Dear Members of the College Community,

St. Angela Merici, foundress of the Ursulines, was a visionary leader who boldly challenged the conventions of 16th Century society to respond to the changing needs of her times. Angela Merici gave this mandate to those who carry forth her mission: “Follow the ancient way but lead a new life.” In founding The College of New Rochelle, the Ursulines inspired that zeal for progressive change through a vision that combines faithfulness with courage to transform lives through the power of education.

At The College of New Rochelle, it is that same transformative vision that impels our mission, informs our strategic plan, and inspired the College’s Board of Trustees to unanimously approve the decision to expand the educational opportunities provided in the School of Arts & Sciences to include both women and men.

This decision, which is integral to the College’s strategic plan, was made after very careful consideration of enrollment trends, market research, and robust feedback from over 1,000 members of the College Community, including the Ursuline Community, students, faculty, staff, and alumnae/i. In making this decision, great reverence was given to the College’s mission, rooted in its Catholic identity, inspired by its Ursuline foundation, and expressed through more than 100 years’ of commitment to women and educational excellence as a time-tested means to a positive and lasting impact on society. Most importantly, this change will not alter but will extend and strengthen the mission of The College of New Rochelle.

The Board was compelled first and foremost to expand the College’s capacity to bring its educational excellence and record of success to a broader range of students. Now the vast majority of young women who would not consider a single-sex college and the incoming young men will benefit from CNR’s distinctive student-centered education and outstanding commitment to academic success.

**Responding to Needs of Society**

The College was founded in 1904 by the Ursuline Sisters as the first Catholic college for women in New York State. At The College of New Rochelle, the Ursulines challenged society’s prevailing attitudes of the time by providing access to the transformative power of education to women who did not have the same opportunity for education as their brothers and fathers.

By the 1970s, the higher education landscape had changed dramatically. As a result of changes in federal regulations, colleges opened their doors to both men and women. With many more educational opportunities available to women, enrollment at women’s colleges began to decline.

Dialogue regarding coeducation in the School of Arts & Sciences began in 1968, the first of several conversations during the decades that followed. In the late 1960s, the decision was made to maintain the single-sex environment for the School of Arts & Sciences and broaden the College’s educational offerings for both women and men with the opening of the Graduate School (1969), the School of New Resources (1972), and the School of Nursing (1976).
With the founding of each of these schools, The College of New Rochelle advanced its mission by responding to the needs of society. Embracing this university model enabled the College to flourish in many ways while affirming its commitment to women’s education in the School of Arts & Sciences. However, enrollment in the School of Arts & Sciences has continued to be challenged by a steady decline in young women’s interest in attending single-sex colleges.

CNR Today
Recognizing the critical importance of the School of Arts & Sciences as the cornerstone of the College’s educational foundation, numerous investments have been made to attract women, including:

- renovation of the Mother Irene Gill Library and the Student Center and the construction of the Wellness Center;
- advances in technology in classrooms and labs;
- new academic programs;
- increases in financial aid and scholarships;
- reorganized and strategically aligned enrollment management.

As a member of the Women’s College Coalition, the College has benefited from their extensive research, admissions advocacy programs, and forums that bring together women’s college leaders to collaborate and explore best practices in communicating the advantages of a single-sex education to prospective students.

While these initiatives have impressively strengthened the College’s position well into the future, they have not significantly improved enrollment in the School of Arts & Sciences. As enrollment declined, a less robust academic experience and campus life for students has consequently persisted.

The Outlook for Women’s Colleges
National and regional enrollment trends demonstrate the realities of a declining demand for single-gender education, a trend that has been mirrored at CNR. Of the 230 women’s colleges in the 1960s, 81 percent have closed, merged, or become coeducational. In the last 15 years alone, more than a dozen women’s colleges have become coeducational.

