

CHAPTER ONE

Long Island University

Beginnings, Bankruptcy, and Bad Decisions

The university has continued to exist in limbo, teetering between tragedy and comedy.

—Elliott Gatner, 1974

FROM BEGINNINGS TO BANKRUPTCY, 1926–1946

SOON AFTER SOUTHAMPTON COLLEGE closed in 2004, the State University of New York at Stony Brook took over Southampton's nationally recognized Marine Science program and began negotiations to purchase the campus. There was a general consensus that it would be in the best interests of all parties for the state to establish a four-year center at Southampton. There is some small irony in this because Long Island University (LIU) was founded in the midst of a controversy between those who advocated a publicly supported university and those who wanted a private institution in Brooklyn. The borough had been growing steadily following World War I and the number of young people who wanted a college education was rising even faster (Clark, Leslie, and O'Brien 2010, 16–17). Some advocates argued that the college should be an extension of the City College (CCNY) rather than a private institution (Gatner 1974, 49). CCNY, founded in 1847, had expanded rapidly by the 1930s, but it was having financial difficulties and had begun raising admissions standards to limit enrollment. For public institutions, in contrast to private colleges that were ever seeking prospective students, additional students led to increased costs.

Students from Brooklyn made up more than one-third of the City College enrollment in 1923, but Brooklyn residents wanted an independent branch established in their own borough. The movement for an independent public college was led by Brooklyn borough president Joseph Guider, who wanted to establish a campus in Prospect Park (Gatner 1974, 53). The movement for a public institution soon became embroiled in controversy

over questions of organization, site location, financial control, and concerns about the costs for additional students (*ibid.*, 53–63). In November 1925, Ralph Jonas, a wealthy Brooklyn financier who had recently been elected president of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, worked with Guider to negotiate a settlement. Jonas believed that the only way to resolve the debate was to establish two universities in Brooklyn, one public and one private. Support for a private university came from a small circle of local businessmen. These were flush times on Wall Street. Enormous sums of money flowed in and out of financiers' portfolios. It seemed like a good climate for philanthropic endeavors.

In 1926 Jonas put up \$500,000 to establish an endowment fund for a private university while continuing his support for his “two university” proposal. New York mayor Jimmy Walker, and James H. Post, a wealthy industrialist, agreed with Jonas about the feasibility of a private university. Post, who served as president of the Adelphi College Board of Trustees, gave a gift of \$50,000 to Jonas's endowment fund. The Adelphi trustees welcomed the development of a four-year coed center because Adelphi, at that time, was a women's college (*ibid.*, 52). At the same time Brooklyn public officials continued pressing for a public university. In the late spring the New York State legislature gave its approval for the creation of a public university in Brooklyn.

Now that a publicly funded university was approved and in the planning stages, Post, Jonas, and their supporters pressed their efforts in the private sector. The fundraising drive continued throughout the spring and summer of 1926. By the late fall nearly \$5 million in pledges and cash had been raised (Gatner 1974, 526). Another historic irony for LIU is that the institution was never again to have such immediate success in raising money for its endowment. The large endowment fund, however, certainly impressed the New York State Board of Regents. On December 9, 1926, the New York State Board of Regents approved a provisional charter to a group of educators and entrepreneurs led by Ralph Jonas and James Post.

One of the concerns that motivated Jonas was his deeply felt commitment to the ideal of an open system of higher education that would not discriminate on the basis of race, class, or religion. In a time when many colleges and universities had quotas for Jews and other minorities, Long Island University opened its doors to all. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, for example, went to considerable effort to establish a strict quota system on Jewish applicants. He was not alone. Shortly after World War I, a similar quota system was put in place in Cornell, Union College, Colgate, Syracuse, and St Lawrence (Clark et al. 2010, 18–30).¹ Although the Long Island University policy was to keep no record of race, ethnicity, or religion, the rosters reviewed by historian Elliott Gatner indicate that 210 of the first entering class of 278 were probably Jewish (Gatner

1974, 103). The Brooklyn campus continues to this day to admirably serve the needs of the diverse local community, which now includes large numbers of African Americans and Hispanics.

