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ARTICLE

Making Global Citizens: Milton Eisenhower, UNESCO, and the Desegregation of Kansas State College, 1943–1950

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Abstract

In 1946, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was formed to promote peace through education and cross-cultural understanding. In the postwar atomic age, American leaders saw UNESCO and education for world citizenship as critical to the prevention of future war, the promotion of a new pluralistic vision, and the development of a well-informed society. A hyper-local case study, this article follows the story of Milton S. Eisenhower, leading UNESCO delegate and president of Kansas State College, and the series of progressive reforms he pursued to promote democracy, citizenship, and global peacebuilding at a rural land-grant college in the center of the former "isolationist belt" of America. This article traces the impact of these curricular reforms, the UNESCO campus-community partnership they inspired, and the subsequent peacebuilding movement that agitated for humanitarian action, civic participation, and desegregation from 1947 to 1950.

Keywords: college presidents; desegregation; Kansas; land-grant colleges and universities; peacebuilding; UNESCO

> *Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.*
>
> —Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1946

In September 1943, Milton Stover Eisenhower arrived on the campus of Kansas State College of Agriculture to begin his new appointment as college president. The first native Kansan and K-State alumnus to serve in the position, Eisenhower's hiring generated significant publicity and discussion among students and faculty alike. Most were unsure what to think about this new leading face of the College; his predecessor, Francis D. Farrell, was a fairly conservative administrator who, during a tenure

that spanned the Great Depression, refused any financial assistance offered by the Roosevelt administration's New Deal. Under Farrell, Kansas State prioritized its agricultural and technical mission first, with secondary consideration given to training for "sound thinking and good citizenship."[1] Eisenhower's appointment threatened to turn Farrell's approach of the previous two decades on its head. Like other progressive leaders during the war, Milton understood that colleges and universities would play a major role in preparing the nation's youth for America's new place in the postwar international community. In his first biennial report as college president in 1944, he expressed the gravity and responsibility facing the College in the postwar years ahead, writing:

> Military victory alone will not achieve the great objective for which this war is being fought. A way of life, here and throughout the world, is at stake, which respects human dignity and retains basic social responsibility in the hands of the people… . Military victory alone must be matched with a victory of our minds.[2]

To Eisenhower, preparing the minds of the rising postwar generation would be a difficult but necessary task for the strengthening of American democracy. With painful reminders of what occurred at home after World War I, many leaders extending from the ivory tower to the White House recognized the importance of laying the foundations of peace through active educational programming to fortify the nation's youth against the pitfalls of prejudice and isolationist thinking. If world peace was to be achieved, and another world war avoided, the foundations of democracy and cross-cultural understanding would need to be laid by educators at home and throughout the world to ensure the success of global governance. Milton Eisenhower's tenure at Kansas State College is a story that reveals much about this struggle, when the perceived stakes of the postwar atomic age were high, when racial, religious, and ideological divides were steep, and when college presidents sought to change institutional culture to bridge differences, meet the demands of world peace, and embolden American leadership on the international stage.

Changing institutional culture is not easy. Kansas State College was a predominantly white, rural land-grant institution founded under the Morrill Act of 1862 to "promote the liberal and practical education" of the agricultural and industrial classes.[3] Its location in the former abolitionist town of Manhattan boasted lore of the founding settlers who fought against slavery in the pre-Civil War conflict of Bleeding Kansas. Yet, the battle for social change was still ongoing both physically and ideologically. In the interwar years, Kansas was known by some as the center of the "isolationist belt" in America, allowing measures of de facto segregation to exist within employment, housing, and other elements of the public sphere. Kansas State College was impacted by these decisions; its funding as a public institution was linked to the demands of a conservative-leaning state legislature that was third behind Idaho and North Dakota

[1]Stephen Ambrose and Richard Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower: Educational Statesman* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 76.

[2]Milton S. Eisenhower, *Kansas State College Biennial Report, 1943-1944* (Manhattan: Kansas State College), 5.

[3]Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, Pub. L. No 37-108, 12 Stat. 503 (1862).

in passage of isolationist policy between 1930 and 1941.[4] Like other land-grant institutions, its influence stretched broadly to every county within the state through active Extension programming. In just seven years as college president, Eisenhower would partner with students on campus and community members through the Extension network to blur the space between town and gown, promoting education for democracy, social justice, and world citizenship in a major transformation of the College and its mission.

As a leading delegate to the newly formed United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and as an appointed member of the Truman Presidential Commission on Higher Education, Eisenhower acted as a bridge between international peacebuilding, national education policy, and the local implementation of progressive reforms. Under his leadership, students and faculty at Kansas State College grew from passive observers to citizen peacebuilders engaged in the battle against prejudice and isolationist thinking. Through the combined social and educational peace activism of students, faculty, and administrators, Kansas became a UNESCO model recognized as an exemplary case of organized "citizens eager to contribute personally to world peace."[5] What began as a series of curricular reforms inspired an educational movement that sought to bridge religious, racial, and cultural divides in the classroom, and promote campus-community partnerships in peacebuilding and desegregation in the years prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*. To Eisenhower and others, UNESCO offered the tools necessary to build foundations of peace at home and abroad—citizens needed only the courage to utilize them to transform their communities.

Historiography

This analysis offers several key contributions to the historical study of land-grant institutions and the development of educational policy in the mid-twentieth century. Since the inception of land-grant colleges and universities in 1862, scholars have viewed their growth as a democratizing force that radically expanded access to higher education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Often characterized as "Democracy's Colleges," land-grant institutions destabilized the monopoly of private Ivy League schools on social mobility, offering valuable opportunities to the poor and working classes to perfect their trade and tap into the benefits of liberal education.[6] The picture wasn't entirely

[4]Ralph Smuckler, "The Region of Isolationism," *American Political Science Review* 47, no. 2. (June 1953), 386-401. Smuckler, a prominent political scientist from Michigan State College, published this study in 1953, analyzing the isolationist voting percentage and isolationist sentiment in each state of the nation. Focusing in on the American Midwest, Smuckler classified Kansas as one of the "top six states in percentage of isolationism." This finding makes the reach of Eisenhower's UNESCO work in the state of Kansas even more remarkable.

[5]"On UNESCO Program," *Atchison Daily Globe* (Atchison, KS), Nov. 20, 1948, 6, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-atchison-daily-globe-the-kansas-sto/133068701/.

[6]Earle D. Ross, *Democracy's College: The Land-Grant Movement in the Formative Stage* (Ames: Iowa State College Press, 1942); Allan Nevins, *The State Universities and Democracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962); Roger L. Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

rosy, however, as historians Nathan Sorber and Margaret Nash remind us that land-grant institutions have also played a role in crushing working-class movements and dispossessing Indigenous Americans.[7] Taking this complicated historiographical discussion into account, this article offers one example of a land-grant institution living up to its democratizing mission in the twentieth century through the expansion of citizenship education, peacebuilding, and democracy through desegregation.

Scholars such as Christopher Loss and John Thelin have explored the impact of increased government involvement in higher education on the development of twentieth-century educational policy. Indeed, land-grant institutions were a part of this story, helping to "bridge the gap between citizens and the state" as part of the New Deal apparatus during the Great Depression.[8] Utilizing Extension networks to help farmers through the Agricultural Adjustment Act and building out programs like the National Youth Administration to keep college students in the classroom, the federal government utilized public colleges and universities to meet the pressing domestic needs of the nation. After the war, as Thelin and others have pointed out, the urgent need for increased federal partnership was met through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and the National Defense Education Act of 1958. As partnerships between the federal government and higher education increased in the mid-twentieth century, the autonomous role of college presidents began to shift dramatically, adding more administrative tasks, fundraising initiatives, and public engagement responsibilities. Though several studies have shown the extent of the United States' involvement with UNESCO and the United Nations more broadly in the postwar years, few have revealed how college presidents with federal appointments sought to leverage their roles in higher education to meet the growing domestic *and* international needs of the nation.[9] This analysis seeks to fill this gap, while also expanding the scholarly discussion of Eisenhower's presidency at Kansas State beyond the walls of the college to

[7]Nathan M. Sorber, *Land-Grant Colleges and Popular Revolt: The Origins of the Morrill Act and the Reform of Higher Education* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); Margaret A. Nash, "Entangled Pasts: Land-Grant Colleges and American Indian Dispossession," *History of Education Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (Nov. 2019), 437-67. See also research compiled digitally through "Land-Grab Universities," a *High Country News* special investigation. Robert Lee et al., "Land-Grab Universities: How the United States Funded Land-Grant Universities with Expropriated Indigenous Land," *High Country News* (Paonia, CO), https://www.landgrabu.org.

