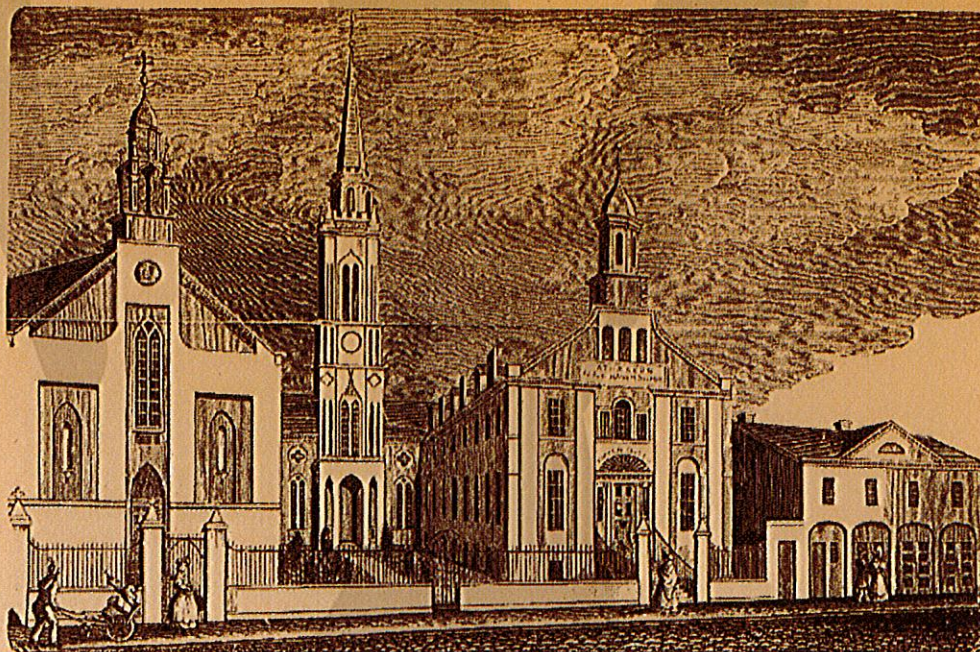


To See  
Great Wonders



*A History  
of Xavier University  
1831 - 2006*

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Xavier is mainly the contributed services of the Jesuit Community, and gifts from individuals and foundations, cannot long endure on such a deficit economy. So, Xavier University, concerned with maintaining its scholastic excellence, its many out-of-classroom services to its students, and its vitality for development and growth, . . . must continue to be circumspect about the expenditure of its resources. It must regularly review all of its sources of income and strive with all its might for improvement." In the absence of a significant endowment, that fiscal mindset would for the foreseeable future be a continuing imperative in the life of the university. (95)

#### **The University Becomes Fully Coeducational**

The idea of transforming Xavier University into a coeducational undergraduate day institution developed in the 1960s. Though there had been sporadic discussions of it earlier, the idea crystallized in the latter part of the decade. In the mid-1950s several students in the school's newspaper had recommended that Xavier become coeducational. A few years earlier three Jesuit universities—Creighton, St. Louis, and Gonzaga in Spokane, Washington—had obtained formal permission from the Jesuit superior general to admit women students in their colleges of arts and sciences. One Xavier student argued that having female students in the undergraduate day programs would make the boys "dress nicer," act "more civil," and study harder so that they would not be outsmarted by girls. Early in his presidency Paul O'Connor maintained that there was no need for Xavier to be completely coeducational because there were already fine Catholic colleges for women in Cincinnati. He did concede, however, that having young women present on campus would doubtless bring out the best in the young men and possibly decrease interfaith marriages. (96)

In the fall of 1961 the trustees began considering whether the undergraduate day division should be coeducational. At the time there were women students registered in the Evening College, summer sessions, and Graduate School. Two years later they petitioned the Jesuit provincial, who at the time disapproved of coeducation, that women be admitted to the College of Business, emphasizing that "there are no suitable Catholic facilities for business education on the college level available to girls in the city of Cincinnati." Notwithstanding the provincial's earlier assurance to President O'Connor that under such conditions "Roman permission for coeducation is readily given," he



denied Xavier's request. Despite the disappointment over the provincial's decision, in 1967 O'Connor pointed out in a talk in Indianapolis that Xavier would "continue to strive for excellence" in its undergraduate programs, as well as "search for new programs that will add to our educational service to individuals. This may include," he said, modifying his position of a decade earlier, "women in the near future." At their spring board meeting that year the trustees again discussed whether they "should come to a definite policy favoring coeducation." No action was taken. (97)

