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Artifact Paper Revision

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Women Gaining Educational Equality

Until 1870, only males studied at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign (Taft). After the Civil War, American males saw the need to educate women because they were the ones raising the children. In the 1860s and 1870s, colleges and universities opened their classes to women (Women's Rights 81). In an effort to encourage the integration of both sexes, Professor Don Carlos Taft wrote an article called, "Young Ladies at the Illinois Industrial University," in 1873, to publicize the University's new equality policies. He informs the women on the newly passed rules, special departments, designated housing, and developed coeducation. The thesis, in Taft's article, tells readers that the University of Illinois wants to invite women to study alongside their male companions due to their belief in equality. He qualifies the University's thesis by wanting to invite women who deserve and desire a formal education.

As Taft's article explains, the Board of Trustees was the first to announce the acceptance of women. The council's five to four majority vote approved the University's goal for educational equality (Taft). This council votes on decisions that improve the wellness and betterment of the student body. A rebuttal may state that the vote was not unanimous; however, more than half of the council wanted to see women succeed. This support could protect women from possible ridicule they feared from individual members of the council or the student male population. If the women were dedicated, this support was all they needed until the male students

became accustomed to their presence. In the meantime, the council could ensure the strict punishment of people violating equality with harassment, violence, and verbal degradation. In addition, the council can provide the resources necessary to succeed. If the women felt another educational department needed to be opened, the council has the power and resources to fulfill these desires.

Taft supports the University's invitation by explaining how the new educational departments would satisfy the incoming wide array of interests. The first programs opened to support women's education were domestic science, design, and wood carving (Taft). At the time, these programs were in high demand for women because they were expected to study house wife material (Women's Rights 82). A rebuttal may state that society should not associate gender with class subjects, but women and men naturally have different interests that evolve through the generations. Men can participate in the same programs; however, if the class did not exist before, then the demand was not high enough during the 1870's. For generations, women were taught to be housewives, thus they were trained to have different work interests and mentalities than men. Women have the right to change these interests and mentalities; however, I believe these characteristics cannot change in a short span of time. These characteristics are easier to change in women that were raised in an environment that did not limit their educational opportunities.

Although the incoming women should have the opportunity to participate in classes, such as, science, technology, engineering, and math, I believe the first generation of women would struggle in these harder classes. Before the new education laws, middle and low class girls stayed home because their families could not afford schooling. Instead, their mothers taught them how to be house wives. High class girls typically attended school; however, they were only taught basic reading and writing skills (The History). These high class girls would most easily accustom

to the higher level education in college. The middle and low class girls would most likely fall behind because they would be competing with individuals that had elementary and high school education. To assure success, the University should accept women into science, technology, engineering, or math majors if they have completed elementary and high school education. Ideally, the University should wait one generation after the new education rights. This wait will allow the first generation of women to attend a full length of schooling before college. Ultimately, the newly opened programs are a chance to start integrating lower educated women in the University.

The article provides support with information on special housing and fees to further invite women to the school. The pricing includes details for furnished versus unfurnished housing. This easily accessible information backs the University's equality warrant. I believe they were trying to prevent women from feeling discouraged while looking for dorms that only housed males. The housing is as cheap and as close to the University building as possible. The house was constructed to hold most of the women attending that year (Taft). As a result, they were close together and able to form a social community. The women could easily meet friends with the same goals and interests. These friends are the basis for women that needed study groups or emotional support. Mainly, women could use these friendships if they were discouraged by the new experiences and challenges.

Eventually, women from all over the country took these advantages and applied to the University. In the same year that the article was written, the percentage of females nearly matched the percentage of males (Taft). These percentages support the coeducation that exists in the classrooms as well as the social community. This dynamic proves that women had an equal chance of getting accepted into the college. This idea provides backing for the University's

equality warrant. Although women were typically house wives during this time period, they were not incapable of receiving a higher level education.

These movements collectively led to the vast amount of roles women can obtain in their workplace, family and relationships in the modern world. The newly passed rules, special departments, designated housing, and developed coeducation aided in building the power of women. Women with an education have the freedom to make their own decisions and become unique individuals. As shown in Taft's article, the University invited women with a desire to learn because they believed every human deserves an equal opportunity to become successful.

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