Teaching the Teachers: Summer School at the University of Wyoming 1905-1950

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TEACHING THE TEACHERS:
SUMMER SCHOOL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING 1905-1950

by

Christi L. Thompson

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To the University of Wyoming:

The members of the Committee approve the dissertation project of Christi L. Thompson presented on February 14, 2018.

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Abstract

This paper is a historical case study that examines the teacher education opportunities presented via the University of Wyoming Summer School from 1905 to 1950 and how the state’s teacher population was affected by these opportunities. It contextualizes UW Summer School in the broader movements of teacher education at the time, from teacher institutes to normal schools. UW Summer School is remarkable considering that when it started, the University had only been in existence for 17 years. The UW Summer School was a successful model, bringing in students for 110 years. This case study fills in gaps in the literature pertaining to the educational history of the west and the institutional history of the University.

*Keywords:* summer school, University of Wyoming, normal school, educational history, teacher education, adult education
Introduction

In 1912, the following paragraph was included in The University of Wyoming Melange, highlighting the City of Laramie and the advantages of the local environment and climate.

The location of the University in the city of Laramie, Wyoming, is ideal for summer school work. During the season of the year in which the summer school is in session, there is almost no bad weather in Laramie. There is practically no hot weather. While the residents of many places in lower altitudes are suffering from hot, humid weather, making study almost impossible, the people of Laramie enjoy cool evenings and nights and delightful days. There is no time of the year more suitable for hard work than the weeks covered by the summer school at this University. ¹

That summer, 106 students attended the UW’s summer school program. ² When initiated in 1905, there were a total of 27 students in attendance, and by 1920 summer school attendance at UW was 352. ³ The commitment to advertising the climate of Laramie eventually allowed for the tag line of “The Coolest School in America,” and the program continued to experience healthy growth through the 1940s, despite world conflicts and economic depressions. Despite initially being diminutive in faculty and student attendance numbers, the University of Wyoming summer school program for teachers, as examined here from 1905 to 1950, adhered to progressive education ideals and represents an example of successfully implementing adult education theory.

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¹ University of Wyoming, The University Melange 8, no. 5 (April 1912), 9.
² University of Wyoming, The Wyo 1917 8 (Spring 1916), 122.
³ University of Wyoming, “Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the President of the Board of Trustees of the University of Wyoming,” University of Wyoming Bulletin 17, no. 4 (1920), 30.
This paper explores the questions of what drew students to Laramie to attend the University of Wyoming’s summer school program for teachers during the first 45 years it was offered, and what the characteristics of the student body were based on the associated records. Other aspects discussed include the curriculum, the physical environment, and marketing programs designed to bring students in from across the state, the nation, and the world to study at the “Coolest School in America”. The discussion that follows is bounded between 1905 and 1950 due to the UW not offering any summer school options prior to 1905, and that general nationwide social and political educational expectations shifted close to 1950 in combination with the passage of the National Defense Education Act. Through the investigation and examination of these various aspects, the UW summer school makes a strong contribution to the history of Western U.S. higher education and teacher preparation.

**Historical Context**

Over the course of time from the 1820s through at least the start of World War I, there were several training options for those who wanted to become teachers. The lyceum, the institute, the summer school, and the normal school which morphed into colleges and universities, all grew from and nourished one another. Pressure from Progressives to have more and better-trained teachers for the common schools was consistent, although teacher shortages remained a constant problem especially in rural areas. Through these various teacher training and professional development opportunities, there were some significant commonalities in the programs, in the traits of those who attended these programs, and the purpose of both the program and the attendees. The commonalities of the programs were principal examples of what

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would become the theories and application of andragogy, or the study of adult education. The following discussion examines progressive education and andragogy and how these principles influenced the summer school teacher programs at UW during the first half of the twentieth-century.

**Progressive education**

Elias and Merriam (1984) in *Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education*[^1], summarized progressive education as a shift on the focus of education from the collective to the individual learner, and to identify and develop each learner’s individual strengths and talents. By making these changes a more democratic society could be built as would a movement for educated individuals to join together to solve common societal problems. The philosophies and ideals of Progressive Education are comprised of a desire to allow a child or an adult to create and enhance their individualized learning through their own life experiences. It was a prominent educational philosophy that dominated classrooms from the turn of the 20th century and has remained an influential approach to teaching and learning. The ultimate goal of Progressive educators was to rebuild and improve society through education and control of the environment, and to “renew the basis for the competitive social order”.[^2]

One of the most renowned and prolific spokesmen of the progressive education movement was John Dewey. He was an incredibly influential scholar, writing on the purpose and need to reform education from the late 1880s and continuing into the 1940s. Dewey continually advocated for resolving negative societal issues and situations through education, intelligence

and applying scientific methodology and reasoning to construct solutions. As Dewey stated, “I believe that the community’s duty to education is, therefore its paramount moral duty. By law and punishment, by social agitation and discussion, society can regulate and form itself in a more or less haphazard and chance way. But through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move”. Elias and Merriam focus on some of Dewey’s foundational ideas from his professional career. Specifically, Elias and Merriam discuss the dependence of growth of the mind upon participation in shared activities; the influence of the physical environment on development of culture; and the necessity of utilizing individual differences in desire and thinking to produce changes in society. 

