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Thy  
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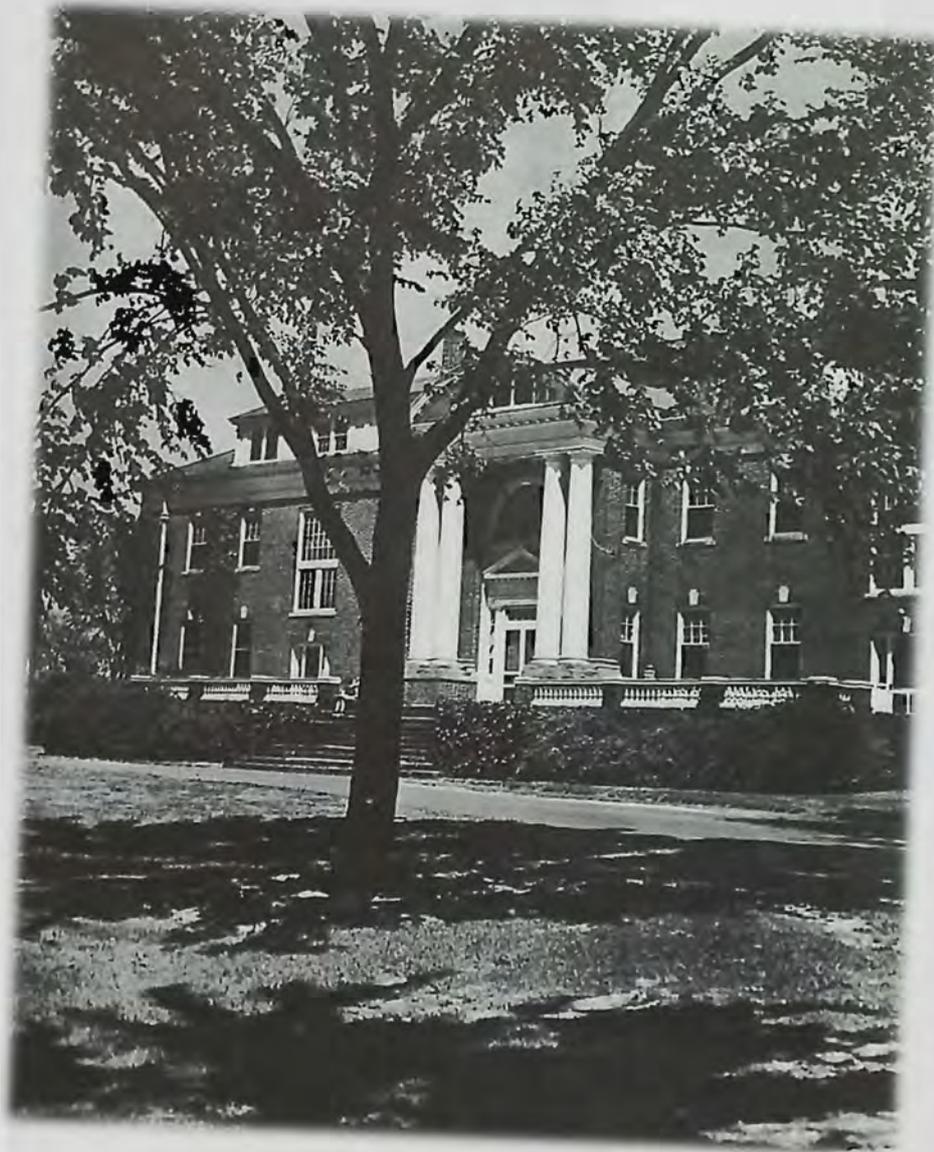
A

HISTORY OF WOMEN  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF  
DELAWARE



CAROL E. HOFFECKER

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1994



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Guiding  
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A HISTORY OF WOMEN  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE



C A R O L E . H O F F E C K E R

RICHARDS PROFESSOR OF HISTORY &  
ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR GRADUATE STUDIES



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*Frontispiece: Warner Hall, the first women's residence hall, is named in honor of Emalea Pusey Warner (1853-1948), who championed the cause of higher education for women in Delaware.*

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A D P



W R



E W

*This book is dedicated to the memory of three women who helped  
build the University of Delaware:*

AMY ELIZABETH DU PONT  
WINIFRED JOSEPHINE ROBINSON  
EMALEA PUSEY WARNER



AMY ELIZABETH DU PONT (1876-1962) served on the University of Delaware Board of Trustees' Advisory Committee on the Women's College from 1939 through 1944 and was among the University's most generous benefactors. During the 1930s, she paid the salary of a faculty member of the Women's College and purchased a house adjacent to the campus to serve as the residence of the dean of the Women's College. In 1939, she established the Unidel Foundation to enhance the work of the University of Delaware. Income from that foundation has since become the University's most significant, ongoing benefaction.

WINIFRED JOSEPHINE ROBINSON (1867-1962) was dean of the Women's College from its founding in 1914 until 1938. The force of her character breathed life into the new and untried institution. Dean Robinson shaped every aspect of the college—from its admissions policies and curricula to the selection of its faculty to the structure of its residential life. In the course of her long career, she earned the respect and admiration of Delawareans and made higher education for women a reality in the First State.

EMALEA PUSEY WARNER (1853-1948), as president of the state's Federation of Women's Clubs, championed the creation of the Women's College and thereafter made its success the central goal of a life dedicated to work on behalf of Delawareans. In 1938, she was the first woman selected to serve on the Board of Trustees of the University of Delaware. If higher education for women in Delaware had a founding mother, it was she.

## Foreword



This book should come with a warning: Once you have read it, the southwest corner of campus will never look the same to you again. That area was the site of the Women's College, whose original buildings were Residence Hall (now Warner Hall) and Science Hall (now Robinson Hall). When the Women's College opened in 1914, it represented hope, promise, and opportunity. Almost thirty years had passed since the end of the University's first attempt at "female education" (1872-1885), and women were looking forward to being able to earn college degrees in the State of Delaware once again. Unlike the Victorian-era experiment with co-education, the establishment of the Women's College led to the appointment of a substantial number of women administrators and faculty members. Its strongest advocate, Emalea Pusey Warner, later became the first woman member of the Board of Trustees.

That is the good news. The bad news is that the opportunities presented by the Women's College were tempered by the imposition of fierce restrictions. The only academic programs available to women were Arts and Science, Education, and Home Economics. Virtually all women students who were not living with their families were required to reside on campus, where Dean Winifred Robinson and her faculty enforced strict curfews and proper female behavior. In the early years of the Women's College, the dean and faculty, like most of the students, lived in the residence hall and remained unmarried. They were also expected to

act as chaperones and to participate in the numerous ceremonial group activities that characterized college life for women in that era. Delaware College, the part of the University in which male faculty taught male students, afforded much greater personal liberty to both students and staff.

It would, of course, be possible to respond to these facts by thinking, "Well, that's the way the world was in those days. Bad as some of those arrangements may sound to us, they were probably better than anything women had known before, and things have improved steadily since then." Unfortunately, this linear notion of straightforward progress, though appealing, is not accurate. One of the most important themes of *Beneath Thy Guiding Hand* is the pendular motion with which the status of women has swung, forward and backward, in society at large and at the University of Delaware. For example, although the nineteenth-century period of co-education did little to establish women as administrators and faculty, it did give female students more parity with their male counterparts than members of the Women's College later enjoyed. Similarly, when the University dissolved its separate college for women after World War II and began educating women and men together—a decision that looks, on its face, like a move toward greater equality—the status of women actually worsened because many gender-specific practices remained in effect, while the number of women in non-traditional fields and in leadership roles decreased.

Some of the policies and practices associated with the Women's College and with the era immediately following its dissolution seem so outlandish by today's standards that it would be easy to dismiss them as phenomena of the dim and distant past. Among the University's current employees, however, are people who were undergraduates here when the situation for women students and staff was quite different than it is now. One of them is the author of this book, who retains vivid memories of sign-out books, May Day pageants, and other practices that survived from Dean Robinson's time into the 1960s. Moreover, to retired faculty and staff who worked at the University when it became co-educational in 1945

and to senior employees who have been here for twenty or thirty years, much of the content of this book is not "history." It represents the personal experiences of living women and men who recall a time that was not, after all, so terribly long ago. We cannot hope to understand either the intensity with which some members of the University community promote changes in women's roles, or the passion with which others resist those changes, unless we remember how very recently things were so very different.

One or two of the early presidents were supportive of certain kinds of progress for women—William Purnell (1870-85), for example, strongly favored co-education—but, like the culture as a whole, the University administration did not even begin to think in terms of full gender equality until the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first major advances of this period were made under the leadership of President E. Arthur Trabant, who, among other things, established the Commission on the Status of Women in response to strong activism on the part of women students, faculty, and staff. More recently, President David Roselle and his administration have made a concerted effort to improve the climate for women, particularly with regard to campus safety, job opportunities, and working conditions. These initiatives have not gone unrecognized outside the University community; for example, for the last two years, representatives of the University have been invited to speak at the annual national Conference on Sexual Assault on Campus, where the University of Delaware is considered a national leader in campus security procedures. Similarly, the 1992 Middle States evaluation report of the University stated: "Women are playing substantial roles as participants in decision making, leading one team member to observe that the campus has the best climate for women of all the institutions visited."

Having had the privilege of chairing the Commission on the Status of Women from 1990 through 1992, I am acutely aware that evaluating the position of women at this University is much more complicated than it might appear from a consideration of one or two isolated issues. The statistics presented in two of the commission's recent annual reports and summarized at the end of this book

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are capable of generating a wide variety of interpretations, to say nothing of starting any number of arguments. Like our forebears, today's students and employees cherish a broad range of views on the roles, expectations, and treatment of women—and it is that difference in attitudes, more than any other single factor, that underlies today's most important gender equity issues.

The major problems facing women do not, I believe, stem from the central administration or from written policies. Certainly, there are still some areas in which administrative fiats or changes in documents are having an effect or could have one; but the strongest and most persistent reason women are still so far from achieving parity with men is not to be found in written guidelines, but in the lack of collegial *acceptance* of women in new roles. Such acceptance is vitally important to continued progress toward equality, but it is difficult to assess and impossible to legislate. What is needed is the kind of consensual attitude change that can occur only as a result of thoughtful, reasonable interactions among colleagues as more and more women become established and familiar figures in roles that were, until so very recently, always filled by men.

The last chapters of *Beneath Thy Guiding Hand* mention significant improvements in the status of women on campus in recent years, but they also point out continuing inequities in such areas as admission to non-traditional fields, promotion through professional staff levels and faculty ranks, and appointment to upper-level positions. As this book illustrates, any progress that is made can be reversed, so it would be naive to assume that all future movement will necessarily be in a forward direction. If, however, women do maintain and increase the gains they have made since World War II, the day may come when young people will find the last chapters of this book as startling as some of us now find the earlier ones. Offering separate classes for women students? Limiting the degrees they are allowed to earn? Dictating the marital status and living arrangements of women employees? Clustering women in lower-paying, lower-prestige jobs? Dividing academic fields into those that are "male-dominated" and those that are "female-dominated?" Assuming that any woman in an

FOREWORD

important administrative job must be there because she is a woman, not because she was the most qualified applicant? If I had to give a short-hand, operational definition of "success" for the women's movement today, it would be this: That people reading this book fifty years from now will be as bemused by the last three questions as some of us are by the first three.

JOAN DELFATTORE

CHAIR

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, 1990-92

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

## Introduction



The University of Delaware is proud to trace its roots to 1743 when the Reverend Mr. Francis Alison opened a school at New London, Pennsylvania, where, according to an announcement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, “all Persons may be instructed in the Languages and some other Parts of Polite Literature....”<sup>1</sup> The statement was, of course, misleading, for Alison did not really welcome “all Persons,” but rather, all male persons. But, there was no need to make such a distinction, because, as every eighteenth-century person knew, formal education beyond the rudiments was restricted to males.

We know a great deal about Francis Alison. We know, for example, that he was a native of County Donegal in Ireland, that he took a master’s degree at the University of Edinburgh and was ordained into the Presbyterian clergy before he immigrated to America, and that he became a major figure in the educational development of the middle colonies. By contrast, hardly anything is known about his wife, Hannah, who presumably assisted in the care of her husband’s students and managed his New London farm during his frequent trips to Philadelphia. Unlike her scholarly husband, she left no treatises, letters, or official documents. We cannot know whether she was educated or to what degree she participated in the intellectual world that absorbed so much of her

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<sup>1</sup> John A. Munroe, *The University of Delaware, A History*, (Newark, 1986), p. 9.

husband's time and thoughts. History is frequently silent regarding the lives of women in eighteenth-century America because so few of them left written records.

Francis Alison's school moved to Newark, Delaware, in the 1740s and became a college in 1833, but women were not admitted to its student body until 1872. They were dismissed fifteen years later with little fanfare. Apparently Delaware was not ready for a reform so profound as higher education for women. It was not until 1914 that Delaware's women got a college of their own. In that year, the state established the Women's College as a separate yet coordinate sister to the all-male Delaware College. The two, gender-specific coordinate institutions were subsumed under the title "University of Delaware" in 1921, but the University did not become co-educational until 1945.

How and why these changes came about is the subject of this book. It is a story of hoping, striving, and succeeding. But it is also a cautionary tale about setbacks and about promises that have been only partially fulfilled. Readers will see not only how far we have come, but will be able to judge for themselves how far we have yet to go to achieve the goal of equal opportunity for men and women to fulfill their educational and intellectual potential.

I undertook to write the history of women at the University of Delaware at the request of the Office of Women's Affairs, which provided funding for the project. I am grateful to three consecutive directors of that office, Mae R. Carter, Laura Shepperd, and Liane M. Sorenson, each of whom gave me advice, support, and inspiration. The major repository of the University of Delaware's history is the University Archives. The Director of the Archives, Jean K. Brown, together with her assistants, Jane E. Pyle, Barbara A. Cole, and Betty M. Dunn, always responded knowledgeably, thoroughly, and rapidly to my many requests. They demonstrated an interest in the project and a sensitivity to my needs that I much appreciate. Members of the University Office of Institutional Research and its director, Michael F. Middaugh, also were very responsive to my requests for statistical data, which they provided promptly in spite of the many pressures on their time.

Archival records and statistics tell only part of the story, however. To get at the human aspect, it was necessary to conduct numerous oral interviews with students, faculty, and administrators—both past and present. Although I interviewed some of these people myself, I was fortunate to have the services of Annette Woolard, a graduate student in the Department of History, who conducted most of the interviews during the academic year 1988-89. Her research notes attest to Ms. Woolard's skill in drawing out her subjects and in making careful notations, not only of what people said, but the manner in which they said it. She was also responsible for reading and making notes from past University publications, including yearbooks, catalogs, and student handbooks—a task that saved me a great deal of time and provided useful material, interpreted with intelligence and sensitivity.

Another history graduate student, Peggy Tatnall, undertook to study the creation and development of the Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program. Ms. Tatnall read through archival material in the Women's Studies Office and interviewed two recent program directors. Based on those sources, she composed a brief account of the unit's history that proved to be a very valuable resource for writing this book.

During the spring semester of 1992, I had the opportunity to teach a graduate seminar for which several students wrote papers on aspects of women's experience at the University of Delaware. The work of these students—Laurette A. Crum, Teresa L. Riesmeyer, and Matthew W. Smallwood—all added to my knowledge and provided perspectives on certain themes that broadened my understanding.

Agreeing to be interviewed for a project such as this takes a certain amount of courage. As an interviewee, one never knows how a writer might use or abuse his or her words. Without exception, those who agreed to be interviewed for this project spoke freely and truthfully of their personal reactions to policies or events that were controversial. Their candid assessments put flesh on the bloodless bones of official records. The people whose interviews helped shape this book are here listed in alphabetical order: Susan Allmendinger, Margaret L. Andersen, Edith H. Anderson, Barbra F.

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Andrisani, Irma Ayres, Helen Baylis, Catherine Bieber, Elizabeth Bohning, Susan Brynteson, Judith B. Carberry, Mae R. Carter, Ross Ann Jenny Craig, Hilda Davis, Camilla Day, Anna J. DeArmond, Anna DeHaven, Alexander R. Doberenz, Rachel Draper Diver, Elizabeth Dyer, James P. Flynn, Florence Geis, Judith Y. Gibson, Helen Gouldner, Sandra Harding, Mary Ann Hitchens, Matilda Whisk, Janice M. Jordan, Barbara J. Kelly, Anne A. McCourt-Lewis, Lila Murphy, David M. Nelson, Laura O'Toole, Marian L. Palley, Marie B. Perrone, Donald L. Peters, Barbara H. Settles, Bonnie K. Scott, Stuart J. Sharkey, Suzanne K. Smith, Liane M. Sorenson, Carolyn Thoroughgood, Edgar J. Townsend, E. Arthur Trabant, and Jeraldine Trabant.

Several people read portions of the text while it was in draft form and made helpful comments, including Barbara Kelly, Mae Carter, Joan DeFattore, Anne Boylan, Jean Brown, and Liane Sorenson. Margaret Andersen, who read each chapter as it was completed, offered me excellent editorial suggestions and valuable guidance and support, for which I am very grateful. Jan DeArmond read and edited the text, demonstrating once again her superb qualities as a teacher. Finally, I want to thank Dianna DiLorenzo, who was always ready to drop whatever she was doing to satisfy my whim for getting this manuscript typed as soon as the words came off my pen; Mary Hempel, who edited the final manuscript and saw it through to becoming a book; and Barbara Broge, who provided a thoughtfully appropriate design.

*Hail to thee proud Delaware,*

*In loyalty we stand.*

*We give thee thanks for glorious days*

*Beneath thy guiding hand.*

FROM UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE ALMA MATER





*Old College in the 1890s, a decade after co-education was discontinued*

## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Beginnings*



ON OCTOBER 28, 1884, an audience composed of both male and female students of Delaware College gathered in the college oratory to hear a speech by Belva Lockwood, an attorney and nationally known advocate of women's rights. Mrs. Lockwood told the students that they were living in "The Era of Woman." "Today," she declared, "the woman question is the question of the hour." Great advances were sweeping the country, she said, as women were seizing long-denied opportunities to attend college and to participate with men in furthering the work of society. "There is a mental growth in the women of today unknown to most of the women of the past. It is but a little time since the intellectual woman was the rare exception; now, she is a feature of society..." Women had proved their intellectual equality with men and had thus laid to rest the arguments of the conservative doubters who had proclaimed them the "weaker sex," fit only for the narrow sphere of home life. The advance of women, Belva Lockwood proclaimed, was the keystone of that progressive momentum of the age "that no conservatism can hold back, no sneer dispel, and no state legislature legislate out of existence." She urged that women be educated to move beyond the single goal of marriage to embrace a broader, more equal partnership with men, "to think and act in the great battle of life."<sup>1</sup>

Belva Lockwood's declaration that the day of women's equality with men was at hand received favorable comment in *The Review*, then, as now, the student newspaper. Her speech was the highlight of the seventh anniversary of the Pestalozzi Literary Society, an organization of Delaware College women. Although "the woman question" still raged in many places, it seemed to have been settled in women's favor at Delaware College, where women had been admitted on the same conditions as men for over a decade. Mrs. Lockwood's arguments in support of women's intellectual equality were familiar, not only to the small number of college-educated Americans of the time, but to the average newspaper reader as well. Her declaration of the inexorable advance of democratic social progress was also a common theme among late nineteenth-century American journalists, politicians, and other opinion-makers. Her audience accepted these ideas as representative of modern and progressive thinking. True, some educators, clergy members, and lecturers continued to hold to the old, familiar arguments that college work did irreparable injury to women's delicate and volatile minds, harmed their capacity for reproduction, and encouraged them not to marry, but the evidence of experience had failed to sustain their fears and objections.

Although the issue of women's participation in politics remained controversial, women's access to higher education no longer appeared to be in doubt. By the 1870s, women were being admitted to over half of the collegiate institutions in America. There were a growing number of private colleges for women, of which Mount Holyoke, Wellesley, and Vassar were among the best known. In addition, some formerly all-male colleges had joined with coordinate women's colleges that shared their faculty and resources. Of these, the "Harvard Annex," begun in 1879 and later named Radcliffe College, was the most conspicuous model. Although these elite, private institutions attracted much attention, the greatest inroads into the previously male domain of higher education had taken place at the state-supported colleges and universities established or expanded under the terms of the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862. The University of Iowa had admitted

women from its beginning in 1856. Cornell University and the University of Michigan were opened to women in 1870, and other state universities, especially those in the Middle West, followed soon after. The name given to this commingling of male and female students in the same courses and degree programs was "co-education." In 1873, the United States Commissioner of Education reported that more than 8,000 women were enrolled in co-educational colleges and universities throughout the country.<sup>2</sup>

Co-education became the policy at Delaware College in July 1872, when the Board of Trustees adopted an enlightened, although grammatically incorrect, resolution "that in future any Female that shall present herself to the Faculty of Delaware College for examination with a view to admission to the College as a student, the faculty are hereby authorized to admit them on the same terms and under the same regulations as male students are admitted."<sup>3</sup> President William H. Purnell had proposed the resolution to the board at its spring meeting in March; but, in order to give the trustees time to consider the proposal carefully, it was not presented for a vote until the board's summer meeting. The small number of trustees who attended the July meeting voted eight to three, with one abstention, to admit women. We know from a trustee's diary entry that among the eight trustees who voted in favor of the resolution, at least one did so conditionally, and it is reasonable to assume that others also regarded the policy as an experiment.<sup>4</sup>

At that same meeting, the board authorized the faculty to establish a new course of study, to be called the Literary Course, which would lead to the degree, Bachelor of Literature. The Literary Course was to replicate the liberal-arts curriculum that led to the Bachelor of Arts, except that a modern language, typically French or German, would substitute for classical Greek. This variation from the standard liberal-arts curriculum was designed to attract those students, both male and female, who lacked training in the classical languages but were otherwise ready to begin college-level work in preparation for careers in teaching.

One year later, the board accepted the faculty's recommendation to make the Literary Course a three-year program of study that

would not require the study of Latin or Greek, agriculture, or advanced mathematics. In addition, the board authorized a three-year diploma program in Normal Studies. Students in this non-degree program would take courses in geography, English grammar, higher arithmetic and algebra, elocution, bookkeeping, "and such other studies as may in the Judgment of the Faculty be necessary to prepare students pursuing this Course to become teachers in the common schools and grammar schools of the state."<sup>5</sup> At a subsequent meeting, the board created a third degree program called the Scientific Course, also a three-year program that eliminated the classical languages.<sup>6</sup>

The admission of women was agreeable to the faculty, several of whom had college-age daughters. It also was initially popular among the students. Members of the Athenaeum Society, a college literary and debating group, endorsed the board's decision by giving a round of "hearty cheers" when they were informed of the new policy. It was, however, more controversial among board members. In spite of the land-grant monies, the college was impoverished and in sore need of student tuition dollars. Some saw the admission of female students as a means to enlarge the student body and to encourage the state legislature to provide funds for teacher education. Others were more skeptical, believing that the presence of women would discourage male students from coming to Delaware College and would overwhelm the college's already inadequate resources.

The chief advocate for co-education at Delaware College was the president, William Henry Purnell. A native of Maryland's Eastern Shore, Purnell had graduated from Delaware College in 1846. He brought a variety of professional experiences to his position as president, having practiced law, organized a volunteer regiment for the Union during the Civil War, and served as postmaster of Baltimore. In common with most of the preceding presidents of the college, Purnell was a Presbyterian, but he opposed narrow sectarianism and kept the college non-sectarian and open to scientific inquiry. Purnell's varied background, not uncommon among nineteenth-century academic leaders, made

him comfortable with the view of education embraced in the Land-Grant Act that linked the liberal arts to the practical, professional subjects of agriculture and engineering.

When Purnell was called to the presidency of his alma mater in 1870, the college was being reopened after a decade of inactivity. Delaware College proudly traced its origin back to Francis Alison's colonial academy, but the institution had not received its collegiate charter from the state until 1833. In 1834, the building called Old College was completed, and the college opened its doors to an all-male student body consisting mostly of young men from Delaware and the nearby region. Plagued with low enrollments and chronic financial difficulties, the college had closed in 1859 just two years before the outbreak of the Civil War. During the war, Congress adopted the Morrill Land-Grant Act, which committed profits from the sale of United States government lands in the West to assist the development of state colleges where liberal arts, together with the practical subjects of agriculture and engineering, would be taught. Only when the Delaware General Assembly had designated Delaware College to receive the First State's portion of these federal funds, were the trustees of the defunct institution able to reopen its doors.

In light of such negative factors as Delaware's small population, popular indifference to education, the state's modest share in the federal land-grant money, and the earlier failure of the college, the prospects for the revived institution were not bright. The faculty consisted of only five people, including the president. The physical facilities, library, and scientific equipment, all housed in Old



*William H. Purnell, president of the University of Delaware, 1870-1885*

College, were marginal. Given those conditions, the college might well have been unable to attract a student body large enough to sustain it. President Purnell's proposal to admit young women was designed to increase the pool of potential students. Some people believed that the president and a few of the faculty and trustees were also looking for an opportunity to provide an inexpensive college education for their own daughters.

In the September term of 1872, six young women joined the freshman class. Unlike the men, many of whom lived in the college building, the women were required to find lodgings in private homes in Newark. Several of them were residents of the town and continued to live at home. Others found rooms with Hannah Chamberlain, who maintained an academy for girls nearby. There were no athletic activities for the women, nor were they expected to participate in military training, but in all other respects, the female students were treated like their male counterparts. George Morgan, a student at that time, recalled later that "they were at college only when in attendance upon classes. They were a well-grounded, bright lot, even decorous, and were gallantly treated." It was generally noted that the men's behavior showed a marked improvement in the company of the women students.

Choice of curriculum was not restricted by sex. Most of the female students chose the Literary curriculum, but a few took the Classical or Scientific. In 1873, the state legislature enacted an "Act to aid Delaware College and to provide for the Education of Teachers for the Free Schools of this State." The bill provided scholarships for students from each county to attend the college in preparation for teaching within the state. This act, clearly related to the introduction of co-education at the Newark college, would have fulfilled its aim more successfully had the legislature concurrently established qualifications for teachers. The febleness and equivocation of the legislature's position on educational reform was further demonstrated in 1875, when the state discontinued the scholarships.

In June 1875, a class consisting of three female and two male students received Bachelor of Literature degrees on Commence-

ment Day. These three women—Elizabeth S. Blandy, Harriette H. Curtis, and Ella Y. Mackey—were the first of their sex to join the alumni of Delaware College. All three were residents of Newark. Harriette Curtis was the daughter of a paper maker who had established the Curtis Mill at the edge of town on the White Clay Creek. The Blandys, another of Newark's leading families, lived at Belmont Mansion on Quality Hill on West Main Street. Ella Mackey was the daughter of William D. Mackey, much beloved professor of ancient languages at the college. Both Harriette Curtis and Elizabeth Blandy had prepared for college at Hannah Chamberlain's academy. During the 1860s, when the college had been closed, Miss Chamberlain conducted her school in Old College, and Harriette had earned the school mistress' ire by coasting down the building's broad, front steps on a sled.

In 1944, Harriette, long since married to her fellow Delaware College classmate Delaware Clark, had survived to become the oldest living graduate of Delaware College. In an interview in *The University News*, an alumni magazine, she recalled that the college had provided no recreation or sports program for its students, but

*Harriette Hurd Curtis Clark (left), who played the role of Lydia Languish in the Delaware College production of R. B. Sheridan's The Rivals in 1873, lived to be the college's oldest graduate. Here, she meets with Carol Christian, a student who played the same role in an E-52 production of The Rivals in 1949.*



that the students of both sexes enjoyed frequent social visits to the homes of leading Newark families, including her own home and that of the Blandys.<sup>8</sup> In winter, the students—male and female—went ice skating on White Clay Creek above the paper mill dam. The men rented sleighs, which they raced on Main Street. In spring, the women watched from the windows in the Old College Oratory while the men played baseball. The most successful cooperative venture between the male and female students during the era of the first women's class was a production of Sheridan's *The Rivals*, which took place in 1873: Harriette played the role of Lydia Languish, and President Purnell served as director of the production. The play was presented before a packed house in the Oratory. The budget for the play was negligible: Newark ladies rummaged through their attics to supply eighteenth-century costumes and props. It was truly a community project that brought the men and women students, the college faculty, and the town of Newark into a single orbit. Unfortunately, this brave beginning in theatrical production had no sequel.

In 1876, a group of nine female students founded the Pestalozzi Literary Society, named in honor of the famous Swiss educational reformer. Their society was organized along the lines of the two male societies, the Athenaeum and Delta Phi, both of which had been features of student life at Delaware College since the 1830s. The new society's purpose was to encourage literary pursuits and companionship. Members met weekly in a room in the college building, designated by the president for their use. They required one another to write poems, short stories, and essays to be read at their meetings, and they debated such issues as, "*Resolved: That the Native savage possesses a right to the soil*" and "*Resolved: Women should be allowed to vote.*" In 1881, the society established a monthly magazine, with the modest proclamation of its intention that it might become the "best monthly published in America."<sup>9</sup> When the society failed to resolve the issue of the publication's name, they called it *No Name*.

The *No Name* was handwritten to save on printing costs. In spite of its ephemeral appearance, copies of every issue have been

preserved in the University Archives. The magazine provides a revealing window into the lives and thoughts of the society's members. Although its editors strove to maintain a high-toned literary style and serious content, they often slipped into sarcastic commentary on local news. Every issue contained critiques of the presentations made at the most recent meetings of the society. Considering the small size and close interaction of the student body, the editors did not shrink from making statements that must have proved embarrassing to their classmates. The editors had clearly defined notions of how college women should behave, and they were determined to use the power of the press, even if only in manuscript, to encourage a high level of conduct and erudition. Infractions such as tardiness, lack of attentiveness during the Bible reading, failure to prepare adequately for the meetings, and frequent outbursts of "compulsive giggling" all came in for reprimand.

Of the eighty-one young women who attended Delaware College during the period of co-education, fifty were members of the Pestalozzi Society. It is difficult to say why the other thirty-one female students did not join. Perhaps they were not invited to do so, or perhaps they were not interested in associating with a society that had literary and feminist objectives. *The Review*, a publication dominated by male students, claimed that "the spirit of Woman's Rights appears to have pervaded the Pestalozzi Society from the very beginning, and seems to be the characteristic spirit of the society."<sup>10</sup>

Although its weekly meetings were open only to members, the society had an impact on the life of the college as a whole. It sponsored dramatic entertainments and lectures to which the entire student body was invited. Innocuous artistic tableaux illustrating such religious themes as "Rock of Ages" and "Simply to the Cross I Cling" were among the Pestalozzians' renditions. But, the society was also a voice for political and social change, as, for example, in its advocacy of educational reform in Delaware's schools. True to their uncompromising spirit of frankness, the editors of the *No Name* once described the state's legislators as "narrow-minded and pig-headed" for their failure to address the needs of Delaware's "shamefully inadequate schools."<sup>11</sup> The society also aroused student

interest in the issue of greater rights for women. It was the Pestalozzians who brought Belva Lockwood to speak at the college and sponsored a lecture by America's most renowned feminist, Susan B. Anthony.

Not all of the society's themes were so high-minded. Commentary in the *No Name* dealt with a variety of student concerns. There were occasional nods to fashion (blue skirts and grey overdresses were popular in 1881) and references to recreational outings, such as ice skating and roller skating, which became quite the rage in the early 1880s. One revealing entry notes that "we have no objection to our lady members smoking cigarette stumps, but would advise them not to make use of the articles during society hours."<sup>12</sup> In another issue, the editors discussed the recent visit to Newark of a group of girls from Philadelphia who flirted with the male students "which we Pestalozzi girls do not *deign to notice*."<sup>13</sup> In 1884, the presidential election in which James G. Blaine, Republican, faced Grover Cleveland, Democrat, also excited much interest and debate among the Pestalozzians.

The picture that emerges of the female students in the Purnell presidency is one of a group of somewhat parochial young women (about half of whom came from Newark and most others from nearby) who were adequately prepared to do college work and who affected in their literary magazine a style of sarcastic camaraderie. These characteristics made them similar to their male counterparts. Their uniqueness lay in the fact that they attended college at a time when higher education for women was still experimental and controversial at Delaware College. They could never escape a sense of being on trial and of representing issues that transcended each of them as individuals. Most married after graduation; some became teachers. Two, including Carrie M. Purnell, daughter of the president, obtained advanced degrees in medicine at the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia and became physicians. Another, Sarah E. Mackey, sister of Ella, taught one term for her father, Professor Mackey, while he lay fatally ill in 1885. The first woman to teach at Delaware College, she married in the summer of 1885 and died the following year.

In June 1877, the Wilmington *Every Evening and Commercial* published a series of articles that dealt with the progress of co-education at the college. The newspaper reported that the experiment had proved highly successful. President Purnell observed to the press that the young women were having an uplifting effect on the behavior of their male counterparts. Co-education, he said, was breaking down the artificial barriers that had heretofore separated the sexes and was giving men and women similar educational experiences. President Purnell was certain that co-education would encourage the women students to look beneath the surface of their male classmates, finding their more solid qualities, and he felt that the shared educational experience would assist the women to become more sympathetic and helpful wives.<sup>14</sup>

The president's argument for co-education aimed to overcome doubts among conservative-minded people by appealing to their belief that women should retain their traditional role in the home. Purnell's appeal to traditional values in order to promote greater educational opportunities for women revealed his sensitivity to the political and social realities of his time. Whether the college women did perform their roles as wives and mothers more sympathetically or intelligently as a result of their college experience cannot be said for certain, but the record does indicate that over half the female graduates did marry within a few years of their graduation and most others probably married later.

Late twentieth-century people are inclined to interpret statements such as those made by President Purnell to justify co-education as examples of the tradition-bound nature of Victorian society. Such an interpretation, however, ignores the fact that swift and dramatic changes were taking place in post-Civil War America. Railroads, industrialization, and urbanization were altering the landscape and the lives of millions of people. Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection excited debate between religious conservatives and scientists that set the educational enterprise at odds with accepted theological beliefs.

The women's rights movement, which included access to higher education as a cornerstone of its agenda, was part of the swirl of



*President Walter Hullihen (third from right) and Mrs. Hullihen (fifth from left) welcome a group of Delaware College alumnae from the 1872-1885 period to their home, as part of the University's centennial celebration in 1933.*

change. It is hardly surprising that the women's movement met with resistance and that, to be effective, advocates of new opportunities for women were compelled to express their views in terms of traditional social relationships. In that "era of woman," higher education for females was a new and radical idea, no matter how it was justified.

Enrollment of women students at Delaware College reached its peak in the year 1875-76 and then declined. By the mid-1880s, women represented a mere handful of the total student body. It is difficult to explain that trend except to note the narrowness of the geographical base from which the students were drawn, the refusal of Delaware's legislature to require teachers to attend college and the lack of special facilities for women at Delaware College. Perhaps, also, continued hostility of some members of the Board of Trustees to co-education discouraged women's enrollment.

In spite of warm support from the president and faculty, co-education did not become woven into the fabric of the college. The area of greatest controversy developed over the awarding of student honors. The short explanation of this tension was that the male students resented the awarding of honors to their female classmates, but that interpretation of the problem is simplistic and unfair. What the men objected to was the fact that students who took the Literary course, most of whom were women, were placed in the same category for honors as were those who took the classical curriculum with its emphasis on the mastery of Greek and Latin and its required work in advanced mathematics.

The honors issue reached its highest intensity in 1885 when Grace Darling Chester, daughter of a professor of science, was named class valedictorian. Miss Chester, who pursued the Scientific course, was described by *The Review* as a "diligent student," but she had been permitted to substitute three classes in botany privately taught, most likely by her father, for regular science classes. The male students cried "foul," and the salutatorian refused to participate in the commencement program.<sup>15</sup> Grace Chester must have been mortified by the publicity the contretemps provoked, for she failed to attend the class dinner. But the next morning, she gathered her courage and appeared before the large crowd at the commencement exercises to give a speech, entitled "Pasteur as a Scientist," and to receive her Bachelor of Science degree.<sup>16</sup> The next year, she began teaching at the Female Seminary in Frederick, Maryland.

It was in the context of this increasingly contentious atmosphere that a majority of the members of the Board of Trustees decided to end their experiment in co-education. On June 24, 1885, by a majority vote of thirteen to eight, the board adopted the following: "Resolved, That the system of co-education in Delaware College be, and is hereby abolished; provided that all students already matriculated may at their option finish their collegiate course." At this same meeting, in what must have been a closely related matter, the board accepted the resignation of William H. Purnell as president.<sup>17</sup> Thus ended the first attempt to introduce women students into Delaware College.

Opponents always maintained that co-education had a negative effect on male enrollments. There is no evidence to support that claim; in fact, enrollments declined in the wake of the board's rejection of women students. It is possible, however, that some young men chose not to come to Delaware to avoid co-education. More important was the state legislature's withdrawal of its short-lived support for future teachers and its failure to establish college attendance as a requirement for public-school teachers. Those actions caused Delaware College a significant loss of revenue at a time when the college was inadequately financed and was hoping in vain for ongoing assistance from the state.

To say that co-education was a reform whose time had not yet come explains nothing. By the 1880s, co-education had become well entrenched at many colleges, especially those that received support from land-grant endowments. Nor could it be argued that the women who went to Delaware College had disgraced themselves, either intellectually or socially. On the contrary, women had been consistently numbered among the best scholars. The only scandal associated with co-education occurred a year after the board had voted to abolish it, when a female student was discovered locked in a young man's room in Old College. Both students were expelled. At the time that co-education was abolished, eighty-one young women had matriculated at the college, and thirty-two of them had graduated—a graduation rate of forty-six percent. During that same period, 214 men attended Delaware, and eighty-five of them graduated, which represented a graduation rate of forty percent.<sup>18</sup>

The members of the Pestalozzi Society were so incensed by the board's action that they used their meager funds to print a pamphlet to proclaim their view of it in their usual uncompromising style. "Delaware College is the only institution of learning in the civilized world that has excluded young ladies after admitting them," the editors wrote. They attacked as spurious the argument that co-education was harmful to the male students: "The young men have never been more studious and orderly than since the admission of young ladies." Nor did they give credence to the contention that

the presence of female students deterred male enrollments. "But suppose there are a few such, should their ignorant and unreasonable prejudice be allowed to dictate the policy of a State Institution of learning, the very object of which should be to dispel prejudice and enlighten the people?...The only college in the little Diamond State is henceforth a thing tabooed to those of our sex who desire to avail themselves of its educational advantages. It is a hard judgment, but we will possess our soul in patience and await with confidence the sober second thoughts to right this injustice."<sup>19</sup>

The women of Delaware would wait a long time "to right this injustice." Nearly thirty years separated the demise of co-education in 1885 from the creation of the Women's College in 1914. The real reasons behind this hiatus must be sought in Delawareans' apathetic attitudes toward public education during those years: The state's refusal both to improve its deplorable public schools and to provide significant support for higher education. It was the classic chicken-and-egg situation: Delaware public schools were too inadequate to prepare students for college, and Delaware College lacked the students and the incentive to supply teachers to the schools. The college trustees were unwilling to stretch their modest resources in support of co-education in view of the state's indifference to teacher training. Young women of the Diamond State would not return to college classrooms until there was a groundswell of public support for improvements in education at every level. Only then would the "era of woman" that Belva Lockwood had so ardently proclaimed in Old College in 1884 become a reality in Delaware.



Courtesy of Marjorie J. Tilghman

*Louise Staton as a young woman*

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Reform*



IN 1897, LOUISE STATON was among eight girls and four boys who graduated from Newark High School. When Louise's father, a Baptist minister, had died several years before, her mother had moved to a house in Newark where she boarded students from Delaware College to extend her slender income. Louise was an outstanding student who loved learning and hoped for a career in teaching. "I wanted to go to college very, very much," she wrote many years later. "I realized that the education that I had so far was only a foundation and I hoped to broaden it. I was bitter against the Board of Trustees of Delaware College for refusing admission to women—both on my account and for the other girls in my class."<sup>1</sup>

Louise Staton was not alone in her feelings of frustration with the trustees' policy. Just two years later, the Delaware College junior class annual, *Aurora*, urged the trustees to admit women. The publication's editor, Everett C. Johnson, argued that Delaware's failure to provide higher education for women had put the little state seriously behind the times and that the influence of female students would improve the quality of education for the college's male students. The *Aurora's* editor reminded his readers that girls made up the preponderance of high school graduates in the state and that many of them "would be glad of the chance to secure a college education," were they offered the opportunity.



*Everett C. Johnson, a Delaware College graduate and leading proponent of the Women's College*

Courtesy of Marjorie J. Tilghman

The junior annual called for the return of co-education to Delaware College, not only because it was just, but because the separation of the sexes was artificial. The series concluded with a ringing appeal: "In the midst of our intermingling hope and anxiety, we, the Junior Class of Delaware College, with all the ardor, zeal, and determination that our young hearts possess, call upon our faculty, our trustees, our alumnae, the various Woman's Century Clubs throughout the state, and all other individuals and societies who are interested in the future manhood of Delaware, to join us in our earnest appeal for the equal education of our boys and girls, which apparently can only be accomplished by adopting co-education at Delaware College."<sup>2</sup>

The *Aurora's* fervent entreaty touched a chord of sympathy and support in Delaware, where efforts to improve education were at last taking shape. In 1891, a federal law required states to provide land-grant educational opportunities to all citizens, regardless of race. Delaware was a segregated state. Rather than admit black students to Delaware College, the state chartered Delaware State College for black students. The new collegiate institution, located in Dover, accepted students of both sexes from the first. In 1897, the year in which Louise Staton graduated from high school,

Delaware adopted a new state constitution that made state government responsible for public education. This was a necessary first step to addressing the educational needs of an overwhelmingly rural state, where shanty-like, one-room schools, maintained by ill-educated and ill-equipped teachers, were commonplace. In the years that followed, educational reformers emphasized the importance of teacher training as a key component to improving the state's public schools.

During those same years, the Delaware College Board of Trustees was cautiously reassessing its position on co-education. In addition to pressures from those who wished to see the college play a role in providing a better educational system in Delaware, some members of the board were also concerned about the future of farming in the state. Throughout America, and especially in areas such as Delaware where agriculture was stagnating, young people were abandoning farm life to seek opportunities in the burgeoning cities. America's rural communities looked to their state land-grant colleges to counter this trend. In 1907, the Delaware College Trustee Committee on Agriculture visited several leading land-grant universities to observe their practices and noted that co-education "was proving a great success" at those institutions. The members of the committee "were deeply impressed" at viewing young women from rural areas engaged in studying domestic science and believed "that they will play no unimportant part in solving the question of keeping the young people on the farm."<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Board of Trustees of Delaware College was required to request an extension of its state charter. The reincorporation procedure gave the state legislature an unusual opportunity to make demands of the college's trustees. The board found itself in the unaccustomed position of being obliged to bend to growing public opinion and to the view of some of its concerned board members that something be done about women's education.

The president of Delaware College at that critical juncture was George A. Harter, a former professor of mathematics. Harter faced a quandary. Like most of the board, he opposed the reintroduction

of co-education at Delaware College on the grounds that the college lacked the physical and financial resources to assimilate female students. On that point, the majority opinion among the trustees had not changed since the 1880s. But Harter and the board now feared that the state might charter a separate college for women to train teachers, one with its own board of trustees and its own claim to scarce state and federal funds. The cautious president thought carefully about this dilemma. He then recommended a solution designed to educate women and yet avoid co-education, while at the same time maintaining Delaware College's control over the state's educational resources.

In November 1910, he unveiled his plan for women's higher education in an address before the Wilmington New Century Club. The president had chosen his audience well. The New Century Club was an organization of about 500 women from Wilmington's leading families who met together to promote philanthropy and social reform, to hold social functions, and to pursue self-improvement. Founded in 1889, Wilmington's New Century Club was part of a network of women's clubs that extended throughout the United States. The Wilmington club was the oldest and largest among the state's fifteen women's clubs and the leader of the State Federation of Women's Clubs.

The club movement was one manifestation of two inter-related phenomena at the turn of the century: The Progressive Movement and the effort of American women to redefine and expand their roles in society. It was an exciting time of national renewal. Progressives urgently sought solutions to the problems associated with late-nineteenth-century industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. Optimistic and pragmatic, the Progressives sought to restore a national spirit of shared community responsibility without sacrificing the benefits of material progress. They had a broad agenda that included legislation to curb business excesses and to provide greater opportunities for self-improvement to all Americans.

The Progressive Movement gave a tremendous boost to long-standing efforts by feminists to gain equal rights for women. As the nation's greatest, under-used resource, women played leading roles

in addressing social problems identified by the Progressives and in establishing new professions designed to respond to those problems. According to the tenets of Victorian culture, women were, by nature, self-sacrificing, sensitive to the needs of others, and nurturing—all traits suited to address the social and educational agenda of the Progressives. America's best-known example of a Progressive woman activist was Jane Addams, founder of Chicago's Hull House, who helped define social work as a profession. The Progressive Era witnessed a dramatic growth in the number of women seeking baccalaureate and graduate degrees, together with an opening of opportunities for women to become teachers, researchers, government workers, and nurses, as well as administrators of social and educational agencies.

The club women were not paid professionals, but volunteers, raised in the genteel tradition of upper-middle-class American life. They have been called "domestic feminists" because they did not aspire to overturn their traditional home and family roles, but rather to extend home values into the wider world.<sup>4</sup> As reformers, club women were especially active on behalf of programs to assist children and working women.<sup>5</sup> In Delaware, where public education had been so long neglected, its improvement headed the list of their concerns.

Among the Wilmington club's members, the most committed was Emalea Pusey Warner, daughter of Lea Pusey, a Quaker mill owner, and wife of Alfred D. Warner, the president of his family's shipping firm. Emalea Warner was an enormously energetic and effective campaigner for numerous reforms. As a young matron in the 1880s, she had been responsible for coordinating Wilmington's charities, and she kept the New Century Club focused on issues of broad social concern, including education, prison reform, and public health. Emalea Warner believed that the problems that confronted modern society could be solved only through the active involvement of committed women. She championed higher education for women as the single most important means to achieve those goals and to widen the world of women beyond that of their private homes and family life. From the perspective of the



*Emalea Pusey Warner, in a portrait by Stanley M. Arthurs*

club women, especially that of Emalea Warner, President Harter came with a very timely and important message.

He hardly needed to remind his audience of the embarrassing fact that Delaware was unique among the states in providing no collegiate institution for its daughters. Noting the earlier failure of co-education at the college, he proposed an alternative: The creation of an affiliated, or coordinate, Women's College. The new institution would be located in Newark, would occupy buildings separate from those used

by the men's institution, and would exercise a degree of autonomy. But, it would be tied to Delaware College and its board and share the use of the established institution's resources.

The president's proposal was met with a hearty endorsement from the club women, who were delighted that those in authority were finally willing to consider including women in the college. Emalea Warner saw in this proposal the opportunity for the women's clubs of Delaware to take on their greatest challenge to date. In her capacity as chairwoman of the state federation's Education Committee, she mobilized the club women and represented them in pushing the proposal to its realization. Without her leadership, the Women's College might well have collapsed before it was begun, and Delaware's daughters would have waited even longer for the opportunity to attend a state-assisted college.

Emalea Warner opened the campaign by sending letters to important people throughout the First State asking for their support. Her letters brought the issue before leaders of opinion and uncovered their individual attitudes toward it. One

important state-wide organization that adopted the cause was the Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry, Delaware's largest and most politically powerful farm organization. The Grange created a committee to lobby on behalf of the cause. Although Governor Caleb S. Penniwell gave only a tepid endorsement, his successor, Governor Charles R. Miller, a lawyer with degrees from Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania, who became governor in 1913, was a strong advocate. President Harter, expressing his willingness to work with Mrs. Warner's committee, said: "Let us work for a coordinate college that will offer to the girls of Delaware the same kind of an education that Delaware College has been offering to the boys. Let it not only be a normal school, a school of domestic science, but a school that embraces the whole range of college activity."<sup>6</sup>

During 1912, a coalition was forged among the women's clubs, the Grange, President Harter, the director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at Delaware College, and the state's Board of Education to work for enabling legislation. In April of that year, representatives of the Board of Education visited a number of institutions of higher learning in New England to gather ideas about how a coordinate college might be organized. Among the potential models, the committee members were most strongly impressed by the relationship between Brown University and its sister institution, Pembroke College. A woman dean administered Pembroke under the general supervision of the president of Brown and that university's board. That was the plan finally implemented in Delaware. The committee also took note of the layout, equipment, buildings, and curricula at several New England coordinate colleges and women's colleges. In October 1912, the committee met with a subcommittee of the Delaware College board to work out the basic structure of an affiliated Women's College, to be conducted under the control of the entire board. Responsibility for the proposed Women's College was written into the new charter for Delaware College, which the General Assembly adopted in February 1913.<sup>7</sup>

The next month, the legislators considered a bill to create the Women's College. As the date for the vote on the bill approached, Emalea Warner campaigned vigorously. She wrote letters admonishing supporters to ceaseless work, for "the hour of our active and united effort to secure the passage of the Woman's College Bill is now at hand." She also supervised the creation and dissemination of a poster addressed "TO THE PEOPLE OF DELAWARE." From the opening line—"DO YOU KNOW—That Delaware is the only state without an institution of higher education for women?," the message was loud and clear.<sup>8</sup>

On March 19, 1913, the Delaware General Assembly passed the Women's College bill. An avalanche of letters and telegrams from club women, Grange members, and other friends had secured large majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The law created a commission that was charged with overseeing the construction of the college's buildings. Governor Miller chaired the commission, but Emalea Warner, the only female commissioner, was its most active member. The commissioners purchased a nineteen-acre farm, located less than one mile south of the Delaware College buildings on the Depot Road that led from Newark to the Pennsylvania Railroad station. They hired Lausatt Rogers, an architect from New Castle, to design two structures, a residence hall and a building for laboratories and classrooms. Construction bids were let to local contractors, and ground was broken on June 16, 1913, less than three months after adoption of the enabling legislation.

While construction of the college buildings was under way, the commissioners collaborated with the Delaware College board to secure a dean, a faculty, and a student body. Selection of the dean was the first order of business. In August, the Delaware College board defined the person it sought as one "who shall be a woman of liberal learning, adequate experience, and undoubted character and ability to organize and put into successful operation such courses of study as the Board of Trustees may adopt." By November, they had found in Winifred Josephine Robinson, an assistant professor of botany at Vassar College, a

candidate who inspired every confidence that she could fulfill those demanding conditions.

Winifred Robinson was forty-six years old when she accepted the challenge to create a new Women's College in Delaware. Reared in Battle Creek, Michigan, she had grown up in the women's world of her grandmother's home, with her aunt and her widowed mother. Although she dreamed of going to college after completing high school, her family lacked the funds; so she rolled up her hair to signify her coming of age and taught school. It took six years for her to earn enough money to attend the state normal school in Ypsilanti. Through persistent effort, she completed a baccalaureate degree at the University of Michigan in 1899, at the age of thirty-one. After graduation, she moved to Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, as an assistant in botany. She continued her education at Columbia University, where she earned a Master of Arts in 1904 and a Ph.D. in botany in 1912. Her botanical



*Emalea Pusey Warner and Winifred Josephine Robinson (who holds a parasol) on the grounds of Delaware College, August 7, 1914*

work took her to interesting places around the world, including Hawaii, Germany, and Jamaica. During her years at Vassar, she spent most summers at the New York Botanical Garden, working with colleagues in her field and occasionally enjoying the theater and concerts that the city offered. In 1913, however, she accepted the post of Dean of Women at the University of Wisconsin Summer School. That position gave her experience in managing large numbers of college women in residence halls and sorority houses and whetted her appetite for the opportunity that beckoned in Delaware.<sup>10</sup>

The chance to shape a new public institution designed to extend educational opportunities for women captured Dr. Robinson's enthusiasm and overcame her reluctance to leave the comfortable world of Vassar. After a preliminary visit to Delaware as Emalea Warner's guest, the future dean wrote to her hostess to express thanks for her "charming hospitality" and to continue the dialog that they had begun about the great object of their mutual concern. "I had intended to learn every line of the Princess (my part in *Love's Labour's Lost* which we are planning to give) on the train but my head was so full of your great ideal for the Woman's College that I kept turning plans over in my mind and never a word did I learn." The letter continued with suggestions for the arrangement of the college dining room, the layout of an athletic field, and the installation of cooking apparatus on each floor of the residence hall so that the students could make tea.<sup>11</sup>

When Emalea Warner replied a few days later, she showed her enthusiasm by using a Quaker salutation, "My dear Friend." Hoping that Winifred Robinson would accept the position at Delaware, she wrote, "your coming to us...will be a new day for little Delaware and a fresh page will be written in our history. We are going to help you *tremendously*—the dear good women of this state whom I know you will love when you can touch their lives and they will love you."<sup>12</sup>

The tone of the Winifred Robinson-Emalea Warner correspondence suggests that, from the beginning of their long collaboration, these two remarkable women shared a vision of what

the college might become. They were a powerful team. Emalea Warner had a well-defined purpose in mind and a prominent social position in the community. Dignified and determined, "she had a presence that would not be denied," a member of the first class at the Women's College later recalled.<sup>13</sup>

Dean Robinson's contribution was her experience in teaching and administration at a women's college. She was described by a perceptive colleague at Vassar as "a leader among her friends" and as an individual who had demonstrated "an unusual ability in dealing with young women."<sup>14</sup> Like many of her students, she had come from an economically disadvantaged, small-town background, and through sheer determination, had earned a professorship in a respected institution. She was thoroughly familiar with each of the prevailing systems of women's higher education, the co-educational plan of her native Midwestern state universities, the women's college world of Vassar, and the affiliated relationship that bound Barnard College to Columbia University. From those experiences, Dean Robinson had formed strong convictions about the most effective organization of a women's college. She held equally strong views concerning not only the living arrangements and social life of the students but also their curriculum and potential careers.

Both Emalea Warner and Winifred Robinson were women moved by powerful convictions and for both, in their different ways, the creation of the Women's College was to be the greatest adventure and achievement of their lives. Mrs. Warner kept beautifully organized scrapbooks, filled with letters, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia concerning the creation and early life of the college, all of which are now located in the Archives of the University of Delaware. She dedicated the scrapbooks to: "Winifred Robinson, Dean of the Women's College, whose vision, scholarship, inspiration, and efficient administration won for it Honor and Success."<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Robinson made a favorable impression on the Delaware College Board of Trustees, and, in November 1913, President Harter offered her the position of dean at an annual salary of \$2,000. The dean was expected to live in the residence hall, and her room and



*The Women's College buildings in 1914: Science Hall (left) and Residence Hall (right), designed by Delaware architect Laussat Rogers*

board constituted an important part of her compensation. The president was also authorized to inquire about Dr. Robinson's religious affiliation, "not that membership in any particular church is required, but that we may assure them [the board] of the Christian character of one for such a responsible position."<sup>16</sup>

The new dean began her duties in the early months of 1914. There was much to do to complete and furnish the buildings and to attract a faculty and a student body. In the spring, Dean Robinson and Emalea Warner toured the state, meeting club women and addressing high school seniors. Their visits attracted considerable attention. A newspaper reporter who covered their visit to Wilmington High School commented that the dean "made a decidedly favorable impression" on the students.

Dean Robinson sat on the stage of the school auditorium, together with the principal and Mrs. Warner. She was probably the first woman with a Ph.D. whom the students had ever seen. The

newspaper reporter wrote, "She is of pleasing appearance, of medium height, fair in complexion and of slender figure. Her personality is altogether kindly and she made the girls at the High School feel that she is interested in them for their own sakes, and not merely that they may be part of an educational institution."<sup>17</sup> When she got up to speak, she disarmed the students with her directness. "I really came just to see you," she said, and proceeded to describe the advantages of a college education and the joys of college life. Her parting words were, "I hope you'll all come to college, we look to you to give it backbone. I shall expect to see many of you there in September 1914." Later, at a smaller meeting in a classroom, the dean encouraged students to be independent and self-reliant. "I would rather you would do something I don't want you to do than to wait to be told what to do. I want you to be in the college life, and not only to be interested in everything there, but in the people who can't come to college. You will lead there a simple, comfortable, hospitable life."<sup>18</sup>

How much Louise Staton would have thrilled to Dean Robinson's words had they been spoken at her high school seventeen years before. Many young women in Delaware who could have been enriched by a college education had never been offered the opportunity. But, finally, all obstacles had been overcome and the State of Delaware was offering its daughters a college of their own. Excitement at the prospect of Delaware's taking its place among the other states in making that opportunity available captured the imaginations of many people. As one newspaper editorialized, "At this college you may discover your talent or your inclination—your fitness for home, church, social, and business or professional life will be developed."<sup>19</sup> Tuition to Delaware residents was free, and room and board cost a modest \$200 a year. Students who lived nearby could live at home and commute at little cost.

But how many would come? Would the efforts of so many advocates be vindicated? Had students really been impressed by Dean Robinson's appeals? The answers to those questions still hung in the balance as the construction workers completed the final touches on the college buildings and the furniture trucks pulled up to deposit their cargoes.



*Dean Winifred Robinson in her doctoral robe poses at the center of the Women's College faculty, staff, and student body at the opening of the Women's College in the fall of 1914.*

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The College*



THEY CAME. A CLASS OF forty-eight freshmen began the Women's College. Later, when the early years of the Women's College had become legendary, its first students were seen as pioneers who had laid the foundations for a better Delaware.

The formal opening of the college took place on October 10, 1914, which the *Newark Post* described as "the greatest day Delaware has ever known."<sup>1</sup> The *Post's* editor, Everett C. Johnson, was the man who, as a student at Delaware College, had argued for co-education in the *Aurora* of 1898. Now a member of the Delaware College Board of Trustees, he had been chosen by his fellow board members to accept the keys to the Women's College buildings from the commission. The realization of the Women's College was a dream come true for Johnson and for his equally intellectual wife, the former Louise Staton.

An eager crowd of between 2,000 and 3,500 people, including the state's most distinguished men and women, gathered on that bright October day to see the two buildings, called Residence Hall and Science Hall, that had been erected for the new college and to witness the installation of Samuel Chiles Mitchell as president of Delaware College and Winifred Josephine Robinson as dean of the Women's College. "Enthusiasm and faith in the possibilities of our little Commonwealth was the spirit of the day," the *Post* reported.



*Dean Winifred Robinson and Trustee Everett C. Johnson at the formal opening of the Women's College*

The speakers and audience shared a sense of pride and of patriotism as they contemplated the meaning and purpose of the two coordinate colleges. The outbreak of war in Europe only a few weeks before served to heighten President Mitchell's rhetorical references to "America as a moral power in the world" that offered equality of educational opportunity to both sexes.

In her remarks, Dean Robinson concentrated on the ideals that underlie a liberal education. She declared that work, recreation, the search for truth, and ethical values made up the four walls of the academic structure. Those walls could keep out the frivolous and the false while exalting knowledge, art,

religion, and the spirit of social usefulness. "On the outside must be all that is conventional in teaching, all that is servile in learning; on the inside, all freedom in method for the teacher, all honest questioning for the learner."<sup>2</sup> The dean had already described the mission of the new institution in its first *Bulletin*. "The purpose of the Women's College," she wrote, "is to provide academic work of college grade that is especially adapted to the needs of women." In addition to its academic goal, the *Bulletin* also promised that the college would give its students "social experience, so essential to poise and grace of manner....The girls will live in a world of their own," Dean Robinson wrote, "surrounded by refined, cultural influences, in daily association with the dean and her associates."<sup>3</sup>

Translating those broad, idealistic concepts into the day-to-day decisions that would guide the development of the nascent college was to be Winifred Robinson's life work. From the college's beginning in 1914 until she retired at the age of seventy in 1938,



*Scenes from the dedication of the Women's College, October 10, 1914*

Winifred J. Robinson provided the vision and leadership that shaped the Women's College. She was responsible for everything—from ordering coal for the furnace to hiring the faculty, advising the students, and maintaining discipline. She had not chosen the affiliated college model for Delaware; the Delaware College Board of Trustees had done that. The board had selected Winifred Robinson to be dean from a long list of candidates primarily because the board believed that she could create a college on the affiliated college model. Her ability to pursue that vision was never in doubt, but, in time, the board would come to question the wisdom and cost of continuing two institutions segregated by gender. The history of the Women's College is,

therefore, a bittersweet tale of an enterprise that began on the buoyant crest of idealism in the Progressive Era and then outlived its era; it is also the story of the woman who saw her once-shared vision questioned and ultimately, at least at Delaware, rejected.

Supervision of the Women's College of Delaware, as it was originally called, was the responsibility of a special committee of the Delaware College Board of Trustees, which consisted of three members of the all-male board, together with the president of Delaware College and the dean of the Women's College. The chairperson of that committee was State Chancellor Charles M. Curtis, a graduate of Delaware College and the brother of Harriette Curtis, the student from the Purnell years of co-education who had played Lydia Languish in *The Rivals* in 1873. Chancellor Curtis was a strong advocate of the Women's College, one on whom Dean Robinson could depend for support. During the initial fourteen years of the college, there was no woman member of the Board of Trustees. In 1928, Emalea Warner was selected the first of her sex to join what had then become the Board of Trustees of the University of Delaware. To compensate for the lack of a female presence, the president of the board appointed an advisory committee to the Women's College, which consisted of five women selected from throughout the state. An Academic Council—made up of the president of Delaware College, Dean Robinson, the faculty of the Women's College, and all Delaware College faculty who taught courses in the Women's College—met biweekly to deal with issues concerning instruction, the curriculum, examinations, and student discipline.

Samuel Chiles Mitchell, whose inauguration as president of Delaware College took place on the same day as the opening ceremony for the Women's College, remained at Delaware for only six years. A kindly man, but a lax administrator, President Mitchell became embroiled in disagreements with some faculty and resigned his presidency in 1920 to accept a professorship in history at Richmond College.<sup>4</sup> Mitchell's successor was Walter Hullihen, a tall, dignified Virginian who held a Ph.D. in classical languages from The Johns Hopkins University and had recently served as an

officer in the United States Army during World War I. Hullihen's interests and abilities lay in administration rather than scholarship. He possessed a cordial, Southern manner, which, coupled with a love of outdoor, manly sports such as big game hunting, allowed him to move easily in the world of Delaware's male elite. One of the new president's first actions was to promote a redefinition of the institution by according it the name University of Delaware, which encompassed both Delaware College, the men's portion, and the Women's College. The faculty and Board of Trustees consented to the new name, which became the official title in March 1921.<sup>5</sup> Dean Robinson agreed to the change on condition that the Women's College would retain its autonomy.

The Women's College was born in an era that was as yet untouched by forces that were soon to unravel the fabric of Victorian culture. Automobiles were a rarity in Delaware in 1914, and still in the future were the social changes associated with America's involvement in the First World War, the ill-advised Prohibition Amendment and the decade of free-spirited self-indulgence that followed the war. In 1914, most people who had achieved or aspired to middle-class status believed that earnest endeavor, sexual abstinence before marriage, and dedication to selfless social causes were worthy goals toward which educated people should aspire in their lives. Dean Robinson and those who assisted in the creation of the Women's College believed wholeheartedly in these concepts, and they purposefully built the college around them.

The Women's College was conceived as a secular convent, where unsophisticated, inexperienced students were to be shaped into socially poised, educated women prepared to pursue careers in fields open to members of their sex and useful to the citizens of Delaware, particularly teaching and home economics. The various aspects of the college were unified by that purpose. It represented an adaptation of those bits and pieces from the experience of other schools that Dean Robinson regarded as most appropriate to the unique needs of the college in Delaware. She was particularly conscious of the college's goal to educate those young women who

could not afford to attend private colleges. She knew that the majority of the students in the Women's College had not received thorough high-school educations and were likely to be self-conscious and insecure in college classes. Many were not prepared to undertake college-level work. Students often came from poor families who lived culturally impoverished, narrow lives. To accommodate them, the dean designed a college that provided a safe, homelike, comfortable environment in which young women could most easily respond to educational opportunities.

A key element in Dean Robinson's concept, therefore, was her use of the Residence Hall. The dean had helped plan the building to ensure that it included large, well-furnished public spaces appropriate to the conduct of social events. Student rooms, by contrast, were deliberately kept small and cell-like, to inspire study but not conviviality. The dean had an inflexible rule that all female faculty of the college must live in residence, must take their meals with the students, and must serve as chaperones for student social events. Concomitantly, she forbade students to live off campus, unless they were commuters living with their parents or close relatives. Those ironclad rules were designed to provide the students with faculty role models who would instill in them a love of learning and introduce them to a richer cultural life than they had known previously. As the dean explained to the Board of Trustees, "It is not the professor's course but the professor's world that the student enters."<sup>6</sup> The dean regarded the college as her family. "So compelling," she once wrote to a friend, "is the desire to mother it."<sup>7</sup>

When the college first opened, there was but one residence, and Dean Robinson, who had her rooms there, was its director. The sudden appearance of the dean in her red-flannel bathrobe was sufficient to restore order instantly to a room full of noisy, high-spirited college students.<sup>8</sup> Dean Robinson had no hesitation in giving advice to students on any subject. On at least one occasion, she instructed a surprised young woman on the art of applying makeup.<sup>9</sup> Another student received a letter from the dean admonishing her against dancing cheek to cheek. "Many a man has been tempted beyond what he was able to bear in the way of sex



*The Delaware State Women's Clubs furnished the public rooms of the Women's College Residence Hall to create a gracious, dignified, yet homey and uncluttered atmosphere typical of the upper-middle-class taste of the time. The dining room, although located in the basement and simply furnished, was equipped for formal dining and featured a fireplace.*

impulse by a perfectly innocent girl," the dean wrote. "Cheek-to-cheek dancing is a very dangerous thing both as to the reputation which it may bring to the girl who permits it and to the results which may come from it."<sup>10</sup>

In the period when the Women's College began, the so-called Seven Sisters colleges—Mount Holyoke, Smith, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Radcliffe, Barnard, and Wellesley—offered models of the collegiate ideal for women. Students at those prestigious private institutions had created what was called "The Life," a special world apart, where women students marched in daisy-chain ceremonies, built



*Members of the "pioneer class" of 1918 pose in their graduation robes on the steps of Residence Hall before marching, surrounded by undergraduates bearing a daisy-chain, to the commencement ceremony on June 10, 1918.*



*The annual Founder's Day tree-planting ceremony in 1924*

strong loyalties to compatriots, and pursued leadership roles in clubs, sports, and theatrical programs.<sup>11</sup> Many of those elements were replicated at the Women's College. The dean established a yearly succession of ceremonial occasions that began with Founder's Day in October, proceeded to a special Thanksgiving dinner, and ended with May Day and Commencement at the close of the school year. Ceremonies were designed to inspire in students an unquenchable loyalty, both to the college as a whole and to their particular class. Those activities became genuine traditions that lasted the life of the college and bound the students to one another and to the institution.

Tree planting was the special feature of Founder's Day. In the early years of the college, the ceremony had practical as well as symbolic value since the small campus had begun on treeless farmland. Each year, the president of the sophomore class planted a tree and presented the spade to the president of the freshman class. The members of the junior class then bestowed class colors on the



*The May Pole dance, as performed by costumed students on the Mall on May Day, 1925*

freshmen, each freshman receiving her colors from her "big sister" among the juniors. The ceremony culminated in the robing of the seniors in caps and gowns. A special feature of that event was the speaker, usually a well-known American professional woman, who would discuss career opportunities for women. Among those who spoke at the Women's College were the suffragist leader Dr. Anna Howard Shaw; Lillian Gilbreth, the time and motion engineer; Dr. Annie Jump Cannon, Harvard University's Dover-born astronomer; and Judge Florence Allen of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. Weekly chapel services presented another opportunity to reinforce the solemnity and high moral purpose of the college. The entire student body and many faculty joined in worship under the dignified leadership of the dean.

Whereas Founder's Day and chapel emphasized the purposeful, academic side of college life, May Day paid tribute to feminine pulchritude, grace, and outdoor recreation. The queen and her court drew annual crowds of several thousand visitors to the

campus during the 1920s and 1930s and provided local newspapers with excellent photo opportunities. Each year, Beatrice Hartshorn, director of physical education at the Women's College, created a new pageant based on a different theme. Colorfully garbed student dancers enacted fairy tale stories on the model of classical ballet, and student acrobats demonstrated their skill in gymnastics. Students wearing diaphanous, yet modest, costumes danced around the May Pole to the strains of "May Is Here," a song, according to legend, composed by Miss Hartshorn.

Dean Robinson disapproved of sororities because she feared their power to detract from the unity of the student body, but she approved of academic clubs, like the Math Club, Le Cercle Francais, and the Home Economics Club, which enhanced the college's mission. She empowered the student-government organization to create rules to govern student behavior and to appoint proctors to enforce those rules. The emphasis on self-discipline that this system encouraged was also extended to the students' academic



*The Mandolin Club in 1919 attracted students who played a variety of musical instruments. In the 1920s, it was superseded by a Ukelele Club, when that instrument became the rage among college students.*

life, which was conducted according to an honor system. Another college-supported extracurricular activity was the Y.W.C.A., which conducted Bible classes and undertook charitable projects. A Glee Club and a Mandolin Club addressed the college's commitment to music education, especially in the early years when there were neither faculty nor courses in that discipline. The Dramatic Club, created in 1917, focused initially on performing modest productions of skits and charades, but it later evolved into an organization capable of performing major dramatic works in conjunction with its counterpart in Delaware College.

Not all of the activities of the Women's College students were so self-consciously studious and culturally high-minded as the above description might suggest. *The Chronicle*, the first yearbook published by the college in 1918, notes that Glee Club members had kazoos, which they played at Delaware College athletic events or, illegally, at lights out in the Residence Hall. Any student who failed a test could expect a kazoo serenade of "The Worms Crawl In, The Worms Crawl Out."<sup>12</sup> Student pranks were commonplace. One warmly recalled episode involved placing a hand muff with a hot water bottle in it inside a girl's bed so that it looked and felt like a small animal. Memorable for a different reason was the student in the first graduating class who tried to evade taking a test for which she was unprepared by applying white powder to her face and feigning a fainting spell in front of the professor.<sup>13</sup> Students of the 1920s recalled learning the Charleston in a line by hanging onto the sides of the shower stalls in Sussex Hall, while one girl whistled "Yes, sir, that's my baby."

Social relations between Delaware College and the Women's College were generally cordial. Female students sometimes complained that the fraternity brothers invited non-college women to their parties in preference to Women's College students, but most of the women students had no trouble getting dates to college-sponsored dances with students in the men's college. In the early years of the Women's College, it became a tradition for the students at Delaware College to descend in costume on the women's Residence Hall before one of their biggest athletic events.

The only failure of an attempted cooperative venture between the two institutions was in journalism. Students from both colleges tried to reorganize the Delaware College *Review* as a joint newspaper, but the Women's College students complained that the *Review's* editors were only concerned with sports and ignored their ideas for stories. The women withdrew from the newspaper and instead published a succession of short-lived and inadequately funded, but often very creditable, literary magazines.<sup>14</sup>

Three academic programs were available to students at the Women's College: Arts and Science, Education, and Home Economics. But, because the college was philosophically committed to the liberal arts and was too small to offer more than a narrow range of courses, the students' programs varied relatively little, irrespective of their majors. When the college opened, it had only four female faculty, but that small band was greatly augmented by faculty from Delaware College, who willingly did double duty, teaching their courses in both institutions for additional pay. Mary E. Rich and Myrtle V. Caudell were the original professors of education and home economics, respectively. They also did double duty. Beyond their teaching responsibilities, they traveled extensively throughout Delaware enlisting students, studying the state's educational, economic, and living conditions, and suggesting ways Delawareans could improve the quality of their lives. Home economics extension in Delaware had its beginnings in the work of Myrtle V. Caudell.

The creation of the Women's College was but one link in a chain of events that transformed public education in Delaware. As a preliminary step to beginning her duties at the Women's College, Mary Rich drove a horse and buggy over muddy roads, visiting schools throughout the state to recruit students and to observe social and economic conditions. She was impressed by the interest and cooperation that she received throughout rural Delaware, but she also discovered ill-educated teachers working in run-down, one-room schools with dilapidated, backyard privies. To awaken Delawareans to the need for change, Mary Rich presented information at meetings of women's clubs and other organizations

about the depressing condition of Delaware's schools. One man who took up the challenge was Pierre S. du Pont, then president of the DuPont Company. In 1918, Pierre du Pont created an organization, called Service Citizens of Delaware, to promote school reform. Its goal was to centralize school administration in Delaware, to upgrade the quality of school instruction, and to provide new, state-of-the-art, comprehensive school buildings to every community in the state. P. S. du Pont initially endowed Service Citizens with \$1.5 million to accomplish its building program, and he personally campaigned for a new school code to ensure that his new schools would be managed according to professional standards.<sup>15</sup>

One outcome of that concentrated effort to advance education was a much-needed improvement in the preparation of teachers. In 1913, the state's Board of Education had secured passage of a law to create a summer-school program for teachers at Delaware College. In its early years, the summer school focused on supplying rudimentary instruction to teachers who had received little or no college training. When the Women's College was founded in 1914, the summer school became the joint responsibility of the two affiliated colleges. In 1919, the state authorized a two-year college certificate program for teachers, another stopgap measure designed to give teachers some training beyond high school. The two-year certificate program became a distinct feature of the Women's College until 1934, when the program was discontinued.

Supporters of the Women's College hoped to interest Pierre du Pont in providing for new buildings and professorships. Through Service Citizens, the philanthropist did give some funds for the construction of Kent Dining Hall and for temporary dormitories. He also financed scholarships for future teachers and paid a portion of Mary E. Rich's salary. All told, Service Citizens spent \$71,000 on the Women's College, but du Pont made clear that his interest was in improving public education in general, not in the Women's College as such.<sup>16</sup>

The college played a very successful role in improving the quality of teacher preparation in Delaware's public schools. By

1932, 312 women had earned two-year teaching certificates, which qualified them to be primary-school teachers. In 1935, Dean Robinson reported that 329 of the state's active teachers were graduates of the Women's College, including 102 teachers in the city of Wilmington, 225 throughout rural Delaware, and two at the Women's College itself.<sup>17</sup>

The other professionally oriented program offered by the Women's College was home economics. Like social work, home economics was a new field that had come into being in response to the reform agendas of the Progressive Era, attracting a largely female, professional work force. Home economics was designed to bring scientific information and testing procedures to the heretofore prosaic, yet creative tasks that occupied the time of housewives: Cooking, sewing, and infant care. As an academic field, home economics, or domestic science as it was sometimes called, sought to justify the role of housewife in an industrial world and to create new professions for women as dietitians, food testers, clothing buyers, and nursery-school teachers. Home economists were also employed to teach their discipline in high schools and to become agricultural extension agents.<sup>18</sup> Where education majors relied upon the social-science fields of psychology and sociology for their intellectual foundation, the major building block of the home economics curriculum was chemistry. Home economists sought to apply knowledge about newly discovered nutritional components, such as proteins, vitamins, and carbohydrates, and to improve food preparation in households as well as in hospitals, schools, and other institutions. Home economics, with its emphasis on scientific testing, was closely allied with the emerging food-processing industry. The study of textiles, although less scientifically developed than nutrition in 1914, was similarly taught with the goal of explaining the process of textile and clothing manufacture in both home and industrial settings.

At Delaware, as elsewhere, home economics looked Janus-like toward women's past and to their future. The field evolved rapidly in response to both mainstream social pressures and the growth of knowledge about early childhood development, nutrition, and



*Students at work in the cooking laboratory and clothing laboratory in 1914, both located in Science Hall*

industrial processes. A food-science laboratory and a textile laboratory were located in Science Hall. In 1914, the food laboratory was equipped with experimental equipment suitable for training dietitians and for testing foods for their chemical and nutritional content. By the early 1930s, the demand for technicians trained to carry out such industrial and scientific applications in cooking had cooled, and Amy Rextrew, who then headed home economics, requested that the old equipment in the food laboratory be replaced by new equipment that would replicate kitchens found in home environments.<sup>19</sup> A similar shift toward training homemakers rather than professional home economists was apparent in the program's emphasis on the Home Management House, which provided the culminating experience for those who majored in home economics. In her senior year, each home-economics major spent one term living in the Home Management House under the supervision of a member of the home-economics faculty. There, the students learned how to make up a household budget; to purchase, prepare, and serve wholesome, well-balanced, attractive dishes designed for family dining, or for dinner parties; and to take proper care of furniture, linens, and equipment.

Home economics presented many ironies that mirrored the conception of the Women's College. Cloaked with the aura of science and progress, it promised to bring women into the modern world, but it did so by reinforcing the age-old role of women as mothers and housewives. The dual aspects of home economics were demonstrated in the careers of the students who majored in that field. Some home-economics graduates of the Women's College did become dietitians, department-store clothing buyers, and home-economics teachers, but from the first, the majority applied their training by marrying and becoming full-time homemakers.

By far, the greatest number of Women's College students earned degrees in liberal-arts disciplines. Most of the faculty who taught in those areas were men whose primary appointments were in Delaware College. Faculty in English, history, and foreign languages were primarily Delaware College men, as were those in the social sciences, physics, and mathematics. As the Women's



*Former Delaware College President George A. Harter, teaching a mathematics class at the Women's College in 1914*

College grew, Dean Robinson concentrated on hiring faculty in a few disciplines to teach exclusively in the Women's College. In addition to home economics and education, those disciplines were physical education, art, music, biology, and chemistry. The selection of art and music is not surprising, for those creative arts had long been associated with women's alleged special affinity for culture and aesthetics. The choice of physical education, likewise, can be explained by the strict segregation of the sexes in college athletics during that period. The explanation of the dean's decision to employ separate faculty in biology and chemistry, however, is not so self-evident. Dean Robinson believed that there was no appreciable difference between instruction for men and women in fields like history, foreign languages, and English literature. Male faculty, used to teaching students of their own sex, could perform quite adequately as teachers at the Women's College in the humanities, she said, as long as they taught in a "vivid" manner that excited the interest of their

students.<sup>20</sup> Chemistry, however, she believed, should not be presented in the same way to men and women because it should be directed to their different careers. In a world in which careers for women were limited, male students might study chemistry in preparation for a variety of careers, whereas female students who studied chemistry were largely restricted to careers in food science. For that reason, the dean believed that the presentation of chemistry to women students should concentrate on the chemical composition of food, which, she believed, was of "much more practical value to women."<sup>21</sup>

In the early days of the college, the number of women faculty was quite small and turnover was rapid. Until the early 1920s, none of the Women's College faculty held the Ph.D. aside from the dean; many had only a bachelor's degree plus some prior experience as teachers. The pay scale was low, even for those times, and the requirement that all women faculty live in the dormitories, a benefit which the University valued at \$300, was doubtless a disincentive for most to remain more than a few years.

There was disparity of pay between men and women faculty. To cite but one example, in 1922, Delaware College hired a male instructor in English for a salary of \$1,800; that same year, a woman with similar credentials was hired to teach foreign languages at a salary of \$900 plus room and board, a benefit

*Women students play basketball in 1919. The Women's College had no space for indoor sports until the completion of the Women's Gymnasium in 1930.*



which carried with it unending interaction with students, including chaperoning responsibilities. Teaching loads were very heavy by recent standards. Typically, faculty taught four courses each term, although higher loads were not uncommon. In 1933, the clothing instructor was scheduled to teach twenty hours a week, while Amy Rextrew, in addition to her duties as head of home economics, taught twenty-three hours each week and also supervised two student-teachers.<sup>22</sup>

It was only in the college's second decade that a permanent core faculty was recruited to the Women's College. That small group of women became leaders of the various branches of the Women's College and made permanent marks on the development of the University. Outstanding among them were Amy Rextrew, whose work in home economics has already been noted;



*Harriet Baily, whose career at Delaware began in 1929, taught art in the Women's College and became the first chairperson of the Art Department under co-education in 1945.*

Harriet Baily in Art; Beatrice Hartshorn in Physical Education; Quaesita Drake in Chemistry; and Jeannette Graustein in Biology.

Harriet Baily, who joined the faculty in 1929, created the first art department at the University of Delaware. Art had not been taught at Delaware College, but under Miss Baily's guidance, it became a real presence on the University campus. Having much vision but little money, she organized annual art shows that brought students into contact with reproductions of major works of art. The students' talents were displayed in the fine posters that they designed to advertise exhibits, plays, and other special events on campus. Many art majors went on to careers as art teachers, where they continued their

own quest to teach Delawareans the value and meaning of art.

Beatrice Hartshorn came to Delaware in 1925 to take over a physical education program that had been constricted by the absence of a gymnasium and consisted primarily of the students doing indoor exercises with wands and dumbbells and playing a few out-of-doors games. By the 1920s, the value of physical education for women was no longer open to question, but disagreements were rife over the issue of women's participation in competitive sports. Miss Hartshorn took the view that women should participate in such team sports as hockey and basketball, but she



*Beatrice P. Hartshorn, director of women's physical education at Delaware from 1925 until 1962*

opposed intercollegiate athletics for women. The Hartshorn regime emphasized body-movement exercises, folk dancing, and the May Day rituals as more appropriate to women than the competitive athletics associated with the world of men. In addition to her influence on women's athletics and physical training, she sought the construction of a gymnasium; when the state legislature agreed to the venture, she helped design the structure that now bears her name.

During the 1920s and 1930s, career opportunities for women scientists were very restricted. Typically, the only industrial positions open to them were in ancillary roles as technical librarians or laboratory assistants. Research universities, likewise, shunned women professors in favor of men. In that restricted market, the Women's College was able to attract and retain several outstanding scientists. Quaesita Drake, a chemist who joined the faculty in the early 1920s, was the first Women's College faculty member, other than the dean, to hold the Ph.D. degree. Jeannette Graustein,

another Ph.D., joined the faculty in biology in 1930. Burdened with heavy teaching loads in beginning-level courses that they taught in overcrowded laboratories, neither woman had much opportunity to pursue research. Elizabeth Dyer, who joined Dr. Drake in chemistry in the 1930s after earning her Ph.D. at Yale, was able to establish a research program in a laboratory in the new Delaware College chemistry building, now named for its donor, H. Fletcher Brown, but that development came only very late in the history of the Women's College.

By 1934, when the Women's College had reached the end of its second decade, it had fulfilled the hopes of those who had



*The Women's College campus in 1930. The Mall, which separates the original college buildings at right from New Castle and Sussex Halls, seen in the distance, was planted in rows of honey locust trees—a species chosen by campus landscape architect Marian Coffin to contrast with the more masculine elm trees that were chosen for the Delaware College Mall. Miss Coffin, who was among America's premier landscape architects, was the pioneer professional woman in the field. In the early twentieth century, it was most unusual for an institution to employ a woman landscape architect. Miss Coffin owed her commission at Delaware to trustee and benefactor H. Rodney Sharp, who admired her work and employed her to plan the grounds at his own home.*

*The Women's Gymnasium, now named Hartshorn Hall, was built with state appropriations approved shortly before the onset of the Depression. Completed in 1930, it contained a swimming pool, locker room, and classrooms, as well as a gymnasium.*

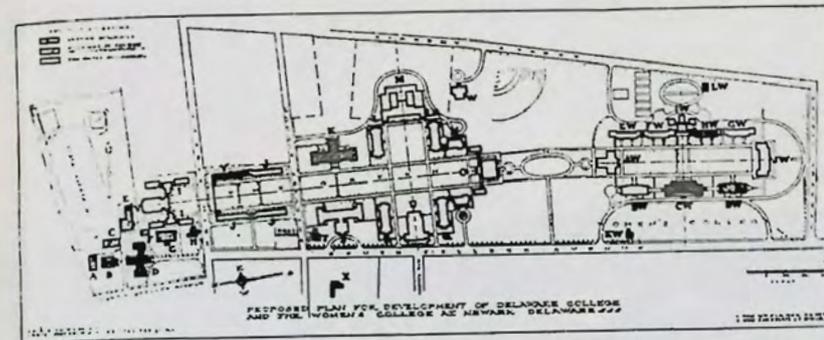


celebrated its beginning. The student body had grown from 133 in 1919-20 to about 300 a decade later. Typically, the Women's College enrolled about two-thirds of the number of men enrolled in Delaware College. In 1934-35, during the depths of the Depression, there were 281 students in the Women's College, 110 of whom were from Wilmington, sixty-six from rural New Castle County, twenty-two from Kent County, twenty-five from Sussex County, and fifty-eight from out of state. In that year, 185 students were studying for degrees in Arts and Science, fifty-four in home economics, and forty-two in education. Since its opening, the college had added several buildings: Sussex Residence Hall in 1916, Kent Dining Hall and New Castle Residence Hall in 1926, and the Gymnasium in 1930. In addition, the college maintained three "temporary" dormitory buildings, called by the whimsical names Topsy, Turvy, and Boletus, which had been constructed in the early 1920s to accommodate the increased student body. In 1934, approximately fifty percent of the student body were commuters, a statistic explained, in part, by the hard times and the lack of dormitory space.<sup>23</sup> In 1933, Amy Rextrew undertook a survey of the students' accounts to ascertain the true cost of attending the college. She learned that the average in-state commuter paid about \$370 a year in personal costs and college fees, whereas an in-state student in residence paid about \$686.<sup>24</sup>

Students could earn some of the money necessary for on-campus residency by waiting tables in Kent Dining Hall or by undertaking other part-time jobs on campus.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the college was stretched to the extreme limits of its resources in buildings and faculty, but it was a lively place that offered sound instruction and a wide array of extracurricular opportunities for choral singing, acting in plays, meeting the leading women of the day, attending dances, playing indoor and outdoor sports, swimming, and seeing art exhibitions. The college had a homey feeling about it. Students and faculty interacted constantly, not only in the classroom but also in the dining hall and the residence halls. Classes were kept small, and no student felt lost. Dean Robinson could honestly boast that the curriculum had been carefully designed to provide "courses distinctly for women" that would prepare them for "their probable life work."<sup>25</sup>

From the distance of nearly six decades, it is tempting to condemn the dean for deliberately limiting Women's College students to opportunities in a few, generally ill-paid "women's" professions. While it is true that Dean Robinson remained an exemplar of the Progressive Era long after the ideals of that time had faded from the American consciousness, it is also important to note that her assessment of women's career opportunities was not off the mark. In 1930, for example, when the University of Delaware was seeking a librarian to take charge of the Memorial Library, one of those under consideration was Dorothy Hawkins. Miss Hawkins had previous experience at Delaware College, where she had successfully served as the college's first professional librarian from 1921 until 1927. She had left Delaware to pursue increasingly responsible positions in libraries at other colleges. Dorothy Hawkins wrote to President Hullihen of her interest in returning to Delaware. He replied: "I am sorry that I am unable to say anything definite about the position but I really have no idea at all whether the Library Committee and the Committee on Instruction will feel that it is necessary to have a man in this position or whether they will feel that a woman would be just as acceptable."<sup>26</sup> The committee chose a man.



Proposed Group Plan for Development of Delaware College and The Women's College of Delaware

DELAWARE COLLEGE				WOMEN'S COLLEGE	
A. Old Heating Plant	J-J.J. Dormitories	R. Social Science	A-W. Y. W. C. A.	H-W. Bussex Hall	
B. Greenhouses	K. Wolf Hall—Agriculture	S. Liberal Arts	B-W. College Hall	I-W. Common and Social Hall	
C. Gymnasium	L. Physics	T. Infirmary	C-W. Science Hall	D-W. Residence Hall	J-W. Unassigned
D. Old College	LA. Recitation Building	U. Auditorium	E-W. } Dormitories	K-W. Practice Home	
E. Mechanical Hall	M. Engineering Building	V. Proposed Gymnasium	F-W. }	L-W. Old Heating Plant	
F. Board of Health Laboratory	N. Unassigned	W. New Power Plant	G-W. }		
G. Recitation Hall	O. Library	X. President's Home			
H. Purnell House	P. Administration Building	Y. Harter Hall			
I-I. Fraternity House Group	Q. English				

*This plan was designed in 1920. Completed buildings are darkened, proposed buildings, including a structure on the location of the soon-to-be-built Memorial Hall facing the area labeled "the Green," are in outline. Note that, in addition to the three existing buildings of the Women's College, several new buildings were projected, of which those labeled EW, FW, IW, and GW were eventually built as residence halls and the Kent Dining Hall. The plan called for each college to develop enclosed campuses, joined only by the Mall's connecting lines. BW, a projected additional classroom building, was never built, nor was AW, the projected Y.W.C.A./Student Center. Had the latter been built on the proposed location, it would have cut off the visual line along the Mall that links the former men's and women's campuses.*



*Students at work in the Women's College chemistry laboratory in 1934*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Merger*



ON A BEAUTIFUL MAY afternoon in 1935, the Delaware Federation of Women's Clubs dedicated a rose garden at the Women's College to Dean Winifred Robinson, whom they praised for her "wise guidance and gentle leadership."<sup>1</sup> The gesture was timely, because Winifred Robinson, at the age of sixty-seven, was fast approaching retirement. Only three years later, a Wilmington newspaper headline proclaimed, "Delaware's Foremost Woman to Retire." The small-town girl from Michigan who had struggled so conscientiously to acquire an education and had abandoned a promising career as a botanist to found a college for women in the First State was praised as a gentlewoman of courage and fortitude "whose life is a monument of service for others."<sup>2</sup> In retirement, the dean planned to leave Delaware. She continued to follow her established pattern of spending her summers in rural Vermont, but she substituted Florida for Delaware in the winters.

On the surface, Dean Robinson's life and work appeared as triumphant as the newspaper coverage suggested, but behind the celebratory façade, she had reason to fear for the future of the college. Her concerns were well-known within the University of Delaware. At a dinner held in Kent Dining Hall in April 1938 to honor her, Dean Robinson reflected on the development and present situation of the institution she had shaped. After making



*Dean Winifred J. Robinson at her desk, shortly before her retirement in 1938*

the obligatory reminiscences about the early years of struggle to establish the college, she noted that the future of women's higher education was not secure. The young women of the First World War era had viewed college work as preparation for the careers they saw awaiting them, but since that time, the national mood had shifted away from accepting the concept of careers for women. Since 1926, the number of American women seeking graduate training had steadily decreased, while established women scholars increasingly complained of their low pay and low status in American univer-

sities.<sup>3</sup> The Women's College, she said, was a bulwark set against those forces that would marginalize women scholars, deny women equal access to education, and keep women from pursuing careers. But the ideals that Dean Robinson embodied were no longer in fashion and, with her passing, those ideals lost their best champion in Delaware.

Seven years later, in 1945, when the Women's College officially merged with Delaware College, the creation of a co-educational University of Delaware had the appearance of inevitability. The shift from coordinate education to co-education seemed not unlike the gently rising ocean tide, which by 1926, had so undermined the foundation of another Delaware landmark, the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse, that the building suddenly collapsed into the sea. The comparison is instructive. As a physical reality, the lighthouse entirely disappeared, though to this day it lives on in hundreds of paintings, clay sculptures, and relics. In fact, the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse remains one of Delaware's best-known symbols. In

contrast, nearly all of the Women's College buildings are still standing and remain vital parts of the modern University of Delaware. Science Hall and Residence Hall are now aptly named in honor of Winifred Robinson and Emalea Warner, respectively. The women's gymnasium, named for Beatrice Hartshorn, is now home to the University's Professional Theatre Training Program. But, hardly any of the thousands of students and hundreds of faculty who pass by or through the former women's campus are aware that it was once a place set apart. Few today even know there was a Women's College, so far has it receded from collective memory.

It would be too easy to attribute the merger to the retirement of Dean Robinson or, alternatively, to the impact of the Second World War. The dean had been an implacable foe of joining the two schools and the special circumstances of wartime served as a catalyst



*In the 1930s, the Women's College remained a separate and distinct part of the University of Delaware.*

to co-education. However, neither event was, in itself, responsible. The seeds of the merger must be sought elsewhere.

President Walter HULLIHEN had never been convinced of the value of the coordinate model. In 1928, responding to a query about co-education, he described Delaware's coordinate plan as "old-fashioned" in its insistence on different courses and regulations for men and women students. He believed that coordinate education was neither cost-effective nor good pedagogy. "Our regulations," he wrote, "forbid [men and women] being combined in a single class. This seems to me an indefensible increase in our overhead costs and is prejudicial to good teaching."<sup>4</sup> Throughout his long presidency, which lasted from 1920 until his death in 1944, HULLIHEN pressed for a unification of Delaware College and the Women's College. Nearly all of the major buildings constructed during his administration were designed to bring men and women students together, not to set them apart. The Memorial Library, built in 1924, combined the libraries of the two colleges in one building located in the middle of the Mall, halfway between the two campuses. In the years that followed, HULLIHEN clustered other new buildings in close proximity to Memorial Hall, thus creating a new campus, symbolically located halfway between the original Delaware College and the Women's College.

With each succeeding construction of a University building, the president pre-empted Dean Robinson's efforts to maintain the separation of the sexes. *In vain, the dean sought for state funds to build a student union building and a new classroom-laboratory for the Women's College.* In 1929, she almost succeeded in the latter quest when the University Board of Trustees voted its support for a classroom-laboratory to take pressure off overcrowded Science Hall. The request went before the state legislature just as the effects of the stock market crash were wreaking havoc with the economy, so, in spite of subsequent annual appeals by the dean, the state never funded the building.

In the 1930s, while building projects at the Women's College languished for want of support, Delaware College and the University as a whole found a new champion in H. Fletcher

Brown, a DuPont Company executive who dedicated his fortune to the education of the common man and the advancement of science. In 1935, Brown announced his intention to provide a modern building for chemistry and chemical engineering for the University. With his gift, the University built a large, handsome structure facing the Mall on the Delaware College side of Memorial Library. In 1937, Brown offered to build a structure identical to the chemical laboratory, to be located on the opposite side of the Mall. This building was to house the Delaware College humanities departments, humanities classrooms, graduate education, and the University administration.

More than any previous building project, the construction of this humanities-graduate education-administration building, which was at first called University Hall, foreshadowed the dissolution of coordinate education at Delaware. Dean Robinson and the Women's College faculty saw the building project as a deliberate attempt to encourage co-educational classes and to redirect the University away from basic undergraduate education and toward advanced scholarship. The dean explained her opposition to the construction project in a letter to a member of the Georgetown, Delaware, school board. Declaring that "buildings are tools," she argued that the proposed building was designed to promote scholarship in various academic disciplines aimed at the best students of both sexes, in place of the Women's College's concept of integrating many disciplines in order to prepare female students for "their probable life work."<sup>5</sup>

University Hall provided a concrete symbol for a debate that absorbed the faculties of the Women's College and Delaware College throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s. Fundamentally, the question was whether the University should be reorganized around disciplines rather than remain divided into two, gender-specific units. As early as 1932, the faculty of Delaware College had taken a stand in favor of a discipline-based organization that would reduce the repetition of courses and promote research scholarship. Those Delaware College faculty who taught classes in the Women's College could not develop advanced courses, much less find time

for research, so long as they were required to teach an endless round of the same beginning-level courses in both institutions.

The Women's College faculty argued for retaining the status quo. Some of them, particularly the younger women, recognized the limitations and redundancies inherent in the dual college system, but they had reason to fear for their careers should they come under the control of their male colleagues. The women faculty argued against academic reorganization. Noting that "co-education does not bring out the best efforts of the woman student," they observed that "in a mixed group, the men express themselves, the women are passive." The women faculty also declared that co-education would deprive women students of opportunities for leadership in extracurricular activities and that co-educational classes would be directed toward the needs of male students at the expense of the needs of female students. With respect to their own situation, the women faculty cited studies done in co-educational universities to show that once men and women faculty were integrated, the women faculty were stuck in the lowest ranks.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of these protests from the Women's College, President Hullihen and the faculty of Delaware College pressed on toward co-education. The composition of the University's Board of Trustees had changed since the time when the board had accepted responsibility for women students only on condition that they be educated separately. The board was no longer controlled by small-town men with parochial views, but was in the hands of more cosmopolitan men who had big-business connections and whose goals for the University embraced scientific research and graduate study. Co-education was not threatening to them. Uniting the two, sex-segregated colleges would reduce costs and would free faculty to direct more time toward research and the teaching of more advanced courses. The construction of University Hall went forward with the board's approval, and the building was completed in 1940. It is particularly appropriate that University Hall was renamed Hullihen Hall in 1944, shortly after the death of the president who had been its chief promoter.

In 1938, in the midst of uncertainty over the future of coordinate education at Delaware, the University undertook a search for a new dean of the Women's College. The successful candidate was Marjory Steuart Golder, widow of an English professor at American University in Washington, D.C., and mother of two young children. Mrs. Golder's life course had been very different from that of her predecessor, and her selection, over a host of other candidates, signaled a new direction for the college and a new type of role model for its students. Marjory Golder was the daughter



*Marjory Steuart Golder, dean of the Women's College, 1938-1945*

of a well-connected Washington lawyer. She was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Northwestern University, held a Master of Arts from Columbia University, and had taught English in high school in El Paso, Texas. She had postponed completion of a Ph.D. at Radcliffe College to marry and rear a family. Just before coming to Delaware, she had served as the registrar and assistant to the dean at American University. She had not had to struggle for the opportunity to attend college, and she had set aside the life of scholarship to marry, only to be led back into a career by the death of her husband. A refined and gracious woman, Dean Golder supported the retention of the Women's College, but she was unable to hold back change.

It was indicative of the new atmosphere that, in the same year in which Mrs. Golder came to Delaware, the University offered its first co-educational courses during a regular session. At first, co-education extended to only a few upper-level courses, but within two years, most advanced courses had become co-educational. By 1940, women students regularly attended humanities classes with men in University Hall; and Women's College chemistry faculty



*Quaesita Drake, seated in front, with her colleagues in chemistry and physics: Elizabeth Dyer, Evelyn E. Talley, Edith A. McDougle, and J. Fenton Daugherty*

members—Quaesita Drake and Elizabeth Dyer—were teaching some of their courses in the previously all-male chemistry building, now named Brown Laboratory.

As the academic rationale for coordinate education was dissolving at Delaware, support for continuing the separate social life of the women's campus was also collapsing. The first major challenge to Dean Robinson's elaborate system of controls had come in 1931, when women students protested against the ban on smoking. Initially, the students dared not suggest that smoking be permitted on the Women's College campus, but they did seek the right to smoke elsewhere in Newark. They also sought the right to accept rides in cars within the town without securing permission from the student governing board.<sup>7</sup> Denial of the freedom to smoke became a major source of irritation for both students and faculty at the college. During the 1920s and 1930s, smoking cigarettes symbolized female liberation from the strictures of Victorian morality. It was for that very reason that Dean Robinson upheld the smoking ban so vigorously. Faculty members resented the need to drive across the state line to Maryland to escape the dean's authority in order to smoke a cigarette. Nothing showed the degree to which Dean Robinson had become out of touch with the times so much as her refusal to seek accommodation on this issue. Toward the end of her

tenure, she reluctantly agreed to permit students to smoke in the college commons room, but she succumbed to this compromise only because of her embarrassment at the sight of students smoking on the streets of Newark. Faculty were never permitted to smoke anywhere in Newark during her regime.<sup>8</sup>

While there was no organized protest, younger faculty at the college complained of the smoking ban and of other restrictions. They resented the demand that they live in the noisy, "gold fish bowl" environment of the dormitories, take all of their meals in the company of students, and spend their weekends as chaperones at student parties, dances, and sporting events.<sup>9</sup> Faculty chaperones deliberately turned blind eyes to the students' dating behavior. Some women faculty even laughed privately at the seriousness with which the college indulged in the pomp of May Day celebrations. A more sophisticated generation found those elaborate extravaganzas farcical.

Changing attitudes toward the overly protective nature of higher education for women affected colleges throughout the United



*The May Queen and her court in 1937*

States in the 1920s and 1930s. Not surprisingly, Delaware absorbed the new ideas much later than did larger, trend-setting colleges and universities. In many women's colleges, female faculty had achieved the right to live off campus, or at least to live in non-dormitory, private residences, as early as the 1890s.<sup>10</sup> M. Carey Thomas, the redoubtable president of Bryn Mawr, insisted on providing women faculty with residential privacy as a means to encourage their research. The First World War and the post-war period ushered in a revolution in moral standards that especially affected the young, while, at the same time, the decline of the Progressive Movement called into question the value of careers for women. Students at women's colleges turned away from the intense, all-female activities and from the social service spirit that their colleges had fostered in the pre-war years toward the greater excitements of dating, drinking, dancing, and driving in fast cars. The right to smoke fit squarely into that changing scene.

Such developments were muted at the Women's College in Delaware, but they were nonetheless present. It was as if the ground were shifting beneath the feet of the older generation of women scholars who had renounced marriage in favor of the chance to have a career. Helen L. Horowitz reports in her study of the Seven Sister colleges, entitled *Alma Mater*, that "women faculty and administrators felt betrayed. Only a few years earlier, they had been objects of student admiration;" now they seemed like leftovers from the Victorian era.<sup>11</sup> Patricia Albjerg Graham, another scholar who has studied those years of transition in women's education, has noted that opportunities for women in higher education were greatest in the years from 1875 to 1925, when colleges and universities concentrated on providing undergraduate education in the liberal arts. After the mid-1920s, as universities became ever more preoccupied with research and graduate study, opportunities for women scholars declined. During the forty years that followed the end of World War I, the cultural model for American women became one of "domesticity" and "acquiescence," not unlike the mid-nineteenth-century ideals of womanhood that women of Winifred Robinson's generation had fought so hard to overcome.<sup>12</sup>



*Katheryne and Dorothy Levis, graduates of the Women's College of the University of North Carolina, became the University of Delaware's first women graduate students in chemistry when they joined a research program in plastics in 1944. The University was willing to support women graduate students in science because of the war emergency.*

World War II introduced powerful changes at the University of Delaware. Many male students were inducted into the armed forces, and military training programs took over University facilities. Work for an undergraduate degree was crowded into three years, instead of four, and new career paths were temporarily offered to women so that they might qualify to replace men in the war emergency. For the first time, the University of Delaware opened to women the opportunity to pursue degrees in engineering, but only a tiny number of women chose that male-dominated field. The pre-war pattern of athletic contests, dances, and other features of campus social life was also disrupted. Women students were pushed to complete their studies rapidly and were strongly encouraged to apply their training to the nation's all-absorbing goal of achieving victory.<sup>13</sup>

The war also acted as a catalyst for more fundamental changes at the University of Delaware. "The war years," says University historian John A. Munroe, "were a major watershed between the small, slowly evolving institution of times past and the rapidly expanding co-educational state university of the near future."<sup>14</sup> President Walter Hullahen died in the early spring of 1944. His successor as acting president was Wilbur O. Sypher, a graduate of Delaware College who had been a member of its English faculty for nearly four decades

and chairman of the department. Although his presidency was brief, Sypherd moved vigorously and emphatically to press for changes that he believed were long overdue. Most significantly, Sypherd urged the Board of Trustees to study faculty salaries. The result of the board's study of this seemingly unrelated topic led directly to the introduction of co-education at Delaware.

The committee of the board charged with considering the compensation of faculty perceived the need for urgent action to ensure that "men of adequate stature" could be hired and kept at the post-war university. To achieve that goal, the committee looked to save money elsewhere, by consolidating the faculties of Delaware College and the Women's College into disciplinary-based units of agriculture, arts and science, education, and engineering. Under the proposed plan, the position of dean of the Women's College would be replaced by a dean of women responsible for the welfare of female students. As acting president, Sypherd explained this new position: "The dean of women would be the first person to greet incoming students; she would have jurisdiction over the housing of students; she would serve as a personal counsellor; she would exercise an advisory control over all student enterprises..."<sup>15</sup> Also envisioned was a dean of men, who would have parallel responsibilities and would additionally serve as University registrar.

When the committee's proposal was made public in the summer of 1944, many people wrote to President Sypherd to give their opinions. For the most part, the men and women faculty members presented the same arguments they had applied earlier to the issues surrounding the construction of University Hall. The faculty of Delaware College applauded the board's plan because it would unite all arts and science faculty into one unit, eliminate the redundancy of teaching the same material to men and women students separately, and organize the University around academic programs rather than gender. Most faculty members at the Women's College argued against the plan because they believed that women needed special conditions in which to learn. Quaesita Drake of chemistry remarked that the reorganization involved abandoning a successful program in the education of women that had integrated knowledge, rather than compartmen-

talizing it, as the new organization would do.<sup>16</sup> Amy Rextrew of home economics commented that the plan held no advantages for women, who "in general...are not careerists. They are homemakers by tradition, preference, and biology."<sup>17</sup> Women must be educated to play a "dual role," she said, as short-term careerists and long-term homemakers. Jeannette Graustein of biology commented that the entering freshmen at the Women's College were "very young, mentally immature, and inexperienced." The college provided "the most favorable conditions in the classroom to break down the mental sluggishness and lack of self-confidence and initiative which so many of them display. The presence of masculine aggressiveness and self-assertion," she feared, would reduce "our chances of success."<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the most thoughtful response came from a man, H. Clay Reed of the Department of History. In contrast to Professor Graustein's concerns about the fragility of women students, Reed observed that the Women's College had always maintained higher standards for admission and retention than those of Delaware College. Professor Reed feared the leveling effect of combining the two institutions. He favored mixed classes but observed that "the civilized world is still a man's world" and that "many men still look upon women as inferior, whereas they are merely different." The effects of that prejudice were already evident at the University of Delaware, he noted, where women faculty were clustered in the lower ranks. Only two of the University's twenty-four full professors were women—Quaesita Drake and Amy



*Amy Rextrew, who joined the Women's College faculty in 1927, became the first dean of the School of Home Economics under the co-educational plan inaugurated in 1945. She later served as dean of women from 1948 through 1952.*

Rextrew. Reed believed the administration could address that problem by hiring women to serve as deans of some of the proposed academic colleges, including the College of Arts and Science, and by recruiting women scholars who would qualify for the rank of full professor.<sup>19</sup> Acting President Sypherd and the board made a very modest effort in that direction when they decided to retain at least one woman in a role of academic leadership, naming Amy Rextrew to head the new Division of Home Economics.

On September 16, 1944, the Board of Trustees accepted the reorganization plan. Dean Marjory Golder complied with the University's request to resign her position, effective July 2, 1945, the date when the Women's College ceased to exist. For the first time, women students faced no formal barriers to entering any academic program offered by the University or to participate in almost any University extracurricular activity. The newly hired dean of women, a twenty-six-year-old economist named Gwendolyn S. Crawford, was expected to provide whatever counseling and moral support women students might require to face the more competitive and less intimate academic environment of a co-educational university. In the women's residence halls, there was to be little change. Familiar rules were still in effect there that governed late-night and uptown privileges, sign-outs, dressing for dinner, and ten o'clock lockup on weeknights.

One mark of change that pre-dated the dissolution of the Women's College by a few years was the relaxation of the rule that had required women faculty to live in college housing. For several years following the war, some faculty women voluntarily remained as heads of residence halls, but they were slowly replaced as hall directors by housemothers—generally, widows who served under the jurisdiction of the dean of women. The University sought to employ “women of charm, common sense and character”<sup>20</sup> in that role, but housemothers could not command the same respect nor enter into the academic world of their charges as the faculty residence directors had done. The previous practice, whereby women faculty had taken their meals with students, also fell into abeyance, and student meetings with faculty of either sex now took place only within the academic environment or at occasional, formal tea parties in the residence halls. The constant

exposure of students to mature, intellectually alert, lady-like women that underlay the old system was replaced by an environment in which women students were only expected to adopt “tea party manners” on rare occasions that bore little relation to their everyday lives. The friendly mentoring, the sense of community, and the ties that bound social life to academic life that had marked the Women's College disappeared, leaving the students free to construct their own social world.

The end of the war, the return of male students, and the resumption of a more regular academic and social life were far more significant for the women students than was the dissolution of the Women's College. The women faculty felt the effects of the merger more keenly. Some faculty viewed it as a release from the stifling environment of the Women's College. Elizabeth Dyer, then an assistant professor of chemistry, relished new opportunities for research. But, the effects on others—for example, Professor Dyer's senior colleague, Quaesita Drake—were less positive. The merger coincided with the retirement of the ranking chemistry professor at Delaware College, and, as the senior professor in her field, Professor Drake was temporarily elevated to the role of department chairman. But, under the new co-educational order, it was not considered seemly for a woman to head such an important department, and she was replaced by a man as soon as one could be found. That experience illustrated most emphatically that women could expect few opportunities for academic leadership in the co-educational University, outside the female field of home economics. Only one woman, Harriet Baily of the Department of Art, was appointed to chair a unit in arts and science, but only because Delaware College had had no art faculty and, thus, there was no male competition for the post.

Co-education did much more than destroy the gender division within the University; it put women into a predominantly male world, and it emphasized scholarship over teaching and nurturing. Reflecting on the long-term effects of the consolidation from the distance of many years, veteran English Professor Anna J. DeArmond put the merger into perspective when she concluded: “It was a serious loss in some ways, but inevitable, and the right thing to do.”<sup>21</sup>



*Students share a room in Warner Hall in 1950.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Co-education*



IT WAS SYMPTOMATIC of the times that the University of Delaware Student Association's first major post-war initiative was a highly successful lecture series on the topic of marriage. The series, held in Mitchell Hall in the spring of 1946, featured physicians, sociologists, and psychologists who addressed such themes as "Problems of Dating and Courtship" and "Personality Adjustments in Marriage." Fueled by release from wartime demands and supported by molders of popular culture and merchandisers, marriage seemed to be on everyone's mind. In 1946, the marriage rate among Americans reached an all-time high, soon followed by that now-famous demographic phenomenon, the Baby Boom. Fears that women would resist being displaced from their wartime jobs and that the returning veterans would be unable to find work influenced much public discourse in the immediate post-war period. Psychologists and magazine journalists promoted the belief that marriage provided an exclusive and all-embracing route to female self-fulfillment, and they warned that those women who insisted on pursuing careers, whether married or single, were doomed to neurosis, frustration, and a loss of femininity.

The issue of a perceived conflict between marriage and career was one with which college women of the 1940s have contended throughout their lives. Among the cohort of women who attended

the University of Delaware in the late 1940s, a few planned to pursue jobs, but only for a brief period, and most gave up outside work when they married, or when their first child was born. The University's director of career planning reported his frustrations in dealing with the "girls" in the 1946 graduating class. Many of them, he said, had applied for assistance in finding jobs, but as graduation day approached, they got engaged and withdrew their requests. Employers were having so much trouble retaining women employees, the director said, "that they are not very enthusiastic about employing girls who expect to marry soon."<sup>1</sup>

The director's experience was part of a nationwide phenomenon. The job editor of *Glamour* magazine contacted the University of Delaware's dean of women, Gwendolyn S. Crawford, in February 1946 to inquire about the aspirations of the University's women. *Glamour's* survey of a number of colleges and universities, including Delaware, revealed that, throughout America, women graduating from college were either marrying and becoming full-time homemakers, or postponing marriage briefly to seek short-term, dead-end jobs until they could find the right mate.<sup>2</sup> Finding a husband was no great problem for the women students at the University of Delaware, for they were suddenly surrounded by a host of veterans who attended the University tuition-free under the G.I. Bill of Rights. More mature than the typical male students of that time, the veterans were eager to acquire an education and to get on with their lives as quickly as possible. The "Joe College" lifestyle held no charm for them, but marriage was in the plans of nearly all of them. "We drew pretty mental pictures of good jobs and a cozy home with a sweet, little girl in gingham waiting at the white picket gate," a veteran student told *The Blue Hen* yearbook editor.<sup>3</sup>

Co-education did not change the pattern of women's academic pursuits. After the anxieties and loneliness of the war years, most college women across the country seized upon the opportunity to play the role of the girl in gingham. In the post-war years, the declining proportion of women entering the professions, which had first been observed in the 1920s, fell yet again. "Women workers,"

historian William Chafe has written, "sought jobs, not careers—an extra paycheck for the family rather than a reputation as a success in business or the professions."<sup>4</sup> The intense anti-communism of the times reinforced the concept that linked the stay-at-home mother to American ideals and discouraged as "socialist" the idea of working mothers and day-care centers.<sup>5</sup>

The prevailing attitudes raised doubts about the utility of college education for women. Lynn White, Jr., president of Mills College, an all-female institution in California, attracted widespread support for his view that the entire collegiate curriculum should be restructured to meet women's essentially non-professional educational needs and to glorify women's roles as homemakers.<sup>6</sup> Those concepts and social forces were powerfully felt at the University of Delaware. After years of urging the University's home economics majors to undertake careers as dietitians, nursery-school teachers, or department-store buyers, the University's home economists now proudly advertised the fact that ninety percent of their students married shortly after graduation and focused their college training on their individual homes and families. *The Blue Hen* yearbook noted this fact and commented that "homemaking can be the most satisfying and challenging of the professions."<sup>7</sup>

Since few women students planned to undertake long-term careers, vocational aspirations played a smaller role in the women's choice of majors than was true for most male students. Yet, although most women students believed themselves to have the luxury of selecting a major on the basis of interest alone, their choices were narrowly defined. At the University of Delaware, as elsewhere, both utility and intellectual interest led women into the same disciplines that had been available to them in the Women's College. Occasionally, interest might lead a woman student into an all-male field, such as engineering, but sex stereotyping was so pervasive a part of the business world that women knew they could not compete successfully in male-oriented vocations. The first woman to major in engineering at the University of Delaware, Frances Cummings, a chemical engineering major in the class of 1946, later regretted that she had not chosen to study



*John A. Perkins, president of the University of Delaware, 1950-1967, greets a freshman coed in September, 1953.*

home economics. It was not that the University's engineers were unkind to her, but she felt she did not belong in the discipline and did not develop sufficient confidence to use her professional training after graduation.<sup>8</sup>

At Delaware, the post-war era was shaped by a particularly strong-willed University president. After a succession of brief presidencies following on the death of Walter Hullihen in 1944, the University, in 1950, hired a new president who was destined to shape significantly the development of the University of Delaware during the expansive decades of the 1950s and 1960s. John Alanson Perkins was only thirty-six years old when he came to Delaware from the University of Michigan, where he had earned a Ph.D. in political science and had begun a career that combined university administration with public service. From his arrival in 1950 until his resignation in 1967, Perkins was a conspicuously dominant force at the University. Hard-driving and autocratic, he exercised personal control over every aspect of the University's life, particularly in the area of faculty development. John Munroe, a most even-handed historian who knew Perkins well, described him in his history of the University as "a vigorous, strong young man with tremendous willpower and with a temper he could not always restrain. Very ambitious

for the University," Munroe added, "he was determined to raise its standing in the academic world."<sup>9</sup>

The Perkins era was one of dramatic growth. The 1950s and 1960s were years of population explosion throughout the United States, and particularly in Delaware, which became one of the nation's fastest-growing states. During the decade of the 1950s alone, the number of people in Delaware grew by forty percent, and the greater part of this increase was among middle-class children destined to attend college. Perkins' presidency corresponded with an increase in total student enrollment, from 1,722 in 1950 to 9,567 in 1967-68. Graduate studies, which accounted for a mere handful of students and programs in 1950, enrolled over 2,000 students during his final year as president. The unprecedented growth in student numbers was matched by an increase in the size of faculty, from 204 to 380, and by a great expansion of the University's physical plant. The president attracted several large additions to the University's endowment and ably represented the University's interests in the state legislature and with state officials.

He was less successful, however, in his dealings with faculty and students. His relationship with women as students, faculty, and administrators was particularly troublesome and frustrating for both sides. In part, those difficulties were a reflection of the times, but in some measure, they grew out of Perkins' own personality and his concept of what constituted progress at the University. Professor DeArmond, who began her career at the Women's College and was one of the University's distinguished teachers, has described Perkins as "ferociously anti-feminist" and "contemptuous of all those women left over from the Women's College."<sup>10</sup> Her perception of the president was shared by many women faculty who watched as the University hired scores of male faculty annually, while virtually no female faculty members were added, except occasionally in a women's field like home economics. As faculty from the Women's College retired from their positions, women faculty members declined in absolute numbers. The women who remained resentfully complained that their salaries were kept low and their promotions were slow to come, compared to those of no-better-

qualified male colleagues. Among those who experienced discriminatory treatment was Professor Evelyn H. Clift, an inspiring teacher, who for many years taught a full load of courses in both classical languages and history, but was denied extra pay or promotion to the rank of full professor until very late in her career. Those few women who were hired to teach at the University were often on part-time contracts or non-tenure lines, and, since President Perkins forbade the practice of hiring more than one member of a family, faculty wives were excluded from employment at the University.

To some degree, the president's unfavorable attitude toward women faculty harkened back to the debate in the 1930s and early 1940s over retention of the Women's College and its separate faculty. All the arguments made by Dean Robinson, the principal champion of the coordinate model, had stressed a commitment to teaching over research. Since John Perkins wished to reverse that emphasis, he had little appreciation for the qualities of teaching that had won women places on the Women's College faculty. That so many women faculty came to feel that the president had contempt for their contributions to the University was, however, also a response to the ungracious, grudging, and intimidating manner that Perkins employed in dealing with all faculty. Faculty women, reared in the lady-like politeness and civility of the early twentieth century, particularly resented the president's graceless behavior, and were ill-equipped to counter it.

Co-education brought virtually no change in the discipline that governed the residential life of women students. Even by the standards of its time, the Perkins administration was unusually conservative, indeed repressive, in its approach to student discipline. The president firmly subscribed to the concept of *in loco parentis* and did not hesitate to limit student behavior and expression to conform to his notion of an orderly campus. Regulations that restricted the lives of women students far more than those of men remained in effect. Lady-like decorum concerning dress, deportment, and personal security were at the heart of a system that had changed little since the days of the

Women's College. Student problems were routinely solved by creating and enforcing new rules. For example, when someone complained that women students were leaning out the windows of their residence halls to talk to people on the sidewalk, a rule was enacted forbidding the women to speak to anyone through the windows. When Newark residents complained about congestion from student-driven cars, a rule was put into force to prevent non-commuting students from driving cars either on campus or in the town. The automobile rule extended even to students home for the weekend who might wish to drive their parents' cars into Newark to shop on a Saturday afternoon. Failure to comply with University rules could lead to severe penalties, including expulsion.

The person charged with maintaining order among the students was John E. Hocutt, whom President Perkins hired in 1952 to fill the newly created position of dean of students. Dean Hocutt's arrival on campus coincided with a vacancy in the post of dean of women, a position now essentially that of a subordinate. Hocutt chose Bessie B. Collins, formerly an assistant dean of women at the University of Pennsylvania, to fill the newly defined post.

Dean Collins exemplified the Perkins administration's attitudes toward women. Mannerly, earnest, and kind, she was concerned for the welfare of women students academically, socially, and professionally, and she earned the affection and respect of a generation of women students. She was, however, unsure of her abilities, which made her willing to accept the orders and priorities set by her two male superiors as well as their patronizing attitude toward



*Bessie B. Collins, dean of women, 1952-1970*

her. Miss Collins' subordinate position as dean of women was in sharp contrast to the role that Deans Robinson and Golder had once held as head of one of the University's two colleges. The period of Miss Collins' deanship marked the nadir of women's influence within the University's administration, not because she lacked zeal, but because the concepts of women's autonomy and educational purpose were so weak.

The primary domain of the dean of women was south campus, where the women were located in the residence halls that had once been part of the Women's College. The atmosphere of regimented order so dear to President Perkins' heart was nowhere achieved more effortlessly or completely than on the south campus during the decade of the 1950s and into the early years of the 1960s. Many of the rules that governed student behavior had precedents in the Women's College of a quarter century before. Students going out for the evening were required to record their destination and time of return in a sign-out book, and on weeknights, the big, colonial-style front doors of the residence halls were locked shut at ten o'clock. Rules regulated the apparel that women students wore to class, in the dining halls, and on the streets of Newark. Late-night privileges on weekends were doled out and monitored by watchful housemothers. Those rules and regulations were administered by students elected from each residence hall to serve on a judicial board under Dean Collins' supervision.

Together with the restrictions that ruled their lives, the University's women students inherited a number of traditions from the Women's College, to which new traditions were added, in an effort to maintain an intimate, cohesive community spirit. For instance, May Day continued to be celebrated with the annual crowning of the queen, the May Pole Dance, and gymnastic demonstrations, until a combination of declining student interest and the retirement of the program's creator, Professor Hartshorn, ended the yearly ritual in 1962. Moving Up Day also was perpetuated, although without the academic regalia of Dean Robinson's time. A big event for sophomores was the arrival of their class blazers, ordered in either blue or white wool which carried a



*The May Queen and her court make one of their final appearances in the late 1950s.*

distinctive class seal with a University of Delaware motif on the breast pocket. Those blazers, worn with a blouse and skirt, constituted the most common garb among women students. Another tradition that continued was the Big Sister-Little Sister relationship, in which junior women, recruited by the dean of women, served as big sisters to freshmen.

Residence halls were at the center of many traditions. The students in each residence hall invited faculty and parents to formal teas, where each hall's formal tea service was put to use. In the fall, the students in each residence hall marched en masse to evening pepfests held on the steps of Old College the night before every football game. Also during the football season, residence halls were the focal points for weekly, outdoor decoration displays, usually featuring a large Blue Hen, made from chicken wire, stuffed with colored crepe paper, devouring or otherwise destroying the mascot of the opposing team—often a far more formidable animal than

even the most fearsome chicken. The competition for the ultimate chicken-wire extravaganza came on Homecoming Day, when the fraternities and residence halls built displays that were mounted on flatbed trucks and paraded around the football field during the half-time ceremony of crowning the Homecoming queen. At Christmas, the students on each floor in every residence hall participated in the annual peanut sisters, or "secret Santa," gift-giving swap. During the winter months, the women's residence halls took part in another creative competition, the annual Playbill, held in Mitchell Hall, in which each hall presented an original, satirical theatrical skit, often based upon some campus theme.

Those women's campus activities complemented the continuing interactions of the men and women students at fraternity parties, interest-group activities, and campus-wide dances. Nothing typified campus life during the 1950s more than "pinnings," which took place occasionally on weeknights. The members of a fraternity would accompany their brother to the front of the women's residence hall where his girlfriend lived and would serenade the couple. As the female residents watched from windows, the brother would affix his fraternity pin on his girlfriend's blouse, directly over



*A Playbill skit is performed in Mitchell Hall in the 1960s.*

the left breast. To be "pinned" was a step between wearing a boy's ring and being engaged. On other occasions, fraternity men would descend on women's residence halls, usually after they had been drinking, to attempt a panty raid. These forays were inevitably broken up by the prompt arrival of Dean Hocutt, looking his most intimidating, and at whose appearance, order was quickly restored.

When the Women's College had been absorbed into the University, the college's faculty had anticipated and feared that women students would lose opportunities for campus leadership. The co-education experience justified these fears. In the post-war years, an informal formula developed by which men were elected to class presidencies and to the presidency of the campus-wide Student Government Association (S.G.A.), women were elected to vice presidencies and to the position of secretary, and men filled the post of treasurer. In 1957, the pattern was briefly interrupted when a woman was elected S.G.A. president. Her victory was attributed to an argument among the fraternities that normally controlled the outcome. Women were indeed chosen to lead many special-interest clubs on campus, but, almost always, their leadership was in areas where men chose not to compete.

In time, two new all-female organizations were created that restored some opportunities for women students to gain recognition and develop leadership. Tassel, an all-female honorary society, was introduced at the University in the early 1950s. Each spring, a small number of outstanding women from the junior class were awakened at dawn to be "tapped for Tassel." Chosen on the basis of their scholarship, leadership, and commitment to service, the Tassel inductees gained valuable experience in the management of a service-oriented society. In 1960, Tassel was invited to become part of Mortar Board, the national honorary society for women, which later became co-educational under the mandate of the Civil Rights Act.

Another important innovation was the creation in the early 1960s of the Association of Women Students (A.W.S.), which included all women students. In many ways, A.W.S.'s purpose paralleled that of the Student Government Association, to which it



*The officers of the Association of Women Students pose in a non-traditional manner that symbolized the changing mood in 1967.*

sent representatives. The A.W.S. spoke specifically for women in a system that persisted in treating them differently from men. Organized into committees that had representatives in each women's residence hall, the Association of Women Students was dedicated to the goals of encouraging scholarship and personal growth and to promoting leadership roles for women. Although by the middle or late 1960s A.W.S. had developed a reputation for busy work, it did give women students a sounding board when they began demanding change in their rule-ridden lives.

Despite their docility, John A. Perkins was dissatisfied with the women students of the late 1950s. He developed the idea that the University of Delaware was preparing what he called "corner post citizens" who would become community leaders. Yet, too many women students appeared reluctant to assume leadership. President Perkins was distressed that so few young women in Delaware chose to attend college, and he was discouraged by the low academic motivation and lack of career ambition displayed by those women who did enter the University. As late as 1956, the ratio of male to female students was a disappointing two to one. By the early 1960s, the ratio of male to female students was approaching equality, but the president was still disturbed to note that, while the University's academic programs in the fields of science and technology had earned national reputations for



*Students work in a cooking laboratory that simulated home kitchens in the 1950s. Compare this homelike atmosphere to the institutional kitchen setting pictured on page 46.*

excellence, few women students took advantage of these programs. "From elementary school on, unfortunately," the president wrote, "girls are conditioned against distributing themselves over the whole spectrum of collegiate studies and related professions often in disregard of natural aptitude and ability."<sup>11</sup>

Women students flocked to some disciplines and avoided others. The vast majority of them were preparing to become school teachers, about half in the elementary grades, the others in various high-school disciplines, especially home economics, English, social studies, and the arts. The demand for school teachers was insatiable during the era of the Baby Boom, and ease in finding employment was a major factor in deciding women's choice of careers. But President Perkins was dismayed to note that few women aspired to become scientists or even to become science teachers. Statistics on the graduating class of 1962 reveal the gender division among the University's pre-professional disciplines. In that year, 100 percent of the students who received degrees in home economics and ninety-eight percent of those in elementary education were female. By contrast, business and engineering produced only one woman major each,<sup>12</sup> and only seven of the 231 students in the College of Agricultural Sciences were women.<sup>13</sup> A major factor in the lopsided distribution pattern lay in women's seeming aversion to mathematics and science—a factor that had a negative impact not only on their enrollment in traditionally male disciplines but also in nursing and those aspects of home economics that required a scientific background.

In 1960, in an effort to reverse this waste of women's educational potential, President Perkins appointed an Advisory Committee on the Education of Women, chaired by Professor Dyer, a veteran of the Women's College and an active research chemist. The committee, consisting of faculty, administrators, and students, was charged "to stimulate the thinking of undergraduate women regarding their professional plans."<sup>14</sup>

The creation of the Advisory Committee on the Education of Women came at a propitious moment, for the year 1960 was one of incipient change in American society. John F. Kennedy captured

the public mood of restlessness and growing aversion to post-war complacency in his successful campaign for the presidency of the United States. In September of that year, an article entitled "A Proposition for Women," by Marion K. Sanders, appeared in *Harper's Magazine*. Sanders argued that too many American women were wasting their lives in the "circular puttering" and "redundant housewifery" associated with unending rounds of shopping, tidying, and grooming, while they ignored the national need for career professionals in the traditionally female-dominated areas of health care, social work, and education. The author's plea, which pre-dated Betty Friedan's bestseller, *The Feminine Mystique*, by three years, called on women to emancipate themselves from their narrow suburban cocoons, return to school, and prepare to pursue meaningful work outside the home.<sup>15</sup> A few months later, at his inauguration, President Kennedy challenged the nation with the stirring phrase, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." A growing shift in public opinion supported the view that important jobs that women might successfully fill were going begging.

The *Harper's* article pointed the Dyer Committee toward a group of potential students who had been largely ignored: returning adult students. In 1963, Professor Dyer appointed a sub-committee chaired by Dean Collins to consider how the University might best respond to the needs of such a group. The following year, the sub-committee distributed a questionnaire to approximately 900 women aged twenty-five years and older who were, or had recently been, enrolled in the University's graduate or undergraduate programs, including those enrolled in non-degree University extension courses in night school. Responses to the questionnaire reflected the growing desire of women to seek careers: many to supplement their family's income and to find the personal satisfaction that a career might bring; others to become primary breadwinners after divorce or the death of a spouse. The Dyer Committee had uncovered an urgent social need to which the University of Delaware might respond. The committee recognized and publicized the fact that an increasing number of women were

returning to college to complete degree programs they had abandoned to marry. The survey also revealed that twenty-eight percent of the more than 2,600 women enrolled at the University in the fall of 1962 were twenty-five or older.<sup>16</sup> The co-educational model based exclusively on students in the eighteen-to-twenty-one age bracket no longer reflected changing social realities.

In the 1960s, the end of the Baby Boom brought other social changes that affected university women. Early in the decade, the demand for school teachers remained very high. In 1960, it was reported that there were fifteen teaching jobs for every qualified applicant,<sup>17</sup> but, by 1964, the declining birth rates of the late 1950s began to reduce that demand. That meant that greater numbers of women were seeking to enter the workforce at a time when the most common source of employment for college-educated women was shrinking. As that situation pushed career-seeking women to explore non-traditional options, the obstacles that confronted women in the workforce attracted more attention. Consider, for example, a report presented to the University's Board of Trustees in 1960 concerning the salary offers made to baccalaureate graduates that year. The median monthly salary for those who entered the field of home economics was \$357, while that for chemical engineers was \$525. Even more telling was the fact that male graduates of the University's business program earned \$464, compared to \$330 for female graduates of that same program. The beginning salary for school teachers was \$342, calculated on a twelve-month basis. Faculty were not necessarily supportive of women's aspirations to go beyond low-paying stereotypical career paths. A member of the class of 1968 recalls an accounting professor who actively discouraged a very capable woman student by saying she was taking a seat in his class that should be occupied by a male, since a man would use accounting in his career, whereas a woman would not.<sup>18</sup>

It is significant to note that, in the same year in which President Perkins created the Advisory Committee on the Education of Women, he told the trustees of his difficulty in

meeting the rapidly growing University's need for faculty due to "the present incredible shortage of competent men available for University positions." The president, like many who considered themselves thoughtful and forward-looking people, had grasped one aspect of the women's career dilemma, but could not see the whole picture. As women entered into a new era of aspirations and self-awareness, they moved beyond the more limited goals that President Perkins had in mind when he created the Advisory Committee on the Education of Women. Yet, Perkins was an agent of change who assisted in starting a process of renewal that transcended his initial vision.

By the 1960s, the Baby Boom generation had moved from the elementary schools and high schools into the colleges and universities. Enrollments at the University of Delaware accelerated more rapidly than at any other time in the University's history. From an enrollment of about 2,000 during the post-war decade, the number of undergraduate students grew to 3,600 in 1961-62 and reached 6,500 by 1967-68.<sup>19</sup> The faculty was growing rapidly as well. In 1965, the University employed 346 full-time faculty, an increase of forty-six new positions over the previous year. By 1968, there were 434 full-time faculty, many of them young and newly acquainted with the University of Delaware.

At first, the University attempted to deal with the student upsurge without changing its fundamental residential policies. In fact, the percentage of resident students on campus actually rose from fifty percent to sixty-four percent during the period from 1950, when the last of the veterans were completing their degrees, through 1965.<sup>20</sup> During that period, new residence halls were constantly under construction to keep abreast of the demand. On the former campus of the Women's College, three new buildings—Cannon, Kent, and Squire halls—arose during the 1950s to complete the line of residence halls that had begun with Sussex and New Castle halls three decades earlier. In 1953, the University built a much larger women's residence, Smyth Hall, designed to house 214 students on Academy Street, adjacent to Kent Dining Hall.

In 1958, on Academy Street, roughly opposite Smyth, the University completed a Student Center that included a large dining facility to handle the overflow from Kent and the men's commons in Old College. As the University entered the 1960s, it was necessary to expand student housing construction even further, and the University began constructing residence halls on the large property behind the center. The residence halls built in the 1960s differed from those built earlier in significant ways. In the past, the University had depended on private gifts or state appropriations for such purposes. In the 1960s, the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development extended long-term credit to universities to support construction of student housing. In order to minimize the room fees that were essential to paying off the construction bonds and to increase the number of units as rapidly as possible, the University abandoned expensive, colonial-style architecture in favor of modern, functional styles. The use of brick facing in the newer buildings maintained a semblance of uniformity with earlier campus architecture, but the size and scale of the new buildings was larger than those constructed earlier.

Most important for the future of women residential students, however, was the abandonment of the concept of a women's campus separate from that of the men. New residence hall complexes, constructed on east and west areas of the campus, mixed men's and women's dormitories to create a truly co-educational campus. During the 1960s, the University built three large residence hall complexes around a grassy area behind the Student Center—Harrington, Russell, and Gilbert. Those halls, which combined men and women students in one area, became the focal point for a new kind of campus life. In the late 1960s, the University built two more co-educational residence complexes, Rodney and Dickinson, on the west part of the campus, and in the early 1970s, the Pencader and Christiana complexes were developed on the north campus.

No matter how rapidly the University increased its campus housing, student numbers were always well ahead of the supply.

That fact presented special problems for the University because of its restrictive policies regarding women students. Traditionally, the University had maintained a relaxed attitude toward housing its male students, who were free to live off campus in fraternity houses or in private housing. By contrast, the policy established by Dean Robinson a half century before continued to require those women students who did not commute from home to live on campus. Burgeoning student numbers forced University administrators to reconsider their housing policies for women students. One response to this problem was to limit the number of women by enforcing a quota of thirty-five percent on the number of out-of-state women who were admitted.

In retrospect, it is clear that the years from 1945 until about 1967 were the twilight of the Women's College. On the surface, few differences distinguished University women in 1967 from those of 1947. In 1967, the Association of Women Students published a pamphlet entitled, "Your Co-ed Campus," which was to be distributed to all women students. The rituals and rules that it described were little changed from those of a decade, or even two decades, before. The pamphlet began with a brief history of the Women's College and a statement of welcome from Dean Collins, who was described as "our very sincere and enthusiastic adviser." The booklet then took note of the organization and purpose of the A.W.S. and gave an account of the women's social honor system. The authors explained that women students were honor-bound to report themselves or others who committed infractions of the rules. The booklet reminded students of the University community's expectations for their deportment, suggesting that women students wear skirts and sweaters or "A-line" dresses and loafers to class or on casual dates. Suits and heels were appropriate attire for more formal occasions, such as football games.

The theme of continuity was also vividly recalled by a member of the class of 1967 who attended a party in Warner Hall to honor the senior-class residents about to graduate. The

refreshments consisted of two cakes. On one was a message of congratulations together with a long list of the names of those seniors who were engaged to be married. A second cake, containing only three names, was presented to those who were not as yet engaged. Nobody at the party knew quite how to treat these three atypical women, especially the one who had chosen to attend graduate school.<sup>21</sup>

Despite demonstrations of conformity to the gender roles of the past, dramatic changes were on the horizon. The year 1967 was a crucial one for inaugurating changes of all kinds. In that year, which Dean Collins characterized in her annual report as "not-too-easy times,"<sup>22</sup> the Committee on the Education of



*Officers of the University of Delaware in 1967-68: Interim President John A. Shirley is seated with Dean of Nursing Mary Carl (at right) and Dean of Home Economics Irma Ayers (at left). The other female figure is Dean of Women Bessie B. Collins.*

Women sponsored a seminar series entitled, "Great Expectations For Women." Students For a Democratic Society, a radical organization better known by its initials S.D.S., staged a protest on Frazer Field against compulsory participation in ROTC and elected its candidate for president of the Student Government Association. President Perkins told the Board of Trustees that the University could no longer accept so many women students without surrendering its residence policy.

For the University of Delaware, the climax of that year of turbulent change was the unexpected announcement of John A. Perkins' resignation from the presidency. An era in the history of the University of Delaware was closing, and women's place in campus life was about to be redefined.



*A protest calling for greater student autonomy was staged in front of HULLIHEN Hall during the 1967-1968 academic year.*

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Revival*



BETWEEN 1967 AND 1974, universities and colleges were at the center of a great wave of social unrest that swept through the United States. A veritable army of restless young people revolted against the restraints, values, and political beliefs of the past. Demographic and economic factors combined with major political events to produce this period of change. The Baby Boom generation matured at a time of unprecedented national affluence that permitted a large percentage of its number to attend college. Simultaneously, the shock of political assassinations, the moral force of the civil-rights movement, and reactions to the war in Vietnam, and especially to the draft, led young people to engage in mass protest against the world that their elders had made.

Social scientists use the term "paradigm shift" to describe the profound change in point of view that took place during that time. The shift had special meaning for those who had been consigned to marginal positions in American society: women and minorities. The era of the 1960s witnessed a revival of a quest for fairness in American life. Blacks, Native Americans, and women rethought and rejected past views of themselves, searched for new ways of thinking and behaving, and demanded that society treat them as equals to white males. As with so much else of that

era, the effects of the women's liberation movement were nowhere more powerfully felt than on college campuses.

A decade later, in 1979, *McCall's Magazine* took a backward look at the rapid changes that had taken place in campus life. "It seems to have happened so suddenly," the magazine author remarked. "Ten years ago, there were women's dorms and men's dorms, and rarely did a member of one sex enter the domain of the other. And now, there are co-ed dorms on almost every campus in the country, so many that they have become the rule rather than the exception."<sup>1</sup> The most remarkable thing about this change, the author said, was not that it had occurred, but that the shift from single-sex to co-ed living had been so readily accepted by virtually everyone, from students to university administrators to parents. No one a decade earlier would have believed such a change possible, nor would prudent adults have countenanced it. It was as if the attitudes and assumptions that had guided the past had suddenly been swept away, and everyone awoke to discover that life would continue without rules. In short, a paradigm shift had occurred, in which former concepts of female respectability and security had been replaced by notions that elevated women's equality, opportunity, and personal freedom.

The housing change described in the *McCall's* article was exemplified at the University of Delaware. We have already seen how, in the early 1960s, rapid growth in the student population forced the University to experiment with new residence-hall designs and to locate its new men's and women's halls adjacent to one another. In the mid-1960s, the University took another step toward co-educational residences by permitting contiguous men's and women's halls in one East Campus complex to share a lounge. To amplify the co-educational atmosphere, the University hired a young married graduate student and his wife to be the residence hall directors of the experimental co-ed halls. Student response was enthusiastic. "Dorm life here is family life," the hall president reported. "The parents are young, liberal, yet firm; they do not interfere when unnecessary, yet they are there when needed. They are respected out of love, not fear."<sup>2</sup> Despite the obvious advantages



*In 1980, University officials rethought housing policies as women students were crowded into make-shift living quarters in residence halls, sleeping on rows of double-decker beds.*

of the brother-and-sister residence-hall model, President John A. Perkins was concerned about where it might lead. Some students were demanding an end to the rules that governed residence life, but the president cautioned against further liberalization. "If institutions of higher learning are to be merely hotel and dining room managers with no influence over the quality of the living experience," Perkins warned in his final *Annual Report* in 1967, "prudence would suggest they cease providing housing facilities and leave it to private enterprise...."<sup>3</sup>

President Perkins' departure from the University later that year spared him the necessity of working out a solution to the multifaceted problem of housing students, a problem that he had rightly identified as the University's dominant issue at the time. In spite of continuing new construction, the University could not keep up with the need for more rooms. Meanwhile, administrators worried that if the students got their wish to be freed from residential restrictions, there would be no mechanism in place to control potentially disruptive behavior.<sup>4</sup> Some administrators noted that the rapid growth of the student body and of the

faculty created a potential vacuum in which no one, not residence hall directors, not faculty, and not judicial courts, could or would give students the direction, support, and attention that they had received in the past.

Those circumstances presented a challenge to the new president, E. Arthur Trabant, when he arrived at the University of Delaware in 1968. A native of southern California, President Trabant had graduated from Occidental College and earned a Ph.D. in mathematics at the California Institute of Technology, before beginning a rapid rise in academic administration that had taken him from Purdue University to the University of Buffalo to the Georgia Institute of Technology and then, finally, to



*President E. Arthur Trabant, 1968-1987 and 1988-1990, with Mae Carter, who worked successfully to help redefine the role of women at the University*

Delaware. Like John Perkins, Art Trabant was an extremely self-confident man, but whereas Perkins exhibited his confidence by dominating others, Trabant demonstrated his confidence through openness to new ideas and a willingness to experiment with change. Under the leadership of Trabant and John E. Worthen, who succeeded John Hocutt as vice president for student affairs, the University moved rapidly to dismantle the ethos of rule enforcement that had formerly guided residence-hall life. One manifestation of the new approach was the dissolution of the position dean of women and the unification of the residence life staff into a single, co-educational body under a male dean of students and a male vice president for student affairs.

The old system had been founded on the notion that women must be regulated and protected. It had been created in the early twentieth century when collegiate education for women was a new concept, and colleges and universities sought to prove to parents and to society-at-large that they could protect women students in a college environment. The system had gone unchallenged for a long time. As late as the early 1960s, young women accepted the controlled, secure system of housing regulations. They were used to obeying such rules at home. But in a time when eighteen-year-old men were being drafted to be sent to fight in Vietnam and flower children were proclaiming "make love, not war," those rules suddenly appeared as a demeaning denial of the women students' status as responsible, mature adults capable of making their own decisions. The demand for greater freedom was especially strong in the personal area of sexuality, where modern methods of birth control weakened sexual taboos and altered the behavior of the young.

The national trend for women students to demand greater freedom reached Newark, Delaware, in January 1967, when a student speaking on behalf of herself and others in her residence hall told a meeting of the Association of Women Students that "women are being discriminated against because of their sex" at the University of Delaware. The student complained that women were far more regulated in the residence halls than were men. Her

argument touched a chord in the minds of many students.<sup>5</sup> Later that spring, usually conservative University of Delaware students amazed themselves and the administration when they elected Ramon Ceci, a Navy veteran and local leader of the radical national organization, Students for a Democratic Society, to be president of the University's Student Government Association. Ceci won his majority vote by addressing two issues that had aroused strong feelings among Delaware's students: the abolition of compulsory ROTC for males and the abolition of restricted visitation hours and closing hours in the women's residence halls. The editors of *The Blue Hen* captured the moment with the comment that "a new spirit crackled across the campus—one of defiance, one of power. Delaware had suddenly splashed into the stream of nationwide college movements."<sup>6</sup>

University policy prohibited women from visiting in men's rooms and vice versa. But whereas men students could choose to live off campus where the rule did not apply, women students who did not commute from home were required to live in the residence halls. "Can a woman who presumably is not capable of deciding when to come in at night make independent decisions about her life in general?" asked a sister group to S.D.S. called The Women's Liberation Front (W.L.F.).<sup>7</sup> The W.L.F. may not have attracted many members and it certainly did not survive for more than a short time, but its flyers communicated messages that made women students think about their place in society. "We have to analyze the female's role in terms of a society which perpetrates male supremacy and profits from it.... We need to build up our own confidence to the point where we can contribute our share of thought and ability to what is now a male-oriented society," the Women's Liberation Front proclaimed. And students listened.<sup>8</sup>

In the stimulating spring of 1967, a spirit of irreverence pervaded the campus as Delaware women pushed against traditional restraints through a variety of means. The annual Playbill, long an occasion for satire, offered one such opportunity. In defiance of the Playbill coordinators from the Association of Women Students, the students of Harrington B presented so

bawdy a performance that the curtain was dropped in its midst. Later in the term, women from Russell D organized a panty raid on Russell C, a neighboring men's residence, then dyed the men's briefs pink before they returned them. This incident was but the forerunner of a campus-wide panty raid that lasted for two nights and was quelled only through the intervention of state police. In retrospect, the students were more proud than ashamed of their actions. The editors of *The Blue Hen* wrote: "In one short semester, Delaware had changed from an academic prison haunted by fear and suspicion to a University of active, excited students."<sup>9</sup>

In that radicalized environment, University administrators chose to bend rather than break. As a first compromise, opposite-sex visitation was permitted for a few hours each week on condition that students left the door to the room open; then, the hours were lengthened and the door rule was relaxed to the partly ajar position; finally, in the fall of 1969, the University took the final step of permitting on a trial basis an unrestricted visitation policy. The doors could now be closed. The new policy could be instituted in any residence hall in which eighty percent of the residents voted for it. With that change, the whole concept of what constituted a protective environment for women was revised. Women students no longer had to return to their residence halls by a specific time. Instead, the halls were kept locked at all hours and every resident was given a key, just as in the private housing market. To ease parental worries and to gauge public reaction to this experiment, President Trabant held an informational open hearing in February 1970. Those who attended learned that, contrary to lurid popular assumptions, most students used the free visitations to study together, play cards, or talk, just as students had always done in single-sex dormitories.

In spite of President Trabant's efforts to deflect criticism, the open-visitations experiment was not without its critics. Some parents, students, and community members viewed the policy as an invitation to promiscuity, as in some cases it surely was. The principal complaints came from young women who encountered men in the communal bathrooms or had to endure seeing and

hearing the steamy embraces of roommates with boyfriends who spent the night. But, despite those invasions of some people's privacy, sense of propriety, and safety, President Trabant and Vice President Worthen told critics that if eighteen-year-olds were mature enough to serve in the Army or to work and live on their own, the University should not treat them like children. University administrators also consoled critics by pointing out that trained residence hall staff members were available to advise students and to help them deal with the problems of college life. After an initial flurry of public criticism, *in loco parentis* died a quick and remarkably quiet death.

With the implementation of the open-visitation policy in 1970, the way was cleared for creating co-ed residence halls, in which alternate floors or even alternate rooms were occupied by members of the opposite sex. The residence-hall staff proclaimed that those changes were a means to liberate students from "artificial and restrictive controls [that] only limit a student and offer him no personal choice."<sup>10</sup> Surveys showed that students living in co-ed halls had higher morale, experienced greater personal safety, and had a better outlook on themselves, on the University, and on their relations with the opposite sex than did those living in single-sex halls.<sup>11</sup> The collapse of the old rules and the introduction of co-educational residence halls rendered the Association of Women Students obsolete, and it disappeared into the newly created Residence Hall Association. Stuart Sharkey, who served as director of residence life during that period of rapid change and went on to succeed John E. Worthen as vice president for student affairs, viewed the dissolution of the A.W.S. and the transfer of responsibility for women's residential rules from the dean of women to the director of residence life as the final integration of the Women's College into a truly co-educational University of Delaware.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, the continuing growth in enrollments forced the residence-hall staff to convert double rooms to triples and to put temporary cots in lounges and recreation rooms. Yet despite Herculean efforts, the University could no longer house

all of its female students and most of its male students. The demand for student housing finally obliged the University to blur the lines that had once separated the residence halls from privately owned rental housing. Old rules were relaxed to encourage upper-classmen to move to apartments. University housing administrators eventually faced a different set of challenges—not to maintain student discipline, but to seek a balance whereby University housing was a sufficiently attractive option to fill the rooms, while at the same time, giving students enough freedom of choice to prevent University residence halls from becoming overcrowded. In the 1970s, a new pattern emerged in which freshmen lived on campus but upper-class students of both sexes, especially juniors and seniors, usually chose to live in apartments, both to save money and to assume more adult responsibilities.

The new residential pattern had implications for women students' sense of community. The intense, campus-oriented communal life of the past had disappeared, but what was to be put in its place? For some students, jobs, family commitments, boyfriends, or involvement with one's major or athletics substituted for the former "rah-rah" communal residence-hall life. Many others, however, still desired a college experience that included late-night talks, sharing feelings, and organizing social events. The quest for community posed fewer problems for men than for women because fraternities had a long history at the University of Delaware. Sororities, however, had been forbidden from the establishment of the Women's College on the grounds that they would divide students and dilute residence-hall life. With the growth of the student body and the restructuring of residential life in the 1960s, those arguments were no longer valid.

In 1968, sorority colonies were organized on campus with the approval of the Board of Trustees and the support of the Association of Women Students.<sup>13</sup> Impetus for that innovation came not only from students but from Dean of Women Bessie B. Collins' assistant Ross Ann Jenny, a recent University of Delaware graduate, who reasoned that it was unfair for the University to

accord men students the right to belong to fraternities while denying that right to women students.<sup>14</sup> In February 1969, five sororities were colonized at Delaware. All offered activities that had once been a part of women's residence life, including group carol singing, intramural sports, and parties. Additionally, the sororities reached beyond the campus to provide service to the community through such activities as tutoring disadvantaged children and visiting hospitalized veterans. The sororities quickly gained popularity and became a regular part of University life.

While those changes were restructuring student life, the women's movement was having an even greater impact on the lives of older women. Women's liberation had gained national attention with the publication of Betty Friedan's best-selling book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. Friedan's main theme, that a generation of college-educated, suburban housewives had surrendered their autonomy and self-respect to become childlike housebodies, struck a deep chord with many American women. One year after the book was released, Congress adopted the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The act's Title VII prohibited discrimination in employment based on race and gender. When the government failed to take the act's protection of women seriously, Friedan and other feminists founded the National Organization for Women to fight sex discrimination.

As those reform ideas were taking root throughout the nation, President John A. Perkins' Advisory Committee on the Education of Women completed a survey in 1965 that revealed that adult women had great unmet educational needs. The majority of the respondents were married women bored with staying at home, but the most pressing needs came from divorced women. The advisory committee's discovery of this hitherto ignored group coincided with statistical evidence of the rising divorce rate in Delaware during the 1960s.<sup>15</sup>

Most mature women students entered the University through the Division of University Extension (now the Division of Continuing Education). Adele F. Robertson, the division's supervisor of academic programs, worked closely with Bessie B.

Collins to address the educational needs of older women. Their cause received a big boost from the Higher Education Act of 1965, which provided federal funds to support university community service ventures directed toward helping women. Robertson used these government funds to hire part-time counselors to assist women returning as students. One person that she selected to fill this modest, government-funded position was Mae Carter, a mature, married woman with considerable experience as a community volunteer. Mae Carter came highly recommended by Bessie B. Collins, who had known her through their mutual involvement in the Newark branch of the American Association of University Women. Neither Adele Robertson, Bessie Collins, nor even Mae Carter herself could possibly have anticipated the significant role that she was destined to play in the University's development.

It would be no exaggeration to say that, with the exception of Winifred Robinson, Mae Carter has done more to change the position of women at the University of Delaware than any other individual in the institution's history. Her accomplishments are particularly remarkable because they were achieved by a person who had a lowly status by usual university measures. Mae Carter was not a faculty member; she had no doctoral degree; and she never held a high-ranking administrative appointment at the University of Delaware. And yet, the evidence of her influence is everywhere apparent and is widely acknowledged by faculty women and administrators throughout the institution. For a person initially hired into a part-time, marginal position to have had such an extraordinary impact is not only a testimony to Carter's skills but also suggests that she was the right person in the right place at the right time. Mae Carter was effective because she combined the non-threatening manner and tactics of the traditional homemaker/community activist with an extraordinarily well-focused determination to change the University of Delaware.

Mae Carter was reared in the liberal, collegiate town of Berkeley, California, where she attended the University of California and graduated with a degree in home economics in 1943. A year later,

she married and, after a brief career as a pre-school teacher, followed the then-common pattern of leaving the workforce when her children were born. She did not, however, abandon volunteer community work, becoming particularly committed to working with the American Association of University Women (A.A.U.W.) in support of education and libraries. In 1956, when her husband's corporation relocated him in Delaware, the Carters moved to Newark. Mae Carter soon became re-established as a volunteer activist for the A.A.U.W., where she met Bessie B. Collins and other community women, many of them faculty wives.

When she began her part-time position in University Extension, Mae Carter discovered a new world of frustrated, even timid, women, for whom higher education represented a means to secure employment and to build self-respect. Some wished to complete degrees they had abandoned in order to marry. Many had difficulty making academic progress because of the demands of parenthood and repeated corporate transfers required by their husbands' employers. The most distressing problems, however, beset the widows, the women deserted by their husbands, and the divorcees. Typically, those women were unprepared to support themselves. All they knew was shopping, playing tennis, serving on church committees, and rearing children. Seeing those frightened women stream through her office made Mae Carter "very aware that you have to be financially independent."<sup>16</sup> Using the skills and networks that she had developed during years of experience in women's volunteer organizations, Carter urged the Division of University Extension to offer programs and courses to serve the needs of adult women students. These efforts met with an enthusiastic response. The program, "Great Expectations for Women," presented in Newark in 1967 and aimed at returning students, was so well-received that it was repeated for the benefit of women in Georgetown and Dover.

During that same time, President Trabant was seeking ways to respond constructively to campus unrest and to bring a sense of shared purpose to an institution that was in the midst of great growth and change. Early in his presidency, Trabant created the

Community Design Planning Commission to identify new goals for the University to pursue in the 1970s. The commission members, including students, faculty, and administrators chosen from all parts of the University, issued a two-volume report entitled *The Decade Ahead* in 1971. That document called for the University to respond to the educational needs of hitherto neglected groups, specifically including women. The commissioners posited "85 theses to stimulate academic reforms," one of which read in part: "The transformation in higher education that began in the last third of the 19th century needs to be completed. Not only should women in greater number be accepted in graduate and professional schools, but special provisions should be made for them, including the right to study on a part-time basis, particularly during the years when they are obliged to care for their young children."<sup>17</sup>

The most important change associated with the Community Design Commission's proclamation took place in the treatment of the University's women faculty and staff. In the two and one-half decades from 1945 until 1970, the University had represented itself as a co-educational institution because all of its academic programs were open to men and women equally. University administrators had wondered why women students spurned many curricular opportunities and remained entrenched in a narrow sphere of "women's" subject areas. During that same era the University had made no effort to hire professionally qualified women to staff its faculty or its administration except in the "women's" fields of home economics, women's physical education, and, later, nursing. Through the activities and insights of the women's movement, the relationship between academic study and professional opportunities was made apparent, not only at Delaware, but throughout the United States. The issue of fair hiring and promotion procedures for women and minorities became the subject of national debate and political action. As the decade of the 1970s began, the University of Delaware, like other American institutions and corporations, undertook to rectify the imbalances and unfair practices that had



*Benjamin F. McLuckie, assistant professor of sociology, 1970-1975, was among the founders of the Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program at the University.*

restricted employment opportunities for women and other minority groups.

In January 1971, Benjamin F. McLuckie, an assistant professor of sociology, taught a Winterim (now called Winter Session) course on changing sex roles in society. As part of the course, Professor McLuckie organized a panel discussion on the status of women at the University of Delaware and asked a student, K. H. Dahl, to prepare an analytical report on the subject to be based on questionnaires and University statistical data. The report revealed a pattern that everyone already knew to be true: The few women faculty at the University were clustered at the lower, non-tenured ranks, and hardly any women occupied positions in higher administration. One can

almost hear the shade of Winifred Robinson proclaiming, "I told you so," to that revelation. Of the University's 128 full professors, only seven were women, mostly older women originally hired into the Women's College. Women made up twenty percent of the total faculty, but they were clustered in traditional women's professional fields. Only fourteen percent of the faculty in the College of Arts and Science were women, compared to twenty-three percent in 1939. Of the women employed in arts and science, fewer than half were above the rank of instructor. Instructors generally did not hold doctoral degrees and were not eligible for promotion to the tenured ranks. Of the nineteen departments in the college, eight had no women faculty at all and

seven others employed only one woman. The picture in other colleges, except home economics and nursing, was no better. Only one woman was employed among the thirty-six faculty members in the traditionally female-oriented College of Education, while none were to be found in the colleges of Agricultural Sciences, Business and Economics, or Marine Studies. Only one academic department, Secretarial Studies, was chaired by a woman.<sup>18</sup>

By 1970, social scientists had established the importance of role models of the same race or gender in helping young people to define themselves and to envision themselves in future careers. The Report on Women at the University of Delaware noted the significance of faculty role models for women students and concluded with the observation that "until the University makes an effort to increase the numbers of women on the faculty, the percentage of women will continue to decline."<sup>19</sup> Since women made up slightly more than one-half of the University's undergraduate student body, it was not difficult to make the case for employing more female faculty. In response to those findings, President Trabant appointed an Advisory Committee on Policies, Programs, and Services Affecting Women Students, Faculty, and Staff, which was chaired by Nancy H. Colburn of the Biology Department.

The advisory committee undertook a thorough study of the problems associated with equitable treatment for women. Its report to the president reiterated Dahl's earlier findings and noted that the U.S. Department of Labor required affirmative action to eliminate discriminatory policies toward the hiring and retention of women. The committee also pointed to the subtle means by which male faculty were dissuading women students from pursuing graduate study or preparing for professional careers. They criticized faculty search committees for using their "old-boy network" contacts to fill faculty positions, without giving women and minority candidates a fair chance. The committee demonstrated statistically that women faculty at all ranks were paid less, often considerably less, than men with comparable credentials. They also suggested that the University reconsider its nepotism policy and supply child-care facilities for working mothers.

There were so many sex-equity problems that needed attention, the committee could only touch briefly on important issues. Its report noted, for example, the absence of gynecological services for students in the Health Center and the dearth of women in higher paying, more responsible positions among professionals and salaried staff. The advisory committee's most significant recommendation was that the University should employ a full-time affirmative action officer who would give his or her attention to addressing the goal of achieving equitable treatment with respect to hiring, promoting, and compensating women and minority persons in every branch of the University.<sup>20</sup> That recommendation was fulfilled shortly thereafter, with the appointment of Jeannette Sam as the University's first affirmative action officer.

Along the way toward compiling its report, the advisory committee also took the step of constituting an offshoot sub-committee to coordinate the introduction of women's studies as a new field of teaching and research. The sub-committee was to determine what faculty resources the University possessed in the emerging area of interdisciplinary study, to coordinate the creation of a team-taught women's studies course, and to determine how women's studies might become a regular part of the University curriculum.<sup>21</sup>

Women's studies emerged on the academic scene in 1970 at a conference on women held at Cornell University. The impetus for this new academic subject grew out of studies by scholars clustered in the social sciences and humanities that were demonstrating how negative social conditioning and artificial barriers had blinded scholars to women's past contributions. Those same misogynist attitudes were depriving women of professional opportunities for self-fulfillment and were denying society the benefits of women's talents. One famous study showed that college women feared academic success because it was not socially acceptable to be seen as smart.<sup>22</sup> Other studies showed that both men and women systematically viewed the work of women as less valid than that of men. Those perceptual biases ranged over the entire spectrum of professional and academic

life, from medicine and law to English literature and art, where the compositions of women were discounted as being less worthy than those of men. The first practitioners of women's studies set out to expose those biases. One goal of women's studies was to give women students a more rationally based, positive view of themselves, and to offer them more fulfilling possibilities for their lives.

Spurred on by the advisory committee, in 1971, a group of faculty from throughout the University—some men, but mostly women—joined by Mae Carter, who chaired the new committee, began meeting together to create a jointly taught women's studies course. Most of the participants were young, newly hired, untenured women who, up to that time, had been isolated in nearly all-male departments and had hardly known of one another until they joined forces to create the course. One of their number, however, was Jan DeArmond, a veteran professor of English, who had begun her career at Delaware in the Women's College. Her involvement lent the enterprise a sense of continuity with a near-forgotten era in the University's history. Although they hoped to see women's studies become a full-fledged program with regular course offerings and faculty lines, the faculty who attended those meetings were willing to start small and to volunteer their time to get the first course off the ground. During the fall term of 1972, a group of nineteen faculty, organized under the leadership of Florence (Lindy) Geis of the Department of Psychology, presented Delaware's first women's studies course to an



*Florence (Lindy) Geis, professor of psychology, coordinated the initial women's studies course and co-authored Seeing and Evaluating People, a study of negative perceptual bias toward women.*

enthusiastic group of ninety-five students, including some University employees.

The women's studies course filled an important need for many students who, like the faculty, were reassessing themselves and their world in light of the new scholarship. But, the cumbersome format of the first course could not be perpetuated. Women's studies needed a budget to pay for permanent leadership and to pay its faculty or gain them release time from their departmental teaching obligations. In 1972 and 1973, the Women's Studies Committee chairperson, Mae Carter, patiently but persistently negotiated to establish women's studies as a permanent, funded program within the College of Arts and Science. Early in 1974, Provost L. Leon Campbell agreed to hire a program director for women's studies and a search committee was established from the women's studies faculty to find an appropriate leader. After interviewing many candidates, mostly women from other universities, the search committee selected an assistant professor of English from the University of Pennsylvania, who began her duties in September 1974.

In spite of the care and concern that had gone into the search and in spite of the first director's enthusiasm for the program, her tenure at Delaware was brief and unhappy. The major lesson to be learned from the experience was that enthusiasm alone—with neither administrative ability nor an adequate budget—was not enough. The second director, a psychologist, also hired from the outside, headed women's studies from 1975 until 1980, but was only marginally more effective. However, thanks to the continuing commitment of a core group of women faculty, the program not only survived, but thrived. Mae Carter remained a key figure in maintaining the program's viability during those difficult years. Because she was not part of the faculty and could not be denied tenure, Mae Carter was free to champion women's studies in University administration circles without incurring the risks that some young faculty had reason to fear from unsympathetic male academic colleagues. The success of the program also owed a great deal to the administrative savvy and conviction of

several faculty members, particularly Margaret Andersen of Sociology, Bonnie Scott, Barbara Gates, and Gloria Hull of English, and Sandra Harding of Philosophy. Those women created a workable structure for the program that consisted of two committees—a large advisory committee that included all faculty with an interest in women's studies and a small executive committee that directed the program.

From its beginning in 1971, the Women's Studies Committee was a lightning rod for a myriad of women's concerns. Long pent-up frustrations on issues ranging from sexual harassment to pay equity to the need for child care poured into the committee from students, faculty, and staff. The members of the Women's Studies Committee empathized with those serious concerns, but the committee had to concentrate on its educational mission. In 1973, the Women's Studies Committee called for the creation of another organization that could focus on non-instructional issues affecting women. Impressed by the seriousness of women's complaints from throughout the University, President Trabant took their advice and created the Commission on the Status of Women as a permanent, University-wide body to support women's interests, reporting directly to the president.

The commissioners were appointed by the president and included faculty, administrators, staff, and students, the majority of whom were women. Mae Carter left the Women's Studies



*Margaret Andersen, professor of sociology and editor of the journal, Gender and Society, led the reorganization of women's studies in 1980 and served as director of the program from 1980 until 1985.*



*Gloria Hull, professor of English at the University from 1971 to 1988, helped to create a co-operative relationship between two fledgling interdisciplinary programs—Women's Studies and Black American Studies.*

Committee to assume leadership of the new organization. President Trabant gave the commission a broad charge to "suggest and assist in the implementation of programs...regarding the basic social changes occurring in our society as newly defined roles for women and men emerge." More specifically, the commission was to be a watchdog on behalf of affirmative action and to publish an annual assessment of the condition of women on the campus.

The commission presented its first annual report, a hefty document containing forty-one pages of text together with numerous statistical tables, to President Trabant and to the University community in April 1975. The commissioners reported that, during their first year, they had published a handbook for women, entitled "HERS," and had printed newsletters that disseminated useful information about campus resources for women. They had also co-sponsored speakers and programs by and about women and women's issues and distributed a questionnaire to women students and employees to gather data on women's concerns. Those efforts were designed to help women overcome their socialized tendency to accept discrimination passively, as if it were an inevitable and unconquerable fact of life.

The commission urged the University to make improvements in many areas. Its report drew attention to sexist language in University publications, to the intimidation of women students by some male faculty, and to the unconscious assumptions of male superiority that were perpetuated and overlooked because, as the commissioners said, "the administration of the University is primarily a man's world."<sup>23</sup> As an example of the effects of past policies, the report noted that, while salaried staff employees made up one-half of the total University employment and women constituted sixty-five percent of that group of employees, salaries for the University's largest employment group were "based on the outmoded assumption that women are supplementing rather than providing the family income."<sup>24</sup>

The commissioners could cite one important area where some progress was being made: the hiring of women faculty. In the three years since 1972, when the President's Advisory Committee had compiled its data on faculty by rank and gender, the University had added 255 new faculty, 102 of whom were women. The challenge, as the commissioners saw it, was to make certain that those new women faculty were given equal access to research opportunities, equal respect for their professional accomplishments, and ultimately, a fair, unbiased judgment regarding their promotion and tenure.

Among the most significant of the commission's earliest activities was its sponsorship of open hearings concerning Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.



*Sandra Harding, professor of philosophy and a feminist theorist known for her work on the relationship of women to the sciences, directed the Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program from 1985 to 1992.*

Title IX prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs. The act was aimed at college and university athletic programs, which typically excluded women's participation and provided scholarships to male athletes but not to females.

Women's athletics at the University of Delaware had long been governed by ideas that dated from the era of the Women's College. Both Beatrice Hartshorn, who controlled women's physical education from 1926 until 1962, and her successor, Barbara Rothacher, strongly opposed a women's varsity sports program at Delaware on the grounds that athletic competition was neither practical nor fitting for women students. Hartshorn and Rothacher's view, one widely shared among women physical instructors trained before the 1960s, was that the goal of women's physical education was to promote exercise for the many rather than to concentrate on competitive intercollegiate sports for the few. This philosophy held that, while all women students should participate in physical education classes, women should perspire, not sweat. Hartshorn and Rothacher's policy was partly intended to protect women students from the derision that was then commonly hurled at female athletes for stepping out of the appropriate "feminine" role. In addition, Hartshorn and Rothacher were attempting to make the best use of a small staff. Through the 1960s, the University's women physical educators were fully engaged teaching the ever-larger classes of required courses for freshmen and sophomores. There was no time to be both teachers and coaches.

In the 1960s, as state universities began developing women's varsity athletic teams, women's physical education underwent significant changes throughout America. At Delaware, student-athletes and younger faculty members such as Barbara Kelly, who had been "radicalized" by what she learned as a member of the President's Advisory Committee on Women, sought to join the movement.<sup>25</sup> David Nelson, then head of the University's athletic programs and later the first dean of the College of Physical Education, Athletics, and Recreation, accepted the necessity for change, and the University of Delaware introduced women's



*Professors Barbara Kelly of physical education and Sandra Harding of philosophy at work in 1980, restructuring the curriculum for the Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program*

intercollegiate athletics in 1969.<sup>26</sup> Mary Ann Hitchens, now associate director of intercollegiate athletics, was hired in 1969 to teach physical education classes and to coach the new women's basketball team. University of Delaware women also competed against teams from other schools in hockey and swimming for the first time in 1969-70. Initially, the women's teams and coaches labored under the burden of inadequate facilities and equipment. Students sometimes had to purchase their own uniforms, but student and faculty enthusiasm was high, and the varsity program expanded to include more sports as conditions permitted. When Title IX was introduced in 1972, the University congratulated itself for being ahead of the game.<sup>27</sup>

Just as women's varsity sports were becoming a fixture at Delaware, the old freshman and sophomore physical education requirement was eliminated as part of a general curricular overhaul that saw the end of nearly all University-wide required courses. Gone too was the swimming requirement that had been the bane, and perhaps in some cases the salvation, of generations of Delaware students. The concept of separate physical education courses for men and women was also called into question and ultimately abandoned as the male and female physical education

*Beneath Thy Guiding Hand*

faculty reorganized into a single unit. One result of the reorganization was that women administrators in physical education lost their positions of leadership. Ironically, it was only after the physical educators left the Women's Gymnasium of which Beatrice Hartshorn had been so proud to occupy new quarters in the much larger and better-equipped, formerly all-male Carpenter Sports Building, that the old building was renamed Hartshorn Gymnasium.

A woman from the University's graduating class of 1967, returning to her alma mater in 1974, would have seen many familiar buildings, but could hardly have recognized the institution as the one she had attended. A revolution had occurred in the position of women in campus life. The entire apparatus of the dean of women's office, with its responsibility for single-sex residence halls, curfew rules, and dress code, had been swept away, together with the Association of Women Students and the women's honor courts. In their place had appeared co-educational housing units supervised by members of both sexes. A new academic program in women's studies had been created and over 100 newly hired women faculty were teaching in numerous departments. The Commission on the Status of Women had been created with powers to recommend policies aimed at ensuring fairness and consideration for the needs of women students and employees. An affirmative action program had been put in place. Women's athletic teams were competing with teams from other schools, and gender-specific physical education classes had disappeared. A new paradigm emphasizing equality of opportunity in every realm of University life had replaced the old paradigm that had isolated women into a limited, protected world of their own. No one could say where the revolution in women's opportunities might lead, but the future looked promising.



*Delaware women's lacrosse coach Janet Smith is carried by team members after they won the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) Division II national championship trophy in May 1981.*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Unfinished Business*



IN THE 1983-84 ACADEMIC YEAR, the University of Delaware marked the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of its charter from the state as a collegiate institution with a series of ceremonies, conferences, and symposia. One conference, sponsored by the Office of Women's Affairs, was entitled "Women's Education: Evolution, Revolution, and Beyond." The theme of the daylong conference was that the revolution in women's place in campus life, which had begun some fifteen years earlier, was as yet incomplete. The keynote speaker, Elizabeth Minnich, a prominent feminist scholar, told an audience of sixty-five students, faculty, and administrators that the collegiate curriculum must be enriched by including the contributions of the "excluded voices" of women and minorities.<sup>1</sup> Another principal speaker, Florence Howe of the State University of New York, cautioned the audience that the University of Delaware, like other American universities, still had much to do to ensure women's equality. To prove her point, she noted that only twelve percent of the University of Delaware's current women students were majoring in fields not traditional for women.

Those calls for further accomplishment came at a time when the University had already adopted structures, procedures, and policies aimed at assisting women and rectifying inequities. Affirmative action was the law of the land. The Commission on the Status of



*Several small-group discussions of themes were held as part of the University's 150th anniversary symposium on women in 1983.*

Women, at the outset of its second decade in 1978, had added an administrative arm called the Office of Women's Affairs, managed by Mae Carter. The office assisted women with job-related problems and created and coordinated a wide variety of support services. The Office of Women's Affairs was perhaps best-known to students and faculty as the sponsor of the Women of Promise and Women of Excellence dinners, held annually to honor and encourage outstanding women undergraduates and graduate students, respectively. The Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program, having earned a permanent place among the University's academic programs, was reaching over 1,000 students a year with a wide variety of courses and was available to undergraduates as a minor academic field. The program had also begun—and opened to the campus community—a weekly, lunchtime lecture series on topics of interest to women.

The existence of those institutional structures, each led by zealous and capable people, was not enough to maintain a

momentum of positive change. The faculty was disheartened to see that the women undergraduates of the 1980s expected that the gains made by women during the 1960s and 1970s would necessarily continue into the future without further effort on their part. Meanwhile, the statistical data published annually by the Commission on the Status of Women suggested that the much-touted progress of the recent past was more apparent than real. In the fall of 1984, for example, when women outnumbered men among the University's undergraduate body by fifty-seven percent to forty-three percent, women constituted only twenty-three percent of the faculty—a ratio that, in spite of affirmative action, had remained stubbornly consistent for a decade.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the proportion of tenured and tenure-track women in the faculty had actually *decreased* from twenty-two-and-a-half to twenty percent of the total faculty between 1975 and 1982. Nor had great breakthroughs occurred in the University's administrative ranks, where only sixteen percent were women.



*Jeraldine Trabant (center) shares a toast with Elizabeth Dyer (left) and Anna J. DeArmond (right)—retired faculty who began their careers at the Women's College—during a reception to celebrate the University's 150th anniversary, held November 11, 1983.*

The disparities were even more extreme regarding black students and faculty. Black women faculty accounted for an astonishingly low percent of the University total.<sup>3</sup> In 1983, women outnumbered men among black students at the University 339 to 278; but whereas there were thirty-five black male faculty, there were only eleven black women in a University faculty of more than 700 persons. Opportunities for black students to find role models in the faculty were few, but for black women, the problem was especially acute.<sup>4</sup> The first black woman to become a full-time member of the faculty was Hilda Davis, who joined the Department of English in 1965 as a non-tenure-track instructor and taught the University's first course on African-American writers. More recently, Gloria Hull, who taught in the English department from 1979 to 1988, Carole Marks, a sociologist in the Black American Studies Program,



*Professor James E. Newton presents an award to Hilda A. Davis, pioneer black faculty member at the University, as part of a symposium entitled "Black Presence at the University of Delaware," held in spring 1984 as part of the University's 150th anniversary commemoration. At left is former University academic counselor Jean Stanton.*

Patricia DeLeon, a biologist, and Barbara Williams, an astronomer, have been among the University's most prominent black scholars.

The intractability of social change demonstrated by those statistics showed that the quest for women's equality had barely begun. The formal victories that had led to the creation of structures such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program had come rather easily, but using those structures to change conditions for women and attitudes about women's place in the University was proving more difficult and tedious. The scope of the problem was so broad that it could not easily be contained in any one theory or any one set of actions. Securing justice for women was a goal that depended on a myriad of subjective perceptions, personal objectives, and feelings of self-worth that transcended statements of University policy. Men and women students continued to be distributed in traditionally skewed fashion among the University's ten colleges. Statistics consistently showed that, although women came to the University with higher S.A.T. scores than men, men were more likely to elect majors in subject areas that would earn them greater respect and money than those chosen by women.

Analyzing the statistical data on sex and career choice in the 1980s is analogous to deciding if a glass is half empty or half full. In the College of Engineering, for example, whose graduates consistently rated at the top of the starting salary scale for all University of Delaware programs, women were slowly making inroads. As recently as 1967, no women graduated from that college; ten years later, the graduating class included nine women; and by 1982, fifty of the college's 305 graduates were women. Optimists who favored women's entry into better-paying professions could point to a steady, healthy gain. On the other hand, the great majority of men and women students continued to follow traditional professional paths. In 1982, the overwhelming majority of engineering majors were still men, while ninety-eight percent of the graduates in the College of Human Resources (successor to Home Economics) were women, as were ninety-five percent of those who majored in elementary education. The most significant area of change during

the 1970s was in the College of Business and Economics, where the number of women graduates rose dramatically from five in 1967 to 228 by 1982, when women represented forty-five percent of those graduating with majors in business administration or accounting.<sup>5</sup>

Statistics revealed that forces were at work reshaping some disciplines to make them more gender-neutral and depriving others of their former lock on large numbers of women students. The most noteworthy example of the latter phenomenon was in the College of Education. Although women remained the overwhelming majority of elementary education majors, the total number of people preparing for careers in that field declined markedly during the 1970s. In part, this shift represented students' reaction to the declining demand for elementary school teachers, but another significant factor was the expansion of opportunities for women in other fields, such as business administration, which offered more prestige, higher pay, and greater chances for advancement.

The most complex reaction to the shifts in women's career options occurred in the field of home economics. From the earliest days of the Women's College, the faculty in home economics had conceived of their field primarily as pre-professional training. Even in the face of evidence that the overwhelming majority of home economics majors used their education in the home rather than in the work place, Amy Rextrew and Irma Ayers, whose consecutive terms as heads of home economics ran from 1929 to 1972, justified their field on the grounds that it trained students for jobs in industry and teaching. But, they had to acknowledge that many students majored in home economics as a prelude to homemaking.

In the early 1920s, the home economists had established a "Home Management House" near Robinson Hall, where groups of senior majors put to the test their training in food preparation, sewing, and other home-related skills. For the first several decades of its existence, it was highly popular with students. The opportunity to move from the residence hall into a homelike setting marked a significant step toward the responsibility of managing one's own home. But, by the 1970s, as the profiles of

home economics majors changed, the Home Management House experience had lost its glamour. The newer students were planning careers outside the home. Some were already married women who had more than enough practice maintaining their own homes while they attended college. They did not appreciate a requirement that forced them to leave their families to spend several weeks living with a group of fellow students much younger and less experienced than they were. As these negative reactions mounted, the college decided to abandon the requirement, and the house was converted to other purposes.

Home economics was changing in other respects as well. During the years of Dean Irma Ayers' administration between 1948 and 1972, the college abandoned its cramped quarters in Robinson Hall for the spaciousness of the new Alison Hall (1954), which offered much-improved equipment and research facilities. The college began a modest graduate program in the 1950s and enrolled its first full-time graduate student in 1962. Programs in child development and in marriage and the family were added to the curriculum. During those years, the men who ran the University were content to remain fundamentally ignorant of what went on in this college, viewing it as an inexpensive, but necessary, enterprise that posed no threats and made few demands.<sup>6</sup> Dean Ayers insisted that her faculty project a conservative, well-groomed image, designed to keep top administrators content.<sup>7</sup>

By 1972, when Dean Ayers retired, the concept of home economics was undergoing dramatic change across the country. The food and textile industries had become high-tech enterprises and commercial care of small children and the elderly were subjects of increasing national concern. As the fields embraced by home economics began attracting more research support, men moved into them. In 1976, the college hired its first male dean, Alexander Doberenz, a nutritionist. Dean Doberenz was soon to discover that at Delaware, as elsewhere, the home economists were arguing among themselves about renaming their college. He moved quickly to resolve this divisive issue, and, in 1978, the unit was renamed the College of Human Resources—a title with no

female or home-centered connotations. Soon, other men were hired to fill important roles in the college, one as its first named professor, others as department chairpersons. Women faculty watched those changes with ambiguous feelings. They applauded the greater freedom to dress and act as they chose, but they were dismayed that the drive to add men to the college deprived women of positions of authority.

The College of Nursing was less affected by change in the 1970s. Nursing had originally been established at Delaware in 1955 as a major within the College of Arts and Science. By 1966, when it became a separate unit of the University, 210 students were enrolled in the program. In June 1972, as it moved into new quarters in Madeline O. McDowell Hall, named in honor of the program's founder, its students numbered 435. But, as medical schools revoked the quotas that had previously restricted women's entrance and as other professional opportunities, both inside and outside the health-care professions, became available to women, fewer undergraduate students chose to major in nursing. Enrollment reached a peak of 883 in 1982 but declined to 374 by 1990, before beginning a modest upward climb. As it responded to the threat posed by low enrollment, graduate programs were instituted to attract practicing nurses, courses were offered in southern Delaware, and an aggressive recruitment campaign was undertaken, especially targeting older students. Edith Anderson, who became dean of nursing in 1976, concentrated on maintaining enrollments and raising the faculty's academic credentials to bring the college into conformity with other campus units.<sup>8</sup> As in the case of home economics, the predominance of women in the College of Nursing was seen as a serious liability in matters of funding, salary levels, and respect within the University. That reality forced deans of both Nursing and Human Resources to adopt various strategies designed to win equal support for their units in University decisions concerning money, space, and enrollment. Professionally oriented colleges that traditionally attract a preponderance of men have not faced such an uphill struggle.

The College of Education has faced many of the same struggles for students and recognition as Home Economics/Human Resources and Nursing. Education is similar to them in that its primary, historic role has been to prepare students—mostly women—for service-oriented, poorly paid careers. In the days before many women with children contemplated careers that kept them at work year-round, teaching offered an attractive choice of profession. As with nursing, national trends in women's careers have changed the milieu in which the College of Education must compete. The downturn in the birth rate during the 1960s also had a negative impact on enrollments in the College of Education.

In the 1970s, the College of Education was restructured to emphasize research and graduate study as well as the preparation of teachers. This restructuring was intended, in part, to shake off the college's female-oriented image, but it was the student body in education, not the faculty, that was preponderantly female. In the mid-1970s, only sixteen percent of the faculty in education were female. The College of Education has been an anomaly with respect to sex: It has had the faculty male-female profile of a college of arts and science coupled with a student profile that more closely resembled a college of home economics. The College of Education was the first at the University to hire a female named professor, Sylvia Farnham-Diggory, a specialist in reading disabilities who came to the University of Delaware in 1976; but leadership positions in the college have remained in the hands of men.

While those professionally oriented colleges with high female enrollments were adjusting their programs in response to women's changing career goals, the College of Arts and Science emerged as the primary unit for teaching about women. By the mid-1980s, its Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program earned a unique place among the college's offerings. In 1986-87, a typical year in that decade, the program offered fifty-four courses to 1,400 students, who represented ten percent of the entire undergraduate student body. This was accomplished in spite of the fact that no faculty were assigned exclusively to the program. Part-time faculty were hired to teach the introductory courses, while others from a wide

variety of departments, both men and women, taught the more advanced courses, usually cross-listed so that students could choose to take those courses for credit in women's studies or in English, philosophy, history, psychology, sociology, anthropology, or whatever discipline the teacher represented. The fact that faculty could neither hold a primary appointment in women's studies nor be granted tenure in the field proved to be more a strength than a weakness because it spread responsibility for the program across many academic departments.

The goal of women's studies was not to become a new discipline but to encourage the expansion of existing disciplines to include women's perspectives and to encourage research related to women. The program has brought together faculty interested in women's issues at its weekly research luncheons, and its seminars introduce several leading scholars to the Delaware campus each year. Women's studies also has developed a visiting scholars program through which departments can add a distinguished woman scholar from another university for a full year. Among the outstanding women who have participated in this program have been Elaine Showalter, a leading literary critic; Jessie Bernard, doyenne of sociology; and Darlene Clark-Hine, a pioneer in the field of black women's history.

During the 1980s, the emphasis in women's studies moved from creating special courses about women in various disciplines to the concept of an "inclusive curriculum" that includes material by and about women in all relevant courses. Toward that end, Margaret Andersen, a sociologist, and Sandra Harding, a philosopher, both of whom served terms as director of women's studies, led a month-long faculty development seminar in January 1984 for eight social science faculty, seven of whom were men. The seminar focused on strategies for revising introductory-level courses to cut across gender lines. This concept, called mainstreaming, has taken on greater meaning as the University has sought ways to address students' lack of knowledge about people different from themselves. In 1988, in response to a recommendation from a committee charged to study undergraduate education, the University

adopted a requirement that all undergraduate students take at least one multicultural course dealing with issues of race and gender. By the late 1980s, the number of faculty who regularly taught about women and racial issues was sufficiently large that the multicultural requirement was implemented with surprising ease.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the University made a concerted effort to hire women into more responsible positions in non-traditional fields. In 1973, Helen Gouldner came to the University from Washington University in St. Louis to become chairperson of the Department of Sociology. She was the first woman appointed as chairperson of a department in the College of Arts and Science since Harriet Baily headed the Department of Art in the 1940s. A year later, Professor Gouldner was named dean of the College of Arts and Science—the University's largest and most diverse college, encompassing roughly half of the institution's faculty and students. She occupied this important post for seventeen years and was succeeded by another woman, Mary P. Richards, a scholar in Old English. In 1985, Carolyn Thoroughgood, a University of Delaware alumna who taught nutrition in the College of Human Resources and later in the College of Marine Studies, was chosen dean of the College of Marine Studies.

Another non-traditional area in which University women have shown significant progress has been athletics. Although excluded from intercollegiate competition previously, University of Delaware women's athletic teams moved swiftly into top contention among



*Barbara Kelly, the last chairperson of the Women's Physical Education Department, rose to become associate dean of the College of Physical Education, Athletics, and Recreation.*



*Mary Ann Hitchens, associate director of intercollegiate athletics, holds the East Coast Conference Commissioner's Cup awarded to the University seven times for its outstanding women's athletic teams. With her are Susan McGrath-Powell, coach of track and field, and Joyce Emory Perry, basketball coach.*

NCAA Division I schools during the 1970s. In 1978, the women's field hockey team took second place nationally among the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) teams. Three years later, the women's lacrosse team began a winning streak that culminated in its becoming the only team of either sex in the University's history to win an NCAA Division I championship. In 1992-93, the women's volleyball team was the North Atlantic Conference champion. The University of Delaware women's athletic program won the East Coast Conference Commissioner's Cup for all-around excellence seven of the nine years that the University participated in that conference.

Though there is active progress by the University toward the achievement of gender equity and Title IX compliance, an NCAA survey reported in the spring of 1992 that sixty-four percent of University of Delaware athletes are men, yet they receive over eighty percent of the available funds.<sup>9</sup> While this disparity is partly

due to the unusually high cost of outfitting the football team, before the Bob Carpenter Sports/Convocation Center opened in 1992, the locker rooms for women athletes were more crowded and generally less satisfactory than those for the men.<sup>10</sup>

The University athletics program provides an excellent benchmark for assessing the position of women throughout the University in the early 1990s. On the one hand, spectacular gains have been made toward achieving sexual equity; on the other hand, there is still room for improvement. The concept of gender equality itself is subject to different interpretations, depending on whether it is perceived as an equality of opportunity or an equality of result. The fact that women are not the same as men was used for centuries to justify severe limitations on what they said or did. It is one thing to open the doors of learning to women and to offer them the opportunity to model their lives and careers on those of men. It is another to stretch well-established educational systems and ways of thinking to include women on their own terms. The resolution of the complex issues that arise from these considerations remains the unfinished business of the women's movement not only in universities but throughout society.

During the 1980s, the University of Delaware responded to several key recommendations from the Commission on the Status of Women. In response to a federal mandate, the University adopted a strongly-worded policy on sexual harassment, and President Trabant demonstrated his commitment to its goals by firing a vice president who failed to live up to its principles. After years of complaints from University personnel regarding lack of day care, arrangements were made whereby the Newark Girls Inc. Child Care Center would accept employees' pre-school children into its program. Better lighting was installed along pathways and in campus parking lots to improve nighttime safety, and police call boxes were installed in conspicuous locations throughout the campus. These initiatives did not solve completely the problem of child care for University students and employees, nor did the brighter lights eliminate the threat of rape, but the commission's

persistence did succeed in encouraging the campus community to address issues that affect women most seriously.

In 1990, women constituted nearly fifty-six percent of the University's undergraduate students, forty-seven percent of its graduate students, and thirty-three percent of its full-time and part-time faculty. The increasing number of women who are studying for the Ph.D. degree at the University promises that the pool from which faculty will be drawn in the future is approaching parity between the sexes. During the 1980s, the proportion of tenured women faculty increased from fourteen to nearly nineteen percent of the total. In 1991, the University Faculty Senate adopted a parental leave policy that offers faculty parents the latitude necessary to meet a promotion schedule that was originally designed for married men and single women. Yet in 1992, only eleven percent of the University's full professors were women, a percentage that is still below the median for comparable American institutions of higher education.<sup>11</sup>

The number of women occupying senior administrative positions has continued to grow. In 1980, Susan Brynteson became the director of libraries and successfully coordinated planning for an addition to the Morris Library that has more than doubled its size. In 1989, Maxine R. Colm, an experienced personnel administrator from the New Jersey state system of colleges and universities, was named vice president for employee relations. In 1994, Susan J. Foster was promoted to the new post of vice president for information technologies. Barbara L. Kreppel and Judith Y. Gibson both serve as assistant vice presidents.

Women's achievements have not always been so readily welcomed. The research findings of feminist scholars continue to provide seeds for debate in some academic disciplines, nor has the perception that a quota system is at work in the selection of women administrators and faculty disappeared. Although women's share of policy-making positions has increased, their voices are still largely absent at the highest level.

Florence Geis, professor of psychology, said unconscious perceptions are a major cause of ongoing discrimination. Professor

Geis performed a host of psychological tests that demonstrate that both sexes have been conditioned by their experiences to give greater credit to males than females, even when both sexes perform equally.<sup>12</sup> The findings of her studies and those by other scholars have been collected in a pamphlet called *Seeing and Evaluating People*. The Office of Women's Affairs has distributed over 2,000 copies, both within the University of Delaware and beyond,<sup>13</sup> but it is difficult to gauge its impact because, as Professor Geis found, perceptual biases are unconscious.

Dramatic disparities continue to define career choices for both sexes in the 1990s. At the University of Delaware, women remain the overwhelming majority of students in the colleges of Education, Nursing, and Human Resources, whereas men constitute nearly four-fifths of undergraduates in the College of Engineering. The continuation of strong professional stereotypes based on sex has several explanations. Beginning with puberty, girls are less likely than boys to excel in mathematics, a fact that appears to be linked to *nurture* rather than to *nature*. While women tend to shun mathematics and come to college unprepared to pursue scientifically-based disciplines, studies also show that women prefer jobs that involve working with people over those that focus on abstract ideas and purely intellectual work, even when the latter offer higher pay. This theory would explain why women have gravitated to business careers but not to engineering, in spite of the fact that both of these fields require preparation in mathematics.<sup>14</sup>

Women's increasing presence in the College of Engineering is of recent origin. The tiny handful of women who ignored social prohibitions to study engineering in the 1960s found their college experience and their entry into the job market fraught with discouragement and difficulties. By the 1970s, socially imposed barriers had begun to recede, but as late as 1975, the college remained ninety-six percent male. By the 1980s, the climate for women had become less chilly. Engineering has, however, remained an unusual career choice for women, not only because fewer women acquire the necessary preparation, but because there are very few women role models. Most women who go into the field

receive encouragement from a male engineer in their families, but when they get to college, they see few women. For example, in the fall of 1990, the College of Engineering at Delaware employed only three, a mere four percent of its total faculty, the lowest percentage of women faculty among the University's ten colleges. In 1992, however, the college took an important step toward improving conditions for women students with the inauguration of the Women in Engineering (WE) Industrial Mentors Program, the impetus for which came from several women engineers employed by local corporations. By bringing women engineering majors and practicing women engineers together, the program seeks to overcome the effects of sexual imbalance in the current faculty.

Compared to many women in the years before the women's movement, most of today's students seem neither afraid to appear intelligent nor unable to approach their college studies with the same drive toward career goals that characterize male students. Having achieved so much, women might easily become complacent in the expectation that the movement toward equality will continue under its own momentum, but the history of women at the University of Delaware suggests otherwise. Twice before, in the period from 1872 to 1885 and in the years from 1914 to 1945, women appeared to have established a firm place in the University only to have it either swept away or seriously eroded. One senior faculty member who has participated in the revival of women's place at the University remarked during an interview for this book, "Equality is something you fight for every day."<sup>15</sup> Universities may take the lead in making society change, but they also reflect society. And, as this history of one university has shown, it is only through the efforts of inspired, persistent, capable individuals that universities move closer to the still-elusive ideal.

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OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

*Readings in Delaware History*

*Wilmington, Delaware: Portrait of an Industrial City, 1830-1910*

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