The new Board of Trustees appointed George Robert Hardie, a former professor of Latin at St. Lawrence University, to be dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Hardie had also served as an official with the New York State Department of Education. Dean Hardie, pretty much on his own, designed the curriculum and hired the first faculty in less than six months. Wasting no time agonizing over the university's statement of purpose, a task that often daunts faculty and administrative committees, Hardie simply copied the mission statement from his alma mater, St. Lawrence University, where he had served as a professor and administrative officer for twenty-five years (Gatner 1974, 79–83). The problem with his rather imperious approach, however, was that it alienated the faculty and students who resented being left out of the process. To make matters worse, Hardie's personality was ill suited to the role of a university leader who must continually negotiate with faculty, administrators, and trustees. He was described as being "headstrong, unpredictable, dour, imperious, obstinate and authoritarian" (*ibid.*, 84).

The aim of Long Island University, said Hardie, was to prepare students for life by providing them with a "broad outlook on the field of knowledge" and specific training in one chosen subject. More specifically, the emphasis would be on developing intellectual discipline, "reasoned self control," an appreciation for the "finer aspects of life, heightened enjoyment of spiritual satisfactions, well balanced judgment, and a quickened sense of obligation to serve the general good." Most of the subsequent statements made by LIU for accrediting bodies over the years have been a series of footnotes to the St. Lawrence formulation.

The first four years were very difficult. Predictably, Hardie's authoritarian manner soon alienated faculty and students, but the first serious crisis was caused by elements over which Hardie had no control. Two years after the university opened its doors, the stock market collapsed and many of the donors were unable to make good on their pledges (Carden and Dinan 2001, 60). The endowment was wiped out. Ralph Jonas himself lost \$93 million in a single afternoon (Gatner 1974, 78n). This was a defining moment for LIU. The institution never fully recovered from this loss. Without an adequate endowment the university was forced to survive primarily on the tuition that came in each September. Under these circumstances the best of leaders would have had difficulty achieving significant improvements in facilities or in the quality of faculty, administrators, and students.

In spite of these problems, the university survived as the enrollment grew to 1,575. The admissions office accepted nearly everyone who applied, drawing from those who couldn't get into Columbia, St. Johns, New York University, or Fordham (Rice 1965, 63–64). LIU offered a second chance

for “late bloomers” and for first-generation college students from immigrant families. These were, of course, high risk students, many of whom never “bloomed” at all. The attrition rates were probably very high. Unfortunately, the admissions office kept no records nor statistics and had no formal admissions policy until after a reorganization in 1955 (*ibid.*, 77). The attrition rate for 1954–58 was nearly 74 percent, about 24 percent higher than the national average. The attrition may have been even higher in the 1930s.

Although the attrition rates were high, the New York State Board of Regents replaced the provisional charter with a permanent charter on February 19, 1931. The next goal was to have the university accredited by the Middle States Association. This accreditation was very important because it opened the door to much-needed financial support from foundations and government agencies. Hardie was advised that the university should withdraw its application because it had no hope of accreditation (Gatner 1974, 583). Two of the reasons, undoubtedly, were the tenuous fiscal condition of the university and the unprofessional operating conditions of the admissions office (Rice 1965, 218–20). Without an endowment, Hardie had difficulty covering operating expenses. In desperation he had begun borrowing from banks against future tuition, a policy that would soon lead to a major economic crisis for the university.

Under a cloud of uncertainty about the survival of the institution, the university held its first commencement on June 11, 1931. The ceremony was held in the auditorium of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The somber celebration was marked with an incident that historian Elliott Gatner thought was a foreshadowing of the university’s subsequent history. The stage curtain fell down on the United States Secretary of the Interior, Ray Lyman Wilbur, as he was giving the commencement address, covering him and the faculty sitting on the stage. Gatner commented, “perhaps, somehow, this was an omen. The University has continued to exist in limbo, teetering between tragedy and comedy” (Gatner 1974, 130).

