

University City High School:  
An Experiment in Innovative Education  
1959-1972

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For almost half a century, urban universities have struggled to create and maintain attractive, safe, residential surroundings in order to protect their reputations and competitive edges. Efforts to improve the quality of local public school systems often accompany urban universities' attempts to revive their urban environments. University City offers an excellent example of this pattern. Forty years ago, the administration of the University of Pennsylvania searched for ways to revitalize its neighborhood and attract new residents to the area. At this time, Penn and its neighboring institutions, caught by the optimistic spirit of the early 1960s, decided they would initiate a renaissance in University City by enhancing the education provided by local public schools. The steps taken to create an excellent, innovative public high school in University City constituted a crucial aspect of this movement. Today, Penn's administration has again selected improvement of the area's public schools as a means by which to improve the quality of life in University City. It seems that given the recurring conflicts that face urban institutions in the late twentieth century, that improvement of public education is still considered a panacea for urban problems. An analysis of Penn's efforts to contribute to University City public education during the 1960s and today offers important insight as to why universities place so much emphasis on ameliorating conditions at public schools. Additionally, Penn's model offers suggestions as to why universities, municipal governments and education activists keep returning to the problem of urban education, apparently unable to provide a lasting, acceptable solution that addresses the problems of schools and the problems of cities.

In the two decades following World War II, American cities faced unprecedented challenges as their demographic, racial and industrial compositions changed rapidly. Both during and immediately following the war, the population of African Americans living in

northern and midwestern central cities skyrocketed as waves of southern blacks arrived in search of better jobs, higher wages and better educational opportunities for their children. The increase in poor, uneducated, urban dwellers who lacked basic job skills placed an enormous strain on the economies of the northern cities in which these populations settled. As a result, cities began to allocate larger portions of their operating budgets to social service agencies in order to accommodate their new residents. Concurrently, as changing modes of production required larger spaces of land for factories, the federal government and private industry shifted the production of goods to the suburbs, the sunbelt and overseas, spawning the deindustrialization of American cities. Additionally, as crime, deteriorating housing and inadequate services came to characterize urban environments, increasing numbers of middle class families began to relocate to suburban areas. Government programs designed to make homeownership more affordable accelerated this mass exodus from central cities, as did the rapid construction of highways that permitted workers to commute to the cities quickly, easily and privately in their own automobiles. Taken together, these circumstances resulted in a huge loss of tax revenues for central cities that also had to bear the burden of supporting many more low income families than ever before. As a result of decreasing revenues and rising costs, the quality of municipal services continued to decline, driving even more families to seek refuge in the suburbs.

In the face of this crisis, America's big city mayors scrambled to preserve their cities' reputations and economies by modernizing and legitimizing municipal government. Importantly however, in the rush to improve safety, housing and city services, politicians left urban public school systems unaltered and unimproved. Philadelphia's reform-minded mayor and later school board president, Richardson Dilworth, admitted that his administration overlooked the school district's problems during his tenure from 1955-

1962, stating "we had so many other things that we had to do and nobody worried much about the schools... we just didn't realize how neglected they were becoming."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, many concerned Americans had already begun to observe the deplorable state of the nation's poorest urban schools and many more would come to recognize the problems following two major events that focused national attention on American public education. First, the 1954 U. S. Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* ordered the immediate integration of all public schools. The Court's action drew publicity to the burgeoning civil rights movement, which increasingly highlighted the inequalities that characterized public education, and empowered many low-income, minority parents to express their dissatisfaction with urban public school systems that failed to adequately educate their children.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after the *Brown* decision the public received a second indication of the inadequacies of American public education when the Russian government launched the first space satellite, Sputnik, in 1957. The knowledge that the country's cold war adversary had beat American scientists in the "race to space" worried many people who feared that the Russian's technical superiority could prove disastrous in a time of war.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of these two occurrences, Americans became increasingly alarmed about the state of education, particularly in the nation's urban centers. James Bryant Conant drew further attention to the crisis situation in urban public schools in his 1961

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<sup>1</sup> Jorene Coffay, "Community Support for the Schools: Recent Trends in Philadelphia School Bond Election" (M.A. Thesis, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 1970), 28, as quoted in Jon Birger, "Race, Reaction and Reform: The Three R's of Philadelphia School Politics" (M. A. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Marilyn Gittell and Alan G. Hevesi, *The Politics of Urban Education*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), 217.

<sup>3</sup> James T. Patterson, *America in the Twentieth Century: A History*, (Fort Worth, TX : Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1994), 369.

report, *Slums and Suburbs*, in which he warned that "[the nation was] allowing social dynamite to accumulate in [its] large cities." After studying large metropolitan areas Conant explained that he felt "concerned... about the plight of parents in the slums whose children either drop out or graduate from school without the prospect of either future education or employment." Conant concluded that "a continuation of this [educational] situation [was] a menace to the social and political health of the large cities."<sup>4</sup>

Seriously alarmed about the decline of the country's urban centers, the federal government took steps to ameliorate the conditions in cities associated with deindustrialization, suburban migration and urban poverty. First, the federal government passed two housing acts in 1949 and 1954 that established the basis for urban redevelopment and urban renewal. The stated goals of these programs included clearance of residential "slums" and expansion of public and private housing in cities. Throughout the 1950s however, these initiatives mostly favored businesses and industry in central city districts. Consequently, while the programs helped downtown business interests to expand and redevelop land in urban areas they did little to combat the growing poverty that increasingly plagued urban populations. In the following decade, President Johnson attempted to address this issue by declaring a "war on poverty" and passing the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964. Between 1964 and 1965, the U.S. Congress appropriated over \$1 billion dollars for programs to develop economically depressed areas through the war on poverty's programs.<sup>5</sup> In response to increasing national concern over the state of public education that began with *Brown* and Sputnik, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act in 1958, which appropriated federal aid for science and language instruction

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<sup>4</sup> James Bryant Conant, *Slums and Suburbs* (New York : McGraw Hill Publishers, 1961) 1-36, as quoted in Michael B. Katz ed., *School Reform Past and Present*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1971), 19.

in public schools. President Johnson later revived aid to schools in 1965 when Congress approved \$1 billion in funding for public schools that served low-income students through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.<sup>6</sup>

In Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania, one of the city's largest and most influential institutions, recognized the opportunities presented by federal urban redevelopment legislation and acted quickly to secure funding for slum removal in its own neighborhoods. Penn helped to ensure that University City would have an advocate to monitor and influence the actions of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority by organizing the many hospitals and universities in West Philadelphia into a community development alliance, the West Philadelphia Corporation (WPC). From its inception, the WPC acted as an unofficial consultant to the Redevelopment Authority, working to bring federal funding to University City for the construction and clearance of blighted neighborhoods. Penn and other local institutions then purchased the cleared land from the Redevelopment Authority and executed physical expansion and improvement projects that extended and beautified their campuses. A similar pattern existed in most large cities during the 1950s, giving urban renewal an extremely negative reputation among the low-income populations whom the projects often displaced.

In addition to assisting its member institutions' improved their campuses and environs, the WPC aimed to improve the education provided at local public schools in an effort to boost the general reputation of the West Philadelphia area. According to the WPC's strongest education advocates, by improving educational opportunities, the Corporation would induce middle class families who worked at the local universities,

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<sup>5</sup> James T. Patterson, *America in the Twentieth Century : A History*, (Fort Worth, TX : Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1994), 405-407.

hospitals and businesses, to move to the area. The WPC believed that these families would then secure private capital to repair and augment the local housing stock. The trend would then give rise to new commercial facilities and an overall enhancement of the residential community. Ultimately, a desirable residential community would confer a myriad of benefits on the local institutions including increased safety and leverage to attract students and faculty to the local universities.

University City High School (UCHS) constituted the WPC's ultimate attempt to initiate this improvement of the University City community. The school's advocates envisioned an innovative, academically rigorous curriculum for the school, that would attract parents who might have chosen to move to the suburbs for the superior public educational opportunities could instead choose to live in the University City community. The school's curriculum specialists created an intensive math and science program for several reasons. First, the school's planners hoped that UCHS's scientific focus would bring the school federal funding through the National Defense Education Act. Additionally, these planners believed the curriculum would allow the school to augment its classes by accessing resources available at the local universities and hospitals as well as a large research and development complex designed for the area, the University City Science Center. Lastly, they believed that the curriculum would particularly appeal to parents who worked for the local universities and science related institutions.

Initially, the WPC enjoyed widespread support for its educational endeavors and for UCHS in particular. Beginning in the late 1950s and continuing through the 1960s, a national and local sentiment that championed change and reform in the public schools bolstered the WPC's efforts to create UCHS. At this time, the Corporation believed that

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

lasting, national interest in improving public education would provide the school with sufficient funding to institute a unique form of individualized instruction. Additionally, modern reform of the Philadelphia school district administration coincided with the WPC's movement to construct the new high school, furnishing even more support for the project. The installment of a progressive school board and superintendent also created a favorable atmosphere for the initial years of UCHS organization. These factors however, like many others that impacted the school's creation, changed dramatically during the decade that it took to make the UCHS concept a reality.

Though national and local efforts to improve public education lent assistance to the WPC's efforts to initiate UCHS, it appears that the University of Pennsylvania did not entirely support the Corporation's efforts to improve the schools in the University's own community. In fact, an analysis of Penn's construction projects during the 1960s reveals that the University erected five major parking garage facilities between 1964 and 1971. Although the University may have wished that more of its faculty and staff chose to reside within walking distance of the campus, it apparently accepted the suburban migration trend and provided the facilities necessary to accommodate this new commuter lifestyle. Penn displayed its lack of commitment to the goal of reviving the University City community in several other ways as well. During the 1960s, as the school constructed substantial student housing, Penn built few residences for faculty to rent or purchase. Likewise Penn only began to offer a mortgage guarantee plan in the mid 1960s after significant out-migration from cities had already occurred. It seems that even if the University purported to want its faculty and staff to remain in the community that it did not wish to expend any funding to make these types of residence choices viable. Interestingly, a similar desire to see the public schools improved coupled with an unwillingness to make any financial contribution

to the goal characterized the Universities relationship to educational reform throughout the 1960s.

Despite Penn's weak commitment to luring middle class residents back to University City through public school improvement, the West Philadelphia Corporation continued to work towards these goals. Several factors however, impeded its progress. In particular, the increasing demands of the civil rights movement placed pressure on the WPC to include consideration of racial equality in its initiatives. Attempting to balance the needs of diverse populations, the Corporation experienced difficulties sustaining the excellent educational programs it helped to initiate for University City. These problems intensified as the optimism of the early 1960s gave way to the cynicism and conservatism of the early 1970s, evoking negative responses to reformers continued efforts to improve the public schools. In the conflicts that ensued, University City High School became a reality, but the school that endured bore little resemblance to the one that the school's planners originally conceived. Importantly, it is neither the University of Pennsylvania nor the school district that suffer today as a result of efforts made to stymie the reform movement of the past. Rather, it is the students of UCHS and all other Philadelphia public schools, who continue to receive a substandard education as a result of the obstinacy and egotism of history's pedagogical traditionalists and reformers.

As the decade began, the 1960s portended great changes for America's urban centers. With the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, the Federal government had committed itself to providing capital to "assist communities in eliminating their slums and blighted areas." Washington acted again on behalf of cities when it created several Federal agencies to oversee public improvement projects designed to revitalize the urban environment and to encourage private developers to build new housing in central cities. Additionally, the government required that each city receiving federal aid develop and submit annually a "workable program" outlining its strategies for improving urban housing and infrastructure. With this advent of "urban renewal" city politicians, businessmen and residents began to believe that after years of neglect and increasing impoverishment, the federal government planned to take significant action to halt and reverse the tide of urban decline.<sup>1</sup>

In June 1958 members of several West Philadelphia medical and educational institutions met to address this issue of urban decline and to discuss the opportunities and disadvantages they shared as urban denizens. An agenda from the meeting describes their communal awareness of "an ever increasing and encroaching sea of residential slums surrounding our colleges and our hospitals."<sup>2</sup> Such a statement illustrates the institutions' contempt for the type of blight that federal legislation proposed to eliminate. Given that such an encroachment threatened these institutions' ability to flourish, the agenda proposed to establish an organization that would "foster, plan, develop and

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<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie S. Carlson "Come to Where the Knowledge Is' : A History of the University City Science Center" 3 September 1999, Archives and Records Center, The University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, (Hereinafter UARC) Section 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes, Meeting of West Philadelphia Medical and Educational Institutions, 10 June 1958, Office of the President, University of Pennsylvania Archives (Hereinafter UPA 4), Box 188, File Folder (Hereinafter FF) "The West Philadelphia Corporation III (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

promote the improvement, redevelopment and advancement of this institutional neighborhood of West Philadelphia as an attractive residential, educational, medical and cultural area."<sup>3</sup> To that end the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel Institute of Technology, Presbyterian Hospital, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science and the Philadelphia College of Osteopathy chartered the West Philadelphia Corporation (WPC) on July 9, 1959.<sup>4</sup>

The following year, the Corporation issued its first annual report explaining its desire to create a more attractive, solid "University City." Describing the section of West Philadelphia that it hoped to revitalize, the report claimed that "the area was going downhill ... Old families were moving out, transients were moving in, houses and commercial properties were falling into neglect." The institutions felt it imperative that they create "a favorable environment for their long-range future – an environment in which their faculty members and staff would wish to live as well as work... a true community of scholars within the larger urban community." Nevertheless, the Corporation stressed that its goals did not include the creation of a single-class community but rather they hoped to maintain the existing cultural, ethnic and racial differences of University City.<sup>5</sup> The WPC maintained this goal of creating a desirable, diversely populated community in University City throughout its existence.

In its 1960 annual report the Corporation estimated that 10% of the faculty, staff and personnel employed by local institutions lived in University City in 1959 and that movement into University City occurred at a rate of approximately 100 families per year.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Carlson, "'Come to Where the Knowledge Is'," Section 1, 1, UARC.

Given these statistics the WPC predicted that by 1962, 20% of the same population would live in UC and that by 1970, 50% of those who worked for a University City based institution would live in the area. In order to ensure this projected residential growth, the WPC felt it imperative that University City offer the resources necessary to successfully house, educate and entertain the burgeoning white middle class population.

As a starting point, the Corporation designated four major objectives for the creation of University City. Taking a cue from the federal government, the Corporation committed itself to promoting redevelopment and construction of new residential and commercial facilities as well as the expansion of the member institutions' facilities. Additionally, the Corporation proposed a unique role for University City as "America's first urban research park," characterized by a cluster of science-related businesses and laboratories to complement the schools and hospitals already located in the area. Finally, the Corporation identified "the planning of school programs of such recognized quality as will make University City inviting to families with children" as one of its four major objectives. Over the course of the next decade, this commitment to improving local public education became increasingly important to the Corporation in its quest to create a desirable urban environment in University City.<sup>6</sup>

Given its prestigious founding members as well as the grandeur of its vision, within a year the Corporation had excited the city about the possibility of a new section of West Philadelphia to be known as "University City." One editorial described the proposed project as "a precedent shattering concept – awesome in size and breathtaking

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<sup>5</sup> "First Annual Report," The West Philadelphia Corporation, Fall 1960, Temple University Archives, West Philadelphia Corporation Files Accession 350 (Hereinafter TUA Acc 350), Box 1, FF "First Annual Report," Urban Archives Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

in scope," unlike anything else in the world. With perhaps excessive enthusiasm, this editor claimed that "a million people – many not associated with any of the affiliated institutions – have a direct stake in the success of this project." More importantly, the writer directed government officials in Philadelphia "to give the project priority consideration", and urged private investors and developers to contribute to the new University City in order to make the concept a success.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, another author believed that the expansion of the member institutions would provide "much needed redevelopment of an area which has been pretty largely sliding downhill for years" and extolled University City as "one of the most outstanding ...major plans for the renaissance of Philadelphia."<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, in 1960, members of the Build America Better Committee of the National Association of Real Estate Boards evaluated the private investment feasibility of the proposed University City area and echoed the media's belief in the plausible success of University City. The agents cited four local financing institutions that had initiated residential mortgage loans through the FHA as well as the presence of strong neighborhood associations as reasons for their confidence. To add to their praise, the visiting committee claimed that "... this area presents one of the most challenging-and one of the most hopeful – prospects for success in conservation-centered urban renewal that we have observed."<sup>9</sup> With so much support and excitement built up around its proposal, the Corporation embarked confidently on its path to a new University City.

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<sup>7</sup> Clipping, "University City: Dream To Reality" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 October 1960, TUA Acc 350, Box 1, FF "UC Opportunities for leadership and investment 1960-1961," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>8</sup> Editorial, "The New University City" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 October 1960, TUA Accession 350 FF "UC Opportunities for Leadership and Investment 1960-1961," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>9</sup> "What others are saying about University City," No Date, TUA Acc 350, Box 1, FF "UC Opportunities for Leadership and Investment 1960-1961," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

From its inception the WPC recognized the pressing need to provide excellent educational facilities in order to establish University City as an appealing residential and commercial environment. In a 1961 report to the Fels Fund entitled "University City: The Next Three Years" the WPC addressed this concern stating that "a serious consideration for a family choosing a neighborhood is often the quality of the public schools. Good schooling is especially important to staff members of educational and medical institutions, who tend to set high goals for their children."<sup>10</sup> Aware of the importance of education to its founding institutions and their staffs, the Corporation committed itself to "taking steps ... [to] assure University City residents of school programs of exemplary quality."<sup>11</sup>

As these statements suggest, the Corporation's concern over the quality of local public education cannot be characterized as entirely altruistic. In an important report prepared by the Corporation for the Board of Education in September 1961, the WPC revealed fears concerning the deteriorating reputation of the area's schools. The Corporation asserted "that biased, negative judgments [were being] made that West Philadelphia ha[d] 'gone black' or 'gone down' economically and that the public schools in the area should cater primarily to the *culturally deprived and underprivileged, and to [those students with] lower levels of vocational aspirations.*"<sup>12</sup> This type of characterization of the student body in University City incensed the WPC given the Corporation's desire to attract middle class families with high academic hopes for their

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<sup>10</sup> "University City: The Next Three Years," October 1961, TUA Acc 350, Box 1, File Folder "University City: The Next Three Years, October 1961," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Report prepared for The Board of Public Education, "University City In Philadelphia: An Opportunity for Educational Leadership and Educational Innovation," 12 September 1961, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, File Folder "Board of Ed — Report of Meeting September 12, 1961," and "Report of Meeting With the Board of

children to the area. An indignant WPC thus used the report to "reject any ...labeling of the area which irrevocably condemns the area by cutting the cloth of public education ... to fit the label."<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the report condemned proposals to concentrate "'technical', 'vocational' [and] 'occupational' high school programs" in the area as these types of schools reflected a negative judgment about the community's future.<sup>14</sup> The threat of the stigma attached to non-academic education sufficiently motivated the WPC to attempt to prevent such an assessment of University City's schools.

To this end, the Corporation offers the services of the Penn Graduate School of Education and Drexel's Department of Education, to assist the school board in planning school facilities for the University City area. Presumably the facilities recommended by the University staff would offer the type of education desired by the middle class population that the WPC, Penn and Drexel hoped to attract to the area. In an extra effort to impress upon the school board the need to reconsider the school programs planned for University City, the report explains that "in financial terms, the redevelopment and expansion ... in University City will generate ... [approximately \$270 million] in additional volume of investment.

Finally, in the same report, the WPC revealed again its interest in attracting and retaining a specific (read: white middle class) population in University City. Asserting its desire to "keep a wholesome balance of interests in the school programs" the WPC proposed to create school boundaries that would incorporate as few students from "outside areas" as possible. Ostensibly intended to promote "general community morale"

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Education," TUA Acc 350, Box 22, File Folder "Board of Ed — Report of Meeting September 12, 1961," Urban Archives, Philadelphia. Emphasis Added.

<sup>13</sup>ibid.

<sup>14</sup>ibid.

and a healthy "school environment program," such boundaries would also allow local University City schools to cater to University staff children and to remain isolated from the surrounding community's population. In this way certain elementary schools, those serving university staffs children, would remain predominantly white while other schools would educate the poorer, minority children from the surrounding community.<sup>15</sup>

From the beginning, however, the Corporation met resistance in its efforts to reconstruct public education in University City. Reporting back to the Corporation following the aforementioned meeting with the school board, the WPC representatives expressed mixed results. Though the Superintendent did assure the WPC that no vocational high school would be erected in University City High School, he did not confirm the Corporation's suggestion that the boundaries for schools in University City be kept as small as possible. Rather, the Superintendent diplomatically asserted that "the question of boundaries for University City schools [was] most complex and under serious study." More importantly, the WPC regretfully reported that the Superintendent and the powerful Business Manager's "basic philosophy" ran counter to the WPC's own intention of "using schools as a means for upgrading an area." The report goes on to state that "there was also no clear acceptance" by the school board "of [the WPC's] position that the schools in University City be culturally enriched to reflect the desires and aspirations of those [the WPC] wish[es] to attract to University City."<sup>16</sup> Thus in their initial efforts to improve local schools the WPC found the school board less than receptive to their self-serving educational initiatives.

