed the benefits that the college brought to Savannah. Armstrong served local high school graduates who could not go away to college. It served businessmen and professionals who attended evening classes. It needed facilities designed for technical training to prepare students to be competitive for jobs in industry, jobs that were particularly attractive to veterans who brought VA money to the city. According to Hawes, VA payments to Armstrong in 1954–55 totaled $485,000, “which put more money in circulation locally through the college than that institution has cost the taxpayers since its inception in 1935.”20

With the needs and benefits clearly stated, Armstrong’s fund drive got under way. Local industry was a primary target. In a public letter to alumni president David Robinson, Hawes proposed that “local industries might well consider financing this project since a very large number of industrial workers take evening courses at Armstrong and since so many of our graduates are employed locally. … Both the day and evening programs serve local businesses and industry in many ways.”21 The medical community also received special attention, as Hawes cited the large number of students who attended Armstrong for training in science-related fields. In addition to a one-year program in Pre-Nursing and a new two-year program in Medical Technology, the catalog now included a rash of new programs related to industry. In the late summer of 1956, Armstrong announced two new technical programs in cooperation with Union Bag Corporation. The new degrees in chemical technology and industrial technology were hailed as “a pioneering effort in the educational field.” “We are glad,” said the official statement from the college, “that the community’s higher education facilities can fill a need in training personnel for industry.”22 Thus was born the Technical Institute, in which two-thirds of the courses (the basic core college courses in English, math, and sciences) were taught by Armstrong faculty and the remaining one-third were taught by instructors from Union Bag at the plant’s facilities. The point was clear: Armstrong served the community in immediate and practical ways of benefit to local industry.

In addition to the expansion of Gamble Hall, Hawes also began to look at the possibility of acquiring new property for the college. Urban renewal projects might mesh nicely with Armstrong’s interests. In July 1956, he wrote to Mayor Mingledorff to request that “those property for the college. Urban renewal projects might mesh nicely with Armstrong’s interests. In July 1956, he wrote to Mayor Mingledorff to request that “those offic也能提供一个空间给任何学生在扩展中被预测。它让我相信该机构应该被发展到其目前位置。”39

The newspaper reported Hawes’s expansion ideas in very general terms and no public comment arose.30 Expansion would require money, and both Hawes and Mingledorff were ready for a second try with the Board of Regents. Chancellor Caldwell had encouraged Hawes to renew contact in the fall and predicted a sympathetic hearing.31 This time, however, Mingledorff intended to take his appeal to the Governor. Indeed, the Chancellor’s office had suggested that those Georgia communities interested in state-supported junior colleges might find their legislators and the governor to be “helpful if not indispensable” in achieving their goal.32 Mingledorff made no secret of his intentions, and in January 1957 he and the members of the Savannah legislative delegation knocked on the door of Governor Marvin Griffin in Atlanta.33 After their discussion, the governor authorized the delegation to prepare a resolution whereby the General Assembly would establish a legislative committee to study the possibility of state support for community colleges in Savannah, Augusta, and Columbus.34 When the State Junior College Study Committee was formed, the Governor appointed representative Frank Cheatham as its chairman. The committee’s official charge was to investigate the need for the location of one or more junior colleges within the State of Georgia, to study in the interest of buildings and facilities, institutional costs, administrative costs, maintenance and operation costs, the available ability of students to such junior colleges, the general need of such junior colleges…and in general to study every phase of a junior college program that would be helpful in providing the General Assembly and the governor with a fair appraisal of the needs for such institutions within our State.”35

While Armstrong waited for the legislative committee to begin its work, it renewed its fundraising efforts for the expansion of Gamble Hall. An architectural rendering showed an impressive addition to the existing building, continuing the vertical lines with tall windows and a tall arched doorway facing onto Drayton Street. The extension would help the college meet the “pressure” from Savannah’s hospitals and physicians seeking more trained nurses, and it would also address the “special urgency” involved in the college’s efforts to join the University System. “With at least three other communities seeking the same identification under the university system…the one with the most adequate and suitable facilities will in all likelihood have the best chance of early favorable action by the regents.”36 Hawes considered the $225,000 in local funds needed for expansion to be a “comparatively nominal extra investment” compared with the financial benefits of becoming part of the University System.37 Chairman Jenkins reminded Savannahians of Armstrong’s twenty-one years of service to the community and added his ringing challenge for a generous response. “Not once in those 21 years has any
general call been made on the firms and individuals of Savannah to give direct help to this essential aspect of community progress…. The time for such a call for voluntary assistance is now inescapably upon us.”

February 1, 1957 was the kick-off date for the campaign, led by Lee C. McClurkin, president of Savannah Electric and Power Company (SEPCO). The editorial page of the morning newspaper put the matter bluntly before its readers. “There is one prime necessity for any educational progress. That necessity is cash in the bank.” By investing in the fund drive, Savannahians were investing in the future. “For, make no mistake, the future of Savannah and this area is completely interwoven with that of Armstrong College.”

The evening newspaper printed a series of feature articles on Armstrong and education in Georgia, starting with the “interesting coincidence” of the founding of Armstrong in the same year as the establishment of the Union Bag plant in Savannah. Fittingly, the first major gift to the campaign was announced a few days later as Union Bag presented the college with a check for $25,000.

Students joined the other campaign workers in soliciting donations. Masques’ director Ross Dorffie organized two teams, Marson and Gold, and each student was to ask three people for a $25.00 donation. Two of the College’s basketball players, tall Louis Wald-house and “mouse” Dick Adams, shouldereted sandwich-boards and invited pedestrians on Broughton Street to “Be An Armstrong Builder.” The newspaper published the names of the “many well-known Savannahians” who had been members of Armstrong’s first class, along with their graduation photo, with the clearly implied expectation that their names would soon appear as donors to the fund drive.

By the third week, the campaign had raised $125,760. The remaining $100,000 was optimistically expected to come from two sources: $50,000 gifts from large investors and $50,000 from a “whirlwind type” drive by the mass of Armstrong students, who presumably were going to buttonhole everyone in sight. The final tally, as reported to the Commission in June, showed a total of $135,000-$140,000.

The fundraising campaign emphasized the expansion of Gamble Hall but it also included “the acquisition property adjacent to the college.” The Quarte- baum residence on the northeast corner of Gaston and Whitaker was available and would give the college the entire block of Gaston Street from Bull to Whitaker, but Chairman Jenkins considered the initial asking price too high and suggested that the Commission wait for it to drop.

Just as the fund drive ended, an unexpected opportunity arose in Chatham Square, two blocks west of the college, where the Board of Education proposed to convert the Barnard Street School into a school for black children from the neighborhoods to the west and south of the square. The white residents on the north and east sides of the square objected bitterly. It would harm property values, they said. “It would open the doors to eventual control of Bull Street by the Negroes.” It would be hurtful to race relations.

“The whole problem seems to be the tendency to skim over the liberal arts education for a technical education. “The whole problem seems to be the tendency to skim over the liberal arts education for a technical education. “The whole problem seems to be the tendency to skim over the liberal arts education for a technical education.”

The comments flew across the room at the March 19, 1957 meeting of the school board. A Committee Opposed to Conversion (COC) presented an alternative proposal: sell the building to Armstrong and use the money to build a new school for black students elsewhere. President Hawes responded that the college had no money for such a purchase, but he conceded that the building offered an attractive possibility to house the Technical Institute and other industrial programs that the college was developing.

The following week, representatives of COC and the school board met with the Armstrong Commission to discuss the matter. The school board offered to sell the building for $65,000 or to rent it to the college for a period of three to five years for $3,000 a year. Mayor Mingledorff countered with an offer to pay $1,200 for an annual lease.

The counteroffer was refused and, after further consideration, the school board reluctantly chose a third option of keeping the building for use by staff. Armstrong did not move into Chatham Square in 1957, but the future of the square would be of primary interest for the college within three years, when vocal elements would again make their opinions known and would again have a decisive effect.

Hawes’s only public comment on the Barnard Street School referred to its possible use for the Technical Institute, the Armstrong program that provided technical training for Savannah’s industries. By 1957, the Institute enrolled 125 students who took industrial classes in the evening at the National Guard Armory, at Union Camp, or at the Steel Products Company. Hawes wanted a place for daytime classes for the program. Laboratory and shop equipment could be obtained from government surplus material, but the Institute needed a building for its increasing number of students.

In addition to the earlier announced programs in chemical technology and industrial technology, courses now included electrical and electronics technology for radio, telephone, and television workers, as well as courses in building construction and civil technology to train “technicians at a semi-professional level.” Courses were open to “any qualified person in any local industry. The basic college courses were taught by Armstrong faculty, and the advanced courses were taught by instructors from Hunter Field, SEPCO, Southern Bell, the Corps of Engineers, and Union Camp. Students did not need to complete the entire freshman core in order to take advanced courses, and they could register as degree-seeking students or not. Armstrong began offering classes on five nights a week instead of three to meet the demand. Armstrong’s fund drive in the evening program was significant and financially beneficial. For the 1956 college budget, Hawes projected a total evening tuition income of $82,500, as compared with daytime tuition revenue of $69,500. Because the cost of evening instructors, mostly part-time, was far less than the cost of the daytime faculty, the Evening College with its Technical Institute became a helpful money-making arrangement.

Hawes also wanted to expand the college’s courses for medical personnel, using an umbrella label of Allied Medical Arts. Other junior colleges were experimenting with two-year nursing programs, and Hawes wanted Armstrong to initiate a similar course of study.

The growth of the Technical Institute and the plans for more courses in the allied health field suggested a new direction that looked toward a broad range of adult workers and invited the financial support of business and industry. It also caught the attention of The Savannah Evening News. In March 1957, an opinion column voiced concern about the changes and the possible effect on liberal education. “The whole problem seems to be reduced unfortunately to a conflict between scientific and liberal education, both so important to our well-being, but the finer without the latter.”

The writer cautioned the college not to fall prey to a “tendency to skim over the liberal arts education for which the institution is so well-known and respected in favor of an unnecessary concentrated scientific program.” Would Armstrong follow the new community college trend of serving local job-training needs, or would it continue a traditional role of liberal arts preparation for transfer to four-year institutions? Any decision about the future would depend heavily on whether or not Armstrong joined the University System.

THE STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDY COMMITTEE AND THE STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE ACT OF 1958

The legislative committee established by Governor Griffin began its work in the summer of 1957, Chaired by Armstrong alumnus Frank Cheatham, the committee consisted of four members from the House of Representatives (from Savannah, Columbus, Rome, Armstrong’s cheerleaders. "Geisha 1957."
Obligation was to take care of the University System, Board of Regents, who observed that the state’s first word coming from James Blisset, treasurer of the discussion continued around the table, with the last for larger appropriations for higher education. The Carrollton to suggest that if more counties had colleges issue prompted committee member Ebb Duncan of ally mild and concerned the impact of new schools Tech. He, too, referred to Armstrong, this time as an to prepare students adequately for transfer to Georgia that junior colleges usually did not have the facilities in 1950.

Armstrong in 1950. Besides President Aderhold, the introduction of a school that had found it too expensive to one at this time.”

Cheatham prodded the Mayor to repeat his earlier assurance that the city would cover the construction costs of Gamble Hall even if Armstrong joined the University System, but that point raised another question from Representative Hawes: succinct headings, a tight text, and a selection of key statistics. He suggested that the committee read it later. His spoken remarks focused on three issues: the addition to Gamble Hall, the question of a gymnasmium, and the prospect of future expansion. To remove any concern about the Gamble Hall addition, he prompted a verbal commitment from the mayor that the state would in no way be obligated for any of the cost of that project. On the subject of a gymnasmium for the city quire the city, Hawes described the redbrick arrangements with the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Hellenic Center and concluded that a “college-owned gymnasmium is desirable, but it is certainly not impera- tive that we have one at this time.” For the college’s long-range needs, Hawes mentioned property available “on Gaston and Barnard Streets within a minute’s walk from the Armstrong Building...The property is not very expensive. It’s a slum property.” As Hawes continued, the committee began to ask questions, and the discussion broke open into a variety of issues: enrollment figures, the Evening College, the Technical Institute, and the library arrangement with the Georgia Historical Society. The conversation then turned to the matter of local control of the college. Hawes was quite clear on the subject: “the Board of Regents will control the policy, (and) the college.” Dewberry was equally firm: “they [the Board of Regents] are the last word, and there is no in-between under the constitution.”

Mayor Mingedoff then cut through to the central issue as he saw it. Savannahians deserved the opportu- nity for a college education, and the city could no longer pay the cost of providing it. The $77,000 that the city committed to Armstrong had many other claims upon it: “We would cut it off tomorrow if there was any possible way of doing it...The basic question is that the City of Savannah cannot support an ever- expanding junior college, and the first thing we know we are going to have to close it.”

Cheatham redirected the discussion to the cost of building new dormitories for the present schools in the University System, a cost that could be avoided by adding community-based junior colleges to the System, since these colleges would not need dormi- tories. The conversation continued for twelve more pages of transcription and concluded with the sugges- tion that Dewberry look over Armstrong’s buildings and facilities and determine the capital outlay that might be involved for the state if Armstrong joined the System. The committee then adjourned for lunch, followed by a tour of the college, and Dewberry set about making his inventory.

The following month, the Junior College Committee traveled to the west coast to investigate the community college system in California. In October, it visited Augusta College, and in November it met with city officials in Columbus. Then it settled down to write its report.

At Armstrong, the fall term of 1957 got under way with a record enrollment (day and night) of 1,267. Major publicity promoted the Technical Institute and the various programs in the medical arts area. In October, the Commission approved a proposal to revive the three-year program in Business Administra- tion, which had been discontinued during World War II. The liberal arts faculty also had a new offering, an Honors Seminar on “The Nature of Man and the Natural World.” President Hawes’s report to the Commission was unusually upbeat: “The present situ- ation of Armstrong College from the standpoint of finances, enrollment, faculty, and future prospects is the best in the history of the institution.” The only troublesome detail was the $85,000 shortfall in the fund drive for the Gamble Hall annex. The Commis- sion voted to accept architect Henry Levy’s bid of $211,807 for the new construction, and the public fundraising campaign resulted in an amount agreed to guarantee a construction loan. The editorial page of the Savannah Morning News commended the Commission’s decision to sign the building contract as an act of faith that Savannahians would provide the necessary money. On December 16, 1957, eighty- six year old Commission Chairman Herschel Jenkins, with his ever-present cigar clamped firmly between his teeth, slid the blade of a long handle shovel into a soft patch of dirt for the groundbreaking ceremony. It had been fifteen years since Gamble Hall opened its doors to offer science courses for students headed into World War II. The new annex would house the science courses now needed to catch up with the Soviet Union’s Sputnik launch on October 4, 1957.

By December the State Junior College Committee had completed its report. Its recommendations took an oblique approach. Rather than proposing the direct addition of junior colleges to the University System, the purpose of the meeting was to get the guests to the “State of Chatham,” but he quickly returned to his main point: ‘Geechee 1951. The Hellenic Center gymnasmium, Armstrong’s home court.

The first item of business was to meet with the heads of all senior and junior colleges in the University System to hear their opinions. In mid-July, all of the presidents or their representatives gathered in Atlanta to make their presentations to the committee. The strongest statement came from President Oman Clyde Aderhold of the University of Georgia, who offered a list of six options for dealing with the increasing numbers of college-age students, but the addition of new junior colleges to the University System was not his preferred option. Rather, he proposed that the freshman and sophomore classes at the University of Georgia be enlarged and new dormitories built to house them. His second recommendation was to develop “university centers” around the state as had occurred after World War II. He cited the Branch Center in Savannah as an example of this approach, along with the resulting cooperative relationship with Armstrong in 1950. Besides President Aderhold, the only other person who opposed expanding the number of state-supported junior colleges was Dr. Jesse Mason, Dean of Engineering at Georgia Tech, who observed that junior colleges usually did not have the facilities to prepare students adequately for transfer to Georgia Tech. He, too, referred to Armstrong, this time as an example of a school that had found it too expensive to continue to offer an engineering program after the drop-off in veteran enrollment. The comments from the other presidents were gener- ally mild and concerned the impact of new schools on existing rather than on enrollment. The funding issue prompted committee member Ebb Duncan of Carrollton to suggest that if more counties had colleges in the University System, more legislators would vote for larger appropriations for higher education. The discussion continued around the table, with the last word coming from James Blisset, treasurer of the Board of Regents, who observed that the state’s first obligation was to take care of the University System, and then go to Augusta, Savannah, and Columbus. With that comment, the existing educational interests rested their case.

The Junior College Committee arrived in Savannah with the heavy heat of late summer, and Cheatham called his colleagues to order at 10:00 a.m. on the morning of August 21, 1957 in a conference room at the DeSoto Hotel. A stenographer sat poised to record everything that was said. President Hawes, Arthur Giggilliat of the Evening College, college controller Jule Rossiter, and Mayor Mingedoff faced their visitors: the legislators, two members of the State Legal Department, and Hubert Dewberry. Cheatham opened with an old Savannah joke as he welcomed the guests to the “State of Chatham,” but he quickly placed the State of Chatham firmly in the State of Georgia since the purpose of the meeting was to get Georgia revenues flowing in Chatham’s direction.

President Hawes made the first presentation. His five-page “Brief Outline of Information” was classic Hawes: succinct headings, a tight text, and a selection of key statistics. He suggested that the committee read it later. His spoken remarks focused on three issues: the addition to Gamble Hall, the question of a gymnasmium, and the prospect of future expansion. To remove any concern about the Gamble Hall addition, he prompted a verbal commitment from the mayor that the state would in no way be obligated for any of the cost of that project. On the subject of a gymnasmium for the city quire the city, Hawes described the redbrick arrangements with the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Hellenic Center and concluded that a “college-owned gymnasmium is desirable, but it is certainly not impera- tive that we have one at this time.” For the college’s long-range needs, Hawes mentioned property available “on Gaston and Barnard Streets within a minute’s walk from the Armstrong Building...The property is not very expensive. It’s a slum property.” As Hawes continued, the committee began to ask questions, and the discussion broke open into a variety of issues: enrollment figures, the Evening College, the Technical Institute, and the library arrangement with the Georgia Historical Society. The conversation then turned to the matter of local control of the college. Hawes was quite clear on the subject: “the Board of Regents will control the policy, (and) the college.” Dewberry was equally firm: “they [the Board of Regents] are the last word, and there is no in-between under the constitution.”
the committee recommended a specific state allocation (initially no less than $300 per student) to any new or existing junior college that petitioned for assistance under the conditions of the bill. The money would pass through the Board of Regents for disbursement, and each junior college that requested funds would have to comply with University System policies and standards. Schools that failed to meet those standards could not receive state funds. Those schools that satisfied the approval criteria would not actually join the University System, but would remain under local control. Augusta Senator Carl Sanders emphasized the issue of local control as a way “to make the report more palatable to our local communities...in view of the fact that they are going to have to provide all of the capital for building the schools.”

The Regents took the recommendations and prepared a bill for legislative approval. All of the omens seemed good. Cheatham described the bill as “the greatest advance in higher education in the state since the board of regents was established in 1935.” The governor was pleased and drew cheers and applause in his state of the state speech when he noted that the bill supported teaching facilities rather than dormitories. Chancellor Caldwell commended Cheatham’s work: “All comments about your study were favorable. I heard no adverse comment of any sort. It is my personal opinion, therefore, that the board of regents as a whole is satisfied with your recommendation and that it would like to see these recommendations implemented by appropriate legislation.”

As the proposal worked its way through the legislative process, however, resistance began to surface. Representative Jack Murr of Sumter County, home of Georgia Southwestern College in Americus, warned that the bill would “be the kiss of death for existing institutions.” He proposed an amendment that gave priority to developing the schools presently in the University System. On February 5, 1958, the bill came to the floor of the Georgia House of Representatives, where it generated an hour of “hot debate” from representatives in counties with University System schools, including a comment that the measure was designed only to help Armstrong College.

At the end of the discussion, the bill emerged with two amendments: 1) a provision that the Board of Regents would disburse the funds only after it “shall annually first declare by resolution that funds are available therefore without hampering the operation of, or reducing the efficiency of, any unit of the University System”; and 2) a provision that the Board of Regents could “cease operation of any [new] school established under this Act at any time said Board desires, and thereafter no funds shall be payable to the local operating authority.” Cheatham told news reporters that the amendments did not alter the intent of the bill, but Mayor Mingledorff did not like the requirement for an annual resolution by the Board of Regents.

The Junior College Act of 1958 gave Savannah a way to retain local control over Armstrong and yet gain the support of state funds to operate the college. It thereby preserved the independence of the State of Chatham alongside of the State of Georgia. But in between the two “states” stood the power of the Board of Regents. The Board could give and the Board could take away. The arrangement presented a mixed blessing. In fact, the two amendments to the Junior College Act provided strong incentives for full union with the University System. The financial allocation would probably be greater and it would certainly be more assured than under the provisions of the bill. By the end of March, Augusta and Columbus decided to forego local control and applied for full entry into the University System. The Board of Regents tentatively approved their applications.

An unidentified source at the university system. An unidentifiable source at the capital warned that Armstrong would find it difficult to get funds if it was the only school using the Junior College Act, but Governor Griffin designated $400,000 from surplus revenues to fund the measure, and Armstrong took steps to apply for its portion of that money as Hubert Dewberry and Chancellor Caldwell prepared to visit Savannah “to iron out a few things.”

Things did not iron out easily. The first sign of trouble came from Chancellor Caldwell, who assured Hawes and Cheatham that the Board of Regents would support Armstrong’s wish to receive funding under the Junior College Act, but “we don’t think that the [junior college] plan would be as educationally sound as coming under the University System.” Cheatham replied with a statement that was to be the formal Savannah position throughout the next months: “At Armstrong we feel our school meets local requirements and we want to come in under the plan and still retain control of our college.” Caldwell then raised a question about the way that Armstrong calculated its enrollment, counting the various categories of night students along with the full-time day students. “If you include all night students at Armstrong, there will not be enough money under the $400,000 available for other schools.” Cheatham took exception to the implication that state money might be cut off “when the sun goes down.”

As the spring progressed, Hawes completed Armstrong’s formal application for funds under the Junior College Act. The application listed Armstrong’s eighteen college preparatory programs, twelve terminal programs, and seven programs in the Technical Institute. It made note of the “extensive” evening program and recommended the addition of a two-year nursing program. Using the figures from the spring term, it calculated 860 full-time students in the combined enrollment of the day and evening programs. It projected an enrollment of 1,232 students for 1958-1959. The application arrived in Atlanta in the first week of May.

The Chancellor’s office had also been busy preparing two criteria documents, both dated May 9. One was marked “Tentative,” and the other carried the title “Operating Policies.” Both set down the standards “which might be prescribed by the Regents for junior colleges which might receive State aid under the provision of House Bill 686.” Each document was brief, two pages and four pages, respectively, but they contained very clear requirements. Item 7 of the “Operating Policies” stated that “the college library must be owned and operated by the college as an integral part of its total operation.” A statement on physical education referred to a gymnasium “owned and operated by the college.” In the “Tentative” document, a statement about the “School Plant” required that “the organization and orientation of all physical facilities must be of a quality to permit minimum projected expenditures for operations, maintenance and replacement.”

On May 13, the Education Committee of the Board of Regents met in Statesboro, where Cheatham joined them to discuss Armstrong’s application. Again,
the Committee asked why Armstrong did not want to join the University System outright. Cheatham’s short answer was “twenty-three years of history.” His expanded answer repeated the opinion that “a local board of control would be more immediately responsive to community needs.” He particularly noted the non-liberal arts programs that Armstrong offered to local industry. The full newspaper report of the meeting reviewed Armstrong’s previous efforts to join the University System and the System’s repeated refusals on the grounds that it already had as many schools as it could fund. As for Armstrong’s current application for state money under the Junior College Act, Cheatham remained confident: “I don’t see how Armstrong could fail to measure up to any of their standards…. I think Armstrong would exceed many of their standards.” The next day’s newspaper repeated the history of Armstrong’s rebuffed efforts to join the University System and stated that the college now believed that local control allowed it “to offer a broader educational program that would be possible under the University System.” Here was one result of the college’s recent emphasis on programs to serve local business and industry. The evening program and the Technical Institute were linked to specific local interests, and the college wished to continue the mutual benefit of those relationships without outside interference.

The following week a representative from the Chancellor’s office visited President Hawes to review Armstrong’s application. Together they agreed on a number of changes. Armstrong’s three-year programs would be terminated. The college would be pruned of courses rarely offered. The college’s overall enrollment figures were revised to use full-time equivalents (FTE), removing 130 FTE students who were either third year students or University of Georgia Extension students. President Hawes was also shown the two documents on Criteria and Operating Policies “on an unofficial-confidential basis.” The report of the visit concluded with the statement that “His [Hawes] position seems to be shifting slightly. My guess is that the application for admission under House Bill 686 might be less appealing than would be possible under the University System.” Here was one result of the college’s recent emphasis on programs to serve local business and industry. The evening program and the Technical Institute were linked to specific local interests, and the college wished to continue the mutual benefit of those relationships without outside interference.

On Monday, June 2, 1958, in the Board Room of the C&S Bank in downtown Savannah, five spokesmen representing Armstrong and the city of Savannah met with five officials from the Board of Regents to review Armstrong’s application for state funds. The Board had also studied a “Report on Facilities” drawn up by Hubert Dewberry after his inspection the previous summer. It contained measurements and inventories of every article that the college owned, from the wall maps to the wiring and the window fans. That report now stood against the standards and criteria required by the Board of Regents. The conclusions were grim. Armstrong needed a minimum of $500,000 in improvements to qualify for funds under the Junior College Act.

Specifically, the college needed three new buildings: a $755,000 classroom building, a $275,000 Health and Physical Education building, and a $90,000 Student Services Building, for a total of $440,000. The college’s existing buildings needed $85,400 in improvements, primarily new wiring throughout and a host of fire safety measures to meet code specifications. If the library at the Georgia Historical Society could not be brought up to required standards, a new library would add another $284,000 to the $495,400 minimum figure.

Despite what must have been a major financial shock, Mayor Mingledorf described the meeting as “a great step forward for Savannah which has long wanted a higher education program with state support.” The problem was that state support was going to be very expensive to get. Mingledorf told the press that the decision required careful study. The Regents would receive Armstrong’s answer at their July meeting. The System representatives indicated that they would be willing to act on the matter at the upcoming June 10 meeting of the Board but Mingledorf deferred to July. It was going to be a long, hot summer. What would it mean for Armstrong’s programs and faculty to come under the control of the Board of Regents? The Board had a list of questions, as did the college administration. Three issues presented particular concerns: the continued operation of the Evening College, the three-year programs, and the Technical Institute. Chancellor Caldwell tried to be reassuring, but certain sticking points remained. “The Board would not look with favor on the offering by a junior college of any three-year program for academic credit.” Armstrong offered four such programs. Caldwell stated that the Regents were supportive of evening programs that met local needs, but they would “ask the officials of Georgia Tech and the Southern Technical Institute to study the programs offered by Armstrong’s Technical Institute in order that the Board may have complete assurance that these programs are in conformity with the highest standards.”

On the question of college buildings, Mingledorf pressed hard to maintain the existing gymnastics, arrangement, and Caldwell agreed to recommend that the Board accept the rental agreements rather than require a new building, thereby cutting $250,000 from the needed improvements. But the Board of Regents was also pushing its own financial advantage. The $400,000 designated for the Junior College Bill had already passed from the state treasurer to the Board’s accounts, and the Board had begun to apply it toward the colleges in Augusta and Columbus, even though those schools were to be part of the University System. The editorial pages of the Savannah newspapers began to heat up. “Armstrong Is Getting A Raw Deal,” groused the Evening Press. The Board of Regents, said the evening editor, was blocking the intent of the legislature by requiring exorbitant improvements. The morning paper followed with an editorial on “The Law’s Intent,” which it claimed, the Board was subverting with “technicallities.”

What was becoming painfully clear was that the estimates presented by the Regents would apply to Armstrong whether the college chose to operate under the Junior College Bill or join the University System. Meanwhile, the newspaper smoldered at the injustice of the Regents who were increasing the financial burden of the city rather than relieving it. Comments coming from the Regents’ office only fueled the flame. L.R. Siebert, Executive Secretary for the Board, remarked to reporters that Savannah could almost build a new college for what it would cost to renovate Armstrong. When questioned further, he saw no inconsistency in the fact that the Board was authorizing $140,000 to the city of Columbus to start a college temporarily in an abandoned hosiery mill and yet was refusing funds to Savannah, which had a fully functioning institution. The city fathers in Columbus had pledged a million dollars to build their new college, Siebert explained. Savannah could do the same for a like amount. Regents Chairman Robert Arnold offered his version of the situation in a letter to the editor responding to the “Raw Deal” editorial that had reached his desk. He and the other officials who visited Savannah at the beginning of June came away, he said, with the impression that Armstrong desired to come into the University System and that steps would be taken to provide funds necessary to bring the school up to standards…. We are not trying to make it hard for Armstrong. I am sure, however, that you can appreciate the fact that the Board of Regents cannot lower its standards for any applicant.

The evening paper flung back its rebuttal. The Regents, it declared, were creating “an obstacle course that is unthinkable in its severity,” placing more importance on facilities and parking space than on curriculum. Editorial indignation spilled over into a second column the following evening and denounced Siebert’s “amazing suggestion…that Armstrong build a new column.
The Armstrong Commission, with Mayor Mingledorff seated second from left. Gachette 1959-60.

million dollar plant rather than refurbish the present buildings.” Such a suggestion showed a total “lack of understanding about the lasting qualities and ‘liability’ of the old Savannah buildings that comprise the Armstrong plant together with [its] more modern structures.” The Board’s estimates for Armstrong’s improvements demonstrated “a profligate disregard for the use of money.”127 Chancellor Caldwell attempted to calm the waters by his own letter to the editor in which he affirmed his complete respect for the scholastic record of Armstrong College.128 But even the Chancellor could slip in an injudicious remark, as he expressed his thanks to Representative Cheatham for securing the extra $400,000 to the Board of Regents.129 On July 24, the newspaper obtained a copy of the full report on the improvements required by the Regents and found a key phrase to highlight the article: “No Serious Defects Found at Armstrong.”130 But the fact remained that new wiring, a gymnasium, a combination classroom and student services building, and possibly a new library still added up to $779,000.

The Armstrong Commission slowly began to swallow the bitter pill. At its July 24 meeting it voiced to establish a committee to negotiate with the Regents for Armstrong to come into the University System. Mingledorff, who chaired the committee, now described the Junior College Act as half a loaf, whereas the University System offered a whole loaf; and since the price was the same for both, the choice was clear. Cheatham accepted the painful political realities. The Junior College Act initiated by his legislative committee gave the Regents the authority to do what they were doing. “No law is any better than the good faith of those charged with operating it,” he conceded. Clearly the Regents did not intend for the Act to succeed. They would disburse the funds provided by the Act, but “they have made it clear that it would be a ‘hard road to travel’ to get those funds. Political recruiitee was not likely to help.” The regents are known to the legislators and Armstrong is not.”131

The Savannah Morning News acknowledged the inevitable direction of events but grumbled about the “deviousness” of the Regents and insisted that they lower their price.132 The Alumni Association and the Evening Press continued their dissent.133 Mingledorff was getting tired of having to fight for the local as well as with the Board of Regents. In early August he addressed the problem publicly:

Every time Chatham County presents something to the State, we are always accused of presenting a divided front. The best way I know to arrive at an unassistance from the state at all is for the Board of Regents to be able to say that the people of Chatham could not make up their mind…. It does seem to me that dedicated citizens who have struggled with the operation of Armstrong through the years could have the support of all citizens after all views of different parties have been presented and considered.134

The mayor then explained that the Commission had not accepted the $779,000 figure and was seeking to reduce it. He proposed to pay the final amount, whatever it was, by means of a bond issue and then pay off the bonds by using the annual allocation that the city currently gave to the college. To put the cost in perspective, he presented comparative data from Augusta and Columbus that showed each of those cities offering the Board of Regents a combined package of property and commitments worth one million to one and a half million dollars. The cost to Savannah would be significantly less than that being borne by her sister cities.135

On September 16, 1958 Mingledorff sat down with the Regents Education Committee for two and a half hours of “horse trading.” When the meeting ended, the terms on the table were $495,000 to be paid over the next four years by an annual payment of $79,000 and an additional payment of $195,000 due by December 31, 1959. The annual payment equalled the existing city appropriation for the college.136 The morning newspaper conceded that it “seemed the best practical solution…. we will still have our Junior College…[and] the city will be out of the junior college business—which is as it should be.”137 The Commission accepted the terms on September 19, and the Board of Regents made it official on October 10. On February 7, 1959, acting for the aldermen and the city of Savannah, Mayor Mingledorff signed the papers transferring Armstrong College to the control of the University System of Georgia.138

Armstrong’s journey into the University System resembled a coy and difficult courtship. After the college’s first advances were rebuffed by the Regents, the Junior College Act offered another approach to receiving state support. The Regents saw the local as the possible beginning of a dual system of state-funded colleges.139 Preferring to have all state-funded higher education under the control of the University System, they fostered the two amendments that made the System the more attractive option. Armstrong, however, preferred the Junior College Act, which protected local control and broad flexibility to meet the needs of local constituencies. The Regents held a different opinion about some of those arrangements and began to turn the screws on Armstrong’s application for state funds. Those funds would come at a cost. Faced with that fact, it was clear to the city and the college that it would be better to pay the price to enter the University System than pay that price to stay out. The only loose end was the large amount due by December 31, 1959. Regents Chairman Robert Arnold was doubtful that Savannah could raise the money before the deadline, but Mingledorff assured Chancellor Caldwell that if the bond referendum failed the city would either “appropriate the entire amount from current revenues” or ask for an extension of the deadline.140 The bond proved to be difficult. Savannah voters had approved a bond referendum in 1957 for nearly three million dollars; but on the April 1959 ballot, where the Armstrong issue appeared with five other bond proposals, the voters, voting on each item separately, rejected all six.141 Mingledorff promptly scheduled a new referendum for the fall. In his commencement address to Armstrong’s June graduates, he commented on the bond’s defeat and urged the new alumni to organize and study the needs of their community. “We cannot continue to have organized opposition to everything without organized support for something.”142 The Board of Regents took note of the April defeat but waited patiently for the next round.143 In November the voters were in a better mood and approved the bond issue for Armstrong along with three other projects.144 Savannah could assure the Regents that the city’s check would be in the mail.145

CAMPUS LIFE: BLUE SMOKE, BRIDGE, AND BERMUDA SHORTS

Most of the public activity involved in the four-year long process of joining the University System occurred during the summertime, the summer of 1957 when Cheatham’s legislative committee held its Savannah hearings, and the summer of 1958 when the criteria set by the Board of Regents raised so much heat and sand. During the regular school year, Armstrong students pursued their own interests, curricular and extra-curricular, without a great deal of attention to the events shaping the future of their college. They participated in the fundraising campaigns, and they wondered what the effects would be if Armstrong became part of the University System; but for the most part students lived in the daily and seasonal routine of classes and social activities, which did not change very much from previous years. The biggest change occurred in the numbers, as more students enrolled and the variety of programs increased. Enrollment in the day program grew from 347 in the fall of 1955 to 557 in the fall of 1960, and the larger numbers made a difference in the foot traffic and parking around Monterey Square during the morning hours.146 The part-time students in the Evening College and the Technical Institute added over 800 more students and attracted strong local publicity along with the close scrutiny of the Board of Regents.147 Graduation figures began to show the new diversity. In 1960, the college awarded ninety-seven degrees, most of which could be considered liberal arts in nature; but a third were in other areas: twenty-seven in business and seven in engineering.148 In 1961, a third of the June graduates were students in the Evening College.149

The faculty and students in the traditional day program, however, defined the general character of life at Armstrong. The Terrapin Club’s social events could still draw a crowd, and campus sororities provided social and service activities for Armstrong women.150 In the early 1950s an organization that called itself Fraternity X declared its intent to provide a fraternity-type
organization for men. In February 1959, coinciding with Armstrong’s new status as a unit of the University System, Phi Delta Gamma fraternity appeared on campus, and the new fraternity men brought their flair to the social scene. They heaved a bathtub and toilet bowl onto the back of a flaked truck for the Homecoming parade down Broughton Street, and somehow they managed to maneuver a mule onto the stage of Jenkins auditorium for a skit during Pioneer Days. They also prompted a few rumblings about fraternity dominance during student elections in the fall of 1960, but any trend in that direction was short-lived. The fraternity men were premature. The University System frowned on selective fraternities and sororities in its junior colleges, and in June 1961 the Armstrong faculty disallowed them as authorized student organizations. 

In the late 1950s student involvement in off-campus politics became more organized than had been true for earlier Armstrong students. A Talmadge Club emerged in the spring of 1956 to promote Herman Talmadge in his challenge to U.S. Senator Walter George, and a Young Democrats Club became active during 1957 and 1958. In November 1959, national politics arrived on campus in the person of thirty-four year old Robert Kennedy, who spoke to a special student assembly in Jenkins Auditorium during a two-day visit to Savannah. The Jukebox reported that “the handsome young racket buster…held every student’s attention to the last word.” But it was the Kennedy-Nixon campaign the following year that became a major campus event. The Young Democrats organized a twenty-five car motorcade trailing red, white, and blue streamers through the streets of Savannah. The newly formed Young GOP orchestrated a Nixon Day and covered the campus with bunting and Nixon posters and then crowded into Jenkins Auditorium to hear speakers extol the merits of the Nixon-Lodge ticket. 

The jukebox boomed its loud and steady beat, undimmed by the addition of acoustical tile in the ceiling. The pounding punctuation of Fats Domino – “I FOUND MY THRILL, ON BLUEBERRY HILL” – simply would not be denied. Faculty who taught overhead in the Hunt Building were known to come down and simply pull the plug on the jukebox to gain some temporary relief. Surprisingly, a conservative bastion of resistance to the new music surfaced within the student body itself in the form of a “Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Music,” a self-declared organization of two, who dedicated themselves to waging war against the advancing ranks of rock ‘n roll. The two, who humbly signed themselves as t. cope and j. hornstein, wrote an Inkwell column entitled “Metronome,” in which they presented their opinions on various musical subjects. They looked wistfully for signs that rock ‘n roll might be a short-lived musical aberration but admitted that their hope was in vain. They protested their inability to write a top-drawer music column since they could not spell good college words like “Freud” and “pseudo,” but “they could and they did.” hornstein discovered that the Armstrong library in Hodgson Hall included a record collection, he stumbled onto the library’s magazine collection, which he found to his surprise included copies of Esquire. The Metronome column was by no means limited to stuffy shirt tastes. It asked Esquire and Playboy, and jazz; and it invited Armstrong students to participate in the Playboy Jazz Poll, which it thought might be of more interest than the Suez Crisis. And Playboy also offered other “dandy things of interest.” But Metronome’s musical advice fell on deafened ears that preferred the low-brow repertoire of “Hot Diggy Dog Diggy,” “Tiotti Fruttii,” or “Good Golly Miss Molly,” served up daily in The Dump. Unexpected allies for the cause arrived in the form of the vending machine company that owned the jukebox. On the charge that vandals were breaking into the machine and stealing records, the company removed the jukebox altogether. Alas, crowded Metronome, the ruby had been plucked from the forehead of the Buddha. The lamentation became lyrical: “the first thing we learned, when our backs were turned, our ever-lovin’ juke box burned.” Always resourceful, however, Metronome offered an alternative to the music of the mechanical monster. Why not play taped lectures by Armstrong faculty? The possibilities were endless: “Best of Beecher,” Bob Strotzer at Jenkins Hall, “Lectures of Our Times,” with Joe Killotin, and “Lectures for Young Lovers,” by Dorothy Thompson. Some of the faculty names were familiar and some were new as Armstrong added more faculty members to teach the rising number of students. The 1955 catalog listed eighteen full-time faculty in the day program, but by 1960 that number had nearly
**Journalism and Political Science Classrooms**

During the late 1950s, Armstrong's full-time faculty benefited from a particular act of generosity from one of the college's longtime patrons, Mrs. Mills B. Lane, Sr. In 1957 and again in 1958 she donated $10,000 “to improve instruction and/or salary increases.” The conversation may or may not have been the moment that prompted the resulting gifts, but it would not have been an unlikely sequence of events.

Many of the new daytime faculty of the 1950s were at the beginning of a long history with the college. Bob Strozier, an Armstrong alumnus of 1949, returned to teach English at his alma mater in the fall of 1955. He loved to write and he loved Armstrong with the mixture of frustration and affection characteristic of any long-term relationship. He wrote long, serious poems for The Inkwell, and he brought contemporary works like Mr. Roberts into his classroom for students to read aloud, including the passages with mild swear words that could make a 1950s student stumble or blush. Strozier would provide challenging experiences for students, colleagues, and administrators for the next forty years. In the fall of 1957 another early alumnus returned to teach at Armstrong, Bill Coyle, class of 1941 and former Inkwell editor, guided the Young Democrats through their first political fora, and his gentle, soft-spoken wit and wisdom left an indelible mark on thirty years of Armstrong students who blocked to his classes in history and political science.

On the feminine side, Lorraine Anchors arrived initially as a counselor in student services, then moved to the registrar’s office, and finally settled in with the English faculty. President Hawes declared her capable of running the college by herself. Jule Rossiter, another Armstrong alumna, did her share of running the college in her position as college treasurer and secretary to the Armstrong Commission. For the next thirty years she kept the college’s account books and was the only female financial officer in the entire University System. She was a worthy and soft-spoken opponent to Hubert Dewberry and took it upon herself to defend the moldings and ceiling medallions of the Armstrong mansion against the ravages of electrical rewiring. At her insistence, all new fluorescent fixtures were dropped from the ceiling in such a way as to preserve the original architectural details intact.

Other longtime faculty were also in place as Armstrong entered the University System. Lamar Davis taught business communications and other intricacies of business life to decades of business students at the college. Harry Perse directed student activities as well as the college choristers. Some of the new faculty did not stay long but left their mark. Elmo McCray and Frank Austin carried their biology students through the old and new versions of Gamble Hall and kept the biology program in shape until Leslie Davenport arrived in 1959. In physics classes and in the Technical Institute, military men held command in the persons of retired colonels John des Islets and William Travis. The new extension on Gamble Hall provided additional classroom space but it was an aesthetic disappointment. The financial shortfall required architectural adjustments that substituted horizontal lines for vertical ones, used metal window frames instead of wooden ones, and shrank the rear door to very modest proportions for humble access onto Drayton Street.

In another sector of college life, a new face arrived in 1957 to teach physical education, a face that beamed with enthusiastic physical fitness beneath the bristles of a flat-top haircut. Roy Sims poured his endless energy into the basketball team as well as into his physical education classes. A second smiling crew-cut joined him in 1959 with the arrival of Larry Tapp. Trapeze lines were in vogue, and Sims signed his students up for classes at the Derenne Avenue Trampoline Center “to develop physical poise, symmetry, and agility.” Not everyone shared his enthusiasm for the new form of exercise, and President Hawes agreed to consider alternatives for those who demurred.

Armstrong basketball games continued to collect enthusiastic headlines and abundant action photos on the sports page of the newspaper. Talent came in all sizes. The “mighty midget from 35th street east,” 5’4” guard “Mouse” Dick Adams co-captained the 1956-57 team with Dearing Trophy winner Bill Short, who belted his name with his 6’1” stance. On the 1958-59 team, 6’4” Buddy Mallard was the toothpick thin’ standout hero, playing two games of the season with a cast on a broken hand. The 100-foot basketball court at the Hellenic Center kept all of the Armstrong “hoopmen” trim and in shape.

Neither athletics nor physical fitness saw anything wrong with cigarette smoking. Smoking was permitted in classrooms at the discretion of the instructor, and small aluminum ashtrays were standard features on classroom desks. “Egad,” choked The Inkwell reporter in her English class, “I can hardly breathe in all this cigarette smoke.” The cloud thickened in her math class. “Cigars, ugh!” Large glass ashtrays sat like place settings around the big tables where the Student Senate and faculty held their meetings. Cigarette litter became a regular subject of comment in Inkwell columns.

Inkwell writers continued to show a considerable degree of talent. Even when it was hard to come up with big stories at a small school, good columns could produce pure fluff that was wonderfully imaginative. High among the latter stood the duo of boy-editor Billy Deal and the “grand Scribe of Armstrong,” Jule Rossiter.
Inkwell staff. Don Davis, left, and Billy Deal, right. ‘Gazette 1960.


Don Davis. Their farewell column “Me and Him” in April 1960 climaxed a year of creative banter between “I, the editor, and Him, my partner.”

Masquers productions remained under the direction of Ross Durfee, and Homecoming still stood as the high-light of the winter calendar. Dance festivities moved off campus to the DeSoto Hotel or to the Ogletorpe on Wilmington Island or to the Manger on Johnson Square, but usually it was the DeSoto. At the end of the school year, the students traded their tuxedos and ball gowns for academic caps and gowns and marched in procession for graduation exercises in the same DeSoto balcony where they had danced.

But life was becoming more informal in the late 1950s, and at Armstrong informality walked onto campus in the spring of 1958 wearing Bermuda shorts. Naked knees, hairy legs, cool comfort, questions of decency and decorum, and all of the pros and cons of class-room attire marched across the pages of The Inkwell and into the official proceedings of the Armstrong faculty. Margaret Lubs, the senior member of the English faculty and the campus Robespierre on the English faculty, the new programs, the beauty queens, student government, and the ongoing saga of doings in The Armstrong faculty members felt the changes too. The University System required that each academic department have a formally appointed department head, even if the department consisted of only two instructors. All faculty in the main academic disciplines now had to hold a master’s degree or be in the process of getting one. Some faculty saw their income reduced by the fact that the Board of Regents frowned on the practice of overtime teaching, which had allowed full-time day faculty to add evening classes to their schedule. Bob Strozier put the lost income at the top of a list of eight reasons why entry into the University System was not the forward step that Mayor Mingledorff proclaimed it to be, and he shared his sentiments publicly in a letter to the newspaper.

As much as anyone, Foreman Hawes knew that life was going to be different under the University System. The System offered long-sought financial stability, but it also introduced a new, remote level of officialdom. The System brought changes, of course, the most notable being a sharp drop in tuition, from $65 to $35 per quarter for a full-time student. That change was certainly welcomed. But admission to Armstrong as a unit of the University System now required that students take College Board entrance exams, which had not been required when the college belonged to the city. Faculty members felt the changes too. The University System required that each academic department have a formally appointed department head, even if the department consisted of only two instructors. All faculty in the main academic disciplines now had to hold a master’s degree or be in the process of getting one. Some faculty saw their income reduced by the fact that the Board of Regents frowned on the practice of overtime teaching, which had allowed full-time day faculty to add evening classes to their schedule. Bob Strozier put the lost income at the top of a list of eight reasons why entry into the University System was not the forward step that Mayor Mingledorff proclaimed it to be, and he shared his sentiments publicly in a letter to the newspaper.

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On Thursday, March 16, 1961, the city of Savannah put the final touches on its plans for the annual St. Patrick’s Day observance. In an effort to attract increased national attention to Savannah’s Irish celebration, the activities included something new. A flotilla of twenty boats, each carrying a fifty-gallon drum of specially prepared dye, would move slowly up the Savannah River and attempt to turn the water green between Habersham Street and West Broad. Reportedly, the coastal community of Asbury Park, New Jersey intended a similar stunt for its portion of the Atlantic Ocean. Savannahians believed that they had a much better chance of success. "The dye is cast," announced the Savannah Evening Press.1

On this particular St. Patrick’s Eve, however, other developments held far greater portent for Savannah and for Armstrong College than did the preparations along the riverfront. The banner story of the local news section of the morning newspaper carried a diagram of a proposed expansion plan for the college. The plan encompassed twenty city blocks west of Armstrong and included all of Chatham Square and a portion of Monterey Square.2 The Armstrong Commission had discussed various expansion plans for Armstrong during recent years, but after the college joined the University System in 1959, the planning became much more focused. Indeed, expansion was essential to satisfy the University System’s requirements for a gymnasium and for classroom buildings that were more academically respectable than the converted residences of the Armstrong mansion, the Lane Building and the Hunt Building. The diagram that appeared in the newspaper showed the specific area to be affected by an enlarged Armstrong campus. The picture startled the senses of Savannah’s preservationists as if green dye had been thrown on their doorsteps.

Below the published diagram appeared other news with disturbing effects of a different sort. An ugly headline announced: “Youths Beat Negro at Lunch Counter."3 It was the first report of racial violence since sit-ins had resumed in protest against segregated eating facilities after a hiatus of several months. More racial confrontations spilled over into the St. Patrick’s Day festivities, and forty-one persons were arrested on March 17, whites and blacks, juveniles and adults.4 None of the racial incidents involved Armstrong; but a third item on the same March 16 news page, alongside the lunch counter story and the expansion diagram, showed a small photograph of a twenty-seven year old U.S. Marine corporal named Alfred Owens who was taking tests for admission to Armstrong College. The results of his tests and a decision about his admission were pending. He was the first African American to submit a formal application to Armstrong.5

The simultaneous appearance of these three news stories on March 16, 1961 was purely coincidental. The sit-ins were not directed against Armstrong, and the two Armstrong stories were unrelated to each other. But both of the Armstrong stories involved “breaking new ground.” The expansion plan proposed changes to an old Savannah neighborhood and ran into rock-solid resistance. The first efforts by an African-American to enter Armstrong met equally stubborn obstacles and did not succeed until two years later in the summer of 1963. By that time, the college’s expansion had taken on a totally different meaning with plans to move to a new location and develop into a four-year institution. The story of these years...
alternates back and forth between the twists and turns of expansion and desegregation.

**SEGREGATION LEGISLATION**

The times were “raw” for higher education in Georgia when Armstrong joined the University System in January 1959. Political resistance to court-ordered desegregation was in high gear and Armstrong immediately felt its effects. The college’s first catalog as a state-supported institution included a lengthy statement of the procedures adopted by the Board of Regents in 1958 to block the admission of African American students to Georgia’s public colleges and universities. All applicants to University System schools were required to submit recommendations by two alumni of the college they wished to attend, and each institution retained the right to determine if an applicant was “a fit and suitable person for admission.” If the fit was deemed not right, college officials could refer the applicant to the Regents for reassignment to an institution more appropriate to the applicant’s needs. The procedures made no mention of race, but the intent was clear. Georgia was one of the “hard core” states in its opposition to integration, and the Regents’ actions mirrored the measures of the Georgia General Assembly in defiance of the Supreme Court decision of 1954.

In January 1959, those measures increased, as Governor Ernest Vandiver’s administration introduced a bill to impose an age limit on applicants to state colleges and universities. In Georgia’s experience, the African Americans most willing to break new ground and apply to all-white state schools tended to be slightly older than the usual white applicants. Consequently the new proposal required that, for initial admission, all undergraduate students had to be less than twenty-one years old and all graduate students had to be under twenty-five. The proposal made no mention of race; but floor leader Frank Twitty minced no words in the two-hour debate in the House: “a tyrannical court supported by the NAACP is trying to rape the great state of Georgia…this bill is designed simply to keep the nigger out.”

But because the action would also affect thousands of older, working, white students who took evening courses, the Board of Regents vigorously opposed the measure. Representative Quimby Melton of Griffin warned lawmakers that it would be “a death knell for every off-campus center of the University of Georgia,” and he particularly noted that Armstrong College “would be crippled” by the proposal. Representative Ebb Duncan argued that it would only complicate the Regents’ efforts to maintain segregation because of the number of regulations that would be necessary in order to make exceptions. All arguments failed, and the age-limit bill passed into law.

Melton was correct about the effects of the bill on Armstrong, but the Regents’ response only made matters worse. Confronted with a law that it did not like, the Board imposed an enrollment freeze for the spring quarter to allow time to develop procedures for screening over-age applicants. At Armstrong, the number of new students for the spring term dropped 90% from the previous year. The Evening College took the biggest loss, where 70% of the students were twenty-one or older. Among the excluded students were several employees at the Savannah Sugar Refinery. Manager Siegvart J. Robertson of the Raw Sugar Department complained vehemently to the Chancellor, who explained the circumstances of the Regents’ dilemma:

> The institutions of the University System were opposed to the age limit bill because they foresaw some of the hardships that would necessarily result. … The bill has now become a law; however, and we must try to administer the new law so as to carry out its expressed intent and so as to exclude as few students as possible.

You say that it is inconceivable to you that the age limit law has been allowed to keep white students over twenty-one years of age from attending college. I am afraid that even the most lenient regulations that can be adopted
President Hawes was ready with his requests. He wanted additional full-time faculty to reduce the use of part-time instructors in the evening program; and he wanted a new position for an academic dean, an office that had been unfilled since 1941. When the latter request was approved, Hawes tapped Joe Killorin, who was on leave for graduate work at Columbia University, to assume the post. As the college entered 1960, Hawes admitted privately that he thought integration was on leave for graduate work at Columbia University, to assume the post. As the college entered 1960, Hawes admitted privately that he thought integration was

The new regulations appeared at the end of April and gave each institution in the University System broad discretionary powers in making admission decisions. The local college could now pass judgment on a student’s “good intent and purpose in making application,” his “proper sense of social responsibility,” his “general fitness,” and even determine if the applicant’s further education at public expense “will contribute to the overall economic welfare of the state.” Under such regulations, most of Georgia’s public colleges could continue to admit everyone they had previously admitted and exclude those whom they wished to exclude. If the law and its discretionary provisions did not really alter actual admissions practice, was the law really necessary? Representative Melton proposed that the bill be repealed, but for the time being it remained on the books.

The 1959 law presented Armstrong with a sharp and painful introduction to the consequences of being under state control. Fall enrollment declined still further as a result of the System’s requirement for entrance exams, but Hawes assured the faculty that “the advantages of things in the University System would outweigh the disadvantages.” The state’s $300,000 allocation to Armstrong meant pay increases for everyone as part of an increased operating budget and included a full program of building improvements. Hubert Dewberry, the Regents’ detail man for finance and development, burstled back and forth from Atlanta to consult with engineers and college officials about plans for new buildings, and in December the House Committee on the University System arrived for a surprise visit to discuss the needs of the newest institution in the state budget.

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President Hawes was thoroughly annoyed by the mayor’s announcement, and he informed the faculty that the reports were erroneous and that no one had contacted the college before releasing them. Armstrong, he said, had no interest in the Barnard Street School. Regents’ policy, as he understood it, did not involve renovations, and indeed he believed that the Regents did not “buy old buildings except for the purpose of demolishing them and erecting new and modern structures.” The college had no plans to develop faculty housing. “If there is any type of structure which we do not need it is faculty housing.” In fact, the Regents had not approved or received any specific expansion plans at all. At their May 11, 1960 meeting they only authorized Hawes to request the city to include the Chatham Square area in its application for urban renewal funds. Things were still in a very preliminary stage.

Discussion of new buildings promptly revived one of Armstrong’s “old ghosts,” the possibility of the college becoming a four-year institution. The Civic Club Council raised the issue in March, and in June three candidates for the Georgia Senate endorsed the idea in their campaigns. President Hawes, who had a long history of reservations about converting Armstrong to a four-year college, made no public comment; but he wrote to Chancellor Caldwell to request a clear state of the Regents’ plans for Georgia’s future college needs. Whatever other considerations might shape those plans, Hawes knew that enrollment would be crucial. When the fall term began in September 1960, the day enrollment increased slightly to 557, but the evening enrollment dropped to 522, a number even lower than the low figure of the previous year. Overall enrollment was down by eight percent.

Meanwhile, the plans for expansion and new construction moved slowly ahead. The Savannah Office of Urban Renewal worked through the summer of 1960 drafting and redrafting a proposal for the Armstrong Project Area. By November, Hawes had a map of the property, which he showed to the Commission and the faculty. He described it as part of a twenty-year plan for the college’s future growth, and he suggested that the faculty might want to stroll around the area in question and examine it. But no map appeared in the newspaper. Hawes also brought the Commission up-to-date on negotiations to acquire the threestory Quarterbaum residence on the corner of Gaston and Whittaker. The plan, he said, was to demolish the existing structure, along with the adjacent Lane Building, in order to provide a site for a new classroom and student services building. Listening to President Hawes make his report was Savannah’s new mayor, Malcolm R. Maclean, Jr., attending his first meeting as an ex officio member of the Armstrong Commission.
At some point in January 1961, Alfred Owens walked through the front door of the Armstrong mansion and stepped into the nearest office. To the police office worker who asked if she could help him, he replied that he was interested in American history. She suggested a number of books that he might find helpful. Owens explained his statement more clearly. He wished to enroll for a course in American history. He denied any desire for publicity and noted in his letter from Nellie Schmidt a few days later: “We regret the necessity of rejecting your application.”

Owens explained to the press why he wished to attend Armstrong rather than Savannah State. Armstrong was closer to his home, the difference between a twelve-block walk and a fourteen-mile round-trip drive to Thunderbolt. He believed that attending a white school would help him face the “hurdles” that he might experience in the future.

The Alfred Owens story blew through Armstrong like a gust of March wind and then was quickly forgotten. The college returned to its major topic of interest, the expansion plan. In mid-March, the Regents authorized Armstrong to apply for urban renewal funds to pay for a feasibility study and preliminary planning for the property under consideration, and the diagram of the area appeared in the March 16 newspaper. The boundaries encompassed all of Chatham Square, including the blocks immediately north, west, and south of the square. The line to the east bulged onto Monterey Square to connect with the existing college campus. This time the news announcement came from President Hawes, not from city hall; but Mayor Macleod enthusiastically applauded the plan as one that would revitalize a deteriorating section of the city and assist landowners in the neighborhood to qualify for FHA rehabilitation loans. Urban renewal, the mayor explained, did not mean only the demolition of substandard buildings. “It also stands for the preservation and improvement of structures which are considered sound and desirable.”

Editorials in both newspapers promptly acknowledged concerns about preserving Savannah’s architectural heritage but urged a spirit of understanding and cooperation, especially since the college’s expansion would involve no cost to the city and might be a step toward Armstrong’s future as a four-year college. Other opinions quickly appeared in letters to the editor. Dr. Antonio J. Waring, Jr. set the moderate tone that characterized the debate at its best. Regarding the Armstrong Junior College expansion program, it would be insane for anyone to oppose it per se. The only question is: it is a great pity that the University of Georgia was not established in Savannah in the first place. As I remember, our coastal fever had something to do with the choice of site.

It seems to me, however, that under the guise of “Urban Renewal,” to destroy one-half of Monterey Square, Gordon Row, and the bowou on the north side of Gaston Street between Whitaker and Barnard is equally insane, not to speak of tampering with the old city plan. Such charm as Savannah possesses is an aggregate charm of many little things and as a city we can scarcely afford to lose such a mass at one swoop.

Certainly the Georgia Historical Society Hall alone, excepted, is very little between Gaston and Gilmore, Whitaker and West Broad which would be particularly missed. It might be worthwhile if our planners cast their eyes in that direction.”
Thinks that this can be done overnight. As you know, I am as interested in the preservation of the beauty and charm of old Savannah as you are, and I do not think that the expansion of the college will do anything but (a) improve the college, and (b) revitalize a section of our city which has now unfortunately fallen into some disrepair."

Away from the pages of the newspaper, other letter-writers began to voice their concerns to Chancellor Harmon Caldwell in Atlanta. Caldwell admitted that he was not familiar with the area in question, but he tried to be reassuring. Closer to home, representatives of Historic Savannah Foundation and the property owners in the expansion area held a tense meeting with the mayor. President Hawes did not attend, but he heard about its proceedings. "I am told," he wrote to the Chancellor, "that the meeting was quite emotional and that it was difficult to conduct it in an orderly manner."

Either before or after that meeting, the city prepared a new expansion proposal that followed slightly different lines from the one published in March. Hawes did not like the new plan. He submitted it to the Chancellor, as Maclean requested, and he also forwarded the mayor’s request that a committee from Savannah be allowed to meet with the Regents to present the city’s views. Hawes saw no reason to alter the previous plan and stated his views plainly to the Chancellor.

Here are some of the reasons for this sudden new approach. Negro families are moving east toward Bull Street and are now within one short block of Monterey Square. … Unless something can be done to stop this eastward movement, property values in the area from Liberty to Gwinnett on Bull Street will drop sharply. If you compare the two maps, that is, the one approved by the Regents [the March map] and the other showing the latest area proposed by the city, you will see that the latest suggested area for college use is a perfect screen for the white residential area in and around Monterey Square and on Gwinnett Street. This plan, as followed, would deny to the college the use of those areas immediately adjacent to the present college plant. …

It seems to me that the city administration is being unduly influenced by a very small, articulate, and noisy minority. For example, Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc. objects strongly to the college placing a building on Monterey Square. It is our feeling that we must have the two last on the western side of the Square as a connecting link between the present college buildings and those which will be constructed west of Whitaker Street. I realize that in a project of this kind, some compromise is inevitable.

However, what is demanded of us is surrender. This statement is frequently quoted to me. "Not a brick should be moved from Monterey Square." Whether Hawes’s assessment of motives was correct or not, his insistence on the importance of a contiguous campus remained the centerpiece of his argument. His battle language suggested that the two opposing sides had begun to dig their trenches. The evening paper cautioned that divided opinions might deter the Regents from taking any action at all, and inaction would only delay Armstrong’s growth. Hawes had his own ideas about how to quiet the discussion.

One very effective way to squelch the opposition would be for the Regents to publicly state that Armstrong College will be made into a four-year, degree-granting institution when and if the money is available and the number of students justifies such a move. Such a statement does not commit the Regents to anything. However, it surely will reduce the noise being made by about 30 people.

State Senator Spence Grayson of Savannah wrote to the Chancellor with a different suggestion: move the college to a new location. He offered his assistance away from the pages of the newspaper, other letter-writers began to voice their concerns to Chancellor Harmon Caldwell in Atlanta. Caldwell admitted that he was not familiar with the area in question, but he tried to be reassuring. Closer to home, representatives of Historic Savannah Foundation and the property owners in the expansion area held a tense meeting with the mayor. President Hawes did not attend, but he heard about its proceedings. "I am told," he wrote to the Chancellor, "that the meeting was quite emotional and that it was difficult to conduct it in an orderly manner."

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Mayor Maclean responded to Dr. Waring with a helpful clarification:

No one has any idea of touching the old Armstrong College buildings on the north side of Gaston. These houses were included so that the owners could obtain FHA loans to improve their properties. … In this respect, being included in the inclusion of this plan is at least 18 months away. … No one

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continued his strong opposition to the new plan. According to Caldwell, the polarized positions in Savannah meant that the Regents “did not know what action to take, and so they did nothing.” But the issue of a new location also came up in the discussion, and Caldwell reported to Senator Grayson the opinions that were expressed.

I talked with President Hawes about the land in the southern part of the country that you suggested as a possible new site for the college. He thought the land was too low for a college campus. The Regents seem to want to keep the College in its present general location.49

Now that the new plan was in public view, city officials set out to convince the community and the Regents of its merits. The long reach from Gwinnett to Gaston, was seriously deteriorating, and the Armstrong project would clean it up. Arthur A. (“Don”) Mendonsa spoke as the executive of the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

Any plans which are proposed should be designed to preserve that which is good in the Armstrong neighborhood and to remove that which is bad … The Monterey Square proposal would preserve that which is good and would generally remove only that which is bad. The Monterey Square plan would eliminate most if not all of that which is good in this neighborhood and very little of that which is bad.50

Shifting the campus west of Whitaker Street, he noted, would also remove the problem of having a major traffic thoroughfare pass through the college grounds. Lee Adler, President of the Historic Savannah Foundation, put the question in terms of “simple economics.”

The new Chatham Square plan was clearly preferable to the Armstrong plan, especially since the city’s legal advisers had informed the mayor that the Monterey Square property would not meet the slum criteria for urban renewal funds. Meanwhile, Mayor Maclean renewed his efforts to persuade President Hawes to relinquish his insistence on the original Monterey Square plan, especially since the city’s legal advisers had informed the mayor that the Monterey Square property would not meet the slum criteria for urban renewal funds.

We feel that we would escape a great deal of local, vocal and legal opposition if you permitted us to proceed with the plan submitted … on the Chatham Square area. You

Student opinion generally agreed with President Hawes, as evident by the 250-300 students who signed a petition circulated by the Young Republican Club on campus.

In view of the increasing enrollment of students at Armstrong … the idea of a unified campus becomes important … Since we are the future citizens of the Savannah community we desire a Savannah that can say, “This is Armstrong” rather than “This and this and that over there is Armstrong.”51

An Inkwell editorial opposed the city’s new plan as one that would “disunify our campus,” and it criticized preservation-minded citizens as people who would “stand in the way of progress for a little bit of ironwork.”52

By now Caldwell was thoroughly uncomfortable with the Savannah situation. The strong views of President Hawes and the equally strong views on the opposing side did not bode well for a decision. Regents Chairman Robert Arnold decided that he needed to come and look at the situation for himself. Letters and maps and street names were no help at all to someone who by his own admission was “not a good map reader,” and Arnold did not like finding himself “in the position of being umpire” in someone else’s neighborhood.

An effort at compromise came from the Savannah Jaycees’ Community Affairs Committee, chaired by Henry Levy, who proposed a new (third) plan that would maintain a link between the old and new campus sections using Gordon Street as the connector but excluding the two trust lots on the west side of Monterey Square. The architectural integrity of the square itself would be maintained, and the Gordon Street houses south of the square would be protected by architectural restrictions designed to preserve the existing character of the neighborhood.53

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We feel that we would escape a great deal of local, vocal and legal opposition if you permitted us to proceed with the plan submitted … on the Chatham Square area. You
can rest assured that you will receive from us any permit you may need to build walkways over Whitaker Street if you so desire. To use [this] plan...would enable us to get started on this much needed project at an early date, an aim we all desire. We are fearful that if we do not have your concurrence and are not able to get going, Savannah will lose a great opportunity to expand Armstrong. In using...[this] plan the Chatham Square land and that to the South of it can be obtained at a much lower cost than the land in the vicinity of Monterey Square. Despite his preference for the city’s Chatham Square plan, Maclean was willing to accept the Jaycees’ proposal as a possible compromise, and Hawes also conceded that the new plan might work. He forwarded the Jaycees’ proposal to the Chancellor as an “acceptable compromise,” with a further comment. Approving the plan as proposed does not mean that other areas may not be included later. For example, the Shrine Home on the west side of Monterey Square is for sale or will be shortly. The other residence on the west side of this square may be acquired by condemnation proceedings if the Regents wish to do so. The compromise clearly received public support from a variety of people who saw Armstrong’s physical expansion directly related to future four-year status. Lee Adler announced the endorsement of Historic Savannah Foundation, “conscious of the economic and cultural benefits to be gained by the expansion of Armstrong College to a four-year college.” Representative Grady Dickey added his support: “Savannah is the second largest city in Georgia and certainly should be the home of a four-year college.” The compromise clearly pleased the Regents who were glad that everything seemed settled at last. They told President Hawes to proceed with the necessary appraisals. But then a small thread broke loose. From the beginning, the expansion plan (whatever version) was not supposed to cost the city anything. Under urban renewal, the federal government would provide two-thirds of the funds to acquire and prepare the property, while the remaining one-third came from the state, which in this case was understood to mean the funds that Savannah was already obligated to pay as part of Armstrong’s 1959 agreement to join the University System. Hubert Dewberry now informed the mayor that the one-third in question would have to come from the city, distinct from the funds in the 1959 agreement. Maclean began to negotiate for the city and state to share the expense. The total estimate to acquire and prepare all of the property in the Jaycees’ plan amounted to $1,635,359. Subtracting expected salvage sales and the two-thirds from the federal government, the remaining one-third came to $485,456. Appraisal values showed the mixed character of the neighborhood, demographically and architecturally. The 30.52 acres involved in the plan contained 496 dwellings, of which 404 were “substandard.” The area included 406 families: 298 white families and 108 black families. Aside from family units, 108 white individuals resided in the area and 54 black individuals. Seventeen businesses operated in the area. In the two blocks of the Gordon Street link between the old campus and the new, the appraised values ranged from $48,000 for 11 West Gordon Street to $4,500 for 127 West Gordon Street. Gordon Street itself became the next thread in the compromise to split, right down the middle of the street, south vs. north. On November 29, 1961, five of the property owners on the south side of the block, four ladies and one couple, wrote a joint letter to Regents Chairman Robert Arnold, who had not yet made his visit to Savannah. The letter-writers rose to defend their homes. The north side of the street, they argued, could provide Armstrong’s necessary link without having to involve the south side.

The North side of the one hundred block has already been included in the various plans for expansion with no objections. Consisting of a filling station, two decrepit buildings, and a monstrous apartment building or rooming house, this block is typical of the slum areas we will gladly “sacrifice.” In the “no hundred” block between Bull and Whitaker Streets is the Shriners Home, which we understand is up for sale as being no longer suitable for their needs.

This [south side] of the block has been well preserved. There is no blight on it. The property owners have remodeled [sic] their interiors, preserved their exteriors, invested heavily to make them comfortable homes with income producing units – offices and apartments. Of the six homes in the block, four are owned by widows who derive part of their income from units within their property. They have no men to speak for them. And [they] are taking this opportunity to tell the Regents that they are not willing to give up their homes without a better understanding of the necessity for this action. We have spent the greater part of our lives working on these homes to keep them comfortable and adapting them to our needs without destroying the integrity, the charm, and beauty of old Savannah. The letter not only reflected the mixed nature of the two-block area but also put Monterey Square back into the expansion picture by the mention of the Shrine building on one of the two trust lots carefully excluded from the compromise plan. Hawes wanted both trust lots for the college despite the compromise exclusion, and he repeatedly raised the matter in his correspondence to Atlanta.