Rumors of tragedy soon were heard. Student and faculty disaffection with Dean Hardie’s imperious style along with the university’s growing debt gave rise to a rumor that the Board of Trustees was going to close the institution. Enrollment had dropped below nine hundred (Carden and Dinan 2001, 60). The rumor of a closing, a familiar theme later in the history of Southampton College, was not so far from the truth. The trustees had given Hardie responsibility to manage the university’s fiscal affairs, but his experience at St. Lawrence, a university with a large, stable endowment, was of no use to him in Brooklyn. In the spring of 1932 the university had been able to pay the faculty only a portion of their full salaries. By June 1932 there was only \$3,738 left in the university bank account (Gatner 1974, 530).

Jonas, the acting chairman of the board, wasted no time. He appointed five new board members and did not renew Hardie’s contract. In Elliott

Gatner's words, Hardie's departure was "unwept, unhonored, and unsung" (Gatner 1974, 137). Jonas then hired Tristram Walker Metcalfe, an old high school friend, first to serve as the chief financial officer, and later as president of the university. Metcalfe, a self-taught accountant with a gift for grasping the intricacies of financial statistics, did not have a college degree, but he did have some experience as an advisor to the mayor of New York on educational policy.² Metcalf quickly stanching the hemorrhaging with a fiscal reorganization plan, which included extensive reductions in all areas of the budget and an end to borrowing against future tuition. The university survived the immediate crisis, but was unable to improve the quality of its facilities and academic programs. The trustees had survived financial distress by implementing a policy that led to "quality distress." A study of forty-eight liberal arts colleges and universities by the Center for Higher Education defined "quality distress" as the outcome of an operating mode that focuses on institutional survival from one year to the next. "Faced with financial problems they survive by cutting into one of their last reserves, their quality" (Wynn 1974, 16–17, 28).

In 1935 Metcalfe made a second attempt to win Middle States approval and was turned down once more. An unaccredited institution with a small endowment can, under the best of administrations, make very little progress in any direction. Forced to rely primarily on tuition for survival, LIU could not afford to be at all selective in its admission policy. Middle States may also have looked askance at a university whose president did not have a college degree, no matter how astute he was at financial matters. Four years later, Metcalfe again applied to Middle States, with the same result. The evaluation team noted the lack of an adequate endowment, low admissions standards, and a questionable athletic scholarship policy in its rejection of Metcalfe's application (Gatner 1974, 583). The scholarship issue cast a shadow on one of the university's most celebrated accomplishments during the prewar period. The LIU basketball team, the "Blackbirds," won national attention when they went to the finals in the first two National Invitation Tournaments (NIT) in 1938 and 1939. In 1939 they were undefeated and won the national title. Their victory was tarnished by the suspicion that their coach, Claire Bee, had bent the rules for his players. Rule bending, unfortunately, was widely condoned by many of the college basketball powers at the time. This practice led to a major scandal in the early 1950s that would have a devastating impact on LIU's reputation.

It was the lack of an endowment, however, that was the more serious of the problems noted by the Middle States evaluators. The university had no choice but to operate on a hand-to-mouth fiscal basis, making it vulnerable to outside forces over which it had no control. In 1942, when the military draft drastically reduced enrollment, the university again came close to closing. Faced with the grim choice between selling its assets and closing or

going into bankruptcy, Metcalfe chose the latter (Carden and Dinan 2001, 63). The bankruptcy option required the university to restructure its financial affairs under the supervision of Judge Matthew T. Abruzzo. President Metcalfe worked with the judge to guide the university through the crisis. In 1943, Ralph Jonas resigned and was replaced on the board by William Zeckendorf, a wealthy real estate investor. What saved the university, of course, was the return of the veterans whose education was paid for through the G.I. Bill. Enrollment jumped from 636 students in 1943 to 4,216 in 1948.