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

Nevertheless, in its first years the Corporation initiated two important programs designed to improve the quality of public education in University City. In September 1962 the Board of Education designated the Henry C. Lea Elementary and Junior High School at 47<sup>th</sup> and Locust Streets a "University Related School." It is significant that the WPC chose to initiate this program at the Lea School because Lea consistently enrolled more children of Penn faculty than any other local elementary school. This initiative set a precedent for "sharing the resources of higher education with the public schools in University City," especially the public schools that served children whose parents worked for the local institutions.<sup>17</sup>

In its first year the Universities-Related Schools program (U-R program) at the Lea School resulted in the organization of a library for the school, the construction of six new classrooms, the establishment of an "academic" ninth grade track and the implementation of experimental curricula in reading and arithmetic.<sup>18</sup> These innovations reveal much about the WPC's intentions for the U-R program. The first two additions, a library and new classrooms indicate the extent to which the WPC and Penn proved willing to finance the addition of amenities to local schools in order to allow University City schools to compete with wealthier suburban schools. More importantly, the latter two additions to University City education reveal how the WPC believed it would retain families in the University City area as their children moved from on elementary school. Given the cost of private high school, many institution-related families felt compelled to move to the suburbs to give their children decent junior high and high school opportunities. By stressing the creation of an "academic" ninth grade (as opposed to

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<sup>17</sup> "Fourth Annual Report," The West Philadelphia Corporation, TUA Acc 350, Box 1 FF "Annual Report — Fourth 1963-1964," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

commercial or vocational training) and experimental curricula, the WPC attempted to assuage parents' fears that their children could not receive a top-notch education from the local University City High School. Similar sentiments would motivate the WPC to support the creation of UCHS only a few years after the creation of the U-R program.

Encouraged by the program's initial success the WPC committed additional resources in the fall of 1963 to the U-R Program, appropriating funds to pay for a full-time program coordinator and to add foreign language classes to the school. Over the course of the next several years the Corporation expanded the Universities-Related Schools Program to include all five other elementary schools in the University City area, specifically the Drew, Dunlap, Locke, Powel, and Wilson schools. Cooperation between the School District of Philadelphia, local school principals and University staff allowed the program to flourish; by 1966 more than 4000 pupils benefited from the program.<sup>19</sup> In addition to supplying funding to augment that provided by the Board of Education, the WPC orchestrated many of the collaborations that made the U-R Program a success. As coordinator of the Program the Corporation arranged for professors from Drexel and PCPS to offer training courses in math and science for public school teachers and principals. A report of one of these training sessions noted that "teachers throughout the district gained confidence and competence and began applying immediately new techniques in their classrooms."<sup>20</sup>

Concurrently, the Corporation involved its member Universities in a program to benefit students at West Philadelphia High School by launching the "Motivation

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> "Progress Report of the Four Universities-Related Public Schools," 22 June 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City Committee on Education 1964-1967," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

Program" in February 1963 with funds from the Board of Education and private foundation grants. Offering more rigorous enrichment classes, college preparation courses and visits to college campuses, the Motivation Program created a small academically demanding track at an otherwise average urban public high school. The Universities and WPC plainly stated their objectives for participating in this program in a report from the district's superintendent. Their goals included "improv[ing] the school and its image within the community and to attract to the school, college bound students [who] were leaving the neighborhood in search of better educational opportunities."<sup>21</sup> Interestingly these goals proved to be harbingers of the educational innovations that the WPC would later assert for University City High School.

As the WPC's activities began to generate substantive improvements of the public education in University City important changes occurred nationally and locally that helped reinforce and redirect the Corporation's efforts. Urban centers became the focus of increasing attention as issues of race and poverty came to the forefront of presidential and congressional action. Particularly in the realm of education, national and local legislation sought to ameliorate conditions in city schools. Following suit, the West Philadelphia Corporation intensified its efforts on behalf of University City public schools.

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<sup>21</sup> "The Motivation Program of West Philadelphia High School," UPA 4, Box 188, FF "The West Philadelphia Corporation II (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

Throughout the first half of the 1960s, the West Philadelphia Corporation continued to use its influence and resources to improve the schools in University City. Programs such as the Universities-Related Schools Program and the Motivation Program quickly proved avant garde as activists began to call for education reform across the city and the country. While civil rights spokespersons and community organizations berated the school district for its discriminatory policies and school programs, the district underwent intense scrutiny by external and internal groups. As a result of this self-reflection, by the middle of the decade, reorganization had brought sweeping structural changes to the district's administration. National commentators touted the city as a model of educational innovation. In this period of sustained optimism the West Philadelphia Corporation grew ever more confident in the propriety of its efforts on behalf of public education in University City. Bolstered by this new citywide support of educational reform, the Corporation set its sights on even more radical enhancements of local public schools.

Support for reform of public education came from a variety of groups, each focused on different flaws in the school system. An important source of reform support came from increasingly vocal civil rights advocates who called for an end to discrimination against African Americans in schools as well as in housing and job markets. In her doctoral dissertation on the history of desegregation efforts in Philadelphia's schools, Anne Phillips describes 1963 as a "year of militancy" in the struggle to desegregate the city's school system. That year, Judge Harold Wood helped to energize the integration movement by ordering a hearing on *Chisholm v. The Board of Public Education*, a two year old case that accused the Philadelphia Board of Education

of discriminating against black pupils and teachers. Following the judge's decision, the school district appointed several committees to scrutinize the system in order to recommend guidelines for improvement of the schools. Specifically the board created the Special Committee on Nondiscrimination to develop a plan for the school board that would foster integration in the schools. Additionally, several community organizations including the Coordinating Council for School Integration and the West Philadelphia Schools Committee helped to bring overcrowding, unfair boundaries and bussing into the desegregation debate and to generate public support for desegregation plans.<sup>1</sup>

The increased militancy of the integration movement succeeded in forcing the school board to adopt a more affirmative non-discrimination policy. In June the board resolved, "that the 1959 policy of nondiscrimination because of race, color, or national origin now be expanded to state explicitly that integration of both pupils and staff be the policy of The (*sic*) Board of Education."<sup>2</sup> Progress slowed however, when Judge Wood ruled that the school board's was acting in good faith despite the fact that part-time classes at overcrowded schools had been eliminated by creating overcrowded classes at the same school rather than by reassigning students to underutilized, predominantly white schools. Following that legal decision, members of civil rights organizations, including the NAACP publicly denounced the school board and the district administration, and threatened a citywide school boycott. The defeat also caused the first fissures within the coalition of civil rights groups, community associations, civic organizations and unions that had united to demand integration in Philadelphia.<sup>3</sup> As disagreement within certain civil rights organizations and within the desegregation coalition stymied the movement's

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Phillips, , (Doctoral Dissertation, 2000) 116-126.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of the Board of Public Education for the Year 1963*, 221 as quoted in Anne Phillips,

progress, opposition to bussing and other desegregationist's plans generated additional obstacles to integration.

While calls for racial equality galvanized the school reform movement, other civic organizations' interest in improving public schools combined to force the district to undergo several studies by independent research teams. By the end of 1964 these teams formally submitted two important reports to the Board of Education, one conducted by the Special Committee on Nondiscrimination and the other by independent researcher William R. Odell. Unsurprisingly, one investigation found that the average achievement levels in basic subjects for Philadelphia elementary school students fell approximately one half year below achievement levels of pupils in other comparable school systems. Additionally, the Odell report found that during the 1959-1960 school year, the Philadelphia public school system expended \$391 per pupil; an amount that placed it seventh among twelve of the largest public school districts in the nation. Thus the report recommended that the school board raise the per pupil expenditure goal to \$650 for 1966, so that "the ... figure will equal the school support levels of some of Philadelphia suburban communities."<sup>4</sup>

The completion of the study by the Special Committee on Nondiscrimination and the Odell report coincided with another survey being conducted by the Educational Home Rule Charter Commission in 1964. After a fiscal crisis standoff forced the state legislature to recommend that the city take over fiscal management of the schools, the governor of Pennsylvania established this Commission, charged with conducting research in order to recommend new procedures for the administration of the Philadelphia public

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<sup>3</sup> Phillips, 126-133.

school system. The Commission held hearings throughout 1964 and submitted its report to the City Council on April 2, 1965, suggesting several important changes to the district's operations which necessitated an amendment to the city's Home Rule Charter. Specifically, the amendment determined a new method for selecting members of the Board of Education, and shifted the responsibility for raising local school district revenues to municipal government. Additionally, the amendment elevated the Superintendent of Schools to the position of "chief administrative and instructional officer of the school system."<sup>5</sup> As a result of the Commission's efforts, city council submitted these alterations to voters for approval in the primary election on May 18, 1965, at which time the public ratified the amendment.

The completion of these studies and reports heralded the creation of a new, dramatically different school district of Philadelphia. As Philadelphia and the nation became increasingly concerned with the quality and equality of public education, these changes in administrative organization prepared the city both physically and ideologically for a new type of public education. Creating a new cadre of administrators, as well as a new mission for the school system, the changes included in the amendment to the city's Home Rule Charter remade Philadelphia's public schools. Commenting on these changes only a few years later in 1969, educational scholars Marilyn Gittel and T. Edward Hollander noted that "Philadelphia's recent upheaval in administrative personnel suggests broad changes in its approach to the role of public education."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>William R. Odell and Survey Staff, *Educational Survey Report for the Philadelphia Board of Public Education*, (Philadelphia : The Board of Public Education, 1965), 343, 385.

<sup>5</sup> Conrad Weiler, *Philadelphia: Neighborhood, Authority and the Urban Crisis*, (New York : Praeger Publishers, 1974), 83.

<sup>6</sup> Marilyn Gittel and T. Edward Hollander, *Six Urban School Districts*, (New York : Praeger Publishers, 1968), 7.

As soon as the public approved the Educational Home Rule Charter Amendment the process of selecting a new Board of Education began. At the suggestion of the Commission, the Mayor and City Council established an Educational Nominating Panel, comprised of prominent members of the Philadelphia business community as well as representatives of local reform minded organizations and institutions. Gaylord P. Harnwell, president of the University of Pennsylvania and the West Philadelphia Corporation, sat on the Panel, which met throughout the summer of 1965 to collect information and to submit possible nominees for the Board of Education to Mayor James H. J. Tate. After several months of deliberation former Mayor and prominent lawyer Richardson Dilworth emerged as a candidate willing to serve as president of the new Board of Education. In September 1965 Mayor Tate approved Dilworth as well as eight other nominees to comprise the new board.

The forward-thinking inclinations of the new board members signaled that the prominent citizens of the Educational Nominating Panel supported making major changes in the school system. As Mayor, Richardson Dilworth had established himself as a reformer, leading a "vigorous period of municipal reform and rebirth" by encouraging "dozens of talented people from all over the country [to] flock to the city government." Under his "imaginative and strong" leadership city government began "exploring, innovating and expanding in numerous directions."<sup>7</sup> To assist Dilworth, the Educational Nominating Panel placed other reform minded individuals on the new board of Education. Among these new members, Mrs. Albert M. Greenfield, wife of a prominent Philadelphia businessman, and an early advocate of school reform rejoined the school board. By encouraging a study of the needs of the school system in 1958, Mrs.

Greenfield had helped to spark much of the initial concern in Philadelphia over the state of the public schools. Another new board member, black businessman George Hutt brought experience in community organizing as well as a long-standing interest in eradicating racial segregation in public schools.<sup>8</sup> Bolstered by their leader's commitment to reform, as well as local and national interest in education, the new board set out to implement change in the antiquated, dilapidated schools of Philadelphia.

During the fall of 1965 Dilworth and the new Board of Education attempted to establish their agenda for change. In October they held meetings throughout the city in an effort to allow community residents to express their ideas and hopes for the new administration. The new president also created three task forces to study the system's needs in the areas of programs and manpower, capital program and physical plant, and budget analysis.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, the new board actively sought the advice of local institutions of higher education in their attempts to construct a plan for improving the public schools. To this end, the new school board invited President Harnwell to serve as a member of a panel that would present ideas for "using community resources for the Philadelphia schools." The other panelists included the president of Temple University, the Dean of the College of Education at Temple and the Dean of the Graduate School of Education at Penn.

It is likely that President Harnwell felt well equipped to offer the board suggestions as to how the University could be utilized as a resource for the public school system. In its Fifth Annual Report the West Philadelphia Corporation proudly asserted

<sup>7</sup> Weiler, *Philadelphia*, 77.

<sup>8</sup> Weiler, *Philadelphia*, 84-85

that its current efforts on behalf of public education resembled those described by President Johnson who emphasized the concept of "service-through-leadership by urban universities." The Corporation went on to commend itself, stating that "in fact, the President's proposal for regional educational laboratories based upon urban universities seems to describe the Universities-Related Program which has been in operation in University City for three years." Additionally, Harnwell could have cited a number of other collaborations between the University and the school district including the Motivation Program and "Project College Bound," both designed to benefit local high school students. Finally, Penn and the other WPC affiliated Universities administered training workshops for teachers and school administrators and the "Four-C Program" for parental education, implemented to familiarize parents with the schools' goals and to foster cooperation between families and educators.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the many programs Harnwell could cite indicating the ties between the WPC's Universities and the public schools, it seems that many Philadelphians considered the University capable of a much larger contribution to the public education. In response to Harnwell's request for material to discuss at the aforementioned panel, Howard E. Mitchell, Director of the Human Resources Program at Penn, prepared a summary of Penn related initiatives for Harnwell's use. Importantly, Mitchell asserted that "the Graduate School [of Education] could be doing a lot more to

<sup>9</sup> John N. Patterson, William L. Rafsky and Donald Rappaport, *Reports of the Task Forces to the Incoming Board of Education* (Philadelphia: School District of Philadelphia, 1965), as quoted in Weiler, *Philadelphia*, 85.

<sup>10</sup> Newsletter, "University City," Vol. 4 No. 2, November 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City Advisory Committee on Education, 1964-1967," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

assist in solving some of the problems of urban education" and that "[GSE] is severely criticized by public school people in Philadelphia as being disinterested." <sup>11</sup>

If GSE had earned a reputation as being disinterested in the public schools, by 1965 President Harnwell, Leo Molinaro, the executive director of the WPC, and other Penn administrators recognized that neither the community nor local government would continue to tolerate this position. Given the heightened public concern over educational quality and equality and the increasing expectations placed on institutions such as Universities to aid in the transformation of urban public school systems, Penn and the member institutions of the WPC took an increasingly active role in initiating collaboration with the school district.

In January 1966, Molinaro and Harnwell both expressed their desire to collaborate more fully with the new Board of Education. Writing to one of President Harnwell's assistants, Molinaro reported that he had discussed the "possibility of working out a relationship between the University of Pennsylvania and the Board of Education" with Dr. C. Taylor Whittier, Superintendent of Schools, and that Whittier had reacted very favorably to the idea. <sup>12</sup> A few days later President Harnwell wrote to his friend and new school board President Dilworth expressing the position that "the University is most anxious to help the board in any way that it can." Harnwell went on to identify three general areas in which the University could assist the school board based on ideas which Molinaro most likely passed on to Harnwell. These suggestions included first, utilizing University faculty to serve as consultants to develop solutions to immediate problems

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Gaylord Harnwell from Howard E. Mitchell, Ph. D., 12 November 1965, UPA 4, Box 207, FF "Board of Public Education (Philadelphia, City of) 1965-1970," UARC.

<sup>12</sup> Letter to Donald S. Murray from Leo Molinaro, 17 January 1966, UPA 4, Box 207, FF "Board of Public Education (Philadelphia, City of) 1965-1970," UARC.

facing the board. Secondly, undertaking long-term studies, the results of which could provide information to the board to help improve the public schools and finally, utilizing Penn faculty to conduct seminars or short courses on topics of interest to the members of the board.<sup>13</sup>

While the increased pressures and expectations of the general public certainly motivated Penn and the WPC to initiate these types of collaborative efforts with the Board of Education, two other important forces also inspired their increased interest in the public schools. First, by 1965 the WPC and its member institutions began to recognize that the faculty and staff families that they had assumed would settle in University City, increasingly chose instead to migrate to the suburbs. This exodus of white middle class families to the suburbs, resulted from a number of local and national forces.

First, migration by poor, uneducated black populations to northern cities during and directly following World War II had changed the demographic composition of urban areas such as West Philadelphia. These new urban dwellers brought with them a host of problems including illiteracy and lack of job skills which cities addressed by increasing the amount spent on social services for these new groups. Consequently, the quality of other municipal services declined as funds became increasingly scarce. Racism, prejudice and contempt directed at these new urban populations, as well as a new perception of a lack of safety prompted the first wave of out-migration from cities.

The federal government accelerated this "white flight" by making home ownership affordable through the Federal Housing Authority, which offered amortized,

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Richardson Dilworth from Gaylord Harnwell, 26 January 1966, UPA 4, Box 207, FF "Board of Public Education (Philadelphia, City of) 1965-1970," UARC.

low-interest rate mortgages to families wishing to buy homes in the suburbs. Likewise, the Federal Highway Construction Act subsidized the movement of hundreds of thousands of families to the suburbs by making it possible for these individuals to commute to the city for work. Finally, certain national programs had the unintended consequence of fostering suburbanization, including the red-lining practices established by the Home Owners Loan Corporation, which caused rampant disinvestment in poor, minority populated urban areas that led to the deterioration of housing and commercial property in these communities.

Though it claimed to support the WPC's attempts to lure middle class families back to the community, the University of Pennsylvania also contributed to the suburban habit of its employees. Between 1964 and 1971 the University built five new garages to accommodate the ever growing number of vehicles belonging to its staff and faculty.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the University offered few incentives to its employees to entice them to live in the city, despite the high cost of mortgages, housing rehabilitation, and homeowners and "car insurance associated with living in the city.

Given the benefits of moving to the suburbs, including superior public schools, cheap mortgages and available commuting options, those families, white and otherwise that could afford to move to the suburbs did so quickly. A class divide began to overtake urban and suburban areas that endured over the next several decades. At this early point, the WPC recognized the urgency of improving the services, such as public schools, available in West Philadelphia. The Corporation's Fifth annual report addresses this need, quoting a report of the Governor's Council on Science and Technology that states

"In this highly competitive and sophisticated age ... the best managers, researchers and innovators will seek out those communities which offer the most satisfaction in physical surroundings and in intellectual, cultural, and recreational environment. Thus the future economic health of the community is critically dependent on the quality of its *educational system* and the 'life climate' it provides."<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, although national and local programs aligned economic and social forces against them, the WPC attempted to reconstruct the public schools in University City in order to encourage families to take up residence in the area.

The prospect of receiving large amounts of federal funding to improve local schools proved equally influential in Penn and the WPC's decision to join the urban school reform crusade. In his Education Message to the Eighty-ninth Congress President Lyndon Johnson recommended that "legislation be enacted to authorize a major program of assistance to public elementary and secondary schools serving children of low-income families." To this end, the President announced he would request \$1 billion for such new programs in fiscal year 1966.<sup>16</sup> As early as March 1965 Molinaro and others at Penn and the WPC began to discuss the possibility of harnessing federal funding to improve public education in University City through the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

An excellent example demonstrates both the increase of national interest in educational reform as well as the University City institutions' desire to make use of federal funding to further the same goal. Following the creation of the Elementary and

<sup>14</sup> Notes from George E. Thomas and David B. Brownlee, *The University of Pennsylvania: A Cultural and Architectural History and Guide*, (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) found at UARC.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Governor's Council on Science and Technology as quoted in The West Philadelphia Corporation's Fifth Annual Report, TUA Acc 350, Box 1, FF "Annual Report — 5<sup>d</sup> 1964-1965," Urban Archives, Philadelphia. [my emphasis]

<sup>16</sup> President Lyndon B. Johnson, Education Message to the Eighty-ninth Congress of the United States, 12 January 1965 as quoted in Katz, Michael B., ed. *School Reform: Past and Present* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1971), 26.

Secondary Education Act the federal government added Title IV to the legislation in October 1965. This new legislation made one hundred million dollars available, for the creation of "regional educational laboratories" that would "focus the educational, scientific, cultural, and other resources of various regions... on promoting quality education through research, development, dissemination and training in education." <sup>17</sup> It seems that given the millions of dollars that the federal government planned to spend on the construction and maintenance of these laboratories, that national interest in and support for educational innovation had reached its apex.

Naturally, the WPC moved quickly to seize the opportunity to further its educational goals utilizing federal funding. After a visit with the coordinator of the U.S. Office of Education's Educational Regional Research and Development Centers Program, Leo Molinaro impressed upon Harnwell, Dr. C. Taylor Whittier and others, the importance of preparing a proposal for a regional educational research laboratory to be located in University City. Molinaro's suggestion spurred the creation of a "drafting committee" which met throughout the summer of 1965 to create a proposal for the Title IV funding. In October 1965, Dr. Whittier established Research for Better Schools Inc., a corporation initiated to develop a cooperative educational research center in the tri-state area. The new corporation submitted a final prospectus for a Regional Research Laboratory that would be located among the other research facilities of the new University City Science Center on October 15, 1965. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Questions and Answers Relating to Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act," 19 May 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Educational Regional Laboratory 1965 (Archives)," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>18</sup> Letter to Gaylord Harnwell, C. Taylor Whittier, Dr. Osol and Dr. Hagerty from Leo Molinaro, 30 March 1965, TUA Acc 350 Box 22, FF "Educational Regional Lab 1965," Urban Archives, Philadelphia, and reports of meetings of the Regional Educational Laboratory organizing committee, May 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 22 FF "Educational Regional Lab 1965," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

This proposal, perhaps better than any other document, identifies the problems that the WPC and the school district hoped to alleviate by reforming the public schools. Specifically, the proposal posed the question: "How can school systems produce and offer the scope, sequence and variety of instructional experiences which are truly suitable to the total range of abilities of our clientele?" This question and the discussion that followed in the proposal, addressed several issues at the heart of 1960s educational debate. First, the proposal noted that schools must more adequately "cope with the needs of culturally disadvantaged children." This quagmire represented the contemporary view that low-income students in urban schools failed to achieve academic success because their home environments did not offer the physical and mental stimulation of their middle class counterparts. Additionally, according to proponents of the "Cultural Deprivation" theory, poor families emphasized education as a means of getting a job, but were basically anti-intellectual and thus failed to stimulate varied 'intellectual' interests in their children. This situation retarded the development of poor children's academic and linguistic skills, placing them at a disadvantage when entering school with middle-class children.<sup>19</sup> Such a conceptualization of the problems of urban schools elicited a belief among many educators that by giving these deprived students extra doses of the middle class advantages they lacked, so-called 'compensatory education', that the inequities in achievement would be stamped out.

