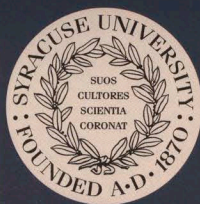


In this latest volume  
of Syracuse University history,  
author John Robert Greene  
looks back at  
Chancellor Melvin Eggers  
and the campus events  
of the seventies and eighties  
that helped shape  
and define his legacy

# The Eggers Years



By training, John Robert Greene G'83 is a historian of the modern American presidency. A graduate of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, he has written books on the Nixon and Ford presidencies, and the presidential election of 1952. In recent years, he has dedicated an enormous amount of effort to researching and writing the two most recent of five volumes of Syracuse University history—*Syracuse University: The Tolley Years, 1942-1969*; and *Syracuse University: The Eggers Years*, which was published in 1998 by Syracuse University Press and is excerpted here. Greene, professor of history and communications at Cazenovia College, New York, explains in his introduction to *The Eggers Years* that, like the previous volumes, this is “a study, a history, not an encyclopedic recitation of every fact that has been a part of the University’s growth.”

In working on the last two volumes, he and his research assistants combed through page after page of University archival material and interviewed more than 300 people, including administrators, students, faculty, community leaders, and benefactors. “My goal,” he writes, “was to paint as broad a picture of the University’s growth as the sources would allow, balancing my narrative of executive decision making with evidence of the political and social forces beyond the executive’s control.”

### Eggers’s Baptism of Fire

In February 1971, Chancellor John Corbally informed the University’s Board of Trustees that he would leave SU to become chancellor of the University of Illinois system. On March 10, Corbally was on his way to Chicago. That same day, student activists demanded that the new acting Chancellor meet with them to discuss their demands.

Several weeks before, Corbally had informed Melvin Eggers, his provost, of his decision and told him that he would be named acting Chancellor. Eggers had only recently been confirmed by the Board of Trustees, and on the day of Corbally’s departure he was not scheduled to take over the office for five more days. However, the students would not be placated. Some 23 years later, the new acting Chancellor-elect remembered his baptism of fire:

“[The students] found out [Corbally] was at the airport on his way to Chicago. So they came over to my office and said, ‘You, in the chapel. Now.’ I said, ‘Look, I’m not the Chancellor.’ ‘We don’t care. You, in the chapel. Now.’... So I went.... It was the absolute right thing to do.... I faced them [approximately 1,300 students had gathered at the chapel] and said, ‘I am not prepared to talk with you as the chief officer of this university. I do not take office until the 15th of March. But I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I will meet you on the evening of the 15th of March. Monday evening.’ That gave me a chance to do some mobilizing and preparing for that meeting.”

Melvin Eggers, acting Chancellor of Syracuse University, began March 15 with a promise to move from “layers” to “community,” a pledge he delivered to the com-

munity during a radio interview on WAER-FM, the campus radio station. He then went to Hendricks Chapel as promised five days earlier, where he received a rather rigorous grilling. He refused all requests—and there were several—to sign statements to show his support for student demands. He did, however, offer a considerable olive branch to participatory democracy when he offered that he would resign if the University Senate ever desired...

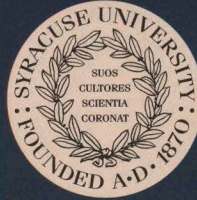
Melvin A. Eggers was born February 21, 1916, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Despite the fact that his family was particularly hard hit by the Great Depression—his father lost his job and, for a period of time, the family was on the dole (“I know what it’s like to eat salt pork through the courtesy of the county”)—Eggers was quick to note during a 1994 interview that he nevertheless got some “important breaks.” Upon his 1933 graduation from high school—hardly a good time to be entering the work force—he concluded that he could not as yet go on to college, but he got a \$50 per semester scholarship to Indiana University. This covered all but \$25 of a semester’s tuition at Indiana University’s Fort Wayne extension program. For his first year, Eggers worked in a neighborhood drugstore for 50 cents a night, and \$1.25 for all day Sunday. This money was given back to the family. When he lost that job, he became a dispatcher in a local dairy for 10 cents an hour. When it seemed that that job would be phased out, he worked for milk. He then got a job in a local bank, where he worked for four years.

