OP ED: ON CHANGING THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL

Marcus Michelsen (BME '14)

It’s difficult for a school to maintain an identity over long periods of time. Students are constantly entering and leaving, professors and administrators (albeit at a much slower rate). When adding technology- and curriculum-related changes, institutions of higher learning are required to change in order to keep aloft. How does a school keep its own unique identity during these periods of change?

When approaching this topic, I’m reminded of Plutarch’s Ship of Theseus—a ship that presents a ship—referred to by Plutarch. The question: is the ship still the Ship of Theseus? I’m reminded of Plutarch’s Ship of Theseus.

If we tie these arguments back to identity in institutions of higher education, we can say that a school keeps its identity if it maintains the same design and still serves the same final purpose.

Consider, now, our school. As we all know, a dramatic change is about to occur this September as we begin to charge students for the first time in over a century. Can we say that this new school is still The Cooper Union? Looking at it from strictly an Aristotelian perspective, I don’t think we can.

Let’s first look at our formal cause: implementation of tuition is a clear change to the school’s design. At its root, the model of this school used to be that students exchange nothing more than their time and energy for an education. This exchange—the key aspect of design of this school—will be dramatically altered in September.

Now examine our final cause. In changing tuition, we change from educating to preparing for the purpose of financial gain. It goes further: when discussing Bharucha’s salary with a friend, I mentioned that our president makes nearly twice as much as Obama. My friend responded by saying that he doesn’t think Obama does the job for the money. With the sheer amount of money that Bharucha receivers annually—more than 700,000 in total compensation—it is impossible to claim that Bharucha isn’t financially motivated. With absurdly high salaries for high-ups such as Bharucha, and Campbell’s notoriously fat bonuses, it’s clear that Cooper has been transforming into a school that serves to benefit its leaders—just like any other business. If this claim seems a bit over the top, consider that Bharucha’s annual compensation is enough to pay one year of half tuition for 35 students, an entire class of architecture students.

Choosing to keep a single administrator over 35 students shows that the end-goal of this school is no longer to educate students it is to make a profit for our leaders.

Less obvious, our material cause changes as well. Colleges cycle through students every four years, but ideally the kind of student entering stays the same. It remains to be seen whether the incoming students will be at the same academic and creative level as current students, but there will be one change that will necessarily occur. We students at Cooper have a very specific relationship with our education since we are not paying for it. When paying for an education, one’s relationship with their education changes, for better or for worse. As an open forum, a community member compared this to

CUA EMERGENCY MEETING

Carolyn Yu (EE ’15)

On January 13, 2014, the Cooper Union Alumni Association (CUAA) held an emergency meeting to present the Huron Group report, state the annual fund report, and discuss the Board of Trustees’ decision to not adopt the Working Group’s financial plans.

Richard Lincer was asked many questions regarding the decision and its consequences. What follows in this paragraph is a list of a few of the points made by alumni in response to the current donation situation at Cooper. Alumni are asked to donate but they are blamed by the administration for not donating enough and at the moment, it feels as if there is no other way to support the school other than giving individual support, words, and talk.

Forty-per-cent of Cooper alumni who had received the full-education scholarship have given back. Donors also need a metric of percentage, dollar value, and quantity of the fund that will work towards the deficit because it is hard to fundraise without a metric. There were 25 pages from the Working Group but there was no opportunity to review or discuss the plans before it was given to the Board of Trustees.

The following answers by Lincer stood out as notable. Each school funds itself and donors can specify which school they donate too. MOOCs are not favorable because they degrade student experience. In order to have well-qualified people for administration positions, the Cooper Union needs to pay them. There are various events, and Cooper had formed a demand made by the protesters who occupied the President’s office last summer. The rejection of adopting the Working Group’s plans in lieu of tuition came after scrutiny from both the Board and the Huron Group, Cooper Union’s financial consultants. The Board suggested, however, that it may implement some of the cost-cutting models created by the Working Group in tandem with a tuition based financial aid system.
The Cooperative: Where are you originally from? Can you tell me about your educational and professional background?

Melody Baglione: I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. I often have to report that’s it. Detroit-Detroit, meaning inner-city Detroit, because people are surprised when I say the suburbs. I’m a product of Detroit Public Schools. It was a unique environment to grow up in; it was really a community that I am. It’s also the automotive capital of the world, so I became interested in cars and the automotive industry. My brothers, my father, my uncle, and most people around me worked with cars. I think that’s why I’m so engaged with cars and technology and ultimately decided to pursue engineering.

