About Mount Holyoke College

Chemist and educator Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke College (then called Mount Holyoke Female Seminary) in 1837, nearly a century before women gained the right to vote. The first of the Seven Sisters—the female equivalent of the once predominantly male Ivy League—Mount Holyoke offered a rigorous program of study at a time when higher education for women was a revolutionary idea. The school quickly became synonymous with academic excellence and brilliant teaching and became a model for many other women’s colleges. In 1893, the seminary curriculum was phased out and the institution’s name was changed to Mount Holyoke College.

Today, Mount Holyoke is a highly selective, nondenominational, not-for-profit, residential, independent, research liberal arts college for women located in the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts. The College’s 1,923 undergraduate students hail from 48 states and 43 countries. Twenty-eight percent of undergraduate students are international citizens. Twenty-seven percent of domestic students identify as African American, Asian American, Latina, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or multiracial. Its 212 continuing full-time and part-time instructional faculty are devoted to undergraduate teaching and cutting-edge research. Over half of the faculty are women; a quarter are individuals of color; over half speak a language other than English and over a quarter earned a degree from an institution abroad. With a student-faculty ratio of 9 to 1 and with most classes averaging 10-19 students, faculty and students collaborate closely on academic course work and research.

The College typically operates on a semester calendar, with an optional January Intersession offering to undergraduates opportunities for research, independent study, projects of students’ own choice, travel, internships, and study. For the 2020-21 academic year, as we operate through the global pandemic, the fall and spring semesters for undergraduate students will each be divided into two seven-and-a-half week modules, with students typically enrolling in two academic courses (8-10 credits) per module for a total semester load of 16-20 credits.

The College’s Professional and Graduate Education program offers graduate degree programs and non-degree opportunities for study at the graduate level. 117 graduate students are enrolled in master’s degree programs; additional non-matriculated graduate students enroll in graduate-level courses throughout the year. Graduate programs follow the semester calendar, supplemented by a January term and a summer term comprised of two primary summer session periods.

Mary Lyon’s famous words—“Go where no one else will go, do what no one else will do”—continue to inspire the College’s students and its 38,200 living alumnae. By offering a distinctive combination of a rigorous liberal arts education, an unusually diverse and international community, a lifelong global network, and a legacy of educating leaders, Mount Holyoke is powerfully positioned to graduate women who will be successful and contribute to a better world.

Seal of Mount Holyoke College

On August 23, 1838, Mount Holyoke awarded certificates to its first three graduates. A seal attached by a ribbon to the diploma bore a design that had been the subject of long and careful consideration by the Board of Trustees. Created by Orra White Hitchcock (wife of Edward Hitchcock, an original trustee of the College), the seal design depicted a centering cluster of palms, a palace in the background, and a block of stone in the foreground. It cited the text of Psalms 144:12: “That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.”

Mission of the College

Mount Holyoke's mission is to provide an intellectually adventurous education in the liberal arts and sciences through academic programs recognized internationally for their excellence and range; to draw students from all backgrounds into an exceptionally diverse and inclusive learning community with a highly accomplished, committed, and responsive faculty and staff; to continue building on the College’s historic legacy of leadership in the education of women; and to prepare students, through a liberal education integrating curriculum and careers, for lives of thoughtful, effective, and purposeful engagement in the world.

Accreditation

Mount Holyoke College is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). This accreditation was approved in 2018 for continuation.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact: New England Commission of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514, email: ciche@neasc.org.

Facilities

Mount Holyoke College’s 600-acre contiguous campus is widely considered to be one of the most beautiful in the nation with its neo-Gothic buildings, spacious greens, two small lakes, and a magnificent tree canopy. It is home to more than 40 academic buildings and residence halls. The main campus is an arboretum with a diverse collection of trees and shrubs, while a nature preserve spans more than 300 acres and serves as a “living lab” for the community.

The College celebrated the grand opening of the College’s new Community Center in Fall 2018, a $50-million expansion and enhancement of the Blanchard Campus Center. The Community Center features the Dining Commons, a 34,000-square-foot one-story addition which serves as the campus’ centralized dining facility. Other components of the Community Center include a concert venue, a student art gallery, a student-life hub with offices for advising, residential life, student government, diversity programming, and religious life, a pub and grab-and-go store, and the Weissman Student Commons which serves as a base for Mount Holyoke’s 100+ student organizations.

Sustainability is a top priority at Mount Holyoke College. The College has set a goal of carbon neutrality by 2037, the College’s 200th anniversary. Mount Holyoke is committed to training the next generation of environmental leaders while also taking significant measures to reduce its own carbon footprint, improve the sustainability of its campus operations and foster a campus culture of sustainability. The new Dining Commons presented a leap forward in sustainable operations by consolidating six dining halls into one and featuring innovative energy-saving technologies and menus focused on locally-sourced food. The campus boasts five buildings certified through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program developed by the
U.S. Green Building Council; these include one of the nation's first LEED-certified science centers, the new Dining Commons built to silver LEED standards, and our newest residence hall, opened in 2008, which was awarded a Gold LEED certification. A photovoltaic array was installed on the Kendall Sports and Dance complex in November 2018 to generate approximately 6% of campus electricity use annually. An online database for faculty and staff research projects houses decades of student and faculty monitoring obtained from fifteen permanent water sampling stations, five weather stations, and additional ecological field sites across campus.

The Fimbel Maker & Innovation Lab, begun as the Makerspace in 2015, moved into a completely renovated space in Prospect Hall in January 2019. The new 8,000-square-foot space provides a broad array of tools in teaching, collaboration and work spaces which students and faculty from across the curriculum can use in academic courses, workshops and events to explore the role of designing and making objects and other products, to test their ideas, and to bring them to life. The Fimbel Lab features 3D printers, a laser cutter, soldering stations, a vacuum former, a vinyl cutter, a wood- and metal-working shop, and other tools such as sewing machines. The physical space brings together people, resources, and tools to support hands-on curricular and co-curricular programming that feeds the expanding maker culture on campus from a central hub.

A $36-million expansion and renovation of Mount Holyoke's science facilities was completed in 2003 to foster interdepartmental interaction, collaborative research, pedagogical innovation, and curricular planning. Students benefit from hands-on work with sophisticated instrumentation often reserved for graduate students at other institutions. The equipment inventory includes a solar greenhouse, a state-of-the-art microscopy facility, two nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometers, a mass spectrometer, extensive molecular biology and genomics instruments, solar cell fabrication technology, a high-speed video system, an atomic force microscope and other instrumentation for characterization and fabrication of nanomaterials.

Other facilities at Mount Holyoke include a center for foreign language study, two theatres for theatre performances, a 250-seat auditorium for music performance, specialized computer labs, the 900-seat Abbey Chapel with its Interfaith Sanctuary, a meditation garden and teahouse, a facility offering child care and child study opportunities, and the Talcott Greenhouse, a 6,000-square-foot complex used for teaching, research, ornamental display, and plant propagation.

Mount Holyoke's library has a physical library collection of more than 700,000 volumes. The library also licenses access to more than 200 scholarly research databases as well as thousands of ebooks and ejournals. In addition, it shares a catalog with other members of the Five College Consortium; the combined collections provide students and faculty with direct access to more than eight million volumes. The library also features several innovative multipurpose venues for collaboration, research, and technology support.

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum is among the nation's leading collegiate art museums, with a comprehensive permanent collection encompassing more than 24,000 works from antiquity to the present. The museum offers students work/study and internship opportunities, functions as a "cultural laboratory" for the campus and is actively used in teaching by faculty and students, and brings to the community imaginative and diverse exhibitions that often attract significant national media attention.