Map 4. Jaycees Compromise Plan, 5 October 1961, showing Gordon Street as the link between the old campus and the new expansion area. The Regents were proceeding on another front. The timing, however, was unfortunate. On November 8, the Board authorized the purchase of the Quattlebaum building on the corner of Gaston and Whitaker streets as the site for a new construction for the college. In December, the Board approved the demolition of both the Quattlebaum building and the adjacent Lane building, already owned by the college, to make way for a new combination classroom and student services building. At that same meeting, the Board authorized negotiations to begin for the acquisition of the Alee Temple on Monterey Square. The Quattlebaum example suggested the fate that might lie in store for the Alee property once it passed into the hands of the University System. When the newspaper reported...
it. Should around Chatham Square, instead of historic sion. Armstrong’s expansion would take place where. the concerns of those like himself who were “deeply interested in the preservation of the architectural heri the Chancellor. His “Dear Harmon” letter expressed the Green on behalf of Savannah Restorations, Inc. William F. Shillman, Jr., a Savannah native now professor of architecture at Princeton University, wrote a scholarly defense of Savannah’s historic nineteenth century structures. The letters went to Chancellor Caldwell, to Chairman Arnold, and to Mayor Maclean. At the end of January 1962, Chairman Arnold finally arrived in Savannah, accompanied by Chancellor Caldwell and Hubert Dewberry, for a meeting arranged by the Savannah Chamber of Commerce. The meeting took place at the college; no reporters were allowed. When the dignitaries emerged, Chairman Arnold announced that the compromise plan had been altered to delete all property east of Whitaker Street, i.e., any property adjacent to Monterey Square, either thetrust lots or the homes of the Gordon Street widows. Instead, the vital connecting link would now shift one block south and run westward along Gaston Street from Whitaker to Barnard. The revision received the approval of the Chamber, the Jaycees, the city administration, the County Commission, Historic Savannah, and the Armstrong Alumni Association. But it did not please everyone. The revised plan still included Gordon Row (the 100 block), and now a new chorus of protest arose from Gaston Street. To Walter Hartridge, the plan constituted a complete betrayal of Mayor Maclin’s earlier assurances that “no one has any idea of tearing down Gordon Row or the houses on the North side of Gaston.” The quotation came from the mayor’s letter to the editor in March of the previous year. Since then, three proposals, numerous meetings, and a torrent of words in print and aloud had altered the landscape of the debate. Hartridge asked permission to attend the February meeting of the Board of Regents, and along with his request he submitted a letter from William G. Gnann, who stated unequivocally that his house on the northwest corner of Gaston and Whitaker Streets “is not for sale and cannot be acquired other than by condemnation which, if attempted, will be contested in court.” Chairman Arnold was not pleased. He thought that all of the disagreements had been resolved by the decisions made at the January meeting in Savannah. He suggested that Hartridge talk to the mayor. The mayor was now trying to deal with the fact that the latest revision in the plan increased the projected cost by $400,000, one-third of which he still hoped would not fall on the accounts of the city. His efforts to encourage the Regents to share that cost now had a new ally sitting at the table. In February 1962, the Board of Regents confirmed Governor Vandiver’s appointment of Savannah attorney Anton F. Solms as the first Savannah Regent since A. Pratt Adams served on the original Board in 1932. It was a timely appointment. During these early months of 1962, the possible conversion of junior colleges into four-year institu-tions became a campaign issue in the gubernatorial race. Lieutenant Governor Garland Byrd, an expected candidate, established a senate study committee to investigate ways to increase educational opportunities in Georgia, and visiting politicians campaigning in Savannah began to announce their support for four-year status for Armstrong. Former Governor Marvin Griffin, aspiring to sit in the governor’s chair again, included Armstrong in his promises to Savannah, as did Lieutenant Governor Byrd during his swing through the city. The public discussion prompted by these visits brought further clarification of the Regents’ reasons for expecting Savannah to pay for the land needed for Armstrong’s new buildings. Although the Board was willing to purchase land to expand its established institutions, it expected local communi ties to cover the property acquisition costs for the schools that had just joined the University System. Augusta, for example, had provided 70 acres of land with Augusta College. Columbus offered the Regents a generous 129 acres to establish the new junior college there. Brunswick, most recently designated as a site for a new junior college in the University System, gave the Regents 97 acres. Armstrong, by contrast, had brought with it 1.75 acres. The Regents thought that Savannah had a responsibility comparable to the other communities in providing land for the growth of the local college. But cost was not the only problem. The latest expansion plan did not sit well with another sector of Savannah society. On February 12, 1962, some of Savannah’s most respected ladies sat down at their desks to write polite but firm letters to the Board of Regents. Their friends followed suit in the course of the month. The letter-writers included some very old Savannah names: Mrs. Craig Barrow (Elfrida Derene), Mrs. George Noble Jones, and Caroline L.
Meldrim. They included women in leadership positions among women’s groups: Mrs. Shelby Myrick, past president of the Garden Club of Georgia; Robertine K. McClendon, Director of the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace; and Mrs. Frank Winer, Secretary of the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. They included women known to speak their minds, such as Savannah’s long-time civic activist, Lucy Barnes Meldrim.

I am seventy-five years old. I am a descendant of an original settler of Georgia with General Oglethorpe…. I own no property in the disputed area nor do I have any financial interest in same. I was the first Democratic Committee woman for Georgia after woman’s suffrage was made a law. My interest in this controversy is motivated by my deep love of my native heath and my distress at the shortsighted policy of destroying permanent architectural and historic assets when the same results can be secured by moving the present plan for expansion one half block to the South.

I do not believe the trustees [Board of Regents] are aware of the limited background of their Mr. Hawes, as far as architectural and aesthetic values of this old eighteenth century city are concerned. He is not a Savannahian and has never displayed any community interests outside the college which he identifies very deeply with himself.

To a person of my age and varied ties to Savannah, it seems most tragic that there should be any controversy over the expansion and development of Armstrong College to which we look forward eagerly. I have six children and thirteen grandchildren and it is vital to me that this institution should grow and prosper. But it is also vital to me that my descendants should protect the assets of their native city and not destroy them and that they should have sound aesthetic values as well as other facets of a good education.

Virginia Heard wrote her letter to describe the early days when she and Mayor Gamble walked the streets of Savannah looking for a location for the mayor’s dream of a two-year college for the city. Now she urged the Regents to abandon all ideas and plans to expand the physical facilities of Armstrong Junior college at its present location.

The acceptance of the Armstrong residence was the initial mistake. The modest physical expansion in this location has been injudicious.

An attempted further expansion would be an irreparable disaster. It would result only in facilities always inadequate for educational living. There would also be the added misfortune of the demolition of buildings of material worth and traditional value….

The college should be moved to one of several available suitable areas in the county.

During 1936 and 1937 I worked closely and actively with Mayor Thomas Gamble to establish a Savannah Junior College. At that time it was impossible for us to envision the tremendous educational explosion. Our idea was to provide some educational opportunity beyond high school for boys and girls unable to go away to college. Please act now not as we did in our ignorance but as you are now able in your knowledge.

Still another letter-writer, who described herself as one of the “Pro-Armstrong-in-a-reasonably-procurable-area group,” pointed out her indignation at the conduct and comments of a local realtor for the college (“I have never attended a meeting so discourteously conducted.”) and at President Hawes’s stubborn insistence on a unified campus:

Mr. Foreman Hawes…believe[s] that ONLY an area starting at Whitaker Street and running west will solve the needs of an Armstrong Campus. For some unfathomable reasons they are totally unable to see that starting at Barnard Street and going west (a slum area) will do just as well at ONE QUARTER THE COST…. Mr. Foreman Hawes’ decision to state the finest residential down-town section trusted the people at the meeting. Since his…long argument for this expensive procedure was based on the one word “contiguous,” it left little to be said. If the potential Armstrong students are incapable of enjoying a street they seem dubious candidates for higher education.

And the letters kept coming. Regents Chairman Robert Arnold was running out of patience. On March 8 he replied to one of the Savannah ladies.

I have your letter of March 7th. I have noted your opinion about the property near Armstrong College and I am forwarding the letter to Chancellor Caldwell. This entire matter will be discussed at the next meeting of the Regents. In view of the attitude of the various groups in Savannah, I doubt if Armstrong College can ever be successful unless it is moved to a new location at the edge of the city where room for expansion is available.

I would like to make one comment about Gordon Row. I saw this property recently and found it dirty and unkempt with many, many window lights broken out. The property seemed to have been abandoned to a great extent. Some of your societies should endeavor to clean it up a little if you want to keep and show [it] to visiotors.

On March 9, Arnold responded to William Gann, whose home on Gaston Street lay in the path of the expansion plan.

I have your letter of March 8th about Armstrong College. I hasten to add that I have had so many opinions from citizens and groups in Savannah that I have about reached the conclusion that there are almost as many different opinions as there are citizens in Savannah.

There is absolutely no chance for a college to survive in a community where there is no concord. Local support and community interest is [sic] absolutely vital to the welfare of the school.

It is my opinion that nothing should be done until the Savannah people settle their personal problems as related to Armstrong.

At some point in the future Mills B. Lane, Jr. entered into conversation with Chancellor Caldwell. On March 14, the Regents’ Committee on Buildings and Grounds reported the results of these conversations in the formal language of the Board’s minutes.

The Committee on Buildings and Grounds reported that Chancellor Harmon Caldwell informed the Committee that he had held several conferences with Mr. Mills B. Lane, Jr., of Atlanta, Georgia, who was interested in Savannah; that Mr. Lane’s father had given a building to the Armstrong College of Savannah; that the Mills Lane family was very interested in having an institution of higher learning in the City of Savannah to serve that section of the State of Georgia; that Mr. Lane had given considerable to a new site for the Armstrong College and had suggested that this new site should be free from traffic hazards and should be large enough for the full development of an outstanding institution; that Mr. Lane had offered to give to the Board of Regents a tract of land not exceeding 500 acres in size as a new site for the College; and that Chancellor Caldwell had recommended the acceptance of this gift; that Mr. Lane stated that the new site should be selected by the Board of Regents; and that when a suitable site was located Mr. Lane would purchase the site and make a donation of the site to the college.

The battle had ended. Almost exactly a year had passed since the first diagram appeared in the Savannah newspaper on the eve of St. Patrick’s Day 1961. Even though the idea of Armstrong moving completely away from the Bull and Gaston location had come up several times during the months of discussion, no one considered it to be a serious possibility. It seemed inconceivable that the college would simply walk away from its present $2 million property. Irving Victor, the new president of the Armstrong Alumni Association, heard the news from reporters who tracked him down in the middle of his Wednesday afternoon golf game. He could not believe it. Mayor Maclean believed it and declared it “the greatest thing that ever happened.” Chairman Arnold pronounced himself pleased and relieved. Lane commended the Regents for “thinking big.” No comment was recorded from President Hawes.

The correspondence of this period reveals the high emotions of the debate, both public and private. Several conclusions emerge very clearly, though other parts of the picture remain indistinct. The debate was never “against” Armstrong. Even the sharpest critics supported the college and its important role in the educational life of the community. The neighborhood in question offered a mixed picture of buildings in good repair and others in serious neglect. The effects of later preservation in that area and still satisfy its expansion needs. Barnard Street and its western environs would have changed dramatically as a result, and new debates would certainly have risen about what was lost or gained in the process. But more was involved here than President Hawes. The discussion included many interests and many personalities on all sides of the issue. College interests, urban renewal plans, preservation interests, the widows of
was away on a cruise and the Regents did not want to proceed without consulting him. As the spring progressed, additional political candidates came to town and called for the conversion of the new Armstrong to four-year status. The governor’s race now included Carl Sanders of Augusta, who took particular interest in the conversion of junior colleges to senior colleges in his own hometown as well as elsewhere. In Savannah, Mayor Macelede also included the issue in his election campaign. When the Armstrong graduates of the class of 1962 received their diplomas on June 12, there was still no news about the new location for the college. Lane returned at the end of the month, but the July meeting of the Board of Regents came and went without a decision. The Savannah Chamber of Commerce feared that if something definite did not happen soon the Regents would not be able to submit construction costs for Armstrong in their budget request for 1963. Chairman Arnold, however, reminded Savannahians that “When a fellow offers to give you several hundred thousand dollars, you don’t push him too hard.” Chancellor Caldwell told Hawes in early August that problems had surfaced about the tentatively approved site, but he did not indicate which site or what the problems were.

Elsewhere, Lane was conferring with the members of his family who comprised the Mills B. Lane Memorial Foundation, which would be the actual source of the money for the purchase of the new Armstrong site. Finally, on August 22, 1962, the announcement came. Armstrong’s new home would be a 250-acre site adjacent to the Windsor Forest subdivision at the end of Abercorn Extension. The aerial photograph showed only pine trees, beneath which an underbrush of weeds and brambles grew out of the sandy soil. Mr. Dewberry told his wife Sara, “I’ve made either a carload of friends or a carload of enemies.”

On October 23, 1962, in the Board Room of the C&S Bank in downtown Savannah, the final papers were signed. Regent Solms received the property for the Board of Regents as President Hawes and Hubert Dewberry looked on approvingly. In actuality, the Lane Foundation purchased 220 acres of the gift property, and 30 acres were the gift of Donald Livingston of the Delta Land Corporation. The total cost was $250,000. Even before the papers were signed, sealed, and delivered, the Regents requested $214 million from the state for the construction of the new campus. In January 1963, President Hawes presented the boycott. Sixty-two of them declared their intent to withdraw from Savannah State and apply for admission to Armstrong. The NAACP supported their action, claiming that “the war was over, but the post-war era was just beginning.” The two seniorites who launched a new chapter of the NAACP, and a spokesman for that organization explained that if the protest included applications to Armstrong it might draw the attention of the state authorities to investigate the situation more seriously.

In the two years since Alfred Owens’s application in 1961, three other African Americans had applied to Armstrong and been denied admission. Arthur Samuels, identified in the press as a “youthful Negro,” was turned down in September 1961 because his application lacked “the required supporting documents.” The following March, Samuels applied to Armstrong again, this time as a transfer student from Savannah State. He was now identified as the grandson of Moses J. Jackson, a well-known local African American advocate of schools for black children, whose work on behalf of his west Savannah community had won him the affectionate title of “mayor” of West Savannah. Armstrong again denied Samuels admission, this time on the basis of his SAT scores, despite his status as a student at Savannah State. The summer of 1962 brought two more applications from Savannah State students, Lauretta Abram and Herbert Owen. Owen sent a personal inquiry to Chancellor Caldwell about Armstrong’s admission requirements and about the possibility of taking courses simultaneously at Armstrong and Savannah State. The Chancellor replied that he knew of no prohibition against doing so and offered a further personal opinion that “If a student registered in one institution seeks to take additional work in a second institution, I think the fact that he is already enrolled in one institution is a factor to be considered by the admissions officer of the second institution.” But no black student entered Armstrong in the fall of 1962.

The following spring, on Friday, May 3, 1963, sixty students from the Savannah State boycott arrived at the front door of the Armstrong mansion to request application forms. The early morning radio news had broadcast their intent, and by the time they arrived Armstrong’s admissions officer Nellie Schmidt was
ready with fifty packets of materials. When the packets gave out, she put out a sheet of paper for names and addresses where materials could be sent. Many of the students were reluctant to sign the sheet, but fifty walked away with the prepared packets. The day had a particularly bizarre quality about it since Armstrong was in the midst of its annual Pioneer Days celebration. Classes began in an atmosphere of mingled fear and excitement, and various signs of the old west theme appeared around the campus. In the corner of the front yard hung a noose, innocent enough in the playful spirit of Pioneer Days; but Schmidt, from an upstairs window, viewed it with horror as the black students came and went through the front gate. The day passed without incident, but during the night a cross burned on college property near the corner of Whitaker and Gaston Streets. The fire department quickly extinguished it and soaked a second cross nearby that had not been ignited.

On Monday, six more students picked up Armstrong application forms, and Chancellor Caldwell and Regents Chairman James Dunlap arrived in town to talk to the Savannah State student body. They outlined a host of undesirable consequences that lay in store for the students who had withdrawn from Savannah State, including the fact that their withdrawal would not be viewed as following officially approved procedures, making them inadmissible to any other school in the University System. By the end of the week, the two seniors who had sparked the boycott issued carefully worded statements of regret for any part of their conduct that had been improper. Their reinstatement was formally followed, and they were readmitted and permitted to return to class. The crisis subsided.

Of the sixty-eight students who received or requested one of Nellie Schmidt’s packets, only one filled out the application form and returned it. His name was Otis Samuel Johnson. The discovery that he alone out of more than thirty protestors now stood as the sole applicant to Armstrong taught him a “lesson for life.”

Johnson applied for admission for the summer term of 1963, the summer that marked the height of the civil rights movement across the United States. In Savannah, twice a day, noon and night, Hosea Williams led rallies and marches in Wright Square, on Broughton Street, and in other locations in the downtown area. Sunday was the day for mass meetings. Mayor Maclean and the leadership of the black community worked hard to prevent any outbreaks of violence, but the summer heat pricked with tension.

It was certainly a tense time for Armstrong officials and for Otis Johnson. Johnson conferred with NAACP head Wesley W. Law in making the decision to stand by his application, and Law notified the NAACP’s local chapter of the need for fund in case its assistance might be needed. Even though he was a transfer student, Johnson “played the game” and took the admission test that Armstrong required in order to remove any reasons to deny his application. Dean Joe Killorin telephoned Johnson to ask him to think carefully about his decision and to inform him that the application would have to be submitted to the Regents. Nellie Schmidt, who found Johnson well-qualified for admission and a likely prospect for Armstrong’s honor roll, sent his forms forward to Atlanta. Shortly thereafter she and President Hawes met with a review committee of the Regents in the Chancellor’s office suite to discuss Johnson’s application. Outside of the meeting room, an angry Regent confronted her in the hallway and told her to “interview him and turn him down!” But the committee did not overrule her decision to proceed with Johnson’s acceptance.

On Sunday afternoon, June 9, Johnson received another telephone call from Joe Killorin, this time asking him to come to the college to meet with President Hawes and himself. The two men informed him of his acceptance, and Killorin registered him for his summer classes. There would be no need for Johnson to come to campus on registration day. He would simply arrive for his first class on Wednesday. On Monday morning at 8:00 a.m., barricades went up to seal the campus at the intersections along Drayton, Bull, and Whitaker Ropes formed off an area from the north side of Monterey Square to the fountain in Forsyth Park. A notice on the door of the Armstrong mansion appeared over the signature of Savannah Police Chief Sidney B. Barnes: “By order of Chancellor Harmon Caldwell of the University System of Georgia, I am hereby closing the buildings and grounds of Armstrong College in accordance with Section 263004 Trespass of Public Property.”

No one but students and employees would be admitted within the restricted area. Hawes issued a terse statement: “A Negro student who has completed his freshman year of college has applied for admission to Armstrong College for the summer term. He has met in full the entrance requirements of the institution. He has been admitted and has been registered.”

Hawes did not name the student or the college at which he took his freshman work, but most of the vital information appeared in the newspaper the next morning: Otis Samuel Johnson, 21-year-old navy veteran, from Savannah State College. Nothing was said to connect him with the spiring protest movement. Despite Hawes’s further comment that he “would like to make this as unsensational as possible,” he had conferred with the Chancellor about necessary precautions; and twenty-five state troopers stationed with Savannah police officers took their place around the perimeter of the campus. A fire truck, with its hoses connected to a hydrant, stood across the street from the schoolhouse door in Tuscaloosa to bar the entry of black students to white classrooms in Alabama.

The following day, June 12, Medgar Evers was shot and killed in Jackson, Mississippi. At Armstrong, summer classes began in an atmosphere of strained calm. Joe Killorin waited for the violence to erupt.

At some time in the late afternoon, a Milton cab (the cab carrier for African Americans) entered Monterey Square to deliver Johnson for his 6:00 p.m. class. He arrived early and waited in Dean Killorin’s office on the second floor. Bill Coyle came across the hall to be introduced and to make academic small talk. Johnson appeared tense but remained composed and soft-spoken. His first class was a philosophy class with Orson Beecher. The other students arrived and took seats at a distance from the new student. Beecher began the class without attention to anything unusual about its circumstances. At 8:00 p.m., Johnson proceeded to his second class, Bill Coyle’s political science course. Again, the white students segregated themselves on one side of the room, but again the class went forward without incident.
The peaceful proceedings left Hawes pleased and greatly relieved, and he commended the students for their cooperation. His personal opinions remained guarded, but he was clear about the conduct that he expected to enforce on campus.

An educational institution ordered by a federal court to accept a student applicant loses control over admissions, at least to some extent. This is a situation which colleges and universities are anxious to avoid.

We ask your continued cooperation to the end that we will avoid having even one unpleasant incident during the summer term. This is not an attempt to influence your attitudes and beliefs in any way. The college is concerned only with maintaining law and order.

The college will not tolerate a demonstration of any kind on college property, including attempts to harass or intimidate. While it is certainly not anticipated and it is no more than a remote possibility, that students will become involved in demonstrations and/or attempted intimidation, if this should happen, the student or students will be dismissed from the college.

The state police and the fire truck remained in place through Friday and Saturday, though the confined area and the number of officers on duty were both reduced. By the following week, the campus was normal again. Johnson found that he could walk to school unescorted, but once on campus he received the “invisible man treatment” from the other students.

He became equally invisible in Armstrong’s photographic records. No pictures of him appeared in the ‘Georgia or in The Inkwell’ during his entire time at Armstrong. At the end of the summer, Nellie Schmidl’s prediction came true, and his name appeared in the list of fifty-four honor roll students for the entire time at Armstrong. At the end of the summer, Savannah State University Archives.

Ottis Johnson as a student.

While it is certain that the choice of his successor showed one more example of how life now was different under the University System.

Part of the question centered on Henry Ashmore’s background and training in the field of education, rather than in a discipline from the arts and sciences.

His undergraduate degree as well as his master’s degree and his doctorate (all from the University of Florida) carried education degree labels. He had taught in the education department at Georgia Southern College during the early 1950s, and he had also served as a high school principal. He had become president of Pensacola Junior College in 1953. The faculty there now numbered 140; a third held doctorates.

The growth that had occurred during his presidency certainly commended him to the Regents, but it did not impress the Armstrong faculty who were strongly influenced by their loyalty to President Hawes and by their belief in the importance of a liberal arts background for their president. Hawes’s training was in the field of chemistry, in which he held a master’s degree.

He had been president of Armstrong for nineteen years, and all but two of his present faculty had known no other president. The majority of the full-time faculty came from liberal arts backgrounds, and the college Bulletin always stressed a liberal arts purpose.

The two-year curriculum centered on a liberal arts core, and the vast majority of Armstrong graduates received their diploma in liberal arts. The business courses and courses for nurses were important but not the central emphasis, and enrollment in the community-oriented programs of the Technical Institute suffered from the age-limit law and from the lack of a four-year engineering degree.

Joseph Killorin captured Armstrong’s vision of liberal arts education in his 1963 report to the Chancellor.

The real purpose of Armstrong’s life as an institution from 1955 to the present, as the faculty has described it from time to time, does not differ from the purpose which colleges have envisioned in the Western World for centuries: to bring to bear the intellectual and moral energies of an able community of teachers to help men and women, especially the young, to free themselves from their own limitations of ignorance, to discipline them in the arts and sciences of civilization, and to teach them to discover the usefulness of knowledge for living in a world where they are citizens, working men and women, and individual spirits seeking enlightenment.

The Armstrong faculty, out of loyalty and professional inclination, believed that a president with a liberal arts background could best lead an institution that held such a vision of its purpose.

The Board of Regents saw things differently. On February 24, 1964, Callaway, Solms, and Vice-Chancellor Martin met in Savannah with members of the Armstrong Commission to convince them that Armstrong needed a new president. It would not be right for a new President to come in just after a new faculty had been brought in by someone else and a new campus had been planned by someone else.

They again outlined Armstrong’s qualifications, and they proposed a retirement package for Hawes that would treat his total years at Armstrong as if they had been under the University System. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Regents’ officials proceeded immediately to speak with President Hawes and to inform him that the Board intended to appoint Henry Ashmore to assume office as of July 1, 1964. Hawes still questioned Ashmore’s suitability, but Callaway did not believe that he would actively oppose the appointment.

What Callaway did not count on was an outburst of opinion by other people in opposition to the Armstrong appointment. Again a flurry of letters and telegrams descended on Atlanta.

On March 11, a delegation of faculty, alumni, and Commission members appeared before the Regents in Atlanta in one last effort to dissuade them from their choice. The Regents listened

As the fall term approached, Johnson made his decision to continue at Armstrong for the next year and to complete the associate degree program there. Since no other black students followed his lead and applied for admission for the fall quarter, he continued his journey alone.

Beginning with the fall term, he took day classes and found several students who made a particular effort to reach out to him, student leaders as well as student “radicals,” male and female alike. He sat with them in The Dump and discussed the civil rights movement and the activities of the Students for Democratic Action, but he remained very careful to do nothing that might get him expelled. In June he graduated with the class of 1964.

The END OF DAYS DOWNTOWN

Aside from the desegregation story, Armstrong focused its attention during 1963 and 1964 on plans for the new campus and the new four-year curriculum. Preliminary sketches of the buildings began to appear in the newspaper. Hanes and Killorin submitted a formal proposal for baccalaureate degree programs in English, history, biology, chemistry, and business administration, with provisions for teaching certification programs in each area.

To teach the new curriculum, the college would need to double its thirty-three member faculty, particularly to include faculty holding the doctoral degree. In 1963, only Dr. Davenport, head of the biology department, held a doctorate. For the Regents, the immediate question concerned the man at the top of the institution. Foreman Hawes was sixty-four years old and would in all likelihood retire at age sixty-seven, shortly after Armstrong moved to its new location in either 1965 or 1966. Should not the construction and occupation of the new campus be directed by the president who would actually oversee the future life of the new Armstrong? The Regents were giving the matter considerable thought. It was particularly interested in the forty-four year old president of Pensacola Junior College, Henry Ludlow Ashmore, who had led the Pensacola school through a $5 million construction program when student enrollment there grew from 300 to 3,800 during the eleven years of his presidency.

The Education Committee of the Regents, chaired by Howard (Bo) Callaway, contacted Ashmore; and in September 1963, Callaway, Regent Anton Solms, and Vice-Chancellor Walter Martin met with President Hawes on the subject of his retirement. Hawes strongly opposed the prospect of an early retirement and the selection of Ashmore. He certainly had no desire to be the center of a public controversy, but the choice of his successor showed one more example of how life now was different under the University System.

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and the next day voted to elect Henry Ashmore as the new president of Armstrong.159 The decision and the method drew comment on the March 12 editorial page of the Atlanta Constitution, which described the Board’s action as a source of “grave doubts about the future direction of higher education in Georgia… The present closed-door, private club method of procedure leaves the bad taste of smoke-filled room politics.”160 Privately, Chancellor Caldwell expressed his regrets to Dorothy Thompson of the Armstrong faculty: “It was my hope that your letter and similar expressions from others interested in the College would persuade the Regents that no change should be made in the administration personnel of the College at this time. I am really sorry that things took the course they did.”161

Hawes attended the meeting in Atlanta with the Savannah delegation but made no public comment until the issue was settled. And then his statement was completely in character. The Board’s decision ended the discussion. The important thing now was Armstrong’s future, and he pledged his complete support.162 Henry Ashmore assured the faculty and community that they had no cause to worry, and he promised to continue the liberal arts “flavor” of Armstrong’s past.163 As for the objections that had been raised, he simply observed, “I’ve run into criticism before.”164 He also pointed out that his background included more liberal arts preparation than his degree labels indicated. His undergraduate work qualified for a triple major in English and political science as well as education, and his graduate work at both the master’s and doctoral level carried a strong minor in sociology. As for the field of education, he described his views with wry amusement: “The irony of all this…is that as a retired and former president of a four-year college I am qualified to speak on the proliferation of education courses.”165 Ashmore argued that the change would be most important for efforts to recruit new faculty holding doctoral degrees. The Board approved the request with the ironic result that the September freshmen paid increased fees suitable to a four-year institution but faculty salaries remained unchanged since the institutional budget and faculty contracts were already in place.166

Two formal rituals remained to close one era of Armstrong’s history and open a new one. The first took place on Friday, May 22, 1964, beneath the old harbor light in Emmett Park, where well-wishers gathered to honor Foreman and Lilla Hawes at a retirement party hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Mills Lane. Armstrong’s two former presidents, Ernest Lowe and Thomas Askew, returned to join the celebration. The three men sported snappy straw hats with Armstrong's hallmark to make the occasion feel festive. But the atmosphere was strained and poignant. Hawes told Martha Fay that it “felt like a wake.”167 As a retirement gift, Hawes received a fully equipped camper to enable him to enjoy his hobby of fishing and exploring the old canals of coastal Georgia. The bittersweet taste of the farewell was unmistakable, however, and was in no way diminished by the captions that accompanied the news photos of the party: “Three Prexies, All In A Row…One Got A Camper So He Can Go.”168 On June 7, Hawes officiated at his last graduation. The graduates included Oris Johnson.

The second ritual occurred at the end of July when Henry Ashmore, now formally in office, presided over the groundbreaking ceremonies for the new campus. On Wednesday morning, July 29, 1964, a long, flatbed truck, its utilitarian nature slightly concealed by red, white, and blue bunting, stopped at the far end of Abercorn Extension where the paved road stopped at a wooden barricade. In front of the barrier sat the Marine Corps Band from Parris Island to entertain the crowd before the speeches began at 11:00. The platform guests seated on the flatbed truck included representatives from the Board of Regents, Mayor Maclean, Chatham County Chairman Robert F. Lovett, various legislators, Mills Lane, Foreman Hawes, and others. Governor Carl Sanders was the featured speaker for the occasion. After the speeches, the Governor, Mills Lane, and Regent Solms turned the required spadeful of dirt.

Most of the pine trees had been cleared away, but the rest of the site remained in a state of nature rough enough to ruin Sara Dewberry’s shoes. Afterwards, as the guests arrived at the DeSoto Hotel for lunch, the gentlemen were still picking the sawdust and beggar’s lice from the cuffs of their trousers.169

But it was a pleasant occasion, far more pleasant than another official duty that confronted Armstrong’s new president during his first summer in office. A cheating scandal surfaced in the wake of the spring term after two students obtained an advance copy of an English exam and offered it for sale to their classmates. When the evidence came to light, Ashmore created a board of inquiry, and the investigation resulted in the expulsion of the two perpetrators and the suspension of seventeen students who had purchased the exam information.170 Armstrong did not have a formal honor court system, which Ashmore believed would help to deter
cheating. Earlier Armstrong students were proud of the fact that the school did not have and did not need a formal honor code or even detailed rules of behavior. But President Hawes noted in his annual report for 1961-62 that the use of an honor pledge as part of the application form was no longer sufficient. The cheating scandal in the summer of 1964 led directly to the creation of Armstrong's student honor court system, which went into effect in the fall of 1965 and claimed to be the first in the University System of Georgia.

In other respects, campus life moved easily through the last days on the corner of Bull and Gaston Streets in expectation of the changes that lay ahead. The Inkwell raised the question of football, but both the Chancellor's office and SACS warned against it. Basketball remained the athletic mainstay, but baseball arrived as Armstrong's second varsity sport in the spring of 1963 and began to build its own creditable reputation.

At the new campus, Armstrong would have its own gymnasium and athletic facilities and no longer have to beg, borrow, or rent them all over town.

On the social side of life, fraternities and sororities, which were prohibited at two-year schools in the University System, hovered around the edge of the college without official recognition; or, in the words of the Inkwell, “Yes, We Have No — Sororities and Fraternities At Armstrong.” One unrecognized fraternity “house” operated across Bull Street above the eatery behind the Oglethorpe Club. But as soon as four-year status went into effect, the way was open for the Greeks to become public again. Student pundits offered their own proposal for a new degree parallel to the programs being submitted by Hawes and Killorin. A Bachelor of Fun Arts (B.F.A.) seemed like a good idea, but it was not likely to gain approval from the Regents, who were “not a fun group.” The Fun Arts were never lacking at Armstrong, however, where the usual campus characters might display their masculine charms in wigs, cigars, and strapless ball gowns for a Homecoming parade or challenge Georgia Southern’s students for the best racing time between Savannah and Statesboro in a bathtub on wheels. In the days before the Interstate, the fifty-two mile route traveled through various rural communities, and Armstrong’s team might even have won had not the Pooler police pulled the bathtub crew aside to allow the backed-up traffic on the two-lane road a chance to pass. There were blanket parties at Hilton Head, well worth the thirty-five cents toll to cross the Talmadge Bridge; and a good street dance with music by “Down in the Boondocks” Billy Joe Royal might cost no more than $25 and a fifth of Jack Daniels for the musicians if “Boondocks” Billy Joe Royal might cost no more than $25 and a fifth of Jack Daniels for the musicians if the dance committee chairman had the right connection.

In September 1964, President Ashmore and the faculty gathered for their first formal faculty meeting and began the process of getting better acquainted with each other. In an attempt to dispel any hard feelings from the controversy that had surrounded his appointment, Ashmore began the meeting with a lengthy tale about a Chinese princess. The main point of the story, whose details have disappeared, was that difficult beginnings can nevertheless turn out satisfactorily in the end. But the story also showed that Ashmore had been to China. Unlike his predecessor, this president liked to travel. His China interests were especially strong; and before the end of the year, Ashmore brought to town Dr. K.C. Wu, a former official of the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek, to speak to the Kiwanis Club and subsequently join the Armstrong faculty. Wu held an established reputation in academic circles. His classes, on both the old campus and the new, were immensely popular as he introduced the students of the 1960s and 1970s to the Confucian values of courtesy and respect.

The other new feature that appeared at Ashmore’s first faculty meeting was the announcement that the usual faculty dinner at the beginning of school would take place at the Pirates’ House. Over the years, faculty dinners and parties were held at a variety of places and frequently at the Oglethorpe Club. The Commission paid one-half of President Hawes’s membership at the club, and Hawes used the convenient location for many college-related events, including the memorable luncheon interviews with prospective faculty. Hawes told the Commission that the connection with the Oglethorpe Club was an important one for the college to maintain. President Ashmore never became a member of the Oglethorpe Club, nor did President Ashmore drink alcoholic beverages.

Governor Carl Sandburg, standing. Mills B. Lane, Jr. to right of podium. Savannah Morning News. Used by permission.

President Henry Ashmore. ‘Godiva 1967.’

In November 1964, as construction proceeded on the new campus, a new development entered the scene with the announcement that Hunter Field would close in June 1967. Local business leaders quickly requested the Industrial Development Division at Georgia Tech to make recommendations about ways to attract new industry to offset the economic impact of the loss. For Armstrong, the closing of the base offered interesting possibilities for student housing and for new programs. President Ashmore went out to look things over and saw a natural educational complex, with eating facilities, a theater auditorium, recreational facilities, a hospital, a dental clinic, and residential quarters that were in excellent shape to serve as dormitories, even though Hunter was some three miles distant from the new campus. Of particular interest to Ashmore was the possibility of developing paramedical programs using the hospital and dental facilities at the base. The Georgia Tech report, which appeared in April 1965, outlined ways in which both Armstrong and Georgia Tech could use the Hunter site. Georgia Tech might establish an extension program in engineering;
and Armstrong might develop a paramedical training program, an oceanography institute, and a paper technology program to supplement the research of the University System, a fact that had been made, or even discussed, in 1959 when the college joined the state of Georgia.

One of the things that would not be left behind was the Armstrong name. On February 3, 1965, President Ashmore asked the faculty to consider a possible change in the name of the college in order to link it more clearly with the University System, a fact that was carried forward to the new campus: a Gamble Hall classroom building, a Jenkins Hall auditorium, and the Lane name for the college’s new library. The disposition of the buildings of the old campus remained a subject of considerable interest, but it was not a matter over which the college had any voice or control. On December 11, 1965, alumni and friends strolled over which the college had any voice or control.

On December 11, 1965, alumni and friends strolled the walkways of the old campus in a final “Farewell to Armstrong.” Thirty years of memories filled the class rooms and corridors. The old mansion, like a great gray wooden bench, with a deep seat and high arms, much too uncomfortable to deserve the name of ‘sofa’ and not much helped by a thin red velvet cushion, came to pay their respects. The moving trucks arrived in the entry hall of the mansion where it served as an ample dimensions over the years.

A companion piece of furniture original to the Armstrong home also made the move. An over-sized, ornately carved, medieval-looking, straight-backed wooden bench, with a deep seat and high arms, much too uncomfortable to deserve the name of ‘sofa’ and not much helped by a thin red velvet cushion, came down from an upper landing of the great stairway, or too uncomfortable for sitting, but more than one Armstrong couple had found other ways to use its ample dimensions over the years. A companion piece traveled with it, a long low chest that usually stood in the entry hall of the mansion where it served as an equally uncomfortable seat for Mrs. Hawes and countless other chaperons during the days of college dances in the lobby. The portraits of Mr. Armstrong and Mayor Gamble came down from the walls. Gamble reappeared in the new classroom building that bore his name. Mr. Armstrong did not make the move.

The college library disentangled its collection from the Georgia Historical Society to provide a good but too-small core of books for the upcoming baccalaureate programs. Some of the volumes still bore nameplates of the 1935 donors to the college’s first book drive, and the literature and history collections included items from Thomas Gamble himself.

Armstrong was not the only downtown institution undergoing a major change in the fall of 1965. The old DeSoto Hotel was about to give way to a new modern member of the Hilton chain. The first Armstrong students took their swimming classes in the old DeSoto’s outdoor pool. Frank Cheatham held his committee hearing on the Junior College Bill in one of the hotel’s conference rooms. Students danced and graduated in the hotel’s ballroom. The building held endless memories from Armstrong’s history. Around the swimming pool stood a number of tall, slow-growing palm trees. Carefully dug from the earth and loaded onto army trucks by Hunter troops, with the dirt of downtown Savannah still clinging to their roots, the palm trees made the trek to the south side of town and carried some of the old ground to the new.

The portraits of Mr. Armstrong and Mayor Gamble. Courtesy of the Georgia Historical Society.
SALE OF THE DOWNTOWN PROPERTY

The old Armstrong College properties along Gaston Street and on Monterey Square occupied a prime location and consisted of structures of considerable interest and value, even though the wear and tear of college use left its mark on all of the buildings. The Board of Regents announced the first round of bids for the property for May 1966. The bidding was low. Historic Savannah Foundation submitted a total bid of $150,000 for the Armstrong mansion, Jenkins Auditorium, the Lane Building, the Hunt Building, and the Quattlebaum Building. Savannah Forward Foundation, Inc. submitted a bid of $75,000 for the Gamble Building. Mikve Israel followed distantly with a bid of $40,000 for the same building, which had been appraised at $135,000.193 The Board of Regents rejected all of the bids and announced a second round for August. Historic Savannah now entered a new bid of $235,000 for all of the Armstrong properties, an increase of $10,000 over the combined amount of the two previous high bids but still nearly $100,000 short of the appraised value of the properties.194 The Board of Regents took the offer. On February 7, 1967, Lee Adler, president of Historic Savannah Foundation, presented a check for $235,000 to Armstrong’s comptroller, Jule Rossiter, as the representative of the Board of Regents. They stood on the steps of the Armstrong mansion for the presentation.195 All of the money went to Armstrong: $60,000 for landscaping at the new campus, $164,000 toward new construction at the campus, and the remainder to the cost of security for the old campus prior to its sale.196

But the story was not quite finished. In August 1968, antique dealer James Williams, who had purchased the Armstrong mansion and Jenkins auditorium from Historic Savannah, announced plans to raze the auditorium. Efforts by Walter Hartridge to purchase the building failed, and the date for the wrecking ball was set for October. Victoria Jenkins, daughter of Herschel Jenkins, made a last effort for a stay of execution. On November 2, she announced that she had purchased from Jim Williams, at an undisclosed price, the building that bore her father’s name.197 The agreement between Williams and Historic Savannah Foundation, however, carried a provision that the Foundation would have first refusal on any future sale of the properties that Williams had purchased. Historic Savannah had issued a verbal waiver to allow Miss Jenkins to proceed with her purchase, but Lee Adler, treasurer of the Foundation, reviewed and reversed the decision, ruling that a waiver was not possible.198 The auditorium disappeared from the scene as if it had never been there at all.
CHAPTER 7
A Period of Adjustment:
1966 – 1970

From the beginning, it was one size too small. Or, at best, it was barely ready for occupancy. The 250 acres at the southernmost end of Abercorn Extension allowed ample room for growth, but the buildings into which the college moved in January 1966 were only enough to get started. Henry Ashmore had already sent forward proposals for two additional classroom buildings and an enlarged student center to accommodate the students in the four-year programs that were scheduled to be in place by graduation 1968. According to President Ashmore, the new campus actually had fewer classrooms and offices than at the downtown location. Of course, in the downtown buildings, a large closet or pantry could count as a faculty office, and classrooms came in equally irregular sizes and shapes. The first years on the new campus would be a period of adjustment in many ways as Armstrong developed the buildings and programs needed for a baccalaureate institution. A great wave of new faculty members and administrators arrived between 1966 and 1970 to oversee, design, and teach the new curriculum. Formal statutes and by-laws established new committees and procedures for college governance. Students moved through the period of adjustment with an awkward ambivalence. Many of the habits and traditions from the downtown college came to the new campus, but some of them did not seem to fit any more, like a favorite old sweater now outgrown and slightly out of fashion.

The move coincided with the changes in American society that accompanied the late 1960s. On campuses around the country, the Vietnam War and its accompanying political activism challenged established conventions. Some of these attitudes arrived with Armstrong’s new faculty, who brought the political character of the period into their classrooms and into the debates on governance and campus life. A few memorable students and one major memorable moment gave the college a brief experience of the high political consciousness of the times, but the general tone of life at Armstrong remained mild as students and faculty developed their new identity as a four-year institution.

NEW BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS
The most striking feature of Armstrong’s new identity in January 1966 was its distance from Savannah. Armstrong now resided out in the country, at the end of the “road to nowhere.” Abercorn Extension ended abruptly at a barricade at the far front corner of the campus, four miles beyond the city limit at Stephenson Avenue. Windsor Forest subdivision lay quietly nearby, but most of the surrounding area consisted of woods. The new Weiss Cinema offered movies to southside residents, but other commercial development was minimal. Only one eating establishment, Harvard’s Bar-B-Que, across from the movie theater, advertised in The Inkwell; and a small “Varsity Park and Shop” offered modest services at the corner of Abercorn and Largo. Zoning restrictions held the line against gas stations and other enterprises considered “detrimental to the appearance and welfare of the area.” The transit company did not provide bus service to this part of Chatham County until January 3, 1966, the opening day of Armstrong’s winter term, when bus #14 made the run for a fare of twenty cents. The route did not make many stops since much of the area south of Derenne remained undeveloped. But Savannah was...
President Henry Ashmore. 'Goochel 1966.

Even as the bulldozers continued their work on campus, two off-campus issues crowded around the construction scene. One concerned the question of dormitories. In the minds of many people, a four-year college meant dormitories, but the Board of Regents had no plans for dorms at Armstrong or at any of the other newly expanded four-year units in the University System. Private investors, however, saw an opportunity at hand. From 1965 to 1967, four private developers proposed plans for student housing close to the Armstrong campus. The first and most ambitious plan envisioned dormitories for 200 students on an 8.2-acre tract just east of the college. The published layout showed two pairs of residence halls, each three stories high, with the ground floor space occupied by a barber shop, a beauty salon, and laundry services. The complex would also include a separate drug store, snack shop, and gas station. As developer Phillip Cranman told the newspaper, students should not have to drive “five miles into town for a hamburger, aspirin, toothpaste, or gasoline.” The Metropolitan Planning Commission disagreed: the area in question was zoned for residential, not commercial use. Two other developers submitted plans to house 200 to 300 students, but without auxiliary services, and Armstrong business professor Sarvan Bhatia proposed a design for thirty-two students as an example that a small-scale venture was possible. Even from the Armstrong Alumni Association considered investing in dormitory construction.

The unresolved issue of Armstrong’s relationship with Hunter Field made all dormitory proposals risky. The huge expanse of the Hunter base extended a long arm southward, not far from the campus. Despite the major investment in the new Abercorn site, the idea that Armstrong might use the buildings at Hunter for dormitories or other purposes remained strong. The Hunter Redevelopment Committee chaired by former mayor Lee Minglelof requested the Board of Regents to take over the Hunter site. After the March 9 dedication ceremony at the Armstrong campus, the visiting Regents joined local dignitaries and college officials for lunch at the Hunter Officers’ Club. Perhaps it was the closest place for a formal meal, but it also offered an opportunity to view the grounds. In response to the urging of community spokesmen, the Board of Regents undertook an investigation of possible options for the soon-to-be abandoned base. The investigation continued through the fall. Ashmore remained publicly non-committal, but his new Dean of Student Affairs, James Rogers, offered his personal opinion in favor of moving to Hunter. “If you had just bought a brand new Volkswagen and then someone gave you a fully equipped Cadillac, which car would you keep?” University System Chancellor George Simpson was not persuaded. The Hunter facilities needed expensive renovation, he argued, and the same money could receive matching funds for new construction on Armstrong’s present campus. And an airstrip that might be activated by a future industrial neighbor was not a desirable feature for an academic environment. Despite continued efforts from community leaders, in November 1966 the Board voted firmly against acquiring the Hunter property. The dormitory issue never experienced equally clear closure. It remained just out of reach but never out of mind.

On the campus itself, two new academic buildings, situated parallel to the original classroom buildings, were ready for occupancy in the winter of 1969. They repeated the same architectural style, with the additional flourish of a marble cornice above the second story. Chancellor Simpson thought it an attractive solution to the problem of the buildings on either side. The students proceeded to create their own paths, especially to the student center, and it contrasted nicely with the bayouet plants installed by grounds superintendent Richard Baker to discourage their beeline to the bridge tables. Gradually, additional walkways followed the footpaths of campus traffic.

In addition to the two new classroom buildings, other construction hurried to keep pace with the growth of the four-year population. Jenkins Auditorium added workspace for the theater group, and the student center moved to a new two-story structure, leaving behind the bookstore and the vending machines in the original building on the quadrangle. Ashmore added two new wings on the administration building in 1970. Library expansion waited its turn, as did the need to expand and air-condition the gymnasium, which was the only non-air-conditioned building on campus, despite the fact that it was the one place big enough for large gatherings such as special lectures, dances, and September registration.

The familiar names from the downtown days carried forward to the new buildings. The primary classroom building became Gamble Hall and housed the departments of English and history, subjects dear to the heart of the founding mayor. His portrait took its place in the central hallway. The small auditorium honored publisher and patron Herschel Jenkins, as had the auditorium that the college built on Gaston Street. Lane Library commemorated the family whose generosity had benefited both the old campus and the new one. The science building, which was the other classroom building, remained unnamed. The faculty petitioned to name it for Foreman Hawes, but Regents’ policy prohibited naming buildings for persons still living. The administration building also retained only its generic name. The student center, by faculty request, became the Memorial Student Center in memory of students who had died in World War II. But the first students who used the building insisted on calling it “The Dump” in memory of their hangout at the downtown campus. That memory (and name) gradually faded, but the bridge tables and the blue smoke continued. The two new classroom buildings of 1969 acquired names that showed the transition from old times to new ones. The administration building became Victor Hall in honor of Terry Victor, the late wife of Irving Victor, who as chairman of the Armstrong Commission continued to champion his alma mater at its new location. The other new classroom building, on the west side of the campus, became Solms Hall, named for Annie Lee Solms, the mother of Tony Solms, who as a member of the Board of Regents had been a mediating voice during the crisis days prior to the move and had also worked to persuade the Regents to allocate funds for the two new
the rest of their academic careers. They listened to the stories of the old days and quickly constituted a second level of leadership alongside their predecessors. Some of them appeared in a student-faculty basketball game in February 1967, where The Inkwell sports reporter ignored their academic credentials in favor of more graphic descriptions. Hardnose Henry Ashmore led the line-up. The history department contributed the Wizard of Oz Lanier and the Jolly Green Giant John Duncan, 6’7” tall, wearing bright green tights beneath his gym shorts. From the chemistry department came Stone Face [Henry] Harris and the British hornet Cedric Stratton (never did “one so small take strides so long”). Robert-Louis-Stevenson-Strozier represented the English Department. They gave the students a run for their money, but the students won, 41-40. The new faces on campus also included new administrators. Ashmore felt strongly that the transition to a senior college required new leadership in administration as well as at the department level.16 He reached back to Pensacola Junior College and brought James Rogers to serve as Dean of Student Affairs. Rogers stayed through the period of adjustment and then moved on to new opportunities. Others came and stayed. Don Anderson (1966), Joe Buck (1968), and Joe Adams (1970) remained for nearly three decades of administrative changes that moved them through a variety of responsibilities.

In the late 1960s, student rights and faculty rights held high profile interest on college campuses. At Armstrong, the question of students’ rights and privileges arose as soon as the new campus was occupied. It concerned cigarette machines. Did students have the right to cigarette machines on campus? Ashmore brought out the presidential prerogative and issued an unequivocal “No.” Responding to the Surgeon General’s report on the dangers of smoking, Ashmore declared that an academic institution dedicated to the search for truth could not ignore the truths set forth in that report. Cigarette machines would not be allowed on the Armstrong campus. Two hundred students signed a petition to protest his decision.21 The following week Ashmore softened his tone but held his position. He acknowledged that other state schools had cigarette machines, but he drew a distinction between the right to smoke and the privilege of being able to buy cigarettes on campus. He did not consider his ruling a violation of any student rights.22 As a student-sponsored forum, he developed his reasoning more fully: “A person has a right to an opinion only when it is based on fact, ONLY when it is based on fact.”23 He believed that students must learn to look at issues intelligently and recognize that cigarette machines were a privilege, not a right. The students replied that the cigarette machines on the old campus had not obstructed the search for truth and Georgia was a tobacco-producing state in which the tobacco tax supported education. Six weeks later, April 15, 1966, a cigarette machine rolled into the Student Center. Dean of Students James Rogers issued an official statement. The new decision made Armstrong consistent with the practices at other colleges: “Inasmuch as the college is committed to educational endeavors which enlighten and challenge the individual, the administration thought it a good idea to dramatize the possible health hazard of cigarette smoking by encouraging research, debate, and discussion of the issue. The college administration considers that this has now been achieved.”24 The selection of a college mascot was not a matter of rights and privileges, but it raised an equal amount of fervor. Scarcely a month after arriving on the new campus, The Inkwell announced a contest for a new identity to replace the long-standing ‘Geechee. The problem, said Student Senate President Elaine Mamanakis, was that a ‘Geechee had no image. Since no one knew exactly what a ‘Geechee looked like, how could its picture appear on a college mug or T-shirt or ball cap?25 Bob Strozier rose to defend the formless figure: Popular opinion, it is true, holds that college mascots should be clearly symbolized by some sort of noble creature – human or animal. Yet institutions of higher learning occasionally rise above mere public opinion. [Here Strozier cited the Aggies of Texas A&M, the Crimson Tide of Alabama, and professional teams such as the Cleveland Browns and the New York Mets]. . . . The significance of the name lies in what they mean to the people of the area where the team plays, regardless of whether the mascot possesses clear symbolic potential. Such is the case with the ‘Geechee.26

The serious work of the faculty involved developing a curriculum for the four-year degrees to be awarded in June 1968. The 116 graduates who received their diplomas in the campus gymnasium on June 3, 1968 represented twelve new Armstrong degree programs. Their graduation coincided with the implementation of the University System’s new core curriculum, which was intended to facilitate transfer of credits among the core carried a traditional emphasis on the arts and sciences, which Armstrong faculty strengthened within the guidelines allowed by the Board of Regents. All students in Armstrong’s baccalaureate programs in arts and sciences would take four English courses as well as a three-course sequence in a foreign language. The faculty who made these decisions were a mix of the downtown generation and a new generation both of them “Young Turks.” Many remained at Armstrong for life, each generation of students held a slightly different memory of each building’s identity. The only things left to be named were the streets along each side of the campus. An ad hoc committee approached the subject with imagination and southern whimsy, suggesting William Faulkner Drive on the arts side of the campus, Eli Whitney Drive on the science side, and Margaret Mitchell Drive behind the library. But the South fell again and the predictable and ordinary locations, each generation of students held a slightly different memory of the days at Bull and Gaston Streets. Many of them appeared in a student-faculty basketball game at Armstrong, the question of students’ rights and privileges arose as soon as the new campus was occupied. It concerned cigarette machines. Did students have the right to cigarette machines on campus? Ashmore brought out the presidential prerogative and issued an unequivocal “No.” Responding to the Surgeon General’s report on the dangers of smoking, Ashmore declared that an academic institution dedicated to the search for truth could not ignore the truths set forth in that report. Cigarette machines would not be allowed on the Armstrong campus. Two hundred students signed a petition to protest his decision. The following week Ashmore softened his tone but held his position. He acknowledged that other state schools had cigarette machines, but he drew a distinction between the right to smoke and the privilege of being able to buy cigarettes on campus. He did not consider his ruling a violation of any student rights. As a student-sponsored forum, he developed his reasoning more fully: “A person has a right to an opinion only when it is based on fact, ONLY when it is based on fact.” He believed that students must learn to look at issues intelligently and recognize that cigarette machines were a privilege, not a right. The students replied that the cigarette machines on the old campus had not obstructed the search for truth and Georgia was a tobacco-producing state in which the tobacco tax supported education. Six weeks later, April 15, 1966, a cigarette machine rolled into the Student Center. Dean of Students James Rogers issued an official statement. The new decision made Armstrong consistent with the practices at other colleges: “Inasmuch as the college is committed to educational endeavors which enlighten and challenge the individual, the administration thought it a good idea to dramatize the possible health

The matter slid out of sight during summer vacation; but when the students returned in the fall they found a new, hybrid mascot in place, something called a 'Geechee Pirate.' Armstrong's Mascot Committee, which drafted the college by-laws and established the faculty and student committees, might not seem like a powerhouse kind of committee, but it became a small statutory battleground for the right of students to influence the selection of cultural events for the campus. The question of student representation on the committee was the most revisited issue in the formation of the college committee structure. Armstrong required freshmen and sophomore students to attend nine college-sponsored lectures or concerts each year, for which they received one hour of academic credit. The Lyceum Series brought a range of visiting scholars and artists: Emory Civil War historian Bell Wiley (February 1967); folk singer Josh White, Jr. (October 1967); poetry editor John Ciardi (October 1968); the Jacques Loussier Trio (November 1967); and the Jacques Loussier Trio (October 1968). The budget for these events drew half of its funds from the general college budget and half from student activity fees. Initially, an ad hoc faculty committee selected the events for the schedule, but the Executive Committee now proposed that the Lecture-Concert Committee be a standing committee of the faculty, with membership and duties defined in the by-laws. From the spring of 1967 to the summer of 1968, four different proposals shifted back and forth between faculty and student predominance on the committee. In the final debate, history professor Bob Patterson took a strong liberal position in favor of a committee of four students and one faculty member. Stuart Worthington of the psychology department offered an amendment for three faculty members and four students. The amendment passed. The question of required attendance, however, remained unresolved. It had long met with student objections, but practical considerations were also involved. The freshmen and sophomore students, to whom the requirement applied, now exceeded the numbers that could fit into Jenkins Auditorium. The gymnasium was not air-conditioned, and it was an awkward setting for many events. On more than one occasion, the college rented the Weis Theater on Largo Drive, and students and faculty trekked the distance. The motion to eliminate the requirement had reason on its side. When put to a vote, it passed. Students would now have more influence on campus cultural events and more freedom to decide which, if any, they wished to attend. It was a sign of the times.

The Lyceum Series brought to campus a range of visiting scholars and artists: Emory Civil War historian Bell Wiley (February 1967); folk singer Josh White, Jr. (October 1967); poetry editor John Ciardi (October 1968); the Jacques Loussier Trio (November 1968). The budget for these events drew half of its funds from the general college budget and half from student activity fees. Initially, an ad hoc faculty committee selected the events for the schedule, but the Executive Committee now proposed that the Lecture-Concert Committee be a standing committee of the faculty, with membership and duties defined in the by-laws. From the spring of 1967 to the summer of 1968, four different proposals shifted back and forth between faculty and student predominance on the committee. In the final debate, history professor Bob Patterson took a strong liberal position in favor of a committee of four students and one faculty member. Stuart Worthington of the psychology department offered an amendment for three faculty members and four students. The amendment passed. The question of required attendance, however, remained unresolved. It had long met with student objections, but practical considerations were also involved. The freshmen and sophomore students, to whom the requirement applied, now exceeded the numbers that could fit into Jenkins Auditorium. The gymnasium was not air-conditioned, and it was an awkward setting for many events. On more than one occasion, the college rented the Weis Theater on Largo Drive, and students and faculty trekked the distance. The motion to eliminate the requirement had reason on its side. When put to a vote, it passed. Students would now have more influence on campus cultural events and more freedom to decide which, if any, they wished to attend. It was a sign of the times.
Other social changes made a natural transition from the old to the new. Rat Week and Rat caps appeared as a "new" freshman activity in the fall of 1966. Homecoming activities in the winter still included a parade, although the Abercorn location required a reconsideration of the parade route. It was a long ten miles from Armstrong to Broughton Street. In 1967, the parade planners decided to shorten the route and start from Grayson Stadium in Daffin Park. In other years the parade went the full distance. Pioneer Days continued as the annual rite of spring, when the central sidewalk became Main Street for pistol-packing cowboys and cowgirls. Faculty submitted to the indignities of a dunking booth, and President Ashmore (in a black cowboy hat) and Jim Rogers mounted oversized tricycles to pedal across campus in the "Geechee 500." By the spring of 1970, however, only a remnant of pioneer activities remained. Times had changed, and the revised dress code eliminated the need for a dress-down day. Pioneer Days had run its course. The Inkwell reporter commented on the end of the event: "They Shoot Cowboys and Indians, Don't They?" In the fall they shot the Rats too, and Rat Week disappeared: no more Rat caps, no more Rat auctions. They kept the dance.

THE VIETNAM ERA
The Vietnam War dominated the national news in the late 1960s, and the army took over the base at Hunter to train American and Vietnamese helicopter pilots. Students faced the issue of the draft, but at Armstrong only a few entered the political fray. During the last fall at the downtown site, a campus "Speak Out" supported the government's policy in Vietnam; but even when political opinion began to shift, most Armstrong students were not likely to wear black arm-bands and attend a Vietnam protest on campus or elsewhere. They were more likely to demonstrate on the issue of dormitories and set up a tent-city on the quadrangle. Similarly, a request by Roman Catholic students to hold an Ash Wednesday mass on campus could generate three days of news coverage as much as any other issue.
But political moments occurred at Armstrong the same as at more activist colleges. In state politics, the election of Lester Maddox as governor of Georgia in the fall of 1966 prompted someone on campus to hang the new governor in effigy, and student Democrats and Republicans alike gathered beneath the swinging figure to sing “If I Had A Hammer” and “We Shall Overcome.” In 1968, on the day after Martin Luther King, Jr., was shot, history department chairman Roy Carroll cut the rope at the flagpole to assure that the flag did not fly at full staff. A subsequent petition to name the student center for the dead civil rights leader gained 400 signatures. Robert Kennedy’s assassination on June 5, 1968 occurred two days after Armstrong graduated its first class of baccalaureate students.

Political and military events found expression at Armstrong in a variety of ways. The faculty Vanguard on liberal issues included Oz Lanier, Bob Patterson, and Ross Clark, as advisors to the Young Democrats, and Bob Strozier as advisor to The Inkwell. In state politics, the election of Lester Maddox as governor of Georgia in the fall of 1968, the cover page carried a small peace symbol and a quote from President Ashmore: “Every respectable college has its underground newspaper.” Beneath the peace symbol, The Inkwell declared: “And here it is, Armstrong’s source of collegiate respectable.”

By the fall of 1968, a new Inkwell staff reflected much of the tone and attitude of the shadow publication. Joe Kelley attended the Democratic convention in Chicago and used the experience to write articles on Lyndon Johnson, J. Edgar Hoover, and “The Games Politicians Play.” Clay Doherty directed his editorials against the draft and the fact that 40% of the student activities budget was devoted to athletics. After he resigned his editorship, he continued to write articles under the heading of “The Liberal Art.” His first column targeted the American system of education, which “creates white suburbia, overlooks black ghettos, and stimulates the drink-your-lunch-bunch.” New editors, Susan Conner and Mike Vaquer, vowed to “continue to voice the liberal viewpoint on campus issues.”

The Inkwell writers and others also gathered at Bob Strozier’s house to discuss creative writing and to plan a new literary magazine. In early 1968, they applied to become a recognized campus organization and receive funding as a student activity. The group included Nell [Eleanor] Childs, who was Armstrong’s most obvious resident radical. A transfer student from the College of Charleston, she was an entity unto herself. Her blue jeans went beyond the concessions. On the first day, the flag on the platform displayed a marijuana plant; on the second day it bore a peace symbol. Dean Rogers denied any association of the college with the festival.

The nationwide presence of student activism prompted college and university authorities to develop policies to deal with events that might disrupt campus life. President Ashmore prepared the initial draft of the University System’s “Statement on Disruptive and Obstructive Behavior,” and the Board of Regents issued the final version in the fall of 1968. It declared that demonstrations, sit-ins, spoken or written obscenities, and indecent, disorderly behavior challenged “the very essence of higher education... the unhampered freedom to study, investigate, write, speak, and debate on any aspect or issue of life.” At the heart of the matter lay two sensitive issues: academic freedom and student behavior.

Ashmore gave the Armstrong faculty his opinion on academic freedom at the opening faculty meeting of 1967: “You have only two academic freedoms. They are to do research within your ability in basic fundamental fields or collect and analyze scientific data and to publish your findings.” Students, he said, should not be a “captive audience” for the personal opinions of faculty. “Students have a right to good instruction in the classroom on the subjects for which they signed up and paid, and not some other extraneous material which the professor feels is interesting at the moment.” Student-faculty exchange in the classroom, he concluded, should concern the specific academic discipline, leaving other subjects to out-of-class conversations where students might take or leave the professor’s personal opinion.

Student behavior came under the purview of the Student Conduct Committee of the faculty, which began to work on the Student Conduct Code in the fall of 1968. In a public forum to discuss the code, students wanted to know who would decide what constituted “gross indecency on campus.” The discussion was very timely. The Masquers were about to present their fall production, Chicago by Sam Shepard. The play was the first in a series of three incidents that constituted Armstrong’s primary experience with the social and political climate of the 1960s.
which sat student Rod Ferguson. The play offered a mix of monologue and dialogue between Ferguson and his stage wife, Betsy Brazzeal. According to The Inkwell, their stream of consciousness conversation served up a mix of hilarity and crudity. A rehearsal photo printed in The Inkwell captured the moment when Ferguson stood with his jeans hung low on his hips and Brazzeal bestowed a kiss upon his navel. The advance publicity in the Savannah Morning News characterized the play as “an avant-garde look at the battle between the sexes” and carried the advisory that “young children will not be admitted to this performance because of the language used in portions of the dialog.” The first red flag went up. Reports about the play, including the photo, sent shock waves through Savannah and caught the attention of state legislator James “Slappsy” Floyd, who was in town to speak at a Veteran’s Day banquet. Dean Joe Killorin tried to calm the tempest with a comparison to Hamlet: “I wouldn’t want to send a child of mine to see Hamlet….” In fact, he added, many of the allusions in Hamlet could be considered offensive if truly understood. Chew removed the profanity from the allusions in Hamlet and the revised version held nothing objectionable, but he and two other Savannahians made a report to Chancellor Simpson, and Battle let it be known that he would continue to “keep a watchful eye on activities at the college.” He had heard rumors that a communist newspaper, the Vietnam Courier, was circulating on campus. Even worse, the Chatham County Veterans’ Council had heard that “filthy and obscene” language was being used in Armstrong classrooms.

The second red flag went up soon after the play when Nell Childs brought forward her petition to establish an Armstrong chapter of Students for a Democratic Society. Childs and five other distributed SDS literature around the campus and submitted their proposed constitution to the Student Activities Committee for approval. When the story appeared in the city newspaper, the Chatham County Veterans’ Council Committee on Un-American Activities rose up in outrage at the idea of any such group being allowed on a state campus. Chancellor Simpson said that the decision to approve or disapprove the petition would be left up to Armstrong. He noted that the University of Georgia’s chapter of SDS had been in existence for several years. The Student Activities Committee reached its decision quickly. “The committee feels that the methods of change advocated by the organization [SDS] are incompatible with the college’s concept of methods of change.” Committee chairman Osmos Lanier would not elaborate. The following week the Young Democrats offered to sponsor the showing of a film on the student riots at Columbia University at the Veteran’s Day banquet. Dean Joe Killorin tried to calm the tempest with a comparison to Hamlet: “I wouldn’t want to send a child of mine to see Hamlet….” In fact, he added, many of the allusions in Hamlet could be considered offensive if truly understood. Chew removed the profanity from the allusions in Hamlet and the revised version held nothing objectionable, but he and two other Savannahians made a report to Chancellor Simpson, and Battle let it be known that he would continue to “keep a watchful eye on activities at the college.” He had heard rumors that a communist newspaper, the Vietnam Courier, was circulating on campus. Even worse, the Chatham County Veterans’ Council had heard that “filthy and obscene” language was being used in Armstrong classrooms.

THE HAYNE DYCHES CASE

Twenty-six year old Waldon Hayne Dyches came to Armstrong in the fall of 1968 to teach sociology. Slender, clean-shaven, with reddish-blond hair, he developed a classroom exercise in social behavior during which he wrote the “f” word on the blackboard in large letters and asked the students to examine the feelings they experienced in reaction to that word. Reportedly, one student dutifully wrote the word in her notebook, where it came to the attention of her father. When Ashmore and Dean Killorin heard the rumors, they met with Dyches to discuss the use of language in his classroom. At the end of January 1969, Dyches received verbal notification that his teaching contract with the college would not be renewed for the following year.

On Thursday evening, February 27, 1969, two Savannah police detectives knocked on the door of the classroom where Dyches was teaching. They issued him an arrest warrant on charges of contributing to the delinquency of minors. The charges concerned the distribution of an Atlanta counter-culture newspaper, The Great Speckled Bird, to students from Windsor Forest High School. Dyches asked for a few minutes to conclude the class and then accompanied the detectives into town. When he was unable to produce $500 in bail, he spent the night in jail. None of the charges involved Armstrong students or Dyches’s activities at Armstrong. On Friday morning, February 28, Dyches appeared in police recorder’s court, where a large number of Armstrong students crowded into the courtroom to offer him noisy support. They were ushered out of the building and continued their clamor from the sidewalk on Oglethorpe Avenue.

The court heard evidence that three teenage boys, also under arrest, had picked up 25-30 copies of The Great Speckled Bird at Dyches’s apartment while Dyches was present. The teenagers had then taken the material to Windsor Forest High School. The police court found the evidence sufficient to bind the case over to Superior Court. Dyches paid the reduced bail of $300 and left the police station.

Since President Ashmore was out of town at the time, Dean Joe Killorin was the chief administrative officer at the college. Killorin telephoned the Chancellor’s office in Atlanta on Friday afternoon and then wrote a brief official communication to Dyches. The two-sentence letter stated: “Until the disposition of the present charges against you is final, you will be given a leave of absence from your duties as a faculty member of Armstrong State College with full pay. During this period you will be relieved of teaching duties.” Killorin sent Richard Baker, the college’s superintendent of buildings and grounds, to deliver the letter to Dyches at his apartment. On Saturday, March 1, Ashmore was back in town and affirmed Killorin’s action as “usual and normal.” Stuart Worthington, head of the psychology department of which Dyches was a member, met with Dyches on Sunday to discuss arrangements for Dyches’s classes, and on Monday, March 3, Dyches met with Ashmore, Killorin, and Worthington. He was informed of his right to appeal the decision to relieve him of his duties.

THE FYNE DYCRES CASE

Twenty-six year old Waldon Hayne Dyches came to Armstrong in the fall of 1968 to teach sociology. Slender, clean-shaven, with reddish-blond hair, he developed a classroom exercise in social behavior during which he wrote the “f” word on the blackboard in large letters and asked the students to examine the feelings they experienced in reaction to that word. Reportedly, one student dutifully wrote the word in her notebook, where it came to the attention of her father. When Ashmore and Dean Killorin heard the rumors, they met with Dyches to discuss the use of language in his classroom. At the end of January 1969, Dyches received verbal notification that his teaching contract with the college would not be renewed for the following year.
In its second finding, the committee found the statutes and not the superintendent of buildings and grounds. Notification should have involved an academic officer of notification, the committee agreed that the college reported the findings on four issues. On the matter to review his case.

Petitioned the Faculty Professional Welfare Committee decision. Informed of his right to appeal, Dyches Killorin’s two-sentence letter placed Dyches on leave of absence. The protracted nature of the legal proceedings directly affected Dyches’s relationship with Armstrong. Joe Ryan III, who vowed his intent to proceed with action against Dyches. Dyches countered with a suit to block the prosecution. The issue hung in the air through the summer. Although through the next two years. The proscribed nature of the legal proceedings directly affected Dyches’s relationship with Armstrong. Joe Killorin’s two-sentence letter placed Dyches on leave of absence, with pay, “until the disposition of the present charges against you is final.” Dyches’s arrest occurred ten days before the end of the winter quarter. On the matter proceeded into the spring term, Dyches would be out of the classroom until the end of the school year unless the administration reversed its initial decision. Informed of his right to appeal, Dyches petitioned the Faculty Professional Welfare Committee to review his case. The committee reviewed his statement, then met with President Ashmore and Dean Killorin to hear their response, and on March 21 reported the findings on four issues. On the matter of notification, the committee agreed that the college had to make a decision before cases resumed on the Monday following Dyches’s arrest, but the means of notification should have involved an academic officer and not the superintendent of buildings and grounds. In its second finding, the committee found the statutes silent on the leave of absence issue with no provision for instances when criminal charges were pending. A result for the alleged prejudicial effect of the college’s action on the court proceedings, the committee found that the administration had no such intent and indeed was obligated to “consider the welfare of the institution as well as the welfare of the individual.” Finally, in the matter of academic freedom, the committee found that “the action taken does not constitute a threat to academic freedom.” It did not stem from any occurrence on the Armstrong campus or in an Armstrong classroom. The committee added a further affirmation of the administrative decision: “in the case under consideration, when a charge of contributing to the delinquency of minors has been brought against a faculty member who teaches chiefly students who are legally minors, the Committee feels that the proper discretion was exercised by the proper administrative officers.”

The committee’s report was temperate in tone and in every way sensitive to the circumstances of the case. It warned of possible long-range consequences.

As individual members of the teaching profession and as concerned members of this institutional family, the Committee wishes to call to your attention the fact that an academic institution cannot be insensitive to the image which it projects to the greater academic community. It cannot afford to ignore the reputation, deserved or otherwise, that it has among members of the teaching profession and in the highest circles of education. Possible censure by the national AAUP must be regarded as a serious matter. Such censure would have a most detrimental effect upon our efforts to recruit an able faculty and to maintain such a faculty. In the light of this, and the fact that final disposition of the charges against Mr. Dyches may not be made until after the end of the academic year, the Committee respectfully suggests that you may wish to reconsider the decision to continue Mr. Dyches on mandatory leave of absence “until the disposition of the present charges” against him are final. 

On April 10, Ashmore informed Dyches that there would be no change in the decision. Dyches submitted an appeal to the Board of Regents on April 28, and the Board appointed a subcommittee to investigate. The subcommittee invited Dyches to appear for a hearing in Atlanta on June 10. Dyches did not appear, but Henry Ashmore did. The committee ruled in favor of Ashmore and upheld the action taken by the college; the full Board accepted that ruling on June 11. 

By that date, the spring quarter at Armstrong was concluded. After his arrest on February 27, Hayne Dyches never returned to teach in an Armstrong classroom. The stinger in the tail of the Dyches case was the American Association of University Professors. The AAUP chapter at Armstrong was four years old in the spring of 1969 when the Dyches matter erupted. Its membership was small but outspoken. On the Monday after Dyches’s arrest, the chapter met and designated two of its members to confer with President Ashmore and Dean Killorin about Dyches’s right to appeal the administration’s action. Dyches’s written statement to the Faculty Welfare Committee specifically cited the policies of the AAUP concerning suspension. On Saturday, March 8, Bob Strozier, Armstrong’s AAUP chapter president, sent an airmail, special delivery letter to the Washington office of the AAUP. On Monday, he telephoned that office, which advised him that “the action of the Armstrong administration was in direct opposition to AAUP policies as published in the 1968 AAUP Bulletin.”

