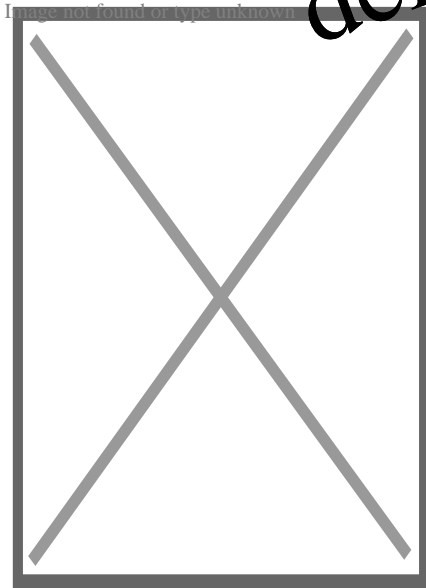


## Dr. Dickie's Rules for a Successful College Career

### Description

*This month's blog article was written by Chelsea Denault, '12. She is a History major and works in the archives.*

When I went away to Albion three years ago, it seemed that everyone wanted to give me advice. Grandma reminded me to take extra-long sheets. Uncle Ron warned me not to light candles in my dorm room and forget about them. My mother reminded me to eat, even if the food was...sketchy. And there was the "final talk" with dad: I know you're responsible and smart, but don't do anything to mess it all up. Even professors and staff were handing out advice five minutes after I arrived. Yet this passing down of sage advice from seasoned elders for new Albion students is nothing unusual. In the first issues of the 1912 and 1914 Pleiad, Albion College President Samuel Dickie offered his advice to incoming freshman. Before we begin exploring Dr. Dickie's recommendations, however, we must understand who the man giving this advice was.



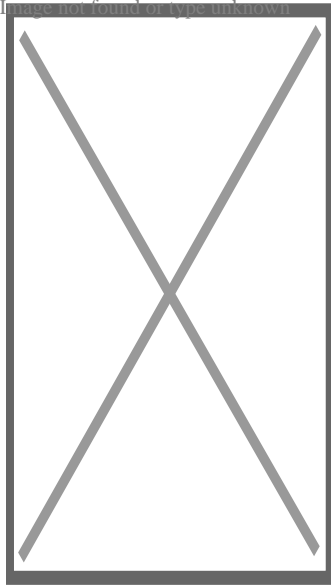
Portrait of Samuel Dickie, n.d.

Samuel Dickie was born in Ontario to a relatively poor family. Though his family struggled with money, he had an enormous appetite for learning and attended Albion College on a scholarship. After graduating, Dickie was invited to join the college faculty as a professor of mathematics and astronomy and he was instrumental in building the Observatory on the Quad. He even served as the mayor of Albion. He also was a prominent speaker on Prohibition and actually was nominated to run as a Presidential candidate by that party (however, being from Canada, he was unable to do so). Essentially, Dickie can be considered Albion's Golden Boy of the time. The man could do no wrong apparently. Therefore, when Samuel Dickie gave you advice, as a disoriented freshman at Albion College, you felt compelled to listen.

Dickie began his advice by emphasizing that the first "business of the student is to study." "A College," Dickie wrote, "is an institution for the development and stimulus of intellectual life. It seeks to give information, develop latent powers, to furnish culture, to broaden one's outlook and to increase one's sympathy in behalf of all that is true and just." Dickie's great faith in higher education as a refining and liberating opportunity – the benefits of which he personally experienced as a young man – are certainly evident here. He was especially emphatic about developing sound and regular patterns of study: "If you fail at this point your failure is complete, dismal, humiliating and wicked...[a] student who does not study is foredoomed to be a failure, likely to be a fraud and certain to be a miserable creature."

In addition to regular study habits, Dickie also encouraged students to get a full night of rest: "No student will do good work on less than eight hours of sound sleep in a well-ventilated room." He also warned students to watch out for their health, stating, "Impaired digestion will ruin your piety and your scholarship." This advice is certainly a far cry from the actual habits of today's Albion students who don't go to bed until 3am for their 8am class and gorge themselves on Hungry Howie's and Eat Shop Chicken Cesar Wraps at all hours of the day (or night, let's be serious). Dr. Dickie would certainly have been horrified.

After attending to their studies and health, Dickie advised students to "get into the general activities of the student body." He then lists many of the same organizations that we would see at Briton Bash today: Christian associations, athletic life, the Pleiad, and "societies that may furnish an opportunity for self-improvement." These "societies" refer to the burgeoning Greek system that was beginning to exert real influence on campus during his presidency. While he was initially suspicious and uncomfortable with Greek life because of its tendency to detract time from studies (as it often does now), Dickie quickly realized that these societies also provided an opportunity for personal growth beyond what the college and its existing organizations could.



Samuel Dickie, n.d.

Interestingly, Dickie also addressed the apparently real student fear of becoming a “book worm.” Writing that he had known “some thousands of students...for the last forty years,” Dickie reassured his readers that he had known only “half a dozen to whom could properly be applied the opprobrious term.” This fear among students of being seen as too bookish during their college days apparently led them to believe that star students were not generally successful after graduating. Dickie addressed this “popular delusion” and argued that it is “rare and exceptional” that “dullards in the class room are quite to shine in later years,” citing a recent Boston Herald study on the idea. While I’m sure the fear of being too absorbed in one’s studies is still pretty prevalent on campus, I think our generation of students realizes that the only way to guarantee success after graduation is hard work. We’ve read enough articles and watched enough news programs about the rough state of the job market to understand that life and success are not come by easily. Still, in many instances we could all bear Samuel Dickie’s advice in mind as this school year begins. Some of it at least – I know I’ll still be going to sleep at 1am this year.

Read the two articles here:

[Dickie, Samuel. “A World of Greeting.” \*The Pleiad\* 4 Oct 1912: 1. Print](#)

[Dickie, Dr. Samuel. “An Exhortation.” \*The Pleiad\* 25 Sept 1914: 1. Print](#)

### Category

1. Uncategorized

### Tags

1. advice
2. freshman
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