Our Graduates

Faculty Study

College of St. Francis
Joliet, Illinois
Our Graduates

An Evaluation of the Objectives of the College of St. Francis by a Study of Its Graduates

Sister M. Immaculate, O.S.F.

COLLEGE OF ST. FRANCIS
JOLIET, ILLINOIS
FOREWORD

In this brief Study of "Our Graduates," the first of its kind to be shared with others, we have attempted to present not only a cross-section of our 227 graduate students from 1933 to 1941, but also to trace the aims of the College that fashioned the training of these young women during their four years under its influence.

The numerous quotations from the reports of the administrative staff, as well as the items gleaned from the questionnaires of the graduates, give evidence that St. Francis not only has a mission to fulfill in the training of youth, but that it can point to a living proof that it is being realized.

This Study, we believe, will serve to form a closer bond between the past and the present, between faculty and graduates; it will afford a closer acquaintance of Class with Class; it will enter into the history of the first nine Classes graduating from St. Francis as a senior college; it will shed a new ray of hope and be an urge for an even greater St. Francis.

Owing to the lack of data in some instances, we were obliged to omit names from the lists, but the response to the questionnaire released in December, 1941, brought whole-hearted cooperation from far and near. Loyalty and sincerity are ever in the foreground, while the ideals based on religion and philosophy continue to take deeper root.

In this Study only the graduates of the senior college were included, because junior college graduates either transferred to other institutions or continued through St. Francis.

May 1, 1942.
AIMS OF THE
COLLEGE OF ST. FRANCIS

This study is a continuation of many studies made by the faculty evaluating the aims of the college as set forth by its founders—namely a Catholic liberal arts college.

A brief survey of what has been done suggests itself. The President's annual reports of the past nine years have preserved not only the facts but also the whole-hearted spirit with which each faculty member cooperated in examining the objectives of the college. Thus, beginning with the 1934-35 Report, we find a thorough, detailed, and well organized plan of study under way:

"The project provides for a detailed study of the aims of the liberal arts college in general and of the Catholic liberal arts college in particular. It calls for a detailed analysis of the particular objectives of the College of St. Francis, an effort to harmonize departmental aims with the general College aims, and course aims with departmental aims. The purpose of the study is no other than to determine whether each part of the institution fits adequately into the pattern of the whole."

This Report also indicates plans for a study of student personnel:

"Again with the aims of the College in mind, a microscopic research of the student personnel will be conducted to ascertain whether education at St. Francis is truly liberal, truly well-balanced, and truly religious."

Of the actual study in which all faculty members collaborated the following year, the President wrote in her 1935-36 Report:

"The entire faculty participated in the study of the college objectives and student personnel outlined by the Dean and presented at the regular monthly meetings. Papers were read and discussions held on the general aims of the Catholic liberal arts college, on the particular aims of the College of St. Francis, and on the relationship existing between departmental and all-college objectives. Throughout the study attention was focused on the need of harmonizing course aims with departmental aims,
and departmental aims with college aims. The detailed analysis of student personnel resulted in a clearer understanding of personnel guidance in operation at St. Francis in its various aspects—scholastic, religious, social, physical, and vocational."

The study of student personnel service with its various phases resulted in a brochure of seventeen pages, made available to faculty members and others interested in this problem. A second pamphlet of fifteen pages produced by the English department illustrates the thoroughness and earnestness of the study of departmental aims.

It is interesting to note that the administrative officers not only found it advisable to have the entire faculty collaborate in the formulation of institutional objectives but also thought it necessary to keep their own attention and that of the instructional staff focused on the educational goals thus set up. In the President’s words (1936·37 Report),

"Periodically the administrative personnel reminds itself of the why and wherefore of St. Francis and urges the instructional staff in general or in departmental groups to recall the objectives of the institution and to examine curricular and extra-curricular offerings to determine whether all activities fit harmoniously into the pattern of the whole. The action of the faculty following recent studies of institutional problems clearly indicates the independence of thought so necessary to maintain the individuality of an institution."

What, then, are the aims and ideals of St. Francis, so long discussed, so carefully formulated? They are clearly and succinctly stated in the college catalogue as follows:

"A LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE. The College of St. Francis is a liberal arts college. The primary function of a liberal arts college is the training of the mind through the art of thinking and the art of expression. In the practice of the liberal arts, the student is brought in contact with the best that has been known and thought in the world.

