





This is to certify that the  
dissertation entitled

AN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY APPROACH TO TRANSITION:  
THE WHEATON COLLEGE MOVE TO COEDUCATION

presented by

AMANDA G. IDEMA

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong  
Education



Major Professor's Signature

8/17/10

Date

*MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer*

LIBRARY  
Michigan State  
University

**PLACE IN RETURN BOX** to remove this checkout from your record.  
**TO AVOID FINES** return on or before date due.  
**MAY BE RECALLED** with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE

AN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY APPROACH TO TRANSITION:  
THE WHEATON COLLEGE MOVE TO COEDUCATION

By

Amanda G. Idema

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education

2010



## ABSTRACT

### AN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY APPROACH TO TRANSITION: THE WHEATON COLLEGE MOVE TO COEDUCATION

By  
Amanda G. Idema

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has been a time of major change for women's colleges (Calefati, 2009; Harwarth, et al, 1997; Powers, 2007). From an all time high of close to 300 in operation, now less than 100 exist (Calefati, 2009). The decade of the 1980s saw a convergence of a perfect storm of challenges: declining birth rates that produced fewer college-going young people, a decrease in young women interested in single-sex education, and an economic recession that left tuition driven campuses in crisis (Chamberlain, 1988; Reisberg, 2000). While some women's colleges chose to close, others made tough decisions to ensure survival (Salamone, 2007). One of these colleges, Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, opted to admit men and pursue coeducation as a way to expand enrollment, improve the quality of the student body, and avoid certain closure.

The purpose of this study is to explore, from an organizational theory perspective, how decision making is made and communicated on a college campus within the context of a major organizational change. Recognizing that each organization is unique and has a very specific set of inherent challenges and restrictions, this study does not attempt to generalize, but rather uses the case of Wheaton's transition to coeducation as a way to identify challenges, outcomes, and lessons learned for future decision making.

Through a traditional case-study method (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994; Yin, 1984) this study examined, in depth, the two year period of decision making and transition on the Wheaton College campus. Key administrators during this period were interviewed, as well as a full analysis of documents created during the same time frame. Four research questions guided this study: (1) what environmental and institutional factors prompted the move to coeducation at Wheaton College; (2) how were decisions made and communication handled to guide the transition; (3) what organizational strategies could be used to explain the transition to coeducation; and, (4) what lessons learned from the Wheaton College transition can be used by other institutions facing similar circumstances.

The data collected from interviews and document analysis was analyzed using a variety of organizational theories. The main framework employed was Quinn and Cameron's (1983) work on the four stages of organizational change and adaptation. Additional theories in the areas of population ecology, niche theory, and organizational communication provided additional points of analysis.

At the conclusion of this study, several areas of future research are presented, as not all aspects of the transition to coeducation could be included in this study. Additionally, implications for administrators, faculty, Boards of Trustees and alumnae/i are presented.

Copyright by  
AMANDA GRAY IDEMA  
2010



## DEDICATION

To Steve, who always believed in our dreams and our future and never let us lose sight of them. F21.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For someone who always had a passion for learning, but didn't always enjoy the work, embarking on a degree of this magnitude seemed like an insurmountable obstacle. Fortunately I was surrounded by wonderful people who never let me forget that I could make this dream a reality. I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Kris Renn, who taught me so much about becoming a qualitative researcher. Thank you for reading countless drafts (sometimes multiple ones in the same day), listening to my rants about the process, reminding me that this was a marathon and not a sprint, and mostly for being "wicked excited" about my topic! To the rest of my committee, Drs. Marilyn Amey, Ann Austin and Vernon Miller, I am thankful for your time, effort and thoughtful questions that helped this all come together.

Thank you to those from Wheaton College who agreed to be a part of this project: Alice "Tish" Emerson, Paul Gray, Darlene Boroviak, Ann Caldwell, Gail Berson, Sue Alexander, Jack Kuszaj and Claire Ramsbottom. It is clear to me that Wheaton holds a very special place in your hearts, and I am forever grateful for your openness, candor, and willingness to share your experiences. Thank you to the Wheaton College Archivists, Zeph Stickney and Deanna Hauck, for pulling hundreds of documents, answering questions, and assisting in my research.

Deepest thanks to my fellow HALE friends and cohort-mates who were part of this process as well. To Monica Fochtman, with whom I started this journey in 2005 – I can't wait to finish it together! Your strength and perseverance during this process have been inspiring. To Bernadette Friedrich who reminded me daily to stay positive, and that it would all come together in the end. To Melissa McDaniels who always had

words of wisdom and inspiration – I have thoroughly enjoyed our walks and track therapy! To Colleen McDonough and Megan Drangstveit who will be experiencing the dissertation process in the near future, thank you for your friendship and laughter.

I am also indebted to those with whom I worked while taking classes and writing this dissertation. To the advising staff in the College of Education, thank you for being patient with me as I became a student again! To the Undergraduate Studies Team in the College of Engineering – your support, encouragement and laughter was just what I needed to adjust to my new job and finish this dissertation! Special thanks to Dr. Tom Wolff, who brought me into the UGS family – I couldn't have done this without you (or your statistics comic book). Dr. Cass Book – you are without a doubt, my mentor, role model, and steadfast cheerleader. Thank you for seeing something in me that I couldn't yet see for myself and encouraging me to take this journey.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible love, support, guidance, and encouragement of my parents, Joan and Joel Gray. You never let me forget that anything was possible, and constantly made sure that I knew that I was capable of achieving my dreams. Thank you for pushing me and guiding me to make good decisions. To Steve – my husband, my rock, my best friend. We survived law school and a doctoral degree...we can do anything! I look forward to the next chapter of our lives, one without classes, papers or exams. Thank you for your unfailing love and support through this process.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Significance of the Problem.....	12
Purpose and Research Questions.....	14
Theoretical Framework.....	16
Overview of the Dissertation.....	17
CHAPTER 2	
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	18
Liberal Arts Colleges.....	19
Women's Colleges.....	22
The Current State of Women's Education.....	24
Survival Options for Women's Colleges .....	27
Theoretical Framework.....	29
Change Strategy.....	29
Organizational Theory.....	32
Organizational Communication.....	34
Summary of the Literature.....	37
CHAPTER 3	
METHODOLOGY.....	39
Methodological Approach.....	39
Selection of Case.....	42
Background on Case Site.....	43
Data Collection.....	44
Data Analysis.....	46
Trustworthiness.....	48
Summary.....	49
CHAPTER 4	
PRESENTATION OF THE CASE.....	50
Setting the Stage for Growth.....	50
Coeducation: The First Pass.....	51
A Change in Leadership.....	55
Trouble Brewing.....	58
How to Save Wheaton?.....	59
Taking it to the Board.....	62
Decision Time.....	65
The Announcement.....	66
Faculty Reaction.....	69
Forum for the Future.....	71

Alumnae and Donors React.....	73
Final Vote.....	77
Finding the New Wheaton Student.....	81
Task Forces go to Work.....	83
Faculty Prepare for Men.....	86
Summary.....	90
 <b>CHAPTER 5</b>	
<b>DISCUSSION OF THE CASE.....</b>	<b>91</b>
Change Strategy.....	91
Entrepreneurial Stage.....	92
Collectivity Stage.....	98
Formalization and Control Stage.....	102
Elaboration of Structure Stage.....	105
Summary of Change Strategy.....	107
Occupying a New Niche.....	109
Communications Strategies.....	112
What Did the Wheaton College Case Teach Us?.....	115
Managing Change.....	115
Community Building.....	119
Power.....	122
Shared Governance.....	123
Trust and Credibility.....	125
Summary of Research Questions.....	127
Future Research, Implications, and Limitations.....	131
Future Research.....	131
Implications for Administrators.....	133
Implications for Faculty.....	135
Implications for Boards of Trustees.....	136
Implications for Alumnae/i.....	137
Limitations of Study.....	138
Conclusion.....	140
 <b>APPENDIX A.....</b>	
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	
<b>APPENDIX C.....</b>	
<b>APPENDIX D.....</b>	
 <b>REFERENCES.....</b>	
<b>148</b>	

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1 Time Ordered Matrix of Transition Events.....	93
---	----



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Number of Institutions by Carnegie Classification Type.....	3
Figure 1.2 Enrollment by Carnegie Classification Type.....	4

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Since the founding of Harvard in 1636 higher education in the United States has grown to over 4,000 individual institutions, resulting in a complex enterprise with a wide variety of educational options for students seeking to further their studies (Rudolph, 2000; Thelin, 2004). Although this sprawling system is part of what makes American higher education appealing, its size and relative lack of coherence concerning its purpose in society (Thelin, 2004) makes it difficult to navigate and comprehend. As it exists now, these 4,000 educational organizations consist of two-year community colleges, four-year degree institutions, graduate programs, specialized offerings, online universities, vocational schools, and various permutations of all of these (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2008; Thelin, 2004). These organizations provide various forms of higher education to over 17.5 million people each year (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2008) and employ teaching methods that range from traditional lecture to online delivery and everything in between (Thelin, 2004). The breadth of higher education options suggests that, despite its size, postsecondary education can, in a broad sense, adapt to societal needs and provide a variety of educational options to the population.

Even with the overall growth and expansion of American higher education, not all of these 4,000 institutions experience the success of the entire educational system. Providing college-bound students with so many options, although beneficial to some students, can be unfavorable to some of the more specialized colleges and universities. At present, higher education is under direct threat from societal and economic pressures, and the choices made by college students regarding where they pursue education. Once

seen as the foundation of American higher education, liberal arts colleges are once again entering a time where they, in general, must redefine themselves or risk extinction (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996; Hartley, 2002; Horowitz, 2005).

In order to fully understand the taxonomy of higher education in the United States, and to examine how and where the liberal arts colleges fit in the larger system, it is helpful to employ the use of a classification system. When seen in context of the whole, the positioning of these schools in the system becomes more clear. The Carnegie Classification System provides definitions and categories for colleges and universities across the United States. Although they have more specifically defined sub-categories, the broader definitions of four-year institutions provided by Carnegie include: purely arts and sciences focus, mainly arts and sciences plus some professional programs, balanced arts and sciences and professional programs, mainly professional programs plus some arts and sciences, and purely professional programs (The Carnegie Foundation, 2005).

The Arts & Science Focus/No Graduate Coexistence (A&S-F/NGC) colleges are defined as having a strong arts and sciences curricular focus with at least 80% of degrees awarded in the arts and sciences, and no corresponding graduate majors (The Carnegie Foundation, 2005). Of the over 4,000 institutions of higher education in the United States, the A&S-F/NGC classification area consists of 95 schools or 2.2% of all institutions (see Figure 1). These schools enroll and graduate just 0.8% of all higher education graduates (see Figure 2) (The Carnegie Foundation, 2005). These liberal arts colleges have average enrollments of about 1,400 students (The Carnegie Foundation, 2005). Even a seemingly small drop in enrollment can have a disproportionate impact



**Figure 1: Number of Institutions by Carnegie Classification Type  
Information for Figures 1 and 2 is from The Carnegie Foundation, 2005**

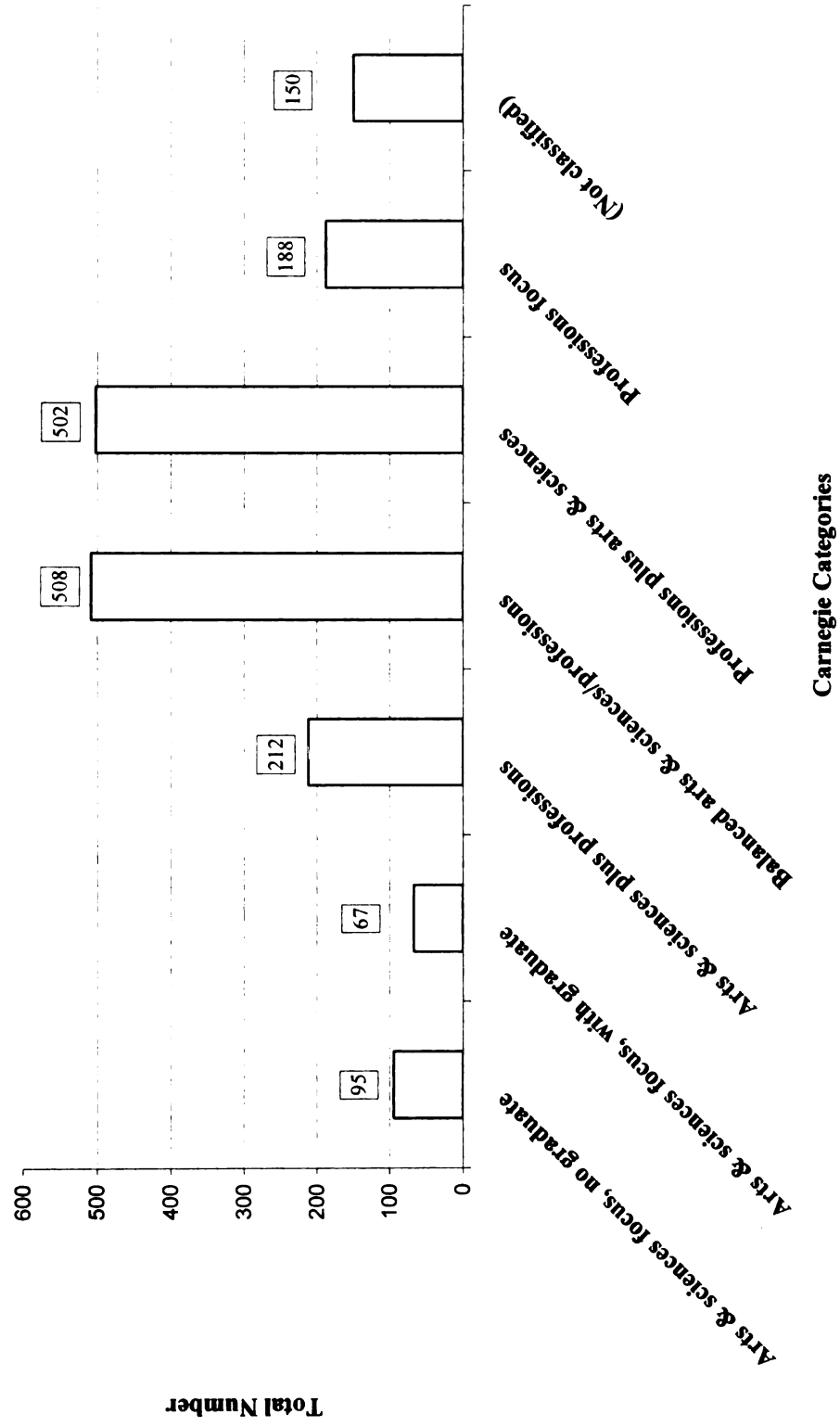
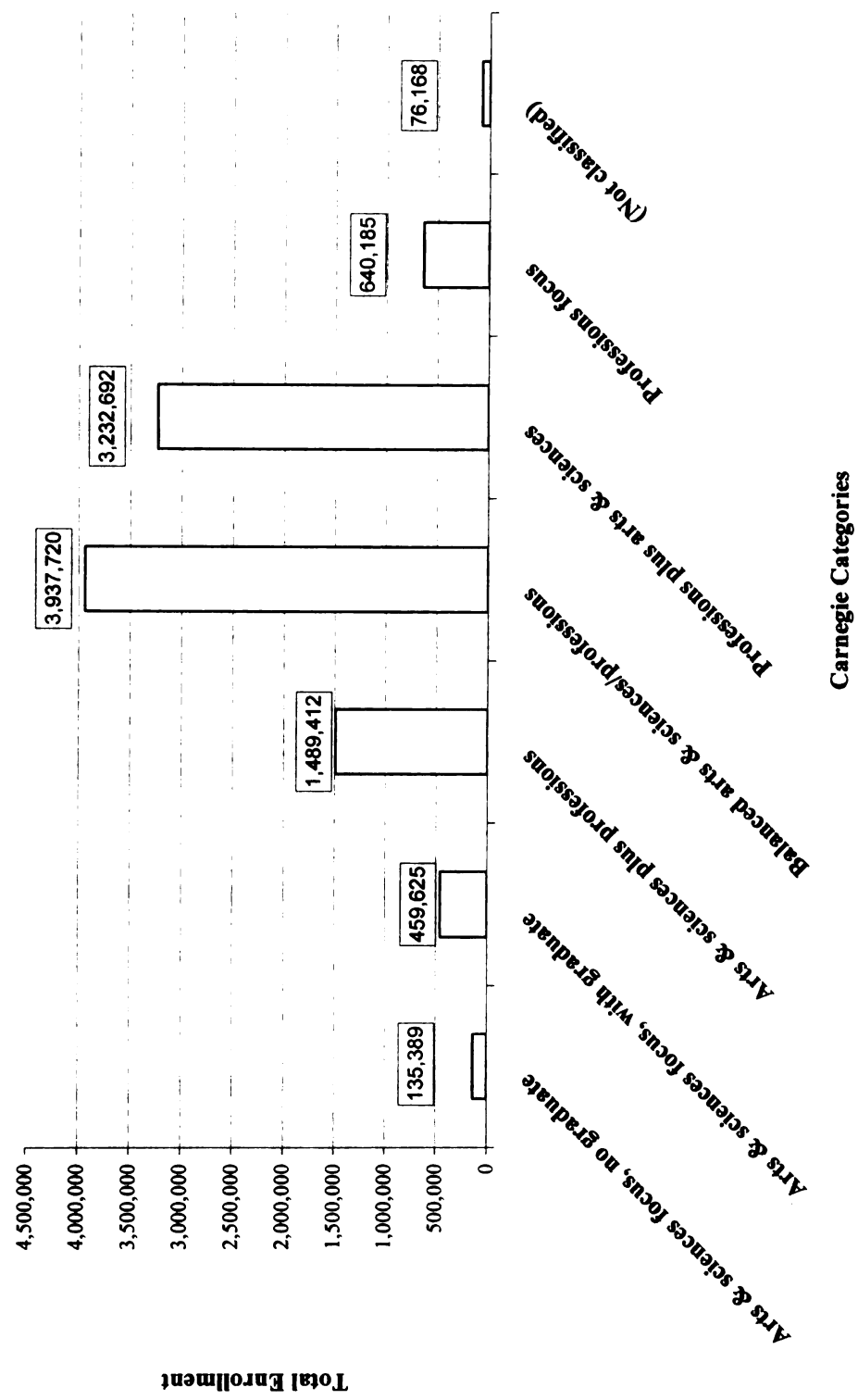


Figure 2: Enrollment by Carnegie Classification Type



on these schools as compared to larger, more comprehensive schools. In addition, financial stresses can leave institutions in a precarious position and without a solid enough student base to ensure survival.

This taxonomy of higher education is helpful in providing the big picture, but for the purpose of this study, I will use an ecologically based life-cycle theoretical approach to explore the past and current threats to liberal arts colleges, and more specifically, women's colleges. This group of colleges, with its narrow academic focus of a pure arts and sciences curriculum and relatively small student body, is once again entering a period of history where outside environmental stresses are taking a toll on the strength and stability of liberal arts colleges.

Grounded in biological selection theory, the population ecology view of organizational change has become a widely accepted model of explaining organizational adaptation, change, and survival (Cameron, 1984; Hage, 1999; Han, 2007; Hannan & Freeman, 1977). Population ecology theory posits that "adaptation focuses on changes in environmental niches" (Cameron, 1984). *Niche theory* has been adapted for the social sciences but also originally came from the natural sciences (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). Organizations (or a group of organizations in the case of women's colleges) occupy a niche when they have a set of characteristics that allow them to outcompete all other organizations in the population (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). When occupying a niche, the organization enjoys the ability to survive and flourish.

Population ecology and niche theory rests on the comparison to Darwin's biological theory of evolution, in that the survival of species in the population is

dependent upon that species' ability to change and adapt with fluctuating environments (Cameron, 1984). If an organization is unable to move into a new niche, it must adapt to remain competitive in its original niche (Cameron, 1984). As a desert animal adapts to the harsh conditions to survive, certain types of higher education institutional types evolve to find new niches to occupy. While the desert animal must cope with extreme heat, limited food sources, and lack of water, certain sectors of higher education face budget shortfalls, declining enrollment, and changes in student demographics that make some institutions less well suited to survival.

Higher education has proven in recent years that it can respond to these environmental threats and adapt to occupy new niches. The emergence of for-profit universities, online universities, distance learning, and corporate education programs has delivered higher education to an entirely new segment of the population (Kirp, 2003). It is now possible to earn a degree without ever stepping foot in a classroom, or interact with classmates and professors in a face-to-face setting (Gumport & Chun, 2005; Kirp, 2003). While more traditional scholars rebuff the notion of online degrees, the emergence of DeVry University, University of Phoenix, and others like them have brought higher education to those who might have never been able to access it otherwise (Gumport & Chun, 2005; Kirp, 2003). These educational opportunities allowed colleges to occupy a new niche of delivery. When increasing numbers of full time workers needed flexible curricular options, students in rural areas needed easier access to higher education, and when the cost of educating online became less expensive than traditional classrooms, higher education responded (Kirp, 2003). These

environmental pressures prompted the innovation and adaptation that led to creation of these online universities (Kirp, 2003).

While the emergence of new types of institutions has opened up higher education to more people, some stressors cannot be solved through the creation of new universities. One of the main threats to the liberal arts sector stems from finances. This financial stress is due, in large part, to the combination of rising costs and a foreseeable change in the demographics of traditional (18-24 years old) college aged students (Gladieux, King, & Corrigan, 2005; Thelin, 2004) who have been the mainstay of liberal arts college students throughout history. Population projections for the next several years indicate that although numbers of traditional college aged students are increasing, their demographics will be quite unlike anything that has been seen in prior years (Lapovsky, 2005). The upcoming years will see a sharp increase in the numbers of Hispanic and African-American students, as well as an intensified number of students from low income backgrounds and first generation college students (Lapovsky, 2005). In particular, students from low income backgrounds will be increasingly unable to afford a traditional liberal arts education. Studies show students who come from families with greater than \$75,000 annual income attend college at nearly three times the rate of students who come from families with under \$14,999 annual income (Lapovsky, 2005).

With average tuition costs increasing at levels nearly twice that of inflation, colleges that were at one point considered “pricey” could very well be out of reach now for a large segment of college bound students (Kirp & Holman, 2003). In their Trends in College Pricing Report, The College Board reported the 2009-2010 cost of

attendance at a private four-year college was \$35,636 per year, while attending a public four-year school was significantly less at \$15,213 per year (The College Board, 2009). Liberal arts colleges are especially vulnerable to the cost issue, as they are generally committed to providing high quality education, many class choices, and small faculty to student ratios, all of which can drive up the cost of education (Lapovsky, 2005). These factors are further complicated by the push across higher education to offer better and more extravagant amenities and increased services to students (Kirp & Holman, 2003; Lapovsky, 2005). Providing such benefits to students often results in an even larger increase in tuition, which could further limit the demographic of student who will apply and eventually attend.

Financial aid and tuition discounting does help ease the cost of attending college for the student, but can hurt the financial health of the institution in the long term. In the year 2006-07, roughly three-quarters of students were the recipients of some form of financial aid, with much of the aid coming from federal loans that totaled nearly \$97 billion (The College Board, 2007). Some schools engage in various forms of tuition discounting, where total costs are offset by grants and scholarships from the individual college (Lapovsky, 2005). This discounting, although helpful in attracting students, ultimately drains college budgets as they are not recouping the total cost of educating each student (Lapovsky, 2005). In the current economy, where federal budgets and loan options are under ever increasing scrutiny and individual family economic situations are in precarious positions, higher education is caught in the middle.

This “perfect storm” of the global financial crisis has resulted in nearly catastrophic outcomes for several colleges. Colleges that rely mainly on endowments

and tuition dollars to survive are finding themselves in “financial hot water, having borrowed many times more than their assets” (Kirp, 2003). More recently, over 100 private nonprofit colleges failed the U.S. Department of Education financial responsibility test (Blumenstyk, 2009). The colleges on this list are now at risk of failing, as “at least five of the institutions that show up as failing the financial test based on data from their 2007 or 2008 fiscal years have either shut down, merged with a wealthier nonprofit college, or sold themselves to a for-profit college company” (Blumenstyk, 2009, p. A21). While financial strain is not the only pressure on colleges, it is a factor that can often overshadow all other stressors.

In times of crisis, the mission statement of the institution can be used for guidance, or can even be called into question (Meacham, 2008). Mission statements and the goals laid out within them are critical to the life of a university (Meacham, 2008). Having a strong mission in which faculty, staff, students and alumni believe in becomes the backbone of an organization, providing assistance in “addressing problems, moving conversations among faculty and administrators forward, and crafting long-term, sustainable solutions” (Meacham, 2008, p. 21). Additionally, when a campus is forced to re-examine its mission and make changes wherein, the niche in which the college resides is likely to change. Despite changes that occur to missions, the crux of the issue becomes one of adaptation and change.

The choice to remain steadfast and hold to the original mission, although perhaps appealing and desirable at the time, could result in further decline in enrollment levels and ultimately, closure (Zammuto, 1984). An alternative choice is to begin a redefinition of the original mission, potentially allowing for a broader enrollment base

and increase in student population. The addition of programs such as pre-professional areas, business or engineering to a pure liberal arts institution has the potential to enhance student enrollment but also results in a “loss of institutional focus” (Hartley, 2003, p. 78). Shifting the mission of a college can have dramatic consequences, as mission serves to guide those associated with the institution, by indicating guiding principles, acceptable activities, and a shared purpose (Clark, 1972; Hartley, 2002; Hartley & Schall, 2005; Schein, 1992).

In further study of the liberal arts college segment of higher education, it becomes apparent that the mission of these institutions is becoming clouded. Christina Sorum (2005) indicated “it seems to me that our mission – why we teach what we teach – is muddled” (p. 27). This view of the mission can be further obscured when the component of “whom we teach” is added to the argument. “The focus [of a liberal arts degree] is less on a body of knowledge, and more on the student who is seeking to learn that knowledge” (Fix, 2005, p. 41). College degrees are increasingly seen as a path to success, and even more so when coming from disciplines that lead to careers such as business, medicine, education, and engineering which are not seen as part of the traditional liberal arts curriculum (Fix, 2005). When students and their parents are no longer attracted to a purely liberal arts degree, regardless of the skills it affords (critical thinking, writing, speaking, quantitative reasoning), schools that provide only such degrees and fit only in the liberal arts niche begin to suffer (Fix, 2005).

