

'A Well-Balanced Education': Catholic Women's Colleges in New Jersey, 1900-1970

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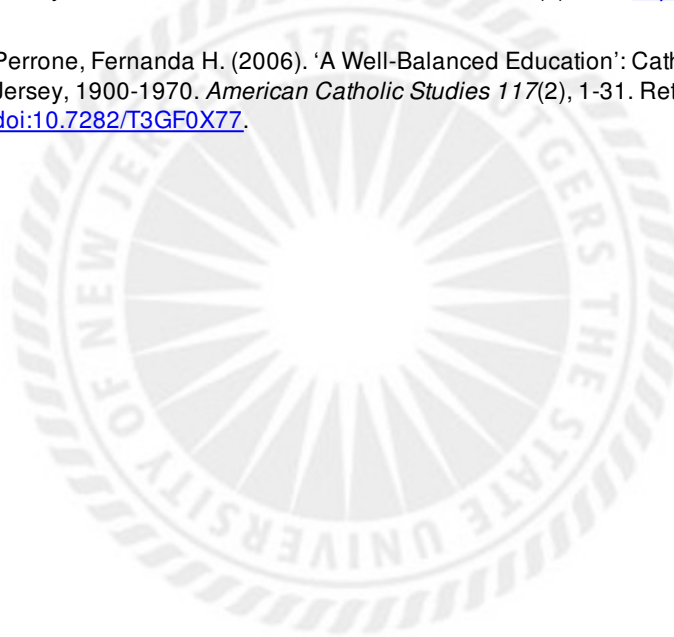
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Citation for this version and the definitive version are shown below.

Citation to Publisher Perrone, Fernanda H. (2006). 'A Well-Balanced Education': Catholic Women's Colleges in New Jersey, 1900-1970. *American Catholic Studies* 117(2), 1-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44194887>.
Version:

Citation to this Version: Perrone, Fernanda H. (2006). 'A Well-Balanced Education': Catholic Women's Colleges in New Jersey, 1900-1970. *American Catholic Studies* 117(2), 1-31. Retrieved from [doi:10.7282/T3GF0X77](https://doi.org/10.7282/T3GF0X77).



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Introduction

Catholic higher education for women in New Jersey began modestly in 1899, when the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth added collegiate program to their girls' academy in Morristown. By 1970, there were four Roman Catholic women's colleges in New Jersey granting baccalaureate degrees, as well as several junior colleges. The history of these institutions has received little scholarly attention. Indeed, Catholic women's colleges in general have only recently become a subject of historical inquiry. Notably, an edited collection, *Catholic Women's Colleges in America*, commissioned by the Lilly Endowment, was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 2002. In their broad evaluation of Catholic women's colleges, editors Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett chose to follow an earlier taxonomy originated by Mother Grace Dammann, President of Manhattanville College, in 1942, and later expanded by historians Edward J. Power and Mary J. Oates, CSJ.¹ According to this view, Catholic women's colleges in the twentieth century United States can be divided into two groups: a few superior, nationally-recognized institutions and a large number of undistinguished local colleges:

Several of the nascent Catholic institutions took as their models the elite secular women's colleges, such as Smith and Wellesley, proposing to offer their students the same rigorous liberal education with an admixture of theology and spiritual guidance. Others, usually urban and regional, saw their role as providing skills and training to young Catholic women of the working and lower middle classes, often the first in their families to attain a college education. These latter functioned as engines of social mobility for a Catholic

population moving beyond its immigrant roots but still devoted to its faith tradition. Their curricular offerings typically included courses in business, teaching, and nursing.²

¹See Grace Dammann, RSCJ, “The American Catholic College for Women,” in Roy Deferarri, ed., *Catholic Education in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1942), 179–180; Edward J. Power, *Catholic Higher Education in America: A History* (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1972), 313–317; and Mary J. Oates CSJ, introduction to *Higher Education for Catholic Women: An Historical Anthology* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1987).

²Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett, eds. *Catholic Women's Colleges in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 5.

The elite colleges refer primarily to Trinity College in Washington, D.C.; Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York; the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota; St. Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana; and a few others.³ All other colleges presumably fell into the "urban and regional" category. Schier and Russett acknowledge, however, the need for individual college histories and comparative studies to further advance our understanding of these issues.⁴

This study takes up their challenge by examining Catholic women's colleges within one state, New Jersey, during the period 1900 to 1970. By looking carefully at the development of the curriculum, the education of the faculty, and the composition of the student body at these institutions, I will determine if New Jersey's colleges truly fit the model of urban, regional, non-elite colleges. Furthermore, the New Jersey colleges will be compared to two of the so-called elite colleges, Trinity and Manhattanville, to see if the differences among these institutions can be understood in terms of the dichotomies of national/local, liberal arts/vocational, and upper-middle class/lower-middle class. By examining the "ecology" of Catholic women's colleges in one geographical area, I hope to create a model which can be used in other studies.

The Foundation of Catholic Women's Colleges in New Jersey

During the nineteenth century, New Jersey had a growing Catholic population. Irish and German immigrants swelled the number of Catholics from about 1,000 in 1,800 to 549,000 in 1850. In 1853, the Holy See established a new diocese at Newark, New Jersey which included all Catholics in the state, and James Roosevelt Bayley, nephew of Elizabeth Seton, founder of the Sisters of Charity, was appointed the first bishop of New Jersey. In 1881, the diocese was split in two with the seven populous northern counties comprising the diocese of Newark and the fourteen southern counties the new diocese of Trenton. At the end of the century, a fresh wave of immigration, primarily from southern and eastern Europe, brought a large influx of Catholics

³Mary J. Oates, "The Development of Catholic Colleges for Women, 1895-1960," *U. S. Catholic Historian* 7 (Fall, 1988), 420-424.

⁴Schier and Russett, *Catholic Women's Colleges*, 9.

including Italians, Slovaks, and Poles to the state.⁵ By this time, second-generation Irish and German immigrants could often afford to send their children to college. New Jersey boasted two Catholic colleges for men, Seton Hall in South Orange and St. Peter's in Jersey City.

Opportunities for women's higher education, Catholic or otherwise, within New Jersey were, however, virtually non-existent in the late nineteenth century. The state's major institutions of higher learning, Rutgers and Princeton, excluded women. Rutgers did not admit women until the opening of New Jersey College for Women (today Douglass College) in 1918. Normal schools located in the state's larger cities offered two-year training programs for elementary school teachers. Nationally, although women had access to single-sex colleges as well as some coeducational institutions, no Catholic college admitted women. However, several girls' academies operated by Roman Catholic sisters were beginning to offer post-secondary level courses to their older students. The Catholic girls' academy of the nineteenth century was a close relative of the European convent school. It also drew inspiration from such Protestant girls' academies as Mount Holyoke, many of which had developed into women's colleges earlier in the century. By 1890, the number of Catholic girls' academies in the United States exceeded six hundred. The girls' academies catered to a middle and upper-middle class clientele. While many of the academies focused on traditional female accomplishments, others offered a rigorous curriculum including science, Latin, and Greek.⁶

Established in 1860 by the Sisters of Charity, the Academy of St. Elizabeth was one of those that offered a challenging curriculum. One of several independent communities inspired by Elizabeth Seton's Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul, the Sisters of Charity of New

⁵*Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, s.v. "Roman Catholic Church," (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

⁶Kathleen Mahoney, "American Catholic Colleges for Women: Historical Origins," in *Catholic Women's Colleges in America*, 37-41. For more on girls' academies, see Eileen Mary Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women, 1860-1920* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987).

