

Nutrition for Defense

How Wartime Nutrition Professionalized Home Economics



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When Franklin D. Roosevelt announced a declaration of war on Japan and Nazi Germany, bringing America into the war it had fought so hard to remain isolated from, he had to contemplate everything a “total war” would encompass. “During these days of stress,” he addressed at a war conference in 1941, “the health problems of the military and civilian population are inseparable. Total defense demands manpower.” Total war didn’t just mean a war fought on land, sea and air; it meant that every citizen would in some way become an active participant in the war. And as active participants in a war, every citizen’s health suddenly became a crucial issue. In order to get the edge on the Axis powers, the American war effort required every American’s full cooperation and ability. It also required extensive war research. Colleges and universities stocked with professionals and specialists in many fields across the nation suddenly became a very valuable resource. At Oregon State College (OSC), President A.L. Strand gave an address in which he reflected on the national crisis by saying the war was “being waged on the battlefield, in the factory, and in the home.”ⁱ The sheer expansiveness of this war would soon call upon the many specialties of Oregon State College. It would provide the college with a golden opportunity to show their worth and attain ample funding for research.

The US. War Department sought out Oregon State College for its School of Engineering and School of Science, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture required the research efforts of the college’s Schools of Agriculture and Horticulture, as well as their School of Home Economicsⁱⁱ. In fact, during the war, the schools undertaking the most war-related projects and

research were the Schools of Agriculture, Engineering, Science, and Home Economics.ⁱⁱⁱ In collaboration with the Schools of Agriculture and Horticulture, the School of Home Economics was tasked with an important research mission: nutrition. Ava Milam, dean of Home Economics at OSC, was soon appointed to the position of acting chairman on the Oregon Committee of Nutrition for Defense, which was part of a larger, national committee dedicated to the research and promotion of healthy eating.

Food and nutrition are an important, and often overlooked aspect of war. The effects of malnutrition on the body are much slower to materialize than gunshot and firebombing, but can be just as devastating on a country's population. Home economics played a unique role in fighting the war on the Homefront, and they were well-equipped for the task at hand. Home economics encompasses many things pertaining to home making and child rearing. But it is also steeped in scientific research. Brought to life at Oregon State College by former medical student Margaret Snell, home economics at the college can trace its original mission back to preventative health and improving a society's quality of life through its women. Since its beginning, home economics has been concerned with food and nutrition research. However, for many years their research lacked adequate funding or proper recognition. World War One brought the school research funding, but the funding was abruptly cut off after the war ended, and they would not see any state or federal funding for their research for many years to come. Different factors hindered the department from expanding their degree program to create graduates with specialized degrees and areas of expertise within the School of Home

Economics. That is, until the Second World War. America's entrance into WW11 marked a great turning point in home economics which had been coming since its creation at OSC.

In this essay, I will outline the origins of home economics in America and at OSC and trace its growth and expansion from its conception to WW11. And I will compare the expansion the School of Home Economics saw during WW1 and afterwards in the 1920s and during the Great Depression to the expansion it saw during WW11. This essay will draw heavily from the Ava Milam Clark Paper's Collection and the College of Home Economics and Education Records from Oregon State's Special Collections and Archives Research Center (SCARC). It will also utilize the works of historians William Roberts, Lizzie Collingham, Gail Braybon, Penny Summerfield, Sarah Stage, Virginia Bramble, and John Rury, and their respective works.

Origins of Home Economics

To an outsider looking in at this nutrition research program during WW11, it may seem peculiar that the U.S. and state governments sought the expertise of home economics institutions at colleges and universities. When it comes to home economics at OSC, the answer lies in its rather brief history^{iv}. Home economics came to Oregon State College in 1889 through the efforts of Margaret Snell, who served as its administrator from its beginning to 1908. Oregon State College was the 4th land grant college to introduce Home Economics to their college.^v At the time, it was called the Department of Household Economy and Hygiene.^{vi} Margaret Snell started off as a medical student, and received her master's degree from Boston University. But she decided that the medical field was not an adequate place to pursue her real passion. Snell wanted to teach the prevention of disease. She was often quoted saying, "I made

up my mind that I would not cure diseased livers but I would teach people how to keep from getting them".^{vii} Snell saw the importance of preventative health as a practice, and felt that there was another field outside of medicine where she could best pursue this endeavor. In the end, she selected home economics as the perfect vessel through which to teach preventative health.

The reason Margaret Snell chose home economics to teach preventative health can best be examined through home economics' origins and primary purpose. The origins of home economics can be traced back to a woman by the name of Catherine Beecher. In 1841, Beecher published her book, *Domestic Economy*, which laid the foundation for home economics in America. In this book and other works of hers, Beecher aimed to provide women throughout the country with literature that combined science with homemaking to solve everyday problems within a woman's sphere of work.^{viii} Her book was a byproduct of the rapidly changing times in America. Even as far back as 1841, technological developments from the Industrial Revolution and the growth and expansion of various scientific fields were beginning to spill over into the domestic sphere. Around the same time as the invention of the telegraph and early experimentation with chemicals for photography, Beecher was busy reading her brother's chemistry books and applying it to home-making. Following the discovery of germs and pathogens, early home economists worked to spread the practice of hygiene and knowledge of home sanitation. From its conception, home economics has held scientific research and discovery in high esteem, and looked for ways it could pertain to the home.

There is also the gendered aspect to examine in why Margaret Snell chose home economics to teach preventative health, and why home economics existed outside the scientific community. The medical field in Snell's day was arguably dominated by men, and would have been hard to break into as a woman. Following a national movement to professionalize certain studies that began in the mid-nineteenth century and spanned to the mid-twentieth century, the formation of the American Medical Association (AMA) in 1847 set standards and defined membership that created barriers for women to practice medicine^{ix}. Historian Sarah Stage notes that this early movement to professionalize came "precisely at the time a growing number of college-educated women were seeking entry into the professions."^x This exclusion from the increasingly professionalized studies led many women to turn to another option. Home economics would have been a place for women to study, practice, and teach science. And in this time, it was not uncommon for women who gained an education in science to eventually seek out home economics through which to teach, study, or conduct research. A good example of this would be a woman named Ellen Swallow Richards, who in 1871 was accepted into Massachusetts Institute of Technology and received her bachelor's degree in chemistry.^{xi} She was the first American woman to receive a chemistry degree. She faced many setbacks and limitations in attaining her degree and in her pursuit of a career afterwards, especially after she married. But through these setbacks, she discovered the value of home economics and used her knowledge of chemistry to test foods and their effects on the body, and aimed to improve the eating habits of families. Already, it can be noted that the research of food and eating habits is already an interest to home economists. Educational Director and Associate Professor of Home Economics at Syracuse University Frederica B. Carleton wrote

about the history and origins of home economics, in which she said, “Home economics is a development of the scientific age, and it is to those women who were first trained in the techniques of scientific research that home economics owes its being”.^{xii}

Carleton’s statement makes it clear that home economists believed their practice stemmed from the era of scientific discovery and expansion, and stressed the importance of its founding women like Snell and Richards, who attained degrees in various scientific fields and applied what they learned to home economics.

Though it would be a long time until home economics saw its own professionalization, it did receive its first elevation in status when it began to be introduced to universities and colleges throughout the country. The formation of home economics at OSC marked a nation-wide trend at the time.

A key responsibility of home economics is teaching women better home care. Since Beecher published *Domestic Economy*, home economics has aimed to improve home life through educating women. A core belief of Snell’s was, “When you educate a man, you educate an individual. When you educate a woman, the welfare of a family may be secure”.^{xiii} Snell saw the value in women’s education, and the importance of home economics in reaching out and raising the standard of living of families on a larger, more impactful scale. Women were in charge of taking care of the family and the home. Simply educating one wife or mother could raise an entire family’s well-being; teaching classrooms of them could raise an entire community.

Originally, the two main paths a woman could take after receiving her education in home economics were either a homemaker, or a teacher. Teachers would often teach at colleges and universities, but would also hold classes for women who didn't have the means to obtain an education. Home economics has often focused on raising the standard of living for all socio-economic classes. Over the years, however, through the expansion and specialization of certain areas of home economics, there would become a growing demand to make other, more specialized career paths available to home economists.

