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## Western at War: Western Michigan College During World War II

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# WESTERN AT WAR

Western Michigan College during World War II

“None of us know exactly what the future may hold, except that it

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Submitted as a requirement of the Lee Honors College, Western Michigan University

must hold victory in this war and a full and complete acceptance of our respective responsibilities. How quickly that victory may come with its assurance of a continuation of the American way of life is dependent upon how fully and completely every American accepts his part.”

-Paul V. Sangren, President of Western Michigan College<sup>1</sup>

Oxford Dictionaries defines “total war” as “a war that is unrestricted in terms of the weapons used, the territory or combatants involved, or the objectives pursued, especially one in which the laws of war are disregarded.”<sup>2</sup> By the end of the 1930s, conflicts in Europe and Asia were ignited and raging across the world, threatening to engulf the globe in a total war. In the early summer of 1940, France fell to an invading Germany, prompting the United States of America to draft a historic peace-time conscription act (Selective Training and Service Act of 1940).<sup>3</sup> Although the United States had made a concerted effort to remain neutral during the early days of World War II, the French defeat was a clear signal that American involvement in the conflict was a matter of when, not if. “Total war” would be coming to America, sooner or later.

War quickly impacted all aspects of American society, including its colleges and universities. In November of 1942, 585 higher education reported a total enrollment of 603,558 full-time civilian students. A year later, that figure would be 373,993 students, a decrease of 38

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<sup>1</sup> Paul V. Sangren, “Welcome Reservists,” Kalamazoo: Western Michigan College, Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford Dictionaries*, online, s.v. “total war”, accessed December 1, 2014, [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/total-war](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/total-war).

<sup>3</sup> Russell Seibert, “Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, Chicago Teachers College Conference, May 4, 1942,” Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

percent.<sup>4</sup> The Selective Service Act was a main reason for the decline in enrollment. Signed by President Roosevelt on September 16, 1940, the SSA required that men between the ages of 21 and 36 were eligible for mandatory military training.<sup>5</sup> Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the National Committee on Education and Defense and the United States Office of Education sponsored a conference that met on January 3-4, 1942.<sup>6</sup> This conference was the largest collection of university and college executives that had ever been assembled, underscoring the magnitude of the situation facing the country and its higher institutions.<sup>7</sup> The assembled executives made this declaration:

In the present supreme national crisis, we pledge to the President of the United States, Commander in Chief of our Nation, the total strength of our colleges and universities – our faculties, our students, our administrative organizations, and our physical facilities. The institutions of higher education of the United States are organized for action, and they offer their united power for decisive military victory, and for the ultimate and even more difficult task of establishing a just and lasting peace.<sup>8</sup>

The Western Michigan College of Education, a small, public teachers college in Kalamazoo, Michigan, was among these institutions involved in the war effort. Throughout the American involvement in the war, Western Michigan College would contribute in many ways, altering itself to simultaneously meet the needs of the war effort and to continue its mission to produce quality educators. Western Michigan College was well equipped for this mission, and it made the modifications necessary to act on behalf of the students and nation it had served.

Through the creation of a national defense committee, accelerated training, industry and aviation

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<sup>4</sup> Ramond Walters, "Facts and Figures of Colleges at War," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 231 (January 1944), 8.

<sup>5</sup> George F. Zook, "How the Colleges Went to War," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 231 (January 1944), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

training, and government military programs, Western Michigan College made important contributions to the war effort while simultaneously acting on behalf of its students and itself.

Western Michigan College truly began its war effort almost a year before the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. On January 17, 1941, the administration established a Committee on National Defense.<sup>9</sup> The committee members were faculty from around the college, and included: Dr. Russell M. Seibert (Social Sciences), Chairman; Dr. Nancy Scott (History); Mr. Ray Pellett (Education); Mr. Judson Hyames (Athletic Director); Mr. Elmer Weaver (Aviation); President Paul Sangren, Ex-Officio; and Dr. William Berry (Geography), Secretary.<sup>10</sup><sup>11</sup> In a paper written for the Chicago Teachers College Conference on May 4, 1942, Dr. Russell Seibert wrote,

