

Sweeping Out Home Economics: Curriculum Reform at Connecticut College for Women, 1952–1962

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At the moment of its founding in 1911, Connecticut College for Women exhibited a curricular tension between an emphasis on the liberal arts, which mirrored the elite men's and women's colleges of the day, and vocational aspects, which made it a different type of women's college, one designed to prepare women for the kind of lives they would lead in twentieth-century America.¹ Connecticut was a women's college that simultaneously embraced the established brand of education practiced by its prestigious Seven Sister neighbors and forged its own path by integrating elements of home economics, municipal housekeeping, and professional/clerical training into its academic program.² For forty years Connecticut College for Women achieved a balance between those two opposing poles of its curriculum.

By the early 1950s, the curricular landscape was changing in the nation and on the Connecticut College campus. Post-World War II industrial expansion ushered in a new emphasis on science education on American college campuses. The Truman Commission had declared in 1947 that higher education was in the national interest and had predicted a boom in college enrollment by 1960.³ Nationally there was a shift from endeavoring to educate a well-rounded generalist to a technically adept specialist. The major local change was in Connecticut College's leadership. The College's president was no longer Katharine Blunt,

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¹William Welton Harris, "Some Personal Reminiscences of Dr. Sykes," Connecticut College Archives (hereafter identified as CCA). See also *The Connecticut College for Women* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1911), 11. The Seven Sisters were Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College, Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, Smith College, Vassar College, and Wellesley College.

²*Connecticut College for Women First Annual Announcement, 1915–1916* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, 1915), 6–9.

³"President Harry Truman's Commission Calls for Expansion of Higher Education," in *President's Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education for American Democracy: A Report of The President's Commission on Higher Education* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1947–48), 1, 25–29, 32–39.

whose academic training in chemistry, first at Vassar and then at the University of Chicago, had manifest itself in applications to food science. Blunt had risen in the academy through the narrow lanes open to women of her era, first becoming the president of the American Home Economics Association and then the dean of the University of Chicago's home economics division.⁴ Blunt's field of home economics accounted for 60 percent of all women faculty members in higher education at the time of her appointment in 1929.⁵ Largely blocked from positions in traditional academic departments such as chemistry, economics, or sociology, women, like Blunt, with training in science and social science fields found that departments and colleges of home economics provided the best, and often the only, opportunity for employment as a professor.⁶ With Blunt at the helm, Connecticut College for Women stayed the course with its home economics offerings, even as nationally the field of home economics became increasingly the realm of coeducational, public land-grant universities west of the Alleghenies.⁷

To be sure, even at elite women's colleges such as Vassar there were students as late as in the 1940s who wished their college would teach them how to be household managers and mothers and do better at preparing them for the world of work.⁸ According to Vassar College Anthropology Professor Dorothy Lee, some Vassar graduates complained that, because college had taught them it was better to read Plato than to wash diapers, and that it was more important to hear a lecture by T.S. Eliot than to stay home with babies after graduation, they had to unlearn what they had learned in college in order to find the value of homemaking or office work.⁹ Still, by 1950 the proverbial gold standard for quality in women's higher education had been set by Seven Sister colleges, like Vassar, all of which lacked Connecticut College's prominent tension between the liberal arts and the vocational. The Seven Sisters—despite a few minor

⁴Warrine Eastburn, "Miss Katharine Blunt, Biographical Material," CCA, Katharine Blunt File.

⁵Rosalind Rosenberg, "The Limits of Access: The History of Coeducation in America," in *Women and Higher Education in American History*, ed. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 125.

⁶Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti, eds., *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 77.

⁷Stage, "Home Economics: What's in a Name?" in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, 8.

⁸Frank Stricker, "Cookbooks and Law Books: The Hidden History of Career Women in Twentieth-Century America," in *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*, eds. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth Hofkin Pleck (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 476–495, 490.

⁹Dorothy D. Lee, "What Shall We Teach Women?" *Mademoiselle* (August 1947): 213, 354, 356, 358.

forays into home economics and eugenics by Smith and Vassar—stood squarely for the traditional liberal arts.

Rosemary Park Takes on Connecticut's Curriculum

In historical accounts of Connecticut College for Women, the president who followed the long Katherine Blunt era, Rosemary Park, is frequently lauded for reestablishing the primacy of the liberal arts in the curriculum. If Katharine Blunt was Connecticut's builder-president, then Rosemary Park was its "educator-president."¹⁰ Park and faculty leaders in the 1950s steered the Connecticut curriculum away from the vocational areas that had been offered as major options and minor electives from the College's opening semester in September 1915. At the same time, the Park era shifted the academic emphasis at Connecticut College toward greater depth—accomplished by moving from five courses per semester to four—and toward better prepared freshmen, who arrived at the College having digested a challenging required summer reading list.

When Rosemary Park became Connecticut College for Women's fifth president in 1946, the heart of the College's curriculum consisted of the arts and sciences subjects taught at both the Seven Sister colleges and at the elite men's colleges of the Northeast.¹¹ There was an additional slant to Connecticut College's curriculum, however, that made it divergent from its prominent brother and sister institutions. Despite the founding insistence on liberal arts, the Connecticut College curriculum had been leavened from the beginning with vocational courses in dietetics, library economy, and secretarial studies.¹² In Park's first year as president, Connecticut College still offered practical majors and courses, including home economics, hygiene, secretarial studies, child study, and retailing, in addition to the traditional liberal arts and sciences core.¹³

Rosemary Park had come to Connecticut College for Women in 1935 from Wheaton College in Massachusetts to teach German. Seeing great potential in Park, President Blunt began to mentor and groom her for higher positions.¹⁴ Under Blunt's tutelage, Park progressed through

¹⁰Patricia Sullivan, "Rosemary Park: A Study of Educational Leadership during the Revolutionary Decades," (PhD dissertation, Boston College, 1982), 35.

¹¹*34th Annual Catalogue of Connecticut College* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, March 1948).

¹²*Ibid.* See also *Connecticut College for Women: First Annual Announcement, 1915–1916*, 17; Sullivan, "Rosemary Park," 38.

¹³Sullivan, "Rosemary Park," 38.

¹⁴Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*, 143. See also Chuck Luce, "Living Legends: Rosemary Park Anastos," *Connecticut College Magazine* (Spring 1998): 32–33.

key administrative posts, taking on the role of dean of freshmen in 1941 and academic dean in 1945. When Blunt's successor, Dorothy Shaffter, clashed with faculty, trustees, and students, leading to her resignation after less than two years as President of Connecticut College, Blunt returned as president for an interim year.¹⁵ When Blunt retired for good, it seemed prudent to many in the Connecticut College community to appoint someone with an inside familiarity with the institution.¹⁶ The trustees turned to the highly regarded Park for whom the college presidency represented the family business. As the daughter of a former president of Wheaton College in Massachusetts and the sister of the future president of Simmons College, it must have seemed pre-ordained when Park assumed the Connecticut presidency in 1946 at the age of 39.¹⁷ At the time of her appointment, Connecticut College for Women was thirty-five years old and still had a sense of being a new institution still in formation.