Changes to Home Economics at Oregon State

Early home economists, though their study was relatively new and small, had expansive visions for its future prospects. The acting president of the American Association of Home Economics Sarah Louise Arnold, in an address given in 1914, wrote, "Our conception of Home Economics must be both partial and progressive. It means various things to the various individuals gathered here tonight. It will probably mean something finer and better to each and every one of us in the years to come." Arnold understood that home economics in her time was in its early stages, where it hadn't yet been fully expanded or refined, but she could already see its immense potential.

Before and during WW11, there had been calls to expand home economics at OSC. Expansion included more funding for research, more building space to hold laboratories in, and more specialized degrees within the separate departments in the School of Home Economics with which to specialize in.

Already by 1916, the School of Home Economics at OSU recognized their potential to expand. In a biennial report on the School of Home Economics, they noted Oregon State College had one of the highest quality schools of Home Economics in the West. They noted changes to their field throughout the country, observing a growing desire to expand dietitian degrees.

The United States' entrance into the WW1 brought research and leadership opportunities to OSC's Home Economics. Ava Milam, appointed dean of the School of Home Economics that very year, was appointed by Herbert Hoover, then the director of the Food Administration, to become the Home Economics Director of Oregon in 1917. Ava Milam came to OSC in 1911 as head of the Department of Domestic Science, which, under her direction, would become the Department of Foods and Nutrition. Milam was also contacted during this period for an opportunity to conduct research for the U.S. Food Administration, with the promise of receiving government funding.^{xiv} During WW1, the U.S. government was concerned with canning and preserving foods, both for soldiers and for civilians as food commodities like sugar ran low. Needless to say, Milam's experiences during that war helped her gain invaluable skills she would bring into the next World War. In her memoir, Milam noted that the WW1 created a "scientific base" for learning about nutrition within home economics.^{xv} At this time, OSC's School of Home Economics was believed to be the best-staffed, best-equipped of any college west of the Mississippi.^{xvi} Already by this time, the school was attempting to expand and professionalize. In the years preceding U.S. entry into WW1, the school was calling for advanced entrance requirements into their degree program, in the hopes of expanding

potential job prospects a home economics graduate could get. Nationally, home economics at this time was moving to standardize their profession. WW1 helped give home economics a boost in national recognition as well. In a 1916 to 1918 biennial report, OSC's Home Economics staff noted the government "has likewise recognized the work of our department."^{xvii} This no doubt would have been very exciting for their department, as they were trying to expand their laboratories and classrooms within the college. However, the research funding they were given was cut off after the war. OSC's Home Economics complained about the lack of government funding for their department to do research work, even comparing OSC to other colleges who did receive funding, either from their state or from their college. The lack of funding handicapped their expansion, and severely impaired their ability to conduct research. OSC's School of Home Economics would not receive any state or federal funding until 1925, seven years after the war, through the passage of the Pernell Act, which allowed them their first full-time research project, which they conducted through the Agricultural Experiment Station.^{xviii} They received funding again a decade later through the Bankhead-Jones Act, which gave them funding to research human nutrition. Most importantly, this brought Margaret Fincke onto OSC's Home Economics staff to conduct the research. She was the first Ph.D. professional on staff, as well as the first nutritionist.

Home economics had been experimenting with food at OSC before the war. Ava Milam noted in her autobiography by 1914 to 1916, they were collaborating with the Schools of Horticulture and Agriculture to test the cooking qualities of different potatoes being grown in the region. By the 1920's they already had a Department of Foods and Nutrition. The problem

was, despite providing courses that specialized in different aspects of home economics, such as textile work, child psychology, and nutrition, the School of Home Economics did not yet offer specialized degrees to women.

The idea behind this lack of specialization stemmed from how home economists viewed themselves. Even after WW1, it was still believed that the prime purpose for an education in home economics was to acquire skills to be a mother or wife, or to help teach other women how to improve upon these skills. Despite this long-held belief on home economics, times were changing. By the 1930s, women within the field were beginning to see the potential of specialized degrees in pursuing jobs outside of teaching. One former graduate of OSC, Mary Thomas, best summed it up:

“Food companies employed dieticians; fabric manufacturers employed designers and stylists; there were opened positions in research work in the nutrition field, interior decorating in the research business, opportunities for private and welfare nursery schools for those who studied child development.”^{xix}

The various areas of expertise home economics could potentially create was staggering. There was some progress towards professionalization in the 30s, as the school split their curricula into two categories of study: general and professional. It was a small step in the right direction. However, it would take until WW2 for any real progress toward this goal to be realized.

