Mary Hawkesworth Interview

Women, Education and Leadership at Rutgers
2015
Interviewee: Mary Hawkesworth (MHW)
Interviewer: June Cross (JC)

MHW: Well our goal in telling the history of women’s education at Douglass is precisely to draw on ways of seeing the past that are fairly new in terms of growing out of critical race theory, feminist theory, women’s and, and gender study scholarship. So we’re going back to old text, reading primary sources and secondary sources, and also situating them in the late 18th and early 19th century, where the history of Rutgers began as Old Queens in 1790s.

And what we discover of course is that the primary focus on education was for men who were going to have a career in the ministry. And there was a sense that women should be good help mates. That they should be mothers producing the future generations, but no sense whatsoever that they should need anything beyond literacy skills. Dutch reform women were taught to read so that they could read the bible, and do their prayers. And they had that tradition, but a more systematic education just wasn’t on the agenda.

And for all of the 19th century, the men who were the governors of Rutgers College were men of cloth. They were Dutch reform ministers, sometimes bishops. So they were deeply committed both to keeping Rutgers College private. To keeping it all male. To keeping its focus on the moral development of young men. So in this 19th century, that religious focus for education was the source of all higher education in the US. It all started out in private spaces funded by different religious congregations, with the mission of producing a generation of preachers. So women were on the outside.

But besides the religious focus of these institutions, in this period there was a new gender ideology being constructed. And the gender ideology was creating a notion that women were not just inferior to men in terms of their spiritual capabilities, which had a very long ancestry, but that somehow women’s embodiment made it impossible for them to have the intellectual possibilities of their male counterparts. So women were being defined as the opposite of men and they were being defined almost exclusively in terms of reproductive function.

Coming out of the French Revolution and the American Revolution was a language of domesticity and that the role of women should be in the home, and that clearly women needed to be domesticated, both for women’s own happiness and the well-being of the polity. Allowing women to move into public sphere was seen as dangerous. There were two kinds of danger that were articulated. One was if women got power they would be like Catherine the Great and do oppressive things to people, and the other was they would be public women as in the connotation of prostitutes, public women.

So you have two directions suggesting that the only virtuous women were women who were in the home. Now, this of course was a completely racialized view. So they were talking about white women. They had no qualms about requiring women of color to be doing work equivalent to men’s work, but they were talking about creating a space for republican women. Mothers of the nation, who only needed to know what would be good for their children’s rearing and building the character particularly of the boys.

So the very first debates about women’s education used this republican motherhood as a hook to say if you want good mothers, you need to educate them. And the first women seminaries, like Mount Holyoke or the first coeducational experiments at Oberlin College were organized how to help women
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know enough to raise men well. To raise their sons well. To raise their daughters to be dutiful. To have a, a very clear Christian mission.

So whether it was single sex education or coed, there was a clear agenda to produce women who understood their place as subordinate to men. The helping of man. Advancing the men’s projects and keeping themselves within the home. There were 2 different kinds of arguments that helped sustain that vision of women’s education. Part of it was related to women’s limited abilities and appropriate roles. Part of it was also linked to a very interesting argument about women’s energy and how the body functioned. So there was, with the help of Harvard Medical School, an argument that women have limited energy in their bodies, and if they devote that energy to thinking, it takes away the energy from their womb, and makes them incapable of reproducing the species.

So you get medical doctors arguing against women’s education for the sake of ‘The Race’. And some of them meant the human race, but most of them meant the white race. There was a white supremacist agenda suggesting that women of color reproduced at a higher level. Part of this was mythic. Part of the racialization of women of color was to claim that they were constantly having babies when often their fertility was lower than white women’s, but the argument was that if white Bourgeois women, upper-crust women were not having more children, then the future of the nation was dire.

So the responsibility of women to have babies was threatened not only by women’s energy being sucked out of their uteruses, but also by the fact that some of these scientists noticed a correlation that more educated women had fewer children. They saw that as a threat to the white race nation that they wanted to truncate. So when debates about women’s education started getting really intense in the late 19th century, most of the argument shifted away from a claim that women were incapable of education, because every woman who had gone to post-secondary school had accelerated.

It was also a period in US history when more women were going to high school than men, and they were out performing the men in secondary school. So they ... It was no longer credible to say that women were incapable of education, so the argument turned about, well they ought not be educated for the sake of the American future as a white race nation. So you have all of those things coming together. At a time when there were little bits of opening, little bits of notions of democracy that pushed the boundaries.

The Women’s Suffrage Movement, The Abolition Movement actively mobilizing awareness that education was good for everyone. That educated people contributed to the economy. That they improved the life of the demos. So you’ve got these pressures towards more participation within The Women’s Suffrage Movement and within The Abolition Movement and after the end of slavery, within the Freedman’s Movement, the creation of freedom schools that would teach people to read and write.

That would teach people practices of participation in political life. Both suffragists and The Freedmen’s Bureau organized events where students, often adults as well as young people, would engage in political debates, would go to the polls, pseudo polls set up so they would learn the practice of voting. A real sense that creating citizens required interventionist education.

So you’ve got some progressive forces trying to expand the possibilities for education. You’ve got conservative forces wanting very clear clamps on education and then you’ve got the federal government that is trying to knit together diverse people’s and passes the Morrill Act that created
land grant institution and made federal monies available to states who would create a mission that was supposed to serve all citizens.

The land-grant colleges that first got opened in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, all were in states that thought girls should be educated as boys, in part because they saw girls as a source of future high school teachers. The boys would be doing the heavy agriculture. Some of the girls would be working on farms, but the talented girls would also go on and becomes teachers. So the co-educational schools, the state schools that started out under land-grant institutional funds opened as co-education.

And within those spaces between 1862 and 1900, women started outnumbering men in those state universities and they also started out performing men. And that created another complicated set of arguments among the educators in the East. These very conservative, religious oriented men that are now associated with schools called the Ivy Leagues. They were horrified at what they called feminization. That women would move into higher education and higher education would lose its status as a high status profession. That its incomes would plummet because if women start working they accept lower salaries than men. So feminization meant they were afraid they would lose the perks of white male privilege.

So in the early 20th century just as women were performing superbly in every educational institution they were allowed in, decisions got made to trim back some co-educational experiments in private schools. Schools like Wesleyan, like Tufts that had been co-education for ... Co-educational for a certain amount of time changed tracks. Tufts created Stevens as a sex segregated school.

Wesleyan just barred women all together. The state of Connecticut created the Connecticut College which was a woman school, so there was a backlash against women's education. New Jersey was the last state in the US to open higher education to women and it's into this kind of complex milieu where you've got Rutgers College and Princeton, two private institutions that were dead set on educating elite men.

Rutgers had accepted the land grant money, so it had an agricultural college that was totally funded by federal and state funds, but they called the agricultural school autonomous. I mean it was part of Rutgers but it was autonomous and every time the state asked Rutgers to do anything like you know expand the mission to be a bit more egalitarian, the board of trustees said no, so the very-

JC: What was it about New Jersey?

MHW: New Jersey was an agricultural state at this time. Its economy was you know scrunched between New York City and the urban centers, Philadelphia, New York. It wanted to create itself as something of this idyllic hierarchical preservation of a northern plantation mentality. I mean the farms were nowhere near as big as plantations, but they certainly were not willing to recognize anything like gender equality.

President Wilson, Woodrow Wilson was a New Jerseyan who had deep roots in Princeton and in the state of New Jersey as a governor prior to going to Washington, DC and he was an absolute proponent of separate spheres for women. He didn't believe at all in anything like a democratic vision despite the fact he was technically a Democrat, capital D. So New Jersey was a conservative state with a strong Republican Party as well as Democratic Party, so competitive two party state, but it was not invested in educating all of its citizens.
In 1915 there was a referendum on suffrage that was defeated, so they were not even supporting women suffrage in the early 20th century. So about as conservative as you could get. And I should note that the women of New Jersey were also split over the suffrage question. There was a lot of agreement among women of New Jersey particularly within the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs, that women's education was absolutely essential, but they did not all agree that women's suffrage was appropriate.

So when Mabel Smith Douglass began mobilizing women in New Jersey around the agenda of women's education, one of her incredible skills was never mentioning suffrage. She herself was a proponent of suffrage, but she never talked about suffrage because she knew that could doom her project. She was incredibly good at bringing together very conservative women, progressive women, pro-suffrage, anti-suffrage all around education. Two kinds of arguments in support of women's education.

One, that the young women of New Jersey had to be able to support themselves before marriage. They of course would become great mothers after they married, but before marriage, they need to be self-supporting. She delineated the women of New Jersey who would be likely to come to a women's college as not the elite whose parents could send them to Barnard or Vassar or Radcliffe. These are lower middle class women who would be great as teachers as secretaries as librarians as people who specialized in foods and nutrition.

