INTERSECTIONS OF ATHLETICS AND INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY IN WOMEN’S COLLEGE TRANSITIONS TO COEDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The history of the intercollegiate athletics programs at Elmira College and Vassar College in the time frame of the 1960s and 1970s, when both historical women’s colleges went coeducational, illustrates that attitudes and beliefs about collegiate sports in formerly single-sex women’s colleges were not entirely homogeneous. In the 1960s and 1970s, the national structure of and assumptions about college athletics in the United States for men and women were remarkably different. The women’s collegiate sports world particularly experienced significant transformations of its own during the time frame. This overarching history, played out on an institutional level that had no past tradition of providing such athletics opportunities for males, placed the unique choice of athletics representation into the hands of the colleges themselves. Not only were the Vassar and Elmira coeducation transitions unique, but their interpretation of the role of athletics within that transitional identity was pioneering.

College archival and other publications demonstrate that at Elmira in 1969, men’s intercollegiate athletics was a purposeful and important component to its coeducation. The spectacle of intercollegiate athletics was to be a celebrated focus of student life and an example of the college’s prestige. Intercollegiate athletics, first mainly for men and more inclusively for both genders only later, developed with an urgency that made such sport programs appear as a rite of entrance into male education. By initially administratively separating the greater part of the men’s and women’s programs, Elmira supported stereotypical gender norms with an athletics nexus and therefore reinforced a status level differential between its men and its women from the start of coeducation.

For Vassar, student and university publications and archives materials show that athletics for men was a common discussion topic as coeducation progressed, yet a large-scale athletics program was not how the college wanted itself represented. By keeping intercollegiate athletics housed within the Physical Education Department, the college reinforced the process of socializing students into a structure which favored neither gender nor any particular concept of athletics. Development of the intercollegiate program occurred slowly, though not without criticism, throughout the 1970s. While the college insisted on its uniqueness, simultaneous fears of the “jock” mentality and of association with homosexuality riddled efforts to establish any type of intercollegiate sport, and only reflected prevailing gendered archetypes. True to Vassar’s historical character, despite the fall back to norms, the treatment of men and women was more equivalent and harbored intentions of maintaining equality. Ironically, admissions selectivity, one of the main reasons the college rejected a big-time athletics program, actually suffered in the years following coeducation even with minimal emphasis on athletics.

The progress of intercollegiate athletics at Vassar manifested the ability of sport program structure to reflect and promote the institutional mission, even if institutional identity was still being reformulated. At Elmira, in contrast, the early developments of sport during coeducation served as a reminder of the cultural influence of athletics. The significance of such institutional histories as those of Vassar and Elmira add to the body of knowledge about the diversity of institutional change, demonstrate the potential utility of sport during such change, and contribute a foundation for analysis of the influence of status and prestige on institutional-wide change and more specifically on the development of intercollegiate athletics. Finally, such histories isolate gendered patterns of change which can be influenced by or profoundly shape intercollegiate athletics.
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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction of Inquiry

The 1960s and 1970s were revolutionary decades in American higher education. Social change influenced vast transformations in colleges and universities during the two decades, and the rapidly expanding collegiate enrollment and career interests of women were at the root of many significant changes. For the 261 men’s colleges operating in 1960, competition for the brightest students along with a downward demographic trend led many to take advantage of the enrollment opportunities an additional population offered by opening their doors to women.\(^1\) Women, in turn, enrolled in overwhelming numbers, and from 1948 to 1970, jumped from 29- to 41-percent of the college-going population.\(^2\) This growing collegiate female contingent was, moreover, largely attracted to coeducational institutions. Such developments placed severe strains on women’s colleges, which were threatened by academic, financial, and prestige issues such as narrower applicant pools and drift of young faculty to coeducational institutions, along with the questioning of social and academic relevance of single-sex education for women. Thus, many historical women’s colleges were impelled to make strategic and at times difficult decisions about their status and viability.

Significant developments in intercollegiate athletics occurring at the same time influenced changes in co-curricular activities at colleges and universities. The predominant men’s intercollegiate athletics organization, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), grew larger and more comprehensive in membership. Meanwhile, an even greater shift in collegiate sports occurred for women in the 1970s. A more focused awareness of disparities in extracurricular sport offerings was prompted by the pairing of gender equity and intercollegiate athletics in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.\(^3\) Further, the
Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) was formed in 1972 to provide championship opportunities and a national governing structure to intercollegiate athletics programs for women. Both developments added to the expansion of sports opportunities, legally and structurally, for on-campus activities as well as nationally-organized intercollegiate competition. Partnered with the changing collegiate demographics, these two historical changes inspired, and even required, colleges to reinvent themselves in the face of profound institutional change.

Women’s colleges, in particular, were forced to contemplate serious institutional changes. These colleges addressed the trend towards coeducation by closing, merging with a nearby men’s college through a coordination process, starting new academic programs such as weekend schools to compensate for insufficient revenue, or admitting men. At Vassar College and Elmira College, two small liberal arts women’s colleges in upstate New York, these developments converged when both made the momentous decision in 1969 to end over 100 years of single-sex education and become coeducational. This study examines decisions made on intercollegiate athletics programs throughout the 1970s while they were transitioning to coeducation. Interpreting the coeducation transformation through the microcosm of intercollegiate athletics reveals a relationship centered on gender expectations and notions of equality. It helps define the colleges’ traditional, and emerging, institutional mission and identity.

As a result of coeducation, long-standing Elmira and Vassar traditions of pioneering opportunity for women’s education, as well as leadership in promotion of women’s health, exercise, and sports opportunities, required reevaluation and potential reformulation. At Elmira, coeducation was “compatible with [the college’s] tradition of meeting the contemporary needs of society as it did in 1855 when the College enrolled young ladies in an effort to offer equal
educational opportunities for women.” Administrators believed that coeducation at the “New Vassar” must maintain the strengths of the traditional Vassar, and must “be the first woman’s college in [the] league to face the new world” by promoting the equality and partnership of men and women in learning. In the change to coeducation, these colleges ultimately sought to lead the way in providing a more culturally, socially, and academically relevant education for their students. But simply admitting men or women does not necessarily yield a relevant education for either gender. In addition to noting curricular changes such as the development of women’s studies majors or co-curricular additions of women’s centers on campus, the social life and culture students experienced was an area of higher education historians Leslie Miller-Bernal and Susan Poulson examined in their case studies of women’s experiences at newly coeducational institutions. In men’s colleges that went coeducational they looked for signs of institutional attitudes towards gender in the educational environment by examining the percentages of representation in honors programs and societies, certain majors, and in the composition of the faculty and administration. An area of campus life Miller-Bernal and Poulson reported as being indicative of institutional attitudes towards gender, but provided little detail about, was the athletics programs.

Yet a traditionally entrenched gender binary exists in athletics more than any other campus activity. Sport has been regarded as a “crucial arena of struggle over basic social conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and as such has become a fundamental arena of ideological contest in terms of power relations between men and women.” Consequently, athletics is an important location for the study of the new coeducational collegiate missions and their consistency in promoting equal opportunity for the student body. Higher education historian John Thelin viewed intercollegiate sports as a “conspicuous and useful” topic for
understanding colleges and universities. The structure and the values athletics programs promote can reveal much about an institution, especially in times of transition. Given the strong institutional histories of women’s physical education and sport participation, along with emerging opportunities for women’s intercollegiate athletics in the 1970s, it is paradoxical that at Elmira and Vassar, the groundbreaking changes in 1969 led to more narrowly focused drive to attract and accommodate the new male students.

For Vassar, “[a]thletics became another integral ingredient in the development of Vassar’s unique coeducational atmosphere.” Administrators stressed the athleticism of its new male students in admissions material, but promoted the perception that big-time college athletics was not essential for a student body that ranked above average in traits such as “peer independence…and cultural sophistication.” Vassar allowed for what it considered to be a natural evolution of its athletics programs, and therefore provided only minimal additional material support to the Physical Education department where athletics was housed. Even within such an atmosphere, Vassar’s social, student, and institutional culture primarily focused on and privileged male teams early during coeducation. Elmira used a concerted effort in men’s athletics as an attraction for the new male student population and a way to promote its new coeducational identity. The administration emphasized and supported an active intercollegiate structure for male students apart from the existing women’s sports program and emerging desires of female students for more intercollegiate competition. Thus, rooted in complex and intersecting issues of gender roles, educational and athletics opportunity, and college admissions status and goals, decisions regarding athletics at Vassar and Elmira during their 1969 through 1980 transitions reveal significant insight into their new identities.
Such a study demonstrates that coeducation had the ability to alter prior ideological and educational traditions and contributed to institutions fashioning a new identity. Ultimately, as one of the more visible signposts of the character and prestige of a college or university, especially as it relates to ideas of equity and equality of the sexes, intercollegiate athletics programs play a role in reaching institutional goals and reshaping the identity of the college. The reinvention of Elmira and Vassar centered much initial attention on the needs of the new students. Even given a natural shift in focus to the male student, the existing women’s sports programs at both colleges were paradoxically either absorbed into a new male vision or bypassed completely en route to dramatically new and different structures which foregrounded the men and not the women. This study will uncover not only the events which occurred, but aims to show how the athletics program of an institution exposes its attitude about gender and its position within the higher educational hierarchy.

**Research Questions**

1. What role did athletics play in the transformation to and promotion of coeducation, as well as subsequent changes in institutional mission and identity, at Vassar and Elmira Colleges?

2. How were athletics for women affected by the change to coeducation at Vassar and Elmria Colleges?

3. What differences existed between the development of men’s and women’s athletics programs at each college in the 1970s, why did such differences exist, and how did they correspond to goals for the new institutional identity as well as contemporary trends in athletics?
Significance of the Study

This study assumes that most formerly women’s colleges aimed to maintain at least part of their historical missions of providing gender-equal education once they became coeducational. This study will thus attempt to address the relevance of examining athletics as a signifier of and impetus for changes on campuses undergoing coeducation. General research and many individual case studies exist about the coeducation process for both men’s colleges and women’s colleges, and while athletics is intermittently included and mentioned as an indicator, it has received minimal attention.11 In his examination of the power of status and prestige in higher education and in particular among liberal arts colleges, Mitchell Stevens considered athletics to be on nearly equal footing with enrollment figures and quality of an entering class based on the esteem sports program can provide to a university or college.12 Yet the athletics structure of a university or college is one aspect of campus life in which coeducational institutions of higher education from the 1960s through the 1970s, and perhaps beyond, seemed to support the culturally constructed, “superior social position” of men.13 It is argued here that the way students desired, were permitted, or were recruited to exercise their athletics endeavors provides an indication of the state of gender relations as well as the status maneuvers of each institution. Further, such descriptive data reveal the powerful role sports play in shaping the image, mission, status, and culture of, in particular, small liberal arts institutions.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter One introduces the coeducation decision at Vassar College and Elmira College and its significance to the study of higher education, intercollegiate athletics, and gender in sport. Chapter Two examines the historical context of higher education and intercollegiate athletics is
outlined first to provide a foundation of understanding of the social and educational environment at the outset of and during the time period of the study. Because multiple elements are at play in the analysis, it is important to provide the layout while at the same time parceling out the most important and pertinent aspects of the time period.

Chapter Three focuses on the methods used in the study. This chapter also outlines the generalizability and limitations of such a research concentration. Chapter Four reviews the process of transition to coeducation at Vassar and Elmira. The chapter includes archival data available from each institution regarding the time period from 1969 through 1980. The presentation of data focuses primarily on administrative decision making, and differences between the processes at both institutions are evident from the institutionally-selected areas of transitional emphasis.

Exploration of the design of the athletics program through the coeducation transition from 1969-1980 at each institution will follow in Chapter Five. The assessment includes ways in which the colleges adapted to coeducation via athletics offerings, departmental policies and opinions about sport. This chapter will include archival data, and will be analyzed with considerations to the role of and attitudes towards gender, gender and sport, and sport itself. Changes within the institutional mission and identity will be determined, in particular, by how ideas of gender interplay with the way the athletics programs were structured and perceived. The importance of each will also be connected with the role of sport on the status of higher educational institutions. These data will reveal how each college intended to maneuver through its coeducation changes while also dealing with a set of evolving meanings and expectations of and for intercollegiate athletics.
Chapter Six provides the conclusion to this study, beginning with an analysis of the role athletics played in the first decade of the coeducation implementation at Vassar and Elmira Colleges. It continues by examining the patterns and meaning of changes within athletics for women and men at each institution, the differences that appeared, and the relationship of those elements to the overall college transition, mission, and identity. A concluding assessment will be undertaken to compare the coeducation strategies and decisions about men’s and women’s athletics based on individual institutional histories and location within the status hierarchy.

Finally, the chapter culminates with an investigation of long-term effects of the decisions from the initial coeducation era on the status of athletics at Elmira and Vassar at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. Implications for future research in higher education, sport history, and sport and gender will be reviewed in the final portion of the study.

Endnotes

3 The wording of Title IX reads simply, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” The application of Title IX to athletics was heavily disputed throughout the 1970s. (Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html)
Within Challenged by Coeducation: Women's Colleges Since the 1960s, editors Miller-Bernal, L. & Poulson, S.L. include several studies which mention athletics as an important indicator, however, most studies make a superficial mention of sports programs existing. The case studies of Yale and Princeton do contain a slightly more extensive undertaking of the athletics situation, especially at Yale. At Yale, the women are most notably known for what has become known as the “Title IX Strip”, their protest of unequal athletics facilities and equipment at the university. Miller-Bernal, L. & Poulson, S.L., Eds. (2006). Challenged by Coeducation: Women’s Colleges Since the 1960s. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.


CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Powerful transformations altered the landscape of American higher education in the 1960s and 1970s, including widespread social, economic, curricular, and structural shifts that permeated many aspects of college and university life. The base of higher education expanded in a move to provide mass access to college education, and the drive toward selective, advanced academic endeavors like professional schools and doctoral programs also spread and became increasingly competitive. Political and social discontent among students also provided impetus for change. Higher education historian Roger Geiger cites three sources of dissatisfaction from which student agitations drew energy, including opposition to the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, and the procedures, organization, and curriculum of universities themselves. Geiger further maintains that in this era, students typically transferred the fervor and passions associated with national concerns such as the antiwar and civil rights movements into mundane local concerns, thus creating a tumultuous environment for both students and university and college administrators. Nancy Malkiel also identified the civil rights and antiwar movements as shaping and reshaping processes in higher education, but specifically included the women’s movement and the confluence between the public women’s rights movement and the private sphere of women’s liberation as setting the context for coeducation in the most elite United States institutions. Consequently, turbulent external influences, tethered with a specific structural and organizational expansion and evolution of higher education, created a predicament for small, private liberal arts colleges. Single-sex liberal arts colleges, especially women’s colleges, were forced to reevaluate their relevance during the 1960s and 1970s as a matter of
maintaining their respective institutional missions for gender equality, their status among their competitors, and in some instances, for survival.

The literature review opens with the situation of liberal arts colleges within the evolving nature of American higher education in the 1960s and 1970s. This review then moves into an investigation of the specific conditions experienced by single-sex, liberal arts colleges. Research on liberal arts colleges by Elizabeth Duffy, Idana Goldberg and Mitchell Stevens, and even more specifically that of single-sex colleges, by Leslie Miller-Bernal and Susan Poulson, has focused on the importance of admissions -- including enrollment, SAT scores, admit and yield rates, and financial aid practices -- as the harbinger of institutional identity and quality.\(^{17}\) The study of elite single-sex colleges and universities moving to coeducation by Nancy Malkiel focused on admissions, but also on the leadership and change process itself.\(^{18}\) While all those features are variables of institutional status and even survival, the literature and primary sources on collegiate athletics offer another level of evidence as to the nature of the adaptation of colleges during the era, and how or why some colleges prospered while others struggled. Stevens, in particular, believed the American system of intercollegiate athletics to be integral to the informal yet powerful hierarchy of status and prestige to which almost all higher educational institutions subscribed.\(^{19}\)

Researching the relationships between sport and higher education also means that their intersection with gender studies, especially for women’s college transitions to coeducation, must be examined. Modern sport, says sociologist Michael Messner, is gendered – and typically along masculine lines.\(^{20}\) Other scholars, such as sport historian Susan Cahn and sociologist Varda Burstyn, agree that sport has served as a locale for unequal and, at times, exploitive gender and sexuality norms that have typically favored masculine archetypes.\(^{21}\) When examining the history
of higher education institutions and the potentially gender-centered nature of their coeducation transitions, then, it is important to look not only at the respective admissions predicaments, but at how each institution simultaneously negotiated the highly gendered realm of intercollegiate athletics.

**Liberal Arts Colleges in the 1960s and 1970s**

Liberal arts colleges, while a diverse range of institutions, have generally been classified together as a single type based on their focus on undergraduate education and on their curriculum. In *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered*, David Breneman defines liberal arts colleges as important based on their being among the oldest American institutions. Few businesses, Breneman argues, can trace their histories back to the eighteenth century, as many liberal arts colleges can. They are typically small, rarely enrolling more than 2,500 students. The colleges are single-purpose institutions based on their capacity to educate undergraduates in non-professional majors in the arts, humanities, languages, social sciences, and physical sciences. They are generally residential colleges of students between 18 and 24 years of age. The small number of students allows the colleges to have low student-faculty ratios, smaller than average class sizes, and selective admissions. Yet these colleges, Breneman asserts, face market competition from more affordable public universities which provide professional programs and were rapidly expanding in the 1960s and 1970s. Breneman characterized liberal arts colleges as unique and hardy institutions, but also fragile.

Finkelstein, Farrar, and Pfnieter echoed the hardiness Breneman saw in liberal arts colleges in their recognition of the durability of the colleges, and viewed their resilience as a successful sequence of adaptive responses. In their analysis of the diversity of responses of
liberal arts colleges to the challenges of declining enrollments, inflation, role relevance, and fiscal austerity, their research found that the compilation of the routes taken to changes, rather than the nature or level of changes, was the critical factor in understanding how liberal arts colleges experienced the 1970s. Even so, they also realized a difference between the more highly selective and well-established institutions and the less selective and less affluent institutions. The more elite institutions were less likely to undergo adaptive changes than those colleges further down in the hierarchy.

In The Threats to Liberal Arts Colleges, Paul Neely further dissected the issue of stratification and competition in higher education and how it particularly affected liberal arts colleges. Within the higher education market, Neely suggested that its differentiation within higher education was how liberal arts colleges had been able to survive in the twentieth century. If the liberal arts college was a smaller version of a large research university, then there would be no reason to pay a potentially higher tuition in order to attend. Neely reasoned that by maintaining a role to educate undergraduates, a large percentage who went into graduate and professional programs or to jobs that did not yet place as much weight on specialized and advanced degrees, top-tier liberal arts institutions continued to occupy a place in American higher education. Within the ranks of liberal arts colleges, Neely also noted that the more elite, selective colleges could drive up the price of education based on quality, selectivity, and reputation. They were therefore also in a position enabling them to be more selective about implementing change. Conversely, the less selective liberal arts colleges tended to experience greater ambiguity with their mission, and economics directed them towards catering to the vocationalism of students, establishing a wider array of “useful” majors for undergraduates and non-traditional students.
In *Creating A Class*, Mitchell L. Stevens used this conception of stratification among liberal arts colleges as a foundation for his contention that education was a part of a much larger process of social reproduction. Stevens was intrigued by liberal arts colleges because of their distinctly American model – residential campuses for undergraduate instruction was a structure that had not, he claimed, traveled far past the national borders once integrated from England. Further, he maintained that studying the privileged social class was important because that class created knowledge and cultural perspectives that others imitated. Combining his two theses, he subsequently argued that colleges were important within the national class structure, and that attendance at elite, liberal arts colleges had become the standard setter. Part of the social power of higher educational institutions resided in their ability to confer a sought-after status through degrees awarded to graduates.

That status system of organizational prestige was, for Stevens, based on three components, including measures of admissions selectivity, relative national representativeness of the student body, and athletic league affiliation. While selectivity and national scope of the student body were reflected within the analyses of other literature such as Duffy and Goldberg in *Crafting a Class*, the idea of higher educational prestige based on athletics affiliation was a relatively novel claim – at least in its consideration of importance for liberal arts colleges -- and will be discussed later in this review.

Of the three elements of status highlighted by Stevens, admissions selectivity and other issues surrounding enrollment were integral in the analysis of Elizabeth A. Duffy and Idana Goldberg in *Crafting A Class*. Much like the purpose of this case study, Duffy and Goldberg valued the detail available in researching how individual institutions confronted problems and made actual choices. Their study of highly selective liberal arts colleges in Massachusetts and
Ohio from 1955-1994 therefore provided an important foundation for understanding this sector of American higher education. The traditional liberal arts colleges “unquestionably matter” -- they enrolled substantial numbers of high achieving students, their curriculum and opportunities for close interaction with faculty represent a traditional, educational philosophy, and as a private sector in the system of higher education, they had some degree of independence from political pressures.29 Liberal arts colleges had, at their most fundamental level, vested self-interest in enrolling a class of their desired quality and size. Duffy and Goldberg found that negotiating between preferred quality and size was often the most difficult pressure faced by the colleges. Liberal arts colleges could or would only grow as their ability to attract high quality students allowed.

Duffy and Goldberg isolated the demographic shifts in students in higher education as one of the key external forces determining changes taking place in higher education in the 1960s and 1970s. Coined as the golden age of higher education, the “tidal wave” of student applications and enrollments allowed colleges and universities of all types to expand.30 The college-going rate reached a peak at 55% of high school graduates in 1968, and earlier fears prompted by Sputnik led to a national commitment to expanding educational attainment and access. The emphasis on access fed into an increase in public institution expansion in the 1960s, including community colleges, regional universities, and branches of existing institutions, which Duffy and Goldberg argued all destabilized the relative role of the liberal arts colleges within American higher education31. Some liberal arts colleges were eager to do their part to accommodate the increasing number of students, and from 1955 to 1965, it was possible to increase enrollment and raise quality simultaneously. On average, Duffy and Goldberg found that the reliance of liberal arts colleges on tuition revenue was a powerful factor in decision
making – a delicate balance was necessary in order to maintain quality, character, and to fiscally function effectively. Much like the suggestions of Finkelstein, Farrar, and Pfnister and Neely, Duffy and Goldberg concluded that the historical quality of the most competitive and wealthy colleges granted them the ability to limit enrollment growth if so desired.

The enrollment tide of the 1960s ebbed late in the same decade and in the early 1970s. The era was characterized as one of growing stratification in college admissions, and among Duffy and Goldberg’s Massachusetts and Ohio colleges under review, translated into a general zero-growth period. Duffy and Goldberg discovered such stratification based on SAT scores, application numbers, admit rates, and financial aid policies. Even so, the only colleges in their sample that expanded during the 1970s were men’s colleges that went coeducational, who were able to maintain quality by supplementing their enrollment with women with high SAT scores while also continuing to be selective in their male admissions.

So while liberal arts colleges were in constant competition against each other for talented students, yield rates, and at times for athletic superiority, in the 1960s and 1970s, the findings of Duffy and Goldberg suggest that even the most elite of the colleges in the study struggled to find ways to contend with significant external pressures and historical changes in higher education. Small liberal arts institutions like Elmira and Vassar comprised nearly 40 percent of higher educational institutions in the mid-1950s, but had dropped to approximately 25 percent of all colleges and universities by 1970. Around 700 new institutions were established in the 1960s, and three-quarters of those were public. While higher education received increasing foundation and federal support, it was centered primarily in large research universities. Most literature also realizes the negative impact on liberal arts colleges of the growing attractiveness of professional studies (e.g., “vocationalism”) in the 1970s. Public institutions also became
more attractive to high quality students not just because of their expanding academic offerings, but also for their lower costs. Duffy and Goldberg noted a decline in liberal arts interest and degrees awarded in the 1970s, and while many colleges believed they must adapt their curriculum to meet growing vocational needs of male and female students, liberal arts colleges with historically classical missions were oftentimes reluctant to veer too far from their traditional academic program of study.

Liberal arts colleges competed amongst themselves for enrollments and prestige, but since the 1950s, many liberal arts colleges also believed they were at a disadvantage to the public universities. In *A History of American Higher Education*, John Thelin noted the advantaged situation of liberal arts colleges earlier in the decade. He said the rush to go to a prestigious college, determined by selectivity and reputation of a school, was a key determinant that actually kept the liberal arts colleges afloat.\(^{36}\) Being selective was a crucial factor in the prestige of an institution, but maintenance of that selective position became much more competitive with the growth of the public sector. Duffy and Goldberg’s research noted a growing importance of admissions recruiting by liberal arts colleges in the late 1960s and 1970s. While Thelin further observed an interdependence between liberal arts colleges and large research universities, who recruited liberal arts graduates for their doctorate programs, even that relationship was not enough to stem the hardships experienced by many liberal arts colleges. Despite a push on recruitment which gained steam in the 1970s after the College Board offered the Student Search Service list of names and addresses, liberal arts colleges experienced falling yields between 1965 and 1980, which led to lower selectivity.\(^{37}\) Women’s colleges in particular experienced declining applications in the latter half of the 1960s, and such colleges in the Duffy and Goldberg cohort
sustained application declines as high as 34%, the loss attributed mostly to coeducation at many of the Ivy League institutions.\textsuperscript{38}

On top of all the structural and economic transformations, social and cultural factors also altered the higher education landscape in the 1960s and 1970s. The 1960s youth counterculture rejected the conventional or status quo mode of society, and students demanded a stronger voice in campus governance. In \textit{Research \& Relevant Knowledge}, Roger Geiger, who focused primarily on research universities yet whose findings can be carefully applied to other realms of higher education, mentions that activism many times focused on the universities themselves, as students such as those in the Free Speech Movement grew weary of a lack of attention to undergraduate needs at large research universities, and demanded changes in general education requirements and a greater overall scope of courses and grading practices.\textsuperscript{39} Such student activism and university response, he asserted, actually exacerbated a growing incoherence within undergraduate education. This incoherence was noted by Thelin as well, who said that by the late 1960s, universities had neglected the clarity of their mission. The problem, continued Thelin, was not that the center of the American university had failed, but that the “modern American university had no center at all.”\textsuperscript{40} The 1970s zero-growth reported by Duffy and Goldberg in their study suggested that, for a myriad of reasons, liberal arts colleges also experienced uncertainty and vagueness about their missions and role within the overall schemata of higher education.

Student activism was oftentimes influenced from external movements such as the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, the women’s movement, and the gay liberation movement. The term “sexism” was coined in 1969, and by the 1970s women began to call attention to gender inequalities in employment, education, and athletics.\textsuperscript{41} Students pressured
campus administration to achieve greater ethnic and gender diversity in enrollment, faculty and staff, campus activities, and the curriculum. Broadly, by the 1970s and 1980s, this translated into further changes in the general education requirements, the addition of more departments in ethnic and gender studies and multidisciplinary fields, and even in loosening of institutional control of social aspects of campus life such as recreational space, dining, and single-sex dorms and parietals.42

**Sports and Higher Education**

Sports and American higher education have become intertwined, with intercollegiate competition officially dating back to the first rowing races between Harvard and Yale in 1852.43 The presence of organized sports lent a “macho” tone to a college life that many had considered “bookish and effete.”44 As sports became more prevalent in colleges, the activity itself, and the particular success of the college among its counterparts, thus provided an extra layer of attraction for families looking for the best college for their sons. Institutional identity became linked not only with athletic success, but with the opponents one met on the playing field -- a phenomenon that was, initially, primarily male. In *Creating A Class*, Mitchell Stevens highlighted athletics affiliation as an indicator of status and prestige for liberal arts colleges.45 John Thelin came to a parallel conclusion in *Games Colleges Play: Scandal and Reform in Intercollegiate Athletics* that college sports were a shifting liturgy of “untested claims” of prestige, publicity, and character-building that was nonetheless part of the institutional and social fabric of the college or university.46 Such tethering of sport with educational institutional identity first developed around men’s sports, and particularly, football.47 Women’s conference and national affiliations taking the same format as those of the men were not organized until the 1970s, and even then,
institutional identity was still linked more closely with football or other male sport success. Male athletics proved to be a strong bond, and for many northeast liberal arts colleges, this meant the possibility of elite affiliations and “status halo[s]” that adorn those in conferences such as the Ivy League, the Patriot League, and the University Athletic Association.48

**Women in Higher Education in 1960s and 1970s**

If women’s athletics was not yet a dynamic component of institutional prestige prior to the 1970s, how did women factor in the developments in higher education in the 1960s and 1970s? In “Dynamic Social Norms and the Unexpected Transformation of Women’s Higher Education, 1965-1975,” Stacey Jones identifies a combination of several interlocking variables such as economics, demographics, and the civil rights movement that contributed to what she considered a rapid and overwhelming change in the position of women in higher education from 1965 to 1975.49 Social trends of the era, especially those that derived from the legal and social implications of the women’s rights movement, profoundly changed the character of American higher education. In particular, Jones pointed out that the participation of women in higher education became impossible to ignore simply based on numbers, as their percentage of enrollment rose from approximately 29 percent in 1948-49 to 41 percent in 1970-71.50

Setting the stage for the changes of the 1970s, in *Crafting A Class*, Duffy and Goldberg reviewed the history of women in American higher education. Since many early colleges provided religious training or professional training in male-dominated fields such as law, medicine and the ministry, they traditionally enrolled men only.51 Education for women was viewed as dangerous and of no practical use based on what was viewed as a limited capability of women to be educated. Midwestern colleges were among the first to be coeducational, mostly
for ideological and practical reasons of frontier life. By the end of the nineteenth century, Duffy and Goldberg cited that nearly 70 percent of the nation’s colleges and universities admitted both men and women, but that the education differed for women who were primarily still being prepped for motherhood and becoming a homemaker. The attraction of single-sex schools also provided some respectability to what were viewed as the “feminine virtues.” Higher education included women by targeting specific populations, such as Catholic women’s colleges, which were founded to educate women of that religion, and the finishing school, which was typical in the South and promoted preparation for marriage and motherhood.

