Western Michigan University

Western Michigan University Magazine

(1963-1980)

Western Michigan University

Year 1964

Western Michigan University Magazine

Vol. 23 No. 1

Western Michigan University

This paper is posted at ScholarWorks at WMU.

http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wmu_magazine1/14
Paul V. Sangren:
The Man and the Hall
by Dr. Russell H. Seibert
THAT WESTERN Michigan University’s latest building, and one of its most imposing, should be named after Paul V. Sangren, its second president, is most fitting. The greater part of the building will ultimately be occupied by the departments and activities directly related to the preparation of teachers, an interest that was ever uppermost in the mind of President Sangren. For some years, however, it will also provide attractive and well designed facilities for the Departments of Art, Economics, History, Political Science and Sociology and Anthropology.

Dr. Paul V. Sangren first joined the faculty of Western Michigan University in 1923 and became president in 1936 at the age of thirty-eight. He earned his bachelor’s degree at Eastern Michigan University and later earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Michigan. Ferris State College and Kalamazoo College each honored him with a Doctor of Laws degree

View of Sangren Hall shows southwest entrance facing intersection of West Michigan Avenue (toward the right) and Gilkison Ave. (in foreground)
in 1955 and 1957 respectively. Starting as an instructor in educational psychology, Paul Sangren became Director of the Bureau of Educational Research, Head of the Department of Education and Dean of Administration. Under his foresight and leadership Western grew from an institution primarily devoted to the training of teachers, with a student body of approximately 1,800, to a university organized into the Schools of Applied Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, Liberal Arts and Sciences and Graduate Studies.

During the years of the Sangren administration Western was known as a college in which there was unusual faculty loyalty and one in which harmoniousness among individuals and departments was characteristic. Before Dr. Sangren became head of the Department of Education it had frequently been referred to as the war department. During the years that he headed it this situation improved so rapidly that the term was quickly dropped.

in this way, the writer continued, had a complexion and physical appearance betokening the fact that he loved an outdoor life. "His demeanor was friendly and had no hint of aloofness or imperiousness." His second contact with Paul Sangren came when Dr. Knauss served on a curriculum committee with Dr. Sangren as chairman:

Although he spoke less than most chairmen did, he succeeded in minimizing the discursive and irrelevant discussions for which committees are notorious. He did this not by showing any signs of arbitrary authority, but by making us all feel that he had a firm grasp of the factors underlying the problem under discussion. We were all convinced that he had unusual cranial ability.

There are numerous factors that help to account for the highly successful administration of President Sangren. It was sometimes said, with a high degree of truth, that he "made haste slowly." He was a man of patience who knew how to move forward steadily but with persistence. He had a clear vision of where he was going and by administrative wisdom and tact carried his faculty with him. He might at times delay a difficult decision for weeks or months, but then having once made up his mind act with unusual vigor and straightforwardness. The changes that took place at Western were evolutionary in character rather than revolutionary but change was constant and in keeping with the times.

When he entered upon the presidency in 1936 the faculty recognized him as the man that had helped save the institution from extinction. In the depression years partisan politics as well as a depleted state budget brought not only drastically reduced appropriations, with the result that many faculty members were dropped and salaries reduced by as much as forty per cent, but even brought a genuine threat that the college would
It was in that critical period that President Dwight B. Waldo, who was himself in failing health, appointed Paul V. Sangren, Dean of Administration. Dr. Sangren went to work at once and with vigor to fight for the school’s preservation. It was largely due to the forces that he masterfully marshalled that Western was saved. The administrative skill which he demonstrated on this occasion was certainly one of the important factors in persuading President Waldo to recommend Dr. Sangren to the State Board of Education as his successor.∗

It is tragic that many students and faculty members have only known Paul V. Sangren during the years Parkinson’s disease has robbed him of the vigor which had earlier been one of his chief characteristics. He was a man vigorous both of body and of mind. He loved hunting, fishing and bridge and found relaxation particularly in the first two in ways that are important to the chief administrative official of any rapidly-growing educational institution. It was not unusual for Dr. Sangren to get up at 3:30 in the morning, to go hunting or fishing with a close friend or two, to return about the time most people were going to their work, to bathe, go to his office and put in a full day’s work dealing with the multitudinous problems that invariably cross a president’s desk and end the day by attending a student dance or some other activity in the evening.