So she carved out a reason for educating the women of New Jersey that didn't upset the elites because their daughters weren't going to be involved, they would continue to go to the out of state schools that they could afford, but she created a sense of ownership among middle class women in New Jersey, that if they created a college for women, their daughters would have better prospects than they had had.

So she launched this campaign door to door to $1 per household to raise $150,000 in order to be able to open the New Jersey College for Women. She persuaded the legislature that they should create the New Jersey College for Women and put in a line item in the budget to fund it. She negotiated with the very conservative leaders of Rutgers College that she didn't want co-education, that in no way was she advocating co-education.

It was a coordinate college for women so young men would not have their education sullied, it would be a separate project for jobs, for women who would contribute to the economy and then become great mothers. So she bought into the discourse of the time. In order to use every available argument to support a coalition for their school, sidestepping the tough questions because she didn't want the project derailed.

And it was her skills as a politician and as a coalition builder that secured the future of this project because the trustees at Rutgers thought they would play along, oh sure, coordinate college sounds fine, but they didn't believe she'd ever raise the money. So they, you know let her squander her energies. She'll hit failure and move on.

JC: So where did she raise the money to come up with the... sorry. Yeah, I've been watching that wondering how long it was going to be before you jumped up? It's okay.

MHW: She raised $150,000 in this door to door campaign which was phenomenal. She got an initial allocation from the state and she very shrewdly argued that the New Jersey College for Women would
have a home economics department that made it eligible for federal funding under an act in 1918 that extended the Morrill Act not only to include agricultural education, but home economics training, so she had three funding sources, state, her door to door campaign, federal money and then of course tuition.

The young women would be paying tuition and with that kind of, you know, portfolio, she was granted permission to open the school with one donated piece of property which she very quickly turned in to 3 donated buildings, and a grant of a lot more anchorage because she was astonishingly charming and she wooed some of the members of the Rutgers Board of Trustees.

Mr. Laurie, a railroad magnet, and the owner of the Nielsen Mansion where we currently are located became her 2 strong, strong supporters on the Rutgers board. So they helped her to keep the project going. The school opened with 54 students in 1918, and 10 years later it had almost 1,200 students. And just in a decade, the New Jersey College for women began graduating more students than Rutgers College that was now 150 years old.

JC: You know one of the things that I’ve been really surprised by is I’ve read your research is this idea that we talk a lot now about girls out performing boys in school, but this seems to be ... And this has always gone on. Could you talk some about this, what is it about women or girl- ... I mean in spite of all of this opposition to educating women, when they are given access, what happened?

MHW: Well, I think to understand how it is that women perform so well, we need to keep in mind that in this period only about 3% of Us Citizens were going on to higher education. So we’re talking about a tiny pool of people. And we’re also talking about a very motivated cohort of students. Something about being denied access to education can be a very powerful motivator. Girls who were thinking that they wanted careers as teachers, were particularly excited about the opportunity to have systematic training instead of teaching themselves.

Many professions in this period, one entered as an apprentice. So lawyers, you didn’t have to go to university to become a lawyer. You didn’t have to go to university to become a doctor. You apprenticed with a professional, but very few professionals would take women on as apprentices. So the women who were financially able to go to college and university saw it as a pathway to a future they would not otherwise have. After the Civil War, something like 800,000 men had died, so there was significant gender imbalance.

Many women started thinking about becoming self-supporting precisely because starvation was there alternative. Their daughters saw education as a way to have a better quality of life than their mothers had. Some of those young women went off to do missionary work. Missionary work among the Native American peoples in the west. Missionary work in Asia and Africa. So they saw teaching as absolutely crucial to that religious vocation. And then you just got, you know, brains that had been deprived soaking up these riches. So they put in the time.

They weren’t drinkers. I mean at the time that the New Jersey College for Women opened it was prohibition. So they weren’t out there drinking and partying. The rules governing participation in the college required that you wore a hat and gloves every time you went off campus. You had to dress formally for dinner. So Mabel Smith Douglass was producing a particular image of an educated woman who was thoroughly civilized and Bourgeois and represented a particular kind of respectability.
It was a white respectability. It was an Anglo-Protestant respectability. There were huge challenges when the first two Jewish students were admitted to the college in 1925, because chapel was mandatory. At that time, 3 days a week. Mandatory chapel. What do you do with women who you know have a different faith? Well they were required to go to chapel, too. So it was a very particular raced classed gendered conception of womanhood, but it was a kind of opening that gave women a chance at careers, using their minds, cultivating their abilities. And many of the women who were early students and students through ...[cough] Excuse me, throughout the history of the college, had a keen commitment to public service. So they wanted to use their intellectual abilities to do good in the world, and all of that created a complex motivation to study and get good grades. Now, I should also note that not everybody got good grades. Some students actually flunked out. This was a concern of some men in ... They weren’t particularly pro-women’s education to begin with, but they said, “But what is this highbrow school whose standards are so tough that women are failing?”

But as the college got more established, the percentage of students who were admitted from the top 10% of their class kept growing and growing and growing. So there was a keen interest in the New Jersey College for women. Precisely because it was a path to a profession for middle income and lower middle women who could go to a state’s school when they could never ever afford out of state. And the state of New Jersey also created a scholarship program that funded 70 scholarships a year for low income students.

So the students who first entered from Newark, from Jersey City, from Camden were often scholarship students. And they had the added motivation that they wanted their grades to be up, so that they didn’t in any way jeopardize the funding of their schooling.

JC: Fine, the first woman, the first non ... I think it’s the first non-Anglo-Saxon Protestant woman who graduates from here came from India as I recall. Is it India?

MHW: She was a transfer student. She matriculated at the New Jersey College for Women for only 2 years. She was from India. And she was taken under the wing of Mabel Smith Douglass who liked the project of an international presence. Yes, so she was here for 2 years and she went on to have quite an illustrious career.

JC: Yeah, so ... So I wasn’t sure whether she had won the Douglas or was she in?

MHW: Yeah ...

JC: Did ... Was there ... When ... I’m jumping ahead. Let me go back a second. So when we were working with the students in your seminar, one of the things that we discovered was that sort of women had been here all along even though they weren’t admitted to the school, they were running boarding houses. Can you talk a bit about that aspect of what you call women expanding the space?

MHW: Right. One of the great things that we learn as feminist scholars, is that even in spaces that are defined as male institutions, there are women making it possible. So you know, the great myth of a woman behind every man, well there are lots and lots of women behind and within every institution doing vast amounts of working to ensure that the institution flourishes.

So I worked with a group of students, and with Kayo Denda, the women’s studies librarian and head of the Margery Somers Foster archives at Rutgers and Fernando Perrone, who is University Archivist, to takes students into the archives, to try to figure out what were women doing, even from the 1790s to make a go of this project. Rutgers College, owned by the Dutch Reformed Church, made a decision
from the days it opened that it was unhealthy to have young men living alone in some kind of a segregated residence hall.

Other colonial colleges had spaces for ... Boarding spaces for men, college residences. These church fathers thought that would destroy their moral integrity. Who knows why. So they decided they were going to board Rutgers students with local families. And the women who ran their houses, opened their houses, they were farming women. They were women who put in long days of labor, but who also did the cooking, the food preparation and decided that they would take in a young scholar.

They were almost all members of the Dutch Reformed Church. They were parishioners. But they housed the men, from the 1790s until the very first residence hall opened in 1890. So we’re talking about 100 years of women feeding, doing the laundry for, providing the emotional support for these young male students, some of whom came to Rutgers as early as age 13. So they were kind of a surrogate moms for these young men. Almost never mentioned, almost never mentioned in the official histories, but a critical part of the daily life of the college.

When women agreed to open their homes for the student boarders, they had to agree to allow Rutgers faculty members to come once a week to inspect the premises. So it’s not like you could do anything you wanted in these spaces. You had to open it up to ... And Rutgers faculty of course at this time were all ministers, so you were having the clergy come to your house almost once a week to inspect the kind of good Christian environment you were creating.

So we have women doing that kind of work. From the very earliest days, we have women making donations to what was then Queens College. Subsequently, after 1825 Rutgers College, donating land. The very first time in the history of New Jersey that a person donated an estate to an institution was to Rutgers College. A woman donated her whole farm hundreds of acres to Rutgers College. You had women making big donations. Some made small donations, I mean $5,000 seems small now, it was quite a huge sum in the 19th century.

So you had women who were benefactors. You had women who were daughters of the faculty, who participated in the theatrical productions in the second half of the 19th century. So you had lots of women figuring in the school’s existence and in the school’s success who just don’t even get mentioned in the official history, so we wanted to make them visible. We also wanted to make visible the images of women that populated the minds of the male students at Rutgers.

So one of our students did some wonderful work on the literary magazine and the student newspaper to see how the young man imagined women. There was a lot of idealization, a lot of pedestal stuff but there was also “the college widow” you know this kind of woman who initiated young men into the excitements of the flesh. Not at all clear whether they were women in New Brunswick playing that role, but she figured ... They figured in the men's fantasies.