Jersey are characterized by their commitment to academic excellence, and belief that all children, rich and poor, have a right to education.⁷ In 1895, the leaders of the academy met with Henry Taylor, Director of Secondary Education of the New York State Board of Regents (at this time New Jersey had no comparable accrediting body), who reportedly affirmed that the school was already offering "two good years of collegiate work," and encouraged the sisters to begin a four-year collegiate program immediately.⁸ Indeed four academy students, joined by two new arrivals from Massachusetts and Illinois, formed the nucleus of the first class at the new College of St. Elizabeth in 1899. Incorporated in 1900, it was one of the first five Catholic women's colleges in the United States. In the early years, the College and Academy of St. Elizabeth had a joint catalog. The first of these lists regulations for both institutions together—for example, all were required to wear a "prescribed costume" of "black (plain, not figured goods)."⁹ Soon, the catalogs were published separately, and, in fact, the curriculum was clearly differentiated from the beginning.

In their design of the curriculum, the founders sought to emulate the best women's colleges in the country. Pauline Kelligar, SC, the directress of the academy, who became the first president of the young college, sought advice from Bernard McQuaid, bishop of Rochester, whom she had befriended while he was serving as president of Seton Hall. McQuaid, a leading conservative figure, was an outspoken advocate of separate education for Catholics. He was particularly concerned that women, who as the weaker sex needed special spiritual protection, were endangering their faith by attending non-Catholic colleges.¹⁰ He advised Kelligar that

⁷Rose Marie Padovano, SC, "The Influence of Elizabeth Seton Reflected in Dimensions of her Charism and Educational Ministry" (Doctor of Ministry Thesis, Drew University, 1984), 23-26.

⁸Blanche Marie McEniry, SC, *Three Score and Ten: A History of the College of Saint Elizabeth* (Convent Station, N.J.: College of St. Elizabeth, 1969), 13-14.

⁹*Catalog*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1900-1901, College of St. Elizabeth Archives, Morristown, N.J. [henceforward CSEA]

¹⁰Mahoney, 49-50.

there was no excuse for placing young ladies in non-Catholic colleges where there were better Catholic ones to which their children could be sent....You will have to keep the standard of literary work up to a high plane. Latin, Greek, mathematics, and Scientific Studies are the requirement of a college.¹¹

¹¹Bernard J. McQuaid to Pauline Kelligar, SC, April 10, 1903, reproduced in Mary Agnes Sharkey, *The New Jersey Sisters of Charity*, vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green, 1933), 229.

Indeed, the new college mandated four years of philosophy, Greek, and Latin, as well as rhetoric, English literature, French for students who did not pass an entrance examination, physiology, hygiene, and church history. The number of requirements meant that the courses students took each year were strictly defined and electives were limited. Trinity College in Washington, D.C., had a similar rigorous liberal arts curriculum. In 1900, the year that Trinity was founded, students could major in any one of eight subject “groups,” seven of which comprised some combination of classical and modern languages. A combined chemistry and mathematics group was added a few years later. Acknowledging the need for practical training, the founders introduced a pedagogy course in 1903. In addition to their major group, Trinity students were required to take science, English, history, and religion.¹² In fact, with the exception of religion, the curriculum at the new Catholic women’s colleges resembled that at non-sectarian women’s colleges. A typical freshman course at Vassar in the 1890s consisted of English, Greek, Latin, mathematics and hygiene.¹³

As well as promoting a rigorous academic curriculum, the College of St. Elizabeth, emphasized preparing women for the service professions. In opening the college, the Sisters of Charity had acknowledged the need to train women to become secondary school teachers: accreditation by the New York Regents qualified the college to prepare its students for teacher certification. By 1908, the college offered, as part of its bachelor of science curriculum, a two-year professional course in home economics designed for teachers and “those administering an institution or a home.”¹⁴ In addition, the college had established a school of education, the curriculum of which included the opportunity for student teaching at the academy, as well as offering courses in the history of education, pedagogy and educational psychology. Students in

¹²Columba Mullaly, SND, *Trinity College Washington, D.C.* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1987), 175-176.

¹³Joyce Antler, *The Educated Woman and Professionalization* (New York: Garland, 1987), 76-79.

¹⁴*Catalog*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1908, CSEA.

the School of Education were still required to fulfill the liberal arts requirements including upper level courses in philosophy and logic. Other more vocationally-oriented courses of study were a bachelor of music program—music could be a preparation for teaching and performance as well as a female accomplishment—and a three-year certificate program in secretarial science.

In keeping with Bishop McQuaid's advice, the Sisters of Charity tried to ensure that the faculty, initially almost exclusively members of the religious community, was well educated. One of the early faculty members, Sister Helen Angela Dorety, received a Ph.D. in botany from the University of Chicago; she raised funds and supervised the construction of the college's first greenhouse in 1911. Another prominent faculty member, Sister Marie José Byrne, later president of the college, received a Ph.D. in classics from Columbia in 1913. Her dissertation was entitled "Prolegomena to an Edition of the Works of Decimus Magnus Ausonius," the fourth-century poet and rhetorician. Reflecting the high academic quality of the college, in 1917 the Association of American Universities placed it on its approved list of institutions whose graduates were eligible for admission to higher degree programs at leading universities. In 1919, it was accredited by the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (later the American Association of University Women), which played an early role in setting standards for women's colleges. Of Catholic women's colleges, only Trinity, College of St. Catherine, and the College of St. Teresa in Winona, Minnesota, were approved by the Association at this date.¹⁵

In the early twentieth century, numbers of students attending the new college gradually increased. Table 1 indicates that in 1919, just over half of the graduating seniors were from New Jersey. The College of St. Elizabeth also drew students from New York, Pennsylvania, and New England, often from towns like Newton, Massachusetts and Waterbury, Connecticut, where the Sisters of Charity conducted schools. These local schools fed students into both the academy and the college. Blanche Maskell and Esther Kenna, members of the college's first graduating class,

¹⁵Marian Talbot and Lois Kimball Mathews Rosenberry, *The History of the American Association of University Women 1881-1931* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 429-433.

were both from Newton.¹⁶ Many students hailed from western New York, where Bishop McQuaid reassured Sister Pauline that “no young lady of the diocese will be allowed to go to any other woman’s college than Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station.”¹⁷ Some students came from outside the Northeast. A survey of places of origin for students attending the college between 1899 and 1910 includes localities as distant as Peoria, Illinois; Lewiston, Maine; Atlanta, Georgia; Jeffersonville, Indiana; Duluth, Minnesota; Monroe, Louisiana; Costa Rica; and San Domingo.¹⁸

College yearbooks can give a rough idea of the ethnic background of students, particularly where more precise student records are not accessible. This method has been used by Paula Fass in her study of ethnic differences in the choice of extra-curricular activities among students at New York high schools. Like Fass, I based my determination of ethnicity on surname, appearance, and in some cases, first name. Some surnames may belong to more than one ethnic group or cannot be determined at all, while some students probably came from ethnically mixed backgrounds.¹⁹ Bearing in mind these caveats, the yearbooks yield interesting results. The 1919 College of St. Elizabeth yearbook indicates that 41 percent of the graduating seniors had Irish surnames and another 41 percent had British (English, Scottish, or Welsh) surnames, while 14 percent had German or eastern European surnames. That many of those women with British-sounding surnames were actually of Irish extraction is suggested by comments like this one under Isabel Mandery’s photograph in an earlier yearbook: “Our sole representative of the Kaiser, Isabel has done much to make the Irish hold *the* German in high esteem.”²⁰

¹⁶Sharkey, *The New Jersey Sisters of Charity*, vol. 3, 215.

¹⁷Bernard J. McQuaid to Pauline Kelligar, SC, May 25, 1903 in Sharkey, *The New Jersey Sisters of Charity*, vol. 1, 230.

¹⁸“Significant Places: Students, 1899-1910,” CSEA. I am indebted to Mary Ellen Gleason, SC, Archivist, College of St. Elizabeth, for this reference.

¹⁹Paula S. Fass, *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 271, n. 13.

²⁰*Catalog*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1910, CSEA.