Some of the advantages of such a small committee have been these: The committee has been in a position to obtain an overall view of the school's contribution to the Nation's war program and to coordinate these activities; it can cut across departmental lines, avoid duplication of effort by several departments, and at times ask several departments to cooperate on a single project; it has also relieved the President of the necessity of making arbitrary decision on many issues. The committee is small enough to be called together without too much trouble; and yet large enough to be fairly representative of faculty opinion.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of the Committee on National Defense was to "give attention to national defense and other matters relating to the present world situation insofar as they concern Western."<sup>13</sup> Letters and documents presented to President Sangren under those guidelines would

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<sup>9</sup> Paul V. Sangren, Faculty Bulletin, Western State Teachers College, April 4, 1941, Zhang Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Western Michigan College, *Brown and Gold 1941*, [http://web.library.wmich.edu/DIGI/WMU\\_Yearbooks/1941.pdf](http://web.library.wmich.edu/DIGI/WMU_Yearbooks/1941.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Seibert, "Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education", 1.

<sup>13</sup> Sangren, Faculty Bulletin, April 4, 1941.

be referred by him to the committee for consideration.<sup>14</sup> When the committee was created, President Sangren had imagined that they should use existing standing committees to carry out suggestions or recommendations, but also understood that, from time to time, the committee would be forced to act on its own behalf.<sup>15</sup> This committee, driven by President Sangren, would evaluate problems brought about by the war and set the stage for Western's war effort for its duration.

One of the first issues brought to the committee's attention was the influx of refugees to the United States, specifically from Europe, and how Western might have utilized their expertise as professors or apprentices.<sup>16</sup> According to the minutes for the February 26, 1941 meeting, there was a lengthy discussion on the matter, with opinions coming from all sides of the issue. On one hand, it would have been very difficult for the faculty of Western Michigan to turn down a refugee willing to help teach WMC students, especially considering that many refugees from Europe were considered the foremost scholars.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the idea that WMC would hire a European refugee for a position over an American who was available was considered unfair.<sup>18</sup> In the end, it appears that the committee came to the consensus that, when it came to hiring refugees, they would do what is best for WMC and its students.<sup>19</sup> The issue of what to do about hiring refugees is an example of a situation caused by total war that didn't involve direct support from the college. The United States was not yet at war, but WMC was already thinking about dealing with one of war's many symptoms: refugees.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> William J. Berry, "Committee on National Defense, January 17, 1941 Minutes", Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>16</sup> William J. Berry, "Committee on National Defense, February 26, 1941 Minutes", Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

In November that same year, the committee discussed an issue which involved the participation of Western women attending social functions at Fort Custer, a nearby military base of about thirty thousand soldiers.<sup>20</sup> Attendance of these social functions was the students' first major contributions to the war effort. The main organization created for women to attend these social functions was a semi-official group called the Fort Custer Service Club in Kalamazoo.<sup>22</sup> This group included 350 women from the area, and "probably a few of these are students at W. M. C."<sup>23</sup>

Reverend Paul Heath reported to the committee that a woman named Mrs. Lenderlink would assemble and chaperone busloads of girls during to official Saturday night Fort Custer dances.<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Gladys Hanson, the Spindler Hall director, reported that girls had gone from Spindler wither her knowledge and permission and permission from parents and President Sangren.<sup>25</sup> The organization, and WMC, had wished to include more students in the social functions, but waited until specific regulations were intact before giving complete consent for student attendance.<sup>26</sup> These regulations were:

1. The dances were to be organized by Fort Custer officials and include the presence of Military Police.

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<sup>20</sup> William J. Berry, "National Defense Committee Meeting of November 14, 1941," Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>21</sup> Russell Seibert, "Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942," Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>22</sup> Berry, "National Defense Committee Meeting of November 14, 1941."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Seibert, "Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942."