[8]Christopher P. Loss, *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 53; John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2019); Glenn Altschuler and Stuart Blumin, *The GI Bill: The New Deal for Veterans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[9]Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Anthony Q. Hazard Jr., *Postwar Anti-racism: The United States, UNESCO, and "Race," 1945-1968* (New York: Palgrave Press, 2012); William Preston Jr., Edward S. Herman, and Herbert I. Schiller, *Hope and Folly: The United States and UNESCO, 1945-1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); For more on the shifting role of college presidents during the mid-twentieth century, see Eddie R. Cole, *The Campus Color Line: College Presidents and the Struggle for Black Freedom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), and Andrew Stone Higgins, *Higher Education for All: Racial Inequality, Cold War Liberalism, and the California Master Plan* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023).

reveal his creation of a campus-community peacebuilding network through the Kansas Commission for UNESCO.[10]

Through his federal appointments with UNESCO, Milton Eisenhower transformed the institutional culture of Kansas State College to meet the pressing demands of global peacebuilding and American democracy. The movement he sparked would inspire students, faculty, and community members to consider their role in improving peace and equality in society. Utilizing archival material, newspapers, yearbooks, and memoirs, this article seeks to reveal what students, administrators, community activists, and others can learn from this important moment in history about campus-community partnerships, cross-cultural learning, land-grant service, and desegregation. But before examining this transformation and its impact in place and time, some context must be given to Eisenhower's formative years and development as the central figure of this study.

Learning from retrenchment: Eisenhower's undergraduate years at K-State

Milton Eisenhower graduated from high school at the age of seventeen, some five months short of his eighteenth birthday. The United States was officially entering World War I, and while he contemplated lying about his age to join the military, he was convinced by his English teacher to attend Kansas State College in nearby Manhattan to begin his educational training in journalism. He grew up on a farm in rural Abilene, Kansas, the youngest of six boys in a strong Pennsylvania Dutch household. Milton and his brothers were the first in their extended family to grow up speaking English as their first language, raised with reverence for the Bible and a deep belief in pacifism—a concept that would undergo considerable strain when older brother Dwight Eisenhower left to start his military career in 1911.[11] Milton recalled that the isolation of rural Abilene from the rest of the world was "physical, political and economic," which contributed to a "prevailing state of mind" that would, at times, express itself as prejudice toward his family.[12] But while the world appeared to be shrinking to Eisenhower as he left for college in 1917, America's position as part of a global community would radically shift during his time at K-State, his study of journalism coinciding with one of the most significant moments of retrenchment from international affairs in American history. To understand Eisenhower's passion for UNESCO and the ideas that drove his reform movement in later years, we must first grapple with the hyper-nationalistic environment he entered as a young college student.

[10]James C. Carey, *Kansas State University: A Quest for Identity* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977); Virginia Quiring, ed., *The Milton S. Eisenhower Years at Kansas State University* (Manhattan: Kansas State University Press, 1986).

[11]Dr. Milton Eisenhower, interview by Maclyn Burg, Oct. 15, 1971, transcript, Digital Oral History Collection, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS, https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/oral-histories/oral-history-transcripts/eisenhower-milton-13.pdf. Milton recalled his mother's heartbroken reaction to Dwight's decision to attend West Point in 1911, a memory that may have contributed to his view of war and passion for peacebuilding.

[12]Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 24, 13. Biographer Stephen Ambrose notes that Eisenhower's mother, Ida, was almost arrested because of her "German name" and outspoken pacifism in 1917.

During his time at Kansas State College from 1917 to 1924, American attitudes toward international affairs were completely reshaped by participation in World War I. While many continued to cling to former president Woodrow Wilson's original rallying cry to "Keep the World Safe for Democracy," others were shocked by the significant loss of American life in the brief year of participation in the war, coupled by the economic burden of postwar reconstruction. Isolationist members of Congress seized upon this sentiment by voting to prevent the United States from joining the League of Nations in 1919, marking the beginning of a decades-long American retrenchment from international affairs.[13] In 1920, Warren G. Harding was elected president promising a "return to normalcy," but the aftermath of World War I was anything but normal. Racial violence plagued cities from Chicago to Tulsa as returning Black veterans advocated for basic citizenship rights only to experience a wave of violent White backlash. Hundreds of Black residents in Tulsa, Oklahoma, fell victim to one of the most horrifying cases of mass racial violence in American history—a national news story that would have been hard to ignore as a young journalism major in 1921.[14] Along with racial violence came a rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan in Kansas and across the country, as well as a wave of xenophobia sparked by the Red Scare of the 1920s.[15] The Klan presented itself not as a terrorist organization, but as a prominent social club with political influence—a facade that shielded much of their underlying activity. In September 1923, Eisenhower's junior year, Klan terrorist activity became so strong in the Midwest that Oklahoma Governor J.C. Walton placed his state under martial law. Klan membership grew to three million strong, with a visible presence throughout the American heartland—a memory shared by President Harry Truman who was almost convinced to join the Klan in the early 1920s to build political connections in neighboring Missouri.[16]

Eisenhower's formative years as a college student began in this moment between Red Summer and Red Scare. A progressive Republican, he revived the K-State Young Republican Club on campus to increase political discourse on contemporary issues.[17] In this engaged role as club president, Eisenhower saw examples of political courage against, and capitulation to, the forces of prejudice and isolationist thinking. In 1923, Calvin Coolidge replaced Warren G. Harding as president, promising do more on behalf of African Americans and immigrants targeted by postwar racial and political

[13]Kenneth Rose, *American Isolationism between the World Wars: The Search for a Nation's Identity* (New York: Routledge Press, 2021), 55–84; See chapters 1 and 2 in Jia Lynn Yang, *One Mighty and Irresistible Tide: The Epic Struggle over American Immigration, 1924-1965* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2020).

[14]Malea Walker, "Tulsa Race Massacre: Newspaper Complicity and Coverage," *Headlines and Heroes* (blog), Library of Congress, May 27, 2021, https://blogs.loc.gov/headlinesandheroes/2021/05/tulsa-race-massacre-newspaper-complicity-and-coverage/. Walker notes that early reports of the massacre coming out of Oklahoma were classified as inaccurate or misrepresentation of the violence in question. It wasn't until NAACP assistant secretary Walter F. White published a report of his findings on June 18, 1921, that the full extent of the violence against the Black community were made known more fully. I argue that Eisenhower, as a journalism student, would have likely followed these reports in the classroom.

[15]Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2017), 11–12.

[16]David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Touchstone Publishing, 1992), 164–65.

[17]Eisenhower, *The President Is Calling* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1974), 22.

violence. Instead, Coolidge turned up the heat, signing into law a restrictive immigration bill, the Johnson-Reed Act, which established a quota system meant to reduce immigration from eastern and southern Europe.[18] When asked why he approved a bill so strongly entrenched in isolationism, he responded, "We must remember that every object of our institutions of society and government will fail unless America be kept American."[19] With nativist attitudes permitted from the top, the Klan continued to rise in popularity, marching in force down Pennsylvania Avenue with little comment from the president.[20] Coolidge's capitulation was sharply contrasted with another Republican in the state of Kansas: William Allen White. A nationally renowned newspaper editor in east-central Kansas, White would have most certainly caught Eisenhower's attention when he ran for governor in 1924 on an exclusively anti-Klan platform.[21] Though he failed to win the race, White's brave condemnation of the Klan raised awareness of its extremist activities, crippled its recruitment efforts, and led to a major case in the Kansas Supreme Court that denied its ability to operate legally within the state.[22]

After graduating from Kansas State College in 1924, Eisenhower built powerful connections that would influence the trajectory of his career, including a lifelong friendship with departing college president William Marion Jardine. Jardine brought young Milton with him to the US Department of Agriculture, where he would work as a New Deal spokesman under Agricultural Secretary Henry A. Wallace until 1941. Eisenhower's reputation as a Republican New Dealer from the Midwest with a fearless attitude toward difficult tasks earned him a frequent seat at the table with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Eisenhower characterized Roosevelt as an "activist" who "believed that every problem could be solved if only men were bright enough and daring enough to act," and, in his approach to governance, as someone "determined to save the system so he could go on to reform it."[23] Despite their political differences, Eisenhower admired the leadership of Wallace and Roosevelt and would go on to embody similar approaches to reform and peacebuilding as an educational administrator.

Returning to K-State: Curricular reform and education for good citizenship

Before his appointment as college president in 1943, Eisenhower was delegated a task that would shape his outlook on discrimination as a postwar educational administrator.

[18]Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 37–38; Yang, *One Mighty and Irresistible Tide*, 54–61.

