

Board Meeting Decides Saint Mary's Future

BY DANIELLE LITTLE
EDITOR

The Saint Mary's Board of Trustees met February 2-3 to discuss the future of the school. They concluded, after the two-day meeting, that Saint Mary's will remain a women's institution and will admit ninth-grade day students next year.

The option of going co-ed was considered by the Board, but was emphatically refused. The number of women's schools in the U.S. is decreasing due to a number of them admitting males. Saint Mary's considered this option because it seemed logical, but refused it because of the area's demand for specialized schools.

"Women's education has been our strength for over 150 years, there is continuing and increasing public interest in it and we will continue to provide it for the foreseeable future," said Charles M. Winston, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The argument backing their decision is that women's schools allow their students to pursue leadership positions and to feel more comfortable in classrooms. They

also boost confidence levels.

The major change the board decided upon is the addition of a ninth grade to the Saint Mary's campus. The news caused mixed reactions from the students, but only positive feedback from the administration. The Board decided to admit about fifteen ninth grade day students next year. The ninth grade will complete the high school at Saint Mary's. The program will be very selective, admitting only outstanding, well rounded girls. In answer to the great maturity difference between ninth graders and eleventh graders, the students have to be mature in order to fit in. Hopefully, these girls will study all four years of high school at Saint Mary's. "By the time they are in the twelfth grade, they should be good students, making an influence on others," said President Jenkins.

The Board envisions many advantages to adding the ninth grade. Having people in high school for four years will be an economic advantage. It will benefit the girls themselves, by

eliminating the need to transfer in the middle of their high school careers. The number of classes offered at Saint Mary's will increase with the addition of more upper level classes. The only courses that must be added specifically for ninth graders are Algebra I, English, and Government/Economics.

Saint Mary's is trying to increase the quality of its applicant pool by enticing good students to apply. "This change in policy will allow us to serve more students, to serve them in a more accommodating way, and will allow us to continue the steady rise in the quality of our students and instruction that has characterized Saint Mary's since we opened our doors in 1842," according to President Jenkins.

Sports at Saint Mary's will grow depending on need. If there is a demand, junior varsity programs will be created. Currently, Saint Mary's offers tennis, volleyball, basketball, soccer, swimming, and dance on the high school level, and tennis for the college. There is a potential for cross-country and

field hockey, if the need arises.

The decisions made by the Board will have no effect on tuition levels. Saint Mary's will continue to emphasize need and merit based scholarships. Also issued are leadership scholarships which are given to well rounded students. President Jenkins said, in regard to sports scholarships. "Classroom comes first for us. One will be able to use her mind long after she cannot play a sport."

Despite the rumors, Saint Mary's will continue its college program. The goals for the college include making it more attractive to perspective students, to increase the quality of students, and to have more academic attractions to lead to more clear majors. This year, the change in the rules for college students has had a positive impact on the students.

Saint Mary's will remain a school affiliated with the Episcopal church. The heart of Saint Mary's mission will not change. It will continue to provide a nurturing atmosphere of individualized instruction.

President Jenkins Reflects on What Lies Ahead for Saint Mary's

BY HARPER BEST
EDITOR

When President Jenkins sat down with *The Belles* recently, it was to talk about what had transpired at the Strategic Planning Board Meeting which took place at the first part of the month.

Much of the local media accounts centered around the proposition of Saint Mary's going co-ed. However, the school community found even the discussion of co-education ludicrous. Jenkins said that it was considered as a viable option for Saint Mary's, although it will not be implemented.

President Jenkins went on to talk about the important niche Saint Mary's holds as the only girls' preparatory school in the area, as well as the nation's only Episcopal women's college. He feels that these are distinctive traits that the Board wishes to further by adding the ninth grade to solidify the high school.

The Board decided that a ninth grade is strategic to the Raleigh-Durham area as it becomes increasingly urbanized. Also, a ninth grade will prevent students from facing three different schools in three years.

Jenkins pointed out that the ninth grade at Saint Mary's will be extremely selective, accepting only the brightest and most well-rounded girls.

To accommodate the high school freshmen, a new building has been

purchased. It is on Hillsborough Street, and was formerly the Social Security building.

The building will be remodeled to include a ninth and tenth grade lounge, science labs, and a publications/computer lab.

President Jenkins said that this new building will add continuity to the campus. Now Saint Mary's encompasses an entire block.

Jenkins also spoke of the need to expand high school athletics. He said that the school would meet the demands of the student population. Next year, Jenkins expects the cross country team to be resurrected.

Although discussion of the high school predominated, Jenkins was eager to underscore how important the college is to the institution. This is especially true, as women's colleges are disappearing across the country.

Jenkins reiterated that the Board felt the college was a good thing, and that it would continue into the foreseeable future.

At the conclusion of the interview, President Jenkins addressed the Ransdell affair. He feels that the school acted appropriately.

He also said that Ransdell had made an erroneous statement when she said she had been expelled from the School. In fact, she had been asked to leave until the end of

the pregnancy and was told that she could return at that time.

Jenkins did say that Saint Mary's policy on pregnancy would be published in future handbooks.

The strategic planning session appears to have been a great success. Many worthy issues were discussed and acted upon. This Board Meeting is definitely a turning point in the school's

history.

The Board has reexamined all aspects of life at Saint Mary's, and has directed the institution in a decidedly contemporary direction which will hopefully behoove all in the Saint Mary's community.

