Women at
Colby College
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AUGUSTA
MAINE
Copy of the Records of the Trustees of Colby College Relating to the Status of Women, 1871-1905

1871: The following resolution was presented by Dr. Shailer:

Resolved, That the advantages of the course of studies pursued in this university be open to young women on the same terms as admission is to young men. After discussion, the same was referred to a committee consisting of Drs. Shailer and Stearns and President Champlin.

The committee to whom was referred the resolution in regard to the admission of young women to the advantages of the university reported, that the resolution previously presented by Dr. Shailer might be wisely and safely adopted. The resolution, after a full discussion, was adopted.

1890: President Small’s Report, and Subsequent Action Thereon.

It is evident that the number of young ladies who desire a college education is increasing. When the Trustees voted, in 1871, that young women should be admitted to Colby on the same terms as young men, it was supposed that the privilege would be accepted only in exceptional cases, particularly by young women who wished to fit themselves for teaching in the higher grades. With each year it has become more apparent that young women would soon apply, in as large numbers as young men, for the advantages of a liberal education. Unless present indications are totally misleading, the number of young women in the next Freshman class will exceed twenty. The
course of events has plainly justified the first step in the direction of co-education, but it as plainly warns that a second step must be taken, and that not merely cold courtesy, but hearty invitation and suitable welcome be hereafter offered at Colby to young women properly prepared for college study. In my judgment Colby is not at present so organized that it would be safe to urge the attendance of young women as strenuously as we do that of young men. That we may be able to do so I ask the earnest attention of the Trustees to the following proposals:—

(a) That the Board adopt the purpose of organizing within the University, a college for young men, and a second co-ordinate college for young women.

(b) That the conditions of scholarship for entrance to Colby be absolutely identical in the two colleges.

(c) That as soon as the income of the University will permit, instruction in the different branches pursued in common by the young men and the young women be given to the students in each college separately; except in the case of lectures, which would be given to the students of both colleges simultaneously, and excepting also laboratory work, in which pupils are engaged upon individual problems.

(d) That in the further development of the elective system due attention be paid to the expansion of courses likely to be of special attractiveness to members of the one college or the other. I refer, on the one hand, to courses in natural and political sciences; and, on the other hand, to courses in language, literature, aesthetics and history.

(e) That in case the students in one of the colleges should in any study not be numerous enough to form a separate division, they be admitted to recitation with the corresponding division in the other college.

(f) That in class organization, rank, prize contests, appointments, and honors, the members of the two colleges be treated as independently as though they were in distinct institutions.
(g) That the Faculty be authorized to begin this re-organization with the class that shall enter in 1890, provided it can be done without additional expense.

These proposals spring from a desire to so organize co-education at Colby that all the lingering objections to the higher education of women in the University will be removed. The Faculty believe that an organization is possible which will enable Colby to offer more favorable conditions for the liberal education of both young men and young women than can be afforded to either by the exclusive institutions. They wish to be more free than they have felt thus far to urge upon young women the advantages of the University.

Messrs. Crane and Dunton made the following report as to item No. 9 on page 13 of the printed record relating to the formation of a college for young men and a second co-ordinate college for young women:

"Report.

We recommend the adoption of the plan of organization recommended by the President on page 13, item 9, of his printed report, and that the authority therein requested be granted."

(Signed) A. R. CRANE,
LARKIN DUNTON.

Dr. Bakeman, minority of said Committee, submitted his report in the form of a vote as follows:

"Voted: that it is inexpedient to adopt the recommendations in Article 9th of the President's report relating to the organization of a co-ordinate college for young women." The majority vote was adopted by vote of eleven to five. This action was then reconsidered with the understanding that another vote should be taken tomorrow morning without discussion.

Subsequently the majority report of the Committee on Reports of the Faculty relating to the establishment of a woman's college
was then adopted by a vote of fifteen in favor to five in opposition.

**JUNE 25, 1901: PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS, MAJORITY AND MINORITY REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE, AND ACTION OF TRUSTEES THEREON.**

Petitions were presented from various alumni in favor of proposed plan of making Colby a college for men only.