A written communication from William Fidler, Secretary of the Washington office, followed with an interpretation of the AAUP Procedural Standards concerning suspension. The Standard stated that suspension of a faculty member should occur “only if immediate harm to himself or others is threatened by his continuance.” According to Fidler, “immediate harm” referred to “physical harm.” Since the existing information did not indicate any such danger and since a legal conviction had not occurred, Fidler enjoined Strozier to urge the administration to return Dyches to the classroom. That recommendation appeared in the comments of the Welfare Committee report suggesting that the administration reconsider its decision. Ashmore dismissed the committee’s reference to a possible AAUP censure as academic blackmail by a vested interest pressure group. On April 21, a week after Ashmore told Dyches that the decision would stand, Ashmore received a telegram from Fidler stating that the Faculty Welfare Committee report and other pertinent material of the Dyches matter were in the hands of the Washington office. The telegram urged Ashmore to reverse the action against Dyches as an indication of “the administration’s willingness to let the matter rest, without further judgment on the seriousness of [the] incident in question until the court reaches its decision. Urge you to rescind the suspension of Professor X [Dyches] immediately.”

The telegram marked the beginning of twelve years of correspondence between Henry Ashmore and the Washington office of the AAUP concerning the case of Hayne Dyches. For the AAUP, the decision to put Dyches on an indefinite leave of absence constituted a suspension imposed by college officials without any specific charges being brought or an opportunity for Dyches to have a hearing prior to the decision. The AAUP believed that Dyches was due a reinstatement and a hearing, and they recommended reinstatement for the 1969-70 year. Ashmore insisted that the decision to terminate Dyches’s employment had been made and communicated to Dyches prior to his arrest and had no relationship with the arrest. That argument made no impression on the AAUP, which pointed to the fact that Dyches did not receive formal written notice of his non-renewal until after the arrest and after the March 1 date set by AAUP policies for early
SETTLED IN

As Armstrong entered the 1970s, the period of adjustment to the new campus had come to an end. The grass was growing well by now, and an oval pool with two small jets of bubbling water had become a popular gathering place at the center of the quadrangle. The college received its formal accreditation as a baccalaureate institution by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in December 1968. New faculty now outnumbered the old and were making their imprint on college life. The statutes, by-laws, and committees were in place and had experienced their first trials by fire. Courses in the curriculum began to change to suit the times. In May 1971, the faculty loosened the core requirements, reducing the English requirement to three courses and leaving the foreign language requirement to be decided by each degree program. The new dress code allowed pantsuits for women, but Ashmore took the precaution of bringing in a consultant from Belk’s to advise the secretarial staff on styles appropriate for office wear. Joe Killorin stepped down as Academic Dean in 1969 and assumed the Callaway Chair of Philosophy and Literature. He was succeeded by H. Dean Propst, who arrived from the mountains of southwest Virginia, driving an air-conditioned car across the Talmadge Bridge on the 4th of July 1969. He stayed to steer the faculty through the next decade of its history. Propst had been recommended by Jule Rossetter Stanfield, the college comptroller, who remained the only administrative officer from the downtown days.

By 1971, four senior classes had graduated from the new campus. Personal student connections with the old Armstrong were gone. Pioneer Days and Rat caps had been discarded as out-of-date. The radical cadre had departed as well. Student activism shifted to environmental issues. The Masquers had a new director, John Suchower, who offered a repertoire designed to challenge but which was generally free of political shock waves. A new committee on Creative and Performing Arts brought to campus Dick Gregory in October 1970, Ralph Nader in January 1971, and Ravi Shankar in May 1971. Another new committee for Awareness Through Community Action (ACTA) published his account of the case at the end of the year. Each year thereafter, at least twice a year, letters passed back and forth between Joseph Schwartz and Henry Ashmore, a full letter noting that the censure continued and a spring letter reporting that the annual meeting of the AAUP had taken no action to remove Armstrong from the censure list. Hayne Dyche had long since left Savannah.

A few statistics show some of the other significant changes that had occurred by the end of the period of adjustment. In June 1970, the college graduated 187 students, 153 with baccalaureate degrees and 34 with two-year associate degrees. All of the associate degrees but one were in health fields, either nursing or dental hygiene, constituting 17.6% of the total graduates. The health field was becoming a small but notable presence on campus. Graduates in the field of elementary education comprised 13.4% of the total, again a small beginning but poised for a major leap into graduate courses as Savannah schoolteachers faced a new requirement for master’s level credentials. Business administration students comprised 24.5% of the graduating class of 1970. Business was not a new field at Armstrong, but it expanded significantly as a baccalaureate program. The remaining 43.9% of the graduates came from the arts and sciences.

Other statistics, and the appearances by Dick Gregory and Bobby Hill, showed a new diversity on campus. For the fall of 1970, Ashmore reported eighty-nine black students enrolled at Armstrong and three black faculty members. The numbers were important. The United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was watching and counting every one.
CHAPTER 8
Sunlight and Shadows: Campus Life in the 1970s

Henry Ashmore liked to keep his office dark. Heavy draperies covered the windows and allowed no sunlight to enter the room. The interior lighting consisted of a single lamp on the desk or perhaps another on a side table. The total effect was of a place completely cut off from the outside world. Nothing could have been further from the truth. During the decade of the 1970s, Armstrong was well connected with the outside world. New programs in teacher education and health professions linked the college directly to the Savannah community. The business administration program enjoyed a natural connection with Savannah businesses and expected to offer a master’s degree in the near future. Programs in social work and criminal justice tied the college to special off-campus constituencies. The chemistry department maintained an active relationship with local industries, and students in the history department used the Georgia Historical Society to research and write papers about Savannah’s historic people and buildings. Most students continued to be local residents, and the feeling of distance out to the college was beginning to diminish. The relationship with the city was not what it once had been, but in a variety of ways Armstrong students and faculty were well connected with the surrounding community. The prospects for the 1970s looked bright from behind the draperies of the president’s office.

And then came the May 21, 1969 letter from Dewey E. Dodds, Chief of the Education Branch of the Atlanta Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Dodds quoted from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and requested permission for an HEW team to visit Armstrong the following week. The letter was not a surprise but came as follow-up to previous conversations and correspondence concerning the number of African-American students and faculty at Armstrong. It was part of HEW’s larger examination of the racial patterns in the University System of Georgia. Armstrong’s particular place in those patterns was a problem. Why did the University System have a predominantly white college and a predominantly black college in the same city? Did those two institutions reflect a segregated system of higher education in Georgia? Five years earlier, in 1964, when the Board of Regents made the decision to convert Armstrong to a four-year college, a reporter had asked Vice Chancellor S. Walter Martin about the relationship between Armstrong and Savannah State. Martin had replied that it “was a question for today and [an] answer for tomorrow.” Tomorrow arrived in the letter from Dewey E. Dodds.

The 1970s was a very full decade for Armstrong as the college found itself involved with health programs, education programs, and HEW. The desegregation issue threw a long shadow over the entire period, with particular effects on teacher education and business administration. That story was complex and highly political and constitutes a distinct chapter in the college’s history. The health professions story followed a separate path, not unrelated to the desegregation issue, but it too is a chapter that stands on its own. But there was another side to the 1970s that simply concerned the “normal” life of the college, as faculty and students went about their business regardless of the political discussions and decisions in process elsewhere. Strong personalities shaped campus life in administration, academics, athletics, and student activities. Some of them played a role in the desegregation...
issue, but their primary responsibility at Armstrong was to teach or to learn or to contribute their special skills to that overall purpose. The 1970s included more than desegregation plans. The “normal” story might even be considered the real one. It needs to be told first as the base on which the other stories rest.

ACADEMIC VISIONS
From the time he arrived in Savannah, Henry Ashmore envisioned a role for Armstrong in teacher education and health professions. Teacher education meant new baccalaureate degrees in elementary and secondary education, as well as a degree in speech and hearing. From the time he arrived in Savannah, Henry Ashmore believed that Armstrong could become a major center for health professions education. These new professional fields, along with the traditional academic programs, contributed to Armstrong’s steady growth in the early 1970s even as the University System as a whole experienced a major increase in enrollment. At Armstrong, enrollment rose in the first half of the decade, from 2,406 in the fall of 1970 to 5,615 in 1975, after which it turned downward with the uncertainties of the desegregation plans. The number of faculty grew from 90 in 1970 to over 140 in 1979.

Besides the darkened office, Ashmore was best known for being a talker. He spoke in a soft, southern manner, with a hint of humor that sometimes left a question about his meaning, and he could carry on a conversation single-handedly at length. The examples were legion. In interviewing one prospective faculty member, he talked nonstop throughout the interview session and at the end turned to the patient listener and asked, “And what was it that you came in here for?” When John Brewer served as Faculty Athletic Representative, he would schedule his appointments for 4:00 in the afternoon, knowing that Ashmore would leave the office at 5:00. Ashmore would talk for the first fifty minutes of the hour, and Brewer would do his business in the last ten. When departments had their annual meeting with the president, it would be primarily a listening opportunity. In the English department, Margaret Lubs would listen for a while and then simply put her head down on the table.

For the most part, Ashmore talked to the faculty about budgets. He liked to emphasize that Armstrong spent a greater percentage of its budget on instruction, i.e., faculty salaries, than did other colleges in the University System. He also stressed his expectation that the faculty would put in a full day’s work at the college and maintain a professional appearance when on campus. He found it “inconceivable” that a faculty member would come “to campus in shorts [and sandals]…with shirt-tail out during the time that the college is officially in session,” even if it was during exams. He thought he should be able to contact department heads in their offices during the break between terms, and he frowned on the fact that he could rarely reach faculty members after 2:00 in the afternoon during the academic term. He was not persuaded that they were leaving campus to work at home: “in these times, when teacher’s salaries are good and teachers are seen leaving their offices in the middle of the afternoon and going home…there is very little chance that they will receive any sympathetic support from the tax-payers and their neighbors for any claims that they may make of being overworked.”

Another factor in Ashmore’s relationship with some of the faculty was his doctoral degree in the field of education. It particularly affected his interactions with the arts and sciences faculty. An incident of Ashmore’s own telling illustrates the feelings that circled around this issue. On one occasion he joined three arts and sciences faculty members having coffee at a table in the cafeteria. After the initial pleasantries, one of the group said, “Dr. Ashmore, I feel like you are not really comfortable being around intellectuals.” Ashmore replied, “Well, I think I have known only two real intellectuals in my life.” He then left the three at the table to draw their own conclusions.

If Ashmore was looking for a professional demeanor and a strong work ethic, he could ask for no better example than his new Dean of Faculty, H. Dean Propst. To the faculty, especially in arts and sciences, Propst offered the qualities that they admired and a strong work ethic. He described this vision as “The Idea of ASC.” It drew heavily on the educational philosophy of John Henry Newman and brought the arts and sciences and the professional programs together in a common endeavor “to develop in each student not only a disciplined intellect, which is of value in itself, but also the basic tools with which that intellect can be put to use in service to mankind.” It was a vision, said Propst, that offered “an adventure of the mind.”

Propst engaged the faculty with his words and with his presence. Because his name coincided with his title, faculty could be both familiar and formal when they addressed him as Dean, a pleasant ambiguity that made everybody comfortable. He was accessible and visible on campus, frequently visiting the cafeteria where he would join faculty for coffee or lunch. A strong work ethic often kept him at his desk late into the evening; but on non-working evenings, he was a regular member of the group that gathered at Lorraine Anchors’ home for cards and supper of chicken salad laced with apples. He came to campus dances and danced with the co-eds, and he put on jeans and a sweatshirt and coached the Dental Hygiene Girls.
The 1970s was a decade marked by significant changes at Armstrong. The Board of Regents' vision for the University System in the 1970s struggled primarily with the desegregation issue, but three new policies also marked the decade. The most controversial was the Rising Junior requirement for all students, which was introduced in 1973. A call for the question failed. Discussion continued "at length," until each amendment withered and fell, leaving only the original motion. It passed 47-41. Serious discussions concerned the core curriculum, where each department had strong self-interests based on academic principles and the need to justify and increase the number of its faculty members. Meetings that dealt with the core could be lively and long. The December 1972 discussion of the history courses in the core and the foreign language requirement lasted for more than two hours. Richard Summerville, new head of the math department, took faculty debate to a high level of close analysis and persuasive logic, and the verbal duels between Summerville and Leslie Davenport, head of the biology department, were classic moments. Bob Strozier was never reserved with his opinions, nor was John Brewer of the chemistry department or Neil Sarverfield from social work. Keith Douglass, in coat and tie and blue jeans, raised questions that were pointed but never strident, and Roger Warlick invariably proposed some sort of reasonable compromise. Propst did not shrink from any exchange of ideas, no matter how heated, but applauded debate as a natural and valuable part of the life of a collegiate community. At the final faculty meeting of 1971, a year which had seen particularly vigorous discussion concerning the core, he told the faculty that "a Faculty's exercise of its right to freedom of debate is fully worth its endurance of the occasional flaring of tempers and emotions." The following year Propst again commended the faculty in a formal end-of-the-year memo.

I sense in my total faculty an enduring dedication to the best principles of teaching that cannot be eradicated by whatever momentary professional differences we might have. Those who think will have differences of opinion – differences that are a sign of health as long as they do not interfere with our common goal of bringing to our students a broader vision of themselves, of their world and of their responsibilities as human beings... I take great pride in Armstrong; I take even greater pride in being allowed to be a part of its Faculty."
Exam, also known as the Regents Exam. The purpose of the test was to establish "basic competence of academic literacy – that is, certain minimum skills of reading and writing" for all graduates of the University System. In November 1972, the Regents established the exam as a requirement for graduation. When an Inkwell reporter came to the English department for an explanation, department head Hugh Pendexter described the exam as a way to assure employers that graduates of the University System would be able to read directions and write a report. The test measured performance against national norms and showed the department how its students compared with others.

The third policy innovation of the 1970s required a formal evaluation of each faculty member through a process that began with student opinion and moved upward through colleagues, department heads, and deans. A few departments at Armstrong already used their own questionnaires to solicit student comments about instruction, but in 1969 President Ashmore moved toward a campus-wide approach that included formal reports by department heads. In December 1970, the Board of Regents mandated that all faculty in the University System undergo a formal evaluation designed by each local campus. At Armstrong, a faculty committee and a committee of department heads created the evaluation package that the faculty approved in the fall of 1977.

The most memorable faculty action of the 1970s occurred in the summer of 1975 when a special session of the Georgia General Assembly imposed a drastic budget cut on the University System. Anticipating a major revenue shortfall, the legislature cut budgets statewide for the coming year. The University System saw $11.5 million removed from its budget, which meant a 2.4% reduction for each of the state's four-year colleges. In every instance the major target was the amount budgeted for faculty salary increases. Henty Ashmore took personal pride in having faculty contracts for the coming year signed, sealed, and returned to his office before the end of school in June, a deadline not renewed by or widely observed elsewhere in the University System. The budget-cut action of the legislature sent the University System crashing into the legal wall of signed contracts at Armstrong. Faculty politicians moved into action, and a series of meetings quickly followed. Propst predicted that the Regents would not honor Armstrong's signed contracts, but he also stated that the college would take no punitive action toward faculty who sought legal redress.

Ashmore met with the faculty and cautioned them to give careful consideration to the possible long-range effects of any legal action they might take. After he left the meeting, a number of faculty remained and decided to retain local attorney Aaron Buchbaum to consider proceeding with a suit on their behalf. Contributions were requested to assist with legal fees. As Propst left the auditorium, he shook hands warmly with Bob Strozier and left a $20 bill in the palm of his hand.

In addition to legal action, the faculty also wanted to express its feelings in a formal resolution. At a called meeting on July 22, fifty-seven faculty members unan imously approved a statement requesting the Board of Regents to provide "full specification of the legal justification" for violating the signed contracts. The resolution then continued:

The callous disregard which the Board of Regents has already shown for the legal rights and financial security of faculty members in the University System of Georgia has done irreparable harm to higher education in the State of Georgia... We urge the Board of Regents to review the priorities established for expenditures within the revised budget and to reconsider its decision not to honor existing contracts. Such action by the Board of Regents will be necessary to re-establish credibility with the academic community.

The contract crisis of 1975 united the faculty around Dick Summerville's rhetoric in a moment of high political consciousness. In some ways, it may have reinforced the faculty's commitment to its role in college governance. The Executive Committee was the most important faculty committee, and the nomination and election of its members prompted active campus picketing every spring, but the committee never replaced the full faculty in the conduct of faculty business. The idea of a faculty senate came up three times in 1975 and 1976, but the faculty remained determined to do its business as a full body.

Beyond faculty meetings and the visionary thinking of Ashmore and Propst, Armstrong's academic vision entered the classrooms in the varied styles and personalities of individual instructors. In the history department, K.C. Wu's insights on Communism and Chinese history prompted students, alumni, and Union Camp to raise enough money to pay his salary for two years beyond his mandatory retirement age. Wu noted the appropriate connection between the Union Camp gift and the fact that China had invented paper. Tall John Duncan let his unmistakable
Charleston accent roll loudly through his always open classroom door. He told The Inkwell that he subscribed to the educational philosophy of Woodrow Wilson, who believed that the purpose of a college education was to make students as unlike their parents as possible. His objective tests were notorious for details that earned him the nickname of "Flunkin’ Duncan.”

In the evening, he offered a popular community service class on the history of Savannah that drew a number of people from town to the campus. It established a reputation for revisionist history that exploded well-beloved myths and brought all of the skeletons out of the closet. If the stories were not completely true, said Duncan, "well, they ought to be." He liked to describe Savannah as a city of “live oaks and dead people.”

Most students were convinced that something really was dead in the psychology department on the second floor of Victor Hall, where the distinctive odor of a non-specific transfer of learning,” he said, different from learning a trade or skill. The Inkwell reporter then asked, "What’s your image of a student?" Douglass replied: “Someone who can’t conceive of being anywhere else but in a learning situation.”

Among the new faculty who particularly enriched the “learning situation" were Virginia Ramsey and James Land Jones, both in the English faculty. Ramsey, blonde or brunette, depending on her choice for the year, represented a new generation of women faculty and a new kind of role model for women students. She was young, stylish, very bright, and very professional, an example of feminism on the rise with a femininity that appealed to male and female students alike. In the classroom, she was a natural; students never forgot her. Likewise, they never forgot a class with Jim Jones. Jones taught philosophy and English, and a class with him was an intellectual odyssey. Thin as a wraith, he demonstrated a logic that was spare, tight, and quick – no ounce of fat, nothing but lean meat, beautifully presented and irresistible. Students loved it. Gentle-mannered and soft-spoken, he always drew a large enrollment in his classes, but one did not enter a debate with him without being ready for a challenge. In 1979, he launched his relentless logic against the Veteran’s Office to protest the form that faculty were required to use to report the attendance of veterans. Like many faculty, Jones did not believe in monitoring attendance and, generally, the college allowed individual instructors to set their own policy regarding attendance. But veterans were another matter. They received government checks, and if they stopped attending class, the college was financially responsible for reimbursing the government for the money that had been spent. Jones chose to attack neither the problem nor the policy but the language of the piece of paper designed to gather the necessary information. In a single-spaced, four-page withering analysis, he argued the total impossibility of answering the questions as asked. It was a flawless assault on an unsuspecting bureaucratic outpost. The triumph was purely personal, however, as most faculty accepted the form and provided the information as requested.

On the other side of the campus, Dick Summerville put together a math faculty that matched his own considerable strengths. Anne Hudson arrived in 1971 as the first woman on the faculty with a Ph.D. since the college had become a baccalaureate institution. Charles Shipley introduced the early courses in computer science and became a tenacious curriculum watchdog, someone who actually read the fine print in course descriptions and challenged their syntax and substance. The quirky camaraderie of the mathematicians defied all conventions in their annual group photo for the Geechee. In 1975, they donned Mafia-style trench coats, low brim hats, and dark glasses and scowled menacingly into the eye of the camera.

In other years, they might troop down to the nearby Yamaha dealership to have their pictures taken on motorcycles, or they would line up in bathrobes and shower caps for a shower-room photo.

In the sciences, Les Davenport kept things in line in the biology department – a very straight line. At his request, plant operations nailed the desks in the biology classrooms in regimented intervals along 24 x 24 boards stretched through the chair rungs. Henry Harris succeeded Fretwell Crider as department head in chemistry and continued to steer students into internships and jobs with local industries. John Brewer maintained a running feud with Dick Baker in plant operations about the erratic performance of the heating and cooling system in Solms Hall, which regularly demonstrated the physical properties of condensation when warm hallway air met cold laboratory doorknobs and produced small puddles of water in front of each doorway. Baker could not fix the problem, but he won the feud by planting a magnolia tree outside of Brewer’s office window, knowing that Brewer loathed this favored symbol of the South.

The teacher education department on the ground floor of Victor Hall beneath Keith Douglass’s rat lab represented an important part of Ashmore’s vision for new professional programs at Armstrong. Department head Bill Stokes drove onto campus every day in a low-slung, powder-blue Z-28, which somehow did not quite fit the rest of his mild-mannered image in coat and tie, spectacles, and thinning hair. His was the main voice to explain the new teacher education curriculum to faculty and students. It was generally easier with students than with faculty. The arts and sciences departments held strong opinions on the courses and instructors for the new education degrees, and discussion often became testy. Teacher education programs also had to meet state certification requirements and accreditation standards, which arts and sciences faculty viewed as examples of outside agencies interfering in the faculty’s control of the curriculum. In 1975, faculty debate challenged the requirements set by the National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education; and in 1977, faculty criticism of those requirements contributed to a temporary loss of NCATE accreditation, to the dismay of the teacher education faculty. In both instances, Propst took steps to work out the differences.
The social side of faculty life in the 1970s balanced some of the wear and tear of academic debate with the help of food and conviviality that fostered a pleasant sense of community. At the end of the first faculty meeting of the year, President Ashmore would invite the faculty to a free lunch in the cafeteria. New faculty of the early 1970s received an additional invitation from Dean Proott for cocktails at his home. Christmas included a formal dinner dance for those inclined toward an elegant affair.

The most formal academic occasion was graduation, held on the quadrangle with faculty procession in full regalia. Somehow, the college had never acquired an official mace to add the full touch of dignity to the occasion. Joe Adams proved himself a man of unknown talents when he took the initiative to correct this omission. A quick trip to Builderama produced a baluster of appropriate size and weight, which Adams transformed with stain and varnish into an acceptable symbol of academic authority. The faculty referred to it affectionately as “the bedpost.” Faculty robes at graduation could be dazzling. Roger Warlick in crimson, Sea Worthington in brilliant blue, and Joe Killorin in steel gray were standouts among the basic black worn by most of the faculty. Anne Hudson, who never took her Ph.D. or herself too seriously, wore the requisite academic robe but adorned her hood with something that looked uncomfortably like the tails of dead squirrels. More or less in academic order of senior faculty followed by the junior ranks followed by the newest hires, the academic procession moved into place in front of the library, facing the graduates seated on chairs in the quadrangle.

Two features of the traditional ritual changed abruptly in the early 1970s. On June 9, 1971, U.S. Senator David M. Gambrell was the scheduled graduation speaker. When weather grounded his flight from Washington, his staff and Armstrong officials scurried to arrange for a telephone hookup that would allow the senator to speak from his D.C. office and be heard by the audience assembled at Armstrong through a public address system. Somewhere the wires got crossed. Ashmore delivered his introduction, which was followed by the harsh sound of telephone static and then the clearly broadcast voice of an operator, who announced that the connection had been broken and inquired, “Would you like me to dial again?”

Gambrell was the last graduation speaker at Armstrong for the next eleven years of the Ashmore administration. The official reason for the change, as explained by Ashmore every year, was to allow the ceremony to focus entirely on honoring the students.

An even more dramatic change occurred in 1974 when graduation moved off campus to the new Civic Center in downtown Savannah. As each graduating class increased in size from 190 in 1971 to 300 in 1974, the number of seats needed for students and their guests became a cumbersome and expensive project; and the extra considerations of rain, sun, and heat weighed strongly in the balance. Faculty traditionalists and the first class of graduates to be affected by the change protested vigorously against the move. But their protest was in fact a sign that, after almost ten years, faculty and students had put down roots and now considered the Abercorn campus as home.

STUDENT LIFE IN THE 1970s

The students of the 1970s were an increasingly diverse population, occasionally as outspoken as their faculty counterparts. As a non-residential campus, Armstrong experienced a different kind of social and cultural life from colleges that had dormitories and bigger budgets, but there were similarities as well. Nationally affiliated sororities and fraternities grew in number and brought to campus a variety of Greek experiences. Fall had its “Rush” season, and Greek week included a day of competitive activities with bathtubs racing down Arts Drive and tug-of-war contests over a mud-filled ditch.

From 1971 to 1978, the greatest energy on campus circulated around Pirate basketball. Everyone felt the frenzy of excitement generated by Armstrong’s African American athletes and Coach Bill Alexander. Prior to 1971 the Armstrong basketball team had been all white. After Alexander observed the talented black players on Armstrong’s rival team at Augusta State College, he began an active search for new talent for the Pirates. He did not have to look far. At Savannah High School he found Sam Berry, a 6’8”, 210-pound, All-American center forward, who became the first black athlete from Savannah to receive an Armstrong basketball scholarship. From Johnson High School he found Sam Berry, a 6’8”, 210-pound, All-American center forward, who became the first black athlete from Savannah to receive an Armstrong basketball scholarship.

The next day at noon a fearless duo raced across the campus riding a motorcycle on the central east-west sidewalk wearing only helmets and sneakers. A campus photographer captured the moment in a mercifully blurry photo. From Effingham County came 6’5” Curtis Warner, who caught the attention of basketball watchers and sports writers with his “fast ball handling and devastating jump shots.” These new recruits took their places beside white teammates Ernie Lorenzo, a 6’10” transfer student from the University of Florida and the tallest player on the team, and 6’6” Stan Sammons, a third-year letter man at Armstrong and the senior member of the start-up squad in the fall of 1971. Each year the mix of talent grew richer. Elijah “Sonny” Powell joined up for 1972-73, and Wayne “Crow” Armstrong arrived for 1973-74. Eventually, the new athletes made it possible for the entire Armstrong team on the court to be African American. When faculty member Susan White went with Dean Propst to her first basketball game, a match between Armstrong and Savannah State, she had to ask which team was the Armstrong team.

Coach Alexander worked his players hard, and he promoted his program with single-minded determination. For the first season, he and SGA president Dennis Pruitt organized a major publicity campaign to arouse campus support. Fifteen hundred students packed the gymnasium for a Pirate Preview in October 1971. Community leaders came from town to add their endorsement. Mayor John Rousakis, a basketball star from Armstrong’s junior college days, came out to show the crowd how it used to be done. President Ashmore took to the floor for a demonstration shot. In addition to the cheerleading squad, Alexander introduced a new group, the Buccaneers, with maroon velvet hot pants, to serve as official hostesses for basketball games and other campus events. Alexander scheduled his games in the Civic Center and established a variety of booster groups in the community. Contributors to the Big 100 Club wore special blazers with an Armstrong emblem. An Armstrong Educational Fund directed contributions to athletic scholarships. The Big A Club provided additional financial support. Donors received special seating at the home games, where attendance averaged 3,000 ASC fans at the Civic Center arena, with double that number in attendance for the ASC-SSC game. Those who did not attend in person could watch the games on Channel 22. The team worked its way into national rankings and in November 1973 found itself in Eau Claire, Wisconsin for a holiday classic match against Kentucky State. Ranked 14th against #3 Kentucky State, the Armstrong Pirates rallied from a weak first half to a cliff-hanger victory, 75-74. The Inkwell burst with unabashed pride in a team that offered “The Best Show in Town.” For the Homecoming game in February 1974, a record crowd of 5,489 fans watched the action in the Civic Center. News of Armstrong’s success appeared in the The Atlanta Constitution and in Associated Press articles as well. Coverage on the local sports page was generous and enthusiastic, with Sam
Pirate Basketball

Berry and Ike Williams as special favorites for feature interviews. Mayor Rousakis proclaimed Tuesday, April 16, 1974 as Ike Williams Day for the city, and County Commission Chairman Tom Coleman did the same for the county. At the end of the 1976-77 season, the Armstrong State College Pirates were the South Atlantic Conference champions for the second time, with Coach Alexander named Coach of the Year and Crow Armstrong designated as the conference’s most valuable player.

Alexander and a unique group of outstanding athletes, black and white, had built a first class act, but it was an expensive act to maintain. The college introduced a $5.00 athletic fee in 1972, and Alexander cultivated community donors for scholarships and relied on gate receipts to fill in the rest of his budget needs. But it was not enough. The SAC required five varsity sports, and basketball used 60% of the total athletics budget. Alexander made no apologies for the cost. Basketball generated publicity, fans, and revenue for the college. It was his priority, and he thought that the coaches of the other varsity sports should hustle as he did to attract outside support for their teams.

I only one person. I’ve got to set my objectives and priorities; most of my effort is toward basketball because I know the proceeds from that can go to the other varsity sports. Now my individual coaches on each sport have to promote their own programs and if they suffer, on occasion, it may be because they do not allot enough time to promoting their particular program. The coach who is confident and who is willing to work hard can promote his own program.

Not everyone was happy with this attitude, and things were about to get worse even as the Pirates soared to their conference championship. It was not just that other varsity sports wanted a larger part of the budget. Women’s athletics represented one example of the new attention given to women’s issues on college campuses in the 1970s. It was the most expensive example and claimed a third of the Armstrong athletic budget. The program first surfaced in 1973 with a directive from the Chancellor for each state college to establish a committee to study the development of an athletic program for women. At Armstrong, a questionnaire distributed to 190 women students found 113 of them interested in the sports listed. Alexander voiced his initial support and proposed four varsity sports for women, but he claimed he could never get more than twelve women students to come to a meeting to develop an actual program in women’s athletics. Skeptics suspected an effort to block any further sharing of the athletic budget, though Alexander denied the charge. In the fall of 1975, Ashmore requested Bob Patterson as chairman of the Athletic Committee to prepare a full proposal and budget for women’s athletics. In the fall 1976, Betty Jean Ford arrived to direct the new program. The Savannah Morning News gave her an enthusiastic and gate revenues started to decline after the peak moment in February 1974. Booster support fell off as well. In March 1977, when the team returned from winning its second conference championship, The Inkwell applauded the success but noted that the campus seemed to have lost interest: “They did it, and they did it without us.” Alexander laid out his record and made his case for more funds. In seven years the Pirates had played in four national tournaments and in the past three years had twice won the South Atlantic Conference title. The budget allotted him was not enough for basketball and the other varsity sports and for women’s athletics too. “I’m a competitor,” he said. “I’ll run a hundred yard dash right now. But I won’t start with my feet tied.” In September 1977, Alexander resigned, claiming that the athletic program no longer received the support it needed from the administration, the community, or the students. He hoped the college would see the need to make changes as a result of his departure. It did. Ashmore merged the athletic department and the physical education department and combined Alexander’s position as athletic director with the existing position of department head for physical education. He explained that the new arrangement would resolve conflicts between the two departments and make more efficient use of limited resources.

Women’s athletics arrived on the scene, backed by the budget would also need to increase in order to support the new program, and Alexander was asking for still more money for his winning basketball team. Even as the team continued to score, the enthusiasm on campus and in town began to wane. Attendance...
editorial welcome and wished her well: “Go, Betty, Go.” Bill Alexander left the following year.

Outside of athletics, other women’s groups emerged. The first one called itself “Mrs.” and turned its attention to women entering college after an interruption for marriage and children. When it became evident that many of the women were single parents, the group changed its name to “Ms.” (Married or Single). The college actively recruited these women through a formal program called Operation Return. One of the first to ‘return’ was Grace Martin, a personal friend and neighbor of Henry Ashmore. She insisted that “Ms.” was “not a coffee club” but an effort to provide support for women juggling the demands of children, households, and husbands.

The Ms. label, however, carried a connotation of “bra-burning sign-carriers,” and so the group changed its name again to Women of Worth (WOW).

Anne Hudson took another angle on women’s issues and worked to establish a campus chapter of the National Organization of Women to promote women’s athletics and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Beauty pageants came under new scrutiny, especially the Miss ‘Geechee contest. Proponents of the tradition argued that it provided scholarships for women. Critics replied that such contests dehumanized the image of women, offered no intellectual benefit, and were not appropriate to the collegiate environment. The pageants survived the debate, but future generations would revive the question again. The selection of Homecoming Queens was less controversial and began to include African American students. In 1972, Margaret Davis became Armstrong’s first African American Homecoming Queen, and in 1975, white student Helen Fogarty and African American student Veronica Black shared the crown.

African American students were a small but growing presence at Armstrong in the 1970s. In addition to basketball, they took prominent roles in academics and in student government, and in 1973 they organized the Black American Movement (BAM) to speak for their interests and promote their identity. Twila Haygood, a founding member of BAM, was also a founding member of the history honor society. Ray Perkins, finance chairman for BAM, served as SGA senator, honor council president, and minority liaison for his criminal justice department. An annual Black Awareness Week highlighted African American music, art, and the selection of Miss BAM. When a guest speaker from South Africa denied that the ancient stone structure at Great Zimbabwe was the work of indigenous African people, BAM members walked out in protest.

They criticized The Inkwell for printing articles that carried an implied slur against blacks, and they published a list of grievances that hit every aspect of campus life: discrimination against blacks in planning student activities, discrimination in the hiring of faculty and staff, “taking advantage of blacks in the athletic program,” and mistreatment of blacks by white professors. They took their grievances to President Ashmore and sent them to Savannah’s African American newspaper, The Herald.

From the other side of the racial divide, the response was equally strong. In the 1976 Geechee a picture of the members of “White Heritage in Today’s Environment” stared back at the photo of BAM members on the opposite page. In 1978, an irate Inkwell editor blasted the whole notion of an organization for black...
Inkwell, 23 April 1975.

Ray Persons and Don Waters, headed to law school. Inkwell, 25 April 1975.

Inkwell, 23 April 1975.


students drawing SGA funds for the Miss BAM beauty pageant. BAM, he declared, was a spoiled child, a private club, a clique, a segregationist movement, funded only to keep the child quiet.26 In reply, BAM insisted that it was a culturally oriented group that helped black students on a white campus “keep in touch” with their black identity. It insisted that it was open to all students even as it sought to protect black interests and promote awareness of black culture.27 The reigning Miss BAM offered her opinion that BAM’s critics were not “worth a spit in the mud.”28

By the 1970s, the various social and cultural events of campus life drew on a large student activities budget controlled solely by the students through the SGA. In May 1975, the SGA created a Campus Union Board to administer the funds. Faculty had little influence on the choices that were made, and an occasional voice noted that the campus was not sponsoring the kind of events that an academic community should offer to its students and to citizens of the community.29

Eugene McCarthy spoke on campus in October 1971, but no comparable national figure appeared again until January 1978, when columnist Jack Anderson addressed a huge crowd of students, faculty, and Savannahians in the new Fine Arts auditorium.

The new auditorium was one of three building projects that marked the 1970s. In 1976, the library added a much-needed eastern extension, and a new Health Professions Building was completed in 1979. Both the auditorium and the Health Professions Building introduced a modern architectural style, in striking contrast with the pattern around the quadrangle. The Fine Arts Building included classrooms and studio rooms for art and music students, and the auditorium’s 1,000 seats provided a venue for large campus gatherings and community events. In dedication, on November 2, 1975, brought to campus actor Burt Reynolds to do the honors. Reynolds had been in Savannah for two months filming the movie *Gator*; and although Ashmore had initially requested Governor George Busbee to officiate, an actor was in some ways an appropriate person for the event. Reynolds confessed that he had never participated in the opening of a college building. Usually, he said, he was asked to open gas stations.30 After cutting the ribbon, he made his way into the auditorium, took a seat in a solitary easy chair in the middle of the stage, and entered into a pleasant conversation of questions and answers with the crowd. In February 1977, actor Leonard Nimoy of *Star Trek* fame spoke on campus, but such high-profile guests were expensive and became increasingly rare.

Instead, the campus invited local speakers and relied on the theatrical talents of The Masquers. Director John Suchower presented a broad selection of classic and modern drama, and his summer program drew student actors from around the state. For many productions, he invited interested persons in the community to join the troupe as well. In the fall of 1974, Joe Mydell arrived and for two years strengthened the African American presence on the faculty and in the Masquers, where he performed and directed. One of Mydell’s major productions was *Purlie Victorious*, an Ossie Davis play that Mydell described as a portrayal of one black man’s way of dealing with southern racism. “If black and white societies can look at the problem and laugh, and, at the same time realize that they are the problem, then communication barriers can be eliminated.”31 It tended to work better on the stage than it did in real life.

In the era when Watergate and Doonesbury broke onto the national scene, it was not surprising that Armstrong produced its own investigative activists and a new genre of campus cartoons. In the spring of 1972, the SGA censured President Ashmore for allowing the Chatham County Republican Party to use Jenkins Auditorium for its convention, in violation of the policies of the Armstrong handbook.32 In November 1973, *Inkwell* editor Glenn Arnsdorf challenged a proposal to give SGA senators free admission to college concerts and dances.33 A petition with 300 student signatures agreed, and the proposal fell in defeat.34 The next editor, Tom Puckett, with lank, shoulder-length hair and wire-rimmed glasses, brought a different look, a different tone, and a different set of priorities to The Inkwell. The paper accused the Cultural Affairs Committee of irresponsible use of funds in paying $2,000 to bring a comedy group to campus solely on the recommendation of one person.35 A “Rocky” column became a regular *Inkwell* feature, with off-
in and more diverse in its programs and its students.

To help students find their way into college life, Joe Buck introduced a new orientation program in the summer of 1974. It emphasized Communication, Help, Advisement, Orientation, and Service, creating the acronym CHAOS as a good-humored acknowledgment of the bewildering experience that students faced in making the transition from high school to college. Incoming freshmen attended special summer meetings with student leaders who explained the opportunities and expectations that lay ahead.

After the first few months, the new students learned the routine and the initial chaos subsided. But beyond the campus, a larger kind of disturbance surrounded the college during the 1970s, as the racial patterns of higher education in Georgia took Armstrong out of its own small world into a period of political uncertainty that lasted through the decade and beyond.

The decade of the 1970s clearly involved more than the desegregation issue. Faculty and students moved through the period in a mix of sunshine and shadows. Everyone remembered high moments of each, from the vigorous faculty protest over salary contracts, to the glory days of Sam Berry and Ike Williams, to the silliness of the streakers. Examples of conflict were actually very small and were a natural result of the fact that the campus community was growing larger.
CHAPTER 9

Kenneth R. Adams was a sixteen-year-old African American student at Pearl-McLaurin High School in Rankin County, Mississippi. He never set foot on the campus of Armstrong State College. In October 1970, his name appeared first in the alphabetical list of litigants in a complaint brought by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund before Judge John H. Pratt in the Federal Court of the District of Columbia. The complaint charged that ten southern states were operating segregated systems of higher education in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Georgia was among the states listed in the complaint and thus became an “Adams state.” The complex lawsuit persisted for nearly two decades in the courts. Predominantly white Armstrong State College and predominantly black Savannah State College, the two state-supported four-year colleges in Savannah, seemed to epitomize the segregated system of higher education that the Adams case challenged. They were not the only desegregation issue in the University System of Georgia, but they held particular attention in the Georgia litigation. Ultimately, in an effort to reconfigure the racial profile of each institution and to eliminate two significant areas of program duplication, the Board of Regents removed the business administration program from Armstrong and sent it to Savannah State and removed the teacher education program from Savannah State and sent it to Armstrong.

The decision for the program swap came at the end of a nine-year period during which Georgia submitted a series of desegregation plans to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Armstrong and Savannah State received specific discussion in each plan, and the ongoing stages of the case introduced a number of cooperative experiments at the two colleges to address desegregation concerns. Each ruling of the court, however, pushed for more results than either the plans or the experiments provided. The “Savannah Problem” was a difficult one. In the end, the program swap left both colleges feeling that the search for Solomon’s wisdom had brought down Solomon’s sword instead.

EFForts TO DEvELOP AN ACCEpTABLE pLAN, 1970-1977

HEW acts better…when a court order is staring in its face.

During the summer of 1969, the Office of Civil Rights undertook a review of the University System of Georgia to determine the state’s compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. OCR officials visited various state campuses, and on February 26, 1970, Regional Director Paul H. Rilling sent his findings to Chancellor George Simpson. The tone of Rilling’s letter was constructive and cooperative, but the primary finding was stark: “The State of Georgia is operating a dual system of higher education based on race in that past patterns of racial segregation have not been eliminated from most of the institutions within the system.”

The report acknowledged the desegregation efforts by individual institutions, but it called for more than just local institutional actions: “The scope of authority of each individual institution under your Board’s control is not broad enough to effect the necessary changes which will disestablish the racially dual structure within the system itself.” This authority rests with

*See Appendix A
the Board of Regents. The report concluded with a request for "a plan for the complete desegregation of all the public institutions of higher education for which the Board of Regents has responsibility...within sixty (60) days of the receipt of this letter."

From the outset, OCR asked for a System-wide plan. Piecemeal efforts by individual institutions would not be sufficient to desegregate the System as a whole. Rilling’s letter was brief but clear. It specifically called for the elimination of “racial identification” in the System's schools, and it requested a statement of particular actions to go into effect in September 1970. On May 15, 1970, Chancellor Simpson delivered Georgia’s response. When published in The System Summary, it took only three pages to state Georgia’s position on the subject of desegregation in the University System. Simpson described the state’s actions to date as “a process of work and achievement rather than an exact plan of action.” As evidence, he offered a table showing the increasing number of minority students and faculty in the University System in 1965, 1969, and 1970. He continued with his personal belief that the compliance review conducted by your office on all campuses of the University System during the summer of 1969 did not offer a plan with any real specificity. It chose the problems which concern you.”

He then cited letters from three college presidents describing their efforts to achieve further desegregation. Of special note were developments in Savannah, where the presidents of Armstrong and Savannah State had initiated several cooperative actions between their two schools. As the result of a cross-town exchange program, for example, sixty-three Armstrong students were enrolled in classes at Savannah State and seven Savannah State students were enrolled in classes at Armstrong. Simpson then spoke of the increasing number of students expected to attend college in the future. He concluded with a brief reference to new acting director at the Office of Civil Rights, now Simpson referred to a particular passage from OCR’s earlier letter of February 26, 1970.

Educational institutions which have previously been legally segregated have an affirmative duty to adopt measures necessary to overcome the effect of past segregation. To fulfill the purposes and intent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it is necessary that any institution maintain a non-discriminatory admissions policy if the student population continues to reflect the formerly de jure racial identification of that institution.

Holsom asked for current enrollment statistics, which Simpson provided, but the increasing number of black students and faculty in the System as a whole and at predominately white institutions did not change the clear racial identity of the state’s three historically black colleges. Holmes examined the figures and informed Simpson that “the racial composition of the campuses at Albany State, Fort Valley and Savannah State appears clearly attributable to the existence of the prior dual system based on race. Accordingly, we must conclude that the dual system has not yet been fully disestablished.” He gave Georgia three weeks to come up with a plan for OCR to review in time to meet Judge Pratt’s June 16 deadline.

Although the desegregation story often focuses on efforts to increase the number of black students in white settings, Holmes’s letter looked hard at Georgia’s three predominantly black institutions. Georgia’s plan, he said, should examine the reasons for this racial pattern and identify ways to correct it.

The roles of the predominantly black institutions in Georgia are, at a practical matter differentiated by the limited curriculum they offer as compared to the breadth of offerings at majority institutions of comparable size. It appears to us that the variety of programs offered at the black colleges will remain insufficient to attract white students, particularly since the extensive duplication by the white schools of the programs offered at the black colleges will continue to provide white students with attractive alternatives...Georgia has a continuing obligation to devise steps that will be effective in increasing significantly the presence of white students and faculty at the three predominantly black institutions. In order for the predominately black institutions to attract students and faculty of both races on a racially nondiscriminatory basis, their programs should be broadened, enhanced in quality, and differentiated from those of other institutions. In June of 1973, Georgia submitted its second response to OCR. This time it was a formal document, twenty-one pages in length, entitled "A Plan for the Further Integration of the University System of Georgia.” It described the state’s existing efforts as a "steady, occasionally difficult process that is moving well and soundly, with due regard for the educational and human issues involved.” It asserted that the University System’s “pattern for success is clearly established, tested and proved; and action is in the process to realize, in time, full and effective integration.” The report acknowledged that difficulties existed. Black faculty often preferred black schools. White students showed “little or no desire” to attend black schools. Administrative positions were fully staffed with little prospect for retirements or new positions. It was hard to know what kinds of programs might attract minorities. Nevertheless, several “innovative plans” were under consideration, such as the possible exchange of faculty between black and white institutions. The
System might also recruit talented minority faculty who did not yet have the terminal degree and assist them to achieve it. The most concrete development in the new plan was the requirement for every campus in the University System to establish a department of Developmental Studies to provide academic assistance for students from culturally and educationally limited backgrounds. This feature, said Simpson, constituted the real "heart of the plan." Finally, since an appealing campus environment might help to attract white students to black schools, the plan affirmed that recent improvements on black campuses would continue.

The Armstrong and Savannah State section of the 1973 Plan described the joint and cooperative activities of the two colleges: a Joint Fund Drive; a Joint Graduate Program; and cooperative undergraduate programs in social work, physical education, music education, and NROTC. A shuttle bus carried students from one campus to the other. As a result, said the report, "at any particular instant of time during the academic day, in excess of 11% of the students on the SSC campus are white." With a thirty-day extension of the court deadline, Holmes and the OCR staff began their review of the Georgia plan. Their opinion came down on November 10, 1973. Despite evidence of "significant progress" and "a good faith effort," the plan lacked sufficient specificity and "falls short of meeting the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964." Holmes's twenty-one page letter then set out specific guidelines for the development of a new plan. It should be a single comprehensive plan for the entire System, and every step of the plan should be "that of a student's choice of institution or campus, henceforth, will be based on other than racial criteria." The current plan, he wrote, relied too much on "individual college administrators who were not able to consider in formulating their plans, approaches other than those that a single institution acting alone or through agreements with other colleges, could accomplish." Beyond this central criticism, OCR had other questions about the 1973 plan. Past recruitment efforts showed shortcomings. Program duplication remained an unresolved issue. And Holmes had a specific comment about the 11% calculation of the number of white students on the Savannah State campus "at any particular instant of time during the academic day." The reference, said Holmes, avoided the main issue. How would the various cooperative efforts alter the full-time enrollment of blacks at Armstrong or whites at Savannah State? For all three of the black colleges in Georgia, Holmes wanted to know the "specific steps which will be taken to assure that Albany State, Fort Valley State, and Savannah State College attain, at least, the academic caliber of all other institutions in the State system of comparable size, level, and function." He requested a new plan in ninety days.

And so the work began again. In December, Holmes and his staff convened a conference for representatives of all of the Adams states and informed them that their plans should contain clearly stated actions and goals, a calendar with deadlines, and specific monitoring procedures. But most importantly, the plans should impose "no undue burden" on black students nor cause any black college to be "downgraded." Since the historically black colleges provided an avenue for large numbers of black students to obtain a college degree, no desegregation plan should close off or limit that result. To do so would be contrary to a basic goal of desegregation. The directives of the December conference carried major implications for Savannah. Any plan concerning Armstrong and Savannah State would have to consider the effect on the educational opportunities and achievement of black students.

On February 15, 1974, Chancellor Simpson submitted a new, eighty-nine page document with a new title: "A Plan for the Further Desegregation of the University System of Georgia." It declared that it was "a complete entity in itself and all previously dated materials are officially withdrawn." It offered a "single comprehensive statewide plan involving all aspects of University System operations." Although the document continued to deny any recent history of discrimination, the Board of Regents now acknowledged that it held "more than a legal responsibility in its efforts to secure the achievement of true desegregation of the University System of Georgia." Continuing Board contributions to the resolution of subtle, often ill-defined, problems of discrimination both within and external to the system would be made on a comprehensive basis.

The new plan borrowed liberally from the previous one, but the introductory remarks set a different tone. A long new section on the centralized governance of the University System emphasized the comprehensive authority of that body to carry out a statewide plan. In response to Holmes's questions about the racial composition of the Board of Regents, the new plan cited the May 1973 appointment of Atlanta businessmen James B. Saladino as the first black member of the Board. On the chancellor's staff, the Vice Chancellor for Services was "an experienced educator and former President of a predominantly black institution" who was "extensively involved in the analysis of plan elements." Current presidents of the historic black colleges, along with the presidents of nearby white institutions, had also contributed to the development of the new document. An expanded discussion of the Developmental Studies program, now identified as Special Studies, stressed its comprehensive and statewide nature and made a strong commitment to provide a full and qualified staff.

Further after discussions between Holmes, Simpson, and their staffs in mid-April, Holmes issued an optimistic statement that Georgia could make the necessary revisions in time for the court’s June 1 deadline. The primary requirement was to show more numbers comparing the resources of comparable black and white institutions on every issue from per student allotment in state funding to square footage of major facilities. Holmes pointed once more to the need for black and white schools in the same locality to offer different programs in order to attract students of the opposite race. And again Holmes referred to Savannah State and Armstrong. Their joint and cooperative programs did not alter the predominant racial pattern of full-time enrollment at each school. In the System as a whole, the problem of unnecessary duplication in curriculum also remained unsolved. Recruitment issues needed closer attention. The state’s Education Fairs would look at ways of "changing the stereotyped image which white students may hold regarding the academic quality of predominantly black institutions." To recruit minority faculty and administrators, a statewide applicant pool might be helpful. The Georgia plan had strengths, but it needed more work.

And so the work continued. A new wave of paper collectively identified as Part B was added to the February plan, now known as Part A, to produce a document of 236 pages, which went forward to Holmes on June 1, 1974. Part B provided the numbers, lots of numbers, all of which argued that no discrimination existed in the state’s treatment of its predominantly black colleges. On the matter of curriculum duplication, the report explained that most of the four-year state colleges offered liberal arts degrees and therefore program duplication was necessary and in most cases "should be permitted without question." At Armstrong and Savannah State, however, the duplication issue was now under close review by joint committees from the two colleges.

The rest of the plan listed various recruitment tactics to attract minority students and listed the steps that Georgia had established an Applicant Clearinghouse to receive and disseminate inquiries for employment among all of the state colleges and universities.

The plan seemed to be getting very close to meeting Holmes’s requirements. One more phone call raised a few critical questions about institutional identity. In a follow-up letter of June 13, 1974, Attorney W. G. Hooper affirmed the System’s commitment to initiate a thorough "role and scope" study for each institution and for the System as a whole to examine institutional missions and determine curriculum changes that might attract minority students. Hooper noted that "there are special difficulties in getting white students to attend [sic] the predominantly black institutions and every effort will be made to identify programs that will contribute to the solution of this problem." The "role and scope" studies would begin immediately.

The following week, on June 21, 1974, a mailgram arrived in the Chancellor’s office bringing the news that HEW had accepted the new Georgia plan. The formal letter came in mid-July. It described the plan (Parts A and B and the Hooper letter) as a work in progress that would make real progress toward desegregation, but HEW warned that it would monitor developments closely. The plan should be considered "a beginning rather than an end point." Overall, the news seemed good, but HEW’s acceptance would only stand if no challenge was brought against it in Judge Pratt’s court.

The challenge came within a year. In May 1975, the Adams lawyers filed their new complaint. “In a blatant regression from its own specific desegregation criteria, HEW accepted in 1974 state plans deficient in every respect, lacking measures to eliminate racial duality in state systems, and failing even to promise actual desegregation results.” Although North Carolina’s plan received the most criticism and Georgia’s plan received a general commendation for attempting to meet its commitments, the Adams lawyers still found numerous flaws that Georgia needed to address. New admissions standards and the new Rising Junior Exam
carried implications for racial enrollment and success. The Special Studies program provided no assurance for the retention of black students and lacked System-wide uniformity. Georgia offered no proposal to realign or reorganize the curriculum at its institutions, and it failed to address the question of program duplication. The court took all of the complaints under review, and in April 1970, Peart issued his ruling: the states must submit new plans. He ordered HEW to provide clear criteria, and he hammered home the central dilemma that the criteria must address.

The desegregation process should take into account the unequal status of the Black colleges and the real danger that desegregation will diminish higher education opportunities for Blacks. Without suggesting the answer to this complex problem, it is the responsibility of HEW to devise criteria for higher education plans that will take into account the unique importance of Black colleges and at the same time comply with the Congressional mandate ([Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act]).

When the new criteria emerged, they emphasized additional funding, new physical facilities, and expanded academic programs to enhance black colleges. Georgia began again. Using the 1974 plan as “supporting evidence,” a new plan appeared in September 1977. David S. Tatel, the new director at OCR pressed it through two revisions, first in December 1977 and a further modification in March 1978. The number documents conceded that Georgia’s black colleges had “academic problems of disproportionate magnitude,” and it proposed that the Georgia legislature fund special scholarships for black students. The March modification bore in specifically on the three black colleges (Savannah State College, Albany State College, and Fort Valley State College) and proposed a focused study of their academic structures. In 1950, the Board of Regents changed the name of the school to Savannah State College, and by 1958 seven administrative divisions were in place: Business Administration, Education, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Technical Sciences, and Home Study.

By comparison, Armstrong was clearly the newcomer in higher education in Savannah, being founded in 1935 as a city junior college, joining the University System in 1959, and acquiring four-year status in 1964. Neither in 1959 nor in 1964 did the fact of two, racially distinct, state-supported colleges in the same community seem strange. Ten years after the 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. Board of Education, segregated education remained strong in Savannah, where token integration had barely begun in the public schools and the University System (and Armstrong) had only recently ended racial barriers in admissions. In addition to the difference in age and history, Savannah State was a residential campus whereas Armstrong was not. By 1969, each college also had distinct academic specialties, such as health professions at Armstrong and industrial technology at Savannah State, but both offered a full program in the liberal arts along with baccalaureate degrees in business administration and teacher education.

Armstrong’s baccalaureate programs were all very young, with the first four-year degrees being awarded in June 1968. The significance of this difference in the two colleges was especially apparent in the field of teacher education, where Armstrong was just getting started and the program at Savannah State was well-established. In 1967, for example, Savannah State had eight faculty in teacher education and graduated 118 students with teacher education degrees. In that same year, Armstrong had three faculty in teacher education and had no teacher education graduates because it had yet to graduate its first baccalaureate class. And the program at Savannah State was growing. In December 1967, the Board of Regents authorized Savannah State to introduce a master’s degree in elementary education. It was the first graduate degree in education to be offered in Savannah, and forty-six graduate students registered for the Savannah State program in the summer of 1968. In 1970-1971, a third of the students admitted to the program were white, a fact that gave some support to the claim that the Master’s in Education degree at Savannah State might be “the most truly integrated program in the public-supported colleges of the State.” But it did not change the basically black identity of Savannah State College or the basically white identity of Armstrong. Even though both colleges were integrated, their enrollment statistics suggested that the legacy of a dual system of higher education in Georgia remained intact.

In his 1969 letter to Henry Ashmore, OCR Director Dewey Dodds prodded Armstrong to increase the number of its minority students and faculty. Major changes would require action by the Regents, but there were certain steps that the local institution could take to alter its racial percentages. In recruitment, for example, Dodds suggested more aggressive practices. We would urge the institution to undertake more affirmative action, beyond nondiscrimination, to attract and involve in the total life of the college members of racial groups historically barred from the institution. We would suggest that it is not sufficient to recruit Negro students, Negro athletes, and Negro faculty members equally with whites, but that extra efforts should be made to attract Negroes where they have been traditionally absent. Dodds suggested that Armstrong’s coaches should visit black high schools. He found that only one athletic scholarship had been offered to a black student. The college catalog had no pictures of minority students. “Pictures of Negro students in academic and social situations should be included in publications when white students are similarly depicted.” In the teacher education program, “No white student teacher has

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Total minority</th>
<th>Minority as a %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASC students</td>
<td>2,198</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC students</td>
<td>2,531</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASC faculty</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC faculty</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. ASC and SSC faculty and students, showing minority percentages in 1969.
ever been assigned to a predominantly Negro school.\(^5\) Student teachers should be assigned to schools representative of the community without regard to race.

Ashmore responded with a report of the college’s latest efforts.\(^6\) Two black nursing students had visited predominantly black Johnson High School to promote Armstrong’s nursing program. The education department had assigned white students to predominantly black schools for the fall term. The academic dean had visited Atlanta University in an effort to recruit black faculty but without any success. Similar contacts with Savannah State College and with Mr. W.W. Law of the local NAACP had also failed to produce results.

Ashmore took issue with the question of pictures in publications and enclosed samples showing black students in the life of the college.\(^7\) Dodds commended the report but asked for copies of the letters sent to black graduate schools in search of minority faculty.

He set May 1 as the deadline for Armstrong’s next report, which should show the expected minority enrollment for fall, along with further efforts to recruit minority faculty.\(^8\) And so it went.

The best new development that Ashmore could report was the appointment of Woodrow W. Griffin as Director of Financial Aid in the summer of 1970. Griffin was a 1968 African American graduate from Armstrong with a degree in mathematics. He personality the “grow your own” approach to attracting minorities to faculty and staff positions. The financial aid office was an important place to assist the enrollment of African American students, but the 89 minority students who registered for the fall of 1970 fell short of the 110 that Ashmore had projected and did not constitute a significant change from the 84 minority students reported for the previous year. “Intensify your efforts,” commented Dodds.\(^9\)

Recruitment of minority students took a major leap forward with the high profile enrollment of Coach Alexander’s basketball players, beginning with Sam Berry in April 1971. O’CR had encouraged particular attention to recruiting black athletes, and Alexander had his own reasons as well. The arrival of other African American students contributed to the 1972 election of an African American Homecoming Queen (Margaret Davis), the establishment of the Black American Movement group, and the observance of Black Awareness Week. Pictures in the ‘Gzech’ increasingly showed the presence of African American students on campus, and the total numbers began to rise from 5.4% in 1972 to 12% in 1978.

It was more difficult to recruit African American faculty members. In 1969, Armstrong had only one black faculty member, library cataloger Pat Ball. By 1973, a formal “Plan for Minority Recruitment” instructed department heads to fill vacancies or new positions “with either a Black or a female if at all possible.”\(^10\) The college would also offer scholarships to its own promising black graduates to assist them through graduate school in return for their commitment to return and teach at Armstrong.\(^11\) By these and other efforts, the college projected that 15% of the faculty would be African American by 1980.\(^12\)

Ashmore sent the minority recruitment plan forward to be included in Georgia’s 1973 response to HEW, but he noted that several “peculiar problems” affected all of Armstrong’s efforts. The major difficulty lay in the fact that a predominantly black college shared Armstrong’s same recruitment area, and “both Black students and Black faculty prefer to attend this institution.”\(^13\) In addition, the pool of minorities in academia was small, and the college had great difficulty locating qualified persons and offering them a competitive salary. All efforts to seek help from the local black community had failed.

If Savannah State was a problem in Armstrong’s recruitment efforts, the solution might be to develop a relationship between the two colleges that would improve the minority numbers for them both. Here lay the central thrust of the desegregation efforts of Armstrong and Savannah State during the 1970s.

The two schools could try to work out something together. Both presidents supported this approach, as did the Regents, but developing an arrangement that was workable and acceptable to OCR was exceedingly difficult.

Two documents in the Ashmore files for 1969-1970 reflect the range of possibilities as conversations between the two colleges got under way. Neither document has a date or an author. The first one is very brief and appears with the early correspondence between Ashmore and Dewey E. Dodds. Marked “For Discussion Only” with “HEW” penned on an upper corner, it was titled “Alternatives for disestablishing racially dual colleges where colleges are located in close proximity to each other.” The alternatives included 1) merger into a new institution, “The University of Georgia in Savannah;” 2) specialized degree programs at each institution not offered at the other; 3) degree programs that would require students to take classes at both schools; 4) pairing schools as in a junior college and senior college, or a senior college and a graduate school, or a liberal arts college and a college with pre-professional programs.\(^14\)

The second document described a merger plan for “East Georgia College,” complete with an organizational chart and a dominant role for Savannah State in the new institution.\(^15\) Upper level work would be located at Savannah State because of better facilities and because it is “the senior institution in a number of ways.” The resources at the Armstrong campus would be appropriate for lower level courses. The reorganization would cause a short-term upheaval, but “the merged institution will become the college which a city the size of Savannah should have had long ago, and which, as separate institutions, neither of the existing colleges can become.”\(^16\)

In 1970, however, the Board of Regents was not considering merger in Savannah or anywhere else. In April 1970, as Chancellor Simpson prepared his first response to OCR, he specifically recommended that the Board of Regents not close or merge any of the institutions of the University System: “We will
encourage cooperative, educational programs, where they are sound and feasible, as has already happened in a number of cases." Savannah was one such case.

Between 1968 and 1978, Armstrong and Savannah State introduced a variety of cooperative efforts, including faculty and student exchanges, programs that required students to take courses on both campuses, and a Joint Graduate Program. On campus, the two colleges worked together in fundraising and in developing a neighborhood education center for a low-income area of the city. Some of these efforts saw modest success, but others, particularly in the academic area, experienced serious problems. Three examples – the Joint Fund Drives, a cooperative undergraduate program in social work, and the Joint Graduate Program – illustrate some of the difficulties involved.

From 1973 to 1976 Armstrong and Savannah State conducted three joint Fund Drives to eliminate competition in local fundraising. The 1973 campaign set a goal of $100,000 to be split equally between both institutions. William A. Binns, Public Relations Manager at Union Camp, and Robert E. James, President of Carver State Bank, led the fundraising team as the month-long drive began in March. By the end of the month, $17,000 had been pledged. The drive was extended and the goal modified to $50,000. By the end of May the campaign had collected pledges for $47,825, and it declared itself a success in that it had produced more than the $44,000 total raised by both colleges in their separate efforts the previous year. Ashmore submitted the campaign brochure to the Chancellor's office, and the Joint Fund Drive appeared in Georgia's 1973 Plan as a 'most encouraging development' with 'gratifying' results. Two more annual campaigns followed with strong publicity and modest success, collecting $45,000-$50,000 from each effort.

In January 1976, James O. Baker, Assistant to the President and Director of Development at Armstrong suggested that the drive concentrate on individual meetings with business and industry leaders rather than continue the high-profile public campaigns. He also recommended that donors be allowed to designate which college they would like to receive their gift since 'many businesses have chosen not to participate using the 'joint theme' as an excuse because of their allegiance to a single college.' Overall, the fund drives did not raise large amounts of money nor did they change the pattern of divided loyalties.

In the academic arena, student and faculty exchanges were voluntary, but they were important. Bob Patterson of the Armstrong history department reported a good reception from Savannah State students who showed no resentment toward a professor who was “imposed” upon them. But in the Armstrong math department the only volunteer to teach a course at Savannah State was a part-time faculty member, and Propst did not believe that part-time faculty fully identified with either the letter or the spirit of what the Chancellor's Office expects from the faculty exchange. Propst worried that he had “not stressed enough the critical nature of the necessity for the success of this program.”

Social work offered an example of a specific cooperative program in which the two colleges worked together to develop a career field attractive to both blacks and whites. At Armstrong, social work graduated its first three students in August 1971. By comparison, Savannah State's slightly different program, a baccalaureate degree in sociology with a social welfare concentration, was well established and graduated a total of forty-three students in June and August 1970. Armstrong would need additional faculty and funding to develop its social work program fully, and a cooperative effort with Savannah State presented an opportunity to address desegregation concerns and seek the needed funding from HEW. As described in the initial grant proposal, the cooperative program would send one faculty member to teach one course on the opposite campus each quarter, dividing the required courses between the two schools and allowing students to take one course per quarter at the other college. The program would be housed and administered at Armstrong, but each college would award its own degree. The Georgia Department of Family and Children Services, funded by HEW, would pay 75% of the cost, and Armstrong would cover the rest.

The proposal stressed the value of social work for Savannah and for the two colleges: “This program is possibly the most ideal program through which Armstrong State College and Savannah State College can implement a cooperative program together.” It identified racism and poverty as problems around which students and faculty of both colleges could rally in a common effort. A Future Center for Human Resources and Services could foster better understanding between the races and be especially helpful for a city that “epitomizes the clash of cultures with views from radical left to reactionary right, from militant black to recalcitrant white.” A second grant proposal emphasized the importance of social workers to serve the elderly and unemployed and to work in hospitals and schools. For schools undergoing integration, social workers could help “overcome interracial tensions and misunderstandings based on prejudice and myth arising from a heretofore virtually apartheid society.”

The strong language of the proposals reflected the two strong personalities who led the social work program on each campus. Neil Satterfield came to Armstrong in September 1969 to teach sociology and social work. He possessed an active liberal conscience and compelling energy. He ran successfully for a seat on the local school board, and he proposed to take his sociology students directly into Savannah's public schools to talk with students about integrated classes. The first action raised questions from President Ashmore, and the second one unnerved and unseated a high school principal.

Satterfield's counterpart at Savannah State was Otis Johnson, Armstrong's first African American graduate from the junior college days in 1964. Johnson completed his baccalaureate degree in history at the University of Georgia, earned a Master's in Social Work from Atlanta University, and returned to Savannah to work with the Model Cities Program. In 1970, he was a part-time faculty member at Armstrong, where his degree and experience meshed well with Armstrong's new social work field. In September 1971, he took a full-time position at Savannah State, returning full circle to the place where he had started his academic life in 1962 before breaking the racial barrier at Armstrong Junior College in 1963.
Johnson and Satterfield were the central figures in the shared life of the social work program. When the grant proposal was approved, each man taught a course on the opposite campus, and the 1973 desegregation plan reported eighty Armstrong students in the program and forty-five Savannah State students. But a visit by John B. Pinka of the Georgia Department of Human Resources raised a number of questions.

We were greatly disappointed...with the limited participation of the Savannah State students in this program even though it was to be a cooperative venture...It would seem that there has been an apparent lack of interest among the Savannah State faculty to steer students into this program. There were also indications that this lack of interest may be attributed to the feelings of the Savannah State faculty that this was an Armstrong State program and to their fear that a more deeper [sic] involvement would eventually lead to a loss of their identity. This problem is of great concern to the HEW...ment would eventually lead to a loss of their identity. This problem is of great concern to the HEW...

Social work was one example of a partnership between Savannah State and Armstrong in an undergraduate program of particular interest to each college. Similar cooperative undergraduate programs existed in Physical Education, Music Education, and NROTC. In every case, students were required to take designated courses on the other campus but remained enrolled on their home campus. The overall racial profile of each institution did not change. Even when social work shifted from a cooperative program to a joint one, students were enrolled in either one institution or the other, and each institution awarded its separate degree. It was the kind of middle-ground arrangement that both colleges preferred, but it did not produce results that OCR and the courts wanted to see. Although an increasing number of black students enrolled in Armstrong's social work program, the number of white students enrolled in the program at Savannah State remained small. Social work was not helping to change Savannah State's traditional black identity.

The numbers that appeared in the February 1974 Desegregation Plan showed fifty-four Armstrong students in the program and twenty Savannah State students. When Satterfield returned, Johnson took a leave of absence for more graduate work, but questions about commitment and image continued. Satterfield felt that Savannah State's support of the program was insufficient to lip service only, and opinion at Savannah State considered the program to be dominated by a 'white image'. In 1976, the grant money began to falter, and the program failed to receive accreditation. The two colleges took the financial burden on themselves, and the joint program moved forward, struggling with funding and accreditation issues.

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The problems encountered with social work enlarged to a different scale in a third example of partnership between the two Savannah colleges. A Joint Graduate Program, begun in 1971, involved a wide variety of academic disciplines, numerous administrative complications, and far more than two strong personalities.

The easiest graduate program for the two colleges to develop together was business administration. Neither school offered graduate work in this field, but both wanted to develop an M.B.A. In October 1970, they began their joint planning. The other graduate area of interest to both colleges was teacher education, but this option was more awkward. Savannah State already had a master's program in elementary education with 52% white enrollment, a fact that Chancellor Simpson highlighted in his first response to OCR in May 1979 as an example of Georgia's success in integrating higher education. Here was a distinctive program that attracted white students to a black campus. Yet Armstrong was also eager to develop a master's in teacher education. Henry Ashmore wrote to Chancellor Simpson shortly after the Board authorized the Savannah State program: "I have been deluged with inquiries and requests on the part of the local people to determine if we will offer the same level of opportunity...I think there will develop a problem in Savannah if graduate work in teacher education is offered in one institution and not in the other." A joint effort would allow Armstrong its opportunity and might also satisfy HEW. On the other hand, a new joint program would terminate the existing program at Savannah State. The Chancellor and the Regents chose to pursue the development of the joint arrangement rather than concentrate graduate work in teacher education at Savannah State alone, and the Savannah State M.S.Ed. died a quiet death when a new Joint Graduate Center was born at the July 1971 meeting of the Board of Regents. James Eaton, who had chaired the Graduate Council for Savannah State's program, allowed himself a brief moment of bitterness to eulogize its demise.

Thirteen quarters of growth and freedom. And then it was no more. Let this last study...stand as a memorial to a thirteen quarter program that was perhaps too successful for its own good. ...
signature feature of all of the joint graduation exercises. Chancellor Simpson delivered the graduation speech and described the "hurricane atmosphere" in which both schools had been living, buffeted on all sides by desegregation issues. He admitted that the storm was not yet over.102 The two presidents also made remarks. Ashmore paid tribute to "the good will and the patience" of all parties working together to make the program succeed, and President Prince Jackson declared that the Joint Graduate Program "shows the world we can live and work together." The ceremonies concluded with the Battle Hymn of the Republic, sung by the Savannah State College Men's Glee Club, and Ashmore took the graduation program to add to the materials to be sent to OCR.103 The August graduation exercises took place at Armstrong in conjunction with the summer commencement for undergraduates, and thereafter the graduate ceremony alternated between the two campuses. James Eaton of Savannah State became the first Dean of the Joint Graduate Program and was responsible for administering the new creation. He held an advanced degree in theology as well as a doctorate in education, and his words often had a pulpit quality to exhort, correct, and speak the truth as he saw it. He wrote his first letter to the graduate students in the new program in September 1971. He described it as a "love letter," but it was a tough kind of love that called for a new loyalty to the new Savannah Graduate Center.