Though young compared to other New England liberal arts colleges and the Seven Sisters, the Connecticut College of 1946 had been on the rise. The College, for example, had established a Phi Beta Kappa chapter in 1934, before it had graduated even twenty classes.¹⁸ Connecticut College's 1934 application for a Phi Beta Kappa chapter was one of only four successful petitions from among the thirty-seven submitted that year.¹⁹ The College's Arboretum was emerging as an educational resource for students on campus and residents of the state. Due the prodigious amount of building that had occurred during Katharine Blunt's two stints as president (1929–1943 and 1945–1946), Rosemary Park took over an established college on a solid foundation, one that had thirty-three buildings and 848 students from twenty-six states and eight foreign countries.²⁰ Connecticut's faculty of ninety-four professors included impressive scholars of national note such as English literature professor Rosemund Tuve. In short, Connecticut College for Women in 1946

¹⁵Ibid. See also Dorothy Shaffter File, CCA.

¹⁶Alice Johnson, unpublished manuscript, (1997), 42. CCA, Alice Johnson File.

¹⁷Park served as Connecticut's acting president in 1946–1947. Her official inauguration took place on 17 May 1947. Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*. See also Sullivan, "Rosemary Park." See also "Dr. Rosemary Park Excited Over 50th Anniversary of Connecticut College," *New Haven Register*, 15 January 1961; Frances Green, "Charming Scholar, Efficient Administrator Is Rosemary Park," *Worcester Sunday Telegram*, 20 May 1962.

¹⁸Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Luce, "Living Legends." See also "Eastburn, "Miss Katharine Blunt," Biographical Material," 7; "Connecticut College's Strategic Priorities for the Second Century: Draft 8," 2 February 2007, 40–46, which lists the opening date of each campus building.

had numerous assets to bolster any claims that it was the proverbial “eighth sister” to the prestigious Seven Sister colleges.

From the beginning of her presidency, Park wrote and spoke against the post-World War II zeitgeist that promoted, in her opinion, an “over-great reverence” for the specialist—a theme she first sounded in her inaugural address.²¹ At her inauguration in 1947, Park stated her intention to strengthen Connecticut College for Women’s mission of liberal education for women.²² Park specified the need for Connecticut College to undertake a reorganization of its curriculum to achieve a program of study that eschewed specialization.²³ A Ph.D. in German literature, Park was through and through a champion of the liberal arts, who favored the generalist approach inherent in traditional liberal learning over focused training to become a specialist. During her sixteen years as president of Connecticut College, a time of unprecedented growth and change in American higher education—including a G.I. Bill-inspired enrollment boom and a growing emphasis on science and technology education—Park showed a gift for articulating on a national scale the value of a liberal arts education.²⁴ She was also skeptical of the progressive educational philosophies that inspired the founding of colleges such as Bennington and Sarah Lawrence, where the emphasis was on curricular freedom-of-choice.²⁵ Required courses, in her opinion, were always essential, whether desired by students or not. Colleges, Park believed, were obliged to define and provide the education for the student as its recipient. Park’s was the predominant view in the paternalistic era during which she came of age in academia, when the adults in charge determined—with a strong sense of their authority and little interest in negotiation—what was right course of study to offer students.²⁶ Such views, however, would break down in higher education in the 1960s as colleges altered their curricular offerings to satisfy changing student interests.²⁷ Park’s privileging of the liberal arts reflected her view of the appropriate education that Connecticut College should provide. Park understood well that the serious elite colleges of the Northeast were liberal arts colleges that did not offer vocational courses of study and had adhered to non-negotiable curricular requirements. The serious elite

²¹Sullivan, “Rosemary Park,” 28.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*, 28, 36.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 36.

²⁶Park, while considered one of Connecticut’s most effective presidents, had less success and a shorter reign as Barnard College’s president in the tumultuous later 1960s; see Sullivan, “Rosemary Park.”

²⁷*Ibid.*, 36.

college she knew best, Radcliffe (her alma mater), certainly had stayed on that traditional path.²⁸

On the Connecticut College campus, Park was regarded as a faculty president according to the professors and alumni who remember her era. Longtime Botany Professor Richard Goodwin, for example, praised Park's skill at listening to, supporting, and leading faculty.²⁹ Faculty, like Goodwin, appreciated her for keeping the College focused on strengthening its academic core. Park exemplified the era of college president as thinker-in-chief. English Professor and Dean Alice Johnson, for example, felt that "Rosemary Park enhanced the college in the public eye and constantly supported [its] high standards."³⁰ Her prominence as a sought-after speaker on a range of issues related to education lent stature to Connecticut College. To the extent that Park became emblematic of Connecticut College for Women, the institution benefited.

Following the collegial, consensus building tack of effective small liberal arts college governance, Park began to lead the Connecticut College faculty through curriculum reform in the early 1950s. Faculty chaired the Instruction Committee that designed the new curriculum.³¹ Park framed the faculty's discussion of curriculum reform in a larger context that transcended parochial concerns such as which course or department to include or exclude. What was really at stake, according to Park, was the ultimate justification for Connecticut College for Women's existence; that is, the essence of the kind of education the College aspired to provide through its academic program.³² Although Park recognized that crafting a curriculum was the responsibility of the College's faculty, she made it clear that whatever was fashioned by them must be a program that would meet the educational needs of the times and its students.³³ The goal for Connecticut College's curriculum was, in Park's estimation, to provide an education that developed in students the capacity to "ask the unanswerable questions which give depth to all of experience."³⁴ Park stated that in fashioning such an academic

²⁸Rosemary Park, "Remarks to Assembly, April 27, 1961," in *Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration Publication: Connecticut College 1911–1961* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1961), 26.

²⁹Richard Goodwin, interview by author 24 April 2007 (interview in possession of author). Goodwin joined the Connecticut College faculty in 1944, retired in 1976, but remained closely associated with the College until his death in July 2007.

³⁰Johnson, unpublished manuscript, 44.

³¹The Instruction Committee is cited as the decision-making body in Rosemary Park's, 14 November 1952 letter to Margaret S. Chaney. CCA, Home Economics File.

³²Rosemary Park, *President's Report, 1952* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, 1952), 5.

³³*Ibid.* There is no indication that students had an influential role in the curriculum discussions, which given that they occurred in the 1950s, is not surprising.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 8.

program, Connecticut's faculty should not be as concerned with communicating "a wealth of detail" but rather with imparting "a sense of human achievement and of human capacity even in times of complexity and ferment."³⁵ Park hoped that a Connecticut College education would encourage students to learn "how much one can learn by oneself because one has inclination, ability, and time."³⁶ In short, Park wanted Connecticut College for Women to encourage its students to become critical thinkers with a desire to learn on their own.

Connecticut College's original curriculum in 1915 had included dietetics (later renamed home economics) alongside liberal arts staples such as English, history, Latin, and mathematics.³⁷ Minor courses offered as electives in the 1915 curriculum included library economy, secretarial studies, commerce, and horticulture.³⁸ Non-credit secretarial courses in typewriting and stenography stood alongside majors in chemistry, English and modern languages.³⁹ Horticulture and landscape design courses were part of the botany department, and commerce fell under the economics major.⁴⁰ Not much had changed between 1915 and 1950. The 1925, 1939, and 1948 Connecticut College course catalogs, for example, listed majors in child development, home economics as well as courses in landscape gardening (under botany), stenography, and typing.⁴¹ Home economics courses drew a healthy and steady enrollment. For example, in 1940, home economics 3–4 (principles of food preparation) enrolled 98 students, representing 13 percent of the College's total enrollment of 755.⁴²

By the early 1950s, home economics had become a staple and, in some ways, a distinguishing feature of Connecticut College for Women's curriculum. Founding President Frederick H. Sykes had conceived of Connecticut College as a pioneering women's college, one not modeled after men's colleges, but instead oriented toward the

³⁵Ibid., 9.

³⁶Rosemary Park, *Report of the President, 1946–1962* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1962), 17.

³⁷*Connecticut College for Women, First Annual Announcement, 1915–1916* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, 1915), 17, 32.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹*Connecticut College Bulletin, 1939–1940* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, 30 March 1939). See also *Connecticut College Bulletin, 1925–1926* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, 30 March 1925); *34th Annual Catalogue of Connecticut College*.

⁴²Margaret Chaney to Katharine Blunt, 24 October 1940, CCA, Home Economics File, 1940 enrollment figure from Irene Nye, *Chapters in the History of Connecticut College during the First Three Administrations, 1911–1942* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1943), 76.

“sphere of women’s interests and activities.”⁴³ Women, Sykes hoped, would be trained at Connecticut College to be “true mothers of the home and mothers of the municipality.”⁴⁴ Toward those ends, Sykes believed that women would need to study food chemistry, nutrition, home planning and decoration, and how to supervise the milk supply.⁴⁵

Connecticut’s first woman president, Katharine Blunt, had helped build the home economics department at the University of Chicago—first created by Marion Talbot—into a world-renowned program.⁴⁶ In Blunt, Connecticut’s home economics department always had a firm supporter, someone who frequently referred to Connecticut College for Women as a “liberal arts college with a vocational slant.”⁴⁷ Blunt, like original president Frederick Sykes, believed that Connecticut College should provide an education related to the real lives women would lead.⁴⁸ She felt strongly that academic training was always enriched by practical experience.⁴⁹ Blunt recognized that, at the time of Connecticut’s founding, the College’s intention to provide (alongside the liberal arts) technical training that would prepare women to undertake professional pursuits was revolutionary in higher education.⁵⁰ A self-sufficient woman, Blunt wanted Connecticut College students to have the choice to pursue a career, a traditional path as wife and mother, or both.⁵¹ In advocating careers for her students, Blunt was in the vanguard of women who broke with the prevailing view that preparation for domesticity was the best collegiate plan for women.⁵²

During Blunt’s tenure at Connecticut College for Women, the home economics department offered sub-majors in household management and food and nutrition.⁵³ The household management major encompassed the study of living standards, family finance, and

⁴³Eastburn, “Miss Katharine Blunt, Biographical Material,” 3–4.

⁴⁴Frederick H. Sykes, “The Social Basis of the New Education for Women,” *Teachers College Record* (May 1917): 227. See also “Eastburn, “Miss Katharine Blunt,” Biographical Material,” 3.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Sarah Jane Deutsch, “From Ballots to Breadlines,” in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy F. Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 413–72, 41.

⁴⁷Oral recollections of Miss Elizabeth C. Wright to Anne Taylor, 1957–58, CCA, Elizabeth Wright File.

⁴⁸Eastburn, “Miss Katharine Blunt, Biographical Material,” 7.

⁴⁹Katharine Blunt, “Unique Characteristics of Connecticut College,” 10 May 1941, CCA, Katharine Blunt File.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Eastburn, “Miss Katharine Blunt, Biographical Material,” 5.

⁵²Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945–1965* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 6.

⁵³Ibid.

government housing projects.⁵⁴ Blunt believed that the home economics department provided “a unique opportunity in research in the social sciences with a woman’s slant, along lines which have been underemphasized.”⁵⁵ At its high point, Connecticut College’s home economics department offered as many as eighteen courses, including a class—about which Blunt expressed ambivalence—introduced in 1933 on marriage and family life.⁵⁶ The marriage course was co-taught by Margaret Chaney, longtime chair of Connecticut College’s home economics department and the author of a widely used textbook on nutrition.⁵⁷ Although she supported home economics, Blunt wanted Connecticut College’s department to offer fewer courses and to integrate more science into its curriculum.⁵⁸ Blunt believed that home economics provided women a scientific understanding of the household environment, and thus she wanted the home economics curriculum at Connecticut College to be regarded as based in science.⁵⁹ In Blunt’s opinion, the more scientific vocational programs, like home economics, were, the more they justified their place in the curriculum of a liberal arts college like Connecticut.⁶⁰ Blunt’s support of home economics as an academic discipline also resulted from her commitment to prepare Connecticut College women for jobs, not just for marriage and motherhood.⁶¹

Faculty opposition to home economics had been building at Connecticut College for years before the curriculum revisions in the 1950s. A 1946 letter from Home Economics Department Chair Margaret Chaney to Connecticut’s Faculty Instruction Committee took issue with a rule for faculty appointments and promotions specifying that instructors must have a Ph.D. degree.⁶² Chaney argued that the

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid. There are suggestions in Katharine Blunt’s papers, as well as in the home economics files in the CCA, that Blunt was less than enthusiastic about a marriage course being part of the curriculum at a serious liberal arts college. See also Home Economics File, CCA.

⁵⁷Katharine Blunt to Dr. Albert Noyes, Jr., 18 December 1939. Blunt’s letter to Dr. Noyes, the chair of the Chemistry Department at the University of Rochester, emphasizes that Connecticut College’s home economics courses in foods and nutrition required laboratory work and had as prerequisites courses in organic and physiological chemistry. Blunt also refers to Chaney and Ahlborn’s co-authored book, *Nutrition*, CCA, Home Economics File.

⁵⁸Eastburn, “Miss Katharine Blunt, Biographical Material,” 3–7.

⁵⁹Ibid. See also Nancy Tomes, “Spreading the Germ Theory: Sanitary Science and Home Economics, 1880–1930,” in Stage and Vincenti, *Rethinking Home Economics*, 34–54, 43.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹K.M., “Miss Blunt Cited as Distinguished Citizen,” *Connecticut College Alumnae Magazine* (May 1949): 6–9.

⁶²Margaret S. Chaney to Faculty Instruction Committee, 1 January 1946, CCA, Home Economics File. In objecting to the Ph.D. requirement for faculty, Chaney was not making a self-serving argument, for she held a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

rule, adopted by the Connecticut College faculty in 1945, placed her department at a hardship, because “there are not enough (sic) women with doctor’s degrees to meet the large demand in the field.”⁶³ Chaney pointed out that most non-research-university home economics departments staffed their faculties with master’s degree holders.⁶⁴ The new rule, Chaney contended, would make it more difficult for Connecticut College for Women’s home economics department to fill faculty positions.⁶⁵ The new rule also might lead Connecticut’s non-Ph.D. faculty in home economics to conclude that reappointment or tenure would be unlikely, thus, “they might as well resign and seek positions elsewhere.”⁶⁶ In response to Professor Chaney’s appeal, the secretary of the Faculty Instruction Committee did not relent on the rule, but did note that Acting President Park had said that, “only occasionally should the requirements of the doctorate for the instructorship in Home Economics be enforced.”⁶⁷

Two years later (in 1948) Professor Chaney complained to President Park regarding a “student-faculty curriculum committee meeting in which the home economics course, Nutrition A, was condemned so drastically.”⁶⁸ Chaney’s letter to Park stated that she was upset that the course, a cornerstone of home economics—as well as Chaney’s own specialty—had been discussed and criticized by the committee without providing her (or another member of her department) the opportunity to defend it.⁶⁹ Chaney was especially bothered that a summary of the discussion appeared in a student newspaper article stating that requiring Nutrition A “was not appreciated by any students.”⁷⁰ Park in her response to Chaney stated that she was sorry that the student newspaper had made the poor decision to publish such negative remarks that could not be verified as a widely held student view.⁷¹ What Park did not say was significant. She failed to reassure Chaney by condemning the student criticisms of the nutrition course. Nor did she say that she was sorry for any faculty criticism of the nutrition course.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Secretary of the faculty instruction committee to Margaret S. Chaney, 9 January 1946, CCA, Home Economics File.