Before the war, Oregon State had the sixth largest home economics department in the nation.^{xx} Despite its scale, the school often had trouble obtaining funding to conduct research. OSC received some funding during WW1 to conduct research, but were immediately cut off after the war was over. They received some funding through the Purnell act of 1925 and again in 1935 through the Bankhead-Jones Act. It wouldn't be until WW11 that the department received adequate funding again, and this time, it was more than they'd ever received.

The Formation of Nutrition for Defense

In order to fully understand the thinking behind Nutrition for Defense, it is important to look at the decade preceding this unique war effort: the Great Depression. The Great Depression was one of the worst economic crises in American history, resulting in mass unemployment and poverty. One of the side effects of the Great Depression was lack of access to food for a significant percentage of the population. While there was never a wide-scale famine in the United States during this time, a consistent lack of access to nourishing food can have negative effects on the human body over time. Food historian Lizzie Collingham refers to this as "slow hunger".^{xxi} While not as palpable as famine, consistent malnourishment for a long period of time can lead to deformities and medical problems. At the beginning of America's entrance into the war, it was estimated by the Draft Board that two out of every five enlistees suffered from medical problems related to malnourishment.^{xxii} Malnourishment was of a particular concern for children, who were still developing, as well as pregnant women. Following the United States' entry into WW11, Franklin D. Roosevelt called for the formation of a special nutrition program that would be dedicated to the defense of the home front.

Roosevelt summed up the purpose of this nutrition program in his statement, “Total defense demands manpower. The full energy of every American is necessary. Efficiency and stamina depend on proper food”.^{xxiii} America was about to enter one of the largest wars in world history. Simply comparing WW1 to WW11, the statistics are staggering. The United States deployed four million soldiers during the WW1, whereas sixteen million were deployed during WW11. That meant there were sixteen million mouths to feed overseas, and a soldier’s diet was no doubt more demanding than the average civilian’s. Soldiers were only one aspect of the war. American industry was needed to make bombs, shells, tanks, airplanes, ships, and so much more. As a result, the demand for workers spiked during the war. And these workers would need a healthy, balanced diet as well, if they were expected to produce all that was needed with maximum efficiency.

The other aspect of the war was the American citizens, who made up the Homefront. Defense of the Homefront was dependent on them for a number of reasons. First, citizens are the foundation of a nation. As the foundation, the success or failure of a country is dependent on the health of its citizens, which can be supported through proper nutrition. The second issue deals with morale. Morale is an important factor in any war. Ava Milam concluded that “morale, so vital to a people at war, is directly related to proper nutrition”.^{xxiv} She saw nutrition as a significant way of boosting morale, and perhaps through her experiences in the previous world war understood how crucial it was. The intent behind American war policy was made clear: strong, healthy bodies would be needed to win this war.

A lesson gleaned from WW1 was that morale diminishes the longer a nation is at war. England, for example, saw a depletion of enthusiasm for the war as the months of fighting turned to years, and news of the staggering death tolls reached their civilian population. Morale was further lowered as the English government failed to act efficiently in dealing with food shortages. Historians Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield note that by the war's end, "it became increasingly difficult to hold onto what [the war] was supposed to be about".^{xxv} This lack of morale muddled in peoples' minds the purpose of the war, and they began to question it. Once morale was lost, it was hard to motivate a population to win a war.

In America, food became something for people to rally behind. According to Collingham, food "became a powerful signifier of American strength and superiority", which was a significant strategy in rallying support from American citizens and allies alike.^{xxvi}

Thus, a Committee on Nutrition for Defense was formed. This was a national nutrition program with an aggressive agenda: to reach every single part of the country in the United States to inform and gather information on nutrition and good eating habits. In the state of Oregon, there was a state branch of this committee, which was created for the purpose of coordinating efforts of 20 interest groups who dealt with maintaining nutrition standards for those on the home front while giving the maximum amount of food to war and relief efforts.^{xxvii} Oregon had a total of thirty-six counties to account for, and the committee organized nutrition programs in each one.^{xxviii}

There was an emphasis on the individual in all of these nutrition programs. Their aim was to empower the individual and give them the recourses necessary to maintain their own health. On the topic of responsibility of the individual, Ava Milam had this to say:

“It is not only desirable, but the patriotic duty...to select and use food in a way to ensure maximum health and strength for the tasks at hand”.^{xxix}

In other words, nutrition was an act of patriotism. This shows the connection between the citizen, the Homefront, and the war effort, and how vital nutrition was in ensuring victory from the perspective of those who worked in this nutrition committee.