The cost of tuition, room, and board and the paucity of scholarships ensured that most St. Elizabeth students were from middle-class families. In 1919-20, tuition was \$150 per term, board was \$300, and rooms were \$100. These costs were comparable to those at elite Catholic women's colleges—those at Trinity were almost exactly the same, although students could choose a more expensive room.²¹ In addition, students were subject to numerous extra fees for libraries, graduation, art, music lessons, and other programs and services. Although the College of St. Elizabeth was open to students of all denominations, in reality, especially in the early years, the vast majority were Catholic, and a religious atmosphere prevailed:

While the institution is distinctly a Catholic one, members of any denomination are received, and no undue influence is ever exercised over the minds of the non-Catholic students. For the maintenance of order and discipline, however, all are obliged to conform to the external religious exercises of the institution.²²

In fact, many of the early students joined the Sisters of Charity after graduation. Of the first four graduates, both Blanche Maskell and Esther Kenna entered the order. Miriam Teresa Demjanovich '23, of Bayonne, New Jersey, entered the community in 1925 and died while a novice; her posthumously published *Greater Perfection* started a movement for her canonization.²³

In 1908, the Sisters of Mercy established a second Catholic women's college in New Jersey, this time in the central part of the state. Founded in Dublin, Ireland, by Catherine McAuley in 1831, the Sisters of Mercy had arrived in the United States in 1843 to minister to the needs of the new Irish immigrants. As well as caring for the poor and the sick, however, McAuley had sought to train young women for employment, eventually founding girls' schools and teacher training colleges.²⁴ The Sisters of Mercy were very active in New Jersey from 1873

²¹*Trinity College Year-book* [Catalog], 1919-1920, Trinity University Archives, Washington, D.C. [henceforward TUA]

²²*Catalog*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1900-1901, CSEA.

²³See A Sister of Charity, *Sister Miriam Teresa, 1901-1927* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1936).

²⁴Mary Jeremy Daigler, RSM, *Through the Windows: A History of the Work of Higher Education*

onward, establishing a girls' academy in Bordentown in 1886. When a plot of land in North Plainfield, then in the diocese of Trenton, was offered to the order, James A. McFaul, bishop of Trenton, recommended that the sisters expand their academy into a college. Upon its move to North Plainfield, the academy was duly rechristened Mount St. Mary's Academy and College and included six college students among the registrants.²⁵

The requirements and curriculum at Mount St. Mary's were similar to those at the College of St. Elizabeth. From the outset, the new college combined liberal arts with vocational subjects. Requirements for graduation included one ancient language, modern languages, English, mathematics, science, physical training, history, civics, economics, art, philosophy, and domestic economy; Catholic students were expected to take religion. The first catalog included a mission statement:

The College of Mount Saint Mary aims to give young women a well-balanced education, along physical, intellectual and moral lines. An effort will be made to so arrange and adapt the training that the graduates will be fitted to enter and to adorn any sphere of life. Special courses in Domestic Economy will prepare young women to become wise and efficient mistresses of homes. Training in Education, Music, Arts and Sciences will prepare them to enter vocational fields adapted to their special talents. Association with the Sisters will train them in the social graces and courtesies so essential to the leading women of all time.²⁶

Mount St. Mary's curriculum encompassed education in the liberal arts, as well as moral and vocational training. The new college sought to prepare well-rounded Catholic women who would be prepared for either marriage or career depending on what their fate might be. Notably, the curriculum included training in the social graces. The College of St. Elizabeth similarly reassured parents that not only were the sisters who ran the college responsible "for the moral and mental

among the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (Scranton, Pa.: University of Scranton Press, 2001), 8-9.

²⁵Marie LaSalle O'Hara, RSM, *The First Fifty Years* (Plainfield, N.J.: Sisters of Mercy, 1981), 64-73.

²⁶*Mount St. Mary's Catalog*, 1908, Georgian Court University Archives, Lakewood, New Jersey. [Henceforward GCUA]

culture of their daughters, but their acquisition and retention of the quiet and refined home manner.”²⁷

Unfortunately, data on students’ choice of majors is not available for the early years of Mount St. Mary’s College. In 1919, only one student, Naomi Kem Wisch of Plainfield, New Jersey, received a certificate in the department of home economics, while the other graduates received bachelor of arts degrees. Wisch’s name and address suggest that she may have been Jewish and a commuter. She was, however, an exception. In that year, of the nine graduates, five had Irish surnames and two British, and 33 percent were from outside New Jersey. Although I could find no statistics on numbers of students living in residence during this early period, when Mount St. Mary’s was almost completely destroyed in an overnight fire in 1911, college students were among those displaced from their rooms.²⁸

Although again, exact figures are not available, the early faculty members at Mount St. Mary’s were initially not as highly educated as those at College of St. Elizabeth or Trinity. At Mount St. Mary’s, the first faculty members, Sisters of Mercy Loretto Miller, Mary Callahan, and Honora Considine, were all themselves part of the first graduating class in 1912. These women quickly caught up with their peers, however. Considine went on to graduate study at Fordham University, becoming the first female religious ever to earn a graduate degree at a Jesuit university. Callahan also studied at Fordham, eventually earning a doctorate in mathematics and education in 1927; she subsequently did post doctoral work at Columbia and the University of Munich. Miller was granted a Ph.D. in philosophy and education from Fordham in the same year.²⁹

In the late 1920s, Fordham had nine extension centers in the metropolitan area, primarily

²⁷*Catalog*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1919-1920, CSEA.

²⁸O’Hara, *The First Fifty Years*, 90.

²⁹Mary Theresa McCarthy, RSM, *Courtly Mercy in 1924: The First Sisters at Georgian Court College* (Lakewood, N.J.: Georgian Court College, 1993), 10-14.

designed for part-time and summer students, particularly women religious. These centers were convenient, particularly considering ecclesiastical disapproval of sisters attending secular institutions.³⁰ During this period, Fordham and other Catholic universities greatly expanded their graduate programs, partly because of the need to educate faculty to teach in Catholic institutions. This rushed development led, however, to some doubts about the quality of Fordham degrees. In 1934, as the result of an American Council on Education study, Fordham was dropped from the American Association of Universities' designation as a university of complex organization, as well as from the Association's list of approved *colleges*. It was reinstated a few years later under the presidency of Robert I. Gannon, SJ.³¹ Furthermore, in the early 1930s, the Association of Collegiate Alumnae encouraged women's colleges to hire faculty members with advanced degrees from diverse institutions, which probably explains why neither Mount St. Mary's nor another prominent Catholic women's college, Manhattanville, was included in its list of approved institutions published in 1930.³² A high proportion of Manhattanville's faculty—50 percent in 1939-1940-- also had doctorates from Fordham.³³ Manhattanville College, founded in 1917 by the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was located in upper Manhattan until 1952.

³⁰Sister Bertrande Meyer, *The Education of Sisters* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1941), 69.

³¹Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 199.

³²See Mary Oates, "Sisterhoods and Catholic Higher Education," in *Catholic Women's Colleges*, 170.

³³*Catalog*, Manhattanville College, 1939-1940, Manhattanville College Archives, Purchase, New York [henceforward MCA] and Talbot, 430-431.

Mount St. Mary's developed a strong program in music, which in the 1930s was mandatory for all students. The program was founded by Gertrude McMullen, who entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1903 at age fifteen. As a nun, she attended the New York College of Music, earning a Ph.D. in piano and composition in 1924, followed by post-doctoral work at the University of Munich. While doing graduate work, she taught music at Mount St. Mary's College and organized the annual musicale, where students performed some of her compositions. Lay faculty member Nicola A. Montani was a founder of the Society of Saint Gregory of America, a branch of the British National Society for Liturgy and Music in the Roman Catholic Church. In 1920, Montani published *The Saint Gregory Hymnal and Catholic Choir Book*, a collection of hymns and liturgical music including his own masses and motets. Transcending its roots as a female accomplishment, music education was also embraced by elite colleges. For example, Manhattanville College organized the Pius X School of Liturgical Music in 1918 and began to offer a bachelor of music in 1937. Mount St. Mary's was accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1922.³⁴ In 1924, the Sisters of Mercy purchased Georgian Court, an estate in Lakewood, New Jersey and reopened under the name Georgian Court College.

