

For the Empire, the Nation and the West: The University of Alberta's Contribution to World War 1

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At the outbreak of war in August of 1914, the University of Alberta was one of the youngest educational institutions in Canada. It boasted only 439 students and an even smaller staff. However, its support of the war at home and abroad was one of dedication and commitment far beyond what was ever expected of this small institution. The years 1914-1918 witnessed the University of Alberta become one of the leading educational institutions in Western Canada. This paper examines the university's contribution to the war effort and chronicles its growth and maturation during these formative years.

In 1915 the president of the University of Alberta, Henry Marshall Tory wrote about the University's participation in World War 1 (WW1). He said that "the common patriotic impulse which stirred the whole of Canada and which found a voice in all the Universities of the country found expression amongst us."¹ At the outbreak of war in August 1914, the University of Alberta was one of the youngest educational institutions in Canada. It boasted only 439 students and a smaller staff. However, its support of the war at home and abroad was

¹ H.M. Tory. Report of 1915 on University's Contribution to the War, Date Unknown. UAA, 68-9, Box 37.

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one of dedication and commitment far beyond what was ever expected of this small institution. Even in the face of such a vast conflict, university officials strove to maintain a sense of cohesion amongst University of Alberta students and staff overseas as well as attachment to their home institution. Led by men like Henry Marshall Tory and supported vehemently by the students and staff of the university, support for the war was continuous and unwavering and typified much of the university experience throughout Canada during the years 1914-1919. Unlike similar sized Canadian university's, however, the University of Alberta was able to thrive and expand in the face of such a far reaching conflict and allow for its sustainable rapid growth in the post-war era.

Although the university had only 439 registered students and a small staff when war broke out, by the end of the war 484 staff and students had served in some capacity in the armed forces, 82 of which had died. This is a significant contribution from such a small university comparable with larger Canadian academic institutions like the University of Toronto and Queen's.² President Henry Marshall Tory justified his university's contribution by stating: "Certainly civilization is asking a terrible price, but a price which is worth paying, if liberty and honour are to be conserved in the world."³ The number of University of Alberta students registered per academic year between 1914 and 1918 was less than the overall number of

² The University of Toronto, for instance, had over 6,000 persons connected with the university – graduate, undergraduate and staff – enlisted in the military in some capacity. Friedland, Martin L. *The University of Toronto: A History*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) p 260.

³ H.M. Tory. Letter from Tory to Private Carswell, Jan 21st 1916. UAA 68-9, Box 41, File 506.

students and staff serving overseas. For instance, in 1914 the university rugby team won the provincial championship, by 1916 all members of this team were serving on the Western Front. By 1916 roughly fifty percent of the U of A staff and student body were serving in some capacity overseas in various units throughout the Canadian and British forces. The first U of A student to be killed was Herbert Joseph Ball, student in the Faculty of Arts, in May of 1915. The university's newspaper, *The Gateway* noted that "The blood of 'Bert' Ball has baptized the University of Alberta to her share in the great battle for freedom."⁴ The Gateway's statement represented the attitudes of many of the staff and students at the university during this time. In hindsight, however, this statement represents a naïve and disturbing image of the conflict that so many young men were to participate in. |5

University of Alberta students enlisted in a number of different units. The Princess Patricia Light Infantry and 78th Canadian Field Artillery contained a large proportion of U of A students, as did the 11th Field Ambulance Unit and 196th Universities Battalion. The U of A even boasted a flying ace in Cy Becker, a university of Alberta student who was awarded the title while flying airplanes for the British. Trench life was difficult for any soldier, consisting of monotonous routine coupled with the constant danger of being hit by a random shell or a sniper's bullet. Through all the chaos soldiers still found ways to complete even the most mundane tasks like writing a letter for instance. An Alberta College student (Alberta College being the predecessor to St. Stephen's College) provides an apt description

⁴ The Gateway. Vol. 6 No. 1, November 1st 1915.

of the conditions in which he was writing a letter home, “I am writing this in my dugout as I am on duty at my phone and buzzer at present, with the cannon roaring around and the bullets flying too. This is war.”⁵

