

Leda Hoffmann's article "Self-Governance" in Grinnell Magazine's Winter 2010 issue was based on the following paper, the result of a Mentored Advanced Project she completed during her final semester at Grinnell. For anyone with a keen interest in the details of the evolution of self-governance at Grinnell, it's a very worthwhile read. It also gives a sense of the scope, depth, and professional quality of the scholarship and research delivered by students who undertake a Mentored Advanced Project at the College.

Establishing Home Rule: The Use of Self-Governance in 1960s Grinnell

A Mentored Advanced Project for History Professor Victoria Brown

By Leda Hoffmann, Spring 2009, Grinnell College

Today, Grinnell's campus is full of discussions about self-governance. How should students get what they want from the administration? Should students work within or outside of the student government system to achieve their goals? What kinds of rules govern alcohol and drug use? What happens to those rules when the police come knocking on students' dorm room doors? How do students stop other students from setting off fireworks? Is yelling "self-governance" out the window the best way to do that?

As Grinnellians discuss self-governance in all of these contexts, this paper seeks to demystify the development of self-governance at Grinnell and to explore where the current systems of self-governance came from. Students, faculty, and administrators typically assume that the principles and practices of student self-governance are products of the Sixties. In fact, the principle of self-governance has always been a foundation of a Grinnell education. And since the opening of the dorms, Grinnell students have been responsible for many decisions about how they would live in their residence halls, and governance structures have long existed to assist that process. Students in the Sixties did not invent self-governance, but they did leverage existing structures to assert their right to genuine autonomy in self-governance.

The principle and practice of self-governance existed for decades alongside the philosophy of *in loco parentis*, which empowered the college to act in place of the parent. This philosophy fit with self-governance as long as the 'child' (the self-governing student) agreed with the 'parent' (the responsible college administration) on basic values and codes of conduct. As the generation gap widened in the late sixties, however, there was a breakdown in shared values. The Grinnell student body, like students all over the world, asserted its generational power. In the case of Grinnell, students drew upon their historical claim to "self-governance" and used the already-existing structures of self-governance to push for their autonomy.

This paper treats the Sixties as that moment in the history of self-governance at Grinnell when students turned the governing responsibilities assigned to them into a demand to make their voices heard, achieve their goals, and strengthen their system of self-governance. It focuses on gender and sexuality because these were the core issues that galvanized campus debate over residence life. While self-governance extends beyond residence life to include academics, judicial councils, and drug and alcohol policies, it was policies around sex and gender in residence life that formed the battleground on which students and administrations fought over the definition of student power between the fall of 1965 and the fall of 1968.

The first steps in the process were taken in 1965 when the college administration made two proposals: segregate dorms by class year and integrate (ostensible unruly) men on North Campus with (purportedly well-behaved) women on South Campus. Students opposed these initiatives and, in voicing their opposition, began to demand a stronger voice in governance. The next steps in the process were taken when students called for the removal of sexist curfews on female students and succeeded in convincing the administration to change the policy. Subsequently, however, students' effort to expand the number of hours that men and women could visit each other's rooms met with administration resistance and became a rebellion against the power structure, ending in a change in who made dorm rules. Throughout this transition, students used the existing structures of self-governance to strengthen their role in setting the policies by which they would live.

The Beginnings of Self-Governance

Self-governance and *in loco parentis* existed together from the early days of Grinnell. As far back as the 1880s, the administration of Grinnell (then Iowa College) valued self-governance as an important component of a college education. In President George Gates' inaugural address in 1887, he spoke of Grinnell's tradition of self-governance:

As to discipline – I am both surprised and gratified profoundly to find a college so thoroughly reformed in the matter of self-government . . . Iowa College is far ahead of many of the older colleges of the East in this regard.[\[1\]](#)

Gates went on to emphasize the importance of self-government as a learning tool, saying,

It is ten thousand times better that young people should learn to govern themselves, than that they should be governed in any best way whatsoever . . . I have boundless confidence in putting students on their honor. If we expect great things of them, they will give us yet better than we expect.[\[2\]](#)

Echoing Gates' sentiment, the college bulletin for that same year says:

All honor attaches to self-government, and self-respect can be secured only by faithfulness and diligence in promoting one's own and the common-welfare in student life as in the state. To this the Trustees look for the realization of their hopes in the students of the college.[\[3\]](#)

When President Main built the women's South Campus dorms in 1915 and the men's North Campus dorms in 1917, the college established dorm councils, setting up a system in which students were responsible for making and enforcing their own rules. The 1917 college bulletin outlined the importance of self-governance as a part of a college education: "The aim in the administration of college government is to lead all students to regard themselves as responsible for good order. The training in self government is considered no small part of the value of a college education."[\[4\]](#) Dorm presidents, the South Campus Women's League (later the Association for Women Students, AWS), and

the North Campus Council of Hall Presidents (CofHP) were responsible for establishing rules and enforcing them. Each dorm had a hall council that disciplined rule-breaking students.

In the 1917 President's report, the dean of women, Carrie Louise DeNise, called the Women's League a "self-governing body."^[5] The bulletins in the late 1910s stated, "The Women's League of which every woman is a member, by Grant Power of the Faculty, has complete control of all matters concerning the general conduct of women in the women's residence halls."^[6] This control included responsibility for "regulations of hours, activities and social functions."^[7] The bulletins from these years also stated, "the Dean of Women cooperates with the League, giving to it the benefit of her advice and experience, and in addition, stands ready to handle for it whatever cases of discipline may be referred to her by the Executive Board."^[8] This relationship apparently worked well. The Dean of Women reported in 1917, "The relation [of the Women's League] with the Dean of Women has been pleasant. There has been co-operation, exchange of opinions, open discussion, and the consideration of present and future policies."^[9] Self-governance and *in loco parentis* could exist together in 1917 because students and the administration shared common beliefs about the regulation of hours and student activities. Women believed that they should be protected by curfews and students appreciated guidance from the deans.

