

The 1903 Conference of Deans of Women of the Middle West
Minutes of the Conference of Deans of Women of the Middle West
Held in Chicago and Evanston
November 3d, and 4th, 1903.

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Minutes of the Conference of Deans of Women of the Middle West
Held in Chicago and Evanston
November 3d, and 4th, 1903.

Tuesday, Nov. 3d, 1903.

10-A. M.

The Conference of Deans of Women of the Middle West was opened by addresses of welcome by Mrs. Crow and Miss Talbot. Miss Evans was chosen presiding officer of the Conference and Miss Breed as secretary.

After a prayer by Miss Evans, it was decided: 1st. That no newspaper reporters be admitted to any of the sessions; 2nd. That no guests be admitted to the meetings, with the exception of the session on Wednesday evening.

On motion of Mrs. Crow, a committee was appointed to present names of those who should plan a permanent organization.

Miss Gill (Chairman), Miss Talbot and Miss Richardson were appointed.

The secretary then called the roll and found the following women present at the Conference.

Miss Breed..... Indiana University,
Mrs. Crow..... Northwestern University,
Miss De Greene..... Lawrence University,
Miss Evans..... Carleton College
Miss Galloo..... University of Kansas,
Miss Gill..... Barnard College,
Miss Harwood..... Ripon College,
Miss Jayne..... University of Illinois,

Mrs. Jordan..... University of Michigan,
Miss Luce..... Oberlin College,
Miss Mayhew..... University of Wisconsin,
Miss Richardson..... Ohio Wesleyan College,
Miss Sherzer..... Illinois College,
Miss Stoner..... Ohio State University,
Miss Stratton..... University of Colorado,
Miss Talbot..... University of Chicago,
Mrs. Wallace..... Beloit College,
Miss Young..... University of Iowa.

The Conference then proceeded to discuss the subjects announced in the call for the meeting.

Miss Stratton opened the discussion on Dormitories, which she considered useful to unify and generalize social life. Miss Mayhew spoke of the democratization of students by dormitory life and its influence in giving social polish and developing a spirit of enthusiasm in college matters. Women living in town worked all the time, women in hall made more friends. She advocated houses containing thirty to fifty women – one housing one hundred being too large. She thought the health of women in hall may suffer to some extent from the spreads and waste of time, but that such women come out in the end as well as the others.

Miss Sherzer thought that life in a dormitory was less trying on the nerves rather than more. The women in hall gains more self control.

Miss Stoner reports that Ohio State University is considering plans for a cottage system. The sanitary conditions of students' living places cannot be properly controlled without some such system.

Miss Richardson reported that Ohio Wesleyan used moral influence to induce houses in town to conform to the University regulations.

Mrs. Jordan reported that Michigan supervises lodging places to some extent, but there are always women who take lodgers solely for pecuniary profit. She described the Woman's League as the Dean's best tool, and as the best instrument for breaking down the line between sorority and non-sorority women. She would favor either a dormitory for freshmen, or a system of accredited houses. She considered the habit of having spreads &c, as quite as prevalent at Michigan as at a dormitory institution. The nine sorority houses she found useful, especially as a means of bringing freshmen under the influence of upper-classwomen.

Miss Breed advocated a dormitory system for the reasons given by previous speakers, and also on account of the possibility of their providing food better adapted to women doing brain work. She regarded the ameliorating social effect as especially desirable in State Institutions.

Mrs. Jordan described her method of calling the women together by classes at a semi-social function and discussing with them matters social, sanitary and academic. She sees all the women in an official way, as they are required to file cards with their courses, &c, in her office, and they drop or change courses only with her consent.

The University of Michigan suggests to town houses that men callers be received only in down-stairs parlors, and be required to leave at a fixed hour; that there be no

parties on Monday to Thursday inclusive; and that students keep early hours. The receiving of men in up-stairs sitting-rooms is almost done away. Mrs. Jordan keeps lists of approved houses, which are filled first. She discourages the rooming of men and women in the same house.

Miss Stratton has done away with this latter practice in Colorado.

Miss Evans reported that at California it is customary for men and women to live in the same houses, and for men to be received in bed-rooms.