"A CATHOLIC COLLEGE. Not only does St. Francis provide the student with a Catholic atmosphere and endeavor to make her conscious of her precious Catholic heritage, but aims at the development of the whole woman, which—in the words of Pius XI—'takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but in order to elevate, regulate, and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ.'

"FRANCISCAN IDEALS. The Sisters of St. Francis are guided in their educational plans by the great Franciscan ideals that come to them as a precious legacy through seven centuries of time. They believe that knowledge may never be divorced from personal holiness; that the
universe may be sacramentalized, whereby all creation will lead to the
Creator; that happiness does not lie in material goods; that simplicity
is the daughter of truth; that the great Franciscan spirit of joy can be
everyone's who will hold Christ as the center of all being.

"PROFESSIONAL WORK. A liberal arts program does not aim
to train students for a profession. Because the faculty realizes, however,
that the majority of students attending St. Francis need a certain amount
of professional training, courses in education, journalism, business, home
economics, etc., are offered. These courses are at all times superimposed
on the liberal arts program and do not constitute so-called major work
or fields of concentration. The result is that the student receives a broad
cultural background together with a sound knowledge of fundamental
professional theory and technical training."
AN EVALUATION OF THE AIMS
OF ST. FRANCIS
BY A STUDY OF ITS GRADUATES

1. A Liberal Arts College

"The College of St. Francis is a liberal arts college. The primary function of a liberal arts college is the training of the mind through the art of thinking and the art of expression. In the practice of these liberal arts, the student is brought in contact with the best that has been known and thought in the world."

A LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM must provide students with opportunities to become acquainted with the major fields of thought and expression. St. Francis not only provides these opportunities but requires of all its students a definite amount of study in the liberal arts fields, namely, language and literature, mathematics and natural science, history and social science, philosophy and religion. Only toward the completion of the general requirements (stated in the catalogue) is a student permitted to indicate a choice for concentrated study or "major" work. Regardless of what her interests may be or what professional goal she is seeking, her major must be a subject in the liberal arts field. At present ten major subjects are offered: biology, chemistry, English, French, German, history, Latin, mathematics, music, and philosophy. Major work is regulated by specific requirements, both general and departmental.

Without a single exception the 227 students graduated from the College of St. Francis (1933-41) completed the general liberal arts program and the specific major requirements. A tabulation of the graduates reveals the following interesting distribution of major fields:
English 28.9%
History 26.8%
Mathematics 11.8%
French 7.5%
Latin 6.6%
Chemistry 6.6%
Biology 6.1%
Music 3.9%
German 0.9%
Philosophy 0.9%

Is St. Francis justified in its insistence upon a liberal arts program? A questionnaire released December, 1941, to all our graduates, calling for data affecting them since graduation contained the following requests:

A. In what respects did St. Francis fail to train you to cope with the problems you were forced to meet in securing and retaining your position?
   In other words: What are we not doing that we could do to qualify our students to meet situations successfully?

B. In what respects did St. Francis train you to be equal to or superior to the demands that arise regarding your position?
   In other words: What are the helpful things we are doing to prepare our students to cope with the difficulties that arise in regard to a position?

Because the above questions make no specific mention of a liberal arts program, the following comments are unusually significant:

"St. Francis gave me a wonderful broad cultural background."

"I believe that we received an extremely broad cultural background at St. Francis, one that enables us to equal (at least modestly speaking) graduates of other colleges."

"Technically, I learned nothing of typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, chemistry, and the thousands of details I need in my work from my English major or my German minor, but I don't believe these are so important. A good general education is a better foundation for success than one overbalanced by one specific knowledge or skill."

"Social, economic, political, and international forces are the factors that shape our jobs, but the training to think and act intelligently helps shape our lives, which is far more important."

"I think St. Francis can and does easily hold her own as far as training its students for their future and life work. I can think of no
more satisfactory way of achieving a well-rounded education than by spending four years at St. Francis.

"I have found my liberal arts training always an asset. I have been glad of the basic training, outside of textbooks. The library was a wonderful treasury."

"I think a liberal arts education gives a grand cultural background to meet almost any situation."