He was a friendly person who knew many of the students and all of the faculty by name. His relationship with them was free and easy. Because the faculty was small it was not difficult for him to know each member but beyond that he knew about the members of their family, their children and the particular problems or interests which troubled or delighted them. He and his good wife, Flossie, were to be seen at almost every student activity. Evening after evening they could be found at lectures, student concerts, athletic events, dances or entertaining groups in their own home.

In both the Faculty Council and the Administrative Council he encouraged free and open discussion. He was not interested in being surrounded by “yes” men. A man of integrity himself he wanted an honest opinion, always reserving the right, however, to make up his own mind after having carefully weighed the advice and counsel of others. He could, where he felt it wise, act quite independently. On one occasion each member of the Administrative Council was asked whether or not it would be wise to rent Kanley Chapel, which had been built on the campus with private funds, to a denomination to permit it to hold regular Sunday services for students. One by one members of the Administrative Council advised against such a move. After weighing the replies Dr. Sangren announced that while he respected their views and appreciated their frankness he believed it was best that the Chapel be made available for such use and proceeded to act accordingly.

(Continued on Page 10)

∗For much of this information in the above four paragraphs and at several other points, the writer is heavily indebted to the article by Professor Emeritus James O. Knauss in the Western Michigan College News Magazine, XIV (Summer 1956) pp. 1-3, entitled “Twenty Years as President: Paul V. Sangren.”
TO A DEGREE that was not always apparent to the casual observer, President Sangren was capable of acting boldly and with unusual foresight. Under his leadership, Western was one of the early institutions in the nation to begin the construction of buildings on a self-liquidating basis. Walwood Hall, serving both as a student center and dormitory, Vandercook Hall for men, and Spindler Hall for women were all erected in this way, to be followed by many others. He could drive a hard bargain. When the highway department wanted part of Western’s campus for the construction of what is now Stadium Drive, he knew that one agency of state government could not condemn property of another state agency.

As a result, he yielded to the highway department only after they agreed to do all the extensive grading necessary for the construction of Waldo Stadium, other funds for which were raised through the PWA and local subscription.

About the time of the Second World War, he realized that the original campus was too small to provide for the growth he foresaw following the war. He therefore moved to purchase a part of the former Arcadia Brook Golf Course and the land that is now known as Kanley Park. Some looked upon this decision as “Sangren’s folly,” and scoffed at the idea that Western could ever build a campus “over there across the tracks.” He, himself, recognized the fact that the starting of a new campus to the west of the hilltop could be done only with great inconvenience for both students and faculty and assumed that the transfer of academic activities would probably take the better part of fifty years. As anyone who knows the campus today appreciates, his judgment in purchasing the land for a new campus to the west of the New York Central tracks was much wiser than his prophecy was accurate. Already the University has had to purchase much additional land and the land he acquired, and more, is already filled with buildings and the teeming activities of students and faculty.

Over the years this writer was always intrigued with one of Paul Sangren’s characteristics. He seemed to possess none of the usual qualities of a good speaker. He was not fluent, his language was not polished nor rhythmical and what he said never delighted the ear because of the richness of language nor the aptness of his metaphor. Possibly these characteristics were the result of his having grown up a second-generation American. Yet despite the absence of

Dedication speaker was Dr. Ernest O. Melby, Distinguished Prof. of Education at Michigan State, as President Miller listened. Dr. Melby said we are sending out millions of children from our schools not prepared to take jobs or assume proper roles in society. He said if we want the American dream to become a reality we cannot have one-third of our youth not fit for employment, unskilled, uneducated and unwanted. Dr. Melby said education is the key to enduring attacks of prejudice, crime or any of our problems. He said we must help every child to make the most of himself.

Dr. Peter Odegard, University of California professor, at the rostrum, was the main speaker at a morning convocation on the dedication day, sponsored by the School of Education, the Social Science Division and the Art Department. Shown are Dr. Chester Hunt, who gave response to Dr. Odegard’s talk for social sciences, and Dr. Willis Dunbar, head of the History Department, who presented a summary. Other faculty responses were given by Dr. Stanley K. S. Phillips, art, and David W. Adams, education. Dr. Odegard, in his talk, said the amount spent nationally on education by the government must be doubled in the future.
In all that he did Paul Sangren was loyally supported by his wife. Flossie had a vigor and friendliness to match that of her husband's. They both thoroughly enjoyed student and faculty affairs of every sort and description. They both enjoyed a good laugh and one was as straightforward and direct as the other. No one ever questioned where he or she stood in Flossie’s eyes. Her judgment of people was generous and candid. Her interest in all aspects of Western equaled his own. She was widely read and active in a number of the women’s organizations of the city. It is therefore most proper that one of the rooms in the Paul V. Sangren Hall should be named after Flossie Sangren. Here students and faculty will have an opportunity to meet together informally to discuss issues of importance and unimportance and to engage in the sort of intellectual exchange that is as important to the life of a university as that which goes on within classrooms and laboratories. The room is appropriately decorated in a Mexican decor reflecting the interests of both Dr. and Mrs. Sangren in that country which they visited on several occasions.