This potential dilution of the mission of liberal arts education has resulted in a smaller number of institutions in existence, making the case that the liberal arts are indeed an “endangered species” (Zammuto, 1984). The sharp decline in numbers of



liberal arts colleges over the last several decades further supports this claim (Fix, 2005; Sorum, 2005). From the 1950s to the 1970s, the proportion of liberal arts colleges dropped from 40% of all institutions of higher education to just 8% (Hawkins, 1999). Further, between 1967 and 1990, 167 liberal arts colleges either closed or merged with other schools to survive (Hawkins, 1999). Currently, these schools are occupying a very small niche, representing just over 2% of all schools (IPEDS, 2010).

These focused liberal arts schools fill a particular niche in higher education, as they often serve specific geographical regions and are small enough to adapt to student needs and changing economic, cultural, and societal changes (Hartley, 2003). Although this flexibility can be viewed as an asset, it can also be a detriment. Adapting to the point of changing the mission results in the loss of identity; re-defining the mission takes an understanding of the issues at hand, the past history of the organization, and finesse for planning in the future (Hartley & Schall, 2005). If an institution is pushed to the point of adaptation for survival, the core elements and mission could also be at risk, requiring radical change in order to remain viable. This radical change could force the organization into a new niche, but would allow it to survive.

Although mission change and financial stress can be seen across many types of liberal arts institutions, one specific subdivision of liberal arts colleges has seen dramatic change over the last half century. Women's colleges, a sector comprised predominantly of private four-year colleges (Harwarth, et al, 1997), have drastically dropped in total numbers over the last half century. Women's colleges, which numbered close to 300 in the mid 20th century, now number just 50 (Calefati, 2009). The most

drastic change in these colleges occurred between 1960-1986, where women's colleges experienced a 60% decline, from 233 colleges down to 90 (Chamberlain, 1988, p. 119).

Financial and enrollment stresses are further magnified at women's colleges. "In a questionnaire that students fill out when they register for the SAT, only 4 percent of female respondents this year said they were interested in attending a single-sex institution" (Reisberg, 2000). Women's colleges face all the same stresses as coeducational liberal arts colleges, but are often smaller in total enrollment to begin with and thus more vulnerable to a significant drop in students (Powers, 2007). During times of financial and enrollment stresses, women's colleges that were impacted by such circumstances began to seek possible solutions to their declining numbers and endowments. Several of the approximately 250 that no longer exist chose to close their doors, while many merged with other schools to offer expanded services and curricular options (Salamone, 2007). Another solution to this enrollment crisis was to completely change the population of the college and expand the student body to include men. The pursuit of coeducation allowed many former women's colleges to stay open, albeit with a different population of students and a very different look to the campus.

### *Significance of the Problem*

Liberal arts colleges (and within them, women's colleges) are exemplars of American higher education (Hartley, 2003; Hawkins, 1999; S. R. G., 1999). Despite their reputation for high quality education, rising costs and decreasing enrollment threaten their existence. Numbers of liberal arts colleges have shrunk dramatically, forcing those remaining to take sometimes drastic measures to stay open. Evidence of colleges merging with stronger institutions, widening curricular options and adapting to

a new population of students result in keeping the doors open, but dilute the historical aims of the liberal arts education.

In the case of women's colleges, closing or merging erodes their foundations of providing education for young women (Salamone, 2007). The original objective of women's colleges was to allow women to attain a higher level of education (Boas, 1935; Gordon, 1997; Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Providing this opportunity to young women filled a niche in American higher education. These early women's colleges were the only places where women could further their education, allowing the fledgling schools to outcompete all other organizations in the population (Hannan & Freeman, 1977).

When women's colleges choose an alternative path to survive (i.e., coeducation or partnering with another school), they cannot remain in the women's college niche. However, they can still retain their ability to provide a high-quality liberal arts education to both men and women. This study examined the case of one former women's college that became coeducational in order to survive, thus moving into a different niche. This study used a case study method to collect data and analyze communication patterns, decision making, and interactions on several levels. Although the study of one school likely can not be generalized to all colleges facing the same challenge, examination of the process could lend assistance or provide examples to campuses seeking the same desired outcome.

Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts was founded in 1834 as the Wheaton Female Seminary, committed to the serious education of young women (Wheaton College, 2007). As the college began to grow, enrollment increased from just a handful at its founding to 1,200 in the 1950s. Despite this peak in enrollment, the economic

downturn of the 1970s and 1980s left Wheaton, along with hundreds of other women's colleges, in a precarious position. Enrollment at the college had been in serious decline since 1981, reaching a nadir of fewer than 1,000 by the mid 1980s, and without drastic change, closure was inevitable (Gray Letter to the Wheaton Family, January 28, 1987). In a bold move, the leadership at Wheaton College announced that in order to survive as a college, men would be admitted for the first time beginning in the fall of 1988. Current enrollment at the coeducational Wheaton College has increased significantly in the last 20 years to 1,550 ("Wheaton College About the College," n.d.).

Although not the only college to achieve such an accomplishment, Wheaton College does illustrate how a college can move from one ecological niche to another in a relatively short period of time. Wheaton saw success as an all women's college, as evidenced by its 1950s enrollment. Despite faltering in the ensuing decades, a new, albeit different Wheaton emerged, and is fulfilling a new niche as a liberal arts college producing high quality female and male graduates.

### *Purpose and Research Questions*

Throughout the last two hundred years, liberal arts colleges have seen massive growth, followed by considerable decrease. Included in this rise and fall are the women's colleges, many of which were defined as part of the liberal arts segment of schools (Harwarth, et al, 1997). Institutions devoted solely to the education of young women grew from the hard work of a few dedicated, educated, and passionate women. Women's colleges saw years of prosperity, increased support, and a swell in enrollment. However, their decline occurred very quickly, as hundreds of schools succumbed to declining enrollment and dangerous financial situations that were felt by liberal arts

colleges in general and magnified in the single-sex institutions (Harwarth, et al, 1997; Powers, 2007).

Some schools, however, have embraced these challenges and found viable solutions as an alternative to closing. Although examining one campus does not provide answers for all of higher education, lessons can be learned and pieces of their plan for survival can lend guidance to other types of institutions that are wrestling with enrollment management issues. Even though the Wheaton College case cannot be extrapolated to explain all situations on other campuses, it can highlight decisions made and actions taken that made the Wheaton College transition to coeducation possible, and as this study will show, with some measure of success.

Given continuing financial and enrollment pressures on higher education, the purpose of this study was to examine what happens to liberal arts colleges, particularly women's colleges that are in danger of closing when their population niche is threatened. The following questions guided the study:

1. What environmental and institutional factors prompted the move to coeducation at Wheaton College?
2. How were decisions made and communication handled to guide the transition?
3. What organizational strategies could be used to explain the transition to coeducation?
4. What lessons learned from the Wheaton College transition can be used by other institutions facing similar circumstances?

### *Theoretical Framework*

In this dissertation I examined Wheaton from a variety of perspectives to study how campus leaders used the option of coeducation to their advantage and turned dwindling enrollment numbers into a thriving campus that welcomes both women and men. Through use of a case study method, I looked at multiple aspects of the transition and sought to explain behaviors, communication, and decisions through a theoretical framework of organizational theory. More specifically, Quinn and Cameron's (1983) change theory will help to frame the transition from a women's college to a coeducational institution. Quinn and Cameron's definition of four distinct phases of change (entrepreneurial, collectivity, formalization and control, and elaboration of structure) will delineate the events that took place at Wheaton in the mid 1980s and provide a structure for analysis of data. A more in depth discussion of this theory and how it fits with this study will be provided in chapter two.

Within change theory, communication theory and life-cycle theory will provide further guidance. The work of Krone, Jablin and Putnam (1987) and Jablin (1979, 1990) assists in explaining communication patterns and messages as a form of processes and outcomes. Through the case study analysis, communication both written and verbal (as told through interviews) can be a valuable resource in examining events and processes.

Van de Ven and Poole (1995) explored the use of life-cycle theory (adapted from the natural sciences) to interpret organizational change and innovation processes. Van de Ven and Poole (1995) further hypothesized that because change in organizations is inevitable, organizations will eventually experience phases of life, death, and re-

birth. As Wheaton College “died” as an all women’s college and was re-born as a coeducational college, this theory will be insightful in explaining the events as a whole.

Use of these theories as a framework will provide structure to the data presented in chapter four of this study. Merriam (1998) defines a theoretical or conceptual framework as something that is “the structure, the scaffolding, the frame of [the] study” (p. 45). While the presentation of data will tell the story of what happened at Wheaton, the framework used to discuss the facts will provide context and organization to the conversation.

### *Overview of the Dissertation*

In this first chapter I outlined the current system of higher education in the United States, highlighting where liberal arts colleges and women’s colleges fit within the taxonomy. I delineated past and current threats to liberal arts and women’s colleges and proposed that the in depth study of Wheaton College can begin to answer questions and provide insight into how one school coped with these threats. The second chapter provides context for this research problem, outlining relevant literature surrounding liberal arts colleges, women’s colleges and theoretical foundations useful to this dissertation. The third chapter is dedicated to outlining the research methods used in the study. Chapter four offers a description of what was learned about the case through interviews and documents, providing a chronological look at the decision process. The final chapter gives an analysis of the data collected during the case study process, along with conclusions and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

In order to fully examine one campus' decision to pursue coeducation as a means for survival, it is important to understand not only the history and background of the women's college movement, but also the underpinnings of issues faced by liberal arts colleges. In order to properly lay the foundation for the study, I reviewed literature in five main areas with an additional section on the background on liberal arts colleges. The greater part of the literature reviewed covers the history of women's education, the current state of single-sex colleges in the United States, organizational change theory, organizational theory, and organizational communication theory.

"A perennial challenge for higher education institutions is to keep pace with knowledge change" (Gumport, 2000, p. 67). This concept has been seen throughout higher education history as colleges and universities have been at the forefront of change not only in education, but also in the areas of society, politics and especially economics (Gumport, 2000). In this study I argue that higher education can be even more responsive to societal change through the reinvention of campuses and the fulfillment of new niches.

Much has been written on women's education, mostly in the form of historical accounts of women's colleges transitioning to coeducation (Boas, 1935, Goodsell, 1931; Green, 1984; Miller-Bernal, 2000; Miller-Bernal, 2004; Palmieri, 1997; Rosenberg, 1988; Semel & Sadovnik, 2006). This type of literature provides readers and researchers with historical background on where women's education has been and where it is heading. Although this aspect of the literature has merit, it does not begin to



explain from a more academic point of view what occurs during such massive transformations.

To provide an extended view to the historical accounts already written on women's education, an additional component has been added. The framework being used for this study is one of organizational theory, specifically organizational change and organizational communication theory. Aspects of this area include population ecology research, which was originally borrowed from the natural sciences, niches and organizational life cycle literature.

Examination of studies on women's education will begin to set the context for the remainder of the literature. The history of, present situations facing, and imagined future of this segment of higher education provide a framework for understanding the current study. However, it is critical to the importance of this research to layer a conceptual framework over, and add insight to the historical accounts. This addition will provide a supplementary lens through which the reader can begin to understand what took place at women's colleges during times of enrollment and financial emergencies. This theoretical aspect assists in explaining actions, plans, proposals and activities undertaken by schools in crisis. Although this study does not propose generalization of findings, there are lessons that can be learned and assistance given to other institutions of higher education that find themselves in a similar situation.

### *Liberal Arts Colleges*

A century ago, liberal arts colleges were a dominant force in American higher education. Now these schools, which educate fewer than 4 percent of all undergraduates, are becoming an endangered species. Intimate size, a residential

setting, small classes taught by full-time professors, faculty-student collaboration, a personal commitment to students and institutional communities of discourse: these are virtues worth preserving. But the tides of fashion in higher education are running against these colleges. (Kirp, 2003, p. 34)

Liberal arts colleges, like other areas of higher education, saw significant growth during the 19th and first part of the 20th centuries (Astin & Lee, 1972). However, this growth began to slow in the early 1970s and even slide backwards throughout the next decade (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996). Liberal arts colleges found themselves especially vulnerable to the economic downturn of the 1980s, as most of them had small enrollments, limited endowments, or external funding and narrowly focused curricula (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996; Pfnister, 1984). After experiencing so many years of growth, the liberal arts colleges in general

were facing the same conditions as they entered the decade of the 80's: declining enrollments, limited and even diminishing resources, a weakened public image, unstable administrative and management structures, and perhaps most damaging, a lack of direction. (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p. 124)

With these bleak conditions at the forefront of liberal arts education, leaders at these schools had to seriously examine the position of their individual campus, resources available, and face the sobering thought that they might not survive this downturn (Pfnister, 1984).

In their foundational work on liberal arts colleges, Alexander W. Astin and Calvin B. T. Lee (1972) examined where this group of institutions fit in the broader

picture of higher education. Through their study of institutions of higher education, they developed the definition of the *invisible college* that is still in use in modern literature (Astin & Lee, 1972). According to their research, this category of invisible colleges is made up largely of liberal arts schools. Due to factors such as lack of federal and state funding, small student enrollment and narrow student recruitment bases, Astin and Lee ascertain that “of all the institutions of higher education, invisible colleges are the most likely to become extinct” (p. 11).

As noted in chapter one of this study, private nonprofit colleges are under direct threat, experiencing a “perfect storm” of changing student demographics, rising costs, shrinking endowments, and a “credit crunch that threatens to limit the availability of some student loans” (Blumenstyk, 2008). Rather than becoming extinct as Astin and Lee (1972) wrote of these colleges, some have chosen other methods of adaptation to hopefully find a new niche to occupy.

For example, Heidelberg University and Tiffin University, both located in Tiffin, Ohio, have turned to the addition of online programs, hiring of more adjunct faculty to teach classes, and awarding of automatic scholarships to financial aid-eligible students to bolster enrollment (Blumenstyk, 2008). In a time where fund-raising goals are stymied by economic conditions and family contributions to tuition are limited, Heidelberg and Tiffin are seeking to create a new niche for themselves by expanding programs and finding less expensive ways to teach courses.

Many early women’s colleges that aligned themselves with strong men’s colleges have, over time, been absorbed into one coeducational college and seen their women’s college roots fade away. Radcliffe College was absorbed into Harvard

University, Pembroke College merged fully with Brown University and Newton College became a full part of Boston College (Harwarth, et al, 1997). While ultimately allowing women to fully enroll in a coeducational university setting, the loss of the school's original identity further contributed to the decline of women's colleges in the United States.

### *Women's Colleges*

In October 1636 the colonial government of Massachusetts signed the act that led to the creation of Harvard University, the first of thousands of institutions of higher education to be created across the United States (Rudolph, 1990). In the early centuries of higher education the mission of the university was geared towards the more elite in society, giving those middle-upper class families a forum to teach their sons to become leaders in society (Thelin, 2004). Over these first 200 years of higher education, the daughters of these families were deliberately left out of the education process. Women were often seen as inferior to their male counterparts, incapable of intellectual advancement and not worth a formal education (Rudolph, 1990). Despite these restricted beginnings, however, higher education has consistently expanded over the last two hundred years to provide access to previously marginalized peoples, including the education of women (Thelin, 2004).

Women's education began formally in the early 19th century in women's seminaries, with options expanding further throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Thelin, 2004). Arising out of the minds and desires of a few pioneers, seminaries began as a way to educate teachers (Gordon, 1997). They were mainly open to the middle

class, as the poor were generally not educated until much later and the rich often had private tutors (Boas, 1935).

Many of these early seminaries were essentially the equivalent of the high school education boys were receiving. However, the seminaries were quickly modeled into college level curricula, using some of the elite men's colleges as an example (Boas, 1935; Goodsell, 1931; Wolf-Wendel, 2000). As the young female attendees longed for more knowledge and society became more accepting of educating young women, the seminaries gained ground across the country. These first seminaries usually had a woman at their helm, one who went against the norms of the time and found a way to become educated before passing her knowledge down to her pupils (Boas, 1935). The mission of these women was to create a place for young ladies to receive a quality education, similar to their male counterparts (Boas, 1935; Goodsell, 1931; Gordon, 1997).

Eventually these seminaries evolved into full colleges for women and took hold all over the east coast (Rudolph, 1990). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the women's colleges of the United States found great success. Women were being educated separately from men, but enjoyed the freedom to learn what was important and necessary to become educated and successful in society (Miller-Bernal, 2000). These women's colleges gave access to a previously marginalized segment of the population and educated them in both disciplinary knowledge and life skills (Miller-Bernal, 2000).

Interestingly, where men's education was originated to mold men into societal gentlemen (Cremin, 1997; Helmreich, 1985), women's education had a different reason. "Women's colleges were founded on a belief in women's abilities" (Schmidt, 1998, p.

200). The early pioneers of women's education recognized that the young girls around them had just as much potential as their male counterparts and rightly deserved a place where they could cultivate their knowledge and abilities.

At the same time women's opportunities were expanding in seminaries and women's colleges, some Midwest institutions were beginning to explore the option of coeducation and allowing women into their classrooms. The 19th century saw schools such as Oberlin, University of Iowa, University of Wisconsin, University of Indiana, University of Missouri and University of Michigan admit women to their entering classes (Rudolph, 1990). From there coeducation began to take hold across the Midwest and West although it took several years longer in the East (Rudolph, 1990).

While this expanding access was initially seen as positive, it created a very specialized and stratified system of higher education. College-bound women had more choices than ever as they decided what type of institution to attend (Rudolph, 1990). Whereas at one point there might have been very few options for young women, they suddenly found there were several schools available to them. With such a narrow recruitment base, women's seminaries and colleges very quickly found themselves in precarious enrollment and financial situations as college-bound young women began to explore their educational options (Miller-Bernal, 2000).

### *The Current State of Women's Education*

Despite these humble beginnings and unparalleled success during the 19th and early 20th centuries, women's colleges have suffered over the last 50 years. More young women choose to attend coeducational institutions (Reisberg, 2000; Schmidt,

1988; Wolf-Wendel, 2000), leaving the picture of women's education looking very different in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century from just half a century ago.

The turbulent years of the 1960s and 1970s saw some of the most dramatic decreases in the numbers of women's colleges. In the wake of civil-rights and the feminist movements, all male colleges were feeling great societal pressure to be open to all students, giving young women greater options in higher education (Salomone, 2007). Further complicating the plight of women's colleges was the passing of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. This law stated "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" ("United States Department of Labor," n.d.). Of particular concern to women's colleges was that Title IX enabled women to gain admission to schools they had not been able to access, and a number of all male schools moved to coeducation. As a result, women's colleges could no longer draw the numbers of qualified applicants needed to maintain their enrollments and the first major sweep of closings followed as a result.

Between 1960 and 1972, half opened their doors to men or closed completely. During the six-month period from June to December 1968, an astounding 64 institutions met one or the other fate. By 1986 women's colleges had become an endangered species. The majority that survived were church-affiliated, primarily Catholic. By 1998 the number had plummeted to 80, down from a high of around 300 in 1960. Fewer than 60 remain today. (Salomone, 2007)

Less than 20 years after this first impact on women's colleges, society and economics negatively impacted women's colleges once again. In the mid-1980s the population of traditional college aged students (age 18-19) dropped significantly due to a decline in birth rates (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Several women's colleges began to feel the effects of the lower numbers, witnessing sharp enrollment declines at all-female institutions nation wide (Harwarth, et al., 1997). The drastic expansion of college options, combined with the first significant drop in student numbers created a potentially catastrophic situation for schools that serve specialized populations of students.

In addition to the decrease in numbers of college-bound students, the economic situation in the United States also began to fluctuate during the 1980s. Prior to that point, costs associated with attending college rose in proportion to the economy and inflation (Gladieux, King, & Corrigan, 2005). However, in the years between 1980 and 2003, "average tuition [rose] almost 145 percent at private and public four-year institutions" (Gladieux, et al, 2005, p. 177). With the average family income not matching this increase, students had to begin making difficult decisions about their spending, including college tuition costs. In addition, the colleges had to raise tuition in order to manage their skyrocketing costs associated with the economic recession of the same time period (Thelin, 2004). The challenges of declining birth rates, struggling economy, and rising costs were seen nationwide in higher education. However, the liberal arts college sector (and specifically the women's colleges) was significantly impacted, as enrollments were smaller, outside funding more limited, and student recruitment bases declined (Thelin, 2004).



### *Survival Options for Women's Colleges*

Several women's colleges, feeling this economic impact, opted to close their doors. The turbulent 1960s and 1970s saw the closure of many of these now forgotten schools. Of the 141 women's colleges that disappeared during 1960-1984, 55 (39%) chose coeducation, while 81 (57%) closed (Chamberlain, 1988, p. 121). The remaining 5 (3.5%) looked to other options such as partnering with more established universities (Chamberlain, 1988, p. 121). Relationships with a coeducational or men's college to share resources and students became a viable way to maintain enrollment. Some of the more notable examples of partnering come from Bryn Mawr College and Haverford, Saint Mary's College and the University of Notre Dame, and Barnard College and Columbia University (Miller-Bernal, 2000). These partnerships allowed the women's college to retain its identity, maintain the feeling of a women's campus, and stay true to the mission of educating women while being able to take advantage of the resources offered by the partner school. Cross registration allowed for an increase of course offerings and a wider range of student activities that might appeal to students, thus maintaining or even increasing enrollment (Miller-Bernal, 2000).

When this partnership is not a viable option, other methods have been employed to attract more students. Some of these include increased financial aid packages, online course offerings, new interdisciplinary programs or allowing cross registration with a consortium of other colleges (Miller-Bernal, 2000). Although these options do not offer the same sharing of resources as the partnership plan, they can work to a college's favor by attracting more students, sharing resources and increasing enrollment.

A third option is to become fully coeducational. Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts for example, used adversity faced in the 1980s to change its focus and has been a fully coeducational liberal arts college since 1988. (Semel & Sadovnik, 2006). In the face of declining enrollments and financial struggles, the leadership of Wheaton College examined the future of the college. One option that kept rising to the surface was the question of coeducation (Semel & Sadovnik, 2006). Wheaton began its new life in 1988 as a college for both women and men and has seen great success since then (Semel & Sadovnik, 2006).

Wells College in New York is a more recent example of coeducation. Like many other women's colleges, Wells benefited from financial gain throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with increased endowments and rising enrollment (Miller-Bernal, 2006). However in the 1980s, Wells College felt the effects of a severe enrollment decline that forced the college into a financial crisis so severe that an immediate solution was needed (Miller-Bernal, 2006). After once enrolling close to 700 students, enrollment at times in the 1990s and the early 2000s fell as low as 300 (Miller-Bernal, 2006). At first, coeducation was seen as an impossible option, so methods of cost cutting were employed to try to ease the financial burden (Miller-Bernal, 2006). When options such as teaching classes in nearby cities to attract more students, allowing students to work towards advanced degrees as undergraduates, and cutting tuition prices failed to sustain Wells, the discussion turned to coeducation. Finally, the announcement was made that Wells would become coeducational in fall 2005 (Miller-Bernal, 2006).

Along with Wells College, three other well publicized coeducation decisions were made by Emmanuel College in Boston, Massachusetts, Regis College in Weston,

Massachusetts and Randolph Macon Woman's College (now known as Randolph College) in Lynchburg, Virginia. Emmanuel College admitted men beginning in 2001 and has seen almost triple the enrollment since then (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006). Both Regis and Randolph Macon decided to admit men in 2007 to preserve their colleges and expand their enrollment bases (Bombardieri & Jan, 2006; Salomone, 2007).

Although the Wells and Wheaton coeducation decisions reversed the financial struggle and enrollment problems on the two campuses, they did not come without commotion. Many student protests and reversal of alumnae support punctuated the decisions, and the publicity from coverage by local and national media outlets drew more attention to the colleges (Miller-Bernal, 2006; Semel & Sadovnik, 2006). Both colleges, having recovered from the protests and proven they can be successful at coeducation, have faced the same pressing question of "how to be loyal to [their] history, serious about the education and support of women students, and yet welcoming to men" (Miller-Bernal, 2006).

### *Theoretical Framework – Change Strategy*

In this section of the literature review I will provide a summary of relevant theoretical literature and explain how it will offer structure and context to the case study analysis. The main conceptual framework in this study comes from a body of theories on change strategy and adaptation. Specifically, I utilized the work of Quinn and Cameron (1983). In their synthesis of nine organizational life-cycle theories, Quinn and Cameron (1983) hypothesized that all organizational change progresses through four stages allowing for successful transition and reorganization. To better explain the stages

and give a more concrete example of what organizations go through, I have woven a sample case into this section of the literature review.

The *entrepreneurial stage* involves collection of resources and information, represents a time of great flexibility and potential for growth and usually the identification of a strong leader. It is often the most open time of the organization, where creativity and innovation are strongest and dreams of the future organization are contemplated (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). Imagine an organization that has just six months to move their paper filing system to an entirely technologically based system. During this stage of the change, leaders in the organization might use their time to do a study of best practices in similar organizations. They would also encourage all levels of the organization to openly offer and discuss suggestions on how to best incorporate the new system into daily practice. No idea would be too inane, and all options are examined for viability.

Quinn and Cameron (1983) defined the second stage of growth, which includes such hallmarks as a sense of community, mission, long work hours and creativity, as the *collectivity stage*. High interaction between group members is seen in this stage, where priorities are placed on “a sense of family and cooperativeness among members, high member commitment and personalized leadership” (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44). Group unity and cohesiveness grows in this stage as well and provides a solid foundation for the next two phases. In the filing system example, the organization would take all the information gathered in the first stage and begin the process of deciding the best path to take. Employees would feel that they have a stake in the process, and be excited about this new change in their work environment.