Dr. King presented the following report from a majority of the special Committee appointed to consider the policy of the College with reference to men and women students:

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FUTURE POLICY OF COLLEGE.**

Your committee appointed to consider the future policy of the college as regards men and women students, have endeavored to investigate and consider the facts bearing upon this important matter and to reach conclusions rational, honorable and for the highest interest of the college.

We would recognize first that the prime object of the college is educational under Christian influences, and second, that we should make this as far reaching as possible.

We find that for thirty years the doors of Colby have been open to women as well as men;

That the extending of its influences for the highest education of women has not been done at an additional expense, but that it has increased the income of the college and its power for good;

That the money invested in the accommodations for women has been well invested;

That provisions by will have been made for a woman's dormitory which will increase the efficiency of the woman's division;

That the largest portion of the income-producing endowment of Colby has been received during the last thirty years, and that the men who gave the largest sums were members of the Board
The undersigned, a minority of the committee appointed at the midwinter meeting of the Board to consider the future policy of the college in relation to men and women students, beg leave to report that he cannot agree with the majority of the committee and submits the following brief statement of his reasons without elaboration:

1. The views of the individuals composing the committee have not changed since their appointment. At that time, two members of the majority had left the committee. The views of the individuals composing the committee have not changed since their appointment.

2. The undersigned believes that the college should be open to both sexes.

3. The undersigned believes that the education of men and women should be co-educational.

4. The undersigned believes that the college should be open to both sexes.

5. The undersigned believes that the education of men and women should be co-educational.

6. The undersigned believes that the college should be open to both sexes.

7. The undersigned believes that the education of men and women should be co-educational.

(Signed) C. E. OWEN.

ALFRED KING.
were in favor of the present system and one was opposed. We remain the same today.

2. We all realize the importance of the question and are equally anxious to do what is for the best interests of the college, not merely today but in the future.

3. It is admitted that the number of women applicants for admission is increasing much faster than the number of men, so much so that it will not be many years before the women will out-number the men. There are fewer men in college today than during any time within the past ten years and there are more women with the exception of the year 1896, when the same number were there. In 1891, there were 137 men; today 123. In 1891 there were 47 women; today 80, and the last entering class contained 37 of each sex.

4. When the time comes that the women out-number the men, the men will feel that they are going to a woman's college and in my judgment such a condition will have a tendency to lessen still further the number of men. It is a fact not to be winked out of sight that many young men who would otherwise naturally come to Colby and who are just the kind that we need as students and as alumni, are kept from Colby because of the large number of women here today and I believe that that difficulty will increase in the future.

5. Whatever the result of co-education in other institutions may be, it has never been satisfactory at Colby. The policy was adopted in 1871 and during the first decade only 23 women applied for admission. The numbers then began to increase rapidly and the situation became such that during President Small's administration the policy of co-ordination was adopted by this Board. This, like most other compromises, was satisfactory to neither party. It did not meet the views of those who were anxious to see a strong minor college for men alone here in central Maine and it met with a vigorous protest from the alumnae, who presented their views to this Board in no uncer-
tained terms. From that day to this, neither party has been satisfied with existing conditions.

6. The financial side of the question I consider a minor one. My own opinion, however, on that point is that by the sale of the property now used for ladies' halls and the turning of the proceeds into the general fund of the college, the reduction of the teaching force in some directions and a combination in others if necessary, a college for men alone could be maintained with less deficit than at present. The total number of students would not be as great as now, at least for many years; but we would have as many men as we have now and in all probability more, and that number ought naturally to increase, so that a college might be built up after the plan of Bowdoin or Dartmouth or Williams or Amherst.