Miss Richardson reported that 250 out of 400 women at Ohio Wesleyan live in hall. Others live in accredited houses (no men allowed there) or with relations. The ten men's fraternities are each allowed one social function per year. The women go to their chapter houses only at these times. Miss Richardson thought the life in the large dormitory a nervous drain, but the dormitory exerts a beneficial influence on the life of the college; she favored a cottage system. She meets every woman filling her course card, together with personal memoranda.

Miss Young has become Registrar of Iowa, so as to come in contact with all the women officially.

Miss Galloo reported that there are faculty advisors at Kansas for each class. The freshmen report to faculty women, but it is a great problem to get in touch especially with upper-classwomen.

At this point in the discussion it was decided to appoint a committee to arrange for getting systematic information from the Deans present on such matters as their official duties, their teaching or not teaching, &c, &c.

Committee:

Miss Richardson (Chairman),

Miss Galloo,

Mrs. Jordan.

Continuing the discussion, Miss Luce thought the dormitory question of pre-eminence important. Life in hall is far less of a strain than in private houses. At Oberlin one-fourth of the women live in hall, others in approved houses, under hall regulations. The mistresses of town houses report delinquencies to the Dean. With few exceptions all board where they lodge. Men and women are not allowed to room on the same floor. There are rules for hours of calling, lights out, &c. Miss Luce thinks the problem of finding suitable heads of dormitories is a grave one; also the matter of inducing town houses to furnish suitable food and comfortable furnishings. She hopes to increase her dormitory system, favoring smaller houses.

Mrs. Crow discussed the advantages of influencing residents of a dormitory during the first few days or weeks of the academic year, when they seem more plastic.

Miss Stratton thought a Dean must have official duties, as machinery, to come in contact with and influence women.

Miss Evans reported that at Carleton all women not living with relatives or working for their board, live in dormitories, and she thought this should be so at the State Universities also. She described the Carleton régime and commented especially on the good health of their students. The Dean should have general oversight of town houses and apply dormitory standards to them. Miss Evans talks to her students after prayers every Tuesday night. She endeavors to keep the rules few.

Miss Sherzer urges the necessity of making halls attractive and beautiful.

Of the committee appointed earlier, Miss Gill as chairman, reported that the committee has appointed Miss Evans, Mrs. Crow, and Miss Breed as a committee on Permanent Organization.

The conference lunched with Miss Talbot in Green Hall, University of Chicago. The discussions were continued at table.

Tuesday, Nov. 3d, 1903.

2-P. M.

Moved and carried that the Conference express its sentiment formally on various subjects when that sentiment was sufficiently general.

Moved and carried that a Committee on Resolutions be appointed by the chair:

Committee:

Miss Young (Chairman),

Miss Stoner,

Mrs. Jordan.

Moved and carried to proceed to the discussion of the subject of Self Government vs Direct Government. Miss Mayhew led the discussion by describing the Wisconsin system. All women students at Wisconsin are ipso facto members of the Self Government Association. The power of this Association is vesting in the Executive Board, consisting of one member from each sorority, one from each literary society, one from the dormitory, one from those who board and one from those who live in town. The President

and Secretary are elected at large. The purpose of this Association is to set a high social standard. The dormitory and the sorority houses have committees to make their local rules and act as proctors. The rules are presented to the social committee of the faculty for approval. Names of delinquents are brought to the Executive Board, or on appeal to the Faculty.

Miss Mayhew reported that the Wisconsin women developed under the responsibility of this system, especially those who held office in the Association. The Association takes some initiative socially, but its main use is to develop a spirit of right and a unity of life.

The University League at Wisconsin is an Association of the faculty women, to uphold the Self Government Association. The rules are few. Parties are limited to week-ends and break up at twelve o'clock. There are some recognized exceptions to this.

Miss Mayhew said that at Wisconsin it had been a question of Self Government or none at all.

Miss Luce reported that at Oberlin there was a system of local self-government in the college houses, and in four large private lodging houses. The government is no legislative, but purely executive. The officers elected by the students are useful to the authorities. Miss Luce suggested the formation of a board of students, consisting of all those holding office in any student organization, and the use of such a board in shaping public sentiment.

Miss Evans reported that at Carleton the young women do not wish self-government.

Miss Luce reported that at Oberlin the personal feeling noticed on the first introduction of self-government had disappeared, a general discussion of the pros and cons of self-government, with especial reference to its working at Welesley [sic] followed. The general opinion, to which there were few exceptions, was that self-government was advantageous wherever possible, especially as it tended to a more self-respecting feeling on both sides.