Oregon State College Goes to War

The United States government reached out to many colleges and universities during the war. They were mainly looking for colleges and universities to conduct scientific research. When they came to OSC, they selected the departments they thought could best carry out their war research. OSC formed a recourses planning board which recruited specialized personnel to conduct research.^{xxx} The national defense projects were mainly in the schools of Engineering, Agriculture, Science, and Home Economics. These departments also conducted the largest projects on campus.^{xxxi}

This Committee on Nutrition for Defense was part of a larger collaboration between land-grant colleges and the U.S. department of Agriculture. Home Economics at OSC collaborated with the School of Horticulture and School of Agriculture in much of their nutrition research, something they had been doing long before WW11.

On top of that, Oregon State's very own Dean of Home Economics, Ava Milam, was appointed as a chairman on the Oregon Committee on Nutrition for Defense during the war, which helped raise the status of home economics at OSC. OSC played an important role in that they provided credible, verifiable information to the committee through their nutrition research. The school was allotted funding for their research, and eventually received access to new state-of-the-art laboratory equipment for the task at hand. Other notable faculty in this nutrition war effort was Edna Van Horn, who was formerly an assistant professor in household administration in 1940. She left OSC during the war years to become an executive secretary of the American Home Economics Association. There were also Dr. Earnest Wiegand and Dr. Margaret Fincke, who were both Oregon State College campus representatives on Nutrition for Defense.

Ava Milam played an important role in this nutrition effort, as both the Dean of the Department of Home Economics and as an acting chairman on the Committee on Nutrition for Defense. She oversaw the research undertaken by her department during the war years, and also had to conduct outreach and collaborate with other departments, particularly the Department of Agriculture and Horticulture.

What was Researched

The extent of research conducted by all home economics departments across the country would be difficult to measure. However, at Oregon State College, there are clear records of what was underway at their School of Home Economics. Most of the research was concerned with nutrition quality of various foods, and nutrition quality of foods under different

conservation methods. There were inter-departmental efforts on various research projects, including “Ascorbic Acid Metabolism of College Students”, “Quality of Frozen Meats”, and “Vitamin Values of De-hydrated Fruits and Vegetables”. There was also an effort to research foods to find affordable fruits and vegetables with high nutrition value so that people of all incomes could benefit from Nutrition for Defense. Home economics at OSC already had a long history of public outreach, and they utilized their skills to spread knowledge of their research to the public through newspapers, radio broadcasts, and classes.

The Department of Home Economics also created new courses during the war. Courses offered between 1941 and 1942 were “Nutrition for National Defense” and “Research in Foods”, for example. Overall, the department saw a massive expansion in its courses. There was 65% increase in the number of courses offered by Home Economics from 1942 to 1944. Enrollment in home economics foods and nutrition courses spiked during the war. In 1940, there were 1167 students registered for foods and nutrition courses. That number raised to 1430 within a year.^{xxxii}

Oregon State historian William Robbins talked about how the war “skewed activities in the school of Home Economics”.^{xxxiii} The war didn’t cause the department to suddenly research nutrition; they’d been doing so long before the war. In fact, the department had been collaborating with the Department of Agriculture since before WW1. Records show both departments working together to determine the cooking qualities of locally grown apples and potatoes dating all the way back to the 1910s.^{xxxiv} The research underway was simply harnessed and focused on one particular aspect of home economics, which was nutrition.

During the war years, Dr. Margaret Fincke, the first Ph.D. staff member and first nutritionist working in the School of Home Economics, was appointed to the Experiment Station staff in 1943, and a year later, she was appointed head of the Foods and Nutrition Department for the School of Home Economics.

Nationally, home economics was experiencing significant recognition for their work. At this time they were given their own federal bureau to conduct research and spread information obtained through collaborative research efforts. The American Red Cross was also interested in this nutrition research. Many home economics institutions at colleges and universities worked with the American Home Economics Association, as well as Omicron Nu, a national honor society for home economists, which was also involved in the research.