7. I see no force to the claim that because large gifts were made to the college by Gov. Coburn and Mr. Colby at a time when they were both trustees of the institution and after the policy of co-education had been adopted, therefore there was an implied condition that that policy should be continued for all time. The gifts were unconditional and without restriction. Had they desired to make such condition, they would undoubtedly have done so. The gifts were made with the ordinary and necessary implication that the trustees should in the future as in the past manage the affairs of the college and adopt new policies or change old ones as they might see fit. With much better reason could the claim have been made in 1871 that the trustees had no power to open the doors to women. The institution was chartered as a literary and theological institution for the "education of youth," and I think any court would give that word its ordinary signification, of young men. All the gifts during the fifty years prior to 1871 had been made when the policy adopted and the only one thought of was that embraced in the charter,—the building up of a college for men. With much greater force could it then have been argued that those
funds could not be diverted to any other use. Without any change in the charter, however, this has been done. It must have been upon the assumption that all unconditional gifts should be used by the trustees as in their judgment should seem best. That same principle applies now and the question is now to be met by the trustees unhampered and that question is, what shall Colby do?

8. The objection is made that funds have been specifically contributed towards a woman's dormitory within the past few years. According to the treasurer's report those contributions amount to $5,394, are deposited safely and separately, constitute no part of the fund we are using today and can be readily returned to the donors.

9. Another objection is the hoped-for woman's dormitory that has been promised by will, by some party we know not whom. This in no way complicates the present situation. Had the funds already come into our possession it would be different. If our policy is now changed, those funds would not come.

10. The suggested plan of making an effort to establish two practically distinct institutions like Radcliffe in its connection with Harvard, or Pembroke in its connection with Brown, seems to me futile.

1. In the first place this suggestion admits the unwisdom of the present system. If the present is good, why not extend rather than change it?

2. In the second place, such a plan is the merest fancy. We have been and still are struggling at Colby to secure money enough to run one college and the result has been a deficit of $54,000 during the past ten years, and that notwithstanding we have kept a paid agent in the field for the past five years whose sole business is to solicit funds. If we have so great difficulty in maintaining one college it is useless to think of creating another and maintaining two; at least within the lifetime of any member of this Board. I see no force, therefore, in the passage
of resolutions looking to that scheme: such resolutions will not and cannot solve the problem.

11. Four possible courses have been suggested:

(1). First, to create two separate institutions in fact. This is out of the question for financial reasons.

(2). Second, to turn the institution into a woman’s college, pure and simple. I think no one seriously contemplates this.

(3). Third, to allow the present policy to continue. This in my judgment will itself in time turn it practically into a woman’s college, and hence to me is objectionable.

(4). Fourth, to make it what its founders intended and what for the first half century of its life it was, a college for men only. I honestly believe that in twenty-five years from this time, Colby would stand higher and would do a greater work if it could be a strong minor college for men than if the present policy is continued, and therefore it is that I respectfully dissent from the report of the majority and wish to put myself on record as in favor of the proposed change, namely, of announcing that beginning with the academic year of 1905-6, Colby will be a college for men only.

12. In what I have said I do not wish to be understood as opposed to the higher education of women. On the contrary I am in favor of it, but I am also in favor of sending our youth to a college for men and our women to a college for women.

(Signed) LESLIE C. CORNISH.

The reports of the Special Committee to consider the policy of the college with reference to men and women students were taken from the table.

Mr. Cornish moved that the minority report be substituted for the majority. This motion was lost, two voting in favor and fourteen against.
Voted: That the majority report be laid on the table and Dr. Bakeman and Dr. King be requested to bring in an amended report at tomorrow morning's session.

Wednesday, June 26, 1901: 8 A. M. Met according to adjournment. The same members were present as at yesterday's session.

Dr. Bakeman presented the following as the amended form of the majority report of the Committee to consider the policy of the College with reference to men and women students:

Amended Form of Majority Report.

After careful consideration of all the facts bearing upon the subject we are of the opinion that it should be the policy of Colby College to continue to use its equipment for the higher education of men and women;

That the number of each shall be limited only by the means of the College to provide suitable accommodations and perform its work in the best possible way;

That the system of co-ordination be continued, viz: that there be a man's division and woman's division of the College;

That we appeal to the graduates and friends of the College to unite with us in our efforts to perfect this system as soon as possible.

The report was accepted, fourteen voting in favor and two against it.