NATIONALLY Dr. Sangren was very active in bringing together several organizations all of which were associated with teacher education. At one time or another he was president of the American Teachers College Association, president of the Association of Teacher Education Institutions, commissioner on the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, and was one of those responsible for the creation of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education out of some of the previously named organizations. He was active in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, serving as an examiner of other colleges and universities on many occasions. He served as president of the Michigan Council of State College Presidents where, during his years of good health, he was always listened to with respect for then, as now, Western frequently served as a bridge between the larger state universities and the smaller ones.

One of the four auditorium-type lecture rooms in Sangren Hall with class in session.

Students utilize chairs in entrance way of Educational Resources Center to study.

Paul V. Sangren Hall was designed as two basic units. At the front is a two-story unit. It consists of precast aggregate concrete panels forming the wall of the second floor supported by an arcade of white pillars and a first floor faced with soft red brick. Color anodized aluminum windows and panels placed between concrete panels provide a strong vertical effect to the unit and a feeling of strength and stability. The exposed columns of the arcade and the beams are finished with a white semi-plastic material.

This front unit houses four auditorium-type lecture rooms on the first floor, one seating approximately 300 students, two seating 200 each and one seating 100. Each lecture room is tastefully furnished in at-
In the Educational Resources Center are brought together not only printed materials such as professional education books, periodicals, pamphlets, reference materials, public school textbooks and public school courses of study and curriculum guides, but in related rooms are found equipment and special layouts for audio-visual materials of every type. In one especially equipped room students may be taught the use of motion picture projectors, 35 mm slides and filmstrips, phono discs, opaque projectors and graphic materials of many types.

Simply stated the Educational Resources Center is meant to be an educational tool to provide services and resources to college students preparing to teach, to faculty members in the department of education and to demonstrate to public school people the way in which educational materials of many types may be brought together for instructional purposes. Through cooperative action on the part of the education faculty and the personnel in the Educational Resources Center, multimedia teaching packets for particular units of work may be prepared. For example, in a unit on heredity a collection containing printed materials, films, filmstrips and charts may be developed and retained for later use. It is also expected that the Center will sponsor seminars and conferences for public school personnel, student teachers and faculty members to keep them informed about new techniques and media that are constantly being developed.

Only by means of a conducted tour of the area can one come to appreciate the rich resources provided by this Center and it is therefore no surprise that it has brought exclamations of delight from nearly all who have visited it.

The second floor of this unit of the building includes the Educational Resources Center whose primary purpose is to serve the School of Education. The Educational Resources Center is concerned with virtually the total range of instructional media. It contains a large library capable of housing 40,000 volumes and seating 260 students. All books and other materials related to professional education are now housed in this library. The room itself is one of the most attractive on the campus and provides students and faculty alike with an ideal place for study. For acoustical purposes the floor is carpeted from wall to wall and the ceiling covered with acoustical tile. Small enclosed carrels are provided for students who need to use typewriters.

Unusual 3,000 pound sign on south side of Sangren Hall faces toward Michigan Ave. It is made of pre-cast concrete.
In order to avoid the feeling of a glorified high school the selection of interior materials and colors became critical. Walls and partitions were designed using plastic with vinyl fabric covering for wainscots and color texture accents. Modern up-to-date office and classroom furniture has been used throughout. Faculty offices, which are so important to faculty moral and efficiency, and equally important to encourage conferences between faculty and students, are either single or double with attractive appointments such as draperies, built in shelves and color-coordinated office equipment.

The Departments of Economics, History, Political Science and Sociology and Anthropology occupy a good deal of the space overlooking the North Valley. Comments from the faculty in these departments have been uniformly enthusiastic.

