

The Culture of Catholic Women's Colleges at the University of Toronto 1911-1925¹

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From the 1847 arrival of members of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) (The Loretto Sisters), women religious have played an active and a diverse role in a variety of educational institutions for Ontario's children and youth. By the turn of the century, schools run by orders of women religious were present in both urban and rural Ontario, with many of the congregations using their Ontario mother houses to establish missions across Canada (and by early twentieth century, around the world). What is evident from a review of the historical record is the extent to which communities of women religious responded to the changing needs of the times. Their involvement and leadership in education (broadly defined) altered their members and their governance structures as well as the larger religious and secular domains in which they worshiped and lived.

This article is part of a course of research on women religious and education. It explores this topic through the lens of the culture of IBVM's Loretto College and the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of Toronto's (CSJ) St Joseph's College, the two Catholic women's colleges at the University of Toronto. The argument is put forth that the two women's colleges worked effectively to create a space for themselves, their faculty, and their students within both the secular and religious communities of the University of Toronto. By the end of the first decade of their existence, the graduates of the two Catholic women's colleges were successful in achieving the colleges' dual goal of protecting the Catholic faith and enhancing the status of Catholics in

¹ The author acknowledges the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC); the archivists of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph's Morrow Park, the Ursulines of the Chatham Union, the Archdiocese of Toronto and the Order of St Basil; Evelyn Collins, the Archivist of the University of St Michael's College Archives (USMCA), and the anonymous reviewers for their assistance in preparing this article.

secular professional society. Evidence is presented through an analysis of sources drawn primarily from the Archives of St Michael's College and the Basilian Archives, as well as sources drawn from the Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto and the two congregational archives.

Further, the article focuses on the first fourteen years of the women's colleges' history. It begins in the year in which women first appear in the Calendars of the University of Toronto as students of St Michael's College (1911-12), with the first graduates appearing for St Joseph's in 1914 and Loretto in 1915.² It ends in 1925, the year in which the Loretto College Alumnae Association published a detailed review and retrospective of the lives and careers of the first decade of graduates. Following a brief review of the recent work on Catholic women's colleges in Canada, the United States and Ireland, the origins of the two women's colleges under discussion are delineated to identify why they maintained separate identities. An analysis of the student experiences, their activities, and career paths is created to present a composite image of life in the colleges. The article concludes with directions for future research.

In 1997, American historian Linda Eisenman made the challenging observation that "Catholic women reveal a long and influential history in higher education, with religious teaching orders responsible for founding scores of colleges for women beginning in 1895. Beyond institutional histories, the overall experience of Catholic collegiate women or religious teachers remains relatively unexamined."³ What she wrote of the American experience could have been applied with some accuracy to Canada and Ireland. Yet, in the past six years, several authors have undertaken studies of Catholic women's higher education

² Prior to that, Catholic women students registered at University College. Both Loretto and St Joseph's College claim affiliation with St Michael's College in 1911. In the 1916 yearbook, Loretto announced that it "completes, in May 1911, the fifth year of its affiliation with St. Michael's" (USMCA. *St Michael's Yearbook*, 1916, 17). St Joseph's College announced in 1915 that "In October 1911, St Joseph's College became affiliated with St. Michael's College (USMCA. "St Joseph's College" *St Michael's College Yearbook*, 1915, 34). The first woman graduate of St Michael's College was Sister Mary Agnes Murphy, a Sister of St Joseph and member of the class of 1914. Miss Frances Connell, listed in the University of Toronto Calendar as a fourth year St Michael's College Student in 1911-12, graduated from University College. In 1915, St Joseph's had two graduates: Miss E. Johnston and Miss Mary McSweeney. Loretto College graduated its first four women in 1915: Mona Clark, Gertrude Ryan, Teresa Coughlin, and Mary Power. (USMCA. *St Michael's College Yearbook*, 1915 37-8).

³ L. Eisenman. "Reconsidering a Classic: Assessing the History of Women's Higher Education a Dozen years after Barbara Solomon," *Harvard Educational Review* 67 (4) 1997, 693, 708.

in all three countries. The following works represent new voices and new directions in the history of Catholic women's higher education.

Since 1997, the Sisters of Charity of Halifax have produced four historical volumes, authored by community members with strong academic credentials. In all four volumes, integral to the history of the congregation is the history of Sisters of Charity of Halifax flagship convent school (and later university), Mount St Vincent.⁴ Collectively, these works present a finely grained analysis the development of women's higher education under the leadership of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax.

Edited collections of essays, biographies, and personal reflections characterize three recent books on women religious and higher education in the United States. In a 2002 collection, Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett assembled ten essays dealing with aspects of *Catholic Women's Colleges in America*.⁵ The collection grew from a 1994 symposium whose aim was to document and examine the history of some 190 colleges which either grew out of convent academies or which were established by congregations of women religious as women's colleges. The 2001 edited collection *Mundelin Voices: The Women's College Experience 1930-1991*⁶ examines the history of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary's skyscraper college on the Chicago waterfront. It is a fine example of feminist scholarship applied to the work of women religious in higher education. Mary J. Daigler's *Through the Windows*⁷ analyzes the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' work in higher education. Daigler uses an innovative approach that combines biography with institutional history to detail the work of that congregation. Together these three works indicate the extent to which congregations of women religious, both themselves and collaborating with secular scholars, have begun to critically examine their past as leaders in women's higher education.

