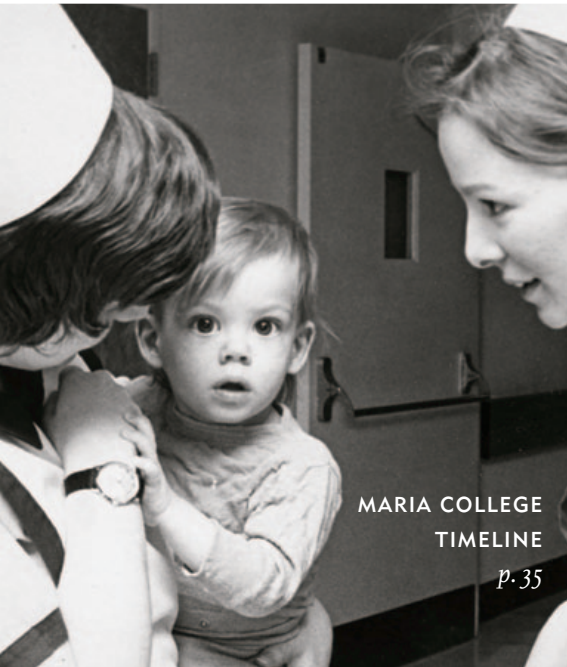




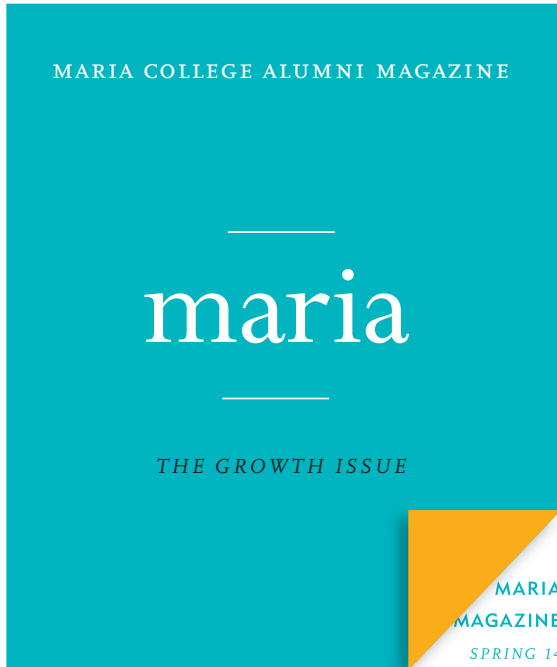
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MARIA COLLEGE ALUMNI MAGAZINE

maria

THE GROWTH ISSUE

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# MARIA COLLEGE







"WE MUST  
BUILD ON OUR  
VALUES AND  
HISTORY TO  
CREATE A  
NEW MARIA."

LEA JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

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#### MARIA MAGAZINE

SPRING 2014

**Editor** Beth Wales

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#### PHOTOGRAPHERS/ILLUSTRATORS

Photos by Mark McCarty, Kris Qua, Patrick Renzi

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tel: 518.438.3111, fax: 518.453-1366,  
email: mm@mariacollege.edu.

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FROM THE  
**PRESIDENT**

DEAR ALUMNI, Friends, and Members of the Maria College Community,

It gives me great pleasure to bring you our redesigned Maria Magazine—the first issue since I became president and an important issue because it documents the history and the exciting developments taking place at Maria College.

This is a wonderful time to be at Maria College. In keeping with the intentions of our founding Sisters of Mercy, Maria College recently became a four-year college. This change in our charter marks the beginning of a time of transition and transformation as we begin our journey as a new baccalaureate institution.

As we look to our future, it is also a good time to reflect upon the past. This issue allows for such reflection with an article that documents the history of Marian Hall and its acquisition by Maria College in 1975. My personal thanks to our librarians for taking the time to research and write this interesting story.

My first year at Maria College has been a time of building infrastructure, as we presented the College to the New York Department of Education for baccalaureate approval. We have been preparing for this moment for many years, and it was my privilege to make the final preparations to help pave the way for state approval. In support of this initiative and to prove our commitment to being student-centered, the College hired an experienced leadership team and made a number of physical plant improvements. As featured in this issue, you will see that we now have a coffee shop, an enlarged bookstore, a new location for career services, a new admissions welcome center and a spacious business office. Perhaps most exciting for me is the repurposed space above the library. Originally bedrooms for the Sisters of Mercy, the area at the top of the staircase now provides offices for over 20 faculty members and includes a lunchroom and a student/faculty work area.

Since my arrival at Maria College, the Sisters of Mercy have gone out of their way to make me feel welcome, and our college community has been equally supportive. I am honored and humbled to have been selected to lead as Maria's first lay president, and as our community pushes forward with strategic planning, I am confident that our college has a bright future and that our shared vision will put us on the road to success.



**LEA A. JOHNSON**  
PRESIDENT



## IN BRIEF

### Fall Fest Starts New Tradition

Maria opened its doors to the Albany community on October 19th, when it hosted its first, "Fall Festival", organized by Dean Deb Corrigan and the Office of Student Services. Approximately 700 area residents attended the weekend event that was held on campus and included a pet psychic, pony rides, an inflatable bouncing room for children, over 20 vendors with local Arts and Crafts, and a haunted house, courtesy of the Maria OTA students. The Albany Fire Department visited the festival and their fire truck was very popular among the neighborhood attendees. This year's Fall Festival will soon be announced on the Maria website.

### Changes to the Board of Trustees Announced

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES recently welcomed the following new members:

**Bassam M. Deeb**, PhD, Med is president of Trocaire College in Buffalo, N.Y., which, like Maria, is sponsored by the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. Deeb also serves on the Accreditation Committee for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

**Mary Jo LaPosta**, PhD, MS, RN is the chief nursing officer at Saratoga Hospital in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and a member of the Maria Nursing Advisory Board. She played a key role in establishing a successful RN-BS partnership between the College and the hospital, and at one time served as chair of the nursing department at Maria College.

After receiving her nursing diploma and AAS from Maria, **Sister Gail Waring**, '60, '63, RSM, MEd, BSN went on to earn a bachelor's from Boston College in Massachusetts and a master's from Columbia University in New York. A former Maria College faculty member, she recently retired from St. Peter's Health Care Services in Albany, where she was vice president for mission services.

**Carole A. Wickham**, '84, DNS, CNS-BC directs professional practice and nursing research at St. Peter's Health Partners in Albany. Under her leadership, nursing certification at St. Peter's has increased by 60 percent. Wickham also is a popular guest lecturer at Maria.



BASSAM M DEEB

MARY JO LAPOSTA

SISTER GAIL WARING

CAROLE A WICKHAM

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDON HAYES







## Top Rankings for Affordability

MARIA COLLEGE recently took the top spot for affordability among private colleges in New York, based on an analysis by AffordableCollegesOnline.org. The analysis focused specifically on distance-learning options from public and private non-profit institutions with full accreditation.

Annual tuition at most New York private colleges exceeds \$28,000. At Maria, tuition is less than \$14,000—and the Board of Trustees is committed to holding the line on costs to keep tuition affordable.



**SISTER HELEN KLEE**

## In Memoriam

THE MARIA COMMUNITY mourns the loss of **Sister Helen Klee, RSM., MS**, who died January 11, 2014 after 78 years as a Sister of Mercy. She was among the inaugural faculty at Maria, teaching at the College full time from 1958 through 1995 and remaining a faculty emeritus until her death. Much beloved by her students, Klee was respected for her contributions to the anatomy and physiology curriculum and will long be remembered for her popular "Sister Helen's Survival Notes." She held a BS and MS from the College of St. Rose in Albany.

## UPDATES

**5 NEW MEMBERS** joined the President's Cabinet.



**MICHELE AURICCHIO, CPA, MBA**  
*Chief Financial Officer*

Auricchio's 30 year experience spans public accounting, private industry, and higher education. She came to Maria from Excelsior College, where she advanced to the position of assistant vice president for finance and administration.



**THOMAS D. IWANKOW, ABD, MA, MS PMC**  
*Dean of Enrollment Management*

Iwankow joins Maria College from his alma mater, St. Bonaventure University. He has held various leadership roles in higher education and is completing his PhD in leadership of higher education.



**JOHN KOWAL, PhD**  
*Dean, Vice President for Academic Affairs*

He served as professor, chair and faculty presiding officer most recently at SUNY Cobleskill. He has a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from the University at Albany and a MS from the University of Massachusetts.



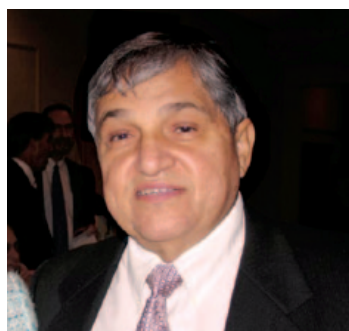
**TOM SHATTUCK, BS**  
*Chief Technology Officer*

Shattuck earned a Bachelor of Science in computer science and a minor in mathematics from SUNY Binghamton. His more than two decades of experience in information technology includes public and private industry and higher education.



**BETH WALES, BA**  
*Director of Marketing & Communications*

A graduate from Indiana University and the GE Advertising & PR program, Wales is pursuing a Master's in Health Care Communications from Boston University. The AMA Capital District named her "2010 Marketer of Excellence."



*Steve DeLorenzo*



*Sister Jean Roche*



*Margie Byrd*



*Sandra Jung*

**STEVE DELORENZO, MS**

A faculty member in both computer science and chemistry, Professor Steve DeLorenzo retired in January, 2014. Steve taught at Maria College for 44 years, and also held a series of key administrative positions including Chair of Computer Information Systems, Chair of General Studies, Director of Academic Computing and Acting Network Administrator. Steve was responsible for bringing Maria online by creating the college's first website.

**SISTER JEAN ROCHE, RSM, MA**

A certified counselor and spiritual director, Sister Jean served as Maria's Campus Minister and was founder of the Bereavement Certificate Program. She was also chaplain for Community Hospice of Albany. She retired prior to the beginning of the 2013/14 academic year.

**MARGIE BYRD, PhD**

Margie Byrd served as Vice President for Academic Affairs for over a decade, retiring in July, 2013. Dr. Byrd began as Director of the Learning Resource Center, and was known for her dedication to helping students develop college-level reading, math, and critical thinking skills.

**SANDRA JUNG, BS, OTR/L**

Largely responsible for building the OTA program into the highly successful program it is today, Sandy Jung will be retiring in May after nearly 40 years at Maria College. Sandy has held a number of key positions including OTA Chair, faculty member, student advisor, and OTA Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. She has also served as consultant to area nursing homes.



## IN BRIEF

### Maria Students Ride for Free



MARIA COLLEGE and the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) announced a transportation partnership last year. It has provided Maria students improved access to school, work and recreational activities.

Maria students' ID cards are swiped into the bus fare box (pre-programmed to recognize Maria ID's) and students may travel unlimited on the CDTA regular route, Northway Xpress and STAR par transit. Maria College is directly served by Route #6 (Second Avenue/ Whitehall Road), Route #13 (New Scotland Avenue) and Route #138 (Allen/Livingston).

President Johnson commented on the new partnership, "As a commuter college, Maria serves students throughout the Capital Region and beyond. This provides greater convenience for our students and we are pleased to offer this benefit to students." CDTA also welcomed Maria travelers into their universal transit access program. CDTA Chairman, David Stackrow, stated, "Students get a reliable way to get to classes, internships and services. It is also an excellent opportunity for CDTA to further regional mobility and strengthen our role as an economic development driver in the Region."

### White Tea Honors Maria Student Nurses

Every spring and summer, Maria College recognizes those student nurses who are completing their program of studies. The "White Tea" ceremony is a special college event and a time when students receive their nursing pins and take the Florence Nightingale pledge. The associate degree May 2013 White Tea Ceremony was moved outdoors to accommodate the hundreds of friends and relatives who wished to attend. Maria started a new tradition with the large white tent that allowed the ceremony to take place in the Marian Hall side yard. In addition to the pinning ceremony, there were student speakers representing both the day and evening nursing programs. In August, the LPN Certificate program held their ceremony in Fitzgerald Hall.