In 1938, having saved \$400 (of which he gave half to his parents), he quit his job at the bank and moved to Bloomington, enrolling at Indiana University as a full-time junior majoring in economics. Two years later, Eggers received his bachelor’s degree; the following year he received his master’s. Toward the end of that year, on April 5, 1941, Eggers married Mildred Chenoweth, whom he met while the two were officers for the local YMCA and YWCA. He did some graduate work at the University of Chicago, but World War II intervened. In 1942, he enlisted in the Navy; he attended the Advanced Naval Intelligence School in New York City, and was then stationed in Washington, D.C., as a Japanese language translator. After the war, he was an economic analyst for the U.S. War Department in Tokyo. He was discharged in 1946 with the rank of lieutenant.

Following his discharge, Eggers enrolled at Yale University, which had offered him an assistantship before the war. Immediately after earning his Ph.D. in 1950 (his dissertation was on the economic development of Japan from 1868 to 1900), the 34-year-old Eggers came to Syracuse University as a member of the economics department. Eggers later told the *Syracuse Record* that “when I came I thought I’d be here three or four years.” Ten years later, he was made chairman of his department; in 1968, he was named chairman of the Agenda Committee of the University Senate...

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Academic Affairs and provost in 1970.... There was no real search for Corbally's immediate successor; as provost, Eggers's elevation to acting Chancellor was virtually automatic. That did not, however, mean that he was a shoo-in to be named the ninth Chancellor. Eggers remembered that "my total administrative experience did not warrant my being appointed Chancellor...[I did not have] any business management experience [of that] magnitude as department chairman, where the nature of administration was to turn in a list of proposals for faculty salary adjustments."...

The minutes of [the search committee's] meetings make it clear that Eggers was at the top of everybody's list—throughout the balloting, he was the only candidate who consistently scored high marks with the entire committee. On June 4, 1971, Eggers was presented to the Board of Trustees as the single, unanimous choice of the search committee....

Why Eggers? His own later speculation on the question is, upon a close reading of the deliberations of the search committee, quite close to the mark: "I was seen as a healer. And I think seen as a person who had made some things happen in spite of being a healer; not just a healer but healing by doing some things."

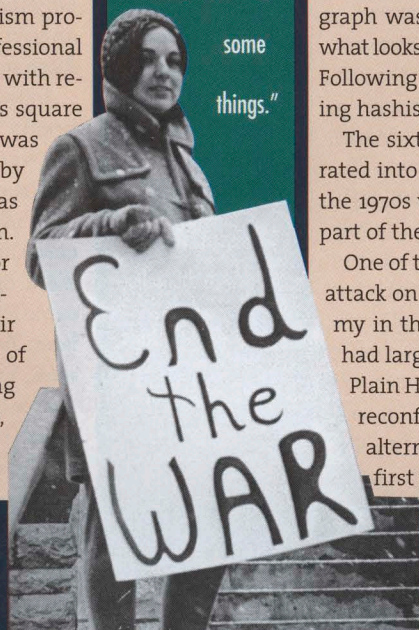
### Revamping Schools

In the fall of 1971, as part of a major reorganization of the University's academic structure, the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications was announced. The new school consisted of what had been the School of Journalism—largely devoted to print journalism—and the Department of Television-Radio, which was transferred from the School of Speech and Dramatic Art. To the school's advisory council, [Ken Bartlett, former professor of television and radio and founder of WAER] made it clear that the name change was brought about "to make it clear that the center's primary concerns were to be the media of public communications: newspapers, magazines, publishing; all forms of television-radio that were "public"; film, both entertainment and educational, and the many new forms for recordings that make public communications vastly different from recent years."

Thus, the University had a revamped journalism program—even if it was not yet at a graduate/professional level, and a new state-of-the-art building to help with recruiting. Newhouse II was roughly 89,000 gross square feet (about 5,000 more than Newhouse I).... It was occupied in 1973 and dedicated on May 31, 1974, by William S. Paley, with David Brinkley acting as emcee. The total cost for the building: \$7.3 million.

One month after Eggers and [administrator Clifford] Winters revamped the University's communications offerings, they reorganized their schools of the arts. John Prucha, then the dean of Arts and Sciences, remembered that the acting Chancellor held a weekly meeting, in his home, of an ad-hoc group. The group, consisting of Prucha, David Krathwohl, Donald Kibbey, and

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Eric Gardner, had been called together to discuss ways to cure the dissension and disorganization that they saw in the schools of the arts. For example: the School of Music was torn over whether it should follow the Juilliard model (preparing students for performing) or the Ithaca model (preparing them for teaching). The drama department, world-renowned since the days of Sawyer Falk, was torn over whether they were training professional performers or teaching drama as humanities. And Winters let it be known that each of these schools was losing money, and something had to be done. Prucha's solution, as he remembered it: "If you have a number of units that have enough merit that you don't want to lose them... you find a way to tuck them into a larger organization."