These basic principles were embraced by educators for approximately 35 years in most schools as well as in the pedagogical courses, model schools, and normal schools, where teachers could observe and practice teaching, offering a prime example of the progressive ideal of learning by experience. Additionally, other subjects that could be learned through practice, such as vocational skills and sciences were popular with progressives. Not only was there learning in the traditional classroom, but the classroom extended outside into the natural or industrial environment. Education was for the people and was to be taken to the people. This ideal is also the basis for extension work through universities that continues today.

Progressive education theories were not implemented specifically for children and pre-service teachers. This education and social movement, as documented by Stubblefield and Keane, has roots in the colonial education systems such as the apprentice system, Benjamin Franklin’s Junto, and the public library. Progressive education was inclusive of strategies designed with the hope and goal of improving society and bringing solutions to societal problems through education. Adult learning was included in this movement through various enterprises (e.g., the Americanization movement, vocational training, access to public libraries, extension classes and demonstrations through universities, and other innovative opportunities like Jane Addams’ Hull House).

In 1926, Eduard Lindeman published *The Meaning of Adult Education*. In this book, Lindeman aligned the theories and practices of the progressive education movement to the functioning practices of adult education. The association between progressive education and adult education was expanded by Malcolm Knowles in 1977 with the publication of *The History of the Adult Education Movement in the United States*. Both texts emphasized the virtues of learning, education being a life-long process that includes adult education, the adult preference for vocational and experiential learning, acceptance that adult learning is pragmatic within each individual learner’s life, and finally understanding that the adult learner’s motivation to learn is internal. These are the core principles on which andragogy (adult learning theory) has further elaborated. These are also basic tenets found throughout the various writings of John Dewey.

As a result of the work of progressive education promoters, teacher training programs embraced many aspects of the basic tenets and philosophies of the movement. Normal schools

incorporated model schools to allow teachers in training to practice methods and techniques in real classroom situations. Summer schools were also opportunities for implementing progressive education through outdoor classroom experiences specific to a subject like botany or zoology, as well as the ability to learn from the individual’s experience as a whole. UW embodied these characteristics by offering opportunities for teachers to gain experience through a model classroom, a model rural classroom, and field-based courses at the UW Science Camp in the Sierra Madre Mountains. Formal learning settings were combined with the informal learning opportunities through organized trips and activities where students learned about the local and regional history, culture, landscapes, and themselves in these environments.

**Andragogy**

At the most basic level, the theory of adult learning (andragogy) states that adults prefer to learn and do learn differently than children. Adults favor a learning environment that is constructed specifically to meet their learning goals and objectives, and which offers them some level of control. A substantial component of that environment is related to the delivery time of learning objectives. Adults strongly prefer concise delivery of learning materials in a shorter timeframe; assignments, readings, and lectures must have explicit or immediate relation to the student’s desired learning. Adults desire to know exactly what they need to do or improve upon in their job or life skills. Additional content ‘fluff’ is not appreciated. Time is of the essence for adult learning. The more concisely material can be delivered, the more favorable the acceptance of the program and of the information. In addition, adult learners value the opportunity to put into practice the newly gained knowledge, skills, and abilities as soon as possible.

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Examining the different teacher preparation programs of the time all reflect the basic characteristics of a program established for an adult learner.\textsuperscript{12} The programs were short, varying in length from a couple of days to a few weeks. Each program was focused on specific material that was of importance to the teacher to move forward with their individual education and/or career.\textsuperscript{13} Additional independent learning may have been required either as a precursor to the structured event or after, and sometimes both. Content was generally delivered in succinct sessions that focused on knowledge and skills that were of greatest utility for individuals to become more successful and qualified teachers. Of key importance, these condensed sessions allowed the teachers to return to a classroom and immediately begin to implement what they had learned.\textsuperscript{14} In areas where summer school was followed by an institute, such as in Wyoming where the State Teacher’s Association meeting was held in the late fall or early winter, the participants could discuss and evaluate the implementation of what they had learned in the summer during the institute timeframe with other experienced teachers. The discussion and evaluation allowed them, once again, to return to their classroom and make modifications for the continued learning, academic, and social growth of their students.