### 51st Commencement

Maria College held its 51st graduation on May 19th at the Empire State Convention Center. Over 140 Maria students received their diplomas from Bishop Howard Hubbard and Maria President Lea Johnson in front of an audience of over 600 attendees. Congressman Paul Tonko was the commencement speaker and received the Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Retiring Sister Jean Roche received the Spirit of Maria Award and Bishop Howard Hubbard received the Maria College Distinguished Service Award for his many years of service to Maria College and to the Albany Community. Dean of Students, Deborah Corrigan, presented the awards for academic achievement in eight program areas to conclude the ceremony.







## Honor Society Induction

Twenty-seven Maria students recently were inducted into Phi Theta Kappa, the world's oldest, most prestigious honor society for two-year college students. Founded in 1918, Phi Theta Kappa requires members to earn a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher, and to complete at least 12 credits of associate degree coursework. The Maria chapter, Beta Rho Kappa, was chartered in 2009. The 2013-14 class of inductees is the largest to date.

## Sister Virginia Sposito, RSM, MA

SISTER GINNY, Maria's Gerontology Certificate Program, Coordinator and Assistant Professor in Gerontology, served on the Planning Committee for the 15th conference of the Mercy Network on Aging. The theme,



Sisters Patricia Lynch, Peg Sullivan and Ginny Sposito

"Age is something to be celebrated! Join us" had national participation from individuals who work with the elderly in Mercy sponsored programs. Last November, she was asked by Albany County to serve on their Aging Advisory Board and help their senior residents. Last October marked her Golden Jubilee anniversary (50 years as a Sister of Mercy).



## Residence Life Comes to Maria

MARIA STUDENTS, who wish to live near campus, now have options, thanks to the availability of University Heights College Suites. This student housing is centrally located to campus (off New Scotland Avenue on Union Drive). The attractive, growing complex offers Maria and other local students modern housing

options designed for college living. Students from Maria, Sage, Albany College of Pharmacy, and Albany School of Law are residents of University Heights. Their housing options range from studio apartments to four bedroom suites. Amenities include an ATM (on site), laundry facilities, and study rooms.

## NEW TO MARIA

### 2013-2014 STAFF HIRED

Kari Bennett, *Registrar*  
 Richard Filkins, *Financial Aid Advisor*  
 Helen Lettieri, *Admissions Counselor*  
 Kate Choi, *Admissions Counselor*  
 Suzanne O'Brien, *Student Account Representative*  
 Nicole Ranieri, *Admissions Coordinator*  
 Andrew Ledoux, *Director of Career Services*  
 Kim M. Cardillo, *Assistant to the Vice President Academic Affairs*

### 2013-2014 FACULTY HIRED

#### FULL-TIME

Dr. Melissa Boles, *Liberal Arts: ANP & Microbiology*  
 Dr. Bobby Bui, *Psychology*  
 Meghan Malone, *Occupational Therapy Assistant Program*  
 Myra Marshall, *Nursing*  
 Kimoy Stack, *Nursing*

#### PART-TIME

Dawn Hadley, *Paralegal*  
 Lenora Harris, *Liberal Arts: Human Biology*  
 Pauline Harter, *Nursing*  
 Rabbi Robert Kasman, *Liberal Arts: Religious studies*  
 Rose Kempf, *Bereavement*  
 Jean Malone, *Bereavement*  
 Dr. Deborah Smith, *Bereavement*

All utilities, Cable TV, high speed Internet access, onsite parking and WI-FI are included in the monthly rental. It is a great alternative for Maria students, even those who are from the Capital District, as it provides convenient, affordable housing with many deluxe options.





# AN INAUGURAL CELEBRATION

THE CAMPUS MARKED THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT LEA JOHNSON, EdD,  
AND THE START OF A PIVOTAL CHAPTER IN MARIA'S HISTORY.





Maria College began a new chapter when Sister Lauren Fitzgerald, RSM, who led the college as president for 39 years (1973-2012), announced her decision to retire. The College launched a national search, and on May 17, 2012, Lea Johnson, EdD, Dean at American International College in Springfield, Mass., was named Maria's fourth president.

Johnson's background includes experience as a business and communications executive, an academic nursing leader, a teacher, and a seasoned higher education administrator. She spent her first year in office becoming acquainted with the campus culture and academic community, and working with the State of New York to gain approval for Maria's transition to a baccalaureate degree institution. As the year progressed, so did plans for Johnson's formal investiture as president.

#### THE FIRST LAYPERSON TO HOLD THE TOP POST

A presidential inauguration, a tradition originating in the 17th century, is a significant moment in an institution's history. Johnson's inauguration, which took place September 7, 2013 had even greater meaning. Not only was it the first presidential inauguration in the College's history, it also marked the first time a layperson would take the top post at Maria, which the Sisters of Mercy founded in 1958 as a formation school for their younger members.



The four-day inaugural celebration began Wednesday, September 4, 2013 with a picnic and games for Maria students, followed by a day of community service to a number of Albany-area charities. The Rev. Michael Farano celebrated an inaugural Mass on Friday, September 6, in the Mercy Chapel, followed by an evening inaugural gala to benefit the College's first "Presidential Scholarship Fund." Faculty, business leaders, and friends packed the Albany Country Club for the event, which raised over \$20,000 for student scholarships. The inaugural festivities concluded with the investiture on Saturday, September 7, at 1 p.m., followed by a courtyard reception for delegates, friends, and the Sisters of Mercy.

A bagpiper led college and university delegates, marching in full academic regalia, into the chapel for the investiture. Over 30 institutions sent delegates to take part in the procession. Among them were representatives from Johnson's undergraduate alma mater, Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill., as well as from Harvard, New York University, Williams College, Union College, Middlebury College, and the State University of New York.

The investiture began with Sister Rose Hobbs, RSM, Inaugural Committee Chair, calling the ceremony to order. Sister Joan Mary Hartigan, CSJ, gave the invocation, and Frederic Stutzman, Chairman of Maria College's Board of Trustees, followed with the welcoming address. Representatives from the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, the Sisters of Mercy, the student body, faculty, alumni, staff, the City of Albany Mayor's Office, U.S. House of Representatives, and New York State Senate provided their perspectives, addressing the audience of members of the Maria community and religious, political, business, and academic leaders.

The Roman Catholic Albany Diocese was instrumental in the College's founding by helping the Sisters of Mercy raise the funds necessary to incorporate. The diocese continues its staunch support today, as evidenced, in part, by Bishop Howard Hubbard's central role in the inauguration ceremony. The bishop bestowed his blessing on Johnson, sprinkled the presidential mace and medallion with holy water, and prayed:

*"Good and gracious God, we ask your blessing on this medallion and mace, signs of authority and power and also on Lea Johnson, so that she may uphold them as president of Maria College. May the light of the Spirit guide her in the years ahead. May her exercise of authority and power be modeled on your gracious mercy from which we have all received. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."*

Sister Rose Hobbs, RSM, continued,

*"We now come to the most significant moment in the inaugural program: the installation. The presidential medallion and mace, which was blessed by Bishop Hubbard, is the sign of the College and the president's rank and authority as the chief executive of the institution's highest office. Mr. Frederic Stutzman, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Maria College, will confer the medallion upon Dr. Lea A. Johnson and invest her as the fourth president of Maria College."*

Maria Board Vice Chair, Jerry Jennings Jr., presented the mace and medallion,

and Stutzman installed Johnson as Maria's fourth president, saying:

*"On behalf of the Board of Trustees, with a pledge of our honest counsel in act of support, I declare that you, Lea A. Johnson, having been duly chosen as the fourth president of Maria College, are vested with all the power and authority pertaining to that office. I therefore bestow upon you the presidential medallion as a symbol of your responsibility and authority."*

## OBJECTS OF INSTALLATION



### THE MACE

The mace became popular during medieval times and serves as a permanent symbol of the institution. The Maria walnut mace is carried at the front of academic processions by a distinguished member of the college.



### THE MEDALLION

The Maria medallion symbolizes the president's leadership. The front showcases the college seal and the name of each Maria president and their term of office is engraved on the back.

## AN UPLIFTING INAUGURAL ADDRESS

The audience of more than 200 listened as Johnson described her vision for Maria College. She expressed optimism about the next chapter in Maria's history, but tempered it with a sobering note: The College must find its unique niche in today's competitive, baccalaureate higher education landscape. Johnson said,

*"I firmly believe the future of education dictates the need for four-year degrees and beyond. Part of our strategic planning process will entail looking at what we feel the current and future educational needs of the region will be. We must consider the impact of globalization and our responsibility as an academic institution to prepare our students to become citizens in a global society. I know our highly respected neighboring colleges all offer a multitude of undergraduate majors and a host of excellent graduate degrees. However, it is not our goal or intent to offer a wide variety of undergraduate majors. I think it is important to be realistic about the future of higher education and where Maria College fits."*

*"As a Mercy College, we hold true to the values of integrity, compassion, justice, and service to others. That said, we will seek to offer majors that are in keeping with our mission and values. I envision approximately a dozen four-year degree programs, and eventually several graduate degrees. We will also remain in tune with the demands of a new business model for higher education — one in which affordability, and accountability are paramount in the eyes of the student, the parent, and the federal government."*

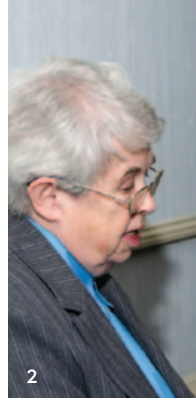
Transitioning Maria from an associate degree to a baccalaureate institution was one of the challenges that attracted Johnson to Maria's top post. Just as compelling is the College's culture, which she experienced during her interviews on campus. She paid tribute to that hallmark of Maria, saying:

*"I realized this was an unusual culture and one that exists at very few colleges and universities in the country. Our faculty, staff, and administration work together as one—as an academic family devoted to doing the best for our students, and as one that truly enjoys each other's company. When you have that culture, you become a community that is actually a team—and that is the culture we have at Maria College."*

Johnson ended on an uplifting note, with these words:

*"This year marks a new beginning for Maria College—an exciting time, and an important transition. I thank the Sisters of Mercy for their support of this past year—and for their continued guidance and ongoing prayers. As Maria College moves forward, our college community will work together, and there is nothing we can't accomplish. The future is ours."*





## FACES FROM INAUGURAL CELEBRATION

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1. The Inaugural (bagpipe) procession
2. Sr. Marilyn Murray reminisces at the Gala
3. Vice President Kowal donning robe for ceremony
4. Chairman Stutzman introduces President Johnson
5. President Johnson addresses Inaugural audience
6. Leaving Mercy Chapel at the end of the Inaugural ceremony
7. Academic visitors from a variety of disciplines
8. Congressman Paul Tonko greets guests
9. President Johnson greeting the local college presidents
10. An ice carving delight for the post inauguration reception
- 11-15. A gathering of faculty, staff and friends at the scholarship gala





## A View From the Top: New Dreams for Maria

In the following Q-and-A, President Lea Johnson discusses the College's long-term challenges and goals and what she hopes to achieve in the coming months.

### WHEN DID YOU KNOW THAT GROWTH SHOULD BE A PRIORITY?

When the Sisters of Mercy founded the College in 1958, they knew they wanted Maria to be a four-year school. Last September (2013), this dream was realized, when the proposal we submitted for a four-year degree program in psychology was approved by the New York State Board of Regents. This semester we rolled out our new baccalaureate psychology program. I expect to follow this successful proposal with a dozen more four-year degree programs in the coming months and years. These new baccalaureate degrees will require an aggressive enrollment strategy, something that the College has never done. As new students are recruited, we need to make sure the resources (people and places) are ample and can accommodate the new student influx. Online programs will also be a growing market for us, and we are upgrading our communication infrastructure and academic resources to prepare for growth in distance learning course offerings.