In the late nineteenth century, educators in the east were among the pioneers of yet another style of women’s college. In *The Academic Revolution*, Christopher Jencks and David Riesman cite that because masculinity was slow to collapse in higher education, advocates of women’s education felt “obliged to establish ‘separate but equal’ colleges for their daughters.” This movement produced institutions such as the “Seven Sisters” colleges, which were distinct from the status quo education for women, training women not solely for motherhood or maintaining the home, but to “use their minds and fulfill their intellectual potential.” One Seven Sisters member, Vassar College, was founded in 1861 and was viewed as especially academically rigorous -- an academic equivalent to the historical elite, all-male Ivy colleges. Other Eastern, non-Seven Sisters women’s colleges such as Elmira College in 1855, were also founded during this era with the purpose of providing an equivalent education to women as that provided for men.

Fast-forwarding to the twentieth century, in 1944 prior to the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act known as the GI Bill, women’s total higher education enrollment was approximately 40 percent of all students. In part due to the GI Bill, by 1950, women had fallen to approximately
32 percent of college students and 24 percent of college graduates. Women’s numbers rebounded by 1960 however, making up 35 percent of graduates in a broadening number of fields, and by 1970, women had regained their 40-percent proportion of total enrollment. Yet Stacey Jones posits that despite increasing numbers of women in higher education, who earned 43 percent of the undergraduate degrees in the 1964-65 academic year, they had remained in the margins. But the situation, according to Jones, changed rapidly within the next decade, and she asserted that the educational and career endeavors of women dramatically shifted to career-based aims.

Jones grounded her assumptions on Timur Kuran’s theory of social change, which stated that in some settings social transformation was delayed initially because of the strength of prevailing social norms, but that the share of individuals willing to break with norms eventually reaches a critical threshold, creating a “tipping point” which leads to unexpected, large-scale and rapid transformations. Further, the interplay of social and economic factors was key to Kuran’s model, and while acknowledging differences based on class and race, Jones based her research on the influences of the civil rights movement, the opening of men’s institutions to women, and the softening demand for teachers that shifted women into other career fields in the 1970s. First, as more women entered the labor force, they soon became more interested in policies against employment discrimination, and borrowed strategies from the fight against racial discrimination to combat unequal treatment of women. Second, at the end of the 1960s, many prominent men’s colleges and universities opened their admissions to women. While coeducation did not immediately expand the career options for women, as numbers of women in higher education increased, the opportunities or chance of individuals selecting to fully align with seeking a career outside the home also increased and began to build critical mass. Finally, a shrinking market for
the teaching vocation worked against the homemaking potential for a rapidly growing female student population, therefore making it either an imperative to look outside of majors perceived to be feminine such as nursing and education, or, making it at least easier for women to choose from outside the expected majors set and to move into other areas or fields of study.62

As society’s expectations shifted to encourage rather than demean academic and career-focused females, women moved from the margins to the mainstream of higher education. Because of both social confidence from less isolation and demographic and economic trends that decreased the demand for teachers, the predominant and accepted feminine role outside the home, more women enrolled in non-traditional majors, and female enrollment in professional schools for careers in business, dentistry, law and medicine rose.63 In contrast, while student numbers were in fact rebounding and while women may have realized their desire for education in a wider array of fields, in A History of American Higher Education, Thelin exercised a more cautious approach and alleged that by the 1970s, there were still disparities in the fields or disciplines and programs to which women applied. Further, he reported that aside from enrollment issues, women still lagged behind men in the faculty ranks. Women held only 21 percent of teaching positions in four-year institutions, yet were 44 percent of the ranks of untenured faculty.64

Coeducation Trend at Men’s Colleges

By the 1960s, financial, competitive, social, and educational factors taken together generated what has been dubbed the “coed panic.”65 Coeducational state universities grew in both number and curricular breadth, and their lower tuition drew students, including high academic achieving students, away from the single-sex market. Along with the larger state
universities, by the 1950s, teacher training schools, or, normal schools, were another option for a more local and middle-class clientele who could not afford the financial or cultural price tag that accompanied many of the liberal arts institutions, and most specifically, the single-sex colleges.\(^6\)

Based on the liberal arts research of Duffy and Goldberg as well as the collection of case studies of the single-sex colleges compiled and analyzed by Miller-Bernal and Poulson, those for men were typically the first to undergo a coeducational transition. Those that went coeducational during the late 1960s and early 1970s did so for reasons influenced by any one of or combination of financial, competitive, social, and educational factors.\(^7\) Financially, most colleges believed that adding women would be one way to increase enrollment and improve the quality of their entering classes. From a competitive and educational standpoint, many male colleges felt that increasing their numbers of male students would risk watering down the academic quality of their incoming class. Reflective of assertions made by Duffy and Goldberg along with Stevens about the importance of the academic quality of a class for maintenance of a certain status level within higher education, many administrators at men’s colleges believed that the consequences and financial costs of admitting women outweighed the risks of any potential negative impact on quality if they were to remain single-sex, or even the perception of such an influence.

Competitively, surveys of seniors at private and public high schools performed by Smith College and Princeton University in 1968 indicated that of those in the upper two-fifths of their class, an overwhelming majority (81% men, 79% women) believed that a college that enrolled both males and females made it more attractive.\(^8\) Socially, many men’s colleges pronounced a desire to provide “real life experience” for their students and also to reinforce their “fundamental liberal arts character,” since women, it was believed, were less vocational and would thus fill in voids in certain departments at the colleges.\(^9\)
Even in light of all the potential financial and academic reasons for going coeducational, scholars pointed out that one of the main impetuses for the coeducational push was actually cultural competitiveness. In *The Academic Revolution*, Jencks and Riesman alluded to the social stratification apparent in higher education in their discussion of single-sex education. They concluded that second and third tier colleges were “slavishly mimetic” and seldom focused solely on the needs of students because their “eyes are on the first rank institutions and not on their students’ problems.” This stratification was multilayered, existing among local or rival colleges as well as nationally. In Marcia Synnott’s article “A Friendly Rivalry: Yale and Princeton Universities Pursue Parallel Paths to Coeducation,” she cited the reasons for Yale and Princeton moving from being all-male universities to coeducational institutions, given their elite profile and relatively comfortable financial status, as being more closely tethered with cultural and social rivalry with each other. Coeducation added costs, but permitted both institutions to take full advantage of the ability to increase their student body, and academically, with even more of the highest quality students. Perhaps the largest single issue of concern was not about institutional changes but about a fear about alumni contributions once coeducational. The experiences of Yale and Princeton, both highly visible, Ivy League trendsetters, set into motion a reevaluation of the relevance of single-sex education for both men and women. Yale and Princeton therefore created momentum for a movement that produced significant changes in the higher education landscape -- the number of men’s colleges shrank from 261 in 1960 to 101 in 1972, and most of those still existing were seminaries.
Impact of Coeducation on Women’s Colleges

The decision for women’s colleges in the 1960s proved to be neither simple nor straightforward. While men’s colleges may have remedied their admissions issues by admitting high achieving females, women’s colleges found it much harder to enroll men to the degree of selectivity they had done in the past. Many of the Northeast women’s colleges, such as Elmira, were highly dependent on enrollment for their livelihood. The drain of prospective students away from women’s colleges had obvious financial impact, more so than for their single-sex male counterparts. Still, the situation for women’s colleges grew more complicated than purely tuition dollars.

In Challenged By Coeducation, a compilation of case studies on women’s colleges that were impacted by coeducation, co-editors Miller-Bernal and Poulson outlined four factors that affected how a college would adapt to the coeducational trend: 1) location, 2) historical prestige, 3) wealth, and 4) ties to a particular subculture. Colleges in urban settings generally fared better than those in rural locations. Ironically, many women’s colleges were set in rural locations by design, but the urban locations were increasingly attractive to traditional-aged and also non-traditional students. Another aspect of location is proximity to a men’s college or coeducational college or university. Colleges such as Barnard and Bryn Mawr were located within a few miles of men’s colleges, Columbia and Haverford. For schools such as Vassar, men’s colleges it most closely associated with, such as Yale University, were located much farther away; after consideration of coordinate status with Yale, Vassar opted to maintain its location and independence. As an alternative to coordinate college status, Vassar also considered regional partnerships for graduate programs and shared undergraduate curriculum as possible recruiting tools.
Miller-Bernal and Poulson also viewed historical prestige as important. Such status aided colleges in retaining a high quality applicant pool along with donations from wealthy alumnae. This ability did not mean, however, that a college was guaranteed the choice to remain single-sex – only that they had more ability to choose how they would react.\textsuperscript{77}

Historical prestige was even more complicated for women’s colleges than it was for men’s colleges. According to Jencks and Riesman and Miller-Bernal and Poulson, women’s colleges in particular suffered from a negative change in status and public perception in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{78} Malkiel concluded that women’s colleges that decided to go coeducational had a much tougher time than men’s colleges going coeducational because of the role of prestige and reputation generated from prejudices and perceived status.\textsuperscript{79} Men’s colleges carried a certain amount of prestige not always afforded to women’s colleges, and that reputation allowed men’s colleges to proceed with coeducation confident in their relative ability to maintain their attractiveness to men and to attract quality women. Despite the progress of the women’s movement of the 1960s, anything male still largely tended to be viewed as superior, and the top female students increasingly chose to attend previously all-male schools.\textsuperscript{80} Duffy and Goldberg echoed such sentiments by highlighting comments from Mount Holyoke College Dean Sally Montgomery, who claimed that in the 1970s, because men’s colleges still represented the dominant culture, men’s colleges going coeducational were seen as a sign of strength, whereas women’s colleges doing the same was a sign of weakness.\textsuperscript{81} They further demonstrated that popular attitudes towards women’s colleges in the late 1960s were unfavorable, as trendy women’s magazines and even the women’s movement viewed the form of education as anachronistic and unnatural. In \textit{Full Steam Ahead in Poughkeepsie: The Story of Coeducation at Vassar, 1966-1974}, co-authors Daniels and Griffen noted similar views of single-sex
Likewise, Jencks and Riesman also use the term “anachronism” to describe women’s colleges in particular, claiming such colleges attempted to separate men and women at a time when most women wanted proximity.

The third factor affecting how a college reacted to the coeducation trend was wealth. Miller-Bernal and Poulson (2006) considered that the more wealth a college had, the more likely it would remain a women’s college because it could, for example, enhance facilities and keep up with technology. Again, such predictors should not be viewed alone or out of their specific context, as colleges such as Vassar with large endowments still became coeducational despite relative wealth. Vassar was one of the most prestigious women’s colleges with a healthy endowment, however, like formerly male universities Yale and Princeton, its wealth presumably afforded it more of an option regarding whether or not to go coeducational.

The fourth and final factor was having a tie to a particular subculture. This referred to linkages to religious organizations, such as the Catholic colleges, and to historically black colleges and universities; both subcultures at times had the benefit of outside support for their missions. Mundelein College in Chicago, for example, was founded by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its early survival, then eventual absorption into Loyola College in the 1990s, were both influenced by its religious origins.

While this handful of factors is therefore thought to have swayed the choice of coeducation for women’s colleges, the actual results of such influences were highly varied. In her assessment of the changes in status and function of women’s colleges, Miller-Bernal highlighted four ways by which women’s colleges responded to the institutional pressures created by the trend towards coeducation. Colleges could: 1) admit men, 2) develop a coordinate relationship with a nearby men’s or coeducational college, 3) develop graduate or
other professional programs to compensate for declining revenues, or, 4) simply close, merge or be taken over by another institution. Her four alternatives for change perhaps overshadowed decisions to maintain some semblance of the status quo, such as down-sizing or accepting a decline in academic quality, and of course, several colleges elected to withstand pressures to become coeducational but had to endure other changes in order to do so. The course chartered by colleges was typically a factor of the specific situation in which each individual college found itself, and each carried its own benefits and compromises.

Those colleges which opted for coeducation choose to do so for various reasons, and the decisions of each individual college contained its own set of variables, including the four identified by Miller-Bernal and Poulson – location, historical prestige, wealth, and ties to particular subculture -- along with others, such as institutional culture. Many colleges, even if they remained single-sex, at times had to make other significant changes such as the addition of graduate programs, pre-professional programs, or alternatives such as weekend and evening college divisions. Mundelein College in Chicago, for example, fought off financial difficulties throughout the 1970s and 1980s by establishing the Weekend College in Residence, and soon had more adult students than those of traditional age, dramatically altering the demographics and needs of the college.  

Whatever the path chosen, the statistical data on women’s colleges verified the significant impact of the challenges of coeducation and changes in higher education between the 1960s and 1980s. As a result of the overwhelming pressures, the number of women’s colleges in the United States dropped dramatically, from 298 in 1960 to 90 by 1986, and later to just 56 in 2006. By 1972, only half were still women’s colleges, and 119 had become coeducational while another 33 had merged or closed.
The Gendered Dimension of Coeducation

For men’s colleges, admitting women generally fit comfortably within the historical mission for provision of a liberal arts education. Men’s colleges highlighted by Miller-Bernal and Poulson in *Going Coed* illustrated that administrators and trustees operated under an assumption that the women would fit easily into the men’s college and that relatively few changes were needed. 89 Any concern was associated with how women could help the college (e.g., selectivity, SAT scores), and not necessarily with what the college could provide for the women. The colleges in Miller-Bernal and Poulson’s compilation, such as the University of Rochester, Princeton and Yale, initially set quotas for number of entering women and the percentage of enrollment to be filled by women in order to ease the sentiments of detractors. As was the case in many institutions, however, such enrollment strategies meant that the women at the institution were generally more academically talented than most of the men. At the University of Rochester, from 1955-61 in the first years of the return to coeducation, one-third of the seniors were women, but women made up half the graduates in the honors studies program and half of the seniors elected to the prestigious academic honor society Phi Beta Kappa. 90 Likewise, at Yale, the first classes of females in 1969 had a 10-percent acceptance rate, and were promoted as “super-intelligent.” 91

Despite a sense of equality in the classroom, the mixing of the genders at formerly men’s colleges faced initial issues based on differing ideas of equality and long-standing histories of male-only traditions. Malkiel determined that there were things that coeducation could not and should not be expected to do; coeducation accompanied but did not cause more profound personal and social transformations in colleges that transitioned. 92 Prior to the coeducation movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, Jencks and Riesman stated that “[t]he equalization of
educational opportunity did not, of course, bring overnight equality between the sexes, any more than the waning of racial segregation has brought parity between the races.” Miller-Bernal and Poulson noted that “mere mixing does not bring equality.” The case study on coeducation at the University of Rochester by Lundt et al. pointed out that coeducation in 1955 did not bring about a noticeable ideological development of gender equality since both men and women endorsed existing gender roles at the start of coeducation. They further articulated, “[i]t is tempting to think that the inclusion of a formerly excluded group would automatically transform its marginal status, but as the University of Rochester’s experience shows, there must be an accompanying ideological and social change for such a transformation to take place.” Malkiel’s assessment of the coeducation transition of elite colleges and universities in the 1970s provided the same conclusion; that men and women at the colleges generally accepted or embraced gendered traditions rather than upending them.

Similar experiences were noted at other formerly men’s colleges. At Yale, the first classes of females felt socially marginalized and even “drowned in the male ethos” on campus. Women at Princeton believed equality between men and women may have existed in the classroom at the beginning of coeducation in the late 1960s, but the atmosphere of the institution was so dominated by its historically exclusive, all-male culture of fraternities and eating clubs, the rest of college life and especially the social culture took much more time to become inclusive of both genders. At Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, the administration first established a coordinate college for women, Kirkland College, yet as was the case elsewhere, the male students at Hamilton followed the lead of their administrators and faculty and viewed the coordinate college and its female students as inferior. That mindset continued into full coeducation in 1978, when Hamilton incorporated Kirkland, and the college initially struggled
with gender equality in faculty and administrator appointments as well as the campus social scene.\textsuperscript{101}

Hence, coeducation for men’s colleges did not automatically yield an equal educational experience for women, and the nature of equality on campus was dependent on accompanying efforts for social and ideological change. Yet the nature of such changes was rarely a question of reforming the college mission; providing a quality liberal arts education could extend just as easily to women as it did to men. For women’s colleges entering into coeducational status, however, the choice meant, among a myriad of other factors, that the institution must actually decide how to adapt its twin missions: to uphold the mission to provide equal educational opportunities for women and to sustain their quality liberal arts mission. While some constituents of single-sex women’s colleges began to emphasize the same social mission of providing a relevant education as that promoted in men’s colleges transitioning to coeducation, others felt that women’s colleges should remain as they were; that it was “not the purpose of a college to be a microcosm of society.”\textsuperscript{102} For significant numbers of alumni, faculty, administrators and students of women’s colleges, offering admission to men was viewed as “tantamount to abandoning their traditional missions.”\textsuperscript{103} Consequently, not only were women’s colleges impacted financially and academically by changes in the number of students applying and enrolling, but they were also burdened with questions of prestige and competitiveness for the best students, relevance, and fear of accusations of abandoning their central mission and heritage – all things they had counted on to set them apart from other colleges and universities.

Because of superior reputations associated with many men’s colleges, academically talented women were eager to attend such institutions. Fearing the worst in terms of class profile and competitiveness, and that the coeducation trend was permanent in the northeast, Vassar,
Elmira, Skidmore, Sarah Lawrence and Connecticut colleges decided to admit men. Elite Vassar College jumped at the opportunity to be the Yale and Princeton of the women’s colleges, as college president Alan Simpson was eager to be “the first woman’s college in [their] league to face the new world.” During the study period preceding coeducation at Vassar, Simpson made the case for the eventual coeducation decision, stating that “[n]owhere in the world is anyone really making a powerful argument for separate education anymore.” Connecticut College president Charles E. Shain reflected similar values, stating “[i]n this age a young American’s education, when it is shared with the opposite sex, is superior in its basic learning conditions to an education in a single-sex environment.” In general, work of Miller-Bernal and Poulson on women’s colleges that experienced or at least investigated coeducation indicated that student resistance to admission of men at women’s colleges grew over time, gaining speed after the women’s liberation movement from the 1960s through 1980s, after more focus on gender discrimination in the 1970s, and after women recognized the rarity and advantages of education in a women-only educational environment. This assessment reflected the experiences at colleges such as Elmira and Vassar which went coeducational in 1969, and experienced little sustained protest from students, alumnae, or faculty about the decisions made on enrolling men. Comparatively, the 1990 protests and strikes staged by students at Mills College were enough to reverse a coeducation decision. Many of the women’s colleges that became coeducational during the late 1960s and early 1970s therefore operated from a much different philosophical focus. Still, such conclusions were not the case everywhere and could be very specific to each institution, such as at Seven Sisters colleges Wellesley and Smith, who decided against coeducation during 1970 and 1971 due to growing opposition and the strength of the women’s movement.
While the publically-promoted opinion at many newly coeducational colleges professed a greater relevance and ability for expansion that came with the addition of men, ironically, men did not initially show the same desire to attend formerly women’s colleges. Men gained little by attending such colleges since schools for women, even the elite Seven Sisters, typically provided a lower social status for men than did the elite formerly men’s colleges and other larger coeducational universities. Regarding the coeducational transition at Vassar College and in general at all women’s colleges, Malkiel outlined the role of prestige and reputation, and commented, “Whether the issue is a matter of prejudice or perceived status, having a son enroll at what was previously a women’s college is a more ambiguous proposition.”

While former men’s colleges showed little evidence of concern over what kind of women would find their college attractive, the kind of male a formerly women’s college would attract was another level of complexity. In the early years of coeducation, trustees and administrators at both Vassar and Wheaton Colleges worried about what type of men they would attract – frequently resulting in contradictory statements and actions. At Wheaton, the college found that “both gay and artsy intellectual men seemed to be drawn to a formerly women’s college with its less ‘jocky’ and machismo atmosphere.” In their research on the history of coeducation at Wheaton, Semel and Sadovnik further observed that, paradoxically, despite the less “jocky” attitude assumed, male athletes were also a noteworthy portion of the first class of male students since admissions recruiters explicitly focused on athletes by selling them on the likelihood of immediate playing time. Vassar College believed it needed to go to great lengths to “alter her ladylike image.” At the outset of coeducation, Vassar promoted the individualism of its student body, and in *Full Steam Ahead in Poughkeepsie*, Vassar historians Elizabeth A. Daniels and Clyde Griffen stated that the college lacked an oppressive male culture. Malkiel
concurred, stating that fraternities, athletics teams, and other “trappings of maleness” were simply not part of the Vassar culture, nor were they at most other women’s colleges. Initially Vassar dealt with underlying fears of attracting “less-masculine” men, a concern heightened by an *Esquire* magazine interview with a student going by the name of Jackie St. James which suggested a “gay Vassar.” Yet such characterization ignored the diversity of men who attended the college and who Vassar wished to attract. Similar to the complexity of the admissions strategy of Wheaton, admissions brochures and other campus publications at Vassar attempted to walk a fine line in recruiting males, emphasizing a Vassar male with a “spirit of intellectual commitment and individualism [,] cultural sophistication [and] concerned with larger social issues,” who did not need a big-time athletics program but yet was athletic.

The cases at Wheaton and Vassar were not isolated, and the type of male a college could attract was an important, though at times conflicting, part of the campus process to either maintain or recreate its institutional vision and identity. Another piece of that updated identity was how the college managed its historical mission with the realities of coeducation. Women’s colleges paradoxically bore a new burden of proof of gender equality. In *Going Coed*, Miller-Bernal and Poulson concluded their case study compilation by discussing the results of coeducation, and especially the views on the difficulty of achieving both structural and philosophical equality between genders. They purposefully included the report of six presidents of formerly women’s colleges from a 2000 meeting of the Mellon Foundation, including leaders from Vassar College, Connecticut College, Wheaton College, Goucher College, Sarah Lawrence College, and Skidmore College. The presidents all believed that equality was an important enough element of the higher education environment and professed how their respective institutions had achieved exceptional gender equality as a coeducational college. Among the
reasons, the presidents cited that their campuses did not have established football or fraternities, two ways in which male dominance had been traditionally expressed and solidified on college campuses. In addition to the absence of football and fraternities, the presidents elaborated on the maintenance of a visible history in iconography and written form on campus as well as the fact that their schools had remained predominantly female in terms of numbers of students, faculty, and administrators.118

As mentioned above, sports was an area that generated concerns about equality. One of the most well-known examples of this issue at a formerly single-sex institution is the so-called “Title IX strip” in 1976 at Yale, when members of the women’s crew team went to the office of the director of physical education to protest inequalities which included a lack of equal locker room and shower facilities.119 Moreover, in Going Coed, Miller-Bernal and Poulson asserted that sports were a frequent complaint of women at institutions where men are newly admitted since it was only then when the sports facilities were improved.120 Prior to and immediately following coeducation at Elmira College, female students made several requests for increased intercollegiate competition for years before the college finally relented – all this despite the men having full competition schedules during their first season on campus. Even though the absence of a pre-established, machismo football mentality avoided explicit imbalances of perceived gender equality, the experiences of a range schools from Yale to Elmira demonstrated that sports remained an early arena where inequities existed.

The final area that the six formerly women’s college presidents evaluated for evidence of gender equality was the personnel of the college or university. Perceptions of the role of both sexes were important to gender dynamics and ensuring an equitable environment. Having balanced ratios of women and men in leadership positions, such as the upper level administration
or as department chairs, was viewed by the presidents of the Mellon Foundation report as promoting a nonsexist atmosphere. In spite of the historical missions of formerly women’s colleges, this was oftentimes an uphill battle. Prior to coeducation at Wells College, the administration endeavored to increase its academic reputation by decreasing the number of female faculty members, which fell from 70-percent in 1928 to 42-percent in 1965. Duffy and Goldberg noted that at women’s colleges in their study that became coeducational, the percentage of female faculty and department chairs at the colleges generally decreased. While this appeared to be the case for many institutions, it did not appear to hold true for all such transitions. It took almost a decade after coeducation for the proportion of women in upper and lower ranks of faculty to increase at Vassar College, but by 1979 women were increasingly represented in upper faculty ranks as well as department chairs. In its decade following coeducation, Wheaton College fell short in achieving its enrollment goal of male students at 50-percent, but by the late 1990s had achieved its desired gender balance in the faculty and had an overwhelmingly female board of trustees.

Elmira College and Vassar College Prior to Coeducation

Malkiel studied elite institutions that underwent the fundamental transition to coeducation because phenomenon at elite institutions had an “outsized influence” on other institutions. Wiggins and Mason argued that small, local scale histories can shed light on broader social phenomena and were not to be trivialized. Case studies of the intersections of athletics and coeducation at formerly women’s colleges Elmira and Vassar will thus reveal two distinct paths of coeducation – the elite and the more local scale -- while also uncovering the interwoven connections among economic, competitive, and philosophical pressures. The historical missions
and hierarchical status of the women’s colleges had direct impact on the ability of the college to adapt to the coeducation transition. The following sections provide a glimpse into the historic background of Elmira and Vassar.

**Historical Elmira College**

The charter for Elmira College was signed in 1855 with the intent to provide for women a college degree equal to that which was provided for men. Elmira College historian Charles Barber attributed the idea for the college to a collection of individuals known as the Friends of Education, a group initially assembled at Albany, New York’s Second Dutch Reformed Church. The college ultimately was located in Elmira, New York, based on interest and financial backing organized by Simeon Benjamin to help the group realize its goal to commission a college for women. Initially chartered by the Regents of the University of the State of New York in 1853 as the Elmira Collegiate Seminary, its name was amended to Elmira Female College by 1855 and soon after, Elmira College, and is considered by many historians to be the first of its kind.

The college welcomed girls from all types of families, including modest households, and despite a hopeful start, suffered several periods of financial difficulty into the twentieth century. Despite the financial strains, Elmira continued to provide top-level education for its students by recruiting quality faculty and administrators. In the early 1900s the economic prospects brightened, and by the 1950s, the college was in a position financially to undertake a series of building projects which included a new facility to contain the gym, swimming pool, and social center.
In the late 1960s, Elmira College students, faculty and administration mirrored the national social atmosphere, and demanded certain institutional changes. The decision to become coeducational occurred swiftly at Elmira College, and the reasons mirrored those of the majority of single-sex colleges which made the transition. Administrators believed students wished to participate in society as it actually was, and that segregation by gender was unrealistic. Elmira President J. Ralph Murray cited economic reasons as well, claiming a decrease in the number of girls desiring a women’s college as well as the negative impact on women’s college enrollments and selectivity that resulted from men’s colleges becoming coeducational. The increased enrollment and low tuition costs offered by The State University of New York (SUNY) system of universities and community colleges also chipped away at demand for private schools in the region; both groups of institutions were among the schools which Elmira competed with for quality students. Elmira investigated the potential to create a coordinate college, but financial, logistical, and governance concerns eliminated that option. Having gone through a series of curricular adjustments in 1966 and 1967, college administrators believed that with some minor expansion in specialized courses and program areas the applicability and attractiveness of the college’s curriculum to males would be readily apparent. Since only few facility improvements were initially deemed necessary to accommodate new students, the administration opted for a speedy implementation. By 1969, full-time male students were attending the Elmira campus.

**Historical Vassar College**

Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, New York, was chartered in 1861 by founder Matthew Vassar as a vehicle to provide for women the same type of education that was provided for men, and to become the “American woman’s Yale or Harvard.” By the late 1920s, Vassar had
established a reputation as socially exclusive and academically rigorous, and it belonged to the “Seven Sisters” women’s colleges that the public viewed as the female counterpart to the elite men’s universities in prestige and quality.134

Into the mid-twentieth century, economic and social strains promoted discontent with the status quo at many women’s schools. Governing boards, administration, faculty, and students perceived a need for change. Vassar College commenced a series of transformations based on the assessment that its isolated environment was becoming less attractive to the most active and talented female students and faculty.135 In the 1940s, women made up three-fifths of the faculty. In the 1950s and 1960s however, men received the larger share of the junior faculty appointments, and occupied more leadership roles within departments and on committees.136 Students were tired of antiquated parietal rules as well as the weekend exodus for mixers and dates at male or coeducational schools. Though focused on expanding women’s opportunities, the college also discovered special challenges and potential issues for admissions when it came to the topic of coeducation. By 1967, sixty-two percent of Vassar students had graduated from a coeducational high school. Admissions questionnaires in 1966 revealed that applicants to Vassar who did not attend based their decisions mainly on reasons such as preference for coeducation or desire to attend a Seven Sisters school that was physically located closer to a male or coeducational college.137 Even the Seven Sisters as a collective group experienced a drop in applicants in 1968, with Vassar’s 14-percent fall the largest among them.138

The controversial Vassar-Yale Joint Study in November of 1966 attempted to examine the possibilities of the coordinate college form of coeducation.139 Vassar President Alan Simpson led a commission to study the potential of moving the Vassar campus to New Haven, Connecticut, to serve as a coordinate college to Yale University. Opinions widely varied, but by
1968, the potential loss of autonomy and culture perceived to result from such a move prompted the Vassar faculty to vote in favor of recommending full coeducation and remaining in Poughkeepsie. The Board of Trustees agreed, and after enrolling transfer and exchange male students starting in 1969, the fall semester of 1970 marked the first class of freshmen male students at Vassar.