A question that may arise from this discussion of adult learning is whether the students in these condensed teacher preparation programs were actually adults. Given that it was typical for normal schools to admit students who had completed their common school education (generally the 8th grade) and that some institutions provided preparatory classes for those who were not academically ready for normal school training, it is possible that these individuals were in their late teens or early 20s. Of course, there were also students who were older.

However, given the societal expectations of that time, one can argue that more responsibility commonly attributed to modern adults was placed on younger individuals than is typical in our society today. Adulthood has been defined differently during different periods, particularly in the profession of teaching. Speicher reminds us that the average age of beginning teachers in rural schools in the antebellum U.S. was 15; by 1910, it had only risen to age 20. The introduction of the high school and the general acceptance that the great majority of individuals should attend and complete a high school education did not exist at that time, although high schools were in their very early development.

The summer program at UW for teachers was a good model of adult education in theory and practice. The sessions were short, delivered in compact, five to six-week formats. The


teachers were able to put into practice what they had learned shortly afterward, which allowed them to see the benefits and worth of their own financial and time commitment to their own education and for their students. Other activities in addition to the academic content extended their motivation to participate in the summer. The programs also provided a foundation on which they could continue to build their own knowledge base by becoming independent and life-long learners.

**A Brief History of Teacher Preparation Summer Schools**

The initial idea of a summer school for adults is associated with the Chautauqua Institute. The structure of the Chautauqua Summer Institute was replicated by other educational institutions; and summer schools, often specific to the training and education of teachers. The option of summer study, once initiated, continued to grow in popularity with certain student populations and continues today at most institutions. This is true of the program offered through UW. Courses were offered at UW in short duration, targeted toward teachers, and initially included guest speaker sessions that were open to the general public, as occurred at Chautauqua and other summer schools.

The Chautauqua summer school model was popular for many reasons. Many individuals could only afford to be on campus intermittently. Some were only available for professional development during the summer. Others could attend a semester or two and then were required


to sit out for an additional period while they built up their finances once again.\textsuperscript{21} For most, consistent employment as classroom teachers during the traditional academic year was required for an income. The overall political and economic factors of the time held considerable sway over the options for these minimally paid teachers. Of course, the timing of summer courses was advantageous for most teachers. During the summer, there was the opportunity for personal and professional growth and development.\textsuperscript{22} The timing also was ideal for the institutions who hosted the institutes. Students who attended in the summer, whether for initial training or for continuing education, were likely to continue attendance either full time until a degree was completed or through other options, such as correspondence. Such was the situation with Virginia Hawkey Mueller who attended the UW summer sessions and correspondence courses off and on for 30 years before finally completing her Bachelor of Arts degree.\textsuperscript{23}

Summer programs varied in length, offerings, availability, attendance, and notable faculty participation. The New Hampshire summer program in 1919 was three weeks long and successful completion of the session was required by every teacher candidate prior to being able to take charge of assigned classrooms in the fall.\textsuperscript{24} At Plymouth Normal School in Plymouth, New Hampshire, the 1919 program was conducted by a total of 21 faculty and attended by 293

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21} Karen J. Blair, “Normal Schools of the Pacific Northwest: The Lifelong Impact of Extracurricular Club Activities on Women Students at Teacher-training Institutions, 1890-1917,” \textit{The Pacific Northwest Quarterly} 101, no. 1 (2010), 4; Christine A. Ogren, “Rethinking the ‘Nontraditional’ Student from a Historical Perspective: State Normal Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” \textit{The Journal of Higher Education} 74, no. 6 (2003), 647.


\end{flushright}
students. In comparison, the Summer School of the South, which was held on the campus of the University of Tennessee (UT) in Knoxville but was not originally a part of UT, was conducted for six weeks with 51 faculty and an overwhelming student population of 2,019 for the initial program in 1902.

The instructors at the Summer School of the South were the leaders in their fields. In this way, the organization was patterned much like the organization of the Chautauqua Institute. Moreover, the courses and topics of the summer school were not restricted to pedagogy or basic common school curriculum, and community members were also invited to attend. Topics within the sciences, philosophy, social sciences, and pedagogy were the foci of lectures and discussions. In addition, there were performances by drama groups and musicians, opportunities to relax alone or in small groups, and to enjoy the local region’s tourism highlights. The annual session of the Summer School of the South ended shortly before the start of World War I. After that, the University of Tennessee (UT) continued with a summer school, although it was not as widely advertised, attended, or structured as it had been previously.

As important as continuing education was for teachers, there was an on-going debate as to the best way for a teacher to spend a summer. Options of summer school, institutes, and

25. Ibid., 46.


vacations competed against the necessity for many to work during the summer months to
supplement their income. The most opportune experiences were those where a teacher could
enjoy a “vacation” while earning an income or attending a summer school. Ogren discusses
several of these options: working in some of the national parks, as service personnel on
passenger trains, or on personal homesteads while attending continuing education
opportunities.29 The concept of a learning vacation was also utilized by UW, as Figures 1-3
illustrate, in advertising the summer school program. However, society’s expectations were
changing regarding how a middle class genteel individual should spend a summer and, generally,
working was not an option. Being able to spend time in nature for personal rest and
revitalization, along with new experiences and personal enrichment, were the ideal summers.
Teachers, being lower income middle class by the early 20th century, were creative in making the
most of their potential opportunities with limited funds.