Importantly, the authors of this proposal admitted that all students suffering from "cultural deprivation" did not grow up in similar environments and thus had been "deprived" of different things. Moreover, because schools did not characterize each

<sup>19</sup> Frank Riessman, *The Culturally Deprived Child*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1-16 as described in Joel Spring, *The Sorting Machine*, (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976), 220.

individual student, the proposal resolved to begin "to learn enough about each child to know how he can learn best and ... then how to devise instruction experiences that are optimally suited to him." To this end the WPC and the school district put forth the rest of their proposal to create an educational research laboratory that would investigate "both the design of innovation and the way in which educational changes [could] be brought into being."<sup>20</sup>

As indicated by the issues highlighted in the proposal to the U.S. Office of Education, the West Philadelphia Corporation and the School District of Philadelphia recognized the magnitude of the changes needed in the city's school system. The authors of the proposal, who worked for the school district and the Corporation, recognized that the system desperately needed a major overhaul of the administration and priorities in order to provide the type of excellent academic experience envisioned by these two entities. Nevertheless, optimism ran high in the city and across the country. The federal government appeared willing to provide a large part of the capital needed to improve public school systems. Additionally, it seemed that popular support would hold the government to this promise and hence allow these programs to flourish. The West Philadelphia Corporation therefore, had every reason to believe that in the next several years, a revolution in public education would occur in the city's public schools. Confident of the material and pedagogical resources available to them, the Corporation set out to add a final, critical component to its enhancement of University City education — a new high school.

<sup>20</sup> "Questions and Answers Relating to Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act," 19 May 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 22 FF "Educational Regional Laboratory 1965," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

Galvanized by growing popular support, available funding, increasing need and prior success in school reform, the West Philadelphia Corporation set a new educational goal for itself – the creation of a new public high school in University City. By this time, due to the continuing movement of white middle class families to the suburbs the new high school increasingly bore the responsibility of luring this much needed population back to the neighborhood. Thus with the advent of a new Board of Education and new federal education legislation, the Corporation began to invest its time and money into orchestrating the creation of University City High School. The process, however, proved neither easy, nor totally successful. As the country moved towards the volatile years of the late 1960s, a myriad of social and political obstacles emerged, repeatedly blocking the progress of the University City High School project. The Corporation and its allies fought a series of battles with local and national organizations before the school district could even begin construction of University City High School and this initial set back constituted only one small harbinger of the trouble to come.

In 1966 though, as the new Dilworth board emerged as a powerful agent of change, such cynical sentiments did not cloud the minds of the WPC or the school board. Instead, enjoying increasing public interest and involvement, the two entities concentrated on trying to keep momentum high in the school reform movement by reminding the public of the "overriding importance of giving the children of [Philadelphia] ... a top-flight education."<sup>1</sup> Although the federal government had indicated its support of educational reform with the creation of the Elementary Secondary Education Act, funding issues absorbed the majority of school board effort in the first

year of the Dilworth administration. In a memo to Dr. C. Taylor Whittier, superintendent of schools, school board president Dilworth expressed his concern about the continuing availability of federal funding, citing "the present situation in Viet Nam" as a cause of his trepidation. To assuage his fear that federal funding might become difficult to obtain, Dilworth named several individuals whom he believed possessed the "very considerable know how" necessary "to get the maximum dollars" from Washington.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Dilworth and his team recognized the exigency of raising more local capital for use in the public schools in Philadelphia. To this end, Dilworth appointed a consultant from Price-Waterhouse, a national CPA firm, to serve as the new director of finance for the school district. The district then conducted an extensive analysis of the outstanding need for school facilities, the district's fiscal ability to buy and operate school facilities, the capacity of local labor and industry to absorb the proposed volume and the district's administrative capacity to manage a new capital program. Following the investigation, the school board announced a massive \$450 million rebuilding program to replace and renovate every school structure in the district.<sup>3</sup> In a letter prefacing the board's new recommended capital program, Dilworth impressed upon the Citizens of Philadelphia his belief that "if educational improvements are given top priority in city development, the City's industrial and business capacity, its cultural assets and the income levels of its citizens will prosper."<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the district's new fiscal plan

<sup>1</sup> Board of Education Report, "Philadelphia: Education City – A Long-Range Plan and A Recommended Capital Program 1966-1971" March 1966, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Consultant Material 1966," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum, To Dr. C. Taylor Whittier from Richardson Dilworth, 22 December 1965, Richardson Dilworth Collection, Box 35, File Folder "RD Personal Correspondance," The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>3</sup> Gittell and Hollander, *Six Urban School Districts*, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Report, "Philadelphia: Education City," March 1966, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Consultant Material 1966," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

proposed to spend an estimated \$700 to \$800 million in the following ten years to construct new school buildings, repair existing plants, and supply additional equipment to the schools. In all, the board's recommended capital program to construct and improve school facilities proposed to build thirteen new high schools. To initiate this new spending, the report set its target spending levels at \$50 million in fiscal year 1966-1967 and \$75 million in the following four years. The recommendations for new increased school spending seemed even more viable when voters approved by referendum a \$60 million bond issue in May 1966. It seemed that everyone, voters, local Universities, the school board and the federal government supported expending funds to improve public education in Philadelphia.

As the school board focused its efforts on securing the federal and local capital necessary to revive the city's schools, the WPC began to lobby the school board for the construction of a new high school in University City. As early as October 1965, even before the new school board officially took office, Molinaro sent a letter to Dr. William B. Castetter of GSE, indicating items found in the school district's ten year capital budget that he had identified as "very important to the development of University City."<sup>5</sup> First, Molinaro cited a new high school for University City, going on to stress that funding must be made available in 1966 for the purchase of land and for the design of a new University City High School. Molinaro implored Castetter to do everything possible to secure these capital needs. The Corporation's efforts appeared to have paid off when the school board released their Long-Range Plan in March 1966. In addition to appropriating needed funding for the construction of thirteen new high school facilities, the plan

<sup>5</sup> Letter to William B. Castetter from Leo Molinaro, 6 October 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City Advisory Committee on Education 1964-1967," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

addressed the possibility of creating magnet schools in the city, facilities that would offer special stature and instruction in science, the humanities, business and the performing arts. The plan describes a magnet school as "one whose enrollment would, in part, be obtained on a city-wide, all-ability basis from children with special interests in the schools' area of concentration." Although the plan claimed that "no magnet schools have yet been designated" in a separate section of the plan made mention of the "success of the University City High School as a magnet school." <sup>6</sup>

In May 1966 the West Philadelphia Corporation became more confident than ever that funding would exist for the development of University City, including the new high school, when the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved two grants totaling \$24 million for University City projects. One of the grants provided almost \$13 million to the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority to acquire, condemn and demolish buildings on land located in Unit 3 of the project. This area included land for the construction of the Science Center as well as a small parcel for the new University City High School.<sup>7</sup> As plans for the Science Center accelerated, the universities and businesses involved formed a new corporation to oversee its construction, a job the WPC had been conducting. Freed from this responsibility, the Corporation shifted "the full weight of its energies to some of the community problems and opportunities" that had arisen. To this end, the WPC announced that in "the immediate future the Corporation's efforts will center upon [initiating]... a public high school that will take advantage of the

<sup>6</sup> Report, "Philadelphia : Education City," March 1966, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Consultant Material 1966," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>7</sup> Clipping, "University City Gets Land Fund of \$24 Million," *The Sunday Bulletin*, 1 May 1966, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation II (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

unique resources of the scientific establishment in University City and make them available to students throughout Philadelphia."<sup>8</sup>

In fact the idea of a new high school located in the heart of University City had been proposed in the past. As early as 1963, the WPC had identified the Bronx High School of Science and Mathematics in New York and the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (Poly) as possible models on which to base University City High School. That year Harnwell and Molinaro met with the principals of both Bronx Science and Poly, a public high school in Maryland that had a close relationship with Drexel Institute of Technology. As a result of these meetings, Harnwell expressed his excitement to the Superintendent in Philadelphia about the possibility of erecting a new public high school, with a curriculum focused on science and technology, located in or around the University City Science Center.<sup>9</sup> Both schools boasted intense science and mathematics centered curriculums as well as instruction in languages and the humanities. Specifically, Poly provided "a highly structured academic program ... designed to prepare students for admission into institutions of higher education."

<sup>10</sup> Importantly however, both schools admitted students on a competitive basis, determined by academic record and an entrance examination, a system that neither the school district, nor the WPC planned to utilize at UCHS. Additionally, the schools' formal class structures, differentiated UCHS from the schools it aspired to imitate. Herein lies one of the major flaws in the UCHS concept. Lacking competitive entrance examinations that would have excluded the majority of the

<sup>8</sup> "Fifth Annual Report," The West Philadelphia Corporation, February 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 1, FF "Fifth Annual Report -1965," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>9</sup> Letters, to Allen Wetter from Gaylord Harnwell and to Leo Molinaro from Mrs. Albert M. Greenfield, TUA Acc 350, Box 27, FF "Board of Education 1963, Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>10</sup> Alamprese, Judith A. and others, *No Gift Wasted: Effective Strategies for Educating Highly Able, Disadvantaged Students in Mathematics and Science*, paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, San Francisco, CA 3-7 April 1989, ERIC, ED 312 803.

local community students, UCHS enrolled a diverse student body with multiple skill levels, not all of whom came to the school prepared for accelerated classes such as the ones at Poly and Bronx Science. Had the UCHS planners instituted an entrance exam for the new school, the success of its individualized, innovative curriculum might have endured. Nevertheless, Bronx Science and Poly's rigorous science curricula, excellent reputations and high rates of college acceptance constituted important characteristics that UCHS's planners hoped to replicate in University City's new school.

Finally, several years after the concept had been conceived, the school district initiated negotiations with the City Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Authority (RDA) to acquire the land for a new University City High School to be located in an active redevelopment area controlled by the Authority. Acting in its traditional advisory capacity, the WPC prepared an outline for the school district, describing the steps necessary for utilizing urban renewal policy in school site acquisition. As of February 1966, the Redevelopment Authority had reserved 6.2 acres of land in urban renewal area #3 for school district use. In addition, the school district owned the adjacent 3 acre Drew Elementary School site. Given that this 9.2 acre parcel would severely constrict the new High School, the Board of Education had informed the Redevelopment Authority in 1965 of its intention to purchase an additional 6.8 acres of land from the Authority for the construction of the new University City High School. With this additional land, the site for the new school would occupy the sixteen acre area between thirty-sixth and thirty-eighth streets and between Filbert Street and Lancaster Avenue.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum, "High School Statement and timetable and High School in the University City area," to Dr. C. Taylor Whittier from Michael P. Marcuse, 25 February 1966, TUA Acc 350 Box 27, FF "Board of Education 1966," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

At the time the Redevelopment Authority had designated the additional 6.8 acres that the board hoped to purchase for housing rehabilitation and construction. The Redevelopment Authority informed the school district that the district would have to condemn this 6.8 acre parcel on their own, but provided that the district did so before the Authority attempted to condemn the land, the Authority would not present a formal objection. The Authority also informed the school district that if the district did not condemn the land before May or June of 1966, when the Authority planned to condemn it, that the school district could expect serious opposition in this matter. With these conditions in mind, the former Board of Education had approved \$500,000 for land and \$225,000 for architectural services in 1965. If the condemnation process could be completed as described, the architects, who had already been chosen for the project, estimated completion of the school by September 1969.<sup>12</sup>

Despite this detailed outline of the steps necessary to implement the new school, events over the summer of 1966 placed the entire project in jeopardy, bringing national attention to the efforts of the WPC and the school district. In fact, the controversy over the 6.8 acre site which the school board wished to purchase for UCHS delayed the progress of the entire University City Science Center, at great cost to developers, the school district and the WPC. The events that occurred that summer however, stemmed from a struggle in Urban Renewal area #3 that had begun several years earlier. In 1963 fourteen residents of this area and a lawyer, John H. Clay, had organized and staged a sit-in at the Mayor's office to demand a role in the redevelopment process of their neighborhood, located in area #3. The demonstration makes sense in light of Anne Phillips' description of 1963 as a particularly militant year for civil rights activists who

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

demanded equality in housing and schools. Given that the sit-in occurred one week before the Mayoral primary election, the demonstrators successfully exacted a pledge from the Redevelopment Authority saying that the Authority would spare as many homes during the demolition process as possible. More importantly, the demonstrators became "official consultants" to the Redevelopment Authority permitting them to participate in the development of a plan for the rehabilitation of their homes. At this time the RDA and the city officials had no concept of the extent to which this agreement would stall the future development of the Science Center.

Mr. Clay and the residents then formed a corporation intended to develop a plan for the rehabilitation of their homes. Between 1964 and early 1965 Mr. Clay retained the services of an architect and submitted two proposals for the rehabilitation of the area, both of which the Redevelopment Authority rejected. The second proposal, submitted in March 1965, called for the clearance of 85% of the structures in the area and the construction of apartments which would cost as much as \$130 per month, a rent that the majority of the residents of area 3 could not have afforded. When summarizing the situation for the WPC's Board of Directors, Molinaro asserted that the residents of the area were being preyed upon by "an unscrupulous Negro promoter who does not even live in the area but owns two properties for speculation on Market Street."<sup>13</sup> Molinaro's anger and distress are understandable. At this point, Clay and the other resident protesters had held up construction of a new high school and the Science Center for almost two years without arriving at a useable plan for rehousing displaced residents. Given the millions of federal and local dollars lined up for the project, the WPC's

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum, to the Board of Directors from Leo Molinaro, 14 September 1966, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "Community Relations (WPC) 1965-1970," UARC.

director desperately wanted to see the project underway. Ultimately, the residents' inability to put forth a suitable plan for their homes led the Redevelopment Authority to terminate their consultant contract in December 1965, more than two years after their initial demonstration. Three months later, Mr. Clay and the residents responded by filing suit against the City Council, the FHA, the Urban Renewal Administration, the University City Science Center, the City Planning Commission, the West Philadelphia Corporation and the Redevelopment Authority, claiming that these organizations had deprived the citizens their civil rights.

Forging ahead, despite the lawsuit, the City Planning Commission approved the 6.8 acre parcel for use as a high school site in April 1966. Conditions began to improve for the project, particularly when HUD approved the above mentioned \$24 million for redevelopment in University City. In July the U.S. District Court then announced that Clay had withdrawn the suit, prompting Molinaro to state that the group had clearly never intended to bring it to trial. Shortly thereafter, the Board of Education voted on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1966 to condemn the land in preparation for the construction of the University City Science Center High School. Three days later however, the project hit another barrier when representatives of CORE, SNCC and the NAACP, claiming to represent the residents, visited the Philadelphia Office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development where they threatened to incite violent riots if any agency condemned the land.<sup>14</sup>

In response to the warning of violent protest, the Acting Regional Administrator of HUD, Lawrence Prattis, referred the entire case to HUD's national office in

<sup>14</sup> Clipping, Richard H. DeLone, "Red Tape and Protests Snarl the Science Center," *The Evening Bulletin*, 14 September 1966, UPA 4, **Box 188**, FF "Community Relations (WPC) 196-1970," UARC.

Washington, DC. This action became necessary due to a new HUD policy that required that the national office review all urban renewal projects in areas experiencing racial tension or violence. The new policy most likely resulted from the riots that had erupted across the country that summer, the most prominent of which occurred in the Watts section of Los Angeles. Once Prattis referred the project to Washington for review, HUD froze the \$24 million appropriated for Science Center demolition and construction as well as the new school until a resolution of the situation could be reached. At this point, in August 1966, several WPC board members and prominent Philadelphia politicians and businessmen sent letters and telegrams to the Secretary of HUD, Robert C. Weaver, in an effort to incite action. Their letters described the cost in jobs and revenues resulting from the delay of the project and requested that the Secretary permit the project to proceed immediately. Moreover, several of the letters assured the Secretary that the threat of racial violence consisted mostly of gross exaggeration. Dr. Harnwell's telegram to Secretary Weaver, like several others sent to HUD, asserted that "investigation by local responsible people including the human relations commission indicate racial factors [are] not primarily involved" and that the majority of local residents wanted the project to proceed.<sup>15</sup>

Whether local residents in fact wanted the project to continue is unclear. One concerned citizen not involved in the dispute, Charles Campbell, took it upon himself to conduct a door-to-door survey of homes in the seven acre area. Campbell then compiled his findings and reported them to the school board, HUD and other local and national agencies involved in the matter. His findings, after talking to 27 homeowners, suggested

<sup>15</sup> Telegrams and letters, to Robert C. Weaver from Thatcher Longstreth, from Gaylord Harnwell and from William Zucker, August 1966, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "Community Relations (West Philadelphia

that "there [was] an obvious undercurrent of ill will among the homeowners." Moreover, Campbell reported that the school board's erroneous issuance of a letter telling homeowners to vacate their properties had a "tremendous impact generating nothing but ill will." Additionally, the survey reported an overall community sentiment that "governmental agencies have let their area run down deliberately without making a decision on what should be done." He also recorded several residents' opinions that governmental agencies' hope that, "by prolonging the decision on what to do, the area would continue to run down to the point where no one will want to stay." In a similar fact finding mission, two Penn graduate students, Lawrence Beck and Stephen Kerstetter interviewed the local resident population and published their findings in a *Daily Pennsylvanian* series entitled "The Quiet War in West Philadelphia." These articles echoed Campbell's reports of resident's mistrust and anger, revealing that at least one resident viewed the events as evidence of the fact that "urban renewal means Negro removal." Their report however, did little to incite a student response to the controversy that raged just north of Penn's campus.

As August turned into September and the project remained stalled, the WPC and its associates bemoaned the freeze of federal funding and delay in construction permission. They grew increasingly alarmed when the *Evening Bulletin* reported that the Redevelopment Authority had presented City Council with a plan to transfer \$500,000 from Urban Renewal Unit 3 to a project outside of University City. In a stern letter to the RDA president Harnwell expressed his dismay that the RDA had not informed the WPC of the proposed transfer, prior to its presentation to City Council, given the Corporation's status as a consultant to the Authority. Harnwell went on to lament that the

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RDA had purported that the funds would not be needed in unit 3, despite the WPC's repeated urging for the RDA to acquire the land needed for the Science Center. This disagreement reveals that the organizations that supported the construction process failed to put their differences aside and present a united front in order to get the project underway. The WPC, the Redevelopment Authority and the school district, each with different interests in the renewal process, obviously found it difficult to cooperate, a fact that hurt their ability to move the project along.

Finally on September 21, 1966 the Board of Education held a public hearing to determine the fate of the 6.8 acre tract of land that had caused years of delay in University City construction. The WPC, now more adamant than ever that the project commence, reminded their Board of Directors exactly how much funding had already been secured for the redevelopment of area 3. According to Molinaro's summary the redevelopment project would be able to utilize \$2.9 million from the City, \$1.9 million from the State, \$12 million from the Federal government, \$1.1 million in non-cash credits created by Penn and Drexel expenditures and \$150 million in private investment.<sup>16</sup> Given the huge amounts of available funding it is not surprising that both black and white civic groups rallied to support the construction of the Science Center and new High School in University City. Two community leaders whom Molinaro asked to speak to the board appealed to the board's desire to foster integration in the public schools when describing their support for the project. In one testimony, the vice president of the Spruce Hill Community Association\* explained that

<sup>16</sup> Memorandum, to the Board of Directors from Leo Molinaro, 14 September 1966, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "Community Relations (WPC) 1965-1970," UARC.

\* The Spruce Hill Community Association consisted of over 800 black and white families, representing a cross-section of families living in the University City area.

this planned high school has more of a chance to succeed in integration than almost all the rest of the city, both because of the strong white and Negro participation in the responsible civic groups in the areas, and because of the city wide drawing of Negro and white students to the magnet.<sup>17</sup>

Though certain civil rights organizations had used racial conflict to paralyze the project only months before this hearing, it seems that certain members of the University City community believed the school would help to address racial inequalities in University City by building a desegregated public school in the area. At this hearing, since none of the resident protesters who had opposed the school board's condemnation of the land showed up to present their side of the argument, the acquisition of the land by school District officials received unanimous support.

Nevertheless controversy over the small school site continued to plague the WPC and the school board. In October 1966, the Redevelopment Authority attempted to compromise with protesting residents by presenting a plan that reserved 2.2 acres of the original 16 acre site for housing rehabilitation. The housing spared in this new plan would have been made available to residents displaced by school construction. An editorial in *The Evening Bulletin*, commenting on the compromise plan, supported the new arrangement, citing that "it's time to get on with it" and that "a new school, new jobs, more tax revenues and rehabilitated homes [could] bring the people of West Philadelphia — and the entire region — enormous benefits."<sup>18</sup> The civil rights organizations however, found the compromise unacceptable. A statement from the head

<sup>17</sup> Statement to the Board of Education from Allen S. Goldman, 21 September 1966, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Public Hearings 1966," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

of the local chapter of CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality, charged that "for months [the RDA] made no effort to be of assistance" and that the "new proposal is asinine and an insult." CORE and other resident spokespeople continued to demand that the RDA return all contested acres back to housing status. Indicating that racial tensions pervaded the controversy, the CORE spokesman labeled the efforts to overtake the land in the area "just an effort of the white power structure to move poor people - especially black ones – around as they wish."<sup>19</sup>

This statement crystallizes the sentiment held by many civil rights organizations with respect to urban renewal. The federal government hoped that "slum clearance" and housing redevelopment would help revitalize "blighted" areas and bring economic benefits to financially strapped cities. Conversely, black urban residents and their spokesmen charged that the federal government wished only to kick poor, minority families out of their homes in order to redevelop the land for new projects that would not benefit the displaced individuals. In this instance the civil rights advocates charged that the redevelopment of area 3 would accrue benefits only for the wealthy, white Universities in the area. In fact it seems that the possibility that the renewal of area 3 would have conferred some benefits to the local populations given the inclusion of the new high school in the redevelopment plans, as well as the jobs that would have been created in the new Science Center. Such benefits however, proved difficult to discern as people lost their homes and their neighborhood to urban renewal.