The *formalization and control* stage is defined as the point in the cycle where the creativity from stage two is formed into more concrete rules, policies and procedures. These rules lead to a sense of stability that might have been lacking and begins to institutionalize the planning that has occurred (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). The open, flowing ideas from the first two stages are made more rational in this stage and goals are formulated based on the formalization of ideas. In this stage, the sample organization would begin to articulate specific rules and regulations for the new system. Employees would be trained on new systems, re-structure their work flow to utilize the new technology, and make a formal commitment to the new process.

The final stage, which contains processes such as decentralization of control, elaboration of the organization and adaptation, is known as the *elaboration of structure* stage (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). In this stage, boundaries of the organization are formed and the “organization monitors the external environment in order to renew itself or expand its domain, or both” (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44). The sample organization, now far along in its incorporation of paperless technology, has turned control of the system over to the employees and decentralized monitoring. Leaders will now rely on the daily users of the system to provide feedback concerning its effectiveness, and will also monitor external sources looking for upgrades or better ways to utilize the technology.

Use of these four stages in explaining the Wheaton College case will provide structure to the data collected and assist in explaining decisions and outcomes that resulted from the college’s progression through these stages. Through examination of the Wheaton College transition to coeducation, interviews, documents and other

artifacts were analyzed through the lens of this model. In addition to change theory, additional organizational theory and organizational communication theories were applied.

### *Theoretical Framework – Organizational Theory*

The body of literature known as *organizational theory* encompasses a wide variety of information, some of which will be explored in this section. One of these theories that is utilized in this study is *niche theory* (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). During their years of growth and expansion the women's college sector fulfilled a defined niche, meaning that the particular organization finds itself in a situation where it can be the most competitive in a particular environmental setting (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). When the environment is seemingly stable, organizations can occupy niches and be very successful in their daily activities (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). However, when the environment begins to fluctuate due to change, this niche can be disrupted. Organizations that are not highly specialized can ride out this change better than those that occupy a narrower niche (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). When an organization has more resources available and can better address areas of change, it increases its likelihood of survival.

Van de Ven and Poole (1995) explored the area of organizational change and innovation processes. Their model follows four different organizational processes that impact change in organizations. Through their exploration of life cycles, Van de Ven and Poole (1995) posited that organizations have definite stages of development, maturity, and eventual death. Although some schools that have transitioned to coeducation still survive, their old "selves" experienced death as they morphed into a

new type of college. Life cycle theory asserts that “change is imminent” (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 515) and there is something inherent in each organization that will cause this change.

At some point in their life-span, every organization will experience some form of change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). As was discussed earlier, liberal arts colleges (specifically women’s college) have experienced massive times of change, especially in recent decades. When the changing demographic of the college-aged student shifted in the mid 1980s, several changes had to take place. Schools that once only enrolled women had to evaluate their situation to see if they could incorporate a wider pool of students, even if it meant altering their student base.

When the decision is made to alter the focus of the organization, it becomes clear that new rules and procedures needed to be adopted (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Coming from a hard science background, Gould and Eldridge (1977) argued that organizations undergo sudden change at the micro level, but experience waves of change over time at the macro level. The new population that lives post-change looks quite different from that of the pre-change population and their characteristics continue to adjust over time.

Postsecondary education experiences change on two levels: large, systemic change that is happening across the country, and smaller, unique instances of change taking place on individual campuses. The Wheaton College case study brought to light what happened on one campus when change in the landscape of higher education forced campus leaders to critically examine Wheaton’s past, present, and future.

### *Theoretical Framework – Organizational Communication*

Although change theory and organizational theory help to define certain events and activities that take place in organizations during tumultuous times, much of the change that actually occurs happens through the direct impact and indirect influence of communication across the organization. Organizational communication is the “process of creating, exchanging, interpreting and storing of messages within purposive systems (Jablin, 1990, p. 157). The way these messages are sent and received can influence not only individual job performance in an organization, but can affect outcomes and process across an entire organization (Jablin, 1990). During times of change and adaptation, communication with all parties involved is critical, and must be timely, precise, and from a credible source (Jablin, 1979). Without these key factors in place, the change process can potentially be undermined and ineffective.

Organizational communication provides a foundation for interactions and lays the groundwork for relationships (Jablin, 1990; Krone, et al, 1987). Through examination of the types of messages sent and received by people in an organization, it is possible to define relationships, explain situations, and understand the meaning constructed through communication interchanges (Krone, et al, 1987). The formal construction of organizations with technology, hierarchies, networks and other inherent structures all shape the form of communication within the organization, making it essential not only to study the messages, but also to study them from within their organizational context (Jablin, 1990).

The structure of organizations allows for several types of communication to take place. “The breadth and complexity of organizations result in communication processes



from individual to mass” (Jones, et al, 2004). Within the boundaries of an organization, communication occurs on multiple levels and across hierarchical work structures, and through formal and informal channels (Jones, et al, 2004). In the context of higher education, communication on one campus, especially during a time of transition or adaptation, takes on a multitude of forms. Messages sent among and between all the various stakeholders and constituents in the organization cross all formal boundaries and can take various forms and approaches (Jablin, 1979, 1990; Jones, et al, 2004).

Jablin (1979) researched communication between superiors and subordinates in an organizational context. His review of nine categories of interactions and communication patterns found several consistencies. First, power and status within these relationships is a prevailing force. Whether power of one person over another is real or perceived, the impact on communication is great (Jablin, 1979). In the context of studying Wheaton College, campus authorities such as the president and board of trustees had power and status over others in the organization, thus potentially distorting the impact of their messages.

Second, Jablin (1979) found “trust as a moderator” (p. 1215) to play a substantial role in these relationships. Communication across different levels in an organization requires a certain element of trust, with the knowledge that the subordinates are not going to be led astray by their superiors. Evidence collected during my pilot study indicated that the announcement of coeducation at Wheaton College was a shocking one to most of the campus community. Campus leaders needed to have the trust of those around them to get the work done.

Finally, Jablin (1979) concluded that “semantic-information distance [is] a source of misunderstanding in subordinate-superior communication” (p. 1215). The disparity between the information and the understanding of such information can create concerns in relationships in an organization. Errors are often made in estimating the amount of knowledge possessed by one or both parties. In addition, chances for miscommunication and lowering of morale increases when the hierarchical difference between parties also increases. When looking at a case of a higher education organization, the differences between a student and the president in perceived amounts of information possessed and hierarchy can lead to the very misunderstandings researched by Jablin (1979).

Although their research concerned mainly the emergence of virtual organizations, DeSanctis and Monge (1999) outlined necessary processes for organizational communication that have applicability in a multitude of situations. While DeSanctis and Monge (1999) were drawing upon examples of organizations using mainly electronic processes for work and communication, the written communication used during the time of the Wheaton College transition can be viewed through the lens of DeSanctis and Monge’s research. Concerning the construction of non-verbal messages, they posit that “the lack of face-to-face contact in electronic communication may negatively affect message understanding” (p. 696). While the information disseminated to the Wheaton community in the late 1980s was not electronic, it was in the form of written letters and memos. The writers of these documents likely had to take special care in constructing these communications, as they were conveying sensitive information that had the potential to upset the community.

It is important to distinguish the differences between organizational communication and other types of communication (e.g., interpersonal, mass communication, etc.). Interpersonal communication for example does not have, in general, the constraints and boundaries placed on relationships by organizational structures (Jablin, 1990).

Higher education provides a rich environment to study from an organizational communication perspective, as there are often competing viewpoints, multiple stakeholders and great opportunity for growth and change (Gumport & Sporn, 1999). Change within these organizations necessitates flexibility, creativity, and excellent communication to help ensure survival of some of the most specialized institutions of higher education. The use and application of organizational communication theory will be an additional lens through which to examine the change that took place at Wheaton College. Communication patterns and interactions remembered through individual interviews, as well as communication expressed through written documents are a rich source of information to be uncovered through development of this case study.

### *Summary of the Literature*

As shown in this chapter, there is an abundant amount of information on liberal arts colleges and women's colleges. A number of models across organizational theory and organizational communication are present in the literature and make available several options to use in analysis of information. However, what has not been found is a case where the two areas merge together to use theoretical models in explaining the evolution of a women's college into a coeducational institution. Thus, the literature I reviewed for this chapter had several purposes. First, I provided an examination of five

relevant areas; liberal arts colleges, women's colleges, change theory, organizational theory, and organizational communication theory. I positioned the study in a historical look at past threats, with a more current look at stressors to this sector of higher education. Second, I began to bring together the two spheres of literature written on women's colleges and organizational theory that I drew together further in analysis of the Wheaton College case study. The literature on theory and models provided a necessary backbone of analysis for the study. Finally, I concluded that although literature in anecdotal form and theoretical form exist, nothing yet merges the two. Through analysis of the events that occurred at Wheaton College, this study will provide a new contribution to the literature on both women's colleges and on organizational adaptation and change.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine what happens to liberal arts colleges, particularly women's colleges that are in danger of closing when their population niche is threatened. Given continuing financial and enrollment pressures on higher education, and using Wheaton College as an example, the following questions guided the study:

1. What environmental and institutional factors prompted the move to coeducation at Wheaton College?
2. How were decisions made and communication handled to guide the transition?
3. What organizational strategies could be used to explain the transition to coeducation?
4. What lessons learned from the Wheaton College transition can be used by other institutions facing similar circumstances?

### *Methodological Approach*

The goal of this study was to understand how one small college overcame a threat to its existence. I used a qualitative case study approach (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994; Yin, 1984) which was appropriate for several reasons. First, a case study method can be employed in order to fully comprehend decisions that were made, changes that took place, and outcomes that occurred at Wheaton College. Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted that the case is "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25). Wheaton's transition to coeducation was part

of a larger phenomenon taking place in higher education, but the specifics were unique to the campus. While the study of one campus does not explain results for all schools losing their niche, utilization of a case study approach lays the foundation to begin to comprehend certain aspects of a larger trend. “Case studies seek to understand a larger phenomenon through intensive examination of one specific instance” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 104). In this study, the phenomenon is not only the convergence of a grouping of socio-economic factors that directly impacted the survival of liberal arts colleges, and more specifically, women’s colleges, but the response to such a convergence. Wheaton College provides the specific instance for examining this phenomenon.

Second, the case study approach lends itself to the construction of complex, multi-faceted descriptions of particular situations (Rosman & Rallis, 2003). Through the use of multiple sources of data, several different perspectives can be collected in order to create the most complete picture possible of the scenario at hand. Typical data collected comes from, but is not limited to, interviews, document and archival records, physical artifacts and observations (Creswell, 2007). This comprehensive review of data is what gives the case study “a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon [that] offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

Finally, the inclusion of organizational theory in the data analysis helps to ground the study not only in a more scholarly way, but to truly begin to understand the progression from single-sex to coeducation. Merriam (1998) writes that “case study is a particularly suitable design if you are interested in process” (p. 33). Through both

describing the events from a historical perspective and analyzing them from a theoretical perspective, the true process of the case will begin to emerge.

Stake (1994) examined different types of case studies and categorized them based on their potential use. *Intrinsic case studies* are those that are chosen merely because they are of interest and because they present a unique problem. They do not seek to explain a particular theory or phenomenon, nor are they meant to be generalized for a larger population (Stake, 1994, p. 237). The *instrumental case study* can be used to generalize or to explain a particular theory or phenomenon. Although the case has individual merits, it assists in understanding larger issues (Stake, 1994, p. 237). A third type is to study multiple cases to form a *collective case study*. This approach is used when the researcher tests a theory or defines new phenomena (Stake, 1994, p. 237).

Stake (1994) further asserted that “because we simultaneously have several interests, often changing, there is no line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental; rather, a zone of combined purpose separates them (p. 237). This study does not seek to generalize to the entire population of colleges in the United States. Through choosing Wheaton College as a case for this study, I intend to bring to light the facts of the case that are relevant to the liberal arts college sector or that prove to be of interest during data collection and analysis. However, there are lessons from the case that could be used to assist in the understanding of the decline of women’s colleges. Using the logic presented by Stake (1994), this case study will blur the lines between intrinsic and instrumental case studies.

### *Selection of Case*

Case studies are very specific examinations of an instance or circumstance (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). They are focused on contextual aspects and are unique to that occasion. The results of a case, while not useful for generalizing, can be used to make analogous comparisons to other instances (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). By bringing to light the events that took place at Wheaton College in the late 1980s I did not intend to provide an exact step-by-step approach, but rather offer an opportunity to make inferences and use “lessons learned in one case to another population or set of circumstances” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The selection of Wheaton College as a site for this case was deliberate. The transition to coeducation was a purposeful decision employed to save the school from closing due to low enrollment and a poor financial outlook (Semel & Sadovnik, 2006). The socio-economic factors of the 1980s directly impacted the security and stability of the college and although coeducation might seem to be a radical solution, it gave the college a potential way to combat the threats to the school at the time.

Furthermore, I selected Wheaton College due to personal connections and previous studies on this topic. Wheaton was where I did my undergraduate work from 1993 to 1997, attending just after the first coeducational class graduated in 1992. This timing afforded me the opportunity to meet and develop relationships with a number of key college administrators and faculty who were directly involved in the transformation of the college. The majority of these people are still accessible, and many lent their support in the creation of this dissertation. Through some of my doctoral courses I had the opportunity to study various aspects of the Wheaton move to coeducation, through a



pilot study of archival documents, as well as interviews with a few selected college officials.

### *Background on Case Site*

Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, was founded in 1834 as a women's seminary. The result of the hard work of educational pioneer Mary Lyon, Wheaton became a haven for young women to further their education and contribute their knowledge to the growing United States (Helmreich, 2002). "That they may have life and may have it abundantly" is the official motto of Wheaton College (Helmreich, 2002). Adopted by the Board of Trustees in 1911, the motto reflects the foundations on which Wheaton was built. Wheaton's founder Judge Laban Wheaton proclaimed that this school was founded to provide women with "...an early, virtuous, pious and liberal education" (Helmreich, 1985, p. 16). Over its first 154 years in existence, Wheaton became known for the rigorous, quality education provided to young women and filled a distinct niche in women's education. Generations of Wheaton women graduated with these pillars and they became one of the factors that set Wheaton apart from other schools (Helmreich, 2002).

Chartered as a four year college in 1912, Wheaton's mission had always been to educate young women "with a quality and intensity of instruction and a seriousness of educational purpose that set Wheaton apart from the general run of finishing schools for young ladies" (Helmreich, 2002, p. 135). For close to 150 years, Wheaton enjoyed great success in this purpose. However, the college found itself susceptible to changes in the United States educational system that would shake its foundation almost beyond repair. The "perfect storm" of a struggling economy, decline in birth rates, and evidence that

young women were more likely to choose coeducational colleges all pointed to the need for immediate and radical change to ensure survival of the college. As I will describe in the next chapter, Wheaton's response to this perfect storm was to pursue coeducation, a decision that ultimately saved the college from the very real possibility of closure.

### *Data Collection*

Multiple sources of data collection in a case study allow the researcher to create a complete picture of the set of circumstances in the case (Creswell, 2007). Yin (2003) provided a comprehensive list of the different types of data collection used in a case study analysis, asserting that the very nature of a case study is built upon the use of multiple data points. The six different types of case study data as proposed by Yin (2003) are documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts. Although multiple sources of data will enhance analysis of the case, not all methods must be used to be effective (Yin, 2003).

For purposes of this study, I planned to incorporate extensive document analysis, utilizing the resources of the Wheaton College Archives. Having researched in the college archives prior to this study, I was aware of the extent of the materials available, including transition-specific documents. In addition, I sought out documents currently in the possession of key individuals involved in the transition, such as faculty, members of the Board of Trustees at the time, and past administrators. The Wheaton archives also houses an extensive collection of media reports published during the transition era. Articles from sources such as *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Boston Globe*, and others provided an outside look at events that occurred at the college. Throughout the course of data collection, I

reviewed over 200 documents totaling close to 400 pages. A list of documents cited in this study appears in the reference section.

While documents provide one aspect of information, interviews provide an additional data source (Creswell, 2007). Using information gleaned during a pilot study on this topic, as well as personal knowledge of people involved in the transition, I selected a preliminary set of individuals for interviews. In order to learn more about how the stage was set for coeducation, I contacted the key campus leaders of the time. There were several individuals who were charged with making the transition occur, so planned to interview a selection of those individuals to examine the course action that took place to ready the campus for coeducation.

For purposes of obtaining as complete data as possible, I selected individuals who represent various tiers of constituents and can provide information for use in analyzing through the theoretical framework outlined earlier in this study (see Appendix A). Such purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) aided in shaping the boundaries of the case and allowed for analysis of multiple viewpoints surrounding the same event. Once I established my list of interviews, I made arrangements to spend a week at Wheaton College and contacted each participant via email (see Appendix B). All interviews, with the exception of one that could not be scheduled during that week, were conducted in person. I anticipated that there would be some element of *snowball sampling* (Miles & Huberman, 1994) where one source of data would lead me to an additional source of data. This occurred once, where several participants mentioned the name of an administrator I had not previously considered. Her interview was conducted over the phone immediately following my week on campus. Each of the eight

interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and was audio recorded for review afterwards. Two participants were interviewed twice, as they were part of a pilot study on this topic.

Interviews all followed the same basic protocol (see Appendix C) to maintain consistency across data collection. Participants were asked several open-ended questions with some follow-up questions designed to bring about recollections of the transition. Due to the fact that the interviews were about events that occurred over twenty years ago, I contacted all participants approximately two weeks prior to the interview with a list of preliminary questions and topics I wanted them to discuss, giving them time to begin to recall events (see Appendix D). However, since I purposefully selected certain individuals to provide different pieces of information, questions in each interview differed slightly.

Interviews were not transcribed verbatim. I listened to each interview multiple times, transcribing direct quotes that supported the case and subsequent analysis. I read each document collected, noting those that either supported or refuted recollections by participants. Additionally, documents were read and sorted by category (i.e., personal letters, Board of Trustees minutes, letters to the community, copies of media publications, and reports by members of the administration). Within each category, documents were then ordered chronologically. Through listening to interviews and reading documents, a sequential picture emerged for analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

In a case study, data analysis does not happen at the end but rather takes place throughout data collection (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). To

this end, as interviews were conducted and documents reviewed, I reviewed each piece of data to see where and how it might fit with my theoretical framework, and to help decide where to go next. In addition, the aim of collecting multiple sources of data was to *triangulate* the information, or identify converging points of evidence that provide a portrait of events (Yin, 2003). Through ongoing analysis, I was able to clearly see these points of triangulation and used them to inform further data collection.

Since the events of the Wheaton College transition occurred many years ago, I used a *time-ordered matrix* (Miles & Huberman, 1994) method of collection and analysis. This method “orders data by time and sequence, preserving the historical chronological flow and permitting a good look at what led to what, and when” (p. 110). In addition, it aids in “displaying time-linked data referring to phenomena that are bigger than specific events so as to understand what was happening” (p. 119). Utilizing this method helped to ensure that the historical events remained in order while conducting the analysis. The matrix produced an illustration of the chronology of events and assisted with putting together the big picture of the phenomenon that occurred.

The matrix served an additional purpose in analysis. Events were not only scrutinized from a chronological perspective, but also through an analytical perspective. Each time period that emerged was compared with Quinn and Cameron’s (1983) adaptation theory, which served as the main conceptual framework for analysis. Individual pieces of data could then be analyzed both where it sits in the history, as well as where it fit into the theoretical framework. Some instances did not fit in the framework, which will be discussed in upcoming chapters.

Furthermore, as each piece of data was sorted and reviewed, I was able to address instances of contradicting and/or missing information. Since all interview participants were recalling the same general set of events, it became clear when differences emerged in recollections. The documents provided a stable record of events, and at times were used to either assist participants with their memory or clarify information that was not fitting with the documented story. Through constant review of the data, I was able to find instances where information had to be clarified, making certain I had the most complete picture of the case.

### *Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness in this study emerged on three levels. First, the concept is defined as a study that is produced in accordance with ethics and competence, assuring that all aspects of the process are carried out with the highest integrity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). To uphold this aspect of trustworthiness, I recorded all interviews, and reviewed the content with each participant. This ensured that what I planned to analyze and include in the study is as accurate and correct as possible, thus limiting the possibility of misinterpreting a participant.

Second, as a researcher in this case I have the responsibility of being truthful in my intentions, methods, and research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Furthermore, “qualitative research involves building and sustaining relationships with people” (p. 77). Part of choosing Wheaton College as a site for this study is due to my history with the college and my relationships with many of the key faculty and administrators who became part of this study. As I see my future as an actively involved Wheaton alumna,

it is imperative that I conducted myself and this research with the utmost professionalism and integrity.

Finally, my continued involvement with Wheaton could be perceived as clouding my judgment where the case development and analysis is concerned. To avoid having my final analysis influenced by my own personal feelings regarding the college, I used a peer debriefer (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998; Spillett, 2003). This individual was someone who has no affiliation with Wheaton College and who could therefore provide “feedback concerning the accuracy and completeness of [my] data collection and data analysis procedures” (Spillett, 2003, p. 36). This peer debriefer not only ensured that I was being honest and truthful in my reporting of all events, but had the ability to “ask questions about the study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2008, p. 192). At several points during my data analysis I utilized this individual to read my presentation of the case and my analysis points to ensure I was being truthful in my examination of the evidence. Use of the peer debriefer added another level of trustworthiness to my study.

### *Summary*

In this chapter I outlined my methods for data collection and analysis in accordance with the definition of case study research. I also described the levels of trustworthiness in my study that was utilized in every step of the process. In Chapter Four, I will lay out the case of the Wheaton College transition to coeducation, describing the data collected through interviews and documents. The final chapter will provide a discussion of the findings and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Presentation of the Case

This chapter will provide a chronological description of the Wheaton College transition to coeducation, from the earliest discussions of the possibility of admitting men through the decision that eventually made the school coeducational in 1988.

Information in this chapter came through interviews with faculty and administrators who played key roles in the process, as well as documents from the Wheaton College archives that pertain to the years of the case.

### *Setting the Stage for Growth*

When Wheaton College was founded in 1834, financial backing came entirely from the Wheaton Family. The money that was used to start the college later became a modest endowment from which the school drew much of its operating costs for nearly a century (Helmreich, 2002). Although the college leadership could arguably do more with outside fundraising, their hands were tied by the founders. “In fact they [the Wheaton family] had for the most part systematically discouraged it, preferring that the institution remain totally a family project” (Helmreich, 2002, p. 181). Throughout the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Wheaton endowment barely grew, falling victim to events such as the Great Depression and financial constraints through two World Wars. Combined with rising costs, it became apparent by the mid-1950s that despite the family wishes, the college would have to make changes in order to financially support itself.

The Board of Trustees in the 1950s recognized that Wheaton would have to make some significant changes to the composition of the student body in order to



remain viable. Since the 1920s, Wheaton enrollment had held steady at about 500 students. However, the board acknowledged that a higher enrollment, something in the neighborhood of 800 students, would “allow the development of both a fuller curriculum and better academic facilities, which would, it was hoped, make the College more attractive to better qualified students” (Helmreich, 2002, p. 500). The increased income from student tuition would offset the shrinking endowment, allowing for better faculty salaries and improved facilities. This could not be done entirely through tuition, however, leading to the difficult decision to break from the wishes of the founders and begin to solicit outside donations to fund the college from monies other than those provided by the Wheaton family (Helmreich, 2002). It is argued that perhaps College leadership waited too long to begin capital campaigns, putting Wheaton behind other women’s colleges in endowment and budget (Helmreich, 2002).

Despite these financial challenges, the college engaged in modest fundraising and increasing enrollments to continue operating for another decade. With the break from the Wheaton family money, the college increased enrollment to 785 “with greatly improved educational facilities” (Helmreich, 2002, p. 501). However, it became apparent towards the late 1960s that these efforts were not enough (Wheaton College Archives Website). It was time for the college to explore new opportunities for growth, even if it meant bringing major change to the institution.

### *Coeducation: The First Pass*

The move to coeducation at Wheaton College was a highly publicized event, consuming the work of faculty and administrators of the small school throughout the late 1980s. However, this was not the first time such a radical change was discussed at

the institution. In early 1969, then President William C. H. Prentice, was invited to join a conference entitled “Conference on the Undergraduate Education of Women (Is there a Future for the Women’s College?)” (P. Tomkins, Letter, April 3, 1969). This group of 16 colleges came together out of their concern for “the future viability of the woman’s college – economically and socially” (P. Tomkins, Letter, April 3, 1969). Upon receiving the invitation, President Prentice declined to attend. He recognized that women’s colleges were in a precarious position, noting in his response to the invitation that

Many colleges of Wheaton’s general kind (small, residential, poorly endowed undergraduate colleges of liberal arts for women) have suffered rather sharp and continuing declines in numbers of applicants or rates of acceptance from the applicants invited or both. School people talk about a trend toward coeducation. If it should turn out to be true that women’s colleges cannot fill their dormitories and their classrooms in some future year, I would certainly favor opening the doors to men. There is, however, no guarantee that any problems would be solved by that action. (W. Prentice, Letter, April 2, 1969)

Despite this rather pointed response, Prentice furthered his comments by indicating that

I do not believe that we should try to make a special case for women’s education. In my judgment it exists because some women want it. If they should stop wanting it, I should certainly not hold that it should continue to exist while we try to persuade them that their judgment was mistaken (W. Prentice, Letter, April 2, 1969)

Around this same time, Prentice received communication from a member of the Wheaton College Class of 1954, which read in part “although my husband and I attended Princeton and Wheaton, we think coeducation is better for our children. Princeton has changed and I’m just curious about Wheaton” (A. Kleinsasser, Letter, February 24, 1969). This letter was not the only inquiry from a Wheaton alumna. In his response to one letter, Prentice wrote “I think it is fair to say that we are still considering the matter” (W. Prentice, Letter, March 3, 1969). Other responses to alumnae indicate similar sentiments, showing that coeducation was a pressing issue earlier in the college’s history.

Looking at the landscape of higher education in this decade, it is not surprising that there was discussion surrounding coeducation. In a time of substantial social turmoil, the 1960s were also a time for colleges and universities to explore ways to diversify their student body. Many of the nation’s elite men’s colleges such as Princeton, Yale, Georgetown and Brown began admitting women (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006). As gender barriers were breaking down at these schools, women’s colleges began to feel the first wave of threats to their existence. Some women’s colleges with strong reputations first explored partnership programs with men’s schools and eventually became coeducational themselves. Notable colleges that began admitting men during this time were Vassar, Skidmore, Connecticut, and Sarah Lawrence (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006).

