

Community Voices

The Leadership of Women: A Conversation Among Presidents of Mount Saint Vincent University

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ABSTRACT

Atlantis is pleased to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Mount Saint Vincent by including an edited conversation among past and current Presidents of the Mount. Sister Mary Albertus Haggerty was president from 1974 - 1978; E. Margaret Fulton, from 1978 - 1986; Naomi Hersom, from 1987 - 1991; Elizabeth Parr-Johnston, from 1991 - 1996; and Sheila Brown, 1996 to the present. The original conversation was held in the Fall of 1998, and was chaired by Wayne Ingalls, who had worked with each of the Presidents during her tenure. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston was not able to be present at the original conversation, and was taped separately in conversation with Sheila Brown.

RÉSUMÉ

Atlantis est fier de célébrer le 125ème anniversaire du Mount Saint Vincent en incluant une conversation révisée entre les anciennes présidentes et la présidente actuelle du Mount. Soeur Mary Albertus Haggerty fut présidente de 1974 à 1978; E. Margaret Fulton de 1978 à 1986; Naomi Hersom, de 1987 à 1991; Elizabeth Parr-Johnston, de 1991 à 1996; et Sheila Brown, de 1996 à maintenant. La conversation initiale eut lieu en automne 1998 et fut animée par Wayne Ingalls qui a travaillé avec chacune d'elles pendant qu'elles étaient en fonction. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston n'a pas pu être présente lors de la conversation initiale, et a été enregistrée séparément lors d'une conversation avec Sheila Brown.

INTRODUCTION

The original conversations were far too long to print *in toto*, so in these edited extracts from the original tapes, we have focussed on those aspects that we felt would be of most interest to our readers. As we think about the intergenerational feminist work necessary for institutional change, about young women ready to take their place in the world, and about older women passing on their vision and understanding, it is particularly relevant to consider the succession of women presidents of a university dedicated to the education of women. The term "community" that *Atlantis* uses for Community Voices includes the communities we share in our universities. *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* believes that one of the goals of Women's Studies is to link academic feminism and

community feminism to create such a community. While the focus of the conversations among the Presidents was on the challenges and triumphs of their particular tenures at Mount Saint Vincent University, what they say has a resonance for everyone interested in creating institutions in which women can claim their birthright.

Sister Mary Albertus Haggerty, PhD 1974-1978

Sr. Albertus: When I became President, I had been preceded by Sister Catherine Wallace. She wanted to make the university known, she wanted to be known herself as the President of Mount Saint Vincent, and she became involved in a great many things outside the university. She gave a great deal

of attention to the university itself, but she also chaired the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission and she received the Order of Canada.

When I came I did not really have very definite ideas, except that I wanted to serve an institution that I loved. I had been associated with the University even as a novice and had taken my academic work here. My feeling was that I was just happy at this opportunity to serve.

At the time I thought that perhaps we weren't giving sufficient attention to the women that we had as students. A great deal had been done for adult women or women who wanted to come back after their children had grown, but less for the younger women students. For instance, we badly needed the athletic complex.

But, perhaps I was most proud of the opening of the Child Study Centre. We received a very special grant for that, and I thought it was so special that I didn't have to make it known to the Board. So I nearly died when the steamshovels arrived to start the building of this Child Study Centre! But it has developed extremely well.

In 1975, we were affiliating with Dalhousie University. The first agreement had been done with Sr. Catherine Wallace, and it was renewed early in my term. It caused a great deal of comment. Some thought it was a very good thing. Some thought we were making a mistake, that we were going to be swallowed up by Dalhousie. And you know, I wasn't fearful of that. I think my feeling was that it challenged us. It was a great advantage to have the students able to take courses at Dalhousie, to use their library facilities and a great many other advantages.