[19]Calvin Coolidge, "Accepting the Republican Nomination," Aug. 14, 1924, Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation, https://coolidgefoundation.org.

[20]John L. Blair, "A Time for Parting: The Negro during the Coolidge Years," *Journal of American Studies*, 3, no. 2 (Dec. 1969); Miller Center, "Calvin Coolidge - Key Events," University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, https://millercenter.org/president/calvin-coolidge/key-events.

[21]Jack Wayne Traylor, "William Allen White's 1924 Gubernatorial Campaign," *Kansas Historical Society Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (Summer 1976), 180–91.

[22]"Klan Loses Its Home in Kansas," *Morning Chronicle* (Manhattan, KS), Jan. 11, 1925, 1, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-morning-chronicle-klan-loses-home-in/136536797/.

[23]Eisenhower, *The President Is Calling*, 153–54.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, US military officials began informing the president about perceived threats posed by Japanese American citizens on the West Coast.[24] Though these threats were baseless, military officials were successful in convincing President Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 9066, requiring the mass evacuation of Japanese American families to internment camps. Eisenhower was hastily selected to head the War Relocation Authority (WRA) tasked with organizing the military removal already underway. With general concern for families, and acting with little information, Eisenhower took several steps to try to mitigate the harm of forced removal, creating a Japanese American advisory council, securing an agreement with the Federal Reserve Bank to protect property left behind, and establishing a program for Japanese American college students to continue their studies.[25]

While many of these efforts were noble attempts to mitigate harm, history tells what little effect they had on sheltering Japanese American citizens from the full impact of this egregious rights violation. After failing to convince governors to provide humane concessions to displaced Japanese American citizens, Eisenhower felt he could no longer remain on the project. He spent only ninety days as director before resigning and turning the WRA over to his fellow colleague in the Department of Agriculture, Dillon S. Myer, in mid-1942.

Eisenhower's brief experience with the WRA was informative on many levels. If the United States was to become a world leader, a concerted effort to root out discrimination and strengthen democracy would be urgently needed. In 1943, race riots engulfed American cities again in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Harlem. News about Nazi atrocities against minority groups in Europe were often coupled with instances of racial violence against minorities at home. As Milton followed reports from his older brother Dwight, now serving as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, he hoped to do more to serve his country in fighting the ideological battles he saw at home. The opportunity finally came in fall 1943 when he accepted a position to return to Manhattan and serve as president of Kansas State College. Ike, who Milton consulted often throughout his lifetime, encouraged him to move forward, asserting, "We must be as concerned about the strength of the nation in peace as we are about winning the current conflict."[26] Milton returned to his alma mater with his sights fixed on peacebuilding in the postwar years ahead.

K-State in 1943 faced the same problems as many higher education institutions during the war years. The College suffered from low enrollment, operated on a fixed budget, and had absorbed a greater military presence.[27] An Army Specialized Training Unit had taken over the women's dormitory, a nursing program had been created

[24] After extensive federal research, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) published a report in 1983 finding no cases to substantiate the claims made by the US military in 1942 of Japanese American disloyalty or plots to sabotage military instillations on the West Coast. The charges levied by the US military to justify Japanese American relocation in 1942 remain unsubstantiated. See full report in *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

[25] Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 62–65.

[26] Eisenhower, *The President Is Calling*, 150–51.

[27] Duane C. Acker, introduction to Quiring, *The Milton S. Eisenhower Years*, ix-xi; "Enrollment Drops to 2,283 Students: Ag School Is Hit Hardest," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Jan. 29, 1943.

for Red Cross aid workers, campus served as a national defense data center, and students were heavily recruited to collect donations for the front line. The school's Extension services remained a boon for many rural communities, expanding the educational reach of the institution to 96 of the state's 105 counties.[28] But even amid so many changes, some things still were familiar to Eisenhower from his time spent on campus as a student: liberal arts courses remained limited and the majority of the school's budget was still weighted toward specialization in agriculture and engineering, and students remained "unsophisticated, unspoiled, and eager to learn" through an ethic of hard work and dedication Eisenhower knew and loved. He was eager to get started.[29]

Eisenhower had little training in educational administration and research compared to his predecessors, most of whom were professors or educational scholars with doctorate degrees. What knowledge he did possess came from the various connections he made with college presidents as director of information in the US Department of Agriculture, including a relationship he began to build with James B. Conant, president of Harvard University. From his reading and observation, he could see the tide slowly turning away from a singular collegiate focus on specialization, or professional training toward a single subject, and toward a balanced approach between specialization and citizenship education. He knew that convincing students, faculty, and trustees of this new approach would not be easy, but he felt it was necessary for the strengthening of democracy in peacetime.

Before a packed audience of two thousand on Inauguration Day, September 30, 1943, Eisenhower engaged his audience in a powerful speech about "change" and the tremendous postwar responsibility of colleges and universities.[30] "The history of the land-grant college is a story of change, and the history of Kansas State College is a story of change" he remarked as a primer.[31] He described the educational systems of Germany, Italy, and Japan as mindless, anti-democratic institutions driven by specialization, and called the audience to action, stating, "In the face of economic complications multiplied by social complexities … educational institutions have as great a responsibility for fostering wisdom and tolerance as they have fostering research and the dissemination of knowledge." Making an urgent proposal to the audience for a new balance between specialization and democracy, tolerance, and citizenship, he stated in conclusion,

> It will not be enough for man to know how to build a Grand Coulee Dam or a Golden Gate Bridge… . not enough to know how to till the soil and protect it… . For every man with a useful place in society will have several great responsibilities … . applying his specialized talents to the solution of community, state, and national problems… . Our concern is that men and women trained in

[28] *Kansas State College Yearbook 1943-44*, 46–47.

[29] Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 94–95.

[30] "Eisenhower Declares: Colleges Have Tremendous Postwar Responsibility," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Oct. 7, 1943.

[31] Milton S. Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address" (speech, Manhattan, KS, Sept. 30, 1943).

> scientific methods shall also gain tolerance, and understanding and wisdom… . Our concern is with the education of men and women determined to be free.[32]

Eisenhower posited to the audience that democracy was an ideal in need of the College's support and strengthening in the postwar years ahead. Many students, faculty, and community members in the crowd left energized and ready to engage in this new direction, including young journalist Kenneth Davis, who would go on to work within Eisenhower's inner circle. He recalled, "I sat up in the balcony of the auditorium and was tremendously impressed… . That speech made me very eager to work with him."[33]

But not everyone was ready to jump on board with this same level of enthusiasm. When Eisenhower established a host of curriculum reform committees and asked for feedback about changing to a trimester or quarter semester plan, some faculty members felt he was going too far in pushing for more liberal arts courses and structural changes.[34] The College had just celebrated its eighty-first birthday, proudly commemorating a foundational curricular change that de-emphasized liberal arts and classical education in favor of specialized training. To some faculty, this change felt like a reversal of the land-grant mission. Eisenhower countered this argument by encouraging faculty to look to the "Campus of Tomorrow," which balanced specialized training with the development of good citizens. While this worked with some faculty members, others remained defiant, including animal husbandry professor Rufus Cox, who bitterly argued that investment in citizenship education would shift study away from the courses his students needed to prepare for successful careers. He went on to explain, "He took on almost a dictatorial attitude, crammed it down our throats."[35] Eisenhower himself would admit in retrospect that he may have moved too quickly with some reforms, giving little heed to his detractors as he made foundational decisions at the institutional level. From his perspective, however, progress wouldn't come without significant changes in general education.

The School of Arts and Sciences, offering courses in English, History, Government, Geography, Biology, and Chemistry, had taken the hardest hit in enrollment since 1941, shrinking from some 1,200 students to lower than 500 in 1943.[36] Under the method of specialization, students in agriculture, engineering, and other schools on campus were only required to take courses in their discipline, meaning most were arriving at graduation without a single course in the liberal arts on their record. This was the discrepancy Eisenhower hoped to amend. He wrote, "The College must provide students with opportunity to gain sound scientific and professional training, a broad understanding of the complex world, and a faith that comes from a true understanding of

[32] Eisenhower, "Inaugural Address," 1943.

[33] Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 78.

[34] "Quarter, Trimester Plans Under Scrutiny," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Dec. 9, 1943.

[35] Carey, *Kansas State University*, 170. Russell Thackrey notes in Quiring, *The Milton S. Eisenhower Years*, that the accusations levied by Cox never came to fruition. Cox suggested that the "comprehensive courses" Eisenhower pushed for would lead to fewer courses in agriculture and animal husbandry, but Thackrey, citing the Kansas State course catalog for 1948-50, points out that "25 courses continued to exist in the Department of Zoology" where Cox taught his students.