### HOW ARE YOU ADDRESSING THE FACILITIES TO ACCOMMODATE THE PROJECTED ENROLLMENT GROWTH AS NEW FOUR-YEAR DEGREE PROGRAMS ARE ROLLED OUT?

Last year, we invested over \$1 million in capital improvements. We're pretty close to our physical capacity now. Ideally, as our enrollment continues to grow, we will have to expand. It's important to take a student-centric approach in both recruitment and retention. The first thing I did, during my interviews for this position and when I arrived at Maria in 2012, was to talk to students. I asked them what they liked and what they needed at the College. This is how I determined the priorities for the first wave of improvement. In this past year, we have opened a small coffee shop that includes a lounge to relax and check email, bench seating throughout the main building, a fitness center, and an expanded bookstore (see pages 20-23).

### HOW ARE YOU ADDRESSING THE PEOPLE ON YOUR TEAM TO HELP ACHIEVE THE GROWTH GOAL?

Maria has a new leadership team that is deeply committed to pushing us forward. In each of the key areas of higher education—finance, enrollment management, academic affairs, technology, and marketing communications—we have been fortunate in being able to attract top talent. I am also quite pleased with our new members on the Board of Trustees: Sr. Gail Waring, Dr. Carole Wickham, Dr. Mary Jo LaPosta, and Dr. Bassam Deeb, President of Trocaire College. Each new board member brings a special skill set that will prove invaluable to Maria College in the years ahead.

### HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN TAKING THE FIRST STEP TO REDESIGN MARIA?

When I took this position, I promised the Board of Trustees that I would make an assessment of the College in numerous areas and present the results at the board's first meeting. So I spent my first 90 days in an assessment mode by listening and talking to students, faculty, and staff. I wanted to be sure to understand the strengths and challenges from different perspectives. This listening and environmental scan set the wheels in motion for the various transformation phases.

### WHAT WILL BE THE ACADEMIC FOCUS AT MARIA IN THE FUTURE?

It's important to build upon the College's strong foundation and history. Maria's *raison d'être* is the mission of Mercy—educating to serve. About 45 percent of our students pursue degrees in nursing and occupational therapy. Now is a critical and strategic moment in our history. At a time when higher education is on the brink of change, Maria must be willing to broaden its academic focus, keep our tuition in check as the lowest private college tuition in the state of New York, and, at the same time, bring innovation to the campus. Although Maria is known for its health care programs, I feel the strength of our culture will allow us to be much more in the future. I think everyone will be pleasantly surprised by the evolution of Maria College over the next five years.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST ESSENTIAL QUALITY THAT A COLLEGE PRESIDENT MUST POSSESS?

I don't believe there is simply one quality. I think you need to be a good listener, a risk taker to survive in today's highly competitive educational playing field, a person who puts their people first, and one who leads with an entrepreneurial spirit as opportunities are balanced with student needs and campus resources.

### MANY SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGES FACE AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE AS THE LANDSCAPE IN HIGHER EDUCATION SHIFTS. WHAT DO YOU FEEL ARE MARIA'S GREATEST COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS?

**AFFORDABILITY:** A third party, Affordable Colleges Online, just announced its national, annual rankings for public and private colleges. In New York state, Maria College was ranked #1 in affordability for private colleges. Our low tuition for a four-year private college is a big benefit. You can attend Maria for \$14,000 a year or less. Students and their families are very smart consumers and weigh their options carefully to determine where they can maximize their education return on investment. Maria will continue to be a great educational value.

**CULTURE:** The ratio of instructors to students averages 14:1. Maria faculty provide students with a great deal of individual attention, and we receive high praise from students for our nurturing approach to teaching. It's a highly supportive, family-like environment.

**ACADEMICS:** Our courses are very student centered, and we do not stray far from the Mercy mission. Excellence and service learning are intrinsic in all majors. We take pride in offering quality rather than quantity in the core major programs. This is not a school that will offer 50, 60, 70 majors. I want to keep the number of four-year majors to approximately a dozen.

## A Glimpse of the President's Journey to Maria

### OBVIOUSLY YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT EDUCATION. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

I am the eldest of four children. Education was always stressed in our home. My mother was an elementary school teacher her entire career, and my father's first career was as a professor of mortuary science and bacteriology. In college, my favorite subject was anatomy, with microbiology coming in a close second. I even own a Leica microscope, but these days I rarely have time to use it. After graduate school, I became a junior high science teacher. In reflecting on my path to the presidency at Maria College, I believe the numerous twists and turns in my career path were all in preparation for this position.

### DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO BE A COLLEGE PRESIDENT?

I never went to graduate school with the intention of someday becoming a college president. The goal of a presidency was something that evolved over time as I realized I had a certain skill set that would be helpful to some institutions. My graduate degrees in higher education management, psychology, public relations, and nursing have already proven valuable during the first year of my Maria College presidency as they have given me knowledge to draw upon as we make our transition to a four-year institution.

### THE MARIA COMMUNITY ENJOYED MEETING YOUR FAMILY AT YOUR INAUGURATION. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THEM?

My daughter, Erin, is a graduate student in medieval history at the University of London, Birkbeck College. She is also the lead singer in a heavy metal band and

writes novels for fun. Erin is engaged to William Masters of Hertford, England, and they will be married next year. My son, Adam, is a graduate student in Japanese at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and is currently doing a year of intensive language study in Tokyo. My husband, Walter, received his PhD in particle physics from Harvard University and served as department chair of physics at Suffolk University in Boston, where he was responsible for establishing the environmental and ABET-accredited electrical engineering programs, radiation therapy program, and the university program in medical dosimetry. When not teaching at Suffolk University, he is part of a research team at a medical institute in Boston. He is the former Professor of the Year for Massachusetts—an honor bestowed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.



## Lea A. Johnson's Journey to Maria

President Johnson earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois and received a master's in psychology from Western Illinois University, master's in public relations from Boston University and a master's in nursing from the MGH Institute of Health Professions. Her doctoral degree in Higher Education Management was from the University of Pennsylvania. Johnson's background in higher education spans more than 30 years, starting at the Suffolk University School of Management, where she directed the Management Education Center. She subsequently became a director at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and later moved to Northeastern University, where she served as division director for more than 20 undergraduate and graduate programs

and was the founding director of the Bouve Institute for Healthcare Leadership and Professional Development. At Northeastern University, she was nationally recognized for her work in the areas of curriculum development and partnership building. Most recently, she was dean of the School of Business at American International College, where she restructured both the MBA and the Healthcare Management Programs. In addition to her work in higher education, Johnson has worked in the publishing, advertising and public relations fields.

Johnson directed campaigns for the U.S. President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, the Foundation for Exceptional Children, the Massachusetts Governor's Highway Safety Bureau, the U.S. National

Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and the Health Data Institute for Chrysler Corporation World Headquarters. Johnson also served as a vice president at Hill and Knowlton International, where she gave strategic public relations, marketing, and crisis management counsel to senior management from the financial services, real estate and healthcare sectors.

Johnson founded a national trade magazine for the public relations profession, serving as publisher for five years. In the publishing field she also served as circulation director for two national trade magazines to the health/fitness industry, and was named general manager and later publisher for a multistate group of high volume vacation magazines.







# MARIA ENTERS A NEW ERA

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Maria is in the midst of a transformation and signs of progress are everywhere. An updated charter reflects the College's new status as a baccalaureate institution. Smart classrooms and other upgrades underscore Maria's commitment to meeting student needs. Additional investments—in curriculum, faculty, and infrastructure—will support the College's evolution. The result will be a “new Maria,” true to its traditions *and* its vision for the future. In keeping with the Mercy mission, students will be educated to serve. Maria will also prepare them to address new challenges and seize opportunities, as citizens of an increasingly global society. ▶

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# THE EVOLUTION TO BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION

SEPTEMBER 17, 2013:  
NYS APPROVES NEW FOUR-YEAR CHARTER FOR MARIA

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When Maria College was founded in 1958, the intent was to establish a “sister formation college,” a place where aspiring Sisters of Mercy could receive the education that would enable them to teach. Although the College was chartered as an associate degree institution, from the beginning the goal was to ultimately attain four-year college status. It would take 55 years—including 13 months—of intensive effort by President Lea Johnson—for Maria College to make significant progress toward that goal.

The defining moment came September 17, 2013, when the New York State Board of Regents approved the College’s request to offer its first bachelor’s program in the social sciences: a Bachelor of Science degree program in psychology. The regents then voted to change Maria’s charter, making it official: The College is now a baccalaureate degree institution.

“This is a major milestone for the College,” Johnson says, “and it marks the beginning of a new era for Maria College. A number of expectations

and requirements will come with this new baccalaureate status,” she adds.

## CHARTING A STRATEGIC COURSE

Johnson will kick off a campuswide strategic planning process this spring to develop a comprehensive blueprint that will guide Maria’s transformation to baccalaureate institution. Although the specifics have yet to be determined, Johnson envisions additional classes in the arts and humanities and more upper-level courses to support about a dozen new majors.

“The strategic planning process will dictate the direction, but I fully expect these new majors to be ones that are in high demand by traditional and nontraditional students,” Johnson says.

She also anticipates significant facility upgrades—some of which already are underway—to support the more advanced academic program and meet the future needs of Maria students.

“We will enhance our reputation to be known not only for strong academic offerings, but also for our use of teaching technology that will ultimately set us apart from many other institutions,” Johnson says.

## THE START OF A 55-YEAR JOURNEY

The original charter request in 1958 was for a baccalaureate college. Supporting documents were submitted to the Board of Regents in February of that year. On April 25, 1958, on behalf of the New York State Education Department, the Board of Regents granted a provisional, five-year charter establishing Maria College of Albany as a junior college.

During the provisional period, the College remained a sister formation institution, focusing solely on educating Sisters of Mercy. College leaders used the provisional years to make changes requested by the Board of Regents, including adding full-time faculty and establishing staff committees. Despite these efforts, on November 22, 1963, the regents granted an absolute charter that affirmed the board’s original decision. Maria was officially established



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INSTITUTIONS.”

LEA JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

as a junior college, authorized to confer associate degrees.

In 1965, two years after receiving its absolute charter, the College opened its doors to the general public. In the years since, the College earned a reputation for associate degree programs that combine a commitment to the liberal arts with excellent preparation for careers in some of the most promising fields. Dreams of becoming a traditional four-year college were not forsaken, but were overshadowed by the focus on building a strong two-year curriculum.

## THE TURNING POINT

While associate degree colleges were once very popular in the U.S., the changing expectations of today's workforce demand greater educational credentials for most entry-level careers. The rapid growth of technology and innovation, the need for today's college student to be prepared for a global society, and to develop critical thinking skills have all combined to raise the educational bar. In a world where baccalaureate and, in some instances, graduate degrees have become entry-level credentials in many fields, the time had come for Maria to resume its efforts to become a four-year baccalaureate institution.

The opportunity to lead that transformation played a major role in Johnson's decision to accept the appointment as Maria's fourth president. She took the helm at the College in July 2012, and, within months, launched the “readiness review” required to establish a bachelor's degree program in psychology. By February 2013, the proposal was submitted to the Board of Regents. Approval followed on September 17, 2013. The external reviewer shared Maria's assessment, noting that the program “fills a very important need in the Greater Albany market as it will provide a personal, private, low-cost bachelor's degree program.”

Less than a month later, the Board of Regents amended the charter. The new era had begun.







MARIA ENTERS A NEW ERA BACCALAUREATE

# PSYCHOLOGY FIRST

FLAGSHIP FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM LAUNCHED THIS SPRING



**WHEN MARIA COLLEGE DECIDED TO TRANSITION** to a four-year institution, the psychology program quickly emerged as the logical place to start.

Maria has long included psychology courses in the College's allied health programs. The College also offers a psychology concentration for liberal arts majors. Equally important, market research—including interviews with Capital Region employers and current and prospective students—indicated high demand for a bachelor's degree program in psychology, especially one that would combine a contemporary, relevant curriculum with real-world experience.