2. Written consent from the girls' parents' must have been given to the Dean of Women, and freshmen were not approved.
3. Transportation to the fort must have been by regularly chartered bus and chaperoned.<sup>27</sup>

In his paper, Dr. Seibert outlined the benefits to the students who attended these events, more so than the soldiers themselves. He wrote that the girls who attended the dances were usually ones who went on few dates normally and had a shy disposition.<sup>28</sup> He argued that “the social contacts have done them good” and highlighted the fact that “care is exercised that no girl go too frequently.”<sup>29</sup>

In some cases, the National Defense Committee would decide not to make a recommendation at all, instead turning over the issue to another committee that is better suited to handle it. One such example is the question of civilian morale, which was handed over to the Adult Education Committee.<sup>30</sup> Another example occurred when the International Harvester Company offered to provide tractors and instructors for the purpose of training women drivers.<sup>31</sup> The committee declined to make a decision and instead referred the matter to the Agriculture and Rural Education Departments.<sup>32</sup> Forty women, most of whom live on farms, showed enough interest that each the departments approved the measure.<sup>33</sup>

The cases of the possible hiring of refugee teachers, the Fort Custer Service Club, civilian morale and the training of women to drive tractors not only outlined some of the early

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



contributions to the war effort by WMC, but also showed the purpose of the National Defense Committee and the process in which the committee functioned. It was clear that in some cases, the National Defense Committee was the most appropriate means to accomplish goals or fix problems; in others, it was understood that other committees or departments were better suited to handle an issue accordingly. Discretion was the committee's best asset, and the proper distribution of tasks were its greatest accomplishments.

One important decision made by the committee as the United States entered the war was the acceleration of the training of the students of Western Michigan. This was important in order for it to be possible for more young men to complete their education before entering military service, increasing the amount of teachers entering the school systems to replace those who had already left for war, and to train more quickly professionals entering fields like medicine, dentistry and engineering.<sup>34</sup> The primary goal of this effort was to allow students to finish a normal four year curriculum in approximately three years by increasing the work load and attending extended summer sessions.<sup>35</sup> A freshman enrolling in June, 1942 would have the ability to graduate in February, 1945.<sup>36</sup> Other programs, like the two year aviation mechanic programs or the rural education programs, could be completed in as little as three semesters.<sup>37</sup> The increased workload consisted of allowing students to take a maximum of 18 credits per semester and by attending a nine-week summer session.<sup>38</sup> While this accelerated program was not mandatory, many students took advantage of the opportunity, with President Sangren noting

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<sup>34</sup> Paul V. Sangren, "The War Program at Western Michigan," circa 1943, Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Western Michigan College of Education, *The Extension Bulletin*, Vol. 3 No. 1, Spring 1942 Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>37</sup> Seibert, "Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

in early 1943 that, “During the past summer, several times the usual number of regular students were enrolled at Western Michigan College.”<sup>39</sup> Accelerated programs were mentioned in the “Educational Opportunities” sections of the 1943-1945 Brown and Gold Yearbooks as being available in *all* disciplines.<sup>40</sup>

Western Michigan first announced the accelerated programs of study in the Spring Quarter, 1942 issue of *The Extension Bulletin*.<sup>41</sup> At the end of any semester, students were allowed to “drop back” into the normal program.<sup>42</sup> In some cases, the college could have required a student to return to the normal program if it became apparent that they were not able to handle the increased work load.<sup>43</sup> The college could also prevent a student from entering the accelerated course if it appears, based on their previous work, that the accelerated course would not suit their scholastic needs.<sup>44</sup>

During the summer sessions, the college was meant to function as normal. The dormitories would remain open at the regular year rates, there was no change in tuition rates, and meals were served in the cafeteria as normal.<sup>45</sup> The college’s financial aid, including scholarships, loans and employment, were to function normally as well (at least as much as it was possible).<sup>46</sup> Every effort was made to make sure Western Michigan College functioned at an accelerated pace, affording each student the ability to either join the war or join the workforce as quickly as possible.

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<sup>39</sup> Sangren, “The War Program at Western Michigan College.”

<sup>40</sup> Western Michigan College, *Brown and Gold Yearbook 1943-1945*.

<http://web.library.wmich.edu/digidb/yearbooks/>

<sup>41</sup> Western Michigan College of Education, *The Extension Bulletin*, Vol. 3 No. 1 Spring Quarter, 1942.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Early in 1940, well before the United States had entered the war, Western Michigan College was already focused on training aviation mechanics under the direction of Mr. E. C. Weaver.<sup>47</sup> Normally a two year program, with the acceleration of studies a student could finish in about three semesters (as discussed previously). In 1941 the college constructed the Mechanical Trades Building, which was fully equipped “for the purpose of training young men for skilled work in the field of aviation mechanics.”<sup>48</sup> The program was so successful that, two years in, Dr. Seibert conceded that no one had graduated through the program... because enrollees had been “snapped up by various industries before the completion of their work.”<sup>49</sup> The demand for high quality aviation mechanics and the rate in which students were poached from the program to work in the industry is an example of the incredible foresight that the administration at Western Michigan possessed at the beginning of the decade.