Depression Years

Both Georgian Court and the College of St. Elizabeth experienced modest growth during the 1920s and 1930s, in spite of the crippling economic depression during the latter decade. Indeed, nationally the number of four-year Catholic women's colleges almost quadrupled, from ten to seventy-nine during this period, while student numbers increased from 1,500 to 23,000.³⁵ The reasons for this increase are complex, but certainly more Catholic women were seeking opportunities for vocational training, particularly in teaching. In New Jersey, the colleges grew

³⁴Mary Mariella Bowler, SSF, *A History of Catholic Women's Colleges in the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1933), 126-127.

³⁵Thomas M. Landy, "The Colleges in Context," in *Catholic Women's Colleges*, 66.

but remained small. New Jersey did not see the proliferation of Catholic women's colleges found in urban centers like Chicago or Milwaukee. At Georgian Court, the size of the graduating class increased from eight in 1919 to twenty-three in 1939, while at College of St. Elizabeth, it increased from thirty in 1919 to ninety in 1939. In comparison, the Manhattanville Class of 1939 had seventy students, while Trinity's graduating class had over one hundred students.

Between a half and three-quarters of the graduates at College of St. Elizabeth and Georgian Court were from New Jersey during this period (tables 1 and 3), while, according to college yearbooks, the majority had Irish or British surnames. The percentage of Italian-American graduates increased slightly at both colleges, illustrating the growing prosperity of this newer immigrant group (tables 2 and 4). The ethnic composition of the student body was actually quite similar at Trinity and Manhattanville during this period. However, the geographic distribution of students was much wider, suggesting that these larger, better-known colleges were truly national in character. For example, at Trinity in 1939, 20 percent of the graduates were from the District of Columbia, 47 percent from the Mid-Atlantic states, and 19 percent from New England, while the remainder were from the Mid-west, the South, or abroad.³⁶ Manhattanville was unique in that it attracted a largely upper and upper-middle-class clientele. Indeed, the Society of the Sacred Heart, the college's sponsoring order, had a tradition of educating women of the privileged classes.³⁷ Costs were higher—about \$1,000 per year in 1939-1940. Several students listed their addresses as New York City hotels and many lived on New York's prestigious Upper East Side. The vast majority of students had attended private girls academies run by the Society of the Sacred Heart, and several had attended boarding schools abroad.³⁸

All Catholic women's colleges were, of course, affected by the financial crisis of the

³⁶*Trinilogue*, 1939-1940, TUA.

³⁷Monika K. Hellwig, "Colleges of Religious Women's Congregations," in *Catholic Women's Colleges*, 21.

³⁸*Manhattanville Catalog*, 1939-1940 and *Tower* [Manhattanville Yearbook], 1939, MCA.

Depression years. The College of St. Elizabeth, which had hitherto been primarily a boarding institution, saw an increase in the number of commuters, which necessitated the building of a cafeteria, meeting rooms, and parking lots to accommodate them.³⁹ Georgian Court reduced tuition and board from \$1,200 in 1932-33 to \$450 in 1934-35, and replaced the professional catering staff in the dining halls with student waitresses, an early form of "work-study."⁴⁰ In spite of the need for vocational training during the 1930s, the two colleges continued to maintain strong programs in the Catholic liberal arts tradition. Although no longer requiring classical languages for graduation, the College of St. Elizabeth continued to mandate courses in English, history, and hygiene for the bachelor of arts degree, as well as twelve credits (three courses) in religion and twelve credits in philosophy. These required philosophy courses, which were taught by the Reverend Lalor R. McLaughlin, College Chaplain from 1914 to 1958, emphasized Catholic religious philosophy. In Epistemology, Thomas Aquinas' theory of scholasticism was "explained and justified," while Ethics included topics such as man's duty to God and the need and value of religion and worship. Courses in the religion department focused on Catholic life and worship. The college also offered electives in economics, psychology, political science and sociology. Courses in secretarial science were offered on a non-credit basis.⁴¹ Similarly, Georgian Court required religion, English, philosophy, social science, languages, and science for the bachelor of arts degree, although it did offer vocationally-oriented electives such as library science, pedagogy, and secretarial training.⁴²

The total number of faculty at Georgian Court increased from ten in 1919 to twenty-eight

³⁹McEniry, *Three Score and Ten*, 77-78.

⁴⁰Alan Delozier, "The Early History of Georgian Court College, 1905-1935 and its Relation to American Catholic Women's Education," *Concept: Graduate Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* (Villanova University) 19 (Spring 1996), 88.

⁴¹*Catalog*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1939-1940, CSEA.

⁴²*Catalog*, Georgian Court College, 1939-1940, GCUA.

in 1939.⁴³ The academic qualifications of faculty also improved during this period. Fig. 2 shows that just under one-third of the twenty-eight faculty members possessed doctorates. At College of St. Elizabeth, of thirty-seven faculty members teaching in 1939, more than half held doctorates, received from institutions such as Catholic University, Case Western Reserve, Fordham, Columbia, and the University of Chicago. At both colleges, the percentage of female religious with doctorates compared favorably to the overall proportion of faculty with doctorates (figs. 2 and 3).

In 1939, the Sisters of St. Dominic of New Jersey founded the third Catholic women's college in the state. This congregation originated with four sisters from Ratisbon (now Regensburg), Bavaria, who came to New York in 1853 to work with the German immigrant population. In 1881, members of the group living in Jersey City became a separate community with Catherine Muth as prioress. Originally an enclosed order with a tradition of learning, in 1906, the sisters adopted the Third Order Conventual Constitutions which allowed them more freedom of movement. In 1912, they moved their motherhouse and girls' academy, Mount St. Dominic, to Caldwell in western Essex County.⁴⁴ As early as the 1920s, Superior Mary Joseph Dunn was eager to establish a college attached to Mount St. Dominic to alleviate the burden of educating young sisters in outside institutions. In 1929, the Reverend Thomas J. Walsh, bishop of Newark, refused her request, claiming that the need for a Catholic women's college in the diocese was already adequately met by the College of St. Elizabeth. With the creation of the archdiocese of Newark and the independent diocese of Paterson in 1937, the sisters reminded the new archbishop that "there is now no other Catholic college for women in the archdiocese of Newark."⁴⁵

Approval was granted shortly thereafter.

⁴³*The Official Catholic Directory* (New York: P.K. Kennedy, 1919).

⁴⁴Lois Curry, OP, *Women after his Own Heart: The Sisters of Saint Dominic of the American Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Caldwell, N.J., 1881-1981* (New York: New City Press, 1981), 9-72.

⁴⁵M. Aloysius, OP to Thomas J. Walsh, May 15, 1939, Archdiocese of Newark/Caldwell College, R.G. 10.3, Msgr. William Noé Field Archives & Special Collections Center, Seton Hall University Libraries, South Orange, New Jersey.

Mary Joseph Dunn envisioned a four-year college where "sisters, as well as women from middle-class family backgrounds, could procure a broad-based liberal arts education in a Catholic cultural environment."⁴⁶ Caldwell was initially a very small college, with a limited number of faculty members with limited qualifications, and questionable accreditation status. It corresponded in some respects to Mary Oates' model of a local college, although it was definitely aimed at middle-class women and offered a primarily liberal arts curriculum. At the outset, Caldwell had seventeen faculty members, including thirteen women religious, two priests appointed by the archbishop to teach religion, and two lay women to teach speech and physical education. The college commenced with about fifty students (thirty-four lay students and seventeen religious), which rose to 170 in 1947, including one non-Catholic who was required to attend all religion classes.⁴⁷

By 1949, Caldwell had twenty-eight faculty members, 70 percent of whom were members of religious orders, and 11 percent of whom had doctorates—from Fordham, Catholic University, and Laval University in Quebec (figs. 1 and 4). Ninety-four percent of the graduates in that year were from New Jersey, the majority of whom were commuters; a 1947 report showed that about one third of the students lived in residence.⁴⁸ According to the Caldwell yearbook, as at College of St. Elizabeth and Georgian Court, almost three-quarters of the graduates of 1949 had Irish or British surnames, while 14 percent had German surnames (table 7). Tuition was comparable to other Catholic women's colleges: \$200 per year, with \$400 for board and \$100 to \$250 for private rooms.⁴⁹ In other words, the new college was probably not serving many women from working class or recent immigrant families.