⁶⁸Margaret S. Chaney to President Park, 1 March 1948, CCA, Home Economics File.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Rosemary Park to Margaret S. Chaney, 2 March 1948, CCA, Home Economics File.

By the early 1950s, Connecticut College's home economics department was increasingly on the defensive against its detractors on the faculty—so much so that Professor Chaney asked Park to intercede. Chaney, for example, wrote a letter in January 1953 to Park appealing to her to intervene in faculty curriculum decisions that Chaney deemed unfavorable to home economics.⁷² Chaney had made a motion in May 1952 to amend Connecticut College's group requirements to include a home economics course among those satisfying the College's science requirements.⁷³ At that May 1952 faculty meeting, the secretary of the Faculty Instruction Committee had tabled Chaney's motion.⁷⁴ Chaney's January 1953 letter stated that many Connecticut College faculty members felt that the tabling of her motion was an arbitrary ruling.⁷⁵ Chaney further complained that her subsequent letter asking the Instruction Committee to reconsider was not read or discussed at the committee's next meeting.⁷⁶ Chaney was understandably distressed that the Faculty Instruction Committee had not allowed full expression of her dissenting view; she likely also understood that the Committee's non-action augured ill for the future of home economics at Connecticut College for Women. President Park did not write a letter of response to Professor Chaney.⁷⁷

Chaney's fears for her department were well founded. The curriculum reforms that occurred in 1953 specified that the home economics major would no longer be offered at Connecticut College after 1958, when two of the department's three professors, including Chaney, were scheduled to retire.⁷⁸ A student entering Connecticut College in 1950 might not have recognized the College's 1958 course catalog. In 1950, the Connecticut College Home Economics Department had three full-time and two part-time instructors.⁷⁹ The College's 1950 course catalog listed fifteen home economics courses: elementary nutrition, principles of food preparation, the house, food and nutrition of the family, management of the household, marketing, child nutrition and development, child relations, methods of teaching home economics, fieldwork in home economics, nutrition, institutional

⁷²Margaret S. Chaney to Rosemary Park, 29 January 1953, CCA, Home Economics File.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid. A handwritten note on the first page of Chaney's letter states that, "R.P. spoke to Miss Chaney."

⁷⁸*Bulletin of Connecticut College, 1957–1958* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 15 April 1958).

⁷⁹*Connecticut College Bulletin 1950* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, 1950).

economics, problems in food preparation, individual study and investigation, and practices and procedures of the nursery school.⁸⁰ Of those courses, only child relations made it into the child development major that survived home economics.⁸¹

The 1959 Connecticut College Catalog was the first where the home economics major was absent.⁸² Courses offered in 1959 by the child development major, into which the last remaining home economics professor had been integrated, show virtually no traces of the defunct department.⁸³ Child development in 1959, for example, offered the following courses: introductory anatomy and physiology (from the zoology department), chemistry of metabolism (from the chemistry department), child psychology (from the psychology department), child relations (the lone holdover from the home economics major), the family (from the sociology department), advanced child study, and individualized study.⁸⁴ By 1961, the child development major offered three additional courses: psychology of personality (from the psychology department), primitive cultures (from the sociology department), and seminar in child development.⁸⁵ None of the three new courses had been rooted in home economics.

Viewed in the context of Connecticut College's founding mission and original course offerings, the curriculum reforms of 1953 were cataclysmic. The reforms specified that within five years the home economics department would disappear.⁸⁶ The curricular revisions were, in the words of President Park, "a clarification of our educational tasks."⁸⁷ Indeed by 1958, the College's home economics courses and its one remaining professor had merged into child development, a department thought by Park and many Connecticut faculty members to have a more traditional academic foundation. The end result for Connecticut College was a more "intellectually pure" curriculum.⁸⁸

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹*Connecticut College Bulletin, 1959* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1959).

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵*Bulletin of Connecticut College 1961* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 15 April 1961).

⁸⁶*Bulletin of Connecticut College, 1957–1958*.

⁸⁷Park, *President's Report, 1952*, 10.

⁸⁸Sullivan, "Rosemary Park," 39. Park does not mention the vocational courses of study in her 1952 and 1962 president's reports, the only two of those reports to raise the issue of curricular reform. But on page 14 of the 1962 president's report Park asserts that the child development major was not as attractive to current students as it had been to previous generations. Gertrude Noyes also curiously deemphasizes this aspect of curricular reform, choosing instead to give more ink in her 1982 history of the College to the shift in 1961–1962 from five courses per semester to four.

Despite the rhetoric, the Connecticut College curriculum that emerged from the 1950s reforms was not a pure liberal arts program of study. The department of education stood intact and the economics department continued to offer some commerce-oriented courses.⁸⁹ The Auerbach Scholars retailing program, for example, that had been supported since 1938 by the State of Connecticut's leading department store, G. Fox and Company, still had a close relationship with the economics department—which offered courses in marketing principles and management—and was available as a summer internship opportunity.⁹⁰ Courses in hygiene stayed intact in the physical education department, which the College continued to offer primarily to help students fulfill a three-year sequence that would ensure that they exercised their bodies as well as their minds.⁹¹ The Connecticut College Catalog for 1959–1960 also shows courses for credit in typewriting and stenography.⁹² But by 1961 the Connecticut College Catalog stated that typing and shorthand courses could be taken without credit and without charge.⁹³

An Outcry from the Defenders of Home Economics

The phase-out of Connecticut College's home economics department brought a hail storm of criticism down on President Park from graduates of the major. The Connecticut College Archives contain a whole folder of letters critical of the move.⁹⁴ Most of the letters are reactions to Professor Margaret Chaney's January 14, 1957 communication to home economics alumnae that President Park "questions the value of Home Economics in a liberal arts college."⁹⁵ In her letter to home economics alumnae, Professor Chaney had noted that her department and its supporters "have tried, with little success, to convince [Park] of the importance of Home Economics to successful family life, and of the need for training professional workers in the field."⁹⁶ Amid the many letters of protest, the Connecticut College Archives contain just one

⁸⁹*Connecticut College Bulletin*, 1959.

⁹⁰Eastburn, "Miss Katharine Blunt, Biographical Material." Also Jeanette Hersey, interview by author 22 January 2007 (interview in possession of author); *Bulletin of Connecticut College: Announcements for 1953–1954* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 30 March 1953), 142.

⁹¹*Bulletin of Connecticut College 1961*. See also "Faculty Discussion Reveals Changes of New Curriculum," *Connecticut College News* (18 February 1953): 2.

⁹²*Connecticut College Bulletin*, 1959.

⁹³*Bulletin of Connecticut College 1961*, 131.

⁹⁴CCA, Home Economics File.