6 | One of the first units made to go overseas with a strong contingent of U of A students was the 11th Field Ambulance Unit. The 11th Field Ambulance Unit was a formation made up of students from the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This unit was to be sent to the front almost immediately after completion of its basic training and many U of A students felt this was the fastest method of being sent to the front. Thirty-two U of A students enlisted in this unit. The commanding officer of the University of Alberta section was Major Heber Moshier, a Professor of Physiology, who was later promoted to Colonel and commanding officer of the entire unit. The men of the 11th were billeted at the Manitoba Agricultural College (MAC) where they went through basic training. Reginald Lister was one of the U of A boys who joined up and wrote about his first impression at the MAC, “We were lined up, told to get to the stores and receive our uniforms, be dressed as soldiers and be ready to parade for supper. Well, you can guess what kind of soldiers we looked like. Half of the uniforms didn’t fit and the way the boys had their puttees on they looked fine!”⁶ The unit embarked to France in May of 1916 where they participated in a variety of jobs including medical

⁵ Pvt. C.B. Wilson. Letter from Pvt. C.B. Wilson to Miss Nettie Burkholder. Jan 1st 1916. UAA 88-66-70. (Thank you to Dr. Rod Macleod for mailing me copies of letters written from Alberta College students serving overseas.)

⁶ Reginald Lister. *My 45 Years on Campus*. (Edmonton: The U of A Printing Department, 1958). 23.

treatment, removal and retrieval of wounded and dead soldiers, as well as the bringing up of supplies. It was a dangerous job and as the official history of the 11th Field Ambulance stated, “The green infantry man might refer to the ambulance man as a trench dodger, but once let him be carried out wounded or tended behind the line for sickness and his estimation underwent a change.”⁷

Life was dangerous in the 11th and two University of Alberta deaths are recorded in both the accounts of Lister and in the Field Ambulance Diary. The first death occurred in June of 1917 when Staff Sgt. J.R. Hammond was killed instantly by a German shell that landed amongst a party of men he was leading to the front. The esteem in which Sgt. Hammond was held by the men of the 11th is best emphasized in the unit war diary, “Sgt. Hammond, who was a B.A. and 2nd year Medical Student of Alberta, had done splendid work both in the matter of training the unit in Canada and England and also on active service. Sgt. Hammond, who was mentioned in Sir Douglas Haig’s dispatch of 7-11-17, was admittedly the most efficient soldier the unit possessed.”⁸ In 1918, Col. Heber Moshier, commanding officer of the 11th Field Ambulance since May 1917, was killed in action two months before the end of the war.

The University of Alberta men in the 11th Field Ambulance Unit were key figures in another event, this time more mischievous than macabre. In May of 1917, when Colonel Moshier was to take over as commanding officer of the 11th, the officers decided to stage a large dinner in honour of Col. Moshier

⁷ A.E. Johnson, A. Roland Hall, C.T. Best, J.M. Roe. *Diary of the Eleventh: Being a Record of the XI Field Amulance Feb. 1916-May 1919.* (City of publication unknown: Publisher unknown, 1919). 70.

⁸ Johnson, Hall, Best, Roe, p 71.

and his predecessor Col. MacQueen. A Captain Turnbull was placed in charge of obtaining the liquor for this dinner and did so late the night before. Turnbull acquired the liquor but with the officer's mess closed he decided to store the spirits under his bed. The next morning Capt. Turnbull, to his shock and dismay, discovered that all the liquor had been stolen right out from under his bed while he slept. The officers of the 11th searched high and low for the alcohol but could find it nowhere and were forced to have a dry dinner that evening. Reginald Lister reported after the war that several U of A students confessed to stealing the liquor right out from under Capt. Turnbull's bed, "and had sunk it in a small river at the back of the camp, suspending the bottles by string around the necks. And for months they would go and bring in a bottle or two and have a party."⁹ As was typical of life at the front, the monotony and strain of day to day trench life was somewhat alleviated by humorous events such as this one.