**Intercollegiate Athletics and Physical Education**

The following sections first provide a glimpse into the state of athletics in higher education during the 1960s and 1970s. Specifically, the review of literature focuses on the state of men’s athletics in the 1970s, along with the challenges and changes to sport opportunities for women, which reached a crescendo in the 1970s with the establishment of a national athletics association for women as well as the growing awareness of gender equality in sports that Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 fostered. Such background is relevant to contextualizing the state of athletics at Elmira and Vassar. From there, the review concentrates on the philosophy of physical education and sports prior to coeducation at Elmira and Vassar in order to better contextualize the rationale and impact of their decisions in the decade following the transition.

**Development of Intercollegiate Athletics Through The 1970s**

Societal shifts and higher education developments in the 1960s and 1970s left almost no area of college life untouched, and the realm of intercollegiate athletics was certainly not immune from the changing times. Men’s intercollegiate athletics thrived, and national athletics associations grew more complex to handle the diversity within overwhelming membership
numbers. In women’s college sports, burgeoning possibilities for expansion of intercollegiate competition opportunities for the skilled female collegiate athlete paired with growing social and legal demands for equality, and triggered additional changes on college campuses.

The origins and development of men’s and women’s intercollegiate athletics in the United States were vastly different, and those variations became more pronounced and inequities more apparent in the 1970s. According to Ronald A. Smith in *Sports and Freedom*, the historical roots of men’s intercollegiate athletics resided in a desire to mimic the competitive rivalries of Oxford and Cambridge and an Americanized version of the value of amateurism in sport. The rivalry between Harvard and Yale burgeoned into an entire network of student-run clubs and activities on college campuses, and the sporting endeavors evolved into a system of regional and national conferences and associations by the early twentieth century. The first intercollegiate competition dates back to an 1852 Harvard-Yale boat race, with intercollegiate contests in sports such as baseball, football, and track and field following soon after. Men’s athletics existed as a network of student-run clubs mostly unfettered by overarching regulating bodies for the first few decades, but as intercollegiate competition increased, rivalries grew stronger, and scandals and corruption threatened the pristine, wholesome image of collegiate sports, university and college presidents called for greater administrative control and a common set of guidelines. In 1906, under the urging of United States President Theodore Roosevelt, presidents from the major collegiate football programs came together and formed the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States, which became the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), as the major national regulatory and governing body for men’s intercollegiate sports.
The NCAA became the main governing body for men’s intercollegiate athletics, almost since its inception. Other organizations existed, such as the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), however, the NCAA was the largest and arguably the most prominent. The association grew so large and diverse that it divided its membership into two divisions (University and College Divisions) in 1968. In 1973, the association federated into three divisions (Division I, II and III) to further satisfy the wide range of institutional members. On a more regional level, conference structures for athletics had also been well established by the 1960s, including conglomerations that catered to elite institutions, such as the Ivy League, which had been loosely affiliated prior but solidified the association in 1954 when the league encompassed all sports. Another conference structure was one that catered to all size institutions and had a more regional character, such as the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC), with its 1938 origins.

While men’s athletics had origins in the co-curricular realm, the governance of women’s intercollegiate athletics has roots in the early women’s physical education organizations and its eventual interactions with the male-dominated sphere of intercollegiate, amateur, and professional athletics. While women had been participating in sports since the nineteenth century, by the mid-1900’s sports were still facilitated primarily within college and university physical education departments. Intercollegiate competition for women was a relatively new trend at that time, as Play Days, Field Days, and Sports Days encompassed the majority of women’s sport experience. Early on, educators of women saw that the win-at-all-costs philosophy associated with men’s athletics led to evils of commercialization, dishonesty, and other forms of corruption in recruiting practices and eligibility. Female sport leaders determined to craft a unique philosophy of “sport for all” and to maintain leadership over women’s sports in
order to ensure proper values. Such a philosophy dominated the 1960s for most liberal arts colleges in the northeast. Yet women’s collegiate athletics was not as uniform in development as was generally promoted, and unique situations have generally not been as extensively acknowledged or researched. In the South in particular, many historically black colleges and universities promoted competitive athletics for female students. In *Women’s Sports: A History*, Allen Guttmann expressed that Alabama’s Tuskegee Institute students regularly competed in track and field, winning the 1937 Amateur Athletic Association championship, and Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial, now Tennessee State University, had world-class runners such as Wilma Rudolph in the 1960s. In *We Were Ladies, We Just Played Basketball Like Boys*, an article about Bennett College in North Carolina, Rita Liberti noted further diversity of sport opportunity with a look within the African American community, and highlighted distinctions which evidenced varied support for female involvement in competitive athletics and, at times, reflected class distinctions within the black community.

Allen Guttmann also remarked in *Women’s Sports: A History* that while educators believed in one system, women students many times had differing opinions of how their sports should be organized. Students at Wellesley College in 1924 voted 237-33 in favor of intercollegiate athletics, but such desires were ineffective when they came up against what Guttmann characterized as the “entrenched education bureaucracy.” Students at Elmira College similarly requested more intercollegiate competition in an overwhelming vote of support for such a preference in the late 1960s, yet faculty disregarded the questionnaire results as flawed, misdirected, and unnecessary. Thus, well into the twentieth century, the majority of women’s college sports remained under the watchful and cautious eyes of physical educators.
who more highly valued the participatory functions of sport versus the corruption they witnessed in men’s collegiate athletics.

In the midst of the feminist and civil rights movements throughout the 1960s, female physical education leaders and athletes faced numerous pressures. In her 1994 dissertation entitled *The Impact of Title IX on Women’s Intercollegiate Athletics*, Gail Maloney found that physical education leaders were viewed with an element of disdain within the men’s intercollegiate athletics environment (as too weak and emotional) and the feminist movement (for wanting to be what men were). It was not until the early 1960s that most Americans viewed the athletic performance capabilities of American women as a worthwhile focus. The Cold War and the superiority of the Soviet Union in the 1960 Olympic medal count, mainly due to the performances of their female athletes, have been typically credited with producing a newfound push for fostering the development of high-level athleticism in “motor-gifted” women. While higher education slowly caught up to the societal and patriotic interest in sports for women, a portion of the field of women’s physical education came to believe that the participatory emphasis discriminated against skilled athletes. Consequently, those leaders recognized a need for a national governing body for women’s intercollegiate athletics.

In *Playing Nice and Losing*, a detailed examination of the development of women’s college athletics, Ying Wushanley detailed the historical lineage of the organization of collegiate championships for women, and characterized it as a progression of decision-making based on the tensions between control and philosophy. The Division for Girls’ and Women’s Sports (DGWS) was established in 1957, a descendent of a series of committees and subsections of the American Physical Education Association dating back to 1917. Rather quickly, the rising importance of women in amateur sports led to speculation about inclusion in the premier
organizations of the time, the NCAA and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). Neither organization was ready to fully open its doors to women, however, and in 1966, educators within the DGWS formed the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW). The CIAW laid the foundation for the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) in 1972 and the future of women’s intercollegiate athletics. The CIAW encouraged the development of competitive sports programs for women in ways that enriched the participant’s overall life. The CIAW filled the need for a national structure, and prevented women’s intercollegiate athletics from being subsumed by the perceived, win-at-all-costs male structure. Administratively, the CIAW was governed by women who were part-time commissioners, and had little budgetary control or resources. These limitations were remedied in October of 1971, when the DGWS board approved a proposal to establish the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). The AIAW officially replaced the CIAW on June 1, 1972, and sponsored seven national championships for its 278 members.

Historian Joan Hult outlined the original mission of the AIAW in “The Philosophical Conflicts in Men’s and Women’s Collegiate Athletics,” and included four purposes: 1) to foster broad programs consistent with educational objectives, 2) assist member institutions in program extension and enrichment, 3) stimulate development of quality leadership, and 4) encourage excellence in performance. Instead of focusing only on education of sport rules and regulations, the new association organized championships for women and became the primary governing body for intercollegiate women’s sports throughout the decade. By 1975, the AIAW structure had striated into three divisions with separate rules to negate the differences and resource availability between the larger universities and the smaller institutions.
Championships were organized, and AIAW prided itself on its structure of allowing every team the opportunity to participate in postseason by virtue of state and regional tournaments prior to national competition. A total of 16 sports crowned national champions, and the membership strengthened to 961 by the 1980-81 academic year. Delegate assemblies were held annually, where representatives of each institution debated and voted on rules proposals and amendments. Finally, part of the legacy of the AIAW was that it was remarkably student-centered. A student-athlete bill of rights was passed in the AIAW, the first of its kind, and student-athletes were encouraged and invited to sit on committees and to participate at the delegate assembly.

One of the defining characteristics of the AIAW’s educational model of intercollegiate competition revolved around the DGWS policy on athletic scholarships that was continued in the AIAW. Initially, athletic scholarships were not permitted, and restrictions on recruiting were also outlined, in order to better promote the educational experience and well-being of student-athletes. As Wushanley and Suggs both explain, these specific regulations were modified soon after the AIAW started operations, as the 1972 passage of Title IX, the 1973 Kellmeyer lawsuit regarding athletic scholarships for women, and the ever-present expansion dreams of the NCAA created situations that made the association’s plans, as originally developed, untenable.

Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments in 1972, which simply stated that, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” The legislation was favorable for those in education because it provided a basis for constructing arguments against inequality in that sphere, and it also particularly applied in women’s collegiate athletics. Though historian John Thelin was
cautious about the immediate impact of Title IX based on its unclear terms and practices, in *A History of American Higher Education*, he provided the argument that the legislation was one of the more significant events in the gender equity movement. In *A Place on the Team*, Welch Suggs also cited the ambiguity and complexity that surrounded the connection of gender equity and athletics. Whereas an engineering program could be integrated, he argued, athletics was a challenge for legislation because of its already highly gendered organization.

While the reform of women’s intercollegiate athletics was in progress in the 1970s with the AIAW and then with Title IX, Thelin also noted that it was initially a movement largely ignored by university officials as well as federal officials. Between 1972 and 1979, there was no Congressional enforcement or scrutiny because guidelines were still in draft stage, and once the government published the guidelines in 1975, it also gave schools another three-year period to come into compliance. Additionally, the guidelines for Title IX based the comparisons of and provisions for gender equity on the existing male model of sport, patterned after the structure and policies of the NCAA, and complicated the situation for colleges and universities even further.

Both Wushanley and Suggs argued that utilizing the male NCAA model for Title IX compliance dramatically impacted the AIAW, which rapidly evolved structurally and philosophically from a non-scholarship organization to allowing its members to offer full scholarships, to recruit off-campus, and even entered into corporate sponsorships and television contracts for some of its championships. On a structural level, such changes meant many of the initial differences between the AIAW and NCAA had begun to fall away in the mid- to late-1970s. It was a trend the NCAA administration was fully aware of as the organization began a lengthy and contentious battle against the application of Title IX to collegiate sports because of the potential impact on male-sport revenue. As Wushanley and others chronicle, the NCAA also
targeted the AIAW in order to take over control of women’s sports, a result which ultimately occurred in 1982.\textsuperscript{172}

As the 1970s progressed, colleges and universities understood they were under the legal obligation of Title IX to provide equitable opportunities for men and women not just in academic and enrollment settings, but also within their athletics programs. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) formulated its policy interpretations and legislators debated the breadth of the legislation, and tension grew in colleges and universities about the proper way to comply with the regulation. In \textit{A Place on the Team}, Welch Suggs concluded that the triumphs of Title IX were that it ultimately created opportunities for thousands of female athletes and obliged the American public to recognize the value of women’s sports, though, as Suggs argued, women’s teams “still lack the deep cultural significance athletics departments ascribe to men’s sports.”\textsuperscript{173} The 1970s were therefore a time of both great expansion and also nervous hesitancy in collegiate sport, and particularly women’s intercollegiate athletics. So, much like the results of the coeducation trend, college athletics experienced significant changes structurally, culturally, and philosophically, and forced administrators to make crucial decisions regarding their purpose and relevance.

\textbf{Physical Education At Elmira College}

In \textit{Elmira College: The First Hundred Years}, Elmira historian Charles Barber pointed out that the college cited early requirements of physical education as part of its pioneering history.\textsuperscript{174} Exercise was part of the initial domestic work of the students but quickly became a separate emphasis. At Elmira, walking for half an hour was promoted, and the college catalogue of 1856-57 provided the appropriate route through the town to complete such exercise, weather permitting. While overly strenuous athletic activity was not encouraged, Elmira students
participated in sports and recreation, and even entertained themselves by forming baseball teams by 1871. The walking soon became a requirement, and was paired with a gym requirement. In 1900, a specific training course was offered which included fencing, and by 1901, every student not a senior was required to exercise three half-hours per week, and needed to be assessed and credited with their gym work. Some speculated that the gym requirement was the first for women in higher education.\textsuperscript{175}

Archival records and yearbooks indicated that Elmira College students launched a more formal structure for their sports just prior to the turn of the century, establishing the Athletic Association in 1895 under the auspices of the physical education faculty to organize outdoor activities and encourage participation. Through his archival research, Barber came to the conclusion that women at the college were interested in athletics from the start. Elmira teams undertook a handful of intercollegiate match-ups in basketball, one of the school’s most popular sports, in the early twentieth century. Similar to the general developments in women’s athletics, Barber claimed the faculty in the early twentieth century were wary of overly competitive, intercollegiate sports and as a student organization, the Athletic Association lacked significant financial support for transportation; intercollegiate contests thus were a rare treat. Yet evidence mounts as the decades unfold that the athletics endeavors of Elmira students flourished and became a part of the cultural fabric of the college. To satisfy the students’ athletics cravings, Elmira educators regularly scheduled Field Days, Play Days, and interclass competitions. By 1917 the Athletic Association started its annual Athletic Awards Banquet and began the tradition of presenting the ‘E’ award to students who accumulated a specific amount of points in athletics participation.\textsuperscript{176}
Miss Catherine Finter, a professor of physical education at Elmira, assumed the advisory role for the Athletic Association during the 1930s, and impressed on the students a preference for Sports Days and interclass competition versus intercollegiate athletics. In the 1931-1932 Athletics Association Handbook, the stated purpose of the group was to generate interest and stimulate activity in athletics, and offered archery, fencing, hiking, hockey, riding, soccer, swimming, tennis, basketball, volleyball, track, and baseball.

Elmira physical educators showed an early interest in the national organization of physical education and athletics. The Athletic Association became a member of the Athletic Conference of American College Women (ACACW) in 1933 and the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF) in 1938. In 1954, plans were finally realized for a new gymnasium facility, and the college constructed a half-million dollar building to house the gymnasium, a swimming pool, and a social center.

Students became more ambitious for intercollegiate play in the 1950s, but came across roadblocks to those athletics endeavors. They wished to form varsity programs in addition to the interclass competitions with which they had grown bored, but met with faculty reluctance to expand. Several years of requests from students for intercollegiate contests and more support for teams met with consistent denials from the college administration well into the 1960s. College administrators claimed that the Central New York Women’s Athletic Recreation Association (CNYWARA), to which Elmira then belonged, prohibited varsity competition and the professors fully believed in the philosophies of the benefits of participation, not men’s style competition. By 1964, Elmira students still yearned for intercollegiate opportunities, and resorted to more creative measures such as calling a contest against St. Bonaventure an
“experiment” in order to be able to play while remaining in good standing with the association.\(^1\)\(^8\)\(^1\)

In the 1960s as in the past, Elmira physical educators continued to prefer an emphasis on participation, and remained in the CNYWARA, which provided a centralized planning association that scheduled Sports Days for its members including private and public colleges of all sizes, funding, and levels such as Cornell University, Ithaca College, Hartwick College, Cortland State University, Binghamton University, and Corning Community College. In 1965-66, the women at Elmira had scheduled 14 Sports Days, eight of those on their own campus, with sports planned such as volleyball, field hockey, bowling, swimming, fencing, basketball, archery, tennis, and softball.\(^1\)\(^8\)\(^2\)

As the 1960s came to a close, Elmira women still desired more intercollegiate competition and interest in dorm competition and sports days were at an all-time low. A questionnaire distributed in the late 1960s by the Athletic Association asked students about their preferences for athletics. Of 441 responses, 409 expressed a desire for intercollegiate competition versus Sports Days, and out of 446 responses, 392 believed that intercollegiate competition would extend the reputation of Elmira College.\(^1\)\(^8\)\(^3\) No evidence exists of physical educators or the administration instituting changes to the format of sports at the college, and so the Elmira students put their competitive dreams on hold for yet a few more years.

**Physical Education At Vassar College**

Physical education and sports had long been an integral part of student life at Vassar College. Founder Matthew Vassar believed that physical education was important for balancing health and studies.\(^1\)\(^8\)\(^4\) The school required light gymnastics from the beginning of the college,
and extensive offerings in physical education and recreational activities gave Vassar one of the most expansive physical training departments for a women’s college during the late-nineteenth century. Time was set aside each day for required physical exercise, formatted after the calisthenic system designed by Dioclesian Lewis for the Normal Institute for Physical Education in Boston.\textsuperscript{185} Starting in 1866, students at Vassar also played baseball, though its draw faded by 1877.\textsuperscript{186} The limited lifespan of the sport primarily derived not from its physical nature, but from an attached stigma of being “plebian”; a majority of students at the elite private school believed playing the sport adversely affected one’s social status since baseball’s “reputation for dignity among the under graduates may be regarded as a minus quantity.”\textsuperscript{187}

By the 1890s, activities at Vassar College led S. Scoville Jr. in an \textit{Outlook} article entitled “Athletic Vassar” to proclaim the era as the “age of physical culture.”\textsuperscript{188} Students at the college established the Athletic Association in 1894 to promote health and physical conditioning, and hosted and attended Field Days to participate in sports such as golf, battle-ball, lawn-tennis, track and field, and basketball. Pink “V’s” were distributed for sweaters when a student broke a school record.\textsuperscript{189} In 1896, the era and athletic character of Vassar women had raised eyebrows nationally. Charles Dana Gibson published \textit{The Coming Game}, a cartoon depicting several determined Vassar women about to tackle a worried football player from Yale.\textsuperscript{190} Harriet Isabel Ballintine, Director of Physical Training during the late 1890s, maintained a suspicion of intercollegiate competition and record-chasing as did many contemporary women’s physical educators. In response to criticism to the publicity about Vassar athleticism, however, she defended the college’s activities, saying, “if refinement and quietness are but the results of weakness and inactivity, and a pronounced manner must necessarily be the outcome of a more
vigorous life, we must be willing to sacrifice the former feminine attributes for the more precious possession of good health.”

Even with all the activity, college administrators remained ambivalent about intercollegiate athletic competition until the 1920s. From the 1920s to the 1940s, President Henry Noble MacCracken expanded the college and its recreational facilities. MacCracken initiated the construction of a new gymnasium, Kenyon Hall, and supported intercollegiate competition in the form of play dates and even occasional independent contests as well as thriving class and dorm competitions.

At Vassar women’s teams freely participated in intercollegiate contests during the early 1960s, though their ability to find teams to play was still limited by the prevailing, restrained notions of proper sport behavior for women. Vassar students appeared less interested in intercollegiate play throughout the 1960s, even with the relatively hospitable environment. They played five basketball games in 1965 against other colleges, and the field hockey, tennis, squash, and swimming teams also competed, albeit irregularly. Formal organized clubs and sports also experienced a decline in popularity in the mid-1960s at Vassar, and Athletic Association reports cited waning interest and commitment to existing teams. Instead, students at Vassar invested more of their time and energy into contests among the different dormitories or houses as well as intramural competition. Vassar versions of rugby and touch football, particularly popular in the early 1960s, matched up students from different houses on campus versus faculty men or men from other schools such as Yale. Vassar touch football even garnered New York Times mention in 1962 for its unusual format of the women’s college challenging teams from nearby men’s colleges, including Yale and Williams. The Vassar women modified the rules of both sports to provide themselves with the advantage, and as time went on, student newspaper reports
boasted that Vassar women seldom lost such contests. Such sports as flag football continued to be played past the point of coeducation, but had been transformed almost overnight into a primarily male pastime. An official college press release on the first-year of enrollment of male students mentioned the “one-year-old intercollegiate touch-football team,” an example of the Vassar concept of sport at the time.

Endnotes

19 Stevens (2007).
26 Stevens (2007).
29 Duffy and Goldberg (1998), xi.
30 Ibid., xix, 4.
31 Ibid.
34 Geiger (2008).

Miller (2011).


Stevens (2007).


Football has been cited as one of the sports most closely associated with a highly visible and culturally powerful brand of masculinity. An in-depth discussion of the gendered and cultural aspects of football is in Oriard, M. (2001). *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Stevens (2007), p. 110. All three conferences consist of institutions noted to maintain elite academic reputations, and not necessarily athletics reputations. Ivy League schools compete in NCAA Division I athletics and consist of Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and Yale University. Institutions listed as full members of the Patriot League, an NCAA Division I member, include American University, Bucknell University, Colgate University, College of the Holy Cross, Lafayette College, Lehigh University, U.S. Military Academy, and the U.S. Naval Academy. The University Athletic Association is a Division III conference consisting of Brandeis University, Carnegie Mellon University, Case Western Reserve University, Emory University, New York University, University of Chicago, University of Rochester, and Washington University in St. Louis.


Jones (Fall 2009), p. 261.

Duffy and Goldberg (1997).

Ibid., p. 107.


Ibid., p. 108. Seven Sisters refers to an affiliation of seven liberal arts colleges in the Northeastern United States who were initially all women’s colleges, and carried the academic reputation of being like the Ivy League for women. The schools consisted of Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College, Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, Smith College, Vassar College, and Wellesley College.


Thelin (2011) lists the college enrollment percentage, while Jones (2009) focused on the percentage of graduates.

Miller-Bernal and Poulson (2004) highlight the percentage of graduates, while Thelin (2011) lists the college enrollment percentages on page 267.

In Crafting A Class, Duffy and Goldberg refer to the coeducation trend as a “coed panic,” which they state was coined by Mary Ellen Ames, director of admission at Wellesley College, who realized that modest declines occurred initially in their admissions operations due to applicants going to previously all-male schools, but that the decline did not last as long as anticipated by many, who perhaps jumped to the conclusion too early that the trend was permanent. Wellesley College was one of the Seven Sisters colleges that considered, but rejected, coeducation during the 1970s. Duffy and Goldberg (1997), p. 15.


Duffy and Goldberg (1997).

Ibid. pp. 266-274.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 114.

Miller-Bernal and Poulson (2006). Miller-Bernal and Poulson also co-authored several chapters, and included extensive analysis in a concluding chapter.

Malkiel (2016).

Ibid. Also, as discussed earlier, the same concept of ability to adapt based on prestige and status was highlighted by Jencks and Riesman (1968) as well as Finkelstein, Farrar, and Pfister (1984).

Malkiel (2016), p. 598


Duffy and Goldberg (1997).


Malkiel, p .598, 604.
93 Jencks and Riesman (1968), p. 293.
96 Ibid., p. 75.
101 Ibid.
102 Bird (1972), p. 65.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Malkiel (2016), p. 598
113 Daniels and Griffen (2000).
116 Ibid.
118 Ibid., p. 383.
122 Duffy and Goldberg (1997).
123 Griffen and Daniels (2006). In 1979, Vassar College reported 136 men and 122 women on its faculty. Since 1979, Griffen and Daniels reported that the proportion of women in upper ranks of faculty increased as well as the frequency of having a female department or committee chair.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

“Vassar Female College,” New Englander, October 1862, p. 725.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid. Yale, the Ivy League college Vassar women most associated themselves with, was almost a two-hour drive from Poughkeepsie, New York.

Ibid.

“VC Applications Fall Sharply, Drop 14% From Last Year,” The Miscellany News, 17 April 1968, 1.


Ibid.


Smith (1988).

Smith (1988).


Crowley (2006).


Play Days, Field Days, and Sports Days were terms used to describe get-togethers of two or more colleges where teams were established for the day by mixing up individuals from all institutions for the purpose of avoiding the highly competitive men’s intercollegiate style of play.


Liberti, R. (Fall 1999). “‘We Were Ladies, We Just Played Basketball Like Boys’”: African American Womanhood and Competitive Basketball at Bennett College, 1928-1942.” Journal of Sport History 26:567-584.

Ibid., p. 140.

Located in the folder for the W.A.A. from 1962-1974, this questionnaire was conducted prior to coeducation, but no other dates or authors were noted. Athletic Association Questionnaire; Elmira Archives.


Hult (1980); Wushanley (2004).

Hult (1980); Wushanley (2004).
The first significant challenge for the AIAW was the 1973 Kellmeyer lawsuit. The cornerstone of the educational model, the anti-athletic-scholarship policy was challenged within just a year of the association’s existence. In January of 1973, Kellmeyer, et al. v. NEA, et al was filed in the U.S. District court for the Southern District of Florida with the purpose of invalidating the policy that prevented women who received athletic scholarships from participating in AIAW competitions. The plaintiff was Fern Kellmeyer, the director of physical education at Marymount College, 11 students who received scholarships from Marymount College and Broward Community College, women’s tennis coaches from both schools, and Marymount College. The defendants were an assortment of physical education associations, including the National Education Association (NEA), American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (AAHPER), DGWS, AIAW, National Association of Physical Education of College Women, Florida Association for Physical Education of College Women, Florida Commission of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, and the Southern Association for Physical Education of College Women.

Title IX and Sex Discrimination, U.S. Department of Education, Retrieved on May 1, 2013 from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html


Ibid.

Suggs (2005), p. 188.

Barber (1955).

Ibid.

Women’s Athletic Association-1965-66; Elmira Archives.


Athletic Association, Constitution and By-Laws, 1931-32, Elmira Archives.

Barber (1955).

Athletic Association, Athletic Association Minutes (20 February 1950, 5 February 1951, 16 April 1951, 12 November 1951, 26 November 1951); Elmira Archives.


Women’s Athletic Association-1965-66; Elmira Archives.

Located in the folder for the W.A.A. from 1962-1974, this questionnaire was conducted prior to coeducation, but no other dates or authors were noted. Athletic Association Questionnaire; Elmira Archives.


188 Scoville Jr. (1896).
189 Guttman (1991), p. 113
190 Guttman (1991), p. 113
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This study will use historical methods and a multiple case study design to investigate the complexities of institutional decision making as it relates to mission, status, and intercollegiate athletics at two women’s liberal arts colleges during the transition to coeducation. The focus on the role of sport is purposefully situated in the foreground, as historical investigation into sport allows the researcher a unique cultural phenomenon for study as well as a unique lens for examining gender and status – two important contexts within the case studies.

In the past, inquiry into sport as a form of cultural studies has been criticized for superficiality. However, the fields of qualitative research and historical studies have increasingly become a base for valuable and revealing research into the interactions and connectivity between and among people, sport, and their socio-historical context. Summarizing the potential of sports studies, Michael L. Silk, David L. Andrews, and Daniel S. Mason stated that “[l]ocating sport – as a cultural form within which the production of knowledge and identities takes place – within the material and institutional contexts that structure everyday life provides the underlying site for the critical interrogation of sporting experiences, forms, meanings, structures, and practices”.

Historical studies as reviewed by Robert K. Yin aim to answer the how and why of non-contemporary events. The basis of contextual sports studies as proposed by sport sociologist Toby Miller expands on Yin’s basic definition, maintaining that the study of sport history is premised on the understanding that social practices make a way of life and change over time, that history is focused on products of culture and their circumstances of circulation and creation, is focused on marginal, ordinary, grass-roots sports experiences as well as those of the dominant
culture, and is concentrated on power relations, conflict, and struggle. The examination of sport as a legitimate focus of cultural studies is a twentieth century phenomenon, rooted perhaps with Clifford Geertz’s writings on the Balinese cockfight. Since that time, much ground has been covered in establishing a breadth of philosophies about and methods for the qualitative research of sports. While academia may have criticized sports studies scholars for “potential superficiality” based on an early desire to document the “determinants of sports participation,” the strength of the field now resides in its interdisciplinary potential within cultural and historical studies. In Qualitative Methods in Sports Studies, contributors and sport historians Michael L. Silk, David L. Andrews, and Daniel S. Mason contend that in order to contextually analyze sport, it is necessary to understand the “disparate structures that meet and flow through sport.” Likewise, in her analysis of method in cultural studies and sports studies, Samantha King relates sports sociologist Toby Miller’s table on contextual sports studies to the study of sports history, revealing that such study is premised not on simply describing sports, but on their impact on social practices. David K. Wiggins and Daniel S. Mason further emphasize that since the 1980s, sports scholars have been more interested in the complex meanings sports has had for athletes, spectators, and other constituencies. Sports studies, therefore, can provide a site for critical examination of not only specific occurrences of sporting structure, rules, and participation, but how such practices connect with and interact in the cultural milieu of their immediate and broader culture and society. The cross-case analysis of historical policies and practices within athletics at the two selected liberal arts colleges is thus expected to uncover the cultural attitudes and beliefs existent at each institution as well as the way they were either unique or consistent with those in higher education and society in general during a specific time period.
The history of higher education and collegiate sport each encompasses a multitude of competing cultural and societal philosophies and structures. Sports historians and sociologists studying the dynamics and influence of college athletics in the United States have revealed the interconnectedness of society with both collegiate and sporting structures. For instance, sport historian Ronald Smith’s *Sports and Freedom* revealed the paradoxical ideal of amateurism associated with American intercollegiate athletics competition, and further illuminated the tantalizing draw that such notions of amateur sport had as it related directly to the espirit de corps, character and values Americans believed they represented; such significance provoked power struggles at higher education institutions waged over control of athletic competition on campuses and on the regional and national stage. Drawing on the more recent history of intercollegiate athletics, James L. Shulman and William G. Bowen’s *The Game of Life* investigates twentieth century developments of collegiate athletics and the interplay between higher education and sports, and reveals the impact those relationships have had on class, race, and gender composition, relations and education, but also how society views the importance and linkages among all three.  