THE G.I. BONANZA AND THE MOVE TO BROOKVILLE, 1946–1953

In 1946 Metcalfe hired Mary Lai, who had graduated from LIU in 1942, to serve as bursar. It turned out to be one of the best hires in the history of the university.

Mary Lai, who retired in 2004, is a bright, energetic, and pragmatic woman who outshined and outlived most of the university leaders under whom she served. She soon became an indispensable member of the university administration. Lai worked tirelessly on the documents required by the bankruptcy court until 1947 when the university was declared solvent. Another important development was the election of Zeckendorf to serve as chairman in 1947. He continued in that office for the next two decades, providing a stable continuity of leadership. Zeckendorf's financial success and his growing influence with financial and political leaders in the New York area were important assets to the young university.

The sudden increase in enrollment ended the financial crisis, but created problems of staffing and space. The understaffed faculty were teaching fifteen-hour loads each semester, whereas most four-year colleges based faculty salaries on a twelve-hour requirement. Many LIU instructors were also teaching an additional six hours of overload. These faculty loads raised serious questions about the quality of education during these early years. The instructors were overworked, underqualified, and underpaid. Only a small number of them held doctorates, and they were still being paid at 1927 levels (Gatner 1974, 258). The facilities were cramped. In some cases, four faculty had to share the same desk. The university had to rent space in nearby office buildings, which was often not suitable for a college campus. The library, for example, had to place a major part of its collection in a rat-infested storage area. The result was disastrous, as the rodents destroyed most of the materials.

Another problem was the unique difficulties faced by the returning veterans. Many lacked the experience and skills required for college-level work. They also had pressing practical needs such as housing, part-time employment, medical needs, and help with the bureaucratic maze in the Federal Veterans Administration. The university appointed a veterans' counselor to



FIGURE 1.1. Mary Lai (center), Vice President for Finance. Ms. Lai joined the LIU administration in 1946 and retired in 2003. Southampton College Academic Dean Vincent Aloia (right). Photo circa 1966. *Courtesy of Southampton Town Historian.*

serve as an “ombudsman,” who was an intermediary linking the veterans, the federal Veterans Administration and the university (Gatner 1974, 262–63). The administration did little, however, to help the veterans and the other students who needed remedial assistance. This undoubtedly played a significant role in the unusually high attrition rates that plagued the university.

Instead of consolidating the postwar gains and responding to the concerns of the Middle States critique, Metcalfe went shopping for a place in the country. There appears to have been no consultation with the faculty or staff about this important decision and no evidence that an alternative policy that would place more funds into a university endowment was even considered. This is another example of policy decisions made from the top without benefit of consultation and without consideration of long-range consequences. Metcalfe became convinced that when the veterans graduated, LIU would need to find a new recruiting area. “Long Island,” he told the trustees, “is a fertile area” (Gatner, 269). The influx of new tuition dollars, therefore, was not used to build up an endowment, but Metcalfe was certainly right about the potential for student recruiting in Nassau County.

Metcalfe's search brought him to the estate of Marjorie Merriweather Post Davies, whose father, Charles William Post, founded the C. W. Post breakfast cereal company (J. Murphy 1989, 29–36). The property, located in the town of Oyster Bay on the fashionable “Gold Coast” of Nassau County, was in marked contrast to the urban environment of downtown Brooklyn. In May 1947, Metcalfe negotiated the purchase of the Post estate for \$260,000. It was a bargain even in those times because the estate, which included twenty landscaped acres and several buildings, was valued by the tax assessor at more than a million dollars (Gatner 1974, 256). Marjorie Davies apparently felt that the property was becoming too expensive to maintain. There was, however, an important proviso requiring that an exemption from the residential zoning laws be obtained before the purchase could be completed.

Frustrated by these delays, Metcalfe decided to establish a base near Brookville for an evening extension program. When Carrol Newsom, the associate commissioner of education, learned of these plans, he wrote a sharp rebuke to Metcalfe in January 1951 telling him that the courses offered in Brookville were not registered and, therefore could not be given college credit (LIUABCL, RG 2:6, Newsom to Walker January 15, 1951). The following spring, Metcalfe established evening extension courses in Hicksville, ignoring the warning from the state education department. In the fall, he opened classes on the Davies estate even though the zoning issue had not been resolved.

Metcalfe's actions undoubtedly further provoked the landowners in Brookville. Alarmed at the prospect of a university disturbing their quiet, rustic environment, they organized a well-financed legal action to oppose any change in the zoning law. Although they would have opposed any university, they were particularly agitated by the nature of LIU's student body, which included so many “Negroes, Jews, or Italians” from Brooklyn (Gatner 1974, 281). On February 20, 1951, the *New York Times* headlines reinforced negative perceptions of the university. Three LIU basketball players had been arrested in the point-shaving scheme that soon became a national scandal. This was much more serious than the minor infraction attributed to Coach Clair Bee in the late 1930s, but it suggests that a climate of overlooking such behavior may have played a role in the devastating scandal that engulfed the university in 1951.

Four more LIU players and twenty-five others from six major universities across the country were eventually charged (Rosen 1978, 113–17; 141–46). It was a public relations disaster, which reinforced the negative perceptions of Long Island University. Ironically, Coach Bee and his team had taken a principled stand in 1936 when they were invited to play in the Olympics, which were held that year in Hitler's Germany. They were told that the Jewish players could not accompany the team. Coach Bee, at the urging of his team, turned down the opportunity to play on the international stage (Carden and Dinan 2001, 63). Bee also refused to play games in any of the

segregated states in the United States. This principled stand, unfortunately, was overshadowed by the basketball scandal. It could be argued that the widespread publicity about the scandal solidified a negative public perception of LIU that it was never able to counter.

Fundraising had always been a major challenge for the university because donors were reluctant to give funds to an institution with a reputation for academic mediocrity and fiscal instability. The university's problems, compounded now by their involvement in one of the worst sports scandals in American history, undoubtedly influenced the Middle States Association to postpone yet another application for accreditation. In December 1951, Metcalfe was told to reschedule an inspection by the Middle States commission in 1953. Unfortunately, Metcalfe did not live to see his beloved university achieve accreditation. In February 1952, President Metcalfe, whose health had been failing for a year, died of cancer.

The board appointed William M. Hudson as acting president to replace Metcalfe. Hudson, described as "an uncertain and pusillanimous leader" by historian Elliott Gatner, faced some very difficult challenges. Hudson had a Yale masters degree and a law degree from Brooklyn but he was cautious and hesitant to take the sort of risks that excited Metcalfe. The Board of Trustees, buffeted by scandals, falling tuition revenues, and rising operation costs, was having second thoughts about opening a campus in Brookville (Gatner 1974, 293). The point-shaving scandal, in particular, fueled opposition to the expansion into Nassau County. The legal battle waged over the zoning regulation by the wealthy landowners who lived near the proposed campus site dragged on for six years. Hudson decided that it would be best to abandon the attempt to establish a base in Nassau County for the immediate future. Students would have to finish their degrees at the Brooklyn Center and receive a diploma from there.

In an interesting footnote, particularly in the light of the Southampton closure, one of the students enrolled in the Hicksville program threatened to sue on the grounds that the university was bound by law to grant him a diploma from Hicksville, not from Brooklyn. Alvin Bahnsen, a history professor at C. W. Post, recalled the incident. He said that he remembered "most vividly" a meeting called by Hudson at the Hicksville High School with the students enrolled in the university's evening program there. One student, he said, angrily refused to accept the closure and "challenged the right of the university to close the extension, on the grounds that the letter of acceptance to the extension program assured him that would receive his degree through the Extension Program at Brookville . . . it was enough to force the Acting President to reconsider his action" ("Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of C.W. Post," 1979). The student's assertion that the admission acceptance was a binding legal contract raised the possibility of expensive legal actions which the university could ill afford.