⁴⁶Quoted in Curry, *Women after his Own Heart*, 129.

⁴⁷Curry, *Women after his Own Heart*, 130-132 and Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Caldwell College for Women, September 24, 1939, Caldwell College Archives, Caldwell, New Jersey. [henceforward CCA]

⁴⁸Report of the Dean, Board of Trustees Minutes, Caldwell College, June 3, 1947, CCA.

⁴⁹*Catalog*, Caldwell College, 1939-1940, CCA.

Like Georgian Court and the College of St. Elizabeth, Caldwell aimed to give students a well-rounded Catholic liberal education. The requirements for both the bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees included English, modern languages, philosophy, religion, social studies, and, at the outset, Latin. Career-oriented classes such as education and business administration were offered as electives. Students preparing for the bachelor of arts degree were required to take eighteen credits of philosophy and twelve of religion, out of a total of 128 credits. Because of the small size of the college, the faculty struggled to offer "dignified" major courses in areas other than the modern languages, English, and Latin.⁵⁰ As at the College of St. Elizabeth, philosophy courses focused on St. Thomas Aquinas and neo-scholasticism. For example, *Ontology and Cosmology* offered "a study of the fundamental concepts and principles of being in the light of scholastic teaching." *History of Philosophy I* covered "ancient or pre-Christian philosophy," while *History of Philosophy II* concentrated on patristic and scholastic philosophy. Social studies also had a religious dimension. In *Problems of Sociology*, "sound principles of Catholic philosophy and theology are applied to social problems such as family, state and marriage."⁵¹

Philosophy, theology and history were taught by the Reverend Paul Perrotta, OP, a Dominican priest holding a doctorate from Catholic University in church history, who arrived at Caldwell in 1941 and would remain until his death in 1969. This Dominican influence was something that set Caldwell apart from College of St. Elizabeth and Georgian Court. Although Dominican priests influenced the theology curriculum at other Catholic women's colleges such as Trinity,⁵² at Caldwell, Perrotta helped design the entire academic program, as well as developing extra-curricular activities. In addition to the Sodality of Mary and Mission Club found at most other Catholic women's colleges, he established a Dominican Third Order at Caldwell in 1945:

⁵⁰Faculty Minutes, May 31, 1940 and April 29, 1941, CCA.

⁵¹*Catalog*, Caldwell College, 1939-1940, CCA.

⁵²Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 301-302 and Mullaly, *Trinity College*, 273.

Dominican tertiaries were lay or associate members of the order.⁵³

Caldwell's weakness was shown by its failure to receive accreditation from the Middle States Association in 1949. In addition to questioning the library provisions and the fact that the administration of the college was not distinct from that of the religious community, the Middle States representatives were concerned with the lack of qualifications among the teaching faculty—the Association generally required that 20 to 25 percent of the faculty hold Ph.D.s to meet accreditation standards. The representatives recommended hiring qualified part-time instructors, as well as releasing more sisters to pursue graduate degrees. In addition, they criticized the emphasis on secondary school teaching and other vocational matters in the college catalog. As at other Catholic women's colleges, Caldwell's liberal arts curriculum was seen as a good preparation for secondary school teaching—in fact in the Class of 1949, over one third of the graduates chose teaching as a profession.⁵⁴ In response to the Association's report, Sister Raymond, the first academic dean of the college, launched a drive to build a new library, which opened in 1952, and two sisters a year were identified to pursue advanced study, while lay instructors were hired to meet the need for additional faculty. Official accreditation was granted in May 1952. In 1953, a research unit affiliated with the Dominican *Institutum Divi Thomae* of Cincinnati was established on campus, giving the faculty and upper-level students the opportunity to participate in medical research.⁵⁵

Post-war Changes

After World War II, Catholic higher education expanded tremendously, as returning veterans pursued new opportunities. Although Catholic women's colleges experienced long-term

⁵³Rita Margaret Chambers, OP, *Celebrating the Past, Shaping the Future: A Short History of Caldwell College, 1939-1989* (Caldwell, N.J.: Caldwell College, 1994), 9-15.

⁵⁴Dean's Report, May 16, 1949 and April 29, 1950, Board of Trustees Minutes, Caldwell College, CCA.

⁵⁵Chambers, *Celebrating the Past, Shaping the Future*, 28-40.

growth during this period, they did not share in this initial rapid expansion.⁵⁶ New Jersey's Catholic women's colleges remained small during the 1950s; in fact, the graduating classes of 1959 at Georgian Court and the College of St. Elizabeth were smaller than those of 1949. Nationally, with the re-emphasis on women's domestic role after peace was declared, the proportion of women in higher education dropped from a high of over 50 percent during the war years to only 30 percent in 1950.⁵⁷ Roman Catholic women were also attending New Jersey's public colleges during this period. In response to criticism that the state university, Rutgers, practiced discrimination against women, the president noted that 21.4 percent of the students at the New Jersey College for Women (NJC) were Catholic.⁵⁸ The college also had an active Newman Club for Catholic students. Tuition for out-of-state students at NJC was roughly equivalent to that at the state's Catholic women's colleges, although in-state residents paid about two hundred dollars a year less. Room and board were comparable at the College of St. Elizabeth and NJC, although significantly higher at Georgian Court.⁵⁹ Catholic students also attended New Jersey's six former normal schools, which, in the 1930s, had been transformed into four-year state colleges of education. Costs at these colleges were considerably lower than at NJC or private institutions.⁶⁰ For example, at Newark State Teachers College (today Kean University), numbers of Roman Catholic students grew after World War II and by 1969 outnumbered other religious groups.⁶¹

In the 1950s, Caldwell and Georgian Court were able to increase their enrollment slightly

⁵⁶Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 209-210.

⁵⁷Fass, *Outside In*, 157.

⁵⁸Robert C. Clothier to John J. Rafferty, May 28, 1948, Office of the President (Mason W. Gross), RG 04/A16, Box 89, Folder 4, Rutgers University Archives, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

⁵⁹William Hurt Huber and Marion E. Abbott, eds., *The College Blue Book*, 5th ed. (Yonkers, N.Y.: Christian E. Burckel), 1947, 120-121.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 224-225.

⁶¹Donald B. Raichle, *From a Normal Beginning: The Origins of Kean College of New Jersey* (East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1980), 235 and 295.

through offering vocational programs specifically designed to attract students. For instance, in 1952, Caldwell introduced an associate in arts degrees in secretarial science and liturgical music to give students who could not afford a four-year college the opportunity to attend a Catholic institution.⁶² In the early 1950s, Caldwell, Georgian Court, and the College of St. Elizabeth all established curriculum leading to certification in elementary education. According to the Caldwell dean, the new program met student interest and could be a means of increasing enrollment. In fact, the program was quite successful—by 1955-1956, 22 percent of the student body was enrolled in elementary education.⁶³ At Georgian Court, 24 percent of the graduating class of 1959 majored in elementary education (table 5). The College of St. Elizabeth introduced three courses meeting provisional certification requirements in 1951. Acting President Sister Hildegard Marie Mahoney wrote that the “critical shortage of elementary school teachers presents a problem and an opportunity for Catholic colleges for women.”⁶⁴ College of St. Elizabeth students desiring to become elementary school teachers were still expected, however, to complete all the requirements for a B.A. degree with a subject major.⁶⁵

Georgian Court had established a department of economics, which included courses in business administration, as early as 1941. In 1948, when the college’s departments were organized into four divisions, the Division of Social Sciences comprised courses in business administration, merchandising, and home economics. The College of St. Elizabeth introduced a bachelor of science degree in business administration in 1949, which included courses in economics, business, and secretarial science. Caldwell’s “social business” major, introduced the same year, consisted of similar courses. Courses in elementary education, business, and home economics could prepare women for their role in post-war society, which most likely would include a short period of paid

⁶²Dean’s Report, Caldwell College, May 25, 1954, CCA.

