

**Volume 1**

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**Woodrow Wilson Moves On**

**Lead: Often disappointments in one career lead to great success in another.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts**

**Content: When Woodrow Wilson came to be President of Princeton University in 1902 he wanted to make it the finest in America. First, he loosened the college's Presbyterian ties, breaking the control of fundamentalist ministers and laymen over the Board of Trustees. Wilson then set out to build the strongest faculty possible. The first Jewish**

**professor was appointed in 1905, the first Catholic in 1909. Attracted by his reputation and drive, senior scholars from schools all across America were lured to Princeton.**

**Wilson achieved early success through a system of instruction in which preceptors, young scholars hired to work closely with juniors and seniors, brought a new spirit of learning to a campus where the term brilliant usually referred at that time to the social life not academics. This system attracted great publicity and Wilson became something of an academic hero.**

**Wilson was also concerned about the growing division in the student**

**body between the wealthier, socially prominent students and the more serious scholars. Wilson's solution was the "quad plan." In 1907 he recommended that Princeton be arranged like Oxford and Cambridge into colleges where students would study, live and eat with resident faculty members. After initially approving this plan the Trustees rescinded their action under strong pressure from alumni and some faculty members. Wilson was humiliated.**

**Three years later he suffered another defeat. He wished to build the new Graduate School on the campus, close by, so that graduate students could be of positive influence on the**

**younger students. He lost the fight because his faculty opponents were able to secure a large grant for the off-campus location.**

**Despite these setbacks, Wilson's service at Princeton attracted a lot of attention. This public interest allowed him to begin testing the political waters. As John Milton Cooper Jr. said, "Politics attracted Wilson in direct proportion to his academic frustrations." The newspapers even played up his defeats positively. The quad plan showed he was against snobbery. His opposition to the off-campus Grad School was portrayed as disdain of the haughty rich.**

**His later political success never quite took away the sting of those academic defeats, but because of them Wilson was probably open to political recruiters. By the time he was forced to resign from the University in the fall of 1910, he was in the middle of a hot campaign for Governor of New Jersey. Two years later Woodrow Wilson moved into the White House.**

**"A Moment in Time" is produced at the University of Richmond. This is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

**Bragdon, Henry W. *Woodrow Wilson: The Academic Years*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.**

**Cooper, John Milton, Jr. *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983.**

**Wilson, Thomas Woodrow. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*.  
Edited by Arthur S. Link. Princeton: Princeton  
University Press, 1966.**

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