The largest single contribution by the University of Alberta in the form of man-power came with the creation of the 196th battalion, otherwise known as the Western Universities Battalion. The presidents of the four provincial universities of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba came together and proposed to the government of Canada that each university raise one company of men (roughly 150-200 men) to form a battalion for front line service. The 11th Field Ambulance Unit was similar to this Western Canadian design, yet smaller in size and not designated for any combat. The 196th battalion was specifically created to send Western University boys to the front to serve together in a combat role. The students enlisted in the

⁹ Lister, p 25.

Alberta company were drawn from the university's Canadian Officers' Training Corps [COTC], which, similar to most Canadian university's, was established in 1915. What must be noted, however, is that although the company was recruited through the University of Alberta, not all enlisted men were directly from the institution alone. As Tory wrote, "The conditions of eligibility are...professional and business men of education; graduates of any university; undergraduates; high school students of suitable age; students of various schools and colleges, students and junior members of the learned professions in the provinces; and friends of these various groups."¹⁰ It would have been extremely difficult for a school whose enrollment stood just under four hundred students to raise a company nearly half that size. Therefore, Tory expanded the eligibility for recruitment. Similar action was taken by all four of the Western Canadian universities.¹¹ Although designed so that all four companies fought alongside each other, the 196th would not see action as a unit, as it was made into a reinforcement battalion to supply fresh troops to units already in combat. However, university pride played a major part in the training and performance of those men that served on the front line as is shown in the song "The 196th Forever: The Good Old U. of A,"¹² a song written to the tune of 'The Maple Leaf Forever' expressing regional loyalty to the U of A and to Western Canada.

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¹⁰ H.M. Tory. Western Universities Battalion C.E.F. UAA, Tory Fonds 68-9, Box 38, file 463.

¹¹ For instance see pages 143-149 of William C. Gibson's *Wesbrook and his University*. Victoria: Morris Printing Company. 1973.

¹² C. Burbidge. *The 196th Forever: The Good Old U. of A.* UAA Tory Fonds 68-9, Box 38, File 463.

Uniquely, the university also made plans to recruit a company for a Canadian Universities tank battalion. In 1916, tanks had made their first appearances on the Western Front and the British high command began promoting their use throughout their army. By 1918, tanks proliferated throughout the British army and within the Canadian Corps. The Canadian militia department requested that the 1st Canadian Tank Battalion be formed from all the universities across Canada. President Kerr, interim president for the university, actively pushed for a company to be made up of University of Alberta students and was adamant that the entire battalion be made up of Canadian university students. Writing to the Judge Advocate General of the Canadian forces, Lt. Col. Biggar, Kerr states, “We do not wish students to be mixed indiscriminately with regular recruits. If we had assurance that University men would serve together under our own officers we could get satisfactory enrolment.”¹³ This concern was also shared by Professor Alexander who applied for a captaincy within the tank battalion and wrote, “Can you advise re proposed Tanks battalion whether unit is genuinely of university character in officering and organization? Good prospects locally if such is case...”¹⁴ It was obvious that those involved in the recruiting process at the University of Alberta were concerned that the battalion be made up primarily of university students in order to keep its unique character. In July of 1918, while the tank battalion was training in England, President Kerr received a letter from the department of militia and defence stating, “As you are

¹³ W.A.R. Kerr. Letter to Lt. Col. Biggar, date unknown. UAA Tory Fonds 68-9, Box 38, File 476.

¹⁴ W.H. Alexander. Letter to Captain Wallace, date unknown. UAA Tory Fonds 68-9, Box 38, File 476.

aware the unit was raised for the most part, through the instrumentality of Canadian universities; and it should be reinforced by men of the same type and standing as those who joined it on formation.”¹⁵ This letter alleviated the concerns of men like President Kerr and Professor Alexander. The 1st Canadian Tank Battalion saw limited action on the Western Front as it was sent to the continent shortly before the war ended. However, the recruiting of this tank battalion is a perfect example of how the University of Alberta contributed to the war effort while striving to foster and maintain a sense of university character and identity amongst its students sent overseas.

