"...Resolved that I should be a man:"

Rutgers College Goes Coed

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THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
RUTGERS
PREFACE

"...Resolved That I Should Be a Man:"
Rutgers College Goes Coed

Guest Curator: Melanie Cooper, Rutgers College Class of 1997

Looking around the campus now, it is hard to imagine that once upon a time Rutgers College was an all male institution. Melanie Cooper's lively exhibition tells the story of that point in time when Rutgers College debated and decided to admit women. Through the use photographs, memorabilia, letters, yearbooks, clippings, questionnaires, and other printed materials, Melanie documents the coed movement at Rutgers and places it in the historical context of the 1960's and 1970's.

As the 25th anniversary approached, the College decided to set aside the entire year for events, "1997-98 Celebration of Women at Rutgers College." Melanie was hired as coordinator of the celebration. As part of her job, she was encouraged by Dr. Kurt Piehler to edit the transcripts of an oral history project conducted each Spring in 1993 to 1995 for the course "Women at Rutgers College" taught by Professor Mary Trigg. Melanie, who had taken the course, not only edited the oral histories, but she used these transcripts, and the rich source material in the University Archives, to write her Henry Rutgers Honors Thesis and to create this exhibition.

Special thanks are due to the first women who attended Rutgers College, to the Rutgers College Office of Student Life, the History Department's Oral History Project, to Tom Frusciano, the University Archivist, and to Janice Levin who mounted this exhibition.

Ruth J. Simmons
Curator of Exhibitions and
The Griffis Collection
Introduction

At each football game, and at most alumni gatherings, the alma mater is sung with the line, "Resolved that I should be a man." When it was written in 1873, these lines were appropriate. Today, however, it is questionable whether any students enroll to "become men," especially when women comprise over half of the college's population. The line from the alma mater is a throwback to days that were not so long ago in years, but that existed in a different era of Rutgers history.

If it weren't for those lyrics, one might think that women students have always enrolled at Rutgers College. Women occupy positions in student government, they are editors of the *Daily Targum*, and earn the highest academic honors in equal numbers to men. Women are now 52% of Rutgers College students, but any woman who applied to Rutgers College prior to 1972, despite their academic record, would have been denied admission.

In 1968, when there was talk of Yale and Princeton going coed in the next academic year, Richard McCormick, Professor of History, Arnold Grobman, Dean of Rutgers College, and Remigio Pane, Professor of Italian discussed the idea of coeducation at Rutgers College. This soon turned into a campaign to allow women into the college. As an all-male school for 206 years, no one expected such change to occur overnight, and braced themselves for three years of studies, debates, and planning.

The Rutgers College faculty quickly approved a resolution to institute coeducation at Rutgers College, but to be put into effect, it would have to be approved by the Board of Governors. Margery Somers Foster, the Dean of Douglass College, would give it her every effort to ensure that did not happen. She felt that women at Rutgers College would not receive the nurturing they required, and feared that her college would also be forced to admit men if coeducation was
approved across town. It was her successful campaigning that delayed the entrance of women until 1972.

When the Board of Governors approved coeducation for Fall 1972, the faculty and administration was faced with a year of evaluating existing programs to ensure that they would be equal for both sexes. Athletics, fraternities, residence halls, and health services were the most discussed: A women's athletics program did not begin until 1974; most fraternities allowed women to join as "little sisters;" residence halls were either single-sex, coed by floor, or coed by room; and a part-time gynecologist was added to the staff of the health center. Most changes were minimal and were improved on as needed over the next few years.

When women arrived in September 1972, most wanted no special treatment. Though they were aware that they were the first women at Rutgers College, the women preferred to be just like any other student. They encountered some difficulties with that in their first years: Professors who treated them differently, limited athletic facilities, and a sheer lack of women on campus. At the time of coeducation, the Rutgers College faculty was 11% female, and there were 13 Rutgers College men to every Rutgers College woman. The numbers evened out rather quickly, but for the first few years they remained a noticeable minority.

Quickly, women's names began to appear in the Rutgers Targum as student leaders. In 1975 Melanie Willoughby was elected president of the Rutgers College Governing Association. Many noticed that the campus was cleaner and more relaxed with the addition of the women, and that men treated women more like equals than they had before coeducation.

Women are now 52% of Rutgers College, and the debates over coeducation seem foreign to many of today's students. This exhibit, "Resolved That I Should Be a Man: Rutgers College Goes Coed," looks at the total process of coeducation and its effects on the Rutgers College campus.