"In many respects St. Francis helped me. I had the necessary confidence through knowledge I gained there, not only in my chosen field, Biology, but in History, Literature, Philosophy, French, and problems on International Relations, to discuss, and to listen intelligently to those who are experts in the field. In other words: St. Francis does not let you become stunted in your mental growth. Everything is important, not only your major and minor."

"The College's focus on a liberal arts program as a whole has done much to formulate my notions on educational philosophy; this seems to me to be a very important item for a stable professional outlook."

"How glad I am now that St. Francis is a liberal arts college. I feel that I have a wide background — some knowledge on a number of things — not too much on one isolated subject."

"To the end of my life I shall be grateful for those required subjects. Everything was beneficial to me — and the 'Spirit of St. Francis' most of all."

"St. Francis has fully trained me to cope with the problems that arise in regard to a position, also to assist in recreational, moral and religious programs outside of working hours. I feel that the integrated curriculum at St. Francis prepared me for almost any type of work, for I feel that I have background knowledge in various fields."

"Since leaving St. Francis and meeting the Science students of other colleges and universities, I find that the cultural background given a student at St. Francis far exceeds that given similar students elsewhere."

Emphasis Placed on Scholarship

St. Francis has always emphasized scholarship. Thus we find in its general requirements for graduation not only 128 semester hours, but also a certain degree of excellence; that is, a student must merit 128 honor points or an average in all subjects of C or better.

In the "major" field we find specific requirements indicative of a student's ability to do intensive work. Of the twenty hours required for a major (excluding freshman courses) ten hours must be devoted to courses in the upper division.

A thesis or comprehensive examination or both are further requirements of almost every department offering a major. No one
doubts the value of these requirements as aids to the promotion of scholastic standards.

And yet St. Francis does not rely on requirements alone to give evidence of scholastic achievement; it provides various opportunities that serve to encourage ability peculiar to individual students. Thus, a proficiency examination in English open to all Freshmen is given at the beginning of each semester. An average of B in this examination merits three semester hours of credit and exempts the student from taking the course. Chemistry offers the same opportunity with two hours of credit for a grade of B with exemption from laboratory work for one semester. Students who rank scholastically high are permitted to carry heavier schedules and sometimes have prerequisites waived.

Often standards seem beyond a student's reach, but although frequently some trembling voice or tear-dimmed eye seeks exemption, the standards remain unchanged. Striving alone does not merit recompense, but striving that can point to results wins the coveted degree.

Laurels are conferred only on those who can soar above the standards of excellence prescribed for the degree. These may consist in graduating with the distinction, "cum laude," "magna cum laude," or "summa cum laude"; membership in Kappa Gamma Pi, the National Honor Society of Catholic Women's Colleges; membership in the Delta Epsilon Sigma, the Eta Chapter of which is established at St. Francis; or the English Honor Roll.

These comments show the graduate in retrospect. Appreciation now replaces anxiety.

"It wasn't easy at St. Francis. The standards made it essential for most of us to put our shoulders to the wheel and push if we wanted to survive. That part of the discipline, as well as the other phases of discipline with which we had to cooperate, is, in my mind, one of the best things I brought with me from Joliet."

"I hope St. Francis will keep its standards high, so that its graduates will be able to meet the high standards of any modern position."

"I think St. Francis must hold a high standard of scholarship above all else."

"Lowering standards at St. Francis — that is unthinkable."

"Scholastically, it can't be surpassed! is my tribute to St. Francis. I have voiced my tribute since I left. I have said it before, but a summer
at the University with students from colleges everywhere made me positive.”

“I was rather proud Friday when Mr. ———, the University visitor, told me in front of my classes that St. Francis is a good school with a wonderful corps of teachers and a beautiful place too!”

“The University of ——— is a nice place, I’m having a good time, the courses are all right, but I still wouldn’t trade a corner of my four years at St. Francis for any part of the University.”

“I realize more and more the superior advantages and training St. Francis offers. I want to tell you how deeply grateful I am for everything St. Francis did for me... I have had the county supervisor twice. He was very encouraging and I thought quite pleased with everything at school. He asked me where I went to school and told me he would not know I was a beginning teacher. I feel that bit of praise was more for the school I attended than for myself.”