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As has been mentioned, a significant number of staff participated in the war effort, often as commissioned officers. Professor Moshier started as second in command of the 11th Field Ambulance Unit; Professor MacEachran, a philosophy professor, became a captain in the 196th battalion; Professor Macleod, lecturer in electrical engineering, accepted a commission as commanding officer of ‘C’ company of the 196th battalion. These are but a few examples of the role played by U of A staff overseas. However, not all were directly involved in combat units. Professor Doyle, head of the department of physics, went overseas to do research on sonar technology and detection of submarines. His research played a pivotal role in combating the German u-boat threat with the development of SONAR. By 1917, hundreds of U of A students and staff were scattered across Europe supporting the war effort in various capacities. However, attachment and identification to the university and to Alberta was

¹⁵ Maj. General Gwatkin. Letter to President Kerr, 29 July 1918. UAA Tory Fonds 68-9, Box 38, File 467.

quite strong. The creation of the 196th battalion was an attempt by the four western universities to create a homogenous unit of university staff and students, each company representing one of the major western universities. As well, with the creation of the 1st Canadian Tank Battalion, President Kerr stressed that the ‘university character’ of the unit be maintained, including the recruitment of reinforcements from the same pool of university men first used to form the battalion. Within these examples we see elements of Western regional identification, provincial loyalty and specific attachment to one’s own university.

Several interesting pieces of information highlight the fact that soldiers and staff were cognizant about their university attachments even when on the Western Front and fighting in various units. Firstly, in the spring of 1917, Reg Lister talked about the 11th Field Ambulance staging a mock convocation as several of the units members would have graduated that year. The men of the 11th were billeted in an old beat up barn which was used as a interim convocation hall and as Lister records, “Our academic procession was quite a sight, with hoods and gowns made of everything from a sand bag to a canvas waterbucket.”¹⁶ Obviously, the men of the 11th were well aware that back home they would have been continuing with their studies and many would have already graduated had the war not interrupted their education.

Lister also discussed another interesting event that he participated in. In June of 1917 there was a reunion of all the U of A students fighting on the Western Front. By the late spring of 1917, all four divisions of the Canadian Corps were fighting

¹⁶ Lister, p 25.

together and this made it possible for almost all the U of A students fighting in the Canadian Corps to come together in the sector surrounding Vimy Ridge. Lister wrote, “It was a very nice affair and I believe it was the only time so many from the U of A got together; and many who were there that night did not return to Canada.”¹⁷ The fact that so many U of A students were able to come together for a reunion exemplifies the strong attachments these men held to their home. Although these men were members of various units throughout the Canadian Corps, and in the aftermath of one of the greatest Canadian victories of the First World War, these men saw an opportunity to rekindle old friendships with other soldiers and share in the commonality of being from the same university.

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In the Gateway edition, the University’s bi-monthly newspaper, for January of 1917 there is a photo on the cover page titled, “Group of U of A in France.”¹⁸ It depicts ten U of A students posing for a picture. The students are from a variety of units including the Princess Patricia’s Light Infantry, the 9th Field Ambulance, and the 8th Field Ambulance. This picture is just another example of how in the midst of a large conflict, and scattered across the continent fighting in different units, attachment to the university of Alberta was still strong amongst many of its soldiers fighting in Europe.

One of the most important methods in which these U of A attachments were fostered was through the Soldiers Comfort Club Letters. These were simply newsletters sent to all the students and staff from the U of A serving in Europe. During the

¹⁷ Lister, p 26.

¹⁸ The Gateway. Vol. 7, No. 10. January 23rd, 1917.

school year these newsletters were also published in the Gateway, the school newspaper, for all to read. The letters would discuss local Edmonton and University news as well as publish relevant information concerning any U of A staff or students serving overseas, including deaths, injuries or changes of address. For instance, in a December 1917 issue of the Gateway the newsletter talked about the tragedy of the Halifax explosion.¹⁹ In a November issue of the Gateway, the newsletter discussed the withdrawal of Russia from the war after the Bolshevik revolution. Alongside this news, the same letter mentioned the death of a Lt. J.E. Van Petten who was a pivotal player on both the university wrestling and football teams.²⁰ This newsletter was specifically created in order to provide a centralized method for University of Alberta students to maintain contact with one another. Although many universities had similar school newsletters, U.B.C., for instance, having copies of its school newspaper 'Ubycee' sent to its soldiers at the front, no university appears to have had such a soldier-specific newsletter being distributed.²¹