Summer schools were popular with in-service teachers for obtaining continuing education
and with pre-service teachers for initial pedagogy and curriculum courses and experiences.
Another option, separate from continuing education, was for a teacher to spend the summer on a
vacation. Many teachers did not have the money to attend school and venture on a vacation. As
continuing education was the primary need, schools began to offer vacation-type experiences in
association with the summer school program. The Summer School of the South organized
extended trips for students to see various natural highlights or larger cultural events, paid by the
participant.30 James Barclay Hall, Ph.D., an educator in Canada, organized scientific expeditions


370-371.
during the summer school offered in Nova Scotia, and made arrangements for a class of teachers
to study science in the British Isles during a summer as well, although it is unknown if the
expedition was undertaken.  

Summer professional development options also included attending sessions in London, England that were developed by the Evans’ Brothers Publishers in England.

The University of Wyoming had a modest beginning in 1886 by forward thinking men for a territory large in area but small in population. The Normal School was established in the earliest days as a needed support for the state. In other states, the normal schools were established as separate institutions from the various flagship universities. The University of Wyoming Catalogue for 1890-1891 was the first to describe the professional teacher training program.

Although our former catalogues contained the announcement of a Normal Department, this is the first year that a regular course was prepared and will be put in operation at the beginning of next Fall term. The course, as outlined in this catalogue, will meet the present demand by giving our teachers a thorough professional training. The instruction in the Professional Course embraces the History of Education, including the systems and methods of distinguished educators. The Art of Teaching, School Management and Practice Teaching, also the Principles of Education, deduced from psychological science. The whole course will be so directed as to furnish the student with a noble ideal of the teacher, inspiring him with due appreciation of his great responsibility, and creating within him an aspiration for the highest success in his chosen profession. 


33. University of Wyoming. *Catalogue for the Year 1890-1891 and Announcement for the Year 1891-1892.* (The Republican Book and Job Print, Laramie, 1890), 73.
By 1905 it was a relatively humble regional institution that attracted a population of students who dreamed of and worked for a college education. The summer school at UW allowed teachers an opportunity for education intertwined with an opportunity for recreation they may not have been able to get elsewhere.

The University of Wyoming Summer School

In establishing its summer school program, the University of Wyoming followed a model similar to many other higher education and teacher preparation institutions of the time. Like the Chautauqua Institute and other schools, UW created a summer program that was specifically targeted toward teacher preparation. At the time, there was a shortage of trained teachers in the state with a growing population of children. The following table illustrates the growth of Wyoming over the course of 50 years. Although the number of teachers does increase along with the number of students, whether or not the teachers were dispersed across the state as needed to teach the children remains unclear.

Table 1 State of Wyoming Demographics of School Age Children and Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State Population</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Male Teachers</th>
<th>Female Teachers</th>
<th>Total Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>92,531</td>
<td>17,792</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>145,965</td>
<td>23,878</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>194,402</td>
<td>38,343</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1,567</td>
<td>1,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>225,565</td>
<td>45,847</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>2,440</td>
<td>2,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>250,742</td>
<td>44,038</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>2,632</td>
<td>3,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>290,529</td>
<td>50,245</td>
<td>1,816</td>
<td>3,248</td>
<td>5,064</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As with many teacher preparation programs at the turn of the 20th century, most of the students who attended the UW normal school were women (see Table 1). Disproportionate attendance by women continued through the summer of 1920 as reported in the annual reports of the President of the Board of Trustees. After the 30th Annual Report of the President of the Board of Trustees, the enrollment numbers were no longer reported by gender. In addition, students were also attending from out-of-state: 12 in 1912, 16 in 1913, 23 in 1914, and 27 in 1915.35

Table 2 UW Summer School enrollment by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of UW Summer School</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910 – 1911</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911 - 1912</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912 - 1913</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 - 1914</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914a</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Report of the President of the Board of Trustees, 1911 – 1921.

a Beginning with the 24th Annual Report, summer school attendance numbers specified the calendar year of the summer school session. At this time, the annual reports were delivered in the fall of the year instead of at the end of the calendar or fiscal year. This results in the double entry of 1913 – 1914 and 1914 independently.