At the micro level, a multitude of studies have been written about universities and colleges, conferences, sports, and coaches and athletes throughout various time periods. Some studies focus on a single college and sport, such as Marc Horger’s article on Oberlin basketball, “Basketball and Athletic Control at Oberlin College, 1896-1915”, which analyzes the early years of intercollegiate development at the small Ohio liberal arts college, or Robin Lester’s *Stagg’s University*, which revealed the highlights and tensions present among the football program, its dominant and influential coach Alonzo Stagg, and the University of Chicago. Some research provides a glimpse into the influences of race, class, and gender on sport, such as Rita Liberti’s
study on the women’s athletics program at Bennett College, while others such as Courtney Smith and her examination of Lehigh University’s athletics program specifically investigate the connection between athletics and university cultures. Other lines of research have investigated the culture of an entire region and the role of sport in building a new societal structure. In “The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient,” Patrick B. Miller explored the cultural progression of collegiate sport in the Southern United States following the Civil War, and investigates the values perceived to be inherent in sport – in particular football – as the region rebuilt itself and its identity.

Units of Analysis

Because this study is exploratory in nature, the research is limited to two case studies. The intentions are to test the prevailing beliefs about the role of gender in higher education and athletics, the relation between status and intercollegiate athletics in the 1970s, as well as the institutional considerations of Elmira and Vassar as they progressed through significant changes in their student bodies.

The institutions for inclusion in this study were selected based on their classification as liberal arts colleges, their former status as single-sex, women’s colleges, and their parallel 1969 decisions to become coeducational. The time period is especially critical based on its situation within an era of great changes socially, institutionally, and within the structure of collegiate athletics. The late 1960s and early 1970s was an era in which many liberal arts colleges in the United States were in a state of flux, challenged to prove their worth among the gamut of higher education options. The time span also contains a wave of male and female single-sex colleges becoming coeducational. In addition to the pressures regarding structure and mission of liberal
arts colleges, the 1970s is a critical decade which highlighted gender relations as well as, in particular, key defining moments in the development of intercollegiate athletics for women. A search of women’s colleges that went through coeducation in the time period in question revealed both Elmira College and Vassar College. Elmira College has claims to being the first women’s college to offer degrees to women similar to those obtained by men at the time of its origin in 1855. College materials have also noted the participation of women in exercise and sport early in the institution’s history. The selection of Vassar College was based on its prominent reputation among (formerly) women’s colleges. The college maintains a unique institutional culture blending progressiveness and refinement in academics and physical education for women, which was another variable which differentiated it from other women’s colleges.

Significant criteria for inclusion of Elmira and Vassar therefore included an institutional memory which recollects progressive thinking specifically dating back to their origins in the late nineteenth century in terms of education as well as physical education and activities for women. Examining institutions with deeply-ingrained missions dedicated to ensuring equivalent educational experiences for women such as those at Elmira College and Vassar College means one can then explore the implications of coeducation upon that identity and the role of athletics in perpetuating, creating, and redefining the identity and status of both colleges.

Historians have undertaken studies of the institutional histories of Vassar College and Elmira College at various points in their respective development, including a study of the coeducation decision at Vassar College by Elizabeth A. Daniels and Clyde Griffen. However, the study of intercollegiate athletics during the early coeducational years, and its subsequent relation specifically to status and gender implications of the mission regeneration of each
college, has not been a topic for extensive analysis. Elmira and Vassar are relatively similar colleges in many respects, yet their differences provide an essential basis for comparison critical for interpreting the findings. The status of each among the hierarchy of Northeastern and national liberal arts institutions differs; Vassar is considered to be an elite institution while Elmira is considered selective yet more regionally focused. Status therefore offers a crucial pivot point upon which to analyze their actions, meanings, and effects of institution-wide and athletics-specific choices.

**Data Collection**

This study will rely on archival research for the collection of primary and secondary sources used to recreate and assess the actions and experiences of the two institutions directly leading up to, during, and immediately following the 1969 decision to become coeducational and extending through 1980. Documents to be analyzed include student newspapers, board of trustee meeting minutes, alumni magazines, admissions brochures, departmental paperwork and memos, and official news releases from the colleges. Various health and physical education, Women’s Athletics Association, and athletic department documents also exist in the archival collections which include departmental memos and student organization bylaws, publications, and correspondence.

Content of such documents will be utilized to: reconstruct actions and experiences of each institution as they moved into coeducational status, to understand the development, importance, and role of intercollegiate athletics at each institution, and to gain insight into the part that institutional identity and status played in the concerns about changes in athletics and the institution.
Generalizability

Because of its highly specific focus, the generalizability of the study is limited. Even so, the topics under analysis -- the liberal arts college in transition, the role of status in college decision making, the role of athletics within the overall higher educational structure, and the way in which gender is especially foregrounded in such a history -- intersect on multiple levels with more general studies and interpretations of higher education and sport history. Despite differences at each college, the research is expected to yield a set of results and conclusions which would contribute to the external generalizability of the study.

Validity

This study aims to collect multiple documentary sources of evidence from different constituents at each college. Historical studies involve making inferences based on the non-contemporary subject matter, and so multiple explanations will be considered and explored for how and why the colleges valued athletics in the manner they did. Finally, the case study will rely on analytic generalization, and so its external validity will be dependent on how the results contribute to a broader theory of status, gender, and sport in higher education.

Limitations

This study intends to provide an analysis of a certain snapshot of the history of Vassar College and Elmira College. In doing so, in its current stage, it does not initially endeavor to capture individual interview data from individuals at both institutions. At a cursory glance, and despite there being less than a fifty-year gap between the period of study and now, there appears to be an uneven availability of key individuals at each institution. The absence of interview data
on the individual recollections of the athletics programs at both institutions during the time period of study will limit the approach to analysis of the data to a historical study rooted in available archival documentation. The absence of primary sources for the individual lived experience of the events at each institution simply provides a potential next step for research. Once a historical saga is revealed through accessible documentation and analysis, existing first-hand accounts can serve to uphold or challenge the inferred institutional experiences.

**Researcher Position**

My interest in the role of athletics within higher education is both academic and practical. My personal career background within intercollegiate athletics will be a factor and needs to be taken into account during the analysis of data. I acknowledge that my inclination is towards support of the value of competitive, intercollegiate sport in higher education settings. In the gradual development of this study and others, I have gained a much deeper appreciation of the various relationships among athletics, gender and society and, specifically, the diverse significances of its presence within the university or college setting.

Additionally, my position as an alumna of Elmira College must also be noted. My interest in the development of athletics at the college was developed as a student, though such research has only recently been more fully investigated following a progression of studies in higher education and the history of women in sport. Recollections of the culture of the college and its claims to a historically progressive mission added to the desire to uncover the actual steps taken within the athletics program as the college adapted to its coeducational decision at such a unique juncture in the history of collegiate sport and in higher education.
Endnotes


199 Ibid., p. 1.


CHAPTER FOUR

Historical Origins and Coeducation Transition

Structural transformations such as coeducation require rationale which depend on the intricate network of ties that exist between internal cultural factors and external influences. Outlining the transformation to and promotion of coeducation at Vassar and Elmira Colleges reveals much about the nature of the process itself and how each institution internally and outwardly redefined its new self.

Institutions such as Vassar and Elmira Colleges provided distinct educational opportunities for women at their origins. They were both viewed as academically more rigorous than other institutions for women at the time, training not just for motherhood; their mission was to allow women to use their minds and earn an education equivalent to that which men received. That mission remained relatively unchanged throughout their first century. By 1968, however, many liberal arts and women’s colleges experienced negative or zero-growth rates in applications in a rapidly changing higher education environment which challenged their foundational mission and place within the contemporary higher education structure.

Coeducation was one adaptation to the challenges of the 1960s. Jencks and Riesman viewed coeducation as a response based not solely on admissions and finances, but more importantly one closely coupled with a desire to remain culturally competitive as the institution addressed enrollment or financial distress. Both Vassar and Elmira regarded coeducation as a means of providing its female students with an education that was more reflective of a society where men and women received the same education and learned how to work with each other. This was a departure from the mission each had previously touted: neither institution had prided itself on being reflective of society; rather, each institution historically viewed the opportunities
it afforded its female students as pioneering. Establishing or reestablishing cultural relevance became overwhelmingly important as many of the larger men’s colleges and universities opened their doors to women. Women who might ordinarily have considered only women’s colleges, or, for Vassar, only Seven Sisters colleges, had more options for academically competitive higher education.

While men’s colleges entering into coeducation rarely felt a need to prove their worth for female students, the same was not the case for women’s colleges that went coeducational. The burden of proof -- academic, physical, and social – fell much more heavily onto women’s colleges becoming coeducational. Malkiel concluded that prestige and reputation linked with anything male-dominated played a significant role that even social transformations at the time, such as the women’s movement and civil rights movement, were only able to indirectly or moderately effect. Writing about men’s colleges going coeducational, Miller-Bernal and Poulson stated that coeducation did not automatically bring about a concern for gender equality, because both men and women endorsed existing gender roles from the start. Maintaining vestiges of a gendered past was more complicated. Women’s colleges provided a different picture of gender equality in coeducation based on their historical mission to ensure equality of academic opportunity for women. Yet Miller-Bernal and Poulson also posit that the women’s colleges, no matter how prestigious, battled against a stereotype that viewed their education, however rigorous, as antiquated. Coeducation for a women’s college was just as complicated a course as remaining a single-sex institution.

The process of coeducation opened new avenues by which each institution had to showcase its relevance, and promote or reinvent its prestige and social status. For Vassar College, status was very important, but it was difficult to discern what was most appropriate as
the college adapted to a new higher educational environment. Vassar administrators struggled between a desire to maintain the college’s uniqueness while also searching for the right combination of features for an elite, coeducational institution. Elmira College also had a strong historical tie to academic quality and innovativeness. A strong presidential presence and leadership characterized the path Elmira traveled.

**Vassar Roots and First Decade of Coeducation**

The shift to a coeducational college at Vassar College was a deliberate and slow process involving a lengthy internal debate over the image the college wished to portray. College administrators attempted to balance the business aspect of enrollment (to keep the college financially viable) with the social capital rooted in a purposefully created image of the New Vassar. Often, the administration expended large amounts of effort regarding the image of the institution, which generally meant the image of the New Vassar man.

The way in which Vassar approached institutional change in its mission and identity, as well as its unique gender role expectations, are best illustrated by its admissions history during the first decade of coeducation. Reports to the president of the College were filed annually by the Admissions office and other key administrative and academic offices, and included numerical enrollment data but also qualitative analysis and anecdotal evidence of how the administrators believed the institution was and should be projecting its image. As an elite institution, maintaining prestige hinged on application, admission, and yield rates as well as the quality of entering students.

The initial synopsis of the move to coeducation at Vassar College demonstrated that enrollment concerns of the late 1960s were paramount. Vassar experienced a 14-percent drop in
applicants in 1968, which was troubling to the administration. When seventh president Alan Simpson took office in 1964, the Admissions picture was relatively positive. The continuation rate of 75.7-percent for the class of 1965 was the highest for an entering class since 1949, and the college bettered that rate to 79.4-percent the following year.\textsuperscript{212} Vassar officials believed its admissions were more selective than in years past, and the percentage of those accepted who ultimately matriculated (433 attending out of 687 admitted) was high.\textsuperscript{213} Students who refused a spot at Vassar typically enrolled in other Seven Sisters institutions, the majority opting to attend Smith, Wellesley, Radcliffe, Mount Holyoke, and Bryn Mawr.\textsuperscript{214}

While the numbers provided a vision of institutional well-being, officials at Vassar grew increasingly worried about a number of issues. First was a looming shortage of students expected by the 1968-69 academic year. The 1966 Committee on Admissions noted that the caliber of the candidate pool was less than in recent past, and that there were fewer applicants. The college was moving more candidates from the waiting list to accepted list, and more from the rejected list to the waiting list in order to sustain enrollments. Compounding such issues was the pressure Vassar and the other Seven Sisters colleges experienced to match the earlier notification dates of the Ivy League, forcing them to choose between aligning with such dates or risking the loss of students from the applicant pool that primarily attended schools with direct ties to Ivy colleges such as the Seven Sisters colleges of Barnard and Radcliffe. Finally, one of the additional concerns of the committee was the subject of Vassar’s “image”, and how that was linked with the quality of student it attracted. This concern resurfaced multiple times over the course of the next ten years, and appeared to be a consistent factor by which the college officials judged the success of the institution.\textsuperscript{215}
These concerns led to the controversial Vassar-Yale Joint Study in November of 1966, which attempted to examine the possibilities of a coordinate college arrangement. Vassar President Alan Simpson led a commission to study the potential of moving the Vassar campus to New Haven to become a coordinate college to Yale University. Opinions varied, but by 1968, the potential loss of autonomy and culture that would result from such a move prompted the Vassar faculty and Board of Trustees to vote in favor of recommending full coeducation and remaining in Poughkeepsie. After enrolling transfer and exchange male students starting in 1969, the fall semester of 1970 marked the first class of freshmen male students at Vassar.  

The Vassar-Yale study gave Vassar officials widespread publicity to the college’s “problems” and appeared to reduce the number of applicants further. In 1967 the Admissions office made the decision, and the Trustee Budget Committee issued a directive to the same effect, that the size of the entering class in 1967 needed to be increased while still attempting to maintain standards and to keep the relative class sizes balanced. In 1967, Vassar admissions staff had considered 1386 freshmen applications in comparison with the 1283 from the previous year. Of those candidates, they accepted 761 (606 accepted in 1966) and enrolled a total of 462 (412 attended in 1966).  

By 1968, however, their 1,180 applications were the lowest since 1953, yet the Committee on Admission also noted that due to the higher admission numbers from 1967, they were permitted to maintain selectivity for 1968. Again, the Committee on Admission noted concern not just with numbers but with the image of the institution. They had observed “the increasing concern and interest expressed by other groups of students in Vassar’s “image” in general and in their possible contributions to admission in particular.”
By 1968, Vassar had also recategorized its competition, acknowledging a changing higher education landscape. In past reports the Committee on Admission listed other colleges to which Vassar applicants went, highlighting particular institutions to which candidates had gone because its main competition had always been fellow Seven Sisters colleges. In 1968, however, there was a shift in how such competition was viewed. Three categories were instead listed, including “Seven College Conference”, “Other Colleges for Women”, and “Coordinate or Coeducational”, evidencing a modification in both the higher education landscape as well as the way in which Vassar officials viewed the college’s location and competition within the transforming educational scene. The results in 1968 showed that the majority of students turning down their admission at Vassar still opted to attend a Seven College Conference school (139 of the 225 replying to such an inquiry). However, the next year the combined prospect of many Ivy League colleges admitting women as well as the impending general admission of men into the applicant pool meant that the competition for the top tier of students had changed. In 1969, only 50-percent of applicants turning down a place at Vassar enrolled at another of the Seven Sisters colleges. Another 16-percent went to women’s colleges, while a third (33-percent) headed to other coeducational or coordinate colleges with Yale the most popular among the category.

The 1969-70 academic year was the first year the Admissions staff admitted men as well as women, resulting in 245 new men who were transfers or exchange students. The admissions report for that year noted a 70-percent increase in application volume of women, and the rate of acceptance decreased from 75-percent to 51-percent. The committee noted concern for attracting and matriculating quality women applicants. The report also noted that staff visits concentrated on men’s and coeducational independent schools, and did not visit previously
scheduled girls’ schools. This section of the report drew comment from the Vice President of Student Affairs, who noted in the margin of the report, “Isn’t this part of the answer to above problem?”

By 1971 college officials were still anxious about the image of Vassar. In the Report of the Secretary of the College, Lynn Bartlett indicated that while coeducation at Vassar had been receiving favorable publicity, they predicted a next, less desirable, stage in publicity. “Female militants will start running down coeducation, and it is conceivable that we will suffer from the kind of negative report that it is being made about coeducation at Yale.” To counteract this, they planned on positive press about the changes in their designs for education of women.

Concern for the image also led to the inclusion in a College Research Center (CRC) study of adjectives most descriptive of the college atmosphere. The results for Vassar were reported, though no description as to the level of agreement by the Committee on Admission or other college officials was included within the documentation. Nevertheless, entering freshmen ranked Vassar College as the most “liberal” versus its counterparts in the study, which included Mt. Holyoke, Randolph Macon Women’s College, Hollins, Trinity, Connecticut, Wheaton, and Briarcliffe. Despite high connection with the adjective “liberal” (41-percent), Vassar also received a seven-percent mark in “Victorian” in 1970, the highest for any school in the study. Conditional on the definition of Victorian and what aspect of life it referred to, it could possibly allude to a prudish moral value structure associated with historical Vassar. The two descriptors show Vassar College to be somewhat split on what image people perceived. This small study lent additional evidence to the image concerns that Vassar continually revisited throughout the 1970s.
Regardless of any image concerns, in 1970, Admissions reported that applications were on the upswing, up nine-percent and the officials were satisfied with the quality of the entering class. The report also highlighted the goal of an equal ratio of men to women, reserving variance of at least 10-percent for any given year’s quality of applicants. The objectives for Admissions were outlined by the department for the President in their 1971 report. The largest entering group of new students ever had been accomplished, as 640 freshmen and 90 transfer students entered, including 300 male students. For the college to continue expanding, the Admission report predicted that while the volume of applications could be maintained, they were concerned about the ability to improve on selectivity. Part of the selectivity concern is due to the plateau in applications expected for men in the approaching years. In terms of academic quality, Admissions believed that students in general were less inclined to be worried about academic success because they were instead preoccupied with participatory democracy and educational reform; a trait they claim was evidence that they were appealing to a “brighter, more lively group of candidates.” As such, the Committee on Admission called for a committee to redefine and identify the characteristics of the student group they were interested in, and to communicate such to both alumnae and secondary schools.

Parallel with the efforts to understand what image the school portrayed or should portray, officials at Vassar were absorbed with ways to better understand what type of male student the newly coeducational college was attracting. A grant from the College Entrance Examination Board allowed them to hire Mr. Dwight W. Chapman to conduct a study on the Vassar male. During the 1969-70 academic year, Mr. Chapman sent out questionnaires, then interviewed 20 of the 90 male exchange and transfer students on campus who had responded to the questionnaire. The goals of the study were to figure out what factors entered into his decision
to come to Vassar, what impressions did they have of the college and did they correspond with
expectations, what had they liked and/or disliked during their semester at Vassar, what were their
educational aims, and what would they like to see in the ideal college. The study found very
little in common among the 20 interviewees. Most displayed a general desire to experience
coeducation first-hand because single-sex education was “on its way out”.\textsuperscript{229} Many were curious
about what females were like outside of the weekend date, but their rationale for coming showed
a restless male student, who was either experiencing a slump of some sort or wanted a break
from a stale situation. Most assumed that the “Typical Vassar Girl” was going to be a mixture of
“intellectual intensity, daisy-chain beauty, upper-middle-class background, and social
sophistication side-by-side with naiveté about the common facts of life.”\textsuperscript{230} Reportedly, the men
found Vassar women instead to be all different and generally friendly. Their one complaint was
that educational life was not as expected; the men were disappointed with what was called
“classroom passivity” of the female students.\textsuperscript{231} Finally, Chapman found that the men were
concerned about “all manner of serious problems,” but they did not “give voice to personal
ambitions,” and showed very little “elitist self-identification.”\textsuperscript{232}

By 1972, the total application volume was up 90-percent from 1969, however, the change
from 1971 to 1972 revealed a drop of three-percent. Most of this was concentrated in the
number of male applications from 1971 to 1972, which had fallen by 13-percent. In 1970, the
first year men were admitted as freshmen, the Admissions office acted on 642 applications from
male students. That rose considerably to 897 in 1971, before settling back down to the 1972
numbers. According to Admissions, the gains in quantity and quality of men in 1971 were due
to the initial success of promoting coeducation. It was believed that the drop in the number of
men applying as well as the quality of men applying was a factor of the Office of Admission
being hyper-selective among its male candidates “out of fear of creating a double-standard unfavorable to women.” The report also cited that there seemed to be a decline in interest in Vassar among men to whom admission was offered. In 1971, most men who declined Vassar admission went to Harvard and Yale; the largest percentage of women headed to Seven Sisters colleges Smith and Wellesley.233

According to the Vice President for Student Affairs, Mr. John M. Duggan, there was a fierce competition for able candidates among selective, high cost, private colleges. This had led to a weakening of standards, since the college had to offer admission to a higher percentage of candidates in order to maintain the student body. Despite a lull in numbers, a social change had developed which fostered a new sense of community unlike that which had previously existed. Duggan writes that energy created by the construction projects on campus and a more congenial relationship between faculty, administration, and students led to a need to find the funds to build a college center, find more recreational space, and expand the athletic program.234

In 1973, the drop in the number and quality of male applicants from the previous year was somewhat covered over by a Trustee decision to allow for a slower growth rate and to affirm that the drop in standardized test scores was permissible because they “consciously gave more weight to personal factors in admission in a way that would not have been possible with a larger class.”235 The Office of Admission report showed a renewal among the number of applicants, registering an increase in both men and women from the previous year (650 men, 1619 women, 2269 total). Despite offering admission to approximately 58-percent of the men and 56-percent of the women who applied, the yield on Spring 1973 offers of admission was at 33-percent for Vassar, lower than the other Seven Sisters colleges which ranged from 42-percent (Mt. Holyoke)
to 73-percent (Radcliffe) (see Table 1). Even so, the Office of Admissions noted within its data that the enrollment of a smaller freshman class allowed it to increase the proportion of new students who were men, but that fewer were ultimately admitted because of “concern for the ‘image’ of Vassar men, the diversity of that population, and the contribution they can make as individuals once on campus.” Part of that image in 1973 revealed that Vassar had enrolled the most freshmen from private schools, totaling 43-percent in 1972 and 41-percent in 1973. The table includes a note that other Ivy League colleges in general report a 24-percent or lower range of students from private institutions. While Vassar officials valued their private school admissions, they also understood its potential to reduce the appeal of the college to both public and private school candidates. The 1973 data also provided positive news regarding selections of those who turn down Vassar admission. Applicants offered admission who chose to attend a different college or university remain similar to those at the outset of the 1970s; the men attend institutions such as Yale, Harvard and Cornell University, while the women continued to elect to attend many of the Seven Sisters colleges as well as what they consider to be the “big three”: Radcliffe/Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. This evidence meant that Vassar was still initially

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Yield Rate</th>
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<td>Radcliffe</td>
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<td>Middlebury</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>Bryn Mawr</td>
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<td>Wellesley</td>
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<td>Skidmore</td>
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<td>Vassar</td>
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Note. From Richard D. Stephenson, Director of Admission (29 June 1973), Vassar College, Annual Report Office of Admission 1973; Vassar Archives. (FOLDER: Annual Reports 1972-73 Administration, Simpson Papers, Box 42)
attracting the same students as its most selective, higher education brethren in Ivy League and Seven Sisters; an assurance of the perceived status and prestige level of the college.

In 1974, competing concerns plagued Vassar; an Admission film took care to sell prospects on the intellectual intensity of the college, yet officials such as Lynn Bartlett, the Secretary of the College, worried that the intensity might have been oversold and turn away the well-rounded student that the college might want to admit. He was worried about a “militant and angry” Women’s Liberation force, and also concerned that even positive stories about coeducation would become counter-productive.\textsuperscript{239} Apprehension of backlash from women’s liberation organizations was woven throughout a handful reports during this timeframe. Vassar lauded its coeducation status as providing a culturally relevant education for its female students, yet it stood in the midst of a sea change in the women’s rights movement and also the 1972 passage of Title IX. Traditional competitors such as other Seven Sisters colleges, including Smith College and Wellesley College, openly considered yet decided against coeducation and endorsed the Women’s Liberation movement.

In the Admissions annual report for 1974, the Director noted three key issues related to the decline in number of applicants. He cited a shift in interest away from liberal education on the part of African-American students, public sentiment about the cost of a Vassar College education, and a shrinking pool of male applicants coupled with possible diminished appeal to men. In all, the total number of candidates was higher than in 1970 (1,973), but lower than the previous three years when the college admitted men. Vassar had a total 2036 candidates in 1974, compared with an average of 2,191 applicants over the 1971-73 span. When examining the previous two decades of admissions data, while the average number of candidates was higher in
the 1970s, the percentage admitted was on par, but the average yield was lower, at 49-percent in 1974, after resting at 58-percent in the 1960s and 53-percent in the 1950s. The Admissions report included another section of comments pertaining to the status of coeducation at Vassar as well as its image. The Director first applauded the efforts of Yale and Princeton, which he cited as stronger than in the past, but also was worried about institutions like Williams, Dartmouth, Wesleyan, Colgate, Middlebury, and Bowdoin moving ahead of Vassar. The culprit, at least for Vassar, was the college’s incapacity to sustain continuing change. Such a loss of relative power was “intensified by [Vassar College’s] own passivity in the face of change, and in some instances by [Vassar College’s] resistance to it,” said Director Stephenson. Again, the issue of image was evoked. “One of those forces is Vassar’s traditional image – its identity as a women’s college,” he continued. While he insisted that the commitment behind the history of that identity was a great asset, it was also so strong that it overshadowed all other images and identities the college had attempted to put forward. There was, he urged, an issue because the Vassar College “association with women is more powerful than [their] identification as a college of excellence or as a coeducational institution.”

While Stephenson examined potential causality with an overarching approach in his report, the Student Affairs Vice President John Duggan was also concerned about the difficulties, but on a different level. His concern dealt more with the college environment and the potential problem faced if Vassar’s men remained a permanent minority. If the gender ratio remained skewed, he believed that the college would have continued difficulties with its image. He believed coeducation would be viewed as nothing but a “paper commitment at Vassar”, and that there would be nothing but “suspicion and friction between the sexes; that Vassar will continue to seem a less than hospitable place for men; that the rumors about the incidence of
homosexuality here will continue to abound without, incidentally, adequate basis in fact; and that both the women and the men will have more difficulty than otherwise in establishing intellectual and social equality.”

Duggan’s concern about the “friction” between male and female students was perhaps grounded in a letter from Joseph Katz, then the Director of the Williams James Center, who spent one day at Vassar College and wrote to Duggan with his findings. In the letter, he noted a great deal of “suspicion and friction”. Males had to deal with uncertainty about their fit, and spend their energy trying to prove themselves as properly masculine, whereas, women expressed resentment that the college favored men in the allocation of resources or its publicity. He contended that women would not stand up to men for fear of being considered a women’s lib advocate, and they voted for a male president of a student body that is overwhelmingly female. “Unlike students at some other campuses, Vassar men and women seem more bent towards an adversary stance rather than a mutual re-education,” claimed Katz.

Katz believed that only with a 50-50 ratio would Vassar be able to reduce the ill-will at the college. In order to maintain that ratio, and counter to the above claim that women at the school harbored ill-will due to the resources put towards the men, he claimed that facilities must be constructed to make the college attractive to them. In particular, he mentioned athletic facilities. Athletic facilities also, however, appeared to be a sensitive issue. He stated, “[o]ne interviewee told me that athletic men were not particularly desirable.” Katz further explained that men who were strong intellectually were important, yet diversity within that category was important. Vassar admissions, he claimed, should look for men who are less “mirror images” of the women the school attracted in the past.
Duggan concluded his report for 1974 requesting that the Committee on Coeducation do more to “create a greater atmosphere of hospitality for the male.” Vassar faculty sentiments were similar, echoing a feeling of antipathy towards male students based on the inadequacy of the sports program, little attention to all-male extracurricular activities, and a lack of an all-male dormitory. Duggan believed one of the ways for Vassar to improve the environment was to “direct its efforts towards enlarging and improving athletic facilities to provide pleasure and exercise for both sexes.” He added that funds would be needed, but that at Vassar he believed that that sort of activity would always receive a “bottom priority.”

The Trustees established the aforementioned Committee on Coeducation, and reported out on February 4, 1975 and May 10, 1975 with a list of steps it believed required attention. The three areas the report focused on were admissions, athletics, and public relations. Proposals for Admissions dealt not with the outright recruitment of men, but instead aimed at general recruitment and only identified racial diversity as a specific target. Recommendations included a greater role for alumni and current students in recruitment, a regional expansion in recruitment outside the Northeast, a push to bring high school guidance counselors to campus, and a desire to find a balance in its recruitment and retention of African-American males and females. For public relations, the committee recommended that the focus remains on recruitment of men, but that such publicity should represent instances of men working with women. Third, athletics became an area which Vassar Trustees believed the college could use to appeal to the male applicant. In February, the committee had stated that if Vassar was to appeal to a broad spectrum of qualified male applicants, there needed to be a significant effort made in both intramural and intercollegiate sports. At that time, the committee reflected that an improved athletics program “would in no way diminish our reputation for academic excellence.” A study
conducted by a “Visiting Committee of Athletic Directors and Professors of Physical Education” was for advisement on aims and administration of an “appropriate program”. As foreshadowed by Duggan, five areas of facility improvement and expansion as well as staffing increases were highlighted but only as “ultimate goals” since they stated that money was in short supply at the time.248

By the 1975 reporting season, the Office of Admissions believed that their subjective admissions criteria had benefited the college by increasing their yield (44-percent in 1973, 47-percent in 1974, estimated 48-percent in 1975), yet their admission ratio had risen substantially from 60-percent in 1974 to a predicted 79-percent in 1975, which allowed them to enroll an estimated 40 or more male students. Again, the Admission staff justified the fluctuations based on its subjective admissions criteria. They used, “subjective judgment of the men’s ultimate potential rather than their objective academic statistics as the determining criterion for admission and were able to raise the ratio of admission for men from last year’s [1974] 60% to 79%, admitting 397 instead of 313” (p 3). Any doubts of academic quality, despite the subjective criterion, were put to rest by the conclusion that, “[a]s in other years, the SAT averages of the admitted men continued to be higher than those of admitted women.”249

At mid-decade, the Vassar administration experienced key personnel changes, which led to developments in admissions and marketing. A new Vice President for Student Affairs, Natalie Marshall, and a new Admissions Director, Richard W. Moll, joined the staff. The new Admissions Director assumed a more active approach to the position, and emphasized more marketing and travel for the staff. Moll believed that admission rates were too high for the selective college Vassar desired to be, and brought them from 75-percent to 59-percent in one year.250 The entering class for Fall 1976 was 41-percent male, up slightly from previous classes.
Moll also requested an emphasis on publications used to promote Vassar College, and was lauded by the Vice President for Student Affairs as he was “working tirelessly to sell Vassar.”