We still wanted to maintain our identity, to maintain our autonomy. I think we were challenged to do what we said we wanted to do: that we wanted to be small, that we wanted to concentrate on the liberal arts, that we had Catholic roots, a Catholic foundation, and that, of course, we were devoted to the education of women. My feeling was that we had to make sure that we were doing what our philosophy of education and what our aims and objectives said.

Wayne Ingalls: I remember that it was a period of

expansion for program development. A number of programs that exist in the institution today began then.

Sr. Albertus: When I look at the University now, I say to myself, I couldn't function here it has become so vast. But I think the little beginnings were good things.

Wayne Ingalls: One of the things that all the Presidents share is that you have all operated in a political environment: there's always that problem of finances, relations with the government, relations with Dalhousie.

Sr. Albertus: One very difficult thing was that I always felt we were treated as a minor institution. And we really never, never received what we should have on a fair basis. I remember one time going to be interviewed by the Maritime Provinces [Higher Education Commission]. We went, well prepared with ideas that we wanted, emphasizing especially the education and development of women and things that other institutions didn't seem to emphasize. And one member of the panel, I don't recall his name, said "we were very much interested and we were very much impressed by the sermon on the Mount," but that meant that all these ideas that we had were wonderful, but it was one institution that had never produced any money. So that was a bit deflating. Plus we were so small. Seton [Academic Center] wasn't built yet and we marveled that people came to us and were so appreciative. But I think we made up for it in the relationships with students.

Dr. E. Margaret Fulton
1978-1986

Margaret Fulton: When I was invited to become President of this University it was a very great surprise to me because I was not only not a Sister, I wasn't even Catholic. I think that they were prepared to take a chance and hire me, was a major statement of confidence from the Board and the selection committee. It was very clear to me that there was no break in terms of the philosophy of the

university: of everything that Sr. Albertus has just outlined as the mission.¹ And the goals and the statement fitted perfectly where I was at that time: my commitment to the changes in the women's movement, and the development of a feminist perspective, and a desire to provide more opportunities for women to get an advanced education. To develop it was just like a gift! Here you are, run this institution! And clearly I was standing on the shoulders of giants.

The business of finance was certainly a great issue and there was no question that one of the things that was expected of me was to get out and to find other sources of revenue for the University than the traditional provincial funding, which was not fair. There was no equality at all in the way in which Saint Mary's and Dalhousie and St. F.X.² were funded and what we got. There was this assumption on everyone's part "oh well, this little girl's university up on the Mount, just stay there and be quiet, do your little thing but don't expect to be funded. I mean you don't have a football team, you don't have any of the things that make a major university, so why would you expect to be funded the same as other universities!" Well, we had some hard sessions. And I think that the recognition of the Mount and the work that the Mount was doing in terms of its Education Program and professional programs for women was a step beyond where you had taken the university, Sr. Albertus.

So there was a kind of opening up, but always with a focus on the fact that we were interested in providing opportunities for women and that women do things differently. Business training for a woman coming through the Business program at the Mount was a vastly different thing from the Business programs at Saint Mary's or Dalhousie. That's not to discredit what they were doing, but our focus was different. And I realized that we did lack facilities; we had no facilities at all for health and physical education. Getting the Rosaria Center developed opened up the possibility for what I considered more holistic education. The Sisters had kept focus on the spiritual aspect of education and the academic had also developed. When we got some physical education [facilities set

up at Rosaria] and opportunities for the students to come together in a social atmosphere up at Seton, then we were starting to get it together. The one thing left was the necessity of expanding the library opportunities to include more technology, more computer education, all of the things that are part and parcel of any university today.

So I think that if I did make any contribution, it was in keeping the focus and then just doing the more practical, the more pragmatic things, getting us better facilities and getting us on a better funding basis.

It's still so easy, for the world, with all its emphasis on doing things in that male hierarchical way, to say "Do we really need a women's university?" There's no question in my mind. The torch falls to you Sheila, to carry on! This was, and is, the only university in Canada that puts any special emphasis on women. And to say that you don't need that emphasis is to misunderstand completely the role of women in society.