THE ADMIRAL AND THE STRUGGLE FOR ACCREDITATION, 1953-55

Hudson's fears about the expansion were abated in October 1953, when the court ruled in favor of LIU. One month later, the LIU Board of Trustees announced the appointment of retired admiral Richard Lansing Conolly to replace acting president Hudson, somewhat allaying the fears of the Old Brookville elites. Zeckendorf, in his autobiography, proudly claimed sole credit for recruiting Conolly (Zeckendorf and McCreary 1970). This was the way things had always been done at LIU. There was no search committee with participation from faculty, administrators, or students. Conolly, a four star admiral who had served as president of the Naval War College, gave the university instant recognition and an enhanced status. His right wing political views also helped in developing good relations with the Gold Coast elites.³ One of Conolly's favorite speeches for local organizations and school commencements was titled "Soviet Imperialism: A Threat to Freedom Everywhere" (LIUABCL, RG 2:6, Conolly File May 10, 1952). He also warned about the dangers of increasing the availability of public-supported higher education, a trend, he said, that was "undesirable in a democracy" (LIUABCL, RG 2:6, Charter Day Address March 8, 1955).

Conolly endorsed the move to expand the university and his presence assured the wealthy Brookville neighbors that the new university campus would be governed by a firm, conservative hand. During his eight and one-half years as president, the university enrollment grew from 2,000 to 10,000. To his credit, he increased faculty salaries from a level far below accepted standards to a level only slightly below average. Conolly, however, adopted Metcalfe's imperious leadership style, paying little attention to the faculty's voice in policy matters.

Conolly now moved aggressively to obtain Middle States accreditation. Several accounts credit Conolly's personal qualities, so dramatically expressed in his military career, with the successful campaign to obtain accreditation. He appointed R. Gordon Hoxie to serve as the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the Brooklyn center in the spring of 1954 and asked him to oversee the accreditation process. Hoxie came to LIU with a distinguished resume which included a PhD from Columbia University and three years of experience as assistant to the chancellor at the University of Denver. Hoxie was an easy choice for Conolly because the two men had similar political views and administrative styles. When Middle States finally granted LIU accreditation in 1955, Hoxie was quick to claim full credit for the success. In an article Hoxie wrote for the *Oyster Bay Guardian* in 1969, which was reprinted in a pamphlet prepared for the twenty-fifth anniversary of C. W. Post, he gave his own account of the accreditation campaign. His recollection reveals a great deal about the leadership styles of both men:

The Admiral had applied for accreditation and he promised a comprehensive report by September first. A committee had been at work on the report for several months . . . but he deemed their report completely unacceptable. My orders: start all over and finish it in thirty days. That is how I got in the habit of a seven day week, 14 hours per day schedule. . . . At 3:00 A.M., September first this report was completed. We got accredited.

This account, however, is sharply disputed by Mary Lai, who worked closely with the faculty and staff committees during the preparation of the report (pers. comm. Dec. 23, 2005). She said that the report was completed by the committees in the spring, but Conolly believed that it was often too critical and needed to be more “positive.” Hoxie, said Lai, edited it with puffed-up prose and gave it a more positive spin. In fact, she continued, he complicated the process at the last minute when the committee was reviewing the final printed draft. “He came into the room all excited and insisted that the organizational chart for the university officers be changed because he was listed as Ralph G. Hoxie instead of R. Gordon Hoxie.” The committee had to remove the page and make the change. Hoxie’s account in the Oyster Bay newspaper was misleading in another way as well. Middle States did not grant LIU accreditation in the fall of 1954 as Hoxie implied. The evaluating team delayed approval for another year.