The summer program was pointedly marketed toward teachers. *The University Melange* for 1910, for the first time, stated that “Arrangements have been made with the State Board of Examiners, whereby a special examination will be held at the close of the Summer School”. In the Announcement of the Summer Session at the University of Wyoming for 1913, the section entitled *Purpose of the Summer School* stipulates, “Broadly stated, the Summer School undertakes to serve adequately the needs of teachers as they prepare better for their work.” It was an opportunity for students to complete coursework toward a degree at a time of year when there was typically more flexibility in a person’s schedule. The program was designed to allow teachers to attend UW in the summer; to either refresh content for the State Board Exam, continue their professional teacher education and become eligible for a higher-level teaching license, or to work toward a teaching degree. The 1915 summer school catalog states,

Certain of the courses offered in the Summer School are in the so-called common branches required for a third-grade certificate. Such work not being offered in the regular courses in the University schools and colleges, no credits are given therein. For courses regularly offered in the different departments of University work, proper credit will be given if these courses are fully completed either by taking extra work in them during the summer session or by subsequently completing them by correspondence. Many students in the state find it very satisfactory to begin certain advanced work in the University during the Summer School and complete it afterwards by correspondence. Six semester hours credit is the maximum that may be obtained by any student during the session.

In 1923 the credit system was increased in conjunction with the summer session changing from one six-week term to two terms of five and one-half weeks each:

University credit will be given for all regular courses offered during the session. Students wishing credit for courses taken in the summer school, must, before registering, present


37. Announcement of the Summer Session at the University of Wyoming for 1913, pamphlet.

their entrance credits and any credentials on which they may expect to receive advanced standing.

Students may earn nine term hours credit (six semester hours) during each of the five and a half week terms of the session. On account of the fact that the terms will be five and a half weeks instead of six weeks in length, the University will not be able to make any exceptions to this regulation. However, in eleven weeks a student may earn 18 hours, the maximum amount that students may earn during a twelve-week term of the regular year. 39

In this early era of the summer program, it was possible to earn teacher certification by combining summer school attendance with the completion of correspondence courses.40

In conjunction with the summer program, correspondence study and extension courses were also popular with those pursuing teacher education training. These programs were encouraged and developed with the goal of helping to mitigate the extreme teacher shortage that existed in the state in the early 20th century.41 Correspondence courses offered flexibility and a jump start on a preparation program for those who were located at a distance from UW. At this time, correspondence courses were in their youth. Students and faculty were learning what the best practices were for teaching and learning in a setting where advancement through course material was dependent on the postal services delivering lessons and assignments to and from instructor to student. “Correspondence study is another form of university extension which has developed greatly in recent years. It involves individual work on the part of a student under the personal direction of an instructor. Such instruction enables one who cannot leave home, to carry


41. Deborah Hardy, Wyoming University: The First 100 Years, 1886-1986. (Laramie: University of Wyoming, 1986), 81; Robert F. Noble, The College of Education: 72 years of Teacher Preparation for Wyoming’s Schools. (Laramie: University of Wyoming, 1986), 26; also see Table 1, p. 15.
on a course of study even while engaged in a regular occupation. The Chautauqua movement has been influential in emphasizing the value of home-study.”

Extension courses tended to be popular for students prior to WWII. Teacher training extension courses, as constructed through establishing branch sessions of courses outside of Laramie, allowed faculty to travel the state to teach various courses and topics, while limiting costs to the students. Most of these sessions were held in the northeast corner of Wyoming, annual rotating in the established communities of Sundance, Moorcroft, Gillette, Buffalo, Sheridan and others. The branch sessions were established in 1922 as a collaborative effort between the Wyoming State Department of Education and the University. The branch sessions were discontinued after the 1932 session due to budget constraints.

Virginia Hawkey Mueller was one such student who documented her rural teaching career in the book, Reflections of a Country School Teacher in 1994. After she had completed high school, she attended the branch summer school session offered in Sundance, Wyoming in 1932. From that point forward, and for 30 years, Virginia continued her professional development, through attending UW summer school and through UW correspondence courses, until her B.A. was complete. Hawkey Mueller recalled,

I had just passed my eighteenth birthday, when I was hired as a teacher for the Whedon School. …Then I went to the County Superintendent’s office and found out Summer School was located at Sundance Wyoming and started that next Monday. …Once we reached Sundance, I was put in the same room with Peggy. We proceeded to laugh our way through six glorious weeks of summer school. …We each took three subjects. Mine

42. University of Wyoming, “The Department of Extension,” The University Melange 6, no. 6 (June 1909), 2.
were: Tests & Measurements, Geography and Music Methods. Tests & Measurements was not very interesting nor very difficult. It was a required subject and I was glad I took it early in my training rather than later on when others were taking it. They complained a lot because the course had become much harder. ...The days flew by at Sundance. We had lots of extra activities sponsored by the Summer School. I also went with some other young people to Sylvan Lake and Mt. Rushmore which was far from finished in 1932.

