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When did St. Norbert change from an institution for future priests to a Catholic college open to any student?

Ashley Knoke '10

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April 2011

Question:

Abbot Pennings,

When did St. Norbert change from an institution for future priests to a Catholic college open to any student?

Ashley Knoke '10

Answer:

My dearest Ashley,

I extend my heartfelt thanks for your query, which, it strikes me, has more than one answer. The transition about which you inquire occurred in a number of steps, each intended to broaden the reach of my Norbertine brethren's service to the community.

As your question suggests, our fine institution was founded in 1898 as a Catholic college to provide men who intended to become priests a religious and classical education. In 1901, St. Norbert opened its doors a bit wider, welcoming not just aspiring priests but all men interested in post-secondary study. This important change enlarged the college's enrollment and prompted its first baccalaureate degree distribution in 1907.

In the decades that followed, the college's curriculum grew richer by the year. St. Norbert awarded its first master of arts degree in 1932. Two years later, the college began offering summer courses. The ROTC program established in 1936 brought about the first military science courses. Saturday classes arose in 1937 and evening classes in 1950.



Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

[Submit Your Question](#)

A proud, pivotal moment in college history came in 1952, when St. Norbert officially admitted women for the first time. You may recall my [thoughts on this advancement](#) written in response to another inquiring alumnus.

Though God calls me to be humble, my chest swells with pride in the growth of the college, which continues to this day. St. Norbert now offers more than 30 major fields of study and three graduate programs, and has on its current rolls 2,041 undergraduate students and 62 graduate students from 32 states and 32 foreign countries. I daresay even St. Norbert himself couldn't help but rejoice in that.

Responses to "Ask the Abbot" questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, O.Praem., who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

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