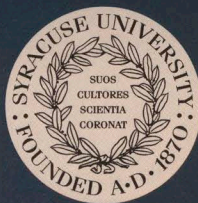
The name "Crouse College of Cultural Arts" was originally floated by Eggers for the new school. But all concerned with the decision give Prucha the credit for coming up with the moniker "College of Visual and Performing Arts"; thus was VPA born.

### The Legacy of the Sixties

At their simplest, college yearbooks serve to ignite the memory of the graduate decades later. The memories of the Class of 1969 at Syracuse University, as recorded in *The Onondagan*, offer the traditional mix of parties, sports, and special events. Some of those mentioned are fence painting, Hot Chicken Toddies, the Ball at Three Rivers Inn, and partying at Club 3200. A special section on "Weekends" highlighted University concerts with Smokey Robinson, Janis Joplin, Paul Butterfield, Simon and Garfunkel, and Peter, Paul, and Mary. When they are well produced, as were the 1969 and 1970 *Onondagans*, yearbooks can be a useful window into the soul of the institution. The 1969 *Onondagan* featured a rather uncommon section of candid photographs, titled "Environment," where few students, if any, were pictured smiling. Indeed, the section featured hundreds of stern students holding large signs protesting the war in Vietnam. The 1970 *Onondagan* continued the tone of solemnity. Where the previous yearbook featured a lot of text, the 1970 yearbook eschewed text in favor of colorful pictures in its introduction—indeed, the opening first photograph was a full-page picture of a skeleton's face with what looks to be the American flag draped around its head. Following it were photos of war, alcohol, someone smoking hashish, soldiers, students, and candlelight marches....

The sixties had ended, but the issues had not evaporated into history. University life through the decade of the 1970s would reflect several issues brought about as a part of the legacy of America in the 1960s....

One of the major demands of the student movement's attack on *in loco parentis* was for more student autonomy in the dormitories. By the end of the decade they had largely achieved that goal. In the fall of 1971, Dell-Plain Hall, which had been an all-male residence, was reconfigured as a coed dorm (men and women were alternated on different sides of the building)—a first for Syracuse University. A feature story in that



fall's *Alumni News* proclaimed that the students were now "Living Their Own Way," citing a survey conducted by the Office of Residential Life, which found that 91 percent of the respondents requested coed living centers, and that when given the opportunity to choose between the dorms and various kinds of off-campus living, an astonishing 91 percent chose to live in the dorms.

### Committing to Major College Sports

The experience of the late 1960s, particularly the 1970 football boycott [nine African American players staged a boycott over racial grievances with the athletic department], led Eggers to believe that Syracuse University could not support a major college athletic program. As he later remembered, "I had some misgivings about whether the University should return to a major emphasis on sports. I didn't see how we were going to be able to do it. Additionally, I knew we had a crumbling stadium and we had no standing as a basketball team because we hadn't yet crossed the line, really. So we didn't have a base to go on." Eggers admitted that he considered canceling the sports program, as had the University of Chicago, and that he got some advice in this regard from some of his colleagues at the Maxwell School. However, he was equally clear that the advice of another Maxwell scion, Michael Sawyer, who argued passionately for the survival of athletics, was the "advice on this matter that I substantially acted on." Thus, by 1971, Eggers remembered that "I came to the conclusion that we were more likely to accomplish the total program of the University if we included a stronger athletic program than if we tried to go without it at all."

### The Dome on the Hill

Archbold Stadium was built in 1909, and for many alumni it meant Syracuse University. Crisp fall days, football games against Colgate; Brown—Davis—Mackey—Ben. But by 1969, Old Arch was crumbling to pieces. As important as its disrepair was the fact that Archbold did not have the 35,000 permanent seats required by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) for its Division I football schools (Archbold seated only 26,000)....