<sup>18</sup> Editorial, "West Philadelphia Compromise," *The Evening Bulletin*, 12 October 1966, 8B, UPF 8.5 News Bureau, S294, FF 4, UARC.

<sup>19</sup> Clipping, "CORE Warns It Will Fight Plans For University City Science School," *The Evening Bulletin* 12 October 1966, 10B, UPF 8.5 News Bureau, S294, FF 4, UARC.

Importantly, the controversy over the land in area 3 became intimately tied to University City High School. In an editorial, one author suggested that "the school site protest has been symbolic of ...fears" that the Redevelopment Authority had overlooked the housing needs of the resident populations. Further evidence that the school became a focal point of racial hostilities came from Mrs. Helen Oakes, chairman of The West Philadelphia Schools Committee,\* who charged that because University City High School would offer a science centered curriculum, Negroes would be excluded from the school based on their failure to meet high admission standards. Mrs. Oakes asserted that this exclusion of black students from UCHS would be unavoidable "because of the inferior education Negroes now receive in segregated schools."<sup>20</sup>

Ultimately, HUD did not approve a loan and grant contract for area u until November 1966. At this point the \$12 million in federal funding that had been held up since July became available to the City to acquire properties and begin demolition. As the opposition to the redevelopment of Unit 3 subsided the WPC, Dilworth and others began to concentrate on making University City High School a reality. However, these leaders could neither make up the time they had lost due to the controversy, nor erase the negative image, now permanently attached to the new school, in the minds of many

The situation that befell University City's planners and the West Philadelphia Corporation as they attempted to utilize federal urban renewal funding to improve the residential, commercial and educational opportunities in the area is a complicated one. Essentially, the area where the Redevelopment Authority and the City Planning

\* A community organization founded in 1960 that championed reform of University City public schools.

Commission planned to build the University City Science Center, as well as University City High School contained deteriorating housing inhabited by low-income, mostly black residents. Debate still rages as to whether a tightly knit, cohesive "black bottom" community actually existed in this area. Certain modern scholars have asserted that the area never existed as the idyllic urban neighborhood that many former residents have described. Conversely, a community newsletter from the era entitled "The Resource" printed by the Volunteer Community Resources Council asserted in its August 1966 edition that once the residents felt 'kicked' into action, they banded together to protect their homes. The newsletter's exact phrase announced, "talk about TOGETHERNESS you have to see it to believe."<sup>21</sup> Subsequent newsletters also suggest that the VCRCouncil at least, committed itself to assisting area residents as landlords and RDA officials attempted to force residents out of their homes and rental units.

Whether or not a tight knit community actually existed in University City Renewal Area #3, it seems that by 1967, even the VCRC association had accepted that the renewal process would not spare many homes. Thus, the Council set about to help their neighbors, especially the elderly, to find decent, replacement housing. To this end the Council's newsletters offered local residents advice for conducting a housing search, warning them first not to move into another section of renewal area #3 where they would be moved out again. Additionally, the newsletter cautioned home seekers to be wary of realtors who attempted to use scare tactics or threats to motivate individuals into renting or buying property. Lastly, the newsletter sent a clear message that "area three residents

<sup>20</sup> Clipping, "Board Urged to Press Plans for University City School" *The Evening Bulletin*, 4 October 1966, 6B, UPF 8.5 News Bureau, S294, FF 4, UARC.

<sup>21</sup> Newsletter, "The Resource," Volunteer Community Resources Council, Summer Edition, 5 August 1966, TUA 350, Box 11, FF "Unit #3 Clay Group Law Suit 1966-1967," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

do not have to take what [they] can get." Moreover, the newsletter reminded residents that they "did not ask to be moved [rather] someone initiated [the renewal process] without [the residents'] consent. Therefore, when [residents] go to the Relocation Office [they] are asking for what is rightfully [theirs] under the city and federal program."<sup>22</sup>

Campbell's investigation also revealed that area residents understood that urban renewal would most likely take their homes. In his report, Campbell noted that although residents had expressed a strong desire to remain in their homes, the majority of homeowners felt that "if there were compelling and justifiable reasons, [they] would tolerate moving *if sufficiently compensated for their homes.*"<sup>23</sup> Herein lay the real reason for the local residents' discontent. Essentially, these individuals and families feared that if the Redevelopment Authority condemned their homes, that they would be unable to find adequate, alternative housing. One man expressed this opinion saying, "I am very satisfied with this house, but if I knew I would get enough money to buy something comparable, I would certainly feel much better." Likewise, others expressed the opinion that "this is a matter of economics. At our age we could not get another mortgage and we wouldn't want any. So we would have to get enough money for this house to buy another one outright."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, they asserted, "if this ground is really needed, the first concern should be for the people living here." The Redevelopment Authority and other local government officials exacerbated residents' fears by handling the entire situation poorly. Campbell's

<sup>22</sup> Newsletter, "The Resource," Volunteer Community Resources Council, May 1967 and June 1967, TUA 350, Box 11, FF "Unit #3 Clay Group Law Suit 1966-1967," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>23</sup> Report, "Neighborhood Attitudes Toward Redevelopment and Rehabilitation : Investigative Report," Charles Campbell, September 1966, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Public Hearings, 1966," Urban Archives, Philadelphia. [Emphasis added]

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

report stated that "government agencies bear the brunt of [local] ill will." According to residents, the governmental agencies had vacillated on most points and had offered little explanation of the plans for the area. Once the situation became hostile, certain individuals began to believe that the governmental agencies had intentionally allowed the area to deteriorate, in order to force residents to move out. Over all, governmental inaction and lack of assurances fortified residents' resolve to remain in the area.<sup>25</sup>

Had local authorities acted more compassionately and carefully to ensure residents decent prices and alternative housing options, the prolonged fight over the needed land might have been averted. This situation seems likely, particularly given the residents' willingness to see the land used to build a new public school. Instead, residents attached the construction of the school to the negative effect on their own quality of life in terms of residence. By creating this dichotomy in residents lives, the Redevelopment Authority and related city agencies engendered resentment from the local community and cost the school district precious time in school construction which would later prove fatal to the University City High School project.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

While the West Philadelphia Corporation faced threats of racial violence and lobbied federal agencies to acquire the land necessary to build University City High School, the Board of Education continued its efforts to transform the system. In the later half of 1966, Dilworth and his associates executed an extensive reorganization of the district's supervisory staff, a process that culminated in the selection of a new, controversial superintendent. During its first two years the new school board's initiatives drew significant national attention, praise and funding to Philadelphia's school system. The changes in the district also reinforced and energized the West Philadelphia Corporation's plans to improve public education in University City. In 1967 it seemed that the school board, the new superintendent and the Corporation shared the desire to bring innovative programs into the schools. Yet, this coalition faced increasing antagonism as the forces of racial tension and demands for fairness flared again, challenging the new administration and the Corporation's educational goals.

By the fall of 1966 the new school board's energy and momentum had produced tangible changes in the administrative and fiscal operations of the school district. Along with its increased capital program to facilitate physical plant reconstruction, the district had initiated a city-wide kindergarten program and increased its operating budget. Additionally, the new board had controversially installed several non-educators into key positions in both the budget and planning offices. As the pace of reform accelerated, the Board of Education and the superintendent of schools, Dr. C. Taylor Whittier acknowledged that Whittier did not exemplify the type of "visionary leader" that could lead the school district through an intense period of reform.<sup>1</sup> In a letter informing Dilworth and the members of the board that he did not wish to be considered for a second

term as superintendent, Whittier explained that he had helped ease the period of transition between the old and new school boards. He recognized that "the new board of Education, faced with the desire to create a new image and a clear break with the past, need[ed] to have a free hand in selecting its chief executive officer."<sup>2\*</sup> Consequently, as the former superintendent faded from the education scene and the Dilworth board continued to implement changes in the system, it became clear to all who still had doubts that the process of reform would have lasting effects on the school system in Philadelphia.

With administrative and fiscal reorganization underway, the school board began to focus more directly on improving the quality of instruction provided in the public schools. To this end, the board increased its collaboration with universities throughout Philadelphia, including Penn and Temple. The WPC happily assisted in the organization of a Liaison Committee designed to facilitate an exchange between Penn faculty and school district administrative staff assigned to formulate new curricular programs. The school board also initiated two programs to improve the quality of teachers at work in the district. The first of these programs, a partnership between the board and the various teachers unions in Philadelphia,<sup>\*</sup> provided stipends to teachers wishing to pursue summer studies beginning in 1967. Additionally, the board established a separate "Prospective Teacher Grant Program" to attract bright new teachers to the district. Through this

<sup>1</sup> Harry S. Resnik, *Turning On The System* (Random House: New York, 1970), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Richardson Dilworth From Dr. C. Taylor Whittier, 21 September 1966, UPA 4, Box 207, FF

"Board of Public Education (Philadelphia, City of) 1965-1970," UARC.

\* Importantly, a copy of this letter marked "personal" was also found in Dr. Harnwell's files, with a note explaining that because of their friendship, Whittier chose to share this otherwise confidential information with Harnwell.' The copy to Harnwell indicates again how closely aligned the various reformers were in Philadelphia at this time a significant factor given their positions of power and influence. The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers, the AFL-CIO and Local #3.

program, the school district offered high school and college students a \$500 grant, to be used for tuition, in exchange for a commitment by the student that he or she would teach for three years in the Philadelphia public schools immediately following graduation.

These administrative, fiscal and managerial innovations constituted the first of the reform movement's tangible effects. At this time several national experts observed the modifications occurring in Philadelphia and cited the city as a model of reform in a two-year study of urban education prepared for the Federal Office of Education. Completed in August 1967, the study proclaimed that Philadelphia was in the midst of "the most dramatic revolution in a city school system in the post-war period." Going on to praise the district, the study asserted that "the Philadelphia school system is moving rapidly towards major improvements" and that the organizational changes recently enacted were "more widespread and far-reaching than ha[d] been experienced in any large system in the country." The study noted however, that "the extent of actual change thus far has been relatively limited" due to the short amount of time that reform had been a priority. Additionally, the study concluded that Philadelphia still needed to augment its reform efforts in several key areas, including desegregation, school reorganization along the K-4-4-4 model\* and by urging teachers unions to be more flexible and open to innovation. Importantly, the report noted that "by moving outside the community for new and needed expertise... the Philadelphia board has set the stage for changes to come."<sup>4</sup>

Encouraged by the success and national praise of its initial reforms, the school board heeded the experts' advice as they searched for a new superintendent. Given the

\* A new model for school systems that suggested that students attend Kindergarten, four years of elementary school, four years of middle school and then 4 years of high school, as opposed to six years of elementary school, three years of middle school and three years of high school.

new programs in place to attract and retain bright, motivated teachers, the school district needed an equally inspired new superintendent to lead the reform movement. The new board found this leader in Dr. Mark R. Shedd, a forty year old, Harvard graduate and superintendent of a small school district in Englewood, New Jersey. Dilworth called Shedd "a young man with the kind of energy and drive who can move our school system ahead the way it must be moved."<sup>5</sup> To the board, Shedd embodied the majority of credentials they sought for the position. As superintendent in Englewood, Shedd had achieved integration in a previously highly segregated system, managing during his short tenure, to ensure that the schools in Englewood enrolled no more than 50% Negro students and no less than 38% Negro students. Moreover, he had addressed the issue of reorganization by instituting the popular K-4-4-4 model in his district. It appeared to those conducting the search that Shedd had succeeded in each of the areas that researchers found lacking in Philadelphia.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the endorsement of Dilworth and the school board, critics attacked the board's decision, pointing out that Shedd had no experience running a large, urban school district, and citing the fact that he had been superintendent in Englewood for less than three years before taking the position in Philadelphia. Still, Dilworth and the board defended their choice, announcing "we bet our money on the man, rather than the experience."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Clipping, Paul F. Levy, "Federal Study Finds 'Dramatic Reform' in Schools Here" *Evening Bulletin* 15 August 1967, UPA 4, Box 207, FF "Board of Public Education (Philadelphia, City of) 1965-1970," UARC.

<sup>5</sup> Resnik, *Turning on the System*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> John P. Corr, "Prospects for City's Schools: Shedd — A 'Cool Young Tiger'," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 May 1967, 8.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

The West Philadelphia Corporation shared the board's faith in Dr. Shedd. In their early correspondence before Shedd even took office President Harnwell happily pledged Penn and himself to assisting Shedd in his proposed educational endeavors, many of which mirrored those of the Corporation." Likewise, the superintendent-to-be expressed an interest in "developing full fledged cooperative ventures with Penn" as a means of "tackling the critical need for talent in any big city school system."<sup>8</sup> Serendipitously, Dr. Shedd's first public address coincided with the public display of the Corporation's goals for the new University City High School, at the WPC's Third Annual Community Conference. In the same week, Dr. Shedd offered the city a glimpse of what he planned to achieve as superintendent of the Philadelphia School District in a meeting with his future administrative staff. In addition to introducing his listeners to a sixty's style vernacular which included phrases like "turning kids on to the [school] system," the future executive officer of the school district stressed his desire to decentralize the decision making power by giving principals more autonomy.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, in this meeting Shedd revealed some thoughts about curricular changes to come, indicating the need to concentrate on "humanizing" the public education provided to students in order to better meet their needs.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the WPC projected to its own audience its hope for encouraging "Educational Innovations in University City" by making this the theme of the Community Conference. In its own way, the Corporation attempted to get the University City community "turned on" to educational reform, by answering questions

<sup>8</sup> Letters, to Gaylord Harnwell from Mark Shedd, 20 January 1967 and to Mark Shedd from Gaylord Harnwell, 7 February 1967, UPA 4, Box 207, FF "Board of Public Education (Philadelphia, City of) 1965-1970," UARC.

<sup>9</sup> Clipping, John P. Corr, "Shedd Plans to Decentralize School Setup, Change Studies," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 June 1967, UPA 4, Box 207, FF "Board of Public Education (Philadelphia, City of) 1965-1970" UARC.

<sup>10</sup> Resnik, *Turning on the System*, 8.

and providing detailed information about its plans for the new high school as well as three other new, innovative programs.<sup>11</sup> At the time, the conference provided an excellent opportunity to develop the type of community involvement Dr. Shedd hoped to cultivate as superintendent.

Although, Dr. Shedd did not officially take office until September 1, 1967, he worked as a consultant to the district in the months prior to his installation as superintendent, interviewing community leaders, talking to teachers and meeting school officials. Consequently, by the time he officially assumed his new position, Mark Shedd had successfully introduced district staff and local citizens to his prescription for improving education. Broadly, his method called for dealing directly and honestly with racial tensions in schools and for decentralizing power by breaking down bureaucracies and increasing community control of schools. At a two-day teacher conference in September, Shedd continued to unpack his plans for the school district. Specifically, he recommended that principals be able to select new teachers from a "talent pool" rather than being assigned teachers by the central administrative office and that principals be able to draw money from a discretionary fund to institute special projects in their schools. These and other changes indicated Shedd's desire to make the central administration more like a foundation and more responsive to needs of individual schools. Additionally, Shedd championed a more "affective" curriculum with an emphasis on self-awareness and sensitivity through greater use of art, music, dance and drama. This goal extended to teachers and administrators as well, who attended sensitivity training workshops. Finally, as superintendent, Shedd hoped to instill a 'new professionalism' in the cadre of teachers

<sup>11</sup> Workshop Reports from The West Philadelphia Corporation's Third Annual Community Conference, 17 May 1967, UPA 4; Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation IV (Community Relations) 1965-1970"

he recruited and supervised. He hoped to restore teaching as a meaningful activity rather than a means towards an administrative career, thereby encouraging greater creativity and individual initiative in his staff. <sup>12</sup> In all Mark Shedd stepped into his new position ready to revamp the Philadelphia school system and promised "that he would not be intimidated by bureaucratic restrictions or the comfortable traditions of the past."<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Shedd continued to find an ally in the WPC, as his efforts to improve Philadelphia public schools got underway. Addressing the members of the Corporation at their annual meeting in October 1967, the new superintendent praised the group's efforts on behalf of public education. He assured the members that "already, University City is having an impact on the school district" and that the new high school would serve "as a springboard for improvements in [math and science instruction] in high schools across the city." In his address, Dr. Shedd also warned that the school district "must not look upon itself as the only educational agency competent to solve school problems or improve the educational climate of [the] City." Rather, he asserted, "what happens in our schools is of concern to all of us – the Board of Education, colleges and universities, business and industry, and non-profit corporations such as [the WPC]." Acknowledging the Corporation's past efforts and requesting future assistance, Dr. Shedd closed his address saying "I invite you to bug us, bother us, show us where and how we can do our job better and most of all continue to be the strong partner you have been in the past."<sup>14</sup>

Mark Shedd's message to the WPC and to the city as a whole addressed one of the most sensitive issues in Philadelphia at the time. As the 1960s had progressed the

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<sup>12</sup> Resnik, *Turning on the System*, 8

<sup>13</sup> Weiler, *Philadelphia*, 87.

federal government's failure to enact the substantive changes promised in the declaration of war on poverty had exacerbated racial tensions in urban areas. Additionally, as cities' financial resources dwindled, the quality of urban services declined, augmenting unrest among low-income, urban populations who, unlike their middle class neighbors, could not flee to the suburbs in search of better schools. This flight only augmented the problems in cities, as middle class families took their tax dollars to the suburbs, adding to municipal governments' financial difficulties. Consequently, as the demographic characteristics of cities continued to change rapidly, white working-class city residents saw the quality of life in cities declining and resented the efforts made by city officials to equalize educational opportunities for Black Americans. A strained atmosphere resulted in which each group involved vied for better educational opportunities for their children. University City High School and other innovative programs ushered in during Mark Shedd's administration provided the school district an opportunity to address the conflicts arising over the declining quality of public schools in the city.

Despite the support of the WPC and other reform minded groups in the city, Dr. Shedd's agenda for change placed him in conflict with a number of powerful forces across the city. The new superintendent's plans to desegregate schools and place individuals who would be "change agents" into key positions of the administration, garnered immediate resistance from a variety of forces who had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Shedd's style and programs "constituted a full-fledged assault on the old guard" as he increasingly moved older, more conservative administrators out of positions of power and replaced them with young, unconventional

<sup>14</sup>Newsletter, "University City", vol 6 no. 3, December 1967, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation V (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

allies willing to try new methods to improve the ailing schools.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately as he alienated the traditional administrative staff, Shedd also became embroiled in a situation that badly damaged his credibility with a large portion of white working class Philadelphians, costing the superintendent the support of a large portion of the cities voters.

The trouble began on November 17, 1967 when 3,500 black high school students walked out of their classes to demand a more culturally sensitive curriculum, staff and dress code. Attempting to negotiate with the demonstrators, Shedd and several board members invited a delegation into the administration building to discuss the students' demands. As the crowd outside grew increasingly excited and restless, police in the area "moved in" and a riot ensued. Although different accounts blamed the initial acts of violence on both the police and the student demonstrators, in all the police arrested fifty-seven people and twenty-two people were seriously injured over the course of the day. Reactions to the events differed across the city. While the black community charged the police department, especially the notoriously racist police Commissioner Frank Rizzo, with excessive use of force, many white communities demanded Dilworth and Shedd's resignations citing their failure to maintain order in the schools.<sup>16</sup>

The riot, although an isolated incident in terms of violence, exacerbated a much larger problem brewing across the city amidst the "Shedd Revolution." After a decade of slow reform led by white, liberal, middle and upper-middle class individuals, working and lower class blacks and whites expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the deteriorating quality of life in America's cities. For black communities, the continuing

<sup>15</sup> Resnik, *Turning on the System*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Weiler, *Philadelphia*, 88 and Resnik, *Turning on the System*, 12-14.

inefficacy of the 'war on poverty' and the civil rights campaign spawned the Black Power movement, a change that precipitated an increase in violence and civil unrest in central cities. At the same time, white working class communities responded to what they viewed as unfair favoritism of dispossessed blacks and increasing urban disorder with their own disapproval of the reform movement. Herein lay the tension that exploded in Philadelphia following the student demonstration in November 1967.

Essentially, the riot elicited a "white backlash" to the efforts of Shedd and Dilworth to address racial inequities in education. From the outset Shedd attempted to improve the school district's communication with black students, parents and community groups. His willingness to meet and negotiate with these black students and activists led to charges of "mollycoddling."<sup>17</sup> One critic describing Shedd's administrative style claimed that the superintendent "put kids over teachers and black kids over everybody."<sup>18</sup> Consequently, when the demonstration turned violent, many white working class families assumed that unruly and disobedient black youth had initiated the disturbance. The incident confirmed their belief that "the schools were 'too lax' with troublemakers, too interested in unnecessary or dangerous experimentation [and] too pro-black."<sup>19</sup>

The incident served to crystallize the conflict between lower-middle class black and white Philadelphians. Additionally, it drew national attention by catapulting Frank Rizzo, police commissioner, into the position of spokesman for angry white citizens. Rizzo's abrasive language and total lack of tolerance of civil disobedience, particularly if practiced by African-Americans, made him an instant champion of the white working

<sup>17</sup> Peter Binzen, *Whitetown U.S.A.* (New York : Random House, Inc., 1970), 288.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Binzen, "Mark Shedd's Big Problem: He Gambled on Ideas and Lost Out on Allies" *The Evening Bulletin*, 21 November 1971, 1, as quoted in Jon S. Birger "Race, Reaction and Reform: The Three R's of Philadelphia School Politics 1965-1971" (Masters Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 10-11.

class. An opinion poll conducted only a month before the riot revealed that Rizzo had an 84 percent approval rating in the city. This overwhelming support resulted from the police commissioner's unfaltering performance during the previous summer, when he had held the city in check as other urban areas such as Detroit and Newark succumbed to fires, looting and riots.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Rizzo appealed to this white ethnic population because he personified these communities most basic attributes as the son of a police officer, born and raised in the white, working-class, extended neighborhood of South Philadelphia. Thus, when Rizzo put down the riot that alarmed so many white working class Philadelphians they rallied to his side, flooding the school district, newspapers and television stations with calls of support.