⁴ G. Anthony, SC, *A Vision of Service: Celebrating the Sisters of Charity* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997); G. Anthony, S, *Rebel, Reformer, Religious Extraordinaire: The Life of Sister Irene Farmer SC* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press; 1997); T. Corcoran, *Mount Saint Vincent University: A Vision Unfolding 1873-1988*. (Lanham: University of America Press, 1999); M.O. McKenna, SC, *CHARITY ALIVE: Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Halifax 1950-1980* (Lanham: University of America Press, 1998).

⁵ T. Schier and C. Russett (eds), *Catholic Women's Colleges in America*. (Baltimore: Johns-Hopkins, 2002).

⁶ A. Harrington and P. Moylan (eds), *Mundelin Voices: The Women's College Experience 1930-1991* (Chicago: Loyola, 2001).

⁷ M.J. Daigler, *Through the Windows: A History of the Work of Higher Education Among the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas*. (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2000).

To celebrate the centenary of its founding, the University College Dublin (UCD) Women's Graduate Association invited women graduates from all faculty and eras to submit their reminiscences. Under the editorship of Anne Macdona, the recollections were assembled into decades and combined with a series of contextual essays to produce *From Newman to New Woman: UCD Women Remembered*.⁸ This collection is representative of a work wherein alumnae have engaged in innovative work to build an institutional history.

From this sampling of recent national and international scholarship on Catholic women's higher education, a context can be structured in which to examine the culture of the Catholic women's colleges at the University of Toronto. Jill Ker Conway, a onetime faculty member and vice president of the University of Toronto, and President of Smith College, reflected that "the women's religious orders that founded women's colleges became intellectual centres within which the question of knowledge and faith had to be reconciled."⁹ Much can be learned from a systematic study of their curriculum, administration, staff faculty, and students. On the campus of that "godless"¹⁰ institution, the two Catholic women's colleges were communities of learning where vowed women held positions of leadership and instruction shared by few of their lay sisters. Some of these academic women leaders were in fact the products of the convent schools that secular historians have largely ignored.¹¹

St. Joseph's College and Loretto College had their origins in the convent academies administered by the Sisters of St Joseph and the Loretto Sisters. The historical record suggests that both communities were planning to establish women's colleges within the first decade of the twentieth century – predating the 1906 commencement of the offer-

⁸ A. Macdona (ed), *From Newman to New Woman: UCD Women Remember*. (Dublin: New Island Books, 2001).

⁹ J.K. Conway "Faith Knowledge and Gender" in T. Schrier and C. Russett (eds,) *Catholic Women's Colleges*, 13.

¹⁰ This label is credited to a number of leading Anglicans, including James Beavan, who thus described the University of Toronto. See J.G.Slater, "A Capsule History of the History Department [of the University of Toronto]. Available <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/philosophy/history/> [visited 17 August 2000].

¹¹ For further discussion, see E. Smyth, "Much Exertion of the Voice and Great Application of the Mind: Teacher Education Within the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, Canada 1851-1920." Special Joint Double Issue of the *History of Education Review* and *Historical Studies in Education*, 3, (1994): 97-114.

ing of university-level courses by their brother St. Michael's College.¹² Both the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Loretto Sisters wanted to affiliate their colleges independent of St. Michael's and of each other. The initial attempts at affiliation made by the Sisters of St Joseph¹³ and the Loretto Sisters¹⁴ were unsuccessful however. A proposal to affiliate Loretto Abbey, St Joseph's Academy, and the Ursulines of the Chatham Union's Academy, "The Pines" under the title of "St Mary's Affiliated Colleges" was drawn up, and discussed but never officially filed.¹⁵ University officials wanted the two Toronto academies to affiliate not as independent colleges but through St Michael's College. Writing in his history of Canadian Catholic higher education, St Michael's faculty member Father Laurence Shook explained the agreement thus:

All girls proceeding to a degree in the faculty of arts should be enrolled in St Michael's; lectures in college subjects were to be given at both St Joseph's and Loretto... lecturers in religious knowledge, ethics, logic and psychology were to be supplied by St Michael's; university subjects were to be taken at the university proper as was the case with men; degrees should be conferred by the university through St Michael's.¹⁶

This compromise shaped the academic lives of the colleges. Yet, as the historical record indicates, the presence of women at St. Michael's College was neither welcomed nor encouraged. A member of the St. Michael's faculty recalled "The realization that they would have to admit women students to their arts courses came at first as a shock to the

¹² According to the *Calendar of the University of Toronto* (1921-22), St Michael's was "declared to be a College in the Faculty of Arts on the 8 th December 1910." (64). Students began working toward the degrees in 1906 with the first graduating class in 1910.

¹³ Loretto Abbey Archives (LAA). Affiliation With St Michael's College File, Loretto College Box, Box 6A. Mother Agatha O'Neill, IBVM. Notes dated 10 October 1911, entitled "Written after an interview with Fr. Roche" The notes stated that "He [Father Roche] also said that the Sisters of St Joseph were also working for it [affiliation] but only one of us would get it. A letter was written from St Joseph's Convent saying that Father Teefy had applied for them three years ago in May. Father Roche said he never heard of it."

¹⁴ LAA. Loretto College Box 6A, Affiliation with St Michael's College File. Letter from Dr. J.J. Cassidy to Mother Agatha, 12 February 1913.