Although coming after some of these prominent changes, the passing of a landmark education amendment further cemented the intent to become coeducational on several campuses. Known as Title IX, and passed in 1972, this piece of legislation had a

lasting effect on college campuses (Thelin, 2004). The idea behind Title IX was to “set forth terms to prohibit discrimination in educational programs” (Thelin, 2004, p. 347). Although much of the attention from the law resulted in changes made to high school and college athletic programs, the impact of Title IX affected education in many additional arenas and allowed women greater equality in the classroom as well (NOW Website).

With changes occurring around higher education nationally, exploration of coeducation at Wheaton College was not restricted to the President’s Office. A survey was conducted by a faculty committee during the 1969-1970 academic year which asked the students and faculty to rate their responses to the idea of a coeducational Wheaton College. Responses were broken down by class year, with faculty as a fifth response group. Each of the five groups showed that more than half of the responses favored coeducation at Wheaton (Report on Attitudes survey, 1969). Results of this survey were discussed among the faculty, culminating in a 47-12 vote in favor of pursuing coeducation to assist in the improvement of the student body (Faculty Minutes, October 28, 1970).

The faculty then took a request to the Board of Trustees, asking the board to use coeducation as means to increase and improve the quality of Wheaton graduates (Board of Trustees Minutes, January 23, 1971). The Board of Trustees took the faculty request seriously, with a lengthy discussion at the May 1, 1971 meeting. Among items discussed were that applications to Wheaton were stable and showing modest increases, the Admissions Office did not feel that applications depended on coeducation and the institution seemed in no imminent danger. To this end, the Board resolved

That plans for the future of the college should continue to be based on Wheaton remaining a women's college granting degrees only to women; at the same time the Board recognizes that no successful college can adopt rigid policies or should close its eyes to the possibility of change; and thus will oversee and review this decision from time to time. (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 1, 1971)

### *A Change in Leadership*

As President Prentice's tenure came to a close in the middle of the 1970s, the Board of Trustees began a national search for his replacement. A relative newcomer to the Board, Paul E. Gray, chaired the search. Gray joined the Board of Trustees in 1971, shortly after the first coeducation vote. A graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and professor of electrical engineering at the time, he was brought on the Board as an engineer who could "kick the tires" (P. E. Gray Interview) of the college and keep an eye on the physical structure of the institution. At the same time he joined the Wheaton board, he was offered position of Chancellor at MIT and began to learn managerial skills to compliment his engineering education skills. Gray served the Board of Trustees for over twenty years, acting as Chairman of the Board from 1976-1988. He remained on the Board into the 1990's, became a Member Emeritus and continues his affiliation through the present as a Life Member (P. E. Gray Interview).

Gray recalled that when President Prentice stepped down in 1975, Prentice had served close to 15 years, and although the college had certainly faced trying times, the presidential search to find his replacement would be used as a "time for change" (P. E. Gray Interview). The result of the search produced Wheaton's first female president,

Alice Frey Emerson (known familiarly as “Tish”), who began her tenure in the summer of 1975. Emerson had previously served at the University of Pennsylvania, as a professor of political science, Dean of Women and Dean of Students (A. F. Emerson Interview). In her years at the University of Pennsylvania (1966-1975), Emerson provided leadership through several protests and periods of student unrest. Being in these positions helped her to “learn a lot about how to maneuver in an environment where there were a lot of conflicting views” (A. F. Emerson Interview), something that would serve her time and time again in her role as Wheaton President.

Emerson did not disappoint the Board of Trustees in her first several years. Following a president who did very little in terms of raising money for the college, Emerson guided Wheaton through a \$26 million campaign celebrating Wheaton’s sesquicentennial in 1984-1928. This campaign was the largest Wheaton had seen in its 150 year history. The money raised during the campaign funded a multitude of projects at the college, such as completely renovated one of the College’s most beloved buildings, Mary Lyon Hall, along with several other improvement projects including the building of a student center, athletic center, and campus bookstore. The sesquicentennial funding also provided money for scholarships, faculty salaries, and enlargement of the library holdings (Wheaton College Archives Website).

In addition to the most successful campaign in Wheaton’s history, the 1980s also brought some new faces to campus leadership who would become key players in the transition process. Darlene Boroviak, professor of political science, had been at Wheaton since the fall of 1970 but assumed a leadership role as Dean of the College from 1979-1983. This role, which later became a Dean of Students position, allowed her

to become involved in activities such as academic advising, career services, and student life. She chaired several faculty committees throughout her time at Wheaton and became heavily involved in several aspects of the college. At the time of the eventual coeducation transition, Boroviak was a senior faculty member and had the respect of both faculty and administration at the college (D. Boroviak Interview).

Ann W. Caldwell spent ten years at Wheaton, arriving in Norton in 1980 and assuming the role of Vice President for Resources. In this position, which lasted eight years, Caldwell oversaw fundraising for the college, alumnae relations, public relations, summer programs and some long-range college planning. She also played a critical role in the planning and execution of the sesquicentennial celebration and campaign during the middle of the decade (A. W. Caldwell Interview). Throughout her tenure at Wheaton, Caldwell's role changed slightly. In 1988 she became the Vice President for Resources and Planning and took a lead role on the campus master plan and planning for the future as a member of the senior management team at the college (A. W. Caldwell Interview).

Gail Berson currently serves as the Dean of Admission at Wheaton College. After graduating in the first coeducational class at Bowdoin College, she spent a year working at Wheaton in 1975-1976 as a staff member and then left for nearly a decade to pursue other opportunities. In 1984 she was invited to return to Wheaton as the Executive Director of Admissions, the "chief admissions operating officer of the time" (G. Berson Interview). Berson noted several issues upon her return to the campus, specifically a shrinking applicant pool, diminished quality of applicants and less national visibility among applicants. In the 1985-1986 admissions cycle, the Wheaton

College Admissions Office admitted nearly 85% of applicants just to fill the freshman class. Attempts to increase applicant quantity and quality existed “notwithstanding every effort to counter that” (G. Berson Interview).

### *Trouble Brewing*

Despite the financial success of the campaign, trouble was looming on the horizon of the college. The Women’s College Coalition had been doing research on the future of women’s colleges and the viability of such in the system of postsecondary education. A survey done in 1984-1985 showed grim prospects. The survey looked at enrollment information for that year, in comparison to the 1980-1981 year. Their findings showed that enrollment in women’s colleges had declined 3% in 1984-1985 and more than 9% since 1980. Applications to women’s colleges showed steeper decline, with a drop of 3% in 1984-1985 but down 12% since 1980 (Women’s College Coalition Report, 1985).

An internal document produced by the college in 1986 showed similar statistics. Reporting on national trends and demographics, the document revealed that “US high school graduates declined 14% between 1981 and 1986, and after a modest upturn, will drop another 12% between 1988 and 1992” (Wheaton College Facts for the Future, 1986). The report also noted that “interest among young women in attending women’s colleges declined from 4.2% in 1970 to 2.8% in 1986.” During the same time period, Wheaton’s enrollment dropped 13% and the Admissions Office saw just 850 applications from a pool of 65,000 “academically qualified applicants.” This large pool of candidates identified college-going women who met Wheaton’s admission criteria of grades and standardized test scores. Of those who did not apply, almost two-thirds



“cited Wheaton’s being a women’s college as one of the reasons they did not complete the admissions process” (Wheaton College Facts for the Future, 1986).

These numbers showed the leadership at Wheaton College that although enrollment was relatively stable in the mid 1980s, this trend could not and would not continue into the 1990s (P. E. Gray and A. F. Emerson Interviews). However, the problem that Emerson and Gray struggled with was that others at the college did not see the same bleak future. While many options to enhance Wheaton would be discussed in several venues, the ultimate decision of coeducation was perhaps the most drastic the institution could undertake.

What made the decision to pursue such a radical option so difficult was that “in this case, there was no crisis. That’s one of the things that made it so hard. People didn’t perceive there was a crisis and they weren’t convinced it was a crisis. I didn’t have that [crisis theory] to use so I couldn’t persuade people there was a crisis” (A. F. Emerson Interview). What Emerson could do, however, was take the information she had and share it with her inner circle of senior leadership and the Board of Trustees.

#### *How to Save Wheaton?*

By the summer of 1986, Emerson had been in the presidency for over a decade. She had just concluded the most successful fundraising campaign in the college’s 150 year history, and financially, the situation seemed to be improving. College leaders were consumed with not only raising the money, but deciding how and where to best utilize it. As a result, very little planning for the future was done during those campaign years. Emerson was well aware of this lack of planning and stated that after the sesquicentennial it was “time to plan the next chapter” (A. F. Emerson Interview).

Knowing the statistics presented by the Women's College Coalition and other sources, Emerson raised the issue at the summer leadership retreat in 1986. Surrounded by her team of senior leaders which included Caldwell, Berson, Dean of Students Sue Alexander, and Provost Hannah Goldberg, Emerson began discussion of what the future of Wheaton might look like (S. Alexander, A. W. Caldwell, A. F. Emerson, G. Berson Interviews).

As Caldwell recalled, "the senior team, in concert with the trustees, had always been planning on a three to five year basis and looking out on the horizon and there were various options considered, of which coeducation was one." Others around the table recall similarly, in that the notion of change was a distinct possibility and that Wheaton had to do something to continue existing. Berson recalled that several options were discussed openly among the leadership, but were "held close and they were not conversations with the community; they were not conversations with anybody except those among us who were at the table." One exercise Emerson put before the group was to imagine what Wheaton College would look like if it were made smaller by 25% from every angle, including students, faculty, staff and programs. The result, as Berson remembered, was

A very demoralizing exercise to go through, because in the end, it was something you didn't recognize as Wheaton. It was something, but it really wasn't the Wheaton any alum would remember, or perhaps be desirable to a prospective student. (G. Berson Interview)

After this exercise, it became clear that the leadership group had to explore different options as no one wanted to see this notion of Wheaton come to fruition. In

these planning meetings, several other viable options were put on the table, including partnering with another college, changing the curriculum to include pre-professional options (which typically did not exist in a pure liberal arts curriculum such as Wheaton's), blurring the lines between high school and college curricula, enhancing a continuing education program, but at the end, "we looked at the mission and the mission was not that we were women's college, but that we were a liberal arts college" (G. Berson Interview).

Berson also remembered that Wheaton College had a specific set of faculty, trained to teach young people in a liberal arts curriculum. Shifting toward any of those curricular options would require "a different set of faculty with a different set of skills" (G. Berson Interview). Emerson recalled similarly, that the group was not looking at coeducation at first, but talked mostly about expanding the ways to attract the population of women, but "the ideas ran out." Berson added that through this process, they were "able to tick off all the things you didn't want to do or that weren't going to fit and where did that leave you? That left you with becoming coeducational, in a very desirable way. It didn't leave you, it led you to the conclusion that it was the right path" (G. Berson Interview).

Emerson, recognizing that something serious had to occur, brought in outside assistance to examine the past, present and future of Wheaton College. Dr. Robert Zemsky, an expert in higher education policy and founder of the University of Pennsylvania's Institute for Research on Higher Education was brought in to handle the task. Having known Zemsky from her days at the University of Pennsylvania, Emerson brought him on board to do a "projection of our logical future" where Wheaton student

demographics were concerned (A. F. Emerson Interview). The trends Zemsky projected were not promising. After examining geographical locations of potential Wheaton applicants, examining factors such as birth rates, trends of college-going women, those likely to select women's colleges, daughters of alumnae, it became apparent that "it was very scary and it seemed pretty clear that we would have a problem in six or ten years. It was a ways out, we were going to be fine in the short run, but it was clear that in the long run it wasn't going to work" (A. F. Emerson Interview). Zemsky's projections made it clear that something would have to be done soon to avoid those long term problems.

### *Taking it to the Board*

Every few years the Wheaton College Board of Trustees took a weekend retreat as a way to gather everyone together, off campus, to do significant long range planning for the institution. With the next retreat on the calendar for a weekend in late October, Paul Gray and Tish Emerson met for a planning breakfast in September 1986. At this breakfast, Emerson suggested to Gray that given Zemsky's data, coeducation might have to be Wheaton's next step. This was the first conversation between the two leaders regarding the prospect of coeducation. One month later, the Board convened their weekend retreat at a conference center north of Boston (A. F. Emerson Interview, P. E. Gray Interview).

The first part of the weekend involved hearing from Robert Zemsky as a special guest. He presented the same grim statistics to the Board, immediately convincing those board members who were "data oriented" according to Emerson. Alumnae board members were not as easily convinced, but the data spoke for themselves. The result of

that meeting was a “preliminary approval” (P. E. Gray Interview) to seriously consider the notion of coeducation as a possibility, which was to be further discussed at the January 1987 meeting. Gray recalled a rule of secrecy among the board members and senior officers who were present at the retreat. “We did not want this to come out publically before we were ready.” When questioned about this, Gray noted that

In institutions, particularly higher education institutions, where you have so many constituencies, there are situations in which you have to make important and institution changing decisions without discussion with all the constituencies because opening it up to all the constituencies would have brought, early on, what it brought eventually when it was finally public. We just couldn’t do that.

(P .E. Gray Interview)

This secrecy held true throughout the remainder of 1986 but one particular interaction between Emerson and the Wheaton faculty set the stage for some harsh feelings and anger later on. Darlene Boroviak recalled a November 1986 faculty meeting in which Emerson shared that the Board of Trustees was beginning to think creatively about the future of the college and where to take it. She added that several options were on the table (D. Boroviak Interview). After learning this, Boroviak stood and spoke on behalf of the faculty

When you say we are going to think differently about who we teach, does that mean coeducation, does that mean admitting men? And she said yes it does. And I said, and several other people said it too, that we hope the faculty is consulted because that changes our lives enormously. Our legislation says that faculty set

the curriculum and this is going to have a big impact on how we teach. And she said yes, yes, yes you will. (D. Boroviak Interview).

Despite this conversation, discussion regarding coeducation continued without the input of the faculty, as did the ultimate vote for coeducation. Emerson defended her decision to not have the faculty weigh in on the issue by saying

I knew we had already decided, and so number one it would be kind of a sham, and number two, I didn't want anybody to put their hand up against coeducation because we were going there. And if we were going there anyway, then why put anybody in that kind of pariah's box? (A. F. Emerson Interview)

#### *Decision Time*

After the Board retreat in October, a special committee was charged with further exploring how coeducation would affect the college. On January 8, 1987, the Board convened a special meeting to discuss the findings of this committee. The result of the findings was a motion that read

Believing that Wheaton College must embrace significant change in order to insure and enhance its continuing strength

and

Believing that we have taken all reasonable care to examine the relevant evidence and expertise bearing on Wheaton's enrollment prospects and considered several alternative initiatives for the College

and

Believing that Wheaton has the human and financial assets to develop a creative approach to the educational needs and aspirations of future generations of men

as well as women, the Special Committee of the Board of Trustees for long-range planning presents the following motion to the Board of Trustees:

RESOLVED: that the Board of Trustees approve in principle the recommendation of the Special Committee that Wheaton College admit men as degree candidates beginning in the fall of 1988.

RESOLVED: that final action on this recommendation be postponed until the annual meeting in May 1987 to allow for wide consultation with members of the Wheaton family, including sharing our findings and convictions and soliciting their views (Board of Trustees Minutes, January 8, 1987).

Although the resolution passed, the Board continued to discuss the ramifications of their decision, reviewing how alumnae would react, timing of the decision, the recruitment/admission process and “the need for a leap of faith” (Board of Trustees Minutes, January 8, 1987). Understanding the momentous decision that was just made, Gray further encouraged discussion among board members given “that a decision to propose coeducation was virtually irreversible and that a positive vote would be a commitment to that future” (Board of Trustees Minutes, January 8, 1987). Ann Caldwell, in attendance at the meeting, recalled a solid Board of Trustees front to the decision. She admired their dedication to the research and their wisdom to know that although this would change the look of the college, the mission would remain the same. The Board, according to Caldwell, undertook a “fundamental governance decision”

which proved Gray and trustees to be “courageous” and noted that rarely do boards make these kinds of rash decisions, especially ones that would ultimately open themselves to backlash, which occurred in the following months (A. W. Caldwell Interview).

Recognizing the difficulties and challenges that such a decision would create, Emerson took it upon herself to unite the Board through imagery. As Berson recalled and the meeting minutes recorded, Emerson placed upon the table a pile of stones.

Likening the College’s future to a pile of small polished stones on the table, she invited each Trustee to take one at the end of the meeting to be returned and reunited at the annual meeting in May. While the shape of the reformed pile of stones will necessarily be different then, the substance and beauty of the stones will be lasting (Board of Trustees Minutes, January 8, 1987).

The Board further planned for revealing the decision to the community, setting a date for January 28, 1987 and reviewing drafts of correspondence to constituent groups. The two hour meeting closed with a reminder from Gray that in the three weeks between then and the announcement, “the same degree of confidentiality agreed upon at the October Retreat should prevail” (Board of Trustees Minutes, January 8, 1987).

### *The Announcement*

Wednesday, January 28, 1987 was a significant day in the history of Wheaton College. President Emerson gathered the entire Wheaton community – students, faculty and staff – in Cole Memorial Chapel to announce the Board of Trustees recommendation to pursue coeducation for Wheaton College. While Emerson was making the announcement, a carefully orchestrated mail delivery placed letters to each



student, faculty member, and staff person in their Wheaton mailbox, and letters to alumnae, parents, donors, friends of the College, schools and other higher education institutions were being delivered to the Norton Post Office. In total, 19,000 letters were distributed regarding the announcement (Proposed Distribution Memo, 1987).

In the Chapel, Emerson stood before the community and announced the decision that she, the Board of Trustees, and the senior leadership had wrestled with for weeks. An exact transcript of the speech could not be located, but the message shared in Cole Memorial Chapel was akin to that put in writing to the community later that day. Emerson, after outlining the success Wheaton had through the campaign, shared with the community the downturn brought to light by Zemsky's research on demographics and the socio-economic state of affairs.

We have three basic alternatives: we could change our liberal arts curriculum to one which will appeal to students with different educational goals; we could seek a different kind of female student with much less academic preparation and ability and narrower interests; or we could expand our mission to educate men as well as women. The first two options are, in my view, both unacceptable and impractical. They build neither on Wheaton's strengths nor on our historic mission. On the other hand, I believe the third alternative, admitting men, has great potential. (Emerson Letter to the Community, January 28, 1987)

Emerson went further to discuss the changing society and the need for a new model at Wheaton. She acknowledged the courage it will take to embark on such a new face for the college and also recognized that "change is difficult, unsettling and risky.

Yet the chance to choose whether to shape our destiny or be shaped by it is a rare luxury and one to be celebrated” (Emerson Letter to the Community, January 28, 1987).

Those who were present recall a sense of outrage among members of the community, particularly the faculty, who realized in that instant that their fear of not being allowed to vote in the process had just come true. That day later became known as “red-letter day, because President Emerson was wearing a red dress when she made this upsetting announcement” (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006, p. 51).

Although the reaction from the community was the most visible, those in the inner circle worried about what that announcement might bring. Reflecting on the events of January, Caldwell recalled a conversation she had with Paul Gray shortly thereafter.

I asked him [Gray] if I had ruined my career here. Because it felt that way with all that we had done during the sesquicentennial and the campaign and everything to build up the alumnae support and role of alumnae in the college and everything, it felt like it was sort of fragile at that point. (A. W. Caldwell Interview)

Emerson put it more simply, with “I have to say, this whole process was a suicide mission for me, but I knew that” (A. F. Emerson Interview). Both recognized that either way, the campus leadership was in a vulnerable position. Pursuing coeducation would produce a risky backlash of emotion, but so too would reaching that crisis point where perhaps any Wheaton College would cease to exist (A. W. Caldwell, A. F. Emerson, P. E. Gray Interviews).

### *Faculty Reaction*

Negative outpouring of emotion came from several sources in the days, weeks and months following that announcement in the Chapel. However, one group on campus felt especially hurt by the decision carried out by the Board of Trustees, and especially President Emerson. The faculty moved swiftly in those days following, holding a special meeting on Friday, January 30, 1987 at which considerable anger was expressed over “a process that had omitted faculty from the consideration and discussion that led to the Trustee action of January 8” (H. Goldberg Memo to Faculty, February 4, 1987). Boroviak indicated that “this [the process] was a part of the faculty anger. In fact, it was a bigger part of the faculty anger than the substantive decision was” (D. Boroviak Interview). The faculty conveyed substantial outrage and fury, feeling betrayed by the administration and even openly crying at that first meeting after the announcement (D. Boroviak Interview).

While Emerson acknowledged that opening up the decision to faculty vote would potentially expose those who were against coeducation when a decision had already been made, Boroviak expressed that perhaps the faculty were aware of this.

When the Trustees announced the decision, they announced it as a tentative decision, that they would spend the spring talking to different constituent groups and getting feedback and thinking in a variety of ways if this is where they wanted Wheaton to go. We [the faculty] knew, in fact, that once the decision was announced as publically as it was, it was a done deal, that they weren’t going to back down. (D. Boroviak Interview)

However, Boroviak also recognized that the considerable anger that rose to the surface after the announcement actually changed the issue at hand. Rather than being concerned about opening the college to men, the issue became the process, which carried over for months after the announcement (D. Boroviak Interview).

Caught in the middle between the faculty and the administration was Provost Hannah Goldberg. Due to ongoing health issues, Goldberg was not available to interview for this study, but several documents point to the work she tried to do on behalf of both parties. Recognizing the faculty anger, Goldberg tried to not only support them, but educate them on the “strong sense of the work that must be done both now and in planning for the future” (H. Goldberg Memo, February 4, 1987).

Despite the healing efforts, faculty anger and mistrust prevailed through much of the spring of 1987. At Goldberg’s direction, an Ad Hoc Faculty Steering Committee was created with seven members and were charged with several tasks: discover what issues exist from the faculty perspective regarding coeducation, how to best deal with those issues, think of what a coeducational Wheaton might look like and discover ways to share this and work collaboratively with the Board of Trustees (H. Goldberg Memo, February 4, 1987). In a follow-up memo to the faculty dated February 26, 1987, Goldberg indicated that the work of this committee “can best be done if the committee functions as a committee of the faculty, with its own chair and its own agenda” (H. Goldberg Memo, February 4, 1987) which essentially moved any administrative control out of the picture. While the committee did their work, they continued to apprise Goldberg of their progress and invited her to attend any and all of their meetings (Letter from D. Boroviak, March 12, 1987).

This collegiality shown initially by the Provost and the faculty did not continue, however. At the May 9, 1987 Board of Trustees meeting, an attachment was entered into the minutes. At the April 3, 1987 faculty meeting, the faculty resolved

That the faculty objects, in the strongest possible terms, to the process by which the Board of Trustees, in the absence of consultation with the faculty, decided in principle to admit men to Wheaton College beginning in the fall of 1988, and to the violation of trust and mutual and respectful cooperation between the faculty and the Board of Trustees and Administration that this decision in principle represents (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987).

Gray and Emerson, along with those present at the Board meeting, noted that although the faculty certainly expressed their displeasure in the process, they made “no comment on the merit of the recommendation” (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987). This particular point seemed to be the crux of the issue – that the anger was over the process, not the decision, and the next step was finding a way for the college leadership to repair the hurt feelings.

### *Forum for the Future*

Adhering to their intent to gather information from constituencies (Board of Trustees Minutes, January 8, 1987), the college convened a set of about 20 events around the country (and one in London, England) entitled “Forum for the Future.” These open events were targeted mostly at alumnae, but included parents and friends and were an opportunity for the college to gather feedback and information from constituent groups.

As the public relations voice for the college, Ann Caldwell was responsible for coordinating these forums and attended a good number of them herself. As she remembered, at each event was “an officer of the college, either the President or me or the Provost, one of the senior officers, and a trustee went to every one of those forums. Not the same trustee, but always an officer and a trustee” (A. W. Caldwell Interview). The agenda for each event was always the same. “We would present the case as we saw it for coeducation, why we were considering coeducation and then invited comments and so-forth. And not surprisingly, the people that came to those forums were not the people in favor of coeducation” (A. W. Caldwell Interview).

Attendance at the events ranged from seven to close to seven hundred, and many of the discussions followed similar patterns. Emerson recalled having to “get up there in a very upbeat way say why we’re doing it, and you had to do that well. And then you had to brace yourself for the rejection.” After presenting the facts of the situation, there were often people in the audience who disagreed with what was presented, and accused the college personnel of lying about it, drawing them into a debate over the evidence for coeducation (A. F. Emerson, P. E. Gray, A. W. Caldwell Interviews). Emerson realized, after the first few experiences, “I finally came around to understanding that these were not rational conversations and they were not supposed to be rational conversations, and they were just really venting exercises but it was very exhausting” (A. F. Emerson Interview).

Despite this pattern that occurred at each event, the college leadership saw the true purpose of holding these events.

You had to go in knowing that your job wasn't to win converts. That wasn't what was going to happen. You had to give the right information and then you had to let people vent. It was important to be there, and to let people see you and talk to you. It was an important part of integrity that you were willing to stand up and take it. But it was a rough spring to do all that. (A. F. Emerson Interview)

Emerson further recalled that although it was critical for the leadership to have the data and the factual information to back up the decision made, it was necessary to recognize that the alumnae didn't necessarily want to hear the data. For them, "it was an emotional issue, not a data issue" (A. F. Emerson Interview).

### *Alumnae and Donors React*

The Forum for the Future events were just one venue where alumnae expressed their anger, sadness, and frustration over the decision to pursue coeducation. Much of Ann Caldwell's spring of 1987 was spent with not only the Forum events, but responding to and addressing the alumnae reaction. In addition, Caldwell faced reaction from donors who had just given money to the campaign in the name of women's education. Although many of these donors were alumnae, contributions were also made by parents and friends of the college.

