

A Brief History of Boston College

Boston College was founded by the Society of Jesus in 1863, and is one of twenty-eight Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States. With three teachers and twenty-two students, the school opened its doors on September 5, 1864. At the outset and for more than seven decades of its first century, the college remained an exclusively liberal arts institution with emphasis on the Greek and Latin classics, English and modern languages and with more attention to philosophy than to the physical or social sciences. Religion of course had its place in the classroom as well as in the nonacademic life of the college.

Originally located on Harrison Avenue in the South End of Boston, where it shared quarters with the Boston College High School, the College outgrew its urban setting toward the end of its first fifty years. A new location was selected in Chestnut Hill, then almost rural, and four parcels of land were acquired in 1907. A design competition for the development of the campus was won by the firm of Maginnis and Walsh, and ground was broken on June 19, 1909, for the construction of Gasson Hall. It is located on the site of the Lawrence farmhouse, in the center of the original tract of land purchased by Father Gasson, and is built largely of stone taken from the surrounding property.

Later purchases doubled the size of the property, with the addition of the upper campus in 1941, and the lower campus with the purchase of the Lawrence Basin and adjoining land in 1949. In 1974 Boston College acquired Newton College of the Sacred Heart, a mile-and-a-half from the main campus. With fifteen buildings standing on forty acres, it is now the site of the Boston College Law School and dormitories housing over 800 students, primarily freshmen.

Though incorporated as a University since its beginning, it was not until its second half-century that Boston College began to fill out the dimensions of its University charter. The Summer Session was inaugurated in 1924; the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1925; the Law School, 1929; the Evening College, 1929; the Graduate School of Social Work, 1936; the College of Business Administration, 1938. The latter, along with its Graduate School established in 1957, is now known as The Wallace E. Carroll School of Management. The Schools of Nursing and Education were founded in 1947 and 1952, respectively. Weston Observatory, founded in 1928, was accepted as a Department of Boston College in 1947, offering courses in geophysics and geology.

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences began programs at the doctoral level in 1952. Now courses leading to the doctorate are offered by twelve Arts and Sciences departments. The Schools of Education and Nursing, the Carroll Graduate School of Management, and the Graduate School of Social Work also offer doctoral programs.

In 1927 Boston College conferred one earned bachelor's degree and fifteen master's degrees on women through the

Extension Division, the precursor of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the Evening College, and the Summer Session. By 1970 all undergraduate programs had become coeducational. Today women students comprise more than half of the University's enrollment.

In 1996 the Evening College became the College of Advancing Studies, offering a master's degree as well as the bachelor's degree. The university's longest presidency, 24 years, came to an end when Father J. Donald Monan became chancellor and was succeeded in the presidency by Father William P. Leahy.

Source: University Historian

A Boston College Chronology*

- 1857 Father John McElroy, S.J. purchased property in the South End of Boston for a new college.
- 1863 Gov. John A. Andrews signed the charter of Boston College, April 1. First meeting of the Boston College trustees, July 6.
- 1864 Boston College opened on September 5, with Father John Bapst, S.J. as president and Father Robert Fulton, S.J. as dean. Twenty-two students admitted.
- 1877 First Commencement. Nine students received A.B. degrees, June 28.
- 1883 *The Stylus*, the College literary magazine, founded.
- 1907 Father Thomas Gasson, S.J. named president; purchased 31 acre Lawrence farm in Chestnut Hill for new campus.
- 1913 Gasson Hall completed. First graduation held at the Heights, June 18. Four classes enrolled in Gasson in September.
- 1918 Conscription and voluntary enlistment for World War I reduced the College enrollment to 125 in October, down from 671 two years earlier.
- 1919 Boston College's first major football victory, 5-3 over favored Yale at New Haven. First issue of *The Heights*, student weekly, November 17.
- 1923 Baseball team beat Holy Cross 4-1 before 30,000 at Braves Field, June 18.
- 1924 Summer School started.
- 1925 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences started.
- 1928 Bapst library opened, the fourth of the early Maginnis and Walsh buildings. Weston Observatory, the seismological station, founded.
- 1929 Law School opened at 11 Beacon St., Boston. Evening College started as "Boston College Intown" at 126 Newbury Street, Boston.
- 1935 Greek requirement for the A.B. degree dropped.
- 1936 Graduate School of Social Work opened at Newbury Street.
- 1938 School of Management opened at Newbury Street as the "College of Business Administration."
- 1940 Cotton Bowl vs. Clemson (3-6) first bowl game.

