



Lycoming College, 1812-2012: On the Frontiers of American Education

John F. Piper

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Lycoming College, 1812-2012: On the Frontiers of American Education is the story of Lycoming College, a liberal arts and sciences college in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The College is one of the fifty oldest institutions of higher education in the nation and is the oldest that retains a relationship to the United Methodist Church. The College shares many characteristics with peer institutions which have retained the liberal arts and sciences as the basis of their academic programs. It also has the distinction of having evolved through four different stages of American education, and has reached a fifth. It began as the Williamsport Academy in 1812, a school that offered a higher level of education than common schools. Academies became the ancestors of public high schools. In 1848 a group of Methodists bought the Academy and transformed it into Dickinson Seminary, soon renamed Williamsport Dickinson Seminary. It was a preparatory school, not a school of theology, despite its name. In 1929 the leaders of the Seminary added a Junior College to their school. Junior colleges were a new frontier of American education in the early 20th Century and Dickinson Junior College became the first fully accredited private junior college in Pennsylvania. After World War II the Junior College became a four year institution and chose the name Lycoming. In 2000 the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching included Lycoming in its list of 213 national liberal arts colleges. This latest frontier has become a challenge to the College to sustain its program in an ever changing American educational landscape.

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