Rutgers University Archives.
Rutgers College

Queen's College was founded by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1766, and became the eighth institution of higher learning in the British colonies. After shutting down for a short time during the Revolutionary War, the College escaped financial difficulty through a gift of $5000 and a bell, later placed in the Old Queen's building. To show their appreciation, the Board of Trustees changed the name of the College in 1825 to honor the donor, Colonel Henry Rutgers. In 1864 Rutgers College became the land-grant college of New Jersey and continued its move towards becoming a university, which it did in 1924. The picture here shows typical Rutgers College students in the early 1940, all male and predominately white. With the dawn of World War II, enrollment took a swift dive as most college-age men joined the armed forces. After victory was declared, the tuition benefits of the GI Bill of Rights led to the rapid expansion of the College which continues today. The 1966 *Scarlet Letter* details the social life of a Rutgers College man only six years prior to coeducation.

Photograph of Rutgers College students, early 1940s.

Rutgers University Archives.

Douglass College

Since 1766, Rutgers College had been an all-male school, leaving the women of New Jersey no comparable opportunity for an extended education. The President of Rutgers College supported the idea of establishing a coordinate women's college, but claimed they could offer no financial support for its establishment. The New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs, in an effort chaired by Mabel Smith Douglass, campaigned successfully to open the New Jersey College for Women in 1918, on a campus close to Rutgers College. The photograph shows residents of the Spanish House on the Douglass campus in the 1930s. Mabel Smith Douglass became the first dean of the college, and in 1955, the college changed its name to honor her. The 1965 yearbook gives a rather stereotypical look at female college sophomores and juniors. As an all-women's college contained in a larger state university, Douglass remains a unique and prestigious school for women.

Photograph of Douglass College students, 1930s.

Rutgers University Archives.
Three Early Views of Coeducation

After the initial idea for coeducation was raised by Dean of Rutgers College, Arnold Grohman, and Professors Richard McCormick in 1968, the idea caught on quickly. And just as quickly, Dean Margery Somers Foster stated her opposition. As the dean of the all-women’s college, she had a vested interest in keeping Rutgers College all-male. The Home News article of 1970 examines Foster’s position on coeducation, and identifies her as “guarding Douglass’ dowry.” She felt that Rutgers College could not nurture women students, and that coeducation would be a mistake. She strongly believed in single sex education for college students, as shown here by the 1970 “Douglass Report,” the college’s response to Rutgers petition for coeducation, and in her response to a letter from Richard McCormick.

This December 1, 1969 issue of the Rutgers Targum illustrates the rise of student involvement in the question of coeducation at Rutgers College.


Rutgers University Archives.

Rutgers University In A Time of Change

The 1960s era of protest brought a new diversity to Rutgers University. The opening of Livingston College in 1969 brought coeducation to the University for the first time along with its urban education mission. This cartoon shows the changing faces of Rutgers students, including women. Both the 1969 Home News article and the 1971 opinion written by David Meiswinkle, Student Government Association president, show the growing publicity and attention -- both negative and positive -- that coeducation was receiving.

Cartoon, Rutgers News Service.
Rutgers College Office of Student Life.

“Governors Reject Entrance of Women to Rutgers College,” The Rutgers Newsletter, October 26, 1970.

Rutgers University Archives.
How Women Would Change Rutgers College

Coeducation would mean more than just allowing women to enroll at Rutgers College. All departments of the university would have to reevaluate their practices to be sure that women could be included, and if they could not, what would need to be changed to accommodate them. The Athletics Department was one of the most difficult to change -- a whole new program would need to be established and implemented, a task that took until 1974. Student groups too would need to determine their ability to help women find their place at the college, and gender discrimination was not to be allowed. These questionnaires were mailed to fraternities to ascertain their willingness to include women, and an overwhelming majority agreed to include women in their membership.

Letter from Albert Twitchell, Director of Athletics, to Howard Crosby, Dean of Students. January 21, 1969.
Questionnaires received from fraternities, Delta Upsilon, Theta Chi, Chi Phi.

Rutgers College Office of Student Life.

The Decision Is Made. Now What?

In September, 1971, the University Board of Governors approved coeducation for Rutgers College. For the next year, the administration, faculty, and students would be left with the job of planning for these women to ensure that any possible problems would be avoided. At the end of 1972, the last all-male academic year as evidenced by the 1972 Scarlet Letter, the question lingered: Would women change anything? Nancy Bazin, Professor of English, hoped that they would, and starting planning for a 1972-73 Rutgers Women's Series. Dean Bishop's letter to Marian Calabro hints at a historic change waiting in the wings in the coming academic year. Change would be inevitable, but what would the changes be?

Buttons from the 1970s Feminist Movement, On loan from Professor Phyllis Zatlin.
Rutgers College yearbook, Scarlet Letter, 1972, Rutgers College Office of Student Life.
Letter from Dean G.R. Bishop to Marian Calabro, January 20, 1972, Gift of Marian Calabro.

"Rutgers College is Going Coed! Be Prepared!" Flier distributed by Professor Nancy Bazin of the Rutgers College Department of English.

Rutgers University Archives.
Welcome Women

On September 6, 1972, the first women moved into Rutgers College dormitories, registered for Rutgers College classes, and participated in orientation activities including the annual Convocation in Kirkpatrick Chapel and freshmen reception at the President’s home. Despite the year of planning that preceded their arrival, no one could judge what might happen. Would a Rutgers College woman have to “resolve to be a man” to assimilate? The 1972 student handbook identifies coeducation as an “experiment,” and for many that was as much as they could expect. The New York Times article of September 10, 1972, covers the advent of coeducation at the College for a national audience, but neglects to interview any of the women themselves. Whether it was the change in residence hall atmosphere or change in classroom behavior, a change had indeed come. Rutgers College would never be the same.

The end of the 1972-73 academic year saw Rutgers College graduating its first women students. The New York Times recapped the year’s events and judged coeducation at Rutgers College a success. The year end report of Mettler Hall preceptor Elizabeth Kanter chronicles the difficulties of a coed residence hall, but highlights the benefits students receive from such an environment. After the first year proved successful, the concerns of those who opposed coeducation were proven unnecessary.

Photograph, Rutgers News Service.


Gift of Marian Calabro.


Preceptor year end report for 1972-73, written by Elizabeth Kanter, RC ‘74.

Rutgers College Office of Student Life.
A Woman’s Place Is At Rutgers College

The women students of Rutgers College wasted no time in becoming involved in student activities. And this was not as difficult as one might think: Though all Rutgers College student organizations were all male prior to 1972, their activities were mostly gender neutral. Many women also joined the not so gender neutral fraternities as full members or “little sisters,” and became involved in campus politics, or the popular Rutgers Community Action service group. Their assimilation as students of Rutgers College came rather easily as they ended 206 years of an all-male history.

Photograph of women in classroom, Rutgers News Service.
T-shirt, gift of Beth Lommel.

Shirley Krapf Sasor, RC ‘76, became the first female football manager in her junior year. She joined the team in her freshman year, and accompanied the team on their 1974 trip to Hawaii.

Photographs, rug hooking, and football program, on loan from Shirley Sasor.

Melanie Willoughby, RC ‘76, was conscious of being a trailblazer at the college, and became the first female Rutgers College Governing Association president in her senior year.

Photograph of Melanie Willoughby, Rutgers News Service.

The Legacy

On May 27, 1976, the first women to enter Rutgers College as first year students ended their four years of college. Melanie Willoughby addressed the graduates and guests as the debates over coeducation, and the questions of whether women could assimilate into the college culture were answered. Women had made their mark through becoming honors students as well as equal participants in student activities, and transformed the campus culture, and as most would say, improved it. By the incoming Class of 1977, the numbers of women admitted had risen greatly, and today, as seen in the 1997 Scarlet Letter, women are equally represented, and a vital component of Rutgers College.

Class of 1976 graduation program, Rutgers College Office of Student Life.
Graduation card, on loan from Sandra Stewart Holyoak.
Graduation pictures, on loan from Shirley Sasor.
Rutgers College yearbook, Scarlet Letter, 1976, Rutgers University Archives.

Rutgers College Student Handbook, 1974, Rutgers College Office of Student Life.
Rutgers College yearbook, Scarlet Letter, 1997, on loan from Melanie Cooper.
RUTGERS COLLEGE GOES COED

My father sent me to old Rutgers;
And resolved that I should be a man ...

For 206 years, those lines of the alma mater did not present much of a problem. When the proposal for coeducation was raised in 1968, many cited that last line as a joke regarding women entering Rutgers College. Would the women students of Rutgers College only learn to be men, or could Rutgers College properly educate and accommodate women? The environment of the college would undoubtedly be changed, leaving the school song neither reflective of the total population of the college, nor the education that one receives there.

