

## Advantages of Choosing a Women's College

A women's college is a sanctuary where intellectual, spiritual and cultural advancement is nurtured. It's a place where the age old adage "It's a man's world" is traded in for the academic, professional and personal development that reinforces a truth still well-buried in the world's male-dominated workplace – that women have more to offer, are competent multi-taskers and natural leaders. In short, a women's college is a place where women get a taste of being in charge – and it's a lesson that lasts a lifetime.

College women young and old, traditional age and returning adult students alike, find a special atmosphere on a women's college campus. Numerous studies and organizations such as the Women's College Coalition document that going to a women's college "greatly increases the chances that a woman will become a leader in a traditionally male (and hence better paid) field; that she will become a scientist or elected official and that she will keep her sights high."

Results of research by the Women's College Coalition elaborate on the positive experience of attending a women's college.

- Students participate more fully in and out of class.
- Students report greater satisfaction than their coed counterparts with their college experience in most all measures – academically, developmentally and personally.
- Students tend to choose traditionally male disciplines like the sciences.
- Students develop higher levels of self-esteem than other achieving women in coed institutions. After two years in coed institutions, women have been shown to have lower levels of self-esteem than when they entered college.
- Graduates of women's colleges are more than twice as likely as graduates of coeducation colleges to receive doctorate degrees and to enter medical school and receive doctorates in the natural sciences.
- Have a higher percentage of majors in economics, math and life science today than men at coeducational colleges.
- Nearly half the graduates have earned advanced degrees and 81% have continued their education beyond college.
- Women's College students are more likely to graduate.
- They are more successful in careers; that is, they tend to hold higher positions, are happier and earn more money.

The advantages of women's colleges are hard to match in the coed world. Why? Historically, role models in coed colleges are male – a tradition that hasn't much changed over the years. Most of the authority in coed colleges is retained by men, classrooms are dominated by men, and so are student leadership positions. These coed classrooms are still guilty of fostering an environment geared toward gendered expectation and the longer they remain in an atmosphere where such sex bias is rife, the lower women's self-esteem seems to fall – until eventually, career aspirations also plummet.

For any woman who wants to put their intellectual development and support first, choosing a women's college is a must, according to Jessica Herrera, a senior biology major at The Women's College of Brenau University in Gainesville, Ga.

"Attending a women's college helps you gain strength in all aspects because you learn to value yourself as a unique individual that is capable of accomplishing all goals one sets. It provides many opportunities for women to grow as strong leaders – and by doing so we are preparing ourselves to conquer the world that men claim to own," Herrera, 21, said.

Women's colleges also establish high expectations, encouraging students to flourish and to reach their highest potential – not cloisters, but dynamic educational institutions that prepare their students for the many roles they will assume in life, that challenge them to become whatever they want to become, along with the offer of an excellent academic education.

There are so many strong women who come from single-gender education backgrounds. Women like Roslyn Wallace a Brenau graduate and the first woman to receive the Scientific Achievement Award for cancer research; Bryn Mawr graduate Nettie Stevens, the first person to observe that X and Y chromosomes determine sex; Barbara Cassani, a Mount Holyoke graduate and the first female CEO of a commercial airline; Brigadier General Elizabeth P. Hoisington (USA RET), a graduate of the College of Notre Dame, Maryland, and the first woman general of the U.S. Army; Rachel Carson, a graduate of Chatham and first environmentalist to awaken public consciousness through her book "Silent Spring" – and many more.

Alumnae of women's colleges find they are connected to a huge network that promises to serve them throughout our professional and personal lives. They count themselves lucky to have discovered such a well-kept secret as the benefits of attending a women's college. Still, they would prefer that this were no secret, but a better-known fact shared with the women of the world.

Academically, professionally and personally, the advantages of women's colleges are hard to match. A women's college graduate enters the workforce with the confidence and self-esteem that will carry her forward – no matter the circumstances or challenges.

*Article contributed by Candi Brancato, Assistant Director of Public Relations for Brenau University in Gainesville, GA*

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