The frequency of the parties and dances was next discussed. Miss Jayne reported that the Illinois women, finding it difficult to keep their own regulation limiting the dances, had requested a rule on the subject, which rule was made by the University Council. Dances occur on Fridays and Saturdays an in accordance with public opinion end at twelve.

Mrs. Jordan told of the method adopted at Michigan to regulate social functions. The women's gymnasium is given to the students for large dances, is free and is the best floor available. Mrs. Jordan requires parties there to close at twelve. The class parties are held in the gymnasium. Fraternity parties are sometimes held in other places, but usually follow the custom established in the gymnasium parties. The Junior Prom closes at two o'clock.

Miss Talbot reported that at Chicago all parties given by students must be in the university buildings, and must close at one o'clock. Dances must be given on Fridays or Saturdays. The authorities have ruled that a dance given by or for students in the house of a graduate of the University should not be allowed as an attempt to evade this rule.

The Conference after drinking tea informally, were shown by President Harper over the University of Chicago.

Tuesday,

8-P. M.

In continuation of the discussion of government of students, Miss Harwood said that she had been led to introduce a self-government system at Ripon, because direct government led to deceit. Miss De Greene said that direct government was the system at Lawrence University, but the senior girls exert a good influence over the younger ones. Miss Sherzer finds a system of money fines useful.

Mrs. Crow had tried to introduce a system of self-government, but the students were not enthusiastic enough to take the responsibility. She has very few rules, but a strict regulation of hours. Callers are received within certain limited hours and the caller's card in duplicate, is brought to the Dean in each case. Students register when going outside the limits of Evanston. Young women walking with men on the campus is not good form. There is no trouble from noise in the dormitory.

Miss Richardson inquired what discipline could be used short of suspension. Miss Evans recommended a letter to the student's parents. Miss Luce would put on probation. In Oberlin the non-academic discipline of women is in the hands of the Dean of Women and a committee of women advisors. Their decisions cannot be reverse by the President or Faculty.

In the matter of driving with men, Miss Luce reported that no driving without a chaperone was allowed. Miss Mayhew said the students were required to return by eight o'clock. Miss Talbot said there was but little driving at Chicago and that in the day time.

The general opinion seemed to be that driving should be regulated only in conformity to local usage and conventions, but that it was often a source of danger.

Miss Evans expressed herself as heartily in favor of free daytime outdoor intercourse between men and women. She requires lights out to be at ten except in the case of seniors, and all girls must be indoors at dark unless a record is made. Miss Talbot sends a young woman home who becomes engaged, and announces the fact, while a student.

Wednesday,

10-A. M.

The chairman called for a report from the committee on Permanent Organization. Miss Luce, as subcommittee on Constitution, asked whether a formal constitution were desired.

Several women expressed the opinion that a secretary only was needed, who should be empowered to call another meeting. Miss Talbot thus moved that the Committee on Organization be empowered to take the interests of the Conference in hand and call another meeting when they see fit. The motion was carried. Miss Breed being unable to serve on the committee, Miss Talbot was elected as third member, the committee being thus:

Miss Evans, Chairman,

Mrs. Crow,

Miss Talbot.

Miss Luce then reported that the Committee on Constitution would waive their question.

The Conference then decided to have the secretary's minutes typewritten and a copy be sent to each member, and that the expense should be divided equally among the members.

Mrs. Crow, in the interests of a future meeting, requested that names of institutions having women Deans and Executives, be given the committee.

The Conference then proceeded to discuss ways of influencing young women. Miss Stoner considered the work of the Young Women's Christian Association as invaluable, as well as the methods of personal contact. Mrs. Crow quoted the experience of Mrs. Saunders at Cornell, who had a miniature home in the dormitory to which she invited students constantly. Miss Talbot advocated strict separation of social from official relations, and the confining of official intercourse to an office. Miss Evans recommended a special effort to greet all students, especially younger ones, after each vacation. Meals and refreshments – food in any way – was extremely useful also. Miss Gill told of the advantages of holding committee meetings over a luncheon table.

Several members then reported on their methods of entertaining. Miss Evans gives six large receptions a year at which the Juniors and Seniors meet townspeople and others. All Freshmen are entertained in sets, and last year Miss Evans had every girl to a meal.