I did my undergraduate degree at Michigan Tech in Houghton, Michigan, it’s an engineering school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It’s further north than Toronto. My freshman year we accumulated 3282 degrees of snowfall— we went snow-mobiling in May. It is very different from New York City. It is very rural and used to be a copper mining town. The university is surrounded by old ghost towns and nature. It’s completely different from Cooper Union and being in an urban environment. I like being either in an urban setting or the country.

I also spent a year abroad on the Congress-Budapest Youth Exchange Program. I studied a semester at a German technical university and did a “Praktikum” (a sort of internship) in Munich. BMW spending two months in the Motorport engine plant and four months working on powertrains in Bavaria. I also tested a semester at the ETH Zurich (The Swiss Federal Institute of Technol-...
“What you look for in a date? Something with a hole.”

“What you look for in a date? An inflated prostate.”

“I am Mark Epstein.”

The Pioneer sits with Atina Grossmann on educational background, raising a child in Massachusetts, and the current political climate here at Cooper.

The Cooper Union: Where from?

AG: The Upper West Side.

TCP: Can you tell me about your educational and professional background?

AG: Yes. I am a New York City girl. I grew up in the Upper West Side. I lived at 87 and I went to Hunter High School, way back in the day when it was called Hunter High School. It was one of those specialized high schools where you had to take a test. It was actually a wonderful place to be because back in the 60's it was still even in New York—not such a cool thing to be a smart girl. Once we got to Hunter, all we felt at home. It was a simulating and nurturing environment.

I ultimately ended up going to City College where I got my undergraduate degree after a brief detour to the University of Chicago, which I left, partially because I had to brave because I was a big student activist. I came to City at a time of enormous political turmoil and excitement during the struggle around open admissions. It was a period from 67-72 when we felt that our educational life was completely entrusted with our activism. I had some of the most amazing professors and that's where I decided to become a history major because it seemed to make the most sense in terms of trying to understand what we were doing. The women's movement was just beginning, the Vietnam War protests were in full swing, and we were trying to make open admissions work at City. After I graduated from City College in 1972, I actually stayed on for another year as some of my friends were getting a new program in a new program which was called the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, so I ended up Cooper Union as the founding president, and trying to work on open admissions as soon as this whole organizational strategy was in place. I imagined going to an event where something was beginning, and this is a very much part of history and part of my identity as a historian, New Yorker, and feminist. Even more so, I never really left New York. It was always a wonderful place to be because back in the 60's it was still even in New York—not such a cool thing to be a smart girl. Once we got to Hunter, all we felt at home. It was a simulating and nurturing environment.

TCP: When did you first learn about Cooper?

AG: I remember being 15 when I knew about Cooper or at least from the 60's on, when I was in high school, because Cooper Union, at least as a place, with the Foundation Building, the Great Hall, and all its historical significance, was so much part of the landscape, especially of the Lower East Side. And, of course, in the 60's, we would all go downtown and hang out at St. Mark's Place and on the Lower East Side so the Foundation Building was the structure that stood benevolently over all the chaos of the time and neighborhood because I was a very much interested in history and literature so it wasn't at all strange for me to be there. I just went to school. It was very much a part of the cultural and political landscape of the East Village.

One very conscious memory I have of Cooper is that I think in the early 60's, back in the day when we still celebrated International Women's Day on March 8th, a march that took us all around the Lower East Side. I was probably in high school or a little bit younger when I had to dig out my car, I'm not sure because I was so busy! In New York, I can just get on the subway. I really needed to get out of there.

TCP: When did you first start working at Cooper and did you come to teach here?

AG: I first came in the fall of 1996. It was kind of a rather unplanned trajectory because I went to graduate school at Rutgers. I was a public school person, I am a graduate of City College. When I went to City, it was fine; I don't think I ever paid for my education in my life. I went to Rutgers, which was a state university, I was a TA and my education was covered completely by a fellowship, my TA gig. As I was finishing my dissertation at Rutgers in modern German history, I got a job at Mr. Holyoke College— a tenure track position at Mr. Holyoke College— and I knew I didn't want to want to go to western Massachusetts. I was a big city person and I didn't think I could do it. It was the 80's and there were very few jobs in history and I really wanted to do it. It was not the job, but my advisor's comments, “you're crazy. You can't turn down a tenure track job.” I buckled and went to teach at Mr. Holyoke. It was beautiful, and it was calm — some of it is very real, really wanted to go back to the city. Though I had my first child and my husband was working in New York, I had to be, basically, a single mother. There was still a lot of snow during New England winters and every morning I had to dig out my car. In New York, I can just get on the subway. I really needed to get out of there.