Another part of the aviation program was the training of pilots, which began at roughly the same time as the mechanic training. At the outset, the program was handicapped due to reconstruction of the Kalamazoo Municipal Airport.<sup>50</sup> Eventually, with the airport in good condition, the college trained roughly 100 pilots a year, and by 1943 approximately 300 students had trained as pilots with 200 in military service flying for the Navy, Army and Marine Corps.<sup>51</sup> Not all of the students who received their pilot licenses would go on to fly for the military. Some

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<sup>47</sup> Seibert, “Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942.”

<sup>48</sup> Sangren, “The War Program at Western Michigan College,” 3.

<sup>49</sup> Seibert, “Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942.”

<sup>50</sup> Western Michigan College of Education, *War Supplement Bulletin: Accelerated Programs; Special Training Plans; Emergency Courses*, Kalamazoo: Western Michigan College of Education, 1942, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Sangren, “The War Program at Western Michigan College,” 3.

when on to become civilian pilot instructors at military schools, some flew for airlines, and at least one became a ground school supervisor for the Civil Aeronautics Administration.<sup>52</sup>

The aviation schools were a massive success, but at a cost. Because of the popularity and the demand for pilots and mechanics, Western Michigan College had been “overtaxing” their facilities. Initially, WMC was given \$60,000 for an aviation center at the Kalamazoo Municipal Airport by the W. E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation.<sup>53</sup> Construction was denied by the War Production Board in October, 1942, however.<sup>54</sup> President Sangren would try again only to be denied on the grounds that “the existing facilities were considered adequate when the site was chosen.”<sup>55</sup>

President Sangren, while steering WMC through the war effort, was clearly also looking beyond the war’s end. He must have been aware of the future applications of the aviation school and was attempting to set the school up for future success by massively upgrading their facilities. He had attempted to use the early successes of the program, as well as the current war effort climate, in order to greatly increase the program. While he was unable to get approval for materials to expand the facilities at the time, the aviation program would continue to grow and grow at Western Michigan, ultimately moving to Battle Creek, Michigan, where it resides today.

Directly related to the aviation program was Western Michigan’s expansion of their Industrial Arts programs. Western Michigan had had a program designed to teach manual or industrial arts for many years before the war. The first mention of manual training classes in

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<sup>52</sup> Seibert, “Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942.”

<sup>53</sup> “WMC Given \$60,000 for Aviation Center,” *The Kalamazoo Gazette*, July 17, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> Maury Maverick to Paul V. Sangren, Kalamazoo, MI, October 7, 1942.

<sup>55</sup> Maury Maverick to Paul V. Sangren, Kalamazoo, MI, July 17, 1943.

Brown and Gold yearbooks came in 1909.<sup>56</sup> During the war, the Mechanical Trades building and the Industrial Arts Buildings were in continuous use with access to equipment and instructors for twenty-four hours a day.<sup>5758</sup> There were two uses for these buildings and educational opportunities, both of which were important contributions to the war effort. The first was non-student vocational training, meant to “fill the ranks” of workers as production increased and labor became more scarce due to conscription. The second was the training of teachers for industrial instruction in either the civilian or military setting.

Engineering was an important part of war education throughout the nation, not just at Western Michigan. Every one of the “five broad fields” (Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Commerce, Agriculture, Education) had a decrease in enrollment except Engineering.<sup>59</sup> The United States had become the “Arsenal of Democracy” and its institutions were now training its students to contribute, including Western Michigan College.

The non-student vocational training on campus was one of many programs throughout the country filling factories with skilled workers. The war training for industries began in early 1940 and by 1943, Western Michigan College had trained 3,000 men for war work, averaging 1,000 trained per year.<sup>60</sup> The defense industry training consisted of three types: pre-employment training, industry transition training, and career advancement instruction.<sup>61</sup> Men receiving pre-employment training were selected from the rolls of the Works Projects Administration and the

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<sup>56</sup> Western State Normal School, *Brown and Gold 1909*, Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Seibert, “Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942,” 3.