The final pricetag of the fifth largest domed stadium in the Northeast and the only enclosed football stadium on a university campus was \$26.85 million. The structure had consumed 30,000 cubic yards of concrete and 880 tons of steel, even though it occupies 10,000 fewer square feet of space than did Archbold. Its most distinctive feature, the inflated fiberglass roof, covers 6.5 acres and weighs 220 tons.... Although sunlight passes through the translucent panels, more than 500 lights, manufactured by the Crouse-Hinds Company, shine for night events.... Seating consists of 49,598 aluminum bleacher seats and 684 theater seats (18 in each of the

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38 private boxes). When being used for basketball, a 50-yard section is cut from the football field with a 60-foot-high curtain designed by Cooper Decoration of Syracuse—a configuration that has become known as the "Demi-Dome."

### Tied Up at the Sugar Bowl

In 1986, the Syracuse University football team, guided by Heisman Trophy candidate Don McPherson, posted a perfect 11-0 record in the regular season, earning a trip to the Sugar Bowl in the New Orleans Superdome on New Year's Day, 1987.]

It had been 23 years between major bowl games for the Orange, and 28 years since the national championship team. They went into the game 11-0, ranked fourth in the nation; their opponent, Southeastern Conference champion Auburn, was ranked sixth with a record of 9-1-1. Neither team had a realistic shot at the national championship, but for Syracuse, the opportunity had finally presented itself to equal the feat of the 1959 team.

It was not to be. With the score at 16-13 and 4 seconds remaining on the clock, Auburn coach Pat Dye ordered a 30-yard field goal. The game ended in a tie. Dye later told reporters that "my decision was not to get beat. This team played too good and had too good a season to get beat." On national television, an incensed [SU coach Dick] MacPherson was plain: "We never go for a tie." A Syracuse radio station collected and sent some 2,000 ties to Pat Dye (Dye autographed the ties to contribute to a sale that benefited Auburn's general scholarship fund). Workers at a Montgomery, Alabama, radio station sent back a shipment of sour grapes. MacPherson was more than a little bitter: "When Pat Dye is 11-0, ask him [why he did it]. Maybe that's why he doesn't get to 11-0."

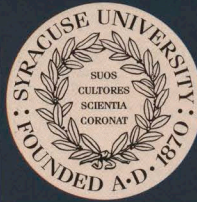
### The Smart Shot

The 1986-87 season was the best in the history of Orange basketball. Their 31-7 record was a thing of beauty, not just for the season's final outcome, which included one of the most thrilling games in the history of college basketball, but because following the leaving of [Dwayne "Pearl"] Washington, no one—not even the most die-hard Orange fan—ever expected them to do so well....

In the opening game [of the Final Four at the Superdome in New Orleans], Syracuse went up against Big East rival Providence, coached by former [Jim] Boeheim assistant Rick Pitino, who, like Boeheim, was coaching in his first Final Four. The Orange beat Providence for the third time in the season, 77-63. That evening, students went wild on Marshall Street, as an estimated crowd of 8,000 shattered windows, ransacked two stores, tore up

road signs, and stopped passing motorists by jumping on their cars. Down south, SU readied itself for Bobby Knight's





Indiana University Hoosiers, who had defeated the University of Nevada-Las Vegas 97-93 in the other semifinal matchup. The final game was a stomach-churning roller coaster ride. The game stayed dead even for the entire time. With 28 seconds remaining, Syracuse led 73-72. Then with only 4 seconds left, Indiana's Keith Smart sank a jump shot from the left side, making the score 74-73. It took the deflated Orangemen 3 seconds to call a time out; Smart then intercepted [Derrick] Coleman's hail-mary inbounds pass as the game clock expired. Boheim told alumni later that summer: "You won't see many better games."

### Legends of Lacrosse

**T**win brothers] Gary and Paul Gait...were perhaps the greatest athletes ever to play a sport at Syracuse—in their entire career, they would only lose one home game [and lead the Orange to NCAA titles in 1988, '89, and '90]. More so than any player in any sport, the name Gait would become equated with the sport of lacrosse around the country.