In this charged atmosphere, Mayor James Tate found himself compelled to support the police commissioner as well. Although Tate would have liked to censure Rizzo's actions, given that the commissioner had recently emerged as Tate's political rival, the Mayor came out on the side of the white working class Rizzo-philies. The position in fact pleased the Mayor somewhat, as he had a long-standing dislike for Richardson Dilworth, who had always been Tate's social, political and professional superior. In line with public opinion, Tate expressed his dissatisfaction with the school board and Shedd by announcing publicly that, "the board ... failed to curb Black Power activities in the schools." Tate went on to denounce Shedd and the board asserting that "our police should not be made the whipping boys for the inadequacies of the school board" since "if the school board and school officials... had been more effective in

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<sup>19</sup> Weiler, *Philadelphia*, 89.

<sup>20</sup> S.A. Paolantonio, *Frank Rizzo: The Last Big Man in Big City America* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1993), 89, as quoted in Birger, *Race, Reaction and Reform*, 16.

maintaining discipline in the schools, trouble might have been averted without the necessity for police action."<sup>21</sup>

Attempting to come to their own defense, Shedd and Dilworth asserted that Rizzo and the police had taken things too far. Although a small coalition of wealthy, white liberals supported the two school reformers, public opinion, the mayor, the police department and members of their own administration, angered by the increasing concentration of power by Shedd and his hand picked staff, dominated the public discourse. Privately, Dilworth revealed grave concerns for the future of school reform in Philadelphia. In a letter written shortly after the demonstration, the school board president noted that:

At the moment [Rizzo] is virtually a folk hero ... 90% of the white community is cheering him on and hissing us. It would have been very easy for us to hide behind the Police Commissioner..., but it would have meant the return to school of thousands upon thousands of sullen blacks, unreceptive to learning because of their sullenness, and awaiting an opportunity to break out all over again.

We chose the hard road, and do not know whether our tactics will succeed...It is clear that if we have another outbreak and another march on the Administration building, the public may very well demand our resignation, on the ground that you cannot temporize with crime and the overwhelming majority of the whites believe any meetings with the militant young Negroes are criminal<sup>22</sup>

Accurately assessing the situation, Dilworth recognized the extent to which the school board, and the country in general, had alienated a large population of conservative, white, working class communities who felt abandoned by their government and besieged in their own city.

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<sup>21</sup> Jeremy Heymsfeld, "Tate Assails Board for Shunning Police Help on Black Power," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 November 1967, 1, as quoted in Birger, *Race Reaction and Reform*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Letter, to Stanley Bregman from Richardson Dilworth, 24 November 1967, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Richardson Dilworth Papers, Box 35, as quoted in Birger, *Race, Reaction, and Reform*, 24.

The cumulative effect of the riot, the deification of Frank Rizzo, and the crystallization of white, working class animosity towards the reform minded school district, colored the ensuing years of the Dilworth/Shedd administration. Frank Rizzo's willingness to attack the practices of the school board inaugurated a new era of public, verbal criticism of the Philadelphia educational system. Prior to the police commissioner's rise to public figure status, few individuals dared to publicly denounce Dilworth in particular, given his venerable status in the City. Empowered by their new leader's aggressive style and articulate speech, however, average citizens increasingly voiced their disapproval of the administration. Thus, the riot and its public aftermath put Dilworth and Shedd on the defensive, permanently. Unable to appease white or black parents, Dilworth and Shedd functioned under constant duress, almost from the beginning of the superintendent's tenure.

This situation weakened the educational reform movement in Philadelphia considerably. Though the Shedd administration operated the school district for another four years, the momentum that he had gathered prior to the riot dissipated in an atmosphere of constant Shedd/Dilworth bashing. Gearing up for the mayoral election of 1971, Frank Rizzo intensified his indictment of Shedd's practices. Consequently, over the course of his tenure, those groups who had supported Shedd from the first, including the WPC, found their leader's capacity to be a 'change agent' himself, greatly diminished.

Although the Shedd administration encountered strong resistance to its efforts to reinvent the Philadelphia school system, the members of the West Philadelphia Corporation refused to relinquish their dreams of bringing an innovative and exceptional high school to University City. At first, it seemed Dr. Shedd's desire to foster experimental programs in the Philadelphia School District would permit the school to emerge as a unique educational facility. Operating under these assumptions, the West Philadelphia Corporation labored to bring expert advisors and strategists to the project. These talented individuals created plans for a curriculum and learning environment that would have made University City High School unlike any other school in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, a myriad of factors intervened to make the realization of this unique educational experience impossible. Ultimately, the Shedd administration's difficulty harnessing support for its new programs resulted in fiscal and organization problems for UCHS.

From its inception, the WPC and other advocates intended for the new high school to feature an intensive math and science curriculum, similar to the ones offered at Bronx Science and Baltimore Polytechnic. In this way the school's curriculum would complement its location among the research laboratories of the University City Science Center. Likewise, the school district decided well before construction began, that the school would offer both a comprehensive curriculum\* as well as a magnet curriculum focused on math and science. By 1966 plans for the school called for 75% of UCHS

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\* A typical high school curriculum including English, Social Studies, Science, Math and a Foreign Language.

students to come from West Philadelphia to enroll in the comprehensive track and for 25% of the pupils to come from across the city for the magnet program.<sup>1</sup>

Initially the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce reported to the WPC's Board of Directors that local institutions favored the plans set forth for the new high school. A Chamber survey conducted in the fall of 1967 found the area's major science-related corporations "unanimous in urging the establishment of a high school of science and mathematics as a source of scientifically-oriented youth who would become the scientists of tomorrow." The Chamber also asserted that the intense science and math curriculum at UCHS "would offer opportunities, rather than barriers, to culturally-disadvantaged children from the minorities." Lastly, to bolster support for UCHS, the Chamber cited the fact that the new school would help foster integration, asserting that the strong science curriculum would "attract youth from all over the Delaware Valley and thus make a positive step toward integration of the races which has always been so in the color-blind world of science and mathematics."<sup>2</sup> Confident of the benefits that would result from the new school, their report beseeched the Board of Education to expedite plans for the new school.

With support from a variety of local businesses and community organizations the WPC initiated the creation of a unique learning environment for UCHS. To this end, the WPC invited Dr. Clifford A. Swartz, a physics professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook to address concerned West Philadelphia residents at the West Philadelphia Corporation's Third Annual Community Conference. At the conference Dr.

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum, "Science Center and University City High School," to Members of the Board of Education from Dr. C. Taylor Whittier, 25 February 1966, TUA Acc 350, Box 27, FF "Board of Education 1966," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

Swartz shared his vision of a unique program of individualized instruction that later became the basis for the innovative structure of University City High School. A brief excerpt from Swartz's plan reveals the flaws that Swartz identified in the current system of education. His proposal for a new type of educational environment opened with a question,

Have you visited your local school in the last hundred years? There is no hurry. The basic techniques of teaching have not changed in all that time. Of course, the windows are bigger than they used to be and some of the furniture is now moveable. There is much talk of new types of math and team teaching. But in most schools the children still sit in rows in rectangular classrooms with a teacher up front at the blackboard. Within each room the children are about the same age as their classmates but usually differ by several years in intellectual maturity. The ability of any particular child in one subject will often be a year or two ahead of his ability in some other subject. In spite of this commonly known fact, each student in the class is supposed to be doing the same sort of work that everyone else in the class is doing, learning at the same rate and listening with the same understanding to the teacher. At the end of the year each student is required to know only a small fraction of all that has been taught, and to know even that much only for a brief testing time. Having been marked on his degree of retention of the study material, he will almost always move on to the next grade. There the slower student will fall further behind and the one with a good memory will gather more honor points. That is the way it is now in most schools and that is the way it has been for a long time...

If the present school mechanism were merely inefficient in performing the role we expect of it, we could cheerfully pay the cost for the custodial care of our children and not worry about their wasted time. The danger of our present school system is not that it is inefficient but that it is too efficient in teaching a lesson we do not intend. The system inherently fosters passive dependence of the student on teacher direction and discourages initiative and self-reliance in learning. There are many happy exceptions to this in some schools... Nevertheless, the formal organization of the schools is designed for teacher-directed teaching of a class rather than student-required responsibility for learning... Individual enthusiasms, interests, or weaknesses have no place in the daily routine... Before class they will not know what they are supposed to learn or what activity will await them; that is the teacher's business. All that the students are expected to do is sit still, absorb what they can, and escape back to real life when the bell rings.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Newsletter, "University City", Vol. 6 No. 3, December 1967, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation V (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

<sup>3</sup> Proposal, "A School For Human Children," by Clifford Swartz, No Date, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

The next section of Swartz's proposal offered an alternative to the flawed system described above. The following passage illustrates exactly why educators considered his program so "radical".

Let us design a school for human children. It must allow children to grow in intellectual skills at a pace independent of their classmates and must also, force them to develop their individual initiative in working toward learning goals. In every sort of project the system should provide all the freedom for which the student will accept responsibility. There should be intellectual freedom in choosing the timing and topics of study, and physical freedom to be still or move around...<sup>4</sup>

Though Swartz's individualized, self-paced curriculum appeared unconventional parents and educators who attended a "Magnet Planning Committee" meeting in January 1968 expressed support for the plans. A memo written to Mr. Molinaro following the meeting explained that the community members present "agreed that the school should have a top quality up-to-date program with individualized scheduling, team-teaching and non-graded classes."

Conversely, parents and educators present at this meeting expressed concern over the composition of the new school's student body. A school board representative reporting on the meeting explained that the parent's present insisted that the school "should be integrated on racial and socio-economic lines."<sup>5</sup> It seems that parents stressed this issue most because of their fear that enrollment at the new high school would be restricted to the upper middle class children of university faculty and staff. The concern that local students would be excluded from enrolling in the new school was not new, indeed the issue of fairness to all students from the University City worried parents and school planners from the beginning. Parents and community leaders had focused on the

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<sup>4</sup> ibid.

issue at the Third Annual Community Conference in 1967, where "the greatest concern of the evening" was the issue of "who [would] attend the school and how they [would] be selected?"<sup>6</sup> Their trepidation stemmed from the belief that local students might not possess the math and science skills needed to participate in the new school's curriculum. This anxiety persisted despite assurances from Dr. Shedd and others, that UCHS was "intended primarily for students in the surrounding area."<sup>7</sup>

Conscious of local parents' concern over this matter, Dr. Marechal Neil E. Young, superintendent for District One where the new school would be located, proposed the creation of the "University City High School Bound"\* program in January 1968. The project aimed to prepare fifth and sixth grade students with below-average academic skills for entrance into UCHS. To this end, organizers enlisted twenty first year teachers to utilize in-service training of local teachers to encourage innovation and competence in the classroom. Additionally, these teachers provided instruction to local parents to increase their motivation and capability to assist their children. The program's designers hoped to employ these trained parents to visit homes, organize block study groups and facilitate neighborhood homework centers. Commenting on the project a few months after its inception the school board indicated that it hoped that a 'ripple effect' would

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<sup>5</sup> Memorandum, to Leo Molinaro and others from Bernard C. Watson, 15 January 1968, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1968," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>6</sup> Workshop Reports from The West Philadelphia Corporation's Third Annual Community Conference 17 May 1967, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation IV (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

<sup>7</sup> Newsletter, "University City", Vol. 6 No. 3, December 1967, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation V (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

\* Originally the "West Philadelphia Teacher-Parent Cooperative Project for Improvement of Basic Skills."

occur, meaning that the parents and students initially involved would transfer their interest and motivation to other members of the community."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, while Swartz and others planned the curriculum for UCHS and local parents and educators prepared students for the academic rigors of the new school, the Shedd administration kept the momentum of the school reform movement going by permitting other, innovative programs to open up shop in Philadelphia. Dr. Shedd actively recruited one such program, The Pennsylvania Advancement School, to come to Philadelphia from North Carolina. A description of the school, which garnered national attention, claimed that it offered "an atmosphere different from anything [students] [had] experienced before. Instead of receiving routine classroom instruction [students] [were] free to explore free-wheeling curricula which involve[d] them emotionally and physically and which [was] often tied to a real-life situation to make the instruction more interesting." Dr. Shedd asserted that success at innovative schools such as the Advancement school "w[ould] generate pressure for change on the traditional establishment."<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Shedd permitted several other "alternative" schools to open in Philadelphia including the nationally acclaimed Parkway Program. These projects, and the support that the administration showed them, most likely encouraged University City High School planners as they prepared to break ground on their own innovative school.

Nevertheless, despite the encouragement coming from other innovative educational programs in the city, certain members of the WPC recognized that problems

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<sup>9</sup> Clipping, "West Philadelphia group helps students prepare for the new University City high school." *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 1 April 1968, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1968," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

lay ahead for the school and the area in general. Two blows came to the organizers of UCHS in April 1968 foreshadowing future difficulties for the project. First, after consultants had spent months preparing "learning packets" that contained reading materials and project descriptions for students to utilize while studying at UCHS, Dr. Paul A. McKim, vice president of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce revealed that members of the business community felt uneasy about Swartz's proposed educational program. In a letter to the district's Superintendent of Innovative Programs, McKim explained several areas of misgiving related to the new school's curriculum. First Swartz's critics feared that the school's planners had placed an "emphasis on experimenting with a new educational concept at the expense of the education itself" leaving critics concerned that not enough attention had been spent on the content of the curriculum. The new style of instruction also caused these objectors to wonder whether the strategy placed too much emphasis on completion of tasks without sufficient instruction to tie the concepts together. Additionally, his opponents felt that Swartz may have overreacted to the deficiencies of the current system of education, and that in fact a smaller number of educational paths would serve a diverse student body adequately without necessitating a unique path for each student. Finally, McKim and the Chamber worried that the UCHS program ignored "the importance of an inspirational teacher in student development" and wondered what would happen to students who did not respond well to Swartz's "do-it-yourself" attitude about learning.

In effect these businessmen proposed to move away from Swartz's radical educational program and suggested that the school use a more traditional 'multi-tracked'

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<sup>10</sup> John T. Gillespie, "The Idea is to Get These Kids Turned On," *The Sunday Bulletin Magazine*, 10 March 1968, 4.

system as they tried to create a new curriculum. Even before Swartz's unconventional system received a chance to succeed, powerful individuals began to recommend its abandonment. Although Swartz's program was not yet rejected, the influence of these individuals expressing reservations did no bode well for the possibility of UCHS's alternative learning environment.<sup>11</sup>

Also in April 1968, Leo Molinaro, executive director of the WPC and its strongest advocate for educational reform announced his resignation and plans to leave Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup> A highly sought after city planner, Molinaro had been offered positions outside of Philadelphia in the past, however, he had declined these prospects, explaining that he found the opportunities in Philadelphia more appealing. That Molinaro decided at this point to leave University City indicates that perhaps he no longer felt the Corporation could attain the goals, educational or otherwise, it had set for itself. Likewise, it is possible that the fast approaching end of Gaylord Harnwell's tenure as president of the University of Pennsylvania motivated Molinaro to accept another position. The two men enjoyed a close working relationship during Molinaro's years in Philadelphia and Harnwell's considerable clout in the city had permitted Molinaro and the Corporation to achieve changes that may otherwise have proved more elusive. The executive director of the WPC may have seen Harnwell's imminent departure as detrimental to the Corporation's effectiveness and therefore chosen to abandon the ship before it sunk. In any event, Molinaro took with him a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the Philadelphia school reform movement as well as considerable connections to the City's

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<sup>11</sup> Letter to Dr. Bernard C. Watson from Dr. Paul A. McKim, 15 April 1968, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1968," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>12</sup> Memo to the Board of Directors of the WPC from Leo Molinaro, 30 April 1968, UPA 4, Box 188, File Folder "West Philadelphia Corporation V (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

educational and business elite. His departure left his successors to deal with a host of problems that lurked around the high school that Molinaro had helped to envision.

Today, it is easy to see that both of these occurrences foreshadowed difficulties in the actualization of University City High School; however, at the time they unfolded the WPC, the school board, and the community refused to relinquish plans for the high school project that they had spent so much time and money to create. Rather, during the fall of 1968, the project appeared to be moving along as construction crews finally broke ground on the fourteen-acre site. Shortly thereafter the school's boosters received another positive sign when the U. S. Office of Education named UCHS part of a national program entitled "ES '70 — Educational System for the Seventies — A cooperative Program for Educational Innovation." This federal initiative's goal was "to develop an educational environment in which a community's resources [could] be most effectively and efficiently managed to provide each child with adequate and appropriate learning opportunities."<sup>13</sup> The designation made UCHS one of seventeen "developmental schools" in the country to offer the ES '70 "organic curriculum."<sup>14</sup> The features of the ES '70 program were very similar to the aims that Swartz and others had originally laid out for UCHS: the schools in the program would provide individualized instruction, the education would be highly relevant to the adult roles the student would pursue and the schools would utilize appropriate educationally oriented technology. The new status conferred national recognition as well as federal and state funding to UCHS.

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<sup>13</sup> Newsletter, "ES '70," Vol. 1 No. 7, February 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>14</sup> Newsletter, "University City," Vol. 1 No. 1, September 1968, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation VII (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

The success of both the ES '70 'organic curriculum' as well as the original educational program conceptualized by Swartz depended heavily on contributions by local institutions and businesses to enhance the school's educational program. The school's boosters worked to establish connections with businesses such as General Electric that would provide on site training and apprenticeship for UCHS students. Swartz intentionally designed his curriculum without rigid class schedules, to allow students to spend time at nearby businesses, hospitals and museums etc. To coordinate this assistance from outside institutions, UCHS planners created several sub-committees to establish the needed connections between November 1968 and the opening of the school in September 1970. The list of sub-committee objectives included locating industrial plants and businesses willing to provide training experience for students and adults; establishing courses that students would be allowed to take at local universities; enlisting professors who would agree to teach at the high school; and utilizing the staff of the Graduate School of Education at Penn to train student and intern teachers.

One sub-committee, concerned with University Relations, listed a variety of services it hoped to enlist from the local educational institutions. The subcommittee hoped to encourage professors from local institutions to lecture at the new school and to council and advise groups of UCHS students. Likewise, the group intended to make use of graduate and undergraduate students at Penn, Drexel and PCPS to teach, tutor and mentor at UCHS. Additionally, the sub-committee hoped that facilities such as psychology clinics and health clinics would make their services available to UCHS students and that the high school students would be able to access the universities' physical facilities such as Franklin Field and computer labs. The school planners also

wanted the local Universities to establish special scholarships for needy students from UCHS. Equally crucial to the success of UCHS would be university support for the new high school's staff. The subcommittee asserted that UCHS staff might take evening courses provided by the universities and that tuition remissions and scholarship programs should be established for the faculty of the new school. <sup>15</sup>

It is crucial to note the extent to which UCHS's planners hoped to elicit contributions and "pro bono" assistance from local institutions and businesses. This reliance on community beneficence made the new school especially susceptible to changes in the economy and public interest. Indeed, towards the end of the decade, as educational reform became less expedient, institutions that did not view public education as their responsibility became increasingly less inclined to assist University City High School.

Between 1967 and 1968 University City High School, and the school district in general, experienced a series of highs and lows that called into question the feasibility of the innovation that Dr. Shedd and his administration hoped to bring to the Philadelphia schools. Though the outlook seemed promising with the advent of the ES '70 program, shifting attitudes and changes in the WPC's administration threatened to slow or halt the progress of the new high school. Still, a committed group of educators, community activists and representatives from University City institutions maintained their dedication to bringing the UCHS project to fruition.

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<sup>15</sup> Letter, to Dr. Neal Gross from I. Milton Karabell, 10 December 1968, TUA, Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Subcommittee on Relations with Universities 1968," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

Considering the years of hard work that it took to secure the funding, land and public support needed to initiate University City High School, its innovative structure and unique goals disintegrated rather quickly. In 1969, over the course of the year, several important factors contributed to the elimination of the original plan for an exceptional curriculum and environment at UCHS. A final blow struck the project when it became clear that the multi-million dollar facility under construction would not be available by the opening of school in September 1970. Searching for an interim school location and becoming increasingly aware of the changing attitudes towards school reform, neither the school board nor the members of the WPC held much hope for the initiation of a truly innovative educational program in University City.

The inclusion of UCHS in the ES '70 program allowed the school's organizers to remain committed to establishing a non-traditional structure and learning environment throughout 1968. During this time subcommittees labored to bring local business and academic institutions together to ensure the success of the school's unique curriculum. The subcommittee for School-Community relations elicited the cooperation of local business leaders who could speak to students about their fields and established connections to businesses where students could visit offices and industry sites first hand. This hard work inspired the school board to announce the school's individualized, science and math focused program to the public in January 1969. In its explanation, the board claimed that the non-graded program had been developed and financed by the U.S. Office of Education. Perhaps wishing to give the unconventional program as much credibility as possible, the board's statement made no mention of Clifford Swartz, or the

fact that the school's designs had called for individualized instruction prior to joining the national ES '70 program.<sup>1</sup>

Once UCHS became an ES '70 school, the school district organized a demonstration summer school in order "to train both teachers and students in behaving in new ways toward each other."<sup>2</sup> District officials, teachers and community activists recognized that the new style of education proposed for UCHS necessitated that students and teachers learn to interact in new ways, by working in small groups and by utilizing community resources effectively. To foster this understanding in future UCHS teachers and students, teachers and campers experienced a new relationship as they worked together to use the funds available to the camp program. Specifically, the camp set up small groups that provided a service to the rest of the camp such as a camp radio station. The proposal for this program noted that "the difficulty encountered in the inter-relationships [between students and teachers] becomes the "organic" material for learning."<sup>3</sup> The camp, and its ambitious goals reflect the wholly new approach to education that the school district and federal ES '70 program hoped to achieve at UCHS.