The Board of Regents agreed and approved Maria's request for a BS program last fall. Just months later, the College welcomed its first four-year psychology majors. The inaugural class includes about 10 students. By 2019, that number is expected to increase sevenfold.

According to John Kowal, PhD, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Maria, the new psychology major is "a flagship program for transforming the College to baccalaureate status and clear evidence of the College's commitment to a future defined by the bachelor's degree."

The new psychology degree program also "will make students more marketable and allow them to further their education locally and affordably," President Lea Johnson says.

## **FLEXIBILITY, CUSTOMIZATION, AND COOPERATIVE EXPERIENCE**

Like many Maria offerings, the BS in psychology program is designed to meet the needs of both traditional students and adult learners. Courses will be offered during the day, evenings, and on weekends. Current students and alumni are welcome to apply.

Peter Byrne, PhD, program chairperson, brings a wealth of experience as a professor and in program development and curriculum design. Other full-time faculty members include Bobby Bui, PhD, and Holly West, MS. Combined, they have more than 50 years of experience teaching at the college level.

The 120-credit program offers an attractive combination of flexibility, customization, and cooperative work experience. With 36 credits in electives, including 21 in psychology, students have ample opportunity to discover where their interests lie and to focus on high-demand fields, such as organizational psychology and gero-psychology.

**"AT MARIA, WE HAVE DEVELOPED A PROGRAM THAT WILL... PROVIDE MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO GAIN EXPERIENCE IN THE SETTINGS THAT WOULD MOST LIKELY EMPLOY THEM POST-GRADUATION."**

BOBBY BUI, PhD

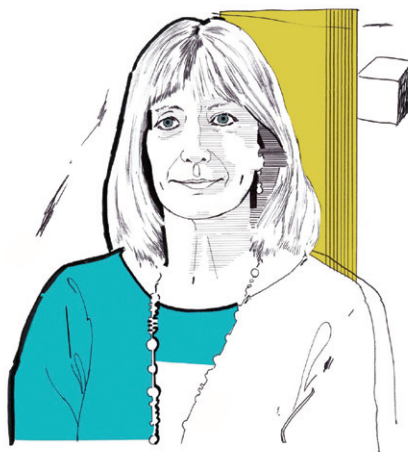
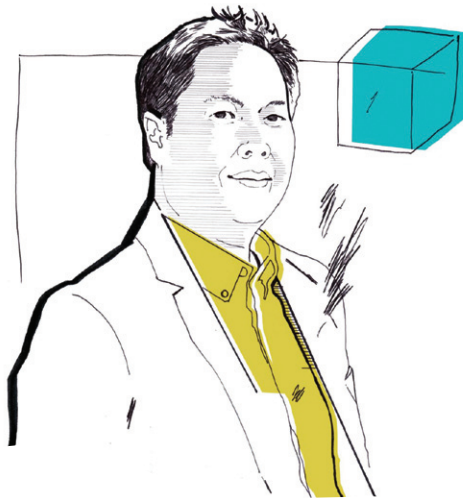


ILLUSTRATION BY LYNDON HAYES

**"IT IS MY JOB TO BUILD A SCAFFOLD BETWEEN THEIR EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE AND THE PSYCHOLOGY CURRICULUM."** HOLLY WEST, MS

The program also is designed to make it seamless for community college students and graduates—from Maria and elsewhere—to transfer already earned credits in psychology and have them count toward the higher bachelor's degree.

For students who already have an associate degree, "the bachelor's degree program provides a more advanced skills set and prepares graduates to be successful in the modern, team-oriented, skills-driven work environment," Byrne says.

Among the program's greatest strengths is its emphasis on cooperative education, which gives students hands-on professional experience, often via paid positions. Weekly classroom seminars address skill development and workplace challenges.

"On any college campus, you will find students who pursue this major without giving much thought to what they will do with the degree post-graduation. At Maria, we have developed a program that will place students into internships and require that they complete cooperative learning while they are still in school. This way, all graduates will have had multiple opportunities to gain experience in settings that would most likely employ them post-graduation," says Bui, who has taught at The City University of New York, SUNY Delhi, and New York University.

## **THE MARIA DIFFERENCE**

The new program also offers the small classes and personal attention that are the hallmark of Maria—and that continue to attract students like Kelly Moran, one of the first to enroll as a four-year psychology major.

"I've always wanted to pursue psychology, especially since I plan to continue my education and work toward a master's and a doctorate," Moran says. She chose Maria because, "I want the individual attention that college students deserve."

That's exactly what Moran can expect from Maria's Psychology Department faculty, who were selected, in part, because of their commitment to acknowledging and supporting students as individuals.

"I see myself as a student's collaborator and guide," says West, whose students will benefit from her more than 20 years of practicum management experience. "I work in and out of the classroom to facilitate students' learning and help them achieve their educational goals.

"Students come to our classrooms with a wealth of experiences and knowledge," she adds. "It is my job to build a scaffold between that experience and knowledge and the psychology curriculum."

## ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID

### WELCOME!

The college has repurposed the former Campus School into an Admissions Welcome Center and Financial Aid Suite. "The new space provides an inviting area for prospective students and their families visiting the campus for the first time. It also allows for interviews with admissions counselors and private meetings regarding a student's financial aid."

**MICHAEL R. DINICOLA**, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION  
**KATE CHOI**, ADMISSION COUNSELOR

MARIA ENTERS A NEW ERA FACILITIES

# THE MAKEOVER BEGINS

## SIX STEPS FORWARD

As Maria prepares for the future, one of the first major initiatives in October 2012, after President Johnson's arrival and assessment, was to improve and update the campus infrastructure for faculty and students. A comprehensive effort in six major areas has created new services and spaces for the Maria community. These pages highlight those campus improvements.





**MICHELE AURICCHIO**, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

## BUSINESS OFFICE SUITE

### SERVICE WITH A SMILE.

Gone are the days when a student would stand in the hallway, ring a bell and await the sliding window of the business office.

“The renovated business office space is bright, welcoming, and comfortable, allowing staff to provide student clients with the necessary privacy and customized service so critical in financial matters.”



**ANNE DEVLIN**, ENGLISH PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF THE LIBERAL ARTS/GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAMS. BACKGROUND: **DOUG RADER**, SCIENCE PROFESSOR WITH MARIA STUDENT.

## NEW FACULTY OFFICES

### COLLABORATION CATALYST.

The 2nd floor formerly contained small rooms or “cells” for the Sisters, who attended the college. It was closed more than 30 years ago and newly renovated to include a faculty kitchen, washrooms, copy center, and a multi-purpose student-faculty lounge. “The faculty and students from the Liberal Arts, General Studies, Psychology, and Business Programs now have such a bright, modern space where we can all work together... it’s really exciting!”





BARBARA M. RUSLANDER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF MATH AND BUSINESS

## SMART CLASSROOMS

### TECHNOLOGY MEETS LEARNING.

In addition to administrative offices in the refurbished campus school, the space also contains two modern classrooms. “Smart classrooms, along with reconfigurable student furniture, enhance the student learning experience. It allows student collaboration with their instructor and with each other, in a manner that incorporates technology and individual learning styles.”

TORI STROCK, MARIA STUDENT



## BENCHES

### HAVE A SEAT.

Lockers have been replaced by oak benches. “It’s hard to imagine the main building without these benches. They are very helpful when you get to class early and need a place to sit, or meet with classmates and compare notes.”





MARY RIKER, BOOKSTORE MANAGER

## BOOKSTORE

### MARIA SPIRIT SHOPPING.

The new Maria bookstore can easily accommodate 20 or more students and carries a complete line of clothing, jewelry, seasonal items, school supplies, and of course, books! "It's so great to hear alumni and students say, "Wow you have so much cool stuff to buy now and more than four people can shop at one time. It's like a real store!"



MIKE MANGAN, MARIA STUDENT

## CAMPUS CAFE

### COFFEE ANYONE?

Previously an empty lounge at the end of the first floor of the Main Building, the space was converted into a coffee shop/Internet café and relaxation area. "The Maria P.O.D. (Provisions On Demand) is a great place for quick snacks and meals, a place to lounge, watch TV, access the Internet, study or catch up with friends. I can't imagine the college without it!"



**IRELAND**, the land of the leprechaun, the Blarney Stone and the Book of Kells is the destination for Maria's first study abroad program this August. While the history and physical beauty of the country make it a popular study abroad destination, the real attraction for Maria College is that it offers the opportunity to learn more about the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy—Catherine McAuley.

According to Study Coordinator, Professor Stephanie Hutchins, the trip makes perfect sense for Maria College students. "This trip will give our students the opportunity to gain an understanding of Catherine McAuley and what the Sisters of Mercy truly stand for. The Ireland trip was an incredible experience for me last summer, and I know our students will not only enjoy the trip, but they will also gain a greater appreciation of our Sisters of Mercy heritage."

Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831 as a religious congregation

# FIRST STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM IN IRELAND: ALUMNI WELCOME

devoted to serving women and children in need. Catherine was a woman of means with a sizeable inheritance, and she used her inheritance to purchase a house on Baggot Street in Dublin—a large house that could be used to shelter and provide classes to distressed women. Her new religious order, the Sisters of Mercy, quickly grew, and Maria College was later founded by the sisters in 1958. Today Catherine McAuley's Baggot Street building is known as Mercy International Center, and it provides insight into the life and teachings of Catherine McAuley for visitors throughout the world.

Professor Stephanie Hutchins had just returned from Dublin and visiting Mercy International Center when she approached President Johnson last July with the idea of taking students back to Ireland to learn about Catherine McAuley and visit the Center. The idea developed into a summer study abroad program that could also be taken for credit as part of a new cultural studies liberal arts course. Students, alumni, and all employees of Maria College are also welcome to simply take the trip that spans 8 days. In addition to visiting Mercy Center and the city of Dublin, trip participants will also tour the country to learn about Irish culture and history. Sites include Trinity College and the Book of Kells, the Blarney Stone, Kilmainham Jail, the medieval town of Kilkenny, the town of Waterford, Kilkenny and the Ring of Kerry, the Irish Heritage Center, a Connemara marble factory, the Cliffs of Moher and Galway City. Arranged by Celtic tours, the study abroad trip will cost approximately \$2,868.00 per person. That price includes airfare, hotels, the land trip transportation, breakfasts and dinners. The college administration is pleased to have Ireland the first destination for study abroad, and Professor Hutchins plans to continue the cultural studies course with other destinations in the future.

For more information on the Ireland trip, members of the Maria community are encouraged to contact Dr. Hutchins directly at [Hutchinss@mariacollege.edu](mailto:Hutchinss@mariacollege.edu).



🕒 **Bronze Statue of Catherine McAuley, Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, at the Mercy International Centre Dublin, Ireland (reprinted with permission). Colorful houses of Kilkenny, Ireland.**





# FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE

## COURSE HELPS STUDENTS WITH ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

**NATIONAL RESEARCH SHOWS** that the first year of the college experience is the most critical for students. One high-impact practice for first-year students is the First Year Experience (FYE) course, designed to assist students with academic and social development as well as transitioning to college.

Assistant Professors Barbara Ruslander, Sharon Hope, and Anne Devlin championed the initial FYE course at Maria College after attending the 32nd Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience in February 2013. The conference provides a forum for colleges to share experiences, concerns, and accomplishments related to supporting student learning, development, and success during that essential first year.

Under Ruslander's leadership, the three faculty members developed Maria's FYE course, which made its debut last fall. The course implements best learning practices and helps first-year students benefit from structured student and faculty interactions. Students take a two-course sequence, earning a total of two credits.

Approximately 60 students enrolled in the first FYE course last fall. Six instructors from various programs also participated.

Maria's FYE course complements the academic mission of the College by providing first-year students with the best resources the College has to offer at a time when students need those resources most. The result: a classroom community where students and instructors exchange ideas and build skills for successful learning.