<sup>58</sup> Sangren, “The War Program at Western Michigan College,” 3.

<sup>59</sup> Walters, “Facts and Figures of Colleges at War”, 10.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Seibert, “Organization of the National Defense Program at Western Michigan College of Education, May 4, 1942,” 5.

Public Employment Service.<sup>62</sup> Their training was for very specific tasks (as there was not enough time to develop well rounded tradesmen) and consisted of classes for six hours a day, five days a week for about ten weeks.<sup>63</sup> Examples of the skills these men were trained are: milling machine operating; operating shapers, drill presses, lathes and spray guns; welding; wing assembling; fabric applying; and parts inspecting.<sup>64</sup> According to Dr. Seibert, another aspect of this training was morale boosting by encouraging the workers to “shave daily, dress as neatly as possible, and feel a sense of pride in the new skills they are learning.”<sup>65</sup> In 1943, out of 502 W.P.A. men that had been trained, 415 were still employed.<sup>66</sup> Dr. Seibert considered this program a great success, and he wrote, “It is obvious that in addition to the number of men added to the nation’s productive forces, this training has paid for itself many times over by removing several hundred from the relief rolls.”<sup>67</sup>

The second type of defense training was designed for men who worked in a factory that was being converted to war industry production.<sup>68</sup> Several industries in and around Kalamazoo and the state of Michigan were forced to halt production of their goods in order to produce something else towards the war effort. The men and women who worked in these factories needed to be retrained into these new jobs, and many got that training from Western Michigan College.<sup>69</sup>

The third type training done through this program was designed for industry workers who were looking to improve their position at their place of employment, or “upgrade themselves by

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

learning new skills.”<sup>70</sup> These workers had classes that met three hours an evening, two nights a week, for ten weeks.<sup>71</sup> Many of these students would drive up to forty or fifty miles in order to attend these classes.<sup>72</sup>

Most of the sources discussing these programs, such as speeches, bulletins and papers from the administration are from the mid-point in the war, approximately 1942-1943. By this point, these programs were only open to men. By in his paper about the war program from 1943, President Sangren mentions, albeit briefly and neglects to discuss further details, that the college was involved in expanding the program towards women who will eventually take the places of the men called to military service.<sup>73</sup> The involvement of women in these programs is an interesting topic, and warrants further study.

The final aspect of the Western Michigan College war effort was probably its most exhaustive and enveloping programs. Beginning in 1942, Western Michigan made a concerted effort to include several military programs on campus for their students, in order to train them to become officers in either the Navy, Marine Corps or Army. These programs were the V-1 Program, the V-5 Program, the V-7 Program, the Air Force Enlisted Reserve and, the largest of the group, the V-12 Program. In 1942, Western Michigan College released *The Extension Bulletin*, a bulletin outlining the availability of each program to students.

Other colleges and universities around the nation had been training military students so fill the ranks of the officer corps in the various departments of the military. In November of 1943, approximately 288,000 military students attended 420 institutions around the nation.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Sangren, “The War Program at Western Michigan College,” 3.

<sup>74</sup> Walters, “Facts and Figures of Colleges at War,” 8.

These military students were not only trained to contribute directly to the war effort, they also contributed well to replace the many civilian students who were no longer able to attend due to the war.

The V-1 Program was an officer training program that was open to students between the ages of 17 and 20 years old who are freshmen or sophomores.<sup>75</sup> In the V-1 plan a student could enlist as an Apprentice Seaman in the Naval Reserve on inactive duty as he completed his education.<sup>76</sup> Each V-1 enlistee was required to take specific courses, including 6 hours of Rhetoric, 18 hours of Trigonometry and Algebra, 10 hours of Physics, 6 hours of United States History, 2 hours of Hygiene, 6 hours of Geography and a Special Physical Education (of which the student did not get credit for).<sup>77</sup> There were also 17 elective courses, including several review courses for no credit, speech classes, and classes on modern Europe, Calculus, Meteorology, Chemistry and Psychology.<sup>78</sup>

The bulletin highlights the fact that, for most students, their college career would not change much throughout this program. This was a consistent selling point throughout the article. “After his enlistment his college life will continue as usual,” it said, “He will not have to give up his favorite sports. He will not need to break up the course of study he has mapped out for himself.”<sup>79</sup>

There were four things the Navy required the V-1 student to do, however:

- To do his work carefully and accurately, whatever the course, and to learn to express himself clearly and concisely.