There was also the “Rutgers girl” who was a woman at the same age as the young man who models for the perfect future wives, who would get invited to the formal dances that were held on campus. So women populated the mental life of the boys and many of the boys in the archives you find their letters home and their letters were often sent to their sisters, sometimes to the parents, but in terms of giving accounts of everyday life at college, they wrote to their sisters which is kind of interesting.

JC: Yeah that is. So how did the college ... Can you talk a bit about how the college grew and the importance to the students?
MHW: Right. We have our founding dean of the New Jersey College for Women, Mabel Smith Douglass, who was a widow, but had 2 children and who one has to say, absolutely dedicated her life to the success of this first public institution of higher education for women in New Jersey. The very first year the college opened, she lived in her office. She slept in her office. Now, I should note the girls, the students slept on the third floor of College Hall, so it was an intimate gathering.

The building was inadequately heated. They were all in the wintertime wearing multiple levels of cold because they ... They didn't have central heating. So it was a tough environment, but it was an environment of excitement about what they could build together. Mabel Smith Douglass talked about the college as being built as much by the students as by her. And it's really important to remember that when the college opened in 1918, women did not yet have voting rights in the United States.

So when she created a government association through consultation with the students that gave her as dean and the faculty and students equal voting rights, they were doing an experiment in democratic self-governance that they did not have any experience of in the political world. At the very beginning the Douglass faculty were all borrowed from Rutgers College. They came and taught courses on the Douglass campus for extra pay.

And they were happy to do it because their salaries were pretty modest, so it was a way of making extra money. The first few years, Mabel Smith Douglass using tuition funds was able to hire a few of Douglass's own faculty, but during the first 5 years, the majority of the faculty were borrowed from the men's college bringing with it the whole men's view of you know skepticism about women's education.

And the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs that had been so instrumental in helping with the campaign to create the college thought that it was not acceptable to have a women's college without women faculty. So they actually organized a delegation to meet with Mabel Smith Douglass, demanding that women faculty be hired. So in the early 1920s, Mabel Smith Douglass started doing searches to hire women faculty.

I mean unheard of in so many places. Many of the women's colleges at that time still had predominantly male faculty because that was who was educated. So Mabel Smith Douglass started hiring women to teach languages. She was one of the first people to think about language instruction by native speakers. So French speakers, German speakers, Spanish speakers, the first Italian speakers, the first language houses were staffed by women who ... Immigrants who were speaking their native languages and teaching the young women to become multilingual.

Mabel Smith Douglass believed in international overseas studies. So she took donations from the students, the language students. They would give like a nickel a week into a pool that would over the course of the year accrue funds that would enable one student to go study in Italy or in Germany or in France or in Spain. So again, a pioneer. She worked with classicists who were doing a dig in Turkey.

So Douglass women, a larger cohort because there was some funding to pay them as research assistants, went to work on an archaeological dig in Turkey and when they came back, one of the yearbooks from the early 1930s has all these Turkish Byzantine themes. It's like, wow. And they took their overseas experience and brought it back to the college. Mabel Smith Douglass firmly believed that the education needed to be practical to help the young women to get jobs when they graduated, but she also believed in the liberal arts.
So they all had to take history courses, Western civilization. They had to take English courses, literature courses. They could major in education and become teachers, that was one of the largest majors at the beginning. Library science became a very important career opportunity for the women. Home economics, not just the science of the home, but food and nutrition, producing professional dietitians was very important in the early history of the college.

And to build the college's name, Mabel Smith Douglass took out advertisements in local newspapers all across the state, announcing the creation of the New Jersey College of Women, stating the tuition, stating how modest the room and board was. She was keenly aware of the financial obstacles to higher education so she started what we would now call a work study program.

She believed that proper young ladies had to have sit down dinners, which means somebody had to be serving those sit down dinners. Instead of hiring women from the community of New Brunswick she hired students, low income students who needed jobs to help them meet their tuition to serve their peers at table. Home Ec students helped with the cooking in the kitchens as part of their professional training.

Home Ec students created a commuter space where they had a cafeteria for the commuting students, students who couldn't afford to pay for the room and board would commute. So she traded on the skills of the students to make this a viable experiment in higher education. In 1928, 1929 she was really interested in finding out why some students were flourishing and some were not. So she called in Professor Emily Hickman, one of those first women faculty who had been hired.

And Emily Hickman designed what we would now call a retention program. I had not read about any of these done so early. She trained cohorts of juniors and seniors at the college to work with groups of we’d now call them mentees, that’s the more advanced students were the mentors, the young students were the mentees. In groups of 8, the mentors would meet with their mentees or protégées to talk with them about what they were learning, what their study habits were. What problems they were experiencing. Were there things going on at home that was making it hard for them to study.

And we have a whole series of reports on the young women that are written by the more advanced students, diagnosing what are their difficulties. And the diagnoses run from “she’s boy crazy, and is only thinking about getting married,” to “her father died, she’s working so many hours a week because she’s now supporting her family and still trying to go to school at the same time.” So by diagnosing what was affecting very particular students, they were trying to craft remedies to help the young women stay in school, finish their degrees. Think about broader professional opportunities.

So she was doing a very individualized tailored kind of educating. It is said that she knew every student in the college. That she met with them, she chatted with them. That she was a magnet around which the college functioned, even as the number of students grew exponentially, and teachers grew, the ratio of faculty to students, she insisted be kept 10 to 1. 10 students for every faculty member, because she thought that kind of individualized attention was absolutely critical to help girls flourish and, and develop their education abilities.

JC: So as ... You’ve been teaching here how long?

MHW: Since 1998, so not quite 20 years.

JC: Okay, so what did you learn that has sort of ... Have you shifted the way you thought about the institution as a result of working on this book, did it reinforce things you already knew?
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MHW: Oh, I didn’t know anything about women’s higher education. Oh, this has been a real learning adventure for me. But I have been through, in my short time at Rutgers, I have been through two Save Douglass campaigns. And I have been fascinated that Douglass so frequently needs to be saved because the Douglass students that I have in my classes are such extraordinary young women. So I did not go to a single sex college. I went to coeducational public school. University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

But I lived in a region where Smith College, Mount Holyoke College existed and I knew students from those schools since we all had opportunities to study everywhere. And I had heard vaguely that there were advantages to single sex higher education. I had never paid a huge amount of attention to that. And what I have been learning through this process, is a whole lot about the kinds of barriers to equal education for women, and why a women’s college still matters.

There’s a lot written that if you look at higher education in The United states now, 57% to 62% depending on which region of the students enrolled are women. So the argument is women are the majority of students, everything is equal, you know, nothing more need to be done. But, everyone who comes up in our society is subjected to the racial ideology, the gender ideology that percolates through public culture, media. And those ideologies still privilege white men.

And all of us who come up in this society, come up with prejudices deeply entrenched. So the kind of education you get at a women’s college is the kind of counter-socialization, that actually has you confront head on biases against you. That call attention to hidden curriculums that privilege men. I mean if you read traditional histories, if you read traditional philosophy, there’s all kinds of stuff about the inferiority of women and people of color that just gets passed over as if it’s not there.

Well, you have Critical race teachers, you’ve got feminist teachers in a women’s college. They’re working on the development of the whole field of women’s and gender studies, on the field of Africana studies, Latino and Caribbean studies. And they are using this new research to help young women think about, “Oh, why am I afraid of success?” Or, “How is it that I’m programming myself to failure?” And, “How can I take advantage of networks with women alumna to move into internships to have doors open for me? How can I learn from the experiences of the generations of women who have gone before me?”

And at Douglass, the loyalty to this college is phenomenal. The Associate Alumni of Douglass College donate millions of dollars in scholarships, to buildings, to overseas studies.

JC: I was amazed they came up with $41 million.

MHW: In the last 5 years. Yeah, and they are constantly ... They call it externships. You know bringing the students into their lives, into their work spaces, letting them ... The students shadow them, to learn what their lives and work lives, family balance issues are like. They create internships. Sometimes paid internships that help the students get that experiential base that helps it ... Them then get job opportunities. So you get a network of women that’s solidarity building, and also really committed to women’s leadership.

Mabel Smith Douglass used to say over and over again, “We expect you to excel. Not just to learn, but to excel. We want you to make something of yourselves.” So this trade of initially an NJC woman, New Jersey College woman now a Douglass woman is to really push. And if you look at our contemporary
students, they’re not just double majors, they’re triple majors with 2 minors. These kids are absolutely astonishing, and they’re going to take the world by storm.

So what I have learnt far more than I ever knew before is how critical it is in a world that is plagued by growing racial and gender inequality, to have some spaces where you can absolutely fight to expand everyone’s potential to the maximum. It’s critical for the students and it’s critical I think for the future of our country.