### EXTRAORDINARY, EFFECTIVE & ENGAGING

FYE achieves results by engaging students with one another and the Maria College community. The course promotes a sense of belonging while

helping students develop the skills necessary for academic success. All sections meet in the same classroom to support the FYE community of learners. First-semester topics included "Habits of Mind," time management, and personal learning styles. For the spring 2014 semester, students are reading *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Activities and assignments revolve around the book's themes and are designed to foster critical thinking and communication skills.

FYE instructors hold weekly collaboration sessions. Course materials are placed in the "Blackboard" learning management system, helping instructors share materials, which are common to all FYE sections.

### POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS & FACULTY

Results of the first semester course exceeded expectations. Students learned valuable skills, and FYE faculty learned from—and, often, were surprised by—the students. The faculty were especially impressed by the transformation that students underwent from that first class to their final presentations.

"They feel empowered as students," Ruslander says. "Transcending differences of age, gender, and goals, they bonded and gave confidence to each other."

Devlin credits the course's "non-threatening environment" with helping FYE students "grow in personal and academic confidence." And Hope is inspired by students' desire to succeed. She states, "I am so proud of the students for their willingness to rise to the challenge and participate in FYE and also for their strong commitment to academics."





# THE JOY OF GIVING BACK

(VICTORIA CALLAGAN, RN, EXEMPLIFIES MARIA'S MISSION OF SERVICE)



"MOST OF THE PEOPLE JUST NEED A HUMAN CONNECTION. THEY HAVE TAUGHT ME SO MUCH, INCLUDING THAT LANGUAGE IS NOT A BARRIER, BECAUSE CARING AND GRATITUDE COME UNIVERSALLY FROM THE HEART."

VICTORIA CALLAGAN, RN

**FACULTY MEMBER VICTORIA CALLAGAN, RN,** rang in the New Year aboard a medical mission boat on the Amazon River. For seven days in December and January, she and three others from Maria—alumnae Jordan Geer and Shelby Kircher and adjunct faculty member Molly Schmidt—sailed from village to village, bringing medical care to indigenous peoples living along the coast of Brazil.

It was Callagan's fifth trip to the Amazon. Now, back in the classroom, she is sharing the lessons of her journey while delivering a powerful message on the responsibilities and rewards of living up to Maria's mission of service.

"I often use examples of my trips in class, particularly when we discuss the importance of a good assessment and of cultural competence in nursing," she says. "What was most rewarding, as with any nursing experience, is not what I did, but what I received from the people I served."

Callagan and her fellow travelers from Maria were part of a 28-member team of volunteer providers, boat crew, and interpreters. The team included nurse practitioner students who were fulfilling their degree requirement for supervised clinical hours, as well as a physician who lives and practices in the U.S. but

Callagan says. "They are so grateful to see us and they look forward to our visit."

One elderly woman was so appreciative that she returned to the clinic bearing a gift: her best live chicken. "This woman had nothing—not even enough to feed her own family," Callagan says, "yet she insisted that we accept her gift. And, yes, the cook on the boat prepared and cooked it for us."

Conditions on the boat were far from optimal. The temperature typically reached almost 100 degrees. Meals were simple and were prepared in a small galley, with limited refrigeration. Because quarters were tight, team members could bring very little luggage. Even with these limitations, most opted to fill their luggage with soccer balls, school supplies, personal hygiene items, and other gifts for the villagers.

Although the primary focus was on providing health care, the mission team had non-medical experiences, too. Among the most memorable was their rescue of a foal that had fallen into a ravine. "We placed a rope around his neck and, with great effort and teamwork, persuaded him to come back up the hill to his mother," Callagan recalls.

On other occasions, the villagers came to the medical team's rescue. Because it was the dry season,



◀ LEFT TO RIGHT:  
Medical mission boat docked on the Amazon River. Indigenous people; Amazon River residents. Volunteers fill their suitcases with flip flops for distribution to the village residents.

remains a Brazilian citizen.

"She provided an invaluable perspective," Callagan recalls. "She was able to teach us about ailments and treatments, including medications, that were specific to the Amazon—things that we don't see here in the U.S. and, therefore, do not know how to treat."

The medical mission team sailed by night and docked in makeshift clinics during the day. At each stop, the medical team treated 200 to 300 patients for problems ranging from life-threatening infections to malnutrition, intestinal parasites, pneumonia, and women's health conditions.

"Most of the people just need a human connection,"

the Amazon was shallow, and the boat sometimes ran aground. When that happened, "people who live along the river—and who didn't even know us—would come from their floating houses, with their tiny boats, and pull us out," Callagan says.

She describes the poverty as "overwhelming" yet incapable of dampening the villagers' spirits. "What continues to amaze me is how joyful these people are despite the fact that, by our material standards, they have nothing," Callagan says.

"They have taught me so much," she adds, "including that language is not a barrier because caring and gratitude come universally from the heart."



OTA CHAIRPERSON  
SCOTT HOMER, '95,  
OVERSEES 40 PERCENT  
GROWTH IN PROGRAM  
ENROLLMENT

# PASSIONATE TEACHING & MENTORING

**SUCCEEDING AS A DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON REQUIRES VISION, PASSION, AND A LITTLE CREATIVITY.** Scott Homer, '95, MS, OTR/L, Chairperson of Maria's Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program, has all three—plus a great deal of empathy for OTA students who juggle family, work and education; something he knows firsthand with three children and earning AAS and MS degrees.

When Homer was offered the position to head the OTA department in 2010, he seized the opportunity not just to lead the program but also to make it more flexible for non-traditional students. Under his leadership, Maria reinstituted its weekend OTA program in 2011. It is the only one of its kind in New York and one of just two nationwide. The weekend program also is responsible for much of the 40 percent growth in OTA enrollment in recent years.

## THE FIRST STEP: ENROLLING AT MARIA

Homer took the first step in his health care career in 1993, by enrolling in Maria's OTA program. His grandmother had succumbed to a long illness the year before, and Homer was determined to help others in similar circumstances. His firstborn, Amanda, was still an infant, so Homer's decision meant he'd be attending school, working full time, and doing his share of the parenting. Twenty years later, Amanda would follow her dad to Maria. In 2013, she earned an associate degree in liberal arts, graduating with highest honors.

Armed with his AAS Maria degree, in 1995 Homer became a certified occupational therapy assistant, working with patients in skilled nursing facilities, elementary schools, and the traumatic brain injury unit at Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital in Schenectady, N.Y. He went on to teach anatomy and physiology courses at Maria, complete his master's in occupational therapy, and practice as a registered occupational therapist (OTR).

Homer was enjoying a successful career when he was offered the OTA chair position, but the college has been Homer's second home for much of his adult life, and he welcomed the chance to grow the program and oversee its reaccreditation by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE).

In 2011, ACOTE awarded Maria's OTA program full reaccreditation for 10 years. ACOTE site visitors made special mention of the program's involvement with the community and Maria's pediatric lab, where students gain hands-on experience in sensory integration interventions. In their report, ACOTE site visitors wrote, "The faculty is recognized for their vision of utilizing the community as an extension of the classroom for learning activities. By infusing classroom activities with purpose through utilizing class projects to meet the needs of populations, the faculty helped students understand the power of occupational therapy."



OTA Chair Scott Homer '95 and daughter, Amanda Homer '13.





▲ OTA Chair, Scott Homer '95 with Maria  
OTA students.



◀ Maria Admission event with OTA Chair,  
Scott Homer '95 and prospective student.





"FOR ALL THE PEOPLE I  
HELPED OVER THE YEARS  
IN THE CLINICAL SETTING,  
I FEEL THAT I AM DOING  
SO MUCH MORE BY  
LIGHTING CANDLES OF  
KNOWLEDGE IN THE  
MARIA CLASSROOM—

SCOTT HOMER '95



## Fund Benefits OTA Students and Health Science Lab

Maria College has established a fund in memory of Gail Blacklock, mother of Scott Homer, OTA Department Chair. She died November 21, 2012. The fund is used to provide scholarship support for OTA students and to upgrade equipment in Maria's Health Sciences Lab.

For more information  
or to contribute, please contact:  
The Maria College  
Development Office  
c/o President Johnson

## A PIVOTAL, PROMISING TIME

With reaccreditation in hand, a new president on board, and a team of highly qualified, dedicated faculty in place, Maria's OTA department is in perhaps the best position since its establishment in 1975. Enrollment is up, graduate placement is at 92 percent, and the program has a champion in President Lea Johnson. In keeping with Johnson's vision of Maria as a baccalaureate institution, the college has proposed a BS in Health Sciences. When approved by the state Board of Regents, the new BS program will be a natural next step for graduates from AAS programs at Maria and other institutions.

Other OTA department strengths include an innovative, experienced-based curriculum and an excellent mix of long-time faculty members and new adjunct professors—including Maria alumni. Sandy Jung, OTR/L, has taught every graduating class since the program's founding and mentored Homer for the chairperson position. Karyn Shenker-Gould, MA, OTR/L, had been Homer's clinical supervisor for his fieldwork at a pediatric outpatient clinic and is impressed with his accomplishments at Maria.

During his tenure, "the department has added faculty, enhanced curriculum, and begun offering additional course sections so that students are able to access the classes they need," Shenker-Gould says. "Scott has been instrumental in fostering a positive reputation for the department and ensuring student satisfaction." She also cites an experiential curriculum "that challenges students so they learn through laboratory exercises and cooperative work experiences."

## APPRECIATING AND PROMOTING THE COLLEGE

Instructors Lisa Deserre, '79, COTA, and Meghan Malone-McNally, '99 (liberal arts) '00 (OTA), COTA, CH, are proud alumnae who appreciate their Maria education and want to provide a similar experience for current and prospective OTA students. Malone-McNally had risen to the position of director at GuildCare's Adult Day Health Care program in Albany, a job she describes as "my passion." She began teaching at her alma mater on weekends and, last fall, joined the faculty full time.

"While collaborating with Scott over the years, I found the OTA department to be one-of-a-kind," she says. "I am constantly inspired by my colleagues, who are so knowledgeable, passionate, and compassionate."

"The faculty fosters so much personal and professional growth in each and every student," Malone-McNally adds. "The department's passion and commitment for the field of OT, and for learning in general, is contagious."

Students tend to share Malone-McNally's perspective. Shanaaz Bell, '12, COTA, is a case in point. She came to Maria after an injury forced her to rethink her career prospects. While driving, she heard the commercial that would change her life. The ad was for an open house at Maria, and Bell decided to attend.

"After I heard what OT was about, I knew instantly that I'd found what I was meant to do," she says. Bell enrolled as a full-time student and has nothing but praise for the faculty. "They are amazing," she says. "They helped students through those really tough times, and encouraged us and guided us."

Bell is one of the 92 percent who had a job after graduation. In fact, she did so well during her eight weeks of field work at Columbia Memorial Hospital, that she was offered a position in acute care. Perhaps best of all, "I love every minute of my job," she says. Bell also serves as vice chair of the Capital District Chapter of the New York State Occupational Therapy Association (NYSOTA).

Homer is not surprised by Bell's success and enthusiasm. He considers it part of his mission to instill that same excitement—in occupational therapy in general, and Maria's OTA program in particular—in current and prospective students. And he takes every opportunity to deliver his message: through community engagement, publications, and professional involvement.

Last November, Homer delivered a three-hour lecture, attended by over 100 OT students and practitioners, at the 2013 NYSOTA Annual Conference. He and Shenker-Gould also presented a poster, "New OTA Graduate Perspectives on Preparedness for Entry-Level Practice," based on research involving Maria students.

## A FULFILLING CHOICE

When Homer enrolled in Maria's OTA program 20 years ago, he envisioned a career in a clinical setting, providing the hands-on therapy that makes a world of difference to those who need to regain or improve function. For years, that's exactly what he did—with enormous satisfaction.

Now, however, he finds joy in celebrating the accomplishments of others. "When the graduating class crosses the stage and accepts their hard-earned diplomas, their looks of gratitude and achievement make me very proud, and I know that I am doing what I was meant to do," Homer says.