The Middle States team visited the university and issued a preliminary evaluation in October 1954 (Gatner, 1974, 585–86; LIUABCL R.G. 3:2, Middle States Evaluation Oct. 10–13, 1954). The commission noted with concern that there was a high faculty turnover and low morale. The faculties at Brooklyn and Post, they reported, were not included in the development of university policy and felt somewhat alienated from the administration. The Middle States investigators noted that the courses tended to be descriptive rather than analytical. Another concern, of course, was the lack of an endowment.

The commission raised serious questions about the admissions office, which was still below established standards. “The admissions officers,” said the report, “are pleasant people, but it is not clear how much actual training they have had in their field. It was noticeable that although the evaluators were informed that the admissions standards had been recently raised, the officers carrying out the admissions policy did not seem to be aware of this fact” (quoted in Rice 1965, 75). The university had, in fact, never changed its open admissions policy and had never made a serious effort to bring its admissions office up to a minimum level of professional standards. The Middle States commission again noted that there was little evidence of university coordination of curricula and programs. The faculty tended to identify primarily with their own centers rather than with LIU as an

institution (Gatner 1974, 592–93). In spite of these reservations, the Middle States report noted that LIU was meeting the needs of Brooklyn-area students whose “standing in high school was in the lower middle range of achievement” (quoted by Gatner, 587).

Hoxie’s efforts at “spin” didn’t work as well as claimed in his account. Middle States accreditation commission chairman Ewald Nyquist wrote to Admiral Conolly on December 2, 1954, telling him that the commission had decided to withhold approval for another year. At that time the commission wanted to see evidence that progress had been made in six areas listed in the letter (Rice 1965, Appendix C). The areas of concern included financial resources for the university, the reluctance of Conolly to delegate authority, the high number of adjunct (part time) instructors, the lack of faculty participation in the policymaking activities of the university, and the need for a “realistic educational plan for the development of the entire institution over the next few years, with particular attention to the development of the Brookville (C. W. Post) branch.” This setback undoubtedly contributed to a souring of the relationship between Conolly and Hoxie. Another factor was the deteriorating relationship between Hoxie and the faculty at Brooklyn. His imperious leadership style alienated both students and faculty. Finally, in the spring of 1955, Conolly removed Hoxie from Brooklyn and named him president of the new C. W. Post center. Rumors circulated that Conolly actually wanted to fire Hoxie but feared that it might alienate Marjorie Merriweather Post Davies and some of the wealthy Gold Coast donors who liked Hoxie. Hoxie had also cultivated support among the LIU trustees.

In the fall of 1955, Nyquist wrote to Conolly telling him that the Middle States Commission had voted to accredit LIU, but warned that they were still concerned about the university finances, the admissions practices, and the problems posed by the admission of the “bottom ranking students.” The endorsement was rather weak, but it was a major threshold for the university. The commission recommended that immediate attention be paid to a review of unified institutional goals and related programs for the centers and required a provisional report in five years documenting efforts to address all of their concerns.

Ignoring the concerns in the report for a more centralized university structure, the trustees further confused the matter by giving the new campus a name that encouraged an independent identity. They decided to name the campus after Mrs. Davies’s father in an attempt, said historian Elliott Gatner, “to present a more genteel image of the college and to de-emphasize the connection with the ‘hustling, bustling,’ entrepreneurs and ‘dirt clogged streets of Brooklyn.’ It was also an ‘obvious move to flatter Mrs. Post [sic], one of America’s wealthiest women, and to encourage her financial support” (Gatner 1974, 303; Carden and Dinan 2001, 68). Although she did give

about \$5 million over a fifteen-year period, Hoxie eventually alienated her and her family with constant badgering for more money. He had blatantly stressed his relationship with the Post family to bolster his support from the Board of Trustees. The Post family finally broke off all contact with LIU, refusing to respond to correspondence from the development office (Kenneth Mensing, pers. comm. May 2006).