**Dr. Naomi Hersom
1987-1991**

Naomi Hersom: As I listen to Sr. Albertus and Margaret, I am reminded of that wonderful line in Anne Michael's book *Fugitive Pieces* where she says "history is the gradual instant." As we've thought about the development of the University it impressed me how each of us had a term when things grew out of work of our predecessors. We're sitting here in the EMF [E. Margaret Fulton] Communication building which contains a much expanded and much needed library as well as the Distance Education facilities and it's named after Margaret - rightly so. So we were developing opportunities for women and, incidentally, improving the quality of the teaching and the research being done at the university by getting a decent library and the facilities for a decent library.

One of the things we looked at was the overall curriculum, and what stood out was the whole notion of the sciences for women. We did very well in a lot of other things, but our general sciences area depended on our relations with Dalhousie. We had not done as much as we might

have to show women that there are opportunities for them in fields outside the traditional women's fields.

So one of the things that I became involved in was preparing women for Engineering. After the people in Montreal had gone through the dreadful experience of the massacre, I represented the Mount on the Canadian Committee for Women in Engineering. That brought out the extraordinarily difficult situation of women when they move into fields that are not traditionally women's fields: the lack of acceptance, the kind of rejection, in fact the ill treatment, that many of them experienced. We were trying to get women to broaden their aspirations and to say that there are other places that women should be known and their contributions can make a difference. I'm very pleased to understand that we now have a proper science wing at the Mount.

But harking back to the early days, I must pay tribute to those early Sisters who were so insightful about choosing the areas that they would develop for a women's university: Developmental Psychology, which led into the Child Development, into the Early Education Programs, Gerontology, in fact, Women's Studies in many aspects. So I think we had exciting times.

What Margaret didn't mention was that both of us became involved in major fundraising campaigns. And one of the things that was new, was going across the country, meeting people in business, in corporations and making the case for a women's university and saying "We need a million dollars or fifty thousand dollars or whatever it was from you in order to help us do what we believe was important to do here at Mount Saint Vincent University."

Wayne Ingalls: I think during your presidency the transfer occurred ...

Naomi Hersom: One of the things that the Sisters had mandated for me during my term of office was to bring about the change in the University from being owned by the Sisters, to becoming part of the Nova Scotia higher education system. Sr. Cantin and I had the long and sometimes delightful but

sometimes not so delightful task of preparing a bill to go before the legislature! I recall vividly sitting in the gallery while the legislature actually passed the bill.³ It was a mixed feeling in many ways nostalgia and sadness that this era was passing. But, on the other hand, here we were launching into a different era, in which this University would be recognized as a university and not, as Margaret pointed out, something that was not quite a university.

Dr. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston
1991-1996

Liz Parr-Johnston: There were a number of challenges in my time, such as fending off the amalgamation dragon, as I like to describe it - if not slaying, at least fending it off. As you know, there was a push to see the amalgamation of Metro Halifax Universities. We worked very hard to develop alternate plans that made more sense, and to protect the Mount and the Mount's mission. We developed a consortium of universities in Halifax that could share common services and work together as equal partners. That was not an easy process, but it was certainly a productive one and a beginning to understanding the differences between institutions and where the synergies would lie.

Fiscal responsibility was another major issue, and I think we did a good job. We faced a period when funding cuts were coming at us and coming at us quickly, so we had to continue to bring in balanced budgets. We developed a capital budgeting process which began to separate the operating budget from the capital budget. Some of the other things that we faced, some before you came, Sheila, were major infrastructure issues.

When I arrived at the Mount, we needed an increased water supply in order to have our fire insurance. We had to negotiate with the Sisters of Charity - and they were wonderful - to get a right of way to bring a new water supply in. We also had the question of heating the Mount. In the end we built our own steam plant that was efficient and much more cost effective. There were other issues, of course, but I think the most important thing was mainstreaming the mission of the Mount to get the

public to understand why the education of women was important and why an institution such as Mount Saint Vincent had a very valid - indeed - essential role within the overall structure of universities.