# WE'RE HERE FOR THE BODIES

HOW THE  
MONASTERY  
OF THE  
IMMACULATE  
CONCEPTION  
BECAME  
PART OF  
MARIA COLLEGE

Photos of life in the monastery are reprinted from an article published in the *Times Union*, May 31, 1959. Photographer: Mother Mary Aquinas, O.P.



The archival collection at Maria College Library offers a glimpse into the history of Marian Hall, once a monastery for cloistered Dominican nuns. This article presents a historical account of these nuns and how they came to live in the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception at Albany, New York. For many years, the nuns lived frugally and followed a schedule of prayer, work, and study. Eventually, the number of nuns in this community dwindled, and the monastery closed in 1970. Maria College purchased the monastery in 1975 and renovated this historic building, transforming it into an allied health education facility that serves over 1,000 students today.

**“WE’RE HERE FOR THE BODIES,”** said the undertaker to the sister who answered the door at the Convent of Mercy Motherhouse in Albany, New York in October of 1967. He had come to the wrong house. The bodies referred to were of ten cloistered Dominican nuns who were interred in the crypt of the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception on the adjacent property. They were to be reinterred at Saint Agnes Cemetery in Menands, New York.

So begins a story that is both fascinating and nostalgic—the closing of a monastery that was once home to a group of cloistered nuns beginning in 1929, and which later became an institute of learning to both sisters and laity. The actual closing occurred in April 1970. Ten years earlier, there had been twenty-two nuns living there. In 1970, however, there were twelve nuns left. Nine chose to continue monastic life at their mother



community, the Farmington Hills Monastery just outside of Detroit, Michigan. The remaining nuns each went to three other Dominican monasteries located in Cincinnati, Ohio, Newark, New Jersey, and Buffalo, New York.<sup>1</sup>

The community of Dominican nuns at the monastery in Albany can trace its history back to Oullins, France, where the generous gift of a local noblewoman established a monastery committed to Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Julia Crooks, daughter of a wealthy New York family, went to France in 1872 and made a retreat at the Dominican monastery in Oullins. She then entered the Dominican order and agreed to be trained to establish a foundation in the United States. It was from this monastery that Julia, who became known as Mother Mary of Jesus, and her niece, Mother Mary Emmanuel (born Virginia Noel), initiated their early formation and

1827

Laywoman, Catherine McCauley spent her inheritance to open the first House of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland to shelter and educate women and girls. Archbishop of Dublin advised her to establish a religious congregation. She founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831.

1843

The first Sisters of Mercy arrived in the U.S. from Ireland at the invitation of the Bishop.

1863

Four Sisters of Mercy left NYC by boat and with \$0.80 to establish a convent branch called Mount St. John at Greenbush, NY (on the Hudson River). They later settled in Albany and built the Motherhouse on New Scotland Avenue.

1929

The Monastery of the Immaculate Conception in Albany was built for cloistered Dominican nuns (lived next door to the order, The Religious Sisters of Mercy).



1948

All “normal” schools in New York were transferred into State Colleges for Teachers. The “Mercy Normal School”, which existed to train novitiate sisters, was changed to the “Mercy Teachers Training” college. Classes were held at the Motherhouse on New Scotland Avenue.

1958

College of St. Rose informed the Sisters of Mercy they could no longer accept transfer credits courses taken at the Mercy Motherhouse. Mother Mary Borromeo, RSM applied to the University of the State of New York for a charter permitting accreditation of courses taught at the Motherhouse. This was the nucleus for Maria College.

1958

NYS required at least half million dollars for eligibility to incorporate as a College. The Sisters of Mercy governing board transferred title of \$650,000 in assets to the College and “Maria College of Albany” incorporated as an educational institution.





The Dominican nuns maintained the monastery grounds themselves—managing the expansive side yard via a large riding lawnmower.



A 1959 photo of a nun in her sparsely furnished bedroom. The Dominican cloistered nuns arose in the middle of the night to pray, participating in the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

eventually brought cloistered Dominican life to the United States.<sup>2</sup> Both nuns came from wealthy families, and were related to John Jacob Astor, the well-known millionaire who died on the Titanic. An interesting aside is that a young survivor from that disaster, an Irish immigrant named Anna Katherine Kelly, entered the motherhouse in Adrian, Michigan and became a Dominican nun, taking the name of Sister Patrick Joseph.

## DOMINICAN NUNS IN ALBANY NEW YORK

A group of Dominican nuns left Detroit for Albany on November 21, 1915, at the invitation of Bishop Thomas F. Cusack, to establish an order in Albany's Capital Region. These nuns included Mother Mary Emmanuel, Prioress, Mother Mary Teresa of Jesus, Sister Mary Agnes, Sister Mary of the Holy Ghost, Sister Mary of the Eucharist, Sister Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Sister Mary Aloysius, Sister Mary Magdalen, and Sister Mary Immaculate, who later returned to Detroit. Sister Mary Reginald and Sister Mary Gabriel came to Albany in her place.<sup>3</sup>

The group stayed with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart on Kenwood Avenue until a convent was prepared for them on State Street, across from the Capitol, in December 1915. Full community life immediately began, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was kept daily. The group was comprised of both cloistered nuns and lay sisters. In a fascinating interview granted to *Times Union* reporter Virginia Keating in May 1959 by Mother Mary Aquinas, O.P., then prioress of the community, Mother described how a young, unidentified novice was nearly arrested in 1919. When the nuns heard that their State Street home had been condemned, this nun was sent to find out if what they had heard was true. She went straight to the Governor's mansion, rang the bell, and asked to speak to Alfred E. Smith, who had been elected the forty-second Governor of New York for a third term. The policeman on duty thought the visitor was too young to really be a nun, and was about to take her to the station as an imposter, when Governor Smith appeared and she showed him her identification. The nun later said that she was more frightened of the Governor's two dogs than she was of being arrested!<sup>4</sup>

In 1927, the nuns received the gift of land at 714 New Scotland Avenue, and permission from Bishop Edmund F. Gibbons to build the new Monastery of the Immaculate Conception. The New Scotland Avenue area had been mostly farmland. The property for the monastery had been purchased by the bishop with a donation provided by a benefactress named Margaret Brady Farrell of the Albany Diocese. Despite her illness, Mother Mary Emmanuel supervised the building plans and ground was broken on July 2, 1927 by Father Cuthbert, Sister Mary Magdalen, and Sister Mary of the Annunciation.<sup>5</sup>

### April 1958

Board of Regents of the State of New York incorporated an educational institution under the title, "Maria College of Albany", as a junior college for the higher education of Sisters of Mercy. Mother Mary Borromeo, RSM became first President.

### Nov 1959

College dedicated and NYS Higher Education tentatively approved the curriculum for both the Associate in Arts and Applied Science degrees. It was affiliated with Catholic University of America. Enrollment first year: 77 sister-students.

### Feb 1961

Maria College evaluated to determine the possibility of changing the charter to grant baccalaureate degrees. It was determined the college needed to operate as a junior college for five years before any consideration be given to approve a curriculum leading to a baccalaureate degree.

### Sept 1961

First graduation; Associate degrees conferred upon 52 Sister candidates.



### Nov 1963

New York Board of Regents granted Maria its Absolute Charter and authorized it to grant Associate degrees in Arts, Science and in Applied Science.

### 1964

Opened enrollment to lay persons with a degree program in Early Childhood Education. At least 100 sisters were enrolled and another 120 lay persons.

### 1964-65

Campus triples in size. Expansion price tag: \$750,000.





## THE MONASTERY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

**T**he nuns moved to the new monastery on Monday, October 5, 1929, at 4:30 pm. Bishop Gibbons was at the door to welcome them. A Mass of thanksgiving had been celebrated that morning. In the evening, the Sisters of Mercy, a separate order residing next door, sent a basket of food. The Bishop again said mass the following morning.<sup>6</sup>

Over 30,000 people had toured the monastery at the Open House held from September 26 through 29, 1929. On Friday, October 9, 1929, at 2:30 pm, Mother Mary Emmanuel's remains were placed in the crypt. Mass was celebrated, and Father Matthew blessed her body. The nuns formed a Libera Procession, similar to a mini-pilgrimage, symbolic in that it presents the image of drawing nearer to God, and is specifically a way of asking God for mercy on deceased members of the Order. They accompanied Mother's remains to the vault. On October 25, 1929, the chapel was dedicated to Mary Immaculate, with Bishop Gibbons presiding and Father Matthew serving as celebrant. On November 2nd, the Bishop presided at the ceremony of enclosure.<sup>7</sup>

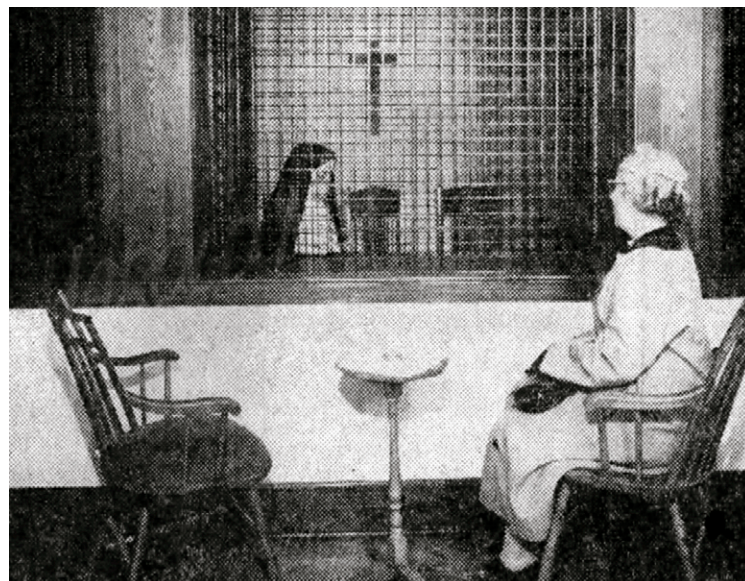
When the monastery had been completed in 1929, a total of twenty-four crypt spaces were provided for the nuns. At the time of their removal in 1967, the remains of ten nuns were interred here, and included Mother Mary Emmanuel (Virginia A. Noel), Sister Mary Rita (Mary Magdalen Fritz), Sister Mary Michael (RoseAnn McSorley), Mother Mary Teresa (Marie Erminia DeCastro), Sister Mary of the Eucharist (Florence C. Stecker), Sister Mary Patricia (Mary Catherine Lyons), Sister Mary Magdalene (Genevieve M. Meyers), Sister Mary of the Rosary (Cecelia M. Greene), Mother Mary Joseph (Carmela M. Guarino), and Mother Mary Agnes (Marie Louise Duprez). According to the records at Saint Agnes Cemetery in Menands, New York, these ten servants of God were reinterred there on October 30 and November 1, 1967. Mother Mary of the Holy Ghost (Theodora Marian Cachanski) also passed away, joining them on December 16, 1967.<sup>8</sup>

## CLOISTERED LIFE TODAY

**M**any wonder how people in religious life spend their time when not engaged in their community's life of ministry and prayer. These followers of Saint Dominic have sought to live out his legacy and preserve the original spirit of their order. According to the Constitution of the Dominican Order, they seek to give an effective corporate witness to the world by working diligently and living frugally. Modern times have seen somewhat less rigorous living, however. Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament continues, and a spirit of silence is still in practice. Modification of the habit, diet, and recreation have evolved. The practice of rising in the middle of the night for prayer



The Dominican nuns that passed away were buried in the basement crypt in what is today known as Marian Hall.



The cloistered nuns received visitors through the heavy grill in the monastery. No touching was ever allowed.

1967

A teaching lab (The Campus School) was established and graduates received an associate degree in Early Childhood.



1968

Mother Mary Borromeo, RSM retired as President



Dec 1968

Perpetual agreement written with St. Peter's Hospital for clinical training of Maria students.



1968

Sister Mary Berchmans Mahoney, RSM appointed President. She initiated the Middle States Association accreditation.



Sept 1969

The "Marian Guild" was formed (auxiliary group of civic minded people to foster the development of Maria College).