You may never see a building with that name engraved upon it, but that is the new graduate school, whether your classes meet on the campus way up Abercorn Extension or under the moss-laden trees in Thunderbolt. Regardless of what anyone says to the contrary, as of September 1971, you are no longer students either of Savannah State or Armstrong, but of the Savannah Graduate Center, the child of these two parent colleges.104

Questions of loyalty and identity were difficult for faculty as well as for students. Although Chancellor Simpson in his graduation remarks described the joint endeavor as one that had risen "from the bottom," such was clearly not the case, and the faculty at both schools knew it. Eaton raised the issue with President Ashmore: "Many of the faculty members feel that they have been more or less impressed into service with the graduate program. This is true on both campuses, but even more here at Armstrong. Also, many of them still do not understand — perhaps accept it is the correct word — the joint program of the two colleges."105 He made the same point to the joint graduate council: "The graduate program does not belong to any one person, any one department, any one college. It belongs to 'us.' And what we create from that which has been entrusted to us will be determined by how well we are able to stride beyond personal power plays and reach new heights of academic vision and interdisciplinary cooperation."106

But cooperation was not easy. Disagreements ran deep and a lot was at stake. Designing the new graduate program involved sensitive decisions on admission requirements, course requirements, and graduation requirements. Every question of academic performance touched issues of race and educational philosophy. Business administration and teacher education also had accreditation agencies to please. And OCR, HEW, the NAACP, and Judge Pratt wanted evidence that Georgia was working to end a dual system of higher education.

The most difficult problems of the Joint Graduate Program concerned access and standards. Both colleges readily acknowledged the importance of both issues, but admissions requirements raised sharp differences. In the M.B.A. program, Dean Eaton objected that the admissions test score recommended by the Armstrong business faculty would exclude "at least two-thirds of all graduates from Black colleges." The program, he argued vigorously, should not have "a mechanism that will automatically exclude none of ten Black students." He expressed similar objection to the graduate admissions requirements proposed by Armstrong's teacher education faculty, which placed too much weight on test scores and disregarded the circumstances of the teachers that the program aimed to serve.

Just how many people do we have applying with an 800 GRE aptitude score? Our purposes state that we are dedicated to serving the teachers of our metropolitan area. This standard belies that statement. It would seem that we are here to serve a select group of persons who by hook or crook make good scores on the test devised by ETS... It is a known fact that on the average black students do not do as well as white students on ETS tests even when they have equal or better academic ability... The [proposed] standards, as now stated, would effectively eliminate, at least four out of five of all Black applicants from the program... An educator's job is to educate, which among other things, means to help the student reach his maximal [sic] potential. Most students, regardless of the height or depth of their scores and grade point averages, have not reached that potential where they enter our program. What we need is more dedicated teachers and fewer instructors who confuse test scores and skin color with ability to become highly effective teachers... I shall fight the adoption of such proposals (as these) at every administrative level possible so long as I am associated with the graduate program. I hope I will not be alone.107

Eaton practiced what he preached. As dean of the graduate program, he reviewed all applications for admission and made all admission decisions. He evaluated the admissions information and was willing to admit students who showed less than the required 2.5 GPA "if in my judgment other factors indicate that the student is capable of graduate work."108 He did not see the need for an admissions committee.

When Armstrong's Joe Adams was appointed to rotate with Eaton as dean of graduate dean, the admissions debate continued. Adams argued that admission to graduate-level work ought to expect a higher quality of performance than undergraduate grades, which he believed were often subject to grade inflation.111 Eaton responded with a lengthy and impassioned discussion of the difference between the "ought" and the "is" in higher education. He agreed with the "ought" as stated by Adams, but the "is" rested on the fact that the State Department of Education required teachers to pursue graduate work in order to improve their salaries. As a result, teachers entered the graduate program for financial reasons as well as academic ones. Eaton then pointed to the deeper philosophical question: Is the Master's of Education degree we offer intended to produce scholars, as such, or is it intended to produce more skillful classroom teachers?... If the major purpose of our program is to take what we have, recognize their abilities as well as their disabilities, recognize their motivations as well as our expectations, I believe a teacher education program of which all of us can be proud might be developed. It would mean taking some of the classes out of celestial realms and centering them on performance rather than on scholarly theories and factual data to be recited on final examinations. If we are forced to ignore the facts, then we have no choice but to settle for a graduate program which will begin evaporating even faster than this quarter's enrollment indicates it now is.112

Besides admissions issues, the Joint Graduate Program also struggled with a requirement for students to take half of their courses at the other college.113 The presidents, the academic deans, and Dean Eaton designed the requirement as a way to increase the number of minority faculty and students on each campus, but the
policy was hard to implement. It did not appear in the Bulletin and apparently no one told the students. If the faculty knew, they did not stress it in their advisement conferences with students. Simply rotating faculty and courses between each campus would not achieve the desired racial mix, since students could wait until the course the faculty was back on the home campus. The 50-50 rule faced practical difficulties as well. Savannah State’s pre-existing graduate program in elementary education meant that Savannah State had more graduate courses in place than Armstrong. Until Armstrong developed new graduate-level courses and hired faculty to teach them, most of the teacher education courses and faculty resided at Savannah State. As Eaton pointed out, the graduate program could not be a 50-50 operation under these circumstances. But Eaton also saw racial undertones in the policy: In spite of any arguments to the contrary, it seems at least fair to recognize that the elementary education program had developed to a rather refined state prior to the beginning of the joint program and that Savannah State College faculty members—not all black, since that always seems to be the hidden issue—had developed courses and competencies that are not duplicated at Armstrong... The graduate program is not a 50-50 program in spite of what is said. It is and ought to be a cooperative program from which both colleges benefit—as they do. To insist that to graduate from the program, one must have taken at least 50% of his work on Armstrong State College—or Savannah State College— campus is just another veiled manifestation of a vision regardless of the pious reasons given otherwise.114

For President Ashmore, President Jackson and the Board of Regents, a racial mix of faculty and students was essential. Another approach would be to divide the graduate education courses between the two colleges, with certain courses offered only at Savannah State and others offered only at Armstrong. The departments would have to agree on which campus would acquire which courses, and the division would be permanent. When the Savannah State education faculty opposed a permanent division,115 the presidents convened a meeting of the Joint Graduate Council and laid down the law. The minutes recorded the comments of each president and the pressure they felt from the Board of Regents and HEW.

Ashmore: The Joint Graduate Program is the “brain child” of the Board of Regents, and as such, it has the very close scrutiny of the Chancellor’s office. Certain problems may require the assistance of the Presidents to work out. The department heads are held responsible for working out specific departmental problems, and some things have to be done whether we like it or not.

Lest there remain any doubt, Jackson stated that the idea for the permanent division of courses was his, and he assured the council that “if the Presidents have to work out the division of courses, they will.”116

Students also had strong opinions about the program. Most of them were working adults who enrolled for one or maybe two courses each term. Financial or family considerations might cause them to interrupt their program of study. As a result, they did not move quickly to complete the degree, and the 50:50 rule complicated their progress through the requirements. The students also had qualitative concerns. In August 1972, the second year of the program, twenty-eight students signed a petition describing the shortcomings of their graduate experience. “The very existence of this program in its presently very obviously undeveloped form promotes an attitude on the part of many of the student participants that the content of these courses is of infinitely lesser importance than the final attain ment of an ‘advanced’ degree and salary increases and promotions presumed to result from the diploma.”117

The petitioners wanted a “more selective admissions policy.” They wanted an honor code, they wanted faculty to be able to grant grades lower than C for poor quality work. They wanted grades sent to the registrar rather than to the graduate dean. They wanted high standards for oral examinations, and they wanted an opportunity to evaluate their professors. In a separate letter to Dean Eaton, August graduate Herbert E. Burnsed placed the issues in a larger context. If entrance standards assured that students were able to do graduate level work, students would feel less pressure to cheat (the honor code issue) and faculty would not need to fail students who were not qualified in the first place. Remediation might help students who could not meet the entrance requirements. “We should not close our doors to anyone seeking to better himself through further education.”118

Both documents echoed the ongoing debate about access and standards. And both documents had repercussions. The concerns made their way to the Chancel lor’s office and back again. Eaton conveyed the message sharply to the Savannah State graduate faculty. It seems to me that this is the time for every Savannah State faculty member involved in the program to do his level best to make certain that everything he does in his professional role as a graduate teacher is not only above board but in keeping with the best practices of graduate education... Rigorous learning experiences should be motivated and expected and... when a course is completed the student should feel that he has had a graduate course worth paying for. This is all I ask of you. If this is done, then we will have no reason to wonder just how much is fact and how much is fiction when these criticisms against Savannah State—the real target—are raised.”119

Jackson: The success of the state desegregation plan depends partly on this program... Peter Holmes of HEW questioned both presidents about the program. Chancellor Simmons has focused his thinking on the Joint Program in Savannah, stating, “This program must work. The problems will be worked out.”120

Haskin Pounds came from the Chancellor’s office to investigate the complaints, and President Ashmore reported that the concerns were being addressed. The problems were simply “success problems,” he said, which were “usually easier to resolve than other kinds of problems.”121

Faculty attitudes toward the Joint Graduate Program were not quite as cheery as Ashmore’s. Even an occasional moment of light-hearted humor could be hard to appreciate. At one joint faculty meeting, President Jackson joked that the Regents had decided to merge the two colleges and the new president would be President Jack-Ash. A bush followed his remark, as the faculty remained unsure whether they were hearing news or humor and responded with slow and nervous laughter.122

The success of the State desegregation plan depended partly on this program... Peter Holmes of HEW questioned both presidents about the program. Chancellor Simmons has focused his thinking on the Joint Program in Savannah, stating, “This program must work. The problems will be worked out.”120

Students also had strong opinions about the program. Most of them were working adults who enrolled for one or maybe two courses each term. Financial or family considerations might cause them to interrupt their program of study. As a result, they did not move quickly to complete the degree, and the 50:50 rule complicated their progress through the requirements. The students also had qualitative concerns. In August 1972, the second year of the program, twenty-eight students signed a petition describing the shortcomings of their graduate experience. “The very existence of this program in its presently very obviously undeveloped form promotes an attitude on the part of many of the student participants that the content of these courses is of infinitely lesser importance than the final attainment of an ‘advanced’ degree and salary increases and promotions presumed to result from the diploma.”117

The petitioners wanted a “more selective admissions policy.” They wanted an honor code, they wanted faculty to be able to grant grades lower than C for poor quality work. They wanted grades sent to the registrar rather than to the graduate dean. They wanted high standards for oral examinations, and they wanted an opportunity to evaluate their professors. In a separate letter to Dean Eaton, August graduate Herbert E. Burnsed placed the issues in a larger context. If entrance standards assured that students were able to do graduate level work, students would feel less pressure to cheat (the honor code issue) and faculty would not need to fail students who were not qualified in the first place. Remediation might help students who could not meet the entrance requirements. “We should not close our doors to anyone seeking to better himself through further education.”118

Both documents echoed the ongoing debate about access and standards. And both documents had repercussions. The concerns made their way to the Chancellor’s office and back again. Eaton conveyed the message sharply to the Savannah State graduate faculty. It seems to me that this is the time for every Savannah State faculty member involved in the program to do his level best to make certain that everything he does in his professional role as a graduate teacher is not only above board but in keeping with the best practices of graduate education... Rigorous learning experiences should be motivated and expected and... when a course is completed the student should feel that he has had a graduate course worth paying for. This is all I ask of you. If this is done, then we will have no reason to wonder just how much is fact and how much is fiction when these criticisms against Savannah State—the real target—are raised.”119

Haskin Pounds came from the Chancellor’s office to investigate the complaints, and President Ashmore reported that the concerns were being addressed. The problems were simply “success problems,” he said, which were “usually easier to resolve than other kinds of problems.”121

Faculty attitudes toward the Joint Graduate Program were not quite as cheery as Ashmore’s. Even an occasional moment of light-hearted humor could be hard to appreciate. At one joint faculty meeting, President Jackson joked that the Regents had decided to merge the two colleges and the new president would be President Jack-Ash. A bush followed his remark, as the faculty remained unsure whether they were hearing news or humor and responded with slow and nervous laughter.122
In general, the graduate program in business administration operated more smoothly than the M.Ed., which faced complications in both its elementary and secondary programs. The master's in elementary education was always the dominant degree, and Savannah State's earlier graduate degree gave its teacher education faculty a strong sense of ownership and leadership in the new program. No one captured that feeling more clearly than Thelma M. Harmon, head of the Education Division at Savannah State. She held firm opinions and did not hesitate to make them known.

Whereas I have the willingness to work plus the educational and experiential background to make genuine contributions specifically in curriculum development and teacher education, I am unwilling to take on certain tremendous time and energy expending responsibilities under the guise of committee membership, particularly since the committee is to duplicate functions presently performed by another committee and the chairman of Teacher Education.

She found the overall organizational structure of the program offensive to her personal authority and a great deal of resentment toward faculty members. Equally strong feelings existed among the Armstrong faculty. Those existing among the Armstrong faculty for the new graduate program, a few of us at the time resisted because a rationale for a sound graduate program did not exist. What did exist was the order that we would have that program. To make that program go, we had to get students—hence the incredible number of students enrolled against the program as a whole. We were told to make the graduate program succeed. A few of us at the time resisted because a rationale for a sound graduate program did not exist.
This final stage followed a fitful path of committees, hearings, and reports. At the center stood two principles in HEW’s new criteria as required by Judge Pratt’s April 1977 ruling. Merger remained an option, but any merger plan must be “consistent with the objective of strengthening the traditionally black colleges.” That primary objective could be reached by providing additional funds, facilities, and programs for black institutions. The second critical element in the criteria required commitments “to eliminate educationally unnecessary program duplication among traditionally black and white institutions in the same service area.”

In Savannah, committees from the two colleges had been studying the problem of program duplication, and their proposal appeared in the September 1977 plan. It divided the courses at Armstrong and Savannah State into five categories that increased the number of joint or cooperative programs and assigned other programs specifically to one campus or the other.

I. Six discrete programs would be offered only at one campus and not at the other.

II. Seven cooperative programs would require at least one course to be taken on the other campus.

III. Four joint undergraduate programs (social work and others) would require that half of the work be on one campus and not at the other.

IV. Three duplicated programs would be offered fully on each campus.

V. Graduate programs would include joint offerings as well as unilateral ones.

In Category IV, the three duplicated programs would be English, teacher education, and business administration. An English major was essential to any college curriculum, and “Teacher education and business are programs having relatively high enrollments at both schools and are felt to be highly significant to the welfare of each college at the present time.”

In Category V, the graduate program would continue its present joint degree offerings, but future degrees might be unilateral, based on each institution’s discrete undergraduate areas. Armstrong’s health professions programs, for example, were unique to the Armstrong campus, and therefore any graduate work that might develop in that area would not be a joint degree with Savannah State. The issue of unilateral graduate programs was sensitive, however, and the October edition of Savannah State’s Independent offered a cautious study of the racial impact of any new proposal and an ongoing investigation of programs that would specifically attract minority students.

In the December revision of the plan, the Regents added a new comment about the “unique problem” in Savannah: “the long term inappropriateness of maintenance of this situation is evident; however, the short and immediate term interests of the Savannah State College and Armstrong State College constituencies must be considered. It is in this spirit that the successful introduction of joint and cooperative programs has been undertaken.” The provisions concerning Savannah were “consonant with the objective of achieving an evolutionary solution to any problem posed by the existence of these two institutions of like function in the same geographic area.”

The direction of the “evolutionary solution,” however, remained unclear, whether it was moving slowly toward merger or whether it would stop at some intermediate stage. Recently appointed Regent (and Armstrong alumnus) Erwin Friedman of Savannah made no secret of his opinion on the subject. On December 7, he told a meeting organized by the Black Action Committee at Savannah State that “the long-range plan for this area is one institution. We can’t justify operating two four-year colleges in this area.” He described the December plan as calling for the eventual end to distinct black institutions, and he observed that “if you adhere to the concept of desegregation, you will eventually eliminate the predominately black institutions. A month later, he told the Savannah Kiwanis Club that HEW’s emphasis on strengthening black institutions was an approach that was much too narrow. In February, HEW rejected the December plan for failing to address the question of the three traditional black colleges. The five-category proposal for the academic programs at Armstrong and Savannah State disappeared, but the intensified focus on the future of the black colleges prompted strong public comment from Savannah State supporters. Roy Jackson, President of the local Savannah State Alumni Association and a city alderman, called for a three-way merger of Savannah State, Armstrong, and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, starting with the merger of the Savannah State and Armstrong administrations into one body located on the Savannah State campus.

The Savannah State faculty proposed that Armstrong “be merged into” Savannah State, under a black president located on the SSC campus with Savannah State’s faculty and staff as the core of the new institution. State representative Bobby Hill, leader of the black caucus in the Georgia General Assembly, favored a merger with an east campus, a south campus, and a president-off-campus. The Savannah State student government president, James E. Smith, presented a student plan for Savannah State to absorb Armstrong, and the SSC Black Action Committee organized rallies to “Save Savannah State.”

On March 8, a contingent of Savannah State students took their opinions to the meeting of the Board of Regents, where security guards were in place to prevent any disturbance. “We at Savannah State are at war to save our school,” student Marsha Artis told the Regents. Fellow student Orion Jones followed with a sharp accusation: “You feel we are inferior people no matter how many As we make. Don’t constantly hop on us as to how dumb we are when you send us to inferior pre-schools.”

Regent Friedman, now vice-chairman of the Board, explained to the students that the Regents intended to study the academic programs at the three traditional black colleges as related to their neighboring institutions. He urged the students not to consider the study a threat to Savannah State. Merger, he said, was only one opinion among others, and even the merger option did not mean merging one institution into another but rather bringing them into union with each other. He promised that the study would follow a democratic process and consult public opinion in each community where a traditionally black institution was located.

The new study was the Board’s latest response to David Tatel. It proposed to examine four options for neighboring black and white colleges.

Option I – merger of institutions;

Option II – institutional specialization for either two-year or four-year programs;

Option III – the creation of a branch campus to offer lower division work;

Option IV – the establishment of a unique program on one campus while closing a duplicated program on the other campus.

Option IV specifically stated that in the “consideration of unnecessary program duplication, particular attention will be given to programs in Business Administration and Education.” The section concerning Armstrong and Savannah State identified various forms for Option I and Option IV: merger in stages; enhancement of engineering technology, dietetics, and/or business administration at Savannah State; the development of marine science at Savannah State; and the “possibility” of placing teacher training at Armstrong and business programs at Savannah State. The study promised to seek “broad public input.”

The input came through two channels: a committee of state legislators chaired by Representative Arthur Gignilliat of Savannah, and a community liaison committee for each of the three cities involved. For Savannah, the liaison committee consisted of twelve persons:

- Representative Arthur Gignilliat of Savannah
- A community liaison committee
- A community liaison committee
The faculty statement appeared on April 27, drafted by Summerville and an ad hoc faculty committee. It proposed six principles as the basis for any decision regarding Armstrong and Savannah State: 1) equality of burden; 2) preservation of academic standards and universal opportunity; 3) thoroughness of planning; 4) adequacy of funding; 5) quality of administration; and 6) stability of faculty. The first principle, equality of burden, called for the Regents to protect Armstrong’s interests as well as the interests of Savannah State, and urged that the Savannah faculty be included in any decisions affecting the academic life of the local area so that Statesboro did not reap the benefits of wounds incurred in Savannah. The statement made no mention of merger. The reason became clear at the May 11 faculty meeting, when the faculty voted on the four options proposed by the Regents. There were forty-nine votes for merger; forty-six for distinct, non-duplicated programs; three for SSC as a lower division branch campus; and seventeen for “other options.” Merger had strong support, but the majority at Armstrong favored something else.

If Armstrong was slow to develop a public statement, it was embarrassingly slow to take to the floor at the public hearings sponsored by the Regents Community Liaison Committee. The first hearing took place at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, May 8 in the ballroom of the Savannah Civic Center. Anyone who wished to speak was to be in advance to be placed on the agenda. Each speaker would be allowed five minutes. All of the options were open for discussion, but Regent Friedman invited particular comment about specialization and non-duplication of programs. Over 400 persons filled the room when Friedman called the forum to order. Most of them were there to speak for Savannah State. One after another, as their names were called from the list, they proceeded to the microphone to deliver their remarks clearly, carefully, and forcefully. Dr. Margaret Robinson, head of the Division of Natural Sciences; Dr. Gaye Hewitt, assistant professor of history; Dr. Thomas Byers, Dean of the College; Dr. Luerta Milledge, head of the department of humanities; Reverend George J. Faison, spokesman for the Savannah chapter of the NAACP; and seventeen others. Repeatedly they emphasized that Armstrong had become a four-year institution in the University System in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Therefore, since Armstrong’s very existence as a baccalaureate institution was against the law, Armstrong should bear the burden of any reorganization plan.

The most powerful moment of the evening came when Margaret Robinson told her story, a story that captured the heart and soul of Savannah State’s history. Her family roots reached deep into “the soils of south Georgia.” She was one of eight children, and she had experienced segregated education in every form. She graduated from Savannah’s only black high school and then went on to earn the one and only state-supported institution, or black land grant college, which existed her in Savannah for higher education of black youth. As a matter of fact, I can remember my first major experience at Savannah State College — that was witnessing the changing of its name in 1948, after ownership of the distinction as Georgia State College for many, many years. And that name was given to a white institution.... I, like many others, knocked on the doors of Savannah State College fresh from the green pastures of an over-crowded high school, probably with a low SAT score, never having performed a decent experiment, nor handled a microscope; and I told Savannah State College I wanted to major in biology; that I wanted to become a medical doctor. And Savannah State College accepted me, and others like me. And under this traditional philosophy of taking students where he or she is, and upgrading the student to where he or she should be, this is what happened to me, and others like me.

After graduation from Savannah State, it had not been possible for a black student to attend graduate school in Georgia, so she had applied for state funding to continue her education elsewhere. “I could not stay in Georgia. They paid me to leave.” Yet she returned to her alma mater to offer other aspiring black students the same educational opportunity that Savannah State had offered to her. She concluded with a ringing endorsement of HEW’s insistence that an acceptable desegregation plan must “specify steps to be taken to strengthen the role of traditionally black institutions in the state system.” The effect of her remarks was stunning. Everyone waited for an articulate response from Armstrong, but the voices were few and ill-prepared and clearly no match for the Savannah State speakers who had carefully planned and orchestrated their presentation for the evening and had carried it off flawlessly.

The second public forum took place two weeks later on May 22 when more than 500 people crowded into the auditorium at the Jewish Educational Alliance. Sixty-three of them had requested an opportunity to speak, and Friedman announced that a third hearing would be held in order to accommodate everyone. This time Armstrong turned out more creditably, with remarks by Dean Propst, Neil Satterfield, Jim Nehterton of the math department, Ross Clark from political science, and graduate student Richard Clark for the students. Of the twenty-four individuals who spoke during the four-hour session, thirteen held an Armstrong connection. No one could equal Margaret Robinson’s story, but Dean Propst came close in offering another perspective.

Savannah stands poised at the crossroads of its educational history. We can seize the opportunity we now have to move forward to the development of a broader base for higher education in this city or we can choose perhaps a deceptively easier way that will lead in stagnation of educational opportunity at worst or to limited development of that opportunity at best. The danger before all of us is the very real possibility that we will miss this opportunity because we are blinded by what has happened in the past or because we are too enamored with accomplishments of the past. The past must be used to free us, not to imprison us. Certainly we must not forget the evils of past injustices in higher education in Georgia and must be forever on guard against their repetition. Certainly we must take pride in what we have done and are doing well in higher education in Georgia and be forever committed to the preservation of the good that has been and is being accomplished. But, if what has been prevented looking toward the future and prevents our going beyond the point at which we now stand, then we betray that heritage and will ultimately destroy it. Savannah State supporters again spoke as effectively as at the previous occasion. But it was clear that no consensus existed that would be helpful to the Board of Regents or HEW. In fact, the hearings seemed to foster the opposite effect, polarizing opinions more sharply than ever. Armstrong political science professor Ross Clark warned of the consequences of “extravagant language” could have on the thinking of students and faculty on each campus. As a political scientist, Clark reminded the audience that position statements should be considered as bargaining points from which to work toward compromise, but he feared that the level of rhetoric threatened to make compromise impossible. “We are, in fact, already coming perilously close to destroying the realm of discourse.” Instead, he urged that every effort be made to build bridges and prepare for an outcome that both schools would
have to live with. “Let us begin,” he concluded, “by lowering our voices.”

Friedman convened the third public hearing on June 21 in the Johnny Mercer Theater of the Savannah Civic Center. An estimated 100 people sat in the cavernous auditorium. Twenty-four persons took the microphone, fourteen of them connected with Savannah State, two from Armstrong. The other speakers included W.W. Law and one other from the NAACP, alderman Roy Jackson, one pastor, and three who identified themselves as Savannah residents. A slide show presented images of life on the Savannah State campus.

The evening was anticlimactic. Savannah State’s advocates remained strong to the end, but the energy had gone out of the public discussion.

Emotions remained strong on campus, however. In front of Lane Library at Armstrong, a spring fund-raising event allowed students to express their feelings by slamming a sledgehammer against a car marked ASC/SSC merger. The SGA had taken an early moderate position that acknowledged the interests of both schools and stressed the theme of protecting academic standards, but in April and May student writers to The Inkwell hurled their opinions back and forth to the delight of editor Bob Torrescano. Marsha Ann Gooden rose to the defense of Savannah State and accused Armstrong students of taking cheap shots and using “standards” as a mask for bigotry.

In June, a lengthy and heavy-handed lampoon seized Vietname imagery (“Hell, no, we won’t merge”), while an Inkwell cartoon showed a slightly different opinion with Armstrong pulling hard for merger with no help from Savannah State.

Elsewhere on each campus, study groups prepared written reports on the undecided future of teacher education and business administration. Haskin Pounds and Charles Nash came from the Chancellor’s office to facilitate the discussions, but no agreement emerged.

The Armstrong teacher education faculty made their case to keep the program at Armstrong based on the “hard evidence” of higher NTE scores for Armstrong students (“NTE SCORES CANNOT BE IGNORED”), and they warned of the effects of an adverse decision: “To fail to place teacher education on the campus where a superior degree of program integrity exists and thereby risk the possibility of producing teachers at levels less than excellent is tantamount to perpetuating a human tragedy on the Savannah/Chatham Community.”

The Armstrong statement also stressed the fact that since more teacher education students graduated from Savannah State than from Armstrong, placing the program at Armstrong would bring more African American students to that campus and thus satisfy the HEW criteria to improve integration.

For the Savannah State teacher education faculty, the removal of teacher education from Savannah State would perpetuate the racial prejudices that had created Armstrong in the first place. Education should work to end such prejudices. “Both education and integration involve changing previously held concepts and attitudes. Neither is likely to be realized through a program or proposal operating within a racially biased society which removes a viable, fully accredited, recognized program from a traditionally black institution.”

The Savannah State recommendation argued that the larger enrollment of the SSC program weighed in favor of placing all teacher education at Savannah State, where Armstrong teacher education faculty would have the opportunity to come and put their claim of superior expertise to work on a highly pluralistic campus that serves persons of different races, ethnic groups, and backgrounds.

The business administration faculty of the two colleges continued to disagree about test scores. The Armstrong business faculty described their collaboration in the Joint Graduate Program as a positive omen for the future; but since Armstrong students scored above national norms on undergraduate business exams and Savannah State students scored below those norms, putting all students into the same classes would cause resentment and frustration.

The Savannah State business faculty argued that scores on national tests were irrelevant.

The most relevant fact, and the one most difficult to predict, was what the students would do in response to the options proposed by the Regents. Liaison Committee members Dick Summerville and Otis Johnson prepared and mailed a questionnaire to a random sample of 400 students from each campus. One hundred and fifteen Armstrong students returned the survey, and Summerville’s analysis of their responses suggested to him the strong possibility of “white flight.” Merger or the option for specialization/non-duplication would in all likelihood “drive significant numbers of present and prospective Armstrong State College students to the University of Georgia, Georgia Southern College, or – most troublesome of all – completely out of higher education.”

For Summerville, Georgia Southern had to be a part of any desegregation plan for Armstrong and Savannah State. Johnson was more cynical about the survey results. “Let the racists go!” he declared when Summerville presented his findings to the Liaison Committee.

For Johnson, Summerville’s emphasis on Georgia Southern “skillfully implanted” the fear of white-flight and diverted attention from the deeper desegregation issues at stake between Armstrong and Savannah State.

Ultimately, all of the forums, the written statements, and the discussions had to come to an end. The Liaison Committee decided that its final report would consist of individual opinions from each member of the committee, excluding the two Regents. There would be no formal vote. On June 26, the committee members presented their opinions on the options, and Friedman compiled the summary report. Three members supported merger in some form (Option I). Two preferred a modified version of specialization and non-duplication (a new Option V). Five favored non-duplication in the form of Option IV. The five votes for Option IV came from the five African American members of the committee who did not present individual opinions but endorsed a document presented by Otis Johnson and entitled “A Plan for the Desegregation of Savannah State College.”

Prepared by an elected committee of Savannah State faculty, the thirty-five page document outlined a plan to enhance “the oldest historically black institution in the University System of Georgia.” It claimed exclusively for Savannah State all of the degree programs in the 1964 catalog that were duplicated by Armstrong when the Regents designated Armstrong for four-year status. The report then listed new programs that would enhance Savannah State’s academic offerings. It leaned most heavily on funding for physical improvements, nearly $24 million, insisting that “fiscal discrimination” lay at the root of the Adams litigation.

Johnson described the document as a compromise that had evolved away from an initial call for Savannah State’s absorption of Armstrong and now focused on HEW’s criteria for the enhancement of black colleges.

The most personal and poignant response on the committee came from Armstrong’s student representative, John Opper. A Chatham County student of the 1970s, he had expected to attend Jenkins High School but was bused to Alfred E. Beach High School instead.

“I wish I could make you understand the pain and frustration of being forced to go to school where I did not want to. The problem did not result from the fact that I was attending school with black children. The apathy and anger I felt resulted because I was being forced to learn in a place I did not like, did not want to be, and did not ever want to be a part of…. I am very worried because I see the potential for the same circumstances for the students of ASC and SSC.”

## Footnotes

104. Friedman convened the third public hearing on June 21 in the Johnny Mercer Theater of the Savannah Civic Center. An estimated 100 people sat in the cavernous auditorium. Twenty-four persons took the microphone, fourteen of them connected with Savannah State, two from Armstrong. The other speakers included W.W. Law and one other from the NAACP, alderman Roy Jackson, one pastor, and three who identified themselves as Savannah residents. A slide show presented images of life on the Savannah State campus.

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114. For Johnson, Summerville’s emphasis on Georgia Southern “skillfully implanted” the fear of white-flight and diverted attention from the deeper desegregation issues at stake between Armstrong and Savannah State.
All of the local reports and recommendations made their way to a special desegregation committee of the Board of Regents, which began extensive meet-
ing in late July with OCR’s David Tate and his staff. Tate’s influence on these deliberations was considerable. Slowly, the details of the plan for Savannah began to emerge. The first report indicated that Savannah State and Armstrong would adopt the same admission standards for regular admission and for admission to Special Studies. The latter program would have open admissions. The next news revealed that Savannah State would gain six new programs and receive $5 million for major physical improvements. The final detail fell into place when the full plan was announced on October 9, 1978. All teacher education programs would be taught only at Armstrong, and all business administration programs would be taught only at Savannah State. Each program would bring with it a significant number of other-race students to the opposite campus. On October 20, the Regents approved the Savannah arrangement by a vote of 6-2, with Regent Friedman voting in opposition. HEW declared the Savannah solution a model plan.

The October 1978 decision constituted the “Fourth Segment” of the Georgia Plan, developed through various revisions for over a year since September 1977. The last section concentrated on the three historic black colleges and the ways to alter their identity from one based primarily on race. Fort Valley State College received new programs and physical improvements, but no nearby institution was involved. In Albany, however, historically black, four-year Albany State College and the newer, mostly white Albany Junior College presented a problem. HEW wanted the Georgia plan to assure 24% white enrollment at both institutions. The Board of Regents rejected both the quota and the possibility of merger.

Since the “Fourth Segment” included all three of the black colleges, if HEW rejected the Albany portion, the rest of the document and the entire plan could fall as well. The black community in Albany fiercely opposed any prospect of merger, and the Regents informed Tate that the hearings in all three communities had “brought forth a depth of emotion unpar-
alleled in the experience of the [University] System.” The Board repeated its commitment to the educational needs of all Georgians, including “the obligation to insure access to all institutions of the System for black students who were at one time excluded.” It declared that “inherent in this obligation is the recognition of past wrongs whose effects continue to have some relationship to the successful education of black students.” It was willing “to explore every avenue that is educationally acceptable to provide interim help to black students.” But for Albany, the Board argued, a quota imperative would be educationally unacceptable, unrealistic, and actually harmful to black faculty, students, and staff. Negotiations with Tate continued into January 1979, but Regents Chairman Milton Jones declared that HEW would have to be the one to step back “because we’re not moving anymore.”

In the end, both sides moved. HEW removed the quota and the merger provisions, and the Regents established a Criminal Justice Institute at Albany State, including a master’s degree program, with a commit-
ment for other “aggressive programs” if “significant” desegregation at the school did not develop during the next three years. Tate considered the compromise sufficient, and the “Fourth Segment” moved up the chain of command to HEW, where Secretary Joseph Califano highlighted the plan’s provision for Savannah State: “The Plan for Savannah State is one of the most exciting and far-reaching desegregation proposals we have received from any state. The key to desegregating traditionally black institutions is their enhancement by the addition of unique, attractive programs and through the closing or specialization of duplicated programs offered by tradi-
tionally white institutions in the same service areas.”

As a result of these steps, Savannah State will be signifi-
cantly strengthened educationally, increasing its ability to compete for students with other colleges in the state system.”

There was little enthusiasm in Savannah. The delay had hampered planning for the swap and had allowed opposition and anger to resurface. At the first announcement in October, Savannah State supporters protested bitterly. Alderman Roy Jackson decried the “rape” of SSC, where teacher education stood at the center of the life of the college. In January, Savannah State student leaders denounced the swap as part of a “world wide conspiracy to oppress the educational and economical aspirations of black people.” In February, student protesters barricaded the entrance to the Savannah State campus and disrupted classes. Student spokesmen called the plan “racist,” predicted that it would put blacks under the influence of white thinking, and argued that blacks ought to be able to produce their own teachers. Friedman and the Regents desegregation committee visited each campus to listen to the students and promise help for those who would be relocating to the other college. The presidents met with the faculty affected by the swap and held up the prospect of a new School of Educa-
tion for the combined program at Armstrong and a new School of Business Administration for the combined program at Savannah State.

If the final outcome was a compromise, it had the effects of compromise as well. It left no one happy. Each institution retained its “identity,” but each felt itself crippled. The prospect of merger, viewed by some as a nightmare and by others as a vision, did not come to pass. For Friedman, it was a failed oppor-
tunity, but he accepted the direction that had been taken, and in midsummer he became chairman of the Board of Regents. The whole desegregation experi-
ence made significant changes in the Board itself. In 1975, Elridge McMillan became the second African American appointed to the Board, and by the end of the decade four other African Americans would be on the Chancellor’s staff. The long effort to develop an acceptable plan had also caused the Regents to become increasingly activist and more and more at odds with Chancellor Simpson. In June 1979, they voted him out of office.

At Savannah State, the new School of Business Admin-
istration and the new programs and funding for major physical improvements did not altogether compensate for what had been lost. It was hard to feel “enhanced” when the college had lost its strongest program. James Eaton could have written another eulogy. Instead, he admitted that his feelings were simply “wrung dry” by the emotional intensity of the Joint Graduate Program. That program disappeared when the swap went into effect in the fall of 1979. Eaton’s comment about the earlier M.Ed. proved to be true again: Savannah State’s teacher education program fell victim to the large number of faculty and students in which it
took so much pride. HEW now sent those numbers to improve the racial mix at Armstrong.

Henry Ashmore considered the swap a bad decision: “It is a silly arrangement and will not help either college. It is very difficult to be half colleges.” Ashmore preferred merger, and he told friends that he would be willing to step down as president in order for a new appointee to lead a merged institution. The presidency at Savannah State had in fact become vacant in March 1978 when Prince Jackson returned to teaching and Clyde Hall became acting president. The vacancy created an opportunity for an administrative merger, but the final desegregation plan provided for the hiring of a new president for Savannah State.

The program swap did not affect the joint undergraduate program in social work, which continued into the early 1980s. When an effort for a looser, cooperative arrangement for social work failed, Otis Johnson and Neil Satterfield each made the case for his institution to claim the program. But given the 1979 decision to enhance the curricular offerings at traditional black institutions, the degree passed to Savannah State alone. The program swap did not affect the joint undergraduate program in business administration.

The death of Armstrong’s social work program ..

The program swap attempted to channel students’ choices, along with specific desegregation commitments affecting all units in the University System. The Savannah State–Armstrong portion of the Georgia plan was only one part of the total final document, but it addressed the most blatant appearance of a dual system of higher education. The program swap took a specific, pro-active step to make things different; and it offered something that the court would accept. Merger would have been an even more dramatic action, but HEW’s insistence that a plan not cause any detriment to black colleges, faculty, or students blocked that possibility. Merger also seemed well beyond the emotional climate of the times. The black colleges felt their very survival to be at stake, and they fought back. In effect, the swap created a black-white merger of two significant programs and then put one on each campus. Neither the Board of Regents nor HEW was willing to go any further than that.

A second significance of the desegregation decade lay in the cumulative effect of the month-by-month, meeting-by-meeting struggle through the various negotiations. Ironically, in trying to undo the legacy of segregation, the experience of the 1970s created a whole new source of ill feeling. Each college resented the loss of an important program, and the inflammatory language and high emotions on both sides built up attitudes of distrust and resentment that lingered well into the future.

The actual racial effects of the swap remained limited. In the short term, the racial numbers on each campus shifted. Nine black teacher education faculty moved from Savannah State to Armstrong. Twelve white business administration faculty moved from Armstrong to Savannah State. One hundred and twenty-five black students followed the teacher education program to Armstrong. Two hundred and seven white students followed the business program to Savannah State.

In each case, most of the students were finishing their degree rather than beginning it. New enrollment figures would be the important ones. Two years after the swap, both programs had grown in total numbers, and each school claimed that the program it had acquired was a significant attraction for minority students. But the number of black students in teacher education was declining; and even though the number of white students in business administration had increased, the new Savannah State president, Wendell Rayburn, reported that they were primarily night students who constituted “a white oasis in a black ghetto.” They took little part in campus life and had no effect in changing the character of the college or the community perception of the college “as anything but a black institution.”

At Armstrong, many of the Savannah State faculty soon moved into retirement. The total number of black faculty and administrators between 1981 and 1987 fluctuated between nine and fourteen. Overall enrollment of black students declined through most of the 1980s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ASC Teacher Education % Black</th>
<th>SSC Business Administration % Non-black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>21.5</td>
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</table>

The swap had other consequences besides the racial numbers. In the fall of 1979 when the plan went into effect, enrollment at both Armstrong and Savannah State dropped approximately nine percent. Recovery would be slow. Armstrong’s loss of the business program meant a crucial loss of direct contact with Savannah’s business community with consequences for future alumni relationships and fundraising. Savannah State’s loss of teacher education meant the loss of a field long associated with black professional advancement and the loss of the large enrollment traditionally drawn to that opportunity.

The attempt to change racial identity by ending program duplication and establishing programs unique to each campus stumbled over a premise that was partially correct and partially flawed. For two state-supported colleges to offer duplicate programs in large fields like teacher education and business administration, with undergraduate and graduate degrees, seemed clearly inappropriate for a community the size of Savannah. But ending that duplication did not mean that students would proceed to the campus that offered their program. Although the teacher education program would draw to Armstrong those local African Americans who wished to become school teachers or upgrade their credentials to the master’s level, other students might adjust their major according to the campus on which they wished to reside, or they might choose another institution altogether. Business students might make similar choices. At best, the program swap attempted to channel students’ choices, but it could not control them.

In the fall of 1978, as the “Fourth Segment” of Georgia’s response to the Adams case was taking shape, a quiet desegregation event passed unnoticed on the Armstrong campus. Alfred Owens, the African American marine who had been denied admission to Armstrong Junior College in 1961, was now retired from the Marine Corps. He reapplied to Armstrong. He told a young admissions officer that his earlier application had encountered some difficulty, but he did not elaborate on the circumstances. His current application papers presented no problem, and Owens enrolled for classes in the fall of 1978. In one sense, he was simply one more African American student to be reported in the statistical summary regularly sent to HEW. No one on the Armstrong campus knew the
personal history of this older gentleman who sat in class with the eighteen and nineteen year old freshmen. Otis Johnson knew Owens’s story, as did others in the black community, but Armstrong remained oblivious to the significance of his enrollment.

Alfred Owens did not come to Armstrong because of the program swap. In a sense, he illustrated Chancellor Simpson’s first response to OCR, that admissions alone could gradually achieve a certain level of integration at white institutions. But Georgia’s subsequent plans provided resources to help minority and poorly prepared students achieve success once admitted. The Special Studies program created by Georgia’s 1973 desegregation plan, for example, brought Evelyn Dandy to Armstrong in 1974 as an African American member of the Special Studies faculty. She provided Owens and other students with a steady source of personal support and academic guidance. Owens found Bob Strozier a tireless mentor for his writing skills, and ultimately he fell under the charm of Roger Warlick’s history classes. In 1981, Alfred Owens graduated from Armstrong as a history major.

Throughout the 1970s, African American students came to Armstrong for a wide variety of reasons. They enrolled in many different degree programs, and they participated in all areas of campus life. The program swap of 1979 sought to increase their presence by concentrating on the particular field of teacher education. But on the other side of the campus, throughout this period and beyond, a steadily increasing number of African American students enrolled at Armstrong for an altogether different specialized career opportunity. These students did not want to be teachers. They came to Armstrong in order to become nurses.

|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|

Fig. 7. Percentage of black students at ASC. Fall enrollment, 1979-1989
In June of 1980, Armstrong’s annual report to the Board of Regents described the first year after the program swap with Savannah State. The form for annual reports in the University System required an opening statement of the “Overall Health of the Institution.” Armstrong’s report seized the health image as a useful metaphor and worked it hard:

Crippled by the amputation of its largest limb (the business administration program) as ordered by the University System Desegregation Plan, Armstrong State College suffered through the year 1979-1980 as the wound began slowly to heal. Scars from the operation will be lasting and the prognosis for a complete recovery is poor. Now that the shock of surgery has worn off, the patient looks to the future as a cripple but with a will to survive and with a determination to over-compensate for the loss of its severed limb. It hopes the physician will be understanding and caring during the years of recovery.

The Chancellor’s office probably did not receive many such opening statements in its annual reports. But the health image was particularly appropriate for Armstrong in ways not necessarily intended by the author of the document. While business administration and teacher education occupied the center of attention in the desegregation discussions of the 1970s, Armstrong had been steadily developing programs in health professions. Degrees in nursing and dental hygiene came first, followed by respiratory therapy, health science, and radiation technology, with other programs waiting in line for approval. The faculty and students in these fields were a fairly new presence on a college campus, where, according to Marilyn Buck, they were definitely the “red-headed stepchildren” in the academic family.

But nurses, dental hygienists, and other health professionals would play a major role in Armstrong’s future well-being, and Armstrong’s poor health in 1979 would actually benefit from their presence.

Health professions marked a natural transition from the 1970s to the 1980s in many ways. The major decisions concerning health professions occurred simultaneously with the desegregation plans; and when the final plan sent the business administration program to Savannah State, Armstrong administrators saw health professions as an important way to compensate for the anticipated drop in enrollment and also satisfy the Office of Civil Rights since many of the students seeking health-related careers were expected to be African Americans. Secondly, and in a much larger sense, health professions reflected a basic change in the character and content of higher education, not only at Armstrong but at public colleges throughout the country. The college campus of the 1970s and 1980s was becoming the home for new career paths, beyond the traditional arts and sciences and the established professional areas such as teacher training and business administration. The presence of new fields of study raised questions about curriculum, governance, and overall academic values, all of which would need re-examination to accommodate the change. The arrival of nursing students and dental hygiene students raised these issues at Armstrong. Finally, health professions became a strong area of contention between Armstrong and Georgia Southern College and ushered in an era of difficult relations between the two institutions. When the last segment of I-16 was completed in the late 1970s, the distance from Statesboro to Savannah became considerably shorter, and Georgia Southern entered the local educational scene aggressively, with...
consequences that affected both Armstrong and Savannah State throughout the 1980s. The first step in that direction rose from the need for more nurses in southeastern Georgia.

A HEALTH PROFESSIONS CENTER

Armstrong had always had a close relationship with Savannah’s hospitals. The original junior college on the corner of Bull and Gaston Streets was only a block away from Candler Hospital whose nursing students regularly walked to the Gamble Building on Monterey Square to take Armstrong courses as part of their work for the nursing diploma that the hospital awarded them. After Armstrong moved to the new Abercorn site in 1966, its nearest neighbor was St. Joseph’s Hospital, which left downtown Savannah for its new location in 1970. Memorial Medical Center, named in honor of the Savannahians who had died in World War II, was located in midtown Savannah, and a new Candler would soon occupy a site nearby. In 1966, all three hospitals operated nursing schools that offered three-year diplomas, but nursing education programs were expensive, and hospital administrators were looking for a cost-saving solution. Henry Ashmore had one in mind. Ashmore believed that nursing education was one of the few major professions under-funded by public money, and he thought it deserved its place in tax-supported higher education.1 The Board of Regents had done its own study of the need for more nurse training programs in the state and came to the same conclusion. In September 1965, the Board proposed that state law allow licensure for two-year nursing programs to be offered at appropriate institutions. The University System already had three nursing programs in the state: a four-year program at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, another one at Albany State, and a three-year program at Georgia Southwestern. None was located in southeast Georgia. Even before the move to the new campus, Henry Ashmore sent forward his proposal for a two-year nursing program for Armstrong, and in March 1966, the Regents gave their approval. It was the first two-year nursing program in the University System.2

Ashmore also had something to offer to Savannah’s dentists. In 1966, no school in the University System offered a program in dental hygiene. Local dentist Semon Eisenberg informed Chancellor Simpson that Georgia was one of only two states that still trained dental hygienists through chair-side preceptorships rather than in dental hygiene schools. He urged Simpson and the Board of Regents to establish a dental hygiene program at Armstrong.3 The Regents responded to the need and in September 1967 authorized Armstrong to create the University System’s first two-year dental hygiene program and a four-year program in dental hygiene education beginning in the fall of 1968.4 With new programs in nursing and dental hygiene, the white caps arrived at Armstrong.

Although new to Armstrong and to most of the Armstrong faculty as disciplines on an academic campus, nursing and dental hygiene were not new to Henry Ashmore. He had initiated both programs at Pensacola Junior College in Florida, and he brought to Armstrong the person who had helped him do it. From 1966 to 1971, Doris Bates developed and directed both nursing and dental hygiene in a combined department of Allied Health Services. The first years were critical and difficult, as the nursing program transitioned from the hospitals to Armstrong and the dental hygiene program grew from the ground up. Initially, the New Armstrong campus had only two classroom buildings, Gamble Hall and Science Hall, neither of which had space to house the nursing courses. Consequently, the first Armstrong nursing classes continued to use the classrooms and clinical facilities at Memorial. They also used the dorms and food service at Memorial, while Candler provided grants for room and board. Candler also committed $9,660 as a one-year gift to Armstrong to hire nursing instructors, three of whom had formerly taught at Candler.5 The three hospitals phased out their diploma programs, and by 1969 all nursing education in Savannah was offered at Armstrong. Newly constructed Solms Hall provided on-campus classrooms and offices.

The hospitals were crucial to Armstrong’s nursing program, both financially and in an advisory capacity. They were the reason for Armstrong’s graduates to staff their nursing services. In addition to the two-year graduates, the hospitals also wanted nurses who were prepared for responsibilities in administration and management.6 Ashmore agreed, and Armstrong added a four-year degree in Health Care Administration in June 1970 for nurses who already had a hospital diploma or a two-year nursing degree.7 The title of the degree was accurate but awkwardly divorced from nursing. In December 1973, it became a B.S. in Nursing.

Initially, however, the two-year nursing degree was the primary health professions program at Armstrong. It quickly received the necessary accreditation and began to send its graduates into the hospitals. But the transition to the academic campus involved adjustments for everyone. The immediate concern at the hospitals was the number of nurses being graduated and the content of their training. The academic requirements of a college degree affected both of these expectations. Nursing students now had to satisfy a two-year core curriculum of general education courses in addition to their specialized nursing courses. If they stumbled in their core courses in English, history, or college algebra, they could not continue their progress in the nursing program. The result was an initial decline in the number of nursing graduates compared with the number previously produced by the hospitals. In 1970, for example, after all three hospitals had closed their diploma programs, Armstrong graduated thirty nurses compared with the fifty-three nurses produced by the hospitals in 1966, the year that preceded the transition of nursing education to Armstrong. On average, the hospitals had produced at least fifty nurses a year.8 Moreover, the nurses who successfully completed Armstrong’s two-year program had one less year of clinical experience than in the three-year hospital diploma program. As a result, they arrived at the hospitals with more academic coursework but less nursing experience than had previously been the case. Hospital administrators watched these developments carefully. For Fenwick T. Nichols, Jr., President of the Georgia Medical Society and Chief of Staff at Memorial, the college was not producing enough nurses quickly enough, and the graduates of the two-year nursing program were less prepared than those who had completed the hospital programs.9 In 1974, he surveyed the Savannah hospital administrators for their opinions and found general agreement that the hospitals would need to provide additional clinical training when the two-year graduates arrived for work. But the benefits of the college-based program were significant. Robert J. Marsh, President of Candler, pointed out that the college setting recruited and graduated students who were more intellectually mature and capable than had been typical for hospital schools.10 Sister Mary Cornicle, the hospital administrator at St. Joseph’s, concurred. In her opinion, it was unreasonable to expect graduates of a two-year program to have all they needed by way of information or experience. The hospital would have to provide what was lacking. Since the college granted the degree, the college controlled the program. Hospitals, she said, could not carry the cost of a full nursing education program; it was just too expensive, “to my mind the most
The first class of Armstrong nursing graduates, 1968. Armstrong Archives.

The dental hygiene program needed funding, equipment, and an on-site dentist to supervise the students. It also needed teeth. Dr. Robert J. Phillips, previously stationed at Parris Island and retired from twenty-eight years with the Navy, fulfilled one of those requirements, and the school children from Savannah’s Title I public schools provided the teeth. The big yellow school bus rolled onto campus, and the children, usually African Americans from schools like Romana Riley in Savannah’s inner city, marched into the modern dental clinic on the first floor of Solms Hall to have their teeth cleaned in the fifteen new dental chairs that awaited them there. Other clients included prisoners who arrived in prison buses accompanied by their guards and wearing handcuffs or sometimes shackles. Like the other patients, they received a free toothbrush and toothpaste, but their free Listerine ended when it was discovered that they drank it for its alcohol content rather than using it to swish and spit.

President Ashmore had insisted that the design of the dental clinic match the one he had known on the dental hygiene moved on to other quarters and the floor was flattened, the windows alone remained as evidence of the original use of the long room on the east side of the building.

Dental hygiene and nursing both occupied the first floor of Solms Hall, but the need for specialized space for future health programs, and especially the need to train more nurses to meet the demand in the hospitals, prompted a proposal for a new building and a new approach to health professions education. Instead of relying on one college alone, a collaborative Health Professions Education Center might combine the resources of Armstrong, Savannah State, and Georgia Southern and increase the number of nursing graduates in a cooperative, non-duplicative, cost-efficient fashion. Students could begin their nursing program with the basic academic courses at their home campus and then take their specialized courses at the Center. The result would be more nurses entering and completing the program than would be true from one campus alone. In April 1972, Ashmore presented the idea of a $1.2 million Allied Health Center to Chancellor Simpson as a way to expand the nursing program, “with particular emphasis on cooperating with other colleges in the region.” Simpson was interested. The idea coincided with the desegregation discussions of the early 1970s, when cooperative programs appeared as an effective way to satisfy program needs and also meet the expectations of the Office of Civil Rights. The Joint Graduate Program between Armstrong and Savannah State had been in place for a year, and Simpson thought an Allied Health Center could follow the same pattern:

I would like to proceed as fast as is possible to develop the concept of a coordinated program in Allied Health work involving Savannah State College, Armstrong State College and Georgia Southern College. Among other things I am especially anxious to achieve optimum participation from Savannah State College and Georgia Southern College. To do this, I think we must proceed on some line similar to that of the joint graduate program between Armstrong State College and Savannah State College. I think we ought to talk about, and lay out, a physical complex that would accommodate such a development, probably including some housing, especially for the participants from Georgia Southern College who must come to Savannah for clinical experience.

James O. Baker, Director of Institutional Research at Armstrong, drafted a formal proposal for the joint project, and conversations followed between the Chancellor’s staff and the three presidents. On June 11, 1972, the Board of Regents authorized the development of plans for a Regional Health Professions Education Center in Savannah as a collaborative project of the three colleges and a possible model for centers in other parts of the state. Students would take courses on their home campus and at the Center and receive their degree from the home campus. Chancellor Simpson did not identify any exact location for the Center, but he commented that it would use buildings at all three institutions and that “some new facilities including housing will be required.”

The Savannah Morning News immediately declared that the Board had voted to put the Center at Armstrong and that Armstrong would acquire dormitory space for 500 students. The banner headline proclaimed “Dorms in Works for ASC,” and State Senator Ed Zipperer, chairman of the Senate Higher Education Committee, announced that the decision meant that Armstrong was no longer a commuter school. In actual fact, the Board’s action carried no stipulation for the Center to be at Armstrong or for Armstrong to have dorms. The emphasis was on the cooperative nature of the project. Nevertheless, Armstrong’s nursing and dental hygiene programs carried a compelling logic to locate the Center on the campus, and the following year, in June of 1973, the Board of Regents authorized the construction of a Regional Paramedical Center at Armstrong.

But it was not to be Armstrong’s program alone. The Center would house the nursing courses for students from the three participating colleges and provide a base for their clinical experience in Savannah’s hospitals. Faculty would remain academically resident at their home institutions, and each college would contribute
to the cost of administering the Center, primarily the cost of its director. In December 1974, the Board of Regents approved the architectural plans for a $2.1 million building. These three separate, incremental acts by the Board of Regents—the 1972 decision for a cooperative Allied Health Center, the 1973 decision to locate the Center at Armstrong, and the 1974 approval of plans and funds for a building—laid the foundation for Armstrong’s role in health professions education in the University System of Georgia. Within that decision lay Armstrong’s claim for dorms.

FINDING A VOICE
By September 1974, J. Stephen Wright was in place as the director of the new Center. Formerly the Director of Allied Health Programs at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, North Carolina, Wright was the clearest visible sign of the collaborative nature of the Center, since the building itself did not yet exist. All three colleges contributed to his salary, and their names appeared on his new letterhead. He was responsible for coordinating their health-related programs and for planning for the addition of new programs to the Center’s offerings. The planning was the important part because there was not much in place to coordinate at the outset. Each of the colleges had a program in medical technology, and Georgia Southern had a program in recreational therapy, but only Armstrong offered the two large programs in nursing and dental hygiene. Georgia Southern was interested in developing a rural nursing program, and Wright offered some suggestions, but nothing happened.

Most of Wright’s work centered around Armstrong, where he had his office and where he served as liaison between the local hospitals and the nursing department, handled accreditation issues, prepared proposals for new health programs, and worked with the architects on the plans for the new building.

Beyond these duties, Wright was important as an outspoken voice in the discussion of the role of health professions on the Armstrong campus. Although hospital administrators could be influential, they spoke from off-campus. The nursing and dental hygiene faculty were still adjusting to the academic environment and were somewhat timid, if not actually intimidated, when confronted with the ways in which a college faculty conducted its business. But Wright was on campus, and he was willing to be confrontational if he felt it necessary. He became a lightning rod in the debate around the place of health professions at Armstrong.

There were a host of issues to be addressed. The students, faculty, and courses in the new programs had specific needs that were an awkward fit for established academic rhythms. Nursing students had to spend daytime hours in clinical experience in the hospitals and therefore would need a full schedule of core curriculum courses offered in the evening. Nursing faculty who supervised the students in the hospitals found it difficult to participate in the faculty meetings and committee meetings that made decisions affecting their programs. They regularly petitioned for an accommodation that would change the noon-hour meeting time or allow them to vote in absentia. Beneath these surface issues lay larger questions concerning budget priorities in view of the cost of expensive medical equipment and the need to hire additional nursing faculty in order to meet the low faculty-student ratio required by accrediting agencies. Financial support from the hospitals was helpful, but it did not pay for everything. There was also the fact that health programs were technical in nature rather than academic in the sense of the traditional arts and sciences. This last issue was a major one, and it became the center of ongoing discussion.

Most of this discussion took place in the meetings of the college Curriculum Committee, which reviewed all program proposals and curriculum requirements. The meetings became the forum for a sharp exchange of views on the philosophical differences between the arts and sciences disciplines and those programs that focused on specific professional training. At the heart of the matter lay the core curriculum. If students in health programs were to receive a college degree along with their professional credential, they would have to complete the appropriate college core curriculum with its broad range of general education courses in arts and sciences. For Wright, this requirement ran up against the greater need to take courses in the technical specialty. A meeting of the minds on this issue was not easy.

In October of 1975, Wright brought to the Curriculum Committee a proposal for a new two-year program in respiratory therapy. The questions from the committee were not friendly: “Is it appropriate...
A.D.N. (the two-year degree program) is a technical nurse. I know that you understand this but I don’t think that many other people around here do. The Faculty Curriculum Committee certainly doesn’t because they were appalled when I described the proposed Respiratory Therapy program as a technical program. If the faculty and the deans had grasped the meaning of this, the 28-hour core curriculum for associate degrees would have been questioned.

Wright could be outspoken and sharp, and the word “technical” was clearly a flash point in the discussion. But his remarks raised an important question. How should a college education balance the requirements for an academic degree and the specific needs of specialized career training? Beyond the curriculum issue lay questions of promotion and tenure for faculty in health-related fields. Dental hygiene faculty, as well as many nursing faculty, held only baccalaureate degrees and therefore would not qualify for either promotion or tenure, but advanced degrees in these fields were still fairly rare.

The solution to these problems would require everyone to reconsider long-established ideas concerning a college education, college faculty, and college students. The questions would come up again and again. What did a college-educated nurse, or dental hygienist, or respiratory therapist need to know? The answer did not come easily. In the meantime, while Armstrong waited for its new Health Professions Education Building to rise, the Board of Regents wrestled with its desegregation issues and backed away from adding health programs at Savannah State. As a result, many other people around here do. The Faculty Curriculum Committee certainly doesn’t because they were appalled when I described the proposed Respiratory Therapy program as a technical program. If the faculty and the deans had grasped the meaning of this, the 28-hour core curriculum for associate degrees would have been questioned.

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practiced their skills on patients in the clinic located on campus, continued the capping ceremony and proudly wore their caps for their ‘Geechee’ pictures. Other health professions, as they arrived on campus, did not have distinctive dress traditions, and even in nursing functional flexibility soon became more important than a crisp white dress and a starched cap. Ultimately, if practicality did not displace the dress and cap, the arrival of men in nursing did.

James F. Repella arrived at Armstrong in 1976 to succeed Sister Bonaventure as head of the department of nursing. He held not only nursing credentials but also a Ph.D. in higher education. Unlike Steve Wright, a male he was definitely a minority in the field of nursing. He assumed his new duties in January 1978, just as a new president arrived at Georgia Southern.14

URBAN NURSING vs. RURAL NURSING

Dale Lick came to Georgia Southern with a background in health professions education and a goal of developing health care programs. On his arrival he found a faculty that was interested in university status and a local community that wanted football.29 All three of these issues launched Georgia Southern into a major regional presence. When Lick arrived in early 1978, the Board of Regents was in the closing stages of the desegregation plan for Armstrong and Savannah State. As it became increasingly apparent that Armstrong might lose its large business administration program to Savannah State, the prospect of a competitive nursing program in Statesboro presented Armstrong’s administrators and Jim Repella with a double dose of very bad news. In fact, it “scared the hell” out of them.45

In October 1978, just as the Board of Regents reached its decision to send business administration to Savannah State, Armstrong submitted a major proposal for the expansion of its health professions programs.46 The following month, Georgia Southern sent to the Board a proposal for a new four-year program in nursing. Both proposals carried heavy political significance for the future of each college. For Georgia Southern, it was a matter of survival. For Armstrong, it seemed a matter of growth. A central issue in each proposal was the relationship between urban medical centers and rural medical needs. Repella prepared the Armstrong document. Dale Lick developed Georgia Southern’s with the assistance of his new rural health specialist, J. Stephen Wright, and Em Bevis. Both now relocated to Statesboro.

In the Armstrong proposal, Repella argued that Armstrong and the medical facilities in Savannah offered the best approach to meeting the total health needs of the region.47 He summarized Armstrong’s history with nursing and dental hygiene. He described the “cornucopia of resources that resided in Savannah’s urban health care community, which was ready and able to reach out to the surrounding rural areas through nurse-physician teams and helicopter trans-
was still waiting for funds for respiratory therapy. State program would dilute resources for Armstrong, which to Regent Erwin Friedman that Georgia Southern’s James McAleer, chairman of the Board of Trustees, was a “sizeable number” of students in health programs, and more programs would attract more of them to Armstrong. 

Georgia Southern’s proposal for a four-year nursing program emphasized the need to train nurses for rural health care service. It argued that mortality and morbidity rates in rural south Georgia required an expanded number of nurses specifically trained to meet the health needs of the region. Students who were trained in a program uniquely designed for rural service would be more likely to remain in rural areas to practice their skills. The proposal outlined a plan for 125 students at an annual cost of $250,000. 

Voices of protest promptly rose from Savannah. Why create a new and expensive nursing program that seemed to duplicate an existing one only fifty miles away? Repella observed that the hospital in Statesboro had only 100 beds and could not possibly support a program for 125 students. He questioned the whole notion of training that was designed specifically for rural nurses. Were they going to deal with “rural appendicitis”? Georgia Southern responded that it was not a question of rural anatomy but rural attitudes, behavior, and health habits. Nevertheless, objections poured out of Savannah. Dentist Walter Stilwell wrote to Governor George Busbee that the Georgia Southern proposal would “harpoon” the establishment of a nursing program at Georgia Southern. 

For Armstrong, the establishment of a nursing program at Georgia Southern was bitter medicine indeed, but the “concept” of a ten-year plan for new programs offered an opportunity for growth in other health professions fields. The list of possibilities was impressive. In addition to the existing programs in nursing and dental hygiene, medical technology would now become a distinct four-year degree, no longer housed in the biology department. Respiratory therapy (already proposed), medical records, and radiologic technology would come next. Seven more programs would be considered beginning in 1980. Four more programs might also be considered in the future. The total picture of possibilities included six associate degree programs, nine bachelor’s programs, and one master’s program. For the present, only the “concept” of the ten-year plan was approved. Each program would need to be presented and reviewed separately. But, in the words of The System Summary, “this concept, if fully implemented, would make Armstrong State College one of the University System’s largest centers for health professions education programs.” There were lots of “ifs” about the ten-year plan; but for Armstrong administrators, Armstrong State College was now a designated Regional Health Professions Education Center.

A year later, in 1979, the new Health Professions Building was ready for occupancy. Located on the far side of Science Drive, it presented a modern architectural appearance similar to the adjacent Fine Arts auditorium, both designed by Robert Gunn and Eric Meyerhoff. A double building connected by an open-air breezeway, the new structure included a spacious dental clinic with a comfortable lobby and a separate, outside entrance for clients. Classrooms and offices shared the same two-story wing with the dental clinic. On the other side of the breezeway lay the dean’s office and a small lecture auditorium most notable for seats that swung out from tiers of long semicircular tables in an impossibly awkward manner that allowed only one way into the seats and one way out. Nursing faculty blamed all of the design flaws in the building on Steve Wright. Wright was gone, as was the initial plan for a collaborative health effort by Armstrong, Savannah State, and Georgia Southern; but the building that had been approved for the cooperative effort now belonged to Armstrong alone, along with a ten-year plan for new health programs. The nurses and dental hygienists moved into the new facility, as did the first students and faculty in respiratory therapy.

By the end of the 1970s, Armstrong was the sole provider of teacher education programs in Savannah and the primary provider of allied health programs in the region. Savannah State held sole claim to business administration programs in Savannah, and Georgia Southern had staked out a share in nursing education.
As each institution worked to protect and expand its interests, it watched the others carefully, and the three presidents met frequently to discuss concerns where their interests overlapped. For example, in 1980 Armstrong proposed the creation of a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in health science for students who had a background in nursing or an interest in health and fitness and wanted to pursue careers in health-related agencies or activities. The emphasis was on health and health maintenance rather than illness. The course work ranged broadly from medical terminology to sex education, drug education, and the study of health care costs and policy. Graduate courses included health care marketing and state and federal health care legislation. The program certainly belonged with an Allied Health Center, but it was developed in conjunction with Savannah State's business administration faculty, and some of the courses would be taught on the Savannah State campus. Savannah State remained very wary of anything that looked like a business administration course being taught on the Armstrong campus.

Armstrong's relationship with Georgia Southern became tangled over the schedule for nursing students to take their clinical experience in Savannah's hospitals. Although the Board of Regents had approved Georgia Southern's proposal for rural nurses, the Georgia Board of Nurses had not, on the grounds that the student nurses would not receive sufficient clinical training in urban medical centers. Consequently, Georgia Southern needed to schedule time in Savannah's hospitals that did not conflict with the presence of Armstrong students there. Things became very testy and very political on the subject of which institution had the lead role in health care issues.

In August 1979, Dale Lick met with a state senate subcommittee in Statesboro to discuss the health needs of southeast Georgia. He did not invite or inform Armstrong about the meeting, despite a four and a half hour conference in Savannah the previous day where the three college presidents discussed future health care programs. After the Statesboro meeting was reported in the newspaper, Ashmore sent a sharp reminder to the region's legislators “that Armstrong State College is the designated allied health center by the Board of Regents and it is the college in this area which will have most of the allied health programs.” Testimony on this subject, he said, should most appropriately come from Armstrong. Perhaps so, but Ashmore's assertion did not prevent state representatives sympathetic to Bulloch County's health needs from using their influence on behalf of Georgia Southern's nursing plans. At her next meeting with the Georgia Board of Nursing, Em Bevis brought with her a cohort of politicians, along with plans for clinical experience in Savannah hospitals, and the nursing board removed its objections to the Georgia Southern nursing proposal. Nursing was only the beginning. Dale Lick's remarks to the senate committee went well beyond a description of southern Georgia as a 90% rural “health disaster area.” The region, he said, also lacked any comprehensive university capable of providing doctoral level education. Clearly, he had thoughts on that subject, thoughts that pointed to an issue that would dominate the 1980s. What were the broad possibilities for higher education in south Georgia? Was a new kind of university possible? What might it look like? What kind of reconfiguration among the existing colleges was possible? For Armstrong, this discussion would involve far more than health professions. It would propel the college into renewed considerations of merger, a new discussion about a school of engineering, and a painful period of relentless public scrutiny.
CHAPTER 11
QUO VADIS –
UNCERTAIN DIRECTIONS IN THE 1980S

Lots of things moved as Armstrong entered the decade of the 1980s. In the fall of 1979, thirteen faculty and 207 students in business administration moved across town to Savannah State as a result of the program swap. Their departure from the second floor of Gamble Hall left behind a curious pattern of holes in the floor of Room 206, where electrical outlets had previously served the typewriters and business machines of the secretarial students in business education, all now relocated to Savannah State with the rest of the business administration program. Armstrong’s history department moved into the vacated quarters, and the students and faculty in U.S. history classes could look at those strange holes in the floor and see a small reminder of the history of desegregation in the United States of America during the seventh decade of the twentieth century.

Savannah State’s teacher education faculty moved into the Victor Hall offices left empty by the history department. The newcomers and their Armstrong colleagues now constituted a School of Education under the leadership of a new dean, Charles R. Nash, who moved to Savannah from Atlanta in the summer of 1979. Appointed directly by the Board of Regents, Nash was the first African American to hold a senior administrative position at Armstrong. In Atlanta, he had served on the Chancellor’s staff for developmental studies and for academic development, and he had come as a consultant to the two Savannah colleges during the start-up of the Joint Graduate Program. He had worked with the teacher education faculties of Armstrong and Savannah State on their separate campuses, and now he was responsible for bringing them together into a harmonious relationship with each other and with the rest of the Armstrong community.

As Nash arrived in Savannah, Dean Propst left for Atlanta to join the Chancellor’s staff as Vice Chancellor for Academic Development. His departure left the office of Vice President vacant, and Ashmore tapped the new Dean of Arts and Sciences, Robert Adair Burnett, to fill the position. Burnett, who had come to Armstrong in the summer of 1978 from the University of Louisville, had scarcely sorted out his duties in arts and sciences; and now, less than two years later, he packed up his papers and moved into the Administration Building. Joe Adams moved into Burnett’s former role as Dean of Arts and Sciences, leaving behind the Graduate Office with its memories of the ill-fated Joint Graduate Program. Since most of the graduate students were now M.Ed. students, Charles Nash as Dean of the School of Education assumed administrative oversight for all graduate work. The elimination of the position of Graduate Dean provided money to hire three more faculty in health professions to join the nurses, dental hygienists and respiratory therapy students as they moved into the new Health Professions Building. When all of the shuffling ended, Armstrong settled into its new organizational structure with three schools and three deans (Adams, Nash, and Repella) under Bob Burnett as Vice President and Dean of Faculty and Henry Ashmore as President.
Beyond these various moves on the Armstrong campus, other changes affected the new decade of higher education in Georgia at both the state and local level. In September 1980, Wendell Rayburn arrived as the new president at Savannah State, where Prince Jackson had stepped down in April 1978 and Clyde Hall served as acting president during the interim. Previously the Dean of University College at the University of Louisville, Rayburn already knew Bob Burnett, and when he brought James Hayes from Louisville to be his academic vice president, Burnett described the three of them as the “Louisville Mafia” and anticipated a good working relationship. There was also a new Chancellor at the head of the University System. After the Regents removed George Simpson in June 1979, they appointed Vernon Crawford from Georgia Tech as acting Chancellor and then as full Chancellor in May 1980. Dean Propst’s move to Atlanta occurred during the transition, and he became part of the new leadership team for the University System.

With the desegregation plan in place, along with its timetable of commitments and reviews by the Office of Civil Rights, the University System now began to look closely at the structure and distribution of Georgia’s public colleges and universities. Changes in federal funding procedures for higher education had prompted Georgia and other states to establish planning commissions to examine the different sectors of higher education as defined in federal policy, and in 1978, Governor George Busbee created the Governor’s Committee on Postsecondary Education to serve as the state’s planning commission. The 1980 report from that committee, though very general in its language, included a goal of “comprehensive, diversified, and accessible post-secondary education opportunities” throughout the state.\(^5\) The Board of Regents, perhaps spurred by the Governor’s Committee, began to look at “Optimal Distribution of Institutions Within the University System.”\(^6\) Did the existing arrangement of junior colleges, senior colleges, and research universities provide the citizens of Georgia with convenient access to higher education in the various regions of the state? The discussion generated by this question rolled across the state and across Armstrong in a series of waves. Some of the waves were only small swells, but others rocked the college hard. Any discussion of change in higher education in southeast Georgia raised the prospect of merger in Savannah. Merger was the one topic that simply would not go away. From Armstrong’s perspective, merger might not be a bad thing, in fact, it might offer a better solution to the Savannah Problem than the swap and status quo of the desegregation plan. Or, it might not. The worst thing was the uncertainty that merger discussions always raised. A presidential vacancy on either Savannah campus invariably prompted the merger question, and the 1980s began and ended with a presidential departure from each college. Debate about reorganization options exploded in response each time. During the course of the decade, a dozen different proposals offered ideas on how to improve the delivery of higher education in Savannah and the region.\(^7\) Expert consultants came and went, organizational charts proliferated, and private conversations and public confrontations argued the issues. During the 1970s, Armstrong had felt itself under pressure from the federal courts and from invisible, impersonal forces over which it had neither control nor influence. During the 1980s, the waves that shaped the college’s future came from Atlanta, from Statesboro, and from local leaders in the community. These forces were much closer to home and had familiar names and faces.