Often soldiers wrote to the newsletter if they were in need of some specific information or wanted to inform friends back home of a change in address. It became a centralized method of keeping tabs on life back home and for the soldiers to read about other U of A students along the front. For instance, Private Ald Bailey wrote the school informing them, "I am very happy and contented as I am now married to the sweetest little English girl I

¹⁹ The Gateway. Vol 8, No. 6, December 1917. A large transport ship carrying munitions exploded in the Halifax harbour causing massive death and damage to the city.

²⁰ The Gateway. Vol. 7 No. 3, November, 15th, 1917.

²¹ Again, see Gibson's Westbrook and his University, p 159.

have ever met.”²² Professor W. Muir Edwards came up with the idea as a means of keeping the university students overseas in contact with the university and relatively up to date on local news. Prof. Edwards was the editor of the newsletter until his death in 1918, when Prof. Alexander took over. Prof. Alexander wrote, “The News Letter was unique, for no other university used this means of keeping in touch with its men.”²³ A student of the university serving in the British army sent a letter to Prof. Edwards and wrote, “Those of us who are in the Imperial Army seldom come into contact with any of the Varsity boys. The News Letter is the only medium of contact and thus we appreciate it all the more.”²⁴ It played a pivotal role in keeping all of the university’s soldiers in touch with one another and in contact with back home. Furthermore, this was a deliberate attempt by the university to institute and strengthen the soldiers’ identification with the university. The U of A reunion in June of 1917 is an example of how successful this newsletter was in achieving its goals.

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Most of the students recruited from the University of Alberta were products of the university’s Canadian Officer Training Corps (COTC) program. This training program was established in January of 1915 by approval of the Canadian Department of Militia and Defence. President Tory and most of the staff were very eager to have an officially recognized training program in place at the university and had been pushing for it

²² Pvt. Ald Bailey. Letter to Miss Burkholder. November 2nd, 1917. UAA 88-66-70.

²³ W.H. Alexander. *The U of A: A Retrospect 1908-1929*. (Edmonton: Publisher Unknown, 1929). 20.

²⁴ Soldier’s Comforts Club Newsletter. July 28, 1917.

since the outbreak of war. Military training occurred in various forms at the university before the beginning of hostilities but never in an official capacity. Many of the staff and students formed themselves into small units and underwent basic training from a local militia captain, Captain Baty. This training expanded throughout the first academic year to include over a hundred students. But it was with the creation of the COTC that the male staff and students of the University could receive military training while obtaining university credit. This way, the university could prepare its men for overseas service and still provide them with credit towards graduation. This was the ideal situation and one of the main reasons Dr. Tory had pushed so hard for the creation of the university's COTC. The first commanding officer of the COTC was Prof. Macleod and after he went overseas with the 196th battalion, the position was filled by Prof. Alexander. The COTC included instruction in military history, basic officer training in discipline and drill as well as handling of equipment.

There was even a professor's platoon within the COTC where for a brief period of time President Tory held the rank of private within the platoon. His commanding officer was Prof. Killam, with the rank of lieutenant. How far Lt. Killam's command extended is shown by an anecdote related by Prof. Alexander; Lt. Killam was lecturing his men on proper marching order and in the middle of his talk Private Tory piped up and stated, "Lt. Killam, there's a bad draught through the Convocation Hall: would you mind shutting the east door?" As Prof. Alexander wrote, "The foundations of the Empire and every last sacred tradition of the British Army rocked violently to and fro, and it was even thought that Jove's thunderbolt might

descend upon him who had sinned beyond all redemption, but *Professor Killam* shut the door as required, and then *Lieutenant Killam* resumed the drill.”²⁵ Obviously, the real commanding officer of the professor’s platoon did not necessarily need to hold the highest rank. By 1916, the COTC contained over 150 registered students and was the main recruitment pool for the university.