¹⁵ LAA. Loretto College Box 6A, Affiliation with St Michael's College File Letter from Dr. J.J. Cassidy to Mother Agatha, 12 February 1913. This letter states that "Mr. Brebner also reports President Falconer as saying he has no date of an application of Loretto Abbey, St Joseph's Academy etc...no such formal application was made to the University, although the matter was discussed." Handwritten notes which accompanied this letter state, "In 1909, a form of application was drawn up including the Academies of the Sisters of St Joseph, Toronto and Ursulines of Chatham which was never presented."

¹⁶ L.K.Shook, CSB, *Catholic post-secondary education in English-speaking Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 158.

administration of St. Michael's."¹⁷ An even less charitable assessment was cited in Anne Rochon Ford's history of women at the University of Toronto, "An official from St. Michael's is quoted as having said just after the turn of the century that, 'The question of higher education for women is not a vital one for the College nor of interest to the Canadian hierarchy.'"¹⁸ These thoughts were undoubtedly impressed on the male students as well. The editors of the 1913 *Yearbook of St. Michael's College* explained that since St. Michael's was "forced to provide for the higher education of young women," Loretto Abbey and St. Joseph's College became "the 'admirable compromise' ... to offer the solution to this problem."¹⁹ In a 1967 synopsis of the early history of St Joseph's College, the Sisters of St Joseph wrote:

The University stipulated that as far as it was concerned, St Joseph's and Loretto Colleges did not exist. The women students of either college were to be known as St Michael's students, registered in the University as St Michael's students and paying their fees to St Michael's. How far the actuality differed from the theory some at least of the older students will recall. The women were indeed registered as St Michael's students but with that all identification with St Michael's ceased. St. Joseph's was St Joseph's and Loretto was Loretto and with unheard of generosity St Michael's waived all claims to the women's fees.²⁰

Analyzing the early yearbooks of St Michael's College, it becomes apparent that the three colleges co-existed as separate entities.

Beginning in 1912, two women religious appear as college deans in the list of the Administrative Officers of St. Michael's College,²¹ reinforcing the argument that the three colleges operated as three separate sites. At the women's colleges, the deans held both academic and resid-

¹⁷ Shook, *Catholic post-secondary education*, 157.

¹⁸ K.McGovern, IBVM, "Outline of The History of Loretto," a paper read before the students and guests at the annual dinner in honour of Mary Ward (22 January 1976), 3. In Anne Rochon Ford, *A Path Not Strewn With Roses: One Hundred Years of Women At The University of Toronto 1884-1984*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 34.

¹⁹ USMCA. *The Echo*, (1913), 48.

²⁰ ASSJ. St Joseph's College. Manuscript 2. St Joseph's College Box.

²¹ USMCA. R.J. Scollard, "The Members of the Corporation, The Collegium and the Administration of the University of St. Michael's College 1852/3 - 1984/5." It is noteworthy that no women religious are listed as college officers or faculty in either the Calendar of St Michael's College or the Calendar of the University of Toronto until 1919. The University of Toronto Calendar 1919-20 lists four women religious in the departmental offerings: Classics, MM Clare BA lecturer in Latin; English, MM Margarita BA Lecturer; German, Sr M Perpetua BA; French, Sr M Agnes BA Lecturer. Within the 1920-21 *University of Toronto Calendar*, the women religious are listed within the composite faculty listings as well as within the departments.

ential responsibilities. There was some degree of academic cooperation among the three communities and, as the years went on, students began to move among the three colleges. It is significant to note that while men took courses at the women's colleges, "women students were not allowed to attend lectures at St. Michael's College."²² Eventually, St Michael's faculty relented and allowed women to attend lectures at St Michael's College – but in separate classes. It was not until the 1940s that co-educational classes in Philosophy and Religion began. In 1953, the three colleges were melded into one co-educational instructional unit. This was done to eliminate duplication in teaching and administration. In the years since this change, the Catholic women's colleges became solely residential institutions.

This background is necessary to understand why the two women's colleges maintained their separate identities, in two locations. Had they combined their resources and consolidated their teaching functions, the presence of the Catholic women's colleges at the University of Toronto might have been more readily observable and perhaps would not have been so obscured by the mists of history.

The purpose for the establishment of two Catholic women's colleges, with their academic and residential arms, was primarily the same as the reason for the establishment of St Michael's College, with the notable exception of the fact that St Michael's College had as its goal preparing some young men for the priesthood: to protect the faith and to prepare students for leadership as Catholic professionals in a changing world. For the Catholic women students attending St. Joseph's and Loretto College, these goals were achieved within the spiritual, social, and academic life of the college in which they were registered. The students of Loretto College were housed at Brunswick Street, located approximately 2.5 kms from the main campus. Loretto College initially shared facilities with the Loretto Preparatory School, High School, and School of Stenography.²³ The students of St Joseph's College were housed close to St Michael's College, in a number of wings and buildings in and around the St Alban's Street motherhouse before occupying the Christie Mansion on Queen's Park Crescent in 1928. In the first decade of their existence, the rapid expansion of both colleges' enrollment placed a severe strain on accommodations as residential, classroom, and common room space had to be created. Living conditions in each college's building were not luxurious and often improvised. Students at Loretto recalled chasing mice with brooms.

²² ASSJ. "St. Joseph's College," Manuscript. 3.

²³ In 1937/8, it was relocated at 84/86 St George Street, a location advertised as "Two Minutes Walk to University Main Building" (24) until the purpose-built college building on St Mary's Street was officially opened in 1959.

Claire Smyth (Loretto College LC 1917) remembered that her room “was so small she had to come out to change her mind.”²⁴

Each college offered limited academic programs to a small number of students. Sisters at both colleges taught English, Latin, German, and French. Priests from St. Michael’s came to the women’s colleges to teach Religion and Philosophy. College activities were likewise separate with each having their own social, cultural, athletic, and religious ceremonies.

The yearbooks of St. Michael’s College attest to the separate identities of the colleges. The presence of female faculty and students in the pages of the yearbook vary significantly from year to year. No female faculty were listed until 1918 and none were pictured. The first portraits and biographies of female graduates appear in 1915 and continue until 1927, when the college yearbook ceases and becomes a St. Michael’s “old boys” annual, focussing solely on the activities of the male students. From that year on, the information on the activities of the women’s colleges can be found exclusively in the pages of the convent-academy annuals: *The Lilies* and *The Rainbow*.

Although both Loretto College and St Joseph’s College grew from convent-academies with which both initially shared physical space and faculty, the colleges quickly developed identities that separated them from their secondary school convent academy roots. The growth of academic, social, cultural, and athletic associations assisted in their identity formation. As the 1916 entry in the *St Michael’s College Yearbook* explained: “[St Joseph’s College] is distinctly separate from the Convent School and being subject to entirely different conditions.”²⁵

The differences would become pronounced over time. No longer were the pupils adolescent girls who were determining their place in the world; they were young women who had made a conscious decision to further their education and gain credentials for careers in both religious and secular society within a context that would protect the faith.

The college calendars clearly stated their dual purpose: to protect the faith and to assist in preparation for the professional world. They equally cautioned parents of both the male and female students that the challenges to the faith inextricably bound with the university experience could be lessened by participation within a Catholic college. In an introduction aimed at parents and their sons, the Basilians were forthcoming of the dangers to their sons’ faith posed by university life – and the dire consequences if higher education was not pursued:

²⁴ USMCA. “M.D.” “Don’t You Remember Way Back When?” *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*, 39.

²⁵ USMCA. *St Michael’s College Calendar. 1917-18*, 41.

All university men admit the great danger to young men thrown on themselves for the first time ... Catholic boys cannot be entrusted to [a] secular university, and yet by leaving them at home we yield our heritage and must in time reconcile ourselves to a position of inferiority ... By not securing the benefits of higher education, Catholics place themselves in a position of inferiority and weakness; on the other hand, by attending non-Catholic institutions they subject themselves to influences that will almost necessarily undermine their Catholicity.²⁶

The Basilians promised parents and their sons a university experience within a Catholic milieu where “close fatherly supervision, intimate association of priests and students, religious exercises, frequent communion, everything to foster strong faith. Students leave the college grounds only when necessary.”²⁷ Once women were admitted to the two colleges, a similar promise was made to their parents. The calendar declared, “Young women can receive as high a training as given in any University in the world, and hardly leave convent walls. Not only is the success of the sisters in other work a sufficient guarantee of what they will accomplish here but the examinations are a test that makes efficiency essential.”²⁸

The College women were educated to pursue careers in both secular society and within the church. In an article entitled “The College of the Future,” Mother Estelle IBVM invited the women of Loretto College to “come and cast in your lot with those of us who are striving to keep the ideal ... It is obvious that a college cannot be maintained without an ample endowment and the best possible endowment is that of professors who have devoted their lives to this work demanding only the means of subsistence and without any claims of family.” She reviewed the history of women and education, focussing on the fact that “the history of educational orders, our own being the first, is largely that of a reconquest of the old rich heritage and its application to new uses.” She reminded the students that “had you lived in the middle ages, a number, even a majority of you having your present talents, tastes and inclinations, would have found happiness, sanctity and a full development of the intellectual life in some of the various monasteries in which perhaps self-actualization was more possible than at any other period of the world’s history. If then, why not now?” She suggested that although “the new-won freedom affords women many attractive avenues of experience ... we now stand on the threshold of a time which demands the fullest possible intellectual development if we are to make effective this new

²⁶ USMCA. *St Michael’s College Calendar. 1912-13*, 12.

²⁷ USMCA. *Calendar. 1912-13*, 15-6.

²⁸ USMCA. *The Echo*, (1913), 48.

application of it to the needs of university students. This, then, the religious life could offer you.”²⁹

Several of the students did accept her invitation. Mary Irene Long (LC 1916) became Sister M. Irma and taught at Loretto Academy Hamilton. Gertrude McQuage (LC 1916) became Sister St Ivan and taught French in the College before serving as mistress general of the Loretto College School. Aileen Kelley (LC 1918) became MM St Margaret and taught at both Loretto Niagara and Loretto Abbey. Gertrude Walsh (LC 1920) worked in business before entering the Loretto Novitiate as Sister M. Annuncia.

The experience of students at St Joseph’s College was similar as some of the women students did join the Sisters of St Joseph and other religious congregations.