⁹⁵Margaret S. Chaney to Home Economics Alumnae, 14 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

letter of support for the decision to cut home economics. In that letter, alumna Dorothy Chapman Cole '44 tells President Park "the Home Ec. Dept. doesn't really belong at Conn."⁹⁷ Cole says that she found the "courses repetitive and dull" and believed that students seeking to study home economics "would be much better off attending one of the large state universities."⁹⁸

In contrast, numerous alumnae wrote that they had chosen Connecticut College for Women because it "was the only Eastern women's college with the Home Economics major," or similarly it was "a small liberal arts college which offered home economics."⁹⁹ Cynthia Rosik, Connecticut College Class of 1955, put a finer point on it, telling Park that "Home Economics was one of the things which made Connecticut a leader among the better eastern women's colleges."¹⁰⁰ Alumna Dorothea Bartlett complained in 1957 to President Park that cutting home economics would remove one of Connecticut's unique features.¹⁰¹ Such sentiments echoed a letter sent four years earlier in 1953 to President Park, in which Mrs. Earle W. Stamm (the wife of a Connecticut College trustee) charged, "You are changing the whole aspect of the college and I think that the alumnae will not be pleased."¹⁰²

A number of alumnae, like Dorothea Bartlett, offered additional compelling rationales for saving the home economics department. Bartlett said she chose Connecticut College because she wanted to study the liberal arts and graduate equipped "to earn my own living at the end of my four years."¹⁰³ Nearly every letter of complaint to Park emphasized the excellent job preparation provided by the home economics major, referencing the "several offers" for better pay that home economics graduates had received in comparison to their classmates who studied "more academic subjects" and "had to accept jobs requiring no training ... or attend secretarial ... schools."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, home economics graduates had ample employment opportunities in industry test

⁹⁷Dorothy Chapman Cole '44 to Rosemary Park, 19 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Virginia Martin Pattison '42 to Rosemary Park, 18 January 1957. See also Virginia Taber McCamey to Rosemary Park, 27 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹⁰⁰Cynthia Rosik to Rosemary Park, 26 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹⁰¹Dorothea Bartlett to Rosemary Park, 23 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹⁰²Mrs. Earle W. Stamm to Rosemary Park, 29 January 1953, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹⁰³Bartlett to Rosemary Park.

¹⁰⁴Marjorie J. Gosling '50 to Rosemary Park, 25 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

kitchens, as dietitians, as well as in food manufacturing companies.¹⁰⁵ Few other fields were as committed to finding jobs for their graduates.¹⁰⁶

Other alumnae letters argued that Connecticut College's home economics department trained students for rewarding jobs in the professional sphere as well as for the important job of raising children. A former nutritionist for Beech-Nut Foods, for example, wrote that, "I cannot overemphasize the value of my major to me in my present role as homemaker and mother of two children."¹⁰⁷ There was incredulity that a college for women could fail to offer a course of study that acknowledged, "what a woman's real purpose in life is."¹⁰⁸ Other than home economics, "what can be more important in the education of a woman?" asked Judith Draper '38.¹⁰⁹ Eliminating home economics also made no sense to Carman Palmer von Bremen '38, "since the majority of graduates [of Connecticut College] marry and enter into family life?"¹¹⁰

President Park acknowledged nearly all of the letters of protest with a form response that cited, as justification for the decision, ten years of declining enrollments in Connecticut College's home economics classes.¹¹¹ In one of the few non-form responses, Park stated that she believed a college for women bore some responsibility to provide information on cooking and general household management; she further expressed hope that the College might establish a "kind of non-credit course" to do so.¹¹² While not a proponent of the home economics major, Park had been on record since 1953 as supporting courses in child development and nutrition.¹¹³ Connecticut College's Faculty Instruction Committee did in fact support keeping the child development major and nutrition course, recommending that the latter be offered in either the departments of chemistry or zoology.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵Stage, "Home Economics: What's in a Name?" in Stage and Vincenti, *Rethinking Home Economics*, 11.

¹⁰⁶Kathleen Babbitt, "Legitimizing Nutrition Education: The Impact of the Great Depression," in Stage and Vincenti, *Rethinking Home Economics*, 145.

¹⁰⁷Jean Kohlberger Carter '43 to Rosemary Park, 22 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹⁰⁸Gosling '50 to Rosemary Park.

¹⁰⁹Judith Draper to Rosemary Park, 16 October 1958, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹¹⁰Carman Palmer von Bremen to Rosemary Park, 29 September 1953, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹¹¹Rosemary Park to Virginia Martin Pattison '42, 30 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹¹²Rosemary Park to Mrs. Daniel Draper, 28 October 1958, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹¹³Rosemary Park to Mrs. Elwood Carter, Jr. (Jean Kohlberger Carter), 25 January 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

¹¹⁴Rosemary Park to Margaret S. Chaney, 19 March 1957, CCA, Home Economics File.

Deepening Connecticut's Emphasis on the Liberal Arts

In addition to excising nearly all of Connecticut College's vocational courses of study, the 1952–1953 curriculum revision underscored the importance of the “Western tradition.”¹¹⁵ Connecticut College's new curriculum required study of European history and the comparative context provided by mandatory courses in US history or American government. The new curriculum sought to develop precision of thought through required courses in logic or mathematics, perspective and direction through courses in philosophy or religion, an understanding of the scientific method through a required laboratory science course, a facility for foreign language through one or two required language courses, acquisition of writing and analytical skills through required courses in composition and English literature, and an appreciation for art and music through required courses in either of those departments.¹¹⁶

The curriculum changes of 1952–1953 also increased the number of required courses, leaving less room for the kind of self-guided exploration of individual interests that occurred at the progressive women's colleges founded after Connecticut College, such as Bennington, Sarah Lawrence, and Scripps. But, as Park stated frequently, it was not Connecticut College's intention to emulate the curricula of the progressive colleges but rather to follow the older, more elite Seven Sister colleges where academic requirements and structures had a long tradition.¹¹⁷ Proponents of the new curriculum, such as English Professor and alumna Gertrude Noyes '25, defended the reforms on the grounds that Connecticut's academic program would now provide coherence to students' intellectual development while also leaving ample room for exemptions and advanced placement by examination.¹¹⁸ The revised curriculum, in Park's estimation, gave students more academic depth in their course of study, yet also developed their intellectual skills and the capacities they would need in adapting to a rapidly changing world.¹¹⁹

In the last year of Park's presidency, 1961–1962, Connecticut College moved to a four-course plan that had been discussed since the curriculum revision of 1952–1953.¹²⁰ From her days as dean, Park knew well the faculty and student frustration with the five-course-per-

¹¹⁵Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*, 148. See also “Faculty Discussion Reveals Changes of New Curriculum,” 1–2.

¹¹⁶Park, *President's Report, 1952*, 6–7.

¹¹⁷Park, “Remarks to Assembly, April 27, 1961,” 26.

¹¹⁸Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*, 148.

¹¹⁹Sullivan, “Rosemary Park,” 38.

¹²⁰Park, *Report of the President, 1946–1962*, 13–15.

semester plan that had been in place since Connecticut College had opened for classes in 1915.¹²¹ Park understood that students struggled to keep up with the demands of five courses, too often turning in rushed and superficial work.¹²² Faculty felt that the four-course plan, which had become the standard curriculum at Connecticut's Seven Sister peers, would enable longer class meetings and foster greater depth of study.¹²³ Defending the new four-course curriculum, Park told an assembly of students in 1961, "these changes will make our teaching more effective ... your learning less superficial ... they will permit you a more secure grasp of understanding on the college courses you elect."¹²⁴ Moving to the four-course plan reinvigorated Connecticut College's curriculum and re-energized the faculty, according to long-time dean Gertrude Noyes.¹²⁵

The four-course plan brought down the number of courses required for graduation from forty to thirty-two. Faculty hoped that the new four-course plan would inject greater vitality into the academic life of the College by enabling more seminars, independent study, and honors study—all opportunities to cultivate student initiative.¹²⁶ Faculty hopes were fulfilled. One tangible result of the move to the four-course plan was an immediate and dramatic increase in the number of Connecticut College students achieving academic honors.¹²⁷ Park noted in her final president's report in May 1962 that in the first year of the four-course plan the number of students on the honors list rose from 114 to 247.¹²⁸ Some faculty, however, were skeptical that the four-course plan did little more than give professors the license to expand the scope and assignments of each course by one-fifth; thus not lessening in any appreciable way student homework.¹²⁹ Although it was still an option, few students at Connecticut College elected to take five courses ever again.¹³⁰

In 1961, Connecticut College also instituted a summer reading list for incoming first year students, requiring books for discussion during the opening week of the fall semester.¹³¹ The summer reading list emphasized philosophical works that would inspire students to reflect

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*, 148. See also Park, "Remarks to Assembly, 27 April 1961," 25.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Park, "Remarks to Assembly, April 27, 1961," 25.