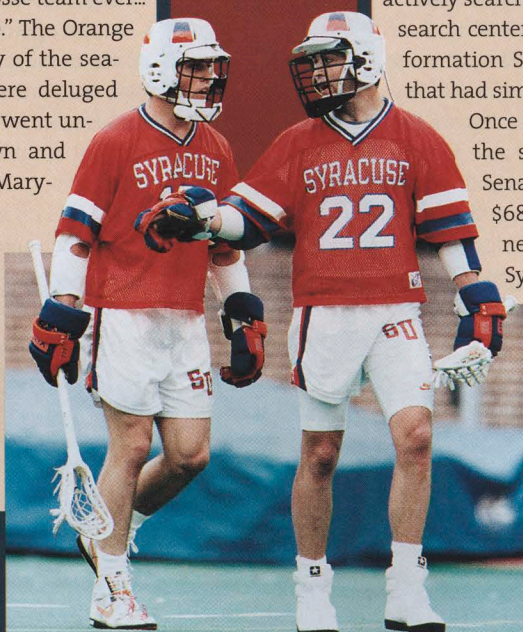
In their freshman season, the Gaits led the Orange to another NCAA tournament bid, only to lose to Cornell in the semifinals.... Starting with their sophomore season, the Gaits yanked the Orange to the summit of college sports.... Paul Gait scored 48 goals [during the undefeated season]; Gary broke the NCAA record with 70. In the semifinal game of the tournament against Penn, midfielder Gary Gait *twice* went *behind* the goal, leapt over the crease, and stuffed the ball over the top goalpost for a score. The Orange won that game 11-10, and beat Cornell 13-8 in the finals; both games were played at the Carrier Dome before 18,000 fans. [Coach Roy Simmons Jr.] gushed, "It can't get any better."

He was wrong. The following season brought with it a repeat performance in which the Orange lost only one game [to Johns Hopkins, 14-13, in the season opener]. After that 1-point loss, the Orange never looked back, reeling off 14 straight wins, capped by a thrilling 13-12 victory over the Blue Jays [Johns Hopkins] for their second straight championship....

The 1990 team was clearly, in the words of one observer, "bar none, the greatest college lacrosse team ever... they could've scored 30 goals every game." The Orange were ranked number one for the entirety of the season. Throughout the year, the Gaits were deluged with press attention.... Again, the Orange went undefeated for the season, stopping Brown and North Carolina, and defeating Loyola of Maryland in the [NCAA] finals.

In the 1980s lacrosse had transcended every other sport at Syracuse University, stacking up some of the most impressive numbers in sports history. Two statistics say it all: Since opening in the Dome in 1981, the Orange amassed an amazing 80-4 record; and, in the space of 10 years, had won 4 national championships—3 in a row.

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### Establishing a Technology Center

**T**hrough the years of developing the funding for the Carrier Dome, the University had built a good relationship with New York's secretary of state, Mario Cuomo. Now governor, Cuomo had proven himself to be more than willing to spend state research and development dollars on major technological centers. Eggers later remembered that Bradley Strait, then dean of the College of Engineering, believed that if the University was to take maximum advantage of the new research dollar, "the way to go...was to emphasize computer applications and software engineering."...

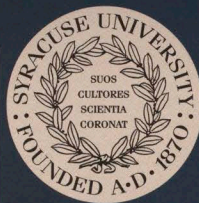
In February 1984, owing largely to the lobbying effort [of Margaret "Molly" Broad '62, then special assistant to the Chancellor for government relations], Syracuse was recognized by the State of New York as the seventh Center for Advanced Technology eligible for state assistance to industry-funded research.

The [Center for Advanced Technology in Computer Applications and Software Engineering] opened its doors in February 1984 with Strait as its first managing director. A consortium of 16 academic institutions in Central New York, its stated purpose was focusing on computer-enhanced reasoning, the development of new software, and interdisciplinary research. However, information transfer was the key to the center's being. It was expected to foster industrial collaboration, leading to a wider use of computer technology, by providing new firms with a wide array of advice and support. Companies were encouraged to join the CASE Center....

The CASE Center certainly was a shot in the arm for corporate donations to the University—the figures jumped from \$388,000 in 1981 to \$4.9 million in 1986. In 1984-85, faculty had received a total of \$30.3 million in research awards—in 1985-86, it was \$54.9 million. The faculties of CIS [School of Computer and Information Science] and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering were formally linked to the center, and in April 1986 the University dedicated a new \$2 million computing facility in Bowne Hall....

With CASE as its lead advertisement, SU could now actively search for a building to house not just its new research center, but the expanding CIS and School of Information Studies programs, as well as science labs that had simply outgrown their Bowne Hall space....

Once again, the ability of the University to lobby the state paid off. By June 1986, New York Senate and Assembly leaders had agreed on a \$68 million loan package for Syracuse, Cornell, and Columbia universities. For its part, Syracuse gained a \$27 million, 40-year interest-free loan from the State Urban Development Corporation (UDC). Another \$8 million came from business donations, and by September 1986, the initial stages of the construction of what would be the Science and Technology Center were under way.