Market analysis indicates that fewer than 5 percent of high school women will consider applying to single-gender colleges. In fact, in a recent survey of freshmen at CNR, almost 90 percent indicated that the School of Arts & Sciences being all women did not enter into their enrollment decision. What was once a societal need is now the preference of a select few. The combination of decreasing demographics of college-bound high school students in the northeast and the highly competitive New York marketplace also negatively impact CNR through increased competition and a growing need to apply resources for financial aid to attract a shrinking pool of applicants.

The Evaluation Process
In view of the current enrollment landscape facing all women’s colleges and The College of New Rochelle directly, the Board determined that it was imperative to reconsider a coeducational model for the School of Arts & Sciences—giving serious thought to this alternative again, as the Board had done on several occasions over the last five decades.
Accordingly, a collaborative, community-wide evaluation process engaged the College Community in a robust dialogue that included:

- thorough analysis of national and regional enrollment trends and internal enrollment data, including the findings of a market research study;
- meetings with key stakeholders of the College, including the Ursuline community, faculty, staff, governance groups, students, and alumnae/i;
- online survey of the College Community;
- online presentation to alumnae/i;
- consultation with other women’s colleges.

The evaluation process engaged over 1,000 stakeholders in the discussion. While both acknowledging a sense of sadness and recognizing the impact and value of a single-gender model, the response was clearly supportive of a coeducational School of Arts & Sciences. We are grateful for the support of the Ursulines of the Eastern Province, the College Senate, faculty, and the Executive Committee of the Alumnae/i Association.

**Continued Commitment to Women**

Our mission and Ursuline tradition compel us to seek the best contemporary expression of the College’s continued commitment to women. During our conversations, many members of the College Community expressed a strong desire to maintain and strengthen our commitment to mission and especially to promote our Ursuline heritage, which places special emphasis on the empowerment of women through education and the promotion of social justice and women’s leadership. While CNR has numerous programs and initiatives across its schools and divisions that contribute to these efforts, plans are underway to unite these initiatives through the formation of an institute for social justice and women’s leadership at the College. The institute will offer a forum to address matters of social justice, including ethical leadership, and will support and strengthen our curriculum in women’s studies and the College’s mission and identity.

This new institute is just one example of the many exciting initiatives underway that have emerged as a result of the College’s strategic plan. CNR news and headlines reflect some of our recent successes and make us especially proud.

The College of New Rochelle...

- Becomes First Private College in Mid-Hudson Region to Earn START-UP NY Designation
- Announces $10 Million Grant from U.S. Department of Education
- Announces $4 Million FIPSE “First in the World” Grant from U.S. Department of Education
- Undergraduate Nursing Program Named One of Westchester’s “13 Great College Programs” by *Westchester* Magazine
- Partners with Southern Westchester BOCES to Offer Teacher Education Graduate Programs
- Offers Only New York Metro Area’s Early Childhood Education Master’s Degree Program with Montessori Concentration
- Wins NACUBO National Innovation Award for Developing Unique “Shared Services” Model in Partnership with Marist College
- Partners with New York Theological Seminary for Accelerated Degree Program that Offers Clear Path to Ministry
- Brings Adult Education Program to Downtown Yonkers
- Presents Second Mariano and Clara Rivera Scholarship
- Ranked 10th in New York and 86th Nationally in *Washington Monthly’s* 2015 Master’s Universities Category
- Named to President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for Fifth Straight Year
We are excited about the future of the School of Arts & Sciences and The College of New Rochelle. We are profoundly grateful and indebted to each of you for your continued support, wisdom, and thoughtful guidance towards advancing the mission of The College of New Rochelle. Our shared goal is to see the College continue to thrive. The ongoing support of our alumnae/i and friends is of paramount importance to the future success of this great College. Together, we move forward with great faithfulness to our Ursuline heritage, embracing the ongoing transformation of The College of New Rochelle.

In closing, we call to mind the words of St. Angela Merici: “If according to times and circumstances the need arises to make new rules or do some things differently, do it prudently and with good advice.”

Sincerely,

Elizabeth LeVaca  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
The College of New Rochelle

Judith Huntington  
President  
The College of New Rochelle