¹²⁵Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*, 148.

¹²⁶Ibid, 148.

¹²⁷Park, *Report of the President, 1946–1962*, 13.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Johnson, unpublished manuscript, 69.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Noyes, *History of Connecticut College*, 148.

on the societal impact that scientific and technological innovations were having on the twentieth century. The intent was to engage students in discussions of issues of the day and to put the incoming freshmen on notice that Connecticut College for Women was a serious intellectual environment.¹³² Chosen works included C.P. Snow's *Two Cultures*, Albert Camus' *The Fall*, Barbara Ward's *Five Ideas That Changed the World*, and Walter Lippmann's *The Good Society*.¹³³

In 1997, Alice Johnson, who had been Connecticut's dean of freshmen in 1961, recalled the intellectual vigor of those first discussions of C.P. Snow.¹³⁴ Students exhibited palpable eagerness to critique and debate Snow's ideas.¹³⁵ The success of that first reading list brought an even more ambitious one for 1962: Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, Andre Malraux's *Man's Fate*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, and Paul Tillich's *Courage to Be*, as well as recommendations to delve into William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, Adolph Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*, Walter Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth*, John Dos Passos' *Mid Century*, William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Karl Jaspers' *Future of Mankind*, and Harrison Brown's *Challenge of Man's Future*.¹³⁶ Dean Johnson noted that the summer reading list concept caught on at colleges across the United States "faster than a prairie fire on a windy day."¹³⁷ The reading list idea was a success in part because Connecticut College and other colleges, in Johnson's opinion, saw emerging in the 1960s "a new breed of student," far more lively and engaged than the 1950s variety had been.¹³⁸

The Legacy of the Park Era Curriculum Reforms

The Connecticut College that emerged from the Rosemary Park era was an institution that had pruned some of the curricular offerings that had been central at its founding. In removing the home economics program, Connecticut College let go of the field where its longest-serving president, Katharine Blunt, had achieved prominence. Also gone by the end of Park's tenure were other programs that had expressed Connecticut College's difference at its birth, such as secretarial courses. It is tempting to speculate about how founding president Frederick H. Sykes and former home economics association president

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid, 149.

¹³⁴Johnson, unpublished manuscript, 69.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid.

Katharine Blunt would have reacted to the changes. Sykes, as well as Blunt, might have cautioned against Park's hard tack into the liberal arts waters. Sykes and Blunt might have asked whether the curricular changes were made to bolster the reputation and stature of the College or whether they resulted from a genuine recognition of a changing current in women's higher education; that is, the belief that vocational programs had served their purpose and were no longer as necessary as they were in 1915. In her last year as president, Rosemary Park expressed satisfaction that Connecticut College's revised curriculum more closely resembled the Radcliffe College she knew as a student in 1924 as well as the academic programs at Bryn Mawr, Harvard, and Pembroke (the women's college of Brown University).¹³⁹ Park's remarks left little doubt that those Seven Sister and Ivy League colleges had been the models of quality and prestige for Connecticut to emulate during her presidency.

Proponents of home economics might have said, however, that Connecticut College, through its curricular reforms of 1952–1962, became more generically a small liberal arts college with less of a plausible claim on curricular distinctiveness. The curriculum reformers might have argued in defense that having a home economics department detracted from Connecticut College's stature, in part because home economics was always seen as an inherently feminine (read inferior) field consigned to always fight an uphill battle in academe to attain the stature of the applied areas that men studied such as engineering.¹⁴⁰ Those critics might have asked whether Connecticut College really wanted to be associated with a field that many in higher education had long dismissed as nothing more than "glorified housekeeping."¹⁴¹ Those critics might also have argued that women's higher education opportunities and employment options had expanded since 1915, rendering segregated vocational programs for women, such as home economics, an anachronism.¹⁴²

Despite heroic attempts by the early home economics partisans, whether Ellen Richards nationally or Margaret Chaney at Connecticut College, the field could never escape limitations imposed by gender stereotypes.¹⁴³ If home economics as a discipline became regarded as a lesser area of study because it was a women's field, then Connecticut College for Women was by association a lesser college for having the

¹³⁹Park, "Remarks to Assembly, 27 April 1961," 26.

¹⁴⁰Frankfort, *Domesticity and Career in Turn-of-the-Century America*, 105.

¹⁴¹Stage & Vincenti, *Rethinking Home Economics*, 15.

¹⁴²Stage and Vincenti, "Women's Place: Home Economics and Education," in *Rethinking Home Economics*, 71.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 77.

major. On those grounds alone, it is hard to fault Rosemary Park and the Connecticut faculty for eliminating a vocational program in favor of a more traditional liberal arts curriculum that more closely aligned the College with the most elite institutions of the day.

By the 1950s, none of the Seven Sister colleges offered vocational courses or programs advocated by the home economics movement. Two of the Seven Sister colleges, Smith and Vassar, had made brief dalliances into domestic science in the 1920s. Smith's Institute for Coordination of Women's Interests, founded by Ethel Puffer Howe, hoped to resolve the "intolerable choice between career and home" by developing cooperative nurseries, kitchens, laundries, and shopping arrangements.¹⁴⁴ But Howe's Institute at Smith lasted only six years.¹⁴⁵ In 1924 Vassar College created a school of euthenics focused on the development and care of the family.¹⁴⁶ Vassar graduate Ellen Richards defined "euthenics" as "the science of the controllable environment."¹⁴⁷ Central to euthenics was the belief that "social change could be produced by individuals acting decisively to alter their environment."¹⁴⁸ An amalgam of domestic science, economics, and sociology, euthenics would be practiced, according to Richards' vision, by a vanguard of scientifically trained women acting as social engineers.¹⁴⁹ Vassar's euthenics program introduced the nation's first major in child study and provided instruction in domestic architecture and furniture, food chemistry, horticulture, and hygiene.¹⁵⁰ Euthenics courses included "Husband and Wife," "Motherhood," and "The Family as an Economic Unit."¹⁵¹ Critics of Vassar's euthenics program thought it "was a prostitution of science and smacked of vocationalism."¹⁵² The euthenics department ran the Vassar Summer Institute for Family and Community Living as a six-week program from 1926 through 1959.¹⁵³ But as a program in a college that overwhelmingly cast its lot with the

¹⁴⁴Rosalind Rosenburg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 100. See also Barbara Sicherman, "College and Careers: Historical Perspectives on the Lives and Work Patterns of Women College Graduates," in *Women and Higher Education in American History*, ed. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 130–164, 155.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶Dorothy A. Plum and George B. Dowell, *The Magnificent Enterprise: A Chronicle of Vassar College* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College, 1961), 63.

¹⁴⁷Sarah Stage, "Ellen Richards and the Social Significance of the Home Economics Movement," in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, 17–33, 27.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 23

¹⁵⁰Plum and Dowell, *The Magnificent Enterprise*, 63.

¹⁵¹Deutsch, "From Ballots to Breadlines," 413–472, 441.

¹⁵²Plum and Dowell, *The Magnificent Enterprise*, 63.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 67.

liberal arts, the euthenics department at Vassar existed at the margins of the curriculum—its courses drew few non-summer students and the program ultimately went defunct.¹⁵⁴

Except for the marginal programs at Smith and Vassar, the prevailing opinion within the Seven Sisters was that the field of domestic science was too tied to household skills to be of serious academic worth.¹⁵⁵ Bryn Mawr College officials, for example, declared that really intelligent women would not find enough elements of intellectual growth in domestic science to furnish a profound course of training.¹⁵⁶ That the field was associated with the agricultural colleges in the Midwest, which East Coast partisans deemed inferior to the Seven Sisters, also held back the acceptance of domestic science.¹⁵⁷ Further complicating the situation was the fact that by the 1950s and on into the 1960s, fields such as home economics were transforming into realms no longer solely controlled by women—a morphogenesis that produced some ironic consequences.¹⁵⁸ Scholars such as Margaret Rossiter, for example, have noted that as men moved into the field, home economics began to receive more funding and legitimacy.¹⁵⁹ In addition, by 1960, women were studying and working in greater numbers than ever.¹⁶⁰ As professional schools and careers opened to them, women did not need—as much as they had near the turn of the twentieth century—the domestic arena to carve out a special sphere of influence.

Rosemary Park also seems to have realized that Connecticut College for Women, to be taken seriously as a liberal arts college of the first rank, needed to strengthen its science programs.¹⁶¹ Like Connecticut's first president Frederick Sykes, Park was a provocative thinker whose speeches tended toward visions of the future. Park saw a future constructed around science and technology.¹⁶² She believed that the careers of the future for women would develop out of general science rather than from the gendered fields of home economics and social work that had held so much promise for women

¹⁵⁴Sicherman, "College and Careers," 154.

¹⁵⁵Stage, "Home Economics: What's in a Name?" 8.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 7. See also Stage, "Ellen Richards and the Social Significance of the Home Economics Movement," 25.

¹⁵⁷Stage, "Home Economics: What's in a Name?" 8.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹Margaret Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982).

¹⁶⁰Linda Eisenmann, "Educating the Female Citizen in a Post-War World: Competing Ideologies for American Women, 1945–1965," *Educational Review* 54, no. 2 (2002): 133–141. See also Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America*, 4.

¹⁶¹Sullivan, "Rosemary Park," 32.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

in 1915.¹⁶³ Park thought that women, especially college educated women, should be equipped to enter scientific fields; thus, she frequently took aim at the prejudiced belief that “math and science are not subjects in which girls can expect to succeed.”¹⁶⁴ Indeed, beyond the Connecticut College campus, the new vocational training emerging in the 1950s was in science and technology. Following the Soviet Union’s launch of *Sputnik*, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act that stressed math, science, and foreign language—all subjects that challenged home economics as a high school elective.¹⁶⁵ It could be argued that by emphasizing the emerging science areas, rather than the practical domestic science fields of days gone by, Connecticut College was both evolving and staying true to its mission to educate women to be of use in the world.

Park’s foresight regarding science also drove the decision to start Connecticut College for Men, which provided graduate programs for the growing number of male scientists working at the Pfizer and Electric Boat plants in the New London area.¹⁶⁶ Having men in some of the College’s science classes, Park believed, would have a positive effect on women, motivating them to show that they could compete with men scholastically.¹⁶⁷ Having men, especially committed young scientists, in classes would also show that Connecticut College was of high enough academic quality to interest and challenge male students.¹⁶⁸ Despite the many accomplishments of their graduates, women’s colleges, even in the late 1950s, still had to defend themselves against the ingrained notion that men’s colleges were by definition superior.¹⁶⁹

Jettisoning or pushing aside the vocational courses was also a clear statement that Connecticut College was not in the realm of the so-called “finishing schools,” the M.R.S. degree colleges such as Finch, Pine Manor, or even the Southern women’s colleges that were widely viewed as providing an education for the cultured and decorative woman who would lead a life of gentility.¹⁷⁰ Such institutions, notwithstanding the

¹⁶³Rosemary Park, *President’s Report, 1957* (New London, CT: Connecticut College for Women, 1957), 7.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵Virginia Vincenti, “Chronology,” in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, 321–330, 326.

¹⁶⁶Astin, “Interview with Rosemary Park,” xxii.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹Marion Doro and George Willauer interviews.

¹⁷⁰Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women’s Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 6. See also Finishing schools bestowed the right social cache and provided training in social deportment, but were usually not four-year colleges, according to Joyce Antler’s, “The Educational Biography of Lucy Sprague Mitchell: A Case Study in the History of

unfair stereotypes of women's colleges, were always closer to being actual sites for finishing for marriage than they were serious liberal arts colleges like Connecticut College for Women.¹⁷¹ Despite the strong reputation of Connecticut College, it lacked the prestigious imprimatur of the "Seven Sisters" which meant that it always inhabited the more self-conscious and insecure realm of the almost-Sisters with Douglass, Goucher, Mills, Skidmore, Wells, Wheaton, and William Smith; a realm that constantly had to prove its quality.¹⁷²

By 1960, Connecticut College's early twentieth-century sisters in practical higher education—Douglass College, Simmons College, Skidmore College, and William Smith College—were also firmly established. Of that group, only Simmons had stayed true to its original mission and had not embraced the Seven Sisters model that meant excising the vocational in favor of the pure liberal arts. Simmons, for example, continued to maintain a school of home economics into the mid-1960s.¹⁷³ According to the 1960 Simmons College course catalogue, a Simmons education was preparation for "most of the professions which women find interesting."¹⁷⁴ A Simmons College student in 1960 had the opportunity to choose courses from nine different schools: business, education, home economics, library science, nursing, publication (publishing), retailing, science, or social science.¹⁷⁵ Douglass College also continued to offer home economics as a major.¹⁷⁶

In contrast, Skidmore and William Smith, like Connecticut College, were settling further into a liberal arts curriculum. By 1962, William Smith no longer offered a home economics department.¹⁷⁷ But unlike Connecticut and William Smith, Skidmore continued to offer home economics.¹⁷⁸ Skidmore, like Connecticut, had offered courses related to marriage and family in the 1930s and 1940s, but had discontinued them as a separate program, moving them into departments such as sociology and home economics in 1954–1955.¹⁷⁹

Women's Higher Education," in *Women and Higher Education in American History*, ed. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 43–63, 47.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Helen Horowitz, 28 April 2007 and Mary Pat McPherson, 1 November 2007, interviews by author (interviews in possession of author).

¹⁷³Claire Goodwin and Jason Wood, "A Brief History of Simmons College." Accessed 12 February 2007 from http://www.simmons.edu/resources/libraries/archives/briefhistory_text.htm. See also Poulson, "Simmons College: Meeting the Needs of Women Workers," 208–234.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Schmidt, *Douglass College: A History*.

¹⁷⁷Miller-Bernal, *Separate by Degree*, 88.

¹⁷⁸Lynn, *Make No Small Plans*, 91.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 91.

Still, despite its continuing home economics program, Skidmore's roots in the Young Women's Industrial Club were less apparent with each year.¹⁸⁰ For colleges such as Connecticut and Skidmore that aspired to greater prestige in women's higher education, one strategy to reach that goal was to resemble, as much as possible, the Seven Sister colleges.