Despite such controversies, and with the alma mater retaining its original lyrics, on September 6, 1972, a new chapter in Rutgers history began. Few at the school today realize the importance and significance of that day, yet with it came a different kind of student into the Rutgers College dormitories, post office, and dining halls: women. For the first time in its history, Rutgers College began its school year as a coeducational institution, and joined the majority of state supported schools that had recently done the same.

The events that led to this "quiet revolution" were not as calm as the women’s arrival might suggest. As a state university with a coordinate system that offered a men’s college, a women’s college, and a coeducational college, many found that to bring coeducation to Rutgers College would be an unnecessary move. This resulted in three years of questions, struggles, and planning before a new Rutgers College would emerge.

The suggestion of coeducation began with a casual conversation in 1969 between Remigio Pane, professor of Romance Languages, Richard McCormick, professor of History, and Arnold Grobman, Dean of Rutgers College. Many all-male colleges had shed their old admission standards, and as Yale, Princeton, and Lehigh opened its doors to women, the question became, why not Rutgers?

The reasons "why not" was soon expressed by administrators, faculty members, and a few students who saw coeducation as the "demise" of Rutgers College, and the entire University, for that matter. Boys and girls in the same dorms? In loco parentis rules had just been abolished five years earlier, and the establishment of coed dorms would raise new questions and regulations. How would women students fit into a classroom environment that had been for so

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1 This essay has been adapted from Melanie Janis Cooper, "Resolved That I Should Be a Man": A Comprehensive Study of Coeducation at Rutgers College," Henry Rutgers Honors Thesis, Department of History and Department of American Studies, Rutgers University, April, 1997. Ms. Cooper’s study is available in Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.
many years male dominated? Douglass and Rutgers Colleges had a cross-registration program, yet few students knew about it and very few took advantage of it. Coeducation would bring new issues to every aspect of college life, and there were those who felt it would only bring on problems more serious than the mistaken words of the alma mater.

Leading the opposition to coeducation was Margery Somers Foster, Dean of Douglass College. Quite understandably, Dean Foster viewed the admittance of women to Rutgers College as a threat to the existence of her college, but she also firmly believed that women at Rutgers College would not receive the nurturing that college aged women required. In the 1970s, each college at Rutgers University held its own faculty, and the faculty of Rutgers College had few women professors. Nor did the college have women in administrative positions, providing no immediate role models for women students. Also, if Rutgers was to go coed, would that suggest that Douglass would soon meet the same fate?

Dean Foster’s arguments were countered by those who initially suggested coeducation, as well as a majority of the Rutgers College faculty. The basis for their support centered on the recognition that students entering college had choices. Few students wanted to attend a single-sex school, and by maintaining its all-male population, Rutgers College was missing out on the best high school students. As a state school, Rutgers had an obligation to provide the citizens of New Jersey what they wanted, and the newly opened Livingston College did not have the scholastic reputation that many students were looking for. The brightest women looking for coed schools would have to choose another university, a severe loss to Rutgers College. The college stood to gain much by adopting coeducation, and in the changing times of the early 1970s, Rutgers had to change to survive.

When the proposal for coeducation surfaced, the Rutgers College Dean’s Office initiated studies to examine the feasibility of coeducation. Similar reports were also issued by Douglass College, as both colleges explored the future of their respective schools if Rutgers College was to go coed. Each academic and administrative department at Rutgers College was asked how coeducation might affect enrollment or operations. Most departments felt that women students would only enhance the classroom environment. Subject disciplines that traditionally had more women majors than men greatly favored allowing women into the school, thereby increasing their enrollments considerably. Administrative units such as the Dean of Students, the Student Center, and the Athletics department would have to make many changes to accommodate the new students, but none refused to participate, nor voiced opposition to coeducation.

The Douglass College report, published in July, 1970, included fifteen “Advantages of Separate or Coordinate Education for Men and Women,” written by Dean Foster in support of women’s colleges. These focused on both the social and educational benefits of keeping the sexes separate during the college years. Reasons such as “a more natural arrangement ... more serious study goes on under separate or coordinate education ... men and women may develop intellectually at a more rapid pace when they are not around each other constantly ...there is a correlation between coeducation and too early marriage ...” hinted at Dean Foster’s both antiquated yet feminist
views towards women’s education. Foster felt quite simply that women needed their own environment to flourish, and coeducation would not work. Douglass’ position on coeducation at Rutgers College was a firm negative.