**PREZIDENTS AND PLANS**

President Dale Lick and President Henry Ashmore launched the first two waves in quick succession. In November 1980, President Lick prepared a presentation for the Board of Regents entitled “A Perspective on Higher Education in Georgia.” Ten months later, in September 1981, President Ashmore delivered a speech to the Savannah Kiwanis Club entitled “Higher Education in Savannah: Quo Vadis.” Just two years after the desegregation plan had rejected the idea of merger, these two presidential actions opened the issue again.

President Lick’s presentation was an expanded version of his remarks the previous year to the State Senate Health and Education Study Committee. It drew heavily on the mass of information about south Georgia that had appeared in his proposal for Georgia Southern’s nursing program. A mathematician by training, Lick held a mathematician’s faith in the persuasive power of numerical data, and now he lined up his facts and figures to support his major theme.\(^8\) South Georgia lacked and needed a university. The region in question stretched all the way across the state and by his calculation comprised 40% of the state’s population and two-thirds of its land. Yet, with all of the public universities located in Atlanta, Athens, and Augusta, there was no university-level institution to serve the rest of Georgia. The lack of high-quality graduate programs, Lick argued, affected the quality of teaching and school administration at the secondary and elementary level, which in turn contributed to a poor level of student performance. As a result, fewer south Georgians graduated from high school, and more of them ended up unemployed. Lick then turned to the familiar subject of the health needs of the region, with its high morbidity and mortality rates. Ninety percent of south Georgia was rural, with poor access to health care. The solution to all of these problems was a “regional university” that would occupy a status between the research university and a four-year college, offering limited graduate programs specifically tied to regional needs and serving as a catalyst for regional development.\(^9\) The report was thorough and convincing. It included a lengthy description of an unnamed “College A” and its readiness to serve as a regional university. “College A” sounded a lot like Georgia Southern; it clearly was not Armstrong.

Lick’s “Perspective” paper came in the wake of the statewide review launched by the Governor’s Committee on Postsecondary Education, and it appeared just two months after the Board of Regents’ study of “Optimal Distribution of Institutions Within the University System.” As a result of their study, the Regents had approved a three-stage process and a time-table whereby an institution might request and justify a change from a two-year college to a four-year college or from a four-year college to a university.\(^10\) Lick’s proposal seized the moment as right for a new kind of university that focused on south Georgia’s regional needs and marked a halfway step in status change. It would be more than a four-year college but less than a major research university. He immediately began a campaign to make Georgia Southern a regional university for south Georgia. He contacted politicians, issued press statements, and hired coach Erksine (Erk) Russell to build a university quality football team. But the highly personal campaign failed to respect the procedures and political sensitivities of the Board of Regents, and in June 1981 Lick ran headlong into a formal reprimand and near-dismissal from his office.\(^11\) Chastened but persistent, he returned a month later to present a formal request for a change of status in accordance with the stated procedures.\(^12\)

When the Regents reviewed Lick’s proposal in August, they expanded the dimensions of the discussion. Regent Friedman observed that since the question concerned the southern half of the state, the Board should consider the region in its entirety in order to determine where might be the best location for a new kind of regional university. He suggested that other locations besides Statesboro might be more suitable and named several, including Savannah. By the time the Board met in September, Valdosta State College and West Georgia College had submitted their applications for a change of status to regional university, and the Board now decided that it should look at the state as a whole, not just one part of it, in order to determine if and where additional universities might be needed.\(^13\) The result was a decision for a statewide “Needs Assessment” project to collect an array of data on Georgia’s educational needs and resources. Each region of the state would conduct its survey of needs, and each institution of the University System would
African Americans in the city and region? Or would it foster educational opportunities for the two existing colleges and also help the cause of desegregation? Would it better site for a university to support the needs of the city of Savannah and its 250,000 citizens, its port, its businesses, industries, hospitals, and the adjoining coastal area. Ashmore candidly described Savannah’s problems, particularly the two colleges competing for state resources. He listed the city’s strengths: its political and judicial offices, its military base, its tourist attractions. The city, he said, needed one institution of higher education. He proposed that a panel of citizens from different sectors of the community, not connected with either of the colleges, study the options for combining Armstrong, Savannah State, and the Oceanographic Institute at Skidaway. The panel might also investigate a combination of the three Savannah institutions with Georgia Southern to make a truly regional university. Other possibilities could also be considered, but the result should be a new institution with a new name. He warned of the danger of Savannah being left out of the current opportunity to create a new university. Now was the time for some sort of merger of the higher education institutions of coastal Georgia.

Ashmore sent copies of his speech to Savannah Mayor John Rousakis, to the Chatham County Commission chairman, to local legislators, the newspapers, and the Board of Regents. Four months later, on January 14, 1982, he announced his retirement. He then wrote to former Armstrong faculty member James Witt:

I think most people in Savannah drew a sigh of relief when I made my [retirement] announcement. I also think that the people in the Chancellor’s Office and the Board of Regents did too. It means they have an opportunity with a vacancy here to merge the two institutions and maybe even make the President of Savannah State College the president of the new institution. If they merged all three institutions, I suppose that new president would be the President of Georgia Southern who has seniority.63

Six months later he wrote again to Witt.

I believe philosophically and as an educator that one urban regional university would be the best for this area. However, it has to be a new university and not blighted by being an absorption of one institution into the other. I am afraid that it will be difficult to get this done as a new freestanding institution because of the Black politicians and the Black community. Most of them prefer to have a freestanding Black institution. I have never been able to understand why Blacks would insist upon having total integration in grades one through twelve then apartheid (or re-separation) for four years of college and then total integration again when the graduate goes out into real life. I have asked several Black friends and leaders the logic of this and the answer that they give me is that there is no logic.

Ashmore’s retirement announcement had two immediate effects. His speech had suggested the formation of a Citizens Committee to look at higher education options in Savannah, and the Chamber of Commerce responded by forming a ten-person committee led by the Chamber’s chairman, N. Carson Branan, president of Great Southern Federal Bank. The committee hired the services of the College Board to gather information and make a recommendation, but the committee itself issued the final report. The group was completely local in character and had no official, decision-making authority, but it sent its report to the Board of Regents and it could claim to be a voice of local opinion.

The other effect of Ashmore’s retirement was to present the Regents with the question of whether or not to proceed with a search for a new president. If the shape
of higher education in Savannah was going to change, a new president might not be needed. The Regents decided to appoint two outside consultants to study the Savannah colleges and make a recommendation. The consultants, Charles B. Fancher of Tennessee and Gordon K. Davies of Virginia, served in the higher education systems of their respective states. Their report (the Fancher and Davies Report) would focus specifically on Savannah, but the Board would also use that information in connection with the statewide Needs Assessment study. Until a decision was reached, Armstrong would have an acting president. In June of 1982, the Board of Regents appointed Vice President Bob Burnet to that office, effective August 1, the official date of Ashmore’s retirement. With the Needs Assessment study, the Fancher and Davies study, and the Citizens Committee study, for most of two years, 1982 and 1983, Armstrong would be studied to death.

STUDIED TO DEATH

Everybody had a chance to offer an opinion, and a lot of people did. The Armstrong faculty had the first opportunity when Ashmore presented them with four options for their consideration: 1) a three-way merger of ASC, SSC, and GSC; 2) a two-way merger of SSC and ASC; 3) a two-way merger of GSC and ASC; 4) a merger of ASC and SSC, with all graduate work transferred to GSC. The faculty ultimately approved a bare bones statement that simply endorsed the Regents’ decision to study “the desirability of consolidation of some or all of the University System institutions in southeastern Georgia.” Faculty, of course, were not going to make the decision; and whatever their individual preferences might be, their main concern was that the decision occur as soon as possible. The administrators of the three colleges began their own discussions of ways to redistribute programs among the different campuses in Statesboro and Savannah. Initially exploratory and tentative in nature, the swirl of ideas suddenly produced a formal proposal from President Lick entitled “A Concept for Higher Education: Savannah and Southeast Georgia,” which he sent forward to the Chancellor. It called for a merger of Armstrong and Savannah State to form a new institution with a new name that would offer all undergraduate degrees in Savannah except health programs. The new institution would be located on the Savannah State campus. Armstrong’s health programs and graduate programs would merge into Georgia Southern, which would use the Armstrong campus as a Savannah site for instruction. Armstrong would, in effect, disappear, part of it to the Savannah State campus and part of it to a branch campus of Georgia Southern. For Burnett, it was a plan for the total “emasculating” of Armstrong. Chancellor Crawford agreed that the proposal was not acceptable.

The Chancellor and the Board were more interested in the recommendations from their consultants, Fancher and Davies, who arrived in Savannah in late November of 1982. They spent a day on the Savannah State campus talking with administrators, faculty, students, alumni, and community leaders, and then did the same on the Armstrong campus. They met with local legislators, with Regents Friedman and McMillan, and they met with the Citizens Committee. They also received information from President Lick. They submitted their report to the Regents in January 1983. It described both Savannah colleges as dominated by uncertainty and by fear of Georgia Southern’s ambitious ambitions. According to the report, the hostile feelings on the Savannah State campus came from a sense of unfilled commitments in the desegregation plan and from a continuing resentment toward Armstrong as an educational newcomer. The consultants found that white opinion in the city thought Savannah State offered a poor quality of education and considered the program swap a failure. Both schools were fairly passive in their outreach efforts. Armstrong felt restricted by the lack of dorms. Savannah State felt limited by a lack of funding and exhibited a siege mentality toward the surrounding region. “We think,” the report continued, that Savannah could support either a single institution of distinction or a fully cooperative and coordinated consortium of institutions. Savannah has neither, which is at one and the same time a problem and an opportunity for the Regents.” The consultants listed four ways to address the situation. One approach would be to strengthen the differences between the two schools with stronger separate identities. Engineering might be added at Savannah State, and the construction of dorms at Armstrong could enhance the recruitment of students in health professions. A second alternative would be a union of the two schools, with a commitment to preserve Savannah State’s heritage of access for poorly prepared students and strong developmental programs to assure high standards. University status might help all parties accept the change. The consultants favored a choice between these two options: separate enhancement or merger. Their other suggestions were for the two colleges to remain distinct but offer a joint graduate program, or for the three area colleges to develop a multi-campus institution, with specializations on each campus. The Savannah Morning News featured the merger option in its headline, “Study Recommends Regent’s Merges Colleges.” At Armstrong, Burnett and others read with amazement the idea of re-establishing the unpopular joint graduate program. Equally strange was a recommendation to discontinue the program swap despite the fact that Georgia was still under obligation (and oversight) to fulfill the desegregation plan that created the swap in the first place. Nevertheless, the Fancher and Davies report was the Regents with one assessment of the situation in Savannah.

The next experts to come on the scene were the College Board specialists requested by the local Citizens Committee. Carol Atlanian and Henry Brickell arrived for their Savannah sojourn on February 9-10, 1983. They scheduled a series of interviews with local high school students and with the faculty and administrators of the two colleges. They did not submit their report until May. As the various visitors came and went, the statewide Needs Assessment project gathered its information concerning the distribution of higher education opportunities throughout the state. For the purposes of the study, Armstrong and Savannah State were included in a region of coastal counties that excluded Bulloch County, home of Georgia Southern. All of the information from all regions of the state made its way to Atlanta to provide the Regents with a comprehensive view of how well the University System was serving Georgia’s educational needs. The results appeared in a February 1983 document entitled “The Eighties and Beyond, A Commitment to Excellence.” It included 115 recommendations, one of which was that no new university be added to the System. Consequently, there would be no new regional university anywhere in the state, and Chancellor Crawford declared the applications from Georgia Southern, Valdosta, and West Georgia to be terminated. But there was also a recommendation specifically concerning Savannah and Albany, the two cities with traditional black and white state colleges. The report proposed further study to investigate the needs of those two communities and to see if they could, along with a “consideration of the establishment of a single institution in each of the two areas or the restructuring of the present institutions to eliminate all unnecessary program duplication.”

And so, the uncertainty in Savannah continued, and Burnett and Rayburn and their administrative staffs resumed their discussions of different organizational possibilities for their two colleges. They met on campus and off campus, at the Rayburn home and at Burnett’s home, as if an informal setting might soften some of the hard issues that confronted them. The Armstrong administrators devised an eighteen-point plan. The Executive Committee of the Armstrong faculty drafted an eight-point plan for a single institution in Savannah and a five-point plan if the two institutions stayed separate. On April 1, Inkwell editors Ronnie Thompson, Michael Barker, and Michael Alwan used the traditional April Fool’s Day edition to announce their plan to merge Armstrong and the Atlantic Ocean, whereby “in addition to the Schools of Human Services, Education, and Arts and Sciences, next fall Armstrong will be able to add a School of Fish.” But there was no humor in the annual report submitted by Armstrong in June 1983. Again, the opening paragraph addressed the “health of the institution.” The uncertain future of the College is no longer a passive accompaniment to life at Armstrong; it has grown to become an active cancerous detriment which affects all major operations of the College. A general feeling of disgust permeates the campus... Armstrong is tired and
The College has been studied to near-death by every type of group imaginable. "Please help," has been replaced by "What is the use?"" What is the use?"

Then followed the required statistics concerning enrollment (15.8% black), freshman SAT scores (805), number of students graduated for the year (365), as well as a summary of campus developments. In the section that asked for the institution's "Accomplishments," the report returned to the grim language of the opening statements:

Arnold State College survived 1982-1983. It was neither merged nor abolished nor decimated again by the transfer of another major academic program. On small things such as survival does Armstrong hang the title "accomplishment." It.

Of course, there were other accomplishments to report, including SACS re-accreditation, plans to appoint a Minority Counselor/Recruiter, and the addition of two new health programs (radiation technology and health science). But when the form asked for a Five Year Plan, the Arnold report simply replied, "On this date, planning is a labor of futility."

For Five-Year Planning, the Armstrong report simply replied, "On this date, planning is a labor of futility." Five-Year Planning, the Armstrong report simply replied, "On this date, planning is a labor of futility." Five-Year Planning, the Armstrong report simply replied, "On this date, planning is a labor of futility."

Certainly, many things contributed to the heavy-hearted tone of the annual report, but the most crushing blow of all came from the recommendations of the U.S. Citizens Committee. The College Board consultants hired by the committee completed their report in May 1983. Based largely on interviews and statistics, it offered a clinical and dispassionate discussion of the two colleges in Savannah. Its language was careful and neutral as it discussed each institution in strictly parallel categories. The Citizens Committee received the information and then prepared its own report, which retained much of the data, language, and parallel format provided by the consultants but condensed the discussion and significantly altered certain words and sections. The result was a strikingly different document. Both reports were sent to each campus, but only the Citizens Committee report appeared, in its entirety, in the Savannah Morning News in a three-part series, July 14, 15, and 16, 1983. It was not good news for Armstrong and Savannah State.

Both of the reports claimed to speak for the best interests of the future of higher education in Savannah. The College Board consultants set the tone of their remarks in an introductory comparison with the city's architectural heritage: "Savannah cannot do in education what it has done so remarkably well in architecture; keep the past while building the future." The two colleges had served well in the past, but "the concern raised in this report is that the standards of the past will not adequately serve the needs of the future." The consultants acknowledged the various groups who held an interest in Savannah's higher education scene: the federal court, the Georgia General Assembly, Savannah high school students and their families, Savannah employers, economic interest groups, the two colleges, their students, administrators, faculty, staff and alumni. But, said the consultants, the citizens of Savannah were the ones with the greatest interest in higher education in the city, and yet "they are least positioned to express it. This report advocates their cause."

The consultants then described each college in turn: Armstrong State College as a College; Armstrong State College as a Social, Economic, and Cultural Institution; Savannah State College as a College; Savannah State College as a Social, Economic, and Cultural Institution. They noted similarities, often using exactly the same language in each section. Both colleges had a high number of students who came for only two years; both admitted many students who were not ready for college and who had to take remedial work. In describing Savannah State, the consultants acknowledged its distinctive role in the black community, where it was a source of public pride, the "largest economic entity in the black community," and an "archway through which young black people can move away from country back roads and city streets into the society of educated upper-class and middle-class blacks." But the program swap of business and teacher education had, in the opinion of the consultants, rendered each college an "Incomplete" institution. Armstrong had lost its link with the business community and Savannah State had lost its link with the public schools. Both colleges had lost a program that was an important magnet for attracting students.

In addition, low admissions standards at each college brought them students poorly prepared for college work, with a consequent effect on the "climate and programs" of each campus. As a result, the consultants concluded, "Savannah [is] Unready for the Year 2000." There followed six options that might help Savannah meet its higher education needs: 1) retain the two colleges but eliminate remedial work; 2) merge the two colleges, with a resulting loss of distinctive history and appeal; 3) establish a branch of Georgia Tech in Savannah as a stimulus to local business, industry, and high schools, even though Tech's admissions standards would significantly limit access; 4) establish a branch of the University of Georgia in Savannah, bringing to the city the reputation and quality of the state's flagship institution; 5) establish a Savannah Community College, with broad access for the first two years of college work, and a branch campus of either Georgia Tech or the University of Georgia for upper level work; 6) establish a Savannah Academy as a college preparatory high school operated by a new Savannah College, which would offer undergraduate degrees and no remedial work.

An addendum noted that any decision should protect Savannah State's history of providing access for black students and also preserve the existing ratio of black leadership in higher education in Savannah, especially a black chief administrator. The consultants did not specifically recommend one option over the others, but their discussion suggested that their list progressed toward the ones with the greatest probability for significant educational change and improvement. They placed their main point at the beginning of their report:

"This report includes plans for a great future in higher education in Savannah. It will be easy to organize enough opposition to defeat any of these plans. It will be hard to organize enough support to achieve any of them. Only those Savannah leaders who are more concerned with Savannah's future than with their present can organize that support. Even for them, it will not be easy." Ten of those leaders sat on the Citizens Committee. They were five blacks and five whites, nine men and one woman. They were well-known names in the Savannah community representing a broad range of community life. In addition to Chairman N. Carson Branan, President of Great Southern Federal Bank, the white members of the committee consisted of John E. Cay III, President of Primer & Cay, Inc.; Nick Mamalakis, President of Mercer Realty Co., Inc.; James M. Piette, Executive Vice President of Union Camp Corporation; and James M. Weeks, Vice-President of Fox and Weeks Funeral Homes, Inc. The black members of the committee were Curtis V. Cooper, Executive Director of the Westside Urban Comprehensive Health Center (and president of the local NAACP); Roy L. Jackson, President of Jackson Brothers Service Center; Robert L. Hess, Guidance Counselor at Shuman Middle School; Betty S. Ellington, Administrative Coordinator of the Exceptional Child Program of the Savannah/Gutham Board of Education; and Matthew S. Brown, pastor of St. John Baptist Church and a well-respected voice in the black community.

The committee's report appeared in the newspaper under the title "New Colleges for Savannah." It borrowed the opening remarks and architectural reference of the consultants, but it added its own sharp conclusion: "Neither Armstrong State College nor Savannah State College can give the people of Savannah excellent public higher education during the remainder of this century and into the next. That is the chief conclusion of the Committee." The report then proceeded to discuss each college, using the parallel format employed by the consultants but changing the headings. Where the consultants had discussed "Armstrong State as a College," the comparable section of the Citizens Committee report used the heading "Armstrong State is Inadequate for the Future." The same alteration occurred in the discussion of Savannah State: "Savannah State is Inadequate for the Future." The description of each college concluded with the assertion that it "does not provide excellence in higher education. Savannah needs to move toward excellence." In the discussion of the program swap, the committee reproduced the information from the consultants' report but put it under a different heading. Where the consultants had described the colleges as "Incomplete," the heading in the committee report declared "Armstrong and Savannah State as
The Savannah business community as a result of the Committee reflect the particular frustration of the community, a concern shared by Armstrong and Savannah State. Was the report actually produced many of the students who attended the report stunned both colleges. Was this what Savannah's unreadiness for the year 2000? Not if Savannah wants its college graduates to compete successfully against those from other cities. For that, Savannah will need better-than-average colleges. Are Savannah's two colleges currently equipped to provide a better-than-average college education? No they are not. The report's recommendations flowed from these opinions. Neither merger nor gradual improvement of the two existing institutions would suffice. Both options had been on the consultants' list. The Citizens Committee rejected them and presented only four possibilities as “Options for Excellence”:

1) a Georgia Tech branch in Savannah;
2) a branch of the University of Georgia in Savannah;
3) a Savannah Academy prep school and a new Savannah College;
4) a Savannah Community College and a branch of Georgia Tech or the University of Georgia.

The committee favored Option #4, with careful attention to Savannah State's historic role in serving African American students. The language and opinions of the Citizens Committee report stunned both colleges. Was this what Savannah really thought? Or was it a reaction to the persistent uncertainty and never-ending talk of merger? Was it simply a desire to clear the table and start fresh? In addition to its comments about the two colleges, the report strongly criticized the local public schools that produced many of the students who attended Armstrong and Savannah State. Was the report actually a broad expression of concern about education throughout the community, a concern shared by blacks and whites alike who wanted something better for their children? To what extent did the Citizens Committee reflect the particular frustration of the Savannah business community as a result of the program? The report conspicuously said nothing about health professions education. What did that omission say about the committee's priorities and its vision of higher education? With the general absence of the medical community, as well as the presence of only one woman, the committee tilted strongly, even if unintentionally, toward a male and business-minded viewpoint.

Voices from each campus quickly challenged the conclusions, procedures, and evidence in the committee's report. The differences with the consultants' report created a sense that the Citizens Committee had produced something radically different from the information they had received. Branan held a public forum and invited consultant Brickell to join him. He then went to Atlanta to present the committee report to the Board of Regents. The Regents listened, but their major concern lay with the Office of Civil Rights, which in the summer of 1983 wanted evidence of Georgia's progress toward the goals stated in the 1978 desegregation plan. In May, the Board had submitted a list of steps to meet those goals, and OCR had responded by requesting additional ways in which Georgia intended to recruit and retain black students in higher education. Any decision affecting Savannah would be measured by its impact on desegregation in general and on Savannah State in particular. Neither the consultants nor the Citizens Committee had given serious attention to desegregation issues except to acknowledge Savannah State's historic role in providing black access to higher education. Nor did either report attempt to predict the effect of the various options on desegregation efforts except to note that the branch campus options would probably limit access for many of the students who currently attended both colleges. Regent McMillan pointedly asked Carson Branan "whether substantial numbers of blacks will enroll in this elixir silk-stocking branch of the university." Whatever the merits of the new ideas raised by the consultants and by the Citizens Committee, the effect on the enrollment and success of black students was a critical issue for the Board of Regents. The Citizens Committee report failed that test.

Its major result, despite its intent to improve higher education in Savannah was to worsen it. The highly public comments about both colleges, particularly the use of the word "broken," provoked emotional feelings and had a devastating effect on fundraising efforts. At a meeting at Butler Presbyterian Church in July, Otis Johnson told the black community that the struggle was purely political. It "has nothing to do with education. They're out to murder us. The time has come to tell them in no uncertain terms that Savannah State College is a sacred cow in this community and we will not allow it to be destroyed." Former President Prince Jackson told the group that Savannah's whites "want your money, they want your land — but most of all they want to cut off your leadership... They're after our jugular and we're going to go after theirs." He urged his audience to write to their legislators. Presi- dent Burnett drafted a letter to Chancellor Crawford in which he described the Citizens Committee report as a slap in the face for the whole University System. He described the publicity surrounding the report as the most severe crisis in the college's history, far greater than the desegregation difficulties of the 1970s. He urged the Board to respond with a prompt decision about Armstrong's future.

While the Board considered what to do in Savannah, another figure entered the picture. In August 1983, Governor Joe Frank Harris offered his opinion on the state's efforts to achieve further desegregation. In a cover letter attached to the Regents' response to the U.S. Department of Education, Harris argued that racial balance was impossible as long as traditional black state colleges continued to exist. "It is paradox- ical to strive for the goal of maximum racial balance within the university system while at the same time maintaining three institutions that appeal primarily to minority students." The governor proposed the merger of Armstrong and Savannah State. The Board of Regents had told OCR that merger was not under consideration, but here it was again, over the gover- nor's signature. The governor's statement was strong and public, but behind the scenes another approach to solving the Savannah Problem was quietly at work.

**ENGINEERING**

In January 1983, Erwin Friedman completed his term on the Board of Regents, and Governor Harris appointed Arthur Giguilliat, Jr. to succeed him as representative from the First District. Friedman left the Board but continued a close friendship with Regent McMillan. Both men held a strong interest in new possibilities for higher education in Savannah. Their idea, which became known as the "Friedman Plan," was to establish an engineering school at Armstrong and to make Savannah State the primary four-year liberal arts college in the city. In July 1983, they asked Thomas Stelton of Georgia Tech to draft an engi- neering proposal for discussion with a group of key individuals at a dinner to be hosted by McMillan. The Needs Assessment project had raised the question of more engineering education in Georgia, and Mercer University was working actively to establish an engineering school outside the University System. In Savannah the local college presidents had included engineering in their discussions about future programs to serve the area. Savannah State already had an engi- neering technology program, and Armstrong partici- pated in a dual-degree transfer program with Georgia Tech, but the Friedman Plan proposed that Armstrong become the site of a new engineering school and that all liberal arts programs move to Savannah State. The plan would enhance and differentiate both institutions. Burnett began to prepare the ground by contacting Georgia Tech president Joseph M. Perit about ways in which Armstrong might help to provide engineering training for local industry.

On the evening of July 20, Regent McMillan welcomed his dinner guests at the Belvedere Room of the Omni International Hotel in Atlanta. In addi- tion to McMillan, Friedman, and Stelton, the group included Presidents Burnett and Rayburn, President Pettit, Regent Giguilliat, Chancellor Crawford, Vice
Chancellor Probst, Board of Regents Chairman John Skandalakis, and a secretary. Sleton's draft had been circulated in advance. It suggested that Armstrong could gradually add upper-level course work in engineering to its transfer program with Georgia Tech, but it also warned that engineering programs were extremely expensive and that Georgia Tech considered its present situation in Savannah. Probst declared the report a disgrace, "totally unacceptable… rather than perpetuating the existing ones. McMillan told his guests that they, the men of power and authority present in the room that night, could help get approval. Enhancement of Savannah State's four-year programs and enhancement of Armstrong would get under way. For Savannah State, the Board submitted a revision. In October, the two presidents announced their intent to hired engineering instructors and introduce engineering courses in the fall. The courses did not constitute a degree program, but they strengthened the preparation of the students in the transfer program with Georgia Tech, and they might become the basis for Armstrong to offer a full engineering degree in the future. The college sent letters to businesses with engineering interests in the community and to 3,000 high school seniors to inform them of the new courses. The letters conveyed the clear expectation of a future engineering degree program at Armstrong.41 Burnett presented the same message to the faculty.42 He also it to the Savannah Port Authority, a major economic planner in the community, and told them that Armstrong was working closely with representatives from Georgia Tech in reviewing applications for the new engineering instructor and in the creation of the new engineering courses, which would sequence smoothly into the Tech program. Even though Burnett was still only the acting president, he seemed eager to show that Armstrong was academically alive and well. The push for engineering courses moved aggressively to build a groundswell of public interest and support in a manner reminiscent of the actions of Dale Lick. But the effort stumbled. Burnett did not consult with his counterpart at Savannah State, President Wendell Rayburn, who heard Burnett’s remarks to the Port Authority with apparent surprise.43 The Regents also felt that Burnett was creating unfounded expectations since the Board had made no decision about the need for a second engineering school at all, much less where one should be if the need existed. They affirmed that position in the spring and, in effect, told Armstrong to "cool it." In Macon, however, city leaders and administrators at Mercer proceeded to break Georgia’s second engineering school. They had already achieved a similar accomplishment with their proposal, and they now planned to ask the legislature for assistance through direct funding or vouchers. The Regents countered by establishing engineering transfer programs between Georgia Tech and the System’s colleges in the central part of the state: Georgia College, Middle Georgia College, Fort Valley College, and Macon Junior College. But the Regents would not make a clear decision about whether the System itself should add another engineering school to break Georgia Tech’s monopoly. On July 11, 1984, the Board announced the selection of Bob Burnett as the new president of Armstrong. His engineering efforts had not damaged his candidacy, and he was now ready for another approach. A week after his appointment as president, he wrote to Wendell Rayburn, "I think it is time for the two of us to have a serious discussion regarding the relationship of our two institutions." He suggested that they consider establishing a joint "Institute for Science, Engineering, and Technology," on the model of a similar joint program in Florida between Florida State University and traditionally black Florida A&M.44 In October, the two presidents announced their intent to proceed with a joint proposal. A joint engineering program by Armstrong and Savannah State might appeal to the Regents as a way to strengthen desegregation efforts, and it might also win support and representation of the Savannah colleges, however, also had their eyes on the possibility of an engineering school. The middle Georgia colleges developed a consortium proposal, and Georgia Southern drew up a proposal that included a $1.25 million pledge from Gulfstream’s Allen Paulsen for start-up costs.45 The Regents decided to ask Georgia Tech to conduct a study of the current and future need for engineering training in the state. By November, Burnett and Rayburn had their document ready; "A Proposal for a School of Engineering in Savannah." It specifically addressed desegregation goals by predicting 15% black enrollment and noted that engineering would bring a significant enhancement to Savannah State. Armstrong would offer the theoretical work, Savannah State would offer the lab
work. A college-operated bus service would serve both campuses. Engineering faculty would find many attractive consulting opportunities as well as numerous co-op possibilities for their students in Savannah businesses and industry. The initial cost for the joint program over the first four years would be $4,775,000. The construction of a new building in the fifth year would raise the five-year cost to $9,275,000. The Savannah Morning News urged the community to show its support by a financial pledge comparable to Paulsen's offer to Georgia Southern. The Regents would want to see evidence of local commitment. "Look," said the editorial writer, "these are our schools. Let's put up!"

In the spring of 1985, Georgia Tech submitted its report to the Board of Regents. Georgia, it said, did not need another engineering school. Transfer programs that sent students from other colleges in the System to Georgia Tech were sufficient and financially prudent for Georgia's engineering needs. Money for engineering should go to these programs and to Georgia Tech, rather than undercut Tech's stature by being shared with another engineering school. Regents Chairman Gignilliat suggested that the Tech study should not be the last word on the subject, since it was kind of like asking one bank to determine whether the town needed another bank. He proposed that the Regents ask an outside group, the Southern Regional Education Board, to conduct a study and offer a second opinion. In the meantime, Savannah developed a steering committee to rally support for an engineering school in Savannah, and Burnett and Rayburn broadened their proposal to go beyond pure engineering and include "the engineer, the technologist, and the technician." A specifically designed program linked with the public schools would prepare minorities to enter these careers. The Regents received the report of the Southern Regional Education Board in the spring of 1986. It agreed with the conclusions reached by Georgia Tech. The existing program at Tech provided adequately for the state's engineering needs. The transfer arrangement with other colleges around the state would continue to provide access to Georgia Tech's programs. There would be no new engineering degree in Savannah.

1988

Between 1980 and 1986, the Board of Regents had looked hard at the units of the University System and determined that there would be no new universities, no new engineering school, and no mergers in Savannah or Albany. The colleges of southeast Georgia looked much the same as before, though Georgia Southern had football and was getting larger, while Armstrong and Savannah State were still small but beginning to pull out of their post-swap enrollment slump. The figures for the fall of 1986 showed Georgia Southern with slightly over 7,100 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students, Armstrong with 2,562, and Savannah State with 1,584. Armstrong had its new president, and Burnett quickly chose a new Vice President and Dean of Faculty to fill the two-year vacancy in that office. Frank Andrew Butler arrived in February 1985, with previous administrative experience at Indiana University and a Ph.D. in physics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Budets remained tight, however, and enrollment recovery was slow. In the spring of 1986, Armstrong trimmed its administrative structure across the board. The biggest change was the merger of the School of Education into the School of Arts and Sciences, ostensibly to strengthen the relationship between teacher education and the disciplines most closely connected with it. But, in fact, the undergraduate enrollment of teacher education had declined, and the reorganization would eliminate the administrative cost of a dean. Charles Nah, who had served as Dean of the School of Education since its creation in 1979, left the campus to take a position with SACS in Atlanta, and Joe Adams, as Dean of the School of Arts, Sciences, and Education, assumed responsibility for the teacher education faculty. Some of the cost-savings went to staff a new Minority Affairs office, which was one of the specific commitments included by the Board of Regents in its amended desegregation plan.

Dale Lick left Georgia Southern in June of 1986, to be succeeded by Nicholas Henry, and by 1986, there was also a new Chancellor of the University System. Vernon Crawford retired in 1984, and the Regents appointed Dean Propst to succeed him. Propst brought to his new position five years of experience as Vice Chancellor, with much of his work directly related to Georgia's desegregation plan. Although his responsibilities covered all of the institutions of the University System, he knew the particular dynamics of higher education in Savannah firsthand from his ten years as Dean of Faculty at Armstrong.
Initiative he was preparing for the legislature. Once again, statewide planning provided an opportunity for more thinking about higher education in coastal Georgia and Savannah.

Burnett described this period of presidential conversations between 1987 and 1988 as “the Era of Good Feeling.” Armstrong was part of a large group of four-year and two-year colleges that stretched from Augusta to Savannah to Brunswick to Waycross. Their presidents identified a list of cooperative proposals and even prepared a plan for a Multi-Campus Regional University in Southern Georgia. Four of the presidents went further and drew up a specific plan for the merger of their institutions into a University of Southern Georgia, comprised of Armstrong, Georgia Southern and two of the two-year colleges: Brunswick College and Emanuel County College. An alternative version omitted the two-year schools and described a merger between Armstrong and Georgia Southern. All of these possibilities circulated on paper and in conversation. But in Savannah, something had shifted.

In the spring of 1986, Burnett described to the Chancellor a change in the “chemistry” of the Savannah Problem. He noted that Savannah State was struggling with enrollment and with its auditors. News coverage was negative. Rayburn’s pronouncements for reform and excellence sounded “hollow.” Specific efforts at cooperation between Armstrong and Savannah State were ineffective and even a source of embarrassment. Burnett asked Propst, “If Wendell or I were to leave or die, what would you do with the Savannah Problem?” In December of 1987, Rayburn announced his departure from Savannah State. The Regents appointed Willy Borden to serve as acting president while they conducted a search. Borden participated in the planning conversations with the other college presidents but was not willing to sign on to any kind of merger proposal.

On March 1, 1988, Burnett spoke to the Savannah Chamber of Commerce to explain the Special Funding Initiative and the various ideas about cooperation and merger that were being discussed. He then left for a conference in Australia. When he arrived at the Melbourne airport, he was greeted by an urgent and merger that were being discussed. He then left that meeting to any kind of merger proposal.

“Propst was taken completely by surprise at this request, which came only four and a half years after the Regents’ decision in November 1983 to maintain the autonomy of the two Savannah colleges. Suddenly, merger in Savannah was back on the table again.

In fact, everything piled onto the table very fast, all of the issues from the distant past, the near past, and the present. Propst scheduled two days of hearings in Savannah, March 22-23, to be followed by hearings in Albany. He and Regent Gignilliat would personally listen to presentations by faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and advocates from each community. Propst invited those who would not be making formal remarks to send him their opinions in writing. Many at Armstrong who had known him well when he was Vice President and Dean of Faculty wrote their “Dear Dean,” letters. Propst requested that the discussions avoid the words merger and use other language, such as union or combination. He also discouraged references to a university as part of the immediate issue. He particularly asked that all comments address four topics: the social, cultural, educational, and economic appropriateness of two separate state-supported colleges in the same community. In Savannah, the hearings would take place in the Coastal Georgia Center, which had been built as a result of the 1978 desegregation plan to be a public statement of the ongoing cooperative relationship between Armstrong and Savannah State and to give the two colleges a positive image and presence in downtown Savannah.

Ironically, in the spring of 1988, the building that was intended as a statement of cooperation between Armstrong and Savannah State became the site of one of the most emotional and acrimonious public discussions of higher education in Savannah during the decade of the 1980s.

On March 22, Propst and Gignilliat took their seats at the table of an upstairs conference room in the Center to hear the representatives from Savannah State present their opinions in February and at the spring Regents’ meetings. The student representatives wanted to know how a merged institution would offer black students special academic help if needed and how it would provide them with role models and courses about black culture. The SSO administrators said that they could only accept merger if Savannah State was the primary institution, retaining its name, its mission, access for the disadvantaged, and a black president. Faculty representatives decried merger as a two-fold elitist threat that would limit access for students and obstruct their graduation. They wanted to discuss historical and legal issues in addition to the four that Propst had set out for the discussion. They pointed sharply to the “sin of 1964” when Armstrong joined the University System in violation of the principles of the 1954 decision in Brown vs. Board of Education. The statement from the Savannah State staff put the 1964 action at the head of their list of grievances, of which there were many: their college had lost its name when the Regents had given it to Armstrong; they had lost their teacher education program to Armstrong with the program swap; and even in the activities of the Georgia Coastal Center they felt themselves treated like a stepchild rather than an equal. Savannah State, they said, was “a Messiah in education for black youths that have been locked out and discriminated against....[A] fair and impartial God [is] on our side.” The Savannah State Foundation then took its turn and described its fundraising efforts to support Savannah State’s historic mission to serve students who were “disadvantaged by race, economy, culture, treatment, or society....[T]here must be institutions established, administered, and maintained to educate these peculiar students.” Representatives from the black business community returned to Propst’s four topics. Socially, a merger would reduce opportunities for blacks and increase their crime rate. Culturally, blacks did not enter fully the life of mixed colleges and tended to drop out. Educationally, traditional white colleges “have a dismal record of educating Black students.” And economically, a merger would decrease the money spent by the Board of Regents in Savannah to the advantage of Georgia Southern. “Merger,” they concluded, “is not in the best interest of either college or the community as a whole.”

The next day, March 23, the representatives from Armstrong made their presentations. Each person spoke individually, in contrast with the group statements from Savannah State. Staff and alumni opinions were mixed, some for merger and some opposed. Faculty sentiment, as drawn from an opinion survey presented by Executive Committee Chairwoman Lorrie Roth, reflected a similar division. Slightly less than 50% of the faculty had responded to the survey and of that number 62% favored reorganization of some sort, with most favoring a regional university of which Armstrong was a part. President Burnett offered his comments from Armstrong, and also mentioned the creation of “one full-service institution,” with university status and engineering. Other Armstrong administrators were divided in their opinions. Joe B. Buck spoke strongly in favor of merger. Joe Dunns and Henry Harris admitted that their past support for merger had diminished, but they believed a multi-campus arrangement might work. Jim Repella thought that a new “coming together” would help attract minority students to the health professions, where they already had a strong record of success. Ed Wheeler, the new chairman of the math department, had been at Armstrong for barely six months and had hardly had time to form an opinion, but he believed that Armstrong was beginning to move in a positive direction after a painful period of uncertainty, and he was distressed that the Regents might undermine that progress. Merger might have benefits, he said, especially if it included strong funding for resources to equip students for college work, but his personal preference was to keep things as they were. John
Brewer, speaking in his role as Armstrong's Athletic Director, had lived with the Savannah Problem for twenty years and knew exactly what he thought on the subject. Merger was the only and obvious answer. Ever since he arrived at Armstrong in 1968, he had seen the Savannah situation as "the most ridiculous state of affairs in which higher education could find itself." The past two years had been an "educational nightmare." "Do what needs to be done and get it over with," he told Propst and Gignilliat.

The people who need decent education the most, the poor, the young, and the tied-down adults, are the people who are presently being cheated and exploited, and some day surely we must answer to them. What can we say to them, then or now?—only that our leadership was too timid, too void of vision, too afraid to do what they and every intelligent person knows ought to be done, too fearful of the political consequences of doing the right thing.

Vice President Frank Butler, who helped with the preparations for the hearings but was attending a conference in Yemen when they actually occurred, submitted his opinions on paper. Public higher education in Savannah, he wrote, needed a single voice. "It is almost a comedy of the absurd, to subject prospective businesses to the story of higher education in this city." But he also noted that merger would be extremely difficult, not least in imposing a huge burden of litigation. Propst, Butler wrote, had lived with the Savannah Problem for twenty years and knew exactly what he thought on the subject. Merger was the only and obvious answer. Ever since he arrived at Armstrong in 1968, his initial reaction to the Savannah situation as "the most ridiculous state of affairs in which higher education could find itself." The past two years had been an "educational nightmare." "Do what needs to be done and get it over with," he told Propst and Gignilliat.

Both men smiled appreciatively at the greeting. A later speaker rose to quote the Bible and urged the two men, "In all thy getting, get understanding." Other comments were less brotherly and scriptural. One speaker called on Gignilliat to resign from the Board of Regents. Another accused him of child abuse in the way that the Board treated Savannah State students. The last speaker of the evening, according to Megathlin's report, asked the entire audience to rise to its feet and join together in singing the Savannah State alma mater. The whole occasion again showed superb organization by the supporters of Savannah State.

Propst went on to Albany for hearings there. Savannah waited. In a special Sunday feature in mid-April, the Savannah Morning News gave each college one more opportunity to present its case. Armstrong political science professor Steve Ealy argued for merger in accord with the constitutional law of the land following the Brown decision of 1954. Otis Brewer, speaking in his role as Armstrong's Athletic Director, had lived with the Savannah Problem for twenty years and knew exactly what he thought on the subject. Merger was the only and obvious answer. Ever since he arrived at Armstrong in 1968, his initial reaction to the Savannah situation as "the most ridiculous state of affairs in which higher education could find itself." The past two years had been an "educational nightmare." "Do what needs to be done and get it over with," he told Propst and Gignilliat.

The rhythm of his comments alternated back and forth between personal experience, factual information, and personal reflections. He acknowledged that as a new administrator at Armstrong in 1969, his initial reaction to the Savannah Problem had been “Merge them. It makes no sense to have them.” Yet in working with the men and women of Savannah State in the course of the desegregation efforts of the 1970s, he had seen the deep loyalty that surrounded the college as “a social, a cultural, a political, and an intellectual oasis in a broader society that either did not or seemed not to care.” In the Chancellor’s office, he had come to know the other historic black colleges of the University System. And most recently, he had listened to the remarks at the public hearings in Albany and in Savannah. “I heard beneath the emotion and behind the sometimes self-serving statements about power and control a common concern. To balance, students will not be well-served by our taking this action at this time. In the face of what is to be gained from consolidation, there is much that could be— and probably will be—lost. Therefore, cannot stand before you and, in good conscience, recommend that the institutions in Savannah and in Albany be merged. As an educator and as an individual, I pray for the perfect and the ideal. As a realist, I know that the issue we are considering has no perfect, no ideal solution.”

The report represented a particular sense of the moment as Propst saw it in May of 1988, personally and professionally. The Board of Regents unanimously accepted his recommendation. There would be no consolidation in Savannah or Albany. Savannah State celebrated; Armstrong was quiet. Regent Joseph Green captured the underlying sentiment on both campuses: “Let’s take it off everyone’s agenda now and forever.”

For forty-five minutes Propst laid out his facts and his thoughts to the Board of Regents and then moved to his conclusion. Standing at the center of our discussion of the consolidation issue must be the individual student. The richness of American society is largely the result of its diversity of people. The richness of our University System is largely the result of the diversity of the students enrolled. We have made conscious attempts to accommodate that diversity and to afford educational opportunity to a broad range of students from the less well prepared to the gifted. Our students can choose from among many types of institutions and pursue diversified interests. In such a context, there can be a place for the values of a traditionally black institution... I believe that consolidation or merger of Armstrong State College and Savannah and University State College and of Darton College [the new name of Albany Junior College] and Albany State College will be extraordinarily divisive, will result in enrollment decreases and will, for at least a decade, diminish the services now available at the separate institutions... I further believe that, on balance, students will not be well-served by our taking this action at this time. In the face of what is to be gained from consolidation, there is much that could be— and probably will be—lost. Therefore, cannot stand before you and, in good conscience, recommend that the institutions in Savannah and in Albany be merged. As an educator and as an individual, I pray for the perfect and the ideal. As a realist, I know that the issue we are considering has no perfect, no ideal solution.”

It is an issue in which the ideal is confronted by the real. It is an issue in which a people-oriented operation cannot be likened totally to a business operation. It is an issue which dramatically reminds us how short of perfection we as human beings really are. The possible in a perfect society is not possible in an imperfect one.
A REGIONAL UNIVERSITY

And so the discussions continued among the colleges of southeast Georgia, building on the conversations in progress before the interruption of the March merger hearings. As with each earlier merger upheaval, the air remained heavy with distrust and recriminations between Armstrong and Savannah State. Things said and done in the heat of a particular crisis always left their mark and made it difficult to move forward as if nothing had happened. In June 1988, the Chancellor’s office and the university’s Board of Regents met for their regular quarterly meeting to discuss the effects of the merger hearings. Burnett spoke bluntly about the damage that he felt had been done by the emotional approach of Savannah State’s supporters. In his opinion, the relationship between the two colleges had been “shot out of the water.”117 When the conversations concerning the future of higher education in the coastal counties began again, Savannah State stepped to one side, leaving Armstrong and Georgia Southern to prepare a proposal for a new kind of multi-campus university for the region. Savannah State could move away from the table, but any proposal by the other two colleges would have to take into account the effect on Savannah State, and the effect on Savannah State would carry repercussions for Armstrong.

At the end of the 1980s, the University System faced a dilemma of priorities. The System had grown to thirty-four institutions, four research universities, fourteen senior colleges, and sixteen junior colleges. On the one hand, the Chancellor and the Regents wanted to bring the research universities – the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Georgia State, and the Medical College of Georgia – to national prominence. On the other hand, the System also had to serve Georgia’s own citizens and promote new economic growth in

a state that was no longer rooted exclusively in agriculture. At the beginning of the decade the Regents had cautiously adopted procedures for Georgia’s public colleges to change their mission and status, but they had been very reluctant to allow any changes to occur, especially if those changes involved high costs that might diminish funding for the major universities. Cooperative arrangements among institutions always seemed like the most efficient and cost-effective approach to providing services over an extended area. Now the Chancellor had raised that prospect again, in terms of consortial agreements, and Regent Gignilliat had revived the idea of “university level delivery” for Brunswick, Savannah, and Statesboro. In September 1988, the Regents reviewed a staff-prepared working paper that addressed a number of concerns, including a “Reconsideration of University System Structure.” It envisioned a regional approach that linked two-year and four-year colleges and provided graduate programs of specific regional relevance. The relationship among the colleges in such an arrangement might take a variety of forms: consolidation under a single president, oversight by a coordinating council, or the leadership of one institution over the others. At the same time, “The first priority is the strengthening of the existing [research] institutions…to a level of unquestioned national competitiveness.”

A proposal from southeastern Georgia had already arrived by the time the Regents read the staff report. Its plan for a multi-campus university in southern Georgia envisioned a configuration comprised of Armstrong, Georgia Southern, Brunswick College (two-year), East Georgia College in Swainsboro (two-year), and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. It looked a lot like the design from the earlier “era of good feeling,” with the addition of the Skidaway Institute. Savannah State would act in cooperation with the new multi-campus university but would not be a part of it. Statesboro would be the primary residential campus and the regional headquarters for the proposed university, but Savannah would serve as headquarters for the institution’s urban mission and “provide greater visibility for and understanding of the purposes of the university as it endeavors to garner support.” The plan proposed that the new institution include an engineering school, which would be the major new expense. Each participating college would benefit from the proposal. Georgia Southern would achieve its long-sought university status. Students in Brunswick and Swainsboro would have access to four-year degrees. The Skidaway Institute could offer a doctoral degree in marine science. And the Savannah problem would be solved. Armstrong would break “the bondage of an unpopular desegregation plan and…offer Savannah university-level graduate and professional degrees,” while Savannah State would retain its historic identity and mission and escape “the continuing threat of merger with another institution.”

Nick Henry, the new president at Georgia Southern, was the chief spokesman for the proposal. The Savannah Morning News was enthusiastic: “University: Gung Ho.” Chancellor Propst was more reserved and described the document as only a very preliminary working paper. Savannah State rejected it outright, claiming that a large and impersonal research-focused university would not meet the needs of black students.

By the end of the year, the Chancellor’s staff and the Regents Planning and Oversight Committee had reviewed the suggested reorganization, along with a less complicated proposal submitted by Valdosta State College and the institutions of south central Georgia. The conclusions from the central office were cautious. All of south Georgia lacked and needed regional access to university-level programs. But the cost of these programs meant that it made more sense to limit them to a few central locations. A carefully planned regional university might provide a cost-efficient approach as long as such an institution in no way diminished or infringed on the role of the state’s primary research universities. The specific organizational arrangement should offer a model that might be used in different areas around the state and preferably have one institution in the lead position with others as affiliates.

In January 1989, the Regents approved the regional university as a concept. They set tentative criteria for eligibility and hired two consultants to study the south Georgia proposals. Nick Henry did not wait for the consultants but immediately began reshaping the multi-campus plan into a new version that positioned Georgia Southern as a lead institution in contrast with the more egalitarian tone of the earlier proposal. Armstrong held a certain cynicism toward outside consultants and found little reason to change that attitude as a result of the visit and recommendations of the newest experts. Raymond Dawson of North
The consultants found the large number of developmental studies students at Savannah State to be inconsistent with the expectation of university-level work and a hindrance to the college’s effort to achieve an accredited master’s program in business administration. They acknowledged Armstrong’s academic strengths but noted that the college lacked the 7,500 full-time equivalent students required by the Regents to become a university. In President Burnett’s opinion, the Regents did not need to hire consultants simply to read the numbers. Numbers were not the key issue. For Burnett, the main issue was how to resolve the Savannah Problem in a way that provided the Savannah metropolitan area with full-service university programming, not tied to distant Statesboro, and at the same time released Armstrong from the restrictions of the desegregation plan and the difficult relationship with Savannah State. The limitations imposed by the program swap and the instability created by the Regents’ repeated merger studies, Burnett argued, were responsible for the fact that Armstrong’s enrollment numbers were not higher. Local institutional autonomy in undergraduate work would not be enough without the growth opportunities that graduate programs offered. In Burnett’s opinion, the consultants’ proposal meant that Savannah had lost again.26

Before the Regents made their final decision, one more effort remained to “deal Savannah back in” to the full advantages of the regional university.27 On June 8, President Henry and President Burnett proposed a merger between Armstrong and Georgia Southern, with a Statesboro campus and a Savannah campus at Armstrong.28 The multi-campus model was now a two-campus model. Burnett prepared a letter asking for statements of public support to be sent to Regent Cignilliat.29 He believed the philosophical differences with Savannah State were unbridgeable, and the awkward “ménage à trois” proposed by the consultants for graduate programs was unacceptable. A merger of Armstrong and Georgia Southern would end the troubled relationship between Armstrong and Savannah State and would leave the latter free to preserve its historic role and identity. Merger carried the risk that Armstrong would be dominated by the larger institution in Statesboro, but it also offered the possibility to ride the rising tide of the regional university as an equal partner. The opportunity to break free from the frozen educational scene in Savannah was, for Burnett, worth the risk.30 But it was not going to happen.

In July 1989, the Board of Regents approved a final proposal for the establishment of regional universities. Prepared by Propst and his staff, the recommendation followed the general principles of the consultants’ report with slight modifications.31 Any four-year institution seeking to become a regional university would have to meet a series of “readiness criteria” that included enrollment numbers, SAT scores, upper-level credit hours, accredited programs, and $300,000 in external grant activity. The enrollment criteria required 5,000 EFT, with 1,000 graduate students. By these criteria, only Georgia Southern was ready to become a regional university. Armstrong and Savannah State were not “currently positioned by size of enrollment or complexity of programs to respond fully and effectively to the need for graduate instruction and research.”32

They would continue their primary missions as separate undergraduate institutions and offer graduate work in an “affiliated” relationship with Georgia Southern. In effect, the new arrangement merged the graduate programs and left the undergraduate programs under the authority of the home institution. It was an arrangement that looked possible on paper, but for Armstrong and Savannah State it brought back memories of their Joint Graduate Program of the 1970s, and few of the people who had lived through that experience considered it to have been a success. Nevertheless, transition teams of faculty and administrators from the three campuses began to work on the details, and the new regional university came into being on July 1, 1990, with great celebration in Statesboro.

The creation of the regional university was the most significant organizational change in the University System since the 1960s. Propst told Burnett that it...
would be the most important decision he would make as Chancellor. Valdosta State College soon followed Georgia Southern and became a regional university in 1993. The regional designation, which had begun with the Special Funding Initiative as an effort to foster institutional cooperation and address unmet regional needs in higher education, had introduced a new way of thinking about organizing, and possibly simplifying, the delivery of higher education in the University System as a whole. The southeast Georgia model, with its unique, affiliated relationship of the three previously separate institutions, bore watching. As a side effect, it might also have put the Savannah Problem to rest.

At Armstrong, however, the outlook did not seem quite so positive. The establishment of Georgia Southern as a regional university culminated a decade of repeated, wrenching reviews of higher education in Savannah. For Armstrong, the decade that had begun with the loss of the business administration program ended with the loss of control of graduate programs, now offered “in affiliation” with Georgia Southern. Health professions were well-established on the campus, but the future of graduate work in those fields would now have to be negotiated with Georgia Southern. And even though nurses, dental hygienists and their colleagues provided important services to the community, they did not carry the political weight or the strong public profile of programs like business administration or engineering.

Looking back on the decade, Armstrong would prefer to forget many of its painful moments altogether. Fortunately there were other memories of the period that resided in the regular rhythms of campus life. Administrators and others might struggle with the institutional answer to President Ashmore’s question, “Where are you going?” but on most days, students, faculty, staff, and administrators knew exactly where they were going. They were going to work – to classrooms, labs, and offices – to teach, to study, and to fulfill the various duties of the life of the college. This other side of the 1980s became the place where institutional and individual memories preferred to linger.
CHAPTER 12
Campus Life in the 1980s

The campus had never looked as lovely as it did on the afternoon of April 19, 1985. Everybody said so. Tables with white tablecloths and flower baskets had been set up on the west side of the quadrangle. A small combo provided music. Serving tables held an abundance of hot and cold appetizers. Well-dressed guests circulated and greeted each other. It felt like a lawn party or a wedding reception. It was the presidential inauguration of Robert Adair Burnett as the fifth president of Armstrong State College. It was the first formal inauguration of an Armstrong president. There had been no such event for Henry Ashmore, who received a nice feature article in the newspaper along with a family photo, and then he simply went to work without further fanfare. Dale Lick had an official inauguration when he came to Georgia Southern, though he kept it small scale. Savannah State had a formal inauguration for Wendell Rayburn when he arrived. And Armstrong had one for Bob Burnett.

The inauguration was a welcomed upbeat moment following the various reviews and reports that debated Armstrong’s future during the period between Ashmore’s retirement announcement in January 1982 and the Regents’ decision in November 1983 to maintain the separate institutional identity of Armstrong and Savannah State. No one knew that the future of the two Savannah colleges would erupt again in 1988, but on that sunny day in April 1985, Bob Burnett marched with his inaugural procession into the Fine Arts auditorium, caught the eye of the camera, and gave it a happy, heads-up wink that suggested that he felt good about the future.

Inside the auditorium, outgoing Chancellor Vernon Crawford officiated at the proceedings that conferred the dignity and powers of the presidential office. Incoming Chancellor Dean Propst sat with the platform party, and afterwards at the reception he renewed old friendships from his days as Armstrong’s dean of faculty.

The mid-decade point of 1985 is a useful place from which to survey the various features of campus life that characterized the 1980s. The 1979 loss of business administration and the 1989 loss of control of graduate programs framed the period, but they were only part of the picture. New faculty, new programs, and new students shaped an increasingly diverse campus community, and in many ways the net sum at the end of the decade showed gain as well as loss.

CELEBRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS
The inauguration was one of three official celebrations for the college in 1985. Burnett saw each one as an opportunity to revive Armstrong’s energy, image, and spirit and to bolster the relationship between the college and the community.

Following the April inauguration, the college celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding in May. That event did not have all of the formalities of the inauguration, but there was birthday cake for students and faculty at the noon hour on May 27. Orson Beecher prepared a brief history of the college and alumni remembered the old days in the mansion on the corner of Bull and Gaston.

The third celebration of 1985 occurred in November with the dedication of the Coastal Georgia Center as a continuing education facility for programs offered by both Armstrong and Savannah State. The Center was part of the 1978 desegregation plan and was intended to show that the two colleges were working together to serve the city and region with short courses,
workshops, conferences, and seminars. In 1982, the city of Savannah donated four acres of land near Battlefield Park on the northwest edge of the historic district, and the Regents approved $3 million for construction. Located on neutral ground and removed from the two campuses, the new building and its activities did not alter or threaten the identity of either of the Savannah colleges. The first director of the Center, Gary Nosworthy, reported to both presidents, and the programs and staff paid close attention to racial balance. According to the desegregation plan, the Center had two primary purposes. It would help “to enhance the overall acceptance of Savannah State College by all elements of the community,” and it would also attract students to enroll in the regular degree programs offered at each campus. In practice, the Center fulfilled the community service role well, but even though it stressed the connection between its programs and Armstrong and Savannah State and used faculty from each institution, it did not significantly change or improve the relations between the two colleges. The 1988 hearings in the auditorium of the Coastal Center bore witness to that fact, and in general the operations of the Center remained remote from the life of each campus.

The three celebrations of 1985 highlighted Armstrong’s past and its expectations for the future in the midst of a difficult moment more than his share of difficult moments. Twice during the 1980s his personal notes exclaimed “Munich!” and “ASC = Czech,” as he felt the frustration of Armstrong’s future being shaped by other people in other places. But on most days, however, was a good day; and on most days, those distant forces did not affect the patterns of campus life.

Burnett was a popular president within the Armstrong community. He enjoyed a good collegial relationship with the faculty and genuinely seemed to enjoy their company. He presided at the monthly faculty meetings with ease and good humor and always introduced his wife Mary at the first meeting of the year. She was a regular and familiar presence on campus, and daughter Wendy attended and graduated from Armstrong during her father’s presidency. At each Inauguration Day, Burnett negotiated a restitution agreement three lean years for the college’s finances. He persuaded M. Lane Morrison to serve as the first VP. Seventy-five faculty members disagreed and signed a petition to protest the procedure. The protest did not change anything about the appointment, nor did it cloud Burnett’s future relationship with the faculty. Anne Hudson, who circulated the petition, subsequently became one of the Burnetts’ closest friends. Burnett himself was keenly aware of faculty rights and prerogatives as stated in the policies of the American Association of University Professors. In 1982, while acting president, he began efforts to remove the AAUP censure that still hung over Armstrong from the Hayne Dyches case. Once Dyches could be located, Burnett negotiated a restitution payment; and since the Armstrong statutes gave every indication of full protection for academic freedom, the AAUP removed its censure in June 1983. Burnett would not tell Henry Ashmore the amount of the payment to Dyches.

Burnett had the help of an able administrative team. John L. Stegall became Vice President for Finance in January 1981, succeeding Julie Stanfield, and in January 1985, Frank Butler arrived to complete the top tier as Vice President and Dean of Faculty. The sight of the two vice presidents walking side by side down the hall provided a contrasting image of height and motion to the great amusement of the staff in the Administration Building. Stegall, the shorter of the two men, leaned and loped gently forward while Butler, smiling, slow-footed, and ramrod erect, swayed from side to side. Outside the Administration Building, Stegall could often be found walking the grounds or strolling through the corridors as he regularly checked on the physical condition of the properties for which he was responsible.

Stegall’s main business, budget oversight and management, faced serious problems during the 1980s. After the program swap, both Armstrong and Savannah State received two years of guaranteed funding from the Regents to protect them from the effects of the drop in enrollment. The extra financial support continued for an additional year, but enrollment remained sluggish. The System as a whole experienced deep mid-year budget cuts in 1983 and 1984, initiating three lean years for the college’s finances. Stegall introduced various money-making and money-saving strategies, including short-term, interest-bearing accounts for college funds, and a four-day week for summer school to save on air conditioning costs. The accounts did well, but mildew in the library brought the air conditioning back on quickly. In many ways the library actually benefited from Stegall’s ministrations since any unspent funds at the end of the year generally went to purchase books. Department heads kept their wish lists ready for the mid-June phone call from the library director’s office. By the 1980s, public colleges could no longer expect tuition and state support to provide sufficient revenue for their budgets. Tuition contributed only about 25% of the cost of higher education and state resources were strained to come up with the rest. Gifts and grants became essential to meet the financial needs of higher education. Armstrong had never really had a development office, and the presence of two public colleges in Savannah often made fundraising problematic, but in the 1980s things changed. In 1982, Burnett designated Joe Buck as the college’s development officer, in addition to his duties in student affairs. Joe had strong connections with the Savannah community, but fundraising really needed its own specialized group. In 1984, Burnett established the Armstrong Foundation to cultivate the generosity of Savannah donors. Nick Mamalakis, an ever-faithful Armstrong booster, served as the first treasurer of the Foundation and deposited his check for $5,000 as the first gift to its account. He persuaded M. Lane Morrison to serve as the first chairman of the Foundation, and by the fall of 1988 the Foundation had raised nearly $90,000 in cash and securities.

But fundraising from the Savannah business community struggled with the fact that Armstrong lacked a business administration program. After the March 1988 merger crisis, Armstrong’s annual report for 1987–88 informed the Regents that the Foundation and other college supporters believed “that the college’s appeal to contributors was crippled by the loss of business administration programs and the failure of the college to obtain such attractive programs as engineering.”

The local hospitals continued to support Armstrong’s health professions with major donations for equipment and faculty positions. In 1989, Candler Hospital’s gifts to the college came to $105,000 and Memorial’s support amounted to $156,303. But hospital funding for new faculty was a mixed blessing. If the needs of

John Stegall, Armstrong Archives.

Frank Butler, Armstrong Archives.

Nick Mamalakis and Bob Burnett, Armstrong Archives.
the hospitals shifted and their support changed accord- ingly, Armstrong found itself with commitments to expensive programs and their personnel. The tough decisions on these matters ultimately came to the desk of Frank Butler, as Vice President and Dean of Faculty. One of Butler’s first tasks was to develop a Five Year Plan to identify areas where spending might be controlled as well as areas where funds needed to be allocated. Larger classes and the use of more part-time faculty would provide savings in instruction, but funding for the library, computer equipment, the sciences, nursing, and engineering needed to be increased. The plan envisioned a new administrative unit for enrollment services, and it affirmed the need for “more resources, both human and fiscal, to improve the college’s visibility, its fund-raising capabilities, and its image.”

Butler also expected the faculty to increase their schol- arly activity. Armstrong’s administration had always acknowledged the value and importance of research and publication, but teaching was the primary expectation, and teaching loads reflected that priority. Since the University System had no policy for sabbaticals or paid leave for research, faculty had to rely on their own resources to pursue scholarly activity. Departmental travel budgets helped to support attendance at professional conferences, but funds for extended research time were nearly nonexistent. In April 1987, Butler established scholarly activity as a clear requirement for promo- tion. Because faculty had to provide evidence of scholarly development resources to support it. Usually those resources meant a reduced load for a full-time faculty member and the use of part-time faculty to cover the difference. The faculty of the 1980s maintained their interest in college governance and in curriculum matters. The professional programs continued to receive particularly close attention at the monthly faculty meetings in Jenkins Auditorium. A March 1980 motion challenged the automatic inclusion of all of the teacher education programs or consultation with the appropriate academic departments. Dick Summerville raised the alarm and pointed to eight procedural violations, large and small, including failure to consult with his own mathematics faculty on matters that needed their consent. The Executive Committee found that fourteen B.S. Ed. programs violated Area IV of the Core, and thirteen of them had not followed proper procedures for approval. Charles Nash, Dean of the College of Education, watched with amazement as the discussion continued through two faculty meetings and culminated in a 52-24 vote to rescind all of the programs in question. Joe Adams patiently prepared a single-spaced, eight-page rebuttal of all of the chal- lenges, and the programs eventually took their place in the Armstrong catalog.

Health professions courses experienced similar rigorous scrutiny. Arts and sciences faculty might not under- stand the specialized terminology in course descrip- tions for nursing, dental hygiene, respiratory therapy, or radiological sciences, but they wanted to review comment on them anyway. In November 1988, Bob Strozier found the language, length, and technicality of the A.D.N. descriptions inappropriate for catalog copy, and “considerable discussion” ensued. The idea of a faculty senate emerged in May 1987 as a way to expe- dite faculty business, but again it failed to get majority support. Most of the faculty continued to feel a sense of ownership where the academic life of the college was concerned.

The tight budgets of the 1980s turned everyone’s attention to matters of finance and retrenchment. In the fall of 1985, the faculty created a Finance Committee as one of its standing committees, and Burnett agreed to consult with it on the question of budget cuts. The committee’s report in January 1986 proposed a draconian measure to eliminate the three schools of Arts and Sciences, Education, and Health Professions, along with their deans, and return to the centralized oversight of the Vice President and Dean of Faculty. According to the committee’s calculations, the college had operated well under this simpler organiza- tional structure in 1975 when it had 15 depart- ments and 3,402 students. In 1985, there were only 2,746 students but 22 departments and three deans of schools. The number of students did not seem to justify the increased administrative costs. The administrative reorganization in 1986 addressed these problems in two ways. It created a combined School of Arts, Sciences, and Education under Joe Adams as dean and established a new Dean of Academic and Enrollment Services to give close atten- tion to recruitment and try to “stop the hemorrhaging enrollment.” Bill Megathlin took on the responsi- bilities of the office, and by January 1989 he began announcing regular cake-cutting celebrations to mark each milestone as enrollment numbers began to rise.

Some of the enrollment increase occurred as a result of new undergraduate and graduate programs. Health professions were clearly a growth area for Armstrong under the ten-year plan approved by the Regents in 1978, and during the 1980s both nursing and health science added master’s level work to their undergrad- uate offerings. These two new graduate fields, along with the M.Ed. programs, were the kind of advanced degrees that the Regents thought appropriate for the System’s four-year colleges to serve specific local needs. Armstrong argued persuasively that local circum- stances also justified graduate programs in criminal justice (1981) and history (1984). By 1989, Armstrong offered five master’s degrees, all of which passed into the affiliated relationship with Georgia Southern.

Frank Butler, left, and Bill Megathlin, right, celebrate rising enrollment. Visscher 1988.
A CHANGING CAST OF CHARACTERS
The fact that an Iranian woman held the point position for the new economics program may have been a bit surprising to Savannah’s businessmen, but it reflected the changes occurring within the Armstrong faculty. By the 1980s, those faculty members with the longest loyalty to Armstrong began to move into retirement. Orson Beecher, Joe Killorin, Lorraine Anchors, Bill Coyle, and Leslie Davenport had come early, stayed long, and served well. Most of the faculty in the 1980s had arrived after the 1965 move to the Abercorn campus and had no connection with the earlier life of the college. Many of them carried a liberal political philosophy and supported the prospect of merger with Savannah State, but others remembered the days of the Joint Graduate Program and preferred to see the two colleges remain distinct. The newest faculty members, particularly those in health professions, lacked both recent and distant history with the college and tended to watch the various merger discussions silently from the sidelines. As a result, the faculty position on merger was always unfulfilled, but while it lasted it cut a broad swath across the college’s planning and conversation. The engineering courses served as a base for the transfer programs with Georgia Tech and other engineering schools in the southeast, but in the dual degree program, the engineering degree was awarded by Georgia Tech.

Another area of curriculum growth in the 1980s was computer science. Lodged initially in the department of mathematical sciences, by 1982-83 computer science offered its own distinct degree and promised students attractive career possibilities. Math faculty developed a new set of skills to accommodate the field, its languages, and its equipment and valiantly tried to explain the mystery of computers to their colleagues in the humanities. For students, computer science seemed to promise a sure path to employment. “Pussat, Wanna job?” beckoned the headline of an Inkwell article inviting students to put themselves under the ministrations of the faculty’s computer guru, Charles Shipley. Health professions, engineering, and computer science were significant areas of curriculum development during the 1980s, but something else was slowly stirring in arts and sciences. In April 1984, the faculty approved the addition of three new economics courses, which with the two existing economics courses provided enough for an economics minor. In March 1986, the college took the next step and prepared a proposal for a new baccalaureate degree in economics. Savannah State objected, claiming that it would duplicate the SSC undergraduate degree in business administration. But Burnett, who had majored in economics as an undergraduate and considered it a traditional component of a liberal arts curriculum, declared that he intended to send the proposal forward to the Regents. Burnett also wanted accounting courses taught on the Armstrong campus and not just at the Coastal Georgia Center, and in September 1986, two accounting courses went into place. Burnett later stated that the accounting decision caused Savannah State President Wendell Barbyrn to stop speaking to him for nearly a year. In 1989, Yassi Saadatmand arrived as a full-time faculty member in economics, holding her graduate degrees from universities in the U.S. and an undergraduate degree from the National Iranian Oil Company College of Finance. More economics courses appeared for a total of thirteen by 1990. An economics major was clearly close at hand, with the expectation that it might fill the vacancy left by business administration and create useful connections with the Savannah business community.35

the difficulties of the 1980s with generally positive prose. Nordquist, with his coat-sleeves pushed up to the elbows and a low furrowed brow of concentration, was a reliable person for any responsibility that did not require him to be on campus before noon, as he was not a morning person. Roth in the short term and Nordquist in the long term became the most frequent and effective wordsmiths for faculty documents. In 1980, alumna Grace Martin returned to join the psychology faculty with her Ph.D. from Florida State, and when she became head of her department, she broke the gender barrier as the first woman department head in arts and sciences. She continued her work of mentoring women students who were trying to balance the demands of college and family life, and she assumed oversight of the general studies program that also sought to serve older students.

Health Professions acquired an especially long-serving corps of faculty. Soft-spoken Ross Bowers led respiratory therapy from its beginnings for more than thirty years. Aluma Emma Thompson returned to the college as Emma Simon and became head of the dental hygiene department. Her administrative responsibilities expanded steadily until she became the coordinator for Armstrong’s graduate programs in the affiliated relationship with Georgia Southern. Barbara Tanesbaum replaced her as the head of dental hygiene and later followed her into administrative duties. Marilyn Buck became nearly indispensable in nursing as she guided the program through its early accreditation hoops and then brought her considerable experience to the office of the Assistant Dean of Health Professions.