At last the time came to return to Sheridan. Then out to the Whedon school. Scared? Not me. Wasn’t I prepared with some new teaching methods, and wasn’t I fresh out of school? Such confidence. 45

It was for teachers like Virginia that the summer school at UW was so critical for professional training. Beyond her initial experience at a branch summer school session, Hawkey Mueller also described a memorable time in Laramie attending the campus summer school in 1933.

The time soon came when I needed to be in Laramie for Summer School. I got on the bus in Sheridan and went to Casper. When I got there, I found the connections on to Laramie were bad. I knew I needed to be in Laramie the next day. So, I announced at the hotel that I needed a ride. A salesman, a good man, took me to Cheyenne. When we got to Cheyenne late in the evening, that blessed man took me to the train station and put me on the train for Laramie. Talk about the Lord taking care of the innocent!

Early the next morning I went to the college, to find I was a day late. I signed up for Music, English, Physical Education, and a room in Hoyt Hall. It wasn’t long till I realized I didn’t have enough money to cover my classes, my room and groceries too. I sent home for more, but before it came I almost quit eating until two classmates, Lois Cook and Evelyn Shanor, took me in. They shared their food with me, which we cooked on a hot plate in the basement of Hoyt Hall. When I got some money from home I was able to pay my share of the groceries. When I look back on it, I realize how innocent I was, but there was always someone looking out for me. I had an interesting time for those six weeks. I was hungry all the time. I never had enough to eat. I spent minimum time studying and my grades reflected it, but I passed.

At the end of Summer School, six of us piled into a car, luggage and all, and drove to Sheridan through the night. We sang songs and talked all the way. I was so glad to see Mom I cried. I must have been more homesick and scared than I knew. 46

46. Ibid., 8-10.
The condensed courses and flexible enrollment available through the summer terms and in combination with correspondence study, were significant formats that catered to adult learners. The organization of these programs allowed for adults to attend courses that were designed for the delivery of concentrated content; content that was critical to the development and growth of professional educators, whether the classroom teacher or the budding or experienced administrator (principal or superintendent) working toward a graduate degree. The shortened courses allowed the students to intentionally deeply engage with the specific content. In addition, the students then returned to their classrooms or new teaching positions in the statewide public schools and were able to implement what they had learned. Given that correspondence courses were also a viable option, ambitious teachers could continue to build their knowledge throughout the academic year. Teachers were encouraged to return the following summer to collaborate with their colleagues and peers, to extend their learning at the UW summer school, and to discuss their successes and failures associated with the year’s prior learning. Discussions among summer school participants would also occur at the Wyoming State Teachers’ Association meeting that was held in October or November each year.

While the teacher preparation courses were the core of the summer program, there were additional programs and courses offered. Other programs that were notable included the geology and paleontology excursions around the State of Wyoming and into Yellowstone National Park, as well as the science camp, initially established in 1923 outside of Centennial, Wyoming in the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest of the Sierra Madre Mountains. The camp became a formal tent camp in 1925 and eventually was composed of permanent log structures.  

agreement with New York’s Columbia University gave “…full credit for the work offered in the field courses in Geology in the University of Wyoming”. The camp was not just for those studying Geology, Botany, or other field sciences. In 1928, the following course description appears: “Combination Outdoor Science Course – A combination outdoor science course will be given by the Departments of Botany, Geology, and Zoology. This course should be of special interest to teachers of Science in high schools. It also presents a profitable opportunity for any person who wishes to become acquainted with the outdoor sciences by direct observation”. There was encouragement for all students, men and women, to take advantage of this experiential learning opportunity.

**Summer School as an Learning Vacation**

During the 1880s until the 1930s, a debate within the emerging professionalization teaching movement focused on how a teacher’s summer break should be properly spent. Ogren discussed the debate and summer options for teachers and the coinciding ramifications. Heard in the voices of the time, some supported the idea that the summer should be used to relax and rejuvenate the teacher, rebuilding energy and stamina to begin the next year fresh. Another frame of thought was that the summer should be used as a time for teachers to continue their own professional education by attending classes, lyceums, institutes, or a combination of available programs. Additionally, some argued that the summer should be used for a vacation, preferably

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*University of Wyoming, 1887-1964. (Laramie: University of Wyoming, 1965), 118, 123. Note: The occupancy permit for the camp was not renewed at the end of 2013 with the U.S. Forest Service. The camp structures were removed in 2014.*


within a natural setting to reconnect with nature. Ideally, a combination of these ideas was preferred. According to many professional teacher organizations, a teacher was using the summer appropriately when she/he could re-energize, learn, and have a vacation concurrently or at least sequentially. The idea of a learning vacation was promoted by UW through their advertisement publications (see Figures 1-3).

