

The Once and Future Emory

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Institutions are in many ways like the individual human beings that make them up. Dispositions, habits, innate strengths and limitations—all have a way of determining an individual's goals and chances in life. This is no less true of a university. Indeed, it may be particularly true of a university, for if you think about the major forms of institutional organization born in the West—the church, the business corporation, the symphony orchestra, and the university—this last is the most conservative of them all, the slowest to change, and the most likely to resemble in the future what it has been in the past. Universities have been around for about eight hundred years, which is roughly what the average faculty meeting feels like.

So my title for this brief talk—“The Once and Future Emory”—is meant to suggest a kind of continuation of things: some of what Emory has been will remain the same; some will be changed by a new era, stamped by new realities of economics, and demographics, and technology; and some of what Emory has been will fall by the way, even though its shadows will continue to color and shape new programs, new strategic plans, new objectives in Emory's mission.

Let me offer three very brief vignettes from Emory's past that may say something about Emory's trajectory into the future.

It was not until the 1840s that the spot designated as the terminus for three railroads near the present World Congress Center would have enough residents to be called a town, and not until 1847 that the town would be named Atlanta. Even so, by 1854 some six thousand souls inhabited the city, about a fifth of them African-American slaves. The streets were mud, the structures were all made of wood, and the town council had to pass a law to keep people from letting their hogs wander the streets. Perhaps most remarkably, in 1854, only eight years after the first doctor arrived, this little town

established a school of medicine. We can speculate about the reasons for the founding of this medical school in Atlanta. The study for doctoring in those days required only about four months of course work and the passing of an exam. But finding a place to study was a trick, since there were only five medical schools in the entire American South.

No doubt, as in so much of Atlanta's history, transportation led to the beginnings of medical education in this city. With railroads connecting the city to most of the country, Atlanta quickly was becoming a hub of transportation, making it easier for students to reach the city. At any rate, the state government chartered the Atlanta Medical College on Valentine's Day, 1854, and the Atlanta city council agreed to let the eight faculty members give lectures in the city hall until the school's own building could be completed.

One of those first faculty members happened to be the fourth president of Emory College, the Reverend Alexander Means, M.D. It's not widely known that Emory's relationship to the School of Medicine actually goes back to the very founding of the Atlanta Medical College in 1854. Alexander Means was the living connection between the two institutions. A more scientifically curious mind probably could not have been found in the Southeast in those days. He exhibited in his Emory laboratory what many regard as the first electric light in America.

But his interest in medicine never flagged. And a year after joining the faculty of the Atlanta Medical College, he resigned the presidency of Emory to devote his full time to teaching medicine in Atlanta.

So the connection between Emory and health care in Atlanta is old and distinguished. One other way in which that connection has been deepened over the years is through Emory's relationship with Grady Memorial Hospital. By the 1890s, the regulation of medical education in America had become more deliberate and intense, and in the same year that Grady Hospital was founded, 1898, the Atlanta Medical College helped to form the Southern Medical College Association, with the aim of bringing more rigorous standards to medical education. Where medical school graduates used to be able to apprentice themselves to a physician in private practice, new standards required students to have supervised practice in a clinic or hospital. Clearly it was in the interest of

both the city and the medical schools for the new hospital to be close to the practicing doctors who made up the faculty of the medical schools.

Thus the link between Grady and the Emory School of Medicine goes back to the hospital's very beginning. The relationship has been long, complicated, and fruitful for both the school and the hospital. Neither would be what it is without the other.

That's one vignette—a picture of Atlanta and a suggestion of Emory's partnership with the community, particularly as we seek to transform the way we teach healing and foster health.

Here's another vignette of sorts. Many of you are aware of Emory's historic connections with The Coca-Cola Company. Some of those connections have been family connections—through Robert Woodruff in the latter half of the twentieth century, and through the company's founder, Asa Candler, and his tribe in the first half. Now Asa had a younger brother named Warren, who entered Emory College when Emory was still a small, rustic campus in Oxford, Georgia. After finishing college at the top of his class in 1875, Warren Candler began a career in ministry and rose to prominence as assistant editor of an influential Methodist publication in Nashville. That position promised in time to be a major rung in the ladder of advancement to becoming a bishop.