Paul Gray recalled being in a unique position with regards to the alumnae reaction. His wife, Priscilla, maintained an active role as a member of the Wheaton College class of 1955, while his daughter, Amy, graduated from Wheaton in 1980. Gray recalled "to put it bluntly, I think they felt betrayed, by me" (P. E. Gray Interview). While his wife knew of the discussions, his daughter did not know until it was announced publically in late January. Although both were saddened by the decision,

Gray believed his wife and daughter did see the value in making a choice that would save their alma mater.

Overall, Gray recalled the alumnae reaction differing by class year. He generalized that the most upset were those who graduated in the late 1960s and 1970s, along with those who were from the classes in the 1930s and 1940s. He surmised that those graduates of the years in between seemed relatively tolerant of the decision since their children (specifically daughters who did not want single-sex education) were of college-going age in the 1980s and they “understood the problem” (P. E. Gray Interview). Caldwell supported this notion, recalling that the older alumnae, although angry, expressed their feelings more as sadness. They had seen “so many changes in their own lives and on campus that this was just another one on the list” (A. W. Caldwell Interview). The more recent alumnae, from the 1970s, “who were raised and educated in a feminist environment and saw the women’s college as an important marker of feminism and feminist beliefs” (A. W. Caldwell Interview) were the ones who demonstrated the most passionate reactions to the announcement.

These women used the sesquicentennial campaign as “fuel on the fire” (P. E. Gray Interview) to share their anger over the decision. Shortly after the announcement to the community, a group of alumnae based in the Boston area formed an organization named TOWEL (The Opportunity for Women’s Education is our Legacy) which alleged that Emerson and the Board were “throwing in the towel on women’s education on the basis of market research and resources which are questionable at best” (“Wheaton Student Group,” 1987). The plan of TOWEL was to generate more support



against the decision, and try to convince the board to vote against coeducation in their May 1987 meeting (“Wheaton Student Group,” 1987).

As their membership grew and publicity on their activities expanded, TOWEL began to allege that the money raised under the sesquicentennial campaign was done so under false pretenses. TOWEL believed that Wheaton College collected donations based on a commitment to women’s education that would not last the decade. Their organization, funded by the husband of a graduate of the class of 1933, initiated a class action lawsuit against Wheaton College under this premise. They contended that the “college had known all along it was going coed and had raised the money as a women’s college” (A. W. Caldwell Interview). When asked to recall the circumstances surrounding the lawsuit, Emerson noted “that was probably one of, actually that was the scariest thing that happened” (A. F. Emerson Interview).

Along with filing the lawsuit, “this group very effectively mobilized the press” (A. W. Caldwell Interview). This drew attention to not only Wheaton College, but to the women’s college issue in general. Caldwell recalled that in the months after the TOWEL group began its crusade, press releases were issued regularly and articles appeared in the media on almost a weekly basis. The pressure of such extensive media efforts resulted in the firing of one member of Caldwell’s staff and the short-term hiring of a public relations consulting group specializing in crisis management to assist with the media attention (A. W. Caldwell Interview).

With the lawsuit moving through the legal system, plans to move toward coeducation were threatened. College attorneys advised that it could take as many as 2-3 years for the suit to move through the legal channels and arguably, the College could

not wait that long to begin coeducation (A. W. Caldwell, A. F. Emerson, P. E. Gray Interviews). In conjunction with Emerson, Gray, and the Board of Trustees, Caldwell contacted each and every person who contributed to the sesquicentennial campaign and offered to return their contribution as a means of settling the lawsuit initiated by TOWEL.

Caldwell recalled the difficulty of carrying out this task.

I found it enormously difficult to contemplate returning money, because it felt like it was admitting that we had raised it fraudulently. But I got through that. I got through it with a lot of help from the president, and the board, and the lawyers. (A. W. Caldwell Interview)

Like other serious issues addressed by the Board of Trustees, they examined various scenarios regarding returning any monetary donations. Prior to making any settlement offers, they needed to see if they could withstand the loss of potentially serious amounts of money. After those options were discussed, donors were then offered three options:

One was to leave the money where it was and as they had originally given it.

Two was to leave the money with the college but restrict it to women's education. Because we knew we would continue to educate women, it could be used for scholarships to women or women's athletics. The third option was to give the money back. We offered to return the money much the way we raised it. (A. W. Caldwell Interview)

Caldwell and her staff wrote to everyone who made a small donation, called those who made mid-size donations and visited, in person, those who made substantial donations. In the end, Caldwell recalled the college returning about \$120,000 of the \$26

million raised during the campaign years. Notably, \$100,000 of the returned money was to one donor, “the same one who was bankrolling TOWEL” (A. W. Caldwell Interview).

Settling the lawsuit that spring then allowed for the Board of Trustees to make their final vote without the influence of a legal battle. In addition, “not only did it bring an end to the suit, but it made every single alumna who contributed vote with their pocketbook in favor of coeducation. Hundreds voted in favor of coeducation by not asking for their money back” (A. F. Emerson Interview). Furthermore, looking back on the events that took place, “the lawsuit was great for us, because we never would have had a way to get the alumnae to put this behind them, if they hadn’t had to say yes, we’ll leave our money in. Psychologically, it was a very wonderful thing” (A. F. Emerson Interview).

### *Final Vote*

By May 1987, the Board of Trustees and senior college leadership had spent close to four months traveling the country for Forum for the Future events, holding discussion groups with students on campus, fielding hundreds of letters and phone calls expressing a variety of viewpoints on coeducation and fending off a lawsuit brought by graduates of the college. In the meantime, the Admissions Office had to travel to some of the same parts of the country, and talk to some of the same people in order to try and recruit both men and women for the 1988 freshman class. Despite all these activities, one thing still had to occur. The Board of Trustees still had not made a final vote for or against coeducation.

Throughout the spring months the trustees had been working on a transition plan to coeducation, through changing College documents to gender-neutral language, planning for the financial costs associated with a transition, and creating planning documents to that effect. At a special meeting on May 9, 1987, Gray reminded his colleagues that

As stewards of the College, it is their responsibility to examine the long-range prospects for the College and to decide if and how the institutional mission should be changed. The intent of today's meeting was not to come to a decision with respect to coeducation but rather to discuss all aspects of coeducation as applied to Wheaton so as to reach an informed judgment at a later meeting (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987).

With that in mind, the trustees thoroughly discussed every aspect of coeducation, from the mission to the classroom, to admissions and finances. The faculty reaction was discussed, as was the lawsuit brought by TOWEL. Reports also indicated that while the Parents Council voted almost unanimously against coeducation, the Alumnae Board supported the Board in a majority vote (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987).

This split reaction was of great concern to those present. Gray, Caldwell, Emerson and Berson spoke of their distaste of those who made irrational assumptions and decided their opinion without knowing all the information. In this special meeting, Gray went on the record with his view:

Observing the tension between a data driven and a judgmental decision, Dr.

Gray stated that he has been frustrated with those who object to the trustee resolution by focusing on data as it relates only to numbers. He has taken every

opportunity to correct this, to communicate that the recommendation is based on the longer view, and that it reflects the judgment of Trustees who bring their cumulative experience to the issue and who have the stewardship responsibility for the College. (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987)

Conversation regarding plans for transition continued, with strategies for rebuilding relationships with various constituent groups, timing of various processes with some attention paid to the possibility of delaying a final vote, and the potential vulnerability of the college if such a delay was to occur. This special meeting adjourned with an additional reminder from Gray that trustee discussions were to remain confidential among members (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987).

As planned, the Board of Trustees gathered for their traditional post-commencement meeting on Sunday, May 24, 1987. The task before them was one that would forever change the face of Wheaton College. After recapping the events leading up to that day, and a reminder from College Counsel of the obligation upon each trustee to act in good faith and in the best interest of the school, Gray indicated several resolutions that were on the table for action.

Prior to any action items taking place, there was substantial discussion surrounding the timing of not only the vote for coeducation, but the implementation of such a vote. While some trustees felt that even if a vote was passed that day, perhaps a delay to admit men would give some additional time to heal wounds and repair relationships. Gray disagreed, pointing out that “an uncertain image for Wheaton would not only have a negative impact on the admission, recruitment and fund-raising cycles, but would also have an adverse impact on the faculty and others engaged in planning

for the College's future. Such a delay would not heal wounds, but rather further polarize the community" (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 24, 1987).

After further discussion on the planning and implementation process, the time had finally come to begin the voting. The first action was on the table.

Founded as Wheaton Female Seminary in 1834 chartered by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1912 as Wheaton College, this institution has survived and flourished because it has responded to new and altered circumstances for more than 150 years.

BELIEVING that Wheaton College must embrace significant change in order to insure and enhance its continuing strength

and

BELIEVING that Wheaton has the human and financial resources to undertake a distinctive approach to the educational need and aspirations of future generations of men as well as women,

VOTED that Wheaton College admit men as degree candidates (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 24, 1987).

With the required two-thirds majority, this first vote carried. The second vote, which also carried, was to slightly amend the College Statutes to include gender-neutral language. The third motion, carried as well, regarded the need for the college to take the next step with the Massachusetts judicial system to amend the college charter allowing for the education of both men women. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Attorney General "has oversight over all the educational institutions" (P. E. Gray Interview) and had to make final approval to a coeducational Wheaton. Until that matter

was settled, the college could recruit but not admit men. Finally, the fourth motion was at hand, and quite possibly was the most critical to the process of coeducation. The language, which was passed by the required majority, read “VOTED that Wheaton College proceed with plans to admit men as degree candidates beginning in the fall of 1988” (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 24, 1987). Gray further initiated two more motions, one calling upon President Emerson to begin the planning process and one expressing great thanks and gratitude to those who contributed to the decision process. Following those approvals, the meeting was adjourned and the next chapter in the Wheaton College history began.

#### *Finding the New Wheaton Student*

With the final vote taken, Gail Berson and her office could earnestly move forward in the recruitment of the first coeducational class in the history of Wheaton College. She and her staff worked tirelessly to promote a different Wheaton College, one that would appeal to a serious student looking for a serious liberal arts education (G. Berson Interview). The work done by the admissions staff was intentional and targeted. Berson was adamant that this not be “just add men and stir” (G. Berson Interview) but that the class was built deliberately.

As part of the process, Berson and her staff went to Connecticut College and Skidmore College to talk to those involved in coeducation planning there. “We really learned a lot from them and had a lot of guidance in the process” recalled Berson. “They gave me two bits of advice. First, don’t take male transfer students the first year, because they’ve gone somewhere that’s coed and you can’t meet their expectations. And the other is to make sure you have a well-articulated athletics program” (G. Berson

Interview). To this end, planning was initiated for five male athletic teams and the strengthening of the existing women's teams.

As Berson and her team digested this advice, they developed their own strategy for recruitment. They had a focused target group of independent schools, especially talking to guidance counselors at these schools who might know first hand of good students for the new Wheaton. "Between the advice and our own strategy, and a good set of printed materials, we went on the road a lot. And we got the word out. Benefitting a lot from the experience of others" (G. Berson Interview).

As the admissions team went on the road, fallout from the lawsuit was still taking place at home. While they could recruit men, they could not admit them or guarantee a coeducational freshmen class until the resolution of the lawsuit was final. To that end, the admissions staff developed what became known as the "surgeon general's warning" that was placed on every piece of print media used by the college in 1987. This warning was a box of print at the bottom of each document that read "The admission of men, planned for the fall of 1988, is contingent upon the timely receipt of an appropriate judicial decree approving the use of the College's assets for coeducational purposes" (Admission Material, 1987).

Berson also found an interesting dilemma with her printed materials. "We had to stage some of the photos for the publications because we didn't have our own guys." Additionally, when the admissions staff showed the recruitment slide show at high schools, they didn't have any men to illustrate what the Wheaton student body would look like. In the end, Berson recalled that were able to recruit some local residents of Norton, with one of her staff members "down on the corner flagging down some Norton



High School boys.” In addition, she had to make some staffing changes in her office, hiring men to do admissions work and look like “the type of men who might have gone to Wheaton” (G. Berson Interview).

In discussing the new Wheaton College in recruiting sessions, Berson recalled that “we always had to be clear that the surgeon general’s warning was there, but we talked about Wheaton as a coeducational school with conviction, and with our strongly held belief that the courts would act favorably on our petition” (G. Berson Interview). Furthermore, the admissions team was very deliberate to not start their recruitment presentations with this caveat. “We didn’t lead with surgeon general, we followed with surgeon general. So we were promoting Wheaton as a wonderful coeducational opportunity while still doing our due diligence and giving full disclosure” (G. Berson Interview).

### *Task Forces go to Work*

While Berson’s staff was promoting the new Wheaton to high school students around the country, work was just beginning on campus to ready the school for the arrival of men. In a statement given shortly after the final trustee vote, Emerson said that she will “welcome the Trustees’ charge to establish a broadly representative planning process. During the next eighteen months, planning for coeducation will be central at Wheaton, with many of the most important issues already clear” (Emerson Statement, May 27, 1987). This directive from the Board of Trustees was part of the discussion leading up to their final vote (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 24, 1987).

To this end, Emerson and Caldwell laid the groundwork for planning through the establishment of five task forces, each charged with a major aspect of campus.

These task forces, Learning Environment, Student Life, Admission/Recruitment, Athletics, and Community Development, were composed of representatives from the student body, faculty, and staff. Each task force was developed in summer 1987 and worked diligently through summer 1988 to address concerns, answer questions, and work through areas of potential problems on the way to becoming a coeducational campus. Much of the work done by these task forces culminated with the development of a self study document published by the college in 1989, in preparation for re-accreditation.

The Learning Environment task force was chaired by Darlene Boroviak and consisted of faculty and several members of the class of 1988. They conducted their work in the area of classroom dynamics, developing goals for learning within the classroom, learning out of the classroom, and academic advising. This group, in their final report, acknowledged that they “look forward to the arrival of young men as students on our campus, believing that Wheaton can welcome, empower, and educate both men and women students” (Synopsis of Learning Environment Report, 1988, p. 1). In addition, the group sought to find a way to incorporate “a learning environment in which the pursuit of a strong liberal arts education is facilitated for women and men by a sensitivity to gender issues on the part of faculty, staff, and students” (Synopsis of Learning Environment Report, 1988, p. 1).

The Student Life Task Force was one of the largest groups, chaired by Sue Alexander, Dean of Students, and comprised of students from all four classes, staff members and a few faculty representatives. Their goals were broad, in that they had to account for issues in campus life/student activities, residence halls and other student

services, such as counseling and health care. Through their problem solving, members of this task force “held meetings in dormitories, hosted a campus forum, and presented their proposals to residence hall staff, the Student Government Association, and the Student Assembly” (Synopsis of Student Life Report, 1988, p. 10). In addition, they visited other campuses recently open to coeducation and administered surveys to residential staff at 36 other New England colleges.

Admission and Recruitment was chaired by Gail Berson and involved several staff members in Admissions, three students and several faculty. Much of their work was seen through Berson’s efforts in recruiting the first coeducational class. However, this group took their task one step further, by imagining what the student body composition would be in fall 1993, five years into coeducation. They envisioned a college “characterized by intellectual curiosity and academic rigor.” They saw “a 2 to 3 ratio of male to female students with increased student diversity” that “affected both the learning environment and general campus ambience” (Synopsis of Admissions Report, 1988, p. 1). Their indications proved to be somewhat correct, with Wheaton students winning “more than seventy five prestigious academic awards since 2001, including 3 Rhodes Scholarships” (Wheaton College Advising Website).

With the inclusion of men, the Athletic Task Force had the responsibility of exploring how to incorporate a new set of athletes on campus. Chaired by then-director of athletics, and comprised of several faculty, staff, students and coaches, this group recommended the continuation of strong women’s sports and the introduction of five male teams. “Creating positive educational experiences for student-athletes remains the intercollegiate program’s mission” (Synopsis of Athletic Report, 1988, p. 3). In

addition, the task force recognized the creation of a new athletic center in 1990 and the role it will play in providing equal athletic facilities for men and women to compete.

The Community Development task force was chaired by Ann Caldwell and included faculty, staff, and two student representatives. Their mission was to find new ways to link a coeducational Wheaton to the community of Norton, Massachusetts. In addition, the college is geographically located between Boston and Providence, providing several opportunities for collaboration and growth with other communities. Centering their efforts within the town of Norton, the task force examined “mutually advantageous projects such as the reservoir clean-up and development and the future planning for the Town Library” (Synopsis of Community Development Report, 1988, p. 1). With the college owning large amounts of land around the town, collaboration between the two entities was key to Wheaton’s growth and integration.

Planning information was not kept solely amongst those on the task forces, or in senior leadership positions. Emerson was adamant that the greater Wheaton community be informed of progress throughout the process. To this end, *The Campus Connection* was created, which was a newsletter published throughout the eighteen month planning process to keep the community abreast of planning activities.

#### *Faculty Prepare for Men*

Once it became clear that the “die was cast” (P. E. Gray Interview) and that coeducation would be the hallmark of the new Wheaton College, the faculty set out to do what they do best. Despite their anger, some of which lingered for quite a while, as a whole their mission was to be the best faculty they could be given the dramatic shift in their student population.

Years prior to the coeducation decision, Wheaton College faculty had been keenly aware of gender dynamics in a classroom setting. In summer 1983, Wheaton College hosted a conference concerning the “integration of the study of women in the college curriculum” (Spanier, et. al, 1984). The basis of the conference was a grant Wheaton College received from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) that allowed faculty to explore ways of including women’s scholarship into the curriculum.

Along with the work the faculty did around the conference, they participated wholeheartedly in a major curricular revision. The three part revision encompassed changing introductory courses in each department to reflect the scholarship of women, encouraging individual faculty to propose new ways of teaching and learning in their courses, and continuing the support of the president and provost and their dedication to the project (Spanier, et al, 1984).

Darlene Boroviak recalled that the conference and the FIPSE grant “really put Wheaton on the map in terms of that particular integration project. We were a national leader” (D. Boroviak Interview). She pointed out that it was a new and different way of studying women and took the opportunity to move it across the curriculum instead of keeping it “in a women’s studies silo.” Faculty from every department got involved and others around the country looked to Wheaton for examples on how to study the scholarship of women (D. Boroviak Interview).

When the final vote was taken for coeducation in May, 1987, the faculty was aware of what this might do to their previously all-female classrooms. Recognizing that dynamics would shift, the faculty went to work almost immediately to prepare.

Boroviak recalled that although the faculty was saddened and upset by the process of the announcement, “all of us quickly realized that it [the curriculum project] gave us a very good foundation to be a coeducational institution that might be able to do things differently. And that notion really carried some weight in terms of being able to move forward” (D. Boroviak Interview). She further attributed this linking as the catalyst for helping faculty heal, as well as bringing some of the alumnae into supporting coeducation since the work that was going to occur in classrooms resembled some of what was taking place through the *Toward a Balanced Curriculum* project (D. Boroviak Interview).

Aside from the obvious, 1987 was a decisive year in one aspect of the Wheaton College curriculum. That was the year that First Year Seminars (FYS) came into existence. These seminars are required of all Wheaton students and introduce critical thinking, writing and discussion into small sections focusing on different topical areas (Wheaton College FYS Website). The fall 1987 FYS sections were composed of the last group of students admitted to an all-women’s college. Boroviak remembers this last all-female semester almost more than any other, recalling that “the First Year Seminars helped us very much in the transition to coeducation. They were small environments in which we could work very intensely at integrating men, and in fact we made a deliberate commitment to that.”

Through the use of small grant money, a majority of faculty volunteered to videotape their fall 1987 FYS classes. A year later, with the inclusion of men, the same faculty videotaped their fall 1988 FYS classes. Those tapes were used to help faculty learn what they were doing inside the classroom, and in some cases, learn from their

mistakes. It allowed faculty to be more aware of teaching styles, and ensure that they were doing their best to keep the classroom climate “welcoming to men, but also keep the women active and making sure they weren’t silenced by men inside the classroom as well” (D. Boroviak Interview). The faculty held regular teaching and learning workshops where they viewed the tapes and critiqued each other, and also brought in experts from the Harvard School of Education to assist in gender within the classroom. When asked about the male/female dynamic in the classroom, Boroviak remembered “oh you had to work at it a lot.” The faculty learned how to structure class discussions to make sure everyone was heard and no one felt stifled.

The work the faculty did to improve their teaching did not go unnoticed. Emerson attributes much of the success of coeducation to what happened inside the classroom. “To the faculty’s great credit, that’s what made it happen” (A. F. Emerson Interview). Emerson was exceptionally impressed by the videotaping of classes and discussions that were held regarding the classroom dynamics. She recognized the hours of work they put in to making Wheaton the best coeducational institution it could be. She commented that from athletics to classrooms, “no one felt second class at Wheaton” (A. F. Emerson Interview). She went further to say that the move to coeducation was “an important intellectual decision” and the faculty was “working hard to try and figure out how to make something really good come out of this and they did a terrific job. Considering the environment they were working in, they were amazingly positive and full of ideas and things to do” (A. F. Emerson Interview).

### *Summary*

In summary, this chapter has provided a chronological look at the events surrounding Wheaton College's transition to coeducation. Beginning with the earliest hints of a transition in 1969, through the actual announcement in 1987, to initial planning through 1988, key events were discussed using personal interviews and College Archive documents. In the next chapter, I will begin to analyze and discuss the events described in this chapter.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion of the Case

In this chapter I will provide an analysis of the case presented in the previous chapter. While the facts of the case are a critical piece of this study, taking them further and analyzing their meaning is the true purpose of this study. To that end, I will utilize the framework first discussed in chapter one to better understand the events that took place on the Wheaton College campus in the 1980s. The data collected from interviews and document analysis will be presented through the lens of organizational and communication theories. This chapter will illustrate the picture of the case and show the relationships that emerged between constituencies. This chapter will also address the research questions identified earlier in this study. Those questions are as follows:

1. What environmental and institutional factors prompted the move to coeducation at Wheaton College?
2. How were decisions made and communication handled to guide the transition?
3. What organizational strategies could be used to explain the transition to coeducation?
4. What lessons learned from the Wheaton College transition can be used by other institutions facing similar circumstances?

### *Change Strategy*

In their change model, Quinn and Cameron (1983) identify four distinct life cycles that an organization will experience throughout its lifespan. Their model does not directly apply to shorter times of transitions, but can be useful in the explanation of a

case like the one presented here. This change model will not address all aspects of the case, nor should it, but it can be helpful in beginning to conceptualize and contextualize the events of the case. The model can also assist in informing further analysis while providing some preliminary analysis.

While not always strictly adhering to the model, the Wheaton College case does bear some similarity to the stages noted by Quinn and Cameron (1983). There are also several areas within the case that do not fit with this theory at all, but the framework helps to contextualize some of the decisions, communication, and actions during the transition. Chronologically speaking, the transition can be viewed in five segments of time, ranging from two to six months each. As noted previously, analysis of this case can include some basic application of Quinn and Cameron (1983) which is best represented using a chronological perspective on the case. The matrix showing this delineation (see Table 5.1), adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994), “orders data by time and sequence, preserving the historical chronological flow and permitting a good look at what led to what, and when” (p. 110). In addition, it aids in “displaying time-linked data referring to phenomena that are bigger than specific events so as to understand what was happening” (p. 119).

### *Entrepreneurial Stage*

The first stage in organizational development defined by Quinn and Cameron (1983) is the *entrepreneurial stage*. This initial phase is characterized by

Innovation, creativity, and the marshalling of resources – the strongest emphasis appears to be on open systems criteria of effectiveness. That is, the success of an

**Table 5.1 Time Ordered Matrix of Transition Events**

<b>Quinn &amp; Cameron Stage</b>	<b>October – December 1986</b>	<b>January – July 1987</b>	<b>August – December 1987</b>	<b>January – May 1988</b>	<b>Summer 1988</b>
Entrepreneurial	Emerson, Board of Trustees, Senior Leadership (Berson, Caldwell)	Emerson, Board of Trustees, Senior Leadership (Berson, Caldwell)	Emerson, Senior Leadership (Berson, Caldwell)		
Collectivity		Faculty, Senior Administration, Forum for Future (alumnae)	Faculty, Senior Administration, Admissions	Faculty, Senior Administration, Admissions	
Formalization and Control		Faculty	Faculty, Task Forces, Public Relations	Task Forces, Faculty, Public Relations	Faculty
Elaboration of Structure				Task Forces, Faculty, Admissions	Wheaton Community

Adapted from Miles & Huberman (1994)

organization will tend to be associated with its flexibility, growth, resource acquisition, and the development of external support. (p. 43)

Although as an organization, Wheaton had been in existence for 150 years and had worked through this phase early on in its life, some of these characteristics could again be seen throughout the first year of this case, roughly October 1986 to December 1987.

For example, when President Emerson first approached her senior leadership and broached the idea of change at the college, she was counting on their creativity and innovation. Without their brainstorming in the summer of 1986, the cohesive administrative approach to the possibility of coeducation might not have been realized. Through allowing the senior leadership team the time and space to think of solutions to the impending enrollment and financial issues, Emerson allowed for them to fully realize the necessity of creative planning.

This creative behavior was seen again when Emerson and Gray led the Board of Trustees through a similar exercise. Presenting Zemsky's data was one piece, but allowing the Board to run through their ideas of aiding the campus was another. This notion of shared power in decision making and creativity in this process was apparent in discussions among members of the Board of Trustees. At their May 9, 1987 meeting, there was dialogue over their role and where the power would lay once a final vote took place.

The Trustees generally agreed on their role: to establish policy and to set the framework and the objectives for the College in its new form. The Trustees expressed the vision that the actual building of a coeducational college ought to

include active involvement of various constituencies. (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987)

Although the Board of Trustees pledged a shared building of the coeducational campus, their decision making process deliberately excluded many of these constituencies. This exclusion eroded the mutual trust at the core of a shared governance system (Del Favero & Bray, 2005; Duderstadt, 2001; Minor & Tierney, 2005) to be discussed further in a subsequent section of this chapter.

While some of the actions taken in the early stages of the transition process do fit with Quinn and Cameron's (1983) first stage of organizational change, the lack of consultation with the faculty, a major college stakeholder, does not match with the definition. Looking purely at how Quinn and Cameron (1983) characterize this stage, their notion of external support, open systems, and resource acquisition (p. 43) did not carry through all facets of the Wheaton College case. While some constituencies were allowed to vocalize their support and participate in the creative thinking process, there were clearly some vital parts to the organization left behind.

One external group that showed resistance to the efforts of the Board and senior administration were the alumnae of Wheaton College. Although there was some positive feedback from a select few graduates, the reaction of alumnae as a whole became very public as the lawsuit filed by the TOWEL group became more visible and drawn out. Despite the TOWEL group being a relatively small part of the alumnae, the publicity garnered from their actions made it seem as though their views represented those of the whole. Whereas the faculty response and anger was mostly kept internal,

TOWEL's outrage attracted the attention of the media and pushed Wheaton's inner turmoil into the open.

Although the stages of the theoretical framework will "parallel the changing activities and characteristics of organizations over time" (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 42), there is some variance to this timeline. For example, some of the alumnae response that was handled later on in the process through the Forum for the Future events still addresses some of the open communication that is noted in this first stage. Additionally, open communication was addressed immediately after announcing the decision to the community. College officials set up a hotline to deal specifically with coeducation-related matters and broadcast the number widely (A. W. Caldwell Interview, T. R. Brooks Letter to Wheaton Students, W. B. Budd Letter to Wheaton Parents). This hotline fielded calls from all over the country and the Hot Line Operators (HLOs) were given regular updates, letters and documents from which to guide their conversations with callers (A. W. Caldwell Interview). While some of these events took place at varying times during the case, they can still be illustrative of certain pieces of the change framework, as some events take place outside the boundaries of a strict timeline.

While Tish Emerson, Paul Gray, and Ann Caldwell all discussed the potential problems with consulting constituency groups prior to the decision, the secretive method they chose could have done more harm in the long run. Instead of putting more energy into the actual planning process, much early effort was spent trying to garner support from the faculty and alumnae. Without having the benefit of being able to go back and do it over again, there is no way to tell if a more open process would have

helped or hurt the transition. However, it cannot be ignored that leaving key constituencies out of the decision process made for more work in the long run.

Although the true healing process took several years, and a lot of time was spent on curative efforts, the senior leadership was able to find some of the necessary creative solutions that would help them move forward. Caldwell and her team put together the Forum for the Future presentations to work towards gaining external support. Gray and Emerson wrote numerous memos to the campus, and were present at many of the Forum events as the face of the college. Berson and her team worked every angle they could think of to find the new Wheaton student, including photographing male students from Norton High School to include in college catalogs, giving a vision of a coeducational Wheaton. Without these efforts, creative thought processes and hard work on the part of many individuals, this early stage could have easily been more overshadowed by the negative emotions felt by those excluded from the process.

This first stage of adaptation and change is supposed to be, according to Quinn and Cameron (1983), one of flexibility, creativity, readiness for change, and external engagement (p. 43). However, not everything that took place at Wheaton College during the early parts of the transition process corresponded to these characteristics. While Emerson and Gray did their due diligence of making sure some major stakeholders had an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas, some critical pieces were left out. By not consulting the faculty or including the alumnae, they might have avoided some difficult conversations or a delay in the timing, but instead got the unintended consequences of more anger and hurt feelings than they anticipated.

### *Collectivity Stage*

The second of the stages is known as the *collectivity stage*, and is marked by “informal communication and structure, a sense of family and cooperativeness among members, high member commitment and personalized leadership” (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44). Certain characteristics of this phase can be seen from just after the announcement in early 1987 through the summer of 1988.

It was during this time that the faculty began to make strides in their work towards coeducation. After realizing that men would be coming to their classrooms in the near future, they began the workshops and seminar tapings in the fall of 1987. Through viewing these tapes, holding workshops internally and with external assistance, the faculty began to come together, lead from within, and commit to the notion of coeducation at the college. Although the faculty was left out of the initial planning stages and early transition discussions, they appear to have embraced the familial characteristics of this stage of the theory through their commitment to coeducational classrooms.

Another critical event taking place during this time was the planning and execution of the Forum for the Future events. The communication that took place during and after these events, both formal and informal, was vital to some of the buy-in to coeducation. Although many alumnae were still furious over the decision, several were able to see how coeducation would be a good thing for their alma mater. The Forum for the Future events varied in location and size of attendance, but the one common theme throughout was the presence of a Board member and a senior college administrator. The commitment of such major college officials ties into Quinn and



Cameron's notion of "cooperative response" and "group unity" among the senior administration in this phase (p. 44), further extending the commitment and devotion of senior leadership.

The formation of the Planning Committee during this time was characteristic of this stage as well. "Emphasis on criteria such as human resource development, morale, cohesion and human need satisfaction are highest in this stage" (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44). Quinn and Cameron go further to indicate that this human resources aspect is paramount in determining the effectiveness of building the new organization, and is most often seen in this stage of development (p. 44). In the course of creating the task forces and committees to address coeducation, Emerson named people from every constituent group: students, faculty, staff and alumnae. This inclusion also assisted with some of the morale building and healing across the community that was critical to the process.

Berson and the Office of Admissions team began the thrust of their recruitment work during this time, and their accomplishments cut across several phases of the change model. In this stage, however, the recruitment of men and women in the Wheaton student body suggests that the new students are beginning to be folded into a model of cohesion that Quinn and Cameron (1983) discuss. In addition, hallmarks of this stage are "cooperativeness among members, high member commitment and personalized leadership" (p. 44).

When Berson's team went searching for members of the first coeducational class in Wheaton's history, they could make no claims as to what the environment would feel like, how gender dynamics would actually play out on campus, or how men

and women would coexist in campus facilities. Students entering in fall 1988 were taking a big risk, yet made a significant commitment to a coeducational Wheaton. Without having any precedent of men and women living and learning together at Wheaton, the 83 men who arrived as part of the 412 members of the Class of 1992 made up just 7% of Wheaton's total enrollment (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006, p. 56) but created a dynamic never before seen at the college.

As seen in the *entrepreneurial stage*, not everything taking place at this point in the timeline is best represented through the corresponding theory. While the incoming students were embarking on a new adventure, the returning students were not as excited at the notion of a coeducational campus. Almost immediately after the January 28, 1987 announcement, the Student Government Association (SGA) at Wheaton distributed a survey to all students, indicating 77% were not in favor of coeducation (SGA Survey Results).

The SGA was not the only student group soliciting feedback. Save Our School Committee (SOS) was a group of vocal young women on campus who aligned with the efforts of the TOWEL alumnae. They also administered a survey to students, which they shared with the Board of Trustees. Their results showed a response of "638 students which indicated that 86% were against coeducation" (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987).

Further evidence of student unrest on campus was documented throughout spring semester 1987. Students began to call the day of the announcement "Black Thursday" and initiated passive protests such as tying black ribbon around silverware in the dining hall and posting flyers around campus (Salholz, et al., 1987). Other students

reportedly wore black armbands and hung black banners from the windows of residence halls (Lyhall, 1987). One student on campus told the New York Times that Wheaton “...would lose its character if it went coed” (Lyhall, 1987).

These protest actions, combined with the SGA and SOS surveys, show the active nature of both current and former Wheaton College students at the time of the transition. While perhaps not their initial intent, the students and alumnae formed themselves into a sort of “social movement” (Simons, 1970), where they demonstrated their desire for a return to an all women’s college. Simons (1970) distinguishes a social movement from a fad or a craze, or from an organized labor union action. The action by Wheaton women were an attempt to persuade the administration to cease transition activities, or as Simons (1970) describes it, “the reconstitution of social norms or values” (p. 3).

The *collectivity stage* is where such behaviors as communication, unity, cooperation, and commitment are demonstrated (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44). The actions of the faculty, Board of Trustees, and administrators show this clearly as they worked to enhance teaching, communicate with alumnae, and recruit new students. Their energies during this time directly supported the new mission of coeducation. Ironically, through showing strong resistance to the coeducation movement, the student body also demonstrated these very same characteristics of unity and cooperation. Quinn and Cameron’s (1983) theory does support the actions of the students through their unity against coeducation, communication to the administration in their surveys, and demonstrations against the integration of male students, even though it was in direct contradiction to the efforts made by faculty and administration.

With the announcement to pursue coeducation public at this point in the process, the *collectivity stage* brought more open feelings and actions to the forefront. While not always working on the same side of the argument, the student body showed their unity and collectivity through active and passive resistance, while the faculty, staff, and administration worked together to improve teaching, recruit future Wheaton students, and communicate with alumnae.

### *Formalization and Control Stage*

This third component, the *formalization and control stage*, is described as the time where “organizational stability, efficiency of production, rules and procedures, and conservative trends typify organizations” (p. 44). It is during this time that structure begins to develop after being conceived and explored throughout the first two phases. Much of the work in this phase took place by the Wheaton College faculty and the five task forces established by President Emerson. Their objectives were to establish guidelines and procedures for a new type of college and they did the bulk of their work from fall 1987 through summer 1988.

As the faculty began their work in the First Year Seminar classes in fall 1987, they began to define the rules and guidelines for a coeducational classroom. Although that classroom composition would not be a reality for another year, they used their combined expertise along with that of the Harvard School of Education to identify challenges and address changes that would have to be made by the next fall. The work done by the faculty in this arena “much to their credit, was what truly made it [a different kind of coeducation] happen” (A. F. Emerson Interview) and was not taken lightly.

The five task forces, which encompassed every area of the campus and were comprised of over 100 representatives from nearly every constituent group, worked long and hard to establish many of the rules and formal structures as defined by Quinn and Cameron in this stage. Along with the broad definition provided by the authors, this stage also includes the use of “productivity measures and efficiency ratios” and the ability for the organization to be “results oriented and have established plans and procedures for getting things done (goals) as major indicators of effectiveness” (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44).

Although much of the planning work was done with specific goals and set outcomes, not everything on campus happened this way. Many of the policy decisions that directly affected the student body had to be on a less formal basis. “We just started the process and ran with it” (C. Ramsbottom Interview). This was often how policy decisions were made and implemented. Other disciplinary-based issues forced creation of further policies on living space. “The men filled space better. They were louder and more physical. Put 80 women on a men’s campus and you’d never see them. Everyone knew 80 men were on a women’s campus though” (C. Ramsbottom Interview).

With the bulk of her work affecting those off-campus, Ann Caldwell and her public relations team also did critical work characterized in this phase. Her outreach to alumnae and donors around the country initially appeared in the *collectivity* phase, but can also be analyzed using the *formalization and control* phase. Her guidance to the Board of Trustees on rebuilding relationships with alumnae was invaluable. Her short and long term planning gave the Board an indication of how carefully structured press

kits and an explicitly stated institutional message would provide concise, accurate information to those around the country (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987).

Caldwell also stressed to the Board that they must be willing to acknowledge the anger and disappointment expressed by a number of individuals, and emphasized “the College must build from within, from among those who support change” (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1987). Although she had been engaging in outreach throughout this process, the connections made by Caldwell to alumnae around the country were specifically to conduct a “pilot program of national admission prospecting for alumnae volunteers as a test of admission potential and volunteer commitment to support it.” Furthermore, she rallied a group of core volunteers to “engage in discussions about constituency relations and organizational change as a way to build support for coeducation” (Board of Trustees Minutes, May 24, 1987). Through soliciting support for Wheaton and coeducation, Caldwell was also establishing the process of using alumnae in the admissions process, a practice which continues today (Wheaton College Alumni Relations Website).

With much of the commotion surrounding the TOWEL lawsuit and student protests subsiding by this point in the transition, the *formalization and control* phase actually had more of the unity and collaboration than what was evident in the first two stages. Much of the structure of coeducation came into existence during this time, from the more formal and proactive work done by the Planning Council and the Task Forces to the more informal and reactive creation of rules for student conduct and engagement of alumnae. The efforts of this point in time truly embrace the planning, goal setting,

efficiency, and movement toward structure and stability that Quinn and Cameron (1983) used to define the stage.

### *Elaboration of Structure Stage*

In the life span of organizations, the final stage of development is one that can last substantially longer than the others. This *elaboration of structure* phase includes a key process where the “organization monitors the external environment in order to renew itself or expand its domain, or both” (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44). For purposes of this case and its analysis, the Quinn and Cameron framework will not adequately support the final part of the transition to coeducation. Since this theory is meant to be applied to the entire life span of an organization, not just a snapshot in time, it is not appropriate to use in true analysis of the final piece of this case. However, certain characteristics of this final phase can be used to explore how Wheaton began to emerge from the transition with new structures and norms, and began to re-emerge as a viable coeducational campus.

In the final stages of planning for coeducation, Ann Caldwell, through her expertise in working with alumnae and outside constituencies, shared

I believe in empowering alumnae in an institution. I believe they have a role to play in an institution, partly in terms of philanthropy and that's clearly an important part of it but the alumnae are the best sort of example of, or product of, an institution. They are proof of its quality and so forth. (A. W. Caldwell Interview)

As Wheaton College turned out graduates year after year, external monitoring of reactions to their educational experience, as well as their roles in society as citizens

were important areas of research to college officials. Alumnae/i after coeducation would be a critical source of information regarding the success of the transition.

Quinn and Cameron (1983) indicated that this stage also allows for much in the way of flexibility, as the organization begins to acquire resources and develop new methods and strategies for growth. The Planning Report issued in fall 1988 indicates that in order to continue succeeding as a liberal arts college, “growth in enrollment will be a critical factor in Wheaton’s ability to enhance institutional quality during the transition years” (p. 8). In addition, the report recommends a measured expansion of facilities on campus to accommodate this growth, but only “without sacrificing academic standards” (p. 9).

As coeducation moved from the hands of a few to the hands of the entire Wheaton community, care was taken in every arena to ensure that the campus could “develop at the boundaries of the organization in monitoring and controlling environmental relationships” (Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 44). Members of the Planning Council recognized this, and specified in their report that

Measuring Wheaton’s success in making a transition to coeducation will be difficult for not all that we aspire to can be expressed in quantitative terms.

Many of our most important institutional values will be reflected in the intangible aspects of the Wheaton culture, in the quality of life and work which is shared by the Wheaton community. (p. 9)

As the campus emerged from a form of these four stages of adaptation and change, the 18 months of planning, although painful and stressful at times, accomplished a wide range of goals. Student unrest and concern was addressed, new



policies were put into place, faculty adjusted their teaching methods, and the campus positioned itself to accept the new student body in fall 1988. However, as some pieces of evidence show, there were still some unresolved issues, particularly where the alumnae were concerned. Nonetheless, beginning in fall 1988, the face of Wheaton would be forever changed and the college was moving forward and beginning the process of redefining itself.

### *Summary of Change Strategy*

As discussed earlier, the Quinn and Cameron framework was not meant to scaffold the entire transition analysis, but rather to help examine certain pieces of the evolution. As would be expected, some activities throughout the two years of transition activities match up with Quinn and Cameron's (1983) definitions. However, a number of events in the case do not. While these stages provided a framework through which to examine the events at Wheaton College during the mid 1980s, not everything can be defined through one of the four phases in the model. This section will provide a brief synopsis of where the activities on campus fit with the model, and where resistance to the model comes to the surface.

One of the first events to take place was Emerson's brainstorming session with senior administration in summer 1986, followed closely by a second session with the Board of Trustees. These events exemplified the creativity and openness of the *entrepreneurial stage*. The *collectivity stage* lends itself to the work done by the faculty to become better teachers, the Forum for the Future events, the creation of the Planning Committee, and the solid plan for coeducational recruitment from early 1987 through early 1988. Task Force work, rules for coeducational residence halls and facilities, and

inclusion of alumnae in the recruitment process helped to define the *formalization and control stage*. Finally, the continual process of external monitoring, alumnae/i inclusion, and constant feedback from constituency groups positioned the college solidly in the *elaboration of structure stage*.

Although many of the actions, decisions, and events do fit with the theory, not everything that took place can be couched in one of the stages. Due to issues inherent to the way decisions were made, resistance was seen early in the process. The lack of consultation with faculty, alumnae, and students might have saved some time and difficult conversations, but instead it produced an unpredictable backlash of anger and emotion. The TOWEL lawsuit, student resistance, and alumnae anger at Forum for the Future events shows how these unintended consequences could have potentially harmed the progress made by all the planning and decision making that took place leading up to January 1987.

Despite the resistance to the decision, and actions that do not fit within the framework, the Wheaton College community did have an opportunity to use these disparities to their advantage and show their flexibility and creativity. The use of the hotline to streamline reactions, the mediation role played by the Dean of Students Office and the care taken in developing the planning documents showed a resilience and commitment to the process that helped it move along in spite of the negativity and anger shown by so many members of the community. Through the pledge made by the Planning Committee to measure the new, coeducational Wheaton in more qualitative than quantitative terms, the campus began to move into its new position as a competitive, coeducational liberal arts institution.

### *Occupying a New Niche*

Prior to the 1980s, Wheaton College occupied the niche of the small, private women's college. The campus provided a high quality education to women that focused on the pure liberal arts curriculum (Helmreich, 2002, Spainier, et al., 1984). While it might not have out-competed other schools in the women's college niche, Wheaton did enjoy relative success for close to 150 years, expanding curricular options, living and learning facilities, and enrollment (Helmreich, 2002).

As shown earlier in this study, environmental factors coming to the surface in the 1980s forced Wheaton to examine its place in higher education. Changes in a niche will force an organization to adapt. Cameron (1984) defines these changes in part as "a change in the size of the niche, or the amount of resources available to organizations" (p. 125). The adaptation that Wheaton undertook in moving to the new niche fits within this change as defined by Cameron.

If Wheaton College was to continue past 1988 as an all women's college, it would have found itself in an increasingly smaller niche, with fewer and fewer resources available. As Robert Zemsky reported to President Emerson and the Board of Trustees, the number of college-going young people was on a decline, especially the numbers of young women interested in single sex education. Although the numbers crisis was not apparent at that particular time, it was inevitably going to occur in the next few years (A. F. Emerson, P. E. Gray Interviews). During that same October 1986 Board of Trustees retreat, Wheaton's dependence on tuition dollars was revealed, meaning the college could not afford to let enrollment decrease any further (A. F.

Emerson, P. E. Gray Interviews). Thus, the pending enrollment crisis directly threatened the viability of the college.

Cameron (1984) further posits that more specialized organizations, or “those that are especially good at a narrow range of activities” (p. 125) are best positioned for adaptation. As a small college with a focused and direct curriculum, the new coeducational Wheaton could adapt and change to fit a new niche. Furthermore, Cameron (1984) indicated that “the fittest species – those that evolve characteristics that are compatible with the environment – survive while other species become extinct” (p. 126). Wheaton College undertook an evolution in the late 1980s into the 1990s that put it solidly in a new niche.

With increasing competition for top students, growing educational opportunities available to those students, and the rapidly rising cost of higher education, the coeducational liberal arts sector of postsecondary education is currently in danger of a change in niche size (Gumport & Chun, 2005; Kirp & Holman, 2003; Lapovsky, 2005). Challenges currently facing liberal arts colleges are leaving some campuses with few options. With each school that changes a mission, alters the composition of the student body, or modifies a curriculum, the liberal arts niche is at risk. Wheaton College, however, has used the change seen in the transition to coeducation to its advantage in the new niche.

In 1985, Wheaton admitted close to 85% of students who applied (Berson Interview). In comparison, the most recent group of admitted students included just 43% of those who applied (Peterson’s Website). This statistic, among other factors, most recently placed Wheaton in the top 60 liberal arts colleges in the country, as

ranked by U.S. News and World Report (2010). In addition, Wheaton students have won some of the most prestigious national and international academic awards, making Wheaton one of just two liberal arts colleges to produce three Rhodes Scholars since 2001 (Wheaton College Advising Website).

Recognizing that Wheaton College was in the process of occupying a new niche also means acknowledging that there was some death and rebirth of the college. Van de Ven and Poole (1995) assert that like biological beings, organizations experience a similar life cycle of birth, life, death. Looking at Wheaton College over its history, this life cycle is shown in its birth as a female seminary in 1834, life as a women's school for 154 years, followed by death of that identity in 1988. However, a new Wheaton was born and is currently living as a coeducational institution.

This concept goes one step further to note that, "change is imminent: that is, the developing entity has within it an underlying form, logic, program or code that regulates the process of change and moves the entity from a given point of departure toward a subsequent end" (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995, p. 515). The theorists note that environment can always be a factor in this life cycle, but this internal code will always dictate the change, regardless of environmental factors. In Wheaton's case, this points to a possible interpretation that there was something deep in the structure of the college that predisposed it to eventual death as a women's college.

Although the financial investment by the Wheaton family served the college well during its early years, it might have been a detriment, as the college was bound by the family's rules against additional fundraising. Although we might never know the true answer, this lack of external funding could have played a role in the decline of

Wheaton's enrollment and resources. If the College was allowed to engage in the raising of additional resources, it might have been able to ride out the crisis in the 1980s and continue to exist as a women's college.

### *Communication Strategies*

While the substance of the transition process is the focus of this study, the role communication played must be addressed. Communication occurred on many different levels during the time period of this case. Discussions between and among administrators and the Board of Trustees had one set of communication protocol, while messages conveyed to the rest of the Wheaton community followed another set. In addition, special attention was given to communication sent to alumnae and donors in the shadow of the lawsuit initiated by TOWEL.

Prior to announcing coeducation on January 28, 1987, communication regarding the move to coeducation was extraordinarily secretive. Meetings first held just with senior administration and later with the Board of Trustees were subject to a rule of secrecy that was taken quite seriously among those in the room (A. F. Emerson, P. E. Gray Interviews). This vow of secrecy was taken so seriously that Paul Gray did not share any of the discussions with his own daughter, a Wheaton alumna, until after the decision was public (P. E. Gray Interview). There almost seemed to be a fear among the Board of Trustees and senior administration of something getting leaked prior to the announcement. As a result, the vast majority of the Wheaton community was shocked by the announcement in the Chapel and the communications that followed.

Jablin (1990) defined organizational communication as a "process occurring within (or between) members of social collectivities or systems" (p. 157). He further

focuses this communication on the concept of *messages* which he defines as “any kind of stimulus which when received and interpreted by a member of an organization causes the individual to attribute meaning to the stimulus” (p, 157).

Of great assistance to data collection in this study was the fact that the time period studied was prior to the advent of internet and email. In an age where a great deal of our communication is immediate, global, and potentially impersonal (DeSanctis & Monge, 1999), it is often rare to have the written record of events as in the past. Documents collected for analysis in this study were preserved in draft and final form, had handwritten notes on them, and editing was made very obvious. The nature of virtual communication is to be temporary. Internet links can be edited, effectively erasing any previous content and emails can be edited up until the very instant they are distributed to thousands of recipients (DeSanctis & Monge, 1999), unlike handwritten letters which were photocopied, addressed, and mailed.

The various forms of communication during the Wheaton College transition proved to be a key piece of the discussion. From closed-door conversations among the Board and senior administration, to the very open and emotional Forum of the Future events, it appears that communication styles among those in charge might have done more harm than good at times. It has already been said that bringing all constituencies into the coeducation discussion early on would have resulted in more turmoil and angst, but there were several opportunities throughout the early decision making stages where some input from other groups might have helped to ease the backlash.

In his review of various schools of communication theory, Jablin (1990) discussed in detail the *humanistic theory* of communication. Through use of the famous

Hawthorne studies, Jablin concluded that “in order to fully understand the nature of organizations, it is necessary to view them as social collectivities” (p. 160).

Additionally, he posited that the views taken by this school of thought indicate that “levels of job performance are to some degree affected by workers’ feelings of job satisfaction and morale” (p. 160). Further, this type of communication supports a two-way discussion that gives workers and management the same ability to share input.

As was seen through the Wheaton College case, this humanistic form of communication did not take place where it mattered. The anger shown by the faculty after the announcement speaks directly to their lack of input and ability to be equal partners in decision making. Although not directly discovered in data collection for this study, it could be inferred that several members of the college faculty and staff experienced some dissatisfaction and feelings of low morale when their lack of input became readily apparent. This notion is further supported by McGregor who hypothesized that open communication channels between workers and management would result in “greater work commitment and higher levels of job performance and satisfaction” (as cited in Jablin, 1990, p. 161).

As shown through the data collected, the faculty and staff did eventually put aside the hurt feelings to do what was in the best interest of the organization. The faculty made earnest efforts at teaching to a coeducational audience, where the staff put their hard work into bringing men to campus and familiarizing them with Wheaton traditions. However, as discussed in this section, research shows that the opposite might have happened. Future research in this area might look at how those who should have been more disgruntled with their work environment found a way to move past those



feelings to accomplish the mission of the college. Perhaps faculty, having already earned tenure at Wheaton, found their ability to be mobile an issue. Additionally, the poor economic conditions of that decade could have hindered the ability for staff and other college personnel to find new jobs. Further, the Wheaton College of the mid 1980s was in a state of disrepair. Possibly the faculty and staff thought that the state of the college could only improve with coeducation.

### *What Did the Wheaton College Case Teach Us?*

Though the models presented by Quinn and Cameron (1983), Cameron (1984), Van de Ven and Poole (1995), and Jablin (1990) provide a framework through which to examine events of the case, there are still some unanswered questions. The Wheaton College case showed that aside from specific events on and off campus, lessons can be learned about broad, over-arching areas such as change management, community building, power, shared governance, and trust and credibility. The case also shows where the theoretical models do not assist with explaining events, processes, actions, or communication. This section will address each of those areas as it relates to the case, examine internal and external issues, and provide discussion on the major issues not fully answered or addressed through theoretical frameworks.

### *Managing Change*

The change that occurred at Wheaton College in the late 1980s was major. All aspects of campus life were affected as the composition of the student body changed dramatically. Senior administration had a complicated, and sometimes messy, situation on their hands as they tried to address areas of concern and manage the various stakeholders, many of whom had not been consulted regarding the move to coeducation.

Additionally, senior leadership needed to address internal issues and concerns, but also needed to be aware of what was taking place external to the campus.

From an internal perspective, the omission of faculty in the decision making process could have seriously undermined the progress of the move to coeducation. While eventually the faculty began taking steps toward welcoming men into their classrooms, their initial anger and feelings of betrayal resulted in the need to spend time and energy healing relationships rather than working toward solutions. The Board of Trustees acknowledged the college's pledge to shared governance (Board of Trustees Minutes, February 28, 1987), a commitment which also resonated further in documents produced for the college's re-accreditation process two decades later (Wheaton College Self Study, 2009). When college leaders deliberately chose to not include the faculty in such a monumental decision, they also violated these tenets of college governance, a move which alienated a key stakeholder in the organization.