[36] *Kansas State College Yearbook 1943-44*, 30–31.

• Man's Physical World	• Man, and the Social World
• Biology in Relation to Man	• Man, and the Cultural World

America … the nature of its spirit and the nobility of its place in a world community."[37] He felt strongly that a deeper understanding of humanity, the world, and democracy had the power to open the minds of students, leaving the institution with the tools needed to positively influence their future communities and workspaces.

Taking notes from Harvard University president James B. Conant and his popular new study, "General Education in a Free Society," Eisenhower and his curriculum committee came away with fifty-one reforms for implementation to liberalize course requirements.[38] Students from every discipline would be required to take courses from the School of Arts and Sciences as part of balancing their specialization with citizenship education. To make the process more effective, Eisenhower proposed the creation of what he termed "comprehensive courses," which would mix content from a student's chosen discipline with content in citizenship education. Each school would be required to add two of the following courses from the School of Arts and Sciences to their formal major requirements:

Each course aimed to fulfill a specific purpose: to inoculate every student with training for citizenship and cross-cultural understanding across the institution. "We want a free, peaceful world," Eisenhower opined in 1944, "and we are prepared to do whatever may be required of us to gain that goal." Encouraging student participation, he wrote, "We will train our minds broadly, we will learn to think deeply and clearly, and we will develop those precious qualities of tolerance and kindness for we know the freedom and peace we want can spring only from our minds and hearts, not from mere devices and organizations."[39]

Eisenhower's citizenship reforms played to students' sense of duty, at times making explicit a comparison between their responsibility to strengthen democracy at home and the sacrifices made by American soldiers abroad. Students were expected to feel a sense of responsibility for the maintenance of a new postwar world order as democratic leaders and global citizens. As involvement in comprehensive courses increased, the School of Arts and Sciences jumped from having the lowest to the highest enrollment in the College. For the first time in the institution's history, students began learning about the world and engaging in democratic discussion on current issues as a required part of their specialized training. While most students accepted comprehensive courses with little protest, it is worth noting that the change coincided with a key Student Council vote to end the campus ban on smoking. The sudden ability to smoke on campus led to what students described in their yearbook as the "Cigarette Shortage of

[37] *Kansas State College Yearbook 1944-45*, 11.

[38] James B. Conant, *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945); Eisenhower, *The President Is Calling*, 167. For more on Conant and his educational philosophy, see Wayne J. Urban, *Scholarly Leadership in Higher Education: An Intellectual History of James Bryan Conant* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

[39] Milton Eisenhower, "Second Year Welcoming Address" (speech, Manhattan, KS, Sept. 5, 1944).

1944-45."[40] Generating both stress and excitement, progressive changes to curriculum enlisted students to become soldiers of democracy through civic and global learning participation.

In the next year, as curriculum changes began going into effect, Eisenhower recognized the strengths already evident in student organizations across campus as part of his changes to the institutional culture. One student group in particular, the Religious Federation Council, caught the president's eye as an example of tolerance and democracy already in action. A coalition of different faiths, the Religious Federation Council sponsored a Christian World Forum, held from February 18 to 20, with students from colleges and universities around the country in attendance.[41] The event made such an impact on Eisenhower that he approved funds to build a new multi-faith chapel on campus in April.[42] After accepting the first of many donations for the project, he explained to an audience, "I have visited many colleges and universities in the United States, and I have found none which has as much healthy religious activity as we have here at K-State. That religious activity needs a focal point. Only a chapel will meet this need … for the cultural development of students."[43] With a new focus on building a multi-faith chapel, Eisenhower showed his willingness to invest in both pluralistic learning and student-driven initiatives on campus. Students learned that the new president saw them as stakeholders and equal partners in the democratic transformation of the College. The Danforth / All Faiths Chapel remains an active space at the center of campus on Vattier Street, just south of the President's Residence.

Campus-community partnerships: From citizenship to global peacebuilding

Eisenhower's investments in citizenship and global learning would increase significantly on and off campus for the next two years. In late 1945, he was appointed by President Truman as a delegate to the first conference of UNESCO in London. The US delegation was charged with helping form the foundations of an organization that would be at the forefront of peacebuilding and global cooperation. Though the United States financed nearly two-thirds of the organizational budget, the group of over fifty representative nations were to operate as equal partners in discussing educational initiatives that could bridge political, religious, and racial divides. Continuous American participation in UNESCO was crucial for helping the country live up to its own democratic ideals and improve its postwar global standing. Intel from the White House signaled that British and Soviet diplomats considered American rapid demobilization and conservative criticisms of world government as "indications of a new form of US isolationism" beginning to take root.[44] Progressive leaders urgently made a case to the American people that "the war is not over," and that the election of 1946 was a

[40] *Kansas State College 1944-45 Yearbook*, 78–79; "Staters Vote to Smoke 3 to 1: SGA Poll Shows 518 Yes, 185 No's," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), May 11, 1944.

[41] "Forum Leaders Talk of War Problems," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Feb. 24, 1944.

[42] Carey, *Kansas State University*, 165–66.

[43] Carey, *Kansas State University*, 90.

[44] Memo to President Truman following Winston Churchill's Speech in Fulton, MO, March 20, 1946, President's Secretary's Files, Box 111, Truman Presidential Papers, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

crucial opportunity to remove isolationist politicians from Congress and support others in support of world governance.[45] It became clear to President Truman that the United States must show the international community that this time was different—that Americans were committed to long-term participation in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. "The government of the United States will work with and through UNESCO," President Truman announced to the public, "to the end that the minds of all people may be freed from ignorance, prejudice, suspicion and fear, and that men may be educated for justice, liberty, and peace."[46] Eisenhower learned much from his direct involvement and helped organize the first National UNESCO Commission upon his return to the United States, focused on encouraging global learning in schools, increasing literary rates, and promoting world peace.[47]

The College in 1946 was a madhouse. As returning servicemembers used their GI Bill benefits to enroll, the student population shot up from roughly three thousand students in 1943 to nearly seven thousand in 1946.[48] While working to resolve issues related to growth and housing, Eisenhower was also determined to continue his promotion of democracy and citizenship as core principles of the institution. That spring, he solicited the help of political science professor Robert A. Walker to discuss the process of promoting democratic principles more fully within the College. From their conversations, a new Institute for Citizenship was created at Kansas State College utilizing a donation of over $200,000 from the William Volker Charity Fund of Kansas City.[49] With Walker at the head, the Institute for Citizenship reported directly to Eisenhower, focused on helping "students develop an abiding faith in American institutions and inform students regarding the significance, organization, and function of effective citizenship."[50] Emphasizing learning in a social, cultural, and global context, the Institute aimed to fulfill its mission by providing direct coursework to K-State students, workshops for high school teachers, research and internship programs, and adult extension classes for the Kansas community.

Wasting no time, Eisenhower and Walker began collaborating on curriculum and enlisting student participation in a series of community presentations throughout the state to "awaken the citizens to the benefits and dangers of the democratic way of life."[51] In the summer and fall of 1946 alone, the Institute for Citizenship granted six scholarships, conducted a workshop for Kansas high school social studies teachers, offered

[45]"Elections: 1946, Your Chance to Change Congress Now," *New Republic*, Feb. 11, 1946, President's Secretary's Files, Box 45, Truman Presidential Papers, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

[46]Statement by the President Concerning U.S. Membership in UNESCO, July 30, 1946, Official Files, Box 464, Truman Presidential Papers, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

[47]Eisenhower, *The President Is Calling*, 180.

[48]Carey, *Kansas State University*, 169.

[49]Russell Thackrey, "The 'Eisenhower Era' at Kansas State University," in Quiring, *The Milton S. Eisenhower Years*, 37–38; Michael J. McVicar, "Aggressive Philanthropy: Progressivism, Conservativism, and the William Volker Charities Fund," *Missouri Historical Review* 105, no. 4 (July 2011), 191–212; The William Volker Fund focused on improving health care and education and reducing the influence of political machines in the Kansas City area. Volker passed away a year after this donation was made in 1946, leaving his nephew Harold Luhnow to shepherd the fund in a much more conservative and evangelical direction.

[50]"Volker Gives K.S.C. $200,000," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Sept. 28, 1945.