Racial diversity among the faculty remained a difficult goal. In teacher education, most of the Savannah State faculty retired during the 1980s, leaving only Stephen Agyekum for an ongoing career at Armstrong. Bettye Ann Battiste and Evelyn Dandy became strong new voices for the African American perspective. An internship program established by the 1983 addenda to the desegregation plan sent African American faculty into administrative offices around the University System as a way of building up a pool of candidates for future administrative appointments, and Armstrong sent Battiste to intern at Georgia Southern as other African American interns arrived to serve on the Armstrong campus. But the number of African American faculty decreased during the decade after the artificial high when the Savannah State faculty arrived, leaving only nine minority faculty (6% of the total faculty) by 1989.46 Charles Nash coordinated Armstrong’s minority recruitment efforts until he left in the summer of 1986, but his departure also meant the loss of an African American in a senior administrative position. With the reorganization of the School of Education into the School of Arts, Sciences, and Education, teacher education leadership now lay at the department head level, and when Lloyd Newberry (tall, dark, and white) was appointed as department head, Regent Ethridge McMillan voted against the appointment on the grounds that Armstrong was not fulfilling the commitments of the desegregation plan. The newspaper headline described McMillan’s action as an accusation of “racism” at Armstrong.47 Joe Adams
promptly compiled a formal report of Armstrong’s efforts to put African American faculty into positions of administrative leadership. According to the report, they had repeatedly declined the opportunity to move into administration. The search committee that recommended Newberry to be department head consisted of three blacks and one white, and the department of six black and eight white faculty members had concurred with that recommendation unanimously. None of the African American members of the department had applied for the position.38

Elsewhere on the campus, more new faculty arrived and made their mark on institutional memory, some for a short term and others over a longer stay. Andy Mazzoli roared into health professions on his motorcycle to join Ross Bowers in respiratory therapy and quickly brought his questions and comments into faculty meetings where health professions traditionally listened more than spoke. Sandy Streater in health science added another strong voice, without the motorcycle, and his good sense and good humor led to his regular election to the college Executive Committee. Larry Babits came to Armstrong with the archaeology component in public history and took his students out in the summer sun to dig up Savannah’s artifacts. At other times of the year, he led a new Armstrong rugby team onto the playing field against any and all opponents, and in the corridors of Gamble Hall, students were likely to encounter him in the full gear of an American Revolutionary soldier, complete with firearm. Frank Clancy introduced his annual St. Patrick’s Day lecture in March of 1988, and it became a regular occasion of happy nonsense with a brief glance at Irish literature and refreshments provided by Kevin Barry’s pub. Frank was also a runner. He coached cross-country running for Armstrong’s men and women’s teams and could often be found outside Gamble Hall in gym shorts and running shoes, limbering up for an afternoon run around the campus. In the library, Kristina Brockmeier looked more like Peter Pan than a traditional lady librarian, and the library reflected her infectious energy. She advised the Armstrong students in Quiz Bowl competition and led her library staff in serious softball rivalry with arts and sciences faculty. When the summer mildew began to grow on the books, the hosted mildew removal parties to attack the powdery white stuff, and when she left Armstrong, she established a fund for an annual award to recognize outstanding junior faculty. After John Jensen joined the fine arts faculty in 1985, Armstrong acquired a kiln and pottery and sculpture the likes of which no one had ever seen before. The lively combination of fun and talent in these and other faculty members gradually gained a formal forum in the Faculty Lecture Series initiated by the department of Languages and Literature in October 1982. The first talks ranged from Jim Jones’ “Meditation on Change: Some Philosophical Problems in History,” to Dick Nordquist’s “Get Stewed, Books Are a Load of Crap: The Poetry of Phillip Larkin.”39 Frank Clancy’s St. Patrick’s Day talks eventually took their place in the series, and other faculty spoke on subjects that ranged widely across the curriculum. Steve Ealy from Political Science regularly offered up topics with scholarly

1980s Faculty

John Jensen. Armstrong Archives

Larry Babits in Revolutionary War gear. Armstrong Archives

Frank Clancy and Armstrong’s cross country runners. Gordon 1987

Kristina Brockmeier. Gordon 1983

Chuck Shipley as guru for computer science students. Armstrong Archives

Lloyd Newberry. Armstrong Archives

Respiratory Therapy faculty Andy Mazzoli, Ross Bowers, and Bill Smith. Armstrong Archives
irreverence to compare American politics with baseball or explain why academic administrators don’t know anything.49

One of Armstrong’s wackiest observances actually drew its inspiration from President Burnett’s inaugural reception. Because the campus had looked so nice for that event, several faculty members began to lobby for graduation exercises to return to the quadrangle, as had been the case in the late 1960s. Joe Buck was skeptical; suppose it rained. Nonetheless, said Bob Strozier, and he and John Welsh and Bill Megathlin, proceeded to organize an event for a Saturday morning in June to prove their point. The announced purpose of the occasion was to present the Armstrong Curriculum Award to honor a member of the college community known for general academic grumpiness, or, more formally, for “unorthodox intensity and uncompromising principles, [a person] whose sarcasm, intelligence, and distrust of the multifaceted mainstream ideologies and customs bring a special vitality to our collegiate experience.” Strozier and Welsh could be considered experts in curmudgeonliness, and Megathlin joined them “to do something to damage [his] squeaky clean image.”50

On the designated day the three founders of the award arrived on campus with their fueled umbrellas and passed out orange juice and doughnuts in the morning sunshine before announcing the chosen curmudgeon. Larry Guillou of the biology faculty, known for his generally grumpy questions and comments on curriculum issues, was the first recipient of the award on June 11, 1988. Jack McCarthy was the second; he proved his merits by boycotting the event.51

STUDENT LIFE: DESEGREGATION, DIVISION I, AND DORMS

Student life in the 1980s mirrored the social concerns of society as well as the distinctive issues on the Armstrong campus. ROTC arrived with spit and polish in the fall of 1980, and although the Vietnam era faculty scowled, a new generation of students did not share their experience or feelings. On the subjects of drinking, smoking, and sex, the prevailing attitudes presented an interesting mix of both more and less tolerance. There was less tolerance for drinking and smoking as the drinking age rose to twenty-one and Armstrong’s smokers found themselves confined to designated smoking areas, but AIDS provoked much discussion in The Inkwell about condom use and even a proposal to put condom dispensing machines in the men’s restrooms of the student center.42 Who would have thought that cigarette machines, which were the hot issue at the beginning of the Ashmore era, might be replaced by condom machines during the Burnett era? The dispensers never made it to campus, and Joe Buck and his assistant Bill Kelso removed the small packets that appeared in hospitality gift packs donated for new students.53

The merger question in its different forms confronted at least two different cycles of Armstrong students. Those on campus in 1982 lived with the uncertain future prompted by Ashmore’s retirement, and those who arrived after 1985 and thought they had been assured of Armstrong’s autonomy saw the issue erupt unexpectedly again in March 1988. Student government presidents found themselves compelled to make public statements of “student opinion,” but Armstrong students, like the Armstrong faculty, never had the unity of opinion that appeared at Savannah State.

In the first cycle, the SGA supported merger, but The Inkwell editor admitted not being well enough informed to offer an opinion.43 In January 1983, Neil Satterfield’s sociology class conducted a survey of 181 students that showed 68% of them opposed to merger with Savannah State.44 By the fall of 1983, both The Inkwell editor and the SGA supported the idea of merger, but a self-declared Armstrong Continuation Committee loudly disagreed.45 In 1988, the merger issue arose as students entered spring break, but when classes resumed and eight students offered their opinions in Inkwell interviews, an anti-merger view prevailed, five to three.46

Within the merger discussions lay the deeper question of the experience of black students on a white campus. What was it like to be an African American student at Armstrong in the 1980s? The program swap initially caused black enrollment to spike to 17.5% for 1980-1981, but by the fall of 1989 it had dropped to 13.3%.47 Even more to the point, black students at Armstrong were not enrolling in teacher education. According to the numbers that Chancellor Propst presented to the Board of Regents in May 1988, black enrollment in Armstrong’s teacher education program declined by 50% between 1978 and 1987. Even more painful was the fact that the number of black students who graduated from teacher education at Armstrong declined by 95%.48

The African American experience, however, did not depend just on numbers. It also depended on social sensitivities and cultural awareness. Neither of these was evident in the theme selected for the Homecoming celebration in February 1980 following the arrival of the teacher education students and faculty from Savannah State. “Dixie Daze Dazzles the Campus,” declared The Inkwell, and the festivities began with the showing of Gone With the Wind to an overflow crowd in Jenkins Auditorium. “The audience hooted in delight at Scarlet’s lament, ‘But what will I do in Savannah?’ and The Inkwell considered the evening to have been a genuinely FUN event.” But maybe not for everyone.54

Efforts to recruit more African American students increased when the 1983 addenda to the desegregation plan provided for a minority recruitment officer at each institution of the University System.55 That decision led to the next stage in the history of Alfred Owens and Armstrong State College.

After graduating from Armstrong in 1981, Owens enrolled at the University of South Carolina, where he earned a Master’s in Library Science. In the fall of 1983, he returned to Armstrong for additional courses in media and teacher education at the same time that the college was looking for a minority recruiter. Owens applied for the job. In January 1984, he became Armstrong’s first Minority Recruitment Officer, responsible for contacting black high school students and working with black churches to promote Armstrong as a higher education option for Savannah’s African Americans. Two years later, in 1986, the college created a Minority Affairs Office to provide counseling, tutoring, and mentoring for minority students. Alfred Owens became its first director.56 His early history with the college during the 1960s remained unknown.

The Ebony Coalition offered an important extracurricular center for Armstrong’s African American students, but the black experience continued to be an issue that needed attention. In May of 1989, a month after the Lloyd Newberry incident, Evelyn Dandy presented a faculty lecture on the topic, “What Is It Like Being The Only One?” She spoke from her experience in the 1960s when she had been one of six African American students on a campus of 1,200 students. She spoke from her fifteen years on the faculty where she frequently found herself in settings where she was “the only one.” She spoke of tokenism, when African American students received either too much or too little attention from their professors. She described patterns of assimilation and polarization that led black students to dissociate from their heritage or withdraw into it. There were no easy answers to these problems, but Dandy’s lecture was one of a series of events in...
1989 that showed a significant shift from the Dixie Daze that began the decade. In February, the city of Savannah, in conjunction with Armstrong and Savannah State, presented a joint musical production Do Lord Remember Me to a full house of more than 1,000 people in the Armstrong Fine Arts Auditorium. Burnett described the event as “one of the largest racially mixed and balanced audiences for a cultural event in the history of the city of Savannah.”

In April the Savannah Morning News posed the following quiz question to its readers: “What Chatham County college has a black student body president, a black homecoming queen, and a black beauty pageant champion?” The answer: both Savannah State and Armstrong! On May 17, Armstrong and Savannah State collaborated to bring to Savannah the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, whose book Things Fall Apart was a classic of African literature. It was a rare moment that a speaker of that distinction spoke quietly from the stage of Jenkins Auditorium. And in June of 1989, Armstrong honored the college’s first African American graduate in an observance of Oris Johnson Day. Johnson came to campus and spoke of his experience of “being the only one” at Armstrong during the junior college days at the downtown location. He paid tribute to Alfred Owens as someone who had traveled the difficult path before him. Owens stood quietly listening at the back of the faculty dining room. He was now well known and respected as Armstrong’s Minority Affairs Officer, but no one knew the story that lay beneath Johnson’s comment.

After Charles Nash’s departure, Owens was the only African American in an administrative position at Armstrong until

Deanna Cross arrived in June of 1989 to be the department head for the two-year nursing program. The predominantly African American congregation at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church in Savannah told her she was going to be “the sacrificial lamb,” but she found Alfred Owens to be a steady source of counsel and encouragement. In due course, she would become the president’s Special Assistant for Minority Affairs.

Aside from the merger crises and the cultural climate of the campus, two other major developments shaped student life in the 1980s. Athletics attempted a great leap forward and stumbled, but student housing finally became reality.

Armstrong athletics entered the 1980s with men’s sports still grumbling about sharing the athletic budget with women. When the basketball program began to show deficits, Vice President Stegall took money from unused SGA funds to cover the loss, and President Ashmore took Armstrong out of NCAA Division II, which was about to require an additional sixth sport for men’s athletics. Stegall attributed the deficits to lower gate receipts caused by the loss of students in the program swap; Coach Bianchi said women’s sports were cutting into the basketball budget. Whatever the cause, it would clearly be expensive to add a new men’s sport. Armstrong moved to NCAA competition.

After the college survived the merger crisis launched by Ashmore’s retirement, Burnett looked to athletics as one way to revive Armstrong’s image and spirit. The example of Dale Lick and Georgia Southern’s football program showed the kind of impact that athletic success could bring. And there was also the memory of Armstrong’s glory days on the basketball court during the 1970s. Burnett decided to return to Division II and then move Armstrong into Division I competition.

Coach Renny Bryner recruited aggressively, raised $30,000 for his program, and moved the basketball team into winning seasons. Average attendance at games increased from 200 to 800 fans as the crowds showed up to watch the Pirates play. In May of 1984, Bryner was appointed as Athletic Director, and he scheduled the 1985 season’s games for the Civic Center, where Armstrong would play as a Division I team. It was an ambitious move. The Inkwell voiced reservations. Was it worth the cost? Would the money be better spent on academic programs? Should Armstrong set its priorities on housing and engineering instead of athletics? The criticism sharpened as student interest and attendance at the games waned. In May of 1985, SGA president Jon Burke blasted the administration for a host of decisions that he believed did not serve the interests of students or faculty. The athletics decision led the list.

The following year Burke bombarded the administration again, this time for the misuse of student fees to support athletics. According to Burke, students had initially agreed to an increase in the athletic fee in order to support the division upgrade but then were surprised to see unused student funds diverted to cover athletic deficits at the end of the year. Now, Burke charged, student funds were diverted to athletics at the beginning of the year before any end-of-year surplus existed. It was “financial finagling, bookkeeping banditry,” and all without student knowledge or consent.

Armstrong hung on for two more years in Division I, but the benefits were not forthcoming and the requirements proved to be too costly. At the end of the spring season of 1987, the college returned to Division II.

The housing initiative had a happier outcome. Earlier Armstrong students had campaigned for dorms, even pitching tents on campus to make their point. The college’s strongest argument for student housing rested on its health professions programs and the Regents’ 1978 designation of Armstrong as a Center for Health Professions Education. After the desegregation plan, Armstrong repeatedly insisted that housing would increase the college’s ability to attract African American students who were interested in health-related fields.
In the fall of 1981, Armstrong began to explore various housing alternatives. The first effort occurred just across Abercorn Street on Middleground Road, where the college tented units in Ridgewood Apartments, primarily for health professions students although basketball players became the most controversial occupants. In March of 1984, Burnett approached the Regents with a formal proposal for dorms to be built on another tract of land across Abercorn, with financing by private investors. The Regents balked at the details. They decided, however, to develop a System-wide policy on dormitory construction that might include private investment proposals. As Savannah Regent Arthur Gignilliat, Jr. stated frankly, “Private investment is the only way we are going to build dorms on any of our campuses.” Both Gignilliat and Burnett argued that Armstrong’s 1978 designation as a health professions education center meant a change of mission that warranted a change from nonresidential to residential status. The Regents disagreed. They considered the 1978 action as a new emphasis in Armstrong’s programs but not a change in the college’s mission. In the fall of 1984, however, the Board reviewed its policies and concluded that if a college were to receive permission for dorms, proposals from private investors might be considered. The following spring, Burnett had a new proposal ready and the Regents gave their consent. Atlantic Investors Development Corporation agreed to construct apartment housing for students on Apache Road adjacent to the campus, and the college would lease the apartments with the understanding that they might eventually be turned back to the developers. The forty-eight units were ready for occupancy by fall. They were open to all students but with preference given to health professions. Burnett and Gignilliat cut the ribbon, and Armstrong broke a barrier that it had long wanted to cross.

The dorms were slow to fill at first. In February 1987, two years after they opened, there were 105 residents, with capacity for 192. Housing director Mack Palmour explained that Armstrong’s dormitory option was not yet well known locally or elsewhere. Most students came to Armstrong because they could live at home and reduce the cost of their college education. Older, non-traditional students were usually place-bound by jobs or family responsibilities. Students who wanted and could afford a dormitory experience typically went elsewhere, or they came to Armstrong as day students for the first two years in order to save money and then left for a residential campus to finish their degree. For enrollment growth and stability, Armstrong needed to attract more out-of-town students and persuade the in-town students to stay for four full years. Getting the message across required new techniques as well as old ones. In the early 1980s, the Student Government Association thought a sign might help, a large marquee-type sign to announce campus events and attract student involvement. They took $4,800 from SGA funds and purchased a sign. President Ashmore considered it too commercial and out of keeping with campus architecture. Vice President Stell was adamant: “Under no circumstances will that sign be put up on this campus.” The sign would have to go, and the SGA would have to swallow the financial loss. Petitions, negotiations and compromise ensued. The sign finally went up across the street on the corner of Abercorn and Middleground Road. Another later sign featured athletic events, and, eventually, a huge electronic billboard of flashing lights and commercial advertising announced all of Armstrong’s news and activities to the passing traffic.

Public opinion, however, was slow to change. To go to college in one’s own hometown, especially while living at home, seemed like a continuation of high school, and that perception was hard to break, regardless of the actual academic experience. The uncertainties and public discussion of the 1980s also left a hurtful residue. Inkwell writers addressed the problem by meeting than in a week of high school assignments. And being at a hometown school did not limit the horizon. Smith spent his junior year on a Rotary International Scholarship in Lausanne, Switzerland. For other freshmen, Armstrong was their first choice for college, and even though some of them left at the end of two years, others arrived as junior college transfers. Many new students were completely unaware of the merger uncertainties that hovered in the background.
background. Bill Kelso finished a two-year program at Brunswick Junior College and came to Armstrong in 1984 to major in criminal justice. He knew nothing of the merger debate and actually thought that Armstrong was the African American college in Savannah. He arrived in time to take some of Bill Coyle’s last classes in political science and promptly changed his major.

He found work with campus security and campus housing, and the SGA offered an opportunity for leadership responsibilities that served him well when he became Joe Buck’s assistant and began an ongoing career in the Office of Student Affairs.

Outside the spotlight of campus leadership, other students found their hands full with off-campus jobs, families, and childcare. But The Inkwell saw them and put their stories in print to correct the stereotype images featured in college publications. Too many smiling blonds and too much inane twaddle about campus life did not give the whole picture, said The Inkwell writer. The real picture also included the N4 student (N4 was the last class hour of the evening schedule that ended at 10:30 p.m.), who rushed home after class, put the kids to bed, grabbed a few hours to study and sleep, and then headed off to her day job. This student was more likely to be a frazzled brunette than a smiling blond.

Sometimes those brunettes received the recognition they deserved. In January 1987, Kim Grier, a junior nursing major and single mother of two children, represented Armstrong before the Georgia General Assembly at the state’s first Academic Recognition Day sponsored by the University System and the Board of Regents. Her GPA was 3.92, and President Burnett appropriately described her as a prime example of the major purpose of schools like Armstrong.

As a health professions student, she represented a significant portion of Armstrong’s students and graduates. In 1988-89, Armstrong graduated 185 students with degrees in health professions, compared with 175 students in arts and sciences, and 97 students with education degrees. Savannah hospitals provided $2.1 million in financial support to the college, and $241,469 of Special Initiative Funds went into Armstrong health professions. Armstrong’s institutional health was slowly improving. Burnett described 1989 as the best year since 1979. Overall enrollment reached 3,702 in the fall. Students at Brunswick Junior College could now work toward a baccalaureate degree by taking upper level courses offered by Armstrong faculty on the Brunswick campus. Students from Atlanta and beyond could find housing available on the Armstrong campus. The dorms began to fill up. The fact that the beach and the Atlantic Ocean were only twenty-five miles away offered a distinct attraction. And students who wanted to cross the Atlantic could travel with Roger Warlick to London as Armstrong began to develop its study abroad programs.

The hometown college was branching out, showing strong signs of energy and vitality at the end of the decade.

Much of campus life, however, remained the same, a fact that was both a relief and a disappointment. The Regents seemed to have made a commitment to leave the Savannah colleges at rest and remove merger from the agenda. The two colleges could pursue their separate lives in a normal fashion, except for the abnormality that limited their respective offerings in teacher education and business administration. All of the discussions and proposals for new directions and new configurations, such as an engineering school and a multi-campus university, had come and gone. The big change that remained was the regional university in Statesboro, which now oversaw the graduate programs of Armstrong and Savannah State in an affiliated relationship. How that arrangement would play out remained to be seen.

Among the gains and losses of the 1980s, one development moved slowly to a welcome conclusion. In 1983, OCR reviewed Georgia’s progress toward the 1985 deadline for fulfilling the commitments of the desegregation plan. When the review found shortcomings, the Regents responded with the addenda of new measures such as the minority recruitment officer on every campus and the administrative internship program.
program. In 1984, the Regents Test raised further questions from OCR, and the Regents responded by establishing special remediation classes for students who did not pass the test. By 1985, OCR considered Georgia to be generally on track with its desegregation efforts in higher education. Only a few areas of concern remained, notably the declining minority enrollment in teacher education at Armstrong. At the end of 1988, a formal ruling declared Georgia to be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and two decades of oversight came to an end.

Other changes by the end of the decade were less dramatic but no less real. At Armstrong and throughout public higher education, the liberal arts increasingly shared the campus with professional programs. Armstrong’s statement of purpose reflected the change, and Charles Nash put it bluntly into words in a final Inkwell interview before he left in 1986. “People are beginning to see that this is not a liberal arts college, pure and simple. It has a solid liberal arts foundation, but it is not a liberal arts college…. We are a professionally oriented college.” He pointed to programs in health professions, teacher education, computer science, and criminal justice as examples. The comment held an element of truth, even though most of the college’s four-year graduates still came from the arts and sciences departments, and the faculty in those departments weighed heavily in college governance and curriculum decisions. But students wanted majors that prepared them for jobs, and the Regents and the legislature expected public, tax-supported higher education to serve the new and specialized needs of society. The change in emphasis was still in its early stages, but Steve Wright and Charles Nash pointed to the trend.

Their thoughts found an echo in a visiting speaker who arrived in November 1985. Cleanth Brooks, distinguished author and literary critic, stood for everything that the arts and humanities held dear, but he too saw the changes that were coming, as he delivered his lecture to a full house in the too-small auditorium of the Health Professions Building. His listeners maneuvered themselves into the impossibly awkward swing-out seats, while others stood against the walls. Younger students from an English class at Savannah Country Day School sat cross-legged on the floor, as the white-haired Brooks began to speak on his announced topic, “The Role of the Humanities in a Technological Society.” He examined the changes in American society and in education, the same kinds of changes that were happening at Armstrong. What would be the role of the humanities in the new shape of higher education? His answer was hopeful. A modern, secular society that no longer held a shared religious consensus at the center of its public life would need the strong presence of the humanities on the academic campus even more than ever before. The study of literature, art, philosophy, history, and their related fields provided the one remaining opportunity for American society to examine and debate the values needed to address the questions that new technology would raise. At Armstrong, that debate and discussion would continue into the 1990s and beyond.
CHAPTER 13
Moving Toward the Millennium: 1990 – 1999

In September 1992, the Armstrong faculty learned with astonishment that Frank Butler intended to put a computer on every faculty desk. Although many faculty members already had computers, many did not. The English and history faculty were particularly stunned at the announcement. They had only recently acquired private telephones in their offices, having previously been summoned by intercom to receive their calls on a phone in the departmental lounge or from an instrument on the wall in a nearby alcove. Faculty in health professions and teacher education had private phones, but everyone shared in the general consternation about the commitment for campus-wide computers. Throughout the 1980s a network of fiber optic cable had burrowed across campus to support administrative record keeping and computer science courses, but not until 1994 did every faculty office have its own computer. It quickly became an essential tool of communication, instruction, and research. The effect of the electronic revolution on education was so dramatic that almost everything that preceded it seemed archaic. In some ways it was the most significant change of the new decade, but it was not the only one.

In 1990, the most immediate concern facing Armstrong was the relationship with Georgia Southern. The affiliation of all Armstrong and Savannah State graduate programs with the new regional university in Statesboro felt like a shotgun wedding with an uncertain future. Four years later, everything changed. A new Chancellor arrived and introduced far-reaching alterations in the University System, including a semester calendar, a revised core curriculum, and a review of institutional missions. As Armstrong moved through these various innovations, it suddenly found itself with a new name that included the word “university” and stood free and clear of any connection with another institution.

THE REGIONAL UNIVERSITY
The designation of Georgia Southern as a regional university in 1990 established a unique kind of institution in the University System. It ranked below the state’s four research universities, but it held an enhanced role and a broader range of graduate programs than the other public four-year colleges, who promptly set their sights on achieving the same goal. But the affiliated relationship between Georgia Southern and Armstrong and Savannah State for graduate work was unique. It suggested a model for regional clusters that might provide a streamlined and cost-effective way to reorganize the entire University System. From 1990 to 1994 Armstrong found itself squarely in the middle of this innovative approach.

Armstrong’s relationship with Georgia Southern involved only graduate programs and graduate students. The undergraduate programs that enrolled the vast majority of Armstrong students remained autonomous. Unlike the earlier Joint Graduate Program with Savannah State during the 1970s, this affiliation was not a partnership of equals. Georgia Southern was the lead institution, but the interpretation of that role raised a number of questions. Presidents and vice presidents found that they had
one kind of authority on their own campus but less authority in the affiliated relationship. An underlying feeling worried that the graduate-level relationship was merely preliminary to a total takeover by Georgia Southern. Armstrong’s faculty, for example, Armstrong teacher said Propst imagined a conversation circulating at GSU: “First ASC, then SSC, then Mercer, and then Valdosta State!! Well I suck in the whole damn universi- ty system!!!” Twice during the 1990-91 academic year, President Burnett and Vice President Butler felt it necessary to reassure the Armstrong faculty that there was no truth to the rumors. Armstrong and Savannah State being absorbed by Georgia Southern.6

In November 1990, as the regional university moved through its first fall term, Chancellor Propst prepared a statement to clarify and guide the relationship of the three institutions. Armstrong and Savannah State, he acknowledged, had lost autonomous control of their graduate programs, but Georgia Southern had also lost its independence in regard to graduate programming. The new relationship required “sensitivity” to avoid any “perception (real or imaginary) of an absolute ‘takeover.’ ” In particular, the “participa- tion of Armstrong and Savannah State College must be fully significant to the graduate efforts of the regional university.”7 Propst then returned to the tone of his 1988 comments on the subject of merger. Again, there were two dimensions to the situation, a rational dimension and a subjective dimension. The organizational relationship was a rational issue that required clear lines of authority and responsibility. The two presidents in Savannah served as provosts in an advisory council chaired by the president of Georgia Southern for matters concerning the regional univer- sity’s graduate programs. The president of Georgia Southern held the most authority. Divagements were to be reported to the Chancellor. Other administrat- ive levels used similar advisory councils and followed carefully defined lines of authority. Organization was rational, said Propst, but “personalism, human nature, and emotion” would also play a role. Each president, he stated, would be influenced by these qualities in himself and in his constituents.

The declared purpose of the affiliated relationship was to increase the availability of graduate programs in Savannah and reduce competition and duplication. In the M.Ed. program, for example, Armstrong teacher education faculty would offer their existing graduate courses, and Armstrong faculty would teach other graduate education courses on the Armstrong campus, making more courses available to students who lived in Savannah. Similarly, Georgia Southern’s M.B.A. courses would be taught on the Savannah State campus, using Georgia Southern or Savannah State faculty as appropriate to the course. Of Armstrong’s five graduate programs, three had counterparts at Georgia Southern (the M.A. in History, the M.S. in Nursing, and the M.Ed.), and two did not (the Master of Health Science and the M.S in Criminal Justice). Students in all five programs could now take their coursework at Armstrong or in Statesboro. They received their degrees from Georgia Southern.

During the first two years of the affiliated relationship, total graduate enrollment increased from 1,209 in the fall of 1989 to 1,789 in the fall of 1993.8 The total number of credit hours also rose, as did the number of professionally accredited programs available in Savannah. Prior to the affiliation, the M.Ed. at Armstrong was the only professionally accredited graduate degree offered locally. After the affiliated rela- tionship with the regional university, three additional accredited programs were available in Savannah: the M.B.A., the Master of Public Administration, and the M.S. in Nursing.

Accreditation was one of three issues that presented problems for the regional university. It was a particular problem for Savannah State, where accreditation was required for business administration and social work. The accrediting agencies in those fields balked at an organizational structure that linked accredited programs with non-existent or non-accredited ones. As a result, Savannah would not seek accreditation for its master’s in social work since Georgia Southern had no social work program and therefore could not be the institution that awarded the graduate degree. At Armstrong, the nursing faculty worked with Georgia Southern to gain accreditation for the M.S. in Nursing. The graduate programs in history, health science, and criminal justice operated without the constraints of accrediting agencies.

Organizational issues within the regional university continued to be difficult despite the guidelines laid down by Chancellor Propst and the boxes on the organizational charts. A new Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research, Wilson G. Bradshaw, reported to the president at Georgia Southern and chaired a council composed of the three academically oriented presidents. Each institution had an associate graduate dean to oversee the local programs, and Emma Simon assumed this role at Armstrong. Faculty representa- tives from each campus attended the Graduate Faculty Council that met regularly in Statesboro.

Off the organizational chart, however, graduate administra- tion often felt like “organizational spaghetti.” In many cases the spaghetti wrapped around basic student services such as class schedules, advisement, registration, and record keeping. Teacher education was Armstrong’s largest area of graduate programming, and complaints about the new affiliated relation- ship surfaced quickly. In advisement and registration, students and faculty in Savannah felt frustrated by unclear information and procedures coming out of Statesboro. Lloyd Newberry described it as a “nightmare,” where the “right hand [does] not know what the left hand [is] doing.” Much of the confusion was natural to any new situation, but there were also concerns that Georgia Southern was scheduling courses and workshops in Savannah that duplicated or undercut Armstrong courses. Frank Butler protested sharply: “If I did not know better, I would see this as a conspiracy to continue to drive us out of graduate teacher education programming. I don’t believe that is deliberate, but, in fact, that is what is likely to happen.”

The question of future graduate programs repre- sented a third serious issue for each institution. New programs meant institutional growth, more students, grants, and prestige, but would the new programs be offered in affiliation with the Savannah colleges or belong to Georgia Southern alone? For example, physical therapy represented a new health profes- sions area that Armstrong was ready to develop. Dean Repella proposed a B.S. degree; Georgia Southern favored a master’s degree. Repella argued that the baccalaureate degree would be less costly and therefore more likely to be funded. It would also be a degree that Armstrong could control, but Georgia Southern vigorously opposed the Armstrong degree and argued that the professional association of physical therapists favored a master’s degree.9 As a new GSU graduate program, it would fall under the control of the regional university, distinct from those programs designated in affiliation with Armstrong. It would also allow Georgia Southern to expand its health professions offerings and possibly undermine Armstrong’s mission as a health profes- sions center. Could Armstrong initiate new graduate programs in health professions without seeing them actually build up Georgia Southern at Armstrong’s expense?

Even small issues carried large implications for each campus. Would letterheads and publications for the graduate program indicate the relationship with the affiliated institutions? Would the name of the affiliate appear on the diploma if the student took most of the work on the affiliated campus? Should the regional university have an office and classroom space in Savannah apart from the two Savannah campuses? In the shopping center across the street from Armstrong, a Georgia Southern sign went up over the Aeta building, and the graduate program set up an office with a conference room and a classroom. Burnett suggested that a modular building on the Armstrong campus would be cheaper than paying rent, but President Henry preferred a separate location.10 More pointedly, Henry wanted to locate the new Executive M.B.A. program in the Coastal Georgia Center rather than on the Savannah State campus. The Center was a convenient location for the business community, but the downtown location diminished the identifica- tion of Savannah State as an affiliate of the regional university.11

Georgia Southern President Nick Henry and Armstrong President Bob Burnett. Armstrong Archives.
At the heart of the matter lay the question of the exact nature of the affiliated relationship. Were the affiliates essentially branch campuses of Georgia Southern as far as graduate programs were concerned? Was the list of affiliated programs limited to those identified when the regional university came into existence? Could the Savannah colleges participate as affiliates in programs that had been offered only in Statesboro prior to 1990? Would Georgia Southern participate in new programs pertinent to the distinct missions of the Savannah colleges but which had no previous history with Georgia Southern? The vice presidents argued these issues among themselves, and eventually they made their way to the Chancellor’s office. For Burnett, the question was “whether the affiliate institution is merely subordinate to or even a branch of the regional university or whether the affiliate institution retains its status as a senior college and becomes a real partner with the regional university.” In the first year of operation, he stated, the regional university had shown no trust or sympathy toward the affiliates. Rather, “the aims of the regional university appear to be to use any means possible to subordinate the affiliate institutions as branch campuses.” Propst met with the three presidents to address their questions. He told them that not all Georgia Southern programs were offered in affiliation with the Savannah colleges but new affiliated programs might extend beyond the eight that existed when the regional university began. There would be room for growth, but it would not include everything for everybody.

The personal interactions within the regional university, however, remained difficult. From the beginning, Propst had stressed the need for sensitivity, but despite a layer of professionalism by all parties and an effort to concentrate on specific issues, the relationship became increasingly acrimonious. In retrospect, Burnett believed that an earlier Georgia Southern president like Pope Duncan might have been able to make the relationship among the three schools succeed. President Nick Henry told Burnett that “collaboration means nothing but heated personal exchanges. On one occasion, President Nick Henry was a different kind of person. He respected the opinion of his faculty but was not yet willing to advocate a complete break from the regional university.” A week later, having heard the opinions of his administrative staff, students, and alumni, he was ready. “We have a mess on our hands,” he now told the Savannah newspaper. The regional university was not working well; students were having “some very, very bad experiences.” He urged the Regents to designate Armstrong and Georgia’s other public colleges as universities.

Propst remained reluctant. He believed that a decision to identify the four-year colleges as universities would create unrealistic expectations for doctoral programs for which there would be no funding. Funding issues were critical. Most of Georgia Southern’s difficulties as a regional university, he insisted, were the result of funding problems. Funding for the regional university came from an initial allocation of $1.2 million from the Special Initiative Fund, of which Armstrong and Savannah State each received $261,000 as “pass through” funds from Georgia Southern. Funding for the regional university came from an initial allocation of $1.2 million from the Special Initiative Fund, of which Armstrong and Savannah State each received $261,000 as “pass through” funds from Georgia Southern. Funding development would only be possible as funds were available. In the spring of 1992, all Special Initiative Funds except for health programs received a 50% cut. Full funding might have alleviated some of the problems among the affiliates but their relationship also suffered from an underlying absence of trust and good will, clearly evident in the exchanges between the presidents and in the findings of David Spence and SACS.

The Regents made no change in status for any of the four-year colleges in 1992 except for Valdosta State, which was authorized to become a regional university

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In the fall of 1993, the Board of Regents, especially those insistent on “mission creep” to university and state agency status, pressed for a new direction with strong political consequences. In September 1993, Burnett addressed the first faculty meeting of the year with his usual opening remarks about what might be expected in the year ahead. He informed the faculty that the Board of Regents “is planning a change in the system organization by the new year to prevent the persistent demands from system campuses to be elevated to new levels such as four-year or university status. The change will take the form of reorganization based on regionalization of institutes [sic].” He then added, “I believe we have some experience in such changes.”

In the opinion of some of the Regents, the regional university concept had become “an ego thing” that only created “status envy” among sister colleges in the System as each institution sought to advance its own interests in isolation from the broad needs of the state.1 Two-year schools wanted to be four-year colleges; the four-year colleges wanted to be universities; and technical schools, which were outside of the University System, were offering accredited college courses. This decentralized, localized approach was exactly what the University System was intended to prevent. A regionalized arrangement of clustered institutions might bring things under more orderly control. The Atlanta newspaper published a map showing a plan for reorganizing the University System into six or seven regions of cooperative educational relationships.2 The idea was still very amorphous, but the Regents were clearly annoyed at the persistent demands coming from the public institutions, their presidents, their alumni, and their political representatives. They always wanted more, no matter what they had. “It never fails,” said Propst.3 A true regional approach that involved either coordinated relationships or mergers might offer more streamlined and efficient delivery of higher education, and the new technology for distance learning made a regional approach more feasible than ever before. The major research universities would not be involved, but elsewhere in the state regional relationships might bring real benefits.4

Not all of the Regents agreed on a dramatic reorganization of the System, and many of the System units feared that regionalization might mean the loss of institutional identity and independence. The voices clamoring for a change of status clearly did not want a change that would diminish their status. On October 18, 1993, the whole matter abruptly shifted gears as Propst announced his retirement. After eight and a half years as Chancellor, he explained his decision as one that was “best for me personally.” Reportedly, Propst had begun discussing his retirement with the Regents earlier in the year, but the unexpected suddenness of the announcement inevitably linked it to the wars within the University System and the political sensitivities they had aroused.5 The Atlanta Journal Constitution noted that the current Board of Regents “appointed primarily by Governor Zell Miller has become more active and also more contentious than those Propst had dealt with in the past.”6 Another report described the plans for regional clusters as “politically charged” and “fractious.”7 All discussion of those plans now came to a halt. Executive Vice Chancellor David Spence, who had been the primary staff person working on the plan, announced his decision to take a position with the higher education system in Florida. Regents Thomas Allgood and John Anderson presented a new proposal that favored keeping the System the way it was. Regionalization, they said, simply introduced another administrative level and consequently brought more disadvantages than advantages. It was best to maintain direct, centralized control over each unit within the System.8

The Atlanta newspaper later speculated that regionalization, in whatever form it might take, had become a “political hot potato” for local politicians and for Governor Zell Miller, who was seeking reelection. Miller’s appointees constituted more than half of the Board of Regents, and many observers felt that the governor’s influence was a factor in aborting any new direction toward regionalization.9 It would be up to the next Chancellor to assess the present and future organization of the University System, including any changes in the relationship of Armstrong and Savannah State with the regional university in Statesboro.

Five months later, on March 22, 1994, the Board of Regents announced the appointment of Stephen R. Portch as the next Chancellor of the University System. The following day, Executive Vice Chancellor Arthur Dunning requested consultant Raymond Dawson to return to Georgia to evaluate the regional university relationship of Georgia Southern, Armstrong, and Savannah State.10 Dawson visited each campus in May and then issued his report. On the positive side, he found that the pooled efforts of the three institutions had made it “possible to do more and do it well.”11 More graduate programs were available in Savannah than previously, and graduate enrollment had increased for each institution. But he also found significant problems. The fact that three institutions were asked to act as one “places an exacting responsibility on GUS” as the regional university—“one that all the tact in the world cannot fully overcome—and it leaves ASC and SSC feeling disadvantaged but still vital participants in the process.”12 Dawson found that the faculty at the Savannah colleges felt their involvement in the graduate program to be in many ways remote and “vicarious.” The resulting frustration affected each campus. Dawson proposed to divide the graduate programs so that each institution would have complete control of certain fields. Armstrong, for example, might regain its M.Ed. programs and its graduate programs in health professions. The other graduate programs in history and criminal justice could remain with Georgia Southern. Savannah State could offer the master’s in social work and in public administration. The M.B.A. would remain with Georgia Southern along with other graduate programs not allotted to the colleges in Savannah.13 Armstrong promptly protested the proposal to send the history M.A. to Statesboro, arguing that Savannah was clearly the preferred location for a graduate degree in history. But the opinion that would carry the most weight would be that of the new Chancellor.

Stephen Portch took office on July 1. His energy swept across the state with polish, persuasiveness, and wit. An Englishman by birth and a literature scholar by professional training, he liked to tell his audiences that in earlier times a chancellor was someone who served as a guardian for small children and insane asylum. The remark always brought a laugh. On the serious side of things, Portch made no comment on the question of upgraded institutional status in the University System, but he called for a major study of System objectives for the coming century. Those objectives should shape any decisions about particular institutions. “I don’t like taking actions that are piecemeal. The whole beauty of the power of the system is to take action with a wide view and not with narrow views.”14

On the same day that Portch took office, Frank Butler, Emma Simon, and Lloyd Newberry learned that the affiliated relationship with Georgia Southern was going to be terminated and that the Regents would decide on how to divide up the graduate programs. That division would look like remained unclear, but it appeared that the M.Ed. might pass entirely to Georgia Southern, where education degrees beyond the master’s level could be offered.15 For Armstrong, this prospect was truly alarming. Teacher education was the area granted solely to Armstrong in the 1978 program swap with Savannah State. To lose the graduate component of that program would be devastating. Frank Butler had already informed Art Dunning that the loss of the M.Ed. would “be viewed with more dissatisfaction.
from the community than any other omission.42 He pointed to the fact that Armstrong’s undergraduate program in teacher education was the recent beneficiary of a major grant that fostered collaboration with Savannah State and that a new program to attract African American males into teaching would operate largely at the graduate level. The future of the M.Ed. was unclear, and so the affilia
tions with Armstrong’s work with minorities.

On July 21, the new Chancellor met with the three area presidents and confirmed that the affiliated relationship would change; it had been a four-year “experiment” that provided a variety of lessons, but a new direction was in order. In personal conversation with Burnett, Portch indicated that he did not like the regional university concept in its present form. He considered it to be out of step with other states and a problem in attracting college presidents to the Georgia System. Burnett raised the issue of the M.Ed. and Portch was not ready to make any commitments.43 On July 29, Portch arrived for his get-acquainted visit on the Armstrong campus. Joe Adams and Bettye Anne Battiste made a formal presentation to press the case for Armstrong to offer the M.Ed., even as the Chan
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And so the affiliated portion of the regional university un
raveled. On January 26, 1995, Vice President Butler convened the first meeting of Armstrong’s graduate faculty since 1989. Emma Simon subsequently presented President Burnett with a framed copy of the minutes that marked the return of Armstrong’s control of its graduate programs.46 All of the programs would be referred to in the future as Regents and by SACs, but Armstrong was back in the business of awarding its own graduate degrees.

MOVING FORWARD AND LOOKING BACK
The divorce from Georgia Southern was a liberating moment. The rest of the decade of the 1990s brought other changes that were less controversial but dramati
cally altered many features of academic life.

The most revolutionary innovation in higher educa
tion in Georgia in the 1990s was the HOPE Scholar
dhip program initiated by Governor Zell Miller to provide college tuition for all Georgia high school students who graduated with a B average. The acronym expressed the intent to Help Outstanding Pupils Educationally. Miller considered the program to be a version of the GI Bill that had sent him to the University of Georgia. The money would come from a Georgia lottery with lottery revenue committed specifically to new educational programs from pre-K to college. The lottery idea faced strong opposition in Georgia, but voters approved the proposal in November 1992.47 The first HOPE Scholarship students entered Georgia’s colleges the following fall. Within two years the lottery produced enough revenue to extend the scholarships from two to four years, as well as add funds for institutional fees and books and remove the family income eligibility cap. Within ten years, fourteen other states introduced similar programs.

For a school like Armstrong, HOPE Scholarships were a mixed blessing. Local students who might have stayed in Savannah for financial reasons now found that going away to another Georgia college was not as expensive as it used to be. In the fall of 1993, 28.7% of Armstrong’s first-time freshmen arrived with HOPE scholarships.48 The total enrollment headcount moved beyond 5,000, an increase of 7% that was also true for the University System as a whole. Growth was particu
larly strong among the four-year colleges, though early studies indicated that the freshmen continued to be those who would probably have gone to college anyway.49 Whatever the reason, the increase was a good sign for Armstrong, and by fall 2000, 80% of Armstrong’s first-time freshmen from Georgia held HOPE scholarships.50 It was not easy, however, to maintain the B average necessary to renew the scholar
ships each year, and students began to appear regularly at Armstrong who were referred to in the formal minutes that marked Armstrong’s return to be renewed to lose HOPE.51 The reality was that many students did lose HOPE. When the University System studied the evidence in 2004 for all freshmen who entered with HOPE in 1998, the results showed that only 23% of those students still held their scholar
ships in their senior year.52

The HOPE Scholarship program was born in the governor’s office, but it was the new Chancellor, Stephen Portch, whose initiatives dominated the 1990s. During the first year after his arrival in July 1994, Portch persuaded the Board of Regents to undertake a thorough mission review of each institu
tion in the University System, convert the academic calendar from quarters to semesters, authorize a revi
sion of the thirty-year old core curriculum, and tighten admission standards to eliminate the provisional admission of under-prepared students. And these were only four of the eleven examples that Burnett listed in describing the new Chancellor’s effect on higher educa
tion in the 1990s.53 Even as those new directions took effect, Armstrong experienced a strong pull of attachment to its history. This juxtaposition of past and future created great energy and some odd results. Much of the energy came from Bob Strozier, who in January 1993 assumed responsibility for Armstrong’s public relations. He moved a lifetime collection of memorabilia from his office in Gamble Hall to a new office in the Adminis
tration Building and brought to his duties a passionate enthusiasm born of thirty-six years of history at the college as a student and faculty member. He took his place within a newly organized Office of Institutional Advancement, which included public information and fundraising as two areas needing strong attention. The 1991 Self Study Report had underscored this need, and Burnett hired John Gehrm as Armstrong’s first full-time development officer. One of the first ideas attempted to reestablish Armstrong’s presence in downtown Savannah. The idea was partly nostalgic and partly pragmatic in its intent to strengthen relationships with the community in a visible way. In December 1993, Frank Butler summarized the thinking in a formal proposal for a “Heart of Savannah Education Center” that would serve Savannah busi
nesses and offer a “bridge to college” for those who lived and worked in town.54 It would be a distinctly Armstrong facility, separate from the Coastal Georgia Center. The proposal identified no specific location but was interested in acquiring property near the coast on Broughton Street. The Regents, however, were not interested in acquiring new property in downtown Savannah and the opportunity passed.55 If Armstrong could not actually return to the down
town area, Strozier was intent on reminding the community that Armstrong’s origins lay in the heart of the city. The result was Armstrong Magazine, a polished publication that made its debut in the summer of 1994 with a sepia-colored cover showing images from “The Rich Armstrong Past.” Beyond the cover story, other articles highlighted life at Armstrong in the 1990s. Economics professor Yassi Saadarmad described her study of the economic role of women in her native Iran, and John Jensen explained the distinctly contemporary “inner vision” that created his sculpture of the “Heart and Soul of Bennie Williams.”56 Five more issues followed through 1998, to acquaint Savannah readers and Armstrong alumni with the activities of the college. Each issue showcased Armstrong’s strengths, as the college emerged from the shadow of the regional university and stood in its own light.

A second approach to improving the college’s image turned into a public relations fiasco, but for those not immediately involved it caused more amusement than damage and produced two priceless newspaper cartoons. As much as Strozier loved Armstrong’s history, he believed that the college was ready for a new look in its signs and symbols and Burnett agreed. In October 1993, Burnett established a Renascence Committee to review a host of things, including the college’s name, its institutional colors, the Pirate mascot, and the alma mater.57 The ten-member committee included faculty, administrators, Strozier, and one student, Inbwell editor Shelley Carroll. After two meetings, Strozier sent Burnett a recommenda
tion for a new aquatic logo in blue and green colors to replace the longstanding Pirate. Further discus
sions by a small core group and a number of physical education faculty produced a specific proposal for a shark mascot, which Burnett rejected, followed by a
The Pirate, he said, was associated with "rape and plunder" and "his hollow cheeks remind you of a street person." Strozier held up a T-shirt with the stingray design. The students were not impressed. Informal of the pending change only the day before, the SGA blanketed the campus with signs that asked "Do You Want To Be Known As Armstrong State Stingrays? (ASS)." Students claimed they had not been consulted, and Shelley Carroll declared that the meeting she attended had looked at more than thirty options and made no final decisions. Student Heather Mills repeated the campus-wide comment: "Who wants to be remembered as an ASS?" As the outcry mounted over the next two days, Burnett convened a meeting with the SGA to present the reasons for the proposed changes. The college needed an "image face-lift," he explained, and perhaps a more gender-neutral image. But he agreed to appoint a new committee to review the decision. In the end, the Pirate prevailed in a newly commissioned design for a silhouette profile that combined "traditional dashing good looks and corporate smoothness." Strozier turned his attention to the next public relations event on his calendar, celebrating the college's sixtieth birthday in 1995.

A grand series of events crowded into the official anniversary date of May 27, beginning with the unveiling of an historical marker in front of the Armstrong House on Bull Street to identify the original location of Armstrong College. Henry Ashmore returned to assist with the event, still tall but thinner now and wearing sunglasses against the bright springtime sunlight. The celebration then moved to the campus for a luncheon reception in the lobby of the Administration Building and the first viewing of two bronze bas-relief plaques depicting each Armstrong president. John Jensen rendered George and Lucy in traditional portrait form and gave each president a light-hearted expression.

The birthday concluded in the evening with the initiation of an Armstrong Athletic Hall of Fame in the new Sports Center that Ashmore had first proposed to the Board of Regents during his presidency more than thirteen years earlier. Burnett gave Ashmore an early tour of the building, and though it still lacked the finishing touches, it was ready enough to host a grand banquet to honor eight individuals who represented different periods of the college's athletic history. From the junior college days, Buddy Mallard stood as the high scorer and most valuable player from the 1959-60 basketball team, when the long, 100-foot court at the Hellenic Center kept the team in good running shape and Mallard played even when he was not in good shape, with a cast on a broken hand for two games of one season. Danny Sims was the 5'6" center of the 1964-68 basketball team but had been "like a coach on the floor" when his team was in play. He could switch with equal success to baseball when the season changed. Charlie Broad set twenty school records for the 1984-87 baseball team during the brief period when Armstrong played in Division I. The college retired his number 13 jersey in honor of his achievements. In the center of the photographic lineup stood Sam Berry and Ike Williams, who had created the memorable glow of Armstrong basketball in the 1970s. Berry, in full tuxedo, was still the taller and heavier of the two, while Williams maintained the lean agility of his youth. Berry was still the college's all-time leading scorer, followed by Williams in second place. They had not seen each other since 1977. Next to Sam stood coach Bill Alexander, who had recruited and shaped the remarkable teams of the era represented by those two players. With a certain photographic irony, on the other side of Alexander stood two exemplary figures from Armstrong's history with women's athletics, Terralyn Edwards (Henry), the first Lady Pirate to score over 1,000 points, and her coach, Armstrong's path-breaking figure for women's athletics, Betty Jean Ford.

Two nostalgic footnotes followed the May celebrations. In June, Strozier retired from the college, in a lively evening of memories offered to the "rhinestone cowboy." When the faculty lecture series began again in September 1995, it carried a new formal title: the Robert Ingram Strozier Lecture Series. In October, Henry Ashmore died at the age of seventy-five, and again the memories swirled around "the sage of Sophoppy," the frugal steward of state resources, and the man of many words. Burnett announced that he would recommend to the Board of Regents that the Health Professions Building be named Henry Ludlow Ashmore Hall.

In the fall of 1995, Armstrong turned its attention to the new System-wide initiatives coming from Chancellor Portch. One of the proposals concerned admission standards and sought to eliminate or greatly reduce the number of students whose SAT scores required remedial courses in college. In the fall of 1994, 43% of the freshmen in the University System needed remedial work. It was Georgia’s "dirty little secret," which might only get worse if the HOPE Scholarship led to inflated high school grades. Portch believed that students who did not qualify for regular college work should be directed toward two-year colleges. Remedial work at the four-year colleges, he said, represented a costly waste of resources, whereas under-utilized two-year colleges could provide that service more economically and
The first inductees into the Armstrong Athletic Hall of Fame. Armstrong Archives.

effectively. The state’s four-year colleges should not be in the business of remedial education. Exceptions might be made for older students or for students with special circumstances, but the Chancellor intended the high percentage of remedial students on the four-year college campuses to come to an end.

For the under-prepared students in Savannah, Portch wanted to move away from the “Savannah Problem” of the past relationship between Armstrong and Savannah State and concentrate on a “Savannah Solution” to equip students for college work. The nearest two-year college in the University System was in Brunswick, which was not a convenient option. Armstrong proposed that Savannah be given its own name as the result of outstanding tennis: “Believe it or not, Armstrong was already on the map under its own name as the result of outstanding tennis.” Tennis coach Andreas Koth, whose players were the nation’s top-ranked team during his tenure, said that Armstrong was already on the map under its own name as the result of outstanding tennis.

The gradual transition to reduce remedial work at Armstrong moved into effect. In the fall of 1998, 43.5% of the first time freshmen at Armstrong were required to take a Learning Support (remedial) course. By fall 2005 the number had fallen to zero. Enrollment did not suffer from the loss. Total enrollment rose steadily during the same period, from 5,570 in fall 1998 to 6,710 in fall 2005.

Portch’s other initiatives had a broader reach. He established a blue ribbon panel of consultants to direct a thorough mission review. The System would establish a general mission statement and each institution would develop an individual statement to define its distinctive role within the larger whole. In connection with this review, Portch proposed that the System convert its academic calendar from quarters to semesters and reorganize the core curriculum that had been in place since the mid-1960s.

The mission review process asked the System’s institutions to examine their missions “in language compatible with national terminology.” National terminology now identified comprehensive four-year colleges as universities, and the blue ribbon panel recommended that Georgia do likewise. Here lay the simple solution to the earlier problem of status envy: simply identify all of the state’s four-year colleges as universities. There would be no expanded budgets in these institutions and no diminished priority for the state’s research universities, but the new label could help recruit faculty, attract grants, and raise prestige, as had always been part of the argument for elevated status.

The Chancellor also wanted the System’s institutions to carry a clear identification with Georgia in their name. For most of the four-year colleges, the name change was a simple adjustment that substituted “university” for “college.” Savannah State and seven other state colleges carried their new labels by June 1996. For Armstrong, the name change was not so easy or obvious. For Burnett, it meant “ten days from hell,” for which the Stingray episode had been a mere warm-up.

On May 7, 1996, Burnett informed the faculty that “Nomenclature for the University System is under review.” Three days later, on May 10, he joined a group of faculty and administrators for a field trip to the onion fields around Vidalia and the chicken farms near Claxton. Faculty field trips were a popular innovation that allowed faculty and administrators to get together informally and enjoy an educational excursion to a nearby site of interest. Geographer Tom Howard organized the onion field trip. On the way home, the conversation on the bus turned to the subject of Armstrong’s name, which many faculty, even without the Chancellor’s prompting, found to be a disadvantage when they attended conferences and constantly had to identify where their college was located. Burnett commented that if the faculty wanted to change the college’s name, now was the time to do it.

The idea rippled across the campus during the next four weeks. History professor Chris Hendricks, who had been on the bus to the onion fields, favored a name change and took his ideas to the Student Government Association to get their opinion. He proposed that the college become Georgia Atlantic University, with the Armstrong name designated for the Administration Building and the School of Arts and Sciences. Georgia Atlantic, he said, would give Armstrong a place on the map and was appropriate to the coastal counties that Armstrong served from Florida to South Carolina. The students were wary. Georgia Atlantic “sounded like a railway station” or a technical school. But they agreed to support the change. On June 11, Burnett convened the faculty to discuss a “Mission, Nomenclature, and Identity Report to the Board of Regents.” The Regents, he said, wanted the university label to include a geographical location and a clear identity as one of Georgia’s state-supported institutions. He offered two possibilities. One was a variation on the Hendricks proposal. The new name might be Georgia Atlantic State University, with the Armstrong name given to the Administration Building and the School of Arts and Sciences. The other possibility was that the college would simply become Armstrong State University and not include a geographical location. Everyone saw the problem with Georgia Atlantic State University. The acronym GAS-U raised the prospect of a whole new series of wisecracks reminiscent of the Stingray event, and no one wanted to go down that road again.

Hendricks and his history colleague Olavi Arens made their argument for Georgia Atlantic University as a good alternative. They distributed a formal proposal entitled “Georgia Atlantic on My Mind,” and Arens carefully reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of a name change. The college had already broken with its past when it moved to the south side of town. The early alumni who were the ones most attached to the Armstrong name were dwindling in number. The college needed a clear geographic identity. He offered a formal motion for Georgia Atlantic University, with the George F. and Lucy C. Armstrong College of Arts and Sciences. A vote for the opposing argument was ready with a list of reasons for keeping the original name firmly attached to the institution. The college could do everything under its old name that it could do under a new name. A name did not make a university significant; it was the university that made its name significant. Armstrong should be very careful about giving away something of value unless something of equal value took its place. And, said the argument, the women in the audience should think about the loss of personal history and identity they incurred when they took their husband’s name in marriage. Among the faculty who offered their opinions, tennis coach Andreas Koth, whose players were winning national championships year after year, rose to say that Armstrong was already on the map under its own name as the result of outstanding tennis: “Believe me,” he said firmly, “people know where Armstrong
Armstrong's name change came as an unexpected consequence of Chancellor Portch's initiative for a System-wide mission review. His other proposals for semester conversion and a revised core curriculum reshaped the System's academic life. The change from quarters to semesters affected the credit hours of every course and also changed the weekly frequency of class meetings. For most programs, the requirements for graduation would change from 180 quarter hours to 120 semester hours. The reduced hours would mean "turf wars" to decide which courses should remain among the core requirements. Portch promoted the change not only to bring Georgia in line with the nationwide trend toward a semester calendar but also as a way to "update and streamline" the curriculum. Although the changeover would involve a major expense, the move from three registration periods and three exam sessions to two would reduce administrative costs and would divide student tuition and fees into two large allotments rather than three small ones. For students, this part of the picture was not an advantage. The new class schedule meant that daytime classes that met five days a week for a ten-week term would now meet either three times a week or twice a week in an extended class period for a fifteen-week term. As a result, faculty might have more time during the week for research or service activities, and students would have more time to prepare papers. Some of this reasoning was valid, but not all of it. The assumption that students who earned fifteen credits each quarter by taking three courses worth five credits each would now increase their load to five courses worth three credits each was simply not reasonable for many Armstrong students. Despite campus posters claiming that 5 x 3 = 3 x 5, the math did not work in actual practice. The typical student load dropped to four courses, with a comparable drop in tuition revenues and an extended graduation rate from four years to five or six. But at least it became easier to find a parking place on campus as the staggered daytime schedule eased the traffic crunch of the morning hours.

For faculty, the greatest change concerned the core curriculum. It affected departmental programs, course offerings, and hiring. Arts and sciences faculty were heavily invested in the core, which supported their ability to staff upper level courses and add new faculty positions. Faculty who taught outside of the core (health professions, for example) wanted to see more flexibility in the new core requirements to allow students to take courses directly related to their major and provide more room for advanced courses in the major field itself. Every department had a strong interest in the shape of the core curriculum and the faculty meetings that defined the new arrangement experienced an intensity of debate much more serious than the gentle sparring around the name change. The primary purpose of the core was to facilitate transfer of credit among the institutions of the University System. The traditional core identified four general areas and stipulated the number of credit hours required in each. Each institution determined the particular courses that satisfied each area of the core. Chancellor Portch asked the Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education to propose a creative new overall design, and with Armstrong's Frank Butler as chairman, the council recommended a change to five core areas rather than four, with the new area to reflect an "institutional option." Each of the five areas carried new credit hour designations to fit the new semester system. As a result, everything was thrown slightly off kilter, requiring each institution to reexamine the distribution of its core courses.

Butler's committee produced its proposal in eight months, compared with the six-year effort that produced the 1967 core curriculum. As Butler explained, "If you're going to swallow a frog, don't look at it too long." Armstrong faculty began looking at the frog in the fall of 1996. It took four faculty meetings, a flurry of e-mails, and an alphabet soup of options: L, R, S, T, X, and Q before the result was palatable. There was no controversy about the basic skills courses for Area A or for the humanities courses in Area C. The sharp divisions arose concerning math in Area D and social sciences in Area E. The old Armstrong core had required students to take two math courses and three history courses (two in world civilization and one in U.S. history). The new core proposal required only one math course in Area A and left the issue of a second math requirement in Area D as a matter of debate. Ed Wheeler rose to argue for the two-math requirement. Bill Megathlin and John Brewer offered their reasons for more flexibility. When the vote was taken, the double math requirement failed. The history department then managed to defend a two-course history requirement. The glory days of the three-course requirement were clearly gone, but surely everyone could appreciate the importance of a solid exposure to history. As different history options appeared on the agenda for the October 1 faculty meeting, the vote ruled in favor of a one-course requirement for world civilization and a requirement for a new hybrid course in U.S. and constitutional history to be offered by history faculty and by political science faculty.

The last area of debate concerned Area B, the new Institutional Option section of the core. The Armstrong faculty chose to create two categories within this area: Ethics and Values, and Global Perspectives. The labels were broad enough for almost every department to develop a course that might fit into one category or the other. The "core wars" produced a creative new core and revealed some significant shifts in academic patterns. Whereas arts and sciences faculty traditionally joined in a solid front and a shared consensus on curriculum issues, the core debate caused them to argue against each other. Chemist John Brewer argued against mathematician Ed Wheeler, and historians found themselves opposed by the other social sciences. Departmental interests sharpened, and some of the old commonalities broke. A second change appeared in the fact that e-mail now relayed the news of the different proposals. With a computer on every faculty desk, the electronic communication system came into its own, and faculty mastered the new medium in order to receive the latest report and pass it on. As the computer entered the mainstream of communication, however, something else departed. After the debate on the math requirement, a three-minute limit was introduced for remarks in the remaining discussions. Nancy White, new head of the history department, protested the change in procedure as unfair. Since Ed Wheeler and others had been allowed ten minutes to make their presentations, she requested the same privilege. Frank Butler replied that the faculty's decision to limit debate received a two-thirds majority, which he interpreted to mean that opinions had probably hardened and were no longer subject to persuasion. He believed that Wheeler's wonderful, six-minute
speech did not change many votes. “The days of great and influential oration,” he said, “may be over.”

Both semester conversion and the new core required increased attention to advisement. Although an able student who followed a normal academic path could use the catalog to select the courses appropriate to a desired degree program, most students benefited from the guidance of an academic advisor. The advisement system, however, relied almost totally on faculty volunteers and was not prepared to deal with a growing enrollment of freshmen undecided about a major and unfamiliar with the core. In September 1990, the Advisement Center opened on the second floor of the library, born from a suggestion by Ed Richardson in the English faculty and supervised by John Jensen during its first year. By the time the new core curriculum and semester conversion arrived, Greg Anderson was in place as its full-time director and a tireless source of information for all of the questions now confronting students and faculty.

Night students and non-traditional students did not fit easily into the regular pattern of advisement and daytime campus services. In the spring of 1993, a new Center for Non-Traditional Learning opened with Dick Nordquist as its director. He pushed up his coat sleeves again and hunkered down over his computer keyboard to explain his services to the campus. Non-traditional learning referred not only to non-traditional students but also to distance learning that provided satellite instruction from one campus to another. Special oversized televisions in designated classrooms with the necessary electronic connections allowed an instructor and students in different locations to see each other on the big screen. At Armstrong, two GSAMS (Georgia Statewide Academic and Medical System) classrooms transmitted courses in health professions, education, and criminal justice. The opportunities for other distance-learning courses were legion. Nordquist acknowledged that skeptics might consider the new approach as “the defeat of higher education at the clicker-clutching hands of the telerons,” but he proposed that it might also be more effective, more student-centered, and more concerned with learning than with teaching. Most Armstrong students continued to sit in traditional classrooms face-to-face with their instructors, but the GSAMS classroom in Victor Hall attracted an overflow crowd in September 1994 as students and faculty crammed into the room for a non-academic moment to hear and see the live broadcast of the verdict in the O.J. Simpson trial.

Beginning in the fall of 1993, Nordquist introduced a formal schedule of weekend classes. Individual departments had occasionally offered a weekend course, but the new arrangement provided many more options. In the winter of 1995, the weekend program offered eight classes and enrolled 150 students. Two years later, in the fall of 1997, fourteen weekend courses served 350 students.

For all students and faculty, electronic education was a growing reality; and Frank Butler knew it. In April 1994 he wrote a long article for The Inkwell on the educational effects of the new technology. “Where have all the students gone?” his title asked, as he directed his thoughts toward the twenty-first century. Cost containment was a political reality, he argued, as were virtual universities that offered all course work online. In order for institutions like Armstrong to make the best use of every dollar and be competitive, every academic discipline would need to incorporate electronic technology into instruction. Faculty should look for grants and workshops to help them adjust their courses accordingly. The library would need to develop electronic listings for its collection and subscribe to databases that reached beyond that collection. The trays of 3x5 cards had already disappeared in favor of an electronic catalog, and nine terminals were in place to search the library’s holdings. In January 1996, GALILEO arrived (Georgia Library Learning Online) along with more computer terminals, and Armstrong students and faculty began to travel the world wide web to destinations beyond the imagination of former generations. Head librarian Ben Lee warned that some destinations were forbidden, and reference librarian Judy Dubus cautioned that websites were no substitute for books, but everyone began to explore the possibilities of the new medium.

The new technology provided a powerful tool that faculty and students learned to use with proficiency. But the purpose of the tool was to serve the academic program, which still relied on individual initiative, creativity and the new intellectual currents that arrived with new faculty. Karen Hollinger and Teresa Winterhalter of the English faculty and Nancy White in the history department joined the faculty in the 1990s and introduced new courses on women in literature, film, and history that would eventually lead to a Gender and Women’s Studies program. In August 1995, Ed Wheeler drew up “A Modest Proposal” for a college-wide honors program. Several departments already offered honors courses, but Wheeler’s proposal envisioned a progression of honors courses from the core to the major, concluding with an honors thesis. Students who completed the program would graduate with honors from the college. In the fall of 1996, twenty-five students entered the program under the direction of Mark Finlay of the history department.

Even physical education felt the changes moving through the curriculum. The existing requirement mandated three activity courses and a swimming course, the dreaded drown-proofing course endured by generations of Armstrong students. For non-traditional students on campus at night or on weekends, the P.E. requirements were extremely difficult if not impossible. If those students were exempt, how could the require-
videos. There had been no new buildings since the 1970s, and the campus now served more than 5,000 students. Space for classrooms and offices was at a premium. Trailers offered a temporary solution and began to grow like mushrooms in various corners of the campus. Burnett called them “modular monstrosities.” A trailer for faculty offices appeared between Victor and Gamble Halls, and an “administrative annex” took its place in embarrassing prominence next to the Administration Building in plain view for the first visit of Chancellor Portch in July 1994. A small statement of public embarrassment might make a persuasive point.

The bookstore received the first face-lift of the 1990s, moving from the old student center on the quadrangle to a spacious, modern facility next door. A new computer center immediately filled the vacated quarters. Between the bookstore and the cafeteria, Shearouse Plaza memorialized alumnus Jesse Shearouse and provided tables for outdoor eating and a place for cookouts and lunchtime musical events. But major construction projects moved at a slow pace. The new Sports Center that celebrated Armstrong’s sixtieth anniversary was first proposed by President Ashmore in 1982. It waited until 1991 for legislative funding and finally opened its doors in June 1995 as a state-of-the-art facility that could seat 5,000 at full capacity in Alumni Arena. The Pirates could now host their home games with pride, and Armstrong could hold December graduation exercises on campus. A new mace designed by John Jensen was already in hand to lead the graduation processions.

In the fall of 1997, University Hall gave the campus a major new academic building with twenty-two classrooms, three lecture halls, and a hundred and seven offices and conference rooms. It illustrated another way that new construction projects might work their way through the approval process of the University System. Among the trailer occupants at Armstrong were the students and instructors of the Law Enforcement Training Center. The Center was not an academic component of the college but offered advanced training and certification for police officers. In 1994-95, two hundred and ten students completed advanced training and certification for police officers. As a result, funding for the building could now be divided between the University System and the Department of Corrections. At the groundbreaking ceremony, the building bore the name of both its functions, the Academic and Law Enforcement Building, but by the time the doors opened, it was University Hall. The building’s non-traditional design resembled a shopping mall with first floor classrooms and second floor offices along an extended, skylit atrium. The classrooms included built-in TV monitors, and the lecture halls had ceiling-mounted projectors for videos and computer presentations. A conference room on the second floor bridged the mall space below and became the “eye-in-the-sky” meeting room for the Executive Committee and other faculty committees. Faculty offices were small, but the new occupants moved in with enthusiasm: teacher education faculty from Victor Hall, mathematicians, and computer scientists from Hawes Hall, government faculty from Solms Hall, respiratory science faculty from Ashmore Hall, and at the far end of the building the Law Enforcement Center staff, whose presence paid a generous share of the building’s cost.

The laboratory scientists waited their turn for the promised construction of a new science building, the third major construction project of the 1990s. After Chancellor Portch made his first tour of campuses in 1994, he set an early priority to upgrade science laboratories. In remarks to public relations officers he described the science professors he had met who were doing their work in labs built in the 1950s and 1960s. They were doing “terrific jobs,” he said, but what “saddened him more than seeing the outdated labs was that the professors were so proud of them, as if they had given up hope of ever getting anything better.” He could have been describing Armstrong’s labs. John Brewer was still fighting his battles in Solms Hall, which he described as “a refrigerator lying on its side,” dripping its moisture into the carpet. Other science faculty had grievances as well. Hawes Hall had only two small labs for undergraduate research, which meant that new projects had to wait until senior students graduated. Suzanne Carpenter wanted teaching labs where faculty could conduct demonstrations for Armstrong students and for potential high school recruits, 600 of whom had visited the campus the previous year to see things “smoke, burn, and fly through the air.” Sabitra Brush taught her science courses for nurses and science teachers in the Fine Arts Building because there was no lab space available in Hawes Hall. How was she supposed to show science teachers how to teach science “in a hands-on, minds-on, manner when the instructor’s only tools are a stick of chalk and a chalkboard?” For a summer workshop on science and technology, she had to use Conference Room A in the Administration Building.

Groundbreaking for the new Science Center began in September 1999. When it opened in the fall of 2003, the massive, double structure connected by an elevated breezeway boasted state-of-the-art laboratories for chemistry, biology, and physics, along with lecture halls equipped as teaching labs. On the other side of the breezeway, computer scientists, now in their own department separate from mathematics, shared the building with the faculty of the psychology department. Keith Douglass moved his rat lab out of Victor Hall and left behind the office that he had occupied for more than thirty years.

The Science Center project included funding for a major overhaul of Solms and Hawes Halls, which emerged with thoroughly modern “smart classrooms” ready for power point presentations and wired to the resources of the worldwide web. The history department moved in on the ground floor of Hawes Hall. Solms Hall acquired two small lecture halls, the office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences, two computer labs, and an honors classroom and lounge. The Advisement Center occupied the second floor along with the departments of health science and general studies. In each building, glass walls on inner corridors created a sense of light and openness. All of these changes, the three major construction projects and the extensive renovations, equipped the campus with a full range of new technology and encouraged a pride of place and a fresh enthusiasm for the academic enterprise. English classes, along with philosophy, and foreign languages, remained in the nostalgic but slightly shabby confines of Gamble Hall, which had the misfortune of an early and low-budget remodeling that put in new wiring but left the building essentially unchanged. Everyone else on campus now needed a map to find where colleagues and classes were located.