Women religious interacted with the students, not only as faculty, but also staff. Sister Johanna, charged with the Loretto College dining room, was remembered by Gertrude Walsh for her “secret store of nuts and raisins” and as “the greatest comforter of our college days in every trial and difficulty.”³⁰ Community was built through the shared crises of examinations:

The Class of 1T8 had forgotten (?) [sic] to translate a certain German story which was prescribed for the year’s work. Rumour said there would be a portion of that book on the paper. We had written an exam that day and were all very tired. M.M. came up and read the story through for us in English and about 10.30 M.S.C appeared on the scene with a tray of cocoa and sandwiches.³¹

As a Catholic college, devotional activities and Catholic practices were a part of the academic year. Mass opened and closed the terms, with graduation masses having Baccalaureate Sermons preached (and later printed as pamphlets or in the annuals). On 15 May 1918, for the first time a common graduation was held for the graduating women of St Michael’s College in “a spirit of unity and good-will.” The remarks delivered by Rev L. O’Reilly celebrated that “these great convent institutions having but one mind, one heart, one intention – to impart to our Catholic young men and women all that is best in higher education and to cherish the high ideals of Catholic manhood, of Catholic womanhood and of the Catholic family.”³²

²⁹ USMCA. Mother Estelle, “The College of the Future” *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*. 4-7.

³⁰ USMCA. G. Walsh, “Don’t Your Remember Way Back When?” *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*, 39.

³¹ USMCA. K. Macaulay, “Don’t Your Remember Way Back When?” *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*, 40.

³² USMCA. “Convocation,” *St Michael’s College Yearbook 1919*. 24.

College students participated in daily and weekly mass, as well as seasonal religious celebrations. Annual retreats, frequently three days in length, were integral to the school year. In addition to celebrations of local community religious events (feasts of St Joseph, celebration of Mother St John Fontbonne and Mary Ward), students also celebrated such religious/secular feasts as St Valentine's Day and St Patrick's Day with parties that included costumes, special desserts, and musical presentations. As well, both colleges participated in the activities of the larger campus Catholic community, including the activities of the Newman Club and the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Both colleges involved their students in a variety of social service activities. As a student of St Joseph's College explained, "A Catholic Student must not confine himself [sic] to the duties of the lecture room and those of society. There are other higher duties that the Church demands of him."³³ Similarly, the Loretto students were advised that "Faith without good works is dead."³⁴ These include activities in both the home and the foreign mission. The students of Loretto College undertook providing "some independent social service... an opportunity was given of rendering timely assistance to an Italian family." The St Joseph College students worked with University Settlement house in a variety of capacities, including Bernita Miller's authorship of a children's play.³⁵ In 1921, students at St Joseph's College established a branch of the student-run, student financed Canadian Catholic Students Mission Crusade (CCSMC) to assist, with "temporal and spiritual aid ...the many brave men and women willing to sacrifice their homes and friends to go into remote countries, to carry on this great work."³⁶ At Loretto under the direction of Mother St Claire, "two mission forces, Foreign and Home" were convened in 1922 to conduct both religious and social functions.³⁷

The two women's colleges, as well as their brother college, utilized an array of strategies to ensure that a university experience would augment and not diminish the faith-base of their students. Students' sense of faith, on both a personal and community level, was enhanced through a variety of individual and congregational activities. As well, students were encouraged to view their faith as living and socially responsible. The activities of both domestic and foreign missions were supported through temporal and spiritual activities. The aim of these activities was

³³ USMCA. "Mission Work," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1922. 52.

³⁴ USMCA. "Our Sodality," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1922. 63.

³⁵ USMCA. *Lilies* vol #2, 166.

³⁶ USMCA. "Mission Work," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1922. 52.

³⁷ USMCA. "Our Sodality," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1922. 63.

clear: to ensure that graduates would bring a socially-responsible sense of themselves as practicing Catholics into their professional lives.

Academic preparation for professional engagement was the second goal of the colleges. Two elements of this goal will be analyzed: the strategies for enhancing the presence of Catholics on the campus, and the provision of education for leadership in professional fields. Women religious and priests, with selected lay faculty, taught the young women students in academic classes. The co- and extra-curricular activities, which were college based, show the extent to which the two religious congregations sought to build community among their students and to present the public face of university-educated Catholic women to the larger community. As had been the tradition in the convent academies, dramatics and music played a leading role.

Single sex drama productions, with the college women playing all roles, were a feature of college life. In the first ten years of Loretto College, under the direction of Mother Estelle and Dr. F.H. Kirpatrick of the Toronto Conservatory, scenes from plays and whole plays were presented in Latin, English, and French. Among the works presented were scenes from *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, *La Oudre aux Geux*, *As You Like It*; *Everyman*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Andromeda*. These productions served many purposes: to build community among the students and faculty; to highlight student talent to the university and broader community; to celebrate events, such as "official" visits to the college and Loretto community and to engage the college students in philanthropic activities. University professors, the general public, and the local press attended, with articles on the productions appearing in several newspapers. Although some productions were offered free of charge, others were staged with philanthropic purpose. The proceeds from the 1915 production of *As You Like It* were directed to the furnishing of a ward in the Convalescent Hospital. Likewise at St Joseph's College dramatic productions and pageants celebrated secular and religious occasions. Here, too, the young women presented classical, Shakespearean, and modern drama.

Co-curricular organizations, like the St Joseph's College French Club, were also present in the colleges. The French Club was established in 1921, with the goal of "extending their knowledge of French literature and developing a greater degree of confidence and fluency in speaking the language" offered students the chance to engage in conversation, to present dramatic readings, and to engage in fellowship with their teachers.³⁸

³⁸ USMCA. "The French Club," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1922. 46.

Musical groups and literary clubs were a feature of both the convent academies and the women's colleges. As the editors explained in the yearbook, St Joseph's College sought to offer a well rounded education: "The essential unity of poetry and music make it desirable that these sister arts should together find a place among the refining influences which have a culture value in woman's finished education."³⁹ Thus, recitals with mandolins, violins, harps, ukuleles, pianos, and organs, as well as vocal music, were features of college life. Both colleges established literary clubs. The Literary Club at Loretto Abbey College was initiated in 1920-21. It held weekly meetings that "opened with the recital of a quotation by each member. They were so many and so varied that all members of the Club received many intellectual treats."⁴⁰ The members of the literary clubs contributed to the college periodicals.

One powerful tool for communicating student experience was the college periodical. Both colleges had a number of publications: literary journals, alumnae magazines, and occasional publications. As one student writing under the name of "Loretto" explained:

It should be the end or purpose of a school journal to encourage and stimulate effort on the part of the student; first for his [sic] own sake, secondly for the sake of those to whom he owes his education, and thirdly, to justify, in some slight measure, the hopes of those who have planted and nourished the seeds of learning and wisdom.⁴¹

Special issues celebrated the achievements of the colleges and their graduates. Loretto College's tenth anniversary in 1925 was celebrated with a special issue that contained a series of articles that focused on modern working women. Eleanor Mackintosh wrote of her work as a librarian – a career in which she found herself "asked the most amusing questions and furnished with the most amazing pronouncements."⁴² Elsie Irvine described her indecisiveness of where to turn her hand next, mindful that "the Alumnae with an unfailing eye for 'loafers' enjoined the office of secretary upon the unwitting new-grad."⁴³ Two lawyers, Florence Daly and Kathleen Lee, wrote of their experience. Daly summarized the history of women and the law in Ontario, observing that "It seems only natural a woman takes a more sympathetic view of trouble and does not leave untouched the smallest detail ... As for the problems affecting women and children in particular, it is undoubtedly true that a

³⁹ USMCA. "The Music Club," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1921, 47.

⁴⁰ USMCA. "The Literary Club," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1921, 55.

⁴¹ USMCA. "Some Early Steps in School Journalism," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1917, 39.

⁴² USMCA. E. Mackintosh, "A Librarian Speaks," *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*, 27

⁴³ USMCA. E. Irvine, "The Stay at Homes by Two Who Know. II," *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*, 27.

woman acquainted with the laws relating thereto is able to treat the matter in a more logical manner.”⁴⁴ Kathleen Lee observed that “women students are on equal footing with the men, whether it be in professional life or as a student of the law.” She concluded that a law career is good for all women whether “a woman is preparing herself for a business career ... [or] if her avocation ... is to be a Club woman or one which brings her in public contact with great numbers of people who have diverse views, a clear conception of the law in all subjects, concerning everyday life, and especially those laws relating to the welfare of women and children, will be of inestimable value.”⁴⁵ The values of maternal feminism were very much in focus here.

Each college made its presence known through participation in the extra curricular activities of the main campus. Both colleges had debating societies that competed annually in the inter-collegiate debating league. Both had a number of athletic teams that participated at a varsity level, although some of these were slow to start. The Loretto College students explained:

Before October we all skated, swam and played tennis ... but apart from attending the various hockey games in which St Michael’s figured largely, and an occasional leave for a Varsity game, there was small actual interest taken by the student body as a whole. In 1920, we suddenly realized the awful fact that we were the only women residents not figuring in the athletic life of the university. The founding of the St Michael’s Women’s Basketball Team was not an easy task and it is due to the splendid unity and spirit of the women of Loretto that it obtained material existence.⁴⁶

Other sports teams such as the St Joseph’s Tennis Club (1917) gave the students the opportunity to compete with each other as it “improves the temper, teaches perseverance and the practice of self-control. It is also beneficial to health as it necessitates the development of the muscles by exercise in the open air.”⁴⁷

Student Councils were established in both colleges: in 1919 (Loretto) and in 1920 (St Joseph’s). Both colleges saw this as an opportunity for students to gain experience that would aid them in future life. A Loretto student explained the importance of such structures within a women’s college:

In these days when woman is competing with man for big positions, she must have some acquaintance with the problems of the government of

⁴⁴ USMCA. F. Daly, “The Woman Lawyer,” *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*, 28.

⁴⁵ USMCA. K. Lee, “Law From A Woman’s Viewpoint,” *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*, 29.

⁴⁶ USMCA. “Athletics at LAC,” *St Michael’s College Yearbook 1921*, 57.

⁴⁷ USMCA. “The Tennis Club,” *St Michael’s College Yearbook 1917*, 43.

affairs. She must have a sense of individual responsibility and initiative and a capacity to deal with those annoying incidents that occur in the business world.⁴⁸

A St Joseph's graduate wrote "In student government there is an opportunity for giving direct play and exercise to the faculty of judgement and this it is a true basis of education for active and inventive powers necessary and useful in any walk of life."⁴⁹

Each fall, a new group of students entered the college and were identified by the year of their anticipated graduation. Through a series of harmless pranks, such as being bedecked with ribbons and sitting on balloons to burst them, they were initiated into the college. These activities were described with such tongue in cheek comment "Many were the torments we were forced to undergo but human respect forbids our telling them ... what could be more humiliating than pushing a chestnut the entire length of a room with the tip of a dainty powdered nose?" The event ended as did many – with "a delightful lunch."⁵⁰

Students from both colleges participated in a number of cross-campus initiatives: social, political, and cultural. They also looked to some of the former leaders of the convent academies for examples – women like Gertrude Lawler, a graduate of both St Joseph's Academy and University College, who established an Alumnae Association at both.