1969-70

Discontinued the Sister Formation Program. Enrollment growth spike attributed to programs in nursing, nursery educational, secretarial science and liberal arts.

1970

Leased the monastery next door and renamed it Marian Hall; historic step in expansion of Maria College.



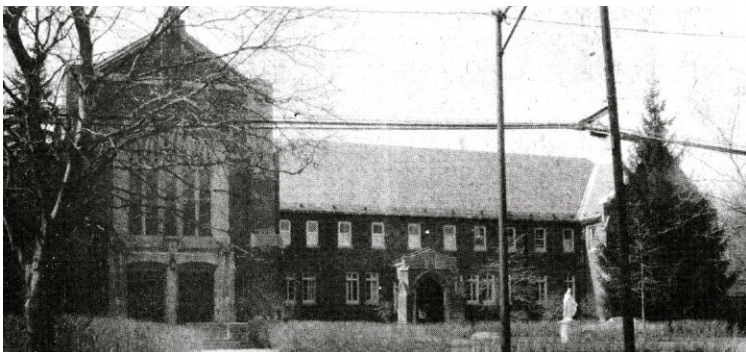
has been discontinued, and home visits to immediate families are allowed when family members are unable to travel. Cloistered Dominican nuns still follow a schedule of prayer, work, study, and community.

THE MONASTERY CLOSES

It is not known exactly why the bodies were removed in 1967, three years before the monastery closed; however, speculation, and local newspaper articles in April and November 1970 indicate that there had been a long, arduous study done of the economic situation facing religious orders. Perhaps the “writing on the wall” foretold the future—lack of vocations, mounting debt, and the directive of Vatican Council II “to consolidate communities wherever possible” made it necessary to close. This very real possibility may have been contemplated and discussed in 1967, with a decision made at that time to move and reinter the remains. The mother community in Detroit also moved the remains of twenty-one nuns from their crypt to Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield, Michigan in 1965, after a decision was made for the community to relocate to Farmington Hills.<sup>9</sup>

In 1970, the monastery was leased to Maria College by the Albany Diocese, and renamed Marian Hall. “At the first Mass held in Marian Hall on November 16, 1970, Monsignor Joseph P. Conway, Vicar General, representing Bishop Edwin Broderick, said that inasmuch as the Sisters of Mercy and the Dominican nuns always had a concern for the interests of each other as neighbors, it seemed especially fitting for the building to be utilized now by Maria College.”<sup>10</sup>

The Religious Sisters of Mercy had originally founded Maria College in 1958 as a two- year Liberal Arts college for sisters and taught by sisters, with a student body of 52. Maria opened its doors to laywomen in 1964, coinciding with a new degree program in Early Childhood Education. From its founding, the mission of the college has been to educate for service to Albany’s greater Capital Region and the communities in which its graduates live and work. The college continued to grow, developed several additional degree programs, and opened its doors to coeducational enrollment in 1971. The college purchased the monastery in 1975 and renovated this unique building.<sup>11</sup> At one time a few Sisters of Mercy lived there, and for a short period a group of Maria College students used it for a dormitory. The tiny bedrooms, or cells, became faculty offices. Necessary updates to Marian Hall were completed in 1984 in order to best use the space for classrooms, lecture halls, and laboratories for nursing, physical and occupational therapy instruction. Leonard G. Angerame of Albany was the architect for the project. Renovations transformed the former convent into a state-of-the-art allied health education facility that serves over 1,000 students today.



April 1970

Accepted as a candidate for accreditation by the Commission on Higher Education of Middle States Association.

1970-71

Accepted male students and became a co-ed institution. Established the Evening Division.



1975

College purchased the Monastery they had been leasing for 5 years and renovated this historic building (see story, “We’re Here For the Bodies”) transforming it into a allied health education facility that serves over 1,000 students. The tiny bedrooms or “cells” became faculty offices.

1975-76

Enrolled first class in OTA



1976

Sister Mary Berchmans Mahoney, RSM retired as President

1977

Sister Lauren A. Fitzgerald, RSM appointed President



1981

Announced, “The Weekend College”—first in north-eastern, New York



## RELIGIOUS SISTERS OF MERCY / MARIA COLLEGE

The original public entrance with a formal parlor is now a large lecture hall. The priest's quarters and sacristy were located just off this area, and are now used as offices for the occupational therapy staff. The kitchen has become an occupational therapy skills lab. The basement now contains a second lecture hall, more occupational therapy space, and an art room. There is a beautiful fountain in the center of the enclosed courtyard where students study and socialize. The changes that were made preserved architectural integrity and the gorgeous stained glass windows, which depict the Madonna, in addition to Dominicans such as Saint Agnes, Saint Albertus, Saint Catherine and Saint Thomas. In 1986, Marian Hall was designated an historic building by the Historic Albany Foundation.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Every place has stories of local history and lore unique to the area. Albany, New York, is a city rich in American history, owning a varied and fascinating past. The Nuns of the Order of Preachers chose this location to show their love of humanity and carry on their selfless work to the best of their ability. These nuns are active today teaching, supporting missionary foundations, and living a contemplative life. The American monasteries are unique from others around the world because they continue to practice Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It hardly seems possible that such an austere way of living, constant devotion to God, and loving and serving one's neighbor, evolving from the life and teachings of Saint Dominic in early thirteenth century Europe, spread to Albany's Capital Region in the twentieth century, and has survived into our twenty-first century United States.

1. "Monastery Closes After Fifty-Five Years of Prayer and Sacrifice," *The Evangelist*, April 9, 1970, 1.
2. *Monastic Milestones: Celebrating One Hundred Years of Dominican Cloistered Life and Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in the Archdiocese of Detroit* (Detroit, MI: Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament, 2006), 7.
3. "Chronicle of the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception," Albany, New York, (1940?), n.p.
4. Keating, Virginia, "City's Unseen Toil, Pray in Silent Citadel," *Times Union*, May 31, 1959, E-5.
5. "Chronicle of the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception", Albany, New York, (1940?), n.p. 6-7. Ibid.
6. Saint Agnes Cemetery Records, Menands, New York.
7. *Monastic Milestones: Celebrating One Hundred Years of Dominican Cloistered Life and Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in the Archdiocese of Detroit* (Detroit, MI: Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament, 2006), 22-23.
8. "Former Dominican Monastery leased by Maria College," *The Evangelist*, November 19, 1970, 1-B.
9. Maria College Academic Catalog, 2010-2011, 3.
10. Ibid.

This article is excerpted from "We're Here for the Bodies: How the Monastery of the Immaculate Conception Became Part of Maria College," written by Elizabeth R. Bouchard, Sister Rose Hobbs, RSM, and Mary Guadrón and originally published in *American Catholic Studies*, Vol. 123, No. 3 (2012): 91-105.

Elizabeth R. Bouchard is a librarian at Maria College in Albany, New York, as well as the catalog librarian at Bethlehem Public Library in Delmar. For further comment on this article please contact: boucharde@mariacollege.edu.

Sister Rose Hobbs is a member of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Northeast Community, and has been the director of Maria College Library since 1999. She has her master's degrees in education and in library and information science. For further comment on this article please contact: roseh@mariacollege.edu.

Mary Guadrón is a librarian at Maria College. She also teaches nursing at Olivet Nazarene University. For further comment on this article please contact: guadrónm@mariacollege.edu.



2008

Golden Year Anniversary: Maria celebrates 50 years of excellence in education!

2010

Began offering the RN-BS completion degree

Feb 2012

Sister Fitzgerald announced her retirement

July 2012

Dr. Lea A. Johnson appointed fourth President



2013

One million dollar expansion started to renovate, build and grow the campus to prepare for enrollment of baccalaureate degree candidates (see photos contrasting past and new).

Sept 2013

New York State approved charter modification to become a baccalaureate institution. First Bachelor of Science degree approved in Psychology.

Dec 2013

Bachelor of Science degree in Healthcare Management submitted to New York Department of Education for approval.



## CLASS NOTES

### 1965

**Sister Gail Waring, RSM**, has retired from her position as vice president for mission services at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany.

### 1966

**Patricia Lynch Shapiro**, now retired, became a first-time grandmother in 2013. She has served on the Board of Directors of Cardinal Newman High School, established the Shapiro Family Foundation to provide educational opportunities at several colleges and universities, and created the Shapiro/Lynch Scholarship at Maria College to support students pursuing allied health careers.

### 1967

**Sister Virginia Sposito, RSM**, is an assistant professor in gerontology and coordinator of the Gerontology Certificate Program at Maria College.

### 1968

**Sandra R. Krug** has written three children's books and completed her first novel. She is working on a book about aging.

### 1970

**Regina (Gibbons) Bereswill** is retired from British Airways and living in Florida. In 2010, she founded a charity to help children and families in her community during times of crisis and upheaval. The organization helps create a sense of normalcy for children by getting them involved in athletics, fine arts, camp programs, and more.

**Carolyn Heidt** served as a home health aide for Visiting Nurses for 20 years.

### 1973

**Lorraine Tylus Steefel, DNP**, earned Master of Science in nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice degrees, and is on the faculty at The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Lorraine recently published *What Nurses Know...Chronic Fatigue Syndrome*. She gives workshops for registered nurses on writing for publication.

### 1975

**Carol Franke** is a clinical nursing supervisor at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, N.Y.

### 1976

**Linda Lee Babcock** earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in counseling psychology. She recently retired after 21 years as a social worker/caseworker for Denver County Human Services in Colorado.

**John Joseph Malek, PhD, MSN, FNP-C**, works in rural health family practice at South Lyon Medical Center in Yerington, Nev. In 2013, as clinic coordinator for Carson Tahoe Hospital in Carson City, Nev., John oversaw the opening of three retail clinics in select Walmart stores. He also has taught nursing theory and ethics for Graceland University's online MSN program and has been recognized by the Nevada State Board of Nursing for his 14 years of volunteer service.

### 1978

**Sharon Millett Hope** is chairperson of the Business Department at Maria College. She earned both bachelor's and master's degrees from The College of Saint Rose in Albany.

**Theresa O'Brien Lansing** is the human resources manager at the American Cancer Society in Loudonville, N.Y.

### 1979

**Terry Brooks Danko** works as a facilities coordinator for Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and is a licensed real estate agent for Realty USA.

**Mary Hayes Roberts** serves as the director of occupational therapy at Trinity Hospital/Twin City in Dennison, Ohio.

### 1981

**Lynne Holloway Stumbaugh** is a certified occupational therapy assistant in the Rehabilitation Department of Bethlehem Commons at Good Samaritan Village in Delmar, N.Y.



David Faas '09



Shawn Griffin '08

**Angela Megas Wattenberg** is a preschool teacher at Albany's Center for Disability Services.

### 1982

**Cassandra Dunbar** recently earned an associate degree in health information technology and works as a medical transcriptionist for Inter-Lakes Health in Ticonderoga, N.Y.

### 1983

**Virginia Lavish, RN**, is retired from St. Clare's Hospital. She and her husband recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

**Kim Lisieski** is a physical therapy assistant at Saratoga Physical Therapy Associates.

### 1986

**William Knab** is a procurement manager for BASF Corporation in Florham Park, N.J.

### 1987

**Colleen Hanaway-Seeley** is director of quality assurance and training at Mohawk Opportunities, Inc. in Schenectady, N.Y. In 2013, she earned her Certified Professional Healthcare Compliance Officer credential from AAPC.

### 1989

**Stephen Desrosiers** volunteers at the Homeless Center for Strafford County in Rochester, N.H.

### 1991

**Laurie Garcelon Hitchcock** works in accounting at Albany Tank Services Inc. in Ravena, N.Y.

### 1992

**Christina Flegel, RN**, is a nurse at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Hudson, N.Y.

**Mary Spencer Riker** is the manager of the campus bookstore at Maria College.

### 1993

**Louis VanZutphen, RN**, has worked at Capital District Psychiatric Center in Albany for 20

years. He served as nurse manager until his retirement in 2008. Now, he works per diem.