⁶³Dean’s Report, Caldwell College, April 27, 1955, CCA.

⁶⁴Report of the Regent, College of St. Elizabeth, May 2, 1952, CSEA.

⁶⁵President’s Report, College of St. Elizabeth, May 21, 1954, CSEA.

work, followed by an early marriage and years spent caring for children and running a household. Catholic women's colleges were not alone in this emphasis: in the 1950s, elite non-Catholic women's colleges such as Agnes Scott in Georgia and Connecticut College for Women offered courses in business, marketing, and secretarial science.⁶⁶ In 1943, Manhattanville introduced a bachelor of science program in nursing as a way of meeting the wartime demand for nurses. Although the program was popular—26 percent of the Class of 1949 took the degree—it was designed to be a temporary expedient and in fact stopped accepting new students in 1948.⁶⁷ Manhattanville also established a major in fine arts in 1951 and first offered a certificate in education in 1957. Only Trinity remained purely academic in its curriculum. Although it offered electives in education, there was no major or certificate program.⁶⁸

While making vocationally-oriented courses available, New Jersey's Catholic women's colleges maintained a strong liberal arts focus. With some small variations, they continued to require courses in English literature, philosophy, theology, modern languages, history, and science for all students. Classes freshman and sophomore years were largely prescribed, allowing students to fulfill graduation requirements before embarking on their major field of study. Furthermore, the majority of students still earned degrees in the humanities, social science, or science—80 percent at the College of St. Elizabeth and 56 percent at Georgian Court (table 5). At Caldwell, the major in social business was merged with social sciences in the late 1950s, while the associate's degree program was discontinued in 1964.

During the 1950s, the proportion of faculty members holding doctoral degrees increased at all three colleges (figs. 2, 3, and 4). As can be seen in fig. 1, in 1959, the percentage of faculty who were in religious orders was at its peak. Women's religious congregations were growing during the 1950s, and orders were devoting resources to the education of sisters to staff Catholic schools,

⁶⁶Fass, *Outside In*, 169.

⁶⁷Manhattanville College Catalog, 1949-1950 and *Tower*, 1949, MCA.

⁶⁸Trinity *Year-book*, 1949-1950, TUA.

colleges, and other institutions.⁶⁹ Indeed many sisters attended New Jersey's Catholic women's colleges, although they were not pictured in the yearbooks during this period.

At the College of St. Elizabeth and Georgian Court, over 20 percent of the faculty held doctorates in 1959. At Caldwell, where the proportion of sister-faculty members holding doctorates rose from about 11 to 16 percent between 1949 and 1959, the order made a deliberate effort to send members to a diverse selection of graduate schools.⁷⁰ In 1959, faculty members held doctorates from Fordham, St. John's, Catholic University, New York University, and the School of Sacred Theology at St. Mary's College. In comparison, during this period, 32 percent of the Manhattanville and 30 percent of the Trinity faculty held doctorates in this year. Trinity, however, benefitted from the services of part-time professors from neighboring Catholic University, most of whom held doctorates.

While New Jersey's Catholic women's colleges struggled to strike a balance between liberal arts and vocational subjects, the composition of their student bodies remained similar to that of earlier decades. At the College of St. Elizabeth and Georgian Court, the geographical distribution of students remained roughly constant (tables 1 and 3). Although the majority of graduates—about 60 percent—were from New Jersey, many of these women lived in residence rather than commuting. At the College of St. Elizabeth, two-thirds of the students lived in residence in 1959—in fact, the residence halls were full.⁷¹ Although Caldwell had a higher proportion of commuters, the number of students in residence was increasing. In the late 1950s, two houses were leased from the Dominican Sisters until a residence hall could be built. The cost of education rose as well during this period. In 1960, for example, tuition, room, board, and activities at Caldwell cost between \$1200 and \$1400 per year, a rate that, although lower than at elite Catholic

⁶⁹Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Women in the Vanishing Cloister* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 46-49.

⁷⁰Dean's Report, Caldwell College, May 25, 1954, CCA.

⁷¹President's Report, College of St. Elizabeth, 1959, CSEA.

women's colleges like Trinity and Manhattanville,⁷² was still probably out of reach for working-class families. On the other hand, all three colleges offered increased financial assistance during the 1950s. For instance, at the College of St. Elizabeth, eighty students received scholarships or grants-in-aid valued at \$43,647, while sixty students were given part-time employment on campus in 1955-1956.⁷³ Many of these scholarships, however, were restricted to graduates of particular Catholic schools.

The ethnic distribution of graduates did become slightly wider during the 1950s. At the College of St. Elizabeth and Georgian Court, the proportion of graduates with Irish and German surnames decreased, while the percentage of those with Italian surnames rose (tables 2 and 4). Although there were a few Latina students during this period, most were from Puerto Rico or were foreign students, as were the few Asian students. A few African-American students appeared as well: for instance, in 1953-1954, a Caldwell student was awarded a Catholic Negro Scholarship through the advocacy of Archbishop Richard Cushing of Boston.⁷⁴ In general, however, statistics on tuition, scholarships, residence, and ethnicity suggest that New Jersey's Catholic women's colleges continued to attract a predominantly middle-class Catholic clientele during the 1950s.

Seeds of Change: the 1960s

The 1960s were years of growth and prosperity for most Catholic women's colleges, although by the end of the decade, signs of change were clearly visible. Enrollment increased rapidly, almost doubling at the College of St. Elizabeth and Caldwell between 1959 and 1965.⁷⁵ Indeed, nationwide the average size of a Catholic women's college grew from 333 in 1953 to 690 in

⁷²In 1959, tuition, room, board and fees totaled \$1850-2150 at Trinity and \$2200 at Manhattanville. See *Trinity Year-book*, 1959, TUA and *Manhattanville Catalog*, 1959, MCA.

⁷³President's Report, College of St. Elizabeth, 1957, CSEA.

⁷⁴Dean's Report, Caldwell College, May 25, 1954, CCA.

⁷⁵*Catholic Directory*, 1959 and *Summary of Higher Education Statistics School Year 1965-1966* (Trenton, N.J.: Office of Graduate and Professional Education, Division of Higher Education, State Department of Education, 1966).

1968.⁷⁶ Furthermore, to meet the growing demand for higher education, several congregations of women religious opened Catholic women's junior colleges in northern New Jersey: Alphonsus College in Woodcliff Lake; Englewood Cliffs College in the town of the same name; Immaculate Conception Junior College in Lodi; and Tombrock College in West Paterson.⁷⁷ All of these institutions had existed previously as colleges expressly for the education for young sisters, but, in the mid 1960s, with the beginning of a decline in religious vocations, they started admit to lay women.⁷⁸

The most successful of the new junior colleges was Immaculate Conception. Like the others, it had originally been founded to provide teacher training to the members of the sponsoring order, the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, commonly known as the Felician Sisters. Founded in 1855 in Warsaw, the order followed the Rule of St. Francis of Assisi. The founder, Mother Angela Truszkowska, wanted her sisters to be "contemplatives in action," women of prayer dedicated to the service of the poor. In 1874, Reverend Joseph Dabrowski of Wisconsin invited the Felician Sisters to the United States to staff schools in Polish-speaking parishes. Because of the large number of Polish immigrants in the area, in 1913, the sisters established Immaculate Conception Province in Lodi in northeastern New Jersey. Originally teachers, they soon expanded their ministry to nursing and the care of orphans.⁷⁹ In 1962, Archbishop Thomas A. Boland of Newark invited the Felician Sisters to assume the management of St. Mary's Hospital in Orange, New Jersey, and the hospital's nursing program was transferred to the college.⁸⁰ In 1965, the year after lay students

⁷⁶Landy, 77.

⁷⁷James H. Lynch, *Born of Necessity: The Two-Year College in New Jersey* (Vineland, N.J.: Standard Publishing, 1970), 107-121.

⁷⁸Ebaugh, *Women in the Vanishing Cloister*, 48.

⁷⁹Joseph C. Shenrock, *Upon this Rock: A New History of the Diocese of Trenton* (Trenton, N.J.: Diocese of Trenton, 1993), 471.

⁸⁰*Response: Felician Sisters Centennial in America, 1874-1974*. Archives, Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, Immaculate Conception Province, Lodi, N.J.

were admitted, the college established an associate's degree program in nursing, apparently the first in the state. By 1967, Immaculate Conception was granted approval by the state to function as a four-year institution granting a bachelor of science degree in elementary education under its new name, Felician College.

Felician College best embodies the local, non-elite, vocationally-oriented college which catered to lower-middle class, ethnically diverse women. Felician did not, however, offer a strictly vocational program. In addition to the popular elementary education and nursing programs, the college introduced a bachelor's degree in liberal arts in 1969. Like students at the older Catholic women's colleges, Felician's liberal arts majors were required to take courses in English, history, philosophy, theology, modern languages, science, mathematics, social science, fine arts, and speech, in addition to thirty semester hours in a major field. The college initially offered majors in biology, English, fine arts, history, and mathematics. As a former junior college, Felician College did not possess as highly qualified a faculty as the other Catholic women's colleges. The faculty, which numbered fifty-three in 1969, included thirty-three women religious, four priests, nine lay men and nine lay women. Most faculty members had master's degrees, while six or 13 percent held doctorates.⁸¹ A comparable percentage possessed doctorates at Caldwell, but the proportion was higher at the College of St. Elizabeth and Georgian Court (figs. 2, 3 and 4).

Students, mainly commuters except for the sister-students living in the Felician Sisters' motherhouse, most likely came from more modest socioeconomic backgrounds than those who attended the residential women's colleges. The Class of 1969 consisted solely of women receiving bachelor of science degrees in elementary education and associate of science degrees in nursing. Perhaps reflecting the vocational nature of the program, a higher proportion of graduates came from minorities and or from newer immigrant backgrounds. The higher percentage of graduates of eastern European (36 percent), Italian (32 percent) and African American (16 percent) origin also

⁸¹*Catalog*, Felician College, 1969, College Catalogs Collection, Center for Research Libraries, Chicago, Illinois.

reflects the ethnic composition of the Bergen County region where Felician College is located and the historically Polish ethnicity of the sponsoring order.⁸²

During this period, the older four-year Catholic women's colleges expanded their facilities to accommodate the growing student population, and administrative, governance, and faculty structures became more professionalized.⁸³ As the number of sister-faculty members was no longer sufficient to teach the growing diversity of courses, all three colleges increasingly hired both male and female lay faculty members, and were forced to provide more competitive salaries and benefits. By 1969, more than half of Georgian Court's faculty members were lay men and women, while the percentages of lay faculty members at College of St. Elizabeth and Caldwell were 36 and 49 respectively (fig. 1.) A number of the new lay faculty members held doctorates, as shown by the fact that the percentage of total doctorates increased at Georgian Court and College of St. Elizabeth (figs. 2 and 3). They also held doctorates from a greater variety of institutions. For instance, in 1969, lay faculty members at the College of St. Elizabeth held doctoral degrees from Florida State University; University of California, Los Angeles; Brown University; and New York University, as well as from Catholic institutions.⁸⁴

The colleges continued to attempt to create a balance between liberal arts and vocational courses, but expansion put increasing strain on resources and led to questions about the quality of the education offered. In the early 1960s, all three conducted self-studies to prepare for reaccreditation by the Middle States Association. In each case, the evaluators recommended hiring more faculty members, as well as a reduction in the number of courses and requirements. Indeed, with administrative, teaching, professional, religious, and co-curricular duties, the sister-faculty operated under a crushing burden. As a result of the recommendations, College of

⁸²*Yearbook*, Felician College, 1969, Felician College Archives, Lodi, New Jersey. The yearbook pictures 47 graduates.

⁸³McEniry, *Three Score and Ten*, 103-108, Chambers, *Celebrating the Past*, 49-63, and Mary Theresa McCarthy, RSM, *Mercy Memories* (Neptune, N. J.: American Press, 1998), 27-32.

⁸⁴*Catalog*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1969, CSEA.

St. Elizabeth restructured its curriculum, reducing the overall number of courses, and changing the philosophy requirement from four to three and later to two courses.⁸⁵ The college continued to require religious studies, English, Western civilization, foreign languages, math or science, art or music, social science, health, and physical education. At the same time, a major in elementary education was introduced. At Caldwell, the number of courses required for graduation was also reduced, while new concentrations were added in Spanish, art, sociology, and medical technology. At Georgian Court, the heavy requirement of thirty-two credits in theology and philosophy was reduced, substituted by new co-curricular activities designed to appeal to students, such as a series of radio programs on the ecumenical movement and the function of the lay person in the church.⁸⁶

The Middle States Association report also criticized Georgian Court for offering too many random and unrelated courses. Indeed, one 1964 graduate remarked that she chose Georgian Court because it was one of the few schools which offered fashion merchandising.⁸⁷ Rather than trying to satisfy all constituencies, the college dropped some of its popular vocational courses and sought to focus on liberal arts, while still maintaining its large elementary education department. It discontinued the secretarial course and home economics and business majors, while no longer requiring music and physical education for graduation. The Association also commented on the quality of teaching at Georgian Court, remarking on methods “not suited to mature students...questions requiring brief answers, given in unison, or single word answers.” The report recommended the faculty try to stimulate student participation and critical thinking.⁸⁸

Responding to similar criticism from the Middle States Association, the Caldwell faculty scrutinized course offerings to provide greater intellectual challenges, revised grading standards,

⁸⁵*St. Elizabeth Alumna* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1965), 8. and *President's Report*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1965, CSEA.

⁸⁶Minutes, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy (Nov. 20, 1963) and (Dec. 12, 1960), GCUA.

⁸⁷Telephone conversation with Linda Cardillo of Naples, Florida, January 5, 2003.

⁸⁸Middle States Association Report, 1963, GCUA.

and introduced teaching methods that encouraged more independent study. The Association also recommended lighter teaching loads to enable faculty members to keep up with developments in their fields.⁸⁹

In spite of this re-emphasis on liberal arts, there is some evidence that students were choosing vocationally-oriented majors, or at least majors that would prepare them for careers, particularly in teaching. At the College of St. Elizabeth between 1965 and 1970, elementary education was the largest major, chosen by 168 students. The next most popular was English, chosen by 157 students, followed by history, home economics, and biology. Many of those majoring in the arts and sciences or home economics went into secondary school teaching.⁹⁰ Similarly, a survey of the career choices of the Caldwell Class of 1968 found that a plurality of graduates had gone into teaching: of 145 women, thirty-two were in elementary education and twenty were in secondary education. Other students entered librarianship, social work, accounting, and journalism. Fourteen were in full-time graduate work, while thirty-one were listed as “married.”⁹¹ At Georgian Court, a survey of the class of 1962 indicated that of forty students who were employed, 95 percent were teachers at either the elementary or secondary level. Of the remaining graduates, fifteen were in full-time graduate study, and the remainder were “housewives.”⁹²

In contrast, during the 1960s, Trinity College offered a highly academic, rigorous curriculum which attracted the best Catholic women students in the country. In 1969, over half the graduates were from the Mid-Atlantic region, a quarter from New England, and the remainder from the Mid-west, South, West and abroad.⁹³ In that year, forty-five of ninety-eight faculty members

⁸⁹Caldwell Board of Trustees Report, November 4, 1964, CCA.