JC: So it starts out as the New Jersey College for Women at Rutgers University of The State University Of New Jersey. Quite a mouthful. When did it become Douglass? When did it make that transition?

MHW: Oh, okay. To think about the history of the women’s college at Rutgers, requires a little bit of dappling with enormous tension between Rutgers College and the state of New Jersey. Even though it started accepting federal and state money in the 1860s as a land grant institution, all the way through 1945, it insisted it was still a private school. And the state would keep insisting, “You’re a public school.” “Oh no, no, no.” The Board of Trustees would say, “We’re a private school.”

And if you read some of the histories of Douglass, whether it’s Demarest’s history or McCormick’s history, you just get insights into these astonishing debates where you have a small group of private members of the Board of Governors who are holding off state imperatives, insisting this is a private school. So Rutgers was named a state institution 4 different times. And then the trustees would do something to antagonize the state and they’d pull the title away from it.

So when the New Jersey College for Women was created with a state allocation, it was seen as part of the agriculture school which was the land grant school. So the very first designation of NJC was not as autonomous institution, but as a department in the agriculture school. Now Mabel Smith Douglass always called it “the College,” but technically it had the status within the university as just a department.

In 1930 when Rutgers College, which it was now calling itself a university since it had a women’s college and 4 men’s colleges had another run-in with the state. The state demanded that Douglass be recognized as an autonomous college, so it got its first kind of vote of confidence from the state, which was increasing its funding. It had increased from $50,000 to $500,000 over a decade.

So Douglass had a very strong identity as a state institution even when Rutgers was still claiming that it was private and could do what it wanted. Things changed greatly over the course of the depression and World War 2. In the early 1950s the state sent efficiency experts to examine the operations of the various colleges. The efficiency experts were very concerned that you had duplication of courses, but of course you have sex segregated education, so there has to be duplication of courses.

So Douglass was under threat at that time and in the early 50s again the New Jersey Federation of Women and the Associate Alumni of Douglass College mobilized women across the state to insist that the College of New Jersey be preserved as an autonomous college. As a college for women. The mother of the governor testified in the New Jersey legislature about the critical importance of preserving this college for women.

So as part of the ... shall we see, changing the nature of the institution after that run in in the mid-50s, the alumnae of ... Of New Jersey College for Women suggested that the college be renamed to honor its founding dean, Mabel Smith Douglass. So same college reinvented with a new name to honor its founder, but preserved as a women’s college with a deep loyalty to the state, but from the mid-50s
subsequent presidents of Rutgers have been increasingly skeptical about the role of a women's college in a public institution of higher education.

JC: So we’re sorting of seeing the fight I mean ... Because the definition of public would say that everybody should be able to go so ...

MHW: Well ...

JC: Why would we need a separate one?

MHW: But it’s really important to look at Supreme Court litigation, because sex as interpreted by the United State Supreme Court is not a suspect classification in the way that race is, so that the court insists you can’t use race almost ever in making decisions because the likelihood that you’re doing it in a discriminatory way is so intense. It has never said that about sex as a classification. It has said that state legislatures and the federal Congress can make laws that treat men and women differently as long as they have a rational basis for doing so and that the means they choose are integrally related to the end they’re seeking.

So in all the sex discrimination cases in the 1970s, 80s, 90s the Supreme Court has struck down male single sex education because it's a means of denying opportunities to women, but it has upheld women's same sex education because it enables women to overcome contemporary discrimination. Discrimination is not an artifact of the past. It is absolutely present in our society. So the court has ruled that it is still possible to tailor special kinds of education for populations that have been historically disadvantaged.

So should we get to a day when women and men and people of color and white people are equal, okay the rationale may disappear but we are nowhere near that yet?

JC: So we get Douglass College, Mabel Douglass leaves in 33. The next dean was...

MHW: Corwin. No, no.

JC: Corwin.

MHW: Yeah.

JC: Corwin, so what happens between? This is like the great question from the editor... What happened between 1929 and 1960?

MHW: Right.

JC: What’s the rule?

MHW: Well, Margaret Trumbull Corwin was the second dean of Douglass.

JC: Mm-hmm.

MHW: And one of the things that’s quite astonishing about this college is that with the exception of 2 interim deans it has been run by women from its inception, so ...
JC: Mm-hmm. Is that unusual for a woman to …

MHW: Yes, absolutely. Most of the women's colleges had men presidents, even recently. I mean more recently there have been a lot of women presidents but they've had a lot of men in ... And men funding the colleges too, but Margaret Trumbull Corwin was recruited to this position from Yale. So she was from an eminent family of educators, was well educated herself and she took over the college in 1934 and remained the dean through 1955, so the longest serving dean of Douglass by a decade.

I mean she was incredibly long in her tenure. She also was avidly committed to the conception of the New Jersey college for women as a white Christian bourgeois space. She too believed in you know cultivating the manners of students so hats and gloves required off campus, mandatory chapel, liberal arts education but with professional qualifications. So she could continue that tradition.

She had run-ins with the students in a way that Mabel Smith Douglass never did. Some people talk about ... How the students were coming of age, they’re becoming more sense of independent women. They were living through the depression. They had a sense of ... You know they had survival capabilities. Some situate that tension in terms of that kind of growing independence on the part of the students, some situate in relation to the fact that in the 1930s the highest proportion of students at Douglass identified as socialist.

And Margaret Turnbull Corwin was a Republican. The second highest political identification on campus was Republican. So you had some factionalization on campus. This of course was the era of the Spanish Civil War. This was the development of Fascism in Italy and Germany. Corwin hired Faculty for the German Department, all of except one identified with the Nazi Party. She protected them. She even fired the one person who was anti-Hitler, so there were a lot of grounds for tension.

One of the issues, there was a growing Jewish population in the college, so mandatory chapel became an issue. Censorship of the student newspaper became an issue. And the issues were at loggerheads, so Corwin had what I would call in this day and age kind of authoritarian tendencies. She not only censored certain kinds of articles from the newspaper and the student's response was to publish a blank space every time she censored something to let people know that they'd be forced to take something out, but then she shut down the newspaper in 1940.

She absolutely refused to allow it to be published. So she had periods of growing pains you might say. On the other hand, she kept the college afloat during very difficult financial times during World War 2. The college was offering courses to help with national mobilization for the war. There was a sculpture that had been built on Antilles Field which was supposed to be the public space of the college behind College Hall where commencement is now held to honor the women who had served in World War 1, she donated that to the government to melt down ...

JC: Make a canon.

MHW: Make something, yeah. Something military so she was an interesting woman. She was clearly very good at mending relations with Rutgers College. She preserved the autonomy of the school. It continued to grow, I mean the ... There were few years during the depression where the enrollments went down a bit, but not hugely and she kept increasing the academic excellence. So the women students ... Something like by the time mid-50s three quarters of them were in the top 10% of their graduating classes, so incredibly talented women.
And I don't know if this is directly the effect of Corwin’s influence, but Douglass women had a much higher ratio of marrying than women from ... Graduating from other women’s Colleges. So she was producing heteronormative, marriage women who defined their most significant relations in terms of family. Many of them also worked, but they defined their value commitments in terms of family first. So I don't know if that’s because of Corwin’s.

JC: And that part of Douglass’s... an argument about creating school in the first place.

MHW: Yeah, so faithful to the mission.

JC: Faithful to the mission.

MHW: Faithful to the mission, yeah.

JC: That created marriageable women, yeah.

MHW: Very marriageable. But, you know, great women who were also dong important things in the world. The alumnae often do surveys of the graduates to see what they’re doing 5 years out. 10 years out. 20 years out. And the Douglas women have an amazing record of public service. During the war as one can imagine, much of it was with the Red Cross, with the support for training operations, for the military Fort Dix was close by and Fort Kilmer across the river would ... Which is now the Livingston campus, was a military base.

So there were all kinds of things being done to facilitate military operations from Douglass and from Rutgers College itself. Some Douglas women entered the military and a few Douglas women actually died in the military service during World War 2. So Corwin has to be celebrated for keeping the project going. Lots of women’s colleges died during this era. There were over 259 women’s colleges in the 1920’s, by the time you get to 1960, maybe 50. So she kept the project moving forward.

JC: So what year did Julia Baxter Bates apply?

MHW: She graduated in ’38, so it would have been ’34. So it would have been at the very beginning of Corwin’s.

JC: Oh can you tell me a story of what happened? So this is the period of the first African American students, that period progresses, I guess, Paul Robeson would have been here around that same time.

MHW: At Rutgers College.

JC: At Rutgers? So ...

MHW: I think he was a little later.

Speake r 3: Wasn’t he like 1919?

MHW: Oh, he was earlier?

Speake r 3: Yes ...
JC: I thought he’s ... I thought he was later, but anyway, it doesn’t matter. So the first African American woman applies during this period?