I always tell this anecdote because that's the best way I really needed to do this. Once again, it had a sexual and junior faculty didn't have anything. I had to do this, to do twice in this week — it was to be more, because it was so much a part of the city. I was heavily involved in the New York area. I was very much a part of the Jewish community that children went to on the Upper West Side. I was very happily working on Parent-Teacher leadership team and I didn't want to give that up. In my whole life, I was happiest when I was doing scholarship and something that felt like activism. I also knew that I loved being a historian, an intellectual, and a scholar and I wanted to continue being a professor.

I had a very good friend named Andy (Anson) Rabinbach, whom you may have heard at Cooper as a professor. He taught history here and the idea was that we would be the ones that were then the “Making of Modern Society” course. He had been a job at Princeton. It was another way to teach history, to be the lead lecturer in the Making of Modern Society. I think the advantage of Princeton was to supervise the adjuncts and to teach electives especially in the Holocaust in terms of gender and golden ages. I think that what I would like my primary role to be is to teach that general history course and teach it in such a way that students can see what it means to be a Jew in something that is forced on them but something that is necessary and interesting for their everyday lives. But he's leaving so we're not just locked into those. Cooper and also has an international presence. I think that really is an advantage because you can expose them to so much. We’re not just locked into those. Cooper is beside the point because I get a job at Columbia. Columbia, though, when I was there because I was very much a part of the New York intellectual, and a scholar and something that felt like activism. I was heavily involved in the New York area. I was very much a part of the Jewish community that children went to on the Upper West Side. I was very happily working on Parent-Teacher leadership team and I didn’t want to give that up. In my whole life, I was happiest when I was doing scholarship and something that felt like activism. I also knew that I loved being a historian, an intellectual, and a scholar and I wanted to continue being a professor.

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TCP: What would you say your role is here at Cooper?

AG: I think there’s a really interesting question. I feel like it keeps changing. The position for me has never been straightforward. It was to teach history, to be the lead lecturer in the Making of Modern Society. I think the advantage of Princeton was to supervise the adjuncts and to teach electives especially in the Holocaust in terms of gender and golden ages. I think that what I would like my primary role to be is to teach that general history course and teach it in such a way that students can see what it means to be a Jew in something that is forced on them but something that is necessary and interesting for their everyday lives. But he's leaving so we're not just locked into those. Cooper and also has an international presence. I think that really is an advantage because you can expose them to so much. We’re not just locked into those. Cooper is beside the point because I get a job at Columbia. Columbia, though, when I was there because I was very much a part of the New York intellectual, and a scholar and something that felt like activism. I was heavily involved in the New York area. I was very much a part of the Jewish community that children went to on the Upper West Side. I was very happily working on Parent-Teacher leadership team and I didn’t want to give that up. In my whole life, I was happiest when I was doing scholarship and something that felt like activism. I also knew that I loved being a historian, an intellectual, and a scholar and I wanted to continue being a professor.

TCP: What course do you expect your students to partake in everything that the Cooper has to offer? And what do you like about being a part of the institution and I'm worried about that future. It’s an amazing place.

Also, we love to be part of a relationship that creates a synergy among the three schools and the whole SVA. You can just be at SVA for example. Cooper has this extraordinary interdisciplinary potential.

TCP: As a closing remark, do you have any advice for the Cooper community or the students specifically?

AG: I think that Cooper has a remarkable history and that we should be very careful with how we both preserve and move forward. I think that we really do hope that we can maintain a full-time scholarship policy. I'm completely aware of the financial challenges. I think that there are ways to make it important and exciting to the students. In some ways, I feel like it's a little harder now. I don't know why but I think that it may be because the students are more overburdened. For me, what I love is the intellectual part of my life: to live in the city, which is my home, to see my kids through school, and to sit on my own damn couch.
**ALUMNI INTERVIEW: JULIA SZPRENGIEL**

*SAIMON SHARIF ‘15*

Alumni can give the greatest advice because they too have been through the ups and downs of Cooper. The Cooper Pioneer interviewed alumni from the art, architecture, and engineering schools to inspire current students and show how different alumni experienced Cooper.

We interviewed Julia Szprengiel (CE ’07) to see what she’s up to now.

**The Cooper Pioneer:** What club/group did you enjoy the most during your time at Cooper?

**JS:** During my senior year at Cooper, I finally joined the women’s tennis team. I had played in High School, and missed tennis quite a bit, but never thought I had enough time to add into my already crazy Cooper schedule. As soon as I started playing with the team, all I could think of was why hadn’t I done this for all 4 years? My classmates had always impressed me with not just their intellectual abilities, but also their wide range of talents outside of the classroom, and their ability to continue to pursue these interests despite our heavy class schedules. Students really make it happen at Cooper. Sports, talent shows, musical performances, cultural events, clubs — everything is student run, and without the amenities and money of large universities. I encourage current students to explore all of their interests while at Cooper. Even if you don’t think you can do it, you probably can. Cooper students somehow always find a way.

**TCP:** What is your favorite memory about Cooper?

**JS:** I vividly remember the moment I found out I was accepted to Cooper University. I came home from high school, and there was a message from the admissions office on the answering machine (remember those?). Despite getting a phone call from the school directly, I still didn’t believe that I was getting in. Maybe they’re just really personal like that, I thought. Then I heard it — “Congratulations, you’ve been admitted into the class of 2007!” The next part is fairly lousy — but I’m pretty sure I screamed repeatedly, and then yelled euphorically several times, while running around the Novartis manufacturing site in Suffern, NY (one of the best needs of NYC). The program is designed to educate and expose the candidate to different areas of the business to provide a well-rounded foundation for a future management position. The best part is that the second year of the program is spent at different Novartis sites abroad. My abroad placement was in Basel, Switzerland.

I had an amazing year from a professional, personal, and cultural perspective. This was an incredible and rare opportunity, and I fully credit Cooper’s strong academic program and reputation for giving me the edge.

**TCP:** Can you describe your current job?

**JS:** Currently, I am back at Novartis Suffern, NY manufacturing site, working in the Operational Excellence group in the Quality department. I lead and manage continuous improvement projects within Quality using Six Sigma/statistical tools.

**TCP:** What advice would you give to current Cooper students, specifically engineering students?

**JS:** Although it might be difficult for the ambitious, overspecializing at Cooper, try not to obsess over your grades. You, they are important, but to an extent, do you benefit just if you get A’s and C’s more than A’s and B’s. As a professional, I know that no matter what, when you come out of Cooper and back into the “real world,” you will be leaps and bounds above your coworkers in your work ethic, knowledge, etc. without even trying. The work you consider to be the expectation will be a “above and beyond” to your colleagues and managers, and you will see how Cooper’s rigor has shaped you.

Also, enjoy Cooper life outside of academics. Participate in sports, hobbies, music, clubs, etc. — if you think you don’t have the time. Believe it or not, once you begin a regular job, you will think, “now I really have no time” compared to college. When I started working, I thought that I would finally have time to indulge all the hobbies I put aside while focusing on school. Not true — life gets in the way at that point and the responsibilities pile on. But, you start working, you have to wake up at 6am, and get excited when you finish chores on Friday night so you don’t have to do them on the weekend… and, but true. So, take advantage!

**ANNUAL SKI TRIP AND SPORTS UPDATE**

**YAMA ELBOROODY CE ’11**

At 3 in the morning on Sunday, January 12th, a hundred people gathered in the lobby of 41 Cooper Square. It was time for Dean Baker’s Annual Ski Trip, which has been going for 38 years. Cooper students and their friends are invited to go to Mont Sutton in Canada for five days, the week before the second semester begins. In Canada, the clubs and organizations for groups which due to their hard work are invited to train for the Cooper bond, since only those with a real willpower, none of whom are in academic trouble. For those who couldn’t get enough of skiing in Canada, Dean Baker also hosts the Alumni Ski Trip during the President’s day weekend, where the whereabouts of students are still bed to be encouraged to attend.

Of course, there were sports involved in the trip, not coinciding the dog’s pulling game. The men and women’s basketball team played Lenoxville, a division 1 school, at Bishop Campus. The volleyball team played in a 4 team round robin start in athletics. These games were about gaining experience in playing intersessionally with some of the best teams in Canada. Back in the United States, Cooper University’s basketball teams are near the top of the ECAC and the East. The boys’ team has started the season in November, while the girls will be graduating this May. The men’s team had a game against King’s college, which due to their hard work resulted in a great game.

The men have an art school tournament coming up in two weeks with Allegheny, MS&Y, and the New School. The New School’s men’s and women’s basketball team just had these guys past weekend — so stay tuned for those scores. The South Carolina trip is the start of the men’s tennis team’s season during spring break. Both men’s and women’s basketball teams are also invited to train for the upcoming seasons.

**MEN’S BASKETBALL TEAM**

**Cooper Union**

**King’s College**

**Score:**

| 77 | 53 |

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

**MARKUS MICHELON ‘14**

A Cryptogram is an encoded quote. It is encoded such that each and every occurrence of a letter is substituted with a different letter of the alphabet. Using clues such as frequency of occurrence and placement, the original quote can be found. For instance, the word shibboleth could be deciphered to reveal the word LONGFELLOW.

"OR Z WFNJ, ORZ WFNJ, ORZ WFNJ, ORZ WFNJ!" - J Whodoyouknow

Last issue’s solution: Age is something that doesn’t matter, unless you are a cheese.” — Luis Bunuel

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