The final decision on coeducation, however, would have to come from the Rutgers Board of Governors, a university and state appointed governing body that held the power to make decisions affecting the status of the colleges. Its first ruling on the coeducation issue took place on October 9, 1970, when the Board “endorsed the principle of coeducation” with the intent “to pursue its plans for the development of additional coeducational colleges in New Brunswick.” However, the Board does not accept the recommendation of the Rutgers College Faculty. Both Rutgers and Douglass College spent the following year producing reports that strengthen their respective positions on the matter, and bring the Board to a more conclusive decision than the one it provided in 1970.

And how did the students of the colleges feel about the possible radical change to their lifestyles? One former student stated, “There were greater social issues to be dealt with that were preoccupying the students’ time.” A majority of students on both campuses felt that coeducation would enrich the lives of Rutgers students, but very few felt it necessary to do anything to bring it about. A student run Rutgers-Douglass Committee for Coeducation formed in 1970 and organized a “Sleep-out for Coeducation,” and a 1971 rally, but both events were poorly attended. The Rutgers Targum featured continuous updates on the developments made by the administration regarding coeducation, and often conducted student opinion polls. Again, students were in favor of the idea, but a sense of apathy stifled any possible enthusiasm. It was left to the faculty and administrators on both sides to present this case to the Board of Governors for one final vote.

Undoubtedly, the final push for the approval of coeducation rested on a legal issue. The University of Virginia was entangled in a lawsuit that ruled their women’s school, Mary Washington College, was not sufficient in providing equal opportunities to women. Rutgers College and the University of Virginia were the last state supported, non-military, all-male schools, and if Virginia could be sued, so could Rutgers. Those fighting for coeducation began to sense this, and recruited the assistance of professors at the Rutgers-Newark Law School — including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, then a member of the faculty, now a Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Plaintiffs were recruited, and plans were put in action in the event that coeducation was once again denied.

Fortunately, no lawsuits were filed, and on September 10, 1971, the Board of Governors approved coeducation for Rutgers College, to commence with the fall semester, 1972. The year ahead was devoted to careful planning to involve women students in all departments, including student organizations. Many student organizations, though all-male, could be classified as gender neutral. For the most part, women would have no difficulties entering student culture, but organizations such as fraternities may have anticipated problems. A questionnaire was distributed to all fraternities, asking how they would approach the inclusion of women students.
in the fall. A large majority intended to admit women either as little sisters or full fledged members. However, including women as full members would jeopardized the chapter’s inclusion in the national fraternities, since many prohibited the membership of women. Fraternity members anticipated that the exclusive ways of their past would not be accepted in the newly coeducated Rutgers College, and they formed little sister programs to help ease the women into their freshman year.

While the fraternities went ahead with plans to accommodate the new students, other divisions of the university fell short in their planning. An athletics program for women was not established until late fall of 1972, and facilities were still inadequate. Rutgers College faced a severe lack of housing in the early 1970s, and freshmen women were sleeping in lounges in College Avenue dormitories, while women transfer students were placed on Livingston Campus. These cramped and dangerous arrangements continued late into the fall semester. Though female administrators were hired as new positions were created, no special attempt was made to hire new women faculty. Nor was there an extended welcome to those professors who wished to set up a women’s studies program at Rutgers College. Suggestions on how to adapt the classroom environment were few, and it was essentially left to the women themselves to establish a voice among their male classmates.

For all the planning and anticipation, women entered Rutgers College with few problems uncommon to first-year students. The 400 freshmen and 75 transfer women began their year just as any other students, getting involved in clubs, student government, and fraternities. Residence halls were busy with the newness of the school year, and for some, the new attraction of being coed. Women remained a minority in the classrooms for years past 1972, but their presence enriched and expanded the college experience for all.

Today, women account for 52% of Rutgers College students. Imagine if every one of those women were replaced by a man. Imagine if today every woman at Rutgers University (Livingston College excluded) was a Douglass College student. This was the Rutgers University that existed before 1972 — as one Board of Governors member described it, “a monastery at Rutgers and a nunnery at Douglass.” Though Douglass College exists and thrives today as a women’s college, coeducation at Rutgers College provided a much needed choice for both men and women students. Women have made Rutgers College home, and Rutgers College has given women an equal opportunity to achieve.

Melanie Cooper
Rutgers College, Class of 1997