How successful were the women's colleges in achieving the goal of enabling their graduates to claim "their share of power, influence, culture, wealth" in Canadian society and increase the presence of Catholic-educated women in the professions and in society in general? In the first decade of College women certainly did achieve this goal. As part of the Tenth Anniversary of the first graduates of the College, some Loretto Alumnae reflected on the life for which their university years had prepared them. In an article entitled *A College Education Does Not Unfit a Girl for Married Life*, the authors reflected the changing realities of contemporary marriage:

The average woman of yesterday entering matrimony depended for her livelihood upon the generosity of some mate, the woman of today – especially is it true of the college woman – acknowledges her master in no such sense... The modern college woman believes in economic independence and that equality will make it possible to come nearer realizing an

⁴⁸ USMCA. "Student Government," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1919. 45.

⁴⁹ USMCA. "Students' Council at St Joseph's," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1921. 49.

⁵⁰ USMCA. "Initiation at 25," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1921, 52.

ideal marriage [sic]... The two entering a marriage contract must determine to share their dangers and responsibilities or it is unfair to both.⁵¹

This is a far cry from the valedictory messages of a generation before where convent academy students and nursing graduates heard that:

the mission of woman [is] to nurse and to soothe and to solace; to help and to heal the sick world that leans on her. This is not the mission of the new woman but the True Woman ... whose voice is not heard on the busy platform of the world, for she esteems it her highest right, her most glorious privilege to soothe the sorrowing and the distressed; she considers the assuaging of pain a better victory than campaigning for the Emancipation of Womanhood, and alleviating the sufferings of an anguished mind a more glorious, God-given work than waging the unnecessary warfare for the so-called upraising of her sex.⁵²

A review of the activities reported to the Loretto Alumnae Association in 1925 attests to the variety of work in which the graduates engaged.

Not surprisingly, given the fact that it was one of the few professional careers in which college women could see themselves reflected, many graduates pursued careers in teaching. Their career paths took them across Canada and the United States. Significantly, many taught in collegiate institutes in the cities and small towns throughout Ontario, offering instruction in a diverse range of subjects including languages, history, physical education, and commercial studies. Additionally, many served as administrators in the province's public schools. This career path – common to so many of the early women graduates is very significant. First, the lack of public funds for Catholic secondary education meant that the province's Catholic high schools were small, ill equipped, and operated mainly through the generosity and resources of the religious congregations and the Catholic diocese. For Catholic lay women wishing to teach in secondary schools, public high schools were one of the only lucrative options open to them. Yet as Catholic women, who often took leadership roles in their local churches and in other charitable organizations, they exercised power within a number of community groups.⁵³

⁵¹ USMCA. "A College Education Does Not Unfit a Girl for Married Life" (presented under the authorship of Mrs Hinzmann, Mrs. McGrade, Florence Daley, Kathleen Lee, M M, Elsie Irvine, Eleanor Mackintosh), *The Rainbow: College Alumnae Number 1915-1925*. 24-5.

⁵² ASSJ. *Annals*, 12 November 1900, 256.

⁵³ A review of the first ten years of Loretto College graduates illustrates just how much of the province was staffed by Loretto women. Gertrude Ryan (LC 1915) taught in secondary schools in Chapleau, Perth, Arthur, and Windsor. Teresa O'Reilly (LC 1915) was head of Moderns, History and Physical Training at the

While teaching was a first career for many of the college graduates, it served as a stepping stone for other careers, including publishing and the world of commerce. Others used their university degrees to gain admission to careers that were opening to women, such as law, librarianship,⁵⁴ and social work, with Mary Power (LC 1915) serving as Director of the Child Welfare Department of the Province of Ontario. This is not to say that marriage and motherhood was not the career path of some. The Alumnae news of both colleges reported the lives lived by many graduates as housewives and mothers.

The creation of colleges for Catholic women at the University of Toronto marks an important event in history of denominationally based higher education. It was a unique experiment wherein two communities of women religious entered into an agreement with a community of male religious to ensure the place of Catholic-based post secondary education within a secular institution. Unlike the experience of the overwhelming majority of religious communities throughout North America, the Sisters of St Joseph and Loretto Sisters never appear to have had the intention of establishing their own colleges as free-standing institutions. Within the secular University of Toronto, St Joseph's College and Loretto College shared with their brother, St Michael's College, common goals: to protect the faith; to enable their graduates to claim "their share of power, influence, culture, wealth" in Canadian society, and to increase the presence of Catholic-educated men and women in the professions

collegiate in Vanleek, after teaching in Cardinal, Arthur, and Napanee. Marion Smith (LC 1917) taught at Rockland High School and Campbellford where "she takes a prominent part in local dramatics and has even toured the adjacent towns in the interest of various benevolent schemes." Claire Smythe (sic) (LC 1917) taught at Mount Forest Collegiate and Loretto Academy. Dorothea Cronin (LC 1920) taught in Haileybury. Hellen Mullett (LC 1921) in Carelton Place; Madelaine Daley (LC 1921) taught commercials at Welland High School. Mertis Donnelley (LAC1919) taught at Harrison High School, Bracebridge High School, and Barrie Collegiate. Frances Redmond (1920) taught in Durham. Sheila Doyle (LC 1922) taught in Chicago before coming to teach at St Joseph's High School. Claire Coughlin (LC 1922) taught at Windsor Collegiate with Gertrude Ryan. Anne Henry (LC 1922) taught in Chesterville. Marguerite O'Donnell (LC 1922) taught first at Simcoe High School and then at Loretto Abbey. Maire Hannon (LC 1922) taught in Oakville. Some graduates sought teaching positions further afield across Canada and the United States. Esther Flanagan (LC 1917) studied Physical Culture in Chicago and taught at Winnipeg Technical School. Edna Duffy (LC 1916) taught in Ohio and California; Mary Downey (LC 1917) taught French and Latin in New York State.