[51]*Kansas State College Yearbook, 1945–46*, 56–57.

adult education courses through the K-State Extension, and gave several presentations for community organizations.[52] The program at Kansas State College picked up so much attention in late 1946 that the director of the Federal Extension Service, M. L. Wilson, praised the Institute as "one of the most significant recent contributions to come out of a land-grant college."[53]

As the Institute gained further national attention, Eisenhower's federal appointments increased from summer 1946 forward. In July, he was selected as a member of the Truman Presidential Commission on Higher Education and named national chair of the first general session of UNESCO in Paris from November to December. As a member of the Truman Commission, Eisenhower joined fellow educational leaders tasked with studying economic and racial barriers in higher education and publishing their findings. Their volume, the second of six in total published by the Commission, was the most groundbreaking and controversial. In this piece, Eisenhower and fellow Commission members highlighted that many of the most prestigious colleges and universities across the country had existing racial quotas in place, limiting the number of Black and Jewish admissions, while institutions in the American South remained entirely segregated for White admissions only.[54] The issue of racial discrimination was of primary interest to President Truman, who expressed on more than one occasion to members of his Presidential Commissions on higher education and civil rights that "discrimination is a disease" that must be removed in order to prevent another wave of "Ku Kluxism" from threatening America's progress at home and with the international community.[55] Incorporating UNESCO language throughout their study, Eisenhower and his colleagues recommended the abandonment of racial and religious discrimination in higher education admissions practices, and that "Colleges become laboratories of inter-race and interfaith fellowship" rather than institutions that uphold racial and religious prejudice.[56]

[52]"Scholarships in Citizenship Given," *Manhattan Mercury*, July 16, 1946, 1; "Citizenship Is Topic at Meeting Thursday Evening," *Manhattan Mercury*, April 12, 1946, 3; "Adult Class Grows into Two Sections," *Manhattan Mercury*, Oct. 8, 1946, 5; "Montgomery Is New Head of Kiwanians," *Manhattan Republic*, Oct. 23, 1946, 5, https://www.newspapers.com/article/manhattan-republic-institute-sponsors-tw/136552147/.

[53]"Praises for College Courses, Institute," *Manhattan Mercury*, Aug. 16, 1946, 1, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-manhattan-mercury-institute-for-citi/136551887/.

[54]Statement by President Harry Truman on the Presidential Commission on Higher Education, Dec. 12, 1947, White House Central File: Official File, Box 1624, Truman Presidential Papers, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

[55]President Truman to Charles G. Bolte, Aug. 28, 1946, White House Central File: Official File, Box 1624, Truman Presidential Papers, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO; Informal Remarks to the President's Commission, Feb. 6, 1947, President's Secretary's Files, Box 188, Truman Presidential Papers Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

[56]President's Commission on Higher Education, *Higher Education for Democracy*, vol. 2, *Equalizing and Expanding Individual Opportunity* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947), 26–27; Ethan Schrum, "Establishing a Democratic Religion: Metaphysics and Democracy in the Debates over the President's Commission on Higher Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (Aug. 2007), 277–301; Philo A. Hutcheson, "The Truman Commission's Vision of the Future," Thought & Action 107 (Fall 2007), 115.

In Paris, race was also a frequent topic of discussion among the general body. With racial violence still taking place in the United States and throughout the world, fellow US representative to UNESCO Charles S. Johnson, president of Fisk University, recounted the general consensus of his peer delegates that "minority, immigration, and colonial problems posed the greatest challenge to the effectiveness of UNESCO," problems existing as "real elements of danger facing a world striving eagerly for peace and security."[57] To those at the table, racial and religious barriers would need to be removed in order for democracy and world governance to flourish.

In Kansas there was no legal statute requiring racial separation in higher education; nonetheless, Kansas State College and the surrounding community of Manhattan suffered from de facto segregation. In October 1946, awareness of this issue began to increase among members of the K-State Student Council after several Black students were required to sit in a separate section of the local movie theater. Undergraduate engineering major Bob Seaton brought a proposal to the floor requesting that the Student Council pass a motion opposing segregation in Manhattan theaters.[58] When opposition to the motion arose, Black student council member Andy Jackson stood in its defense, exclaiming, "I am an American citizen like everyone else, and as citizens, we are entitled to just fruits of democracy." Jackson's words reflected the feelings of many students of color attending an institution invested in promoting and bettering "citizenship" and "democracy" while feeling both words were still out of reach for him and the black community. A later poll revealed that a narrow 51 percent of students across the College were in favor of segregated theaters.[59] Though the motion of Seaton and Jackson wasn't officially adopted, news of the Student Council debate made its way by telegram to Eisenhower in Paris, who recommitted himself to combating discrimination in his reconstruction of the College's institutional culture. In an assembly upon his return from Paris, Eisenhower laid out plainly to his students what was at stake if cross-cultural understanding and democracy were to fail in the new postwar atomic age. He argued,

> [We have] a choice between positive, global peace, or horrible, indescribable destruction. Indeed, the situation does not really permit a choice. We are compelled, by all that has gone before us in history and by the value we place upon human life, to choose one world. There is no alternative… . The place for each individual to start is with himself. The greatest contribution to world peace and security each free citizen can possibly make is to begin now, today, to inform himself accurately about the cultural heritages of all peoples and about our modern domestic and international problems."[60]

Eisenhower's updates about UNESCO and his time in Paris energized the student body, many taking his challenge for cultural learning to heart. K-State in spring 1947

[57]"New Fisk President, Back in US Expresses Deep Faith in UNESCO," *Chicago Defender*, Jan. 4, 1947, 3.

[58]"Students Oppose Segregation Rules," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Oct. 26, 1946.

[59]Merril Werts, "Student Opinion Survey Shows K-Staters Divided on Racial Segregation in Theaters," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Nov. 12, 1946.

[60]Milton Eisenhower, "UNESCO Points the Way to International Understanding," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), March 7, 1947.

was ready to bloom with new global learning opportunities. That year, the School of Arts and Sciences was carrying 70 percent of the teaching load, with a larger enrollment of students than the Agriculture and Engineering schools combined.[61] The Student Council began organizing "International Security Assemblies" with the help of faculty and administrators, bringing a host of international officials to speak on campus, including United Nations delegates from South Africa, Great Britain, and China. Even the president's older brother, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was brought in to speak with students about the postwar reconstruction of Europe.[62] In addition to the speeches on global issues, students also began hearing new languages on the quad following the approval of the first K-State international student exchange program with Mexico. By mid-1947, student exchange had contributed greatly to the internationalization of campus, with enrolled students representing fifteen countries.

In May, a major National UNESCO Conference was scheduled to take place in Denver. Eager to promote UNESCO's peacebuilding mission, Eisenhower and Walker committed to soliciting the attendance of campus and statewide community members at the conference. From February to early May, Eisenhower, Walker, and Eric Tebow of the Institute staff wrote hundreds of letters, organized transportation and hotel arrangements, and visited personally with several Kansas educational and community leaders to encourage their attendance. In campus and local newspaper editorials, Eisenhower recruited readers to join "the UNESCO army, dedicated to truth and understanding."[63] When the conference finally arrived in mid-May, some two hundred Kansans were seated in the audience—the regional conference was a major success.[64]

Those in attendance at the UNESCO conference in Denver were so inspired they immediately got to work organizing a state-level UNESCO conference in Kansas to be held in December 1947. Although Wichita was selected as the event's location, the bulk of the planning and preparation took place on the campus of Kansas State College. Over the summer, community members, faculty, students, and administrators collaborated on conference details, the process of creating a state commission, and how they could inspire the implementation of UNESCO global-learning initiatives in local Kansas communities. In September, Eisenhower spoke about the power of individual changemakers at the third meeting of the US National Commission for UNESCO in Philadelphia. Marveling at the inspiring collaborative work he witnessed over the summer, he remarked, "UNESCO's task clearly involves profound studies by trained specialists … but if UNESCO is truly to lead us to world peace through international understanding, this high-level scholarly attack must be supplemented by concrete projects in which the people of our cities and rural areas … can directly and immediately participate."[65]

[61] *Kansas State College Yearbook 1946-47*, 42–43.

[62] *Kansas State College Yearbook 1946-47*, 75–76.

[63] "Eisenhower Explains UNESCO Aims to Students at All College Assembly," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Sept. 19, 1947.

[64] Kenneth Davis, *The Kansas Story on UNESCO*, United States National Commission for UNESCO, March 1949, 7–8.

[65] Davis, *The Kansas Story on UNESCO*, 4.