The reality for most teachers was that these ideal summers were beyond reach due to finances and/or geography. Teachers were paid sparingly and most had to work at what jobs they could during the summers to make ends meet until they returned to school and their regular salary. Individuals considered themselves fortunate if they secured summer employment where they were also worked in natural surroundings, such as in the national parks. Some employers, such as railroads, preferred teachers on their payroll in the summers, given the perception that teachers related to a higher social class of vacationer better than others willing to work for the same wage.


51. Ibid., 15-20.

52. Ibid., 18-19.
The UW summer program packaged the idea of a learning vacation for teachers. The 1922 summer school announced the opportunity in exactly this way, “Vacation Opportunities and Serious Study Combined.”
Advertisement posters were modified and ran in teacher journals, such as the *Wyoming Teacher Association*, the *Midland Schools Journal*, the *Nebraska Education Journal*, the *Oklahoma Teacher*, the *Kansas School Journal*, and even in the 1928 *Journal of the National Education Association*, as well as in preliminary announcement bulletins and advertisement posters. The Director of the Summer School made sure to highlight the academic programs and recreational opportunities established in the high mountain plains of the Rocky Mountains, and included many opportunities to hike, fish, and enjoy nature.

![University of Wyoming Summer School campaign poster, 1933.](image)

*Figure 2. University of Wyoming Summer School campaign poster, 1933. Emmett Chisum Special Collections, University of Wyoming Libraries: Laramie, Wyoming.*
The 1933 summer session advertising poster stated, “The University is located at 7,200 feet, and the Summer Camp at 10,000 feet, both amid the natural recreational advantages of the main range of the Rocky Mountains. Full advantage of this location is taken in planning curricula and entertainment features for the Summer School program”. The photographic images of the campus that were printed on promotional posters veered away from the interior classrooms and direct exterior fronts, to the exteriors of buildings surrounded in blooming flowers, and walkways with ornate fences, trees, and flower beds (see Figure 1).
Throughout these years, a concerted effort was made to plan enrichment activities for the participants of the summer program. Planning of these events was initially undertaken by the Director of the Summer School and by 1949 the events had evolved into a collaboration with various entities across campus, with the Director of Recreation being the primary contact. Prior to this publication, the primary contact had historically been the director of the summer programs, usually the Dean of Education. Participation in the events and activities separate from the content delivery was not mandatory but provided students with entertainment options outside of the classroom and studying. There were opportunities to participate in and enjoy plays, bands, dances, and other social events. Many of the activities were closely tied to the outdoors and to the culture of the West. Each summer, students could participate in multiple performances of two or three plays. The university’s band also performed at various functions, as did some of the organized vocal groups. Picnics were popular events as well. Chuckwagon cooking and the open fire cooking of wild game steaks drew many students to the plains outside of Laramie, to the small town of Centennial located at the base of the mountains, and to the UW field camp. Weekend and day trips planned for a weekend day were scheduled to allow students to take in a rodeo performance in Cheyenne at Frontier Days, travel to Colorado to see stage performances at the Central City Opera or spend a weekend at a dude ranch. These trips often had minimal costs, usually to cover the transportation fees and perhaps a night’s lodging.

54. Preliminary Announcement 1920, pamphlet; Recreation Summer Schools Activities, 1949.
Figure 4. University of Wyoming, Recreation Summer School Activities, 1949. Emmett Chisum Special Collections, University of Wyoming Libraries: Laramie, Wyoming.
Beginning in 1930, the Summer Quarter Preliminary Announcement advertised the railroad fares of 1929 that were required to visit Yellowstone National Park from Laramie, encouraging potential students to take advantage of the opportunity. Additionally, an advertisement for UW organized picnics at various locations were advertised as well. These advertisements continued for the next 19 years, occasionally including additional points of interest, such as an independent Frontier Days description (whereas prior it was included in the description of other recreation opportunities) and including the Black Hills of South Dakota on a map depicting the proximity from Laramie to Yellowstone National Park and Estes Park. In the 1949 pamphlet of summer school activities, a three-day trip at the end of the first term of summer school was scheduled to the Black Hills of South Dakota, including stops at Devil’s Tower National Monument, Mount Rushmore, and Wind Cave National Park. This trip was repeated with modifications at the end of the second summer term in August of 1949. Three-day trips to Yellowstone National Park were also scheduled at the end of the first and second terms, with stops in Jackson, Old Faithful, and Cody, Wyoming. If students were not intending to attend the second term of summer school, a five-day trip to Grand Canyon National Park was an option. This trip included stops in Salt Lake City, Bryce Canyon, and Zion National Parks as well. This trip was schedule to leave Laramie after the second session had begun classes. In the same fashion, a five-day trip was scheduled at the end of the second term to travel to Glacier National


Park. Advertised prices for these trips included lodging and transportation and required a minimum number of students to cover additional expenses.⁵⁸

Further Research

In the pursuit of answering who the students were that attended the UW summer school for teachers and why they came to Laramie, there were potential primary sources that were left untapped due to researcher constraints. The potential untapped resources include the official class registers and transcripts from students who attended the Laramie main campus and branch campus sessions during 1905-1950. In addition, the State of Wyoming Archives contains records of licenses issued to teachers in the state, as well as county superintendent reports. Scrutinization of these materials could provide further evidence as to who did attend the summer schools and whether the individuals remained in the state as licensed teachers. Additional details regarding the sources examined and those not examined can be reviewed in the research proposal that was written in association with this paper.