Not surprisingly, Moll’s initial efforts included the promotion of Vassar to the male student. “This year’s success in attracting male applicants must be expanded,” Marshall wrote, “and a new attractive and humorous little brochure is designed to do just that.” The brochure, entitled *Vassar for Men?*, was a six-paneled brochure with a photo of a male wearing a Vassar t-shirt on the front and a side panel that read, “Surprise! There are 750 men at Vassar. The freshman class is 41% male.” One panel was dedicated to showing the academic profile of the current class, outlining secondary school rank and SAT scores. Included in this panel was also a run-down of different characteristics, including percentages of those who attended private or public schools, how many students earned Vassar financial awards, how many states were represented, and finally, an inventory of how many students they had who had earned varsity letters in high school, how many of them had been varsity team captains, how many had been editors of the school newspaper, and how many had been president of a school club or student government.

The remainder of the text on the final two panels was divided into categories about the graduating class and other notable facts about the college. The text went to lengths to show that the men were leaders and intellectually superior, for instance, stating that 31-percent of the 1976 graduating class were men, but 47-percent of those named Phi Beta Kappa, one of the most prestigious of collegiate academic honor societies for liberal arts colleges, were also men. It described the success of men’s athletics teams of basketball and soccer, and that students had elected a male as their Student Government President. Additionally, it stated that men have “slightly out-profiled” women in the SATs every year they have been at Vassar. In an
environment that was allegedly suffering from a “friction” between male and female students, and despite any benign attempts of this brochure at humor in order to attract a certain type of male student, this rhetoric instead only maintained a dichotomous atmosphere where the attempt to highlight a dominant male was actually set against the Vassar female before students even stepped foot on campus. It had attempted to paint a picture of an archetypical, male-dominated educational environment.

Another notable element of the brochure was the use of sports, which was slowly being viewed as integral to the marketing efforts for and perception of males at Vassar. The largest photo in the collage was of two basketball players. The academic profile of men at Vassar included the statistics on how many had played a varsity sport as well as captained a team in high school. Within additional text, they promoted Vassar as a place for men based on the strength of its men’s sport teams, primarily basketball and soccer. Sport was an area of potential connection with prospective students, it was evidence of Vassar’s “maleness”, and it was important to demonstrate proof of the place of both at Vassar. Within another section, however, the brochure’s assertions drift back to the college’s more cautionary stance on men’s athletics, reminding prospects that Vassar was not a “big game, fraternity/sorority college”.254

Finally, the other contributing piece to the brochure was the portrayal of selectivity. One of the section headings reads, “Vassar sounds Ivy, and Ivy sounds super-selective.” Even if students never associated Vassar College with Ivy League schools such as Princeton, Yale, or Harvard, the headline linked them anyway and subsumed whatever image of quality and prestige students may have of the Ivy League schools. From that level, Vassar then promotes what it believes to be its unique quality of individuality by letting potential applicants know that the college is very selective, but that there was a subjective approach to admissions that valued more
than only academic profiles, and that once enrolled, the curriculum was flexible, multidisciplinary, and made for a “self-styled maturity”\textsuperscript{255}.

\textit{Vassar for Men?} struck a nerve with Vassar students because of how they believe they were portrayed. Following the pamphlet’s publication, Moll recollected a protest by 300 students with banners and signs, offended that the Admissions office, after five years of coeducation, still believed it needed to focus on men. Moll discontinued the pamphlet after three years, claiming it was no longer needed because of an increase in male students (due, in part, to his pamphlet). Said Moll, “The world now knew Vassar as co-ed and it seemed time to cool that emphasis.”\textsuperscript{256}

By 1977, there remained internal inconsistency regarding image, which on occasion had a paralyzing effect on the ability of the college to sell itself. Still, by the summer of 1977, Vice President for Student Affairs Natalie Marshall believed that the college’s transition to an identity as a coeducational school had been established, and that the male student population was of high quality.\textsuperscript{257}

In an address to faculty, Director of Admissions Richard Moll had a somewhat different opinion.\textsuperscript{258} The admit rate had been reduced to 51-percent (from 61-percent in 1976 and 74-percent in 1975) due in part to an increase in applications. While 73-percent of the entering class of 1977 were from the top fifth of their class, Moll contended that the students they “won” were not as “statistically impressive as those they lost.” As for the colleges the students were headed to, if not to Vassar, the usual list of Ivy League institutions received most of the male students, and Seven Sisters colleges along with Yale, Brown, and Cornell received most of the female applicants. This was coupled with an apparent shift for Vassar in the \textit{Newsweek} magazine rankings, who moved the college from its “most selective” category into the “highly selective”
classification. For Moll, the challenge was “determining reality”, and then finding a solution. He told the faculty that there still existed an image issue, but that it was just that – an obsession with image. “Vassar, from my point of view,” he said, “is far too concerned with superficial appearances and is too often guilty of mistaking mystique for reality.” He also told them that the Vassar supporters tended to be more “pretentious” about admission selectivity than is justified.\textsuperscript{259}

Overall, the credentials of incoming Vassar students declined after coeducation; mean SAT scores fell over the decade. Also concerning, the average yield for women had decreased from 45-percent for the classes of 1974-1976, to 33-percent for the entering classes of 1977 and 1978.\textsuperscript{260} The quality of incoming Vassar students suffered, though the trend was something Malkiel observed in several formerly women’s colleges and women’s colleges that had remained single-sex, including Smith College. Conversely, men’s colleges that added women had stabilized their academic quality over the same time period. She concluded that there were too many variables to determine whether the trend was due to Vassar becoming coeducational or other former men’s colleges becoming coeducational.\textsuperscript{261} Vassar enrollment practices had to continually shift over the first decade of coeducation to adjust to coeducation, to its new competitors, and anticipated application and yield rates. At times the Admissions staff concentrated on high school academic rank and test scores, while other times adjusted to boost admission by taking into account a broader set of criteria and characteristics, especially of the prospective male students. These maneuvers both fed into and further fueled the internal discussions on the Vassar male identity.

Two years later, an article ran in the Vassar Quarterly which described the view of Vassar’s image from the vantage of secondary school guidance counselors. The Admission Office had welcomed counselors in from high schools around the country to see Vassar and to
discuss their view of the college. Counselors believed Vassar to be of high academic quality and that coeducation had succeeded. Counselors also believed Vassar did not have as focused an image as it thought it did. In many respects Vassar accomplished its goal of being viewed as a coeducational institution and maintaining its reputation of academic prestige despite, or, in spite of, its “obsession” with the proper markings of status and prestige via its male identity.

**Elmira Roots and First Decade of Coeducation**

Elmira College never had a large philanthropic support that other women’s colleges, such as the Seven Sisters colleges, enjoyed in the late 1800s. Matthew Vassar had contributed $1,250,000 for the founding of Vassar College. According to Elmira College historian Charles Barber, Elmira College founder Simeon Benjamin provided $80,000.00 to the college’s founding in 1855. Paid in installments, this provided a weak fiscal base.

In fact, prior to the 1969 transition to coeducation, Elmira College officials had several times been forced to seriously reevaluate the financial situation of the college and to contemplate strategies to secure the institution’s future. The year 1954 marked one such financial crisis at Elmira College. The college overseers had to withdraw funds from the unrestricted endowment in order to cover an operating deficit for 1953. At that time, the Trustees mulled over options, including joining a state university or selling to an outside interest group. Tenth president Dr. J. Ralph Murray was in part appointed in 1954 for his promotional abilities and forward-looking administrative style in order to establish a more secure fiscal state. Quoted in the Elmira College Bulletin in November of 1954, Murray stated that current trends made it necessary to reevaluate Elmira College’s financial position while best preparing graduates for service in the modern society.
By the end of the 1960s, Elmira College and Dr. Murray faced another serious financial challenge which called for reevaluation of the college’s mission and identity. In 1968, enrollment dropped by nine-percent, and evening classes were opened to men to add tuition revenue. Like many private, liberal arts institutions, discussions were held regarding coordinate college options; at Elmira such conversation occurred in 1964. With no prospect of a coordinate arrangement, coeducation had an early test with the evening class idea. As enrollment issues continued, students were surveyed regarding their opinion on becoming fully coeducational. According to two 1968 surveys of students, 95-percent preferred full coeducation. A subsequent faculty vote in October of 1968 also favored acceptance of male students. With the support of students and faculty, the administration too favored a move to coeducation.

President Murray’s support of coeducation was based on the threat of a continual enrollment decrease and the financial strain the college was facing due to the decline of tuition revenue. A press release on the coeducation decision went to the local news outlets dated January 25, 1969. Shortly afterwards, a letter from the office of the president to faculty and students went out and informed those constituents that the Board of Trustees had voted that day to admit men beginning in the Fall of 1969. In that letter, the President wrote that, “The Board of Trustees made a decision this afternoon which is so important that I wanted you to know immediately…I feel, with deepest conviction, that Elmira is in an excellent position for transition.”

The administration had a carefully constructed, consistent message which was provided to faculty, students, alumnae, parents, the public, and the expanded applicant pool. Dr. Murray highlighted four main points for the transition. First was the argument that Elmira needed to
reflect the current society and that there was declining interest in single-sex education. Second was the expected financial support from business and industry, which Murray argued was certain to dwindle if Elmira was to have remained single-sex. Third was the expectation for quality faculty, who Murray contended would go elsewhere if the tuition dollars could not support their salaries and the desired, quality academic program. Finally, Murray indicated that the decision was made slowly and deliberatively over the span of five years of evaluation.²⁷¹

Murray’s fourth point regarding the decision-making process, in fact, anticipated one of the more inflammatory issues resulting from the decision to go coeducational. Alarmed opposition stemmed not from the expectation of change itself but more from the way the administration unrolled its plans. As expected, there were representatives of the alumnae who believed coeducation meant a loss of the traditions and culture that had characterized Elmira College. In a response to a letter from an alumna, President Murray explained that the Admissions Office had been doing its job, yet enrollment at the school was down by 50 students by 1969. He rationalized that if he had provided everyone linked in any way to campus a voice, the study would never have been completed. He maintained that he spent time with class presidents, the student government president, and had conducted a poll of “about 400 students informally.” He even contended, in the body of the letter, that he reported to the Board that the students were 90-percent in favor, just in case his numbers were off, though he had found that as many as 95-percent were in favor of coeducation. Finances were his final justification in the letter. As a small liberal arts college, alumnae contributions were not even one-quarter of the operating budget of over $4.6 million; hence the college relied heavily on tuition revenue. With planned faculty salary increases on the horizon, he stated that adding new students was the only way to answer the economic challenges.²⁷²
Once the decision was solidified by the administration, others, including students, were also put off by the manner in which the decision was announced. This occurred in spite of the student vote that had been 90-percent in favor of coeducation. Martha Varsha, a student writing in the Elmira College Bulletin, expressed the distress of the student body, writing that “[o]ur first reaction was complete shock, our second, extreme wrath. It was not that we objected to the idea of men on campus; we felt deeply hurt and indignant that students were not allowed a greater part in such a monumental decision.”

Despite the contentions that he had consulted with many students, a vocal group of students harbored general suspicion. In one student newspaper article on the subject, the author contended that “[m]ore than just boys will be on campus next year. There will also be an inheritance for Dr. Murray and the Board. An inheritance of mistrust.”

One month later, a full-page advertisement was published in the Octagon’s “black issue” indicating that the apprehensive feelings towards the administration had not subsided. In this particular advertisement, the full page was black with white lettering announcing, “THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO TO HELP ELMIRA”, followed up with the next advertisement, which was designed in the same manner but read, “DR. MURRAY IS KING. WE ARE POWERLESS. AREN’T WE?”

The communications from President Murray and the Board of Trustees suggested that the decisions made for the transitioning Elmira College were based on deliberate financial planning for what they promoted as a progressive academic program conducted on a socially conscientious campus. As a tuition-dependent institution, the college’s fiduciary survival had to be focused on enrollment because they knew endowments and other such donor outcomes were not enough to support operations. Those continued operations included the academic assurances of provision of a continued, quality education, which involved competition for quality faculty
with other private and state colleges and universities. In order to provide the quality education that women wanted and deserved, therefore, their preferred strategy was to become coeducational. His fourth and final message was a defense of the decision process itself, validating the process and insisting many times that the move was made after much deliberation and consultation with all the various constituent groups at Elmira.

The administration followed up the rationale statements regarding coeducation with the assertion that the campus was ready – socially, physically, educationally – to accommodate men. In the letter addressed to alumnae and parents, Dr. Murray stated that the new, more flexible curriculum will be attractive to and suitable for men. “Elmira’s philosophy as stated in the charter in 1855 and reaffirmed in 1955 is that women’s education should be the same as that given men. For this reason, we believe Elmira’s curriculum will be meaningful for men.”

According to the administration, the curriculum was delivered by highly-rated professors with salaries comparable to the better institutions in the nation. Additionally, in another attempt to illustrate the natural evolution into and preparedness for coeducation, the administration reminded constituents that evening classes had already been opened up to men starting in 1968.

The education of men was not an entirely new venture.

The physical readiness of the campus also provided justification for the transition. Murray believed that the college’s physical plant could accommodate men with little transformation. He noted they would need to remodel a residence hall, yet the classroom space, science, recreational, and dining facilities, and the library were all adequate. Though deemed adequate, recreational activities appeared to occupy a substantial part of the deliberation and subsequent communications. A letter from the college to high school guidance counselors projected the current facilities for recreation would be able to foster men’s intramural sports of
basketball, track, swimming, and wrestling, and that the college would develop them into intercollegiate sports when “practicable.” Also hinting at the future plans for recreational infrastructure changes, the initial news release announcing coeducation also mentioned the movement from intramural to intercollegiate sport as a possibility for basketball, swimming, wrestling and tennis.  

Elmira hosted a Coeducation Week in March in order to ease the campus community into having men on campus full-time, prove that the campus could integrate men with little problem, and to advertise its soon-to-be coeducational status. During the week, approximately 120 men from seven colleges or universities stayed in the dorms, attended classes, and participated in social activities in order to provide “male opinions on social regulations and other school policies, determine the girls’ reactions to these opinions, and give publicity to the decision to go coed.” Without any other fanfare, coeducation week came and went; the current students offered only few comments; the Associate Press story quoted only one female Elmira student about the experiment, “‘Boys are great!’ one young miss said Sunday.” An article running early summer in the Syracuse Herald-Journal on the changes at Elmira cited a male student from St. Bonaventure University who was going to transfer to Elmira expressly for the “challenge.”

As the Fall semester of 1969 commenced, 99 male students arrived on the campus as part of the first class of coeducation. The college administration anticipated concern about the quality of those male students. Charles Miller, the Director of Admissions, assured Elmira College students in the Octagon, the student newspaper, that standards for admission were not being lowered for men. He cited the criteria of being in the upper half of his class, good college board scores, a grade point average in the 80’s, and an interest in the liberal arts. Miller admitted that he believed the male student enrollment would be slow to increase, while he
suggested that the applications from women had already gone up because of the coeducation shift.

President Murray provided a public assessment of the move to coeducation early during the 1970-71 academic year. The President’s Report published his official synopsis of the 1969-70 year and attempted to rally all constituencies around an image of Elmira College as an innovator. Within the report Dr. Murray discussed the decline of private college attendance and the ascent of state universities and state university systems and their growing ability to provide excellent academic programming. As colleges and universities grow more heterogeneous, he contended, most single-sex colleges will soon find the argument to become coeducational “too compelling to resist.”

Elmira College, he continued, must not just aim for survival, but should maintain its place within higher education as an “innovator”; “The ability to continue to innovate, to refuse to be satisfied with present performance will enable a college to disengage from survival and concentrate instead on excellence.”

Murray boasted about the college’s new three-term approach to the academic year as well as the curricular changes associated within, and that the admissions program was growing in strength and numbers. Within the report the President also set the goal of near even enrollment of the genders, claiming that the Admissions Office would be doing more work to compete for the best male applicants (since the accepted rate was almost 90%), and would also be looking at two-year colleges for transfers.

In terms of facilities for men, Henry Weigl, then head of the Board of Trustees, included a review of the coeduction transition. To accommodate the 99 men who initially enrolled and attended at Elmira College that first September, the physical plant of the college required “several minor additions and alterations”. Elmira renovated Alumnae Hall to provide housing
for the male students and built a 12,000 square foot addition to Emerson gymnasium on campus. To provide adequate facilities for the male students, that addition included a mat room for wrestling and gymnastics, two handball courts, a new spectator seating area and a glass partition overlooking the pool, areas for equipment and locker room, as well as sauna and shower facilities.²⁸⁷

Further changes included the personnel and program changes, which revealed the highly intentional, immediate move to design a program of intercollegiate athletics for men. Weigl confirmed the intention, stating that “[w]ith the expected doubling of the male enrollment in 1970, the College moved swiftly to introduce a program of intercollegiate athletics with plans to field competitive teams in golf, tennis, bowling, fencing, swimming, cross country, basketball and wrestling.” Further, he mentioned the hiring of Paul Brand as an instructor in athletics, but more importantly announced him as the director of intercollegiate athletics as well as the bowling and golf coach. Weigl also proudly announced the hiring of the other men’s coaches (Jack Casey—basketball, Fred Lawrence—tennis, John Marshall—cross country, swimming, John Palmer—wrestling, George Zurenda—fencing). Finally, he pronounced the teams the Golden Eagles (which would become the Soaring Eagles the following year), and announced that the College would be seeking to join the NCAA Small College Division.²⁸⁸

In the planning stage and early days of coeducation, President Murray was quick to reiterate that the college needed only minor structural additions in order to accommodate the addition of a full-time male student body. Still, as the Board of Trustees president Henry Weigl contended, they expected almost 200 men on campus in the second and third years, with a large percentage of them hopefully competing in the eight intercollegiate teams they were starting. When Director of Athletics Brand was hired, he publically announced the need for better
facilities in order to field the planned teams. The college indeed moved quickly, and in early November of 1970, the opportunity to add a major component to its campus physical plant was finalized. Elmira College purchased the Francourt Farms Golf Club for $600,000, which included 240 acres with the golf course, driving range, pool, clubhouse, and lockerrooms. According to the Octagon reporters, Elmira College was approved for a subsidy that covered interest over 3% on a $4,000,000 loan the College received through sales of New York State Dormitory Authority Bonds. The grant was funded through Title III of the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 (Loans for Construction of Academic Facilities), and was expected to amount to $2,600,000 over a 30-year period. The facility, situated twelve miles from the main campus, had multiple purposes, not least was to be used to expand the athletics facilities for the college in the next few years. The college planned to be able to maintain the golf course and earn revenue for its use from both the community and students. Camps were a possibility for the summer months for additional revenue. Finally, the college planned to build a large-scale athletic facility on the property in the next few years. Construction was to start that fall, with plans for a geodesic dome structure to house basketball and squash courts, exercise rooms, tennis courts, and spaces for fencing and mat rooms. In the plans as well was a dirt floor for track and field events, a natatorium with an Olympic sized six-lane pool and diving area, as well as offices for the physical education department. President Murray expected the facility to be the largest of its type in the country.

In an Octagon interview, Warren Board, the executive assistant to the President, spoke about building plans for the college which included a new dormitory on campus as well as the multi-purpose athletic field house out at Francourt Farms. Board reassured students fearful of a “jock mentality” taking over campus that no “outlandish programs” would be prepared. In a
move similar to the coeducation transition, he also reassured Octagon readers that no other programs would be interfered with and that the planning for the facility had been in place for five years as part of the college’s master plan.292

In June of 1977, the college continued to implement changes as the Rev. Dr. Leonard T. Grant, the Eleventh President of Elmira College, assumed the helm. During his time at Elmira College, Dr. Grant is credited with boosting the endowment fund and reducing the debt while keeping tuition lower than average for New York private colleges. He placed an emphasis on providing liberal arts education even for pre-professional programs. New degree programs were introduced, including Criminal Justice, Nursing, Physical Education, Computer Systems, Medical Terminology, Education, and Speech and Hearing. Dr. Grant further reorganized the college into six administrative divisions: Academic Services, Administrative Services, Athletic and Recreation Services, Development and Long-Range Planning, Financial and Business Services, and Student Services.293

By the summer of 1979, the Dean of Admissions, Charles Miller, reported that the college had reached its long-term goal of balancing male and female enrollment in the freshmen class of 1977 (49% male-51% female), but that male enrollment had dropped sharply (41% male-59% female) for the entering class in 1978.294 He noted that Elmira needed to actively respond, given its new coeducational status, and ironically focus more on the male applicant. The yield report for the previous two years also showed a sharp decline from 1977 to 1978 entering classes, and the same downward trend for the entering class of 1979.295 The evening program had also seen a decline, falling to 1,273 during Term 1 in 1978-79 after being at 1,435 in Term 1 in 1977-78. Among the reasons for the decline in evening enrollment was a change in tuition rates by nearby Mansfield University, a Pennsylvania state university which was offering
in-state tuition for neighboring out-of-state New York students.\textsuperscript{206} Graduate program enrollments were also in decline (1,912 in 1977-78 to 1,429 in 1978-79).\textsuperscript{297}

The growing pains for Elmira College extended from Admissions questions to a perceived lack of common agreement as to the mission of the college. The college’s positioning as a liberal arts institution was questioned in the Admissions section, suggesting that the college had lost a bit of its focus after a push to expand professional and certificate programs.\textsuperscript{298} “Of course, there is not common agreement among us as to the mission of Elmira College,” President Grant expressed in a Trustee Report in 1979. “One thing is certain, though, we are all generally agreed that Elmira is a small, independent, liberal arts, college, committed to preparing learners of all ages to become responsible global citizens.”\textsuperscript{299}

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\textsuperscript{213} Harry, J.L., Director of Admissions (June 10, 1965). Report of Director of Admissions, Simpson Box 41, Vassar Archives.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid, Appendix E:Colleges Chosen by Candidates who refused places at Vassar in 1965 and 1964.
\textsuperscript{216} Vassar College News Office (October 28, 1968), untitled press release. Vassar Archives.
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\textsuperscript{219} Harry, J.L., Director of Admissions (1968). Report of the Committee on Admission for the Academic Year 1967-68, Table VI. Colleges Chosen By Candidates who Refused Places at Vassar – 1968, Simpson Box 41, Vassar Archives.
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CHAPTER FIVE

Athletics Developments During the Coeducation Transition, 1969-1980

John Thelin stated that the structure and values that an athletics program promotes can reveal much about an institution.\textsuperscript{300} The place of sport, in particular intercollegiate athletics, at Vassar and Elmira after the coeducation decision continuously reappeared in deliberations about the status of the transition and in discussions about attractiveness of the respective campuses to the male student. Mitchell Stevens further connected intercollegiate athletics with esteem that it could provide to any given institution based on sport affiliation; the idea of a status halo tethered prestige to an institution based on how it developed sport and its associations, whether simply by choice of sport, or membership in a certain league or at the national level.\textsuperscript{301} The distinctiveness of the Vassar and Elmira situations, and of other women’s colleges transitioning to coeducation, was that the element of institutional esteem based on sport affiliation had gone relatively untapped. Up to that point in history, prestige from sport associations was a primarily male phenomenon of intercollegiate athletics. Though each college had a marked history of women participating in sport, coeducation opened up a new avenue for prestige and status showing which would be based on how they developed a sport program for the male students, and eventually, how they would conceptualize their programs for women within their respective systems.

Athletics at Vassar: Coeducation Transition through 1980

Vassar College had always been a place where physical education had some import in the educational process. From the 1890s “age of physical culture”, to the much publicized touch football games of the 1960s, sport activity of some sort was omnipresent at the college. In the
years leading up to coeducation, the organization of Vassar sports occurred initially within the Physical Education department. Departmental reports to the President documented the activity and struggles of the department, as well as its general philosophy regarding the place of sport at Vassar. By 1965, the Physical Education department was active, sponsoring dance, basketball games, swim meets, tennis tournaments, archery tournaments, golf, riding, and recreational volleyball. Outside groups utilized the campus facilities, especially Kenyon Gymnasium, on a regular basis, and faculty members believed that the gym was “a real inducement in securing new faculty members (especially the young men) and prospective students [were] impressed when given the opportunity to see [the facilities].” On the curricular side of things, physical education was a requirement for graduation, but carried no academic credit. Scheduling for such classes was done after all the academic courses were set. In the years leading up to coeducation, the faculty already believed that additional staff was needed in order to serve the number of students; in 1965, the faculty also believed overloaded schedules resulted in students failing courses. Failure, they stated, was typically due to the students’ inability to attend, rather than poor performance. Failure also meant the need to retake classwork, increasing the workload of the small faculty staff, and continuing the cycle.

Already in 1966, the department, which worked with the student-run Athletic Association to provide intercollegiate opportunities for the students, understood that more funding was needed. The department specifically requested a fund for activities sponsored with the Athletic Association. An increased desire for intercollegiate competition had put a strain on the Athletic Association’s budget. They requested funding for transportation to intercollegiate games. Vassar had not provided transportation, and faculty were transporting students in their own vehicles. Finally, the department requested funds to hire outside-rated officials for home games,
a practice recommended by the national women’s physical education association, the Division of Girls and Women’s Sports.\textsuperscript{304}

In 1968, the facility issue was again included in the Physical Education department’s annual report to the President. Kenyon was the only gymnasium space on campus, and the cost to maintain the gym had continued to increase along with the increased demand for open hours. The 1968 report also alluded to some frustration with the college’s support, containing a solo, handwritten page which read only, “Tennis Courts (see reports of last 20+ years)”. As intercollegiate and recreational activities continued to increase, the demands on the faculty also increased. Paired with what the department saw as a major facility shortage to handle the interest, exasperation had set in before coeducation was even enacted.\textsuperscript{305}

By the beginning of the transition to coeducation, the Physical Education department had noted that despite the offer of credit-bearing coursework for their classes, the men participating in the student exchange who might be transferring such coursework back to their original institutions did not frequently enroll. The faculty also suspected the transition to be the culprit for a lull in interest in both intramurals and intercollegiate sport activities. Whether it was due to the “general turmoil of this year or whether the present student body is not interested in this [extracurricular sports] area (although they do take such work in regular classes) is not known.” Respectively, the intercollegiate program also suffered. “This is the first time in four years in which we have had so small a game schedule and in which we did so poorly,” read the report. It continued, “[t]his was due to the fact that team attendance for practices and games was sporadic.”\textsuperscript{306}

Curricular changes occurred in the 1969-70 academic year which ended the physical education requirement for graduation and made physical education courses credit-bearing on
either a pass/fail basis or as a half-credit unit for certain courses. Students, according to a survey the department conducted at the request of the Dean, favored the flexibility of an elective program within physical education (408 votes for yes compared to 88 ‘no’ votes). The department sent a memo to the Joint Committee on Curricular Policies in April of 1970 providing the rationale for physical education as a curricular option promoting the social as well as educational values. Within the curriculum, the faculty planned to emphasize “carry-over sports”; those which students might play later on in life such as tennis and swimming. At the time, however, the staff was unsure of what the interest in the program would be in future years. A report by Mr. Ken Wilson was noted, which indicated that the present male student was thought to be “non-competitive”.

To facilitate the addition of men to the student body, the college performed a much awaited renovation of Kenyon in order to provide lockerroom, shower, and toilet facilities for men. To manage the education and coaching of some of the new students, the college hired one new male. It was noted within the report about inequality in the treatment of the women in that department, specifically that the “present male member is receiving a much higher salary than the woman member of equal rank whose background is similar, experience greater and responsibilities as great!!” It continued, “Women’s Lib take note!” For varsity intercollegiate athletics, they anticipated a much more extensive program for both men and women in the future. They noted intercollegiate teams and schedules in field hockey, volleyball, and basketball for women, touch football and basketball for the men, and coed tennis.