When the day finally came for the Kansas UNESCO Conference on December 12, a blizzard had engulfed all of southeastern Kansas. Still, despite the storm, 802 delegates and observers representing over half of the counties in the state made it to Wichita.[66] Individuals from all walks of life were present and ready to engage with the organization, from pastors and rabbis, to educators, businessmen, radio commentators, mothers, community organizers, and students from each of the state's major colleges and universities. After a discussion of aims and goals, the first statewide UNESCO commission in the country was officially established in Kansas, with Dr. Robert Walker elected as chairman. The Conference consisted of six breakout sessions and a keynote address given by Milton Eisenhower upon his return from the second global UNESCO general session in Mexico City.[67] Attendees discussed the foundations of the new Kansas UNESCO branch and the role it would play in UNESCO's international mission. A Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education made plans for a textbook survey to determine to what extent existing materials "feed prejudice, are inaccurate, or … fail to contribute to international understanding."[68] The Committee made efforts to suggest revisions and distributed more accurate materials, including a booklet published by the New York City Board of Education titled *A Better World*. A Committee on Adult Education organized a series of UNESCO workshops, films, and learning materials that could be distributed for consumption statewide. A Committee on Reconstruction organized a United Nations Appeal for Children campaign to assist in the education and resettlement of displaced adults and children brought to Kansas after the war. Finally, establishing headquarters on the campus of Kansas State College, Walker and his team produced a bulletin and newspaper to spread the word about films, books, upcoming speaker events, and peacebuilding events across the state.[69]

For nearly a decade, the Kansas Commission for UNESCO served as a major player in state and local educational initiatives. By April 1948, it had successfully organized UNESCO units in thirty counties and six colleges and universities, with numbers continually growing by the day.[70] In 1949, the Commission published *The Kansas Story on UNESCO*, a pamphlet that documented the success of its campus-community partnership and suggested how it could be replicated by other states and nations. Though it may have been impossible to stop the impending Cold War, citizens felt they were contributing to the pursuit of world peace through cross-cultural understanding, and in some small way, they felt they were making a difference. For many students invested in citizenship education at Kansas State College, being involved in the new Kansas Commission for UNESCO broadened their interest in issues at the local, national, and

[66] Davis, *The Kansas Story on UNESCO*, 21.

[67] The 1947 UNESCO conference in Mexico is especially noteworthy because it is the moment the international body voted on the creation of a Declaration on Human Rights. Former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt was charged by Truman to lead the American delegation in drafting the document.

[68] Davis, *The Kansas Story on UNESCO*, 31–33.

[69] Davis, *The Kansas Story on UNESCO*, 31–33.

[70] "Statewide UNESCO Unit Has 30 Member Counties," *Manhattan Mercury*, April 5, 1948, 1, https://www.newspapers.com/article/manhattan-republic-statewide-unesco-unit/156672437/.

global level. This bridge to peace activism would act as a catalyst for the growing movement of support for civil rights and desegregation among White and Black citizens in the state of Kansas.

A peacebuilding movement: Global citizens and desegregation

By spring 1948, UNESCO fever had swept across every college and university campus in Kansas, but especially on the grounds of statewide headquarters at Kansas State College. In March, students replaced their "International Security Assemblies" with events sponsored by the new UNESCO Club. Club leaders hosted a mock United Nations event that allowed the campus community to learn about international governance through participation. Undergraduates taking part in the mock session were required to learn about the culture, history, and present needs of each country they were given to represent—a powerful global learning tool for students from mostly rural communities. In addition to drawing one-hundred-plus participants, the event was open to observers, including local high schoolers and community members.[71] It wasn't always pretty; White students are depicted wearing the cultural and traditional clothing from the nations they represented, and it's not clear whether students were always respectful, though no incidents were recorded to the contrary. An active space for local and exchange students alike, UNESCO Club-sponsored events, speeches, and fundraisers strived to engage peers in global learning experiences that would open people's minds, not close them.

Students weren't just learning through mock participation, they were also taking active steps to involve themselves directly in the reconstruction of war-torn Europe and Asia. The "Adopt a School" campaign was first proposed at the Kansas Commission for UNESCO Conference in December and quickly became one of the most popular and effective peacebuilding activities on college campuses across the state. Each institution pledged to select a town, school, or church that had been affected by the war to focus on for the academic year.[72] Funds were raised, letters were written to survivors, speakers were brought to campus—all in an effort to actively engage students in a powerful peacebuilding campaign. Washburn University adopted an Ethiopian school and welcomed an Ethiopian exchange student in February. Friends University in Wichita adopted a small Hungarian village, while Wichita State University adopted the University of Munich in Germany. Kansas State College selected Lingnan University in Canton (now Ghangzhou), China, for adoption. Students donated books, magazines, clothing, and other materials for the reconstruction of the institution damaged by the Japanese occupation. The broader Kansas community was inspired to begin a similar effort in facilitating exchange with war-torn towns and cities across the ocean. Neosho County, as one example, sponsored an exchange project with a small town in Holland. Citizens exchanged "letters, newspapers, and illustrated materials," as well as seeds,

[71] *Kansas State Yearbook 1946–47*, "K-Staters Study World Peace," 91–92.

[72] "On UNESCO Program," *Atchison Daily Globe*, Nov. 20, 1948, 6, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-atchison-daily-globe-the-kansas-sto/133068701/.

textiles, and cultural items.[73] Never in the history of the state had the international community felt so close.

Building upon this momentum, the Institute for Citizenship secured enough funding from local businesses and organizations to sponsor ten K-State student exchanges. One UNESCO student leader, John Sjo, was a military veteran who secured funding from the State Farm Bureau to study different methods of agriculture in Europe while helping with reconstruction. Upon his return, he was asked to conduct a short speaking tour of several high schools in the east-central Kansas area to tell students about his experience.[74] Through active engagement with peacebuilding, students at Kansas State led global initiatives that bolstered learning and made a difference for those they were able to serve. But while some were focused on involving themselves overseas, others looked to challenges closer to home.

Students on campus associated with UNESCO and the National Student Association formed a Civil Rights Committee to document cases of formal and informal racial discrimination across the city of Manhattan. In just one semester, the group enlisted the participation of a hundred active students and added over three hundred names to their mailing list. From August to December of 1948, the group, led by committee president Lou Northam, surveyed ninety local restaurants, bars, theaters, and housing developments to study the problem of racial discrimination. In an interview with the campus newspaper, Northam explained, "We simply want to establish positive actions for equality among as many citizens as possible … to secure for all society the right to citizenship and its privileges, and discourage in every possible way discrimination and segregation based on race, color, creed, or national origin."[75] The Committee found that while several establishments were marked as spaces safe for students of color, discrimination in housing was rampant. It thus became the focal point of the report. Owing to redlining bank and real estate practices, Black students and faculty were not permitted to live north of Colorado Street in Manhattan. Even the school's one Black fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi, was required to operate below the Colorado Street color line. As the College grew to attract more students from within the state and abroad, a rise in discrimination complaints made their way to Eisenhower's desk, which troubled him immensely.

Racial discrimination was becoming a heated topic in 1947-48 within the region and across the country. After the publication of two Presidential Commission Reports, first on Civil Rights and then on Higher Education, the Truman administration began pushing Congress for civil rights legislation.[76] In June 1947, Truman became the first American president to address the NAACP in front of the Lincoln Memorial, a year

[73]"On UNESCO Program," 6.

[74]"John Sjo Gives Talk on Trip to Europe," *Oracle* (Kingman, KS), April 19, 1949, 2, https://www.newspapers.com/article/oracle-john-sjo-gives-talk-on-trip-to-eu/156672113/. Sjo would later go on to become a professor in agricultural economics at Kansas State University.

[75]Lou Northam, interview by Rex Parsons, in "Civil Rights Committee, UNESCO Strive for Minority Group Equality," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Dec. 3, 1948.