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Similar to most academic institutions in Canada, male enrollment in the university steadily declined during the war years as manpower needs increased overseas while the enrollment of women continually rose. The board of governor reports for the academic year 1915-1916 showed that 57 women were enrolled. The next academic year 85 women were enrolled; the following year 118 and finally in the 1918-1919 academic year, the year the war ended, 187 women were enrolled in the university. As Prof. Alexander wrote, “Much of the duty of keeping alive university tradition and carrying on university societies rested with the girls, and they rose to the occasion.”²⁶ Similar to the situation throughout the rest of the country, the women of the University of Alberta provided valuable assistance to the war effort as well as occupied various roles previously held by the men now serving overseas. The most notable example of the new roles played by women at the university during this time period was the first ever female president of the Students Union. Miss Katie McCrimmon was elected president for the 1917-1918 academic year and was the first woman to hold that position.

²⁵ Alexander, p 18-19.

²⁶ Alexander, p 20.

Women of the University of Alberta were significant in many organizations supporting the war effort. One of the most appreciated was the Soldiers Comfort Club. Although, Prof. Edwards and later Prof. Alexander were the editors of the newsletter, the entire staff was almost entirely made up of women. In the Gateway edition for 27 February 1917 there is a photo of the entire staff of the Soldiers Comfort Club. Prof. Edwards is the only male present and the staff numbers fourteen women. Prof. Edwards wrote, “I really never realized before how many were contributing to its [the newsletter] issue. It is therefore with great pleasure to be able to present them to you...They have done most faithful work and shown in a very real way their appreciation of the work you are doing for Country and for them.”²⁷ Prof. Edwards further recognized Miss Dillow as the official associate editor of the newsletter. The Soldiers Comfort Club did not just produce a newsletter every two weeks, but the women made and collected food, clothing and any other material to send overseas to the university men. It was a major project and as Prof. Alexander wrote, “this society maintained a steady flow of socks, cakes and candy, if such things can be said to flow, to the front until the end of hostilities.”²⁸ It was a significant effort and one that exemplified the support the war effort received from the women of the University of Alberta. The increased role of women in the university was representative of women throughout the country and signaled a major shift in gender roles in war-time Canadian society.

²⁷ The Gateway. Vol. 6 No. 12, February 27th, 1917.

²⁸ Alexander, p 16.

The campus continued to act as a centre for recruiting, training and various other methods of supporting the war effort. In early 1915, President Tory and the Board of Governors offered up the university hospital for military use. This was rejected by the federal government on the grounds that they had enough facilities for the care of the sick and wounded. However, by 1916 the increasing amount of casualties resulted in the government rescinding its original rejection and using the hospital for sick and wounded military personnel, similar use of university buildings occurring at Mount Allison and Dalhousie University. The hospital continued to be operated by the government until 1922 when its control was handed back to the university. At the same time that the hospital was taken over by the government, the bacteriological department was placed under the control of the militia department and played a significant role in the production and administration of an anti-typhoid vaccine. This department essentially administered the vaccine to all men recruited from the province of Alberta.

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Although university life revolved around the war effort during the years 1914 to 1918, efforts towards supporting the war did not prevent the university from continuing to thrive and even expand in the face of such an all consuming conflict. In fact, the growth that occurred during the war years is impressive for such a small institution geared so heavily towards the war effort. In October of 1915, the Arts building, home of the faculty of Arts and Sciences, was officially opened and became the largest building on campus. This was the first building to be built on campus solely for the use of the university and its affairs. It was the only major physical addition to the university campus during the war. The curriculum offered by the university, however, continued to

expand. In 1915, the College of Agriculture was established (later to be the Faculty of Agriculture) with E.A. Howes being its first dean. This was now the university's fifth faculty, the other four being Law, Applied Science, Arts and Medicine. That same year the Committee of Graduate Studies was established. This was the nucleus for the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Pharmacy was being taught at the university since 1914 and was officially recognized as the School of Pharmacy in 1917. The teaching of dentistry began that same year and was considered a department within the Faculty of Medicine. The Department of Accountancy was established in 1916 and later became the School of Commerce. In 1918, the Department of Household Economics was established. As this list shows, the war may have occupied the minds and the actions of the majority of those on campus, yet under President Tory and the faculty of the university, the educational opportunities offered by the school continued to expand into a variety of areas. As John Macdonald wrote, "With these beginnings...the shape of things to come was already clearly foreshadowed when peace broke out..."²⁹ By the end of the war this growth enabled the university to be considered a prominent Western university and receive increasing numbers of students. Similar growth by other universities was often hindered by the all-encompassing war effort, discussions abounded in 1916 to close down Mount Allison University for the remainder of the war and even the University of Toronto limited certain educational programs. The actual physical expansion of the University of Alberta is an impressive feat and may have been the only

²⁹ John Macdonald. *The History of the U of A: 1908-1958*. (Toronto; W.J. Gage Ltd, 1958). 21.

university in Canada to actually add another building to its campus during the First World War.

Even though university enrollment declined during the war years the university curriculum changed very little. At the University of Toronto, for example, popular anti-German sentiment resulted in the teaching of German to be suspended throughout the war, except small classes taught to soldiers going overseas, and two teachers with German backgrounds to be fired.³⁰ There was no similar popular anti-German sentiment at the University of Alberta. German language courses continued to be taught at the university without interruption.

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The one man who truly embodied the spirit of the University of Alberta during the war years was President Tory. Tory was a central force in the recruiting effort in Alberta throughout most of the war and established the ‘Khaki University;’ a program designed to give returning soldiers university equivalent education so when they returned to civilian life they would be able to join the work force or continue their studies already equipped with a certain level of education. This ‘Khaki University’ was unique throughout the entire British Commonwealth and stands as arguably the greatest University of Alberta contribution to the entire war effort.

Tory’s recruiting efforts were a product of his undeniable and arguably naive faith in the cause that Canada and Britain were fighting for. He believed that this war was a fight for democracy and the ideals inherent within that democratic ideology were rooted in the institution of the university. Tory’s conviction in

³⁰ Martin L. Friedland. *The University of Toronto: A History*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). 260-261.

the war effort acted as a driving force for him during the war years. He wrote, "It is hardly necessary to state, that in common with all the Universities of the British world we have been deeply moved by the great war which our Empire is engaged. The common patriotic impulse which stirred the whole of Canada, and which found a voice in all the Universities of Canada, found expression also amongst us."³¹ The University of Alberta was still considered a relatively small university during this period and President Tory ran a highly centralized administration. He had an eye on any sort of activity related to the war effort. As he told Private Carswell, "Personally, I am able to think of little else than things associated with it..."³²

When the war broke out, Tory began the process of creating a military training course offered by the university to its students. This was intended as a means to encourage enlistment for overseas service. By 1915 this program acted as a substitute for physical education classes and by 1916 this program became a mandatory subject. Students taking the military training course were given university credit for successful completion. Tory kept a close watch on this program as shown by a letter received in April of 1914 from Major Eaton, the commandant of the program. This letter gave a detailed overview of the number of students enlisted, the duration of the course, what subjects were being taught as well as what physical demands were being placed on the students.³³ This letter is an example of the centralized

³¹ H.M. Tory. *The University and the Empire*. UAA, Gateway, Vol 6, April 1916.

³² H.M. Tory. Letter to Prvte. Carswell, Jan 21st, 1916. UAA, Tory Fonds, 68-9, Box 41, File 506.

³³ Major Eaton. Letter to President Tory, April 14th 1914. UAA, Tory Fonds, 68-9, Box 37.

nature of many of the university's war-time activities. President Tory made sure to fully understand the methods of military instruction being taught at the university. Tory's efforts in establishing military training eventually brought about the creation of the Canadian Officers' Training Corps at the University of Alberta. This became a federally recognized training program sending University of Alberta men overseas as officers.