Mrs. Crow gives afternoon teas for twenty or thirty students at a time. The residents of the dormitory give afternoon receptions once a month to which each invites one guest. Mrs. Crow is at home to the students on Sunday evenings.

Miss Harwood recommends using a chafing dish at Sunday evening at homes.

Miss De Greene makes a feature of informal "spreads".

Miss Young called on all women students. She has a day at home, and gives formal receptions occasionally.

Mrs. Jordan calls on young women who request it and on the sick. She invites all to her houses in some way, and has a day at home.

Miss Jayne calls on all Freshmen away from their own homes, has a day at home, and recommends smaller social functions rather than large. She finds it even better to cultivate incidental relations with students, when the more human side of their intercourse can be brought out.

Miss Mayhew thought it was possible to get too intimate with a few students, which was a danger, especially in a dormitory institution. She attends regularly all the women's function, meetings, &c.

Miss Breed reported that after calling on students for two years, she had given it up in favor of more general entertaining in her own house.

Miss Mayhew advocated games. Mrs. Jordan thought the students preferred conversation. Miss Stoner gave a good account of picnics.

Miss Talbot has formal receptions once a month at which the head of the house is assisted by the students. Students are encouraged to invite guests, especially young men, to meals. There are also dinners at which a number of the faculty are present, followed by an evening of games, charades, &c. Miss Talbot also gives formal receptions to non-resident women and graduate students.

Discussing the control of students' parties by the faculty, Miss Young reported that the Iowa faculty exerted no control directly, but that public sentiment was verging toward earlier hours. She said that the worst cases of late hours were traceable to persons living in town. The fraternities at Iowa give one large party a year, the sororities one in three years. Each class has an annual dance and informal parties are numerous. She thought a popular girl went to an average of one dance a week.

Mrs. Jordan said there were comparatively few dances at Michigan given off the campus. Those in the university closed at twelve.

Miss Stoner said the class dances at Ohio State University were given in the Armory, but the fraternity dances were not. The faculty has the matter of control under consideration.

The general opinion seemed to be that entertaining by the students was beneficial to them, when kept in moderation. Miss Talbot emphasized the unequal distribution of social privileges in a large institution.

A question showed that nearly all the institutions represented had faculty committees to regulate in some way the social life of the students.

Miss Mayhew said the committee of this sort at Wisconsin was very useful in helping the women to keep their rules. The committee wrote notes to the men's fraternities asking them to observe the twelve o'clock rule. At Wisconsin there are five military hops each year, of an extremely democratic character.

After an informal report from the Committee on Information, the meeting adjourned to lunch with Mrs. Patten. President James of Northwestern and Mrs. James were guests at the luncheon.

During the luncheon hour an informal vote was taken to omit the session on Wednesday evening and accept an invitation to attend a concert at Northwestern University.

Wednesday,

2-P. M.

The session opened with further discussion on how to prevent excessive social dissipation on the part of certain students. Miss Talbot advocated a combined test of good scholarship and good health, to be applied in individual cases. It was decided that this suggestion be embodied in the resolutions.

The subject of Christian Associations was opened by Miss Stratton who raised the question of how best to attract every element of the student body to these associations.

Miss Jayne reported the services of the Association in practical ways as invaluable. It locates new students, provides employment for the needy, breaks down the sorority line and keeps up a good house.

Miss Talbot was inclined to think that the Associations develop the social side too strongly, and that they should confine themselves more within evangelical lines. In reply to a question of Miss Luce, the general opinion was that Deans should take no initiative in the Association affairs.

Miss Richardson approved of the "General Secretary" as an intermediary between faculty and students.

Miss Jayne recommended having the Secretary an alumnus of the institution in question.

Mrs. Crow reported that the Northwestern Secretary lived in hall and was a great success.

Miss Young thought the Secretary should be doing some work as a student.

Miss Talbot reported that the Chicago Secretary spends one-third of her time on university class work.

The Committee on Organization asked for an expression of opinion on the date of the next Conference. The Autumn of 1905 met with general approval.

The Committee on Resolutions then reported and after some amendment, resolutions 1-3 were adopted as given in the report of that committee.