[76]Steven F. Lawson, ed., *To Secure These Rights: The Report of President Harry S. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights* (Boston: Bedford Publishing, 2004); McCullough, *Truman*, 586–91; Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2022), 14–28.

before he desegregated the US military—a major spark in the already active Black freedom struggle.[77] Closer to home, thirty-year-old Jewish educator Esther Brown of Kansas City, Missouri, began working with the NAACP to highlight the funding discrepancies between the White schools and Black schools in her neighborhood. Embarking on a fundraising campaign throughout Kansas in 1948, including a pivotal stop in Manhattan, Brown solicited enough funds to launch a key lawsuit in partnership with the affected Black families in *Webb v. School District No. 90* in 1949.[78] Meanwhile, as the lawsuit played out in the courts, Black students in the school district staged a massive walkout to protest school segregation. During the walkout, courageous Black schoolteacher Corinthian Nutter taught protesting elementary school students in her home, under threat of violence and retaliation from the surrounding White community. Media outlets throughout the Kansas/Missouri region reported on *Webb v. School District No. 90* throughout the proceedings and to its conclusion, which invalidated the "separate but equal" doctrine in Kansas City Schools. After the lawsuit's success, the NAACP moved to sponsor another lawsuit in the Topeka School District in 1951. This one was brought by the parents of Linda Brown, a young Black third-grade student whose name would forever be associated with the landmark Supreme Court case in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which declared segregation in schools throughout the country unconstitutional in 1954.[79]

Eisenhower's approach to ending discrimination at K-State was decidedly more *evolutionary* than *revolutionary*. He was often uncomfortable with the term *activist* and refrained from using it to describe his approach to civil rights in his memoir, published in 1974. In his 1943 inauguration address, he boldly declared that "education must work for social justice," though his personal philosophy was to refrain from strong political statements as the head of a publicly funded state college. "What an educational institution can do in the field of civil rights," he later reflected, "is to become a model of excellence, upholding mutuality in human relations, ridding itself of every vestige of discrimination."[80] Thinking back on his experience in the War Relocation Authority, Eisenhower may have placed great value in taking a slow, well-thought out educational approach to avoid giving strong and vocal directives he felt would "force people into fixed ideological positions." The College, he hoped, would maintain its place as a beacon of change to the community rather than a space of polarization and conflict. "I'm glad it did not come to that," he shared almost forty years later in an interview with biographer Stephen Ambrose. "It could have frozen many minds."[81]

After a review of the Student Civil Rights Committee's findings, Eisenhower began his approach to ending discrimination by working with the Student Council. In one

[77] Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights*, 28–43.

[78] "Housewife to Talk on School Problem," *Wichita Eagle* (Wichita, KS), July 19, 1949, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-wichita-eagle-esther-brown-1949-tope/136420713/; see Milton S. Katz and Susan B. Tucker, "A Pioneers in Civil Rights: Esther Brown and the South Park Desegregation Case of 1948," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1995), 234–48.

[79] Adrienne Van Der Valk, "The Bravery of Linda Brown," Learning For Justice - Southern Poverty Law Center, March 27, 2018, https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/the-bravery-of-linda-brown.

[80] Eisenhower, *The President Is Calling*, 168.

[81] Milton Eisenhower, interview with Stephen Ambrose, Aug. 1982, in Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 101.

meeting he asked subtly, "Do you folks care if the black students swim with the whites?" The students thought for a moment about the segregated pool on campus and began to shrug, indicating that they were not against swimming with their Black peers. Eisenhower encouraged them to think more about passing a Student Council resolution to make the pool open for all students. After some time, they voted unanimously to approve.[82] When he encountered protest from the athletics director, Eisenhower gave strong support to the Student Council resolution. The swimming pool was officially integrated in late 1948, sparking the beginning of another transformation on campus.

Eisenhower worked with students again when federal funding was used to build new housing facilities for student veterans using the GI Bill. "Do you care whether black students are housed there too?" he asked the Student Council. Once again, they approved of a resolution to integrate campus housing—the first integrated housing project in the city of Manhattan.[83] Next came athletics: after Black student teams were allowed to participate in intramural competition beginning in December 1948, Kappa Alpha Psi won the tournament in back-to-back seasons.[84] After two or three semesters, the evolutionary desegregation movement quietly made its way through the remaining discriminatory pockets on campus, integrating facilities, housing, and intramurals with little backlash from students or the surrounding community, and without a single article in the newspaper. Avoiding campus protest or an oppositional demonstration, Eisenhower worked quietly and effectively with students to institute change.[85]

The ensuing years of 1948-50 marked a significant shift toward domestic reform for those associated with the Kansas Commission for UNESCO. After a violent communist-backed coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the hopes of many Americans seeking a peaceful postwar resolution between the United States and Soviet Union were beginning to diminish. Conservative anti-communist crusaders in both parties seized the opportunity to paint UNESCO's efforts to bridge divides between the East and West as "pink" or "communist-leaning," as was the case with Idaho congressman John T. Wood, who described UNESCO as "the greatest subversive plot in history."[86] With criticism building at this time in the early stages of McCarthyism, the publication of the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights turned attention inward, fueling UNESCO civil rights discourse to combat racial violence, segregation, and other barriers standing in the way of the United States' ability to meet the standards laid out by the international community. When the United Nations Social and Economic Council tasked global UNESCO leaders to study the issue of race prejudice, Eisenhower supported a resolution to analyze "scientific materials concerning questions of race."[87] This campaign formed the beginnings of the first UNESCO Statement

[82] Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 101–2.

[83] Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 101–2.

[84] *Kansas State College Yearbook, 1949-50*, 185.

[85] Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 102-3, notes that Eisenhower received one angry letter from a parent threatening to pull her daughter from school if his desegregation policies were not abandoned. Eisenhower wrote back simply noting that he "hoped the student would not be deprived of her opportunity to attend Kansas State." The student remained enrolled and ultimately graduated.

[86] John T. Wood, "Washington Impressions" *Coeur d'Alene Press*, Nov. 10, 1951, 2, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-coeur-dalene-press-john-t-wood-cri/165065897/

[87] UNESCO, *The Race Question* (Paris: United Nations Organization, 1950).

on Race, issued in 1950, a document that aimed to dispel notions of prejudice, aversion to race-mixing, and ideas purported by eugenicists and White supremacists in the West.[88]

In spring 1949, Eisenhower recognized that just as his peacebuilding initiatives could not be contained on campus, neither could his mission to root out discrimination. He became more calculated in his decision to approach the public with discussions about civil rights and social justice, knowing any effort to disrupt the status quo could be targeted by anti-communist officials with a microscope on higher education.[89] The Institute for Citizenship organized a regional conference on civil rights and began offering community workshops on racial prejudice and job discrimination.[90] Then, in an unprecedented move for the campus community, Eisenhower began encouraging his athletics director not only to allow Black players to join K-State athletic teams, but to actively pursue the recruitment of Black student-athletes through scholarship offers. That fall, Manhattan native Harold Robinson became the first Black athlete to receive a scholarship in the Big Seven Conference upon joining the Kansas State Football Team.[91] Robinson remembered, "When I walked on the practice field I was waiting for someone to say, 'Hey, you're not supposed to be here.' But nobody ever said anything… . All these guys who didn't care for me, the next thing you know they were my buddies. The whole team, they protected me. I enjoyed it all. At the time, I didn't realize how important it all was. All I wanted to do was play ball."[92] In his first season with the team, Robinson played an average of forty minutes per game as a linebacker in a strong Wildcat defensive squad, receiving accolades from coaches and players alike.[93] Soon the Kansas State men's basketball team began recruiting Black players, with baseball following suit.

The radical acceptance of Black players in K-State athletics was unique, but not singular. The inclusion of Black athletes had been at the forefront of the national consciousness after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in professional baseball in 1947. Several college sports programs in the North and in the West had begun recruiting and playing Black athletes with administrative support. But with progress also came resistance. Integrated college sports teams ran into roadblocks throughout the South

[88]In 1951, a revised UNESCO Statement on Race was published to further dispel biological understandings of race, declaring that all humans come from the same family, and that racial differences make no biological difference with regard to individual intelligence or capabilities.

[89]For more on the Cold War attack on social change, see Joy Ann Williamson-Lott, "The Battle over Power, Control, and Academic Freedom at Southern Institutions of Higher Education, 1955-1965," *Journal of Southern History* 79, no. 4 (Nov. 2013), 879–920.

[90]"Eldridge Announces Civil Rights Meeting," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Sept. 27, 1949; "Workshop to Consider Job Discrimination," *Manhattan Mercury* (Manhattan, KS), Feb. 19, 1950, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-manhattan-mercury-institute-for-citi/136553896/.

[91]Bob King, "Manhattan Youth First Negro to Play in Big 7," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Sept. 15, 1949; 2024 marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of Robinson's integration of Kansas State College sports in 1949.

[92]"SE: K-State Led Charge in Breaking Racial Barriers in Conference," Kansas State University Athletics, Feb. 7, 2017, https://www.kstatesports.com/news/2017/2/6/58994e36e4b0adf5f7a13083_131478101492171198.aspx.

[93]Al Berekmann, "Harold Robinson Completes Successful First Season in Big Seven Football," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), Dec. 2, 1949.

and Midwest, with several all-White teams threatening to forfeit games rather than play against a Black opponent. Such was the case in 1946, when the University of Tennessee's all-White basketball program chose to forfeit a game rather than play against Duquesne University's integrated team.[94] The following season, coach John Wooden convinced the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball to remove its ban on Black athletes after a legendary championship run coaching an integrated team at Indiana State University. Pressure began mounting for change across the college sports spectrum, and Eisenhower, using his influence and reputation within the Big Seven Conference, worked closely with K-State athletic programs to move integration forward.

