

*Info*  
Women's Cont. Educ

# Continuing Education for Women

1960-1975



## HISTORY

The history of Continuing Education for Women at the University of Minnesota is a fascinating story of an idea which, thanks to good planning and dedicated work, was turned into action in 1960 and has now enjoyed fifteen years of creative and productive life.

The idea, like many great ideas, was as simple as it was realistic and sound. Most women, because of discontinuities in their lives, have need at certain ages to resume or continue education, with values accruing to themselves as individual human beings and to the society of which they are a part. Because of the years devoted by most women to marriage and children, with all their tasks and joys, a certain obsolescence confronts women in things academic and professional. If opportunities and facilities are available, this "rustiness" can be filled or replaced by a new and exciting resourcefulness.

Such basic ideas stirred the imaginations of two gifted faculty women of the University of Minnesota in the late 1950's. Elizabeth L. Cless and Virginia L. Senders, the originators of the "Minnesota Plan for the Continuing Education of Women," were not content merely to theorize. They went to work, got their ideas down in black and white, and invited criticism (always in abundant supply on a university campus). Their zeal and enthusiasm were infectious.

It must be admitted their basic ideas were planted in good soil. The University of Minnesota was already far advanced in testing, guidance, continuing education, and wide-reaching service to the people — a service not deterred by difficulties or the fear of innovation. The University of Minnesota was (and is) a large university with extensive resources and facilities, flexible in its traditions and work, and with faculties and an administration willing to meet new challenges.

When, in 1960, the program received from the Carnegie Corporation a grant of \$110,000 as aid and encouragement for the first three years, the Plan was organized with a counseling/research component under Senders, attached to the Dean of Students, and an experimental teaching component directed by Cless in the General Extension Division. From its modest teaching beginnings of two or three liberal arts seminars limited to twenty-five students each, Continuing Education for Women has grown to a department offering 150 to 200 courses and registering over 3,000 students a year.

The growth was neither spontaneous nor accidental. Much of the credit for the success of the program belongs to Vera M. Schletzer who accepted, integrated, and coordinated the ideas of the two co-founders. She went to work as a counselor in 1961 and, when Senders

left in 1962, Schletzer joined Cless as co-director. Dr. Schletzer was working for women long before the present liberation movements became popular. Through her efforts the Carnegie grant was extended for two years. Through her tireless enthusiasm and patience, she defined the Plan in a role that coordinated with other departments in the University, smoothing out bureaucratic problems, winning support, and spreading the word. In 1965, when the Carnegie funding phased out, University support was assured and the program was integrated into University budgets.

That fall Cless left for Claremont and in January of 1966 Schletzer left the Plan and moved into the General Extension Division to broaden the scope and service of the Counseling Department. Louise Roff became the director of the Minnesota Plan for the Continuing Education of Women. Under her creative leadership the program grew and the wider needs of many additional women were addressed. On Roff's retirement in 1973, Edith Mucke became director. Curricular programs, program advising, services for, and counseling of women returning to school are now contained within Continuing Education and Extension.

### **PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES**

The life pattern of a typical woman differs in predictable ways from that of a typical man. Many women retire from active professional life when they have children. Human waste occurs when able people do not obtain or use education to the limit of their abilities and when trained people drop out of socially productive activity, whether it be in the labor market or volunteer enterprises.

Today many women do not limit the definition of themselves to mothers and homemakers. They are eager to begin or continue an education which will give them a strong liberal arts education and/or an education in preparation for a career.

The principal objective of the program was originally to make possible the full use of the resources of able women. A second objective, complementary rather than competitive with the first, was an increase in personal happiness and satisfaction of many individual women which can occur as they find ways to make full and productive use of their capacities and their time. Today, fifteen years later, these continue to be the objectives.

### **OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

The direction of the program's growth has been dictated largely by the needs of women who have come for help. Because mature, out-of-

school women came in great numbers, the program was for years known as a plan for mature women or "rusty ladies." It was Ann Green, student in the first seminar, who coined the term to describe the state of their academic skills, a term used with great affection, and a term so gently apt that it was immediately accepted into the lexicon of continuing education for women.