Miss Mayhew then spoke on the health of women in coeducational colleges, which she thought was as good as in women's colleges, and much better than it was five or six years ago. Women grew stronger during their college course, due to regularity of life. She advocated the employment of a resident trained nurse, thereby avoiding much serious illness. Although too much society reduces the vitality of the few, it is really the grinds who suffer most.

Miss Mayhew also spoke against competitive athletics. On motion of Miss Talbot, a resolution was carried condemning intercollegiate athletics for women.

Another resolution was carried commending the work of the Young Women's Christian Associations.

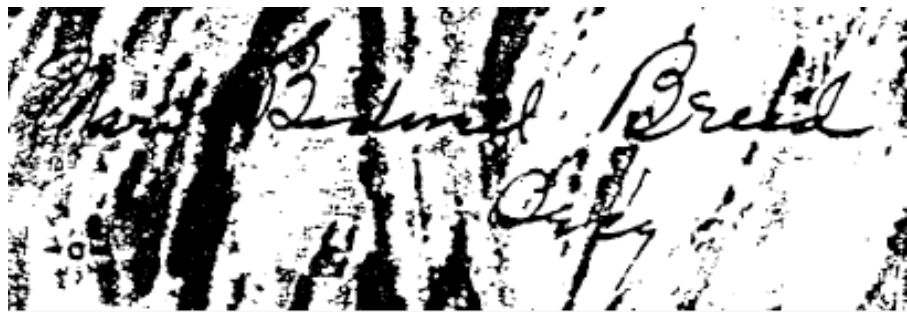
The admission of men to gymnasium exhibitions, contests and games was then discussed. Miss Mayhew and Mrs. Jordan admit a few men on ticket. Miss Stoner would admit faculty men, fathers and brothers of the students taking part.

The members seemed nearly equally divided on whether to exclude practically all men from these events (exceptions being such men as the men students' athletic director), or to admit a few men under restrictions. The general opinion was that some restrictions were necessary, and that the men should witness the events in question from a gallery, and not from the floor of the gymnasium.

Mrs. Jordan reported that only one or two special men were admitted to the gymnasium exhibitions, but a comparatively large number to basket-ball games. Some of the members were of the opinion, however, that the reverse of this arrangement was desirable, as the games were more dignified than a set exhibition.

Miss Luce said that the tendency of women in coeducational colleges to recite and behave in general with constant conspicuousness of the presence of men – “to play to the gallery” – convinced her that no men should be admitted to games or contests in the gymnasium.

After passing votes of thanks to Mrs. Patten, Mrs. Crow and Miss Talbot for their hospitality, the Conference adjourned. The members were entertained at a reception by the Guild of Northwestern University.

A high-contrast, black and white image of a handwritten signature. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "Mrs. Patten". The background is heavily textured and noisy, possibly due to the scanning process or the original document's condition.

Resolutions Adopted by the Conference of Deans of Women

Held in Chicago and Evanston, Nov. 3-4, 1903

In view of the fact that this meeting represents the various interests of college women throughout the middle west, it has been thought well to embody, in a general way, the results of our discussions in a form in which they may be of use.

Since we represent institutions so widely different in character, unanimous agreement upon any of these subjects cannot be expected. The resolutions which follow express the opinion of the majority.

I. RESOLVED that the Conference of Deans of Women favor three kinds of homes for young women at college who are away from their own homes. These are, in order; 1st, Dormitories, preferably small; 2d, Cottages, belonging to and controlled by the institution; 3d, Approved lodging and boarding houses belong [sic] to private individuals.

II. RESOLVED that in all matters concerning the conduct of student life, the principle of student government is approved so far as it is practicable.

III. RESOLVED that social life should be regulated and that the tests of good health and high scholarship should be applied in extreme cases of social dissipation. In the opinion of this conference, the public have exaggerated impressions in regard to the amount of social dissipation existing in co-educational institutions. The facts brought out in the reports of the deans from such institutions point to the conclusion that the proportion of women students who give too much time to social affairs is very small.

IV. RESOLVED that intercollegiate athletic contests for women are not approved.

V. RESOLVED that we cordially welcome the assistance given by the Young Women's Christian Associations in our work with students.

IV. RESOLVED that we express our hearty thanks to Mrs. Crow and Miss Talbot and their Universities which they represent for the kindness which they have shown and for their efforts in making arrangements for this meeting.

Alice Young.

Chairman of Committee on Resolutions