“Here is one ex-student who has learned to appreciate you and the other teachers like you at St. Francis. That mental discipline comes in handy.”

“I meet so many teachers whose conversation reveals how meager their collegiate exposure to learning was, and I often have occasion to be grateful for my St. Francis background. You all offered us so much in class, that whether we absorbed it or not, I think we all recognized the high calibre of instruction. When something brings that thought home to me, I always wish I could tell one of you.”

Preparation for Graduate Work

Among the many studies made by the Committee on Curriculum is one of special interest to students seeking admission to the graduate school. It included a very detailed examination of the requirements of the graduate schools which our graduates are likely to enter; a comparison of the curricular offerings at St. Francis with these requirements, and adjustments where necessary to provide the necessary graduate prerequisites. This study proved especially valuable in assisting students to plan their undergraduate work with emphasis on their future, so as to qualify them to meet specific requirements of universities.

To date twenty per cent of our graduates have pursued or are pursuing graduate work. Five per cent have already received the master’s degree, while four per cent more are candidates for higher degrees in 1942.

The Universities which these graduates attended are: De Paul University, Loyola University, University of Illinois, Chicago Musi-
cal College, Chicago Teacher's College, National College of Education, Northwestern University, St. Louis University, Notre Dame University, Ohio State University, University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of Colorado, Classical School of America in Rome, Catholic University of America.

A desire to continue study shows itself in the large percentage of graduates who have been attracted to register for extension work, correspondence courses, undergraduate courses, science of nursing. This additional thirty-one per cent gives ample evidence that the spark enkindled in the average St. Francis graduate is still aglow, and that there is little or no stagnation.

An evaluation of the data of these graduates who have pursued graduate work shows that the preparation at St. Francis enabled them to cope successfully with the work mapped out for them in the graduate school. Nor has their work been limited to one or two departments. Practically every department has been represented in graduate work: English, history, Latin, mathematics, chemistry, biology, French, speech, journalism, music, sociology, and education.

The following remarks reflect the apparent ease and feeling of security with which the average St. Francis graduate enters upon her graduate work; they show that she has been trained to do independent work and can hold her own in work of graduate level:

"The thorough training insisted upon by the College English department has been of the most immediate value to me both in my graduate work and in my present position. Without the scope of its historical and literary background and its simultaneous stress on quality and quantity, I feel that much of my subsequent work would have been misdirected."

"The Mathematics department at St. Francis seems to be superior. Often this summer (1941) when I was in the graduate courses in Mathematics I had occasion to be glad for all the Mathematics courses I had had."

"St. Francis prepared me thoroughly to cope with the problems encountered in graduate work. I have found the Pro-seminar course especially helpful in discovering aids for research work in the University Library, and the Congressional Library. It has been of great benefit in pursuing a pro-seminar in the Romance Languages, and in research for actual writing of a dissertation."

"St. Francis gave me a solid foundation and comprehensive background in my major field. It trained me in self-dependence in matters of research."
"I have felt many times, for various reasons, that my college training was on a much sounder basis than that of other teachers I have met."

"There is much to be said in favor of the vast amount of research required during the school term — it stimulates one throughout life."

II. A Catholic College

"Not only does St. Francis provide the student with a Catholic atmosphere and endeavor to make her conscious of her precious Catholic heritage, but aims at the development of the whole woman, which — in the words of Pius XI — takes in the whole aggregate of human life, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ."

Just as the College of St. Francis aims to be a liberal arts College not only in name, but in operation, so it endeavors to be Catholic not only on the pages of its catalogue, but in its atmosphere, its library, its curriculum offerings, its instruction, its student guidance, its ideals.

The atmosphere must necessarily reflect the faith, the hope, the love that inspire and animate each individual privileged to share so many religious opportunities and likewise the spiritual bond that unites faculty and students as together they offer the morning Sacrifice and break their fast at the Communion rail. There are, moreover, countless visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the weekly Holy Hour, triduums and novenas, the motivation inspired by the Sodality, and at present the noble effort to form an army on its knees before the King of Peace to parallel the gallant army in the field of service.

The library, according to Sister M. Elvira in her recent study titled *Our Library*, "is rich in Catholic books, old and new," and has an especially good collection on Mariology and Franciscana.