The on-campus developments were dramatic enough to counterbalance one off-campus loss. On July 1, 1998, the Coastal Georgia Center that had been constructed in downtown Savannah as part of the
President Burnett’s proposal for on-campus residence in the spring of 1998 was approved. The Board of Regents recognized the need to build new residence halls and transferred oversight to Georgia Southern. The names of all three institutions continued to appear on the sign outside the Center, and Armstrong and Savannah State retained a loose connection with the site, but their continuing education courses now returned to their home campuses.

President Henry trumpeted Georgia Southern’s new acquisition: “We now have a campus in Savannah.” But Nick Henry would not be the Georgia Southern president to oversee the offerings at the Coastal Georgia Center. His comments came in a blazing farewell speech to the Georgia Southern faculty after his sudden resignation by mutual agreement with Chancellor Porch in May 1998. Henry had continued to push hard for an engineering program at Georgia Southern, attempting to influence the legislature to that end and thereby violating the procedures of the Board of Regents. This time, unlike the previous experience of Dale Lick, the result was not a reprimand but a resignation. Engineering was going to come to Savannah, but it would be a Georgia Tech program in which the local universities might participate in offering foundational courses while Georgia Tech faculty offered advanced courses at a Savannah site or by distance learning from Atlanta. The students would earn a Georgia Tech degree.

As Armstrong reduced its presence in downtown Savannah, it began a new collaborative venture in Hinesville. In the fall of 1998, at the new Liberty Center site, Armstrong, Savannah State, Georgia Southern, Coastal Georgia College, and East Georgia College began to offer classes to military personnel and families based at Fort Stewart. Gradually, Armstrong acquired the leading role, and by the fall of 2004, five hundred Liberty Center students were enrolled in Armstrong classes.

One more growth prospect lay on the horizon. In the spring of 1998 the Board of Regents approved President Burnett’s proposal for on-campus residence halls. By now, the Regents had made their peace with privatized financing; indeed they welcomed it. Opposition came not from the Regents but from Savannah State, which fiercely objected to the growth of residential services at Armstrong, claiming it was a violation of the 1978 desegregation plan. Burnett agreed to identify the housing as primarily for health professions, teacher education, and athletics, but once again Armstrong and Savannah State found themselves at odds with each other, and the battle was “bloody.”

The new residence halls, named Compass Point, rose as an impressive presence directly across from University Hall, reinforcing Armstrong’s new identity as a university for students beyond Savannah and the immediate region.

**MOMENTS TO REMEMBER**
The building projects, the name change, the core wars, semester conversion, and the return of graduate programs were major milestones through the 1990s. But other moments also left their mark. In the case of Gary Fodor, that mark stood on the Savannah riverfront. Fodor was a young language instructor at Armstrong who took a “wobbly” Spanish program and began to build it into the leading language offering on campus. He organized his students into an Hispanic Society and set his sights on an appropriate way to commemorate the quincentennial of Columbus’s voyage to the Americas. The result was a life-size bronze bust of Hernando DeSoto to honor the Spaniard’s explorations in Georgia and the broader Hispanic role in American history beyond 1492. To pay for the bust, sculpted by Armstrong alumni Billy Nelson, Fodor organized fundraisers on campus and worked with a quincentennial committee in the community. The unveiling took place on Saturday, October 10, 1992 on the plaza of the Marriott Hotel adjacent to the Savannah River, climaxing the efforts of many people but most especially an Armstrong Spanish teacher and his students. After Fodor’s untimely death in 1995, he received his own bronze memorial, sculpted by John Jensen and placed in the Armstrong language laboratory.

African American students were the focus of three new initiatives in teacher education during the 1990s. In January 1993, Armstrong and Savannah State received a $1.2 million grant from the Dewitt-Wallace Reader’s Digest Foundation for tuition assistance to encourage minorities into teaching. Lloyd Newberry prepared the grant proposal, which sought to identify persons already working in the public schools in various roles and draw them into teacher education classes to become full-time, certified classroom teachers. Teacher aides, for example, could continue to work in the schools four days a week, but on Friday they would come to campus for classes while a college student in teacher education took their place as a Friday substitute. Evelyn Dandy served as the program’s Armstrong director and Prince Jackson as the director at Savannah State. Designated as Pathways to Teaching, the program gained national attention when Dandy appeared on ABC News with Peter Jennings and testified before a congressional committee. Newberry’s second initiative, Troops to Teachers, continued the effort to attract minority males into teaching by targeting the military retirees from the various bases in the area. In many cases, these veterans possessed math and science skills or already had college degrees and could easily add the courses needed for teacher certification.

The third initiative created a new collaboration with Savannah State, whereby students could pursue their Savannah State degrees along with Armstrong education courses. As Newberry described the program, “We worked with Savannah State faculty to develop subject area degree programs, then we carry education courses over there and students graduate with a Savannah State degree.” The new arrangement began quietly in January 1992. By 1998, Newberry reported that these three “alternative preparation” approaches made Armstrong the leading source of minority teachers in the University System. The Pathways program alone for 1997-1998 enrolled sixty-four black females and thirty-three black males, including one bus driver and one cafeteria manager. All of them held a connection and commitment to the local public schools. The three initiatives coincided with a surge in enrollment following the slump of the 1980s, and the growing numbers justified the reestablishment of the School of Education in August 1993. After Armstrong acquired university status in 1996, each organizational unit (education, health professions, and arts and sciences) became a college of the university. Total enrollment passed 6,000 by 2002.

**Gary Fodor, left, and students of the Armstrong Hispanic Society.** (1994)

**Troops to Teaching teacher and students. Armstrong Archives.**

**Pathways to Teaching teacher and student. Armstrong Archives.**
Health professions in the 1990s experienced major gains and a nostalgic loss. Among the gains was a new program in physical therapy. Included in the ten-year plan of 1978, the program accepted its first students in March 1995, supported by $90,000 from each of the local hospitals over a three-year period. It was the fourth physical therapy program in Georgia and the only one south of Augusta. When Armstrong regained control of its graduate offerings, Emma Simon pulled out the master’s proposal she had shelved during the “marriage” with Georgia Southern and sent it forward to the Board of Regents for approval.

The increasing emphasis on graduate and baccalaureate degrees in health professions marked a move away from the two-year programs that had been Armstrong’s first offerings in the health field in 1966. The two-year nursing program still attracted large numbers in the early 1990s, graduating over 120 students each year between 1992 and 1994, but the phasout began in 1995. The last class of fifty-four students received their degrees in June 1998. The four-year nursing program continued to send an average of fifty-five to sixty graduates into the hospitals each year, and the programs in radiological science and respiratory therapy both moved from two-year to four-year degrees. New master’s degrees in public health and health services administration joined the health professions roster in the fall of 1998.

In arts and sciences, the economics degree finally made its appearance in January 1996. It was not a business degree but it offered a way to fill the vacancy left by the business program and to reconnect Armstrong with business and economic interests in the community.

A year and a half later, in May 1997, the economics program attracted the second largest gift ever received by the college when 1938 alumnus Philip Solomons donated $500,000 toward the establishment of an endowed chair in appreciation for his education at Armstrong and as a memorial to his wife Shirley. The Board of Regents matched the gift, and Armstrong acquired an endowed position for the Shirley and Philip Solomons Eminent Scholar in Economics.

By 2000, the economics department consisted of five faculty involved in eighteen projects with the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA). The department’s Center for Regional Analysis, directed by Mike Toma, published a quarterly summary of economic trends, performance, and predictions. This kind of community-oriented research and scholarship was exactly what Chancellor Portch and the Board of Regents envisioned for the newly-named universities of the System.

Outside of the academic program, Armstrong students of the 1990s had their own memorable moments. Body-piercing jewelry appeared in eyebrows, nostrils, lips, tongues and other parts unseen, and tattoos became fashion statements for men and women alike.

Beauty pageants continued their parade of contestants and critics, occasionally generating campus-wide attention, as in January 1990 when a local television personality enrolled for classes and entered the Miss ASC pageant and won. The Inkwell raised the alarm and declared the contestant to be a ringer, a professional, not a real student. She already had a college degree from Georgia Southern and three previous beauty pageant titles. She had only been an Armstrong student for two weeks when she entered the pageant. Did she really represent Armstrong students? Or did she only want one more chance to qualify for the Miss Georgia pageant? Campus chatter converged around “Miss ASCgate.”

The rumors proved to be true, and pageant organizers took away the title when the holder failed to fulfill the responsibilities that accompanied it.

But beauty pageants remained a part of life at Armstrong, even as Inkwell editor Shelley Carroll noted that the rules excluded women over the age of...
twenty-four and those who had ever been married. As a result, a significant number of Armstrong women were ineligible to compete for the scholarship that accompanied the title. 131 Carroll could look across her desk and see examples of these ineligible women in her Inkwell staff. Annette Logue wrote a regular column entitled “In A Pig’s Eye – A Real Woman’s Perspective,” in which she told her readers how to manage life as a wife, mother, and student. Her advice was to ignore the kitchen floor, introduce your husband to the washer and dryer, and be prepared for Math 101 to be a far more protracted ordeal than twelve hours of labor and delivery. 132 Logue managed not only her academic work and her Inkwell duties but also took on the editorship of the 1994 ‘Geechee and found time to participate in productions of the Masquers. Grace Robbins, the third member of the editorial triumvirate known as “The Ladies of the Inkwell,” managed her responsibilities as wife and mother along with her Inkwell assignments and the requirements of the history honors program. Her interests lay with “The Other History” of African Americans, mountain folk, women, and those who contributed to U.S. history “on the battlefield, in the rice field, or in the kitchen.” 133 This remarkable Inkwell staff put out a premier edition of thirty-two pages of solid content and never produced a paper of less than sixteen pages.134 The Inkwell of the 1990s, as in former years, attracted people with a flare for creative and challenging writing. Some years showed more talent than others, but the newspaper maintained its traditional newspaper presence even as the campus moved to electronic communication and desktop publishing. The 'Geechee was not so fortunate. The 'Geechee of 1995 celebrated Armstrong's sixtieth anniversary with the final edition of the traditional college annual. It had provided the “facebook” for generations of students and faculty since 1937 when the first students decided that their college needed to have a yearbook. The university would now record its memories electronically and in a variety of small publications rather than a central one.

In the social life of the 1990s, homecoming remained a centerpiece moment with a basketball game, the crowning of a queen, and special gatherings for alumni. The new off-campus social event was the Beach Bash. On May 11, 1990, two hundred students converged at Spanky’s beachside location for flipper races, water balloons, and the traditional tug-of-war across a line drawn in the sand. 135 The beach also became a major marketing feature to attract students from inland regions, especially after the campus acquired housing. Publicity brochures began to carry pictures of students in the surf even before Armstrong adopted Atlantic into its name.

On October 10, 1996, Armstrong honored its new name and new university status with an on-campus celebration of AASU Day. Huge initials stood on the quadrangle in front of the library. Chancellor Portch joined the noontime festivities to judge the chili cook-off competition and unveil the new compass logo of the university. Eddie Aenchbacher introduced the refurbished Pirate with its sleek profile and wushuckling hat. The Gospel Choir sang, the dance team performed, and there were games and free T-shirts, coles, hot dogs, and hamburgers for everyone. 136 The event was a great success. E-mail flooded into Burnett’s office requesting him to make it an annual event. 137 Each fall thereafter on a weekday in the middle of October the quadrangle shifted into carnival mode with a big grill for the hot dogs and hamburgers, kiosks with Cokes, a dunking booth to douse willing faculty, an orbitron or bungee cords or other gravity-defying games, and always a bright new T-shirt. On October 9, 1997, the AASU Day
activities included the formal dedication of University Hall, Regent S. William Clark, Jr. represented the Regents and attempted a creative effort to pronounce AASU as a single word: “Ahhsuh.” It sounded slightly like a sneeze.136

During the faculty debate on the name change, tennis coach Andreas Koth had commented on the national name recognition that Armstrong’s tennis players were bringing to the college. Like Koth, many of those players had transatlantic origins and represented the growing presence of international students on campus, especially in tennis. Basketball remained the sport most likely to draw a crowd, but tennis attracted scholar athletes and national titles. In 1991, Pradeep Raman won his way to a national championship and put Armstrong on the map even before coach Koth arrived. Mike Lariscy confessed that his coaching of Raman consisted of four bananas, two cups of water, and leaving him alone.139 Koth, a native of Germany, recruited extensively overseas, and the tennis teams began to sound like a roll call at the United Nations with students from Brazil, Finland, Germany, Australia, Holland, and Venezuela.140

The international traffic moved in both directions, particularly after the semester calendar left most of the month of May available for travel-abroad programs between the end of the spring term and the beginning of the summer session. For most Armstrong students, a semester abroad or a year abroad was simply out of reach financially and personally, but a two-week opportunity was quite possible. Chancellor Porech set a goal of 2% of University System students to engage in international study each year, and the System provided faculty workshops and student scholarships to help internationalize the academic experience. The attention given to teaching reflected a traditional priority at Armstrong, but expectations for faculty research were also growing stronger. As Vice President Butler told the Executive Committee, Armstrong was undergoing a “paradigm shift” to encourage more scholarly activity beyond classroom instruction. The new paradigm did not mean publish-or-perish, he explained, but the semester calendar actually reduced the typical teaching load from nine classes a year on the quarter system (3-3-3) to eight (4-4), a change that allowed and assumed more time for research and service.141 Teaching would always remain primary, but progress toward tenure and promotion increasingly looked for evidence of scholarship and service. A letter to The Inbound by a “concerned faculty member” claimed that Armstrong was changing its institutional philosophy from teaching to research and scholarship.142 Butler replied that each department and each college of the university would establish its own criteria for scholarship as appropriate to the discipline.143 The change in expectations moved slowly, but it was moving.

Along with that change came a modest shift toward large lecture sections rather than the traditional class of forty students. University Hall had lecture rooms for 100-200 students, and the new science building and the renovation of Solms Hall included lecture halls for seventy-five students. Armstrong students would not find themselves in an auditorium with “299 of your closest friends,” as Karl Grotheer had described his experience at the University of Georgia,144 but they might find themselves in a classroom setting significantly different from their memories of high school.

Honors students, on the other hand, would find themselves in a small seminar setting with challenging material and lively discussion. Sometimes the material extended beyond the planned syllabus. In the fall of 1998, the honors program occupied a remediated classroom on the second floor of Gamble Hall. Tables and chairs were arranged in a circular configuration to encourage discussion rather than lecture. On the walls of the room, honors director Mark Finlay arranged for a display of work by students in an Armstrong art class. One of the paintings showed a black-faced minstrel dancing beside a riverboat and a cotton bale. The artist was Robert McCorkle, well known as a long-serving, outspoken member of the Chatham County Commission but now retired and, like many Savannahians, taking an occasional course at Armstrong for personal pleasure. Art courses were always popular. But McCorkle’s painting prompted strong objections from Chris Yeargin, an African American student in the honors program. The issue, said Yeargin, was his right to learn in a non-hostile environment versus the artist’s right of expression. Here was a teachable moment and a source of revenue, blacks themselves often played the role of minstrels or even owned minstrel shows. In such instances, said Robinson, blacks had to weigh the entertainment and economic value of the minstrel show against the derogatory caricature that it perpetuated.145 Honors student Michael Kaplan submitted an additional comment to the newspaper defending the decision to remove all of the artwork. The honors program, he acknowledged, was new, and new endeavors sometimes made mistakes. The mistake in this case was the absence of procedures for selecting artwork for display. The most important consideration, said Kaplan, was that the honors program not become divided into opposing camps but that it work together.

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Beyond Savannah, discussion of merger surfaced again in the actions of Atlanta attorney Lee Parks, who wanted to see more African American students at the University of Georgia and more white students at the state’s historic black colleges. In his 1997 lawsuit, Parks successfully challenged the affirmative action practices at the University of Georgia, but the litigation had little effect elsewhere in the University System. Burnett made his deposition using the data and reasoning of the 1988 hearings, and nothing further ensued.152 There were two presidential changes at Savannah State during the 1990s, but the vacancies did not prompt merger considerations.153

In April 1999, President Burnett announced his retirement, effective June 30. He had served as president for seventeen years, the third of three successive long-term presidents. The pattern of longevity gave Armstrong an important source of stability in leadership, though it was no longer the norm among college presidents nationwide. In his last speech to the Rotary Club on June 11, Burnett delivered no bombshell comments, as had been the case with Henry Ashmore and Nick Henry, but shared his memories with characteristic genuineness and good humor. He remembered his first impression of Bob Strozier in boots and cowboy hat; his first encounter with sociology instructor Jane Patchak, who mistook him for a textbook salesman; the protest petition circulated by Anne Hudson. He spoke of the “Dark Ages” during the difficult 1980s and the recent successes of the late 1990s. He reflected on the battles (for economics); and he confessed ruefully to three reprimands from the Board of Regents: for a poorly prepared presentation of an early housing proposal; for his absence during the 1988 hearings; and for his public criticisms of the affiliated graduate program. But he declared himself a happy, voluntary retiree and told a news reporter that “I am Armstrong Atlantic.” The year-long advertising campaign to feature the “Faces of Armstrong” each ad presented someone from the university under the slogan “I am Armstrong Atlantic.” The year-long series of faces drew from all elements of the campus – students, faculty, staff, and alumni – and emphasized the range of programs that Armstrong offered. One of the first ads turned the spotlight on engineering. Under the banner “Georgia Tech at AASU” appeared the face of Fletcher Smith, a civil engineering major, former Army Ranger, and father of three. The ad described the new engineering arrangement between Georgia Tech and Armstrong.

Fletcher was not looking forward to uprooting his family so that he could finish his engineering studies at Georgia Tech. Thanks to the new Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program, he won’t have to. Instead, he will earn his Georgia Tech degree on the campus of Armstrong Atlantic State University.156

Whatever its artistic or economic value, the educational value of the painting was priceless.

The McCorkle painting created the only high profile racial issue on campus during the 1990s. Black enrollment rose from 13.5% in the fall of 1990 to 22.2% in the fall of 2001.150 The Board of Regents appointed a search committee for Burnett’s successor and designated Vice President Frank Butler as interim president. There was no discussion of merger. Other retirements of the 1990s marked the end of an era at Armstrong in a number of ways. Those faculty who had come to Armstrong in the 1960s when the college became a baccalaureate institution had now completed thirty or more years of service. Some of them had taught long enough to teach the children of the first eighteen-year olds who sat in the old one-armed desks brought from the downtown campus. Five long-serving stalwarts left the history department, including “Bluntin’” [John] Duncan, who wrote author John Berendt the inside story of Savannah’s secrets for Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil and told a nationwide audience on Good Morning America his personal version of Savannah history. “Founded on a bluff and its main street is Bull,”[153] Anne and Sigmund Hudson retired from the math department after Anne had accumulated as many national math honors as the tennis team had won championships. Joe Adams and Bob Strozier took with them a huge piece of institutional memory, as did Alfred Owens. John Brewer retired from the chemistry department and became the campus liaison for the construction of the new science building. John Suchower retired from twenty-two years of directing the Armstrong Masquers in a repertoire that tilted often toward the unfamiliar. “I’ve done a lot of strange plays, not because they were strange but because they were not in the limelight.”[154] His productions attracted a loyal cadre of community actors and actresses who took their place on stage along with the students in the tradition of Armstrong’s earliest theatre director Stacy Keach. New director Peter Mellen arrived in 1993 to continue the theatre experience for the next generation. The name of the degree changed from its long-standing designation as “Drama/Speech” to a new identity as “Theater” and its first graduates received their degree in December 2000.155

In the spring of 1999, Armstrong launched an advertising campaign to feature the “Faces of Armstrong.” Each ad presented someone from the university under the slogan “I am Armstrong Atlantic.” The year-long series of faces drew from all elements of the campus – students, faculty, staff, and alumni – and emphasized the range of programs that Armstrong offered. One of the first ads turned the spotlight on engineering. Under the banner “Georgia Tech at AASU” appeared the face of Fletcher Smith, a civil engineering major, former Army Ranger, and father of three. The ad described the new engineering arrangement between Georgia Tech and Armstrong.

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Other faces followed: Danita Mance, African American graduate student in Public Health (“From Day One I’ve Loved It Here.”); economics major Kevin Hagan, who hoped some day to own his own business, “confident his degree in economics will be the perfect preparation.” Current businessman and 1968 alumnus Cliff McCurry confessed that his first paper at Armstrong Junior College earned an F minus: “That got my attention!” History graduate student Katherine Ferreira got a lot of attention and phone calls when her ad described how she combined her academic career with her responsibilities as the mother of five children, including a newborn.

The ad campaign showed Savannah the face of Armstrong with its odd new name and its strong new identity as a freestanding university. Other faces, without names, covered the front of the faculty-staff directories from 1999 to 2003. Each year presented the challenge of identifying the mix of people that now worked on campus. It was an old-fashioned, non-electronic kind of face book that reflected a community where faculty, students, administrators, and staff still met face-to-face even as new technology sent the educational experience spinning into the far-flung corners of an electronic world. In the center of the directory for 2000-2001 appeared the face of the new president, Thomas Zane Jones.

Photos by Gail Brannen.
EPILOGUE
A Glimpse of the Jones Years: 2000 – 2009

When Chancellor Stephen Portch introduced Tom Jones to the Armstrong community from the stage of the Fine Arts auditorium, he had two opportunities to play with the new president’s name. As an Englishman and a student of English literature, he could draw on the familiar figure from Henry Fielding’s eighteenth century novel, or he could refer to the popular Welsh singer and songwriter of the same name. Portch chose the latter. He turned toward the new president, grinned, and asked “What’s new, pussycat?”

The question was a fitting forecast of the changes that the new administration would bring to Armstrong, even though Jones himself bore little resemblance to either of the other Tom Joneses. A geologist by training and the former Vice President for Academic Affairs at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia, Jones brought to Armstrong his experience at a sister institution in the University System and a low-key, informal personality that preferred polo shirts and casual gatherings to the pomp and circumstance of the presidential office. His inauguration passed as a blur in his memory, and an early memo to the campus proposed dress-down Fridays for faculty and staff. Other new things would follow.

Because the Jones administration was still in office as the work on this history approached its end, this book never intended to examine the Jones years in the same way as the other periods of Armstrong’s history. Dr. Jones’s retirement in June 2009 closed an identifiable historical segment, but this epilogue offers only a sample of the features that characterized life at Armstrong during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The most striking feature of the period was the physical appearance of the campus, where the landscape had matured in ways that stood in striking contrast with the memories held by the students who had arrived at the new location in the late 1960s. Grounds superintendent Philip Schretter had transformed Armstrong from a “faded golf course,” into an arboretum of specialized gardens and winding walkways tucked in along the main sidewalks of campus traffic. Well-established camellia bushes and various exotic plants grew beneath the pine trees around the central fountain area and created a shady refuge in the middle of the quadrangle. The fountain and “Lake Ashmore” that had seen years of prankster soapsuds and had become a death trap for campus cats now contained a planting bed for lilies of the Nile, with a gentle spray feature in the center. A new international garden grew between Hawes Hall and Solms Hall. On the grounds crew, women like Janice Nease and Donna Rigdon rode the mowers and carried the blowers and their smiling faces appeared in the photos for the “I Am Armstrong” ad campaign. The well-tended campus and the new and refurbished buildings astonished returning alumni and pleasantly surprised Savannah natives and newcomers who came out for special events, theater performances, or for classes. After Dr. Jones arrived, neat red banners bearing the Armstrong compass logo hung from campus lampposts and added their color beneath the canopy of trees.

Renovations and new construction were strong features of the Jones presidency. Victor Hall ceased to be a classroom building and became home to all admissions and registration services. The Administration Building reorganized its space and duties. Gone was Conference Room A, scene of the Stingray news conference and
A Transformed Campus

thirty years of meetings involving the business of the college. A long, sleek new conference room took its place. The Vice President for Academic Affairs moved to the opposite end of the hall from the president’s office, and Bill Megathlin moved in next door to Dr. Jones as a special assistant to the president. When renovations were complete, the building carried a new name, Burnett Hall, to honor former president Bob Burnett who died on June 19, 2004.

Jones wanted a new entrepreneurial spirit to shape the future direction of the university. He brought to campus Leary Bell from Columbus State as head of a new Office of External Affairs to foster relations with the community and channel Armstrong’s energies into areas of economic development. Jones told the faculty that Savannah was fond of Armstrong, but he wanted that fondness to become active enthusiasm about the resources and talent that the university had to offer. He thought that major building projects in key locations might prompt public attention and give the university the high-profile recognition that it needed.

To develop these possibilities, Jones created an Educational Properties Foundation that put the entrepreneurial spirit into action. The first project, Legacy Hall, envisioned an upward and outward addition of Burnett Hall to give the college a distinctive, iconic presence facing Abercorn Street. The second project, a new conference center, could provide increased opportunity for scholarly activities and a place for community meetings and public events. Legacy Hall fell victim to the road-widening plans of the Georgia Department of Transportation, but the conference center found its financing and took over the shopping center just west of the campus, where a former Publix grocery store was transformed into the Armstrong Center for Continuing Education and Community Engagement. The Center opened on September 22, 2006.

A third major building project doubled the Compass Point residence halls from three hundred to six hundred beds. Savannah State objected, as it had done previously with President Burnett, claiming that Armstrong’s mission did not include extended residential services, and Jones now entered his time of troubles with Armstrong’s across-town neighbor. Chancellor Portch had encouraged Jones to improve
relations with Savannah State, but the housing issue was a sharp point of contention. The Compass Point expansion went forward as the university reached an enrollment peak of 7,000, but it left another bitter moment between the two Savannah institutions. Other efforts, however, attempted to change old patterns and old memories. In the fall of 2007, the two presidents invited the first joint faculty of both institutions to a get-acquainted social gathering at the Armstrong Center. The following year the new faculty met on the Savannah State campus, and in 2009 the two groups met at the Georgia Historical Society. A further initiative offered grant support for collaborative research projects that paired students and faculty of the two institutions.

The merger issue, however, could still appear from time to time, as in October 2006 when Savannah State President Carlton Brown resigned his office and newspaper editor Tom Barton proposed the creation of Savannah Atlantic State University. Merger, Barton acknowledged, was “the third rail of local academic politics” and it caused the usual sparks to fly. The new Chancellor of the University System, Erroll Davis, quickly and firmly rejected the merger idea, and Earl G. Yarborough arrived as the new president at Savannah State in the summer of 2007. The idea surfaced again in January 2009, when state Senator Seth Harp proposed mergers for the two state universities in Savannah and in Albany. Again, the Chancellor and the Board of Regents showed little interest. President Jones had already announced his retirement decision, and the Regents made no change in the search under way for his successor. The inability to offer a teacher education degree, however, still rankled at Savannah State, and in 2007 State Representative Lester Jackson of Savannah proposed that all of the System’s four-year institutions offer teacher education programs in order to meet the teacher shortage in Georgia. The Regents affirmed the importance of teacher education but made no changes at Savannah State.

Aside from bricks and mortar projects, the other striking change of the Jones years was a near total turnover in the university’s administration. Within nine years all of the vice presidents and college deans were new to the campus. In some instances the high administrative officeholders changed twice during that period. Jones had indicated on his arrival that he did not intend to have a long presidency nor did he intend to leave behind a senior administration of white males. At his departure, two vice presidents were women: Ellen V. Whiford as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, and Vicki L. McNeil as Vice President for Student Affairs. John McGuthry, as Chief Information Officer, brought an African American presence to the upper levels of the administration. Not since Henry Ashmore appointed his new administration in the late 1960s to make the transition from two-year to four-year status had there been such a total change in Armstrong’s leadership.

As Jones moved Armstrong into the future, he also honored the university’s past, establishing honorary degrees to pay tribute to distinguished figures in Armstrong’s history. Irving Victor received the first honor in December 2001, in recognition of the many ways in which he had served the institution: as an alumnus of Armstrong Junior College, as the long-serving chairman of the Armstrong Commission, and as a loyal supporter of every Armstrong activity. Bob and Mary Burnett were honored in December 2002 as joint contributors to the Burnett presidency and to the life of the Savannah community. And H. Dean Propst returned to campus in December 2003 to be honored for his years as dean at Armstrong State College from 1969 to 1979 and for his service as Chancellor of the University System from 1985 to 1993.

By January 2001, the Armstrong faculty had become too numerous to meet in Jenkins auditorium, and faculty meetings moved to the large lecture room in University Hall. The new location scrambled the traditional patterns of sitting on the right or on the left, but political sensitivities were still sharp when President Jones introduced his strategic plan in the first year of his presidency. The plan identified four directions for the Armstrong compass: Applied Sciences and Technology, Health Professions, Teacher Education, and Community and Economic Development. The arts and sciences did not appear as a strategic direction but seemed relegated to a lesser role of core values. Arts and sciences advocated quietly but persistently made their case, and by 2005 the compass included Liberal Arts as one of the four primary directions, all of which pointed toward an outer rim of community and economic development. In other business, lively faculty debate became increasingly rare, although strong opinions could still surface in a discussion of courses for an African American Studies program or in a debate about electronic evaluation of faculty by students. Elections for members of the Executive Committee and the Curriculum Committee moved to electronic voting, and a slow but steady momentum began to build in favor of a senate form of governance to replace the monthly meetings of the full faculty. The new Faculty Senate held its first meeting in the fall of 2008.

The change in governance coincided with a reorganization of the three colleges within the university. In July 2008, at Vice President Ellen Whiford’s recommendation, the former College of Arts and Sciences split into a College of Liberal Arts and a College of Science and Technology. The College of Education and the College of Health Professions remained unchanged. In the latter college, physical therapy students were poised to earn Armstrong’s first doctoral degree.

Student life in the new millennium involved a broad array of new paraphernalia. Tome-size textbooks required ever-larger backpaks that eventually gained luggage handles and wheels. At the other extreme, shoulder bags carried laptop computers in increasingly compact sizes. Cell phones were prone to ring during class, and the first after-class questions tended to be directed not to the teacher but to friends or family to ask, “Hey, where are you? What are you doing?” Distance learning and online courses were now part of the academic mainstream, but the number of students physically present on campus mirrored the rising enrollment. The parking lots were full and the library was busy even on Friday afternoons. Student housing was a contributing factor and the residence halls continued to grow. The students themselves caught the entrepreneurial spirit when they voted to create another student fee to pay the total cost of a major addition to the Memorial College Center.

The new buildings, new programs, and growing numbers reflected deeper changes in academic life that caught the attention of philosophy professor Erik Nordenhaug. On February 9, 2001, he presented a faculty lecture entitled “Where is the ‘Uni’ in University?” The lecture presented a fanciful account of a future archaeologist who uncovered the physical remains of something called a university and tried to puzzle out just exactly what it had been. The question was, what held a university together? It was a philosopher’s question, which meant that Nordenhaug was more interested in examining the question than in providing an answer, but if it framed a significant issue in view of the changes sweeping through higher education. Where was the “uni” in university? Some of it lay in the core curriculum, notwithstanding the varied options and choices now available. Some of it lay in life on a campus that was still compact enough for easy gathering places in the cafeteria, the library, or the gym. And some of it lay in the fact that the rhythms of change always carried an element of continuity. A small example could illustrate the point. Suzanne Carpenter of the chemistry and physics department was one of those faculty members who paid close attention to curriculum matters and whose opinions in the Curriculum Committee and on any curriculum issue were always solid, well-informed, and persuasive. Armstrong had always had faculty members like her.
who kept a careful eye on curriculum details. Long-time physics professor Morris Whittem, who retired in 2001, was one such person. In a chance meeting with her former colleague after his retirement, Carpenter greeted him warmly and then stopped, looked at him, and declared in amazement, “Morris, I am you!” In such fashion, each generation of faculty followed in the line of its predecessors. The faces changed but a unity remained.

FINAL THOUGHTS
The Armstrong story shows one institution’s experience in the history of higher education. The story began with the community booster spirit of the 1920s and 1930s, embodied first in a high school teacher and then in a mayor. That spirit produced a two-year city college despite the Depression. The college survived World War II, took on new life with the veterans, and looked for ways to accommodate the coming wave of baby-boomers. That accommodation involved joining the University System, becoming a four-year institution, and moving to a location that offered room to grow. The post-war direction of higher education raised questions about a traditional liberal arts curriculum or a curriculum directed toward technical and professional skills. It also confronted segregation at an institutional level and within the larger body of the University System. Efforts to address that issue sent Armstrong and Savannah State into a short-lived experiment of joint programs and a longer “experiment” of a program swap that, with slight modifications, passed its thirtieth anniversary in 2009. In the 1990s, both institutions shared a brief affiliation with Georgia Southern for graduate programs, but the pull of separate institutional identity remained strong and each institution found it possible to have its own place in the region.

As Armstrong moved toward its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2010, longtime alumni from the downtown days of the junior college continued to believe that nothing could have been better than the education they received in and around the Armstrong mansion at the corner of Bull and Gaston Streets. They remembered clearly and fondly the moments of intellectual awakening that could occur in a class with Joe Killorin when all it took was “12 freshmen, a teacher, and Plato.” Armstrong’s later students could have similar moments in an honors seminar with Mark Finlay that looked closely at a painting of a black-faced minstrel. Such experiences might take place in any number of settings that challenged students to deal with old ideas or new ones and guided them toward the skills and intellectual maturity that changing times required. Each generation adds its stories to those that came before. This history has told some of those stories – stories of presidents, faculty, students, buildings, controversies, and celebrations – both the good times and the hard times that hold a place in institutional memory. No history ever tells “the whole story.” Each person who has been part of Armstrong’s history will have other stories not told here or would tell these stories differently. A new chapter began with the arrival of Linda M. Bleicken in July 2009 to be the seventh president of Armstrong. Her story remains to be told, along with many more yet to come.
APPENDIX A

Timeline of Georgia’s Desegregation Plans, with ASC/SSC Highlights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia plans</th>
<th>ASC/SSC highlights</th>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Cooperation re: libraries, athletic and social events</td>
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</table>
| 1970         | ASC/SSC section of the response:  
  • Student exchanges  
  • Faculty exchanges planned  
  • Cooperation re: libraries, athletic and social events |
|             | Oct – Adams case goes to court |
| 1971         | Sept – ASC/SSC Joint Graduate Program begins:  
  M.Ed. and M.B.A. |
| 1973         | ASC/SSC section of 1973 Plan:  
  • Joint Graduate Program  
  • Cooperative undergraduate programs in Social Work, P.E., Music Ed., NROTC and other  
  • “Evolving” programs in Criminal Justice and Health Professions  
  • Joint Fund Drive  
  • Shuttle bus between the two campuses |
|             | “at any particular instant of time during the academic day, in excess of 11% of the students on the SSC campus are white.” |
| 1974         | ASC/SSC section of February Plan:  
  • Joint programs: Joint Graduate Program, Joint Fund Drive, Joint Social Work  
  • Cooperative programs: P.E., Music Ed., NROTC, “evolving” programs in Allied Health  
  • General exchanges: students and faculty, library resources, Neighborhood Center for Continuing Education, student activities, shuttle bus  
  • Duplicated programs on each campus (3): English, English Education, Business  
  (11% quote remains)  
  • Joint Fund Drive  
  • Graduate programs, joint and/or unilateral |
|             | June 13 – Georgia Plan accepted by HEW (Parts A & B and Hooper letter) |
|             | ASC/SSC section of revised plan:  
  • Three study committees: duplication committee, recruitment committee, department head committee  
  • Joint programs: Joint Graduate Program, Joint Fund Drive, Joint Social Work  
  • Cooperative programs: P.E., Music Ed., NROTC, “evolving” programs in Allied Health  
  • General exchanges: students and faculty, library resources, Neighborhood Center for Continuing Education, student activities, shuttle bus  
  • Duplicated programs on each campus (3): English, English Education, Business  
  (11% quote remains)  
  • Joint Fund Drive  
  • Graduate programs, joint and/or unilateral |
|             | June 21 – 1974 Georgia Plan accepted by HEW (Parts A & B and Hooper letter) |
|             | June 21 – 1974 Georgia Plan accepted by HEW (Parts A & B and Hooper letter) |
| 1975         | May 1 – Adams lawyers file complaint vs. 1974 Plan  
  Aug 1 – Adams lawyers back in court; charge HEW with accepting unacceptable plans |
| 1976         | Mar – Adams lawyers submit analysis of Georgia progress reports |
| 1977         | April 1 – Judge Pratt’s ruling: HEW must provide criteria for acceptable plans  
  July 2 – HEW Criteria  
  Sept 1 – Georgia submits “A Plan for the Further Desegregation of the University System of Georgia”  
  Dec 15 – Continuation revision of the Plan; special legislation to fund black scholarships |
| 1978         | Mar 8 – Continuing revision of the Plan:  
  BOR to study the three historic black colleges and neighboring white colleges with four possible options:  
  I. Merger  
  II. Specialized roles as two-year or four-year colleges  
  III. Designation of one campus as a lower division branch campus  
  IV. Location of unique programs on the black campus, closing the duplicate on the white campus  
  Study conducted through three committees:  
  Community liaison committee, Legislative subcommittee, Special Regents committee |
|             | Dec 19 – “Fourth Segment of A Plan for the Further Desegregation of the University System of Georgia”  
  Three sections concerning SSC and ASC, Fort Valley State College, Albany State College and Albany Junior College  
  Dec – OCR problems with Albany section; further negotiations |
| 1979         | Mar 2 – OCR accepts total Georgia Plan:  
  Sept 1, 1977 Segment; Dec 15, 1977 Segment;  
  Mar 8, 1978 Segment;  
  Oct 19, 1978 Fourth Segment;  
  Feb 5, 1979 Albany Segment |
|             | Sept – ASC/SSC program swap goes into effect |

1974
- May – Chancellor George Simpson’s response to 1969 OCR review
- Oct – Adams case goes to court

1975
- May 1 – Adams lawyers file complaint vs. 1974 Plan
- Aug 1 – Adams lawyers back in court; charge HEW with accepting unacceptable plans

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- Mar – Adams lawyers submit analysis of Georgia progress reports

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  - Mar 8, 1978 Segment;
  - Oct 19, 1978 Fourth Segment;
  - Feb 5, 1979 Albany Segment
APPENDIX B

“Studied to Death” – 1980s Proposals Concerning Higher Education in Savannah and Southeast Georgia

Nov. 1980 – Dale Lick, “Perspective on Higher education in Ga.” : the need for a regional university


• ASC/SSC merger, placing all undergraduate education on SSC campus
• ASC health professions & graduate programs merged into GSC, using Armstrong campus as a Savannah base

Jan. 1983 – Fancher & Davies Report requested by BOR re: Savannah’s colleges

four options:
 a. differentiation & enhancement*
 b. merger, possibly as a university*
 c. joint graduate program
 d. ASC/SSC/GSC multi-campus institution w/ specialties on each campus
 (*consultants’ preferred options)

May 1983 – College Board Report (Aslanian and Brickell), prepared for the Citizens Committee

six options:
 a. retain ASC & SSC but eliminate remedial work
 b. merge ASC & SSC
 c. establish a branch of Georgia Tech in Savannah
 d. establish a branch of the University of Georgia in Savannah
 e. establish a Savannah Community College, with broad access for the first two years of college work, and a branch campus of either Georgia Tech or the University of Georgia for upper level work*
 f. establish a Savannah Academy as a college preparatory high school operated by a new Savannah College, which would offer undergraduate degrees and no remedial work*
 (*consultants’ preferred options)

June/July 1983 – Citizens Committee Report (Branan Committee)

four options:
 a. a Georgia Tech branch in Savannah
 b. a branch of the University of Georgia in Savannah
 c. a Savannah Academy prep school and a new Savannah College
 d. Savannah Community College and a branch of Georgia Tech or the University of Georgia

Aug. 1983 – Friedman Plan: ASC as Engineering School (with health professions); SSC as the liberal arts college in Savannah

Nov. 1983 – BOR decision: no merger of ASC & SSC; no new engineering school

July [& Nov.] 1984 – ASC/SSC proposal for a joint engineering school

1987-88, “Era of Good Feeling” – Regional planning in conjunction with Special Funding Initiative:

• 4-way merger into “South Georgia College”
• 2-way merger of ASC & GSC.

Mar. 1988 – BOR reconsideration of merger of ASC & SSC: decision against merger

Fall 1988 – Renewed discussion of “consortia” and “university level delivery”

• the multi-campus plan for coastal Ga. involving ASC, GSC, Brunswick College, Georgia College (Swainsboro), and Skidaway Institute of Oceanography

June 1989 – Consultants Dawson & McTarnaghan report re: regional university

• GSC as regional university (GSU)
• ASC & SSC graduate programs offered through GSU
• undergraduate autonomy for ASC & SSC

June 1989 – Bob Burnett & Nick Henry proposal for GSC/ASC merger

July 1989 – “A Proposal for the Establishment of Regional Universities”

Chancellor & staff modification of consultants’ criteria for regional university status

• GSC as regional university (GSU)
• ASC & SSC graduate programs offered “in affiliation” with GSU
• undergraduate autonomy for ASC & SSC

This proposal went into effect July 1, 1990. It ended in December 1994.
APPENDIX C

Armstrong’s Presidents and Names

Presidents of Armstrong

Ernest A. Lowe, 1935-1941
J. Thomas Askew, 1941-1942 (on leave for military service, 1943-1944)
Foreman M. Hawes, Acting President, 1942-1944; President, 1944-1964
Henry L. Ashmore, 1964-1982
Robert A. Burnett, Acting President, August 1982-July 1984; President, 1984-1999
Thomas Z. Jones, 2000-2009
Linda M. Bleicken, 2009-2010

Henry L. Ashmore, 1964-1982
Robert A. Burnett, Acting President, August 1982-July 1984; President, 1984-1999
Thomas Z. Jones, 2000-2009
Linda M. Bleicken, 2009-2010

Name and status changes

May 27, 1935 – The Mayor and Alderman of Savannah vote to establish Armstrong Memorial Junior College.

December 1948 – Armstrong Commission Chairman Herschel Jenkins proposes to drop “Junior” from the college’s name. The college becomes Armstrong College.

The 1952-53 college Bulletin identifies the college as Armstrong College.

February 7, 1959 – Armstrong joins the University System of Georgia but keeps the name Armstrong College of Savannah.

May 8, 1963 – The Board of Regents authorizes Armstrong to become a four-year college, with the first baccalaureate degrees to be awarded in 1968.

September 1964 – Four-year status goes into effect, as requested by President Ashmore.

February 3, 1965 – The faculty votes to change the name to Armstrong State College.

June 20, 1996 – President Burnett, in consultation with faculty and alumni, recommends a new name, Armstrong Atlantic State University. The faculty votes to approve the recommendation.

NOTES

Chapter 1 Notes

1. Savannah Morning News, 14 November 1929; hereafter SMN.
3. The Industrial College awarded its first college degree in 1889 to Richard B. Wright, Jr., son of the college’s president. The enrollment figures for 1922-23 show 168 grammar school students, 239 high school students, and 16 college students. Clyde W. Hall, One Hundred Years of Educating At Savannah State College, 1890-1990, (East Poina, Illinois, Versa Press, Inc., 1991), 8, 30, 32.
4. Lowry Axley’s papers concerning the Junior College Movement in Savannah are part of the holdings of the Georgia Historical Society. Collection 35, hereafter cited as Axley Papers. The collection includes two notebooks labeled The Junior College Movement in Savannah, which contain materials concerning junior college education in general and the particular efforts to establish a junior college in Savannah from 1927 through 1931. The collection also includes two folders of newspaper clippings. The typed script of the radio talk is in Box 2, notebook 421. The complete text of the talk also appeared in the SMN, 14 November 1929.
5. Time and again, newspaper articles added an e to Lowry. In his file of clippings, Axley regularly crossed out the offending vowel. Axley’s special interest was in word usage and dialect, subjects about which he published a number of articles, most notably concerning southernisms such as “you all.”
6. The owner of the SMN, since 1926, was Herschel V. Jenkins. Its managing editor was Walter Roy Neal. The Savannah Press, the evening paper, was owned by Pleasant Stovall; its managing editor was W. G. Sutlive. The typed script of the radio talk is in Box 2, notebook 421. The complete text of the talk also appeared in the SMN, 14 November 1929.
7. George F. Butler to T. E. Orelle, 14 May 1926, Axley Papers, Box 2, notebook 421.
8. Chatham County offered six grades at the lower level, three at the middle level, and three at the upper level.
9. SMN, 30 April 1927, 10 May 1927, 26 May 1927, 4 June 1927.
10. Minutes, Board of Education, 14 November 1927.
11. SMN, 4 June 1927; Peru, 7 June 1927. Axley would have been well aware of conditions in the elementary schools, where his wife Nina Axley was the principal at the 38th Street School. Minutes, Board of Education, 9 August 1926.
12. Peru, 10 August 1927. Both Mrs. Waring and Dr. Wilson were long-serving members of the school board. Mrs. Waring was keenly interested in developing kindergartens in the school system. Dr. Wilson appears to have been a bit of a maverick, often very outspoken. In 1932, he attacked the salaries of the school superintendent and assistant superintendent and carried on a vigorous dispute with the school board about various ways to economize. Minutes, Board of Education, 14 March 1932.
13. SMN, 11 March 1928.
14. SMN, 16 March 1928.
15. SMN, 17 March 1928, 22 March 1928, 16 May 1928.
17. SMN, 27 May 1928.
18. SMN, 5 June 1928.
20. SMN, 13 June, 18 June, 21 June 1928.
21. SMN, 17 and 18 July 1928. The Junior Chamber of Commerce was established in March 1928 as a young men’s protest against the Board of Trade which, it charged, was dominated by old leadership that lacked youth and energy. The new group enthusiastically took on a number of local projects (keeping Savannah’s baseball franchise, establishing a radio station), but it lacked members from the traditional establishment whose influence weighed heavily in local matters. See SMN, 17 March 1928, 20 March 1928.
22. Nelson Stephens to George W. Uphart, Chair of the Junior Chamber Public Education Committee, 25 July 1928, Axley Papers, Box 1, folder 13.
23. SMN, 24 July 1928.
24. SMN, 10 July 1928.
25. Minutes, Board of Education, 10 December 1928.
29. SMN, 29 January 1929.
30. SMN, 2 March 1929.
32. SMN, 24 March 1929.
33. Lowry Axley to the Members of the Citizens Junior College Committee, 19 April 1929, Axley Papers, Box 1, folder 13.
34. SMN, 5 and 8 February 1929; Press, 5 and 6 February 1929.
35. SMN, 6 February 1929.
36. Nelson Stephens to George Butler, 30 January 1929, Axley Papers, Box 1, Notebook 421.
37. SMN, 6 April 1929.
38. SMN, 5 and 8 February 1929; 22 March 1929 re: Burke County.
39. SMN, 5 March 1929.
40. SMN, 12 May 1929.
41. Lowry Axley, “Quality of Instruction for Junior Colleges,” SMN, 1 April 1929, Axley Papers, Box 2, notebook 421.
42. Delma Eugene Presley, The Southern Century: Georgia Southern University, 1890-2006, (Statesboro, Ga.: Georgia Southern University, 2006), 48.
43. SMN, 16 and 17 May 1929, 6 June 1929.
44. SMN, 8 June 1929.
45. SMN, 27 June 1930.
46. SMN, 18 June 1929.
47. SMN, 3 November 1929.
48. SMN, 3 November 1929.
49. The five private junior colleges were Young Harris College in Calhoun, and South Georgia College in Douglas.
50. SMN, 25 December 1929, Axley Papers, Box 2, notebook 421.
51. SMN, 9 January 1929.
52. SMN, 11 March 1929.
53. Axley Papers, Box 2, notebook 421. Emphasis added, as probably occurred to make the oral pun.
54. SMN, 14 April 1929.
55. SMN, 27 February 1929, 29 March 1929.
56. SMN, 3 March 1929.
57. SMN, 6 April 1929.
58. SMN, 23 February 1929.
59. SMN, 9 March 1929.
60. SMN, 17 February 1935. See also Lowry Axley's radio broadcast of 1934. See Chapter 1.
61. SMN, 13 March 1935.
62. SMN, 17 March 1935.
64. SMN, 9 July 1935.
65. SMN, 19 August 1935.
66. SMN, 17 September 1935.
67. SMN, 30 May 1935. See also Nelson Stephens to George Gooch, 1 April 1929, Axley Papers, Box 2, notebook 421.
68. Construction of the new high school began in 1935 and was completed in 1936.
69. SMN, 8 September 1932, 26 June 1933.
70. Lowry Axley to the Members of the Citizens Junior College Committee, 19 April 1929, Axley Papers, Box 1, folder 13.
71. SMN, 17 March 1935.
73. SMN, 12 July 1945. Gamble's obituary provided a full review of his career.
75. Gamble wrote prolifically, producing a History of City Government in Savannah (1901) and countless articles for the Savannah newspapers on historical subjects. His bound volumes of articles and clippings are located in the Georgia Room of the Bull Street Branch of the Live Oak Public Libraries in Savannah. They include a volume on Armstrong Junior College, 1955-1958. His clipping collection concerning the college is somewhat selective and needs to be supplemented by the Savannah newspapers themselves. Unlike Lowry Axley, Gamble did not leave a record of his behind-the-scenes activity for a junior college. I have found no collection of Gamble's personal papers.
76. SMN, 17 February 1935.
77. SMN, 5 September 1935. This article gives Gamble's version of Armstrong's origins. Ola Wyeth had previously gathered information on junior colleges for the Junior Chamber's campaign in 1929. See Chapter 1.
78. SMN, 26 February 1935.
79. SMN, 1 March 1935. By 1935 the University System included eight junior colleges, located in Douglas, Cochran, Albany, Forsyth, Dhalonage, Tifton, Carrollton, and Americus. Fincher, 8.
80. SMN, 1 March 1935.
81. Quoted in Gignilliat, 31. See also Fincher, 10. The recommendation came from a 1933 survey conducted by George A. Works, Professor of Higher Education at the University of Chicago. The survey was requested by the Board of Regents and the report became known as the Works Report. A second report followed in 1940.
82. SMN, 8 March 1935.
83. SMN, 11 March 1935.
84. SMN, 12 March 1935.
85. SMN, 14 March 1935. Herschel V. Jenkins also accompanied the mayor and Regent Morgan to Atlanta. The newspaper remained in close touch with all developments.
86. SMN, 9 March 1935.
87. Ibid.
88. SMN, 11 March 1935.
89. Ibid.
90. SMN, 12 March 1935.
91. SMN, 17 March 1935.
94. SMN, 17 February 1935.
95. SMN, 5 September 1935. This article gives Gamble's version of Armstrong's origins. Ola Wyeth had previously gathered information on junior colleges for the Junior Chamber's campaign in 1929. See Chapter 1.
96. SMN, 17 March 1935.
97. SMN, 5 September 1935. This article gives Gamble's version of Armstrong's origins. Ola Wyeth had previously gathered information on junior colleges for the Junior Chamber's campaign in 1929. See Chapter 1.
98. SMN, 26 February 1935.
25. Minutes of the Board of Education, 18 March 1935. The minutes do not contain the text of Gamble's comments or the remarks of board members, but the newspaper carried a full report. See SMN, 19 March 1935. Gamble acknowledged that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools required a minimum budget of $20,000 for a junior college, of which $10,000 had to be guaranteed outside of tuition; but he pointed out that the city of Augusta was actually spending only $5,000 of city money on its junior college and St. Peter's was spending only $2,664 from its current municipal budget for its junior college.

26. SMN, 21 March 1935.

27. Ibid.

28. SMN, 23 March 1935. See also SMN, 21 December 1935 for Lowe's biographical information.

29. SMN, 22 March 1935.


31. SMN, 3 April 1935.

32. SMN, 16 April 1935.

33. SMN, 2 April 1935. Skinner's comment was actually stronger than reported. He advised Savannah not to start a junior college in or tied to a high school. The space conflict in the Augusta arrangement threatened the accreditation of both the junior college and the Augusta Academy. Edward J. Cashin and Helen Callahan, A History of Augusta College, (Augusta, Ga.: Augusta College Press, 1936), 37-38.

34. Pres., 4 April 1935.

35. SMN, 19 April 1935.

36. Pres., 18 April 1935. This crucial commitment was one that Ayden never obtained.

37. Pres., 17 April 1935.

38. SMN, 21 April 1935.


40. Pres., 13 May 1935.

41. Pres., 18 April 1935.

42. SMN, 26 April 1935.

43. SMN, 28 April 1935.

44. SMN, 16 April 1935. Speaking to the University of Georgia Club in Savannah in the midit of the junior college discussion, Sanford praised junior colleges "as the salvation of the university by relieving it of students who should be obtaining the fine training of such institutions, leaving the body of higher learning to fulfill its rightful work." SMN, 26 April 1935.

45. SMN, 23 May 1935.

46. Minutes of the Board of Education, 15 May 1935. The letter was read to the board at its May 20 meeting.

47. SMN, 21 May 1935.

48. Ibid.


50. SMN, 24 May 1935. See also Minutes of the Board of Education, 24 May 1935. As quoted by Mayhew, the 1865 charter stated the school board's purpose to be "the direction, maintenance and superintendence of public education of white children in said City between the ages of 6 and 18 years." This language was much more specific than that in the Augusta charter.


52. SMN, 26 May 1935.

53. Ibid.

54. Daughter Lucy, Mrs. Walter Johnson, was about to give birth to a son, born on Saturday. The birth announcement appeared in a small separate statement at the conclusion of the Sunday article that carried the news of the gift of the house.

55. The last listing of Mrs. Armstrong and her daughter in the Savannah Directory appears in 1930, the year that Mrs. Armstrong married Carl Moltz.

56. Jan C. Plenmonos. Treasures of Toxaway, (Jacksonville, Florida: Jan C. Plenmonos, 1984), 24 and 39. Deed records show land purchased at Lake Toxaway by L.W. Armstrong (Mrs. Armstrong) in 1913 and again in 1916. The house there was probably built in 1913. The Savannah home was completed in 1919.

57. Preston Russell and Barbara Hines, Savannah, A History of Her People Since 1733, (Savannah, Ga.: Frederic C. Bell, 1992), 162.

58. An oral tradition exists that taxes were owed on the house and that Gamble offered to forgive the taxes in exchange for the gift of the building to the city. See taped interview with Lilla M. Hawes. Comments to this effect surfaced in interviews during my research. City tax ledgers show regular payment of city real estate taxes. Savannah Real Estate Tax Ledgers, CT 160, Georgia Historical Society.

59. SMN, 27 May 1935. It was a very good news day on other fronts since the paper reported the decision of Bethlehem Steel to use Savannah as a distribution center and announced that General Mills was planning to locate a flour plant in Savannah. On May 28, the news got even better as the city announced an agreement whereby Union Bag and Paper Corporation would locate a manufacturing-operation on the site of the old Hermitage plantation adjacent to the Savannah River. The negotiations with the paper company had also been in process throughout the spring as part of Mayor Gamble's effort to attract industry to the city. Union Bag would subsequently combine with Camp Paper Manufacturing to become Union Camp. Mrs. Armstrong, born Lucy Camp, was a member of the Camp family of "timber tycoons" who had developed the timber and paper industry in Virginia and Florida. Parke Roues, Jr., The Timber Tycons: The Camp Families of Virginia and Florida, Their Empire, 1867-1987, (Richmond, Va.: The William Byrd Press, 1988), 95-96.

60. SMN, 12 June 1935.

61. The Code of the City of Savannah, 1936, prepared by Joseph C. Hester, adopted May 13, 1936, (Savannah, Ga.: Macfieley Printing Co.,), 275-277. The initial members of the Armstrong Commission were Mayor Gamble, city finance chairman H. L. Fulton, alderman Herbert F. Gibbons, school board president Henry Blum, school board members Martha Waring, Herbert Kayton, and Frank Spencer; school superintendent Ormond Strong; city librarian Ola Wyeth; and three at-large members: Herschel V. Jenkins, Judge A. B. Lovett, and A. Pratt Adams. SMN, 28 May 1935.

62. SMN, 30 May 1935.

63. SMN, 31 May 1935.

64. SMN, 8 June 1935.

65. SMN, 12 May 1935.


68. SMN, 21 June 1935. In this article, Adams reviewed the steps leading up to Lowe's appointment. He described Lowe as a man he had known "for many years," probably through the Alumni Association where Lowe worked while in Athens. Adams' account suggests a considerable amount of early, behind-the-scenes discussion concerning the appointment.

69. SMN, 21 June 1935.

70. Code of the City of Savannah, 1936, 277. “Section 1644(b). No Financial Responsibility on Board of Education. It is hereby distinctly recognized and acknowledged that the connection of the Board of Educa
tion and the Superintendent of the Public Schools with the Junior College, and the co-ordination of the High School and Junior College shall in no wise place financial responsibility of any character whatsoever at any time or through any act of the said Junior College Commission or of the City of Savannah upon the Board of Education.

71. SMN, 30 July 1935.

72. SMN, 19 August 1935; Pres., 26 August 1935.

73. SMN, 24 July 1935; Pres., 14 August 1935. Boyd and Miller knew Lowe personally before their appointment to the faculty. Mrs. Miller, who was serving as librarian at Savannah High School, was tapped personally by Mayor Gamble to become the college librarian.

74. Deed 30 V 153, Chatham County Courthouse.

75. SMN, 19 July 1935.

76. SMN, 9 August 1935.


78. Pres., 13 August 1935. Gamble's statement is reminiscent of the school board's equally explicit disclaimer of any financial responsibility for the junior college. The divorce of the city from any financial role in the public schools had occurred in 1933, following the school system's claim against the city for back funds due since 1928. See SMN, 29 December 1936 for discussion of the city budget from 1928 to 1937.

79. Pres., 16 and 17 August 1935.


81. SMN, 23 August 1935.

82. SMN, 14 July 1935.

83. SMN, 26 June 1935. The first student to register, according to the newspaper, was Cecil Reinstein. Of the total first day registrants, 39 were boys and 26 were girls. The mayor's grandson, Thomas Carr, registered on the second day.


86. Pres., 2 September 1935.
Chapter 3 Notes

1. Alexander C. Ormond interview. Ormond was a graduate of Savannah High School, having begun his education at the one-room school at the Savannah Sugar Refinery where his father was chief engineer. He had applied to Georgia Tech but was told he could not be admitted until he was sixteen. Armstrong had no minimum age requirement. Ormond transferred to Georgia Tech after his first year at Armstrong.

2. SMN, 17 September 1935.

3. SMN, 1 September 1935. Lowe planned to teach a course on contemporary economic problems.


6. President's Report, December 1939, Armstrong College Commission Minutes and Reports. The Armstrong Commission minutes are collected in two large notebooks in the Armstrong Atlantic State University Archives. The collection appears to be copies of the original documents, typed as a complete body at a later date. All indications are that they are faithful to the originals, which apparently no longer exist.

7. SMN, 14 July 1935.


13. Pres, 22 October 1935. During the first year, forty-three students dropped out, about half of them for academic reasons. As Lowe explained this unexpectedly high percentage to the Commission, a number of poorly qualified students had been "swep[t] into the institution by the wave of publicity attending our opening," and other students had mistakenly expected easy work. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 9 April 1936.

14. Marilouise Lockwood Cope interview.

15. William Boyd interview.

16. Osmos Lanier interview.

17. SMN, 9 January 1936.

18. Margaret Forston Stephens interview.


21. Inkwell, 27 March 1936, 28 October 1936. The auditorium carried no name until 1942, when it was formally named Jenkins Hall. See Commission Minutes, 6 March 1942.

22. SMN, 12 February 1936. The Lucas Trophy was instituted in 1927 by Arthur Lucas, an enthusiastic supporter of the city.

23. Lowe had originally carried the title of dean of the college. In December 1935 the Commission awarded him the title of president and Thomas Askew became dean.

24. Thomas Carr interview.

25. SMN, 5 June 1938.


27. Inkwell, 27 March 1936, 22 May 1936.

28. SMN, 12 December 1936. In 1994, when Doris Falk Stillman, Professor Emeritus of English at Rutgers, discovered to her horror that her "enrapturizing" text was in error, she pleaded with the college to replace her hasty improvisation and "clear my name of this ignominy." Letter from Doris Falk Stillman, 4 January 1994. Stone files, Armstrong Archives (AA). To change a tradition, however, no matter how embarrassing to the author, is very hard to do. The Alma Mater is sung at every graduation, with Spencer and Falk identified as the authors.


30. Inkwell, 29 October 1937.

31. The memory of these tea dances is very strong among Armstrong alumni despite numerous [Inkwell comments] and occasional presidential reports about small attendance.

32. Robert Gordon interview.

33. 'George, 1940.

34. Robert Gordon interview.

35. Edward Morgan interview.

36. Harriet Konter interview.

37. Pres, 5 February 1937.

38. Inkwell, 25 February 1938. See also Savannah Playhouse Scrapbook. The scrapbook contains a collection of photos and programs of Playhouse productions.


40. SMN, 18 April 1941.

41. A script for one of these post-performance interviews exists in the Playhouse Scrapbook.

42. Marilouise Lockwood Cope interview.


44. Inkwell, 8 May 1940. The album can be found in the Armstrong Archives.

45. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 9 April 1936, 8 October 1936, 12 February 1938. The early planning for the 1938 budget preceded Mr. Lane's gift and did not include a business instructor.

46. See the list of graduates in the college Bulletin for 1939-1944.

47. SMN, 24 September 1936.


49. Commission Minutes, 6 March 1937, 9 December 1938.

50. SMN, 8 March 1937.


53. Inkwell, 23 October 1936, 22 September 1939.

54. Commission Minutes, 8 October 1936.

55. Commission Minutes, 6 April 1936, 15 December 1939.

56. SMN, 30 October 1936. O'Neal had initiated his lawsuit the previous year. SMN, 16 October 1935.

57. SMN, 5 September 1936.

58. SMN, 15 November 1936.

59. SMN, 15 November 1936.

60. Commission Minutes, 8 October 1936.


62. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 18 April 1940.

63. The bequest came from the will of Miss Carrie Colding. By the court's ruling, Armstrong shared the proceeds of the sale with the other claimants. SMN, 19 August 1937; Commission Minutes, 21 August 1938.

64. Pres, 1 October 1937. Armstrong never took possession of the property, which subsequently became the home of St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church.

65. Pres, 1 October 1937.


67. SMN, 16 June 1940.

68. Commission Minutes, 10 May 1941.

69. SMN, 3 September 1941.

70. Pres, 19 June 1941.

71. SMN, 29 December 1939. After the successful accreditation report, Lowe had suggested that the Commission consider carefully the future direction of the college and whether he was the person to continue to lead it. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 18 April 1940. Lowe did not have an advanced academic degree.

72. Commission Minutes, 2 June 1941.

73. Mr. Boyd left for medical school. Mr. Dyer took a position with radio station WSAV. Miss Fortson and Miss Ennis left for marriage, the latter leaving town. Miss Fortson would later return as Mrs. Hugh Stephens to teach at the college as full-time and part-time faculty.

74. Pres, 7 April 1941; President's Report (Askew), Commission Minutes, 10 July 1941. Sports activities continued on a voluntary basis.

75. Pres, 7 August 1941. Keuch intended to return but changed his plans after the U.S. entered the war.

76. Life, 8 May 1939.

George Gannam was the first Savannahian to die in World War II. His younger brother Michael Gannam was at Armstrong at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In November 1936, the R.A.F. over Gibraltar. Arthur Davis died in a training war.

His talents, along with those of Hoyt Ware, Robert Gordon, and Arthur Jeffords, gave the early Inkwell a distinctive creative character. All four men served in the armed forces during World War II. His younger brother Michael Gannam was an Armstrong woman in military service. Ten names were listed as missing or prisoners of war, four of whom had been liberated. Nineteen names were listed as ‘deceased,’ with the implication that their deaths were war-related.

In a special ceremony in the fall of 1999, Armstrong awarded Alvie Smith and Michael Gannam their belated diplomas. Both had continued their education after the war and received degrees elsewhere.

Frank Crehbaum interview.

The collection is very comprehensive and particularly attentive to wedding announcements. It is most useful as a source for articles in the evening newspaper, which has full of useful as a source for articles in the evening newspaper, and particularly attentive to wedding announcements. It is most useful as a source for articles in the evening newspaper, for which there is no index available.

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Frank Crehbaum interview.
33. Hawes suggested that two Commission members might out just what was involved. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 15 February 1946. Initially the Commission had reservations about the arrangement with the Center. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 13 July 1944.

31. Joe Killoris interview; Bob Strozier interview.


34. Commission Minutes, 18 February 1948.


37. SMN, 27 November 1947.


40. Inkwull, 19 January 1949. Previously, "The Dump" had been the name the students gave to the non-college owned shack shop across the street. Different generations of Armstrong students knew different Dumps.

41. Inkwull, 26 January 1954.

42. Inkwull, 31 March 1950.


44. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 27 July 1948.


46. The pre-war programs in liberal arts, home economics, and commerce continued, but the commerce degree was now directed primarily toward secretarial training.


49. The Armstrong Revolute, Issue 1, 1 November 1945. AA, Box 12, file 1. The group financed and published the paper themselves. After the first issue, "Armstrong" disappeared from the banner. I have found four surviving issues, two from the fall of 1945 and two from the fall of 1946, reflecting a primary interest in campus elections. I am grateful to Mr. McGinty for providing me with copies that he had saved.

50. Inkwull, 26 October 1945. McGinty's party established its teams before its newspaper, a sequence which probably shows their order of priorities.

51. Revolute, 8 November 1945.


53. Inkwull, November 1946.

54. Revolute, 1 November 1946.


57. Turtle Times, 13 May 1948.


60. Turtle Times, 21 May 1948.


62. Inkwull, 3 November 1948.

63. Inkwull, 1 November 1948.

64. Commission Minutes, 2 November 1948.

65. Inkwull, 8 November 1948.

66. Inkwull, 15 November 1948.

67. Eight issues of The Turtle Times survive in the Armstrong Archives. The issues extend from October 1947 through May 1948. Lee Goodwin Alexander remembers seeing a meeting between an angry parent and President Hawes that left Hawes very unnerved. She also remembers Hawes saying that when one particular student crossed the stage at graduation he intended to give him a bone-crushing handshake that the student would never forget. Joe Magee terms a likely candidate for the honor.

68. Inkwull Extra, 7 October 1949.

69. Interview with Archie Whitefield. I have found no surviving copies of The Director.

70. Inkwull, 10 February 1950.

71. Inkwull, 10 March 1950.


73. Inkwull, 3 May 1950; Harriet Killoris interview.

74. Inkwull, 2 June 1950.

75. Hal Greene, "Introduction to a New Universe," Inkwull, 22 May 1946.


82. Inkwull, 8 November 1948, 17 November 1948, 10 December 1948. Orson Beecher invited Archie Whitefield to go to one of the meetings. Archie Whifield interview.

83. See college Bulletins for 1946 and 1947 and graduation programs for subsequent years. Graduation programs for 1948 and 1953 are missing. AA, Box 7-B.

84. Bob Strozier interview.


87. Inkwull, 17 April 1947.

88. Finance Committee Minutes, Commission Minutes, 8 April 1947.

89. SMN, 14 April 1947.

90. Pres, 9 June 1948. Hawes preferred a gymnasia closer to the college and identified a site on the corner of Gaston and Barnard as a possibility, but the necessary funds were not available. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 6 April 1949.

91. Inkwull, 30 September 1949.

92. SMN, 2 December 1949.

93. Inkwull, 2 December 1949.

94. SMN, 3 December 1949.

95. Archie Whifield interview.

96. Inkwull, 11 October 1948.

97. Inkwull, 30 March 1949, 13 April 1949.


100. Clippings Scrapbook, December 1950.


102. Inkwull, 21 April 1950; Geechee 1950.

103. SMN, 3 June 1947.

104. Clippings Scrapbook, October 1947.


106. Lee Goodwin Alexander interview.

107. SMN, 3 February 1949.

108. Inkwull, 13 April 1949, 26 May 1949. See also Playhouse 1947-1950 materials in AA, Box 11, file 1. These materials come from Shirley Hoffman, an active student participant in Thomas's theater program. The Bulletin for 1949-1950 claimed that the festival "received nation-wide recognition."


110. Inkwull, 2 June 1950. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 18 July 1950. Shirley Hoffman suggests that the ability of the troupe to continue their performances during Thomas's lengthy recovery period may have led to the conclusion that the drama activity could be scaled back and covered satisfactorily by one of the English faculty. Letter from Shirley Hoffman, 27 July 1994. Thomas became director of a new community theater under the auspices of the Telfair Academy. SMN, 14 May 1950.
111. SMN, 31 January 1946.

112. SMN, 31 February 1946; President's Report, Commission Minutes, 14 February 1946.

113. SMN, 25 July 1946.

114. SMN, 28 July 1946.

115. SMN, 31 July 1946. The original plan suggested a five-year period of operation until facilities at Athens could handle the additional applicants. A new branch campus in Moultrie, Georgia, would handle veterans interested in agriculture, but all others would be referred to Savannah.


117. All of the correspondence, undated, appears as part of the Commission Minutes for 13 February 1947.

118. Peus, 4 July 1947, 10 July 1947. Kennedy was a former Regent of the University System.

119. SMN, 13 November 1947. A minority report proposed the merger of Armstrong, the Hunter Branch, and the Herry Institute to create a college specializing in work supportive of the pulp and paper industry. The "paper college" project, or more formally a "college of industrial and forest products," provoked enough interest for the Board of Regents to appoint an investigating committee that met twice in Savannah. No proposal ensued. See SMN, 8 April 1948, 8 May 1948, 9 May 1948, 12 May 1948. The Commission Minutes do not mention the issue.

120. SMN, 14 January 1948.

121. SMN, 15 January 1948.

122. Dyer, 261-262. Dyer describes the establishment of Armstrong, the Hunter Branch, and the Herry Institute to create a college specializing in work supportive of the pulp and paper industry. The "paper college" project, or more formally a "college of industrial and forest products," provoked enough interest for the Board of Regents to appoint an investigating committee that met twice in Savannah. No proposal ensued. See SMN, 8 April 1948, 8 May 1948, 9 May 1948, 12 May 1948. The Commission Minutes do not mention the issue.

123. SMN, 26 May 1948. SMN, 15 May 1948. A small number of Armstrong students also took summer courses, but in the days before air-conditioning interest in summer school was very limited.

124. Commission Minutes, 26 May 1948; President's Report, 22 July 1948. The summer arrangement produced $16,000 for Armstrong's strained budget.

125. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 18 April 1946, 13 February 1947. See also Bulletin, 1946-47 and 1948-49. Students outside of Chatham County paid $60 per quarter; out of state students paid $75 per quarter. According to Hawes, the VA would pay the highest rate listed in the Bulletin. In-state students at the University of Georgia paid $47.50 per quarter in 1947. Armstrong next raised its tuition in 1951-52 to a single rate of $55. See Bulletin, 1951-52.

126. President's Report, Commission Minutes, August 1949, 9 July 1947. The Playhouse always benefited from patrons in the community, most notably Mrs. Trousdale.


128. Ibid.

129. President's Report, Commission Minutes, August 1949.

130. Commission Minutes, 10 February 1950; SMN, 15 January 1950. The city provided $75,000, or 56%, of the college's budget for the year.

131. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 18 July 1950. Six faculty positions were cut, along with one administrative position, the business manager. Hawes took over the responsibilities of the business office.


133. Geechee, 1951.

134. Clippings Scrapbook, August 1951.

135. SMN, 4 October 1950.

136. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 1 November 1950.

137. President's Report, 10 February 1950.

138. The Strayer Report of December 1949 proposed that the junior colleges of the University System be realigned with secondary schools under the State Board of Education, where they could continue to prepare students for transfer to baccalaureate programs and offer adult education programs to the local community. The Board of Regents did not adopt any of the Strayer Report's recommendations concerning junior colleges. Fincher, 36-39.

139. Faculty letter, 2 April 1951, presented to the Commission meeting of 10 May 1951.

140. Pres, 2 June 1951. The comment on the city's debt was based on the comptroller's report for the first four months of the year. The mayor and others challenged the allegation.

141. Ibid.

142. The Housing Authority operated Garden Homes, Yamazrae Village, and Fellwood Homes. The members of the Housing Authority Commission included Herbert Keyton, a frequent member of the College Commission, and Judge Hugh Stephens, husband of faculty member Margaret Stephens. SMN, 15 June 1951. The personal connections may have influenced the decision or may simply have made them aware of the revenue source.

143. Herschel V. Jenkins to Margaret Stephens and Orson Beecher, 5 July 1951, Commission Minutes, June-July 1951. See also President's Report, Commission Minutes, August 1951. Jenkins' comments at the Council meeting were supportive of the college. Hawes also supported and encouraged the faculty action. The figures cited in the faculty request came from regional and national statistics as well as from the salaries paid in local high schools and local industry. The request did not use figures from the University System. The treasurer of the University System told Hawes that the salary increases at Armstrong would put them slightly above the $3,500 average paid to faculty in the System's junior colleges. James E. Blisset to Foreman Hawes, 31 July 1951, Commission Minutes.

144. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 16 November 1951.

145. SMN, 29 December 1951.

146. Ibid.

147. Harmon Caldwell to [Commission member] William Murphy, 25 November 1951, Commission Minutes. Caldwell reminded the Commission that Ernest Lowe was still director of the University's Extension Program and would not do anything harmful to Armstrong.


149. President's Report and Commission Minutes, 30 July 1952. The modification removed Hawes's opening sentence ("Armstrong College is in serious financial difficulty"); and it deleted the statement of the reduced allocation from the city.

150. SMN, 25 December 1952.

151. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 9 July 1953.

152. Ibid, 31 October 1952.


154. Ibid, 31 October 1952. The benefits for Korean War veterans were not as generous as those for World War II veterans. Korean War veterans paid tuition and fees when they registered, with reimbursement checks arriving subsequently. See Bulletin, 1953-54. World War II veterans, with a certificate of eligibility, did not make up-front payments.

155. No specific veteran's group appeared in the Bulletin, The Inkwull, or the Geechee following the Korean War.

156. Inkwull, 14 November 1952.


158. Commission Minutes, 9 July 1953.

159. Commission Minutes, 18 November 1954.


162. Bulletin, 1953-54. Evening instructors were part-time.

163. Bulletin, 1954-55. Business courses had long been a staple in the evening program. Engineering expanded from day to evening classes. Transportation was a new field, offering a two-year degree and a terminal one-year program.

164. Geechee, 1951. A picture of Mr. Duheny teaching a class for Union Bag employees describes the swing-schedule arrangement.

165. Bulletin, 1954-55. The college stressed this possibility, though it would depend on how well the courses fit into a particular degree program. It was not simply a matter of credits and hours.


167. SMN, 3 September 1951.

168. Lee Goodwin Alexander interview, Joseph Killorin interview.


175. Humes, 222-223.


177. Ibid. Until 1950, Savannah State was known as Georgia State College.


179. Jack Porter Memoir, AA, manuscript collection.

180. Chairman Jenkins proposed the change. Commission Minutes, 15 December 1948.
Chapter 5 Notes

1. Albert Stoddard interview.
2. Commission Minutes, 19 October 1949; President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 16 January 1952.
4. SMN, 22 October 1955.
5. The destruction of the old City Market occurred in 1954. The preservation of the Isaiah Davenport house led to the establishment of the Historic Savannah Foundation in 1955.
7. Of the city’s $4.5 million budget for 1955, Armstrong’s portion was $72,000. SMN, 24 November 1954. Financial issues were especially sensitive to the city after a “scathing assessment” by an outside consultants firm in the summer of 1955 concluded that the city had a current net deficit of nearly a million dollars. Cofer, 30.
8. Inkwell, 14 February 1955.
10. Quoted by Hawes in President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 21 July 1955.
11. Foreman Hawes to Harmon Baldwin, 30 May 1955; Caldwell to Hawes, 31 May 1955, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Record Group 35, Sub-group 1, Series 31, Box 4, File “Establishment of Armstrong State College,” hereafter GDA, “Establishment of ASC.” See also SMN, 6 May 1955.
18. Fincher, 44.
19. Pros, 9 November 1955. The public schools operated under the authority of Chatham County, not the city.
20. SMN, 15 November 1955.
21. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 18 February 1955. According to Hawes, the college had twenty classrooms, eight of which were actually constructed to be classrooms. Similarly, the college operated eight laboratories, only three of which were built for that purpose.
22. SMN, 31 October, 1954. The Donner Foundation, established by William H. Donner, maintained an interest in medical research and in educational institutions. In 1945, the Foundation acquired a substantial amount of stock in the Savannah Electric and Power Company, after which Mr. Donner made frequent visits to the city and developed an interest in the city’s welfare. Lee C. McClurkin, president of SEPCO, negotiated the grant for the college.
24. SMN, 12 January 1956. Hawes emphasized the schedule of classes for shift workers that allowed “the student to shift from one class to another depending on his work hours.”
25. Bulletin, 1955-56. The labeling of these programs was certainly creative and visionary as well as helpful to students in planning a course of study. The new programs consisted of the general college core curriculum and specific courses in biology and chemistry.
26. The Commission Minutes do not report the final amount raised from the campaign, and newspaper reports generally included gifts received in earlier years, which boosted the appearance of generous donations. The campaign also operated on several fronts at once, for endowment giving, new construction, and alumni membership donations. Sifting these figures, I would estimate that perhaps $6,000 was raised in this first effort. SMN, 12 July 1956.
27. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 12 July 1956.
28. SMN, 8 August 1956, 6 November 1956.
29. Hawes to Minglehoff, 18 April 1956, in President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 12 July 1956. Hawes had identified this area as of interest to the college on previous occasions. The reference to the cost of the real estate reflected the 1956 condition of the property in question.
30. Pros, 12 July 1956. The newspaper mentioned “other space in the vicinity of the college which could be used for building space.”
31. Caldwell to Hawes, 8 March 1956, GDA, “Establishment of ASC.”
32. M. Gordon Brown, Assistant Chancellor, to Frank Foley, Columbus, Ga., 16 April 1956, GDA, 37-13-26, Box 1; General Assembly, State Junior College Study Committee of 1957, hereafter GDA, State Jr. College Committee.
33. Minutes of the Board of Regents, 10 October 1956. The Education Committee of the Board reported that Savannah’s officials planned to “appeal to the governor and the General Assembly of Georgia for State funds for the partial support of the Armstrong Junior College in Savannah.”
34. Pros, 26 January 1957. The two other cities were also in contact with the governor. The Armstrong Commission had considered a joint effort with Columbus but decided against it since Columbus had no public junior college as yet and the Commission felt that Armstrong could make a stronger case acting alone.
36. SMN, 28 January 1957.
37. Ibid. The increased amount included funds to acquire new property.
38. Ibid.
39. SMN, 1 February 1957. The article noted that twenty-six SEPCO employees attended Armstrong’s Evening College.
40. SMN, 1 February 1957, editorial.
41. Pros, 31 January 1957.
42. Pros, 4 February 1957. Union Bag had made a similar gift in 1953.
43. Inkwell, 23 January 1957.
44. SMN, 24 February 1957.
45. Pros, 14 February 1957.
46. SMN, 25 February 1957.
47. Commission Minutes, 28 June 1957. President Hawes reported $15,000, but Dr. Victor believed that $140,000 was a more accurate figure.
48. SMN, 27 October 1956.
51. SMN, 20 March 1957.
52. Commission Minutes, 28 March 1957.
53. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 28 March 1957. This report coincided with the Commission meeting with the school board members to discuss the Barnard Street School option.
54. SMN, 31 December 1956; Clippings Scrapbook, January 1957.
55. SMN, 6 September 1957.
57. Hawes’ budget for 1958 projected $97,266 for daytime faculty as compared with $45,850 for evening instructors. Commission Minutes, 29 October 1957.
58. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 28 March 1957.
59. Inkwell, 1 March 1957. The initial announcement of the technical program stated that its courses would be “exactly the same as regular college courses. Letter grades will be given, and college standards rigidly maintained.” SMN, 6 November 1956. The Inkwell pointed to rumors that the evening classes might drop the parallel reading requirement.
60. Meeting of the State Junior College Committee, 6 May 1957, GDA, State Jr. College Committee, Box 1: The Augusta representative was future governor Carl Sanders. Hubert Dewberry served as the Regents’ eyes and ears in a way far beyond what might be suggested by his official title. He was a significant figure in many of Armstrong’s early dealings with the University System.
63. “Heating of the Junior College Legislative Committee, July 15-17, 1957,” GDA, State Jr. College Committee, Box 1. Armstrong first offered an engineering program in 1948-49. Twelve students completed the one-year program in 1949 according to the commencement program of that year. The 1948-49 catalog listed eight engineering courses. By 1951, the course listings dropped to four and thereafter fluctuated between four and seven, probably depending on the personnel available to teach them. The number of graduates from the program also dropped, and no graduates of the engineering program are listed in the commencement program for June 1957. In the summer of 1957, when the above discussion took place, the engineering program was still present in the Armstrong catalog as a two-year plan of study. By this time, the program had the resources of the Technical Institute instructors.
64. Dr. Zack Henderson of Georgia Teachers College in Statesboro, for example, did not believe that Armstrong would hold enrollment in Statesboro.
65. Ibid. A secondary issue at the hearing was the attrition of first and second year students in the state's four-year schools. Regents Chairman Robert Arnold opened the hearing by observing that less than 40% of the freshmen in the state's senior colleges continued through to graduation. Students who were not serious about college were not taking up needed space. The implication was that additional junior colleges might screen indifferent students out of higher education, or at least out of the University of Georgia. See other correspondence on this subject in the papers of the State Jr. College Committee.
66. "Heating of the Junior College Legislative Committee At The DeSoto Hotel, Savannah, Georgia, August 21, 1957," GDA, State Jr. College Committee, Box 1; hereafter cited as "Savannah Transcript."
69. Ibid., 2.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., 13.
72. Ibid., 14-15.
73. Ibid., 16.
74. Ibid., 18.
75. Ibid., 28-29. Mingleldoff mentioned the Barnard Street School that had been offered to the college, and Cheatham suggested that Dewberry examine that property as well.
76. Committee member and future governor Carl Sanders always stated that the California trip influenced his thinking decisively.
77. Records of the two other hearings can be found in the GDA materials of the State Junior College Committee.
78. SMN, 6 September 1957. The enrollment figure constitutes head-count. Evening students and Technical Institute students were usually part-time.
79. Commission Minutes, 29 October 1957. The two-year secretarial program had continued without interruption.
81. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 29 October 1957.
82. Commission Minutes, 12 December 1957.
83. Press, 16 December 1957.
84. A December 14, 1957 editorial referred to "the emphasis so recently placed on science education by the trend in world events." The State Junior College Committee heard a direct reference to the Sputnik launch from the Chief of Staff at Fort Benning during the committee's hearing in Columbus in November.
85. Carl Sanders to Hubert Dewberry, 14 December 1957, GDA, State Jr. College Committee, Box 1. The report and the draft of the bill that it produced are part of the records of the State Jr. College Committee.
86. SMN, 5 January 1958.
89. SMN, 22 January 1958.
90. SMN, 6 February 1958.
93. Press, 11 April 1958, Both Columbus and Augusta were represented on the Board of Regents.
94. Press, 10 April 1958.
96. SMN, 26 April 1958.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. "Application To The State Board of Regents By Armstrong College Of Savannah For Approval Under the State Junior College Law," GDA, "Establishment of ASC." A reader, presumably in the Chancellor's Office, made a marginal note that the enrollment projection was "obviously not F.T.E." The reader also ticked off each of the college's three-year programs and noted that the total number of students in all technical programs was twenty-five.
101. The dates suggest that the criteria may have been prepared after the Armstrong documents had been submitted.
102. GDA, "Establishment of ASC."
103. Ibid., "Operating Policies."
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid., "Tentative."
106. SMN, 14 May 1958.
107. Ibid.
108. SMN, 15 May 1958. The primary news in the article was that the new college in Columbus would be part of the University System.
110. Representing the college and the city were Herschel Jenkins, Joseph Harrison, Irving Victor, H.Y. Charbonnier, and Mayor Mingleldoff. President Hawes appeared in the group photo printed in the newspaper, but his name is not mentioned in the list of Armstrong representatives. The officials from the Board of Regents were Chairman Robert O. Arnold, Chancellor Harmon Caldwell, Howard H. Callaway, Everett Williams, and J.H. Dewberry.
113. Press, 2 June 1958. The statement reflected the thinking of the times that did not consider Savannah State College as an option for the students that Armstrong served.
114. Harmon Caldwell to Lee Mingleldoff, 9 July 1958, Commission Minutes. The list of faculty questions appears in the Commission Minutes preceding Caldwell's letter.
115. Ibid. The "Summation" report in May had also expressed concern about the extent of the college's control over the offerings of the Technical Institute.
116. SMN, 3 July 1958.
119. SMN, 14 July 1958.
120. SMN, 17 July 1958.
121. SMN, 23 July 1958.
Chapter 6 Notes

1. _Pres_, 14 March 1961. The effort achieved only modest results.


3. Ibid.


5. At least one African American soldier at Hunter had taken an evening course during the postwar years. See Chapter 4. The circumstances of the new, formal application were different.

6. The above comes from Joe Killorin. Joe Killorin interview.

7. _Bulletin_, 1959-1960, 11-13. The Bulletin printed the full text of the Regents’ resolution, as was required of all System schools.

8. Armstrong’s admission statement now included a “right to examine and investigate the moral worth, character, and personality of the applicant.” Such a statement had not appeared in the catalog of the previous year. Ibid., 16.


11. Ibid.


14. _SMN_, 13 March 1959; _Commission Minutes_, 21 April 1959. The legislation would affect new applicants, not students who were already enrolled.

15. Harmon Caldwell to Stuart J. Robertson, 23 March 1959, Georgia Division of History and Archives, 53-1-51, Armstrong State College, General File, 1958-1966, hereafter GDA, ASC General File. Caldwell himself was personally opposed to the segregationist position of the Board of Regents. Brazeal, 362. Robertson was an Armstrong alumnus.


17. _SMN_, 24 April 1959, editorial.

18. _SMN_, 24 April 1959.

19. Faculty Minutes, 11 September 1959 and 21 October 1959, GDA, ASC Faculty Minutes. Fall enrollment showed 509 day students and 647 evening students, a headcount drop of 202 students. The loss of a bomber unit at Hunter Field also affected the numbers.


27. _SMN_, 13 May 1960, 18 May 1960. A news photo taken through the trees of the square showed the Barnard Street School captioned at “Armstrong College Gym Site.”

28. Hawes to Killorin, 19 May 1960, AA, Box 23, file 13; Faculty Minutes, 18 May 1960, GDA, ASC Faculty Minutes.


30. _Pres_, 26 March 1960; _SMN_, 5 June 1960. The candidates were Frank Cheatham, Spence M. Grayson, and John S. Hood.


32. _SMN_, 27 September 1960; _Pres_, 29 September 1960; President’s Report, _Commission Minutes_, 18 November 1960. The new admissions procedures required applications to be submitted twenty-one days before the beginning of the term in order to allow time for the prescribed tests and screening interviews that were the segregation safeguard. Hawes believed that this requirement contributed to the enrollment decline.

33. See correspondence between Donald E. Naimsmith, Director of the Savannah Office of Urban Renewal, and Harmon Caldwell, 17 June 1960, 24 June 1960, 1 July 1960, GDA, ASC Urban Renewal, 1960-62, folder 2. Two ample folders concern the urban renewal project and the controversy that it sparked.

34. Faculty Minutes, 1 November 1960, GDA, ASC Faculty Minutes; President’s Report, _Commission Minutes_, 18 November 1960.
35. Maclean succeeded Mayor Mingleford who resigned to run for the office of Chairman of the County Commission.

36. Alfred Owens interview.

37. SMN, 7 March 1968; Alfred Owens interview. The first news story confirms the general course of the preceding events, but most of the information I have used comes from Alfred Owens’ personal account. He is quite clear on the point that the NAACP did not initiate his action and that the organization subsequently chastised him for it. At a time when the NAACP exercised great care in selecting students to break the educational color barrier, Owens did not fit their guidelines. His honorable military record was an asset, but the age law as well as the fact that he was seeking initial admission worked against him. Transfer students could make a stronger case for admission to white colleges because they came with a pre-existing record of college work.

38. See Calvin Trilling, An Education in Georgia, (New York: Viking Press, 1963) for the classic account of this story. Both Hunter and Holmes entered the University of Georgia as transfer students, a year and a half after their initial applications. The NAACP carefully orchestrated the entire process.

39. SMN, 7 March 1961. The financial comparison is questionable. Savannah State had a larger student body and a larger budget.

40. Eugene Cook to Foreman Hawes, 22 March 1961, GDA, ASC, Admissions, 1959-64.

41. SMN, 23 March 1961.

42. SMN, 28 March 1961.

43. Alfred Owens interview.


45. SMN, 16 March 1961.


48. A. J. Waring, Letter to the editor, SMN, 22 March 1961. The detailed map will be helpful in following the discussion of this issue. The debate always assumed a close familiarity with Savannah streets and the character of the neighborhoods, a fact to be remembered with sympathy for distant Regents to whom the names Gaston, Gwinnett, Gordon, Bull, Barnard, and Whitaker meant nothing.


50. Harmon Caldwell to Manning G. Davis, 12 May 1961, and Dassie Denny to Harmon Caldwell, 31 August 1961, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2. Denny had recently purchased a house on Monterey Square at 432 Bull Street and feared that the expansion plan would demolish the house as the site for a new college library.


52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Albert Stoddard described the standoff as a “war” of strong feelings and overly strong words. Albert Stoddard interview.


56. Harmon Caldwell to Spence Grayson, 8 September 1961, Grayson to Caldwell, 15 September 1961, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2. This comment may be connected with the action of Mills B. Lane five months later in March 1962, though I have found no evidence to prove the connection.

57. SMN, 13 September 1961.

58. Pem, 12 September 1961; SMN, 12 September 1961. Maclean used the word “mail” to describe the new design.


60. Ibid.

61. SMN, 16 September 1961.


64. Hawes to Caldwell, 28 September 1961, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2. On the same day, by separate letters, Hawes sent to the Chancellor Charles Waring’s September 24 letter to the editor along with other local clippings. He repeated his suggestion for a clear announcement about future four-year status as a way of ending the controversy. He also suggested that the Regents tell the mayor that if the preferred property could not be acquired it might be necessary to move Armstrong away from its present location. Apparently Hawes assumed that this possibility would not be well-received locally. Although not mentioned by Hawes, the Regents’ plans to establish a junior college in Brunswick hovered around the edges of the Savannah issue. Mayor Maclean was quoted as saying that if Savannah could not resolve its differences of opinion the Board of Regents “might take their money and invest it in Valdosta or Brunswick or somewhere else.” SMN, 4 September 1961. The same opinion, that “the money would go to some smaller town if the lands were not made available without argument,” appeared in another correspondence. See Mrs. Raymond Fowler to Carey Williams, 12 February 1962, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2.


70. Ibid.

71. Foreman Hawes to Harmon Caldwell, 5 October 1961. The properties occupied the two trust lots on the west side of the square.

72. SMN, 10 October 1961.

73. Ibid. Savannah already had a four-year college, Savannah State College, but the comment reflects the thinking of the early 1960s.

74. SMN, 11 October 1961.

75. SMN, 18 October 1961.

76. SMN, 24 October 1961.


78. Ibid. Map 4 is the reference map for these statistics. A number of physicians had offices in or adjacent to the site affected by the expansion plan.

79. Lewis M. Richardson, President, Savannah Real Estate Commissioners, 23 November 1961, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 1.

80. Gordon Street property owners to Robert O. Arnold, 29 September 1961, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 1. This folder contains a large map of the area, with colored shadings to match numbered comments. The comments describe the Alee Temple as “desirable” for the Regents to purchase. The other trust lot is noted as “especially desirable” and “highly controversial,” with acquisition projected for a later date. The map also identified the southwest block of Bull and Jones Streets as suitable for the long-range plans of the college. The comments indicate that the Bull Street preservationists were justified in their fears.

81. SMN, 9 November 1961. The price reported for the building was $65,000.

82. Foreman Hawes to Harmon Caldwell, 18 December 1961, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 1.

83. Alexander A. Lawrence to Harmon Caldwell, 19 December 1961, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 1. Lawrence admitted that he and the “hundreds of other Savannahians” were a minority.


86. Frank E. Butler (Savannah Office of Urban Renewal) to Sydney Carter and Associates and Thomas-Driscoll-Hutton, Inc. (planners), 26 January 1962, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 1. See also Pem, 26 January 1962.


88. Maclean’s letter (23 March 1961) had included the words “the plan at present...” (my emphasis), but the present had changed.


91. Ibid.

92. Seven letters to Regent Carey Williams bear the February 12 date. GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2.
97. Lucy Bowne McIntire to Carey Williams, n.d., GDA,
ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2. The designation “not a
Savannahian” was, and continues to be, a heavy indict-
ment whenever controversial issues arise. But the favor-
able attitude toward the college is also important to note.
98. Virginia Heard to Carey Williams, 12 February 1962,
GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2. Virginia Heard was
Assistant Superintendent of Chatham County Schools
in 1935. She misremembered the date of the college’s
founding. She assisted Gamble in the spring of 1935
when the mayor made his big push for the junior college
project.
99. Mrs. Raymond Fowler to Carey Williams, 12 February
1962, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2.
100. Robert Arnold to Mrs. George Noble Jones, 8 March
1962, GDA, ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2.
101. Robert Arnold to William Gann, 9 March 1962, GDA,
ASC, Urban Renewal, folder 2. See William Gann to
Robert Arnold, 8 March 1962, GDA, ASC, Urban
Renewal, folder 2.
102. Chancellor Caldwell’s mail included a letter from Mrs.
Lane, dated February 9. The Chancellor acknowledged
it with a “Dear Anne” letter on February 16. Mrs. Lane’s
d Letter does not appear in the file. Caldwell to Mrs. Mills
B. Laney, Jr., 16 February 1962, GDA, ASC, Urban
Renewal, folder 2.
103. Minutes of the Board of Regents, 14 March 1962. The
Board also voted to inform the city of Savannah that it
was no longer interested in plans for Urban Renewal.
104. Irving Victor interview.
106. Irving Victor, who worked actively on the expansion
plans, saw the future Armstrong buildings in the down-
town area as compatible with traditional Savannah archi-
tectural styles. Irving Victor interview.
108. SMN, 8 April 1962. This report described the preferred
site as a 600-acre tract.
109. SMN, 23 April 1962.
110. SMN, 15 April 1962.
111. SMN, 18 July 1962.
112. Caldwell to Hawes, 6 August 1962, GDA, ASC, Presi-
dent Foreman Hawes, 1957-1964, hereafter GDA, ASC,
Hawes Correspondence.
114. Sara Dewberry interview.
181. Prew, 8 December 1964. Wu was educated at Gwinnett College in the U.S., but he had subsequently returned to China and held a number of official posts: mayor of Shanghai, governor of Taiwan, and Minister of Information for the Nationalist government.

182. Commission Minutes, 19 June 1964. Membership was elective and required a period of residency that would delay Ashmore's eligibility. Haws suggested that Killorin become the interim liaison member, since he already met the residency requirement and was well known in Savannah.

183. SMN, 21 November 1964; Prew, 26 January 1965.

184. For Hawes, see Annual Report, 1959-1960. For Crider, see SMN, 5 March 1965.

185. Faculty Minutes, 3 February 1965.

186. See below.

187. SMN, 16 December 1965.

188. Thirty years later, in the 1990s, Bob Strozier could recognize the student names from the downtown days on these desks that were still in use in Gamble Hall.

189. Bob Strozier interview.

190. Lilla Hawes interview. The bench and the chest passed into the possession of the Armstrong history department, where they both remain.

191. In April 2007, Armstrong Alumni Director Patty Parker spotted the portrait (a subsequent reproduction) leaning against a wall in the basement of the Armstrong mansion.

192. W. Clay Adamson to Clermont Lee, 19 January 1966, AA, Box 14, file 1. Adamson was the landscape architect with the Board of Regents. Clermont Lee was the Savannah landscape architect who prepared the preliminary plans for the grounds of the new campus.

193. SMN, 18 May 1966. The Daughters of the American Revolution had been the only other group to express interest in the Armstrong mansion and the adjacent auditorium building, but they were unable to muster the money for a serious bid. The college had briefly occupied and held classes in the Quattlebaum building.

194. SMN, 17 August 1966. See “Certificate of Appraisal, Savannah Real Estate Board, Properties of Armstrong State College in Monterey Ward, Savannah, Ga.”, 21 October 1965, AA, Business Office Records, Box 3, Appraisal file. The appraisal set a value of $124,800 for the Armstrong mansion and the Jenkins auditorium as a combined property. The Lane Building was valued at $24,300, the Quattlebaum Building at $25,000, the Hunt Building at $25,500, and the Gamble Building at $135,000.

195. SMN, 8 February 1967. The Foundation immediately offered options on separate parts of the property. An option for $90,000 went to James A. Williams for the Armstrong Mansion and Jenkins Auditorium. The Quattlebaum Building was sold to Wayne Cunningham for $25,000. The Lane Building went to Mrs. Peter Scardino for $25,000. The Hunt Building went to Coite-Sommers Construction Co. of Vidalia, Ga. for $25,000. Forward Savannah purchased the Gamble Building for $75,000 for community services. SMN, 9 February 1967.


198. Prew, 7 November 1968.

Chapter 7 Notes

1. AJC, 19 December 1965.

2. Inkwell, 6 December 1967.


4. SMN, 21 December 1965.


6. The divorce image comes from Roger K. Warlick, who arrived in Savannah in the fall of 1970 to become head of the Armstrong history department. He felt a tension between the college and certain portions of the community that still evident five years after the move. Roger Warlick interview.

7. Ibid.

8. The college hired Tom Llewellyn, local WSAV newscaster, in July 1967 to handle public relations for the college. Inkwell, 7 July 1967.

9. Susan Panted Conner interview.


11. Irving Victor interview; John Brewer interview.


14. Ashmore believed that the Board of Regents found him an aggravating person who had been hired from out of state and was immediately unhappy with what he found when he arrived. Henry Ashmore interview.

15. See correspondence between Ashmore and Simpson, AA, Box 14, files 9 and 10.


17. SMN, 13 September 1967.

18. In addition to Mingledorff, other advocates for the Hunter site included Malcolm Maclean; Joseph Webber, who was president-elect of the Chamber of Commerce; and State Representative Willis Richardson. The Savannah Morning News offered two editorials in support of the proposal. See SMN, 11 May 1966, 5 November 1966 (editorial), 6 November 1966, 7 November 1966, 15 December 1966 (editorial).

19. Inkwell, 10 February 1966. Ashmore wrote to Chancellor Simpson that the Hunter discussions were causing a morale problem among faculty and alumni who feared that a branch of the University of Georgia or Georgia Tech might move onto the site to the detriment of Armstrong. Ashmore to Simpson, 25 April 1966, AA, Box 2, file 2.


21. An alternative option took the form of apartments, not dormitories, constructed by private developers in 1968 on Middleground Road. SMN, 14 March 1968.


23. This pavement pattern was still evident in many places in 2010.


26. The Armstrong Commission still administered a small fund of college money distinct from state funds, and Irving Victor continued to serve as its chairman.


28. Faculty Minutes, 2 December 1969, AA, Box 8, file 1.

29. The college offered baccalaureate degrees in English, history; political science, psychology, biology; chemistry, math, elementary education, accounting, and management and marketing. Additional degrees included English with teacher certification and History with teacher certification. The graduation ceremony of 1968 ended an odd interval between 1966 and 1967. I have not found graduation programs for those two years, though nine students received the Associate in Arts in June 1966, followed by eleven in August 1966. Twenty graduates received two-year degrees in June 1967, followed by nine in August 1967. Annual Report, 1965-66, 1966-67, AA, Box 3, files 8 and 9.


31. Ashmore made the doctoral expectation very clear to the old faculty. GJSA, ASC, Appointments.


33. Henry Ashmore to Nathan E. Brundidge, 1 June 1972, AA, Box 15, file 19. Brundidge had inquired about the problems involved in a transition from junior college to senior college. Ashmore highlighted the need for changes in leadership and personnel.

34. SMN, 9 February 1966.

35. SMN, 14 February 1966.


37. SMN, 20 April 1966.

38. Inkwell, 18 February 1966.

39. Inkwell, 11 April 1966. Strozier would be involved in a later mascot issue in the 1990s.

40. Inkwell, 14 October 1966, 4 November 1966, 13 December 1966. In 1967 the Student Senate grudgingly accepted the Pirate name and symbol. Inkwell, 6 December 1967. The yearbook dropped the apostrophe from its “Vee” title after 1967, but this history will continue to use it for the sake of consistency.

41. Inkwell, 1 February 1967, 26 October 1967, 19 Inkwell, 8 November 1968.

42. Faculty Minutes, 29 May 1967, 20 September 1967, Executive Committee Minutes, 27 June 1968; Faculty Minutes, 2 July 1968. See also The Inkwell, 17 January 1968.

87. SMN, 23 November 1968.

88. William Fidler to Roy Carroll, 3 January 1969 and 31 October 1968. See also SMN, 4 November 1968, file 16. Ashmore also reported that student evaluations of Dyches case in a small book entitled Hypocrisy in Academe (New York: Vantage Press, 1972), hereafter Hypocrisy. It consists primarily of documents involving the case with intermittent commentary by Ashmore, who was furious at the position taken by the AAUP in the matter. He threatened a lawsuit against the AAUP, and the final censure report was published.

89. Roy Carroll, Chairman, Faculty Professional Welfare Committee, to Henry Ashmore, 21 March 1969, AA, Box 7-3, file 6.

90. Ibid.

91. This portion of the story can be followed in Henry Ashmore's Hypocrisy, 40-47.

92. Six faculty members had convened the organizational meeting of the Armstrong chapter on a Friday afternoon in April 1965 in Johnny Ganem's restaurant on the corner of Habersham and Gaston Streets, a favorite gathering place for faculty during the college's downtown days. Onson Beecher called to order the founding meeting, which elected Leslie Davenport as the first president. Minutes of the Organizational Meeting, 3 May 1965, AA, Box 7-3, file 2.

93. The chapter's recorded vote on the Dyches matter was 12 to 1 to urge administrative reconsideration and an opportunity for Dyches to receive a hearing before a final decision about his leave of absence. Bob Strozier to Roy Carroll, 12 March 1969. Ashmore made a point of the small number of AAUP faculty, noting that the full faculty numbered seventy at the time of the incident. Ashmore, Hypocrisy, 19.


96. Ashmore, Hypocrisy, 38.


98. AA, Box 7-3, file 6. The new procedures appeared in the Armstrong Statutes for 1972. They provided for temporary suspension, following review by the President and the Chancellor, "in any situation where a faculty member is charged with violating a state or federal law or is indicted for such a violation." Armstrong State College Statutes, 1972, 13.


100. Ibid.


104. AA, Box 7-3, file 5. In 1976, Ashmore appointed a faculty committee, UFF, chaired by Adeline Barber, to propose options for redress to Dyches that might resolve the censure issue. The committee developed five options: 1) monetary settlement; 2) monetary settlement and an apology to Dyches; 3) monetary settlement and a clarifying statement concerning the removal of Dyches from teaching; 4) an apology; and 5) a clarifying statement concerning the removal of Dyches from teaching. Adeline Barber to Henry Ashmore, 1 February 1977, AA, Box 7-3, file 3. The censure remained in place when President Ashmore retired in July 1982.


106. Bob Strozier interview.

107. In October 1968, the Callaway Foundation, Inc. established a trust fund to honor Fuller E. Callaway by establishing Professional Chairs at thirty-three state and private colleges and universities. The Callaway professor received a 50% salary supplement above the designated salary. Spartan Summary, October 1968.

108. Joe Buck interview.

109. In October 1968, the Callaway Foundation, Inc. established a trust fund to honor Fuller E. Callaway by establishing Professional Chairs at thirty-three state and private colleges and universities. The Callaway professor received a 50% salary supplement above the designated salary. Spartan Summary, October 1968.

110. Joe Buck interview.

111. Joe Buck interview.

112. Commencement Program, June 1970. Programs in health professions and education began during the "period of adjustment," but they will be discussed more fully in Chapters 9 and 10. The one non-health student among the two-year graduates received a degree in police administration.

113. Dewey E. Dodds to Henry Ashmore, 24 December 1970, AA, De-segregation Box 2, file 7. Dodds was the Acting Regional Civil Rights Director for Education in the Atlanta Office of Civil Rights. His letter compared the numbers reported by Ashmore for fall 1969 and fall 1970.

Chapter 8 Notes

1. Ashmore found that strong light bothered his eyes.


4. Henry Ashmore interview.
23. Faculty Minutes, 4 April 1972.
26. Faculty Minutes, 14 September 1977.
27. SMN, 19 July 1975.
29. SMN, 19 July 1975.
30. Bob Strozier interview; Dean Propst interview.
31. Faculty Minutes, 22 July 1975, AA, Box 8, file 5.
32. Propst memo to Ashmore, 24 July 1975, AA, Box 8, file 5.
33. Faculty Minutes, 18 November 1975, 6 April 1976, 22 July 1976.
34. SMN, 8 August 1975.
35. Faculty Minutes, 18 November 1975, 6 April 1976, 9 November 1976.
38. SMN, 6 January 1975.
40. Inkwell, 14 October 1971.
41. Susan Conner interview.
42. Inkwell, 31 July 1974.
43. Anne Hudson conversation.
44. John Brewer interview.
45. For health professions, see Chapter 10.
46. In the fall of 1975, I attended my first faculty meeting with a colleague from another department. We sat near the front on the right. After the meeting, having observed the very obvious seating pattern, I inquired if it made a difference where one sat. The history cohort replied loudly, “Yes!” They were only partly kidding.
48. See Propst’s previous comment, see Faculty Minutes, 1 June 1971, AA, Box 8, file B. For the longer comment, see Propst Memo to the Faculty, 26 March 1972, AA, Box 8, file 2.
49. Faculty Minutes, 19 May 1975, AA, Box 8, file 6; Administrative Council Minutes, 15 December 1977, Stone files.
50. SMN, 9 June 1971. The memory of this occasion holds a cherished place in faculty lore.
51. Gambrell got a second chance and spoke at the August 1971 graduation exercises, but that occasion marked the end of graduation speakers for the Ashmore years.
52. Inkwell, 16 May 1974.
53. SMN, 8 March 1974.
54. Inkwells, (n.d.) Spring Quarter 1974, Special Issue on Intramurals. The famous photo also appeared in the ‘Geechee for 1973-74. The first group of streakers may have been high school students; the duo seem to have been Armstrong students.
55. Inkwell, 1 April 1971 (Sam Berry feature), 8 April 1971 (Carrie Warner feature), 22 April 1971 (like Williams feature).
57. Susan White interview.
60. Inkwell, 10 January 1974.
64. Inkwell, 10 March 1977.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid. Three articles in this issue of The Inkwell dealt with basketball matters: a critical comment from the editor and two feature articles.
68. The legislation was enacted in 1972 but not enforced until 1974.
69. SMN, 10 February 1974. The sports columnist described the financial needs of the Armstrong program and reproached Savannah for not being more supportive.
70. Inkwell, 10 March 1977.
71. Inkwell, 13 April 1977.
73. Inkwell, 13 April 1977.
1. The original designation of the case was Adams v. Weinberger, established as a testament to his leadership.

3. This account concentrates on the Armstrong and Savannah State issues.


7. The sharp-minded opponent was Marsha Ann Gooden. See Chapter 9 for The Inkwell coverage of Savannah State issues.


17. Ibid.


21. Ibid., 2.

23. Ibid., 2. See also GDA, 33-1-200, Box 4, file 1.

25. Ibid., 19.

27. Ibid., 2.

29. Ibid., 13. The reference was to Howard Jordan, who left the presidency of Savannah State College to become Vice Chancellor in 1971.


33. Ibid., 9. The 11% quotation remained in the new plan.

35. Conference on State Planning, 12-13 December 1973, AA, Box 42, file 7. This meeting represented a change in OCR procedure from dealing with each state's individual circumstances to developing a set of standards applicable to them all. Olson and Hage, p. 174.

37. Ibid., 200. See Ashmore and Jackson to Vice Chancellor John W. Hooper, 14 May 1974, GDA, 33-1-200, Box 4, file 4.

40. Ibid.


Chapter 9 Notes


2. The original designation of the case was Adams v. Richardson, since Elliot Richardson was Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare during the Nixon administration when the case began. As the case proceeded it took the name of subsequent HEW secretaries (Adams v. Weinberger, Adams v. Califano), and at its conclusion it was Adams v. Bennett (William Bennett, Secretary of the Department of Education during the Reagan administration). The suit was actually directed against HEW and not the individual states. Judge Pratt presided over the case throughout and issued his final ruling in December 1987, which terminated the complaint on the grounds that the litigants no longer had standing. See The Washington Post 15 December 1987 and 17 December 1987. A further ruling in 1989 allowed the case to be reopened, but it seemed to have run its course. For a useful chronology of the case, see Carol Olson and Joe Hage, "Achieving Social Justice: An Examination of Oklahoma's Response to Adams v. Rich- ardson," Journal of Negro Education, 59, no. 2 (1990): 174-175.

3. This account concentrates on the Armstrong and Savannah State elements of the story. Appendix A offers an outline of each plan and the concurrent developments in Savannah.
The phrasing of the title suggests "Plan for Minority Recruitment." Among those options appeared in subsequent plans and discussions.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ashmore to Dodds, 3 November 1969, AA, Box 42, file 11.

The catalog for 1968-69 and for 1969-70 had no pictures of African American students. The 1969 brochure showed black students in class pictures and activity pictures.

Dodds to Ashmore, 20 November 1969, AA, Box 42, file 11.


"University System of Georgia, Black Student Enrollment in Predominantly White Institutions," AA, Box 44, file 3. The data gave no breakdown of undergraduate and graduate students and therefore may include students in the Joint Graduate Program as well as students in the cooperative programs. The result would be a generous interpretation of the actual racial composition of the Armstrong campus.


An example of this procedure occurred with George Brown in social work. Ashmore to George Brown, 26 April 1974, AA, Box 23A, file 16.

"Plan for Minority Recruitment." The project planned thirty-three African American faculty members. Armstrong never came close to achieving this goal. The Joint Graduate Program and other cooperative programs during the 1970s blur the numbers, and the final program swap brought nine black teacher education programs during the 1970s blur the numbers, and the final program swap brought nine black teacher education programs.


"Abstract on Proposal, Social Work Program with Savannah State," n.d., AA, Box 5, file 21. The date is probably the summer of 1971 since the document refers to the pending transfer of Otis Johnson from part-time at Armstrong to full-time at Savannah State. Johnson became full-time at Savannah State in the fall of 1971. A subsequent letter from Ashmore to Chancellor Simpson in March 1972 concerning the social work program noted that "We were asked to do this in cooperation with Savannah State College." The letter does not indicate who asked for this action, whether the granting agency (HEW or the Chancellor’s office or some other source. Ashmore to Simpson, 24 March 1972, AA, Box 5, file 21.


Ibid.


SMN, 13 July 1971. Satterfield proposed to conduct a series of summer meetings, "harmony meetings," using Armstrong students to lead discussions with high school students. The principal at Johnson High School, James L. Bonnette, was furious at the idea as unwarranted interference by a school board member in school administration and as an insult to every principal… I don’t think I need college students telling me how to integrate my school.” Bonnette resigned in protest.

1973 Plan, AA, Box 42, file 7.


Otis Johnson to John Ball, 20 August 1973, AA, Box 5, file 21. The letter concerned accreditation. Initial accreditation had been denied.

February 1974 Plan, 35. AA, Box 42, file 49.

Satterfield to Elmer Dean, 5 August 1975. Dean was chairman of the Social Science Division at Savannah State. Satterfield expressed concern that SSC "has given only lip service to the Social Work Program." In other correspondence, Satterfield referred to the new SSC coordinator’s declared intent to prepare a brochure that would revise the program’s "white image." Satterfield to Thomas Byers, 21 May 1975, AA, Box 5, file 18. Thomas H. Byers was Dean of the College at SSC.

Social Work had the largest enrollment. Criminal Justice presented another possibility for a joint undergraduate program, but the cooperative effort faltered in its early stages.


Ashmore to Simpson, 6 October 1967, AA, Box 5, file 1.

Systems Summary, July 1971. Assistant Vice Chancellor Hankin R. Pounds met twice with the local college presidents and the faculty in business and teacher education and directed the draft letter that proposed the M.Ed. degree. Dean Propst and Prince Jackson to George Simpson, 50 August 1971, AA, Box 5, file 3.

Eaton, "Requiescat." Eaton emphasized the mixed-race enrollment in the Savannah State program.

Henry Ashmore and Prince Jackson to George Simpson, 26 January 1971, AA, Box 23A, file 8A, and 18 June 1971, AA, Box 4A, file 2A.

SMN, 17 July 1971.

Ashmore and Eaton had exchanged opinions about the location. Eaton to Ashmore, 25 January 1972; Ashmore to Eaton, 4 February 1971, AA, Box 5, file 2.

SMN, 5 June 1972.

Ibid.

Ibid.


James Eaton letter, 1 September 1971, AA, Box 5, file 2.

Eaton to Ashmore, 20 March 1972, AA, Box 600, file 12.

Eaton to Graduate Council, 18 April 1972, AA, Box 5, file 18.

Eaton to Mary Torian (SSC business department head) and Orange Hall (ASC business department head), 30 June 1972, AA, Box 5, file 3. Orange Hall had cited the admissions score set by the accrediting agency and noted that lower admission scores could cause a high failure rate. Hall to Eaton, 6 June 1972, AA, Box 5, file 3.

Eaton to the [Graduate] Academic Affairs Committee, Division Chairman, and Department Heads, 30 October 1973, AA, Box 5, file 13.


Adams to Eaton, Harmon, and Stokes, 4 October 1976, AA, Box 5, file 19.

Eaton to Adams, 6 October 1976, AA, Box 5, file 19.
113. Administrative Meeting, Savannah Graduate Center, 30 December 1971, AA, Box 5, file 5. The Savannah Graduate Center was the initial name proposed for the Joint Graduate Program as a deliberate effort to create a new identity distinct from either Armstrong or Savannah State. The Board of Regents found the name too vague, and both local institutions feared that the broad label might allow the (unwanted) inclusion of other institutions, specifically Savannah Junior College. See Eaton to Ashmore, 20 March 1972, AA, Box 600, file 12.


115. “Position of Savannah State College Graduate Education Staff on Division of Courses,” 27 January 1974, AA, Box 5, file 13.


117. Ibid.

118. Graduate Student Petition (to Presidents Ashmore and Jackson), 2 August 1972, AA, Box 5, file 12.


120. Eaton to Savannah State Graduate Faculty, 29 September 1972, AA, Box 5, file 9.


122. Susan White interview.

123. Thelma Harmond to Prince Jackson, 13 October 1971, AA, Box 5, file 10.

124. Thelma Harmond to Thomas Byers and Dean Propst, 3 November 1971, AA, Box 5, file 3.

125. Adams and Propst to Ashmore, n.d., AA, Box 5, file 16. The report referred to an April 4, 1974 meeting that expressed an attitude that “the teacher education programs were used only as a means of operating a graduate program for the institutions, [and] that academic degrees were then offered under the guise of teacher education.” See also Joe Adams, Annual Report, 1975-1976, 1 July 1975 to 30 June 1976, AA, Box 5, file 19.


127. Bob Strozier to Joe Adams, 18 August 1975, AA, Box 5, file 18. Students could request a No Credit grade in their first graduate course if they performed poorly.


130. From 1973-74 through 1975-76, 155 black students graduated from the Joint Graduate Program with a degree in Elementary Education, compared with 77 white students. See Open Hearings by Ad Hoc Committee of the Board of Regents, 19 August 1977, GDA, 33-1-200, Box 5, file 7.

131. David S. Tatel to The Honorable George E. Busbee, Governor of Georgia, 2 July 1977, GDA, 33-1-200, Box 14, file OCR Correspondence.


133. As a new faculty member in 1975, I attended several joint department meetings of the graduate history faculty of Armstrong and Savannah State. These occasions were professional and courteous but definitely dull.

134. Draft letter from Board of Regents to Joseph Calhoun, Secretary of HEW, 13 December 1977, AA, Box 42, file 3.

135. Tatel to Busbee, 2 July 1977, GDA, 33-1-200, Box 14, file OCR Correspondence.

136. Ibid.

137. The duplication committee began its work as part of the revision of the 1974 Plan. The presidents submitted the proposal to the Chancellor in February 1975.


139. Minutes of the HEW Duplication Committee, 14 February 1975, with Duplication Committee Report attached, AA, Box 43, file 5.

140. President Jackson believed that the proposal did not go far enough. He suggested a gradual increase in the number of courses required on the other campus, shaping all programs into joint (50:50) programs by 1987. He believed that a gradual increase in the number of courses required on the other campus, shaping all programs into joint (50:50) programs by 1987.

141. Simpson to Tatel, 15 December 1977, AA, Box 41, file 2. The December revision was drafted by Regent Milton Jones of Columbus, Georgia and a special Regents Drafting Committee. See Draft letter to David Tatel, 22 November 1977, GDA, 33-1-200, Box 5, file 7.

142. Friedman was appointed to the Board of Regents in January 1976. System Summary, January 1976.

143. SMN, 7 December 1977.

144. SMN, 18 January 1978.

145. SMN, 28 February 1978.

146. SMN, 2 March 1978.

147. SMN, 3 March 1978.

148. SMN, 6 March 1978.

149. SMN, 7 March 1978.

150. The previous year, students from predominantly black Atlanta Junior College appeared at the July 1977 meeting of the Board of Regents, and an uneasy confrontation of shouting and dovetailing ensued. SMN, 28 July 1977.

151. SMN, 9 March 1978.

152. SMN, 10 March 1978.

153. Simpson to Tatel, 8 March 1978, AA, Box 41, file 3.


155. SMN, 27 April 1978.

156. Faculty Minutes, 11 May 1978, Stone files. “Other Options” became a fifth category.

157. SMN, 7 May 1978.

158. SMN, 9 May 1978.

159. Transcribed statement of Dr. Margaret Robinson, delivered May 8, 1978 [to the Community Liaison Committee], AA, Box 44, file 1.

160. Ibid.

161. Ibid.

162. I was present at the forum, and the embarrassment for Armstrong was palpable. Oris Johnson confirms the preparation for the Savannah State presentations. Oris Johnson interview. The minutes of the first public hearing show twenty-seven speakers. Four were identified with Armstrong, seven were student faculty, and both local institutions feared that the broad label might allow the (unwanted) inclusion of other institutions, specifically Savannah Junior College. See Eaton to Ashmore, 20 March 1972, AA, Box 600, file 12.

163. SMN, 9 May 1978.


166. AASU Archives. The event was part of the Save Our Students fund drive.


169. Jobwell, 2 June 1978. After the decision for the program swap was made, an article by Joe Adams, Jr. proposed to transfer all Savannah State students to Armstrong and pare the SSC campus into parking lots. See Jobwell, 1 November 1978.


172. “Report of Armstrong State College Business Administration Faculty,” n.d., AA, Box 44, file 5. The report stated that ASC students scored 25% above the norms and that SSC students scored 50% below the norms.


175. SMN, 5 December 1977.

176. Ibid.


180. Ibid.
Chapter 10 Notes

2. Marilyn Buck interview. Marilyn Buck joined Armstrong’s nursing faculty in 1974 and served in teaching and administrative roles for more than thirty years.
3. Henry Ashmore, speech, 15 October 1965, AA, Box 15A, file 2A. The text of the speech does not indicate where or to whom it was delivered.
5. System Summary, September 1965. The concept of two-year programs for nurses on college campuses was developed by Mildred Montag of Adelphi College in New York between 1952 and 1957 as a result of her research design for such programs at junior and community colleges. See “History of Associate Degree Registered Nurse Programs,” Deanna Cross folder, Stone files.
6. System Summary, March 1966. Armstrong proudly claimed the distinction of being the first, but it was first only by a month. The Regents were creating new nursing programs around the state. In April 1966, they approved a two-year program for Albany Junior College and in July gave preliminary approval for one at the Woman’s College of Georgia. System Summary, April and July 1966.
7. Semon Eisenberg to George Simpson, 18 August 1966, AA, Box 22-1, file 19.
15. Sister Mary Cornile to Fenwick Nichols, 2 October 1974, AA, Box 22, file 4.
19. Emma Simon interview.
20. Ibid.
23. James O. Baker, 10 May 1972, AA, Box 22-1, file 9. The proposal was for a federal grant to provide 75% of the estimated cost of $1.7 million.
24. This provision differed from the Joint Graduate Program, which awarded a joint degree.
27. Frank C. Dunham to Ashmore, 20 June 1973, AA, Box 22-1, file 9. Dunham was Vice Chancellor for Construction and Physical Plant.
28. System Summary, December 1974. The new figure included the full cost of the Center, beyond just the construction cost, which was limited to $1.5 million. SMN, 12 Dec. 1974.
29. Simpson’s two comments about housing, in his letter to O’Rear and his public statement to the press, never treated housing as a central issue but simply as part of the overall concept of the Center. In fact, the dormitory question was very secondary. In correspondence with the Chancellor’s staff, Ashmore acknowledged that the housing, if any, would be for short-term use by students only during the time when they were actually taking courses at the Center itself. In other words, they would not be dorms in the usual sense for the larger student population. Ashmore to O’Rear, 19 July 1974, AA, Box 21-2, file 1.
30. Wright to President Pope Duncan, 22 November 1974, AA, Box 22-1, file 10.
32. The Statement of Purpose included five parts, the third of which was “to develop the student’s technical and analytical skills through programs leading to professional degrees in a number of areas, including Allied Health, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, and Teacher Education.” ASC Bulletin, 1974-75. This five-part purpose statement first appeared in the 1972-73 Bulletin.
33. Propt to Stephen Wright, 22 October 1975, AA, Box 22-1, file 10.
34. Wright memo to nursing faculty, 27 January 1976, AA, Box 22-1, file 10. The quote appears in a note appended to the copy of the memo sent to Ashmore.
35. Wright to Ashmore, 3 March 1976, AA, Box 22-1, file 10.


38. Ibid.


40. Philosophy of the Department of Nursing, Bonaventure to Ashmore, 21 November 1975, AA, Box 22-1, file 4.


42. Ashmore’s initial discussion of reorganization referred to possible alignment with a restructuring at Savannah State, where programs were organized into divisions rather than departments. Faculty Minutes, 18 November 1975, AA, Box 8, file 5. In 1977, the future relationship with Savannah State remained unsettled. See Chapter 9.

43. The new dean for the School of Arts and Sciences was Robert Burnett. See Chapters 11 and 12.

44. SMN, 12 January 1978, 11 June 1979; Delma Eugene Presley, The Southern Century, Georgia Southern University, 1906-2006 (Georgia Southern, Statesboro, Ga., 2006), 214.

45. Conversation with Jim Repella.


47. Ibid. All of the following quotations come from the proposal.

48. Ashmore to Simpson, 9 October 1978, AA, Box 22-1, file 16.


50. SMN, 13 November 1978.

51. Walter B. Stillwell to George Busbee, 13 November 1978, AA, Box 50.2, file 14B.

52. Nick Mamalakis to George Busbee, 20 November 1978, AA, Box 22-1, file 16.

53. James A. McAleer to Erwin A. Friedman, 22 November 1978, AA, Box 22-1, file 16.


55. SMN, 5 December 1978.

56. SMN, 15 November 1978.

57. Simpson to Board of Regents, 1 December 1978, AA, Box 22-1, file 16.

58. SMN, 8 December 1978.

59. Armstrong had offered a two-year, preparatory program in medical technology since its junior college days. It became a three-plus-one program in 1985 when Armstrong developed its baccalaureate programs as a senior college. Closely tied to the biology department, it did not initially raise the same kind of distinctive issues and problems as nursing and dental hygiene.

60. System Summary, December 1978.

61. Marilyn Buck interview.


63. SMN, 3 May 1979.

64. Dale W. Lick, “Testimony to the Senate Health and Education Study Committee,” 14 August 1979, AA, Box 22-1, file 16.

65. Henry Ashmore to Arthur Gagnonlitt, Jr., 9 October 1979, AA, Box 22-1, file 16.

66. Presley, 222. Presley lists State Senator Joseph Kennedy, Representative Jones Lane, and Representative Paul Hudson at the meeting with the Georgia Board of Nursing.

67. Lick, “Testimony to Senate Study Committee.”

Chapter 11 Notes


3. The former School of Professional Studies now became the School of Human Services and subsequently the School of Health Professions.

4. Burnett to Hanford D. Stafford, Executive Director, National Consortium for Black Professional Development, 17 March 1982, AA, Box 50.2, file 11A.

5. Fischet, 71, 78.


7. See Appendix B.


52. Burnett to Joseph M. Pettit, 8 July 1983, AA, Box 58.1, file 22.
53. "A Preliminary Plan for the Development of Savannah Technical College. (Affiliated with Georgia Institute of Technology)," 20 July 1983, AA, Box 52.4, file 6. The name and the affiliation suggest something less than a full-fledged engineering school, at least at this stage of the planning.
55. Ibid.
56. SMN, 5 October 1983.
58. SMN, 4 November 1983.
59. SMN, 9 November 1983.
60. "Friedman Concept," Burnett notes, 2 August 1983, AA, Box 52.4, file 6.
61. AA, Box 58.1, file 22.
62. Acting President Burnett Memo to Faculty. 17 January 1984, AA, Box 58.1, file 22. The file also contains the letter to interested persons in the community and the letter to high school seniors.
63. SMN, 5 February 1984.
64. AJC, 25 March 1984, AA, Box 58.1, file 26.
68. SMN, 20 November 1984.
69. SMN, 7 April 1985.
72. System Summary, October/November 1986.
73. Burnett note, AA, Box 59.2, file 1.
74. Burnett to Dr. Belden, Dr. Guinn, Dr. Henry, Dr. Spence, Dr. Teel. 1 March 1988, AA, Box 59.1, file 1.
75. These handwritten notes, identified as "Spring 1986, To Chancellors" seem to be the record of a conversation, possibly by phone. AA, Box 59.3, file 3.
76. Ibid. Two different comments follow the question: "Status quo?" and "General perception is - survival of fittest." Written in different ink, these comments appear to be the answer Burnett received to his question.
77. All of the papers concerning these hearings can be found in AA, Box 59.1, files 2, 3, and 4.
78. See Chapter 12 for further discussion of the Coastal Georgia Center.
79. I was present for this event. My description draws on my personal notes and on Bill Megathrill's report: AA, Box 59.1, file 3.
80. SMN, 10 April 1988.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. SMN, 12 May 1988.
87. Ibid. Giglullis's motion was appended to the end of a copy of Propst's report.
88. Minutes, Quarterly Meeting, ASC/SCCS Presidents and Vice Presidents, 14 June 1988, AA, Box 56.1, file 18.
91. SMN, 2 October 1988, editorial.
97. Burnett notes of Board of Regents meeting with consultants and discussion of their report, AA, Box 59.2, file 9.
98. Information Digest, 1988-89.
100. The phrase comes from Nick Henry to Don Harwood, 13 June 1989, AA, Box 59.2, file 7. Harwood was an editor at the Savannah Morning News.
105. Ibid.
106. 19 June 1989, Burnett to Propst, AASU Archives, Box 59.2, file 9.

Chapter 12 Notes
1. The inaugural proceedings were videotaped and selections from the tape also appeared in the video tribute at Burnett's retirement in May 1999.
5. The Coastal Georgia Center created by the Desegregation Plan replaced an earlier cooperative effort by Armstrong and Savannah State to serve the needs of low-income, poorly educated adults of the inner city. The Neighborhood Continuing Education Center (NCE) was established in 1970 with assistance from the Georgia Center for Continuing Education at the University of Georgia. The center's purpose was to provide basic adult education courses along with courses on nutrition, aging/home nursing, income tax preparation, occupational education and other programs to help residents of the inner city to be "better consumers, workers, parents, and citizens as well as participants in the political process." See Laura and Hampton, "Some Guidelines for Development of a Neighborhood Continuing Education Program in Savannah, Georgia," 7 January 1970. AA, Box 10, file 1. For much of its life, the NCE operated out of the Henry Street School, with the cooperation and support of the Savannah-Chatham School Board and under the direction of Clifford Hardwick. In the mid-1970s, President Ashmore and others began to advocate a continuing education center with a broader focus aimed toward career and professional groups. Ashmore to D. J. Harrison, 12 March 1975, AA, Box 10, file 8. Henry Love to Friedman Winter, 7 December 1977, AA, Box 10, file 13B. The NCE moved from Henry Street to the United Way Building on Monterey Square and then to
the new Coastal Georgia Center, where it took on its new purpose.
6. The first Czech reference has no specific date but occurs in the papers for 1981 and refers to Dale Liggins's initial effort to make Georgia Southern a regional university in the spring of 1981. See AA, Box 56.1, file 14. The second reference appears in notes for May 1988, just prior to Chancellor Propst's report to the Regents on the future of Armstrong and Savannah State. See AA, Box 59.1, file 2.
8. Burnett to Ashmore, 8 July 1983, AA, Box 15D, file 4A.

Stone files.
12. AA, Box 56.1, file 10.
16. Faculty Minutes, 7 April 1987, Stone files.
18. Faculty Minutes, 8 and 9 April 1980. Joe Adams issued his reply on 14 April 1980. See Stone files. The discussion of the teacher education programs wasDick Summer ville's last hurrah. He left Armstrong in the summer of 1980 for Christopher Newport College in Virginia.
20. Faculty Minutes, 19 May 1987, Stone files. The motion came after a faculty meeting extending through three sessions because a second session failed to achieve a quorum.

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23. Faculty Minutes, 9 January 1989, 4 April 1989.

24. The Master’s in Health Science was approved by the Board of Regents in November 1980; its first students graduated in 1983. See Faculty Minutes, November 1980. The master’s degree in nursing first appeared in the catalog for 1988-1989. Its first graduates would have finished during the time of the affiliated relationship with Georgia Southern.

25. Bulletin, 1989-1990. The five degrees were: the M.Ed., which offered eleven specific degree programs; the M.A. in History; the M.S. in Criminal Justice; the M.S. in Nursing; and the Master's of Health Science.

26. System Summary, October 1978. Students who did not meet the requirements for regular admission took a separate Basic Skills Examination. These students were admitted under conditional admissions status and their remedial courses did not carry college credit. According to the desegregation plan, the cut-off scores set for Armstrong and Savannah State on that exam (63 in reading, 63 in mathematics and 63 in English) were lower than the scores set for Albany State College (65, 70, and 65) and Fort Valley State College (65, 78, 65).


29. The CPC was introduced over a four-year period from 1984-1988.

30. Candidates for Graduation, 9 June 1989. General Studies presented twenty-nine candidates. The greatest number of nominations came from the baccalaureate nursing program, which listed thirty-five candidates. The next highest number of nominations was for the master's degree in nursing.


32. Minutes of ASC-SSC meeting, 10 March 1986. AA, Box 56, file 18.

33. Faculty Minutes, 11 September 1986. Burnett described the courses as useful for criminal justice majors preparing reports for various law enforcement agencies.

34. 31 June 1989, Burnett speech to the East Savannah Rotary Club. AA, Box 59, file Speeches.


36. Annual Report, 1980-1989. The report indicated the number of minority faculty, which included Asian faculty, leaving an even smaller number of black faculty than the statistic showed.

37. SMN, 13 April 1989. The headline stated “Burnett Defends ASC Appointment Against Regent’s Charge of Racism.” The newspaper wrote the phrase “racism.” It did not appear as a quote from McMillan.


40. Inkwell, 19 October 1984.


43. Bill Kelso interview.

44. Inkwell, 9 October 1981, 6 November 1981.

45. Inkwell, 14 January 1983. The survey found that 52% of the respondents were agreeable to a merger with Georgia Southern.


47. Inkwell, 11 April 1988.

48. Annual Reports.


52. Owens continued as Director of Minority Affairs until his retirement in 1989.


55. SMN, 4 April 1989.


57. Author’s personal recollection. Owens’s full history with Armstrong became known as a result of the research for this history.

58. Deanna Cross interview.


60. SMN, 17 November 1983.


64. Inkwell, 5 March 1986.

65. Ashmore Memo to Faculty, September 1981, Stone files; Inkwell, 23 October 1981; SMN 3 December 1981. Ashmore described the occupants as health professions students. Coach George Bianchi’s use of the apartments for athletes became an issue when he allowed the units to be occupied rent-free during the summer.


67. Burnett remarks, Faculty Minutes, 12 September 1984, Administrative Council Minutes, 12 September 1984, Stone files.

68. SMN, 14 November 1984.


70. SMN, 1 October 1985; Inkwell, 16 October 1985.


75. Ibid.

76. Bill Kelso interview.

77. Inkwell, 5 April 1989.


81. Warlick began his study abroad trips in the summer of 1982, initially working with a colleague from the University of Georgia and then subsequently on his own.


83. System Summary, June 1984. A passing grade on the Regents Test was a requirement for graduation, and the success rate at the traditional black institutions was low.


85. Propr., “An Active Dream of the Future,” System Magazine, January 1990. Propr.’s report included a review of the decade of the 1980s regarding OCR oversight. OCR had essentially found Georgia to be in compliance in 1985, but the formal ruling came in 1989. Chancellors Crawford and Propr both vowed to continue Georgia’s desegregation efforts even without the legal pressures to do so.

86. Inkwell, 14 May 1986.

87. Most of the health professions graduates were in two-year programs.

88. SMN, 6 November 1985; personal memory of the lecture.

Chapter 13 Notes

1. Executive Committee Minutes, 8 September 1992, Stone files.


3. Faculty Minutes, 6 November 1990, 5 March 1991.

4. Propr to Nicholas Henry (GSU), William Gardner (SCC), and Robert Barnett (JASC), 27 November 1990, AA, Box 59, file 11.


6. Roger Warlick to Chancellor Propr., 8 June 1989, AA, Box 59, file 9. Warlick used the phrase in reaction to the consultants’ report on the plans for the regional university.

7. Burnett notes concerning Newberry’s description of Georgia Southern’s first graduate registration on the Armstrong campus, AA, Box 59, file 15.

8. Frank Butler to Harry Carter (GSU Vice President for Academic Affairs), 27 May 1993, AA, Box 59, file 18.


14. Burnett interview.

15. Ibid.
16. Emma Simon interview.


20. “Rationale for Regional Universities in Georgia,” n.d., no author, AA, Box 59.2, file 1. The document was faxed from Columbus College on 16 April 1992.


22. Ibid.

23. SMN, 14 April 1992, 15 April 1992. The newspaper carried a front page photo of the Armstrong faculty meeting and identified Columbus College, Augusta College, Albany State, and Kennesaw College among those institutions seeking to become universities.


27. Faculty Minutes, 7 April 1992.

28. “Remarks to the Faculty, Fall 1993,” Faculty Minutes, 9 September 1993.

29. AJC, 6 September 1993.

30. Ibid.


33. AJC, 19 October 1993.

34. AJC, 20 October 1993.

35. AJC, 24 October 1993.


37. AJC, 2 January 1994. According to this article, the governor’s relationship with Propst had suffered from Propst’s opposition to a building program that the governor had favored for System schools as part of an economic stimulus plan. President Burnett was present at a meeting between the governor and Propst where Miller vigorously expressed his anger about the stalled building projects. Burnett interview.

38. Dawson was one of the consultants who proposed the regional university arrangement in 1989. See Chapter 11.


40. SMN, 23 March 1994.


47. SMN, 28 December 1994.


50. Student Information Reporting System, Georgia Student Finances Commission.


52. Information Digest, 2005-2006.

53. This pattern is not just anecdotal but also appears in the Joint Study Commission Report.

54. “Don’t Count on Hope,” SMN, clipping, HOPE folder, Stone files. The report found that at Armstrong only 13% retained their HOPE scholarship.


56. “A Proposal to Establish Armstrong State College ‘Heart of Savannah Education Center,’” 4 December 1993, attached to Executive Committee Minutes, 1 February 1994, Stone files.

57. Burnett speech to East Side Rotary Club, 11 June 1999. AA, Box 59.25, file “Speeches.” Burnett described the Regents’ rejection of an offer for the Levy Building on Broughton Street as a major lost opportunity.


60. Strozier memo to Burnett, n.d., AA, Box 59.3, file 3.


63. SMN, 14 May 1994.


65. SMN, 12 February 1997.


67. Memorial Service for Dr. Henry L. Ashmore, 17 October 1995; Memorabilia Stone files. The particular comments came from Bob Burnett, Joe Buck, and Joe Killorin.

68. SMN, 15 May 1995. Armstrong’s numbers illustrated the problem: 43% of the freshmen for fall 1994 needed one or more remedial course, and nearly half of the 1996 high school graduates who entered Armstrong the following fall were required to take a remedial course. See “New Fall 1994 Freshmen,” ASC Masterfile/Institutional Research; Stone files; Information Digest, 1995-1997.


70. AJC, 9 May 1995, 11 May 1995. When Regent McMullan raised concerns about minority students, Portis proposed summer programs for at-risk middle school students to be offered on college campuses with mentoring, early intervention, and guidance as the teenagers prepared to enter their high school years.

71. 13 August 1998, Faculty Workshop, Stone files. Augusta and Columbus faced a similar dilemma, and Augusta State University proposed a similar solution.


73. Information Digest, 1998-99, 2005-2006. Enrollment dipped briefly in fall 2000, but rose steadily thereafter. Armstrong continued to offer Learning Support courses for students in special circumstances (older students, presidential exceptions), but the general rule directed under-prepared first-time freshmen to Savannah State.


76. Faculty Minutes, 7 May 1996, Stone files.

77. InSb, 20 June 1996. The InSb covered the name change story in detail.

78. I voiced these points in friendly but serious disagreement with my history department colleagues, Arens and Hendricks.

79. Ibid.

80. Faculty Minutes, 11 June 1996.

81. Faculty Minutes, 20 June 1996. Coleman was an at-large Regent, not the Regent for the first district.

82. SMN, 17 June 1996.

83. AJC, 12 December 1995.

84. System Supplement, February 1996.

85. Faculty Minutes, 24 September 1996, Stone files.

86. Agenda for 1 October 1996 faculty meeting, Executive Committee Minutes, 2 and 3 October 1996, Stone files.

87. Faculty Minutes, 8 October 1996, Stone files.

88. E-mail exchange between Nancy White and Frank Butler, 1 October 1996, Stone files.

89. InSb, 15 September 1995.

90. InSb, 28 September 1994; author’s personal memory.

91. InSb, 1 February 1995.


94. InSb, 5 March 1993.


98. Faculty Minutes, 12 September 1996. The first graduate of the Honors Program was Marion Götz, a chemistry major who graduated in June 1999.

99. InSb, 9 November 1994; Faculty Minutes, 8 November 1994.


101. Jensen designed the new mascot before the 60th anniversary.

102. SMN, 10 October 1997.


106. Inkwell, 18 September 1997. The Inkwell conducted an opinion survey of the science faculty in anticipation of the new science building.


108. SMN, 29 May 1998. The newspaper printed the full speech as a by-line feature article.


112. SMN, 10 October 1992.

113. Armstrong and Savannah State were among eleven schools in six southern states to receive Dewitt Wallace-DNA Digest Fund grants. SMN 13 January 1993.

114. Armstrong and Savannah State each received $612,000 to support the program for five years. A subsequent grant of $100,000 from the Ford Foundation followed the earlier work of Jacob Powell, who made the special assistance of Regent Eldridge McMillan in the direction toward more scholarship.

115. Enos, 13 January 1993. President Burnett acknowledged the special assistance of Regent Eldridge McMillin in the award of the grant. See Faculty Minutes, 12 January 1993. Armstrong and Savannah State each received $612,000 to support the program for five years. A subsequent grant of $100,000 from the Ford Foundation followed the earlier work of Jacob Powell, who made the special assistance of Regent Eldridge McMillan in the direction toward more scholarship.


118. Ibid.


125. SMN, 5 December 1995.


137. AA, Box 59.3, file 1.

138. SMN, 10 October 1997; author’s personal memory.


140. Inkwell, 9 April 1998.

141. Nordquist to Deanna Cross, Vice Chair of the Executive Committee, 25 March 1995, Stone files.

142. Executive Committee Agenda, 25 November 1997 (with subsequent grant of $100,000 from the Ford Foundation followed the earlier work of Jacob Powell, who made the special assistance of Regent Eldridge McMillan in the direction toward more scholarship.


144. Inkwell, 25 September 1998. The issue swirled particularly around the new dean of arts and sciences, Dabney Townsend, but Butler took full responsibility for setting the direction toward more scholarship.

145. Inkwell, 4 October 1989.

146. Inkwell, 6 November 1998; SMN, 15 November 1998.

147. AA, Box 59.3, file 1, Clippings; Inkwell, 9 January 1999.


149. Inkwell, 19 November 1998.


158. SMN, 30 April 1999.


Epilogue Notes

1. Personal memory.

2. Tom Jones interview.

3. SMN, 6 June 1998. Schretter arrived in 1993 and followed the earlier work of Jacob Powell, who made the first attack on the fountain in the 1980s.

4. Tom Jones interview.

5. Faculty Meeting, 4 October 2000, with my personal notes of Jones’s remarks. Stone files.

6. Tom Jones interview.


8. SMN, 31 October 2006.


11. Edward Thompson, Armstrong’s first African American vice president, served as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty from 2002 until 2005.

12. The honorary degrees were awarded at the December graduation exercises.


14. In 2006 Armstrong began to offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy degree as part of a consortium arrangement with the Medical College of Georgia. In the fall of 2009, the Board of Regents authorized Armstrong to offer the degree independently.

15. Conversation with Suzanne Carpenter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS:

AA – Armstrong Atlantic State University Archives
AJC – The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
GDA – Georgia Department of Archives and History

SMN – Savannah Morning News
SEP – Savannah Evening Press (also Press)

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From the Mansion to the University: A History of Armstrong Atlantic State University makes it possible for us to appreciate higher education and the significant role that this university has played in the lives of the citizens of Savannah and the state of Georgia.

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