In spite of the capital changes initially made, the Physical Education department believed in the continued need for a college center, the updating of athletics programs, and expanded recreational facilities. Multiuse facilities were in failing condition. Department chair F.
Elizabeth Richey stated that the weekend dances and mixers had ruined the floors of Kenyon gymnasium, the only gym space on campus, and that the make-shift weight-lifting room created to help accommodate interest of male students was inadequate because both the floor and the ceiling structure below were deteriorating from the weights being dropped. Similarly, the department had, for many years, requested capital improvements of a new basketball court, locker rooms, squash courts, and outdoor tennis courts. Furthermore, attention to a potentially burgeoning athletics program was requested by the Physical Education Department. In 1972, the department was most concerned about team transportation, which up to that point was still being conducted via personal automobiles of the department members. Richey therefore requested that, since there was strong support for a men’s athletic program, funding for team transportation for both the men’s and women’s teams would be allocated.310

By 1973, the department realized that there was a distinct difference between developing a varsity athletics program and the educational endeavors of the department. It continued trying to persuade the President of the need for a definitive philosophy and for the funds to enact whatever type of program resulted. Chairperson F. Elizabeth Richey wrote that the department had found it difficult to justify what they viewed as two conflicting ideas of physical education. They believed that an athletics program was essential for Vassar as a coeducational institution, and that they had provided opportunities for men and women according to their interests and the facilities available. Yet they believed that the program offerings would not be able to expand without investing more money; if the college was to do so, the department suggested that intercollegiate sports at the college take into account “Vassar’s differences,” which included a class schedule that went all day long instead of ending in the afternoon. This required unique competition times or even shorter seasons. Making athletics part of the educational experience,
they believed, would result in an improved program for the small percentage of the population they envisioned participating.\textsuperscript{311}

In the summer of 1974, Physical Education department chair F. Elizabeth Richey addressed both the President and the Trustee Committee on Coeducation about athletics. Despite the non-credit bearing role of varsity athletics and intramurals, she reminded them that it had an important place at Vassar. She put forward rationale of the Greek ideal of healthy mind in a healthy body, an increased awareness for regular exercise, and the growing interest in sport in the American culture.\textsuperscript{312}

Through Richey’s reports, the department again expressed to the college administration that Vassar had too few facilities to sponsor a broad sport program, and that there were too few individuals in the department to teach, coach, and supervise all the recreational activities. They put forth the proposal to hire part-time coaches, since that seemed to be the most appropriate solution given the state of the varsity sports program. The varsity athletics program at the time did not recruit or scout, and no students received financial assistance based on their athlete status. The department provided what it believed to be its philosophy regarding the establishment of the varsity program: “Given the tough academic demands at Vassar and the lack of a built-in tradition for men’s intercollegiate competition, we are building the program for both men and women in response to their interest and dedication and according to our own best professional beliefs.”\textsuperscript{313}

The Physical Education department brought up the question of philosophy of collegiate athletics again the following year after the gifting of the Prentiss Facility. The Prentiss Facility provided a baseball field, a soccer field, and a track. At the time, the Physical Education department had been allowing the sport program to evolve naturally with student interest and did
not have definitive expansion plans. Vassar did have a soccer team, but did not have a baseball or a track and field team. The Physical Education department had requested facility upgrades, though a baseball field or track had never been included in those requests.314

The dissonance between the college administrators and the Physical Education department was indicative of the inherent problems perceived when sponsoring intercollegiate athletics in a formerly female college. Chair Jean M. Appenzellar expressed that the committee that evaluated athletics forgot the school’s history; going from a men’s college to coeducational and from a women’s college to coeducational were vastly different situations. “As a result of the way male and female athletics developed, men’s colleges now have far more facilities, staff, budget, equipment, support services, schedules and teams than do women’s colleges.”315 As examples, she stated that Vassar did not have a custodian for the gym, but that Wesleyan, a men’s college, had five, and that the Vassar athletics budget was one half of Marist College’s budget for crew alone. Appenzellar continued with a request that “Vassar needs first of all to set goals and decide what model to follow,” and that “the Physical Education Department has tried to work from the educational model…but it also happens that we haven’t the staff, facilities or budget for a conventional male athletic operation.”316

The students, said Appenzellar, had no understanding of how the sports program worked at Vassar. The department was working on procedures for creating a team, since in the first five years of coeducation, participation had been sporadic even for some of the more popular sports such as soccer or basketball. She said that “they expect[ed] instant programs, and this is not possible without funds, staff, and equipment; moreover it is not possible without sustained commitment, talent, and leadership from students.”317 The state of the program in 1975 was modest; and the department requested an increased budget for officials, uniforms, and part-time
coaching staff. The department also requested either sports information personnel or a custodian for the gym.\textsuperscript{318}

In 1975, the Dean’s Advisory Committee on Athletics was still in consultation about what kind of program those at the college wanted. What the committee did do was help to increase the budget of the Physical Education department to add support for club travel and hosting games. It encouraged an expansion of the intramural program. It also believed there to be an insufficient number of coaches, but that part-time coaches created an atmosphere of uncertainty the college did not want. It found that the college had difficulty securing competition for the men against comparable institutions, students dropped out of participation at high rates, and there was a “wide but shallow range of interests” in what was a “small but heterogeneous” student population.\textsuperscript{319} As for the current intercollegiate program, it found that the number of sports was good, and it recommended better support for what was already in place.

While short of receiving an official sports information staff member, the Public Relations department provided some of the associated tasks. Public Relations printed schedule cards of the intercollegiate sports, and had a part-time student reporting on athletics results to the local newspaper and the wire services. The Physical Education department suggested taking team photos, sending information to the students’ hometowns, and getting events printed in the school newspaper.\textsuperscript{320}

The Physical Education department was also hopeful that they would receive increased administrative support. By keeping athletics within the department, the department believed that such a decision was indicative of the role that athletics would have at Vassar. “Based on the belief that athletics belongs in an institution of higher education only in so far as it contributes to
the experience and knowledge of the students, this position means that at Vassar we can resist the negative, exploitative aspects of athletics currently on the rampage.”321

Vassar administration, faculty, and students spent the 1970s in debate about the scope and type of program they wanted as well as the type of men it would attract. These two components became linked, if not directly associated with each other. Support for athletics generally revolved around a preference of having a quality, laid-back type of athletics program. One male student wrote in November 1974 that in “its own low-key way, Vassar is on the way to becoming a school with a strong and well balanced inter-collegiate athletic program, that is, a reputation for quality athletics.” 322 Those more critical did not perceive the quality others identified in the hands-off approach. In the spring 1973 edition of the Vassar Quarterly, a student complained that the athletics program suffered from a lack of space, a small budget, and the need for more staffing.323 Later in 1975, another student linked the issue of recruiting with the state of the athletics department. He offered up that it was a myth that serious athletes could not be academically gifted. Since Vassar was an academic pioneer as a women’s college, as a coeducational institution, “should it be mediocrity for all?? To overlook athletics is to ignore the true spirit of the liberal arts experience.”324

Similar questions about intercollegiate athletics grew more common in the latter half of the 1970s. Throughout the decade, many college publications mentioned frustrations about the indecisive role of athletics, and about financial, facility, and staffing inadequacies. The indecisiveness over whether athletics was to remain “low key,” what “low key” actually meant, and whether the growth of sports would lessen the status and academic qualifications of the males attracted to the institution, was symptomatic of the identity struggle occurring at Vassar on the larger scale.
By 1974, Vassar was in the midst of an identity crisis. The only Seven Sisters college to go coeducational, the college struggled to define and act on its existing strengths and commitment to women’s education with its new mission that included the well-being of its men. In reaction, Vassar administration lauded the school’s uniqueness. The new Vassar man and woman were characterized as being intellectual and individualistic, culturally-sophisticated, and concerned with larger social issues. Admissions material endorsed the importance of affinity to sports and physical activity, but most comments published in alumnae magazine articles or admissions materials asserted Vassar’s uniqueness by preserving a notion that the school was not a “big game” college or that “big rah-rah sports are not missed by most of the men.” Other recollections of the college revealed that many men were satisfied with low-key athletics, that there were not many jocks who attended, that they attended because there was not a football team, or that there was not the “macho, oppressive male culture” that students had experienced elsewhere. Vassar therefore had established what it termed as “Coeducation with a difference,” which broadly meant focus on maintaining equality of the sexes and not a male-dominated coeducation, and more specifically included an athletics program “based on enjoyment not competition.”

On the other side of deemphasizing the “big-time” athletics approach was that the college appeared compelled to combat the image of the Vassar male as weak and less masculine. This was especially prevalent following the rise to national acclaim of Jackie St. James, an openly gay student whose 1974 interview in Esquire magazine became a stereotype of Vassar men. Sport, Vassar administration believed, was therefore still important to mention within publications in order to appear more attractive to heterosexual males and to dispel the perception of being a college choice for the gay male. In order to make sure that prospective male students knew
sports existed at Vassar, recruiters frequently mentioned athletics in admissions publications and the college bulletin, including tables listing the number of varsity letters earned and team captains among the male applicant pool.  

The indecision over the type of man to attract, the fear of what they perceived they would attract, and the way the college wanted to be perceived via its athletics program was even evident in how the teams nicknamed themselves. Vassar school colors were rose (interpreted as a pastel shade of pink) and gray prior to coeducation. The nickname given the teams as early as 1969 was the “Big Pink” or simply “Pink.” Containing an air of self-mockery as well as a possibly alluding to Ivy League nicknames (e.g., Cornell Big Red, Dartmouth Big Green, Harvard Crimson), Vassar maintained the designation for both men’s and women’s teams throughout the first few years following coeducation. Early stories about the men’s basketball team in particular reflected a bit of playfulness with the nickname and with the whole scenario instead of a dedication to serious competition. Faculty-coach Streit characterized match-ups against Sarah Lawrence College, another former women’s college that had recently become coeducational, as the “Powder Puff circuit,” and referred to Sarah Lawrence teams as the “Wild Bunch.”  

By 1973, campus sports reporters started using “Panthers” on occasion, even combining the two to discuss the “Pink Panthers” in sports articles. Later in the decade when there was more serious attention on the athletics program, both nicknames faded from the sports pages. *The Miscellany News* primarily referred to teams as only Vassar or Vassar College. Finally, by 1980 a new designation that served as a nod to how founder Matthew Vassar made his fortune, the Brewers, appeared and ultimately became the one Vassar elected to maintain.  

The shift in nicknames, especially the dwindling attractiveness of the less serious Big Pink and Pink Panthers monikers, can be read as a component of the growing attention and
concern over the state of the sports program that became evident by the mid-1970s. The Trustees Committee on Coeducation released a report in February of 1975 in which they commented that significant effort had already been made in intercollegiate and intramural programs, and that steps to an improved athletics program would not diminish Vassar’s academic reputation. The physical education department, which been operating under the assumption that the institutional consensus was in favor of a low-key program (“Coeducation with a difference”) since repeated requests for funding for facilities or assistance in creating an intercollegiate program had gone without response, viewed the report with disdain.

The schism between the Physical Education department faculty and the trustees grew deeper throughout the latter half of the 1970s. Physical Education faculty believed that even with a modest program, they had been stretched thin, teaching classes, running intramurals, and coaching the varsity level teams. Requests they submitted for improved facilities had not been acted on, leaving the teams poorly funded and with inadequate practice and competition space. The Physical Education department joined the Northeast Independent Athletic Conference for its women and the Northeast Athletic League for its men. Vassar did not seek out membership with a national association throughout the 1970s because the faculty believed the fees were too high, and that the level of competition would mean students had to put in more time, and would necessitate more coaching, practice, and equipment. Vassar faculty preferred a more loosely structured conference with schools whose academic demands were similar. The chair of the department by the mid-1970s, Jean Appenzeller, viewed athletics as an educational program and looked to develop and sustain low-key intercollegiate programs for both genders. The trustees, on the other hand, were alleged to have placed more emphasis on competition, on the men, and to have been haphazard in their funding efforts and decision-making regarding athletics.
The debate continued for several more years. The backlash against an expanded program had not yet run its course, and a student poll conducted in 1977 revealed a fear of the “jock” image and a decline in academic prestige if too many improvements were made in athletics.\textsuperscript{338} From that point on, however, most editorials and interviews with physical education staff served as a rallying cry for support for athletics. By 1978, the Vassar program only supported nine varsity teams while its counterpart schools typically provided opportunities in upwards of twenty-five programs. Roman Czula, a department instructor and coach, gave an interview in which he admitted that while the process was moving too slowly, more student support was needed.\textsuperscript{339} Another interview with department head Appenzellar showed her optimism with the student demand for sports and called for more student commitment despite not being a “big-game” school.\textsuperscript{340}

In 1978, an Ad Hoc Committee on athletics moved from its first phase, identifying that a need existed, into “Phase Two,” proposing actual changes to be made. Citing Vassar as “gravely inadequate in the physical educational opportunities it provides its present and prospective students,” the committee report suggested that the poor athletics program had failed students through its deficiencies and that Vassar had forfeited the opportunity for educational balance and a strong community with what was defined as a “weak” athletics department.\textsuperscript{341} The committee examined the areas of staffing and facility expansion, and settled on staff appointments (instead of faculty) and on building a brand new facility instead of improving on the existing recreation building, Kenyon.\textsuperscript{342} Some suggested changes occurred. In a move which would begin the separation of the athletics program from the guardianship of the Physical Education department, Vassar hired John Wallace in 1978 as Athletic Director, though it was initially a part-time position; and increased the athletics budget by one-third from 1977-78 to 1978-79.\textsuperscript{343} The
Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) admitted Vassar into its membership in October 1978, another sign that the physical education department and administration were willing to take small steps in a more competitive direction, at least initially for the men (the ECAC provided championships for women starting in 1983).  

**Vassar Women’s Athletics (Post-Coeducation)**

An examination of the development of women’s athletics at Vassar College in the midst of the debate regarding the place of men and the status of the college’s athletics program reveals that many of the ideologies or perspectives that once characterized Vassar, the women’s college, and its connection with sport were maintained through the coeducation process. Vassar College ideas of sport appeared to have blended a complicated mixture of embrace of, and transcendence from, gender norms. The evidence mirrors the indiscriminate approach of men’s intercollegiate athletics, especially in the early 1970s, though the lack of emphasis was not always as pervasive at the institution as the debate would have it seem.

Female students at Vassar College had established the Athletic Association in 1894 in order to promote a culture of physical activity. Intra-college activities thrived in the early 1900s as well as field day activities with other schools. Vassar students were one of the few women’s colleges whose administration allowed some opportunities to compete against other colleges. By the mid-twentieth century, however, club sports and even the random intercollegiate team activity were in decline. What took their place in the interim, prior to coeducation, demonstrates the complexity of the Vassar sport concept. Almost a century earlier, baseball, a predominantly male sport, had been in vogue on the campus for nearly a decade prior to falling out of favor due to its association with a “plebian” lifestyle.  

Fast-forwarding to 1962, Vassar students formed
touch football teams. Games which they initially played between campus houses quickly extended to teams of male professors and then male students from neighboring colleges and universities in what they considered to be intercollegiate games. Garnering national attention in a *New York Times* article that year, the writer categorized the games as novel and lighthearted. Those games and the attitudes and meanings displayed within, however, symbolized a unique and deeply intertwined relationship among society, gender and sport at Vassar. A distinctive social culture of self-confidence and physical activity at Vassar provided the foundation for the touch football games, yet that same social culture also constrained the women to playing touch football and the inclusion of activities after (Vassar women typically invited teams to social mixers following the competition); the games were as transgressive as they were reiterative of gender expectations and relations. Vassar sports of the time were transgressive in the sense that they were female students entering a predominantly male sport sphere, but also mocked the male athletics model itself by appropriating what could arguably be viewed as the model’s flagship sport. By 1969, however, the gender expectations regarding football participation, even touch football, rotated back to the men. The *New York Times* ran another article about Vassar football that year, this one entitled “Vassar Football Victor, With Girls on Sidelines” on a touch football game at Vassar against Sarah Lawrence, who had also recently decided to become coeducational. Vassar women were noted as being on the sidelines cheering.

As early as 1971, enough women were interested in intercollegiate basketball at Vassar College to reorganize a team for more than inter-class or dorm challenges. There was little fanfare about seeking out intercollegiate competition, and women’s sports received limited attention compared with the minimal amount of coverage the college and student media provided the men. The school newspaper, *The Miscellany News*, reported in 1971, “Contrary to popular
opinion, Vassar does have a girls’ basketball team,” though another in 1973 took liberties with the “Big Pink” nickname by removing any agency or strength from the label by calling the women’s team a more feminized or childlike “Little Pink.”

In terms of program offerings, Vassar women’s programs followed the same chaotic path as did its men through the early 1970s. In the 1974–75 Vassar Bulletin, the administration noted, without gender distinction, that “there will be varsity and/or intramural programs” in touch football, soccer, field hockey, basketball, fencing, lacrosse, swimming, squash, tennis, and volleyball. In 1975, the women had tennis, field hockey, volleyball, swimming, basketball, and squash. Finally, by 1980 the Vassar College Bulletin listed the women’s varsity sport offerings of 1975 with the addition of cross country.

The building of additional facilities for athletics generally focused on accommodation of men’s sports. Physical Education professors such as Appenzeller asked for a space for softball, but instead received the donation of Prentiss Field, a baseball field and baseball equipment that received only limited use from 1974, when it was financed, to 1976, when interest in baseball was solicited, to 1978 when the team officially formed. The Physical Education department lacked resources to support both men’s and women’s teams. For financial reasons, the department held off on expanding the 1976 women’s soccer and men’s rugby teams into varsity level programs because of worries of spreading resources too thin. Existing varsity teams evidenced such worries, including the 1973 women’s squash team. One member of the team charged the college with ignoring the athletes and the pride that could be gained by representing the school if only it invested more in them – “I don’t want to see it decay because of tradition.”
Athletes representing Vassar in the 1970s did so on a primarily regional basis, especially the women. Vassar never joined the national AIAW for its women’s sports, but did eventually belong to one regional league, the New York State Amateur Intercollegiate Athletic Association for Women (NYSAIAAW). Only in 1978 did the Physical Education department join a larger, more wide-reaching conference, the ECAC, but just to play men’s soccer and men’s tennis in a more competitive league and to get the athletes more recognition.

While Vassar women found resources and opportunities limited in terms of serious intercollegiate competition, the major construct in which Vassar neglected its female athletes was philosophical. The omnipresent philosophical debate at Vassar regarding the fears about the “jock image” conveyed an overwhelming focus on men’s athletics, not women’s athletics. The insistence on providing a modest and understated program was inextricably connected with an idea that high academic standards were incommensurate with the style of male intercollegiate athletics that Vassar authorities believed was most popular. It was also therefore strongly connected to the persistent concerns about a loss of standards due to an influx of academically unqualified and socially uncultured male athletes (“jocks”). Physical Education faculty such as Appenzeller believed that the serious (male) athlete would not come to Vassar because he “may not have concentrated on academics.” The admissions brochures and other campus publications attempted to walk a fine line in recruiting males, emphasizing a Vassar male with a “spirit of intellectual commitment and individualism [,] cultural sophistication [and] concerned with larger social issues,” who did not need a big-time athletics program but yet was athletic. The Admissions Office and the college went to great lengths to discuss the novelty of the “Vassar male” regularly throughout the 1970s, despite the fact that by 1976 the freshman class
was 41-percent male (“Surprise! There are 750 men at Vassar. The freshman class is 41% male”). 359

Athletics at Elmira College: Coeducation Transition through 1980

Athletics and academics are often complementary in recruitment of students.360 Athletics provides esteem to an institution, and status can be linked at least partially with athletics affiliation. University administrators, according to Mitchell Stevens, developed systems for conferring status, including one that was emotional and categorical in nature -- athletic league membership and intercollegiate competition.361 In addition to the status halo that could protect an institution during tough times, league membership could also set-up situations for lower caliber schools to usurp the status of a more elite school. At Elmira College, intercollegiate athletics during the early years of coeducation fit into two molds; it was undoubtedly a part of the college’s initial strategy for obtaining the desired male enrollment, and was also used to garner prestige and associations that had not been available as a women’s college. Plans to sponsor intercollegiate teams were distributed to high school guidance counselors in order to generate interest in male students. Sport, in the specific form of intercollegiate athletics, was an immediate tool linked with the perceived attractiveness of Elmira College to potential male students and with retention of males once enrolled. The hiring of an athletic director, the hiring of several coaches for the men’s varsity program, the adoption of an athletics nickname and identity, membership in the NCAA and the implementation of major facility additions all helped promote Elmira College not just as a newly coeducational institution concerned about the needs of its new male student, but as desiring a place within the intercollegiate athletics space that
elevated it in line with or above its predominantly regional private and state college and university competitors.

With the first male students settling into a routine at Elmira during the 1969-70 academic year, Dr. Murray shifted attention to the idea of an athletics program for men as a way of increasing the attractiveness of the college. It was within the already established Physical Education department that changes were implemented. Not yet a year into coeducation, in February of 1970, President Murray appointed Paul Brand as a Physical Education Instructor charged with getting the male sports program running. Brand came to Elmira after stints at Texas colleges and universities - St. Mary’s University, San Antonio College, and Trinity University. He had most recently served as a physical education instructor at the American School in the Dominican Republic, where he had crossed paths with Charles Miller, who had become the Elmira College Director of Admissions. In an Octagon article, one of Brand’s initial public comments was that the biggest issue for him is a lack of facilities for the Elmira College men. In the initial move to coeducation, Murray publically contended that recreational facilities were adequate. Less than a year into coeducation, however, there was already a shift in thinking that they would entice more applicants and potential students once new facilities were established and off-campus competition was scheduled. Administrators met the pressure to assure continued male enrollment numbers along with retention with creation of the varsity-level athletics program and accompanying facilities. Brand additionally forecasted that the number and nature of programs to be offered, including suggested sports such as basketball, track, swimming, tennis, and golf, would be determined as soon as the number of men enrolled was projected for the following year.362
Much of the second half of the first year of coeducation appears to have been focused on getting men involved in recreational activities such as bowling, billiards, and table tennis. Brand held tournaments on campus in such activities, earning the moniker of “Elmira’s premier jock”. Frank McNeill, a student who would become the first sports editor of the student newspaper, commended Brand for making the men feel more at home and for providing a better outlook for the future of Elmira athletics. Other articles by McNeill reflected a cynical edge about the relationship between men and women at the college, hinting at present and/or perceived student tensions associated with moving from an all-female campus to a coeducational one. McNeill and others increasingly also displayed what appeared to have been an underlying, dismissive opinion regarding the skill level and traditions of the women’s sports already in existence on the campus. For instance, one of the long-standing Elmira College women’s athletics traditions was the white coat earned with varsity level participation. McNeill commented within the sports page of the student newspaper, “Maybe next year there will be more to cheer about than some white coat.”

The following year Brand is on record making sure the bar was not set too high for the men on campus since the program had not yet, in his opinion, had time to develop, nor did it have appropriate facilities. He commented that the men’s athletics program at Elmira College would finish “close to the bottom of the cracker barrel in athletics competition” during the 1970-71 academic year.” In 1970, the college initially fielded men’s teams in eight sports overall, including cross country, wrestling, and basketball but also tennis, bowling, golf, fencing and swimming. The program had only six cross country runners, and had difficulty finding wrestlers for a few of the weight classes. Despite presumptions of poor turnout or performances, Elmira administrators went ahead and hired head coaches for most of the men’s sports, including Fred
Lawrence for tennis, Jack Casey for basketball, John Palmer for wrestling, John Marshall for cross country and swimming, and George Zurenda for fencing. The presence of a more active athletics program led some male students to feel as if Elmira College had been truly transformed to a coeducational institution. Octagon sports editor Frank McNeill commented, “[t]he subtle reminders that you attend a girl’s school are slowly being erased…you can even be a genuine jock if you’re so inclined”\textsuperscript{366}

Elmira College administrators believed that to have a men’s sports program, it needed to ascribe a certain amount of distinctiveness to it to encourage internal unity and excitement as well as meet the external needs for attractiveness to potential male students. Paradoxically, in spite of the desire for distinctiveness, there was a definitive drive to quickly ascribe to the men’s athletics program the majority of the elements that characterized the typical men’s athletics environment of the time. The school mascot was selected and a school bus was provided for teams (men’s and a few women’s, including tennis, when the men and women traveled together) to travel to sporting contests. In 1970 the Golden Eagles was the selection for the school mascot. The following year the mascot selection was modified slightly, with Elmira College adopting the nickname as the “Soaring Eagles”. Purple became the prominent sporting color for Elmira uniforms and identity. As early as October 1970, the bus provided for Elmira sports teams was said to have been painted with purple letters and branded by some as the “Eaglemobile”\textsuperscript{367}

The early spotlight on facilities and plans for the men’s athletics program continued throughout the first decade of coeducation. Newspaper and college accounts included reports on both men’s and women’s athletic activities and accomplishments. Reports were filed about the men’s wrestling and fencing schedule, men’s basketball, men’s and women’s bowling, women’s swimming success, and women’s basketball for 1970-71. The sport of basketball had attracted
the most attention that year, the men going 9-9 overall. Plans for further promotion of men’s basketball were seen in an advertisement in the March 3, 1971 edition of the *Octagon* in search of cheerleaders for the 1971-72 basketball season. The sports editor McNeill also continued to write about being male at Elmira, hinting at an initial sense of displeasure from women about men being on campus. In a December 1970 column he mentioned grumblings about men being a favored group at Elmira College, and in February of the following year, he wrote about wanting to make sure that he communicated “maleness” and that the men would not be leaving.

The pinnacle of the 1970-71 sports season was reached in late March as the college hosted its Athletic Banquet, which incorporated the already long-running Women’s Athletic Association’s awards banquet. The college and men’s athletics administration took charge of the event and secured Otto Graham, a Pro Football Hall of Fame member, as speaker, and included awards and recognition for “intercollegiate, women’s and intramural sports”.

By Fall 1971 after two years as a coeducational institution, Elmira College cemented its arrival onto the men’s collegiate athletics scene with a move into membership in a national sports organization. That year Elmira earned membership in the Small College Division of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Elmira President Murray sought membership in the NCAA for the college’s men’s program, and perceived the move as cementing the legitimacy of the venture into men’s athletics, and consequentially, coeducation. In January of 1971, the College Public Relations Office put out the press release announcing the NCAA’s decision to offer active membership, a development which President Murray interpreted as a “tribute to our College’s increasingly comprehensive intercollegiate athletic program.”

After two years, Athletic Director Brand’s assessment of the early developments was that the men’s programs, with the exception of wrestling and perhaps cross country, had been
extremely successful with ample interest in both varsity and intramural programs. The college designated $24,000 in athletic scholarship aid for men in 1971-72, and another $6,000 the following year prior to the 1973 NCAA Division III designation as a non-athletic scholarship membership. The athletic department initially directed the money into its basketball program, though the athletes were encouraged to participate in sports in every season in order to repay the support to the entire program.\textsuperscript{372}

The status and utility of the Physical Education department began to shift. Physical Education requirements for students were in flux by the Fall of 1971. Upperclassmen no longer had any requirements, but freshmen and transfer students had to pass a physical education test and a swimming test. The small faculty group could not accommodate testing of these requirements for the growing student body.\textsuperscript{373} More curricular changes developed down the road for the department, which would also put a strain on the faculty and separate the department from the intercollegiate athletics programs.

The 1971-72 basketball season was key in gathering support for the men’s athletics programs at Elmira College. As a new member of the NCAA, the basketball team had become the premier sport at the college and the department hoped to garner support from the campus as well as attention of the local community. An early December game scheduled with Vassar College was an important event for the Elmira College athletic department in 1971. The match-up against Vassar had potential to offer prestige if victorious and acknowledgement that Elmira athletics, and in turn the college itself, had perhaps more successfully transitioned to coeducation than some of its more historically elite counterparts. The College sponsored a chartered bus trip for trustees and anyone in the community to ride to Poughkeepsie to watch the Soaring Eagle
basketball team take on Vassar. For $12, anyone could gain access to the bus ride, admission, a meal, and champagne on the bus ride home.\textsuperscript{374}

The successful result was much lauded in the campus newspaper. “The future of the season has brightened considerably with the crushing of the boys from Vassar by our Golden [sic] Eagles basketball squad,” commented Octagon reporters Buckhout and Burke. The two characterized the game as a “massacre” over the Vassar “Big Red”. Additionally, they highlighted a difference between the Elmira energy invested into the men’s sports program and the status of Vassar in 1971. “Any males who were considering the trip on the basis of messing with the moneyed women at the school would have been sorely disappointed. Basketball is obviously a social no-no, or else everyone had better things to do. Their stands were virtually empty, and the individuals there were overwhelmingly male.”\textsuperscript{375}

Even as the administration supported and touted the growth of the men’s intercollegiate athletics program, there were a series of expected minor growing pains surrounding the program. An editorial in the Octagon in January of 1972 asked the question about the academic performance of (male) athletes being judged differently than that of non-athletes, and asked whether the priorities of the campus were for education or basketball.\textsuperscript{376} In a sports column response the following week, student columnist Grant Rose defended the athletics program’s academic standards, replying that the accusation was false, and that a winning basketball team is just as important as a good education to a school lucky enough to have one.\textsuperscript{377}

Another Octagon reporter investigated allegations of missing money and the Men’s Athletic Association. In February of 1972, Barbara Fox was looking into the Men’s Athletic Association, and determined that there was no such thing.\textsuperscript{378} She claimed that a budget of $2,400 was requested by the organization. What she discovered was that since students had complained
in 1970-71 about having to pay admission to watch basketball and wrestling, the president of the Men’s Athletic Association and Paul Brand had requested the money from the Finance Board and student activity fees using the association title so the money could be allocated in lieu of students themselves paying admission. Records showed that the money was paid, but Brand claimed to have had no record of it being received.

With the college already earning NCAA membership by 1972, Paul Brand then helped establish a new layer of athletic competition, starting the Private College Athletic Conference independent league with colleagues from Houghton, Eisenhower, and Roberts Wesleyan. The new conference membership came just in time for the dedication of the new athletics and recreational facility, the J. Ralph Murray Athletic Educational Center, in the works for January 1973. The dedication of the domed facility, which the Board of Trustees announced would be named the J. Ralph Murray Athletic Educational Center after the President, took place over the January 26-28, 1973 weekend with a men’s basketball game as a highlight. The facility itself cost $5.3 million and represented what the college deemed a “major milestone in the College’s transition from a women’s college to a coeducational institution.”

Said Dr. Murray, who was then addressed as the Elmira College Chancellor instead of President, “[t]his Athletic-Educational Center is an absolute necessity to make Elmira College a viable coeducational institution and will provide facilities for a broadened approach to curricular development.” The facility, which became known colloquially as “the domes”, included three geodesic domes and had original plans for a six-lane pool. The first dome was a dirt-floor field house, the second was a basketball court and was to be also used for volleyball, wrestling, and gymnastics with seating for 2000, along with squash courts, office space, and lockerrooms. The third dome was an ice hockey rink with space for 3,500 spectators, along with space for tennis, badminton and other
storage. A small fleet of minibuses were to provide transportation for students traveling between
the campus and the facility. Finally, the college created a new position solely responsible for
coordination and maintenance of the facility.\(^{381}\)

An *Octagon* article just a month later cited some initial issues with getting students out to
the Murray Center from the main campus. Complaints included the distance, along with the bus
schedule not meshing with the class schedule and with the hours of availability. Paul Brand
reportedly considered closing the on-campus Emerson Gymnasium in the evenings to drive
traffic to the center.\(^{382}\)

After four years as a coeducational institution, Chancellor Murray sat down with a
student interviewer to discuss various topics, among them the progress as a coeducational
college. Another topic the interviewer included was athletics spending. Chancellor Murray
admitted that he believed the first year of coeducation was a “disaster for everybody”.\(^{383}\) He said
that students did not behave particularly well, but that the situation had improved. He was asked
to respond to the claim that many people believed the enlarged athletics program had been a
detriment to the academic quality of the College. In response, Dr. Murray emphasized that that
was a myth, and that on paper, the men were actually higher in board scores and grade point
averages than the women. He continued to discuss the financial aspect of athletics, claiming that
the amount of money being spent on athletics was very low at $24,000, and that scholarships
were not given for athletes. A new men’s ice hockey team was a different expense, he claimed,
as getting the program started required having to purchase new equipment to start the team. He
confided, “We’ve just made adjustments in this institution for athletes.” Not coincidentally, the
photograph included with the article is of Dr. Murray sitting in front of a large photo of the
Murray Athletic Educational Center.\(^{384}\)
There was evidence of some lingering uneasiness about the way the athletics program was developing and the support, perceived and real, that it received from the college administration. Steve Tekulsky, a student writing for the Octagon, wrote a short two-part series regarding the place of athletics at Elmira. In his first article, he asserted that one only had to look to the Murray Center to understand the role that athletics is to play within the overall institution. He claimed that there were more male athletes on campus that year, and that it was the result of an extensive and expensive recruiting process. “It cannot be ignored, then,” he wrote, “that one of the goals of this Administration is the eventual creation of a successful (lucrative?) athletic program.”

In his second article, he again offered up the Murray Center as the centerpiece of his criticism. “The Domes may not be at the heart of what is wrong with Elmira College, but because it has been chosen as the symbol of Elmira College it must also serve as the brunt of most criticism aimed at the institution itself.”

The “domes” did become a center of activity, including events outside athletics. It housed athletics events, but also drew financial benefit and community engagement by hosting roller derbies, blues concerts, household supplier exhibitions, Girl Scouts Jamboree, as well as being a potential rain site for the College’s graduation ceremonies. It additionally sought and drew local attention when announcing the kick-off of its men’s ice hockey program in December of 1973.

The Murray Center was also proudly offered up as a reason for notoriety of the college. In a note about a men’s basketball trip to Australia in 1974, Dr. Murray was quoted as having said that “the development of the Murray Center brought Elmira College to the attention of people throughout the world.” The Australia trip, it was noted, was being undertaken as a mission that the Australian government was partly funding to show how sport could develop at
small, private institutions. To satisfy the academic bent of the college, the players were all to receive credit for researching some aspect of Australia or Australian life.

Athletics, while it already occupied an important role within the college, was solidified as a separate administrative division by 1977 under new college president Dr. Leonard Grant. Paul Brand emerged as the head of the Athletic and Recreation Services. He clarified his responsibilities as running intercollegiate and intramural athletics along with the management of the Murray Athletic Educational Center, the Soaring Eagles Golf Club, and sports camps and clinics. Reporting on intercollegiate athletics, Brand reflected an excitement about the program being at a pinnacle of progress. Such “all-time high” was the result primarily of the soccer program finishing second in the Private College Athletic Conference (PCAC), a men’s basketball team that went 13-8 and tied for the PCAC title, and an ice hockey team that qualified for the NCAA Division II playoffs for the first-time ever in its relatively short history. The Murray Athletic Educational Center had been increasingly used, combining college student activities, instructional programs for the community, and spectator type activities for the region. Brand estimated that the Center provided at least, if not in excess of, $100,000.00 annually. The Murray center operated in conjunction with the Soaring Eagle Golf Club, which also charged for memberships for the public, faculty, and for students, to add to that income. Finally, the other financial draw to the Murray center in particular was the summer sports program, which Brand says drew between 750 and 1000 youth to the campus for instructional camps in activities such as tennis, golf, figure skating, swimming, and dance. ^390

Among Brand’s points of emphasis for the 1977-78 academic year, not surprisingly, were to increase community use of the Murray Athletic Educational Center. The college depended on tuition and fees for 62-percent of its income, so it welcomed the increase to the 18-percent it
reported as income from auxiliary services. His other two goals were to increase intramural activity, and to improve the women’s athletics program. Within his report, Brand highlighted the division’s move to comply with Title IX regulations by adding a female staff member (Mrs. Carrie Daly) to assist with women’s athletics.  

By the next year, the Trustees report from President Grant showed that the College had attempted to remain true to at least two of the points of emphasis noted the year prior. In order to provide more opportunities for student recreation, Grant noted that intramurals and the club sports programs were increased, and that programming at Emerson Gymnasium was increased with more flexible hours. Additionally, they made the Murray Athletic Education Center and Soaring Eagle Golf Course free for student use. In terms of women’s athletics, he noted that “major attention” was given to women’s athletics, and that they had as many women coaches as they did male coaches. He noted that the women’s basketball team placed second at the Elmira College tournament, and that the college had a bowler place second at the National Intercollegiate Bowling Championship. Finally, Grant relayed the fact “that Elmira College had arrived nationally in intercollegiate sports.” The ice hockey team had become the first New York college to win an ECAC Division II championship when they defeated Middlebury College, and also earned a berth into the first-ever four-team NCAA Division II national championship.

In athletics, things appeared to be full-steam ahead by the end of the decade. Just six years after its dedication, focus remained on the potential of the Murray Center. A “Murray Center New Direction” plan “identified the Center as a site for sports, recreation, physical fitness programs for people of all ages and conditions throughout the Twin Tiers,” wrote Brand in his section of the 1979 report to the college’s trustees. The committee of several individuals (Mrs.
Barbara Preucil, Mr. Al Mallette, Mr. William Tryon, Attorney David Mandeville, Dr. Arthur Wellington, Mr. Gary Wydman, Brand) were charged with identifying the major issues with the Murray Center and suggesting solutions. Among the main issues noted were the access, to which an access point off of one of the main routes was suggested, inadequate lighting, and the need for a marketing study to identify needs of students and the community. They also reorganized, and all programming and promotions for the Murray Center were to fall under Paul Brand. They hired a Program Supervisor to watch over all activities at the Murray Center, as well as a Director of the Physical Plant who took care of maintenance at the facility.

Among the personnel highlights, Brand included the new position of Miss Pat Dudas, who had been in charge of the summer sports camps and clinics which had been profitable for the first time during the 1978 summer season. She had been named Assistant Director of Athletics as well, and had the responsibility to develop the women’s intercollegiate athletic program. The only other mention of women’s sports was the notation that women’s softball was added as an intercollegiate sport, but both women’s swimming and fencing were canceled because of a lack of participation.

The listed accomplishments of the overall athletics program included a co-PCAC championship for the men’s basketball team, PCAC championship for the men’s bowling team, a New York Collegiate Hockey Association championship for the ice hockey team, appearances in the ECAC post-season tournament for both men’s basketball and ice hockey, and a qualifying golfer, Mike Prosinski, for the ECAC championship.

Included in the report of Public Relations/Publications was also notice that a full-time sports information director, Lars Hanson, had begun work on March 10, 1979. Among Hanson’s
responsibilities was to promote all varsity athletic programs as well as the Murray Athletic Education Center.  

Among the athletics department goals stated in the report was more promotion of the Murray Center as a “sports, recreation, and physical fitness hub for the Twin Tiers”. They claimed to want to hold true to the center’s purpose. Moving away from use of the facility for commercial purposes (e.g., business expos), they wanted to improve and/or create a rapport with the community to get high school and community attendance at collegiate athletic contests and to attract their own students for recreation and as spectators. The use of the Murray Center was clearly moving from an all-encompassing facility to a more focused-use facility, zeroing in on use as an athletic facility for the college’s varsity programs which they hoped would bring in the community – not to rent the facility or use it for their own fitness goals or recreation, but to pay as a spectator to the college’s athletic events.

Two years later, the Murray Center was still a focus, but was joined by other concerns, both curricular and otherwise. The main concern in 1981 was about the operating costs of the Murray Center, which had become a relatively large operation for the college. The goals for athletics and recreation had been expanded to include curricular concerns about the physical education requirements and major, revising both to place emphasis on physical fitness and life-long recreational activities and on teacher certification, coaching, and recreational and sport management. Other goals included an emphasis on women’s sports, as well as the decision to remain in the NCAA Division III, and new attention to recreational and athletic needs of minority students (which was noted to be based on Admission’s objective to seek more minority students, and showed the continued use of athletics as a tool for admissions purposes).
Elmira Women’s Athletics (Post-Coeducation)

At the close of the 1960s, Elmira women desired more intercollegiate competition while interest in dorm competition and sports days were at an all-time low -- increasingly reflective of emerging attitudes in women’s athletics. By coeducation, the structure of Elmira College Physical Education Department changed with the addition of Paul Brand in 1970, who became an instructor and Director of Men’s Physical Education, and ultimately the Director of Athletics. There were two female instructors already on staff, Eunice Kellogg and Dr. Margaret Locke, who became the Director of Women’s Physical Education and an Associate Professor upon the advent of coeducation. The handbook stated the emergence of intercollegiate sports, noting golf, tennis, bowling, fencing, and swimming to be open to women, while wrestling, cross country, and basketball were to be solely men’s intercollegiate programs. As the 1970-1971 Women’s Athletic Association Handbook stated, the athletics supported by the student group were for “fun, exercise, release, friendship,” and “you need not be a pro to participate”. At the dawn of coeducation, then, women competed in the handful of varsity programs organized by Brand (golf, tennis, bowling, fencing, and swimming), or participated in intramural level sports such as bowling, volleyball, basketball, skiing and softball as part of the Athletic Association.

Women at Elmira experienced a somewhat lukewarm reception from Brand. A local newspaper interview with Brand in 1970 set such a tone. Al Mallette, the reporter, introduced Brand as the “envy of every red-blooded American male”, working at one of the oldest women’s colleges that boasted “a bevy of pretty, shapely females”. Brand explained his predicament of working with some of the females at the college in a patronizing fashion, saying, “pretty as they are, [some] had way out theories on how things should be done. And you know how it is to change one girl’s mind!” Reemphasizing a stereotype of male superiority in athletics and the
female as a trophy rather than active and equal participant, one of the two photographs that illustrated the article presented Brand, on a sofa, between two female students, dressed in skirts with their hair and outfits tidy, leaning into Brand to appear engrossed in whatever he was saying.400

Even with introduction of Brand and his mindset concerning women and athletics, female students possessed some optimism regarding athletics at the dawn of coeducation. A September 1970 *Octagon*, the student newspaper, article remarked on the “bright outlook for the women’s sports” and even cited that in contrast, the men’s interest had fallen short of expectations.401 In the same year, another *Octagon* article reported that, “The women, who have always been at the college, have played no small part in the building of this vibrant program under the direction of Athletic Director Paul Brand.”402 Even so, the loyalties to the existing system of the Women’s Athletic Association versus the drive to belong in the new program forced female students into what could be perceived as a two-tiered system.

In its first year of existence, the intercollegiate program’s men’s basketball squad played an 18-game schedule. In comparison, the women’s basketball team, still under the Women’s Athletic Association, only managed approval (financial and philosophical) for three games. Athletic Association minutes hint at a period of turmoil once the college experienced coeducation, concentrated predominantly on the unclear intersection, if there was one, of the Women’s Athletic Association and the intercollegiate athletics program. In March of 1970, the Women’s Athletic Association was still sponsoring inter-class, inter-dorm, and inter-scholastic competition for basketball and volleyball, though there was a noted push to get the same two sports to be recognized as intercollegiate.403 In 1971, there was still confusion regarding where any financial support was to come from for women’s basketball, one of the more popular
women’s sports at Elmira. A proposal was submitted to the Women’s Athletic Association for equipment, uniforms, and transportation, but the association did not vote on it and was reluctant to do so based upon a notion that the team might be taken over by Brand and become varsity by the following year.  

A series of correspondence between the women’s basketball coach and team co-captains with Eunice Kellogg of the Physical Education department during the 1970-71 academic year illustrated a tense atmosphere. A memorandum requested a varsity women’s basketball budget from the Women’s Athletic Association or a supplemental budget from the college president to support the women’s team playing prior to the men’s team, to purchase balls, uniforms, and to provide for transportation for several more competition opportunities nearby. The memo closed by endorsing the new excitement of the game of women’s basketball since they switched to the men’s game rules, and the suggestion that Paul Brand be consulted to assist with scheduling contests for the team. The response provided by Kellogg scolded the coach, Rubin Rochin, for his lack of knowledge regarding the structure at Elmira College. She told him that the team was part of the Association, and not above it, and that their teams are not intercollegiate teams as defined by Elmira College and are to be open to all skill levels. She rejected the memorandum as ignorance to the process, cited that a student only should have made any such requests to the WAA, and stated that all funding requests must go through the student activities council, not Dr. Murray. She additionally denied the request for Brand to assist with scheduling.

“We appreciate your zeal, enthusiasm, and talent in this line, but would like to remind you of the team’s place as part of our Association. Our W.A.A. teams, whether basketball or something else, are NOT Intercollegiate teams as defined by our college…[therefore] our organization feels our basketball team should not be limited to 15 players…as long as more are interested."
Kellogg and the Women’s Athletic Association therefore understood the distinction between the two philosophies present at Elmira of participatory versus competitive athletics, but appeared to lack the power to independently suggest changes in the intercollegiate program run by Brand.

The power to alter the athletics landscape resided more so with President Murray and Paul Brand and their vision of the athletics program. Many of the vestiges of women’s athletics tradition, such as the agency of the Women’s Athletic Association, were erased within the first few years of coeducation. One of the women’s long-standing customs of celebrating athletics, the Athletic Association Awards Banquet with a long list of historical, special awards, was taken over by the athletic department after just one year. President Murray himself was involved in making sure the annual awards celebration, ordinarily planned and carried out by the Women’s Athletic Association, was transformed into the Annual Athletics Awards Banquet, a banquet for all the athletes, and grouped the varsity participants in with the athletic association participants. The president was also involved in securing Otto Graham, a former Browns quarterback and Pro Hall of Fame member, to speak at the 1971 banquet with special note to commend Elmira on its NCAA membership for its men’s sports.408

By the end of Spring 1971, the Women’s Athletic Association minutes discuss the start of the Athletics Awards Banquet and some changes to the association’s traditional awards, discarding the Polly Perfect Award/Lowman Posture Award (for an individual displaying grace, poise, posture and personality) by 1975 and changing the historical White Blazer award to a Gold Bracelet award.409 After 1971, the archived minutes of the association end. The only other remaining notice within the archived folder for the Women’s Athletic Association was written by Physical Education Director Dr. Margaret Locke and simply and matter-of-factly reads, “The
A March 1972 memo from Director of Men’s Athletics Paul Brand to the President was even more telling regarding the planned direction of sport and the athletics programs at Elmira College. In the letter Brand detailed the offerings provided to men at Elmira College, including the state of intramurals. His critique of the Women’s Athletic Association then commenced, disparaging them for failing to hold a single match or game, let alone a complete program. “The growth of men’s intramural and intercollegiate teams is no surprise,” Brand commented. He expressed surprise, however, at the failure of the men’s wrestling program and the activities of the Women’s Athletic Association, stating that “…solely women’s activities may have a short life.” He called their organization and financial support into question and said he had assisted with some scheduling but one of the events, a volleyball contest, was run so poorly it was an embarrassment and he cancelled all remaining activities against outside competition. Furthermore, he proposed that club sports (wrestling, men’s volleyball, coed skiing, and women’s volleyball) be provided the money that was previously used for WAA activities, fully understanding, he said, that it would mean that the WAA would no longer exist.  

While the Women’s Athletic Association minutes disappeared, the association was listed as still operational in 1973. Association activities slowly disappeared from records and special awards the association used to distribute at the spring banquet, such as the “E” Award, were discontinued. The athletics program elevated women’s volleyball to varsity, intercollegiate status in 1973, and clubs and intramurals were run by the athletics department during the rest of the decade. One positive step for the women’s teams was membership in the AIAW, though only as associate members (not eligible for championships), by 1978. The one sport the
Elmira women repeatedly put forward for intercollegiate competition over the previous several decades, basketball, finally entered the intercollegiate program in the 1977-78 season.\textsuperscript{414}

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No reference was located to determine how the nickname “Panther” was selected, or if the bridging of the two, “The Pink” and “The Panthers”, was a light-hearted reference to The Pink Panther movie series which gained popularity during the 1970s.


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Ibid. Lindberg mentions a comment from Department of Physical Education chair Appenzellar which recalls requests for space and facilities. Appenzellar contends that she requested a space for softball from the Trustees, but got a baseball field. Prentiss Field, as it was named, remained relatively unused for years after it was constructed. Vassar students do not start a baseball club until 1978.


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391 Ibid.
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402 Newspaper clipping from Octagon, undated with no author, entitled “Girls Sports Still Big At EC”, located in the Elmira Archives. Article describes the recent move to coeducation.
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408 Morrison, F.F. (February 24, 1971). (press release), Elmira College Public Relations, Elmira Archives. Elmira College Public Relations untitled press release authored by Frank Morrison details the renaming of the Annual Athletic Awards Banquet and that President Murray would like to look at joint awards instead of the usual protocol the women had previously used. Also, Morrison, F.F. (February 23, 1971). Former Browns Superstar, Otto Graham, Main Speaker at EC Athletic Banquet, Mar. 29 (press release), Elmira College Public Relations; Elmira Archives.
413 The AIAW directory identifies Paul Brand as the contact, signifying the transition of the women’s sports programs totally under the governance of the college’s athletics department. Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, AIAW Directory 1978-1979, p. 77.
CHAPTER SIX

Analysis of Research Findings

The examination of the athletics programs at women’s colleges that went coeducational in the late 1960s is a revealing microcosm of the overarching change process that occurred institutionally as well as within collegiate athletics. During the 1970s, collegiate athletics itself was in the midst of a philosophical and structural sea change that was also primarily centered around gender. The binary, gendered culture of college athletics is a prime area within which to explore how coeducation transformed the institutional identity of formerly single-sex institutions. Transformation was a nuanced concept, especially for coeducation in historical institutions where gender roles were firmly entrenched. Malkiel argued that while coeducation had a transformative effect on colleges, the “institutions themselves proved to be remarkably durable, and women (or men) generally accepted or embraced traditions rather than upending them.”

The coeducational development of Vassar College and Elmira College was therefore exposed to change on many levels, and had opportunities to embrace traditions or to transform them. The methodical progress of intercollegiate athletics at Vassar manifested the utility of sport program structure to reflect and promote the institutional mission, even if institutional (male) identity was evolving rather than pre-determined, and even though at times such utility alienated internal constituent groups. At Elmira, in contrast, athletics helped define a new coeducational identity. Early developments in men’s sport at the college served as a reminder of the gendered history and nature of sport in the collegiate realm which typically favored the masculine archetypes, along with the cultural influence of men’s athletics. The significance of such institutional histories as those of Vassar and Elmira add to the body of knowledge about the
diversity of college athletics participation and the value of athletics to the collegiate mission and identity. Such studies also add to the foundation of knowledge of women’s college sports history, gender and sport, enrollment strategies and institutional identity in higher education.

**Role Athletics Played in Coeducation Strategies**

At Vassar College, the strategy for moving into coeducation was contained within its slogan, “Coeducation with a difference,” emphasizing equality of the sexes. Decision-making at Vassar was conducted primarily through committee efforts, and at a very deliberate pace. The Physical Education department had requested resources for years, even prior to coeducation, for assistance for students who wanted to pursue competitive athletics opportunities, but had received little in resources or feedback and perceived committee deliberation over such to be painfully chronic. The department, with little guidance or resources from the college administration, assumed a philosophy of allowing for the natural evolution of intercollegiate athletics. If the students gathered enough interest and support, the department would do what it could to assist in managing the sports. The concept of natural evolution was just as much due to the department’s hesitancy to mimic what they viewed as the big-time male athletics model (versus the participatory model they had so long sponsored) as it was due to a lack of resources to commit to such an undertaking without an institutional mandate. They provided whatever assistance they could to students wanting an intercollegiate team, but it was primarily left up to the interest and commitment of the students.

The absence of an early mandate on intercollegiate athletics was a result of the identity struggle waged throughout the first decade of coeducation. Vassar administration craved outside affirmation of its coeducation decision, and frequent assessment of what it viewed as the
college’s uniqueness led to countless reflections and studies about the Vassar male. Athletics frequently entered into discussion as a way to fashion the Vassar male identity, to better serve the current male students, and to eliminate perceived antipathy towards the male students. Even so, the administration viewed sport as a back-burner issue and was hesitant about placing emphasis in its direction due to fears of its impact on the Vassar image of prestige and academic excellence. Only towards the end of the 1970s did organized sport become something in which to truly start investing in order to attract the male student.

In 1974, the Admissions Director Stephenson believed that the college still struggled with its coeducational identity because of a powerful historical association with women rather than its identity as a “college of excellence.” That same year, Student Affair Vice President Duggan called for the Committee on Coeducation to direct efforts towards improving athletic facilities in an effort to create a more hospitable environment for male students. Unfortunately, he also believed his suggestions would never be realized due to the culture at the time. One step that was taken was the procurement of a donation of Prentiss Field for baseball, soccer and track in 1974. The Physical Education department reaction at the time was cynical, however, and the field donation reflected the disjointed nature of opinions about, and understanding of, sport. A soccer team did exist, but no baseball or track team existed at the college, and the Physical Education department had no funds with which to form such teams.

The Committee on Coeducation reported out in February and May of 1975 that athletics was one of three main areas of focus for the college to attract male applicants. That recommendation led to the Visiting Committee of Athletic Directors and Professors of Physical Education, which also provided a list of advised steps for improvement which included staffing
and facilities. Those proposals were not acted on immediately, and instead shifted to long-term, “ultimate” goals due to what was considered a lack of funding for that kind of endeavor.

In 1975, a new Vice President for Student Affairs and a new Admissions Director embarked on a publicity campaign to manage enrollment and image concerns. The controversial admissions pamphlet, *Vassar for Men?*, carefully included athletics as part of the identity of the current male student; images of male athletes were prominent though it maintained the pledge of staying above the big-time athletics fray.

Substantive action finally resulted from a Dean’s Advisory Committee on Athletics in 1976, when Vassar moved forward with additional funding for the Physical Education department for travel and urged some revision to the staffing for intercollegiate athletics in the form of full-time coaches. The publicity campaign initiated by the new administrators extended to athletics, as the Public Relations department began printing sport schedule cards for all sports deemed intercollegiate and reporting athletics results to local media outlets.

In 1978, an Ad Hoc Committee on Athletics moved into a second phase of recommendations for sport at Vassar College. Student polls had revealed that there still existed fear over a jock image. Members of the Physical Education department attempted to settle the doubts by assuring that development would not go in the “big-game” direction while asking for more student commitment to the sports that were supported. The beginning of a modern intercollegiate athletics program also occurred in 1978 when Vassar College hired John Wallace as Athletics Director and also began plans for a new athletics facility. At the same time, Vassar joined the ECAC as a way to further its competitive options and gain recognition for its male athletes.
Despite the national discussion on women in college sport, mention of Title IX and its application to sport is absent in documents from the era concerning admissions and athletics; college officials expressed concern regarding racial diversity and were more concerned or fearful of a backlash from “militant women’s liberation” organizations regarding coeducation decisions and subsequent promotion or marketing. Because there had not been a substantial push to create intercollegiate teams reflecting the male model of sport, there was little for the college to concern itself with. The Physical Education department did attempt to offer competitive opportunities for its women, joining the Northeast Independent Athletic Conference in the mid-1970s. Still, the majority of the decision-making regarding athletics throughout the 1970s was predicated on the image and identity concerns about the Vassar male. Only once that identity was formulated and embraced would there be anything in the athletics realm to compare.

Coeducation strategy at Elmira College, conversely, was determined by strong administrative personalities at the presidential level as well as within athletics. Anecdotal data suggests that many of the first male students at Elmira were veterans attending on the GI Bill or students recruited for athletics participation. Athletics was an important component in the innovation President Murray aimed to market as the new Elmira College. The previously untapped arena of men’s athletics gave Murray opportunity to attract a new demographic--male student-athletes--and push the college into status spheres of higher education it did not have available prior to coeducation simply via new athletics affiliations and notoriety. Enrollment jumped considerably in just the few short years immediately following coeducation (932 in 1968 to 1275 in 1970) and between 1971 and 1979, Elmira College enrollment shifted from 27-percent male to 44-percent.
The president’s hiring of Paul Brand, who was an acquaintance of the Admissions Director, set the tone early. The three individuals formed a male-dominated nexus of power at the college. Dr. Murray provided Brand with authority to construct a men’s athletics program on par with regional competitors. Recruitment of male students for the athletics programs extended the reach of Elmira College and allowed it to branch out regionally and nationally. The facility construction that Murray implemented was designed to parallel the goals of a strong and thriving men’s athletics program and to elevate Elmira’s status among its competitors. The development of men’s sports, membership in the NCAA, and the construction of the Murray Athletic Center and sponsorship of ice hockey in 1973, all made Elmira stand out even more among its competitors. The geodesic dome structures were unique for the time, and many regional institutions in the New England area, in particular, which were on par with the status Elmira desired, already sponsored ice hockey. Other instances of the college promoting its athletics program in order to publicize its arrival into a new status sphere included the basketball team’s trip to Vassar College, complete with a fan bus that included the assumption of victory and champagne, along with the men’s basketball trip to Australia to spread word about how small colleges can develop high-level athletics facilities. Athletics was not just a co-curricular activity for the new male student at Elmira; it both dictated and reflected the associations the president and athletic director wished to develop.

Even after Murray’s tenure as president, Brand maintained the influence he had earlier been afforded, and continued to preside over all things athletic and recreationally-related. Brand conveyed a reputation as a stereotypical athletic male for the 1970s. The local paper commented on his Arnold Palmer resemblance and good looks, he was idolized by the male students, reportedly admired by the female students, and even networked for a short time with the local
sport fan through his own local television program. With the blessing of Murray, Brand wrangled control of the all the athletics programs at the college, eventually even those for women. His disdain for the way that sports had been run prior to his arrival was well established and the administration’s embrace of the NCAA model for its men unequivocally ushered in the end of the existing model of sport for women. In just his first year, Brand and President Murray took over the long-standing women’s athletics awards banquet and combined it with the celebration for intramural and men’s athletics. While natural to combine forces, the first banquet in the coeducation era was coordinated by Brand with little collaboration from the Women’s Athletic Association. The banquet concentrated efforts on its male athletics program, and the guest speaker, a Football Hall of Fame member, was brought in to boost the status level of the event. The historical women’s athletics awards were handed out at this event for only a few more years after 1970, and the Women’s Athletic Association ceased to exist altogether by 1974. Towards the end of the decade and once the men’s programs had settled into the niche Murray and Brand crafted, vestiges of the former women’s sports programs had disappeared and women’s athletics slowly shifted into the NCAA model. The Elmira administration eventually looked to establish more intercollegiate-style programs for the women, and also noted concerns over the college’s Title IX situation by the end of the decade. Athletic Director reports provided to the trustees and the school newspaper mentioned the law and the specific need to hire more female coaches for its female athletes. A female hired initially as the camps director grew into a more pivotal role in athletics administration and was charged with improving the women’s programs.
Changes in Women’s Athletics at Vassar and Elmira at the Beginning of Coeducation

As Elmira and Vassar colleges transitioned to coeducation in the 1970s, the concept of women’s athletics in the nation’s colleges and universities was also evolving. For women’s colleges navigating the complex decision to broaden their educational mission and enrollment, transitioning sport programs also presented administrators with similar complexities – structurally but also philosophically. Sport for women was part of the history of Elmira and Vassar, and both colleges offered a variety of sport opportunities in ways concurrent with national trends as well as, at times, beyond the typical provisions. Both colleges had a long-standing Women’s Athletic Association and traditions surrounding sport programs. At Elmira College, in particular, an entire system of athletics awards had been established by the Women’s Athletic Association during its single-sex years which rewarded longevity and breadth of participation by students over the course of their enrollment at the college. The developments in women’s athletics, including the establishment of the AIAW and the passage of Title IX in 1972, made the decision-making process about athletics even more significant as both colleges contemplated athletics for men. Ironically, the men’s athletics programs had the spotlight first, and once developed into the desired structure, served as the comparison point for their women’s programs which had been there all along.