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Tory spearheaded much of the recruiting effort throughout the entire province. He received numerous letters requesting his help in getting men onto the enlistment roll. These letters flooded into Tory's office at such a pace that eventually even army officers knew he was the man that recruits needed to contact before enlisting. An example of this is shown in a letter from Captain Eve of the 4th Universities Company in writing to a Sergeant Nelson of the Royal North West Mounted Police. Captain Eve stated, "Before receiving your discharge from the R.N.W.M.P., I recommend you to call on Dr. H.M. Tory, Principal, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta., and have a talk with him with respect to your prospects."³⁴ This letter is interesting in lieu of the fact that even a man with a reputable position within the police force had to essentially be approved by Tory before being enlisted in an Albertan unit.

President Tory was not afraid to use his influence in order to help certain men gain enlistment into an Albertan regiment. In an incident in October of 1915, a French Canadian man who had enlisted in Alberta was rejected on the grounds of bad eyesight

³⁴ Captain Eve. Letter to Sergeant J. Nelson, September 28th, 1915. UAA, Tory Fonds, 68-9, Box 37.

in one eye. Tory wrote to Captain Eve, commanding officer of that particular unit, and stated, “Dr. Moshier recognized the fault with his eye but states emphatically that men have been accepted both here and at Montreal who are less fit...I would greatly appreciate if you would facilitate the acceptance of Gariepy provided of course the deficiency is not a serious one.”³⁵ Private Gariepy was a French Canadian who had enlisted in Edmonton with the Universities battalion and President Tory obviously felt strongly about his continued role within the unit.

Tory’s efforts in recruitment paid off within the university and throughout the province. By 1916, over half of the male population of the university was directly involved in the war effort, and by 1918 nearly all able-bodied students were involved in some capacity. As well, a large amount of university staff went overseas to support the war effort in direct and indirect capacities. By 1915, Tory was already acutely aware of the success of the recruiting effort when he wrote, “It is a curious fact that the West which is supposed to be the least loyal has done far more than the East in proportion to its population. According to a statement issued by the Militia Department, our Province has produced two to one against any other Province in Eastern Canada.”³⁶ Tory was proud of the war time support throughout the Western Provinces and strove to have the University of Alberta act as a leading example in this massive Western recruiting effort.

³⁵ H.M. Tory. Letter to Captain A. S. Eve, October 16th, 1915. UAA, Tory Fonds, 68-9, Box 37.

³⁶ H. M. Tory. Letter to Mr. Leo Brown, Aug 11th, 1915. UAA, Tory Fonds, 68-9, Box 37.

The University of Alberta in 1914 was a small institution still attempting to forge its identity and prove its worth as a university in a young Western Canada. The university's commitment to the war effort resulted in a strong and proud identity being forged even while such an all encompassing conflict raged in Europe. Because of the staff and students dedicating themselves to the war effort, the University of Alberta found itself stronger than ever by the end of the war. Whereas similar sized institutions like Mount Allison, Dalhousie and even the University of British Columbia found themselves in financial straits at the end of war due to lack of student fees, the University of Alberta found itself poised to play a leading role in post-secondary education in Western Canada. Enrollment sharply increased in the years that followed the cessation of hostilities and the university was able to accommodate the rapid expansion and sharp rise in enrollment rates that accompanied the post-war years. Yet, eighty-two men had paid the supreme sacrifice and many more were physically and emotionally damaged. President Tory embodied the belief by many that these casualties had been for a greater cause. In hindsight this belief proved naïve, as the First World War was to give rise to men like Hitler and Mussolini and set the stage for another global conflict. However, the University of Alberta guided by an inherent belief in the righteousness of England and, therefore, Canada's cause, had contributed in significant ways to Canada's First World War effort. Although much of the U of A's experience typified university participation throughout Canada during the First World War, certain elements of the U of A's contribution stood alone. Furthermore, the university continued to expand even while all the resources of the country were focused on defeating Germany

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and its allies. After the war this growth continued, as it did in much of Western Canada, however, the University of Alberta became a beacon of this growth, and a guiding example amongst the educational institutions of Western Canada.

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