The decision to name the campus after the Post family also set in motion an “identity crisis” that has never been resolved and, many believe, hurt both fund raising and student recruitment. The name of a college often has a significant impact on the public perception of the institution (*New York Times* Aug 20, 2005). Mary Lai addressed this issue in an analysis she wrote in 1970. She noted that some university officials had discussed the confusion created by the C. W. Post name in 1963, about the time that Southampton College was founded. Many thought that it was an independent college, and others were uncertain as to where it was located. A treasurer’s report in 1963 stated that “[t]he obvious solution for clarifying these ambiguities is to name each center of the university by its location. Thus we would have: LIU Brooklyn, LIU Brookville, and LIU Southampton” (Lai 1970, 12). Lai agreed with this proposal, pointing out that these designations put the university name at the forefront. In response the LIU Board of Trustees ordered that letterheads, programs, and newspaper advertising place the LIU name in prominence, but it did not change the name of the Post campus.

In spite of the changes ordered by the board, the public perception of LIU and its various parts remained rather vague. Susan Ulrich, who worked in the Southampton College admissions office for many years, spoke of her frustrations when she went to high school college day fairs: “Organizers as well as prospective students weren’t sure if we were a branch of the state university, an independent college, or a part of LIU. Our public image seemed to be blurred and poorly understood” (pers. comm. July 2005). There were, of course, other factors at work here. Many of the students and faculty at Post and Southampton preferred to identify with their own centers because of Long Island University’s negative image.

The Post campus, however, was an immediate success. The estate buildings were transformed into campus facilities to accommodate the rapid growth in the student population. From the two hundred students enrolled in 1955, the student body grew to include seven thousand undergraduate and 3,500 graduate students by the mid-1970s. Demands for teacher education programs led to the creation of extension centers in Hauppauge, Brentwood, and Westhampton Beach. This experience with extension programs may have encouraged President Conolly and the trustees to consider a more extensive expansion onto eastern Long Island. The president wrote a confidential letter to Edward Fearon, the president of the Southampton Chamber

of Commerce, on May 10, 1961, telling him that the university had decided to “establish a co-educational four-year liberal arts college in Southampton for commuting students in the fall of 1962, provided that suitable physical facilities are provided by the local community.” In a postscript, he asked that Fearon not mention this decision until “our joint project is further developed.” (LIUABCL R.G. 2:6, Box 1, Conolly to Fearon).

A few months later, the Middle States committee returned to LIU to determine the progress made by the university in addressing the concerns raised in 1954 (LIUABCL R.G. 3:2, Middle States Evaluation of LIU Oct. 22–25, 1961, 69–70). There were impressive improvements, noted the committee, but there was still a concern about the financial organization and the identity of the university. The committee noted that the university had not restructured the fiscal organization. It was still a federation of campuses, each with its own budget supported primarily by its own tuition. This structure contributed to a continuing “identity problem” for the university. The faculty also tended to identify with their own campus rather than with LIU. A priority, stated the Middle States committee, should be to establish a university-wide set of goals and purposes.

Another concern that had not been addressed was the tendency of the administrators to ignore the faculty when they formulated university policies. This alienated many of the faculty and contributed to a pattern of poor relations between them and the administration (Gatner 1974, 594). Faculty morale remained low. The faculty were still concerned about the excessive workloads and complained that university personnel policies were “generally inadequate.” These problems contributed to the emergence of an aggressive union movement in the 1970s.

One key recommendation that had particular significance for the establishment of Southampton College called upon the university to defer all new expansion until they consolidated the gains made at C. W. Post (Gatner 1974, 593). This advice from Middle States, which came in October 1961, in the midst of Conolly’s negotiations with local Southampton citizens, was ignored. There was very little thought given to the potential problems posed by the lack of sufficient capital to adequately fund the development of the new center. Many board members were very enthusiastic about the move and raised few objections. According to Mary Lai, one trustee was heard to exclaim, “Southampton, the name is magic!” (Lai, pers. comm. Oct. 25, 2005).