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<sup>75</sup> Western Michigan College, *The Extension Bulletin*, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> United States Government, *V-1 Collegiate Program*, U.S. Naval Service, Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, Paul V. Sangren Collection.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.



- To include in his college curriculum studies which give him a sound working knowledge of mathematics and physics.
- To keep himself in good health and develop his physical condition to the standard required of Naval officers.
- To remember at all times he is training to be a leader of men – an officer in the United States Navy.<sup>80</sup>

When a student applied for the V-1 Program he was given a physical exam, the same exam that was given to all Navy volunteers.<sup>81</sup> Towards the end of the program, each V-1 candidate would be given a “stiffer” physical exam required of all Naval officers.<sup>82</sup> At the end of one and half years of work, the candidate was expected to take a competitive exam, and those students who rank high enough were eligible to continue on in either the V-5 program or the V-7 program.<sup>83</sup>

The V-5 program involved training in Naval Aviation. As soon a student was selected for V-5 training, he was activated and began receiving regular Navy pay (about \$75 per month).<sup>84</sup> Each cadet had two rounds of flight training, preliminary and advanced training.<sup>85</sup> After completing both rounds of training, the cadet would be commissioned as an Ensign in the Naval Reserve and become a Naval Aviator.<sup>86</sup>

The V-7 program was the program in which ship officers were drawn from.<sup>87</sup> Each student accepted in the V-7 program would continue his studies until graduation, with no restrictions on curriculum.<sup>88</sup> After graduation, each student was required to go on active duty for

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

training as a Reserve Midshipman, earning \$65 a month.<sup>89</sup> At the successful completion of this training, each midshipman would then be commissioned as an Ensign, USNR.<sup>90</sup> Students directed to the Dean of Men, Mr. Ray C. Pellett, in order to be considered for any of these Naval programs.<sup>91</sup>

The Air Force Enlisted Reserve program was announced in early May, 1942. In this program, high school seniors and college students of all levels were able to enlist and allowed deferments in order to complete their college career.<sup>92</sup> Jobs available were as bombardiers, navigators, pilots, armament communications, engineers, meteorologists or photographers.<sup>93</sup> Students interested in this program were directed to contact the local Army Recruiting Station.<sup>94</sup>

The largest and most extensive program activated on the campus of Western Michigan College was that of the V-12 program. During this time, Western Michigan became more like a base or a ship for the students in this program than it was a college. In the pamphlet created for incoming V-12 students titled *On Board the Western Michigan*, WMC is consistently referred to as a “ship.”<sup>95</sup> There was a stark reminder at the back of the pamphlet describing what is expected of each V-12 student:

#### **You’re In the Navy Now**

This college is a ship and you are on board. The commanding officer is the captain or skipper. The dormitories are quarters; your room is a compartment; your bed is a bunk. The floors of a building are decks; the halls are passageways; stairs are ladders; walls are bulkheads; ceilings are overheads; the lavatory is the head. Right is starboard; left is port. When you go upstairs

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Western Michigan College, *Onboard the Western Michigan*, Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives, 1-32.

you go topside; coming downstairs you go below. The infirmary or hospital is the sick bay. The dining hall is the mess hall; the kitchen is the galley. All hands means the entire crew. Aye aye, sire is the reply to an officer's order signifying that it is understood and will be obeyed. It is not to be confused with Yes, Sir, an affirmative answer to a senior's question. Scuttle-but is an unauthenticated rumor and should be avoided. A sea-lawyer is a seaman who is prone to argue, or one who tries to avoid difficult tasks. Carry on is a command meaning to resume work or continue that which is in progress. Field day is a day for general cleaning of the ship. When reading time you begin at 0001, one minute after midnight and continue to 2400, or midnight. Noon is 1200 and 6:15 p.m. is 1815. While you are an enlisted man you have a rating. When you are commissioned you receive a rank.<sup>96</sup>

It's clear to see the difference between the promises made to the V-1 program students and the expectations of the V-12 students. V-1 students wouldn't lose their college experience, yet the V-12 students were in the Navy, even at Western Michigan, and they were to behave as such.