While the Xavier trustees and administration entertained the question of coeducation, President O'Connor in 1967 granted permission to several students from Our Lady of Cincinnati College (OLC), a women's college on Victory Parkway about four miles south from the Xavier campus, to take day classes. The Sisters of Mercy had opened the college, which overlooked the Ohio River, in 1935. O'Connor referred to the OLC students as "special exceptions." The following year the administrations of Xavier University and Our Lady of Cincinnati College agreed on a cooperative experimental program whereby students from both colleges could elect to attend certain day classes on either campus. In announcing the plan, which was subject to renewal each year, Paul O'Connor and Sister Mary Honora Kroger, OLC president, pointed out that it was "not to be construed or viewed as preliminary to a merger. The identity, autonomy, and independence of each institution are in no way impaired by this agreement." They hoped ultimately that a consortium embracing all area institutions of higher learning would be achieved. (98)

As the two institutions engaged in the cooperative venture the university's Student Council in the fall of 1968 conducted a survey of the undergraduate student body concerning the possibility of coeducation at the university. Among the 943 respondents, 22 percent were freshmen, 28 percent sophomores, 28 percent juniors, and 22 percent seniors. There was a uniform and affirmative trend in the answers among commuters, resident students, and students throughout the four classes. Among the respondents, about three-quarters of whom had attended all-male high schools, 64 percent of them wanted Xavier "to extend coeducation to the undergraduate day division," while 19 percent did not and 17 percent were indifferent. (99)

Three months later a university-wide committee, chaired by Dean Thomas Hailstones of the College of Business, submitted a preliminary report on coeducation to the Board of Trustees. The majority of the



trustees thought that by going coeducational the university could both increase the quality of the students and help its financial position. At the time the university faced a \$600,000 deficit. They advised O'Connor to confer with Archbishop Karl Alter of Cincinnati and the presidents of the two Catholic women's colleges, Our Lady of Cincinnati College, which was scheduled to change its name to Edgecliff College on February 3, 1969, and the College of Mount St. Joseph, before they made a proposal to the provincial. (100)

During the holiday season O'Connor met with all three individuals. "Sister [Mary] Honora at Edgecliff [College]," O'Connor informed the board, "thought that this move of ours would hurt them during the first and possibly during the second year. But she thought in the long run it would not make too much difference." He then added in parentheses that he did "not know how many of her faculty would agree with her." Honora and the Sisters of Mercy had expected Xavier to make "this move long before this time," he explained, "and that they had been preparing for it." Moreover, he continued, "Sister Adele [Clifford] at Mt. St. Joseph also did not think it would make much difference one way or the other." Though the archbishop at first seemed worried about the effect it might have on the women's colleges in the city, he was satisfied with the discussions O'Connor had had with the two presidents. He did think, however, that if the Jesuits were going to put up women's residences, they "were letting [themselves] in for a lot of trouble." O'Connor informed the archbishop that it was not in the university's immediate plans. (101)

At the January 1969 meeting of the Board of Trustees, O'Connor cited reasons why he thought "it would be advantageous" for Xavier to go coed. Arguing that the number one reason for Xavier to admit women at the undergraduate day level was to provide "a more normal and natural environment for learning and living," he contended that it would also give Xavier "access to a number of excellent students heretofore denied to us." While not thinking women were "naturally more intelligent than men," he insisted that "experience has shown that . . . colleges who have gone coeducational find their women students in general ranking higher than the men." The presence of bright women students in a class, he further argued, might "spur on the male students to better accomplishment." (102)

While maintaining that there were valid academic reasons for the university to become fully coeducational, he also underscored the potential financial benefit. O'Connor argued that for Xavier to



become financially solvent it needed "more day undergraduate students," as young men were not attending in sufficient numbers. Not unlike many other Catholic colleges and universities in the late sixties Xavier's financial picture was bleak. The unprecedented growth in the college-going population in the early part of the decade led the university, like many other institutions, to enlarge faculties and make extensive additions to facilities on the campus. As a consequence, expenses soared, loans were secured, and significant deficits were incurred. Moreover, the unexpected declining enrollment in the latter part of the decade had also contributed to the deficits. (103)

According to O'Connor's best estimate, the university could function most efficiently with about 2,500 day undergraduate students. He was hopeful that going coed would help achieve that goal. In addition, he pointed out that the archdiocesan school office worried about a number of their Catholic women graduates attending the coeducational secular universities. "[A] goodly number of these graduates stated quite flatly," the president said, "that they wanted a coeducational school and were tired of 'all girls' schools taught by Nuns." Lastly, there was "also the fact," he declared, "that the presence of women on the campus seems to have a civilizing influence on the men students, but I would not press this point too far." (104)

