

Profile of the College

Gettysburg College is a four-year, nonsectarian, coeducational liberal arts college affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and located in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It is situated adjacent to one of the nation's most famous Civil War battlefields, the Gettysburg National Military Park. Its purpose, as stated in the charter, "is to serve the cause of liberal education in changing times, by providing a community of learning committed to the discovery, exploration, and evaluation of the ideas and actions of man, and to the creative extension of that developing heritage." It is governed by an independent Board of Trustees consisting of thirty-six members who are elected as provided in the Bylaws with the President of Gettysburg College serving as an ex officio trustee.

The College creates opportunities for students to learn specific intellectual skills and to strive for breadth of understanding. A rigorous program of undergraduate learning in the arts and sciences is complemented by student programs designed to challenge and enrich the academic experience. A close student-teacher ratio of approximately 10 to 1 and a campus-wide honor code system promote a positive atmosphere of trust.

Historical Overview of the College

The original charter of "Pennsylvania College of Gettysburg" was an act passed by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and signed by Governor George Wolf on April 7, 1832. The chief founder of the College, the Rev. Samuel Simon Schmucker, prepared a document to convert the already existing Gettysburg Gymnasium into a college with the intention of advancing "the cause of liberal education, particularly among the German portion of our fellow citizens." That beginning established its continuing heritage as the oldest college affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The first academic year began on November 7, 1832 and the instructional program has continued without interruption to the present day.

Two years after its founding, with a student body of 98 students, the College shared a building on High Street with the Lutheran Seminary. Largely through the efforts of Thaddeus Stevens, the College received the first of six grants from the General Assembly to purchase land and construct a building. A tract of land west of North Washington Street of six acres and one perch was purchased. A building then known as the "College edifice," was designed by Philadelphia architect John Trautwine and was ready for limited use in the fall of 1837.

During the Battle of Gettysburg, the College "served as a Union signal station June 30, July 1, and July 4, 1863, and as a hospital for the care of both Union and Confederate wounded July 1 and for some weeks thereafter." Approximately one hundred years later, for a period during the 1960's, Dwight David Eisenhower, following two terms as President of the United States, lived in Gettysburg and maintained an office on campus. He also served as a member of the Board of Trustees. These historical ties are maintained today through the Civil War Institute and the Eisenhower Institute with offices in the District of Columbia and Gettysburg College.

By 1937, five hundred students were enrolled on a campus that contained a dozen buildings. Today the student body numbers over 2,500. Except for a few years in the 1930's, there have been women students enrolled as degree candidates since 1889. At the present time the student body is composed of approximately equal numbers of men and women. The name was officially changed to Gettysburg College by an amendment to the charter on November 14, 1921. A restatement or major revision of the charter took place in 1974 and was approved by the Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on April 1, 1974. Gettysburg College is a charter member of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and was first accredited in 1923.

Among its distinguished alumni, Gettysburg College has had three Rhodes Scholars, Spurgeon M. Keeny (1914), Ordean Rockey (1916), and Luke P. Norris (2006); two recipients of the MacArthur Award, Mimi Koehl and Patrick Noonan; eleven recipients of NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship, with Luke Lawrence (2016) being the most recent; two recipients of the Rotary Global Grant Scholarship (2021; Katherine Mercer and Jenna Thoretz); many Fulbright grant recipients, with Brittany Bondi (2019), Aidan Egglin (2019), Nathan Kumar (2019), Vanessa Martinez (2019), Caroline Kostecky (2020), Benjamin Pontz (2020), Joseph Accetta (2020), and Emma Schilling (2021) being the most recent; eleven Goldwater Scholars: Walter Kowtoniuk (2004), who also won the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship, Natasha Gownaris (2008), Julie Markus (2008), Brittany Jones (2012), Ron Malone (2013), Ryan Matzke (2014), Madison Strine (2017), Leah Gulyas (2018), Olivia Peduzzi (2019), Erin Schroeder (2019), and Claire Woodward (2019); and the winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1989, Michael Bishop.

Sources: The Gettysburg College Charter and the Monograph: "Yonder Beautiful and Stately College Edifice: A History of Pennsylvania Hall (Old Dorm), Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania" by Charles Glatfelter, 1970. Alumni information provided by Dr. Carey A. Moore, Professor, Department of Religion, and Maureen Forrestal, Assistant Provost for Student Scholarly Engagement & Dean of Fellowships, Scholarships & Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity.