

Today's News

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Fordham U. Will Close Its Marymount College Campus, 5 Years After Taking Over the Women's Institution

By [PAULA WASLEY](#)

Fordham University has announced that it will close Marymount College, its women's campus in Tarrytown, N.Y., in June 2007 because of dwindling enrollment and financial difficulties.

Marymount, like Fordham a Roman Catholic institution, was already struggling when it agreed, in 2000, to be taken over by the university in order to mitigate the prohibitive costs of operating a small campus.

But, according to the chairman of Fordham's Board of Trustees, John N. Tognino, "it is no longer academically or financially feasible" for the college to continue as a separate entity.

The announcement, which Fordham issued last Thursday, has left students and faculty members on the 25-acre campus dismayed and uncertain of their future.

"The faculty seems stunned, even though we saw it coming, and the student body is extremely emotional," said Leo Cooley, a professor of English and president of Marymount's faculty union. Of the college's 798 students, juniors and seniors will be able to graduate from Marymount, but freshmen and sophomores will have to complete their degrees at one of Fordham's other undergraduate colleges.

Tenured faculty members at Marymount have been told that they will retain their positions until 2007, but will begin negotiations on Tuesday to work out the terms of future employment, benefits, and possible severance arrangements.

According to the Rev. Gerard Reedy, dean of Marymount College, administrators and union negotiators are seeking to find alternate posts for Marymount's 36 tenured professors on the faculties of Fordham's other schools.

At the time, the absorption of Marymount into the Fordham University system was considered a model solution for the small liberal-arts college, allowing it to function independently yet give its students the opportunity to participate in programs offered on Fordham's Manhattan and Bronx campuses. Fordham also appeared to gain from the acquisition of a Tarrytown campus, where it housed a division of the Fordham College of Liberal Studies.

But since the takeover, Marymount has been plagued by attrition and low enrollment. A committee established by the Board of Trustees to evaluate the merger found that 45 percent of Marymount's freshmen did not return for their sophomore or junior years.

Another problem, said Father Reedy, was amalgamating two academically dissimilar institutions, with Fordham drawing more-competitive students than Marymount. "One of the greatest advantages of the

consolidation was to be that students could live on a small campus but partake in the larger school," he said. "But when you have 200 points' difference in the SAT's between the student body in the two schools, it's hard to integrate academically."

After Marymount closes, Fordham will use the Tarrytown campus to expand its liberal-studies college. The proceeds of Marymount's \$6-million endowment will be used to assist female students with financial need.

Marymount was founded in 1907 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. In its closure, it joins a growing list of women's colleges that, facing competition from larger coed institutions, have been forced to close or admit men.

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