Shortly after O'Connor's presentation the trustees unanimously voted to admit women students to the undergraduate day division, thus discontinuing the 138-year-old single sex undergraduate admission policy. "It was to be clearly understood," they noted, "that it is the mind of the Trustees that the University remain a Jesuit university, not less than at present, and it does not mean that we expand simply for the reason of having greater numbers." Like O'Connor they hoped to secure and maintain an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 2,500 students. About three weeks later Father General Pedro Arrupe wrote to the Chicago provincial, Robert F. Harvanek, approving Xavier's request to admit women students. "Let us pray that the admission of women," he wrote, "will relieve the financial embarrassment of Xavier and elevate academic standards as well." (105)

In the fall of 1969 the undergraduate day college of the university became coeducational. Xavier was among the last of the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities to become totally coeducational. That fall 52 women, including 23 first-year students and 29 transfer students, signed up for day classes. Two months earlier, on July 1, Mary Louise Faeth had been named the university's first dean of women in the



undergraduate day school. Since the end of the nineteenth century coeducation had helped to save many small denominational men's colleges whose existences were severely threatened by competition from state institutions in the Midwest and West. In the 1970s almost all of the remaining Catholic men's colleges and some women's colleges went coed. (106)

Though a 1968 campus survey had indicated that about two-thirds of the undergraduate student body preferred coeducation, some students opposed the change. "If we have equal numbers of girls and fellows, hardcore intellectual thinking will be lost," a male junior student said in 1969 in an interview by the *Xavier News*. When the administration planned to open the fifth and half of the sixth floors of Kuhlman Hall to women in 1970, there was an avalanche of outrage in the student newspaper. "Our university has condescended to allow women to enroll in day and night classes," a male student said. "But to allow them in our dorms! Never!" (107)

Notwithstanding some male opposition and reservations, women students immediately became engaged in curricular and cocurricular activities. They were active in campus organizations including Student Council, the weekly *Xavier News*, the drama group, volunteer work, and liturgical activities. In the fall of 1969 Kathy Keating won two Ohio women's swimming championships, 50-yard and 100-yard breaststroke titles, at a meet held at Denison University. While the women's rifle team zeroed in on practice targets, other women students helped organize a marching drilling team. (108)

As the university went coed, it had to change the way it did business. Father Albert B. Bischoff, a member of Xavier's campus ministry staff in 1969, noted "that the cafeteria service had a habit of cooking for men. It was all starches and heavy stuff, lots of greasy meat, no salads. The women's dietary needs were overlooked." At times when he accompanied the women to the cafeteria he observed that the young men were less likely to whistle or make catcalls in his presence. "I was like their guardian angel. They were noble, courageous souls." In 1970 only two women taught full-time on the faculty. The university had hired its first temporary woman faculty member in the undergraduate day division in the Department of Biology in 1960. The cultural and social events on campus also had to be reconfigured in the early 1970s. In the spring of 1972 an Ad Hoc Committee on Women's Concerns, in conjunction with the English and education departments and with assistance from the Cincinnati chapter of the National Organization



for Women, sponsored a three-day campus seminar featuring a series of lectures and panel presentations, designed to sensitize the Xavier community to the need for an increased awareness of the roles of women in society and, more particularly, on campus. As the institution in the 1970s became more fully coeducational, the few women faculty members, full-time and adjunct, sometimes joined by women support and administrative staffs and students, explored a variety of topics relevant to alternative lifestyles for women as they sought to realize their maximum potential as human beings. (109)

#### Board of Trustees

From 1865 through the first half of the twentieth century, church influence within many private institutions had declined, especially in colleges that had converted themselves into universities. The modern era at these schools saw the presidency and the ranks of the faculty, once dominated by clergymen, routinely filled by laymen. In the process, these faculties acquired more authority in terms of hiring, curriculum, and degree requirements. Moreover, in many institutions the trustees had become corporate directors for institutional maintenance and the administrators more like business managers. (110)

As the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities entered the 1960s, their presidents remained firm in their opposition to laicization of the boards of trustees. "As administrators of Jesuit colleges and Jesuit universities," they recorded in the Proceedings of the Conference of Jesuit Presidents on January 10–11, 1960, "we readily recognize our responsibility to clearly establish and to spell out in our structural organization the lines of Jesuit leadership and control, particularly in each key spot. We recognize that legal authority must be clearly and exclusively invested in Jesuit hands." Within a few years that attitude changed radically. (111)

The move toward greater inclusion of lay men and women on the boards of the Catholic institutions began around 1964. According to the Charles Ford and Edward Roy study in *The Renewal of Catholic Higher Education*, published in 1966, the "number two problem" after finances cited by the presidents of the colleges and universities surveyed in the mid-1960s was "the ambiguous role of the religious community." There were times when religious community and university leaders did not agree, and when that happened religious community opinions took precedent over the university. Prior to this time a Jesuit college or university was identified with the religious congregation, namely the