Originally, the plan for the building drew little opposition. Then the University announced that five buildings and three fraternity houses would be razed to make room for the new construction. Julia Stokes, head of the Division for Historic Preservation of the State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, argued that the Ward Wellington Ward House should be preserved. By late November [1986], the issue of whether any historically important buildings would be destroyed in the process had delayed construction, and the UDC refused to vote on the final approval of its grant until this matter had been resolved. It was not until December 19, 1986, when the University announced that it would sell the Wellington House for one dollar to anyone who would have it moved and restored, and agreed to consider giving \$10,000 to anyone who would agree to its restoration, that the UDC approved the grant [ultimately, no one accepted the University's offer and the Wellington House was demolished]. When completed in fall 1988, the Science and Technology Center was the largest building ever erected by the University. Occupying a five-acre lot, the building houses the CASE Center, as well as educational facilities in computer science, electrical and computer engineering, information studies, and chemistry.

### Activism in the Seventies and Eighties

Many observers, particularly those who had been political activists in the 1960s, sneered at the college students of the 1970s and 1980s. Derisively labeled as members of the "Me Decade," or later as the selfish members of "Generation X," it is often assumed by outside observers that the college campuses of the 1970s and 1980s were devoid of any type of awareness of the world's problems and were simply racing to complete a degree that would get them lots of money....

The material madness and the *Animal House* stereotypes offer too simplistic an indictment of college students during the 1970s and 1980s. Throughout this period there continued to be many political and social causes for which students were willing to, and did, voice their concerns. For some, despite the myth that it had been done away with by the protests of the 1960s, it was the continuation of *in loco parentis* at the University. Others participated in environmental, gay and lesbian, racial, and feminist activism with all the vigor of their sixties brethren. Although it is true that the number of students who actively lobbied for political causes declined in the 1970s and 1980s, and it would be an error to label the decades as revolutionary in nature (although many alumni of universities around the nation have lately tried to do just that), many college students were still willing to "take to the streets" for causes in which they believed.

On April 22, 1985, students representing a group called the Coalition Against Racism and Apartheid hammered homemade wooden crosses into the grounds surrounding the Administration Building and splattered red paint, symbolizing blood, on the crosses. They also camped out on the lawn in a tent encampment they called Crossroads—named after the site of a South African clash.

### Protesting Apartheid

The issue that most galvanized the nation's universities during this period, including Syracuse University, was the debate over the academy's alleged collusion in South African apartheid. Early in 1978, colleges and universities around the nation began to pressure their boards to sell any stock in companies that did business in South Africa. One report to the Board of Trustees claimed that the University held an endowment of \$50 million, some \$15 million of which was in corporations with South African interests, and estimated that it would cost the University between \$150,000 and \$200,000 in commissions or replacements to divest....

In April 1978, the Executive Committee voted not to divest the endowment of its stocks in companies that did business in South Africa, arguing that "pressure from foreign companies on the government of South Africa is an effective means of bringing about change in that country, and because the black people there are most likely to suffer from any economic sanctions...."

Unlike some protests of past years, the South African issue was not a transient one. Rather than disappearing with a summer vacation, the issue stayed alive at colleges all over the country—well into the mid-1980s....

As a result of the board's refusal to divest, Syracuse University would play a part in a national protest against South African apartheid. On April 22, 1985, students representing a group called the Coalition Against Racism and Apartheid hammered homemade wooden crosses into the grounds surrounding the Administration Building and splattered red paint, symbolizing blood, on the crosses. They also camped out on the lawn in a tent encampment they called Crossroads—named after the site of a South African clash.

### Progressive Vision

Despite his competence, courage in the face of adversity, and importance as a transitional figure, John Corbally was not at Syracuse long enough to articulate a coherent vision for the future. However, [William P.] Tolley and Eggers were both able and willing to look forward. These men shared a vision of continual internal progress and physical growth. Tolley dreamed of an institution expanding beyond its roots as a small liberal arts college to become a modern research institution. Eggers dreamed of taking that institution to heights of national acclaim. Both men met quite different challenges: Tolley faced the chaos of World War II, the crisis of McCarthyism, and the upheaval of Vietnam; Eggers faced financial disruption and declining enrollments. Few whom we interviewed could fully agree on how these men conquered those challenges. However, they all agreed—and the evidence...confirms—that conquer them they did.