⁹⁰*President's Report*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1970, CSEA.

⁹¹Report of the Dean, Caldwell College, June 30, 1968-July 1, 1969, CCA.

⁹²Standing Committee Reports, Georgian Court College, 1966, GCUA.

⁹³*Trinilogue*, 1969, TUA.

held Ph.D.s from twenty-five universities.⁹⁴ Manhattanville also had a strong faculty, of whom 47 percent held doctorates in 1969.⁹⁵ Many Trinity students entered graduate school. In a survey ranking women's colleges by the rate of Ph.D.s in the arts, humanities and social sciences, Trinity ranked second after Bryn Mawr, while the College of St. Elizabeth ranked nineteenth.⁹⁶ Furthermore, between 1945 and 1967, twenty-two Trinity students received the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Scholarship for graduate study, as compared to five from Manhattanville and one from Georgian Court. Trinity was also the only Catholic institution of thirty-five small liberal arts colleges eligible for the Watson Fellowship.⁹⁷

Apart from some minor shifts, in the 1960s the composition of the student body at the College of St. Elizabeth, Georgian Court, and Caldwell remained similar to that of earlier decades. Ninety-five percent of the Caldwell Class of 1969 was from New Jersey, while during the decade, the percentage of students from New Jersey rose from 60 to 71 percent at College of St. Elizabeth, and from 66 to 80 percent at Georgian Court (tables 1 and 3). However, the majority of students lived in residence--70 percent at the College of St. Elizabeth in 1969--so the colleges were still, in spite of the increased percentage from New Jersey, not necessarily serving local women.⁹⁸ According to the yearbook, the majority (55 percent) of the College of St. Elizabeth Class of 1969 had Irish or British surnames, as they had since the college's founding. At Georgian Court and Caldwell, although a plurality of graduates had Irish or British surnames, the proportion of students with eastern European or Italian surnames increased during the 1960s. This increase

⁹⁴Faculty Statistics, 1969-1970, Vertical Files, TUA.

⁹⁵*Catalog*, Manhattanville College, 1969, MCA.

⁹⁶Helen Sheehan, SND, "The Catholic College and the Ph.D.," *Catholic Educational Review* 55 (April 1957). See also Trinity Alumnae Ph.D.s, 1915 to present, Vertical Files, TUA.

⁹⁷Charles E. Ford and Edgar L. Ray, Jr., *The Renewal of Catholic Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1968.) I am indebted to Mary Hayes, SND, Archivist at Trinity University for drawing my attention to this resource.

⁹⁸*President's Report*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1969, CSEA.

reflects the continuing prosperity of these ethnic groups, of whom the third generation was reaching college age. These figures are born out by a study at Georgian Court which found that 61 percent of the students had grandparents who were foreign-born. The same study, looking at father's occupation, identified 23 percent as being in the professions, 37 percent in business, and the remainder as "other," which suggests that the majority of the students came from middle-class or lower middle-class homes.⁹⁹

The representation of racial minorities was still low at all three colleges. The College of St. Elizabeth had the highest number of minority students; in the Class of 1969, there were two African-American, three Latina, and one Asian student. Of these, about half were foreign students. Beginning in 1968, with the introduction of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), more students from diverse backgrounds began to attend Catholic women's colleges. In the first year of the program, between ten and twelve students enrolled through the EOF program at each college.¹⁰⁰ At Georgian Court, the first EOF students attended the summer session before matriculation, where they took courses and were sent on field trips designed to provide "cultural background." The students lived in one of the dormitories under the supervision of Sister Margaret Mary Foley, Director of Admissions. As well as becoming used to residence life, they "reviewed social skills and techniques required for success in future educational, social, business and professional environments,"¹⁰¹ suggesting that the college administration feared that the EOF students would not fit into Georgian Court's middle-class environment.

The introduction of the EOF program was only one of several harbingers of changes to come. After a decade of expansion, enrollment at the College of St. Elizabeth dropped almost 20

⁹⁹Self Study Report, Georgian Court College, Middle States Association Accreditation, 1963, GCUA.

¹⁰⁰*The Chancellor's Report* (Trenton, N.J.: Department of Higher Education, ca. 1970), Appendix H.

¹⁰¹McCarthy, *Mercy Memories*, 32.

percent, from 1,115 in 1966-67 to 895 in 1968-69.¹⁰² Sister Hildegard Marie, the college's president, attributed the decline to tuition increases, the availability of inexpensive public higher education, the introduction of coeducation at nearby St. Peter's and Seton Hall, and the increase in the number of Catholic colleges for women. Indeed, during these years, enrollment grew at the new junior colleges.¹⁰³ In 1970, Sister Hildegard Marie noted a continued decline in full-time enrollment, from 740 students in 1968-69 to 700 in 1969-70. Pointing out that the percentage of commuters in the freshman class was lower than average, she stressed the importance of attracting more students from the surrounding community.¹⁰⁴ A special committee appointed in 1970 recommended increasing the student body to 1,200, including students "from diversified geographic and socio-economic backgrounds anxious to assume responsibilities for their own education," graduates of junior and community colleges, and adults. The report also criticized the physical education requirement, while calling for a more flexible and vocationally-oriented curriculum including new majors in special education, psychology, early childhood development, and nursing, as well as possibly introducing a master's program in teacher education.¹⁰⁵ In response, the college established the Department of Continuing Education in 1970. At Caldwell, a decline in enrollment was first noted in 1967. The following year, married women were accepted into all programs, in spite of earlier concern about the effect on the "girls." In October 1968, Caldwell initiated Talent Research Youth, a program for disadvantaged students.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, Catholic women's colleges had to become more local, vocationally oriented, and diverse in order to survive.

¹⁰²*The Chancellor's Report*, Appendix H.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴*President's Report*, College of St. Elizabeth, 1968 and 1970, CSEA.

¹⁰⁵Report of the College Committee Studying the Programs, Goals, Resources and Needs of the College, June 1970, filed with *President's Reports*, CSEA.

¹⁰⁶Board of Trustees Minutes, Caldwell College, January 26, 1967, May 15, 1968, and October 25, 1968, CCA.

Conclusion

New Jersey's Catholic women's colleges do not fit neatly into the categories of elite or local colleges. During the period 1900 to 1970, they provided a liberal Catholic education for middle-class women, which did not differ greatly from the education offered at better-known and more prestigious colleges like Trinity and Manhattanville. Although some vocational courses were available, the majority of students followed a fairly rigorous and well-defined liberal arts curriculum, which, however, many used as a springboard to careers in teaching. The faculty at the New Jersey colleges, the majority of whom were Roman Catholic nuns, were well-qualified enough to meet regional accrediting standards. Because of the small size of their institutions, however, they were often over-burdened by teaching and administrative responsibilities, and their scholarship probably suffered. The College of St. Elizabeth was the strongest academically, followed by Georgian Court, Caldwell, and, at the end of the period, Felician. Throughout the period, factors like the proportion of freshman coming from private high schools, the limited number of scholarships offered, and the fact that the majority of graduates were of Irish, British, or German ethnicity, suggest that most Catholic women's college students were middle-class. The composition of the student body at the elite colleges was remarkably similar, with the difference that Manhattanville attracted a large cohort of upper-class women. Before 1970, New Jersey's Catholic women's colleges were not serving the working-class daughters of new immigrants or racial minorities. They were also not primarily serving commuters. The majority of students lived in residence, and although the New Jersey colleges did not draw students from as wide a geographic pool as did the elite colleges, many students came from outside New Jersey. Rather than understanding the differences among Catholic women's colleges in terms of class, they can better be explained in terms of the academic credentials of their students. While all the colleges

catered to middle class Catholic women, the best students from this applicant pool attended the elite colleges. Further research on aptitude test scores, post-college destinations, and other indicators of student achievement would most likely bear out this point. This study has demonstrated the difficulties of generalizing about Catholic women's colleges, suggesting that more local studies are needed to fill in this increasingly complex picture.