JC: Right. When we think about the record of Margret Margaret Trumbull Corwin, there are aspects that one can only in the 21st Century see as deeply, deeply troubling on grounds of racism. She was the dean when a young African-American woman Julia Baxter at the ... In those days, subsequently Julia Baxter Bates applied, and on the basis of her outstanding academics was admitted to the college.

The college did require students to send a photo but Julia Baxter was light complected, and the screening committee didn't realize that they had admitted a student of color. But Corwin invited students to come for a campus interview and when Julia Baxter Bates arrived on campus, Corwin realized that this was an African-American student. And she tried to convince Bates that she should go to Spelman, and Bates said she didn't want to go to Spelman.

She wanted to go to the New Jersey College for Women. So Corwin could not rescind her admission without creating a massive problem for the college, but she refused to allow Julia to live on campus. She required her to become a commuting student, and Julia’s closest relatives were in Newark, I believe. So she had to commute, and in those days classes were 6 days a week, Monday through Saturday. So she had to commute 6 days to be able to do her studies.

So Corwin also established a quota for Jewish students, and she ... In her papers she made arguments that if too many Jewish students were admitted then the kind of student that the college was looking for wouldn't be interested in coming to school here. So she shifted the focus of recruitment from Northern Jersey, the urban centers, towards South Jersey as an effort to contain the number of Jewish students in the school.

So both on grounds of racism and anti-Antisemitism there were difficulties. In the 1940s when African-American students were admitted. They were only admitted in twos. Jewish students were only admitted at least in twos because they had to room with each other. She wouldn't allow cross “race” ... And she used that language, housing.

MHW: Talking about the... The deans, you go from these founders, first one 15 years, second one 22 years, to 5 year increments.

JC: Yeah.

MHW: And almost nobody lasted more than 5 years until we got to Mary Hartman. And she had quite an extraordinary sense of possibilities, but the ... I mean we can talk about Bunting and Adams in just a couple of sentences because ... They have a few terrific things that each of them did, but they were very short term, and my view I mean is that each one of them left because she was furious at what central administration was doing to the college.

JC: In what way?

MHW: Bunting who was a scientist and who did amazing things to get women to start going to graduate school, wrote in her annual reports that decisions were being made year after year after year about the college without the college being consulted. Decisions like all of the Douglass faculty who had created the library science program, were transferred to the new library science school that was opening. The Douglass faculty who had been training teachers since 1918 were taken and put in the Department of Education.
JC: At Rutgers?

MHW: At Rutgers.

JC: And at this time there’s no cross ... Douglass faculty doesn’t not teach at Rutgers, and Rutgers faculty isn’t teaching at Douglass?

MHW: No, students can ... Students were allowed to take a course if there was no comparable course offered at their home campus, but there was, was co-ordinate institutions and so to raid the faculty without consultation. You’d be a little annoyed. You’d be a little annoyed. There were also ... There was also constant planning going on about the future of the university. When Ruth Adams was the Dean the university had its first huge discussion of reorganization and President Mason Gross wanted to create what he called the cluster college concept.

He would create lots of small colleges, 1,500 students each, but he defined college as an organization of students, not as faculty. So he wanted to take all the faculties and consolidate them. So he wanted to really change the nature of higher education in this institution. And Ruth Adams thwarted him. She mobilized not only the Douglass faculty, but faculty from the other colleges to be so opposed to this, that she defeated the president’s plan.

But the way he got around that was to start planning sessions from which she was excluded. No Douglass representatives were allowed. He issued secret memorandums that only the men’s colleges got, and of course those memoranda were all shaping the future direction of the university. So one way you can say “Well Bunting left to become the president of Radcliffe. Adams left to become the president of Wellesley.” I mean it just sounds like a natural career move, on the other hand they were motivated to go on the job market.

JC: So after Dean Corwin, you have a series of deans who are sort of 5 years each. What, what drives that?

MHW: So if we were to think about the history of Douglass in periods there is the NJC period that is not only the founding period in the development of the institution and it’s state wide and national reputation, but it was a period completely controlled by 2 women. Mabel Smith Douglass and Margaret Trumbull Corwin. In the last 50 years we've had a succession of deans, enormously talented women who have come to Douglass made important contributions and then moved on.

So Mary Ingraham Bunting was a scientist. The first Dean of Douglass who came out of the sciences. She came to Douglass at a time in the 1950s, mid-1950s when there was all of this propaganda about women finding meaning as housewives and mothers. “The Feminine Mystique” was in full warp for white women. And she had a mission that Douglass women were going to go to grad school, that this was higher education training women for professions to break new ground. And she was here for 5 years.

She left Douglass to become the president of Radcliffe. So you know extraordinarily talented women, but while she was here she started research programs involving the undergraduate Douglass women in scientific research which was new. She fought for the right of Douglass faculty to teach graduate courses. Prior to Bunting there was incredible sexism on the part of the men’s colleges including the now Graduate School that had been recently opened and they did not believe even though more
faculty at Douglass had PhDs than at any of the other colleges, that Douglass faculty were qualified to teach graduate courses.

So even though some of the Douglass faculty had out published everyone on campus they were not allowed to teach graduate courses and Bunting thought that was totally unacceptable. She also understood that many women especially in the aftermath of World War II married early and thought that they had lost all prospects for higher education. So she created a returning student program. They're now called the Bunting Scholars. For decades they were called the Sophia’s, you know women of wisdom, to enable New Jersey women to come back to school and get their degrees no matter what their age was.

And it was one of the first programs in the country for what we now call re-entry women or nontraditional women. So Bunting did a spectacular job. She was followed by Ruth Marie Adams. Adams was a Victorian literature specialist. And Adams was a woman who also wanted the students to see a future where they could pull together an understanding of themselves as professionals and having a private life.

So she created an honors program, she was very interested in increasing the intellectual content of all the Douglass courses. Douglass had far better academics in terms of the entry qualifications of their students as well as the graduation qualifications of their students. So one of her ways of fighting the devaluation of Douglass was by foregrounding the extraordinary work the students were doing.

She also created the first, what's now called an equal opportunity program. She designed a program to recruit women of color from the urban areas of New Jersey and thought very carefully about crafting this program to have a summer ... I think it started out as 2 weeks, it gradually grew to 4 weeks, orientation so the students would have some capacity building coming in.

She was aware of the kinds of challenges of having students who came from a segregated society living together. So thinking about how do you foster community across difference. How do you build some mentorship from the more advanced students to the younger students knowing that it’s going to be cross racial? How do you use the student organizations that exist, the NAACP on campus? You know to facilitate an interracial coalition.

So she too did quite astonishing work and she left after 5 years to become the president of Wellesley College. She was president of Wellesley and gave Hillary Clinton the right to give a commencement address, another one of her feathers in her cap you might say. Adams was followed by Margery Somers Foster who is a woman who served in the military during World War 2. She, legend has it, arrived on campus in a red Mustang with an 80 mile an hour speeding ticket from the New Jersey Turnpike.

She said she wanted to dean the way she drove, with the reckless abandon but keeping the institution moving forward. She presided over the school at a time when there was enormous discussion of reorganization. The ...

JC: Where are we now?

MHW: We’re now in the early 1970s. And the proposal was to remove faculty from the individual colleges and make it a university-wide faculty, a Faculty of Arts and Sciences. She was absolutely...

JC: Opposed to this.
MHW: Opposed to this. She wanted to preserve the women's college as a women's college. She also had to deal with co-education. Co-education was started the first core class of women was admitted to Rutgers College in 1972.

JC: Yeah, I've had to break this down a little bit because we're now we're getting into sort of some ... The not a thread of the late 60s and early 70s, so Douglass College for Women is here. It's got a huge reputation as being a successful school, so then what make Rutgers decide to start talking about admitting women on its side, the men being wild then.

MHW: Right.

JC: Graduating and doing what they do, so why admit ... Why is ... Why is does that conversation even begin?

MHW: The Board of Governors at Rutgers confronted the question of co-education. 4 different times in the history of our august institution. First in 1981 when it was proposed by ...

JC: 1981?

MHW: Oh, sorry. 1881. When the director of the Agricultural College whose name was Cook recommended that women and men be admitted to the agricultural school in the same way they were to the co-educational state schools that were land-grant and they voted that down. In 1895, they were asked to consider it again when the Rutgers female college in New York City proposed a merger. They also were funded by Henry Rutgers far more lucratively than Rutgers College had been and this was a time when they thought merging resources would help both schools flourish, the trustees voted it down.

They totally voted down the possibility of anything co-ed in 1911 when the first question of the New Jersey College for Women came up which helped shape the language of a co-ordinate college, not co-education. Then in the 1960s you face huge increase in enrollments in higher education. In the 1950s for the 4th time Rutgers was officially declared the state University of New Jersey. Only in the one 1950s they accepted that commitment. They stopped calling themselves a private university. And so they began planning to increase the population from 7,000 to 21,000 in a ten-year period. Well how are you going to do this? One proposal was to keep the Rutgers College men, Douglass women and then create new colleges like what became Livingston as co-ed. Another was to make everything co-educational. And there were proponents of both of those possibilities.

Many surveys were conducted during this period both of students and alum. And the undergraduate students at Rutgers College went from being totally opposed to coeducation in the early '60s to totally in favor of co-education by the late 1960s. So there was a huge shift in perceptions of what was acceptable in higher education, fueled by the civil rights movement so that many of the terms of discourse about co-education changed even in the men's newspaper, The Targum, they started talking about discrimination against women as opposed to single sex education.

So there was a vote in 1970, and the Board of Governors finally voted to admit women with a two-year lead time, but they also wanted Douglass to become co-educational. They wanted everything to become co-educational. Livingston was being designed as a co-educational institution. The Graduate School was opening up to co-education, so they thought, “Okay, it is time for everyone to be
coeducation.” And the faculty of Douglass still believed in the project of women's education. They believed that the time was not right.

They cited studies of what happens in classrooms when all of a sudden you bring men and women together, and how the men dominate the discussion, and there's pressure for women to play less intelligent than they are. So they didn't want those consequences, they wanted to keep Douglass as a women's college. So the Douglass faculty voted, I think 4 to 1 against coeducation. And under the deanship of Margery Somers Foster, they appointed a committee that was chaired by Mary Howard and Elaine Showalter both eminent ... Both scholars who became eminent feminist scholars who designed a project for feminist Education at Douglass.

They had never embrace that were before. Women’s education had been the moniker. Now, they started talking about what would it mean to create feminist education. And part of that project was to literally reshape knowledge. Not just to have women as role models in the classroom, but to start doing research on women, to see whether what you learn about the world is different if you study both men and women, to discover whether or how we understand the universe changes if you take diversity seriously, if you study people from the global south as well as from Europe and North America.

So this plan was you know just a brief outline. A promissory note you might say, well it was to create a college that would become known nationally as a center for the study of women, as well as a place to educate women. And they proposed the building of not just the women's studies program, but they held the first women's history conference in the United States. They hired scholars who did amazing literary criticism focusing on the recovery of women's work as well as reinterpreting works by men with a feminist lens, with a lens of post-colonial scholarship.

They contributed to the creation of the Center for the American Women and Politics. The Center for Women and Art. The Center for Women and Work. The Center for Women's Global Leadership. All parts of a project to really foster women's leadership and then brought them together under the umbrella of the Institute for Women's Leadership.

JC: And this was all within Douglass or is this branch this ... An umbrella between Rutgers and Douglass?

MHW: Douglass launched them. As we move from the 1970s, the very first project to the 1990s, other units are clearly critical players, but these were imagined at Douglass, launched from Douglass and certainly under the administrations of Jewel Cobb, Jewel Plummer Cobb and Mary Hartman. They were seen as absolutely part of this feminist project to change the known world, to help us begin to learn about an inclusive world, not just white Eurocentric men.

JC: Okay, Mary Hartman is a huge seminal figure here, can you talk about probably the most ... No, I won’t put the word in your mouth, but talk about her accomplishments here.

MHW: Right, Margery Somers Foster came to Rutgers in the early 1970s dealt or we might say staved off the co-educational incursion, protected the school as a women’s college but it was very clear to her that her vision for Douglass and the presidents were on a collision course. So she left and was replaced by Jewel Plummer Cobb who was the first African-American Dean of Douglass, also a woman scientist, and who was deeply committed both in the education of women and the education of women of color.
And Dean Cobb was the first person who started a systematic program not only to place Douglass women in the labs of research scientists around campus including her own, she kept her lab open. The whole ... She was a cell biologist the whole time she was a dean and employed Douglass students in that lab while she went through several different grants. But she started building relationships with the pharmaceutical companies in New Jersey, other science-based companies in New Jersey to take Douglass women into the labs in paid internships.

She was very aware that many of the students of color could not afford the luxury of an unpaid internship over the summer. They needed to earn mon- money so that they could come back to school. So by creating paid internships, she created a mechanism to help these students cultivate their scientific skills and also stay in school. So she did some amazing work. And she was still fighting a battle to preserve Douglass as a women's college with its own faculty, with its own curriculum with its own graduation requirements.

But she too could see that the university was moving towards consolidation of the faculty into one research discipline based focus and treating the undergraduate colleges as more residential institutions. So Dean Cobb left in 1980 to become president of California State University-Fullerton. Mary Hartman who was a professor in the history department at Douglass College who had come here even before she finished her dissertation who was the person to teach the first women's history course in the college, who was one of two people to organize the first women's history national conference which was held at Douglass in 1973, and published one of the first women's history volumes Cleo's Consciousness Raised, was asked to become acting dean. And Mary knew everybody on campus because she had kind of come up here. I think first came in the late 60s, so she had been on campus about 12 years when she was named acting dean. And she took on the job with just astonishing gusto.

She understood that the decision to create the Faculty of Arts and Sciences was a done deal. There was no way she could reverse it. So the question was how do you get faculty commitment to the college when you’re no longer paying faculty salaries? How do you preserve the intense relationship between faculty and students when you’re not hiring your own people? And Mary did this through social life. She organized intellectual events, so lecture series, theatrical productions, scientific meetings. But she always had events at the dean's house to bring together faculty staff and students. She made it an inclusive space that brought people together, and she gave rip roaring parties. So everybody loved to go to Mary's house to party and the student’s met the faculty. The faculty saw what talent was among the students so she made ... The organization technically was called The College Fellows. She made it something that faculty wanted to be involved with. She recruited people from the sciences, the social sciences, the humanities. She developed an honors program where you could teach special courses.

During this period the number of faculty at the university was declining. Size of classes were growing exponentially. She was creating an honors program where you’d only have 12 students to teach. She created a tutorial system where faculty could reach out, work individually with undergrad, very talented undergraduate students.

So she found lots of creative ways to bring faculty and students together. So the college had the same feel even though it didn’t control its faculty. And if you read the student yearbooks, one of the things that is absolutely fascinating is that prior to this 1983 creation of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the yearbooks always have department by department, the Douglass faculty and you can see Douglass had more women faculty. I mean 54% of faculty at Douglass were women at a time when the national average was 9% and the other Rutgers Colleges was 9% or lower.
So you could see how important these faculty were. As you move forward the faculty are recreated as the fellows, they're still there. You still see the faces of the faculty. You see the faculty working with students, not department by department, but they're involved in projects. So Mary Hartman had a way of bringing people together. She was a terrific fundraiser.

She convinced the state legislature to create the first endowed chair in women’s studies and because she didn't think they were providing quite enough money to actually get the eminent kind of scholar she was hoping for, she persuaded some families of Douglass alums to do a public private partnership in the Irving Blanche chair …

JC: Edith Irving.

MHW: Edith.

JC: Edith Blanche.

MHW: Edith Blanche and Irving Laurie Chair of New Jersey, right! And this again is decades before that became leveraging public money with private money became state of the art in fundraising circles.

JC: Can I track back a little bit because okay they so there's a takeover on the Newark campuses. This was a question I had earlier that I sort of asked you. How much of the takeover of the Rutgers Newark campus impact what was going on here or in the New Brunswick campus was it more a reaction or all these changes going on, a reaction to the … It’s probably impossible to pull them apart but …

MHW: There were …

JC: What degree is it a response to a national zeitgeist or a particular moment that happens there?

MHW: Right. There were … There were black student organizations at Douglass and at Rutgers College as well as at Rutgers Newark and in Camden. They started as did many schools with NAACP Chapters, but they got more radical. So on Douglass they created the Black Student Congress, which became enormously important. They did fundraising to get participants in sit-ins and demonstrations in the South out of jail.

They hired lawyers from the North to go down and represent some of their fellow students who were involved in civil rights activism and who were running afoul of the racist legal system, so they were very radical and active. What differed between Newark and New Brunswick was who was in charge of the buildings. In Newark when the black students occupied the university property, police were called.

When the Black Student Congress from Douglass and the Black Student Association from Rutgers jointly entered Old Queens, Mason Gross welcomed them in, opened the door said, “I believe completely in what you’re fighting for. Let’s talk about how we can realize it.” It was Mason Gross who believed that we were a state institution, we needed to develop all kinds of programs to increase the proportion of African-Americans and Latinos on campus.

So he actually was a deft politician. Opened the door … I mean you don’t have to bang down a wall when the doors open and started planning with the students. Now, the students protested repeatedly in New Brunswick saying he wasn’t moving quickly enough on his commitments, but he always answered supportively. “We’re working on it. Here, we've got … We've made this much progress.”
That changed when Bloustein, Edward Bloustein, became president. He was not Mason Gross and he did not think the approach to student protest was to open the door and welcome people in.