Conclusions

The summer school teacher preparation program offered at the University of Wyoming from 1905 to 1950 is an example of progressive education and the implementation of adult education theories. Most students who attended the UW summer school did so because they were either active classroom teachers or students who wanted to become teachers in Wyoming.

Although the admission age was younger than what is now considered college age and emerging adulthood, at the turn of the 20th century, these students were considered adults. The course offerings were scheduled at a time that was more convenient for a working adult to

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encourage participation in professional development for practicing teachers, as well as those entering teacher preparation. They were able to attend classes, acquire new knowledge and skills, and immediately put the new knowledge and skills into practice throughout the upcoming school year. They were also able to correspond and meet with other teachers who had attended the summer session to discuss additional ideas and techniques about instructional practices. The following summer they could then return for another summer session and continue to build on their prior knowledge and become more proficient practicing teachers.

Additionally, the summer program was an example of progressive education. Through the model school that was available for preservice teachers to observe and to practice teaching skills, the preservice students could fully experience the concept of experiential learning. Summer School Bulletins and preliminary announcements such as the 1906 University *Melange* highlighted, “One of the special advantages of the Summer term will be a course in Primary Methods, conducted in connection with a practice school or primary pupils”.

The Model School established in the summers for primary grades, including kindergarten, and eventually the separate Rural School were also advertised through the various publications, posters, and journal ads, to draw adult learners who wanted to attain specific experiences in these specialized settings. The UW publications and advertisements highlighting the opportunities to acquire practical experience while on campus were consistent from 1906 through 1950.

The opportunities for field work at the mountain camp to study botany, zoology, and geology were additional opportunities to engage in learning in the natural settings. These science courses, although open to all students, were targeted to educators as the 1924 advertisement

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stated, “Many Courses to Meet the Needs of Superintendents, Principals, and Teachers of all Subjects. Field Courses in Geology, Botany, and Zoology.” The field recreational opportunities were also multipurpose, as they were also openings for additional experiential learning. Trips to the regional national parks allowed for individuals to experience places they might not otherwise have been able to see. The cultural events, especially the rodeos, weekends at a dude ranch, and chuckwagon and wild game fry dinners were opportunities to learn about and taste a bit of the iconic wild west and U.S. western culture.

Fundamental to progressive education were the core elements that social progress and social change were fundamental objectives of the established national education system. In alignment with this progressive belief, the *University of Wyoming Announcement of Courses of Study for the Summer Session of 1914* had a section devoted to describing the intricacies of the course entitled, “Social Aspects of Education.” The two-page course description begins,

> This is a new phase of education which has been emphasized only in the last few years. We are beginning to realize that an effective education cannot be secured unless the teacher and the school are allied with agencies for social progress. The increasing complexity of our social life and the partial failure of certain social agencies to perform their function properly have made us realize more keenly the need of this co-operation. Many specific means for securing co-operation will be studied in detail, but the general significance of and the dangers in the whole movement will not be neglected. It is intended to make the course of such a practical nature that it will give the teacher definite notions for increasing the social efficiency of her community.

The essence of Progressive Education ideals at UW at this time was not isolated to the field experiences embedded in the courses, whether through the model schools, the field-based science  

60. University of Wyoming Summer Quarter advertisement poster, 1924.  
courses, and the recreational activities, it was also a foundation for the courses and activities for summer school students.

Further research regarding the 1905-1950 period of summer school programs for teachers at the University of Wyoming will result in continuing to fill gaps in this area of educational history. Locating, gathering, and examining summer school participant recollections of these summer school years, if available, could add significantly to the understanding of the program through the student perspective. Comparing UW’s program to that of other schools in the region has potential to increase insight into the characteristics of higher educational institutions in the Rocky Mountain region and the students they served. Additional research examining the demand for teachers in the state and how many summer school teachers were able to work in Wyoming following attendance at a summer school session could offer ideas for growing the number of professional educators in times of severe need. Research pertaining to the summer school programs that continued after 1950 has the potential to illustrate the change in educational philosophy and practice as a result of the societal changes of a new era, and continuing to our modern era, where again, a potentially difference focus exists on the purpose of summer school programs.
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