During that year's basketball season, Eisenhower's office received a number of angry phone calls from the presidents of the University of Oklahoma and the University of Missouri. No other school in the history of the conference had allowed Black athletes to play with Whites, and they demanded that Kansas State leave these players at home when playing scheduled away games at their institutions. Both presidents threatened to forfeit any game in which Kansas State allowed Black athletes to play outside of Manhattan. As basketball season ramped up and the team traveled to play Oklahoma and Missouri that winter, Kansas State made sure Black players were in the starting lineup.[95] Neither opposing team made the decision to forfeit.

The road was difficult for the first Black athletes to break the color barrier at Kansas State College. Gene Wilson, the school's first African American basketball player, was often required to stay in separate hotels from his teammates on road trips and was subjected to the racist heckling of fans from opposing teams. Working behind the scenes, Eisenhower monitored the treatment of Black athletes and made sure they had access to the same facilities as the rest of the student body. Years later in 2014, Wilson told the *Manhattan Mercury*,

> Kansas State's President Milton Eisenhower took the lead and I'm grateful to him for making it happen. If it wasn't for Milton Eisenhower, the Big Seven would not have integrated for another few years. Eisenhower was determined it was going to happen and suffered a little because of it. They call him a socialist, a communist and looking back now it was crazy back then because he came from Abilene and his brother was the President.[96]

Eisenhower's evolutionary approach in curing discrimination wasn't perfect. Just as he failed to fully protect Japanese Americans in 1943, he was unable to fully shelter Black student-athletes from the continued discrimination they would go on to face breaking the color barrier. However, Wilson's remarks speak to the understanding that many Black Kansas State athletes had at the time—that their college president was in their corner, and for some, that was enough to continue the fight.

[94]"On This Day – Dec 23, 1946: University of Tennessee Basketball Team Refuses to Play Opponent," Equal Justice Initiative, https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/dec/23.

[95]Ambrose and Immerman, *Milton S. Eisenhower*, 103.

[96]"SE: K-State Led Charge in Breaking Racial Barriers in Conference," Kansas State University Athletics, Feb. 7, 2017, https://www.kstatesports.com/news/2017/2/6/58994e36e4b0adf5f7a13083_131478101492171198.aspx.

Although Eisenhower's pursuit of desegregation in the Big Seven Conference was his most publicly scrutinized endeavor, the growing national spotlight on his family and his personal relationship with the K-State community likely prevented any major harm to his reputation. By late 1949, Republican Party insiders were beginning to court Dwight Eisenhower for a possible presidential bid. The growing popularity of Ike, and a real chance to secure a Republican presidency for the first time since 1929, likely reduced the level of major accusations levied from conservative anti-communist factions toward the Eisenhower family. And then there was Milton's solid reputation within the K-State community—a reputation marked by loyalty and pride that extended from his time as a young student on campus in 1917. The admiration of students, faculty, and federal officials for him and his family was well recognized by those in the state legislature. Like other internationalist college administrators of his day, such as Franklin Porter Graham at the University of North Carolina and George D. Stoddard of the University of Illinois, Eisenhower knew how to build community and persuade those around him to invest in initiatives for the common good.[97] He spoke the language of concerned global citizens, and he knew how to translate their needs to a conservative state legislature in Kansas that saw him more as a partner than an enemy. The political situation was volatile, as fellow UNESCO colleague George D. Stoddard found out when he was ousted from his University of Illinois presidency at the height of McCarthyism in 1953. But, even under significant political risk, Milton Eisenhower remained steadfast in his commitment to the ideals he set forth in 1943 for the extension of good citizenship and peacebuilding.

Toward the end of his life, after his personal memoir and biography were written, it is clear that among his many reforms and achievements at Kansas State, Eisenhower was most proud of his quiet and coordinated activism with students to break the color barrier and dismantle systems of prejudice and discrimination on campus—the results of a positive cultural transformation centered on strengthening democracy and enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

Conclusion

On March 27, 1950, Milton Eisenhower published an article based on a speech he gave before the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities two months earlier. He wrote, "The best service the average American can immediately give to the cause of peace is the education of himself: the replacement of his own ignorance with a knowledge of world affairs, the overcoming of his own prejudices by sympathetic understanding, the permeation of his own private interests with an objective rationality."[98] No better summary could be given of the radical transformation he enacted during his seven years as president of Kansas State College. There, students in the former center of the "isolationist belt" learned about the world through courses

[97] William A. Link, *Franklin Porter Graham: Southern Liberal, Citizen of the World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021); George D. Stoddard, *The Pursuit of Education: An Autobiography* (New York: Vantage Press, 1981).

[98] "President Eisenhower Offers Ideas on World Peace in National Journal," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), March 27, 1950.

taught by the Institute for Citizenship, in the new multi-faith chapel, in their UNESCO Club assemblies, and through new curricular changes that emphasized cross-cultural understanding. They were encouraged to root out their prejudices by participating in peacebuilding and civil rights campaigns to help the war-stricken and marginalized in partnership between campus and community through the Kansas Commission for UNESCO, and as a result, they focused less on their private interests and more on ensuring the rights of citizenship for all. The small land-grant college and her students became a model of democracy and global citizenship in action.

Shortly after the publication of his article, Milton Eisenhower announced that he was leaving Kansas State College to serve as president of Penn State University. He considered the change among the most difficult professional decisions of his career but relished the opportunity to bring his ideas to a much larger university system with a strong liberal arts reputation. The Kansas State community was shocked by the announcement, organizing a memorial "Eisenhower Day" to celebrate the accomplishments of the president and allow students to pay tribute before his departure.[99] That morning, Eisenhower canceled his appointments to make time for individual meetings with members of the Student Council—his partners in institutional change. The immeasurable work they accomplished together in social and cultural change was commemorated by the School of Arts and Sciences, which now bears the name "Eisenhower Hall." Kansas State College and the Kansas Commission for UNESCO remained a force for good as globally minded organizations in the Midwest, though the Cold War advent of Sputnik and subsequent National Defense Education Act of 1958 drove educational investment toward other priorities, particularly scientific and technical education. Still, the cultural and social transformation organized by students, faculty, administrators, and community organizers in Kansas remains a powerful model of peacebuilding and world citizenship for educators moving into the future. After six years as president of Penn State University (1950-56), Eisenhower would serve for two separate terms as president of Johns Hopkins University (1956-1967, 1971-72), and as an adviser to three more American presidents. Even as the United States descended further into the Cold War, he remained committed to peacebuilding, social justice, and cross-cultural understanding until his death in 1985.

Today, isolationism is creeping back into American political discourse. A recent Gallup poll found that only 65 percent of Americans "think the United States should take a leading role in world affairs"—the lowest number recorded in decades.[100] Rhetoric from top political leaders attacking immigrants and people of color has increased, sparking a 20 percent rise in hate crimes across the country from 2016 to 2020.[101] As major conflicts continue in Ukraine and Gaza, cynicism among republicans (Eisenhower's former party) is high, with many arguing that the United States should

[99]"Eisenhower Day Offers Students Change to Pay Tribute to Prexy," *Kansas State Collegian* (Manhattan, KS), April 25, 1950.

[100]Jeffrey M. Jones, "Fewer Americans Want U.S. Taking Major Role in World Affairs," Gallup, March 3, 2023, https://news.gallup.com/topic/foreign-affairs.aspx.

[101]Vanessa Williamson and Isabella Gelfand, "Trump and Racism: What Do the Data Say?," Brookings Institute, Washington, DC, Aug. 14, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/trump-and-racism-what-do-the-data-say/.

divest from its decades-long mission to preserve global democracy and spend less time talking about race, culture, and inequality in the classroom.[102] In a moment when American peacebuilding and education for global citizenship is urgently needed, scholars worry we are in danger of heading into a new era of isolationism and retrenchment from world affairs. In this pressing moment, looking to the past can give us clues on how we should respond to the similar threats we face today. Milton Eisenhower's cultural transformation of Kansas State College, a predominantly White, rural land-grant institution, reminds us that change is possible, that cultural education can open minds, and that campus-community partnerships can make a real difference in combating the spread of prejudice and isolationism in our communities. Eisenhower inspired this educational movement for peacebuilding and desegregation with mere changes to curriculum and initiatives to increase global awareness. Tools like education for global citizenship, peacebuilding initiatives, and campus-community partnerships remain viable options for today's educators seeking to enhance the open society in times of retrenchment from global and equitable learning.

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[102]German Lopez, "Half of Republicans Say Increased Racial Diversity Will Be 'Mostly Negative,'" *Vox*, July 24, 2018, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/7/24/17607608/racial-diversity-republicans-democrats.

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