So he issued a policy that said, there is a difference between First Amendment free speech rights to which students are totally entitled and trespass, criminal trespass on private property. University grounds are a kind of private property and when you encroach administration buildings you are breaking the law. And if you break the law, I'm calling in not just the Rutgers police that would subject you to judicial board hearings on campus, I'm calling the New Brunswick police.

So he gave students warning and the students continued to occupy buildings and he had them arrested. He had them arrested. So not just suspended, he had them arrested. So some of the students became even more radical, spending time in jail will do that ... It wasn't that all of the dissent was at Newark. There were mobilizations on all of the campuses, but it got less press under Mason Gross because of the kind of politician he was.

MHW: I think you could say there was a trajectory from the early 1960s through the first decade of the 21st century, to try to move beyond the idiosyncrasies of Rutgers' origins as these small liberal arts colleges to become a major state university. The language of efficiency, the language of non-duplication, the language of equal opportunity, every program open to every student regardless of where the student lived, fueled the transformation under graduate education, with the consequence that the undergraduate colleges were proposed to be abolished.

And the initial proposal was to abolish all the undergraduate colleges. So Rutgers College still existed as a co-ed college. Livingston was co-ed, Douglass was all women. The agriculture school was co-ed so the idea was you would no longer be a student of a college, you would be a student of a school. The schools were controlled by the faculties and everything else would be a residential hall.

So the transformation of undergraduate education had a structural component, doing away with the undergraduate colleges. It also had an academic component it was all about changing the general education requirements to bring them into conformity with you know new scholarship and a different way of understanding the world in the 21st century.

The huge confrontation in New Brunswick over the transformation of undergraduate education was about the structural dimension. Livingston didn't want to be abolished. Livingston had been the only school created as a co-ed school with a social justice mission - from the time it was created 30% to 40% of its students from the very outset were students of color. That proportion grew over the intervening decades.

Douglass was committed to being a women's college and there were a lot of alums and students with loyalties to Rutgers College that didn't want to see Rutgers College abolished either. So there was major mobilization against the structural recommendation, but only Douglass won. And Douglass won not only by mobilizing students, alumnae, but also the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs and the state legislature of New Jersey. The legislature passed a resolution, I think it was unanimous, that Douglass as an entity of higher education in the state should be preserved. So it was a rip-roaring campaign that lasted about eighteen months and you could say Douglass emerged victorious.

JC: Do you believe it did emerge victorious?

MHW: I believe it emerged facing yet more challenges than it had before. When you think about a college, people think about a physical space. They think about friendship networks. They think about
generational relations, students and alums. They usually think about a faculty. They usually think about a particular intellectual orientation, a curriculum. Certain kinds of majors dominate others. The challenge for Douglass Residential College was to perpetuate a meaningful college experience without autonomous control of housing operations, support operations, health facilities, classroom facilities, no faculty.

So it was fully integrated into this huge research one institution, and yet it preserved the promise of women's higher education. So the challenge that both Harriet Davidson and Jackie Litt have been coping with quite brilliantly is how to get students excited about coming to Douglass, and giving them extra programs at Douglass through a mission course, through co-curricular programming, through living learning experiences in the residence halls, that makes them still think of themselves as Douglass women, and as Rutgers women.

So they are doing the both and Douglass is value added to a research one education. We all agree that you can't do better than a research one education, but you can ...

JC: What is a research one education?

MHW: Oh, Oh, sorry, sorry. Okay.

JC: For those of us that don't know.

MHW: The Carnegie Foundation did a study of higher education and created a system of ranking schools on the basis of how many majors they offered, the research profiles of their faculty, the quality of their entering students, the amount of their funding in federal grants. And at the absolute epitome of this hierarchy is a research one institution. It signifies that you are huge. You cover every conceivable terrain. You're offering PhDs in almost every field and not just one or 2 but 30, 40, 50, 60 a year that you're bringing in hundreds of millions of dollars in all of these different fields. That your faculty have world class reputations. So it gives you the best you can get in higher education so to speak, but typically in a context where classes are larger, and often in a space where teaching assistants, adjunct faculty have more face to face time with undergraduates than do senior faculty, research scholars.

And part of what the reinvention of Douglass has been in the past decade, is finding ways to create strong links between senior research faculty and Douglass students. So a program was created for the women in science, technology, engineering and math, that put them in some of the best labs, and the fellows program still exists that involves faculty and teaching. There’s a mission course that’s got a focus on women's leadership and also how knowledge is linked to power, that has a ratio of 22 students to 1 faculty member.

So unlike an intro psych course that has 450 students, here you have very intensive interaction with your teacher. And they've also created a peer mentoring program. So there is a student mentor assigned to these 22 students, first years, as well as a faculty person to help the student figure out how do you negotiate a huge university. There are all kinds of co-curricular programs, overseas studies opportunities, living and learning communities.

So Harriet Davidson and Jackie Litt have recreated the sense that you're part of an intense, vibrant, intellectual community, where everybody knows your name even though you're in a school with 52,000 students, which is quite a feat.
JC: It is, and you know, it's interesting has a sense to like this sort of the arc of the narrative that you tell your folks, total exclusion of women from the academy to sort of this battle between ... Or not really a battle. Well ... It's a struggle between how do you ... Why should there be ... What is the role of women's only or are predominantly it is like when I say this they're like “no, we're not supposed to say it's totally women,” but it's predominantly female.

In an environment that's co-educational, how do you justify your existence? And should you ... Is there a reason to keep justifying the existence? Do you feel there is?

MHW: Well I am a political science, a political scientist by training. And if you look at the political world, 18 women serving as presidents, prime ministers, chancellors, highest executive office of their country out of 182. The going international average of women in parliaments and legislatures is 22%. Women in cabinet level positions around the world the average is 24%. Women are 51% of the human population.

So if you look at positions of power in the public sector women are still radically under-represented. If you look at the private sector, it's worse. If you look at the chief financial executives of Fortune 500 companies women are like 4%. Women have gained ground in the professions but if you look at the most elite tiers of the professions, they're still markedly under-represented. So there is no question that women have made extraordinary progress over the last 100 years, but we haven't attained anything like meaningful equality even on men's terms.

And many women want not just meaningful equality on men's terms, they want to change the values that organize public and private space, so that men are doing more of the work in the homes, so that men are doing more childcare, so that there's more equitable distribution of household responsibility. Some states like Sweden have made far more progress than the US has in that direction, but it's still not equality.

If you talk to the most powerful women in Sweden, they will still say they don't have equal chances with their male counterparts. So the justification that I see for a school like Douglass that takes from the very first year the theme of women's leadership, regardless of what your area of intellectual interest is, and tries to help students build the kind of foundation, so that they won't just get an entry level job and you know spend their whole life in an accounting department, but become the chief financial officer of a university or a corporation.

That's this project. It's to do a counter-socialization so that they have the tools to move forward and do transformative professional work, not just fitting into the spaces that they're allowed in.

JC: Then there's also the Institute for Women's Leadership which is university-wide, all the campuses?

MHW: Okay, when Mary Hartman decided to retire from being Dean of Douglass, she became Dean in 1981 and she served through the fall of 1994, so a long and glorious reign. She decided to retire with the end of the major financial campaign, capital campaign for the 75th anniversary of Douglass. And part of that campaign was to build a beautiful building which houses the Center for Women's Global Leadership, the Institute of Research on Women, Women's and Gender Studies and the Institute for Women's Leadership, but part of it was also to find a way to make visible the incredible research organizations focusing on women's lives that were clustered on the Douglass campus.

So the Institute for Women's Leadership defines itself as a consortium with member units that are doing extraordinary path breaking research on women in politics, women and work, women and art,
women in the sciences, technology fields, engineering, leadership itself, American politics, the world. So it brings together all of these research units that are also advocacy, social change units to try to show people at Rutgers what these scholars are doing and these scholars are often far better known off campus then they're known on campus.

So the IWL partners with its individual units to develop new programs, many of which involve our undergraduate students in leadership training in these diverse fields. Mary Hartman was the first director, the founding director of the IWL and she made, I think, a very strategic political decision to open IWL programs to all of Rutgers because part of the objective was to help all of Rutgers learn about the treasure that has been created it Douglass.

So yes, any student can apply for an IWL program, just as any student can be a Women's Studies major, but we still have I would say a very high preponderance of Douglass women participating in these programs because they're our neighbors. They live all around us and they know far more about this. They have us as their teachers in their classrooms and so I mean I don't actually have at the top of my head the stats for which different units are participating in what proportions, but yes they are open to all students, but very high percentage of Douglass students participate.

JC: Okay, so you’re on the faculty of Douglass? Is there ... Are there no ...?

MHW: There are no faculty at Douglass. I ... I’m on the Faculty of Women's qnd Gender Studies and Political Science.