On all levels, the information learned from this research was released to the public in some form or fashion. The American Home Economics Association had a national journal where they would publish findings. Oregon State Home Economics would hold radio sessions and publish their nutrition recommendations in the Barometer. Students at OSC could read the paper during the war years and find a very helpful article published by Ava Milam about cheap fruits and vegetables containing healthy doses of vitamin A, or tune in to listen to home economists discuss meal planning on the radio. It seemed at this point more than ever, home economics had achieved a great deal of recognition and an elevated status in society. In her memoir, Milam noted how the government recognized the work of home economics during the war.^{xxxv}

Backlash and Gender Roles

Women home economists could not have gotten such considerable national attention without encountering controversy at some point during WW11. One instance was a 1944 New Yorker article that attacked home economics:

“Home was quite a place when people stayed there, but Home Economics is just another in the long line of activities which take ladies away. Of all the home economists we have met in our lifetime, all had one trait in common: not one of them was home.”

This ties back to a general anxiety over women leaving the home and taking over men’s positions. Everywhere one looked, women were filling positions once held exclusively by men. Women were entering factories and industrial sites. Schools took over part of the responsibility of providing meals for children as their mothers went off to work, which became a major reason for the creation of the national school lunch program. Many Americans felt threatened by this change in the status quo, and what it might mean for where women would belong after the war. Historians Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield comment on the general “surprise and hostility” women faced when they encroached on men’s sphere of work during WW11.^{xxxvi} Surprisingly, home economics became a target for people with these anxieties. This might stem from how people perceived home economics, since home economics could have represented a very traditional and conservative sense for what a woman’s role in society was supposed to be. Home economics is traditionally concerned with women, the family, and the home. It’s about home making. But there is a substantial part of home economics that is about science and teaching and the improving the quality of life of people. Home economics involves researching food and dietetics and preventative health. During WW11, this later aspect of home economics

was amplified, and therefore appeared threatening toward those anxiously watching women all over the country challenging the status quo.

Another critic of home economics at this time was a fellow home economist named Marion Talbot who wrote to the Home Economics Journal, praising “a return to the real meaning of home economics rather than an emphasis on ascorbic acid...riboflavin and vitamins...”^{xxxvii}

This criticism is interesting, because it shows that home economics at this time had visibly changed during the war. It had become extremely specialized on nutrition research all across the nation. If anyone were to tune in to their radio broadcast or read their local newspaper, they might hear nutrition advice from a local home economist group, and hear about the scientific research they were conducting. Again, home economics was already researching these things before the war, and home economists traditionally traveled and spread information on their studies, but there seemed to be a sore spot over this issue during WW11.

What’s interesting about this backlash is Ava Milam’s response. At first glance, she’s surprisingly traditionalist about the issue. In response to the New Yorker column, Milam argued that her department focused on training women to be good wives first, and secondly trained women for careers. She also pointed out that while it was common for women to go on to be teachers, or even specialists, after they obtained a degree, they typically got married and settled down within three years.^{xxxviii} Although she was stating factual statistics, this could have also been a way to appease the masses and try not to step on anyone’s toes.

For a while, Milam held firm that home economics at OSC would remain a school committed to preparing women for homemaking first, and secondly for careers. She made her argument for this in a newspaper article during the war. In it, she stated the statistics of women who eventually get married and become home makers after they graduate as the argument for why there are no specializations offered. “Rather than majoring in one department,” the article states, “students take a general homemaking course in the program of liberal arts”.^{xxxix} The school was still set up under the purpose of helping women become more efficient wives. The idea of someone wanting to specialize in a specific area was not viewed as a practical education. This marks an interesting point in the history of home economics. A field so expansive, born out of science and ingenuity, had for so long been able to expand and specialize without significantly challenging women’s roles in America, was now at a crossroads. If they allowed themselves to progress and professionalize, what would it mean to the very purpose of home economics?

However, while Milam may have been more traditional in some aspects of home economics, she was in other ways quite progressive. In an article published to the Daily Barometer, Milam called for an inclusion of men into the School of Home Economics, even insinuating that men wrongfully assume home economics belonged solely within a woman’s sphere.^{xl} This stands to show that Milam may have seen a more expansive future for home economics that did not rely on traditional gender roles. It also shows that she did not perceive home economics as only being important to women or future wives. In the very same article, she acknowledges the growing demand for trained home economists “far exceeds the

supply”.^{xli} This seems to contradict her initial statement in regards to keeping with tradition.