- 1941 Cardinal O'Connell purchased the Liggett estate, the upper campus, and gave it to the College.
- 1946 To accommodate post war enrollment, army surplus barracks became dormitories on the site of present Campion Hall; a larger office/classroom building was erected on the site of McGuinn, and a recreation building on the site of Cushing Hall.
- 1947 Construction begun on the first permanent building since the completion of Bapst in 1928, to house the College of Business Administration (occupied in September 1948). The School of Nursing opened at 126 Newbury Street.
- 1949 College acquired small reservoir (lower campus). Hockey team won national title at Colorado Springs.
- 1951 Lyons Hall was completed in July.
- 1952 The School of Education opened in September in Gasson Hall. Doctoral programs were begun in Economics, Education, and History, the beginning of increased emphasis on graduate education.
- 1954 Law School moved to St. Thomas More Hall on the Chestnut Hill campus.
- 1955 Claver, Loyola, and Xavier Halls opened, first campus residences constructed by B.C. The School of Education moved into Campion Hall.
- 1957 Graduate School of Management founded. Alumni Stadium dedicated September 21.
- 1958 Latin no longer required for the A. B. degree. The College of Arts and Sciences Honors Program and the Scholar of the College program were begun. The original gymnasium, Roberts Center, and the first hockey rink, McHugh Forum, were opened.
- 1959 The Board of Regents, advisory to the trustees and administration, was established.
- 1960 The Nursing School occupied its campus building, Cushing Hall. Three more student residences, named for the early bishops of Boston, Cheverus, Fenwick, and Fitzpatrick, were completed.
- 1961 McElroy Commons opened.
- 1963 The Boston College Centennial Convocation was addressed by President John F. Kennedy on April 20. The Self-Study of the College of Arts and Sciences led to a new core curriculum, a reduction in the course load, election of department chairmen, the establishment of Educational Policy committees, and sabbaticals.
- 1964 Carney Hall opened. Welch, Williams, and Roncalli residences were occupied.
- 1966 Higgins Hall was dedicated in November.
- 1968 The Regents joined the Jesuit trustees to form the Board of Directors, October 8. The Black Talent Program was started, precursor to AHANA Student Programs.
- 1970 Women admitted for degrees in all undergraduate colleges (Sept.). The modular residences were placed on the lower campus. Pulse, an academic/social action program, was started. The Campus School for multi-handicapped children was begun.
- 1971 The office of president of Boston College and rector of the Boston College Jesuit community were separated on January 1. Installation of Omicron Chapter, Phi Beta Kappa, April 6.
- 1972 Father J. Donald Monan succeeded Father Joyce as president, September 5. The trustees voted to eliminate the Board of Directors and to expand the Board of Trustees to include laymen, November 19. The newly structured Board of Trustees, with 35 members (13 Jesuits), elected Cornelius Owens '36 chairman. The Women's Center was established.
- 1973 The Long-Range Fiscal Planning Committee presented to the Trustees a plan for balanced budgets for the succeeding five years.
- 1974 Newton College of the Sacred Heart became part of Boston College (announced March 11).
- 1975 The Law School moved to the Newton Campus. Edmond's Hall was occupied in September.
- 1976 The New Heights Advancement Campaign to raise \$21 million over five years was begun in April. By 1981 it raised more than \$25 million.
- 1979 1,000 friends of Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill gathered in Washington for a dinner attended by President Carter to establish the O'Neill Chair in American Politics, December 9. The Graduate School of Social Work established a doctoral degree program. The Recreation Complex named for Athletic Director, William J. Flynn.
- 1980 The Jesuit community endowed the Thomas I. Gasson, S.J. Chair for distinguished Jesuit scholars.
- 1982 Walsh Hall residence dedicated to former president Michael P. Walsh, S.J., October 7.
- 1984 O'Neill Library dedicated to Speaker of the House Thomas P. O'Neill, '36, October 14. Doug Flutie awarded Heisman Trophy.
- 1985 The E. Paul Robsham, Jr. Theater Arts Center was dedicated on October 25.
- 1986 Rededication of renovated Bapst Library, dedication of Burns Library, April 22. *Goals for Nineties* (planning document) published. Alumni Association moved to Alumni House on the Newton Campus. St. Patrick's Day dinner in Washington honoring Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill. Speakers included President Reagan, former President Gerald Ford, and Bob Hope. \$2 million was raised for B.C. scholarships. Five year \$125 million Campaign for Boston College started. The dismantling of McHugh Forum was begun to make way for Conte Forum.
- 1987 The Carroll Graduate School of Management's doctoral program in finance was approved by the Trustees. The Jesuit Institute, funded by a \$1.5 million gift from the Jesuit community, with a