This system remained strong throughout the early part of the 20th century. In President Main's 1928 report to the trustees he wrote,

House government, under the sympathetic cooperation of college officers has by common consent been approved and firmly established. By natural development through the house groups, self-government has grown to be the established order for the entire student body . . . The Grinnell ideal has always been to develop in its students the consciousness of community responsibility.^[10]

Although there were moments of tension, and plenty of occasions when individual students broke the rules, the student body as a whole subscribed to the administrators' principles of residence life. Self-governance continued to grow under this framework. Jonathan Scharff argued in his 1984 paper on self-governance from 1900 to 1945, that Grinnell's "democratic self-governing student body" became "more representative and independent" in those years.^[11] Students took on more responsibility for "regulating dormitory life, disciplining students, and supervising various student activities,"^[12] while continuing to enact and enforce rules that conformed to adult standards of gender conduct and sexual propriety. Students, as a group, never questioned the campus adults' norms or their right to require obedience to these norms. As Scharff admitted, "the faculty had the final decision on everything that affected the college community,"^[13] and both the faculty and the administration were reluctant to give up parental control.^[14]

The dorm rules in place in the early sixties reflect the college's tradition of student enforcement of parental norms. The student senate, the Council of Hall Presidents (CofHP) and the Associated Women Students (AWS) enforced the rule stating that women had to be back on South Campus before curfew (usually 10:30 p.m. on weeknights and midnight on the weekends) when security locked the South Campus loggia. Students also enforced the rule that students could have a member of the opposite sex in his or her room only during visitation hours, from 2pm to 5pm on Sunday, during

which time all doors were to stay open the width of a book. The administration had the final say over these rules, but self-governance meant that students had the responsibility to enforce them. Hall councils tried students who broke the rules, but serious cases were referred to the Faculty Committee on Student Affairs (FCSA). Student senate proposals for any and all significant rule changes had to be approved by the FCSA, President Leggett, and the trustees.

The Sixties

In the Sixties, this system of *in loco parentis* came up against a new order. Across America, shifting power dynamics, the sexual revolution, and the sense that the older generation did not know best caused students to question the existing power dynamic on college campuses. As Terry Anderson writes in his introduction to *The Movement and the Sixties*: “Nothing was sacred, everything was challenged, and the result was an era we simply call ‘The Sixties’.”^[15] With the anti-war movement, Black Power movement, and student protests at universities all over the United States, young people saw that they could question the existing power dynamics and that they had more power than they might have previously believed.

At the center of the student revolution was the sexual revolution. The Sixties generation embraced a new set of ideas about sex and gender. The sexual revolution was not just about “free love” but was grounded in the idea that people should be free to make their own choices. Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin argue that the sexual revolution was “an insurgency rooted in the conviction that the erotic should be celebrated as an utterly normal part of life.”^[16] All over America, students “pressured college authorities, who had traditionally acted as surrogate parents, to stop policing their carnal lives.”^[17] Students spoke out against “parietal” rules that limited hours for coeducational visitation in dorm rooms. Beyond sexual freedom, students also argued that men and women could – and should – be platonic friends, and that youth should be free to “build self-regulating *communities* that would heal and transcend the multiple ruptures – of race, class, religion, and political ideology – that embattled their elders.”^[18]

The Sixties generation questioned their elders because, in young people’s eyes, the older generation did not appear to be running things very well. College students in the late sixties began adolescence during the Cuban Missile Crisis and watched as the people in charge of the world brought it close to destruction. The older generation got the country involved in a war in Vietnam that seemed to have no end and drafted the younger generation to fight it. In 1968, students watched as police used brutality against young protesters at the Democratic National Convention. In a world divided by the Cold War and a country torn apart by racial and political tension, students concluded that the older generation could not be trusted, and they pushed to make their own rules.

Adults had long believed that when students were given responsibility, they would support parentally-approved codes of conduct. Nothing prepared the Grinnell faculty and administration for the questioning of authority, gender norms, and sexual morals that came in the Sixties. Like people all over the world, Grinnell students challenged everything and sought to build a self-regulating community that better fit their new values.

Restructuring the Campuses

The administration instigated the first conflict over residence life when the new college president, Glenn Leggett, suggested dividing the dorms by class year and integrating the campuses by sex. This meant changing the system whereby men lived on North Campus, women lived on South Campus, and older students held governing authority over younger ones. The conflict in 1965 over these proposed changes did not reflect a Sixties-style student assertion of new values. Instead, the argument over the restructuring of the campuses was a traditional one – the adults worked to increase student civility while students asserted their behavior was not a real problem. It was the student demand to be involved in the decision-making process around this restructuring that foreshadowed the spirit of the Sixties and paved the way for student action on other residence life issues: women’s hours and coeducational visitation.

In the fall of 1965, President Leggett participated in his first Encampment, the annual retreat of administrators and Student Government Association (SGA) leaders. At Encampment, Leggett heard about a fraternity-like culture on North Campus where most male students spent all four years in the same dormitory. Leggett heard about male students butchering a pig in a Langan bathroom, leaving a dead frozen cat placed on top of a pile of snow, hazing underclassmen, and fostering a culture of “anti-intellectualism.”^[19] The new president concluded that life on North Campus “was noisy, vulgar, and academically debilitating” and that something had to be changed in the hall system to solve what he labeled the “North Campus Problem.”^[20] His solution was to restructure the dorms so that civilizing females would be living in women’s dorms on both North and South Campus, and students would be segregated by year in school in order to allow for a “progressive withdrawal of college authority.”^[21]

Leggett’s statements about self-governance in this period reveal a president who was conflicted about issues of student freedom and responsibility. He wanted students to learn from self-governance and told the student newspaper, the Scarlet & Black (S&B), before the 1965 Encampment, “I don't believe in the *in loco parentis* concept. The time is gone when the administration of a college can regulate student morality.”^[22] Besides, added the 47-year-old president, “I look too young to be anyone's father.”^[23] He believed that students should be guided through their first year and then “regulatory controls should be relaxed.”^[24]

After Encampment, however, Leggett outlined the dangers of too much student freedom: “Colleges have to let people make mistakes, but they can’t allow the students to get away with mistakes day after day.”^[25] He continued to push students to take responsibility but maintained that rules should be set by administrators, stating that students did not realize “how thoroughly they control the situation. They aren’t aware of the terrifying responsibility they have. The students have to create their own environment beyond the rules.”^[26] A month later, in October 1965, Leggett continued to outline his belief that students should be self-regulating under the guidance of college officials. In a speech aimed at parents, he said:

Students should not be encumbered with rules. Their society in the long run probably needs to be mostly self-regulating; but college officials, not students, have to define the environment in which this self-regulating society is to operate, and if students do not find this environment to their taste, then the adjustment is theirs, not the college’s to make, and it is a matter of honesty to announce it.^[27]

Leggett supported the traditional co-existence of self-governance and *in loco parentis*,

but it is clear from his statements that a growing sense of student freedom in the Sixties was beginning to shake this system. Since the president didn't have a well-worked-out philosophy, students questioned his inconsistencies and asserted their views in the discussion of dorm structure.

Leggett grounded his agenda of integrating men's and women's dorms in his desire to civilize the men on North Campus. He justified the second reform – the creation of “freshmen dorms” – in the argument that segregation by year would allow for a progressive withdrawal of college authority as students got older and, hopefully, more responsible. Student response to Leggett's ideas had two components – reaction to the content of the proposals and reaction to the process of making the decision. The reaction to the content reveals typical student worry about change, but the reaction to the process reveals a new “Sixties” student concern with demanding power.

Students did not generally agree that there was a “North Campus Problem” to begin with. At Encampment, some SGA officers had agreed that coed campuses would be a solution to immaturity on North Campus, but later that October, SGA president Steve Kent told the S&B that he believed there was no “North Campus Problem.”[\[28\]](#) At student senate the week after Encampment, there was no real discussion of possible changes to the hall system, as most senators did not think the current system was a problem.[\[29\]](#) In April, students continued to question the existence of a “North Campus Problem.” An S&B survey revealed that two-thirds of students doubted such a problem, and the editors of the S&B argued that Leggett's reform proposals were bad because they assumed anti-intellectualism when that had not been demonstrated.[\[30\]](#)

Still, most students accepted the idea of coed campuses even if they rejected Leggett's reason for proposing that reform. On that particular reform, there was dispute but no real conflict. However, when it came to the issue of “freshmen dorms” and the idea that South Campus would be for younger male and female students and North Campus for older male and female students, students took a strong oppositional stance. Students fought to keep one of the primary structures of self-governance, the hall council, in which upper-division students could guide younger students in the creation of self-regulating community. The administration insisted that it had no desire to “destroy the self-governing independence of the halls,” but students regarded the separation of the older students from the younger ones as a genuine threat to the self-governing hall system.[\[31\]](#) The issue dragged on, but students never relented. In a February 1966 poll, 341/400 female students held that all-class dorms were the best system and in April of 1966, 430/459 students polled expressed their opposition to freshmen halls.[\[32\]](#) A year and a half later, in September 1967, the editors of the S&B argued that dividing the campuses by year in school would mean that younger students would have no academic or social guidance.[\[33\]](#) And the following semester, in February 1968, all but 3 of the 117 respondents to another poll thought that splitting campuses by class was a bad idea.[\[34\]](#)

Ultimately, Leggett did decide to alternate the dorms by sex, but he never enacted a system of class segregation. This decision was due, in part, to the strength of student arguments, but it was also due to students' continuous demand for a voice in the issue. Immediately after Leggett's first Encampment in 1965, 50 students showed up at a coffee hour in the Forum to discuss the idea of integrating the dorms.[\[35\]](#) Less than a month later, 830 students had signed a petition complaining that the student voice was not being heard in the discussion of hall reorganization.[\[36\]](#) The December 3, 1965 S&B is full of letters from students arguing against breaking the campuses up by class.[\[37\]](#)

The effect of student demand for a voice is evident in Leggett's decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on residence life and to include equal numbers of students and

faculty on the committee.[38] Moreover, the Ad Hoc committee of three faculty and three students was not only chaired by a dean but by the SGA president as well.[39] The idea of providing for an equal student voice on committees was new and reveals a movement towards greater student involvement in decision-making. Leggett, however, still held all the power. Setting up the Ad Hoc Committee granted students the right to persuade him, not to overpower him. When Leggett decided not to split campuses by class, he wrote:

If students have power on this campus it is because their ideas are good, not because of some trade unionist concept that students ought to have something to say simply because they are students or because they are free for awhile to embarrass the college if they do not have their own way.[40]

Leggett maintained that he listened to students not because of increased student power, but because their ideas had merit. However, Leggett's concern that students could "embarrass" the college suggests that he felt some new threat from the student body; in October of 1967, students were embarrassing adults all over the country. Leggett was clearly nervous about these new ideas about student leverage and stuck to his claim to power under *in loco parentis*.

When students returned to campus in the fall of 1968, they moved into men's dorms and women's dorms on both ends of campus. With the beginning of coed campuses, the editors of the S&B mocked the administration's gendered reasoning for alternating dorms:

The women, through the shyness which befits the gentle sex, except on rare occasions, chose to stay on South Campus. The men usually preferred to remain in masculine company on North Campus. The nature of things dictates that women will have a taming influence upon men. The proximity of women surely will help to remove some of the jungle conditions that used to exist in the boys' dormitories and Cowles dining room.[41]

Students happily accepted this change, but not because they believed there were "jungle conditions" on North Campus or that women would be a "taming influence." Rather, students embraced the change because of their generational view that people of different sexes did not have to be separated. For students, this residence life issue was about students asserting their right to a voice on college issues and protecting the structures of self-governance in which hall presidents and hall councils could mentor younger students.

Women's Hours

During the time that students and administrators debated restructuring the dormitories, students mounted – and won – a separate fight to eliminate women's hours. Until the fall of 1967, first-semester female students had to be in their dorms by 10:30 p.m. on weekdays and midnight on the weekend.[42] Older female students had until 12:30 on Saturday nights.[43] Like most residence hall rules, enforcement of women's hours fell under the jurisdiction of the hall councils. Security locked the loggia doors at

curfew every night, but penalizing students for late returns was the responsibility of women's hall councils. In the spring of 1966, student discussion surrounding women's hours focused on how to effectively administer the rule. It appears that more and more women were missing curfew, and an Associated Women's Students (AWS) proposal in February of 1966 asked that only one door be left unlocked at curfew so that it would be easier to keep track of when women returned.[44] At the same time, AWS asked that each woman be given 15 "grace" minutes per semester in which she could be late without a penalty.[45] Once she used up her 15 minutes, however, a female student returning past curfew would be punished with three nights' confinement plus one night for every 5 minutes she was late.[46] These proposals, indicating an effort to control changing behavior, passed student senate and were approved by the faculty and administration.

It was at Encampment in the fall of 1966 that AWS reversed its approach and started to argue against women's curfews altogether. Upon SGA's return from Encampment, the S&B published a special edition of the paper to cover the issues discussed at Encampment, where AWS president, Karen Lauterbach, called for "unrestricted hours." Lauterbach argued that women needed to learn individual responsibility and that segregating sexes by isolating women was paternalistic.[47] Lauterbach's statements reveal a shift in the younger generation's attitude towards gender roles. Just as students questioned Leggett's idea that women would civilize the men on sex-integrated campuses, others began to argue that women's hours represented "repression by the system" and saw "potential for responsibility" in the abolition of hours.[48]

However, the shift was not complete in 1966. The S&B reported, "some students, especially girls, expressed doubts about the wisdom of completely abolishing hours for freshman women. As one woman said, 'Girls are not raised the same way as boys,' and need some form of guidance." [49] Lauterbach herself thought that women needed guidance, although she argued that hours were not the way to do this.[50] Other women commented, "guidance should not be punitive but should be a constructive thing" and that "some kind of initial freshman hours might be a good thing." [51] Some students seemed to agree with the previous year's AWS board that the rules needed to be fair but that they were necessary. But while some students continued to believe women needed protecting, more and more students believed that women should have the freedom to make their own decisions.

Just a few weeks after Encampment, both AWS and the CofHP passed resolutions calling for the abolition of hours, and the proposal went through the student senate in mid-November, although it did not pass the administration.[52] Highlighting the need to adapt rules as student values changed, a senator remarked,

Reassessment of the student role in the college community has resulted in a realization of basic philosophic inconsistencies regarding expectations of students and a further realization of the need to overcome these inconsistencies by changes in the rules governing student conduct.[53]

Students' own ambivalence about these changes is evident in the fact that they still recommended that the loggia be locked at midnight during the week and at 1am on Friday and Saturday.[54] Women would be free to come and go at anytime, but they would have to return through the door of Main Hall.[55] Perhaps more importantly, men would have to be out of the loggia by closing hours and out of dorm lounges by 10:30

during the week and 1am on Friday and Saturday.[56] The senate also voted to maintain freshmen hours and stipulated that freshmen women had to be in the loggia by the time the doors were locked.[57] Students were clearly in the middle of a transition from agreeing with the ideas of the adults to asserting their own ideas. During this transition, students revealed their desire for their own form of *in loco parentis* and their remaining concerns about having too much freedom.

It would be a year before the faculty, administration, and the trustees voted to eliminate women's hours. Student leaders had asked the Faculty Committee on Student Affairs (FCSA) to make the change for the spring semester, but the FCSA claimed nothing could be done quickly.[58] Even reform leaders like Karen Lauterbach admitted that eliminating women's hours might not happen fast and agreed with the administration that increased counseling facilities were needed first.[59] While students like Lauterbach pushed for changes to the rules that reflected their new gender ideas, they still agreed that women needed protecting and still wanted guidance from adults.

The FCSA voted to abolish women's hours in February of 1967.[60] Leggett said he would discuss this change with the trustees and make a decision in the spring: "I have concerns about some aspects of the proposal, but at the minimum, I expect to take an affirmative action on the matter of some liberalization of women's hours." [61] In April, Leggett approved the proposal to eliminate women's hours and said that this would go into effect in the fall of 1967.[62] In making this change, Leggett refused to acknowledge that it was a comment on larger social changes in sexual conduct and morality. He stated that it was simply no longer critical, for women's security, to have restricted hours:

This approval rests on the belief that any regulation of college women's hours, either by the College or by the individual, is a matter of security rather than morality and that reasonable security can be assured within the women's residences without the necessity of the College maintaining an arbitrary 'hours' system.[63]

In the announcement, Leggett said, "Self-regulation of women's hours will apply without regard to parental permission." [64] The use of the term "self-regulation" implied that it was now the student's responsibility to be back in the dorm at an appropriate time.

An S&B editorial in the fall of 1967 called the elimination of women's hours "long awaited, and . . . a welcome liberalization of college rules." [65] The S&B editors understood that students still had a long way to go in asserting their control over residence life issues, especially over the issue of visitation. But, they announced, "In recognition of this signal occasion," of women's hours being eliminated, "discussion of Grinnell's remaining social problems will be suspended until next week." [66]

Visitation

Coed visitation hours proved to be the issue on which students and the administration could not find common ground as they had with coed campuses. Nor did students have success working within the system on visitation as they had with women's hours. In this case, students had to declare complete independence. After questioning the administration on the visitation issue for three years, students eventually used self-governance to declare home rule and set visitation hours for themselves.

For decades before 1968, students had enforced the rule limiting dorm visitation by a person of the opposite sex to Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Under the structures of self-governance, hall presidents and hall advisors were charged with monitoring visitation and punishing violators. Big campus events, such as the annual spring North Campus Weekend, allowed for some increased visitation hours Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but this was a notable exception to standard practice.

By the mid-1960s, however, compliance with and respect for the visitation rule was breaking down. In the spring of 1966, the college suspended a student, caught by a college electrician, with a woman in his room.^[67] At the end of that semester, over 50 graduating seniors signed a letter “admitt[ing] visitation violations, and suggest[ing] increased open dorms.”^[68] The students argued that regardless of the rules, students were going to participate in illegal visitations.

As students pushed for the elimination of women’s hours at the 1966 Encampment, students also pushed to increase the hours of legal visitation. Karen Lauterbach predicted at the time, that “with a change of hours, there must be serious consideration of open hours regulations.”^[69] That semester, SGA proposed new open hours: Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 1 p.m. through 11 p.m., and Sunday 1p.m. through 7 p.m.^[70] The senate suggested these hours but understood that the final determination would come from Leggett. Students were moving towards a desire to determine the rules for themselves but, at this point, they continued to talk about Leggett granting them increased hours, not granting them the ability to decide the hours themselves.

Different generational views on sex and gender complicated the dialogue between students and the administration on the visitation issue. The adults continued to believe that open dorms contradicted their sexual and moral code while students argued that open dorms would allow for more natural relationships between men and women and a more healthy, less secretive attitude towards sexuality. In the seniors’ spring 1966 letter to the S&B, they wrote:

Let us not base our considerations of the open dorm question on a suspicious attitude toward sex, but rather let us consider those reasons for more opens which would improve the social environment, and benefit the campus as a whole.^[71]

Students were not simply interested in making it easier to have sex, they were committed to developing an environment in which men and women could visit each other, as friends, without any expectation of a romantic or sexual relationship.

Grinnell students felt the growing generation gap. In an opinion piece in the S&B at the beginning of the Spring ’67 semester, Richard Schneirov and Grant Crandell articulated the challenge facing Grinnell: “We feel that the wide disparities that exist between the educational, social, and moral philosophies of the members of the Grinnell community must be discussed, debated and reconciled anew.”^[72]

These “wide disparities” left Leggett with a dilemma. While he believed in student independence, students were asking him to increase visitation hours and thereby condone more time to explore a moral and sexual code at odds with his own. The man who had said he looked too young to be anyone’s father no longer believed that “regulatory controls should be relaxed.”^[73] Visitation was the greatest challenge to Leggett’s views on *in loco parentis*. He viewed the visitation issue as much more about morality than women’s hours had been. The moral implications of eliminating women’s hours could be

avoided by claiming the decision was a “matter of security,” but visitation was a different matter; to Leggett, visitation was clearly about sex.[74]

Students continued to counter Leggett’s view with their own views on gender relations and continued to argue that open dorms were not simply about sex. An S&B editorial articulated the fact that students saw gender very differently than the administration:

If open dorm hours were extended greatly . . . it is our contention that visiting would become more natural and informal, that it would involve groups rather than couples, that the clandestine sexual overtones would be diminished, and that its acceptance by non-participating hall members would be without reasonable objections.[75]

Leggett was caught in the generation gap. “It used to be that if a boy spent the night with a girl,” he lamented, “they would be immediately expelled and no questions asked.”[76] Leggett desired “homogeneity in academic and . . . in moral standards”[77] and tried to get students to adhere to his code. The 1966 editors of the S&B called this “a clear-cut case of penalizing students for failure to conform to a set moral code, determined by college officials.”[78]

In the fall of 1967, when Leggett announced the decision to have coed campuses, he reaffirmed his position against “the extension of open rooms.”[79] He claimed that opens would, “give rise to social expectations and confrontations that not all students are prepared to meet and seriously interfere with the College’s responsibilities for the mental health of all students.”[80] He continued to assert the older generation’s belief that coed visitation was about sex and his parental concern that open sexuality would be harmful to college students. Similarly, when approached by the S&B, Dean of Women Alice Low cited psychological studies showing the negative effects of pre-marital sexuality on mental health.[81] For students, such claims merely revealed the administration’s inability to relate to students’ new generational stance.

With the coed campuses issue, Leggett had been anxious to protect self-governance, as he understood it. But with visitation, Leggett faced a genuine conflict between his standards of moral conduct and student independence. His response was to critique the whole self-governance system. In September 1967, he argued that while hall presidents were individually competent, the system could not deal rationally with the visitation problem.[82] The “clamor on the part of some house presidents for ‘home rule’,” he claimed, distracted from his efforts to discuss “what changes students thought necessary . . . without the pressure of emergency.”[83] Leggett dismissed student protests as ineffective, suggesting that,

“Student action is as liable to misinterpretation by the public press as that of administrators and . . . though the College cannot control threats to its institutional integrity, it will go on and not be influenced by them, time-consuming and disruptive as they may be.”[84]

Leggett did not realize that student belief in self-governance was heading toward a bold assertion of student power and the establishment of a wholly new approach to making rules in dormitories.

In the fall of 1966, the administration continued to enforce the visitation rule. Shortly after Encampment, the Faculty Committee on Student Affairs (FCSA) suspended

three students, a couple who spent the night together at the male student's off campus apartment and one other male who was caught with an unnamed female in his dorm room.^[85] The fact that the FCSA suspended students in a private apartment reveals that this rule was really about controlling morality. The adults were focused on sexual behavior.

These suspensions escalated the visitation debate. As a response to the suspensions, the leaders of student government risked suspension to stage a protest. On November 23, 1966 the leaders of SGA, the CofHP, and AWS spent the night in the SGA president's room in Gates tower, in what came to be known as "The Gates Protest."^[86] SGA president Steve Kent explained to the S&B that "administration officials so far have virtually ruled out the possibility of change in this policy and have refused to discuss the problem formally."^[87]

The structures of self-governance were very much in play in this protest. As student leaders, the protesting students were responsible for reporting illegal visitation and they signed their own "apprehensions" in the morning.^[88] The S&B's coverage of this story included a picture of Robert Foote signing his own "apprehension."^[89] The Gates protest succeeded at getting student attention. The day after the protest, 700 students gathered in the ARH auditorium to discuss open dorms.^[90] However, the protest did not do anything to change the administration's position. Leggett rejected the student's appeal to revoke the suspension of the three students.^[91]

Then, the administration canceled opens for North Campus Weekend, violating a ten-year tradition of increased open dorm hours during the celebration on North Campus.^[92] Students came back from winter break to the announcement that opens for the weekend were cancelled. The administration had not discussed the decision with anyone from student government and continued to speak in terms of morality – saying only that the inappropriateness of open dorms necessitated this change.^[93]

S&B articles suggested students were more concerned with the principle of the decision than they were concerned about the specific weekend. They were upset because these decisions, made without student input, violated their right to self-governance. In the spring of 1967, the faculty and administration were in the process of approving the elimination of women's hours and now students began to articulate an interest in the way decisions were made, not just in changing the rules.

In a speech in the student senate, endorsed by over half the senators, Roger Koenker stated, "the time has come to establish the student revolt at Grinnell."^[94] He pointed out that self-governance was a right listed in the catalog: "The premises in the catalog of a 'closely knit community,' 'self-government,' and 'education considered as an organic whole' have not been realized, and the attitudes that serve to stifle these objectives can no longer be tolerated by responsible students of the college."^[95]

Students agreed that they needed a say in residence life policy and generally agreed that visitation hours should be expanded. It was the question of how far this "student revolt" should go that dominated student debate during the spring and fall of 1967. Students discussed two main approaches. Most members of SGA, CofHP, and AWS wanted to work within the system to get administration consent for increased hours. More radical groups, like Students for a Democratic Society, argued for protest as a way to achieve open dorms despite the administration.

Students who sought to work within the system tried to help the administration overcome its reservations about open dorms.^[96] In April of 1967, the SGA Open Dorms Committee presented four questions for discussion: What was wrong with the structured hypocrisy of no one getting caught? How would students deal with increased emotional

trauma because of sex? Could a system in which dorms decided rules on a dorm-by-dorm basis protect minority rights? How could the extension of opens be presented to parents and donors? [97] The fact that SGA was willing to even discuss these administration concerns testifies to SGA's desire to work with the administration to solve the open dorm problem.

When students came back from break in the fall of 1967, the Council of Hall Presidents (CofHP) took its own position on the question of structured hypocrisy by saying it was important to establish "liberal rules legally." [98] As the S&B editors stated, "the fight is not for open dorms – it is for legal open dorms." [99] The CofHP did not want to hamper the rapport between students and the administration or faculty, but they still wanted the rule changed: "We must object . . . to any impetuous, irresponsible, or potentially damaging method proposed as an initial effort to achieve social reform." [100] They criticized existing hours policy as "seriously inhibitive to a desirable development of individuals who can accept, or be challenged to accept, the ultimate responsibility for their actions and for the respect which is due to others." [101] Making an argument that could appeal to administrators, they "reassert[ed their] dedication to pursue the changes initially through the existing legal system." [102] And they used the same argument Grinnell College presidents used to support self-governance for decades: increased responsibility is important to education.

More radical students argued that the entire system had to change, regardless of the administration's concerns. Articles in the S&B characterize the spring and fall of 1967 as a time of "revolution" and the editors of the S&B began to side with the radicals: "somewhere between revolution and maintaining the status quo lies the desirable course for liberalization. If we really believe that social rules change is important, let us not be timid about steering closer to the former." [103] Eric Thor outlined students' dilemma in an opinion piece in the S&B:

Some students may believe that we do not have the right to make our own social regulations. They might, if they desired, petition the administration to be granted the privilege of self-government. Others may believe that we have the right, but that we should not use revolution or radical action to gain the practical exercise of self-government. [104]

Analyzing these viewpoints, Thor doubted that "opens w[ould] be extended through legal means" and argued that open dorm policy would have to be made without cooperation from the administration. [105] He envisioned an alternative process by which students would use self-governance to establish an open dorm policy:

If enough students truly believed it was their right to be self-governing, and they simply began to exercise that right, the revolution would be invincible. How many would be enough? No one knows exactly – perhaps if two or three halls, acting as individuals and as social units, were to withdraw, the system might be defeated, perhaps it would require greater numbers. But I am confident that if we decided we were going to have a revolution, we would also have a victory. [106]

Thor assumed early on that asserting the existing self-governance system would allow

students to be self-governing on the visitation issue. In another S&B opinion piece, Paul Jones also reminded students to focus on these principles: “the problem is that too many activists are crying for change not in the form of principles (from which rules are derived) but are starting at the wrong end with rules and then trying to develop principles.”[\[107\]](#)

The continued tension between students about how to go about changing visitation policy is evident in the resignation of the CofHP president, Bill Fligeltaub. As students became more desperate in their fight to control dorm rules, the demands on student leaders increased. Students pressured their leaders to not report illegal visitations. In his October 1967 resignation speech, Fligeltaub announced his principled opposition to what he called “a philosophy of hall rights” and maintained that, as CofHP president, he could not adopt such a philosophy.[\[108\]](#) Fligeltaub reiterated his policy: if he heard a woman’s voice in a room, he would ask the man to remove her and after three warnings, he would send them to Judicial Council. Fligeltaub recognized, however, that his position was at odds with those he was elected to represent. He resigned as CofHP president in protest against the pressure to shun his “duty to honesty and responsibility.”[\[109\]](#)

Ray Horn, the president of Rawson Hall, tried to combine the SGA approach with the radicals’ agenda by placing an open hours plan before the student senate. Claiming this was “the first proposal regarding open dorms to go through student governmental channels since 1962,” Horn aimed to increase visitation hours, giving each dorm more authority in setting hours, and achieving both goals by working within the existing governance system.[\[110\]](#) In regard to hours, Horn’s proposal was that the administration would allow for open dorms on Sunday through Friday from 12 p.m. to 12 a.m. and on Saturday from 12 p.m. through 1 a.m. In regard to dorm authority, his proposal empowered each dorm to vote on its own hours within the hours allowed, as long as each dorm was “open” for at least three hours a day.[\[111\]](#)

The language in Horn’s proposal continued the student effort to appeal to the administration through the argument made by Presidents Gates and Main that increased student responsibility was important for education: “we do not ask for unlimited freedom, for we recognize that we are still growing. But we do ask for responsibility, that responsibility which is essential to our continued growth.”[\[112\]](#) Whether working through student government channels or independently, students were seriously interested in increasing self-governance. Horn pushed for this increase in visitation hours and dorm authority in the same week as Leggett’s speech rejecting the call for open dorms, and though it won senate approval, both the FCSA and Leggett turned it down.

The debate over open doors appears to have been tabled in the spring of 1968. Coverage of the visitation issue in the S&B, as well as coverage of women’s hours, dropped off during this semester. The pages of the S&B were dominated by stories of Vietnam during the Tet Offensive, the Columbia protests, Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, and the presidential election (LBJ announced he would not seek reelection in March, and Bobby Kennedy would be dead by June). There were some efforts to keep the visitation issue moving, but there was little action as global and national issues took precedence. However, Grinnell students watched and learned from the movements of 1968. Student protests all over the world reminded Grinnell students that students could successfully assert power.

In the fall of 1968, students used this new understanding of power to take matters into their own hands. New, younger, hall presidents sided more with the radical point of view than leaders like Fligeltaub had the year before. Student attention turned to

asserting “home rule” as the way of confronting the administration on the visitation issue. This approach not only promised to change the rules, it changed the way the rules were made.

In October, the student senate passed a relatively conservative resolution for 24-hour coeducational open lounges. Students working within the system hoped that the faculty would approve the resolution because it included provisions for campus security and hall determination of lounge use. The next week, the resolution did pass the FCSA. It would still need to pass Leggett and the trustees, but there was now faculty movement on the issue of coeducational visitation in the dorms.

By this point, however, students had moved further. While the FCSA debated approval of open lounges, students took big steps towards home rule. At the beginning of October, Katherine Karlson, president of Langan Hall, eliminated the visitation restrictions for her dorm.^[113] Since the structures of self-governance already existed, and since Karlson was the person responsible for enforcing dorm rules, she was able to change the rules as she saw fit. The next week, Smith created its own system for setting visitation rules. Under the leadership of Merryll Penson, president of Smith, each floor formulated its own policy, suited to its individual needs, and designated its own hours.^[114]

While the Students for a Democratic Society pushed for protests, the leaders of SGA, AWS, and CofHP supported the simple, yet radical, stands for home rule in Langan and Smith on the grounds that Karlson and Penson were working within the established hall system of self-governance. ^[115] This approach, said the elected student leaders, “still remains the only logical means to bring about the needed changes at Grinnell.”^[116]

The Langan and Smith declarations of home rule put the administration in a predicament. An S&B editorial outlined two possible stands for the administration – refusing to change the rules or undergoing a period of review and then changing the rules.^[117] If the administration was not to change the rules for moral reasons, the editors suggested, there would probably be disruptive activities similar to those at Columbia University since “an administration simply cannot function unless it has the support of the majority of the students and members of the community.”^[118] The better approach, according to the S&B, would be to undergo a period of review and justify changing the rules because of changes in residence life:

The administration can surrender if it can do so honorably. To force a confrontation on it will force it to take a stern stand. If the student government acts with caution and tact, they may win. If they act impulsively and try to force a confrontation, they may lose.^[119]

President Leggett tried to assert his control by emphasizing home rule’s threat to minority rights: “the concepts of individual liberty and communal order are getting so polarized,” he claimed in October of 1968, “that rational consideration of different points of view is extraordinarily difficult.”^[120] He cautioned against hasty action, stating that none of the current residence life structures were stable enough to handle a big change:

Though some difficult matters such as the change in women’s hours and the residence hall system have already been instituted, none of the structures is secure enough or experienced enough, at this moment, to warrant an easy optimism and none of them will make

the place as perfectly reasonable as one of us might ideally wish.[\[121\]](#)

By this point, however, the residence life structure had already undergone fundamental change. It was too late for Leggett to impose visitation hours that fit with his moral code. On October 21, three days after Leggett made his comments, Loose became the third dorm – and the first male dorm – to declare home rule and adopt a policy of “self-determination.”[\[122\]](#) At a general house meeting attended by 89 out of the 95 men living in Loose, 44 men voted for self-determination, 32 voted for the informal system of “discretion,” 1 voted for the official policy of open hours between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Sunday, and 12 abstained.[\[123\]](#) This vote suggests that almost all students were comfortable with more a liberal visitation structure, but, at this moment, the large minority of students who cared about structure were the ones with the greatest influence over policy.

The administration could no longer attempt to enforce the rule. At a meeting for student advisors, Dean S. Eugene Thompson said that no student would be prosecuted for violating the rules of the hall unless a student wanted to take a case to Judicial Council.[\[124\]](#) In essence, students were now in charge of regulating themselves.

To formalize this policy across campus, the senate voted to have a referendum on self-rule. The senate hoped to “establish a standard that would be more acceptable to the needs of the students and which would protect individuals with minimum standards for each dormitory.”[\[125\]](#)

The proposal in the referendum stated that policy would be determined by majority vote. Each hall would vote on whether the vote should take place by hall, floor, or wing and then each group would vote on whether it should be by secret or open ballot.[\[126\]](#) After deciding on the system for voting, students would then vote as to what visitation hours should be.[\[127\]](#) Visitations outside of the agreed-upon hours would be handled by asking the visitor to leave.[\[128\]](#) First cases were to be handled by hall councils, and higher authorities would review repeated violations.[\[129\]](#)

The self-rule referendum passed in a student vote and then the proposal went to FCSA, where it carried “no more official weight than any other proposal.”[\[130\]](#) Fifty-three percent of students favored home rule with no limitations, 41% favored hall self-determination within the limits of 12 hours a day and 16 hours on the weekend, and 6% voted for no change.[\[131\]](#)

As students waited on the administration reaction, the S&B predicted that it would hinge upon two crucial questions:

First, can the students set up a workable system of governing themselves to replace the present unsatisfactory system established by the administration? Second, under the system, will the students choose to have 24 hours opens and if so, can and will, the administration, backed by the trustees and the alumni, sanction such a situation?[\[132\]](#)

Under enormous pressure from students, who had already decided to disregard the administration’s rules, Leggett conceded, approving 24-hour coeducational use of the lounges, and saying that each residence hall could have a maximum of 84 hours a week in which visitations could occur (so long as visitations did not take place between 12 a.m. and 8 a.m. on Sundays through Thursdays or between 2 a.m. and 8 a.m. on Fridays and

Saturdays).[133] Unable to give up all authority and clinging to his sense of morality, Leggett maintained that the “opening of common use lounges weakens any argument for the need to have coeducational visiting in individual rooms during the normal hours for sleeping.”[134] He also insisted that minority rights be protected, reminding students that it was his job to ensure all students’ comfort and privacy in dormitories and dining rooms.”[135]

For all intents and purposes, student self-governance and *in loco parentis* no longer existed; *in loco parentis* had died and student self-governance had gained strength and autonomy. In November, 1968, Leggett admitted, “the college can no longer support the old notion, that residence hall management ought chiefly to reflect a kind of remedial parenthood (*in loco parentis*) environment.”[136]

The next week, the halls established their own dorm policies according to the policy in the referendum. The halls seemed to ignore Leggett’s rule that visitations could not be “during the normal hours for sleeping” and some established 24-hour opens. Many halls decided hours by floor or section, often making distinctions between open halls and open rooms.[137] For example, Cleveland, a female dorm, established 24-hour opens but stipulated that men must be escorted while in the hall.[138] Like most halls, Dibble, a male dorm, decided to vote by floor and each floor’s hours varied from 24-hour opens to noon to midnight opens.[139] Still, not all halls embraced the new change. James, a female dorm, voted to follow the present rule of opens on Sunday afternoon from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. until the administration officially changed the rules.[140]

Throughout the month and a half in which students had developed the structures for home rule, students continued to discuss the protection of minority rights and supported home rule as a system that allowed for all viewpoints to be considered. Often, students said that home rule was more important than establishing specific open hours.

At an October meeting of 40 students to discuss home rule, a consensus “seemed to indicate that more people believed in the possible success of experimentation in ‘self-determination’ for halls and floors than in passing a mandatory rule for 24-hour opens.”[141] For students, the fight was not only about the dorm rules; it was just as much about how the rules were made.

When Karlson declared home rule for Langan, she said, “I want to get away from the secretiveness that has existed in the dorms.”[142] With new generational ideas about gender, Karlson wanted people to be able to live more naturally, obeying only the community value to “not disturb others.”[143] Following the principles of self-governance, Karlson stated, “we have open dorms that are based on consideration of other people.”[144]

In Smith, Merryl Penson said that she and the student advisors of her hall could not enforce a college rule that they felt to be unjust.[145] Since Penson was not comfortable enforcing the rule and students disregarded it anyway, “it was decided that a policy should be formed in order to alleviate the problems brought about by student disregard for the rules restricting visitation.”[146] Again, Penson stressed consideration for others, deciding that Smith should set hours by floor so that hours could be adjusted for individual concerns.

There were minority opinions that felt threatened by these rapid changes. One girl living in Smith said that she wanted to transfer because open dorms on her floor had created an “intolerable living situation.”[147] However, opinion pieces in the S&B suggest that most students valued home rule because it would create a democratic system in which students could talk about their differing opinions and then create a rule to accommodate differences. As Susan Kaiser put it in an editorial titled “Home Rule:

Freedom or Anarchy,” the principle of home rule demanded “student consideration of the actual implications of his actions as they affect others as well as himself . . . Previously,” Kaiser stated, “administrative policy has provided a set of preventative rules as guidelines to limit student behavior. The regulations on hours, student use of the lounges, and residence halls have defined what the student cannot do.”^[148] With this new system “the arbitrary authority set up for the student to follow is replaced by students thinking about their actions.”^[149]

After Home Rule

Once students established home rule and had more open visitation hours, the college moved towards coed dorms and floors. In 1970-71, students continued to articulate their desire to live in a different system of gender dynamics. Mary Brooner, President of Associated Women Students (AWS), explained: “It’s a fact that in this world women have to live with men, and the earlier you learn to relate to your own sex and the opposite sex, the more you have a chance to be independent.”^[150] By 1974, only two single-sex dorms remained: Dibble Annex for men and Smith Annex for women.^[151] The 1974-1975 Student Handbook includes the rules for self-determination of coed bathrooms, continuing the self-governance tradition of student voting for hall rules.^[152] Today Grinnell still has unpaid Student Advisors, students vote on gender-neutral bathrooms, Judicial Council involves students in rule enforcement, and students sit on a large number of college committees. In the fall of 2010, there will be a gender-neutral floor in Loose on which rooms will no longer be delineated by gender.

Grinnell students in the Sixties used Grinnell’s tradition of self-governance to navigate a difficult time of social change. When Leggett worked to solve the “North Campus Problem,” students made sure that he heard their voices and would not separate the campus by class. As student ideas changed about the need for women’s hours, students eliminated these curfews by using student government to talk to the administration. When the administration could not understand the younger generations’ desire for coeducational visitation hours, students took matters into their own hands and committed themselves to the system of self-determination. Because of Grinnell’s historical loyalty to the principle of self-governance, Grinnell students had the power to protest visitation hours and sign their own “apprehensions.” When these protests did not succeed, students could decide to declare home rule. Hall presidents were responsible for enforcing the rules, so students could take charge of the rules governing their own lives and work out a system that accommodated more people.

Students in the Sixties learned that generational conflicts and social issues could be resolved by using the structures of self-governance available at Grinnell. As dorms declared home rule, students learned that self-governance allowed for more diversity in a time of social change. Each dorm and floor could decide on its own visitation policy and find a system that worked for each individual self-regulating community.

The development of self-governance outside of the system of *in loco parentis* is a reminder that students need to continue to use self-governance to create a community in which everyone’s views are involved in decisions. When administrators, faculty, and students have differing ideas, the structures of self-governance can help to find a solution that works for most people in the community.

After students firmly established self-governance as a relatively autonomous system for the dorms, the new Dean of Students, Jim Tederman, continued to build upon Grinnell’s tradition of self-governance in the 1970s. In a memo in 1979, he emphasized

the importance of student action:

Nothing will work in the residence halls unless the students need it, want it, and fully participate in it. Ultimately, the only ones who can solve problems in the halls are the students themselves. We can, and should, offer them help and support but they ultimately must do it.[\[153\]](#)

This is what students learned in the Sixties. Throughout the last part of the 20th century and into today, students have continued to support and value self-governance. Grinnell students have had the structures of self-governance since the early days of the college. As shown by the turning point in self-governance discussed in this paper, it is student use of these structures that keeps self-governance alive.

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