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# Guide to the Noel M. Swerdlow Collection 1967-1971



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## Descriptive Summary

<b>Identifier</b>	ICU.SPCL.SWERDLOWNM
<b>Title</b>	Swerdlow, Noel M. Collection
<b>Date</b>	1967-1971
<b>Size</b>	0.5 linear feet (1 box)
<b>Repository</b>	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
<b>Abstract</b>	Noel M. Swerdlow (1941-) emeritus professor in the Departments of History and Astronomy and Astrophysics. The collection includes documents collected by Swerdlow related to the non-reappointment of sociology professor, Marlene Dixon, and the subsequent Student Sit-Ins in 1969. Materials date between 1967 and 1971, with the bulk of the material dating from 1969. .

## Information on Use

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Swerdlow, Noel M. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

### Historical Note

Born in 1941, Noel M. Swerdlow received a B.A. (1964) in history from the University of California, Los Angeles, and an M.A. (1967) and PhD (1968) in medieval studies from Yale University. He joined the History Department at the University of Chicago as an Assistant Professor in 1969, and served as professor in the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of Chicago from 1982 until 2010, when he was named Professor Emeritus. He also spent time as a visiting Associate Professor in History at Caltech in 2008 and from 2010 to 2018.

His research focused on the history of the exact sciences from antiquity through the seventeenth century as well as the history of astronomy. He was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey (1973, 1985), was elected to membership of the American

Philosophical Society in 1988, and received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1988 at age 47 largely due to his research on early astronomy and its technical aspects, which proved instrumental in integrating a highly specialized topic into broader studies of science, culture, and history.

Some of the works Swerdlow published include *The Commentariolus* (1973), in which he translated and explored Copernicus's early astronomical work; *Mathematical Astronomy in Copernicus's De Revolutionibus* (1984), which he co-wrote with O. Neugebauer; and *The Babylonian Theory of the Planets* (1998).

Swerdlow joined the faculty at the University of Chicago around the time of the controversial non-reappointment of Marlene Dixon, which generated a series of student demonstrations. On November 13, 1968, during a faculty procession for the inauguration of Edward Levi, the University's eighth president, sociology professor Marlene Dixon stood with approximately one-hundred students who chanted, "Work, study, get ahead, kill!" outside of the Conrad Hilton. Later, in early January, 1969, her colleagues in the sociology department declined to renew her appointment for a second term, arguing that the intellectual quality of her work did not meet the university's standards. In response, Dixon maintained that she had been fired due to her radical feminist political views and also because she was a woman.

As a result of the decision to not reappoint Dixon, student activists formed a Committee of 75, and launched a series of demonstrations on her behalf. They sent an open letter to the Maroon, demanding that Dixon be rehired and that students be given an equal say in decisions to hire and fire professors. By the close of the month, the Committee of 75 had grown to 444 students.

On January 30, 1969, students staged a sit-in at the Administration building and remained there until February 11. They demanded various reforms including the reservation of half the places in each freshman class for working class students, a faculty consisting of 51 percent women, and the establishment of programs in Black studies, women's studies, and working-class studies.

The students' demands were not met, although the Administration appointed a faculty committee to review Dixon's dismissal. The committee upheld the previous decision that Dixon lacked the appropriate credentials to receive tenure, although they offered Dixon a one-year extension of her contract, which she rejected. Meanwhile, the Administration expelled 48 of the student strikers.

## **Scope Note**

The Noel M. Swerdlow Collection includes statements, speeches, memoranda, chronologies, reports, and periodicals documenting the non-reappointment of Marlene Dixon or the 1969

Student Sit-In. The collection also contains reports from several other campus committees from the years 1967-1970.

## **Related Resources**

Browse finding aids by topic.

## **Subject Headings**

- Swerdlow, N. M. (Noel M.)
- Dixon, Marlene, 1936-
- Levi, Edward H., 1911-2000
- 
- University of Chicago -- History
- College students -- Political activity -- History -- 20th century
- College teachers--Tenure
- Student-administrator relationships
- Student movements
- Student strikes
- 
- 
- 

## **INVENTORY**

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 1**

Statements, Speeches, and Memoranda, 1969

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 2**

Chronologies of Student Sit-Ins, 1969

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 3**

University Disciplinary Committee, reports and statements, 1969

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 4**

University of Chicago Record, 1969

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 5**

Administration and Faculty – Reports, Chronologies, and Statements, 1969

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 6**

University Committee Reports, 1967-1970

- Kalven Committee, 1967
- University-Community Relations, 1969

- Committee on University Women, 1970

**Box 1**

**Folder 7**

Bulletins and Announcements, 1969

**Box 2**

**Folder 1**

Chicago Maroon, 1969

**Box 2**

**Folder 2**

Chicago Maroon, 1969

**Box 2**

**Folder 3**

Chicago Maroon, 1971