"The phenomenal growth of the Women's Division brings us face to face with a problem the solution of which we can no longer postpone. During the last three years the number of women in the college remained quite stationary, but this year we have leaped from 77 to 108. The noble gift of Mrs. Dexter leading to the erection of Foss Hall has, without doubt, given a new impetus to the Women's Division."
Conditions have been constantly changing, until now the number of women is increasing more rapidly than that of the men. It is manifestly impossible to ever return to co-education, and I believe that henceforth co-ordination, which has served the purpose of the college for fifteen years, should be discontinued. I am convinced that it is our immediate duty to make of the Women’s Division a separate college. It seems to me very probable that the enlargement of Science courses will gradually increase the number of men; but there is little doubt that the number of women will increase more rapidly than the number of men, even under circumstances most favorable. A careful observer may well fear for the effect upon the Men’s Division of the college if our policy is not defined at once, for if co-ordination continues another year I think it more than likely that there will be a third more women than men in the next entering class. If this should occur, it would be difficult to ever regain our ground in the Men’s Division.

With the exception of Mr. Colby’s first donation of $50,000, the gifts from the benefactors of Colby make it very evident that they intended to have the income from their benefactions devoted to the education of both men and women, as both the sexes were being educated at Waterville when their bequests were provided. Instruction, therefore, given by the Faculty of Colby College in a new Women’s College at Waterville would be in full harmony with the intent of these donors. The increased number of students now makes it necessary that there shall be divisions—and possibly sub-divisions—in class-room work, and it is believed that a schedule can be arranged looking to the complete separation of all the men and women, at least in the two lower classes. The increased number of students calls for some line to be drawn, and why not this as well as any other? Instruction can thus be given to two colleges as well as to two co-ordinate divisions of one college.

I would therefore recommend that we make the Women’s
Division of Colby College into a separate college and under a separate name; that there be a separate chapel service; separate public exhibitions; a separate commencement; that the library be used in common; that there be one Treasurer of both institutions, while the administration and instruction given in the new college be, as far as possible, the same as that of Colby College. This will entail at present but little additional expense.

There is therefore no financial reason why the above plan should not be at once adopted. The advantages will be that we have definitely settled our policy, and can calmly wait with these necessary first steps taken, until additional funds shall make possible the separation of other classes in the Junior and Senior years, if this shall prove advisable for other reasons than that of economy. The Women's College, in my judgment, will grow rapidly, and it will not be many years before we shall require new dormitories. Such an institution, too, will appeal to an enlarged constituency which must attract gifts and students.

The rapid increase of the Women's College would have no injurious effects upon the growth of Colby College, which must necessarily be slower, even with the introduction of more Science courses, on account of our restricted field and the intense competition for students in this part of New England. We shall at the same time educate both men and women at Waterville in these two institutions, and thus carry out the desires of the fathers, fulfill the wish of our constituency, redeem the promise made in June, 1901, and adopt the policy for which the time seems ripe. I believe that there is a general feeling that separation must come some time, and that the sooner it arrives the better it will be for all concerned.

Let me remind you then of how complete will be our educational system. We shall have four academies, strategically situated in various parts of the state, in which co-education will always prevail, fitting men for Colby College and women for the College for Women at Waterville.”
It was voted that the Women’s Division of Colby College be made into a separate college, with a separate name, chapel service, catalogue, public exhibitions, commencement; that the library be used in common; that the recitations, as largely as possible, be in Foss Hall or neighboring buildings; that the laboratories be used in common with Colby College; that the instruction of the first two years of the college be entirely separate from that given to the men of Colby College, and that there be separation in the Junior and Senior years as far as possible; that there be one Treasurer for both institutions, and that the administration and instruction of the new college be, as far as possible, the same as that given to Colby College.

That the officers of the college be the same as those of Colby College, and that the annual meeting of the Trustees of the new college occur on the same date as the meeting of the Trustees of Colby College; that the President and Faculty of the new college be the same as the President and Faculty of Colby College, with the exception of such additional instructors as shall be found necessary; that the entrance requirements be the same as those of Colby College; that the courses of instruction be, for the first year, the same as those given to the students of Colby College; that the working out of this plan be committed to a committee of five on the part of the Trustees and a committee of the Faculty of Colby College, who shall report to the Trustees in June, 1905.