Following the establishment of the demonstration summer school, UCHS planners set out to establish the 'feeder pattern' for the new high school. Accordingly, the "West Philadelphia University City High School Advisory Committee" organized a subcommittee to conduct research and offer suggestions as to which elementary and junior high schools' students should flow to UCHS. At this time severe overcrowding characterized the majority of schools in West Philadelphia, a situation that necessitated

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<sup>1</sup> Clipping, "University City High School To Offer Nongraded Course," *Evening Bulletin*, 28 January 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Report, "A Plan for a Demonstration Summer School — 1969," TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "Campus Summer School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

complex bussing systems to achieve better distribution of students. The school district's Planning Office estimated that adequate school space would not be available in West Philadelphia until the end of the 1970s.

In April 1969, the principal of West Philadelphia High School, Walter Scott, familiarized the subcommittee with the problems inherent to choosing a feeder pattern. First, Scott warned that a stigma might become attached to the present West Philadelphia High School if the feeder pattern allowed students to choose which high school they wished to attend. Naturally, most students would try to enter the new University City High School and feel that West Philadelphia High School constituted an inferior option. Secondly, Scott informed the subcommittee of possible resentment by the immediate community if only a portion of local students became eligible to enroll at UCHS given that the majority of parents and students would demand that they benefit from UCHS's new facility and unique structure. Finally, because the magnet portion of the school would enroll 25% of the student body, some students from other parts of the city would gain admission over students from the immediate vicinity, a situation which Scott warned could generate additional hostility from local parents and students.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of the new high school's feeder pattern worried the WPC as much as it concerned area residents. In a letter to Dr. Shedd in early April 1969, I. Milton Karabell, Molinaro's successor as the Corporation's executive director, expressed his "concern about the possibility that not all of the lower schools in the University City area [would] be included in the feeder pattern for UCHS." Addressing the issue, Karabell reminded

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Report of minutes, Feeder Committee of the West Philadelphia-University City High School Advisory Committee, 9 April 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

Shedd that the six University-Related Schools had received repeated confirmation that they would be included in the new school's feeder area. He went on to advocate for these schools asserting that based on this commitment, the families in the area had traveled to Washington to protest when HUD had halted the redevelopment project due to controversy over the school site. Moreover, Karabell claimed, these six schools had "engaged in joint planning ... efforts to improve their quality" in order to prepare their students to enter UCHS.<sup>5</sup>

Karabell's letter also reminded Dr. Shedd of a statement he had made at a community meeting in 1967, at which time the superintendent had indicated that UCHS would be open to all residents of University City. This statement further confounded the feeder pattern issue because at the time Dr. Shedd made this assertion, the school board intended to convert West Philadelphia High School to a middle school when University City High School opened. This plan had since been revised, however, pushing the conversion off until the end of the decade. The change of events left the WPC's Board of Directors and the feeder pattern subcommittee to wonder how community residents would react to the possibility that not all University City children would be able to attend University City High School. Recognizing that the school's inability to serve all local children would soon create major problems, most of the school's advocates began to press the school district to establish a feeder pattern so that they could make sure that their interests would be represented.

The issue of UCHS's feeder pattern also garnered significant attention as it related to the innovative curriculum still planned for use at UCHS. Given that the highly

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<sup>5</sup> Letter to Mark Shedd from I. Milton Karabell, 3 April 1969 TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

experimental proposed learning environment, the program's designers advised that the school open with only half of the 3000 pupils the building could actually accommodate. Considering this recommendation though, one subcommittee member hit on a key issue when she asked, "Can the West Philadelphia University City High School (UCHS) open with only 1250 pupils and hold seats open, while children in other schools are being educated in overcrowded conditions?"<sup>6</sup> The issue of fairness, to students in the other overcrowded schools in University City, became a central one from this point forward. The demographics of University City compounded the difficulty of this problem. Given that the most affluent residents of the greater West Philadelphia area lived in close proximity to University City, it seemed likely that the new school, would enroll a greater portion of these students than any other West Philadelphia high school. Thus, if UCHS opened with fewer pupils than it could actually accommodate, it would appear to confer a benefit to white, middle class students over other low-income, minority students in the surrounding neighborhoods. At this point then, issues of racial and class bias slowly began to creep into the criticisms of the new high school.

In its initial efforts to address the feeder pattern issue, the subcommittee identified and researched several plausible feeder systems. Suggestions included basing eligibility on the geographical boundaries of a student's home, on the geographical boundaries of University City and on a student's junior high school. A committee member also suggested an alternative scenario, in which West Philadelphia High School would also make use of the learning packets and innovative curriculum designed for UCHS, thereby reducing the possibility of a stigma becoming attached to the older school and perhaps

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<sup>6</sup> Report of minutes, Feeder Committee of the West Philadelphia-University City High School Advisory Committee, 9 April 1969, TUA Acc 350 Box 22 FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives,

decreasing the importance of the feeder pattern. Finally, a community group suggested that admission to the new school be based on a lottery system, similar to the one used at the Parkway Program.\* The solution's offered however, failed to address the fact that promises had been made to more residents over the past five years than the school would actually be able to accommodate. Ultimately, the feeder pattern subcommittee reduced the decision to only two options based on the geographical boundaries of University City and the elementary and junior high schools attended by students. The subcommittee abandoned the idea of instituting the ES '70 individualized curriculum at West Philadelphia High School after the U.S. Office of Education and the State Department of Public Instruction expressed disapproval of a joint operation. Moreover, no funding existed to train the teachers, purchase the equipment and pay the salary of the staff needed to set up a second ES '70 style school.

Despite widespread concern over the feeder pattern issue, Dilworth and Shedd failed to articulate a position on the matter. In a letter dated June 18, 1969, Karabell implored Dilworth to respond to a letter that Shedd had never answered. Karabell expressed his fear "that the decision making process relative to feeder patterns for the University City High School [had] continued without any recognition of the concern of the community and their long-standing support of this program."<sup>7</sup> Indicating a strong desire to act on the local school's behalf, Karabell reaffirmed his constituency's willingness to appear before the Board of Education to express their concerns. Finally,

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Philadelphia.

\* Another innovative program initiated during the Shedd Administration. For more information on The Parkway Program see: Henry S. Resnik, "High School With No Walls — It's Happening in Philadelphia," *Think*, November-December 1969, 33-36.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Richardson Dilworth from I. Milton Karabell, 18 June 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

after months of uncertainty, Dilworth answered Karabell's request for information by explaining that Dr. Shedd had delegated the decision on the feeder issue to Dr. Young, Superintendent for District One. Dr. Young, in turn, had announced only the day before Dilworth's letter to Karabell that the issue would be presented to the Board of Education in an upcoming meeting. Following this presentation however, it appears that the board again put off residents' concerns for future consideration. In a letter to the WPC, one of Dr. Shedd's assistants reported that a meeting to discuss the issues raised in front of the Board of Education would be arranged "as soon as the professional staff members [were] all available."<sup>8</sup>

The possible racial and class biases raised in the context of the school's feeder pattern continued to plague the Advisory Committee and the WPC throughout 1969 as community groups and concerned parents watched carefully to see how the situation would be resolved. Without a firm position on the issue, the school district attempted to gain community insight into the matter by presenting a questionnaire to the participants at the West Philadelphia Corporation's Fifth Annual Community Conference. Given the Conference theme of "University City High School — What's Happening" the school board hoped to gain information from citizens with an active interest in the new school. The questionnaire presented the two alternatives: one that determined UCHS's student body based on the student's elementary school and another that used students' home location as feeder criteria. The response from Conference participants favored the first option, which would have permitted students from ten elementary/middle schools to attend UCHS. Utilizing this strategy, UCHS would have opened with 4896 students, in

<sup>8</sup> Letters, to I. Milton Karabell from Richardson Dilworth, 10 July 1969, and to I. Milton Karabell from Marechal-Neil E. Young, 9 July 1969, and to Mr. Robert S. King from Robert L. Poindexter, 18 July 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

1970-1971 and more than 5000 students in the next five years. Unfortunately the questionnaire did not provide these crucial statistics. In a memo explaining the community response one school district officer noted that "since the capacity of [UCHS] is approximately 3000-3500, this alternative would severely overcrowd the facility. Unable to develop a feasible feeder strategy, the school district left the issue undecided, leaving many individuals from the Corporation and the community anxious.

Augmenting the WPC's and community's obvious concern over who would get to attend UCHS lurked a much larger, more consequential issue. In the latter half of 1969, funding availability and the general public's view of the Shedd administration came into question, changing the direction of the educational reform movement in Philadelphia. This shift portended a dire fate for University City High School and educational reform in general.

After almost two years of Mark Shedd's liberal style and frank confrontation of racial issues, increasing numbers of parents as well as teachers felt the 'progressivism' of the new administration had gone too far. Parents disliked Dr. Shedd's desegregation plan calling for massive citywide bussing of students to achieve racial balance in classrooms. Additionally, parents and community representatives alike felt slighted by the new administration's attempts to deal directly with neighborhood activist groups, bypassing local home and school associations that traditionally communicated with school officials.

Dissenters made their dissatisfaction abundantly clear in April 1969 by vetoing a ninety million dollar school-bond issue put forth by the Dilworth school board. An analysis of the wards that voted most adamantly against the bond issue reveals that the white working class enclaves of the city deliberately rejected the bond issue in order to

send a message to Shedd and Dilworth. One commentator concluded after the defeat of the bond issue that "there was a feeling that the black community was getting all the improvements at the expense of the whites."<sup>9</sup> This analysis reveals an important aspect of the racial tension that existed in Philadelphia. Although many working class white families lived in the city and paid taxes to support the public schools, they chose to enroll their own children in the city's large parochial system. Consequently, in 1969, when Dilworth and Shedd asked voters to spend even more money to improve a system that many families did not even use, voters responded by rejecting the bond issue. Racism and self interest both proved more influential than the spirit of reform, as white working class families expressed the opinion that they would no longer pay for improvements for the public schools that so many black students attended. As Dilworth noted in an interview at the time " there's a tremendous tendency on the part of everybody to distrust everybody else." For the whitetowners that rejected the bond issue, this distrust of Shedd and his policies outweighed their desire for new schools for their children.<sup>10</sup>

For University City High School, rejection of the bond issue had grave consequences. Though voters passed a scaled-down sixty million-dollar bond issue in November, the school system faced a serious fiscal crisis. Increases in capital expenditures since 1965, rising teacher salary demands, increasing stress on the local tax base, rising national inflation and decreasing state and federal aid combined to create a dire financial situation. The lack of funding required the Shedd administration to threaten school closings and program trimming in an effort to raise more money for the schools. Despite a series of attempts to levy new taxes on liquor and corporate net income, city

<sup>9</sup> Binzen, *Whitetown*, 297

<sup>10</sup> Binzen, *Whitetown*, 296-297.

and state officials refused to allow the schools to acquire the funding they so desperately needed. The crisis forced a halt of the physical expansion that Dilworth had initiated four years earlier.<sup>11</sup>

Once members of the West Philadelphia Corporation and other UCHS advocates learned of the school district's fiscal problems they quickly sprung to the defense of their pet project. The school's planners recognized immediately that the district constructed no new high school in West Philadelphia that when UCHS finally did open, it would be expected to enroll many more students in order to relieve the pressure at other West Philadelphia schools. This scenario would make it practically impossible for the school to retain its small class sizes and innovative curriculum. Given that the end of the physical expansion program would force the Dilworth board to shelve plans to build a replacement for West Philadelphia High School, Dr. Harnwell drew upon his connections to implore Dilworth to carefully consider this action. In a letter to Dilworth, Harnwell wrote, "conditions ... in West Philadelphia, require an increase in the pace of the school construction program rather than a decrease." The WPC president went on to warn Dilworth that "elimination of the proposed [replacement] high school would have severe effects throughout the system... mak[ing] it impossible to follow through on the present plans for relieving overcrowding at several of the middle schools and elementary schools in District One."<sup>12</sup>

Additional members of the WPC and other West Philadelphia community groups expressed their concern about the removal of a new high school from the board's capital

<sup>11</sup> Weiler, *Philadelphia*, 93-94.

<sup>12</sup> Letter to Richardson Dilworth from Gaylord Harnwell, 9 October 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

program at a meeting held on October 14, 1969.<sup>13</sup> Members of a variety of local community organizations turned out to protest the elimination of a new high school from the board's capital program. Representatives from ten Home and School Associations as well as twenty-seven other "University City High School Community Groups" listed themselves as in opposition to the board's plans. Speaking for these groups the chairman of the Subcommittee on School and Community Relations of the West Philadelphia University City Advisory Committee, Wayne L. Owens explained the citizen's concern plainly. He asserted that "our basic fear is that ... UCHS [will] open as an overcrowded new school and that the individualized instruction innovations possible in the ES '70 program will be crowded out."<sup>14</sup> In fact this exact scenario is what befell University City High School. An analysis of how and why this situation evolved will complete the story of the high school that many hoped would be "a springboard for improvement ... in high schools across the city."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "Statements to The Philadelphia Board of Education," from I. Milton Karabell, Hardy Williams and Wayne Owens, 14 October 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>14</sup> "Statement to The Philadelphia Board of Education," from Wayne Owens, 14 October 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22 FF "University City High School 1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>15</sup> Newsletter, "University City," Vol. 6 No. 3, December 1967, UPA 4, Box **188**, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation (Community Relations) 1965-1.970," UARC.

Prior to 1969, the majority of the West Philadelphia Corporation's efforts on behalf of public education in University City, centered on the creation of University City High School. Particularly after 1966, as the Universities-Related Schools Program became more autonomous and the land controversy died down, planning and organization of the new school absorbed the Corporation's attention relating to education. Likewise, the University of Pennsylvania, closely aligned with the WPC, rallied behind UCHS during its formative years. The arrival of Mark Shedd and the implementation of the ES '70 program bolstered and galvanized this support for the experimental school in University City.

In 1969 however, Penn's support of educational programs in University City, including UCHS, began to falter. The University's first attempt to remove itself from the quagmire of public education came amid the school district's fiscal crisis of 1969. As resources available to the University City public schools diminished, disgruntled parents and home and school associations implored the University to increase its monetary and organizational donations to local public schools. After a visit in April from the 'friends and parents of the Lea School,' Dr. Harnwell realized the difficult position the University faced, given that so many local school advocates *expected* direct assistance from the University. Harnwell immediately appointed a committee to review the Universities-Related Schools Program and requested that the committee submit recommendations concerning the program's continuation or modification as soon as possible. Additionally, in a letter responding to the Lea School group, Harnwell asserted that the "Statement of Responsibilities" developed in 1967 by to give structure to the Universities-Related Public School Program' "[was] never ... officially accepted by the faculties of the

University of Pennsylvania, the President, the Provost or the Trustees; all of which are necessary to make such a commitment."<sup>1</sup> In this way Harnwell attempted to remind local community groups that the University did not officially "owe" the local schools assistance.

To be fair, Dr. Harnwell conceded that there existed a need to review and modify the URSP program "partly because of the inability of the universities to expand upon their commitments to the program and redistribute substantial quantities of funds from other areas of university concern."<sup>2</sup> Still, he went on to deter the Lea parents and friends from attempting to extract any other agreements from the University, pending the results of the investigation into the program. The University President asserted, "it would be both unwise for the University and short-sighted for the other parties to this agreement to attempt to modify the existing arrangement extensively."<sup>3</sup> Attempting to mitigate the expectations of these groups, Dr. Harnwell also asserted that after looking into the history of the Universities-Related Schools program "it seems that the visibility of the program has far exceeded its actual impact on the schools involved." This message drastically differed from those the University and the Corporation had sent just four years earlier

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mr. Chad F. Gottschlich from Gaylord Harnwell, 21 October 1969, Office of the President, Community Relations, WPC, Universities-Related *School* Program, Box 257, FF 17, UARC.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

To disseminate this information to the schools in District One, Frank Betts, Assistant to the President for external affairs sent a letter to Dr. Young, superintendent for District One. The letter instructed Dr. Young to make no additional commitments to public schools under the URSP program while the committee reviewed the program. He says that he fears that if commitments are made without the full consent and understanding of all parties that they will lead to ill will and misunderstanding.

Letter to Dr. Marechal-Neil E. Young from Francis M. Betts, 9 October 1969, Office of the President, Community Relations, The West Philadelphia Corporation, Universities Related School Program, Box 257, FF 17, UARC.

when the WPC's newsletter claimed that the program "has made a significant contribution to all the schools throughout District One."<sup>4</sup>

As it became apparent to parents and community activists that Penn intended to quietly withdraw much of the support that it had verbally pledged to local schools, UCHS planners began to worry. In 1968, George Love, the school district's ES '70 coordinator, had envisioned forging a close relationship between UCHS and the University of Pennsylvania. In a letter preceding a meeting of University and UCHS officials, Love expressed his belief "that a great University such as Pennsylvania should be a leader in educational endeavors."<sup>5</sup> Love went on to pose six questions for discussion at the upcoming meeting that revealed the type of "close ties" he hoped to establish between the two schools.

Asking, "since the school will be operated on a twelve month basis could we establish a total living experience for students, faculty, [and] intern teachers ... during the summer months on the grounds of the Morris Arboretum?" Love indicated his hope that Penn would provide the school permission to undertake expensive, unconventional programs utilizing land and facilities that the University owned. Likewise, when questioning whether students would be permitted to work in Penn laboratories, Love restated his interest in utilizing Penn's physical resources for UCHS students.

Next, asking, "may we have permission for faculty members to work in [UCHS]?" Love indicated his belief that Penn professors would augment the teaching staff provided to UCHS through the school district.

<sup>4</sup> Newsletter, "University City," Vol. 4 No. 2, November 1965, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City Advisory Committee on Education, 1964-1967," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

Finally, by asking for "permission for students who are adequately prepared and motivated to take courses on the University Campus" as well as "how [UCHS] graduates will be admitted to the University when they have not taken traditional courses" and lastly, "what scholarship aid will be available to [UCHS] graduates?" Love indicated his profound belief that UCHS students would receive preferential treatment in Penn admissions and financial aid processes, given the school's alliance with the University.<sup>6</sup>

In November 1968, when Love posed these questions, the plausibility of Harnwell agreeing to their stipulations seemed high. The school district had recently broken ground on the school's future site and Dr. Shedd announced that same month that UCHS would participate in the national ES '70 Program. Over a year later though, in December 1969, close collaboration between UCHS and Penn seemed much less likely. At this time, president Harnwell instructed Francis M. Betts, the president's assistant for external affairs, to determine exactly what the University had agreed to provide to UCHS in its earlier meetings with the new school's staff. By questioning all those who had attended the previous meetings, Betts determined that even if Harnwell had agreed to the requests Love had made that no official decisions had been rendered. Specifically, Betts noted that neither budgetary commitment nor any personnel decisions had been made in terms of the University's relationship to the new school.<sup>7</sup>

The University then took the opportunity to restate its relationship to the new school offering terms much less generous to the high school, almost two years after the initial meeting at which Love had presented his desires. In a statement from Provost

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Gaylord Hamwell from George Love, 27 November 1968, Presidential Papers, Community Relations, The West Philadelphia Corporation, Universities Related School Program, Box 257, FF 17, UARC.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

Goddard in April 1970, the following points delineated the official relationship between UCHS and the University of Pennsylvania.

First, the Provost explained that UCHS could provide instruction at the Morris Arboretum only if the school district provided instructors, supervision and transportation to the facility. The Provost made no mention of the possibility of using the facility for a residential summer program, as Love had originally requested. Likewise, Goddard stipulated that Penn would expect the school board to provide supervision and insurance for students who utilized the Universities laboratory facilities in conjunction with courses taught by Penn professors.

Second, the Provost stated that "in accordance with standing University Policy, faculty members may, at their own initiative, work in [UCHS]," however, Goddard stressed that Penn would accord these professors "no compensatory time or other remuneration." The Provost also asserted that "faculty members [would be] expected to carry their normal load and responsibilities" if they chose to participate in the UCHS experiment.

Third, the Provost stated bluntly that no UCHS students would be permitted to enroll in University courses for college credit. Defending this position, Goddard stressed that although the University had allowed high school students to attend classes on a part time basis for the experience, they had never granted these students permission to take classes in the University.

Finally, regarding the most important aspect of Mr. Love's request, the Provost explained that "the University attempts to maintain a uniform policy regarding admissions and student financial aid for applicants to the University of Pennsylvania

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

undergraduate divisions." The Provost assured Mr. Love that the University [was] more concerned with evidence of a candidate's quality for admission than it [was] in being unnecessarily restrictive with regard to the designation of the units of study at the high school level. This response implied that Penn would not reject qualified UCHS students based on the unique curriculum utilized at the new school, but that the Provost could not ensure that UCHS students would receive preference during either the selection or financial aid process.<sup>8</sup>

In this way, the University made its position with regard to UCHS very clear. Rather than bestowing any unique privileges on the new local high school, the University displayed its intention to treat the new school as it would any other public high school. The Provost's responses, particularly those rejecting the possibility of special consideration of UCHS students by Penn admissions, undoubtedly disappointed Love and the other UCHS advocates who had hoped to foster a unique relationship between the two schools. In fact such a program would have constituted a major selling point for UCHS. Unfortunately, it seemed that the University intended to mitigate its obligations to UCHS and the Universities Related Schools Program at the exact time when financial constraints and an increasingly impotent school board forced these programs to need Penn's assistance the most.