- matching University subsidy, was founded to promote research on the religious and Jesuit traditions of Boston College.
- 1988 The first students enrolled in the new Nursing Ph.D. program. The Music Program became a department of the College of Arts and Sciences. Vouté Hall and its companion student residence were occupied. The Museum of Art (then called the art gallery) was opened in Devlin Hall. Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, spoke at celebrations of the University's 125th anniversary, October 5 and 7.
- 1989 Congressman Silvio O. Conte '49 was present for the dedication of Conte Forum on February 18. The School of Management became the Carroll School of Management and the Carroll Graduate School of Management in honor of Wallace E. Carroll '28. Sister Thea Bowman was awarded an honorary degree and AHANA House was named for her in October. Roberts Center was razed to make room for the Merkert Chemistry Center.
- 1991 Wing added to Campion Hall, with major renovation of the original building.
- 1992 The Eugene F. Merkert Chemistry Center dedicated. The Campaign for Boston College completed, exceeding the \$125 million goal by over \$11 million.
- 1993 Renovated Devlin Hall welcomed as occupants the Department of Geology and Geophysics, the Department of Fine Arts, the Art Museum, and the Admission Office. The football team beat Notre Dame at South Bend, 41–39, when Notre Dame was ranked No. 1 in the country. Renovation of Fulton Hall was begun. A new core curriculum went into effect in September. The Department of Theater was established. Two new residences, 70 and 90 St. Thomas More Road, were completed and occupied.
- 1994 The graduate programs in Nursing and Education separated from the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. Father Monan established a new University Academic Planning Council to map university strategies for the near future. A new dining facility was opened alongside Robsham Theater, and a garage for 900 cars was completed behind St. Mary's Hall. The stadium seating capacity was enlarged from 32,000 to 44,500. For the second year in a row the football team defeated Notre Dame.
- 1995 Fulton Hall reopened, enlarged and transformed exteriorly to match the Gothic style of the early buildings. The university's endowment placed it among the thirty-five largest in the U.S. The Brighton-Allston Boston College Neighborhood Center was established.
- 1996 On October 6, 1995, the trustees elected Father William P. Leahy to succeed Father J. Donald Monan as president. The Law School's new library was completed and opened on the Newton campus in January. *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Boston College 16th among the nation's teaching universities and 37th in the national universities category. The student residence at 70 St. Thomas More Road was named Thomas A. and Margaret A. Vanderslice Hall; the nearby residence building at number 80 was named Gabelli Hall; and the Art Museum became the Charles S. and Isabella V. McMullen Museum of Art. On May 1 the university community honored retiring president Monan with a warm, joyous celebration. The University Academic Planning Council's final report, "Advancing the Legacy: The New Millennium," was published in May. On July 31 Father Monan's 24-year presidency ended and Father William Leahy donned the mantle of president.
- 1997 The highlight of the year was a two-day celebration of the inauguration of Father William P. Leahy as the 25th president of Boston College. On October 19 Father Leahy was principal celebrant of a Eucharistic Liturgy of the Holy Spirit on O'Neill Plaza. Later in Robsham Theater Harvard University President Neil L. Rudenstine moderated a panel of distinguished scholars discussing the topic "Remembering a Past – Imagining a Future: Catholic Higher Education." On the following afternoon in Conte Forum at the formal Inauguration Ceremony greetings of welcome and of good wishes were brought by the Archbishop of Boston, Bernard Cardinal Law, the Governor of the Commonwealth, William F. Weld, the Provincial of the Jesuit New England Province, Rev. William A. Barry, S.J., Massachusetts Institute of Technology President, Charles M. Vest, representing the higher education community, and by representatives of the Boston College alumni, students, faculty, and staff. After receiving the symbols of office, Father Leahy spoke of the challenges facing him and Boston College. The University launched a new journal, *Religion and the Arts*, with Dennis Taylor, professor of English, as editor. Father Leahy established and chaired a committee to outline steps needed to implement recommendations of the University Academic Planning Council. In January the School of Nursing held religious, academic, and social celebrations of its golden jubilee. In a rating of graduate schools, *US News and World Report* placed Boston College Law School 22nd in its field while the Graduate School of Social work was ranked 14th, the School of Nursing 27th, and the School of Education 28th. Father Leahy was homilist at Cardinal Law's St. Patrick's day Mass at Holy Cross cathedral.

* References to presidents and Board of Trustee chairmen are minimized in this chronology since they are listed elsewhere in this *Fact Book*.

Source: University Historian