The Nova Scotia Council [on Higher Education] also pushed to close some Faculties of Education. We worked very hard to present the calibre of our Education Program, and therefore when the decision was made as to where Education would go, the Mount was right up front. The transition was immensely difficult, but, where there's a will, there's a way, and I think the people who were here at the Mount really bent over backwards to make everybody feel welcome. And "partnerships" is the key to that. Another area, Sheila, that you came and helped with, is the whole question of governance, the decision-making process and demystifying it and communicating to people. How decisions are made, why they're made, and yes, that their voices are heard.

Sheila Brown: One of the key aspects of that is that we've adopted a joint problem solving approach. When an issue arises, we can sit down and tackle it and see if the parties involved, whoever that might be, can find a resolution without necessarily going to the more formal resolution mechanisms that exist, and that on occasion have to be used. I don't know whether that's a characteristic of a university that has a somewhat different composition^d but certainly I think that looking for common ground is very much a characteristic of this institution and the people who inhabit it.

Liz Parr-Johnston: I think that here at the Mount, there was a basis for that because we had trust, and developing that trust and understanding was a major accomplishment. There are times in any institution's life when things look like they are insurmountable. But they never were insurmountable. This institution has overcome a lot and will continue to do so, I know.

Finishing a matching funding Campaign was another accomplishment. I can remember knocking on doors and phone calls, but we

certainly finished it, and we're very proud. My sense is you have used the benefits of that productively.

Sheila Brown: It's allowed us to do a number of things, both in terms of some of the infrastructure issues that you talked about, but also to provide better scholarships for our students, to enhance our library collections through endowments, and in our 125th anniversary year, we'll finally unveil that donor recognition wall as we start to plan for our next major fundraising initiative. It was a great success to raise nine million dollars from a target of eight! It is a great tribute to you and all the other people who worked on that campaign!

Liz Parr-Johnston: A lot of it had been done before I even arrived on the scene.

Wayne Ingalls: I'm thinking about the funding that allowed us to make significant changes in the campus.

Sheila Brown: I think the facilities we were able to provide for our students and the Education transition has greatly enhanced the Mount's longstanding commitment to community outreach. With a larger critical mass of individuals and the technical facilities that we have available to them, we can reach out to part-time students in remote locations, many of whom are women and that underscores the Mount's mission and its commitment. We're able to take programs (up to and including master's programs) to people who might not otherwise be able to access them.

Liz Parr-Johnston: What I must mention is that we had an absolutely superb team. The president and the two vice-presidents worked so closely together that if anybody asked any one of us a question, they got the same answer.

Sheila Brown: I'm not sure we realized it was so important at the time, but looking back on it, I think we see in reflection just how valuable it was to each of us individually and to the Mount to have that team of people who got on so well together.

Liz Parr-Johnston: I think there were complimentary skills, abilities and a great deal of trust. Perhaps personalities, but I think it was more the ability to have respect for the other individuals...and it was fun.

Sheila Brown: You started talking about the original partnership and then the consortium. I think we've been able to bring [cooperation among local universities] quite a long way, and it does facilitate student movements. There's certainly been some exchanges of professors. If someone's on sabbatical leave at one institution, someone from the Mount can go over and teach a particular course in exchange for future considerations or just a straight exchange. So academic cooperation is significantly different than it would have been maybe even five or six years ago. And I think that serves the students in the metro universities very well.

Dr. Sheila Brown
1996 - present

Sheila Brown: It's interesting that every one of the presidents who's participated in these panel discussions has commented on the difficulty of getting adequate resources and making sure the Mount was recognized as the distinctive university it is and the excellent university it is and is funded accordingly. We've all had that battle and we've all talked about the relations with other universities in the metro region.