"It subscribes [she writes] to the Science and Cultural Foundation Series, and receives a gift subscription to the Catholic Book of the Month Club. Memberships in learned Catholic societies bring Catholic material; e.g., American Catholic Historical Association, American Catholic Philosophical Association, American Catholic Sociological Society, Catholic Association of International Peace, Catholic Art
Association, Catholic Library Association, Catholic Theatre Conference, and the National Catholic Education Association. The Catholic magazines subscribed for regularly number approximately fifty, among which are found such magazines as *Thought*, *Catholic World*, *Commonweal*, and *America*. There is a card index of all available material in the library on outstanding Catholic authors; also on all available material in the library on the Blessed Virgin Mary."

The curriculum does not limit its Catholicity to the Religion department, which has the responsibility of equipping the students with Apologetics, Catholic Doctrine, Catholic Liturgy, Church History, Sacred Scripture, and a course on Marriage, requiring that every Catholic student take a course in Religion each semester. Rather it is the earnest concern of the administrative personnel that every department integrate its work primarily by religion. Thus while some courses are distinctly Catholic, such as Religious Element in English Poetry, Catholic Revival in English Literature, Ecclesiastical Latin, Confessions of St. Augustine, Liturgical Music, and Gregorian Chant, all courses are permeated with a Catholic view of life.

The instructors, most of whom are Religious, are imbued with the sacredness of Catholic ideals that inspire youth. Their philosophy of life, their experience, their understanding, their willingness to sacrifice time and effort have encouraged faculty-student contacts. Students feel free to discuss with them their problems — great and small. This freedom from restraint has done much toward shaping their attitudes and views, training them to recognize and respect a philosophy of life in accordance with Christian principles.

The religious ideal that inspired the founders of our college was beautifully epitomized and passed on to succeeding instructional staffs by a challenge made by Rev. Mother Thomasine in a report to the Board of Directors:

"The college will become what the Congregation would have it become — a mighty power for good in the cause of Catholic womanhood — only by unceasing labor, continuous prayer, and never-ending sacrifice. Whether the price to be paid for teaching young women to live nobly and beautifully, to live St. Francis' way, which is Christ's way, is too great I will let this Board decide."

The Sisters feel that their labor and prayer and sacrifice have been well repaid for already out of the small number of non-Catholic
students in our midst seven have been given the great gift of faith with its promise of peace and happiness. They have been baptized and confirmed; life has a new meaning for them.

Nothing can be more gratifying than the sincere appreciation of religion on the part of our graduates. They write:

"I sincerely appreciate every advantage and every opportunity St. Francis gave me; especially do I realize the part she played in moulding and strengthening my faith to meet the reverses and the trials which come to most of us."

"I will always be grateful for the spiritual and cultural training which I received during my college years and which although always appreciated, are doubly precious in times of upheaval and distress."

"To St. Francis I owe a debt of seven successful years of teaching as well as a spiritual background which has always been my light when the hours seemed darkest."

"I believe that Psychology and Religion are the two subjects that have helped me most."

"There were other phases of my life at St. Francis which I have come to appreciate — not the least of which is the religious training I received."

"St. Francis developed the ideal of a higher life in me. The Sodality work filled me with a militant zeal for Catholic Action."

"The religious training and influence are increasingly important in a life made chaotic by pagan ideals and materialistic concepts. That I believe is perhaps the most valuable contribution of St. Francis, the combination of a religious, intellectual and social life into a whole that prepares the individual for a fuller, richer life."

"This should have been put first, of course — the wonderful religious training at St. Francis is something no girl will ever forget."

"The more I work the more I appreciate my philosophy major — the outlook it has given to my life."

"The Sodality was always a powerful and practical influence in my life."

"In all sincerity I must say that it's really not the academic courses offered at St. Francis for which I've been so grateful; it's the deep-rooted religious background I got there which has benefited me more than words can express."

"More than anything else, I am grateful to St. Francis for the deep appreciation it gave me of my religion. I have been in a position since my graduation where my faith, its principles, its doctrines, are constantly being attacked. Without my background of College religion I would many times have been lost. ALWAYS KEEP FOUR YEARS OF RELIGION A REQUIREMENT."

"I will always feel indebted to St. Francis for helping me to become imbued with a definite philosophy of life, which is, undoubtedly, the