The V-12 program began on Western Michigan's campus in July 1943 and ended in September of 1945.<sup>97</sup> The program trained a total of 2,891 sailors and 1,015 Marines during that time frame.<sup>98</sup> The program had three Commanding Officers: Cdr. John T. Tuthill, Jr., Lcdr. Fredrick S. Bartlett and Lt. Ernest H. Carl.<sup>99</sup> The Marines had two Officers-in-Charge: Capt. Ralph E. Britt and Capt. Greenville Clark.<sup>100</sup> The training of Marines ceased in October of 1944.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Western Michigan College, *Onboard the Western Michigan*, 32.

<sup>97</sup> James G. Schneider, *The Navy V-12 Program: Leadership for a Lifetime*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987, 487.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

V-12 students were selected out of high school on the basis of scholastic achievement and examination or were already enlisted under the Navy and Marine Corps Reserves.<sup>102</sup> Each student in the program was given a 21 page packet of instructions and regulations that each sailor or Marine needed to abide by.<sup>103</sup> Each page had a saying at the bottom, “You Here – Determines – You There.”<sup>104</sup> This book guided every movement and action of the students, from their daily routine to demerit cards.<sup>105</sup>

There were six companies (A through F) of three platoons each.<sup>106</sup> They lived in three “barracks”, which included Spindler, Vandercook and Walwood Halls.<sup>107</sup> The use of these dormitories for the barracks posed a large problem, with many of the women displaced on campus. In order to accommodate the program and still have a place for the on-campus women to stay, Western Michigan purchased five residences on Walwood Place.<sup>108</sup> These residences were former houses of faculty members and were intended to be torn down after the war in order to make room for expansion, but they “met the housing emergency quite adequately.”<sup>109</sup>

V-12 sailors and Marines were active on campus as well as with their military duties. Many of them played on Western’s athletic teams, leading to successful seasons in football, track, baseball and basketball, the latter being ranked as fourth best in the nation.<sup>110</sup> Many were also involved in music, with some sailors and Marines playing in either the marching band or the

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<sup>102</sup> Western Michigan College, *Onboard the Western Michigan*, 10.

<sup>103</sup> Western Michigan College, *Navy V-12 Unit, Western Michigan College*.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Western Michigan College, *Western Michigan College 1944 V-12 Log*, Zhang Legacy Collections Center, WMU Archives.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>108</sup> Western Michigan College, *Brown and Gold 1945*, [http://web.library.wmich.edu/DIGI/WMU\\_Yearbooks/1945.pdf](http://web.library.wmich.edu/DIGI/WMU_Yearbooks/1945.pdf) , 134.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Western Michigan College, *Western Michigan College 1944 V-12 Log*, 16.

dance band.<sup>111</sup> Both bands were actually directed by a V-12 trainee named Kenny Welch, who was a former member of the official Navy band.<sup>112</sup>

The government programs that were utilized by Western Michigan College were a very important part of the contribution of the college to the war effort. From the V-1 program to the V-12, Western Michigan College supplied the United States Armed Forces with the men they needed to fight World War II and supplied the students with the education they needed to be able to lead men into combat.

Western Michigan College was prepared to deal with the hardships that a total war like World War II was to bring to the campus. Through the creation of the National Defense Committee, the administration made sure that the college would be able to allow Western to survive and thrive during the war. By accelerating training for many of the students, the college allowed students to get into the war effort quickly, while still training men and women for jobs that were in high demand due to the war. Western Michigan also filled an important need through their aviation mechanic and pilot training. The war effort, both overseas and on the home-front, put those who were education in aviation in high demand, either by flying or by fixing. Western also contributed to the war industry by quickly producing industry workers and allowing others to improve on the skill they had already acquired. Finally, Western directly contributed officer candidates to the cause, training many man through 3 years and altering itself to accommodate them. Before the war had even begun, Western Michigan College was preparing itself. Because of that, it survived and contributed greatly during one of the most difficult period in American history.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

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