One of the things I said when I was installed was I felt a great weight of history resting on me because of the tremendous group of women who preceded me. I'm the ninth president of the Mount, and it's useful to remind ourselves that all nine presidents have been women and all nine had doctoral degrees. And while the sisters were often referred to as "Sister," sometimes people overlook the fact that they were all "Doctor...., S.C." ⁵

For me, there was a real sense of history and heritage and what contribution could I make. Because I had been Vice-President before I became President, I had a sense of knowing the community.

One of the things I might pick up on, that characterized Liz's presidency and I think has continued in mine, is the relationships with the other universities. Under Liz's leadership, a strong partnership was developed with Saint Mary's University, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and the Atlantic School of Theology, with the end result that seven institutions in Halifax decided to form a seven institution partnership or consortium and to work more closely together.

As a result we've been able to develop closer cooperation and to develop some programs that still focus on our distinctive mission, for example, the Management Development for Women Program with Saint Mary's. We have been able to put that on a much more secure footing, and to attract women from a much broader set of organizations. One of my disappointments is that we haven't been able to advance the Women in Engineering program. Perhaps we need to focus on women in science and technology, rather than just women in engineering. While women may well be represented in biology, for example, they're still under-represented in some of the technological fields like physics.

One of the other things that Liz did was to initiate a strategic planning process that resulted in the creation of what was then called Blueprint '98, which had sixty some recommendations! When I took over in 1996, one of my challenges was to look at all those recommendations and create a new Blueprint. One of the ways I did this was to make it a very inclusive process. We set up a matrix, if I can describe it that way, of a series of topics or themes that needed to be explored, such as student recruitment and retention and enrollment management. Then I said that women's issues have to be paramount in whatever we do, so if we have six working groups looking at those themes, let's also create four vertical groups to look at how we can be sure that women's issues are at the forefront. In the end we had over a hundred people working on ten working groups and it all came together into six key strategic directions for the university. The first of those strategic themes was to reaffirm our mission. We've all talked about the mission, and it's really quite remarkable that the mission has been so

consistent over what the five presidents represented here have said. It centres on our commitment to women. At the end of the Blueprint Planning process, we had a one line statement of vision. That vision was to be the Canadian university known for educating women leaders who make a difference.

That's something that the Mount has become known for. Mount graduates are throughout the country, making a contribution, making a difference. One of the themes that is also there, but that needs redefining, is accessibility. The Sisters founded the institution to provide access to women who might not otherwise have opportunities to access higher education in the 19th century.⁶ In Margaret's time and your own time, Naomi, and Liz's time, there was accessibility in terms of outreach through distance education, and now we're redefining some of the technologies we use to achieve that accessibility.

I'd also like to comment on funding. After eight months in my presidency, a new [Provincial] funding formula was proposed that suggested that the Mount was getting at least its share of the funding, and maybe too much! So one of my challenges has been to try to ensure [reduced funding] does not happen, and to try to convince those making decisions that the Mount plays a unique and valuable role in terms of its distinctive mission in the panoply of universities in Nova Scotia. We don't think the current funding formula really addresses what is distinctive about the Mount, such as that we have the highest percentage of part-time students in this province. Many of those are women, combining study with family, study with work, study with caregiving responsibilities. There is a cost to having a high number of part-time students. You cannot reduce them to a fraction and say people are taking two courses so they're 2/5 of a body. Because those students, when they come to the Mount, still have to be registered, to access all the facilities. And between the first and second version of the funding scenario, we were able to have part-time costs recognized, although we still don't think it fully reflects the true costs.

Wayne Ingalls: The Education Transition Project

was also a major challenge during the last four or five years?