Nevertheless, despite the University's seeming desire to extricate itself from its responsibilities to the local public schools, the University concurrently collaborated with the school district to sponsor another educational alternative for University City. Interestingly, funding for this new program, the West Philadelphia Community Free

<sup>8</sup> Letter to George Love from David R. Goddard, 6 April 1970, Office of the President, Community Relations, External Affairs, New School in University City, Box 255, FF 14, UARC.

School (WPCFS), came almost entirely from Penn's donations and assistance. Designed by Dr. Aase Eriksen of Penn's Graduate School of Education, the Free School utilized scattered "houses" as classroom sites to teach groups of 200-300 students core subjects such as English, math and foreign languages. Other commercial and industrial sites throughout West Philadelphia provided the facilities for the Free School's elective-enrichment classes. At the time Dr. Eriksen and the school board conceived the Free School they believed the program would alleviate overcrowding at West Philadelphia High School *and* allow the educational resources of the community to be extended at relatively little cost.<sup>9</sup> For these reasons, Provost David R. Goddard requested that Penn faculty contribute to the program "through voluntary participation in the development of supplementary elective-enrichment courses."<sup>10</sup>

The manner in which the Free School came into existence differed dramatically from the type of support the University seemed prepared to offer UCHS and the URSP schools during the same time period. Contrary to the University's position which tolerated Penn staff teaching at UCHS, the University actively encouraged its staff to teach at the new Free School, offering staff the use of the University's laboratories, seminar rooms and libraries for instruction of Free School students.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Penn provided the...free school the consultant services of Dr. Eriksen, contributed the use of its recreational facilities to the Free School and leased or loaned the first two "houses" to the

<sup>9</sup> Letter to I. Milton Karabell from Mark Shedd, 22 August 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 27, FF "Board of Education 1968-1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>10</sup> Provost's Memorandum No. 14-69, to the Faculty of The University of Pennsylvania from David R. Goddard, 29 September 1969, Office of the President, Community Relations, West Philadelphia Community Free School, Box 256, FF 10, UARC.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, to I. Milton Karabell from Mark Shedd, 22 August 1969, TUA Acc 350 Box 27 FF "Board of Education 1968-1969," Urban Archives, Philadelphia and News Release, The University of Pennsylvania News Bureau, 8 October 1969, Office of the President, Community Relations — West Philadelphia Community Free School, Box 256, FF 10, UARC.

school board to serve as the Free School's primary sites. As Frank Betts noted in a summary of the University's involvement in the school, Dr. Harnwell and other Penn staff including Betts had personally intervened on behalf of the Free School in dealings with the Board of Education as well as several funding foundations.<sup>12</sup> Most importantly, it appears that the University of Pennsylvania expended not less than \$60,000 for the school's use over the four year existence of the West Philadelphia Community Free School.<sup>13</sup>

It seems likely that the University chose to redirect its financial and administrative support towards the Free School, for two reasons. First, by 1969 charges of unfairness and racial bias related to the feeder pattern for UCHS made this school an unattractive cause, as the University would become linked to the injustices perceived at the new school. Additionally, Penn may have chosen to cut some of its ties to UCHS because of the dire financial situation of the school district. It is possible that the University administration feared that if Penn became too closely aligned with the UCHS project that they would be expected to pick up the cost of the unfinished school if the district proved unable to fulfill this obligation. Conversely, the West Philadelphia Community Free School required substantially less capital and did not require major cooperation with the school district. For this reason perhaps Penn felt the Free School offered a "safe" way to fulfill its responsibilities to the community and education, without forcing the University to expend huge amounts of its own money.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum, to Members of the Board of Directors — West Philadelphia Community Free School from Frank Betts, 30 October 1970, Office of the President, Community Relations — West Philadelphia Community Free School, Box, 256, FF 10, UARC.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum, to Martin Meyerson from Francis M. Betts, No Date, Office of the President, Community Relations — West Philadelphia Community Free School, Box 256, FF 10, UARC.

Regardless of the reason that the University chose to favor the Free School over UCHS, the creation of the Free School proved detrimental to University City High School for two reasons. First, the Free School absorbed media attention that might otherwise have focused on UCHS, as the latter school neared completion and prepared for its first group of students. Had UCHS received more publicity as its organizers searched for an interim site, community groups may have placed increased pressure on school district to accelerate construction. As time proved to be a fatal factor in the maintenance of the school's unique curriculum and learning environment, this pressure may have saved the school from its mediocre fate.

Secondly, and more importantly, the creation of the Free School allowed many school district officials to assume they had solved the problem of overcrowding in West Philadelphia's high schools. This erroneous assumption led to the aforementioned crisis when the Board of Education removed plans for an additional high school in West Philadelphia from its capital budget. That the creation of the Free School partially motivated the school board's decision to delay construction of a replacement for West Philadelphia High School is evidenced by a letter Dr. Harnwell sent to Richardson Dilworth concerning the issue. Harnwell wrote, "indiscriminately linking the Free School to the proposed elimination of a high school may severely prejudice the chances of the Board of Education and the University to introduce and operate the [Free School] program successfully."<sup>14</sup> At this point in time, President Harnwell and others who protested the elimination of a new high school from the school board's capital budget did succeed in getting the project reinstated for construction in 1974. The averted crisis

<sup>14</sup> Letter, to Richardson Dilworth from Gaylord Harnwell, 9 October 1969, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "West Philadelphia High School 1970-1972," Urban Archives, Philadelphia

however, revealed the pressure that the bond issue rejection the previous spring had placed on the school board to save money in the coming decade.<sup>15</sup>

Following president Harnwell's denial of Penn's responsibility to the Lea School, as well as the creation of the Free School and the decision to defer construction of a new high school in West Philadelphia, the tide in University City began to turn. These episodes, all of which occurred before UCHS ever opened, suggested that neither the University, nor the school district intended to expend large amounts of funding for education in West Philadelphia. This realization gave all of those interested in University City public schools a reason to fear for the success of University City High School.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to Gaylord Harnwell from Richardson Dilworth, 17 November 1969, Office of the President, Community Relations, West Philadelphia Community Free School, Box 256, FF 10, UARC.

So what happened to University City High School once the West Philadelphia Corporation, the University of Pennsylvania, and the school district shifted their focus towards the creation of the Free School and saving money? Advocates did not give up hope for UCHS. The school district, unable to abandon a partially completed project, continued to fund the slow construction of the school's future facility. Concurrently, the Advisory Committee continued to oversee curriculum development and make organizational decisions for the new school. Nevertheless, a series of factors combined to eliminate the optimism that had characterized the school's initial stages. First, as the University of Pennsylvania's unwillingness to contribute to school district related educational endeavors became apparent, UCHS planners realized that the school would lack important physical resources that they had once projected for use at UCHS. Likewise, when Harnwell stepped down from the University presidency, UCHS lost an important spokesman and ally, adding to the feelings of insecurity among the school's organizers. Second, as the financial pressures on the school district mounted, the school board presented plans to use UCHS to alleviate overcrowding at all West Philadelphia public high schools. The decision effectively destroyed the possibility of applying the individualized, unique curriculum planned for the school. Finally, with the unique curriculum obliterated and the school at full capacity, physical violence erupted in the halls of University City High School, bringing with it the negative, "urban school" reputation that plagued so many other Philadelphia public high schools. Thus in first year of UCHS's operation, grave problems besieged the school that many had hoped would serve as a model for excellent public education.

In the first month of 1970, hope for renewed Penn presence in the public schools arrived when the special committee President Harnwell had appointed to investigate the faltering Universities-Related Schools Program released its findings. The group's basic discovery that "despite its ambitious goals, the program ha[d] languished and [was] now ineffective," surprised neither the University nor the Community groups that had begun to clamor for increased assistance. The report went on to criticize Penn's actions in relation to the program claiming that:

The University of Pennsylvania apparently has been willing to let the name of the program be used, first to attract promising faculty members who wish to live in West Philadelphia and secondly to mollify an increasingly critical community, without being willing to invest more than minimal amounts of program-committed personnel, money or administrative help.

This report constituted the first attack on Penn's willingness to support improvement of the public schools only if the University did not have to contribute its own funds. Despite the past ineffectiveness of the University in relation to the program, the report stated:

...community expectations remain high and there is considerable pressure from various community and university groups to urge the University to make good its vague public promises. After considering the possibilities of abandoning the Universities Related program, or of maintaining it at its present level, the committee feels that these alternatives are not wise. The committee considers that it is in the best interest of the University to expand, coordinate and intensify the UR program to a level where it is effective in improving the quality of public education in University City

Given these community sentiments, the committee attempted to provide a framework for improvement, recommending that:

...the University commit enough resources to this program to make it work: i.e., have a significant beneficial impact on the Universities-Related schools as judged not only by the University but by the schools themselves and the community.... Something on the order of \$200,000 per year should probably be considered the minimum magnitude ... [levied through] a special fund-raising campaign [since] funds should not be taken from academic budgets for this purpose. <sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, this finding placed the committee in opposition to the expressed position of the President's office. Despite indications from the President that the University felt it did not "owe" the public schools in University City anything, the staff and faculty appointed to investigate the matter recommended that that University significantly increase its contributions to local schools. In the face of community, and now faculty pressure, the University did attempt to revive the Universities-Related Schools Program by initiating discussions between local public school advocates and University faculty. Penn however, never had the money necessary to institute the program as the committee had suggested. Consequently, although community activists may have viewed the committee's report as a boon to the cause of improving University City public schools, in fact the report revealed the economic realities of Penn's involvement in public education, and the unlikely probability of the University increasing it's contributions in the future.

Following the University's blow to the movement to improve education in University City, the school district disappointed UCHS specifically, when it became apparent that the facility at 36<sup>th</sup> and Lancaster Avenue would not be ready for the opening of school in September 1970. In an effort to assist the school, members of the Advisory Committee, the West Philadelphia Corporation and local community groups formed search teams, conducted site visits and investigated local properties to find a suitable temporary space for the school. All parties involved agreed on the importance of locating the interim facility somewhere in District One, to ensure that the ES '70 program remained associated with the area's students, parents, and local schools. Both I. Milton Karabell, executive director for the WPC and Wayne L. Owens, a member of the Community Relations subcommittee expressed their personal willingness to assist Dr. Young in her search for a feasible site for at least 200 students that would allow the school to open in September 1970.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, the school district selected a former school the E.S. Miller School Building at 43<sup>rd</sup> and Ogden streets, to serve as the temporary home of UCHS. Interestingly however, the University of Pennsylvania, the institution that probably could have found a site for the school with little difficulty, remained conspicuously absent throughout this ordeal. Despite the fact that they had recently helped the Free School acquire a several school sites, Penn never indicated any intention of helping the equally needy University City High School.

<sup>1</sup> "Special Report of University Council/Senate Committees on Education in University City on the Subject of the Universities Related Schools Program," 20 January 1970, Office of the President, Community Relations, West Philadelphia Corporation, Universities Related Schools Program, Box 257, FF 17, UARC.

<sup>2</sup> Letters, to Marechal-Neil E. Young from I. Milton Karabell, 14 January 1970, and to Marechal-Neil E. Young from Wayne L. Owens, 19 January 1970, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1970-1972," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

Penn's unwillingness to aid UCHS in its search for an interim school site reveals an important phenomenon that began to characterize the University/school district relationship near the end of the 1960s. Earlier in the decade, when Harnwell and Dilworth actively participated in the development of educational programs for University City, both institutions benefited from the two mens' friendship and social connection. Later however, when left in the hands of individuals who had no personal relationship, the cooperation between the district and Penn began to break down. These strained relations became apparent during the high school's construction delay over the summer of 1970. At this time I. Milton Karabell sent a stem letter to the school district's deputy mayor for planning Michael Marcase admonishing Marcase and the district for their failure to complete construction of the new school by September 1971. Although the contract for the new facility projected a completion date of January 1972, Karabell assumed that construction would be accelerated based on a report prepared by an engineering company that had been retained specifically to conduct an analysis to determine the cost of accelerating the program Marcase responded to Karabell's letter, informing the WPC's director that the acceleration fee ad come in prohibitively high, around \$725,000, and that therefore the school district could only attempt to finish the school by the original completion date. Unfortunately, when the district chose not to pursue an acceleration plan it seems that members of the Advisory Committee were not informed, leaving them to rely on public documentation of the completion date which aimed for a 1970-1971 opening.

Finally, after determining the cause of confusion, Karabell continued to express hostility towards the district, lamenting the lack of communication between the district

and those attempting to plan the school, asserting that "the entire community loses by these set of events... [particularly] the school board [which] loses credibility and needed community support." Moreover, Karabell reminded Marcase, "another year goes by with overcrowding at West Philadelphia High School not relieved."<sup>3</sup> Though the situation never escalated from harsh letter writing, the example is significant because it illustrates the extent to which the West Philadelphia Corporation and the school district struggled to cooperate in the absence of the special ties between Harnwell and Dilworth. Additionally, the confrontation reveals the extent to which UCHS planners felt increasingly slighted and disregarded by the school district administration. Importantly, these feelings commenced in August and September 1970 and resurfaced less than a year later when a more consequential decision to adjust enrollment figures permanently altered the fate of UCHS.

In the meantime, the Advisory Board conducted interviews to assist in the selection of the UCHS principal, Davis B. Martin, who came to UCHS from Bartram High School, also located in West Philadelphia. Students and teachers participated in an ES '70 Summer Workshop, funded by the State Department of Education, in preparation for the opening of UCHS at its interim site in the fall of 1970.<sup>4</sup> In September classes commenced, utilizing the ES '70 organic curriculum, for the first 200 UCHS students at the E.S. Miller School. Four months later, principal Martin and George H. Love, the ES '70 coordinator for the school district invited members of the Advisory Committee and

<sup>3</sup> Letters, to I. Milton Karabell from Michael P. Marcase, 27 August 1970 and to Michael P. Marcase from I. Milton Karabell, 8 September 1970, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1970-1972," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>4</sup> Newsletter, "University City," Vol. 9 No. 1, October 1970, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1970-1972," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

the WPC to visit the school and witness the unique program first hand - the UCHS "experiment" seemed to be working.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, this period of pride and success turned out to be short lived, coming to a quick halt in April 1971 when members of the Advisory Committee and the school district took stock of the University City High School preparations. At this point the district had trained only thirty staff members in the methods of the new organic curriculum planned for UCHS. Over sixty more staff members would be necessary for the school to open with the number of students intended for Fall 1971. Additionally, as of April 1971, no one from the school district had begun to implement the type of relationship between the UCHS and the University that Provost Goddard had described almost a year earlier. Nevertheless, because the school still lacked a complete curriculum for Grade 10, district officials asserted that the University would have to take "a much more active roll than proposed ... [by Goddard]; including curriculum development, because there [were] not enough resources within the school district to accomplish the tasks remaining."<sup>6</sup> Such a demand probably unnerved the University who had attempted for several years to extricate itself from the web of the school district and UCHS. Still, if these facts came as a disheartening reminder of the steps still needed to make UCHS a successful reality the worst was yet to come.

Once again, in April 1971, the school district announced its intention to delay construction of a replacement high school for West Philadelphia High School. As they had in the past, the WPC complained to the school board, stressing that without another

<sup>5</sup> Letter, to Members of the Advisory Board from Davis B. Martin and George H. Love, 1 December 1970, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1970-1972," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum, "University City High School Meeting — 4/19/71" Not Dated, UPA 4, Box 255, FF 14, UARC.

high school in University City all of the present high schools, including UCHS, would be forced to operate under severely overcrowded conditions. This time though, the school district could not satisfy the WPC's pleas that the board reinstate plans for a new school to the capital budget. Following the defeat of several bond issues, the district's grave financial situation would not permit the construction of a new high school in West Philadelphia particularly given that both the Bartram Annex and UCHS had recently been constructed in the area. In addition to the district's fiscal problems, it seems likely that the lack of informal avenues of communication between the school district and the WPC hurt the Corporation's ability to influence the district on the matter. When Gaylord Harnwell stepped down from the Presidency of the University of Pennsylvania in August 1970, he had taken with him considerable clout and personal connections to all areas of the City including the Board of Education. Other avenues of informal persuasion had also disappeared from the school district/UCHS relationship adding to the difficulties faced during the latest crisis. Moreover, Dilworth and Shedd, though connected to the school's planners, wielded considerably less power than they once had over school district decisions in the final year of their administration. The sum of these personnel and power changes significantly decreased the ability of activists in University City to express their concern when the board decided to reorder its priorities to the disadvantage of West Philadelphia.

Following the school board's decision, UCHS's advocates became increasingly fearful that overcrowding would destroy the possibility of exceptional instruction at UCHS. The curriculum development staff for the new school had advised that the school open in September 1971 at half its capacity admitting 1300 pupils, asserting that "an

increase in the number of students will destroy the ability of the [individualized] program to be implemented as planned." <sup>7</sup> School district and Advisory Committee members recognized that pressure from the community would call for opening the school at full capacity with 2600 pupils. At this point in April 1971, all parties knew that without another new high school in West Philadelphia, it would be difficult to justify keeping enrollment at UCHS low while other schools operated on dual shifts to accommodate their huge class sizes. Unable to foresee a viable solution, a memorandum from a UCHS planning meeting prophetically titled its concluding section "Big Trouble." <sup>8</sup>

In the first two weeks of June 1971, the UCHS planners' worst fears concerning overcrowding and the destruction of the individualized curriculum came true. Initially, the school district informed UCHS principal Davis Martin that he should prepare the school to open in the fall of 1971 with 2000 students, 1000 ninth graders and 1000 tenth graders and that these would be selected with an eye to maintaining a racial and gender balance. Such enrollment would have constituted a compromise between the 1300 students proposed by curriculum developers and the 2600 students demanded by community activists. The disappointment came however, when the district administration informed Martin that 602 students from Shaw junior high school would constitute a part of the school's first 2000 pupils.

The announcement generated concern and anger among the members of the Advisory Committee who had worked diligently to establish University City High School's carefully planned feeder pattern. The Committee's distress stemmed from the racial make-up of Shaw which was heavily African American. As a result when these

<sup>7</sup> ibid.

<sup>8</sup> ibid.

Shaw students joined the others at UCHS they would upset the delicate balance of races that the feeder pattern subcommittee had worked so hard to create. The minutes from this meeting bluntly stated "the racial factor has been hampered," indicating that the feeder pattern's most important consideration had been the racial make up of UCHS's student body. Questions immediately arose as to how the 602 students from Shaw would be introduced to the organic curriculum and why Shaw students had been chosen over Bartram students, since adding Bartram students would have helped to foster integration. The questions revealed the obvious concern over the now racially unbalanced student body. Indicating the extent of their anxiety, one woman called "for the community to fight for the school as they worked for it to be." Another man plainly stated the basis of the group's dissatisfaction asserting that "the feeder pattern has been broken [and that] the integration pattern has been broken." He then wondered aloud "will the program be broken?"<sup>9</sup>

Attempting to calm the distraught crowd, Principal Martin assured the committee that an orientation session would be held for the new students and that Dr. Shedd had promised that the individualized instruction concept would be continued at UCHS. It became clear however, that the district did not intend to adhere to the feeder pattern that the subcommittee had established when the new District One superintendent stated that "after a thorough survey of the district [that] there [was] no clear-cut feeder pattern for any of the schools... [and that] there [was] a need to look into this more thoroughly. This unwillingness to reassure the subcommittee that the racial balance would be maintained at UCHS revealed to the Advisory Committee that the school board no longer viewed

<sup>9</sup> Report of minutes, West Philadelphia University City High School Advisory Committee Meeting, 21 July 1971, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1970-1972," Urban Archives, Philadelphia

UCHS as a special priority, nor would it grant the school any favors with respect to enrollment numbers or racial balance.

As he continued, Martin delivered more bad news. Specifically, due to the increased enrollment and district financial problems, teachers that had no training in the ES '70 method would be teaching at UCHS. Moreover, Martin explained that the Union had expressed its intention to present a grievance on the matter of selecting Department heads based on their knowledge of the organic curriculum, rather than by their seniority as regulated by the Union contract. Given the conflict with the Union, Martin explained that the school would probably open without department heads, rather than assigning teachers who did not have experience with the organic curriculum model. Finally, Martin revealed that the school would function for only ten months, rather than the twelve months originally planned, explaining that official action by the school board would be needed to implement the twelve month school year.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, overcrowding, inadequate numbers of trained staff and Union opposition became threats to the unique model planned for UCHS. Dr. Shedd raised additional alarm when he announced Philadelphia's withdrawal from the ES '70 program in June 1971. Reacting to the decision, George Love, ES '70 coordinator for the school district asserted that the action hampered his "effectiveness in obtaining the necessary support for the total individualized, interdisciplinary educational program" intended for UCHS.<sup>11</sup> Taken together, the elimination of plans for another new school in West Philadelphia, the addition of several hundred additional black students to the new high school and removal

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Letter, to "friends" from George H. Love, 25 June 1971, TUA Acc 350, Box 22, FF "University City High School 1970-1972," Urban Archives, Philadelphia.

from the ES '70 program marked the beginning of the end of innovative education at University City High School.

To a certain extent the school board cannot be blamed for the changes it imposed on University City High School. By the fall of 1971, the era of educational reform had largely ended in Philadelphia, its successes and failures sealed. The end resulted from a variety of economic and political factors. As one educational expert explained, "the advocates of basic education ... seek not the intellectual emancipation of students but a solid return for their dollars invested in schools and an end to the freaky, subversive behavior they associated with progressive educational reform."<sup>12</sup> The public's lack of faith in the administration's innovative pedagogical approach turned to support of a "back-to-basics" movement in the public schools that reigned by the mid 1970s. Clearly as early as 1971, the public did not support the school district's efforts to reform the public schools, expressing their dissatisfaction by severely limiting the finances available to the district. The ambitious construction and repair projects Dilworth had envisioned consequently never materialized.