⁵⁴ Kathleen Costello (LC 1920) worked as a librarian stenographer and then assistant editor of the *Catholic Educational Review* at the Catholic University of America. Eleanor Mackintosh (LC 1922) worked as a librarian with the Toronto Public Library.

and in society in general. Addressing the joint women's colleges graduation in May 1918, Dr A.J.Mc Donagh, a layman invited to address convocation observed:

As I sat here I wondered what our grandmothers would think of this higher education, I am inclined to think they would be rather scandalized. But we must realize, whether we like it or not that higher education is here and is here to stay. And if it is a fact in the life of to-day, if we have to consider higher education for the women of the country, there is no one bold enough to say that Catholic women should not be in the forefront of that higher education.⁵⁵

The presence of Catholic women's colleges within the University of Toronto altered both the religious and secular world. Within the religious world, these colleges demonstrated that faith and professional status could be achieved. As graduates of Catholic Women's colleges, the young women who attended St Joseph's College and Loretto College were welcomed into such organizations as the Catholic Women's League, the International Federation of Convent Alumnae, the Alumnae Associations of both colleges, and the St Michael's College Alumnae Association (founded in 1917). Upon graduation, many undertook leadership roles in these and other lay organizations at the parish, diocesan, and national levels. In addition, some of the graduates also took leadership roles within secular society. The colleges also altered the congregations that administered them. Many graduates acknowledged the bonds they felt with their college and its congregations as some of their classmates became members, and leaders of their college congregations or other congregations. Through the operation of the colleges, the congregations had to establish new working norms both within themselves (as they created new governance structures) and without – as they negotiated with the Basilians, the University of Toronto and each other.

The two Catholic women's colleges were established with the dual goals of protecting the Catholic faith and enhancing the status of Catholics in Ontario. They were highly successful in both these endeavours. Writing in the St Michael's Yearbook of 1922, on the *Growth of St Michael's College*, the author observed that the "growth in numbers is even more remarkable in the case of the women students since their first enrollment was as late as 1912 and their present total is almost as large as the men. Will the growth continue? What will the normal attendance be? Only the future will tell."⁵⁶ As Table 1 indicates, over the first two decades, the percentage of women students ranged from a low of 9.6% (in the first year of women's inclusion) to a high of

⁵⁵ USMCA. "Convocation," *St Michael's College Yearbook* 1919. 24.

⁵⁶ USMCA. "The Growth of St Michael's College," *St Michael's Yearbook* 1922, 25.

46.7%.⁵⁷ Together, the two women's colleges represented a significant part of the total St Michael's College enrollment.

Many factors contributed to the success of the two colleges in the first decade. They were effectively able to capitalize on an emerging need – a place to provide higher education for Catholic women to enable them to engage in professional work. They were able to draw upon the resources of their congregations to provide excellent leadership and teaching within the colleges. The Sister-Professors quickly gained the respect of their colleagues across the university.⁵⁸ By encouraging their students to effectively model faith and education, they were able to continually grow.

This article merely begins to analyze the history of Catholic higher education for Canadian women. Its content raises many questions for further study. The impact of the First World War on women's higher education should be examined. Research is needed to explore how the colleges responded to the challenges of hard economic times and the increasing state regulation that accompanied university expansion. As well, the place of the graduates of the women's Catholic Colleges within traditional, emerging, and non-traditional professions for women, begs for further examination. What assumptions, both implicit and explicit, were made by faculty and students concerning professional destinations? How were the tensions elicited by women's involvement in professional work handled? Finally, comparisons need to be made between the growth and development of St Joseph's College and Loretto College as Catholic women's colleges within a federated secular university and with other Sister Colleges across the country and throughout the continent. In the long run, were these two experiments helped or hindered by their unique status?

⁵⁷ See Table 1: Student Enrollment by Sex at St. Michael's College University of Toronto, 1911-1931.

⁵⁸ For a more detailed discussion, see E Smyth (in press for 2005) "Sister-Professors: Roman Catholic Women Religious as Academics in English Canada 1897-1962," in P. Stortz & E.L. Panayotidis (Eds.), *Historical Identities: The Professoriate in Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

TABLE 1
STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY SEX AT ST MICHAEL'S COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, 1911-1931

YEAR	# Students	#Men (percentage)	#Women (percentage)
1911-2	83	90.4% (75)	9.6% (8)
1912-13	86	80.2% (69)	19.8% (17)
1913-14	114	74.6% (85)	25.4% (29)
1914-15	119	71.4% (85)	28.6% (34)
1915-16	140	65.7% (92)	34.3% (48)
1916-17	173	67.6% (117)	32.4% (56)
1917-18	166	66.3% (110)	33.7% (56)
1918-19	162	61.1% (99)	38.9% (63)
1919-1920	186	64% (119)	36% (67)
1920-21	206	58.7% (121)	41.3% (85)
1921-22	242	53.3% (129)	46.7% (113)
1931-32	297	56.2% (167)	43.8% (130)

Source: Compiled by author from University of Toronto Calendars (USMCA) and from *St Michael's College Yearbook 1922*, p.25 (USMCA).