Sheila Brown: We underwent a major external review of teacher education programs in Nova Scotia, chaired by Bernard Shapiro, currently of McGill University. That panel recommended that the number of universities offering teacher education be reduced because it was felt there were too many people graduating in teacher education in the province. To cut a very long story short, the Mount became the site in the metro area that would continue to offer teacher education and that meant that our full-time education faculty almost doubled from about fifteen to thirty. We added a whole new collection of graduate programs in Adult Education, Curriculum Studies, and Educational Foundations, and we had to accommodate that in terms of space when space was something we were very short of. We had to accommodate fourteen additional faculty and work out arrangements by which they would transfer from Dalhousie and Saint Mary's to the Mount without being disadvantaged in any way. It's not that there hadn't been a lot of ground work, but it was still a major challenge!

Sr. Albertus: It was a wonderful thing that the Mount was chosen.

Sheila Brown: Our Education Department is at the forefront of some of our new distance education initiatives using the Internet to reach students further and further afield, in locales like Jamaica and Bermuda. Shapiro also recommended that to enter Education you had to have a degree [first]. I think it was recognized that a good solid education with a combination of courses in arts and science as well as professional studies will stand you in very good stead whether you're going on for Education, or whether you're planning to complete a BA or BSc, or to go on for further graduate or professional education. That combination of the Arts and Science and Professional Programs is another of our key themes.

Margaret Fulton: I think it builds into what many universities are trying to do now to encourage

interdisciplinarity, because the single specialized programs have become so overspecialized that they're almost meaningless. To me the essence of real education is when you return to the holistic type of education where you're developing the whole person, not just training a person to fit into some particular job classification.

Sheila Brown: One of the things that I think is inherent in what all of us have said, but we haven't said it explicitly, is that this University was built on a scale to make sure that a good relationship could develop among the students in a class and between the students and the professor. One of the challenges of the funding difficulties is to try to maintain that commitment to personalized education, to keep that focus; that's why a lot of students choose to come to the Mount. That attention allows all the students and particularly women to develop their self-confidence, to develop their self-esteem and learn to speak out.

Wayne Ingalls: Now I wonder, just as we conclude, whether any one of you would like to make a comment?

Naomi Hersom: Well, this is rather facetious, but I was thinking that we've all talked about problems and obstacles that we've faced, but certainly boredom wasn't one of them! And each of us, I think, has reflected what a privilege we think it has been to be asked to serve the Mount and to be part of this larger endeavor on behalf of women. What remains with me from listening to my colleagues now, and thinking back, is that it has been a privilege!

Margaret Fulton: And certainly I can echo that! It was a wonderful opportunity to develop some of your own ideas about education! But the thing that the Sisters had established so firmly was the concept of service, which, Naomi, you just made reference to, and that is the big difference and the big thing that's needed in society today. You can go the route of product education where you're cranking out all manner of degrees and training people to function, but do they still have some

concept of what it is to be fully human and fully developed? And if that doesn't include the service orientation, then something is missing, and I think it's very strong at the Mount. I'm sure that, Sheila, under your guidance it will continue very strong.

Naomi Hersom: ...and a wonderful heritage from the Sisters!

Sr. Albertus: I feel very strongly both in my work in our congregation, the Sisters, and in the University, that God gives us the leaders we need at the time. And when I look at what we have done, each one has done something special that the others could not have done and that makes me very happy. I think that's a wonderful thing.

Margaret Fulton: It's a real organic growth of an institution; it's not a superimposed instant institution.

Sr. Albertus: I think it's very evident from what we've said that each one has had a different idea and each one has made a different contribution, and it's all very wonderful!

Wayne Ingalls: There are certain similarities that run all the way through.

Sheila Brown: The core values seem to have been there through what each of us has said. I consider it a great privilege to have had the opportunity to be educated in an environment that was primarily women, now to lead an institution with a focus on the education of women and to be in a university where women's contributions and perspectives are found throughout the curriculum, to maintain a research focus on women, and to provide the resources for people to continue to do that. The continuing opportunity to try to build our Women's Studies program and the Chair ⁷ has been a very important part of that. And we're approaching the 25th anniversary of *Atlantis*, the Women's Studies journal that we publish, which is another piece of that commitment.