This omission of faculty in the Wheaton College case is relevant throughout higher education, especially in those institutions currently facing change, adaptation, or transition. As was discussed earlier in this dissertation, many schools are faced with the need to adapt their method of teaching and delivery of education as the student demographic is changing (Gumport & Chen, 2005; Kirp, 2003). Much as the Wheaton College leadership adapted the student population for survival, many colleges and universities are changing the way they educate students, for example, offering more courses and programs online to appeal to a broader student base (Gumport & Chen, 2005; Kirp, 2003). As increasing numbers of institutions turn to such radical changes,

the need to include stakeholders, especially faculty, will be critical to the adaptation process.

Looking back at this case, it is evident that the opportunity existed for shared governance, and there was a chance for faculty to be consulted as part of the change process. In the summer of 1986, Emerson led her senior leadership team through a brainstorming session about options for the college. This process allowed for all involved to envision a crisis not yet on the horizon, and gave them an opportunity to see that coeducation was the best possible option for the college. Perhaps if Emerson had allowed the faculty to participate in a similar exercise, much of the angst over the process could have been avoided. Even if the faculty came to a different conclusion about the future of Wheaton, at least they would have been made a part of the process. This also would have upheld the college's commitment to a shared governance model, giving both faculty and administration a chance to participate in considering the future of the college. This participation in the process might keep the focus on the actual decision, and not how the college arrived at such a decision.

External to campus, the alumnae posed another challenge in managing the change process. While college documents do not indicate that alumnae play a formal role in college planning and administration, they are nonetheless a key stakeholder, and a group of women that proved to have great power in the aftermath of the coeducation announcement. It should not be shocking that the alumnae of Wheaton chose to rise up against coeducation, as the very roots of women's education came from advances made by women, for women (Boas, 1935; Goodsell, 1931; Gordon, 1997; Wolf-Wendel, 2000). "Women's colleges were founded on a belief in women's abilities" (Schmidt,

1998, p. 200) and some scholars consider schools that choose to merge or explore coeducation harmful, as they erode the basic foundation of women's education (Salamone, 2007).

Having women's educational history at the forefront of the college (Helmreich, 1985, 2002) put the alumnae in a prime position to rebuff any sort of change to the student demographic. As defined by Simons (1970), the concept of a social movement is "an uninstitutionalized collectivity that mobilizes for action to implement a program for the reconstitution of social norms or values" (p. 3). In the case of the Wheaton College alumnae, their formation of TOWEL, presence at the Forum for the Future events, and communication with college officials were attempts to persuade campus leaders to keep Wheaton a women's college and return to the norms and values held on campus when they were students.

With the wide range of ages, locations, experiences, and viewpoints of alumnae, engaging them in the decision process would not have been a reasonable option. However, surprising the alumnae with the announcement produced several unintended consequences, including the very public TOWEL lawsuit. Especially since there was no immediate enrollment crisis in 1987, and the college had just raised millions of dollars in a fundraising campaign, the announcement that the college was in trouble likely left many alumnae wondering just what was taking place on campus. Although college leadership had no way of knowing just how visible, powerful, and mobilizing the alumnae could be, it might have worked out better if they had been warned that changes were in the future of the college. Leadership could have informed these external

stakeholders that, despite a successful campaign, there were still fiscal and enrollment concerns that needed to be addressed.

Fiscal concerns, alumni donations, and endowments have been of concern to institutions of higher education for many years (Kirp & Holman, 2003; Lapovsky, 2005) and are still at the forefront of higher education. With over 100 colleges and universities failing the U.S. Department of Education financial responsibility test (Blumenstyk, 2009), support from outside the institution is critical. Wheaton College leadership knew that maintaining alumnae support was a key component to the transition (A. W. Caldwell Interview), yet still pushed forth with planning without involving the women of Wheaton's past. Contrary to this, however, was the mandate from the Wheaton family that discouraged overt fundraising (Helmreich, 2002), including seeking financial support from alumnae. Nonetheless, the support of alumnae was important to the college and the coeducation decision could have seriously impacted that relationship.

### *Community Building*

Once the announcement was made in January 1987 and the reaction from various stakeholders began to cause unrest on campus, there was little the administration could do other than begin to repair relationships and rebuild the community. Cameron (1984) has shown that colleges that do not adapt to fit into a new niche, and cannot remain in their old niche, will ultimately fail. Part of being competitive in a niche is the ability to change, adapt, and transition as the environment requires (Cameron, 1984). While the college as a whole was moving into the new niche of private coeducational liberal arts college, aspects of the Wheaton College community

had to move into new niches as well. Building new communities, establishing new rules and practices, and evaluating processes were all part of this community building, as well as contributing to new niche building on campus.

As with managing the change process, this community building took place both internally and externally. On campus, the administration faced the challenge of repairing relationships with the faculty and students, two main constituent groups who felt betrayed by the process that took place. These actions had to be very deliberate and very transparent, as the secrecy of the decision process had already fractured relationships. Although senior leadership felt at the time that confidentiality was necessary, choosing not to communicate with stakeholders seriously impacted the community. Communication across different levels of power on campus requires a certain element of trust, with the knowledge that the stakeholders are not going to be led astray by leadership (Jablin, 1990). Further, this lack of communication can make the relationship aspect of community building that much more difficult, as trust levels drop, morale declines, and misunderstandings result (Jablin, 1990).

Despite this, certain aspects of campus life had to move forward. As the men arrived in Norton in fall 1988, policies, procedures, and community building activities were being put into place. The Student Affairs Task Force had begun the process of outlining residential options, student activities, and discipline policies. Additionally, activities and programs were started on campus, initially for men, and eventually for men and women together (J. Kuszaj Interview). These programs allowed the men to feel comfortable, as well as introduced the notion of coeducational living to the upper class women who started college at an all-female school.

The faculty also worked on building community in coeducational classrooms, honoring their commitment to improve teaching through videotaping themselves. Additionally, they continued the work begun in the early 1980s on the Balanced Curriculum project, keeping feminism and women's ideals alive in the teaching process. Through dedication to community building both in and out of the classroom, faculty and administration began to work together on a coeducational campus.

External community building was more of a challenge for several reasons. Location was a barrier to community, as alumnae, donors, and parents are located all over the world and not just in one central location. Moreover, while students on campus maintain similar demographic profiles (age, experience, interest, etc.), alumnae differ greatly in these areas. Without the technological benefits of current times, communication took longer and was more sporadic than it is today. Additionally, the student communication aspect took longer as well, without having today's communication tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs available.

Perhaps one advantage of this, however, is that while communication took longer in 1987, "the lack of face-to-face contact in electronic communication may negatively affect message understanding" (DeSanctis & Monge, 1999, p. 696). Leaders at Wheaton had the benefit of being able to craft letters, phone calls, and visits more so than if they were posting on a website or sending electronic messages. Given some of these communication obstacles, the Forum for the Future events began the slow process of deliberately bringing alumnae back into the activities of the college and regaining some of the trust that was lost in the coeducation process.

Directly related to community building is the retention and recruitment of students. Wheaton College had to simultaneously recruit new students and retain those who were already there. As with the internal and external building discussed earlier, these actions were deliberate and transparent in nature. The activities initiated by the Dean of Students Office worked toward some of the retention goals, as well as work done by faculty in the classroom. Recruitment proved to be a different challenge, as Berson and her team had to find students willing to participate in the unknown. While being as open and honest as possible, the admissions team still had to find and recruit quality students looking for a liberal arts education. As with managing the change process, this balance of recruitment and retention was a delicate course of action and shows that, when done deliberately and with purpose, can be of benefit the community.

#### *Power*

While the Board of Trustees, in concert with the senior administration, made the decision to pursue coeducation, doing so effectively took any other stakeholders out of the process and left them with little power and even fewer options. Each of the constituent groups discussed in this study had valid reasons to exert power in this process, much of which could have been managed by leadership. By completely eliminating them from the change process, however, these stakeholders were stripped of their formal power role in the organization and reacted through speaking out, protesting on campus, and filing a lawsuit, as was demonstrated by the faculty, students, and alumnae in the months following the announcement.

The actions of major stakeholders, however, did show that at different times in the events of this case, various groups did have power in certain arenas. The President



and Board of Trustees held power almost all the way through the process, guiding the transition, communication, and decision-making. Faculty, although stripped of their power as it related to governance, held power over the classroom environment and could have opted to do nothing to improve their teaching. Students and alumnae held no formal positions of power in this case, but found positions of power through their actions, which almost derailed the entire process. The TOWEL lawsuit was a way for the alumnae, albeit a small group of women, to show the college that even though they were no longer physically on campus, they have the power and ability to influence major decisions.

The rise of alumnae power and the anger demonstrated by faculty are clear examples of where the framework of Quinn and Cameron (1983) does not assist in understanding the Wheaton College case. The stages described by Quinn and Cameron (1983) suggest that as an organization moves through adaptation and change, there is a shared sense of progress and all aspects of the organization work together in achieving the goal. As was demonstrated by the faculty and the alumnae, not all stakeholders were interested in furthering the idea of a coeducational institution. While, arguably, they were in favor of keeping Wheaton open, they were not in favor of sacrificing women's education to do so. Although the stages assist in explaining the flow of events, and provide scaffolding for the chronology, there are some clear weaknesses in using them to clarify all aspects of the transition.

### *Shared Governance*

If there was one thing overshadowing the transition to coeducation on campus, it was the mistrust the announcement created between the faculty and senior

administration. Mentioned throughout the data are the hurt feelings, anger, and betrayal felt by members of the Wheaton faculty after being told they would be a part of the process, only to find out the decision was made without their input.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) defines shared governance as the “governance of higher education institutions in which responsibility is shared by faculty, administrators, and trustees” (AAUP Website). While this definition affords faculty the main responsibility of matters concerning the classroom, the AAUP notes that faculty should still play a main role in central aspects of the college or university, including budget and policy decisions. In its own literature, Wheaton College also pledged to these same notions of shared governance. However, at the crux of this case, is the fact that perhaps the most major change in the college’s history was made without adherence to shared governance.

In their work on institutional adaptation and reform, Gumpert and Sporn (1999) noted that shared governance has “long been acknowledged, stressing the mutual interdependence of faculty and administration and the ideal of working on a joint endeavor in matters of that entail an intermingling of academic and fiscal concerns” (p. 34). Many of these joint endeavors grew from a need to pursue some sort of change at the institution, either due to environmental factors such as cost, quality, and access or social factors such as economics or politics (pp. 5-6).

In the Wheaton College case, the campus was plagued by both sets of factors, and all signs pointed to the need for radical change. This would have been an ideal opportunity to explore shared governance, perhaps through inviting faculty and staff into early discussions on options to help the struggling campus. In defense of the

decisions made by the Board and senior administration, however, is Duderstadt's (2001) work on the subject, which noted that while shared governance "engages a variety of stakeholders in the decisions concerning the university, it does so with an awkwardness that tends to inhibit change and responsiveness" (p. 2). He further states that the very nature of faculty can stall the change process, rather than speed it along as is necessary in today's environment (p. 2).

In addition to the structure of shared governance, there is a cultural aspect that cannot be ignored. While the two sides must collaborate for shared governance to work, the relations between the two are often fraught with mistrust and dissonance (Del Favero & Bray, 2005; Minor & Tierney, 2005). Further, the two parties involved have a deep misunderstanding about how to influence and change others. "Influence is a tool widely used by administrators to build consensus, while academics tend to believe it is indecent, even immoral, to attempt to influence others" (Dressel, 1981, as cited in Del Favero & Bray, 2005, p. 56). This lack of trust and mismatch of guiding principles makes the notion of shared governance seem unrealistic in most environments.

Despite this dichotomy, shared governance is a critical tenet of higher education and must be considered when dealing with a case such as that of Wheaton College. While the data collected did not explore the relationship between faculty and staff prior to the announcement, it appeared that the lack of adherence to such a key principle nearly destroyed the relationship for the future.

### *Trust and Credibility*

As the events of 1986-1988 played out, the administration found itself reacting to various constituent groups as it expressed power, and expended great amounts of

energy and resources managing these unintended consequences. Throughout the entire process, relationships had to be rebuilt, trust regained, and credibility restored. At the crux was the internal inconsistency that the Board of Trustees and administration created when they chose to not include faculty in the decision process. In the face of their shared governance model, leadership excluded a critical constituent group from the process and did not extend to them the same creative brainstorming process they put themselves through in moving toward coeducation.

Research has brought to light the need for effective communication, especially when cultivating relationships within an organization and trying to maintain trust among stakeholders and more senior leadership (Jablin, 1990). When considering such immense changes in the structure or nature of an organization as Wheaton College did, this issue of trust and credibility is paramount (Jablin, 1990).

However, despite the mistakes leadership made in their lack of communication regarding the decision making process, the precarious position women's colleges were in at the time was not a secret. In the years prior to coeducation, research showed that liberal arts colleges (and within those, the women's colleges) were an "endangered species" (Zammuto, 1984, p. 185). As discussed earlier, this segment of colleges was particularly vulnerable due to their composition (Astin & Lee, 1972; Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996; Pfnister, 1984). Women's colleges bore the brunt of this vulnerability, with 141 women's colleges disappearing during 1960-1984 (Chamberlain, 1988). This information, much of it published during the very time Wheaton moved to coeducation, brings into question why stakeholders were so surprised by the announcement. Seeing

that nearly 60% of women's colleges closed during this time (Chamberlain, 1988), why would leadership at Wheaton College not be worried?

While the decision to pursue coeducation ultimately saved Wheaton College from closing in the late 1980s, the process almost destroyed the college from the inside out. As other colleges face similar bleak enrollment and financial circumstances, and begin to think about options for survival, these broad issues must be considered. Wheaton College leadership was lucky, in that in the years that followed coeducation, trust and credibility were restored and the campus flourished with high enrollments and academic success of the student body. However, with the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see that mistakes were made along the way, critical relationships were largely ignored, and power of constituent groups was underestimated. Managing change can be a messy process, as seen in this case, but with some careful planning and thought, some of the unintended consequences in the Wheaton case could be averted in other cases. Recognizing that not all situations are alike, lessons can still be learned from the experiences of Wheaton leadership regarding power, change, transition, and community building.

### *Summary of Research Questions*

Earlier in this study, four specific research questions were presented. Although discussion of the case has alluded to some answers, there are more precise conclusions that have come from the discussion. This section will provide more explicit answers to each of the four research questions, noting how the study has responded to them.

*What environmental and institutional factors prompted the move to coeducation at Wheaton College?* Emerson, Gray, and the Board of Trustees had to ensure they

knew the answer to this question as well. The work done by the Women's College Coalition, Robert Zemsky, and internally at Wheaton showed there were several environmental factors forcing Wheaton towards change. The declining birth rate, shrinking enrollment, deteriorating numbers of women interested in single-sex education, and rising costs all contributed to Wheaton's impending financial crisis. Although noted by Emerson, these issues were not all present when the decision was made, but they were on the horizon and present enough to be perceived as a threat to the school's existence.

From an institutional perspective, Wheaton College was ripe for change in the mid 1980s. President Emerson had herself been brought to campus to enact change. The Sesquicentennial Campaign in 1984-1985 was already a benchmark for success, as it was the most successful fundraising endeavor to that date. The faculty, through their creation of the balanced curriculum project, had already begun to effect change in the campus learning environment. These new initiatives had created a climate of new and exciting occurrences and although drastic in nature, coeducation became the next great change on the small campus.

Second, *how were decisions made and communication handled to guide the transition?* These two processes occurred in very separate arenas during the transition. As noted in the discussion, the decision to pursue coeducation was made in a more secretive fashion, with only a small inner circle of individuals who were privy to the information at hand. Board of Trustees members were sworn to secrecy and senior administration did not discuss the issue with anyone outside the circle. Until the

announcement on January 28, 1987, very few people knew what was to happen at Wheaton College beginning in fall 1988.

Conversely, the communication after the announcement was very open and transparent. Multiple letters were sent to Wheaton College students, alumnae, parents, friends, and the general public. Media was a weekly presence on campus and stories appeared in multiple print sources throughout the 18 month transition process. The Forum for the Future events made discussion and communication over transition issues very public and task force planning documents were shared widely across campus. Although not all stakeholders might have agreed with the difference in communication before and after the announcement, several pieces of evidence have pointed to the fact that this type of dichotomy might have worked to the advantage of those in power during this time.

*What organizational strategies could be used to explain the transition to coeducation?* While no one strategy fits perfectly, Quinn and Cameron (1983) provide a clear four stage framework that can be valuable in making sense of the various stages of the transition. As explained earlier in this chapter, the framework does not truly fit the case, but aspects of the stages can be used in analyzing events and decisions. Through examining the evidence of the case, stages become evident at several different places and follow somewhat of a chronological path during the years researched for purposes of this study. Additional theoretical work aids in explaining various aspects of the case, such as the niche concept, life cycle of the all female college, and communication strategies employed by college administrators (Cameron, 1984; DeSanctis & Monge, 1999; Jablin, 1990; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Finally, *what lessons learned from the Wheaton College transition can be used by other institutions facing similar circumstances?* Since the results of a case study are not meant to be generalized to a larger population, the entire experience of those involved with the Wheaton College transition to coeducation cannot be exported to another campus. However, pieces of the experience can be applied to colleges and universities finding themselves in a similar situation. The leadership exhibited by Emerson, Gray, and the rest of the senior leadership team can certainly be studied by other leaders seeking to make change on a campus.

Using Wheaton administrators to assist other campuses has already happened on a couple of occasions, as Tish Emerson, Hannah Goldberg, and Sue Alexander were contacted several times during the years following Wheaton's coeducation movement. Just as the Wheaton team looked to Connecticut, Skidmore, and Vassar, officials at Wells College and Regis College referred to Emerson, Goldberg, and Alexander to assist with their move to coeducation (A. F. Emerson and S. Alexander Interviews). Berson echoed this by adding "we executed very well. I think we are a model of how to do it. People look to us. When Goucher [College] went coed the following year, they came to us, and we were quick to say we learned from others" (G. Berson Interview).

There are also parts to the transition process that did not go as planned, such as the faculty reaction or the TOWEL lawsuit. Although in hindsight, college officials can see that these objections grew from anger over the process perhaps more than the actual decision, they likely were not aware of how much the protests would affect the process. However, these aspects can be helpful as well, as they provide a glimpse into how things can go wrong in such a massive change process. These negative pieces of the



story can also aid others, as it provides not only information on where potential problems might be, but also gives possible solutions or coping strategies.

### *Future Research, Implications, and Limitations*

This study is by no means an exhaustive documentation of the events that took place at Wheaton College in the mid 1980s. While it has brought to light details of the transition process, and provided some theoretical analysis to assist in explaining actions and decisions, it has opened the door for more questions and future research. In addition, this study focused on the actions of major constituency groups (i.e., faculty, president, board, alumnae, and admissions) and as a result has produced implications for each of these groups, especially those who are faced with change. It is also crucial to recognize that this study has certain limitations, some of which could not be avoided while pursuing the answers to the research questions presented in earlier chapters.

### *Future Research*

Although this study did answer the questions asked, the process of uncovering the answers led to further questions that can be studied at a later date. This section will outline some of those possibilities, with discussion on how they might be addressed.

*When Wheaton College changed the composition of the student body in fall 1988, how did the academic success of students change, if at all?* The answer to this question can be measured in scholarship achievement on national and international levels, which is often a gauge of academic achievement. Potential success can also be measured by academic qualifications of incoming classes. However, a caveat exists here since it is possible that increased academic qualifications have been a national trend, and not just unique to Wheaton. Additionally, this success can be measured in national rankings.

Wheaton is currently ranked in the top 60 liberal arts schools in the country, but research can be done to explore its academic reputation as an all women's college, specifically one in the same state as prestigious single-sex colleges such as Mt. Holyoke, Smith and Wellesley.

While many data points show that the transition was a success, *what different outcomes could have occurred had the transition not been as successful as it was?* Wheaton was not the only college to make national headlines in their pursuit of coeducation. In 1990, the Mills College Board of Trustees announced their intent to pursue coeducation and revoked the decision just a few weeks later after significant protest on campus. While the Wheaton Board of Trustees stayed firm in their intent to pursue coeducation, external constituencies made threats to the success of the transition. Fortunately, only a small percentage of the Sesquicentennial Campaign money was returned. If a larger amount was requested for return, outcomes could have been different with regards to campus improvements. Additionally, the faculty could have chosen not to integrate new teaching methods as much as they did. It was entirely their decision to make their new teaching style the best it could be.

For 150 years the Town of Norton existed with a small college of young women in its borders. With the intent to add men to the college, it would be interesting to study *how the Town of Norton reacted to coeducation*. Prior to 1988, only about 800 women per year inhabited the buildings of Wheaton College. In 2010, over 1600 men and women live there, requiring the addition of several campus buildings and residence halls. Areas of study could look at if there was concern from the Town over the

increased male population or the expansion of the campus buildings and boundaries to incorporate the larger student body.

Coeducation not only enlarged the size of the student body, it significantly changed the type of graduate that was produced. As alumnae/i graduate and choose where to prioritize their philanthropic giving, *what effect did coeducation have on the endowment of Wheaton College?* Prior to coeducation, the majority of the financing of the college came from the endowment set up by the Wheaton Family in 1834. Fundraising and alumnae donations were not seen as a significant source of income for the college. However, since coeducation, campaigns and alumnae/i contributions have substantially strengthened the endowment (Wheaton College Self Study, 2009).

The administrators at Wheaton College in the 1980s had none of the technological benefits of current day life. Without the use of email or internet, news moved much slower at the time of the transition. If the same situation were to occur today, *how might the outcome be different with the use of communication technology?* Archival documents showed several examples of letter exchanges between college administration and various outside people. Several times, references were made to items crossing in the mail, or a delay in responding due to waiting for further correspondence. A possibility for future study would be to explore if it was better or worse that the news took longer to spread since administrators had to rely on postal mail and telephone as opposed to email or internet postings.

#### *Implications for Administrators*

As was seen during the discussion and analysis, Wheaton College benefitted from the leadership and wisdom of a President and Chairman of the Board who were

willing to identify a problem and take a great risk (some would say leap of faith) to solve that problem. They were also fortunate to have a dedicated group of senior leadership who took the daunting task of changing an entire campus in the span of 18 months. Not gone unnoticed was the support of others in the college community who rallied behind their leaders.

From a presidential power point of view, this dissertation was solely about the change process, not the outcome. The time in between the decision to pursue coeducation and the outcome of coeducation was guided largely by presidential leadership. Although the actual vote was at the hands of the Board of Trustees, the initial impetus for change and the subsequent planning process came at the hands of the president and her trusted administrators.

However, the role of president is often a balancing act. As seen through this study, President Emerson had to make some difficult decisions throughout the years of her tenure at Wheaton. While the decision to make the college coeducational was ultimately a good one, there were many points during the process where lessons from her actions can be learned. Recognizing that she could not please all constituent groups with the coeducation decision, she made choices regarding where and when to include people.

While Emerson was able to keep her senior administrators and Board of Trustees included in the process and on the front lines of planning, she could have permanently fractured relationships with the faculty, students, and alumnae. As administrators, especially presidents, grapple with difficult decisions, attention must be paid to which groups are included and which are not. Additionally, decision makers

must be prepared to accept any unintended consequences from not including all constituency groups.

The senior leaders at Wheaton College, in hindsight, recognize that the process could have been handled differently. There is no question that those in charge at the time have accepted responsibility for the way the process overshadowed the substance of the decision. For those who come after, however, the actions and reactions discussed in this study can provide a roadmap for navigating difficult decision making and possible negative or unintended outcomes.

#### *Implications for Faculty*

Much of the angst over the transition was due to the process, not the substance of the decision. For faculty, this creates specific issues concerning academic governance. On a campus that clearly defined a shared governance structure, the process of moving toward coeducation at Wheaton College clearly violated this arrangement. When this kind of agreement is decided upon by all involved and then so clearly violated, trust between faculty and administration is thrust into the spotlight.

Faculty members who find themselves in situations similar to Darlene Boroviak and her colleagues in 1987 have some difficult decisions to make. The Wheaton faculty, after a period of significant anger, chose to eventually support the move to coeducation and further improved their teaching methods in anticipation of a new kind of student body. However, they could have just as easily derailed the coeducation process by either not supporting the decision more publically, or by leaving the college altogether. Without a strong faculty, it would not have mattered how many male students the college could have recruited.

Reflecting on the Wheaton College case, several questions come to light regarding the relationship of faculty and the rest of the campus. What were the implications of President Emerson indicating she would consult faculty and then allow the Board of Trustees to proceed without doing so? Where does the sphere of influence and power truly rest on campus? What are the relationships of those actually in power and the perception of where the power lies?

### *Implications for Boards of Trustees*

Similar to some of the implications for faculty, what were the ramifications of taking a vote without faculty input? The Board of Trustees took a significant risk by not involving the faculty in initial discussions and were lucky things turned out the way they did. Boards of Trustees need to take the time, effort, and sometimes money, to do the proper research. Although a significant portion of the fallout from the decision was emotional (mostly from alumnae), at least the Board had concrete data to back their decision. Without the data, their process of gaining support for coeducation could have been seriously limited. The Wheaton College Board of Trustees proved they could make a tough decision, take that leap of faith, and come out better for it on the other side. In the situation of other small colleges seeking a niche change, could they learn from this Board's experience? Could some of the same choices made and research done still apply?

In a shared power situation, Boards of Trustees need to recognize that although they have control over some aspects of an institution, they are not the only stakeholders in a major decision process. Although Boards might typically only have financial control, and a decision of this magnitude is certainly of financial relevance, there are

others on campus with control over the rest of the institution. Without faculty support, the Board risks fracturing relations with faculty, students, and alumnae/i, all of whom have significant impact on the success of a college.