Politically, the situation was equally as dire. Following the student demonstration in November 1967, political relations between the Mayor and the Police Commissioner and the school board and Shedd had continued to erode. Rizzo's increasing popularity among a large segment of white, working class voters made him a strong candidate for Mayor, and he criticized Shedd and Dilworth mercilessly during his campaign throughout the summer of 1971. He told audiences, "I used to say Shedd wouldn't last eight minutes

<sup>12</sup> Katz, *Reconstructing American Education*, 122-123.

after I'm elected. Now I say he won't last eight seconds." <sup>13</sup> In his first month as Mayor Rizzo did not get to fire Mark Shedd, the superintendent stepped down prior to the inauguration, however, the Mayor elect did get to dismantle the reform minded school board. In December when three school board members' terms expired, Rizzo chose not to reappoint Richardson Dilworth, the reform movement's leader and the city's beloved Mayor. Shedd and Dilworth both understood in the summer of 1971 the likelihood of this series of events. Therefore any decisions they made concerning UCHS must be evaluated in terms of what the two men hoped to leave the school district in terms of organization and policy, once their administration ended. Perhaps in the interest of reaching as many students as possible, they decided to expand UCHS's student body, thereby relieving some of the overcrowding that plagued West Philadelphia's schools. This decision however had the effect of making the sustenance of the individualized learning system nearly impossible.

Though the school held on to the learning packet based curriculum for the first months of the 1971-1972 school year the individualized educational program did not last long. In December 1971, when UCHS moved into its permanent facility, the reality of the unique program differed greatly from what its creators had envisioned. By February of 1972, an influx of even more new students required UCHS to revert to a structured program with class periods marked by bells and fixed student schedules. The period of individualized instruction then ended for all but twenty-five percent of the students, those enrolled in the magnet portion of the school. The decision was necessary, not only due to

<sup>13</sup> Joseph R. Daughen and Peter Binzen, *The Cop Who Would Be King: Mayor Frank Ruzo*, (Boston : Little Brown and Company, 1977), 175-176 as quoted in Birger, *Race Reaction and Reform*, 9.

an increase in enrollment, but because the school had only hired nine of the fifty teachers trained during the ES '70 summer program.

Although the high enrollment and inadequately prepared faculty contributed to the demise of the innovative program attempted at UCHS the ultimate end to the school's exceptional status occurred during its second year at its permanent facility when violence erupted at UCHS. In the first six weeks of classes during the fall 1972 semester, UCHS experienced four serious stabbings of students by students, a takeover of the school by pupils that required intervention by police gang-control units and several assaults on teachers by students. One teacher asserted "this thing has gotten away from us. The students have taken over. Teachers are in fear of their lives and nothing will happen to change it until someone is killed." Another suggested, "the school got off to such a bad start that the students just do what they please."<sup>14</sup> School officials cited several reasons for the school's rash of violence, including the building's physical plan which included circular halls and interconnected classrooms as well as private areas facilitate individual study. Ironically it seems that the very construction of UCHS that the school's planners hoped would make it a model of innovative education, contributed to the school's demise by making violence easy to commit. In fact for a number of reason's including the new school's gang infested surrounding communities, the school's discipline problems may been greater than the average public high schools at the time. This situation seems likely given that the district assigned the school four security guards, more than any other school in the district.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Charles F. Thomson, "Gangs Disrupt University High," 22 November 1972, *The Evening Bulletin*, 1, 1. <sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

Clearly University City High School's administration could not attempt to utilize the innovative program designed for the school when so many other problems absorbed their time and attention. One teacher commented on the situation stating that "there has *been an improvement since the [student] takeover because discipline has become the absolutely number one priority at the school.*"<sup>16</sup> Such a statement reveals the changes that had occurred in the conception of the school in only a few short years since 1967 when Dr. Shedd asserted that UCHS would "without question, be a high school which will be a credit to University City and the people in it."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* [Emphasis added]

<sup>17</sup> Newsletter, The West Philadelphia Corporation, Vol. 6 No. 3, December 1967, UPA 4, Box 188, FF "West Philadelphia Corporation V (Community Relations) 1965-1970," UARC.

Despite a decade of support from the West Philadelphia Corporation and the School District of Philadelphia, the innovative, excellent educational program designed for University City High School proved unsustainable. In its earliest stages, UCHS's advocates envisioned a superior public school complete with an individualized curriculum, an outstanding faculty, a wealth of physical resources, and a participatory community. The school's planners believed these amenities would attract talented students who would achieve academic and personal success due to the excellent education they received at UCHS. Additionally, the West Philadelphia Corporation believed the new school would enhance the Corporation's efforts to lure middle class families back to University City. By its first full year of operation however, UCHS embodied none of the greatness its creators had anticipated and consequently, conferred none of the benefits on the University City community that the school's supporters had expected. The inability of UCHS to live up to the high standards set by its founders resulted from a variety of errors committed during the creation of UCHS and reveals important lessons for school reformers today.

A myriad of factors contributed to the disappointing reality that characterized UCHS in the early 1970s, however it is essential to recognize that several fatal flaws marred the "UCHS experiment" from its inception. Most importantly, the school's inventors attempted to create a program and facility that differed radically from any other project that the school district had financed or constructed without securing any fiscal contributions from private investors or businessmen. UCHS planners relied solely on the funding that became available from the federal, state and local government when these entities began to focus on improving public education. As a result, these organizers

expected the School District to bear the burden of creating this unconventional school, including the costs of formulating a unique curriculum, training faculty and staff to implement the new system, and constructing a state-of-the-art facility. Given that no benefactor or sponsor supplemented the School District's coffers, UCHS's successful existence became vulnerable to destruction in the face of changes in the economy and in the priorities of the voters and politicians of Philadelphia. Once these types of shifts began to occur and the School District's budget no longer permitted unlimited construction and teacher training, University City High School's advocates found it increasingly difficult to maintain the special programs and curriculum they had intended for use at the school.

UCHS proved unable to achieve the goals its inventors set due to another flaw in the school's original design. When the WPC set out to create an academically rigorous, scientifically focused high school for University City they failed to consider whether a "market" existed for such a school. In fact, two excellent, college preparatory high schools, Central High School for Boys and Girls' High School already existed in the city. Thus, while the School District and the WPC believed that UCHS would attract students interested in science and mathematics, they never received a mandate from parents or students to create an alternative to the existing academic programs. For this reason few parents and students rallied to support the school's unique curriculum when the school district placed the program in jeopardy by adding several hundred extra pupils to UCHS's student body. In this instance, the WPC and those designing UCHS revealed a lack of experience and knowledge of the long established patterns of Philadelphia public education that proved damaging to the new school's success.

Although a lack of adequate funding and a devoted parent and student population contributed to the school's difficulties, several decisions and events that occurred over the course of UCHS's development proved equally damaging to the school's special curriculum and style of instruction. Importantly, the school's planners chose to make UCHS a community high school, open to all students in University City, rather than instituting a selection process for students based on academic ability. This decision made it exceedingly difficult for the school to maintain its unique structure and curriculum for several reasons. First, from the school's inception, the WPC and the Advisory Committee planned to create a school which would appeal to middle class parents, particularly those who worked for University City based institutions. To achieve this type of program, the Advisory Committee implored the District to establish a special feeder pattern that would furnish a racially and economically diverse student body for UCHS. Amid the burgeoning civil rights movement, however, the creation of a special feeder pattern to select students for UCHS garnered charges of discrimination and racism from local populations, especially those excluded from the new school. Consequently, the District and the Advisory Committee became embroiled in a debate revolving around "fairness" to the many communities who believed their children should have the opportunity to attend the new school.

The use of a specially contrived feeder patter evoked additional problems for the new school because it gave the district control over which students would attend University City High School. The school's planners expected the district to assemble a talented, highly motivated student body for UCHS. When the District became pressed for money and space to relieve overcrowding, though, the district expediently chose to

fill UCHS to capacity with whichever students and teachers needed assignment, regardless of their race, economic background, educational abilities or experience with the important ES '70 program. Issues of fairness and academic ability succumbed to the district's need for classroom space as the large "baby boomer" generation entered high school.

Consequently, the UCHS could not support the special programs designed for its use, given decision to assign students to UCHS in order to relieve overcrowding at other schools.

Additionally, the decision to forego entrance examinations hindered the school's ability to provide a superior, scientifically focused education as a large portion of the student body routed to UCHS had neither the ability nor the inclination to thrive in the school's unique, rigorous program.

The decision to enroll students at UCHS without any basis for admission garnered problems for the school's special curriculum and programs from several other groups affected by the decision. Because the students assigned to UCHS did not compete for admission, the teacher's union asserted that they would not give the school special permission to select its teachers as did Central and Girls' High. Although certain teachers had attended summer camps to become familiar with the ES '70 program and style of instruction, the union refused to allow the school to require this training of its teachers. This situation significantly restricted the school's ability to utilize the special ES '70 curriculum, as only some of the teachers at the school had any experience with this type of instruction. Likewise, parents in Philadelphia, particularly in the city's white, working class neighborhoods, expressed similar unwillingness to support any school programs that bestowed special advantages on certain students without requiring entrance requirements for such programs. In 1967 parents and voters displayed their opposition to

the district's unconventional programs by defeating the School Districts \$90 million bond issue. For these parents, like many black parents, fairness superseded all other considerations, including financial freedom for the school district that would have benefited their own children.

As the School District's financial constraints worsened, the District found itself compelled to delay the construction of an additional high school in the West Philadelphia area, leaving the existing area high schools to remain overcrowded indefinitely. Prior to this decision, the UCHS curriculum planners had recommended that the school open at half capacity in order to allow students and teachers to adjust to the new individualized, instruction methods. After the district announced the delay though, the school's planners and the district felt compelled to increase the enrollment planned for UCHS. Again, issues of fairness affected the school's operations when it became apparent that UCHS students would attend small, under-enrolled classes while students at other schools suffered in overcrowded facilities. Despite the decision to assign additional students to UCHS, no funds became available to introduce these additional students to the ES '70 program or to train additional teachers to implement the individualized instruction and special curriculum planned for the school. The decision to assign additional students to UCHS resulted in the collapse of the school's unique programming and a return to traditional methods of instruction at UCHS. Importantly, this situation might have been avoided, and the school's innovative system preserved, had the school's planners secured a special source of funding for UCHS to supplement teacher training and student preparation. In the mid 1960s though, few school reformers expected that the era of support for school reform, construction and spending to end so quickly.

In fact, the brevity of the school reform movement is another important factor that contributed to the inability of the special curriculum and structure to endure at UCHS. Although the WPC and others began lobbying for the school as early as 1964, classes did not commence at the permanent facility at 36<sup>th</sup> and Filbert until December 1971. In the interim, important changes occurred that negatively impacted the UCHS experiment. While the conflict raged over the land needed to build UCHS, several charitable foundations and other funding sources allocated resources to different educational programs in Philadelphia. As time elapsed funding for educational programs became increasingly difficult to secure given a general downturn in the economy as well as an increase in spending on the war in Viet Nam by the federal government. Additionally, the delay in construction pushed the project off for so long that in fact many key individuals who could have contributed talent and determination to help the school realized in its original innovative form had left their positions at the WPC and the School Board before construction even began. These participants may have been able to help an enduring, unique program at UCHS.

Finally, the long delay in between the conception and realization of UCHS kept the school from opening in an atmosphere that strongly favored school reform and educational innovation. UCHS opened instead, just as Frank Rizzo and other conservative Philadelphians took control of the city's municipal government and School District, demanding an end to liberal, unconventional forms of anything including public education. Had the school opened before the change in administration, it seems possible that UCHS might have been afforded an opportunity to establish itself in the University City community and win support from local parents and students. Such a scenario may

have provided the school with the advocates it needed in 1972 as the need to relieve overcrowding triumphed over the desire to maintain unique programming and small class sizes. In fact, by the time UCHS opened many observers of the city's school system felt that Shedd and Dilworth's reform measures had caused an increase in violence and disorder in the schools. Conversely other Philadelphians felt the reformers had not gone far enough towards establishing more integrated, culturally diverse public schools. Interestingly both charges could be supported by considering the newly opened University City High School that suffered from a homogeneous student body and violence from its first year in operation. Thus, the land controversy, feeder pattern dispute and other factors that delayed the opening of UCHS had grave consequences for the success of the school as a model of innovative education.

The importance of strong, consistent funding, a supportive, participatory community, a method of selection that satisfies local communities while pursuing the school's objectives and a favorable climate are all attributes that the creators of UCHS failed to secure for their project. As a result, the excellent education that UCHS's founders hoped to offer to students could not be maintained. Rather, UCHS came to suffer from many of the problems that confronted other urban public schools at the time, including gang violence, high dropout rates and overcrowded classrooms. Nevertheless, an analysis of the entire effort to create the new school reveals that not all of the factors that contributed to the lack of success at UCHS stemmed from the concept itself. Rather, it appears that by securing several important elements, truly innovative, excellent programs in public schools can be achieved. In light of the problems that plague urban schools today, it is essential to highlight and stress these keys to success.

Many of the difficulties that beset urban centers fifty years ago continue to afflict cities today. With the exception of revitalization going on in many central business districts and other gentrified neighborhoods, cities still struggle to provide services to their regions' poorest inhabitants while attempting to maintain a decent quality of life for all residents. Though the current booming economy has helped to improve the financial situation of most municipal governments, cities still suffer as compared to suburbs, due to a lack of middle class, tax paying, homeowners and businesses. Most importantly, improvement of urban public education still remains one of the top priorities of urban politicians in their efforts to make cities desirable places for families to live because of a belief that improved educational facilities will bring homeowners, commercial development and increased safety to the areas these facilities serve.

In Philadelphia today the University of Pennsylvania has undertaken a variety of initiatives to bring middle class residents back to University City and to improve the area's reputation in general. In addition to a number of commercial development projects, the current efforts by the school's administration address the need to improve local public education much as they did half a century ago. The prospects for the Penn-assisted public school that will be constructed at 42<sup>nd</sup> and Locust appear favorable when compared to the efforts made by the University during the 1960s on behalf of University City High School. Importantly, Penn has stated that it will contribute \$1000 per student to the new school, almost \$700,000 per year for ten years, to enhance the public school's programs. Given that a lack of funding proved fatal to UCHS, this commitment is truly significant. Likewise, Penn had promised to provide technological and teaching support for the school from its Graduate School of Education. Although Penn pledged GSE's

participation in UCHS as well, it seems likely that the University will enforce this collaboration since it has money invested in the project.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly however, as of March 2000, the school's construction had been delayed due to "the school board's extended deliberation process to determine the catchment area" (read : feeder pattern), "which will determine who can attend the school." The current controversy concerning which students will attend the new school resembles almost identically the issues raised by parents almost fifty years ago.<sup>2</sup> The debate sparked a community meeting where University City residents discussed the "attendance boundaries" (again read : feeder pattern) and stressed that they wanted to ensure that their children would be able to attend the new school. Among the suggestions for selection methods, parents mentioned a lottery system and two other systems one which would base enrollment on the existing boundaries of the Lea and Wilson elementary schools and one which proposes a larger, geographical area in order to include more students from other elementary schools farther west. These three proposals all resemble plans presented to the UCHS feeder pattern subcommittee as the school district attempted to create a feeder pattern for the high school.<sup>3</sup>

Reviving another issue common to both eras, one parent complained that the lottery system would boost the odds of white students getting accepted to the school at the expense of black children. Phrasing her question much like any parent in 1969 would have she asserted, "about 70 percent of [eligible children] are black, 30 percent are white, yet you'd be reserving spots for a smaller segment of children. About 300 white children

<sup>1</sup> Katie Ambrogi, "Construction Delayed for new Penn-assisted school," *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 30 March 2000, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

would have a 1-in-2 chance of being admitted, and about 4000 black children would have a 1-in-6 chance. *How is that fair?*"<sup>4</sup> It seems that the issues of fairness, particularly fairness with respect to race still plague school reformers, many decades after the civil rights movement and the UCHS experiment.

The school board however, seems no more interested in preserving racial balance at the new school than it did at the time of UCHS's feeder pattern debate. School Board president Pedro Ramos addressed the lottery concept stating that he has "concerns about the dilution a lottery would have to the value of the whole proposal."<sup>5</sup> If by dilution Ramos means lowering the standards of education available at the school by admitting more black students than white (a scenario that would accurately represent West Philadelphia's racial break down), or by letting in more low-income students than middle class ones, (also representative) then in fact the school board has not come far since the days of UCHS. Importantly, because the new school will be a K-8 school, rather than a high school, the academic abilities of almost all of the students enrolled should be comparable. As a result, a lottery system would not "dilute" the school in anyway. Nevertheless, if Pedro Ramos or any other members of the School Board feel strongly that a level of academic ability, or that a balance of race or class must characterize the students of the new Penn-assisted school then they should implement a method to screen applicants and base entrance to the school on this test. Had the UCHS planners instituted such acceptance criteria they might have avoided being forced to absorb an influx of

<sup>3</sup> Alexis Moore, "Boundaries Debated for New Grade School: At Issue is the Method for Deciding Which Pupils Will Be admitted to the Penn-Backed Facility," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 January, 2000, BO2

<sup>4</sup> Katie Ambrogio, "Construction Delayed for new Penn-assisted school," *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, 30 March 2000, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Alexis Moore, "Boundaries Debated for New Grade School: At Issue is the Method for Deciding Which Pupils Will Be admitted to the Penn-Backed Facility," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 14 January, 2000, BO2.

students from other overcrowded West Philadelphia High Schools and consequently maintained the school's, innovative curriculum and structure.

Finally, if the University takes any other cues from its predecessors' experience with UCHS it must consider the atmosphere that dominates urban communities and their neighboring institutions today and compare it with the atmosphere that dominated ten years ago. In 1990, the country was in the midst of a recession and urban revitalization had barely begun in the nation's largest urban centers. Though the strong economy and favorable forecast for cities offers significant hope for the future of urban public education, the efforts to establish this new school could be seriously hampered by an economic downturn or a return to conservative politics, just as UCHS suffered in the early 1970s. Thus the most important considerations for the new school's advocates must be to determine a feeder pattern that satisfies all parties involved and to get the school up and running as quickly as possible, with as much community support as possible, while a favorable political, economic and social climate still exist. Without taking these steps the University and the school board will risk repeating the mistakes of those who worked so diligently to plan UCHS.

What is most striking about the history of University City High School is that it reveals so many of the dilemmas associated with the urban experience of the late twentieth century. The effects of urban renewal, the 'War on Poverty', the civil rights movement, the growth of suburbs, the war in Viet Nam, and the conservative backlash of the Nixon administration all contribute to the story by defining the atmosphere during which UCHS became a reality. Likewise, the school's history offers valuable lessons for those reformers attempting to improve urban public education today. Although the

unique program designed for use at University City High School did not endure, the school currently offers several specialized tracks for students wishing to pursue careers in the medicine, law, business and government. This unique system attempts to assist students who are not college bound make a smoother transition from school to work. Though it is not the individualized curriculum envisioned by the school's founders, this modern program at the high school seems to display remnants of the original conception of UCHS. Ideally those planning the new, Penn-related public school today will avoid the errors made by those who planned UCHS so that the innovations and amenities planned for the new school will still be available for students fifty years from today.

## Critical Bibliography

This thesis examines University City High School, a public high school created by the Philadelphia School District with assistance from the West Philadelphia Corporation, and other University City institutions. UCHS provides a case study of efforts to reform public education conducted during the 1960s. The archival papers of the West Philadelphia Corporation, found at the Urban Archives at Temple University, formed the principal source for this study. For that reason, this thesis largely views the creation of UCHS as a product of the West Philadelphia Corporation's efforts.

The viewpoints of the central administration and trustees of the University are also well represented in this thesis. This information was readily available and easily accessible, at the University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center. The collections from the Office of the President revealed the University of Pennsylvania's position regarding UCHS as well as other educational endeavors undertaken at this time. In addition, valuable insight had been obtained from the newspaper clippings files of the University News Bureau at the University of Pennsylvania, transcripts of which are included in the file folders of the collection from the Office of the President. The clippings files of *The Philadelphia Bulletin*, available at the Temple Urban Archives, also yielded useful research. Both clippings files are organized by subject and taken together they provided enough material to obtain a sense of how the media, especially the newspapers, portrayed the efforts to create UCHS.

No comparable archival resources could be obtained from the School District of Philadelphia, from the local teachers union, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, or

from the neighborhood groups of the West Philadelphia communities affected by the creation of the new school. The opinions of the leaders of these organizations however, including the school board and the school district administration, are discernible from the correspondence between these individuals and the members of the West Philadelphia Corporation and the employees of the University of Pennsylvania, available in the collection of the Office of the President at The University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center.

Finally, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Daily Pennsylvanian* are catalogued by subject and recent dates can be searched on-line and in the case of *The Daily Pennsylvanian* downloaded for free. The on-line database for both newspapers provided ample information relating to the University's latest educational endeavors. Though no archival information was available concerning this issue due to the current nature of the topic.

An abundance of secondary material exists relating to urban education, experimental education, education in the 1960s, education of African Americans and desegregation. The Resnik book, *Turning on the System*, proved especially useful for gaining a sense of the spirit of the movement, rather than for factual information. The Weiler book, *Philadelphia: Neighborhood, Authority and the Urban Crisis*, contained an excellent summary of the events leading up to the reform movement in the public schools as well as the decline of the movement. An original copy of the *Odell Report*, prepared for the Board of Education in 1963 and 1964, is available at Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania. It offered very specific statistics relating to the demographic characteristics of the city's public schools at that time as well as recommendations for improvement of the system.

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