In the spring of 1888, the president of Emory College resigned to become the first president of what is now the Georgia Institute of Technology. In April that year Warren received a letter from his older brother:

Dear Warren

I have several matters to write you about. First—Emory College. Dr. Hopkins has resigned for bigger pay. Several influential Methodists have been to me to enquire if I thought you would accept. They are going to urge . . . you to . . . take it. . . .

I am satisfied you can decline without breach of [faith to the] church. . . . The post you are at is of much greater importance than the presidency of Emory. You can do the Church more good at Nashville and in addition to these reasons you are so situated that a move from there now

would materially interfere with your personal and family welfare. . . . I say to you—if the place is positively offered you—decline it.

[On] another subject. You know how I suffer with headaches. Well some days ago, a friend suggested that I try Coco-Cola [sic]. I did and was relieved. Some days later I again tried it and was again relieved. I determined to put money into it and a little influence.

The point of this story is that the future is as obscure and inscrutable to us now as it was to Asa and Warren Candler over a hundred years ago. But the future may also be as promising. For by the end of that year in which Asa wrote to his brother, Warren had indeed been offered and had accepted the presidency of Emory College. And Asa had bought the secret formula from its inventor, John Pemberton, and had launched what would become the world's most famous brand name. Within another decade, Warren had been elected bishop after all, Asa had joined the Emory board of trustees, and together they would form the most influential duo in Emory's history, moving the college to Atlanta, refounding it as a university, and setting it on the trajectory to become what it is today.

A third vignette leads to a third point. An important characteristic of Emory's trajectory of development and focus can be seen in the fact that just two years after the rechartering of Emory as a University, members of the medical faculty formed a military hospital unit and volunteered along with Emory nurses to serve the allied forces in France during World War I. This bold step manifested a tendency in Emory's people to think internationally. In fact, as early as the 1850s, just two decades after the college's founding, the student body included young men from Korea, Cuba, Bolivia, Canada, England, and even, exotically enough, a couple of Yankees. One of the great Methodist missionaries of the nineteenth century, Young J. Allen, graduated from Emory in 1858 and served in China for fifty years. A young Korean came to Emory in the 1890s and after graduation returned to his homeland, where he became a prominent member of the government in Seoul and penned what is now the Korean national anthem.

Emory has been from its earliest days an institution with its eye on the international horizon. Its faculty have traveled abroad to study and converse with colleagues at least since 1854, when Professor Means sojourned in England and conducted experiments with the great Michael Faraday. Emory's alumni have included a Korean ambassador to the United States and at least two American ambassadors to other countries as well as other Foreign Service postings. Emory sends more graduates into the Peace Corps than nearly any other university its size. At commencement last year, some 430 students hailing from 82 other nations received degrees, and the University proudly displayed the flags of those countries during the graduation ceremony. More than 40 percent of Emory undergraduates study abroad at some time during the careers here. As part of our strategic plan, we have set a goal that by the year 2015 12 percent of Emory College freshmen will be coming from abroad. This year we found ourselves well on track, as we welcomed fully 11 percent of the freshman class from other countries.

In other strategic initiatives, Emory has extended its work to improve health care around the world with the creation of the new Global Health Institute just last year. We are so committed to this enterprise that Emory has provided \$55 million from the University's strategic initiative funds and \$55 million from other sources, including Emory schools and departments, foundations, private and governmental partners.

Along these lines, Emory last year launched the new Institute for Developing Nations, after extensive planning with President Jimmy Carter and the board of the Carter Center. Building on the unparalleled partnership and opportunities we have with the Carter Center, the Institute for Developing Nations will forge new ways for American universities to have an impact on the peoples of the developing world, especially those developing nations with the highest incidence of poverty and economic hardship.