JC: At Rutgers?

MHW: At Rutgers.

JC: There’s no formal ...

MHW: In the School of Arts and Sciences. The School of Arts and Sciences was created in 2007 when the undergraduate colleges were abolished. Yes, so I'm a faculty member in the School of Arts and Science at Rutgers University, but I teach on the Douglass campus.

JC: Yeah, so it a crutch? Is, is, is Douglass sort of become a crutch for women who otherwise couldn’t hack it in the larger co-educational?

MHW: No, I wouldn't call it that at all. As a professor of women's and gender studies and as a teacher from graduate school in political science, I have students that come from all different kinds of backgrounds, majors and there is no way that you would ever call a Douglass woman a weakling. They are feisty. They're smart. They're energetic. They're go-getters. They’re involved in all kinds of campus organizations. They network. They have a sense of self confidence. They are extraordinary young women.

And in women studies classrooms in particular you're trying to build bridges among the students and we sometimes have conversations. Students who don't live on Douglass, don't know about the Douglass residential college. Like how did you get involved in all of those 17 things you've just been talking about, they'll say to a Douglass woman and just say, “I'm a Douglass student.” So, I mean one of the changes that Douglass residential college enables is that students can, who are not living in the Douglass residential halls, can participate in Douglass programs now too.
So the attempt to try to get Douglass opportunities out to larger cohorts of students is another one of the contemporary challenges, because you need a lot of resources to go from a program for 50 students to go to a program for 500 and a lot of those resources have not been proffered by the university itself, so fundraising becomes very important.

JC: And did I notice when I look at the Rutgers fundraising thing, I mean there’s pictures of women on every page but there’s no ...

MHW: That was a victory of the IWL. We fought for years to stop having Rutgers visually represented as white men.

JC: So the graduates ...

MHW: So the fact that there are some students of color on those pages, that there are faculty of color on those pages, that there are women on those pages, that I would say was a 15-year battle.

JC: So, all right. So, but the question gets to when I look at the line items on the budget, I don’t see ... I mean like there’s no line item for women. So there’s like a project, like an ongoing project to still get Rutgers to recognize that women are partners in the educational process. So how do you ... How do you do that? What is your ... What is your reading of the history tell you about what’s necessary in order to do that?

MHW: What do they say about water wearing away the rock by constantly dripping? We are constantly annoying the rock that is Rutgers to try to get adequate funding for programs that are extraordinary programs. Of course the AADC [Associate Alumnae of Douglass College] has been a huge partner because the AADC raises funds for scholarship money. Oh, the Associate Alumnae of Douglass College continue to raise funds to enable special programs for Douglass women.

The Global Village at Douglass involves international travel experiences. They've gone to Romania, to Thailand, to Dominican Republic, to South Africa and the projects involve service learning, not just you know tourism, but low income students can’t afford that. The Associate Alumnae of Douglass have been raising funds so that if you are living in the Global Village and this is the year the Global Village is going on that trip, you get to go on that trip. So you know trying to eliminate financial obstacles to these astonishing opportunities for students.

It's a huge project and it means making alliances with supportive senior administrators, building alliances with each new generation of administrators who come in. Allison Bernstein was spectacular at that. One of the ways that we can endear ourselves to the administration is bringing in lots of money. So the new Gloria Steinem Chair that has almost reached its goal of three million is another way of bringing something to Rutgers that they would not get absent the work of the Institute of Women’s Leadership.

So it's partly developing spectacular substantive programs and partly trying to get the university to see what spectacular programs these are.

MHW: In the 19th century, the battles over women's access to higher education played out on two very different fronts. One was the co-educational schools operating under land-grant money that for particularly lower middle income people was a huge opening because the tuitions were very
manageable. On a parallel course, there was a proliferation of women's colleges, sometimes called women seminaries, sometimes called women institutes.

The difference between secondary education and tertiary education in the 19th Century was always you know fluid. And these were typically far more expensive available only to more affluent families. A very strong concern with moral virtue because this ideology of Republican motherhood, this notion of separate spheres even some of the language from suffrage that women have higher moral capabilities than men, and they're going to bring this morality into politics.

So there was always an aspect of liberal arts education, but there was an aspect of producing the bourgeois women who would have a mission of doing good in the community, so the beginning of philanthropy. The beginning of social service organizations. Jane Adams and the Hull House frame, working with immigrants, you know, cross-class interactions. So you have private schools for women that are growing from the 1830s through 1900.

But even by 1900, more women were attending co-educational public schools than were attending private schools. And from the early 19th century, through the 1960s, you just saw more and more of the women's colleges being thrown by the wayside. The studies of college-bound students indicate than less than 1% of women students will even consider a women's college. So there are now in 2014, I think only 42 women's colleges left. Rutgers is the only women's college housed within a public research university.

So it's thoroughly distinctive in that regards. And the university web pages all blur the fact that it is a women's college because they don't want to get into equal opportunity issues. Several people have tried to sue the university saying that it's a violation of the rights of white men that there is a program that is targeted towards women, and I'm sure you'd be surprised to find that as the demographic profile of Douglass has become increasingly in majority women of color.

Vast preponderance women of color, 66% percent women of color. White animosity towards the college has grown.

MHW: The most radical feminist activism started on Douglass in the 1970s. Adrienne Rich was the founder of one of our wonderful undergraduate student organizations called LABIA. It was an alliance of Lesbian and Straight students on campus and that certainly brought together women from Rutgers College as well as from Douglass as well as Livingstone. It was ... It had a broad outreach.

There were wonderful interventions in the 1990s organized by the Douglass Equal Opportunity Board, which involved both faculty and Douglass students who were trying to fight racism on campus. And they initiated projects that they then opened to the other colleges and that brought anti-racist men and women to Douglass to participate in those kinds of activities. So I think you know you get certain kinds of devaluation of Douglass because it is a women's college. You get certain homophobic tendencies raising suspicions about who would choose a women's college.

But you also get very creative coalitions across campus on issues like violence against women, on issues like anti-racism. So the transformation of undergraduate education advanced as one of its justifications to do away with the petulance among the students at different colleges, the notion that there was a pecking order to make it clear that no matter what undergraduate space you inhabit at Rutgers, you're getting a world class education. And I think students see it that way now.
I think no longer is there a sense that you know there's something wrong with you if you choose Douglass Residential College, but there certainly were decades where some of those tensions proliferated.

JC: So what was Rutgers Female Collage and what happened to it?

MHW: Well in 1825, the trustees of Rutgers College in New Brunswick, men's training ground for life in the Dutch Reformed Church, decided to change their name to Rutgers College both to honor Henry Rutgers who was a Revolutionary War hero and in the quite self-serving hope that if the college named after Henry Rutgers he would leave all his worldly possessions to them. And Henry Rutgers was a real estate magnet in New York.

So in Manhattan itself he owned huge tracts of land and he owned lots of land upstate New York. So he was a very wealthy man by early 19th century standards. I'm sure he was flattered to have become the namesake of Rutgers College. He donated $2,000 to build a bell in a bell tower to help call the students to classes. And in his will he left $5,000 to Rutgers College New Brunswick to help them with their project. That was in the 1830s.

At that time half a dozen women had left $5,000 to Rutgers College, so it was not an astonishing sum. In his will he left far more money and land to create a Rutgers Female Institute. A system of higher education for women. And a group of Dutch Reformed ministers in New York City and the New York environs organized the Rutgers Female Institute on the promise of providing as good an education as any young man could get in the United States at the time.

It opened in 1837. The women were taught Latin, and Greek, and classics and history of literature, and mathematics, chemistry, physics it was a real higher education experience. Between 1937 and 1867, its mission grew from a kind of a two-year experience to a four-year experience. It was then chartered by the Board of Regents in the state of New York to become the Rutgers Female College.

So it preceded Barnard, and it moved from a beautiful building in the Lower East Side to an astonishing building that looked kind of like a castle right across from where now the New York Public Library stands, so prime New York City real estate, and it was flourishing. As early as 1867 it was teaching a course on the legal status of married and single women which we think is probably one of the very first women's studies courses offered in higher education in the US.

In the 1890s there was a big recession. Not quite as big as the Great Depression but huge financial problems. So there were cash flow issues involving the investments where the female college's money lay. It was because of those financial complications that the female college, Rutgers Female College, made an overture to Rutgers College of New Brunswick that they would merge.

At that time all merger meant was that they would, you know, cast their fates together, sell some of the New York real estate. Help both institutions. And Rutgers New Brunswick already had a history of partnering with medical schools in the city of New York so it wasn't breaking tradition in that sense, but the Rutgers trustees wanted nothing to do with the Women's College, and the combination of not being able to get the short term cash flow to whether that financial exigency meant that it sold its buildings to other women's colleges. Hunter, Barnard and went out of business in 1895.