Margaret Fulton: The thing that I emphasize is the

sense of shared leadership and team leadership. I never had the sense that I was 'the President', at the top of the pyramid. I don't think many of the people around the university did either. The shared leadership involved everybody, at every part of the university. People were just enormously helpful, in the administrative staff, the cleaning staff, there was such a commitment to the whole institution! And you know, so often in larger universities you are isolated in different parts! Nobody had an overall perspective of how it was working together.

Naomi Hersom: Well, that's what Sheila mentioned when she was talking about the scale. That does strike one when you come from the larger universities.

Margaret Fulton: A great sense of cohesiveness that we were all on the same team and we were all going in the same direction.

Naomi Hersom: I'd like to reemphasize the student faculty relationships, too. I saw presentations by third year students on a Saturday morning in this building and I sat there really impressed that undergraduate students were getting opportunities that I hadn't had until I became a graduate student. And that was because of the close liaison that exists between the faculty and the students. Very impressive!

Wayne Ingalls: Well that strikes me as an appropriate place to bring it to a close. The students is really where it's at.

Margaret Fulton: That's what it's all about.

ENDNOTES

1. Mission Statement (*Mount Saint Vincent University Calendar*, 1999)

Mount Saint Vincent University is dedicated to the education of women. The University is committed to:

- the promotion of academic excellence through the provision of a strong liberal arts and science core and selected professional disciplines;
- a high degree of personalized education;
- the advancement and dissemination of knowledge through teaching, research and scholarly activity;
- the preservation of knowledge through its role as a repository and trustee of our cultural heritage, and
- the continuing intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical development of those sharing in its life in an environment characterized by

the values of its founders, the Sisters of Charity: social responsibility, ethical concern and service to the community.

2. Three other universities in the province of Nova Scotia.

3. *Bill 69: An Act to Amend and Consolidate the Acts Relating to Mount Saint Vincent University*, May 25, 1988.

4. Gender distribution: Students (84% female and 16% male); Faculty (62 % female and 38% male) and Senior Administration & Management (85% female and 15% male). (Mount Saint Vincent University, 1999)

5. Presidents since 1925

1925-1944	Mary Evaristus Moran, SC, BA, MA, PhD
1944-1954	Maria Rosaria Gorman, SC, BA, MA, PhD
1954-1965	Francis d'Assisi McCarthy, SC, BA, MA, PhD, LLD, DHumL
1965-1974	Catherine Wallace, OC, BA, MA, PhD, LLD, LLD(Civil), DHumL.
1974-1978	Mary Albertus Haggerty, SC, BA, MA, PhD, LLD(Civil), DHumL
1978-1986	E. Margaret Fulton, OC, BA, MA,, PhD, LLD, DHumL
1986-1991	Naomi Hersom, BA, BEd, MEd, PhD, DU, LLD
1991-1996	Elizabeth Parr-Johnston, BA, MA., PhD
1996-	Sheila A. Brown, BA , MA , PhD

(*Mount Saint Vincent University Calendar*, 1999)

6. The Mount started as an academy established by the Sisters of Charity in 1873. The original purpose was to train novices and sisters as teachers, but the Sisters quickly recognized the need to provide opportunities in post-secondary education for other women as well. In 1914, an agreement was signed with Dalhousie University, enabling students to enrol in the first two years of a bachelor's degree program at the Mount and to continue for the last two years and the awarding of the degree at Dalhousie. In 1925, the Nova Scotia legislature awarded the Mount the right to grant its own degrees, making it the only independent women's college in the British Commonwealth. A new charter was granted in 1966, changing the name from Mount Saint Vincent College to Mount Saint Vincent University. Under its terms, a lay Board of Governors and Senate were established along with the Corporation representing the Sisters of Charity. In 1988, the current charter was approved by the Nova Scotia legislature, transferring ownership of the university from the Sisters of Charity to the Board of Governors. (*Mount Saint Vincent University Calendar*, 1999)

7. Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies, one of five Chairs in Women's Studies in Canada.