#### *Implications for Alumnae/i*

What can be learned from alumnae/i power? What can be further discovered about alumnae/i relations? Caldwell and her staff did a masterful job at controlling some of the hurt feelings by going around the country, contacting alumnae individually, and doing what they could to repair relationships. Despite this work, it was the alumnae (specifically the TOWEL group) who almost derailed the process through their lawsuit and subsequent national media attention.

Alumnae/i networks can be an incredible source of power for a college or university. With thousands of graduates going to all corners of the globe, their sentiments regarding their institution can be quite powerful. High school students looking for colleges might turn to their parents, friends of parents, siblings, or others looking for suggestions on where to go. A positive connection from one of these people might connect that young person to their college choice. Negative comments from graduates can just as easily turn that young person to a rival college.

Although these individual influences can affect the overall status of a college, alumnae/i can also have a sweeping impact on an institution when they work together. While not all Wheaton graduates were involved in the TOWEL lawsuit, the few who were created a significant effect on the transition. Alumnae/i groups can express their distaste for college decision making and be quite public about their feelings. While they can be a valuable resource for a college, angry alumnae/i can disrupt institutional goals

as was the case in this study. Conversely, as was also seen in the Wheaton College case, alumnae who did not ask for their Sesquicentennial Campaign money back were making a clear vote in favor of the college decision. Though these women were not as public as the TOWEL group, they too made their feelings known in large numbers.

### *Limitations of Study*

All research studies have within them some limitations, usually ones that are “beyond the control of the researcher” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 75). This section will outline the limitations specific to this study and discuss how they were addressed in the process of the study. As I have pointed out several times in previous chapters, what is discussed with reference to the Wheaton College transition to coeducation cannot be generalized within higher education. While possibly seen as a limitation, it also must be pointed out that a case study method was deliberately chosen for this dissertation, despite the fact that generalities cannot be made.

Case studies are “intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 11). While case studies go into a great amount of detail, they are only meant to “gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 11). Through the choice of a case study method, this dissertation is not meant to be an example of all colleges facing change or pursuing coeducation, but can be used to inform others on how one campus handled itself. Merriam (1998) notes that through choosing a case study method, the outcome is to inform process, and further, cases can be studied just for their inherent uniqueness, not necessarily to affect general change.



Another limitation was my role in the process of this study. As an alumna of Wheaton College who is still heavily involved in the activities of the campus, my insider status affected several areas of my research. I initially used my connection to Wheaton as an asset, as it gave me initial contacts on the campus, and access to top administrators through the use of relationships established when I was a student. Additionally, I had the advantage of hearing some of the history while enrolled in the college, and could witness first-hand how Wheaton's all-female history is still preserved.

Conversely, this insider access had its drawbacks. Although I was a student at Wheaton for four years and have been in close contact with the campus since I graduated, I found there was a large disconnect between the urban legends heard as a student and the reality of the situation. During several interviews, there were many times when it was assumed I knew something, or a rumor had to be dispelled, so time was spent backtracking and filling in missing pieces. Additionally, studying something of such importance to me personally could have led to a skewed reporting of data, or slanted discussion and analysis. The use of a peer debriefer assisted with pointing out areas where I could have misconstrued information. Through reading my data and analysis, she was able to identify areas that needed further discussion.

This case study presents the series of events that took place on a single campus in a very particular time and place in history. While the events that rocked Wheaton College in the 1980s have certainly been addressed at other schools, some during that same time frame, each campus handled its solution differently. As discussed earlier in this study, some campuses turned to coeducation, while some chose to close their doors.

Some campuses partnered with bigger, stronger schools, while still some others changed their curriculum and mission to adapt to a new niche. While lessons can be learned from the Wheaton College case, the exact process would not be a predictor of success at other schools.

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth case study analysis of how one campus handled an impending crisis through making substantial and historic changes to the entire organization. Through examination of data collected in interviews and archival documents, an early picture began to emerge of unrest and hurt feelings, despite a more public image of later success in transition. While many on campus were planning for the arrival of men, precious attention and resources had to be diverted to address anger, betrayal, and sadness, some of which culminated in a very public lawsuit.

The results of this study, although not for use on a general, widespread basis, can provide guidance and assistance to administrators and senior campus leadership who are faced with the possibility of enacting great change. Lessons learned through the Wheaton College move to coeducation can better inform campus leadership on decision making strategies, communication techniques, and tactics for coping with backlash and public resistance to the change. This model of change could conversely inform individuals of how not to pursue change, depending on circumstances.

## Appendix A

### *Key constituent groups and subjects to interview within each group*

- President of the College at the time of coeducation
  - Alice (Tish) Emerson, served as President from 1975-1991. As president, Emerson provided background on the reasons behind pursuing coeducation, research conducted on the issue and how the decision was communicated to the community.
- Representative from the Board of Trustees at the time of coeducation
  - Paul E. Gray, Board of Trustees member from 1971-1997, serving as Chair from 1976-1987. As long-term member of the Board, as well as Chair during the transition process, Gray provided additional background to the reasons behind pursuing coeducation, research conducted on the issue and how the decision was communicated to the community.
- Provost of the College at the time of transition
  - Provost Goldberg could not be interviewed due to severe health issues at the time of this study, but Darlene Boroviak, Professor of Political Science from 1970-present was suggested to me as the best contact from the faculty. Boroviak was a senior faculty member at the time of the transition and knew first-hand of the challenges of bringing men into a classroom setting, as well as had some administrative responsibilities during the same time period.
- Vice President for Resources and Planning during time of transition

- Ann W. Caldwell served in this role from 1980-1990 and was heavily involved with alumnae relations, public relations, strategic long-term campus planning and fundraising for the College.
- Dean of Admissions during time of transition
  - Gail Berson assumed this role in 1984 and still holds the position. A key element to making coeducation work is to recruit and admit the “right” combination of students. Berson knew of admission trends before and after the transition and the work that was done to improve enrollment at the college.
- Dean of Students Office
  - Sue Alexander served as Dean of Students from 1987-2008 and was brought to campus specifically to guide all student services aspects of the transition. Her office handled specifics of how men were incorporated into campus life, the different units involved (athletics, housing, student life, etc) and how each of them planned for coeducation.
  - Jack Kuszaj came to campus as the Associate Dean of Students in 1987 and still continues in that role. He worked very closely with Dean Alexander during the transition process.
- Department of Residence Life
  - Claire Ramsbottom served as Director of Residence Life from 1985-1996. Her responsibilities included working out a residential plan to incorporate men for the first time.

## Appendix B

### *Email to prospective interviewees*

Dear xxxx,

My name is Amanda Gray Idema and I am a PhD candidate in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University. I am also a Wheaton College graduate, Class of 1997. I am pursuing my dissertation research in the area of small liberal arts colleges, specifically women's colleges who have turned to coeducation as a means for survival.

As part of my research, I am looking at multiple data sources, including documents from the Wheaton College archives, media publications from the time of the transition to coeducation and interviews with key faculty, staff and administrators who were at Wheaton College in the 1980's. Given your role on campus during this time, I would like to include your reflections, observations and remembrances in my data set. If you are willing, I would like to interview you and ask a set of open ended questions pertaining to the transition to coeducation.

Interviews will take approximately 60-90 minutes, and could include a follow-up interview at a later date. Interviews will take place at a location of your choosing and at a time that is most convenient for you.

If you are willing to participate, please let me know via email (agidema@msu.edu) or phone (517-449-2334).

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Amanda G. Idema

## Appendix C

*Interview Protocol (adapted from Creswell, 2007, p. 132-6)*

**Greeting and project description:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in my case study of Wheaton College's transition to coeducation. I am interested in learning more about how the decision to admit men was made, what factors went into making the decision and what lessons were learned from the experience. In addition, I am particularly interested in how communication was handled during the transition, both between campus administrators and the administration with the rest of the campus community.

**Interview process:** I have a series of open ended questions I would like to ask. Please feel free to elaborate wherever you feel is necessary to fully explain events as you remember them. Unless you object, I would like to audio tape our conversation for purposes of accuracy in transcribing at a later date. If you would like to say something and have it not recorded, I will turn off the recorder at that time. Before we begin, I have a consent form for you to sign (review and sign form). Do you have any questions before we get started?

**Questions and sub-questions** (will differ slightly depending on participant's role in transition)

1. **Please describe your role at Wheaton College during the 1980s, specifically in the years leading up to coeducation (1986-8).**
  - a. How long had you been in the position prior to learning of coeducation at Wheaton?
  - b. What led you to work/study at Wheaton College?
  - c. What sort of influence did you have on the transition (key decision maker, task force member, rule enforcer, student)
  - d. Experience at other institutions, either single-sex or coeducational?
2. **What role did your office (you) play in the transition to coeducation?**
  - a. Direct vs. indirect responsibilities

- b. Dissemination of information
  - c. Resource allocation
  - d. Strategic planning
3. **When did you first learn of Wheaton's plan to admit men?**
- a. When in the timeline of events did you hear of the plan?
  - b. What was your reaction?
  - c. Were you surprised by the announcement?
4. **From what you remember, what was the reaction on campus to the announcement?**
- a. Was there student resistance? Any of it serious?
  - b. Parent concerns
  - c. Current student concerns
  - d. Alumnae concerns
5. **What do you remember regarding those first few weeks men were on campus in the fall of 1988?**
- a. Orientation
  - b. First few weeks in the classroom
  - c. Residence hall/dining facilities/athletic facilities/other social interactions
  - d. Media presence on campus and its impact
6. **Looking back on the planning time for coeducation (1987-8), do you think anything should have been handled differently?**
- a. Decisions made by you or your office directly
  - b. Decisions made by others that you think should have been handled differently
  - c. Examples of other moves to coeducation (Wells, Regis, Randolph Macon) where you think Wheaton should have done something differently
7. **Reflecting on the first year of coeducation, do you think anything should have been handled differently?**
- a. Were men made to feel welcome?
  - b. Were the women on campus made welcome?

- c. Aside from the arrival of men, was anything from the “old Wheaton” different in the fall of 1988?
- 8. **Is there a particular person you think I should speak with to glean more information on the transition?**
  - a. Other administrators?
  - b. Other students?
- 9. **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Thank you for your participation today.



## Appendix D

### *Sample of follow up email to interview subjects*

Dear xxxxx,

I am writing to confirm our interview for Monday, November 16 at 10am in the BHC Cafe. If that time no longer works, please let me know. I expect the interview to take about 60-90 minutes max, and I will be asking you to reflect on several aspects of the transition to coeducation:

- your role in the transition to coeducation
- your knowledge/recollection of decisions made by top administration
- specific challenges faced by you/your office during the transition time
- communication of the transition to the Wheaton community
- the role of campus leaders/administrators in the decision to pursue coeducation

I am looking forward to our conversation!

amanda

## References

- AAUP Website (n.d.). Retrieved July 29, 2010 from <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/about/mission/glossary.htm>.
- Astin, A. W., & Lee, C. B. T. (1972). *The invisible colleges: A profile of small, private colleges with limited resources*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Blumenstyk, G. (2008). In turbulent times, 2 small colleges brace for the worst. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54, 35, p. A1.
- Blumenstyk, G. (2009). More than 100 colleges fail education department's test of financial strength. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 55, 39, p. A21.
- Boas, L. S. (1935). *Women's education begins: The rise of the women's colleges*. Norton, MA: Wheaton College Press.
- Bombardieri, M., & Jan, T. (2006, September 1). Regis college to admit men in '07. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved March 1, 2009, from [http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2006/09/01/regis\\_college\\_to\\_admit\\_men\\_in\\_07/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2006/09/01/regis_college_to_admit_men_in_07/).
- Bonvillian, G., & Murphy, R. (1996). *The liberal arts college adapting to change: The survival of small schools*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Calefati, J. (2009). The changing face of women's colleges. *U.S. News and World Report*, posted online March 11 at <http://www.usnews.com/articles/education/2009/03/11/the-changing-face-of-womens-colleges.html>.
- Cameron, K. S. (1984) Organizational adaptation and higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 55, (2), 122-144.
- The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2005). *Undergraduate instructional program tables*. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/index.asp?key=800>.
- Chaffee, E. E. (1991). Three models of strategy. In M. W. Peterson (Ed.), *Organization and governance in higher education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp. 225-238). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.
- Chamberlain, M. (1988). *Women in academe: Progress and prospects*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Chronicle of Higher Education (2008). *Almanac*. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <http://chronicle.com/almanac/>

- Clark, B. R. (1972). The organizational saga in higher education. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, 2, pp. 178-184.
- The College Board (2009). *Trends in college pricing 2009*. Retrieved March 7, 2010 from [http://www.trends-collegeboard.com/college\\_pricing/1\\_1\\_published\\_prices\\_by\\_sector.html?expandable=0](http://www.trends-collegeboard.com/college_pricing/1_1_published_prices_by_sector.html?expandable=0)
- Cremin, L. A. (1997). College. In L. F. Goodchild & H. S. Wechsler (Eds.), *The History of higher education* (pp. 35-52). Needham Heights, MA : Simon & Schuster.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Del Favero, M., & Bray, N. (2005). The Faculty-Administrator Relationship: Partners in Prospective Governance? *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*. 3(1), 53-72.
- DeSanctis, G., & Monge, P. (1999). Introduction to the special issue: Communication processes for virtual organizations. *Organization Science*, 10, 6, pp. 693-703.
- Duderstadt, J. (2001). Fire, ready, aim! University-decision making during an era of rapid change. Paper presented at The Glion Colloquium II, La Jolla, California, January 5, 2000.
- Fix, S. (2005). Response. In *Liberal arts college in American higher education: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 40-45). New York: American Council of Learned Societies.
- Gladieux, L. E., King, J. E., & Corrigan, M. E. (2005). The federal government and higher education. In P.G. Altbach, R. O. Berdahl, & P. J. Gumport (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 315-339). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gordon, L. D. (1997). From seminary to university: An overview of women's higher education, 1870-1920. In L. F. Goodchild & H. S. Wechsler (Eds.), *The History of higher education* (pp. 473-498). Needham Heights, MA : Simon & Schuster.
- Goodsell, W. (1931). *Pioneers of women's education in the United States*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Green, M. (1984). The impacts of irrelevance: Women in the history of American education. In E. Fennema & M. J. Ayer (Eds.), *Women and education: Equity or equality?* (pp. 19-40). Berkeley, CA : McCutchan.
- Gumport, P. J. (2000). Academic restructuring: Organizational change and institutional imperatives. *Higher Education*, 39, 67-91.
- Gumport, P. J., & Chun, M. (2005). Technology and higher education: Opportunities and challenges for the new era. In P.G. Altbach, R. O. Berdahl, & P. J. Gumport (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 393-424). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gumport, P. J., & Pusser, B. (1997). Restructuring the academic environment. In M. W. Peterson, D. D. Dill, L. A. Mets, & Associates (Eds.), *Planning and management for a changing environment* (pp. 453-478). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gumport, P. J., & Sporn, B. (1999). Institutional adaptation: Demands for management reform and university administration. National Center for Postsecondary Improvement Report Number 1-07. Stanford, CA.
- Hage, J. T. (1999). Organizational innovation and organizational change. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, pp. 597-622.
- Han, Y. (2007). Population ecology, strategic choice, and competition. *International Journal of Business Research*, 7, 4, pp. 124-8.
- Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hannan, M. T., and Freeman, J. (1977). The population ecology of organizations. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 82, 5, pp. 929-964.
- Hartley, M. (2002). *A call to purpose: Mission-centered change at three liberal arts colleges*. New York: Routledge-Falmer.
- Hartley, M. (2003). "There is no way without a because": Revitalization of purpose at three liberal arts colleges. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27, 1, pp. 75-102.
- Hartley, M., & Schall, L. (2005). The endless good argument: The adaptation of mission at two liberal arts colleges. *Planning for Higher Education*. 33, 4, pp 5–11.
- Harwarth, I., Maline, M., & DeBra, E. (1997). Women's colleges in the United States: History, issues and challenges.

<http://www.womenscolleges.org/files/pdfs/WomensCollegesHistoryIssuesChallenges.pdf>

Hawkins, H. (1999). The making of the liberal arts college identity. *Daedalus*, 128, 1, pp. 1-25.

Helmreich, P. C. (1985). *Wheaton College, 1834-1912: The seminary years*. Norton, MA: Wheaton College.

Helmreich, P. C. (2002). *Wheaton College, 1834-1957: A family affair*. Cranbury, NJ: Cornwall Books.

Horowitz, H. L. (1987). *Campus life: Undergraduate cultures from the end of the 20th century to the present*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Horowitz, H. L. (2005). Balancing hopes and limits in the liberal arts colleges. In *Liberal arts college in American higher education: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 16-25). New York: American Council of Learned Societies.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (2010). Retrieved February 27, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/InstitutionList.aspx>.

Jablin, F.M. (1979). Superior-subordinate communication: The state of the art. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, 1201-1222.

Jablin, F.M. (1990). Organizational communication. In G.L. Dahnke & G.W. Clatterbuck (Eds.), *Human communication: Theory and research* (pp. 156-182). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Jones, E., Watson, B., Gardner, J., & Gallois, C. (2004). Organizational communication: Challenges for the new century. *The Journal of Communication*, 54, 4, pp. 722-750.

Kirp, D. L. (2003). Mindshare and the life of the mind: A liberal arts college finds its market niche. *Change*, 35, 34-39.

Kirp, D. L., & Holman, J. (2003). This little student went to market. In *Shakespeare, Einstein and the bottom line: The marketing of higher education* (pp. 11-32). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Krone, K.J., Jablin, F.M., & Putnam, L.L. (1987). Communication theory and organizational communication: Multiple perspectives. In Jablin, F., Putnam, L.L., Roberts, K., & Porter, L. (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication: An interpretive approach* (pp. 18-40). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Lapovsky, L. (2005). The economic challenges of liberal arts college. In *Liberal arts college in American higher education: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 50-69). New York: American Council of Learned Societies.
- Lyhall, S. (1987, April 26). A Women's college looks to men, skeptically, for survival. *New York Times*, p. E8.
- Meacham, J. (2008). What's the use of a mission statement? *Academe*, 94, (1), 21-4.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Miller-Bernal, L. (2000). *Separate by degree: Women students' experiences in single-sex and coeducational colleges*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Miller-Bernal, L. (2004). Coeducation: An uneven progression. In L. Miller-Bernal & S. L. Poulson, *Going coed: Women's experiences in formerly men's colleges and universities, 1950-2000* (pp. ). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Miller-Bernal, L. (2006). Wells College: The transition to coeducation begins. In L. Miller-Bernal & S. L. Poulson, (Eds.), *Challenged by coeducation: Women's colleges since the 1960s* (pp. 1-24). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Miller-Bernal, L., & Poulson, S. L. (2006). The state of women's colleges today. In L. Miller-Bernal & S. L. Poulson, (Eds.), *Challenged by coeducation: Women's colleges since the 1960's* (pp. 375-388). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press
- Minor, J. T., & Tierney, W. G. (2005). The Danger of Deference: A Case of Polite Governance. *Teachers College Record*. 107(1), 137-56.
- National Organization for Women Website (n.d.). Retrieved February 13, 2010 from [http://www.now.org/issues/title\\_ix/index.html](http://www.now.org/issues/title_ix/index.html)
- Palmieri, P. A. (1997). From republican motherhood to race suicide: Arguments on the higher education of women in the United States, 1820-1920. In L. F. Goodchild & H. S. Wechsler (Eds.), *The History of higher education* (pp. 173-182). Needham Heights, MA : Simon & Schuster.
- Peterson's College Review Website (n.d.). Retrieved February 14, 2010 from <http://www.petersons.com/collegeprofiles/Profile.aspx?inunid=9702&reprjid=12&sponsor=1&tabid=10000>

- Pfnister, A. O. (1984). The role of the liberal arts college: A historical overview of the debates. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 55, 2, pp. 145-70.
- Powers, E. (2007). Staying single sex. *Inside Higher Ed*, March 5. Retrieved March 6, 2007, from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/03/05/sweetbriar>.
- Quinn, R. E., & Cameron, K. (1983). Organizational life cycles and shifting criteria of effectiveness: Some preliminary evidence. *Management Science*, 29, 1, p. 33-51.
- Reisberg, L. (2000). A crossroads for women's colleges. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 10.
- Rosenberg, R. (1988). The limits of access: The history of coeducation in America. In J.M. Faragher and F. Howe (Eds.), *Women and higher education in American history* (pp. 107-129). New York: Norton.
- Rossmann, G., & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rudolph, F. (1990). *The American college and university: A history*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.
- Salholz, E., Hutchinson, S., Katz, S. E., Joseph, N., & Michael, R. (1987, March 30). A sisterhood under siege. *Newsweek*, 77.
- Salomone, R. (2007, February 16). A place for women's college. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. B20.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schmidt, R. (1998). The role of women's colleges in the future. In J.M. Faragher and F. Howe (Eds.), *Women and higher education in American history* (pp.198-207). New York: Norton.
- Semel, S. F., & Sadovnik, A. R. (2006). Coeducation at Wheaton College: From conscious coeducation to distinctive coeducation? In L. Miller-Bernal & S. L. Poulson, (Eds.), *Challenged by coeducation: Women's colleges since the 1960s* (pp. 48-75). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Simons, H. W. (1970). Requirements, problems, and strategies: A theory of persuasion for social movements. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 56(1), 1-11.
- Sorum, C. E. (2005). The problem of mission: A brief survey of the changing mission of the liberal arts college. In *Liberal arts college in American higher education*:

- Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 26-39). New York: American Council of Learned Societies.
- Spanier, B., Bloom, A., & Boroviak, B. (Eds.). (1984). *Toward a balanced curriculum: A sourcebook for initiating gender integration projects*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc.
- Spillett, M. A. (2003). Peer debriefing: Who, what, when, why, how. *Academic Exchange*, 7, 3, pp. 36-40.
- S. R. G. (1999). Distinctively American: The residential liberal arts colleges. *Daedalus*, 128, 1, pp. v-xii.
- Stake, R. (1994). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 236-47). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Thelin, J. (2004). *A history of American higher education*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Title IX Website (n.d.) Retrieved February 13, 2010 from <http://www.titleix.info/History/History-Overview.aspx>.
- U. S. Department of Education. (1993). *120 years of American education: A statistical portrait*. Washington, DC.
- U. S. Department of Labor (n.d.) Retrieved March 7, 2010 from <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm>
- U. S. News and World Report College Rankings Website (n.d.). Retrieved February 14, 2010 from <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/liberal-arts-rankings>
- Van de Ven, A. H., & Poole, M. S. (1995). Explaining development and change in organizations. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20, 3, p. 510-540.
- Wheaton College (2007). *History of the college*. Retrieved June 6, 2009 from <http://www.wheatoncollege.edu/about/History.html>
- Wheaton College About the College Website (n.d.). Retrieved June 6, 2009 from <http://wheatoncollege.edu/about/basics/>
- Wheaton College Advising Website (n.d.) retrieved February 13, 2010 from <http://wheatoncollege.edu/advising/scholars/>
- Wheaton College Alumni Relations Website (n.d.). Retrieved February 13, 2010 from <http://wheatoncollege.edu/alumnaei/volunteer-resources/ways-to-volunteer/>



- Wheaton College Archives Website (n.d.). Retrieved February 13, 2010 from [http://wheatoncollege.edu/archives/exhibits/history/brief\\_history.html](http://wheatoncollege.edu/archives/exhibits/history/brief_history.html)
- Wheaton College First Year Seminar Website (n.d.). Retrieved February 13, 2010 from <http://wheatoncollege.edu/academics/the-wheaton-curriculum/first-year-seminar/>
- Wheaton College Institutional Self-Study (2009). Retrieved March 6, 2010 from <http://wheatoncollege.edu/academics/accreditation/>
- Wheaton College student group plans hub protest of co-education. (1987, February 25). *The Taunton Gazette*.
- Wolf-Wendel, L. E. (2000). Research issues on women's colleges. Chapter in OERI (Ed.), *A Closer Look at Women's Colleges*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/WomensColleges/index.html>.
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zammuto, R. F. (1984). Are the liberal arts and endangered species? *Journal of Higher Education*, 55, 2, pp. 184-211.

#### Interviews Conducted

- Alice F. Emerson, November 19, 2009
- Ann W. Caldwell, November 30, 2009
- Claire Ramsbottom, May 22, 2007
- Darlene Boroviak, November 16, 2009
- Gail Berson, November 16, 2009
- Jack Kuszaj, March 23, 2007, May 23, 2007
- Paul E. Gray, November 17, 2009
- Sue Alexander, March 23, 2007, May 23, 2007

## Items from Wheaton College Archives

Admission Materials printed in spring 1987

A. Kleinsasser, Letter, February 24, 1969

Emerson Letter to the Community, January 28, 1987

Emerson Statement, May 27, 1987

Gray Letter to the Wheaton Family, January 28, 1987

Guidelines for Commencement/Reunion Weekend, May 18, 1987

H. Goldberg Memo to the faculty, February 4, 1987

Letter from D. Boroviak to H. Goldberg, March 12, 1987

Minutes from Wheaton College Board of Trustees

January 23, 1971

May 1, 1971

January 8, 1987

February 28, 1987

May 9, 1987

May 24, 1987

Minutes from Wheaton College faculty meeting, October 28, 1970

P. Tomkins, Letter, April 3, 1969

Planning Report, 1988

Planning Committee Memo to Wheaton Community, September 12, 1988

Planning Committee Draft Report, 1988

Proposed Distribution of All Constituency mailings, January 8, 1987

Report on attitudes toward coeducation held by students and faculty of Wheaton College, 1969

Student Government Association Survey, February 1987

Student Government Association Survey Results, April 1987

Synopsis of Final Report, Admission and Recruitment Task Force, 1988

Synopsis of Final Report, Athletics Task Force, 1988

Synopsis of Final Report, Community Development Task Force, 1988

Synopsis of Final Report, Learning Environment Task Force, 1988

Synopsis of Final Report, Student Life Task Force, 1988

T. R. Brooks Letter to Wheaton Students, January 29, 1987

W. Prentice, Letter, March 3, 1969

W. Prentice, Letter, April 2, 1969

W. B. Budd Letter to Wheaton Parents, January 28, 1987

Wheaton College Facts for the Future Document, 1986





MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 03063 8633