During these past fifteen years Continuing Education for Women has helped many women foresee and plan for the interrupted, multiple-role lives they lead; helped them use all the facilities available in a large state university to maintain intellectual skills and training throughout the family years; and made it possible for women to contribute in a major way to the society in which they live.

Today Continuing Education for Women has a staff of seven persons: a director who is a member of the professorial staff, three program coordinators, a program facilitator, and two secretaries.

### **COUNSELING**

At the present time, Schletzer's staff of fifteen skilled counselors and advisers are available to all students and would-be students, without charge, to guide them through the use of testing services and consultations. Professional counselors and program advisers assist students in selecting programs of study, determine prerequisites and standing, evaluate transcripts of previous academic work, and arrange examinations for credit or advanced standing.

Several times annually, Continuing Education for Women offers courses taught by staff members of the Counseling Department — courses designed for women seeking a sense of direction. Aptitude, interest, and scholastic ability tests are given. Time is devoted to career development and opportunities, problems in returning to school, and morale building.

### **DELIVERY**

Eight or nine liberal arts seminars are offered annually. Interdisciplinary faculties made up of outstanding University teachers coordinate and lead these seminars carrying upper division or graduate credit, each limited to thirty students.

Regular University accredited courses, taught by University faculty, are offered at times and locations convenient for part-time students. Among the disciplines represented by the courses offered are studio arts, humanities, history, English, psychology, sociology, rhetoric, American Studies, languages, accounting, and biology.

The Department offers workshops in skills and refresher courses such as How to Study, Efficient Reading, Let's Read a Book, Math Refresher Course, Journalism Workshops. Noncredit seminars and classes of from three to twelve sessions are programmed in response to community requests and needs.

### **THE STUDENT BODY**

Many students who begin their academic work through Continuing Education for Women go on and become full-fledged University of Minnesota day-school students. For such students, the Department acts as a foyer or entrance. Many students who have completed some college work are able to finish by taking courses offered through the Department.

Students range in age from 18 to 81. They come from all socio-economic levels. Not only in age and socio-economic levels do they reflect diversity: they are single, married, divorced, widowed; Black, Caucasian, Oriental; of diverse religious beliefs. They come from all parts of the two million population metropolitan area, and from small towns as far away as one hundred miles. Their educational backgrounds range from no college work at all to persons holding graduate degrees. Today approximately 900 to 1,000 students register for courses through Continuing Education for Women each quarter.

According to a survey of all the students who registered for courses during 1973-74, we find a representation of every possible age group from what is close to the typical undergraduate to what is considered post-retirement age. The largest grouping is between the ages of 41 and 50 years — 35% are below 40. Most of the respondents are married and most of them have children.

The income, educational level, and occupational status reflect the same middle class origins as that of the general University of Minnesota undergraduate population. The academic achievement of the group is relatively high, 75% having some college background at the time of the first registration in Continuing Education for Women. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents indicate their current full-time occupation as "housewife." Those employed include clerical workers, teachers, and other professional occupations.

Most participants give personal interest and intellectual stimulation as reasons for the first registration although many later will have decided to become degree candidates.

### **THANK YOU**

To the hundreds of faculty members and administrators, to members of the Advisory Board and to the thousands of students who have made this celebration possible, our thanks!

Continuing Education for Women

1960-1975

1960-1962	Virginia Senders, Coordinator and Co-director Elizabeth Cless, Co-director
1962-1965	Vera M. Schletzer, Coordinator and Co-director Elizabeth Cless, Co-director
1965-1966	Vera M. Schletzer, Coordinator and Director
1966-1974	Louise Roff, Director
1974-	Edith Mucke, Director

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1966-	Vera M. Schletzer, Director, Department of Counseling, Continuing Education and Extension
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*The University of Minnesota adheres to the principle that all persons shall have equal opportunity and access to facilities in any phase of University activity without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.*