Keeping OSC’s home economics degree program unspecialized and geared toward tradition would be unpractical in a country that had come to recognize the value of professional home economists.

Despite their efforts to mitigate critics like the New Yorker, home economics at OSC showed signs of concern over the changing gender roles they perceived were taking place across the country. In 1944, the Department of Home Economics conducted a series of surveys on the local high school and college student populations to gage their views on the institution of marriage and family. Some of the surveys conducted included “Attitudes of College Women toward Problems Involving Family Adjustments during Wartime”, and “College Students’ Attitude toward Marriage during the War Period”.^{xlii} This was no doubt also brought on out of a concern for the changes to home economics during the war period.

The success of the School of Home Economics during the war caused many working within the department to call for a continuation of the research after the war. This was the most funding and recognition the department had ever received before and they seized the opportunity to try to make their case. They argued that nutrition was an important research endeavor no matter whether the country was at war or not. Those within the school believed nutrition to be an important enough effort that it should be continued after the war. Fortunately, their elevated status during the war years helped them be heard on this issue. Having learned their lesson from the previous World War, home economics pounced on the

opportunity to secure future funding. Articles were published in newspapers about the importance of continuing nutrition research, both at OSC and across the country.

The efforts eventually paid off. After a lot of pushing, the School of Home Economics at OSC received a grant to continue a research project on tooth decay in 1945, and by 1946, the Research and Marketing Act was passed, making more funds available for research projects such as nutrition at OSC.^{xliii} By 1946, there was already proof that the School of Home Economics changed its long-held ways of offering no specialized degrees when they awarded their first ever Ph.D. degree to Suen-I Wu Cheng, who specialized in child development. By 1949, OSC had given their first Ph.D. with a major in foods and nutrition.

Conclusion

Home economics at Oregon State College was set on a path to professionalization since its beginning. Applying science to home making created many new fields of study for the department, which only developed overtime. A lack of recognition and funding, coupled with a desire to cling to a traditional view of the purpose of home economics, hindered them from truly realizing its potential for many years.

The U.S. entry into World War Two dramatically changed home economics at OSC. Not only did they receive national attention and prestige for their research, but they were able to prove the importance of nutrition research, and obtained adequate funding to continue their research after the war. The realization of the importance of nutrition created a demand for degree programs to help women specialize in this field, and overall, the war helped change the

perception of women pursuing careers after college just enough so that they could finally begin specializing home economics at OSC and offering women professional careers.

ⁱ "August Leroy Strand (1942-1961)," Presidents of Oregon State University, Special Collections and Archives (SCARC) OSU Libraries. <http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/presidents/strand/strand>.

ⁱⁱ When talking about home economics as a general study, it will not be capitalized. However, when referring to a specific department or organization, such as the Department of Home Economics or the American Home Economics Association, it will be capitalized.

ⁱⁱⁱ William G. Robbins, *The People's School: A History of Oregon State University*, (Oregon State University Press, 2017), 154.

^{iv} By the time of U.S. entry into WW11, home economics at OSC would have only been about 50 years old.

^v College of Home Economics and Education Records, Box 18, RG 141, "Historical Essays Notes on the History of Home Economics at OSU/U.S., Special Collections and Archives (SCARC) OSU Libraries.

^{vi} College of Home Economics and Education Records, Box 18, SCARC.

^{vii} Ava Milam Clark Papers, Series 2, Folder 4.7, SCARC.

^{viii} Frederica Carleton, "The Roots of Home Economics", (1959), Home Economics Papers, Box 18, SCARC.

^{ix} Sarah Stage, Virginia Bramble, *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, (Cornell University Press, 1997), 3.

^x Stage, Bramble, 3.

^{xi} College of Home Economics and Education Records, SCARC.

^{xii} Frederica Carleton, "The Roots of Home Economics".

^{xiii} College of Home Economics and Education Records, Box 18, SCARC.

^{xiv} Ava Milam Clark Papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1.1, SCARC.

^{xv} Clark, Munford, 116.

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