In fact, there are indications that, to a large extent, insecurity about its liberal arts identity propelled the 1952–1962 curriculum reform efforts at Connecticut College. Faculty at Connecticut in the 1950s “were obsessed with establishing the intellectual credentials of [the] young college,” recalled English Professor and Dean Alice Johnson in a 1997 unpublished historical account of Connecticut College in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁸¹

Johnson's perspective on Connecticut College is not easily dismissed, because she arrived at Connecticut in 1958 from Wellesley College, not long after the first major curriculum reform in 1952–1953 but before the second wave in 1961, and stayed until her retirement in 1986.¹⁸² To Johnson's eyes, Connecticut College's original vision of educating women to pursue careers was innovative.¹⁸³ Despite her background in the pure liberal arts field of English literature, Johnson recognized the historical significance of Connecticut's “so-called practical areas of study;” that is, fields such as home economics that had been eliminated from the curriculum in the 1950s.¹⁸⁴ Johnson came to believe that Connecticut College, in its earliest decades, had been ahead of its time with its emphasis on women putting their liberal arts education to good use in the world.¹⁸⁵

The Connecticut College for Women Alice Johnson found in 1958, however, aspired to become the eighth sister to the Seven Sisters, with a drive that “was at times so compelling that it became education by imitation rather than by intellectual persuasion.”¹⁸⁶ To a newcomer like Johnson, Connecticut looked like a Seven Sister college.¹⁸⁷ Like Wellesley, Connecticut maintained “vigorous academic standards.”¹⁸⁸ But Johnson was “immediately impressed by how much more work professors expected of Connecticut College students than had been the case at Wellesley.”¹⁸⁹ In Johnson's opinion, “Connecticut was still in the

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Johnson, unpublished manuscript, 29.

¹⁸²Alice Johnson, “Everything Changes, Nothing Changes,” *Connecticut College Alumni Magazine* (Winter 1978): 21–22, 34.

¹⁸³Johnson, unpublished manuscript, 29.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 29.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 31–32.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 30.

¹⁸⁷Johnson, “Everything Changes, Nothing Changes,” 21–22, 34.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

throes of trying to prove itself as good as, if not better than, the older women's colleges in New England."¹⁹⁰ Johnson noted that at Connecticut College new programs sometimes got proposed but then would be dismissed on the grounds that the Seven Sisters were not following such a course.¹⁹¹ Johnson believed that Connecticut College had cut majors like home economics in the 1950s "as the urge to become the eighth sister became an overwhelming desire."¹⁹² Connecticut College's longstanding commitment to career preparation had given way to a belief that developing marketable skills could be done by a woman after graduation.¹⁹³ According to this view, career training was more appropriately acquired at specialized vocational institutions like the Katherine Gibbs School, where a woman with a B.A. could get clerical training to become an assistant to the male president of a prestigious company.¹⁹⁴ If that stance toward career preparation was good enough for the graduates of the Seven Sisters, then it was good enough for Connecticut College, because "To be chosen to join that illustrious group would signify that the college had at last arrived at a level of excellence commensurate with its most pressing goals."¹⁹⁵

Alice Johnson found the obsession with the Seven Sister colleges difficult to appreciate, because Connecticut College had impressed her at first glimpse as practicing the virtue of constant self-examination with no trace of the smugness "which permeated some of those female institutions that had been founded at a much earlier date."¹⁹⁶ Johnson's recollection of a self-conscious desire to be as good as the Seven Sister colleges matches the impressions of numerous alumni, faculty, and administrators who remember Connecticut College as constantly trying to keep up with older and more highly esteemed peer institutions, either the Seven Sisters or the established New England men's colleges.¹⁹⁷

By the beginning of the 1960s, the question Windham, Connecticut High School Principal Egbert Case had posed in a 1913 letter to college founder Elizabeth Wright (Is Connecticut like Smith or

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Johnson, unpublished manuscript, 31.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid., 46.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 31. Johnson defended the strength of the physical education major, citing that its demanding science requirements had prepared not a small number of its graduates for medical school.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 31.

¹⁹⁷Bredeson, T. Fenton, Hersey, and Kaplan interviews. Also Claire Gaudiani, 5 June 2007, Lynda Munro, 29 August 2007, Charlie Luce, 21 April 2007, Brian Rogers, 5 December 2006 and 22 January 2007, interviews by author (interviews in possession of author).

Simmons?) had taken on new meaning.¹⁹⁸ At the time of Connecticut College for Women's opening in 1915, the accurate answer to Principal Case would have been, Connecticut is more Smith (that is, primarily a liberal arts college) but some Simmons (with vocational majors and courses). By 1960, the answer to Principal Case's question had changed, largely due to Connecticut College's curricular movement toward pure liberal arts, a path not taken by Simmons. Simmons College was, in 1960, as it had been from the first, largely professional and vocational in its programs of study for women. Smith was a women's liberal arts college of the first rank. Park's curricular moves established Connecticut College solidly in the realm of Smith and the other Seven Sister colleges.

Connecticut College's founders and shapers, such as first president Frederick Sykes, had emphasized that education should spur useful activity out in the world.¹⁹⁹ At her inauguration in 1930, third president Katharine Blunt similarly stated that, "The right of women to higher education and their ability to profit by it having been proved [by the Seven Sister colleges], we are now free to experiment," free to "adapt the [Connecticut] curriculum to the special interests of women."²⁰⁰ Blunt believed in a curriculum that differed from the Seven Sister colleges, which had largely tried to prove that women were capable of the same curriculum offered at the elite men's colleges. Like first president Frederick Sykes, Blunt wanted Connecticut College to provide women an "education related to real life."²⁰¹

Blunt and Rosemary Park after her, as they prepared the next generation of women leaders, faced a longstanding question: should women's colleges imitate the elite men's colleges (thus providing educational equality with men) or should they take a newer, more radical approach to education?²⁰² Blunt took the latter, more radical path for Connecticut College. Park, on the other hand, drew Connecticut closer to the view held by the Seven Sister colleges. Yet Park perhaps did not fully break with Blunt's path and Connecticut College's original mission but instead reinterpreted both, restating Blunt's words as "the value of college is not in just making a living but in living a life."²⁰³ Park wanted Connecticut College to produce tough-

¹⁹⁸Egbert A. Case to Elizabeth C. Wright, 5 June 1911, CCA, Elizabeth Wright File. Case had asked, "Will it [the new college] be of the nature of Simmons or of Smith?"

¹⁹⁹Sykes, "The Social Basis of the New Education for Women," 227.

²⁰⁰Eastburn, "Miss Katharine Blunt, Biographical Material," 3.

²⁰¹Ibid., 5, 7. Oakes Ames paraphrases Blunt's view of Connecticut College's "central interest" in *The Annual Report of the President 1984/85* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1985), 1.

²⁰²A question articulated by Linda Eisenmann in "Educating the Female Citizen in a Post-War World," 140.

²⁰³Luce, "Living Legends." See also Park, "Your College Education: Our Mutual Responsibility," 15. At that talk in September 1957, Park said, "life is not just making a living. It is also living a life."

mindful and socially aware young women who were concerned with something greater than earning a living.²⁰⁴ And Park believed that a liberal arts education, without supplemental vocational elements, provided women with both necessary and sufficient preparation for meaningful and productive lives after college.

²⁰⁴Rosemary Park, "Charge to the Seniors: Commencement, 11 June 1961," in *Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration Publication: Connecticut College 1911–1961* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1961), 28. See also Sullivan, "Rosemary Park," 28.