The establishment of the AIAW and Title IX highlighted the philosophical and structural differences between women’s and men’s intercollegiate athletics in the 1970s. The participatory competition that had long dictated the structure of collegiate women’s programs changed to more closely mirror the structures and philosophies that guided intercollegiate men’s athletics. In this rapidly shifting environment, there was opportunity for both institutions to again take the lead in providing sport in a way that was precedent setting for women’s athletics. The AIAW had been
formed in 1972 to provide a structure for intercollegiate competition as well as national championships for women, initially for seven sports before expanding to 16 national championships in three divisions by 1980. Philosophically, the AIAW aimed to provide a similar but independent sport association that valued not only high-level competition and championships opportunities, but was also an organization that while similar to the NCAA’s model for men’s sports, sought to avoid some of the excesses and negative aspects that were perceived to exist in men’s collegiate sport. The AIAW boasted a membership of 278 from the start and grew to 961 members by the 1980-81 academic year. While AIAW membership ranged from small to large, private to public schools from the East to the West coast, neither Elmira nor Vassar Colleges were among the association’s member schools during the first half of the 1970s. Institutional resources and administrative choices curtailed sport-related efforts and desires of women at Elmira and Vassar Colleges through the latter part of the decade. Coincidentally, then, athletics for women at both institutions was the locale where they lost their voice, if even temporarily, in the shift to coeducation. It was a part of the college environment in which deep-rooted societal and gendered expectations of physical activity and sport seemingly overrode existing traditions.

At Elmira College, several sports were sponsored for women and labeled intercollegiate as early as 1973, including swimming, tennis, and volleyball. Those sports operated primarily on their own with some scheduling assistance through the athletic department. Swimming and tennis had comparable teams for the men, and were able to schedule in conjunction with those teams. The volleyball team, which did not have a male counterpart at the time, was criticized by Brand for being an embarrassment, not fielding enough players for a team and not playing a full schedule despite assistance provided by the men’s athletics program. Only once the Women’s
Athletic Association ceased to exist, the basketball team, which Elmira women were particularly interested in playing at an intercollegiate level even prior to coeducation, was granted intercollegiate status in the 1977-78 season. The basketball team’s status change was on the eve of Elmira College’s associate membership in the AIAW, which occurred in 1978. While the membership moved Elmira more in line with the national athletics trend for women, the associate membership did not include eligibility for the national championship, which also meant no participation in local and regional qualification tournaments. NCAA membership for the men’s teams, by contrast, was fast-tracked for a myriad of reasons, including male student-athlete access to championship opportunities.

Vassar College continued its internal evolution of sports via the Physical Education department well into the 1970s. By the end of the decade, the women were included along with the men in the publicity efforts of printing schedule cards and game coverage by college reporters. Vassar sought membership in the AIAW in the Spring of 1981 for the 1981-82 academic year. The college’s athletic schedule brochure lists potential participation in the New York State Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (NYSAIAW) tournament for the sports of field hockey, soccer, swimming, tennis, and volleyball.

In 1982, the NCAA governance structure expanded to include women’s sports and championships. Elmira College was already a member of the NCAA (admitted in 1970), and since it only sought out associate membership within the AIAW, when the NCAA offered women’s championships, the women’s teams were technically finally eligible for a national tournament. Vassar sought admission into both the AIAW and the NCAA in 1981. Its women’s teams were eligible for AIAW championships through 1983, when the AIAW officially ended its operations and women’s championships were subsumed into the NCAA organizing structure.
Attention to women’s rights in higher education and women’s involvement in intercollegiate sport— the passage of Title IX in 1972 and the growth of the AIAW—occurred contemporaneously as Elmira College and Vassar College were establishing themselves in a new, coeducational environment, and conversely needing to pay attention to their “maleness”. While much focus was understandably provided to recreating themselves for the addition of men, the original mission of each institution to provide equal treatment for female students, for which both schools had been early and strong proponents, appeared to be overshadowed, at least in terms of sport, during much of the first decade of change. The difficulties, however, matched the general struggle that John Thelin noted within the reform of women’s intercollegiate athletics. Guidelines for Title IX were published in 1975, and schools had until 1978 to come into compliance; it was a movement in sport that university officials could largely ignore in the 1970s. Also creating confusion was the decision to base the comparisons of sports on the male model of sport and the policies of the NCAA, which was new territory and complicated situations for schools who had long promoted a more participatory or educational style of women’s athletics involvement.

Sport was a visible signpost for the state of gender equality on campus, and was reflective of what is occurring within an institution more broadly. Miller-Bernal and Poulson suggested, and Malkiel affirmed, that the mere mixing of genders, as occurred at single-sex colleges that went coeducational, did not and could not be expected to bring about ideological or structural development of gender equality. At most colleges, existing gender roles prior to coeducation tended to be endorsed and reaffirmed. At Vassar, sport in many different formats (i.e., club, intramurals, intercollegiate touch football, and intercollegiate contests) had historically moved in and out of popularity but always had a presence at the college. The physical educators who had
been charged with running all athletics programs repeatedly requested more resources to accommodate the growing demands of students for intercollegiate competition before and after coeducation. The physical educators also continuously requested a presidential or an institutional stance on exactly what the athletics program at Vassar should look like. Athletics typically factored into upper administrative level discussions on the Vassar male and frequently appeared as a solution to the challenge of attracting the appropriate student to the college. It was not until late into the 1970s that athletics shifted from a debated, male student attribute to a concrete, formalized program for its male, and female, students.

At Vassar, female students had a historical pattern of attempting to balance a self-confident air of transgressing typical gendered expectations in sport with prevailing societal gender norms. Experiments in sport challenged standard gender roles, such as their baseball teams or flag football teams, but in the end, the traditional mindset was too far ingrained to truly extend gender boundaries. It appeared that the administration at Vassar endorsed a similar, comparable gender strata for its men. The brand of the Vassar male embraced confidence in the masculinity of refinement in social status and intelligence while also grasped onto athleticism as a key characteristic of manhood in order to eliminate fears of being too feminine or homosexual.

It will never be known whether the Elmira faculty advisors of the Women’s Athletic Association would have welcomed the changes in women’s sports in the 1970s and urged the Elmira female students to pursue the new intercollegiate opportunities if the college had remained single-sex. What is known, is that at the dawn of coeducation, the female students were predominantly in favor of intercollegiate competition. At Elmira, however, the women’s leadership in the coeducation era followed traditional gender roles when it came to sport. The status importance of men’s intercollegiate athletics to the overall mission, newly transformed
identity, and financial survival outweighed contemporary developments in women’s sport and
the long-standing tradition of women’s physical activity that existed at the college. At Elmira
College, by initially separating the men’s and women’s athletics programs, the structure
supported anachronistic gender norms and reinforced a status level differential between its men
and its women. The women’s sport culture at Elmira was essentially displaced by the men’s
culture of sport and the status that it brought to the college. Once the men’s program was in
place, the women’s sports were eventually assimilated into the enhanced men’s program model.
While the entire process held the Elmira female student out of the burgeoning national
intercollegiate athletics structure for a handful of years, the incidental result was that the model it
assumed actually reflected changes in women’s athletics and eventually provided the female
students the competitive, intercollegiate opportunities they had long requested.

In *A Place on the Team*, Welch Suggs stated that the triumph of Title IX was that it
created opportunities for women and added value to women’s sport competition. Suggs argues,
however, that women’s sports still lacked a deep, cultural value that most colleges and
universities already ascribed to its men’s athletics. At a former women’s college, it is possible
that cultural significance for women’s athletics was already engrained, to a certain extent, within
the collective fabric of the institution. It can be argued that a pre-existing culture recognizing the
significance of physical activity and sport was present at both Vassar and Elmira Colleges at the
time of coeducation. Still, the first wave of athletics championship competition opportunities for
women on a regional and national level that occurred during the mid-1970s came and went
without involvement by either institution.

At Elmira, the women, in particular those interested in basketball, had started to request a
more robust structure and opportunity for intercollegiate competition. Internal conflict between
the pre-existing directors of the Women’s Athletic Association and the newly appointed Athletic Director, a lack of institutional knowledge or concern in regards to women’s athletics on the part of the new Athletic Director, and a strong presidential push to establish a unique and competitive men’s athletics program all combined to dismantle much of the athletic history at the college and temporarily suspend the growth and development of the women’s athletics programs at Elmira. Interestingly, Title IX was not lost on Elmira College administrators and even students. An article in the student newspaper discussed the specifics of the law and how Elmira would meet the requirements. The article itself and the issues described within exemplified the confusion and evolution of the application of Title IX to collegiate athletics during the 1970s. In the article, Athletic Director Brand cautiously stated that while the college would do everything it needed to in order to meet the standards of the law, progress could be deterred because women might not participate in “rough, physical sports like hockey” and that having to provide equal scholarships to women would decrease scholarship amounts for men. The tone of the article was reluctant and disdainful regarding the prospects available under Title IX, and set up the genders in opposition to each other. As Suggs suggested, Title IX created opportunity for women, but due to the preexisting status differential and cultural significance between men’s and women’s sports in general which was typically male-dominated, a zero-sum style of comparison of the genders oftentimes resulted. The new requirement of providing for women’s sports had a tendency to be labeled not as adding value to a department, but as taking away from a department’s ability and resources to provide for its men’s sports.

For Vassar, a large-scale intercollegiate athletics program was not central to how the college wanted itself represented. By keeping intercollegiate athletics with intramurals and clubs under the Physical Education department for the early part of the 1970s, the college reinforced
the process of socializing students into a structure which favored neither gender nor any particular concept of athletics, excluding only that of the “jock” or “big-time athletics”. Development of an intercollegiate program occurred slowly throughout the 1970s. The administration focused most efforts on the Vassar male and determining his identity. When it came to sports, the only thing that was definitive from the start was a mistrust for “big-time athletics” and the qualities that philosophy attributed to or excluded from the Vassar male identity meant that little attention and resources were provided for developing the standard male model of intercollegiate athletics. This also meant that the administration abated any desires by the female students to also follow the national trend by incorporating intercollegiate play. At least partially intended, the treatment of men’s and women’s athletics turned out equivalent, and reflected intentions of maintaining equality. Ironically, admissions selectivity, the reason many at the college rejected a big-time athletics program because of the “dumb-jock” stereotype, actually suffered in the years following coeducation even with minimal emphasis on athletics, leading to a slight softening of attitudes about athletic involvement.

**Connection of Athletics Development to Institutional Identity and Contemporary Trends**

In her research on coeducation at elite institutions from the late 1960s through 1980s, Malkiel determined that there were things that coeducation at that time did not and could not do. At the most elite colleges and universities, coeducation “did not solve, and could not have been expected to solve, such persistently challenging personal and social issues.” Despite all the advances during the women’s rights movement and the civil rights movement preceding coeducation, for instance, issues such as gendered-patterns of behavior, the ratio of women in leadership and faculty positions, gendered fields of study and the gender ratio of graduate
students were not resolved by coeducation. Yet coeducation still had a transforming effect, and the process by which it occurred is a relevant aspect of analysis in higher education. The development of the men’s and women’s athletics programs at Vassar and Elmira Colleges illustrated the respective institutions’ connection with historical and contemporary patterns of higher education, the interconnectedness of gender with aspects of change, and also the instances where leadership, process, and institutional survival combined to allow the college to travel a more individualized course.

**Consistency at Vassar College**

The development of the men’s and women’s athletics programs followed much of the same course throughout the 1970s. Resources were scarce throughout most of the decade and requests from the physical educators to help provide students with the intercollegiate experiences they wanted were largely ignored. The Physical Education faculty also requested philosophical guidance on the model of athletics at the institution. Little assistance was directly provided, though the absence of allocated resources was indication that at that time, the college was not interested in crafting a modern athletics program. The prevailing culture demonstrated a fear of and disdain for the contemporary big-time men’s athletics structure, and this atmosphere prevailed throughout the decade. The model of athletics remained fairly consistent from the years leading up to coeducation throughout most of the 1970s. Vassar therefore trended outside of the norm for men’s athletics by maintaining a more participatory focus. Women’s intercollegiate athletics in the United States changed swiftly and dramatically in the 1970s, so while Vassar’s women’s athletics programs were reflective of the national norm at the beginning of coeducation,
by the end of the decade, they were only starting to move in the same direction as national developments.

Men’s athletics and recreational opportunities were repeatedly viewed as solutions or potential tools for providing an attractive campus setting for the male student. Sports already existed for the women, and in their contemporary status, were not viewed as much as a tool to retain its female students or recruit new ones, but something permissible to a degree should the students so desire. Popularity of sport for women had ebbed and flowed throughout the 1960s; for the physical educators of the time, this pattern was commonplace.

Little difference existed between men’s and women’s athletics development in the 1970s at Vassar by design. The slogan “Coeducation with a difference” meant that they were going to highlight equality in the mission and institutional identity. As the college labored over what that meant and what kind of male student it wanted to attract to complement the female students it had long enrolled, progress mirroring the national intercollegiate athletics scene was waylaid. A few sports, including men’s soccer and basketball, attracted the male students and Vassar was able to maintain teams and schedules annually. Yet the institutional emphasis was non-existent throughout much of the 1970s, despite various committees on coeducation pinpointing intercollegiate athletics as a location within the college they could improve in order to be more attractive to the male student. The 1975 admissions pamphlet “Vassar for men?” highlighted intercollegiate athletics with its imagery and in the text, recounting how many varsity letters were earned and how many male students had been varsity team captains, discussing the records of its men’s soccer and basketball programs, but taking care to also make it clear about the style of athletics (not a “big game” college). The pamphlet accompanied a new directive to publicize more of what the Vassar male was adding to the campus, and intercollegiate athletics was linked
into the college’s administrative direction. A more concentrated focus on intercollegiate athletics for both men and women evolved from this directive in the latter half of the decade, including hiring of coaches and publicity such as schedule cards and score reporting of games and events to local news sources.

The Vassar College development of intercollegiate athletics corresponded with the goal of creating a newer version of the same Vassar for both genders but only under Vassar circumstances. It maintained much of its mission of equality within the athletics program, first through inattention, then through more purposeful publicity directives. While on a much different scale, developments in Vassar athletics trended more in the direction of The Ivy League and its tenants regarding non-athletic-based scholarship, recruiting athletes who were representative of the academic quality of the overall student body, and its inclusion of female athletes in its league for competition and championships. Though The Ivy League was much closer to the national model of intercollegiate athletics for men than it was to the participatory model, Vassar had a history of comparing itself with the Ivy schools resulting from its association among the Seven Sisters colleges. Its admissions publications alluded to a connection, real or otherwise, telling prospective (male) students that “Vassar sounds Ivy.”

There is no evidence that its athletics programs were modeled following The Ivy League’s example, but Vassar desired to emphasize its educational excellence over everything and worried about categorization within either end of the college’s perceived understanding of the athletics spectrum. Vassar administrators feared an image of being attractive for gay men by showing too little emphasis on athletics, but also went to lengths to underscore the fact that it was not recruiting only “jocks” or into big-time athletics.
Development of men’s and women’s athletics was on an even scale because of an institutional decision to carefully map out its gender balance – in numbers and in character. Its correspondence to what was happening on the larger scale in intercollegiate athletics was behind trend, however, during most of the 1970s. Vassar caught up with the national trends late in the decade once its other transitional issues were resolved. By the 1980s, the athletics programs were similar to what could be found in other NCAA Division III institutions. Vassar’s mission of equality was carried through its coeducation process, including within athletics. Treatment of its intercollegiate athletics programs was equal and the teams reached a similar status to other similar institutions by the early 1980s, yet the underlying, archaic assumptions about sports, gender, and sexuality cannot be overlooked and were also maintained throughout the decade. As Malkiel expressed, coeducation certainly changes colleges, yet that shift alone does not automatically remove gendered patterns of behavior.

**Ebbs and Tides at Elmira College**

The development of women’s athletics at Elmira College was conflicted during the 1970s. Early in the decade the struggle between philosophies meant the women were unable to explore all the opportunities the men’s sports were given at the start of coeducation. By the second part of the decade, however, women’s sports slowly shifted under the auspices of the men’s Athletic Director, and the same intercollegiate model that had been built for the men was then used as a template for the women. In 1974 Elmira hired Carrie Daly as a coach for volleyball and swimming, and in 1976 had a new coach for women’s basketball, Laurie Davies. The female athletes were hopeful that with support, a “permanent sport criteria for women could be established.” By 1977, the women’s basketball team, which had long been
requesting to become intercollegiate, spoke out in the school newspaper. They thanked the paper for coverage throughout the season, but expressed dismay about the support they received. “How a school can expect girls to continue to uphold their spirit when no support is given is beyond us. It is great that Elmira College can offer financial assistance to men for basketball and hockey and come through with very powerful and successful teams, but when the women volunteer their time and effort for the school, they at least deserve some type of acknowledgement.”

The next year the team was elevated to intercollegiate status, and the women’s program was given associate member status in the AIAW. Associate status precluded involvement in championships, yet the membership was a step towards new associations and a women’s athletics program reflective of national trends. In the President’s Trustees report in 1981, goals for athletics included keeping the men’s athletics program in NCAA Division III, with “additional emphasis being given to women’s sports.”

The development of men’s athletics at Elmira was purposefully constructed from the start of coeducation and directed by presidential leadership. Malkiel identified that in the United States, leadership played a fundamental role in change, and that presidents (and particularly, male presidents) played a critical role in coeducation, needing to mobilize planning and execution to make coeducation happen, and also to find the necessary resources. Despite declining enrollment, and therefore resources, prior to the coeducation implementation, President Murray found the necessary financial resources needed to capture prestige and status he believed would assist the college’s transition through men’s athletics. Significant resources were specifically directed towards men’s athletics once the coeducation decision was made. The college hired a men’s athletics director, coaches for sports that did not even start with full team rosters, pursued a fast-track of the men’s athletics programs into NCAA membership, assumed
control of the annual athletics awards banquet, and the largest addition which was aimed at both prestige through athletics nationally and regionally, the Murray Center.

The critical differences between the development of men’s and women’s athletics in the 1970s were the result of the use of athletics as a primary focus to attract male students and complete the process of coeducation. The utility was on many levels. It theoretically aided enrollment. It combatted the mentality that a women’s college would not be of equal status as one which had always enrolled men. Men’s athletics provided a means of increasing status by joining the NCAA and creating new associations with other colleges and universities. The Murray Center added to a status and prestige which was centered around men’s athletics and recreation, and aimed to extend that prestige beyond the Elmira campus. The resources needed were perceived to be worth the boost in status and associations.

The developments in athletics corresponded with the shifting institutional identity. Elmira administrators knew the college’s history of being a women’s college was a dominant identity, at least regionally, and needed to ensure the new, coeducational structure was recognized. A thriving men’s athletics program provided ample evidence that it was. Elmira enrollment was maintained throughout the 1970s, and the gender ratio of the entering freshman class neared equality by 1977 (49-percent male). The college began to experience overall enrollment difficulties just one year later, however, and male enrollment dropped sharply in 1978 to 41-percent of the freshman class. The President’s Report to the Board of Trustees highlighted the need for Admissions to again focus more on the male applicant. Yet the 1979 Trustees report noted conflicting ideas about the mission of Elmira College. Perceptions regarding coeducational success in terms of gender and that portion of the college’s identity were moved aside for new issues and concerns. The President noted the common ground mission of Elmira
being a “small, independent, liberal arts college, committed to preparing learners of all ages to become responsible global citizens”, yet the growing number of professional programs at the school, including an evening program for both bachelor’s and associate’s degrees, as well as certificates of achievement in areas such as coaching, caused questioning of the central identity and mission. By 1981, President Grant acknowledged the difficulties the college continued to face in maintaining full-time, undergraduate levels, and reported again on the mission of serving all ages as well as being a regional center for knowledge and service. Athletics was still a significant portion of the Trustees report, however, concerns had shifted away from the overarching intercollegiate program and a specific emphasis on its utility for enrollment. The administration focused more on the academic side of its athletics offerings, including a desired revision of the physical education requirements and the physical education major offered. The operational costs of the Murray Center also consumed much of the administration’s concern, leading to a call to seek out more outreach to the community including sport camps, which were quickly becoming profitable and supplementing the income of the Murray Center.436

Athletics was an early location of attention for the transition to coeducation, and in doing so, placed the male student and men’s athletics in the forefront of campus efforts. Elmira’s historical women’s college identity was succinctly altered in 1969, and men’s athletics assumed a large role in that transformation. That transformation period was relatively short yet forceful. By firmly embracing the archetypical, cultural superiority of men’s intercollegiate athletics, the college eliminated the existing women’s structure because of a perceived lack of cultural importance. Men’s athletics as envisioned by President Murray and Athletic Director Brand was well established by 1976. Attention at that point was no longer on making coeducation a success, it was assumed that it had been accomplished, but had morphed into more pressing issues that
had nothing to do with gender, such as the college’s central identity and mission as a liberal arts college and its connection with and responsibilities to the region. With the emphasis shifted away from increasing the men’s sports complement, and in part due to attention to Title IX, the athletics department finally returned to its women’s component, taking over the last of the women’s club programs, adding a few women’s coaches, and joining (if only as an associate) the AIAW for intercollegiate competition. In the case of Elmira College, the prestige it sought through athletics when it added male students evidenced the culturally constructed imbalance of importance that existed between men’s and women’s sports at the time. In many ways the college attempted to catch up to other coeducational schools and their men’s intercollegiate athletics programs. In other ways, Elmira also boldly initiated change without a precedent. Few elite women’s schools went coeducational, and its New York neighbor Vassar College certainly did not attribute such emphasis to its men’s athletics program.

The relationship of institutional status to the processes and types of institutional change affected how Vassar and Elmira experienced the coeducation transition. This distinction was evident within its athletics decision-making. Finkelstein, Farrar, and Pfnister believed a difference existed between highly selective and well-established versus the less selective or affluent liberal arts institutions; the elite institutions were less likely to need to undergo major adaptive changes. Neely likewise argued that the more elite colleges could be more selective about how they implemented changes. Less selective institutions experienced more ambiguity with their mission, and Thelin contended that these institutions were typically prompted to promote programs or make changes that might be attractive to more students, not what necessarily fit their original profile.
Vassar College was among the elite women’s colleges, occupying membership in the Seven Sisters association and linked with Ivy colleges. The transition to coeducation generated questions regarding academic status and quality of its new and continuing students. Vassar closely scrutinized its enrollment figures, which fueled its almost decade-long task of determining the characteristics of the Vassar male. Vassar had the ability to maintain its liberal arts mission, and to delve into such a lengthy, internal debate. Its well-established, historical prestige provided a theoretical cushion to fall back onto as it worked through the processes of change. Athletics at Vassar, therefore, followed the same path. There was no critical urgency to establishing an intercollegiate athletics program, and the prestige associated with involvement with a national organization or conference was not perceived as needed.

Urgency, in contrast, may well have been part of the equation in the coeducation transition at Elmira College. While Elmira promoted its historical legacy as being the first women’s institution to offer equivalent (to men) degrees to its students, its size, selectivity, and affluence were on a lower scale than that of Vassar. Based on the research of liberal arts colleges and adaption, the status level of Elmira meant that it was more predisposed to greater change in mission, and overall, as it went through the process of coeducation. In an effort to maintain and attract enrollment as a newly coeducational institution, President Murray endeavored to provide Elmira with a status association through men’s athletics that would make it attractive to students, both male and female. Mitchell Stevens observed that no other country wove sports into the academic culture and institutional identity to the extent that Americans did. Athletic league affiliation granted social incentive and power to the colleges and universities who were members. No other changes on the Elmira campus, outside of a new dormitory building, invited in the new male student the way they envisioned their athletics
program doing. The fast-tracked membership in the NCAA was viewed as a major accomplishment and the facility acquisitions and renovations of the Murray Center lifted the college into a status sphere not available prior to coeducation and assumedly not readily available via another method. Most of the early male students were recruited for or participated in athletics.

Yet Elmira experienced issues with its mission late in the 1970s. Debates commenced over the mission of the institution and its status as a liberal arts college in the final few years of the decade. Elmira believed it had made it through the early challenges of coeducation, structurally and philosophically providing a coeducational environment on campus and ensuring that the college was perceived by the outside as a coeducational college. The college had offered night courses to both men and women prior to coeducation as a means of supplementing its full-time, undergraduate tuition when enrollment had dipped. A decade into coeducation, Elmira experienced difficulty again in maintaining full-time, undergraduate enrollment and began offering certificate programs and associate degrees in various professional areas, and discussed a commitment to being a center for regional education. Neely argued that as the less selective institutions experienced greater ambiguity with mission, economics directed them towards catering to vocationalism of students, both traditional and non-traditional.\textsuperscript{441} For Elmira, though the outward appearances of a successful coeducation transition were evident in its competitive (men’s) athletics program, the college was unable to prolong the enrollment benefits of such change, and the prestige associated with athletics association did not extend to other lingering debates such as the institution’s overarching mission.
Long-Term Implications

Elmira College, in particular, continued to occasionally look to athletics as a means to enhance and balance its enrollment. The goal of a gender-balanced enrollment came close to realization in the decade following coeducation, however, by 2009, enrollment had reached 72-percent female, mirroring the percentages in 1971 at the beginning of coeducation. Athletics alone was not enough to maintain the overall enrollment and permanently guide admissions trends at the college, at least not at the envisioned balance. In its 2016-17 Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) document, the college provided supplemental information which indicated efforts to improve women’s programs had continued, but that men’s athletics had still been designated as a tool for improving men’s enrollment at the institution.

“Elmira College has made a commitment to improve athletics participation opportunities for our student-athletes with a special emphasis on women's programs since 1987. During this period five women's programs were added: lacrosse; field hockey; ice hockey; golf and cross country. Staff enhancements and facility renovations were made. The College enrolls a higher percentage of women; however, athletics plays an important role in the recruitment and retention of men. To grow male enrollment, men's volleyball was added in 2010-11, baseball in 2014-15 and cross country in 2015-16. The Cheerleading program is administered through Athletics. A competition team accommodated 26 participants in 2016-17. The team also competed in NCA sponsored STUNT for the first time last season.” [https://ope.ed.gov/athletics/#/institution/details](https://ope.ed.gov/athletics/#/institution/details)

The numbers reflected athletics’ importance in enrollment endeavors, and, particularly, with male enrollment. With a 2016-17 reported total undergraduate enrollment of 974, just over 30-percent of its students participated in one of the college’s 19 intercollegiate sports. The number of male student-athletes at Elmira constituted 47.5-percent (145 athletes of 305 male students) of the total male enrollment. Female student-athletes made up 22.1-percent of the total female enrollment. 442
According to its EADA reporting, Vassar College, by comparison, continued to enroll a larger student body (2,390 in 2016-17), and by 2016, had an enrollment that was 42.8-percent male and 57.1-percent female. The college sponsored 23 varsity, intercollegiate sports by 2016, and of its male students, 19.5-percent were counted as student-athletes. Their women’s athletics teams accounted for 14.3-percent of the overall female student population. Athletics at Vassar continued to be reflective of its student population and while a significant portion of its enrollment, had not been solely relied upon to aid in the recruitment of either gender.

**Contributions and Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several recommendations and suggestions for future research that can be derived specifically from this study, covering research fields of higher education, sport, and gender. Elmira College and Vassar College were small liberal arts women’s colleges in upstate New York that went coeducational in the same time frame. Overall, however, they operated in separate spheres of higher education based on historical associations and social and financial reputation. The range of experiences of these two institutions demonstrates that extending the variables, and including institutions such as state institutions and teacher’s colleges, should only multiply the possible yield of results, and perhaps also discover some commonalities. Future research could shed more light on the development of contemporary women’s collegiate athletics, examining whether a college’s associations, status identity, student population, or even leadership were more dominant factors in providing opportunities in women’s athletics, what those opportunities looked like, or, conversely, whether institutional identity was only a factor in how athletics was structured if other organizational and administrative elements appropriately aligned.
The path from single-sex to coeducation particularly isolates the element of gender in institutional decision making for study, which makes the future research of schools similar to Elmira and Vassar a valid place of investigation of both gender in higher education as well as athletics. Studying the development of intercollegiate athletics at colleges and universities already coeducational would not only shed light on contemporaneous gender relations during the same era, but could, for instance, extend to examining how departments maneuvered through the AIAW/NCAA schism in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

From an administrative perspective, these case studies add to the body of inquiry regarding the role of athletics in higher education. A uniquely American practice, intercollegiate athletics has important social status implications for universities that can, among other factors, be linked with prestige and ultimately enrollment. Utility of athletics for enrollment-driven institutions is not to be overlooked, but as the situations at Vassar and Elmira demonstrate, should not be expected to alone resolve such needs.

Extending case study research of single-sex to coeducational institutions from their athletics departments to curricular change as well as social developments on campus, particularly as they relate to gender during the same era, would permit comparisons within the same schools as well as across different associations or types of institutions. Such studies would help look deeper into whether the gendered nature of athletics created scenarios that were independent of the rest of campus, or whether those traditionally masculine archetypes existed in similar forms throughout the institution and, in turn, higher education.

Finally, this research also opens up avenues within which to continue examination of the relation between institutional change and social status in higher education. The case studies of Vassar and Elmira lend credence to the assertions that more elite colleges with larger
endowments were more resilient to widespread change than were colleges of a lesser social
standing or within a different status sphere. Despite choosing to go coeducational in order to
change with society and offer what it viewed to be a relevant education to its female students,
Vassar continued to focus on its unique identity in order to transition. Sport was an attribute of
its desired male student, but only once that was determined, athletics structure transitions
followed for both men and women. Elmira College also focused on its identity, but elected to
make associations within men’s sport in order to facilitate a faster route to desired prestige, and
by extension, enrollment.

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