So the future surely holds the prospect of a more globally connected Emory.

One more vignette: I alluded earlier to the role an Emory graduate, Isaac Hopkins, Class of 1859, played as the founding president of Georgia Tech. One hallmark of Emory has been—and will continue to be—the imaginative use of technology to achieve a greater good. Isaac Hopkins saw, in Georgia after the Civil War, the need for greater technological training, so that the South could build an industrial base to complement its

agricultural traditions. And so he launched—at Emory—the state’s first program in machine design and technology. Fully a hundred years later, although the technology had changed considerably, Emory was again in the technological forefront. America’s libraries faced a problem of mammoth proportions in the slow crumbling of millions of books and documents printed on extremely brittle wood-fiber paper in the nineteenth century. Emory in the 1980s formed a consortium with Harvard and Yale to begin putting these at-risk documents into a digital format that will make them available electronically and thus save the past for the future.

This Saturday, as part of our Homecoming activities, the Emory University Libraries Emory University Libraries will celebrate their new collaboration with the University of North Texas and the Atlanta University Center to increase the number and diversity of students enrolled in graduate library programs in upper Georgia and to prepare these students for an array of 21st Century library careers with an emphasis on digital knowledge management. This program is being inaugurated on the 20th anniversary of the closing of Emory’s own Library School, and will provide a new opportunity for Emory to facilitate the training of new librarians.

Advances in technology are outstripping the ability of most of us to keep up with them. Technology’s impact on the future of Emory and other universities is just now beginning to be felt and more fully imagined.

Those, in short, are a few glimpses into Emory’s past and a few safe projections about Emory’s future. The lessons are that our vision will be obscure but hopeful, our enterprise global, and our major challenge the place and cost of technology.

Some other certainties remain:

- Emory will continue recruiting a greater share of the intellectual elite among America’s—and the world’s—very best high school graduates; the evidence is clear from trends in the last twenty years that Emory has become the first choice of students who just ten years ago might have chosen the Vanderbilt, Duke, Northwestern, and even the Ivy League.
- Emory will continue to seek ways to resolve issues of resource-disparity among students, closing the divide between the very well-off and the less-well-off, between

rich and poor. Emory, like the rest of the United States and, indeed, the world, will confront the reality of this divide and will need to overcome it. Last year we created the Emory Advantage Program to reduce the debt load of students from middle-income and low-income families. Interestingly, other major universities followed our lead in this, including Stanford, Virginia, and Chicago.

- Emory will look very different thirty years from now. One need only recall the difference between what Emory looked like 30 years ago, and what it looks like today, to imagine the changes afoot. New facilities currently coming out of the ground or planned for the next three years include a psychology building, a theology school building, nine freshman residence halls, and the beginning of a major overhaul of our clinic and hospital buildings.

In closing, let me pose three reasons why I think Emory has achieved its place among the nation's top twenty research universities and will succeed in achieving our goals over the next decade.

First, some very smart people have taught at and guided the institution. These have been men and women of extraordinary intelligence, vision, and energy, who were able to recognize the needs of the community and the school and, more importantly, find ways to meet those needs with great economy. They recruited outstanding people and stretched dollars as tight as they could.

Second, Atlanta has been a formidable influence. From the moment the citizens of Terminus decided the town needed a more upscale name, to the time the city adopted the phoenix and the motto *Resurgens* for its seal, Atlanta has harbored an ethos of aspiration and the quest for the main chance. Despite its disadvantages – lack of a major body of water, complete devastation in the 1860s, the burden of Jim Crow laws and segregation through most of the twentieth century – Atlanta has had a sense of potential that could be realized only through the building of great institutions, including a great university.

Finally, Emory's heritage has included not only a Methodist theology of going on to perfection but also a sense of needing to work for positive transformation in the world. This combination of people, place, and ethos has made for a remarkable foundation from which the next chapter will be written. It will be interesting to be part of the writing of that next chapter over the next decade.