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# MIZZOU

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## Around the Columns

### Looking back on American Education

MU Chancellor Brady J. Deaton was raised on a small farm in Eastern Kentucky. His father was a bricklayer and a carpenter.

“I’m not from an educated family,” Deaton says.

But when exposed to the University of Kentucky’s 4-H Youth Development program, Deaton thought, “oh my goodness there are such incredible opportunities here.”

Like the University of Missouri, UK has an extension program that offers its research findings to the citizens, pairing education with public service.

The Morrill Act of 1862 helped establish that defining characteristic in universities throughout the U.S. by giving each state a grant of public land to sell or use for colleges (hence “land-grant” universities).

This year, MU commemorates 150 years of history on the anniversary of the Morrill Act, signed on July 2, 1862. But the inception of higher education in America started decades earlier with the first universities: the modern day Ivy Leagues.

#### History of U.S. education

In the 15th and 16th centuries, early universities adopted a European model of education, intended only for an elite class.

Part of the mission of Harvard University, the oldest American university, founded in 1636, is “to create knowledge, to open the minds of students to that knowledge, and to enable students to take best advantage of their educational opportunities.”

Thomas Jefferson championed educating common people for the betterment of society and democracy during the second half of the 18th century. That message circulated in the North. But southern plantation owners were unwilling to incur additional taxes to fund public education for poor whites, says Kerby Miller, an MU history professor. Wealthy planters used racism and white solidarity between the poor and wealthy to counter legislation for public education.

That solidarity did not exist in the North, where mass production and capitalism would characterize a second industrial revolution during the latter half of the 19th century. Early labor unions surfaced, industry boomed and stark divisions in class formed. As southerners and immigrants migrated to northern states, upper- and middle-class northerners feared that newcomers would become a welfare burden if not educated — so began the Morrill Act and public higher learning.

The purpose was to educate the common people in practical subjects such as manufacturing and agriculture. “It literally brings the basic sciences of a research university together with the arm of the university that ensures that the world can be fed from that knowledge,” Deaton says.

Using research and acquired knowledge redefined American education: improving basic functions such as planting seeds properly, using fertilizer effectively and not only grasping how to build a table, but also understanding the science of the glue that holds it together and its most effective use.

In 1887, the Hatch Act increased funding to land-grant universities; and in 1890 and 1994, new provisions of the Morrill Act required those institutions to integrate or establish separate land-grant universities for black and Native American students.

“Kentucky State University, Lincoln University, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Tennessee State University — those have a very distinct role in the evolution of the United States,” Deaton says.

In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act added funding to engage land-grant university research in real-world application. Today’s university extension programs aim to solve communal issues such as hunger, unemployment and illiteracy.

Almost a century later, a 2011 Battelle Institute report credited land-grant universities as key to American agriculture’s rise to international prominence.

### **MU stands out from the pack**

Although many universities, including Mizzou, had opened doors before 1862, the Morrill Act required each state to have a university that specialized in the sciences and applied work. Some states created new agricultural and mechanical universities in addition to their state colleges. The University of Missouri, instead, added the land-grant mission in its guiding principles. The result: an expansive research institution combining community services, diverse degree programs and top professors.

MU is one in only five universities in the nation that offers law, medicine, veterinary medicine and a nuclear research reactor on one campus (the nation’s largest university nuclear research reactor).

“We have a powerful learning system here that is unmatched really anywhere in the country,” Deaton says.

In 2010, MU boosted the Missouri economy with \$434.8 million in sponsored research, instruction, commercial services, public service contracts and grants.

The university provides about \$100 million in student financial aid and spends \$51.8 million

employing more than 10,000 students.




“To me, there’s no other place that I would work. I’ve had opportunities to work in private universities,” Deaton says, “and I want to be at a public land-grant university because it encompasses all the commitment, vision and mission that matters to me and my view of humanity.”

He acknowledges not only a thirst for knowledge but also an intrinsic concern for people, both of which epitomize land-grant values.

“Certainly it’s a humanitarian instinct that people matter,” he says, “and that low-income people or poor people have just as much right to all this as anyone else.”

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