### 1995

**Katie Mullaney** is a keyboard specialist at the New York State Education Department Office of Teaching Initiatives.

### 1997

**Donna Burdo Royer, BSN, RN**, is a dialysis nurse at Albany Stratton VA Medical Center. She just completed her bachelor's and plans to continue her education and become a family nurse practitioner, specializing in nephrology.

**Shannon Wigley Wilkinson** is a claim tech at St. Peter's Hospital.

### 1998

**Lyndia Hauser** works as a certified occupational therapy assistant at Dutch Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Schenectady, N.Y.

**Lisa M. Stracuzzi Loehr**, who works at Miss Hall's School in Pittsfield, Mass., recently attended The Johnson & Johnson School Health Leadership Program.

### 1999

**LaReina Bertolucci** earned a Doctor of Physical Therapy and works as a physical therapist at Kingston Hospital.

**Ramona Petrucci Thompson** is nurse manager on the dementia unit at Bethlehem Commons at Good Samaritan Village in Delmar, N.Y. Ramona is married and has two daughters, ages 12 and 15.

### 2000

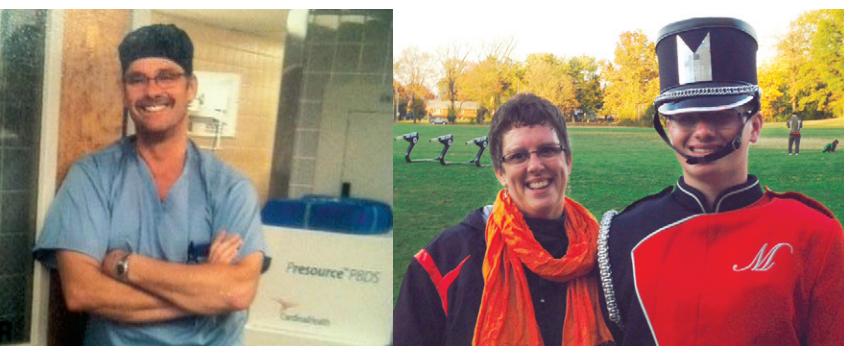
**Epifanio Borrello, RN**, is a notary public and paralegal.

**Olga Tenney** went on to earn a licensed practical nurse certificate in 2007. She is now retired.

### 2001

**Karen Denn-Cunniff** is a cardiac sonographer at Albany Associates in Cardiology.





Christopher De Franco '09

Colleen Hanaway-Seeley '87

## 2003

**Mary Treffiletti Franchini** is employed at Capital Cardiology in Loudonville, N.Y.

**Cathy Krzanowski** has worked for Northeast Association Management/Public Employer Risk Management Association for the past 14 years, advancing to her current position of licensed workers' compensation claims adjuster. She has a 17-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter. A liberal arts major at Maria, Cathy has continued her writing by maintaining a poetry journal.

**Christy A. Smith** is pursuing her BSN at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania. She's also working in cardiothoracic surgery at Forbes Regional Hospital in Monroeville, Penn., and in critical care ground transport at St. Elizabeth's Health Center in Youngstown, Ohio.

**Shannon Steinman, RN, OCN**, has been working at Berkshire Hematology Oncology (BHO) in Pittsfield, Mass., since her graduation from Maria. BHO recently merged with Berkshire Medical Center (BMC) and is now part of the new, state-of-the-art the art BMC Cancer Center.

## 2004

**Maribeth Cady Meyers** works for the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance.

**William Whalen, BSN, RN**, works at Frederick Internal Medicine Associates. In 2013, he earned his bachelor's degree from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

## 2005

**Mary Pamberi, BSN, RN**, works as a nurse at the New York State Office of Mental Health.

**Elizabeth Haver-Browne Schwarz, BSN**, is working as an LPN clinical adjunct instructor for Questar III BOCES.

**Laurie Tracy RN, CCM, CLNC**, is enjoying a successful second career as a photographer. Recent awards include third prize in the 2013 Adirondack Balloon Festival Photo Contest and first, second, and third prizes in the 2012 Killington Hay Festival Photo Contest.

## 2006

**Meghan (Hendrickson) Hickey, RN, CCRN**, works in the surgical ICU at the Durham VA Medical Center in North Carolina and earned her CCRN (certification for adult, pediatric, and neonatal critical care nurses) in 2013. She married her husband, Chris, in 2009 and gave birth to a second son, Elliot, in 2011. Her oldest son, Gunner, "who was my motivation during my education at Maria College, is now 12!!!"

**Flora Quayle** is a teaching assistant at the Center for Disability Services in Albany.

**Donna Riccio, BSN, RN**, is finishing up her master's at SUNY Stony Brook's Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Program and expects to graduate in June. She works in Albany Medical Center's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and CapitalCare Pediatrics Troy.

## 2007

**Paul Busman, RN**, is an OR circulating nurse at St. Peter's Health Partners/St. Mary's Hospital in Troy, N.Y. His wife, Charlene, is on the nursing faculty at Maria.

**Candy Stevens Newton** is coordinator at Albany's Art Utopia.

**Carmen Stuparu, RN**, works in the Informatics Department at the Johns Hopkins Health System (JHHS) in Maryland. This past year, Carmen was part of a team that implemented a new electronic medical record system for two JHHS hospitals. She and her family also welcomed a new addition: a third daughter.

## 2008

**Shawn Griffin, RN**, is a flight nurse and the outreach coordinator for Air Methods, LifeNet of South Carolina. He recently became a paramedic, is pursuing his MSN, and expects to take the certified flight registered nurse exam soon. Shawn continues to serve as a flight nurse in the Air National Guard.

**Joshua Malone, RN**, expects to complete his BSN this spring. A nurse in the Albany Medical Center ICU, Joshua is secretary for the Adirondack Chapter of the American

Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN). In 2013, he served on a poster review committee for AACN's National Teaching Institute & Critical Care Exposition.

**Jami Passaretti, LPN**, works in the Day Rehabilitation Program at New Visions, formerly the Albany County Association for Retarded Citizens.

## 2009

**Christopher De Franco, RN**, works at Albany Medical Center as an OR charge nurse for general surgery/trauma.

**David Faas, RN**, a field nurse for Maxim Healthcare Services of Albany, also works for the Center for Disability Services in Scotia, N.Y. He got married in October and is enjoying life with his wife, Faith, and his children, Matthew and Mikayla, both age 12.

**Colleen M. Henry, COTA**, is employed by Advanced Therapy PLLC of Albany. She provides school-based services in the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District in Berne, N.Y., where she is a member of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports team.

**Susan Lesko, RN**, works at Four Winds Saratoga in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

**Jennifer Mullet** is administrative coordinator, Government and Community Relations, at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y.

**Shantae Polsinelli, BSN, RN**, spent three rewarding years in Albany Medical Center's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), while also working for Visiting Nurse Service of Schenectady and Saratoga Counties (VNS). Shantae left the NICU to focus on her BSN, which she completed in December. She continues to work for VNS and intends to begin working toward her MSN this fall.

**Elizabeth Tuttle, RN**, is a detox/rehabilitation nurse St. Peter's Health Partners/St. Mary's Hospital in Troy, N.Y. In 2013, she passed the Council for Homeopathic Certification exam, earning her national certification in classical homeopathy. Elizabeth is co-authoring a book on her experience with homeopathic trituration; target publication date is 2015.

## 2010

**Tara Gallagher, RN**, credits her clinical and preceptorship experiences at Maria for helping her find her niche in psychiatric nursing. She works at Four Winds Saratoga in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., as a unit RN and relief supervisor, and looks forward to continuing her nursing education in the future.

**Robert Hogan**, Assistant Registrar for Transfer Articulation at The College of Saint Rose in Albany, is pursuing his master's degree in higher education leadership and administration.

**Judy Lille Lainem, RN**, is a nurse at the Center for Disability Services in Albany.

**Raymond Melecio, RN**, a mental health nurse at Ellis Medicine in Schenectady, N.Y., is enrolled in the nurse practitioner/psychiatry program at The Sage Colleges.

**Shahnaz Sial**, is a certified lymphedema therapist. She is continuing her education at Russell Sage College in Troy, N.Y., while working at Albany County Nursing Home and, per diem, at Evergreen Commons Nursing Home in East Greenbush, N.Y.

**Jennifer A. Stratman, DHS, RN**, works in Albany Medical Center's Post Anesthesia Care Unit. In 2013, she earned her Doctor of Health Sciences degree, with a concentration in global health, from A.T. Still University's Arizona School of Health Sciences.

**Paula Young, RN**, is a nurse at St. Peter's Hospital and an occupational nurse at Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory in Niskayuna, N.Y.

## 2011

**Travis Hyer** earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from Excelsior College in Albany in 2013. A certified strength and conditioning specialist and a certified corrective exercise specialist, Travis works at Cobleskill Regional Hospital in Cobleskill, N.Y., and is studying for his orthopedic nurse certification.

**Corina J. Menagias** is employed at Sanctuary Salon in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and is working toward her barbering license. Corina earned her cosmetology degree while studying business management at Maria. Her goal is to continue developing her skills and, eventually, to open her own salon.

## 2012

**Shanaaz Simpson Bell** works as a certified occupational therapy assistant at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Hudson, N.Y.

**Catherine Brennan** is a certified occupational therapy assistant at Advanced Therapy in Albany.

**Beth Hanley** is employed by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice as a fingerprint examiner.

**Danielle (Schliff) LeBeau, COTA**, works at Albany Medical Center and, in December 2012, married Jason LeBeau. Her "baby sister" Cassandra Schliff is following in Danielle's footsteps by attending Maria to pursue a career as an occupational therapy assistant.

**Alina Sandul** recently earned her occupational therapy assistant degree. She is a homemaker.

**Debra Xhialli** is working as an independent contractor, specializing in providing homecare services for seniors diagnosed with dementia. She also provides respite services for caregivers.



## ALUMNA PROFILE



### Kathleen Jones, '75: From Maria to Nursing Home Administrator

FOR KATHLEEN JONES, MSN, LNHA, '75, a Maria College education laid the foundation for an increasingly successful career. Today, as executive director of St. Peter's Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Albany, she has fulfilled her aspirations—and is quick to give credit to Maria for instilling the skills that have served her well for nearly four decades.

"My Maria education prepared me very well," says Jones, who earned her associate in applied science degree from the College in 1975. "We learned the clinical, collaboration, and leadership skills that are essential for geriatric and long-term care nursing."

Maria faculty and advisors also modeled the commitment and involvement that are central to compassionate nursing. "They were so invested in our success," Jones recalls, "even to the point of helping us navigate the personal and community barriers that we encountered. The fact that Maria is a faith-based organization also meant a great deal to me personally."

In the earlier years of her career, Jones worked as a staff nurse, shift supervisor, infection control nurse, employee health nurse, and in staff development. She complemented that experience by pursuing a bachelor's degree and was promoted to director of nursing even before completing her BSN.

Jones earned her BSN in 1995 from The Sage Colleges. She then went on to complete

a master's with a concentration in community health and administration, also from The Sage Colleges, and to pass the board exams for licensed nursing home administrator.

For 11 years, Jones served as nursing home administrator of the Wilkinson Center of Amsterdam Memorial Hospital, now part of St. Mary's Health Care. In September 2012, she was appointed to her current position at the helm of St. Peter's Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, a 160-bed skilled nursing facility with a 40-bed designated physical rehabilitation unit. As such, she oversees a complete range of geriatric services, including long-term residential care, comprehensive rehabilitation, clinically complex medical care, and therapeutic and social activities.

The job is a dream come true for a health care professional who relishes every opportunity to have a positive impact on patients, residents, and their loved ones. In fact, even after she retires, Jones expects to find a way to remain involved in ensuring that individuals receive the care and attention they deserve.

"I love the continuum of care," Jones says. Post-retirement, she sees herself working part-time on utilization reviews, teaching aspiring nurses, or "perhaps boning up on my piano playing skills and volunteering for residential nursing facilities!"



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