The area housing the social science division includes not only faculty offices and classrooms of varying sizes but also makes special provision for the Center for Sociological Research and the Institute of Public Affairs connected with the Department of Political Science. Each of these areas has a suite of offices so arranged as to make it possible for these agencies to carry on their work most efficiently.

On the lower floor overlooking the North Valley are found the unusually extensive and well-designed classrooms, laboratories, work spaces and offices housing the Department of Art. Space does
Huge oil painting of Dr. Sangren watches over students as they study in foyer of Sangren Hall.

not permit a detailing of the unusual features of this area. It is only possible to point out that here one may find rooms providing the latest equipment to thrill the heart of any artist and ample space for sculpturing, painting, drawing, ceramics, graphic arts and an attractive little lecture room for teaching the history of art.

The head of the department reported that “student reactions reassure us that art is becoming for others the rich and meaningful experience that we have found it to be for ourselves.” He quotes one student as saying this place “makes me not just have to work but want to.” Another student observed “that the new environment and equipment have given quite a lift to the teaching by the professors, inspiring us all to want to strive for a good finished product.”

One of the prides of Art Department is the kiln and ceramics-sculpture drying room complete with two large furnaces.

Another well equipped studio is wood-cut room which has three roller presses, for making wood-cut impressions.

The head of the art department observed that Robert Henri once said, “Art is just the best way of doing what needs to be done.” The same may be said of Paul V. Sangren Hall. Here learning and teaching may become both art and an art. The dedication of this building to Paul V. Sangren can only bring to him and the members of his immediate family great joy, for the provision of adequate quarters for those who would gladly learn and gladly teach was certainly one of his primary goals.
“We’re Behind Western . . . . . for Life!”

Life time support of Western is the intention of these latest alumni to take out Life Memberships in the Alumni Association.

Donald A. Burge ’52
Shirley McKimmon Burge ’52
Parchment, Michigan

Donald W. Burns ’53
Barbara Jean Haines Burns ’63
South Lyon, Michigan

James Bolen DeVries ’62
St. Joseph, Michigan

James J. Dorr ’62
Martha Wanink Dorr
Libertyville, Illinois

James T. File ’57
Ann West File ’57
Vandalia, Michigan

Capt. Robert N. Harris ’61
New York, New York

Joseph T. Hoy ’42
Kalamazoo, Michigan

John G. Hungerford ’53
Norma Crane Hungerford ’54
Kalamazoo, Michigan

William B. Hungerford ’57
Dixiana Crane Hungerford ’56
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Kenneth Lyles ’48
Chicago, Illinois

Jack B. Olson ’42
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Bruce G. Wisner ’59
JoAnn Osman Wisner ’60
Port Huron, Michigan

James R. Starring ’23
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Lois E. Godde ’36
Lois Walkley Godde ’35
Battle Creek, Michigan

James R. Starring ’23
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Lois E. Godde ’36
Lois Walkley Godde ’35
Battle Creek, Michigan

James T. File ’57
Ann West File ’57
Vandalia, Michigan

Capt. Robert N. Harris ’61
New York, New York

Joseph T. Hoy ’42
Kalamazoo, Michigan

John G. Hungerford ’53
Norma Crane Hungerford ’54
Kalamazoo, Michigan

William B. Hungerford ’57
Dixiana Crane Hungerford ’56
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Kenneth Lyles ’48
Chicago, Illinois

Jack B. Olson ’42
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Bruce G. Wisner ’59
JoAnn Osman Wisner ’60
Port Huron, Michigan

Edythe L. Parker Var West ’38
Glendale, California

Zola Volpel ’39
Detroit, Michigan

Suzanne Britten Werner ’64
St. Clair Shores, Michigan

Sherwood Bishop Winslow, Jr., ’63
Battle Creek, Michigan

Hal K. Menzie ’49
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Gerald C. Wolf ’56
Ann Arbor, Michigan

John C. Fleming ’61
Seattle, Washington

Gary Hershoren ’57
Monroe, Michigan

Frank J. Richards ’52
Berkley, Michigan

It’s Easy to Use the
WMU Subscription Club

* New subscriptions
* Renewed subscriptions
* Gift subscriptions
* No additional cost to the subscriber
* Any publications
* Any length of time
* Any number of magazines
* Any special rate when coupon or rate card is attached

Full payment must accompany all orders. Make all checks payable to: WMU Subscription Club and mail to WMU Subscription Club, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo.