

“A Rat in a Maze”:

Student Attitudes Towards the Design of UB’s Amherst Campus, 1968-1985.

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Introduction

Today at the University at Buffalo (UB), it may not be uncommon for a student to walk into an English class where the subject under discussion for that day concerns Michel Foucault and his idea of the panopticon. Inevitably, there comes a point when midway through the class session, the professor stops his lecture to raise an interesting “fact” about the university – “in case you haven’t heard, the Amherst campus was built to prevent riots” – after which he will then try to uncover some connection between this supposed design rationale to the writings of Foucault in front of a few gaping students. On a less serious note, students might occasionally make comments about that the “ugliness” or “prison-like” aesthetic of the campus.¹ Yet, even outsiders have been compelled to comment on the architecture of the campus. One individual, after glancing at the proposed plan for the new campus, scathingly criticized its buildings as one of those “old time grain elevators or rundown ghettos...with hideous lines and unsightly materials...they are incredible examples of mediocrity.”²

This paper examines how UB students experienced the development of the Amherst Campus from its conception in the mid-1960s up to 1985. It uncovers the myths that students associated with the campus, their viewpoints on its architectural style and design, and the ways that they tried to influence its development. Such a study is useful not only because it sheds light on student attitudes towards the “establishment” that produced the campus, but also because there has been very little scholarly inquiry on the student experience at UB’s Amherst Campus.

¹ As a student at the University at Buffalo, the author has been exposed to such views of the campus. It was because of the occasional derision that many people seemed to express at the campus that the author was compelled to uncover how others in the past related to the campus. The author thanks Professors Gail Radford and Tamara Thornton, and his fellow thesis writers for their suggestions and support throughout the project.

² Letter from H.C. Frank to Martin Meyerson concerning the design of the proposed Amherst Campus, March 30, 1970.

As such, the following narrative seeks to present a clearer picture of the relationships between the student, the state, and the university administration in the context of the campus.

The sources that will be most referenced by this paper are writings published in the university's student newspaper, *The Spectrum*. And though the *Spectrum* has been known to veer to the left especially during the period of the Vietnam War, letters and opinion pieces written by other students will also be examined to provide a more balanced analysis of the period. Supplementing the *Spectrum* will be the *Buffalonian*, an annual undergraduate yearbook that was published by the university – but has since ceased to exist – and one whose pages provide an abundance of information pertaining to student life.

Rise of the Berkeley of the East

A long history of the University of Buffalo preceded the development of the Amherst Campus. The university was originally a private college formed in 1846 consisting of a medical school. By the 1920s, the university had expanded enough to warrant the construction of its Main Street Campus, otherwise known as South Campus. For the first half of the 20th century, the university functioned as a local school, preparing its graduates for varied careers in the Buffalo region. Though local historian Mark Goldman has argued that UB was a place to “educate the children of the city’s upwardly mobile middle class without shaking them up too much,” former vice president of the university Richard Siggelkow has maintained that the university had actually espoused the principle of academic freedom. Its liberal faculty went as far as asking radical individuals such as the British fascist Sir Oswald Mosley to come speak at the university.³

³ Mark Goldman, *High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983), 248.

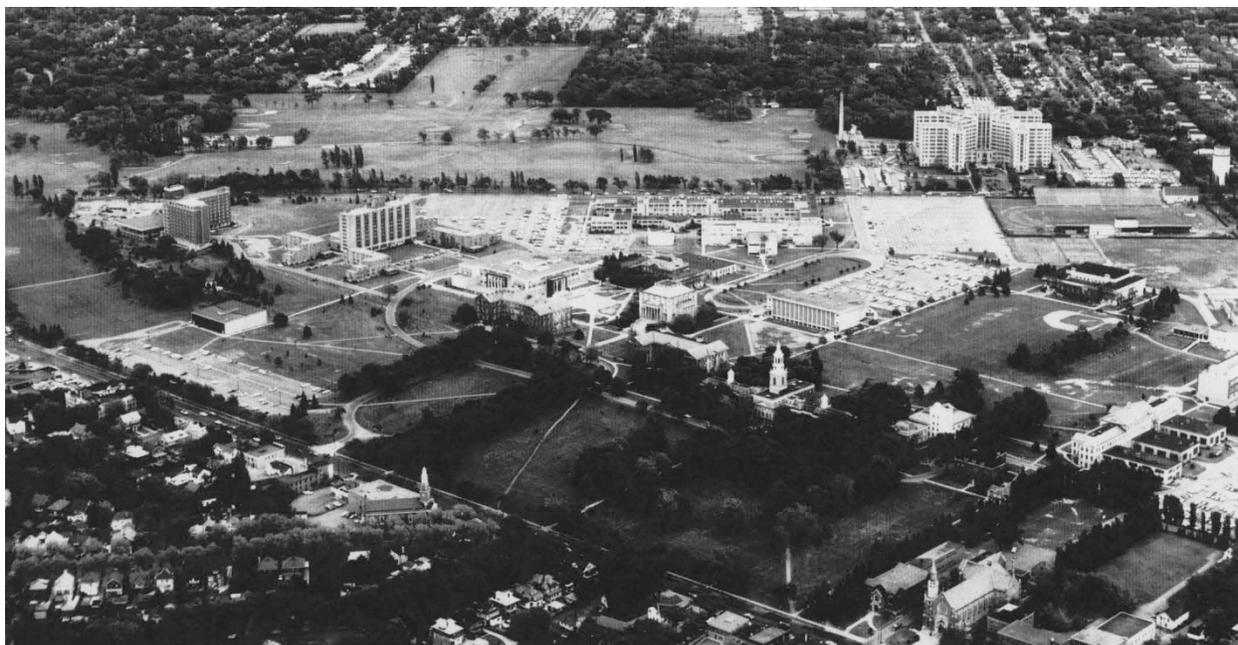


Figure 1: The Main Street Campus. Photograph from UB Archives.

The University of Buffalo rose into national prominence as one of the four major state universities in New York due largely to the efforts of Nelson Rockefeller. In 1948, Governor Thomas Dewey formed the State University of New York (SUNY) following the pivotal studies of the Truman Commission on education. Yet at the beginning, SUNY consisted of no more than a collection of teacher's colleges and various technical institutes. After Nelson Rockefeller was elected as governor in 1958, he worked speedily to reorganize the SUNY system so that it could meet the increasing demands of higher education in New York. In doing so, he hoped to boost several SUNY schools to the level of research universities such as Berkeley or UCLA in California.⁴ In a their landmark study, Rockefeller's Heald Commission called for the

Richard A Siggelkow, *Dissent and Disruption: a University Under Siege* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), 19, 23. Sir Oswald Mosley's appearance at the University of Buffalo in 1962 had shaken up much of the community. Bomb threats and hate letters written from Buffalo residents were not uncommon in the weeks leading up to his visit.

⁴ William R. Greiner and Thomas E. Headrick, *Location Location Location: a Special History of the University of/at Buffalo*, Center Working Papers (Buffalo, N.Y.: Center for Studies in American Culture, 2007), 37.

establishment of four major SUNY research universities that awarded doctoral degrees at Albany, Stony Brook, Binghamton, and Buffalo. Clifford Furnas, president of UB at the time, decided that the university could pursue its own expansion plans if it merged with SUNY. And in no short order, UB joined the SUNY system in 1962 and instantly became one of the flagships of the SUNY system. With great power came great responsibility, for the university's physical organization had to be expanded to accommodate a projected enrollment of 20,000 students.⁵

The reinvigorated SUNY system would need resourceful and prominent designers for its architectural program, and in this area Nelson Rockefeller played a crucial role. He formed the State University Construction Fund (SUCF) in 1962 as a public client agency which became responsible for the construction of all SUNY schools. Its formation was meant to replace an inefficient bureaucracy that was responsible for all public construction. Previously architects had to work with the state's Division of the Budget, an agency whose architectural and hardware standards often conflicted with the architect's. As such, it could take as long as six months to complete a schematic. With the advent of the SUCF, one architect and contractor was effectively given free reign in planning and constructing a certain building. Now, all that was left to do was to warm the relations between New York State and the jaded architectural profession. On January 29, 1963, Rockefeller invited a group of world-class architects to his mansion and led a tour through his collection of art to demonstrate his love for art and architecture. The exhibition supposedly impressed everyone involved that high class architects such as I.M. Pei, the firm Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK), and Gordon Bunshaft from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) joined Rockefeller's mission to build his grand SUNY campuses.⁶

⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶ Samuel E. Bleecker, *The Politics of Architecture : A Perspective on Nelson A. Rockefeller*, ed. Ezra Stoller and George A. Dudley (Rutledge Press: New York, 1981), 150.

But before any design on a new campus could commence, a site had to be chosen. In a controversial and protracted process, three “factions” conducted their own studies to determine the new location. On one side was President Furnas who had resolved to keep the university on the Main Street Campus while also expanding out into adjacent land such as a city-owned golf course and several residential properties. Others individuals from the SUNY board of trustees favored moving the school to a large, undeveloped site in order to facilitate the expansionist policies of SUNY. Then there was also the SUCF who had contracted Vincent Moore from Albany to conduct a site study which, as far as anyone could tell, did not significantly influence either Furnas or SUNY in their decision making. The fragmentation of the site-planning process was further compounded by the fact that SUNY and the SUCF often clashed with each other to the point that Rockefeller had to appoint a commission to mediate their differences.⁷

In any case, the SUNY trustees reached a decision in June of 1964. A new campus would be built at the suburb of Amherst three miles away from the Main Street campus. For a while, land acquisition proceeded quietly. In 1966, however, a local architect by the name of Robert Coles came across the report that Vincent Moore had previously presented to SUNY. Of great interest to Coles after reading the report was the mention that a 400 acre waterfront site had been proposed as a potential area for UB’s new campus. The significance of such a site was its potential to rejuvenate the ailing city of Buffalo, and to see such a chance pass would not satisfy Coles. Together with some twenty local businessmen and educated professionals, he formed a group known as the “Committee for an Urban University” and, with the help of Buffalo’s *Courier Express* newspaper, campaigned for the waterfront. To gain some traction for his campaign, Coles attempted to recruit UB’s new president, Martin Meyerson, who had once been

⁷ Greiner, *Location Location Location*, 45-62.

an urban planner. But as Meyerson reportedly said, his “principle concern must be the future of the University, not the future of downtown Buffalo.” And if Meyerson’s lack of support had not discouraged Coles, then a report conducted by the engineering and planning firm Gross and Heller Associates certainly did. In their report presented to the SUNY Trustees in February 1967, the firm firmly supported the Amherst site for its favorable cost and provision of space. Thus, the matter subsided; Amherst would remain the definitive site for the new campus.⁸

When Martin Meyerson had become president of the university in 1966, he envisioned no less than a fresh start for the institution. College enrollments boomed in the 1960s and institutions of higher learning were becoming so expansive in their number of students that the former president of the University of California Clark Kerr felt compelled to term the modern university as a “multiversity.” Such a term could be applied to UB, which at the time of Meyerson’s appointment as president, boasted approximately ninety academic departments. To consolidate all these entities into a manageable scale, Meyerson restructured the departments into seven faculties, each led by a provost. Complementing this decision was Meyerson’s intent of creating thirty colleges, each encompassing no more than 1,000 students, each with their individual identity, and each with their own intellectual and professional designations.

The colleges were ways of creating of a sense of community within the structure of a large university. Professors and students were placed under the same roof and were given the freedom to pursue their own intellectual development. But as ambitious as the colleges were, they were also subjects of intense debate and controversy. One particular college, College A,

⁸ *Ibid.*, 66-74. Some individuals have offered other reasons for why Amherst was chosen. One view suggests that insiders in the planning process wanted a large payoff after SUNY brought the land that they owned at Amherst; this view has been debunked by Greiner. A recent conversation with a Dr. Robert Baier, who was a UB student at the time and is currently a professor in the Dental School, revealed that Amherst was chosen as the site to keep some distance from Buffalo’s black population; The historian Michael Frisch confirms this view.

offered students credit for completing unsupervised non-classroom activities. The controversy centered on the fact that students within the college were essentially responsible for creating the policies within the college and as a result, a mass of students took advantage of the system by giving themselves ‘A’ grades. It was not a particularly auspicious start for the colleges, but they forged on under Meyerson’s tenure, with classes being held in such out of the way locations like the storefronts of Main Street. The integration of the colleges into the overall functioning of the university was such a priority that before planning for the new campus had been completed, construction on a building complex meant to house six colleges had already commenced.⁹

Any new campus at Amherst had to support Meyerson’s vision of the colleges as well as the continued expansion of the university. So when Gordon Bunshaft of SOM offered his proposal for the campus, officials were noticeably unimpressed. Though Bunshaft had initially been contracted by SUNY to design only the site plan for the campus, he had taken the initiative to design the “buildings” of the entire campus, but not buildings in the plural but rather one gargantuan building measuring one mile long and one thousand feet wide with several offshoots that were intended to house some colleges. Needless to say, the entire scheme was scrapped for its supposed inability to provide room for expansion and growth for the university. Bunshaft quit the job, SOM created an alternative master plan, and concluded its involvement with the campus. The firm Sasaki, Dawson, and DeMay was given the job of revising and incorporating elements from SOM’s master plan to form a final site plan for the university.¹⁰

The Sasaki Dawson and DeMay plan was no less ambitious than Bunshaft’s plan. The campus would be a sprawling complex organized under two building types: the faculties (meant

⁹ Siggelkow, *Dissent and Disruption*, 83-84.

For more information on the college system, consult:

State University of New York at Buffalo, *The Colleges* (Buffalo, NY: State University of New York, 1975).

¹⁰ Greiner, *Location Location Location*, 88-91.

to house the seven faculties) and activity corridors (the colleges). Seven faculties, buildings containing the academic classrooms and departments, were oriented on an east-west axis known as the academic “spine.” Each faculty would have their own “distinct architectural expression,” but to give the overall campus coherence, a standard color scheme of dark brown brick was to be imposed on the design of the faculties. Jutting out of the spine were the activity corridors, and each was also designed to have their own architectural expression. To the northeast of the spine was Lake Lasalle, and bordering the water on the southern and western sides were additional activity corridors stretching to either end of the lake. And to provide a “major campus focal point” for the campus, a grand space known as the University Plaza was to be located on the southwestern border of the lake. There, a cultural center and store would border an expanse of

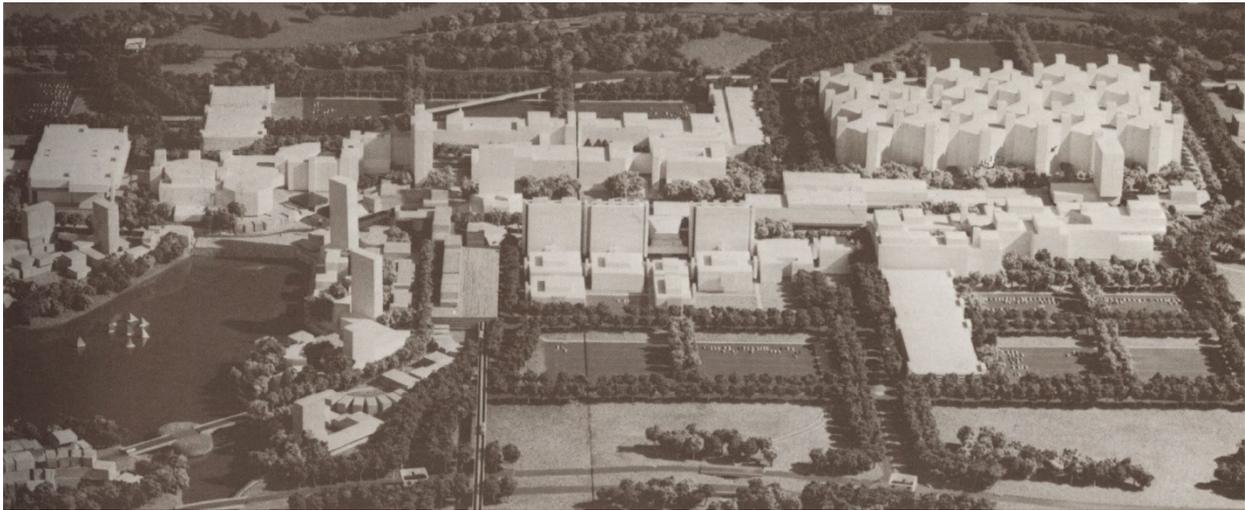


Figure 2: Scale Model of the Amherst Campus Master Plan. From Sasaki Dawson and DeMay Master Plan.

open space to generate “continuous activity both day and night.” Finally, a vast network of roads was designed to tie the campus together. A long loop road would conceivably encircle the outer border of the campus. Faculty entrance roads would branch out from this loop road to connect to

the faculties. Another loop road provisioned for a shuttle bus and separate from the outer loop road would pierce through each faculty. But for some reason, the designers had not extended this bus loop to serve the activity corridors on the outer fringes and as a result, students would have to rely on a series of walkways and bikeways to travel between the faculties and activity corridors.¹¹

¹¹ State University of New York at Buffalo, *Final Report, Comprehensive Campus Plan, vol. 2, Design Vocabulary* (Albany, N.Y.: State University Construction Fund, 1970).

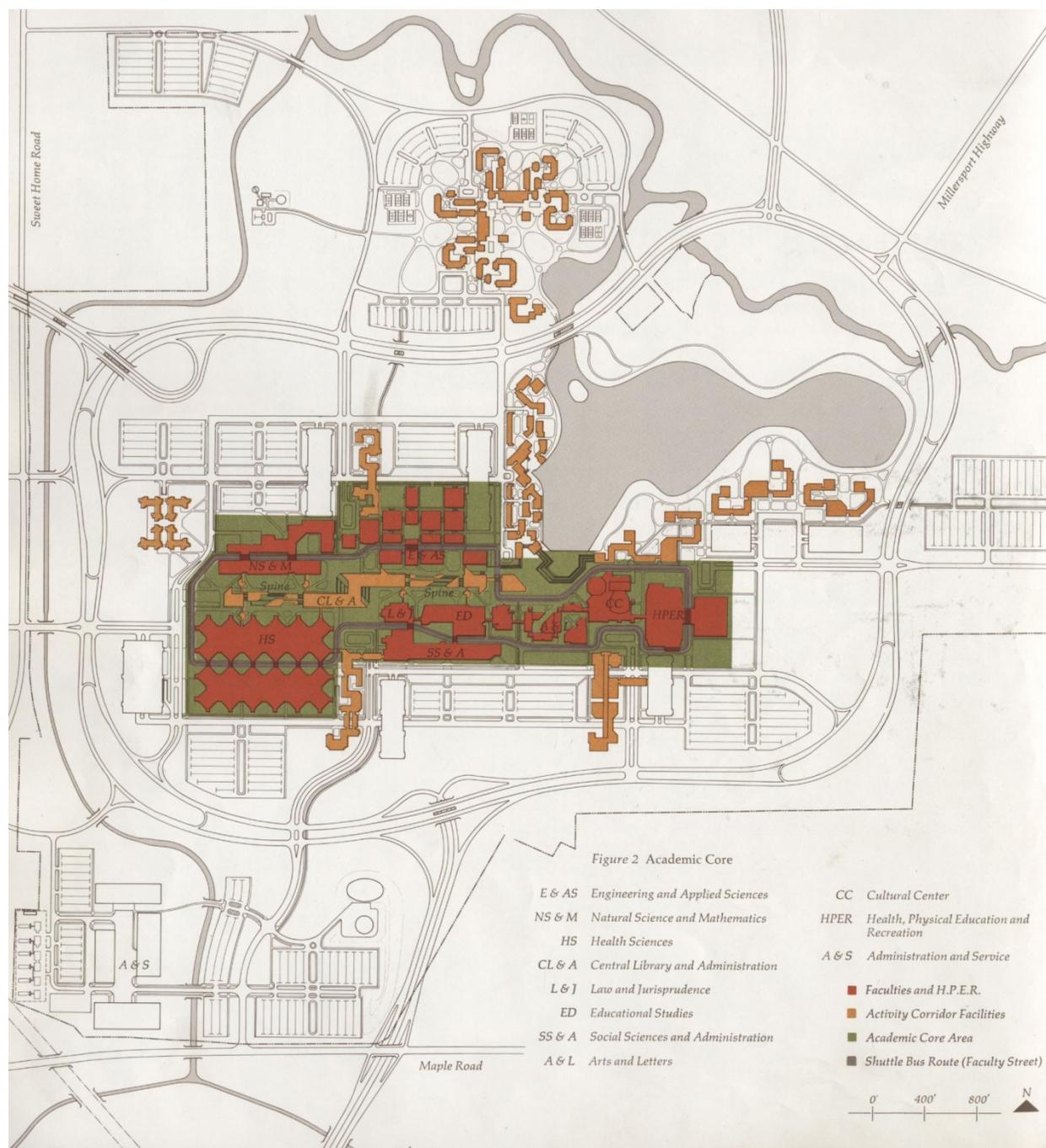


Figure 3: Sasaki Dawson and DeMay Master Plan.

The groundbreaking ceremony of the campus was held on October 31, 1968, but it did not take long for controversy to strike. Several weeks after the event, observant students noticed a lack of black construction workers working on the new campus. So critical were they of the issue that on December 18, 1968, a resolution was presented to the student polity detailing the

steps to be taken to ensure that “all competent black workers will have access to construction jobs...and, second, to assure that a significant number of competent black workers will be available to meet the demand for construction workers.” To accomplish this, the resolution urged the creation of a hiring hall and the requirement that all construction workers for the campus be hired from the hall. Secondly, the resolution proposed the establishment of a construction school to train black workers.¹²

The following is a brief summarization of the events following the presentation of the resolution. It had been met with no reply after being sent to Governor Rockefeller, and it was only after three months, on February 7, 1969, that he met with the resolution’s backers and announced the creation of a commission to investigate the issue. Apparently, the seriousness of the matter had led the SUNY administration to propose a construction moratorium on March 5, pending Rockefeller’s approval. As news of the moratorium circulated, university president Martin Meyerson sent a telegram urging the SUCF to impose a work stoppage. And so, the culminating efforts of students, administration, and various labor unions resulted in the imposition of a moratorium effective March 21. Days later, Rockefeller reaffirmed his support for the pause in construction to 1,200 demonstrators at Buffalo’s Rosary Hill College (now known as Daemon College). But only a week had passed when on March 27, the SUCF lifted the moratorium after it claimed to have reached an agreement with the labor unions involved. As a matter of fact, the unions representing minority workers had been shafted from the meeting and amidst the outrage, the *Spectrum* released a vitriolic editorial condemning Rockefeller as the “Albany Villain.” Finally, the moratorium was reinstated but would suffer from continual pauses throughout its term. By June of 1970, the moratorium was done for good.¹³

¹² “Resolution Urges Construction Equality,” *Spectrum*, December 17, 1968.

¹³ Dennis Arnold, “Rocky Softens on Hiring Hall,” *Spectrum*, February 10, 1969.

The break in construction had seriously hampered Meyerson's dream of building up the University at Buffalo to become the "Berkeley of the East," but construction issues were not the only problem at hand. During his four year tenure, he had had to deal with student disturbances amounting to protests against military-industrial corporations that were recruiting students at UB, attacks against ROTC and Themis¹⁴ sites on the Main Street Campus and an occupation of the Hayes Hall administration building. Administratively, Meyerson was the target of much antipathy from old faculty members that felt pushed away by his new reforms. Meyerson's sudden resignation as president in the January of 1970 further signified an end to his educational 'Camelot', as vice president Warren Bennis called it.¹⁵

The period immediately following Meyerson's farewell was tumultuous. On February 25, 1970, a group of white student activists from SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) protested on the side of several black athletes who were in a dispute with their coaches over the differences of stipends. As the athletes and coaches were in negotiations (apparently, they were going well), SDSers started breaking the windows of Hayes Hall. The acting president, Peter Regan, reportedly called in a group of campus security officers to arrest the students. What followed has been disputed, but the disruptive students and officers engaged in physical confrontation. Students retreated to the Norton Student Union and barricaded themselves, but police broke through, chased down, beat, and arrested several students. The ensuing days saw more violent confrontations between the police forces (now augmented by city police) and students, culminating in a police occupation of the Main Street Campus several days later. The occupying

Dennis Arnold, "Construction May Halt in Amherst," *Spectrum*, March 7, 1969.

"Meyerson Asks Moratorium on Amherst Construction Site," *Spectrum*, March 21, 1969.

Editorial, "Men in the Middle," *Spectrum*, April 23, 1969.

¹⁴ Project Themis was a military research grant awarded to universities to advance naval technology.

¹⁵ Sigglekow, *Dissent and Disruption*, 90-133.

forces had left by the end of March, but forty-five faculty had been arrested for holding a sit-in at Hayes Hall to protest the police occupation. By May, students and police in Buffalo and all over the country were in conflict over the Kent State killings of several students as well as over President Nixon's bombing of Cambodia. But just as these demonstrations had erupted with vigor, the summer of 1970 had provided enough time for reflection so that by the fall semester, the University at Buffalo had quieted down. Meyerson had gone, acting president Regan had resigned, and Robert Ketter now took the helm of a faltering Berkeley of the East.¹⁶

Beginnings of a Campus

In the fall of 1973, O'Brian Hall, the new home for the Law School, became the first academic building to open at Amherst. Otherwise known as the Faculty of Law and Jurisprudence, O'Brian Hall would form part of a larger sub-campus group with the Faculties of Educational Studies, and Social Science and Administration. At once enclosed but open to the rest of the campus, this conglomeration of buildings would be pierced on the northern and southern perimeters by pedestrian walkways leading to a central open space that becomes, in the words of the site planners, "the locus of activity for the sub-campus."¹⁷

The opening of O'Brian Hall was not only momentous for the campus but also for the law school. For several decades, the school had been fragmented within itself and from the university. Its administrative functions occupied parts of Louis Sullivan's Guarantee Building in downtown Buffalo, while its classrooms and a segment of its library were housed in another

¹⁶ Sigglekow, *Dissent and Disruption*, 135-241.

¹⁷ Harry Weese and Associates, *Faculties of Law and Jurisprudence, Educational Studies, Social Science and Administration, Joint Education and Social Science Administration Library and Lecture Center: Building and Site Development Study, Design Vocabulary and Action Program* (Albany, N.Y.: State University Construction Fund, 1970), 8. (North Campus Construction Records, 1951-1991, Box 24, Folder 1, SUNY Buffalo University Archives).

building downtown. But with the advent of O’Brian, the law school was reunited under one building. The sheer excitement of the move to O’Brian Hall overshadowed the numerous deficiencies of the building. Lecture halls were devoid of furniture, forcing students to sit on the concrete floor. But according to one student, it was at least better than their previous accommodations where they had supposedly endured “the agony of 212 degree rooms.” O’Brian was paradise in comparison, and now, “faced with such a plethora of pleasures, we may all flunk out.”¹⁸

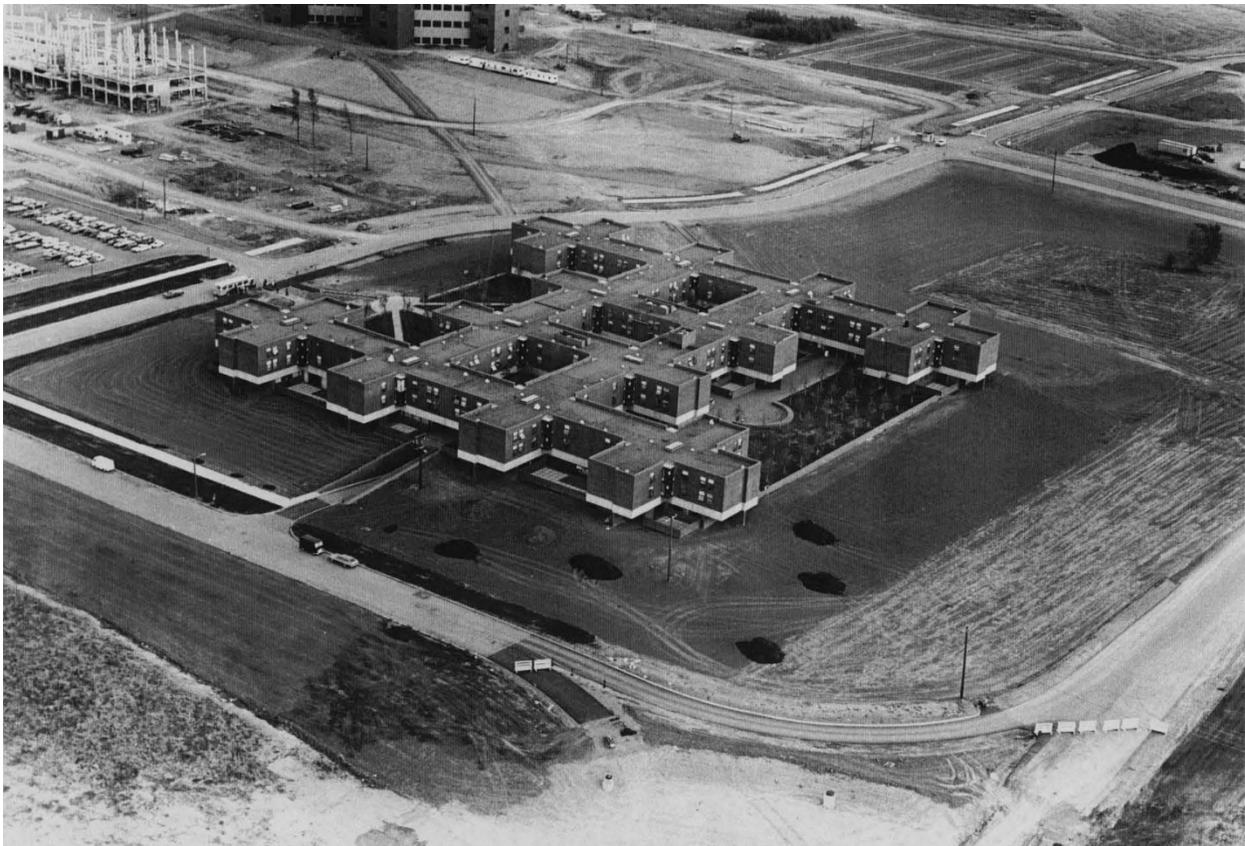


Figure 4: Governor’s Complex, designed by I.M. Pei. Photograph from UB Archives.

Coinciding with O’Brian’s opening, Governors Complex became the first dormitory hall to open its doors at Amherst, followed by the Ellicott Complex a year later in 1974. Designed by

¹⁸ “UB Dean of Law Enthused About New Campus Site,” *Courier Express*, September 4, 1973. Law School Rolls Out Carpet for New Students,” *Opinion*, September 20, 1973.

I.M. Pei, Governor's Complex bore the same appearance as the dorms that he had designed in Fredonia; he had essentially copied the same scheme. As its name implied, the complex was made up of four identical halls named after the previous governors Lehman, Clinton, Dewey, and Roosevelt of New York, providing accommodations for 800 students.

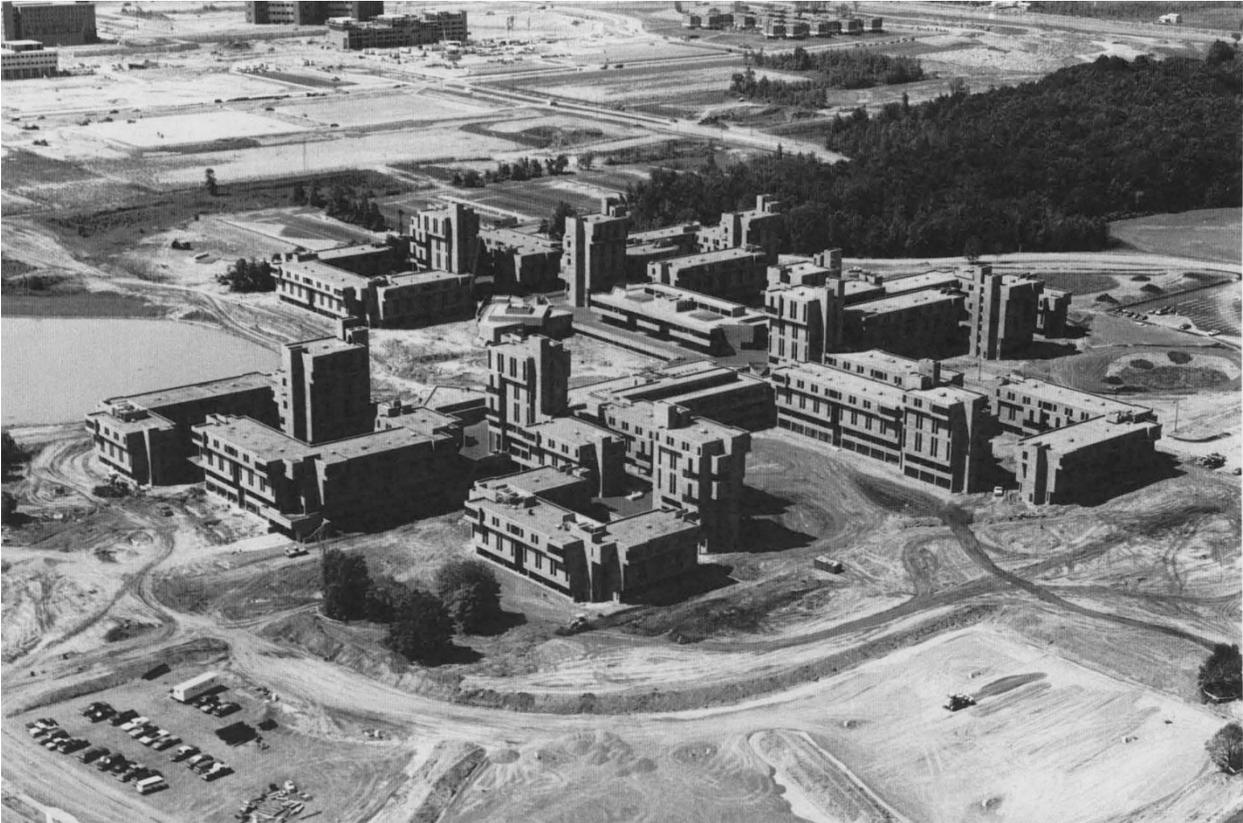


Figure 5: Ellicott Complex, designed by Davis Brody and Associates. Photograph from UB Archives.

Meanwhile, the gargantuan 38-building Ellicott Complex was nearing completion on the far side of the campus. Designed by Davis, Brody, and Associates, Ellicott was intended to serve as the home for six colleges housing up to 3,300 students. The colleges would be separated into their own U or L-shaped quadrangle, each with a slightly different aesthetic from the rest. Spaces with different functions within each quadrangle had distinguishing characteristics of their own.

More public areas contained wider windows. Cantilevers signified a change in function inside the building. On a larger scale, the quadrangles were attached to an L-shaped academic core containing libraries, food services, a theater, auditorium, and a bus tunnel, and on a good day, students could take a stroll on the roof of the core.¹⁹

The Ellicott Complex was essentially a little city. As the architectural publication *Progressive Architecture* described, the complex “embodied an impressive set of urban design virtues: mixed use at high density, separation of vehicular traffic, choice of open or protected pedestrian routes, effective hierarchy of spaces from communal to private.” The Ellicott Complex certainly looked like a city, calling forth “mixed images of...Carcassonne and San Gimignano.” Students looked upon the structure and likened it to the Emerald City from the *Wizard of Oz*. But of course, the Emerald City was deceptive despite all its glory; its wizard was no wizard at all. Ellicott was no different.²⁰

Indeed, deceit and confusion were central themes that students upon examining Ellicott and Governors, or as one student called them, “peopletainers.” As a poem published in the *Buffalonian* yearbook concerning Governors describes:

“...the frenzied searcher ran
through hallways measureless to man
designed by I.M. Pei
So twice five miles he ran around
Dewey and Clinton he never found”

It appeared that residents simply could not find their way around the labyrinth of Governors; it was, as one student put it, “a confusing maze of ill-lit halls and stark concrete... [that] has given more than one student cause to mutter that the designer should be made to live in it.” And those

¹⁹ John Quinan, “The Ellicott Complex,” *Buffalo Evening News*, May 8, 1976.

²⁰ John Morris Dixon, “College Town: Joseph Ellicott Complex, State University of New York at Buffalo,” *Progressive Architecture* 56 (December 1975): 52.
State University of New York at Buffalo, *Buffalonian* (Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo, 1978), 112.

that had successfully navigated the maze had become “conditioned to find [their] way along specific routes...to reach those destinations where the reward is greatest.” And of the Ellicott Complex, one student said: “at first glance, the huge labyrinth-like [sic] Ellicott Complex... appears to have been deserted by civilization.”²¹

Confinement and confusion suggested more sinister motives to some students. To at least one resident, Ellicott appeared to be a “group of futuristic, architecturally monolithic buildings... reminiscent of a scene from a Ray Bradbury novel.” Perhaps as an ominous foreboding of the future or as a reminiscence of the quelled student protests which occurred only a few years prior, the writer reminded his readers that “Orwell’s 1984 is ten years away!” While the extent to which such a view gained traction is hard to discern, the idea that the architecture of the dormitories somehow served to dominate its students in a totalitarian system was shared by yet another student years later when he observed that the Ellicott and Governors Complexes were “full of dead ends, isolated towers, and plenty of windows – what would be handier for a potential thought police?”²²

One event that captured the minds of students and incubated those feelings of Orwellian totalitarianism was the infamous Attica Prison Riot in New York State. On September 9, 1971, thousands of rioting inmates at Attica took over the prison and held the prison staff hostage. In the four days of negotiations, Rockefeller’s subordinates pled with him to visit the prison and negotiate with the prisoners. Whether he was trying to preserve his political image or because he did not want to negotiate with miscreants, or even because he could not take the strain of

²¹ “Spaced Out Symmetry: A Look at the New Amherst Campus a Few Months Before it Opens,” *Ethos*, June 21, 1973. State University of New York at Buffalo, *Buffalonian* (Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo, 1974), 18.

Richard Korman, “Memoirs of Maneuvering in the Maze Called Governor’s,” *Spectrum*, May 6, 1974.

Amy Dunkin, “Ellicott Complex: an Isolated but Exciting Living-Learning Center,” *Spectrum*, February 11, 1974.

²² Jeff Deasy, “Countless Cubbyholes of Futuristic Fantasies,” *Spectrum*, April 26, 1974.

Eric Martens, letter to the editor, “Ellicott Dead Ends,” *Spectrum*, September 21, 1977.

negotiating an impossible situation, Rockefeller repeatedly declined to meet with the prisoners and eventually gave the order to quell the rebellion. In the ensuing affair, 43 people, both inmates and hostages, were killed as police were attempting to take back control of the facility.

Needless to say, the Attica affair prompted a massive public outcry against Rockefeller's brutality. On September 13, 1971, 200 students and residents of Buffalo attended a rally downtown to protest the state's actions at Attica. To some, it may have seemed that the state was not just turning against the prisoners but also against the public. As the *Spectrum* reported, the police's "indiscriminate beatings and other acts of alleged savagery" in the ensuing scuffle with the protesters resulted in the arrests of 11 people, 4 of whom were university students. On a more peaceful note, 150 students held a sit-in at the university's medical school three days later to persuade it act on its responsibility to offer healthcare to the injured inmates at Attica. But as non-violent as the affair was, students continued to verbally attack Rockefeller. An editorial written shortly after exclaimed that "Governor Rockefeller, being his usual concerned self...refused to come to Attica for fear that his reputation and image might be soiled. Now there are 38 dead!" For other student leaders, the problem was not just the governor but the American system as a whole: "we have been manipulated and lied to by 'officials'...President Nixon, Governor Rockefeller and his political hacks have failed miserably." Some historians have tried to absolve Rockefeller from such criticism, however. As Underwood and Daniels have remarked, Rockefeller's involvement in "either negotiation or the retaking of the prison had the potential of bringing down criticism from both liberals and conservatives" at a time when Rockefeller was vying for high political office.²³

²³ "Untitled," *Spectrum*, September 15, 1971.
Editorial, "Attica Atrocities," *Spectrum*, September 15, 1971.

The events at Attica had further fomented student distrust against a supposedly unsympathetic administration of UB. By 1975, four years after the fact, students were still rallying for the Attica prisoners who were now standing trial, and among their many demands were bus funds to send student demonstrators off to Albany to show support for the indicted. But to the disappointment of the students, President Robert Ketter rejected the appropriation of such funds. As a result, a hundred students held a sit-in on April 24 at Hayes Hall to demand funds and in the next day, dozens of students showed up yet again to demonstrate. For hours, students sat in the lobby awaiting Ketter as police officers stood outside the building. What followed was a blur of events; the tension literally shattered when for some unexplained reason, a glass window broke, sending panicked students out of the building and into a confrontation with the police. From there on, the situation quickly devolved as students gathered up shards of glass and stabbed several officers. By the end of the debacle, ten students had been arrested and suspended, and several officers injured. And what had been achieved? In retrospect, the violence had accomplished nothing for the students or the administration, but had opened a wider gap of distrust and bitterness. As a scathing *Spectrum* editorial announced, “Dr. Ketter’s punitive, overreactive measures, aimed at quelling the disturbance rather than getting to the source of the problem...is reminiscent of hasty and tragic actions that have been taken in recent years by many appointed and elected officials.”²⁴

So for the first two years of the campus at Amherst, the university had been rocked with demonstrations calling for an end to police brutality, while simultaneously being brutalized

Jo-Ann Armao, “Med School Sit-in is Successful,” *Spectrum*, September 16, 1971. James E. Underwood and William J. Daniels, *Governor Rockefeller in New York: The Apex of Pragmatic Liberalism in the United States* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 236.

²⁴ Richard Korman, “Nine Are Suspended Following Hayes Hall Clash,” *Spectrum*, April 28, 1975.

Editorial, “Opening Door to Violence,” *Spectrum*, April 28, 1975.

Students later got the funds from the SUNY Binghamton Student Association: “Attica Support Group Receives a \$1000 loan from Binghamton SA,” *Spectrum*, April 28, 1975.

within. Meanwhile, a portion of students living in buildings like the mazy Ellicott and Governors dormitories could not help but wonder if they were the first experimental subjects in some nascent totalitarian takeover. A visual analysis of the Amherst Campus in 1975 confirms that the

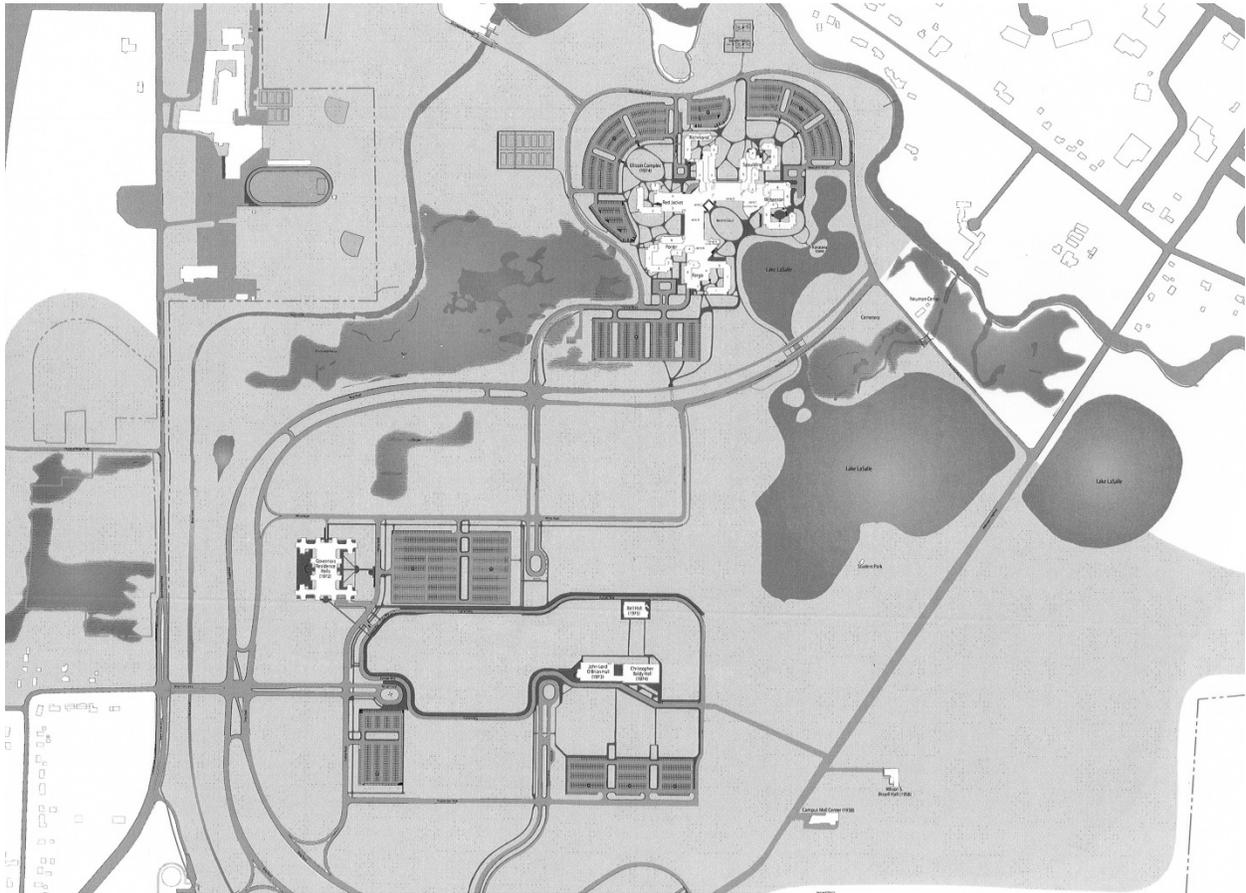


Figure 6 A map of the completed buildings at Amherst Campus by 1975. Notice the distance between individual buildings. This plan is deceptive because it does not show ongoing construction projects on the spine. Plan from Historic Resource Manual by Foit-Albert Associates.

fears of these students were not unfounded. The campus stood desolate with only five completed buildings; the completed dorms were distanced from each other by several thousand feet.

Amherst itself was isolated from the surrounding suburb and the Main Street Campus. It was far

from becoming the Berkeley of the East. In the words of the *Buffalonian* 75' yearbook, Amherst was "a diluted triumph...a monument of grand scale and aloofness."²⁵

At the center of it all was Dr. Ketter, entrusted with the almost impossible task of keeping Meyerson's dream alive. Ketter had been Meyerson's right hand man of sorts, having proposed a prospectus for the development of the colleges. He had been promoted as the vice president of facilities planning and given the task of overseeing the construction of the Amherst Campus. Needless to say, his job was made more difficult by issues concerning hiring practices and construction delays. In frustration, he later resigned his role, exclaiming that if he were to write a memoir about his experience, it would have been titled "Paradise Goofed."²⁶

Paradise was indeed slipping away from the University at Buffalo by the early 1970s. Just as there had been a flurry of new incoming professors under Meyerson's term, a drastic shift in fortune was at hand. Eminent professors who had come to Buffalo from prestigious institutions such as Harvard and Yale (individuals with very little loyalty to Buffalo to begin with) started leaving one after another. Ketter's subsequent appointments of fresh but conservative arrivals to vacant administrative and academic posts had failed to please many students and faculty alike. By the fourth year of his presidential term, Ketter was receiving mixed evaluations. For sure, he had accomplished the difficult task of warming the relations between the university and the community. Yet, some of the faculty also criticized his lack of innovation. As one commented, "Dr. Ketter is a pragmatist, not overly ideal. I would like to get a few more idealists rather than implementers in [Hayes Hall]." Students were also displeased at

²⁵ State University of New York at Buffalo, *Buffalonian* (Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo, 1975), 12.

²⁶ Rod Gere, "A 'Troublemaker' Talks on University Planning," *Spectrum*, June 27, 1969.

his lack of leadership, citing the decline of the university's Colleges and a failure to attract more prestigious faculty as a sign of "stagnation."²⁷

The perception of Ketter, or any bureaucrat for that matter, as an incapable administrator was further perpetuated by New York's financial crisis of 1975. 1975 was generally not a good year for New York State. The Urban Development Corporation (UDC), a government entity created by Rockefeller to fund public housing projects, had defaulted on its bond debt to its investor banks. The repercussions ranged far beyond the state. Now, other public agencies that had sold bonds were being forced to pay interest rates of up to 10%. Meanwhile, New York City had been on the decline since 1969, having lost 200,000 jobs by 1975. Now it was on the brink of bankruptcy. In an effort to save New York, the new democratic governor Hugh Carey, with his infamous proclamation that "the days of wines and roses are over," took drastic measures by cutting back budgets throughout the state. Though effective, his actions were unpopular; why would someone from the Democratic Party initiate such financial austerity and break the tradition of spending? The sharp scrutiny of the population against Carey has led some historians to argue that he "was, and remains, one of New York State's most effective yet least appreciated governors."²⁸

²⁷ Warren Bennis, *The Leaning Ivory Tower* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973), 130-131.

Jeffrey S. Linder, "Ketter Draws Mixed Reviews," *Spectrum*, April 26, 1974.

Gary Cohn, "Academic Leadership Lacking," *Spectrum*, April 26, 1974.

By early 1974, members of the university were becoming aware that the Colleges were suffering from lack of interest on the part of the faculty. As a result, the Reichert Prospectus was passed to bureaucratize the Colleges in an attempt to attract faculty. Colleges would now have to be chartered by a faculty-dominated committee and present an outline of the goals and purpose of the college (presumably to prevent occurrences such as the student self-grading of College A). While professors who were previously part of any of the Colleges were not paid for their service, the Reichert Prospectus incentivized faculty participation in the Colleges by reimbursing them. To the disappointment of students, the prospectus would also eliminate the majority of the "experimental" courses that had been offered previously. And thus the *Spectrum* editorially criticized the prospectus' potential to "destroy the Colleges' most valuable asset – experimentation." For more information, consult:

Gary Cohn, "Colleges Must Be Approved by a Faculty-Dominated Group," *Spectrum*, January 21, 1974.

Editorial, "The End of Innovation?," *Spectrum*, January 21, 1974.

²⁸ Seymour P. Lachman and Robert Polner, *The Man Who Saved New York: Hugh Carey and the Great Fiscal Crisis of 1975* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2010), 2.

In the ensuing efforts taken to save New York, SUNY's budget was inevitably slashed, prompting yet another hostile reaction from students. Such antipathy was expressed by protest. On May 11, 1975, 150 students gathered at the dedication ceremony of the Ellicott Complex. As Governor Carey praised the Ellicott Complex as a "cathedral of learning," they chanted against the tuition hikes and faculty reductions that had occurred at their university. The success of the protest was limited, for several months later at the end of October 1975, a construction moratorium was placed on all further SUNY construction. The dream of a Berkeley at Buffalo could not have seemed further away.²⁹

By now, the administration had grown acclimated to the amount of protesting that students were doing. So it was probably no surprise to Ketter that in the March of 1976, 150 students confronted him at Haas Lounge in the Norton Student Union on Main Street to "converse" about the layoffs, tuition hikes, stoppage of construction, and the situation in which students had been placed. For by now, 20,000 students were unceremoniously crammed on the Main Street Campus, and no relief was in sight. For hours, students debated with President Ketter and threw sarcastic remarks at his inability to accomplish anything, to which Ketter ardently responded: "you can kick and scream and make all the noise you want, but the check machine is not in Buffalo." Ketter was indeed powerless against the state. The end of the construction freeze would not come until May 1977.³⁰

²⁹ The *Spectrum* had published its last issue right before the demonstration at Ellicott. For more information, consult: Gilbert Stinger, "U/B Dedicates Ellicott Complex For 6,000 Students," *Olean Times Herald*, May 15, 1976. Joseph P. Ritz, "UB Building Ban Soon to be Lifted, Carey Promises," *Courier Express*, May 12, 1976.

³⁰ Richard Korman, "Hayes Annex is Occupied Briefly; Ketter Takes on Students in Haas Lounge," *Spectrum*, March 26, 1976. Tom Batt, "Steingut Announces End to State Construction Freeze," *Spectrum*, May 2, 1977.



Figure 7: Amherst Campus in 1977. Photograph from UB Archives.

The moratorium had seriously hindered new construction at Amherst, but it had not halted any ongoing projects. By 1976, Fronczak Hall and Clemens Hall were finished, ready for occupation by science and liberal arts departments, respectively. A year later in 1977, six new buildings were added to Amherst. Two buildings, Cooke and Hochstetter Hall, were completed for the Health Sciences Faculty, and the engineering department acquired a new building, Furnas Hall. The Talbert-Capen-Norton Complex, a giant structure which was really composed of three buildings, stood at the center of the academic spine and awaited the arrival of the undergraduate libraries, student organizations, and administrators. So amidst the financial austerity and a growing distrust among students towards the administration and especially the state, Amherst

Campus had somehow managed to take shape, slowly but surely. And for years to come, its changing landscape would not only influence the minds of students but also be influenced by students.

The Year of Amherst

Progress had been made on the campus at last, and the years of 1977 and 1978 were greeted by a majority of students with great but cautious optimism. As they made the transition to Amherst from Main Street, students soon found that there was much room for improvement. The move to a new campus had not shed the problems of old, for as one student said, “architectural must never be used as a rationalization for apathy. Instead, we must strive for and work together towards a progressive and just society.” For sure, there was a growing awareness among students that times were changing as the school transitioned from Main Street to Amherst. This process of ‘change’ was significant enough to be the central theme behind the *Buffalonian* yearbook for the graduates of 1978. Of the many concerns that students had, the growing size of the university was especially disconcerting. As one student put it, “the worst part of the change has been the increasing apathy...I have found it difficult to feel a part of the total University.” And for another student, “the impersonality of this large University has also generated a stronger need for a more definitive personal identity.” So with an uncertain sense of purpose, UB students entered the new school term of 1977-1978. A student newspaper, *Ethos*, proclaimed: “It is the year of Amherst. Welcome.”³¹

This period in the university’s history, and in America’s, was characterized by great uncertainty. Life had settled down after the Vietnam War. Professionalism became the new

³¹ State University of New York at Buffalo, *Buffalonian* (Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo, 1978), 8. Editorial, *Ethos*, 27 September, 1977.

status quo. As the student leader Todd Gitlin recalled, “we became professionals and managers, and made the acquaintance of credit cards and small domestic pleasures.” As for the youth that had made their way into UB, they themselves became ever more involved in their studies and social life, less so in activism. In a *Buffalonian* interview, UB’s Dr. Richard Siggelkow, the vice president for student affairs, described the situation: “the great majority still remain more concerned over jobs, dating, and fiances than civil rights, conservation or the threat of nuclear war...the overwhelming majority do not want to take the time to be properly informed, meaningfully concerned, or intelligently active.” And as one student explained, “today, it is virtually impossible to get someone to sign a petition. So many are wrapped up in their studies that they have no time or interest in the politics of this university.”³²

For the small majority of students that were genuinely concerned about the happenings of the university, they need not look further than the administrative plan to move several student organizations from Main Street to Amherst. The scheme involved the transition of the undergraduate and graduate Student Associations as well as the Student Corporation known as Sub-Board I, to name a few, to Talbert Hall. As Jay Rosen, the *Spectrum*’s special features editor, exclaimed, “what was once a “closely knit network of student organizations is [now] in danger of being split by the unsettling move of five groups to the Amherst Campus.” Logistically, a wide-scale move of every organization to Amherst was impossible at the time; three of the six buildings reserved for student organizations remained on the drawing board. Therefore, dozens of organizations would have to stay put on Main Street. Such a scheme prompted one of Rosen’s interviewees, the treasurer of Sub-Board, to remark that “they couldn’t

³² Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1987), 432. State University of New York at Buffalo, *Buffalonian* (Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo, 1977), 175. SUNY Buffalo, *Buffalonian 1978*, 13.

have planned it any better if they wanted to split student organizations.” The president of the Graduate Student Association raised a more sinister point concluding that the administration was trying to give “a particular character to the nature of student organizations at [the] University,” one which would “minimize the role students play in the policies of the University.”³³

But to Jay Rosen, the problem ran deeper than policy decisions made then and there. To him, the campus at Amherst was the epitome of the university’s attempts to separate its students. In the summer of 1977, he penned in the *Spectrum* an article exposing Amherst’s design as one that seemingly intended to corral and control students. “It appears that the new campus was, in part, designed to prevent student disturbances from reoccurring, and failing that, to limit their size and effectiveness,” Rosen announced. Of the University Plaza, a main activity space of the university, Rosen argued: “the plaza is set at an elevation fifteen feet below the surrounding academic spine area. Hence, activities on the terrace... would not be visible to ground level occupants of the spine.” He further questioned the utility of the plaza, noting that the six “centralized” buildings which were set aside for students were located a quarter of a mile from the University Plaza. But even more jarring was the absence of a student union from any of the proposed plans. “No student union. Let it sink in... The campus without a heart will never have a beat,” Rosen lamented, for “the \$300 million Amherst Campus will always be as cold and barren as December itself.”³⁴

As he raved on about the lack of a student center, Rosen also attacked the more superficial aspects of the campus. Through his column, “Exile on Main Street,” Rosen laid down his criticisms of Amherst Campus with sarcastic prose. To him, the campus was no more the

³³ Jay Rosen, “Move to Amherst Threatens to Split Student Organizations,” *Spectrum*, July 22, 1977.

³⁴ Jay Rosen, “Control of a College Campus: the Theory Behind Amherst,” *Spectrum*, July 8, 1977.
Jay Rosen, “Exile on Main Street,” *Spectrum*, September 16, 1977.

Berkeley of the East as it was the “Turkley of the East.” Rosen mocked everything from the poor workmanship of the buildings to the policies surrounding the usage of Lake LaSalle. “The signs around the Amherst Campus amaze me...NO FISHING - NO SWIMMING - NO BOATING. They were going to put another one there – NO LOOKING,” Rosen raved. And of the Ellicott Complex, he joked: “Red Jacket (a sub-unit within the complex) is coded green. Looks nice at Christmas, I guess...The Buffalo Bills would never lose a game there. You build the visiting team’s locker room somewhere in Ellicott...You just know the other team would never find its way out.”³⁵

³⁵ Jay Rosen, “Exile on Main Street,” *Spectrum*, July 8, 1977.

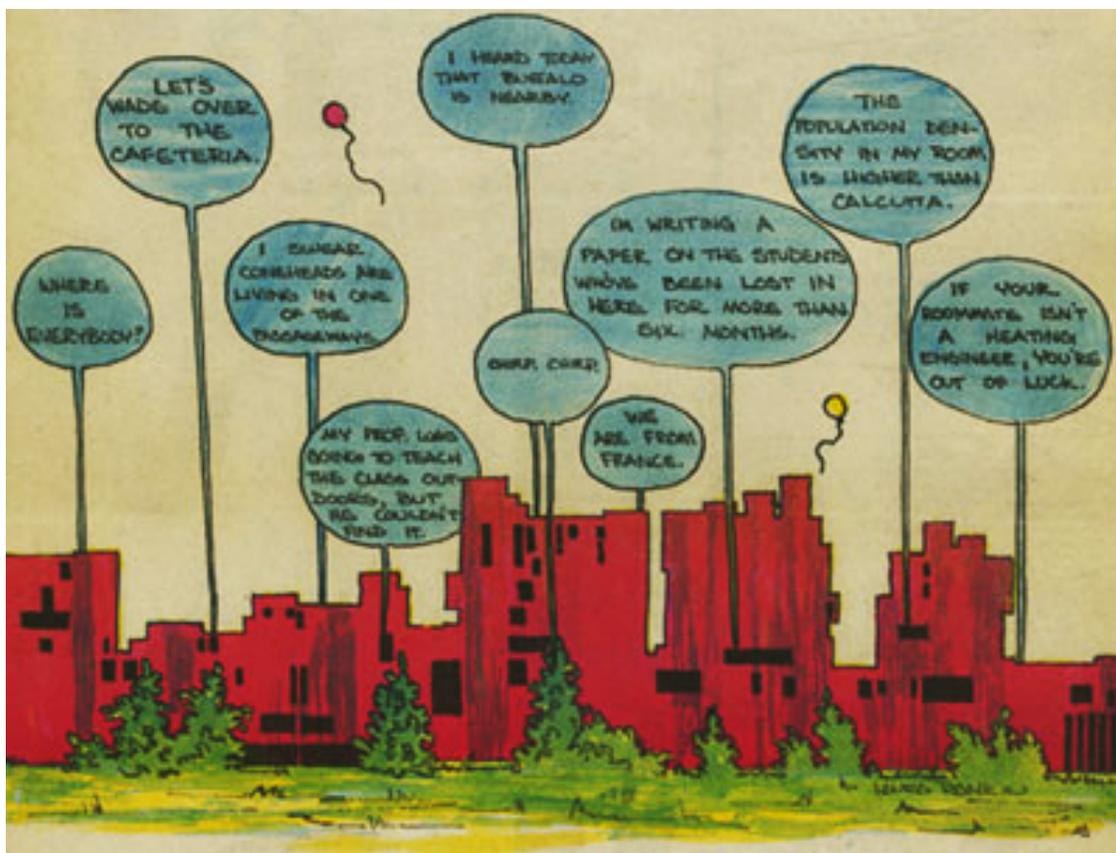


Figure 8: A cartoon drawn by Laura Rankin in the August 25, 1978 issue of the Buffalo Evening News. The campus and its buildings did not escape the critiques of non-students. Notice that the dark vertical striations on the blood red buildings resemble prison bars. Overall, a very bleak image.

An influx of students responded empathetically to Rosen's assertions that the administration of UB was implementing a strict system of control. As one student wrote, "Jay Rosen did an excellent job in reporting the behind-the-door-scheming which created the Amherst Monstrosity...the establishment was being threatened and it responded accordingly to protect its OWN INTERESTS." Another student was apparently "shocked and dismayed to learn of the true reasons for the set up of the Amherst campus, although I should have been able to perceive them purely through observation." Yet another student conceded that "decentralization is working because if it were not, there would be much more student protest about what is being done to us...We are being divided and conquered." One student praised Rosen: "You have helped to

bring out in the open a serious question for people who are now aware of what's happening...the implications of what this control may mean, totalitarian control and a serious threat to human freedom, is so frightening yet so disguised and so subtle."³⁶

But if Rosen's contentious writing had attracted some like-minded students, he had also summoned the wrath of many frustrated readers. A flurry of student letters was sent to the *Spectrum* mocking Rosen as the "Ellicott Berater" with a similar vigor as the students that had defended him. One exasperated student asked Rosen to "please stop reminding us of the imperfections which exist in our would-be flawless, comfortably secure surroundings." Other letters defended the campus. "We can't expect Amherst, a campus built in another time and place, to be a duplicate of Main Street," one student argued. Another ventured that "it will no doubt be some years until enough money is secured to create a *real* campus here as was intended – and climbing ivy and chestnuts are not requirements to make it such." Yet, Rosen remained steadfast in his response: "My personal contention is that the new campus appears empty because of the inherent nature of its design...I will stand by my belief that 'something is missing' at Amherst."³⁷

It is doubtful that Rosen's words in any way influenced the opening of Baird Point in 1978. On a portion of the land originally designated as the location for the University Plaza, three marble columns, remnants of the demolished Federal Reserve Building in Buffalo, were erected at the edge of Lake LaSalle as the predecessor for a major campus space. But if President

³⁶ Mory Fox, letter to the editor, "The Amherst Monstrosity," *Spectrum*, July 15, 1977.

Robert Lane, letter to the editor, "More Intelligence," *Spectrum*, September 23, 1977.

Bernard Brothman, letter to the editor, "The New Student Center," *Spectrum*, September 23, 1977.

Kevin McCabe, letter to the editor, "Target of Control," *Spectrum*, September 30, 1977.

³⁷ Allen Scott Cohen, letter to the editor, "Jay 'Ellicott Berater' Rosen," *Spectrum*, November 2, 1977.

Margaret Mary Buchanan, letter to the editor, "Self Inflicted Amherst," *Spectrum*, October 21, 1977.

Cathy Russo, letter to the editor, "Amherst Here and Now," *Spectrum*, October 24, 1977.

Michele Spione, letter to the editor, "Sunset in the Wilderness," *Spectrum*, November 2, 1977.

Ketter's dedication ceremony for Baird Point was any indication of how students would react to it, then Baird Point was a total flop, for even at the event, Rosen remarked that "only a handful of students could be spotted in the crowd which was dominated by administration members..." Half a year later, Baird Point remained barren. "Many students here believe that Baird Point is the dullest thing to hit UB since cafeteria food," a student wrote, while another maintained that "its use is very limited. Its remote location and uncomfortable lawn seating confounds me." Yet another joked that "it'll be really great when they complete the building that goes with the pillars." Presently, there has been no building erected with the pillars. Words from the *Buffalonian* resound perhaps even today: "Baird Point stands alone, stands lost."³⁸

The libraries that opened at Amherst in 1978 did not escape the comments of students. In Capen Hall, the Undergraduate (UGL) and the Science and Engineering (SEL) libraries opened to a generally positive reception. One student likened the experience of walking into the UGL "like walking into a giant box of crayolas" while other students praised the library's conduciveness to studying. But of course, not all comments favored the new libraries. Following the theme of a decentralized campus, the Lockwood Library had opened several buildings down. The split locations of these libraries had caused at least one person to complain about receiving conflicting information on where to find library materials. And following the precedent of other buildings, the libraries were insufferably confusing to walk through for some students. Such a reaction prompted some students and professors to design new signage for the Talbert-Capen-Norton Complex. Simply named "The Signage Project," the group of artists created new graphic

³⁸ Jay Rosen, "Ketter Delivers His 'State of the University Address'," *Spectrum*, September 13, 1978. Caryn Schulz, "Exploring the Often Obscured, Later Potential of Baird Point," *Spectrum*, February 14, 1979. State University of New York at Buffalo, *Buffalonian* (Buffalo, NY: University at Buffalo, 1979), 113.

standards, stressing legibility and ultimately aiming to “‘un-confuse’ those who use the often bewildering Talbert-Capen-Norton Complex.”³⁹

Across from Capen Hall stood the first two modular towers of the Health Sciences Faculty, but given the fact that only \$650 million had been allocated for the construction of the campus at Amherst and that the originally planned twenty-four modules of the Health Sciences would have amounted to roughly \$300 million, the remaining twenty-two towers had been scrapped. Designed by the firm Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, the faculty’s individual buildings – essentially square modules rotated 45 degrees and connected on a grid with the other modules – would have had the capability to change its functionality on demand due to the “extreme unpredictability of future program changes” attendant with combining clinical, research, and teaching facilities together. And even though the full extent of this modular flexibility could not be realized in a completed scheme, the only two buildings standing – Cooke and Hochstetter Halls – would be put to the test. No more than one year after the buildings had opened, Jack Randall, an architectural associate from the Office of Facilities Planning, wrote a letter to the Acting Vice President John Neal detailing his extreme distaste for the two structures. Of the general character of both halls, Randall wrote: “...depressing because of color and dark background-contrasts and a totally distracting hodgepodge of miscellany....” A footnote to the letter, written by an unknown individual, described the halls as a “marvelous example of a space that not only inhibits learning-teaching but aggravates tendency to complaint.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Diana L. Tomb, “The New UGL: An Eyeful,” *Spectrum*, July 14, 1978.

Edward Murphy, letter to the editor, “Science and Engineering: Not Too Bad,” *Spectrum*, September 29, 1978.

Lisa Abbey, letter to the editor, “Science and Engineering: Too Bad,” *Spectrum*, September 29, 1978.

Lynn Novo, “New Lockwood: New Problems,” *Spectrum*, September 6, 1978

Mary Kay Fisch, “Complex is Less Perplexing Since Implementation of Signs,” *Spectrum*, September 15, 1978.

⁴⁰ Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, *Master Plan Report: Health Sciences Center, State University of New York at Buffalo/Amherst* (Albany, NY: State University Construction Fund, October 21, 1970).

Letter from Jack Randall to John Neal concerning the Cooke-Hochstetter lecture hall deficiencies, April 18, 1978

By 1977, Amherst Campus had taken shape, although it was still far from the original plan that had been conceived by Sasaki, Dawson and DeMay. Some students enjoyed the new campus, but others had become convinced of the totalitarian nature of the campus. The extent to which students actually subscribed to such a view is incalculable. If anything, many students defended the campus optimistically. One thing was for sure: students wanted more spaces on campus that gave them the opportunity to congregate. Their critiques of the campus would continue, but as will be shown, they would take more active steps in protesting for a more unified and centralized campus.

Fighting for Amherst

The only athletic facility to grace Amherst Campus in the first decade of its existence was a temporary air filled bubble structure lying between O'Brian Hall and the Ellicott Complex. The Bubble had been erected early in 1975, but not without problems. Despite promises that it would open in January, the opening date was postponed first to February due to structural problems and later to March. The anticipation had not subsided meanwhile for a *Spectrum* reporter described that despite "all the controversy, scandal, and general depression in the air," Amherst was at least getting some recreational facility; "the Bubble is not a palace, but it's better than nothing." The initial jubilation accompanying the opening of the Bubble on March 19, 1975 turned to scorn. One student observed the delight that most people felt when the Bubble opened on March 19, 1975. Yet, as years passed, student discontent rose. At least one student had called the Bubble "a patched pimple." Others, having dealt with the overcrowding, long lines, and general inefficiency of the Bubble began to refer to it as the Ketterpillar.⁴¹

⁴¹ Bruce Engel, "TGIF," *Spectrum*, January 24, 1975.

Paige Miller, "Good But Could Be Better: The Bubble Opens Wide Its Doors," *Spectrum*, March 19, 1975.

Meanwhile, Clark Hall, the only athletic facility on Main Street, was becoming dangerously overpopulated, and a lack of funds had stopped any serious maintenance efforts. Some students saw it as a “crumbling gym...in ludicrous contrast to our beautiful Amherst Campus, which without a gym is as complete as a house without a bathroom.” Indeed, Clark Hall was “pathetically outdated,” lacking in basic accommodations such as handicap access and elevators. Even the vice president of facilities, John Neal, conceded that Clark Hall was an appropriate gym for 6,000 students, not three or four times more.⁴²

Nearing the end of 1978, *Spectrum* reporters discovered a bill passing through the state legislature that would appropriate \$15.3 million in funds for the construction of a domed stadium at Syracuse University. Students were understandably upset at such a scheme; in their eyes, the state had clearly abandoned its role of funding its ailing public universities to fund a private building venture. It was not just any building, but rather a modern athletic facility which UB was sorely lacking. It did not take long for students to realize the irony of the situation. So on November 3, 1978, an estimated 1,100 UB students angrily surged towards the groundbreaking ceremony of Buffalo’s new Light Rail Transit System at Main Street, disrupted the proceedings, and confronted the honoree of the event: the Governor Hugh Carey. But students were not just furious at Carey for handing funds over to a private university. Since 1975, Carey, they claimed, had consistently routed funds away from UB. To them, Carey was “the man they held most responsible for the University’s stagnation.” Now, the protestors and Carey waged a verbal war. He defended himself by associating with the student movements in the late 1960s and also cited his continued involvement in trying to provide tuition assistance to state students through his

State University of New York at Buffalo, *Buffalonian* 1979, 117.

⁴² Gary Sammartano, “Completion of Gym at Amherst Still Eighteen Months Away,” *Spectrum*, November 12, 1976.

Mark Meltzer and David Davidson, “Clark Hall: An Antique that Lives On,” *Spectrum*, November 6, 1978.

Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). “Bullshit!,” skeptical protesters shouted. At one point during his speech, Carey mispronounced President Ketter’s name, calling him “Netter” and then later “Kitter.” Needless to say, as Ketter recoiled in embarrassment and Carey struggled to redeem himself amidst the raucous laughter, students viewed themselves as having won a major battle. The *Spectrum* editorially announced: “at this moment Carey was arch-villain, and nothing he could say would change the demonstrators’ minds.”⁴³

In retrospect, students had not won a significant victory. The first phase of the new athletic facility that they had protested for would not open until 1982. The treatment that Carey received at the hands of the protesters was also undeserved. Though he may have set aside funds for a private university, that particular piece of legislation had also included provisions for several other major building projects in Western New York. Earlier in the year, Carey had also announced his support for the release of \$48.8 million to Amherst Campus to supplement its construction of the first phase of a new gym, a music center, and several engineering buildings.⁴⁴

The first portion of a new athletics facility finally opened in the fall of 1982. Boasting a 10,000 seat arena (3,500 of which were actually available at the time of the opening), an indoor track, a triple gymnasium, several racquetball and handball courts, and a locker room, Alumni Arena won the praise of the students, some of whom considered it “one of the finest athletic facilities in the country. In the meantime, a second phase, housing several swimming pools, weight and exercise rooms, and other facilities for intramural sports, was under construction. But despite a student who raised a complaint about the strict regulations imposed over the usage of its pool, the opening of the facility in 1985 passed uneventfully.⁴⁵

⁴³ John H. Reiss, “Rally Lures 1100 Protestors to Square-off Against Governor, *Spectrum*, November 6, 1978. Rob Cohen, “Carey and His Comments – Students Not Satisfied,” *Spectrum*, November 6, 1978.

⁴⁴ John H. Reiss, “Carey Gives Support For New Amherst Construction,” *Spectrum*, June 16, 1978.

⁴⁵ David Czajka, “UB’s Alumni Arena!,” *Spectrum*, August 30, 1982.

Not long after their major protest against Carey, students turned their attention to President Robert Ketter. In 1979, he was nearing his ninth year in office and students could not help but ponder what Ketter had achieved during his term. On October 26, hundreds of students crowded into the Haas Lounge at Squire Hall, the student union on the Main Street. There, the president and university students debated and defended their actions. In the ensuing conversation on whether Ketter should stay or go, it was no surprise that some students did not have many positive words for Ketter. A *Spectrum* editorial published a week later summarized the situation: Ketter's tenure had been "characterized by a consistent adversary relationship with students," the editors proclaimed. They proceeded to list their dissatisfactions: Ketter's involvement in the committee that had suspended radical students in 1970s, his resistance to allocating bus funds for sending students to an Attica support rally, and his suspension of a student run pharmacy and a university daycare center, to list a few. On November 9, 1979, the discontent of the university was made clear when approximately 2,400 students, faculty, and staff voted on a referendum that resulted in a "no confidence" result for Ketter. "Robert L. Ketter has been President long enough," the *Spectrum* proclaimed, citing his failure to complete the Amherst campus, provide enough funds for the libraries, and critically engage with the student population. Ketter rebuked the students. Surely, a vote from 2,400 members in a university of 20,000 could not accurately determine whether every single student or professor at the university desired to either keep him in or out of office. Ketter was not the only individual to question the validity of the referendum. *Spectrum* editors had also commented on the situation: "one of the problems with UB is that too many people are apathetic...never stopping to think about how they could improve this

Kim Ring, "Alumni Arena is a Cool Place," *Spectrum*, November 30, 1983.

Letter to the editor from Marcie Lucas, "(Non) Swimming at Alumni," *Spectrum*, February 22, 1985.

University.” The *Spectrum*’s plea for everyone to “play a part” fell on deaf ears. Ketter retained his presidency and would continue to do so until 1982.⁴⁶

For many students, it seemed that Ketter had ended his presidency with a victory, for with one last act, he closed Squire Hall. “How convenient,” a student remarked sardonically, that Ketter would leave the presidency the same day that Squire Hall closed. For two decades, Squire Hall (previously known as the Norton Union) had served as the student union for the university. Located on the Main Street campus, Squire was, to the students, the heart of the school. Now, it was to be renovated for the Dental School starting in March 1982 in an attempt to save the school from losing its accreditation. And while many students were sympathetic to the plight of the Dental School, they were also left wondering where to congregate. To some students, it seemed that Ketter had finally fulfilled his lifelong goal of placing the student population into submission. “All Ketter is doing is putting the final twist in decentralizing students,” said the Vice President of the Student Association.⁴⁷

Student leaders concocted a plan to deal with the eventual ejection of student organizations from Squire Hall. Two of the most outspoken of these leaders, Bob Hayden and Peter Hirschman, formed the Kabosh Committee. Initially, the group proposed that several floors at the Capen-Norton-Talbert Complex in Amherst should be set aside for exclusive use by student groups. Meanwhile, Harriman Hall, a building located next to Squire, would serve as a union for the Main Street Campus at the cost of displacing much of the Theater department. To their surprise, President Ketter accepted much of the proposal. All of Talbert Hall would be relegated to student activity at Amherst while Harriman Hall would house both the Theater

⁴⁶ Editorial, “Students and Ketter – An Adversary Relationship,” *Spectrum*, November 2, 1979.
Ketter Referendum Results In: Voters Lean to ‘No Confidence’,” *Spectrum*, November 9, 1979.
Editorial, “The Time Has Come,” *Spectrum*, November 9, 1979.

⁴⁷ Terry Canade, “Small Crowd Hears New Save Squire Student Plea,” *Spectrum*, January 29, 1982.

Department and some student groups. Renovations started at Harriman, but a month later, disputes arose. Kabosh accused the Division of Food and Vending Services (FVS) of starting construction at Harriman without having consulted them. As Hayden reportedly said, “we don’t want a union that is a restaurant.”⁴⁸



Figure 9: Squire Hall at Main Street. Photograph from UB Libraries website.

Perhaps Hayden and Hirschman were unhappy at the lack of communication between Kabosh and FVS for in late November, Kabosh inexplicably changed its position on the issue of relocating the soon to be displaced student groups. Now, it wanted to focus its efforts on quite literally saving Squire from the wrecking ball. “We own this building,” Hayden announced to the

⁴⁸ Alan C. Kachicm, “Hayden’s Kabosh Committee Outlines Proposals For Squire,” *Spectrum*, September 11, 1981. John K. Lapiana, “Groups Get Amherst, Harriman; Culminates Three Month Debate,” *Spectrum*, October 5, 1981. Frederick E. Park, “Relocation,” *Spectrum*, November 18, 1981.

cheers of students at Haas Lounge. Apparently, Amherst Campus was no longer adequate or up to the task of housing a student union. "It's so sterile out on Amherst," Peter Hirschman claimed. With that said, Kabosh now outlined a potential method of stalling the closing of Squire: keep the FVS in Squire and stop its renovations at Harriman.⁴⁹

The Squire controversy produced many outspoken individuals. As Kabosh continued its fight against the FVS, a sociology professor, Ed Powell, spearheaded an effort to seek a court injunction to stop the university from taking Squire. An alternative group known as Save Our Squire (SOS) was formed to protest Squire's closing with civil disobedience. By February 3, 1982, the movement to save Squire took a heated turn when several hundred students occupied Squire Hall at 10 p.m. University police soon intervened by demanding that the protesters leave the building or risk arrest. In the end, approximately 90 students were handcuffed, yet all but three were allowed to return home with a court summons. Of the three that spent the night in jail, *Spectrum* reporter Reg Gilbert was the most vehement, penning an article a week later that blasted the administration for lying about threats to the accreditation to the Dental School and insulting him and his fellow students by calling Squire Hall a "funhouse." Gilbert channeled his anger from the Squire controversy towards the university. "UB is a schizophrenic institution...Amherst a half-constructed, futuristic monument to inhuman architectural design...still ugly to me, still cold and empty, still isolated and distant," Gilbert raved. Main Street did not escape his critique; it was a "bleeding patient on the operating table...Parker Hall is cold corridors now; Foster seems eyeless and soulless..." For Gilbert, the demise of Squire

⁴⁹ Terry Canade, "Kabosh Student Committee Holds a Rally to Support For Its Cause," *Spectrum*, November 20, 1981.

Hall continued the trend of dehumanizing and sterilizing the school, “re-created free of human germs.”⁵⁰

Perhaps more unnerving for the university students was an atmosphere of distrust and fragmentation that permeated through the Squire controversy. By the middle of February, when the battle for Squire seemed to be losing hope, students began to vent their frustrations against Kabosh. “It has become obvious that the real goal of the Kabosh leaders is to get as much publicity as they can before the next Student Association (SA) election,” a student wrote, citing that Kabosh was fighting a losing battle by trying to save Squire while they should have focused their efforts on acquiring space for the displaced student organizations. *Spectrum* editors shared the same sentiment: “Kabosh, the Student Association (SA), and Sub Board I (SBI) have lied to students...treated the Squire organizations like peon fighters – strategic, expendable pawns in Hayden’s and Hirschman’s battle to satisfy their political egos and ambitions.” It was a reasonable reaction. Days ago, Kabosh and the SA had issued an order for the 38 student organizations residing in Squire to remain in place despite the upcoming move date. These organizations were placed in a predicament: stay at Squire Hall or risk losing out on the free moving service offered to them by the university administration. “Why aren’t those SA and SBI hypocrites, who sit comfortably in their spacious Talbert Hall offices and who like rats fled Squire three years ago, moving back into Squire themselves?,” *Spectrum* editors criticized. Reg Gilbert then retorted: “The *Spectrum* rises smug and glib to the most scathing attack imaginable on the foremost student leaders involved in saving our only student union...unfortunately, you

⁵⁰ Seth Allen, “Sit-in to Save Squire Peaceful; 96 Arrested for Trespassing,” *Spectrum*, February 5, 1982. Reg Gilbert, “Jailed Student, Sick of Lies, Defied Police to Save Squire,” *Spectrum*, February 10, 1982.

escalate drastically the student disunity you assert Kabosh has created.” Kabosh was, in fact, working on a multimillion dollar lawsuit in its attempt to save Squire, Gilbert defended.⁵¹

But no lawsuit could have stopped the inevitability of Squire’s conversion to a dental school which had been planned since 1977. At 2 a.m. on February 27, 1982, 200 people gathered inside Squire Hall and its Haas Lounge singing Vietnam War songs and chanting various 1960s protest beats. By 4 a.m., the disturbance had been quelled; 39 individuals were arrested, 32 of whom were students. Ketter promptly suspended the miscreants as his less act as president of UB. By the morning, Squire Hall lay dormant, “raped” by the administration. After months of protests, negotiations, and infighting among students, Squire Hall finally closed its doors.⁵²

The events following the closing of Squire Hall would require another essay to fully detail. Suffice it to say that for ten years afterwards, students would be pit in a constant debate over whether or not a new union should be built at all and more importantly, how a new union would be funded. An examination of the events immediately following the closing of Squire demonstrates a dwindling possibility for a new union. By the middle of 1982, Dr. Steven Sample was fully engaged as president of UB and to the joy of many students, expressed his support for a new student union. To that end, he initiated several meetings with six student leaders from various organizations to discuss the logistics of a new union. The leaders were soon divided amongst themselves over the principle issue of how the union should be funded. Most rejected the idea that students should pay for their own union. So when Sample initiated a referendum

⁵¹ Bill Mack, “Big Mack Attack,” *Spectrum*, February 10, 1982.

Editorial, “United We Fall,” *Spectrum*, February 19, 1982.

Reg Gilbert, “Guest Opinion,” *Spectrum*, February 26, 1982

⁵² John K. Lapiana, “Turning Out The Lights,” *Spectrum*, March 1, 1982.

asking the university's students whether or not they wanted a new union, the results confirmed their attitude: 66% of the 5,300 voters said no to the union.⁵³

Meanwhile, a new Student Activities Building (SAB) had been under construction ever since \$7.2 million had been appropriated for the building in the summer of 1982. The building itself was 47,000 square feet, placed adjacent to the once planned University Plaza. Among its many accommodations were rooms for gaming and dining as well as space for student organizations. But as the events concerning the referendum have shown, students at UB did not consider the SAB to be a real union. So when the SAB partially opened in the fall semester of 1984, there was a noticeable absence of students compounded by the fact that the game room later charged a fee for entrance. In the meantime, meeting rooms and spaces for student organizations were still under construction and would not open until the following spring. It was no surprise, then, that the extent to which the new SAB functioned as an actual student union was questioned. And though students were hopeful that "the SAB will probably be widely used by students before very long," the concept of a true student union still captured their imagination. As a warning, the *Spectrum* reminded students that "the more time that goes by without a union, the lesser the chance that one will be built in the near future."⁵⁴

Conclusion

⁵³ Jonathan M. Goldstein, "Student Presidents Confer with Sample to Plot Union Proposal," *Spectrum*, October 13, 1982.

Gary Stern, "Union Referendum Overwhelming Rejected; Sample, SA 'Disappointed', GSA Ecstatic," *Spectrum*, February 4, 1983.

⁵⁴ Chris Shaw, "New Student Activities Building Will Offer Food, Clubs, Games and Used Furniture," *Spectrum*, August 27, 1984.

Liz Petrino, "Activities Building to Start This Fall," *Spectrum*, August 30, 1982.

Editorial, "Enjoy SAB, Pursue A Union," *Spectrum*, August 27, 1984.

Rockefeller had dreamt of a reinvigorated SUNY system that could catch up to the standards of the great universities of California. Martin Meyerson had dreamt of the University at Buffalo as the instrument by which SUNY could meet such a goal. Yet, dreams belie the actual reality of the situation. Amherst Campus had not met the challenge. Its history has been anything but smooth. Romantic visions of its potential greatness were counteracted by suspicions of its totalitarianism. Some students have considered the campus a success, others a failure. One thing is certain: the campus has been a medium through which students could vent their frustrations against the establishment. Slow construction? Blame the state and the governors Rockefeller and Carey. The student union is being threatened? Blame Ketter and his administration.

The preceding history of Amherst Campus has documented some of the ways that students have experienced its design. It has shed light on the ways that students have acted to influence its architecture whether it was through small projects like redesigning signage to large scale efforts at championing for athletic facilities. But despite these efforts, the students responsible were by far the minority. The 1982 *Buffalonian* yearbook devotes a total of two pages for the effort to save Squire Hall. A recent conversation with Jay “Ellicott Berater” Rosen reveals that most students never took to heart issues of the campus save for a few politically minded students. Amherst Campus might be shrouded in myth, but in the end, its students walked its plazas and buildings, never giving a second thought to the idea that its design was used to repress students.⁵⁵

The historian Michael Frisch hotly contests the myth of the campus as having been designed to stop protest. “Think of the major protests throughout history... with one or two

⁵⁵ Jay Rosen, e-mail message to author, April 23, 2015.

exceptions, revolts against the state have seen more success if the perpetrators took advantage of narrow winding alleyways,” Frisch argues. “Put a bunch of protesters into the middle of a plaza and they’ll get hosed down by a couple of firehoses, but if student radicals wanted to revolt, they could barricade themselves into Ellicott, block some entrances, open the windows to its towers and throw stones at advancing police, and the press will be able to capture the situation before the police could ever penetrate into the complex.” The Ellicott Complex had been designed to foster small student communities, to scale down the enormity of the multiversity into more intimate colleges. The student radicals would certainly be united into an intimate community sharing a similar interest at that one moment.⁵⁶

The rationale of design conflicted with student desire. While the designers of the campus had wanted to decentralize it in an attempt to form smaller communities within a large university, students had championed for a greater centralization of the campus. In the fall of 1992, students finally got what they wanted. After years of negotiations, the new student union at Amherst opened its doors to the university. 75 clubs and organizations took up residence in the three-storied building connected to the SAB. At its opening, the reaction from students was positive, for finally here was a space that provided not only a diversified atmosphere with its different cultural clubs but also an aura of unification that had been lacking for ten years since the closing of Squire. Contrary to what Jay Rosen described years before, the campus finally had a heart. And so it was with great jubilation that on November 12, 1992, the date of the union’s dedication, President William Greiner announced: “students, it’s all yours.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Michael Frisch, interview by author, Buffalo, April 29, 2015.

⁵⁷ Mark Pollio, “New Student Union Beats Expectations,” *Spectrum*, August 26, 1992.

Jeriel S. Zuniga, “Student Union’s Formal Opening Highlighted by Presentations,” *Spectrum*, November 16, 1992.
 Gayle Meinkes, “New Student Union Acquaints Students With Best of ‘College Years’,” *Spectrum*, February 17, 1993.

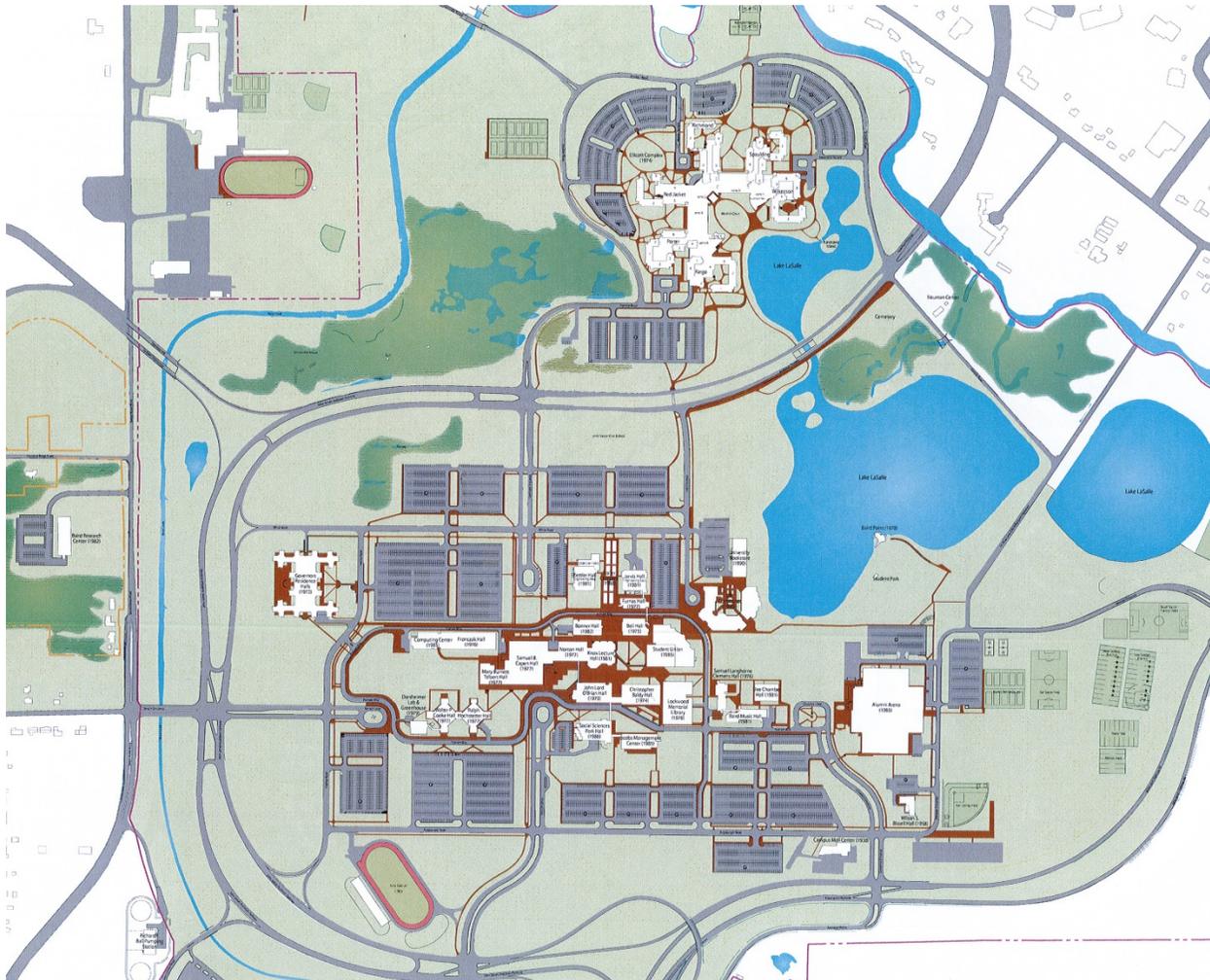


Figure 10: A plan of the campus in 1990. The spine has taken shape, but the Ellicott Complex is still woefully isolated on the northern portion of the campus. Plan from Historic Resource Manual by Foit-Albert Associates.

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