

HISTORY

Georgian Court University was founded in 1908 by the Sisters of Mercy of New Jersey as a women's liberal arts college in the Roman Catholic tradition. The university began in North Plainfield, New Jersey, headquarters of the Sisters of Mercy of New Jersey—and was originally called Mount Saint Mary's College. With an inaugural class of seven young women, Mount Saint Mary's College set out to offer women a quality education rooted in the Mercy core values of respect, integrity, justice, compassion, and service.

The student body grew steadily, and by the 1920s the search was on for a new campus to accommodate the college's expanding needs. In 1923, the Sisters found Georgian Court, the palatial winter estate of Gilded Age railroad tycoon George Jay Gould in Lakewood, New Jersey, that featured stunning architecture in the British Georgian style. The Goulds sold the estate to the Sisters of Mercy with the stipulation that it retain the name Georgian Court.

In 1924, the college was moved from North Plainfield to Lakewood and was renamed Georgian Court College. The dramatic Gilded Age architecture and idyllic grounds became a hallmark of the college, providing an inspiring environment where students could grow academically, spiritually, and socially. Over the next several decades, Georgian Court College's programs and facilities grew, along with its reputation for graduating scholarly women of the highest caliber.

In 1976, the Graduate Program was launched as the first coeducational program on campus. It was soon followed by the Coeducational Undergraduate Program, which allowed both women and men to take undergraduate classes in the evening. Mindful of the university's mission to maintain a special concern for women, the Women's College continued to provide undergraduate women with mentoring and leadership opportunities.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Georgian Court continued to expand its academic offerings and resources. In 2001, Rosemary E. Jeffries, RSM, Ph.D., became the college's eighth president and embarked on a comprehensive planning process to secure Georgian Court's place as a beacon of ethical education and academic excellence. She secured university status for Georgian Court, expanded degree offerings, and increased the school's focus on research and scholarship.

In February 2004, the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education awarded university status, and Georgian Court College became Georgian Court University. Since then, the university has added, expanded, and revised its academic offerings; updated campus resources and technology; constructed new academic and residential spaces; established additional sites statewide; and launched in-demand programs online.

Much of this has occurred since 2012, when Georgian Court went fully co-ed. This historic move expanded GCU's Mercy education to a more diverse audience of women and men from across New Jersey, the United States, and other countries.

Another new era began in 2015 when the GCU Board of Trustees named Joseph R. Marbach, Ph.D., as Sister Jeffries' successor, making Dr. Marbach the first man and first layperson to permanently lead GCU as president. He was inaugurated in October 2015 during a week of events and activities reflecting the theme, "Transformation through Catholic Education."

As the university approaches its 100th anniversary in Lakewood, New Jersey, the values set forth by the Sisters of Mercy remain at the core of GCU's mission. Ultimately, GCU is a caring community fueled by scholarship, friendship and empowerment—all of which help students expand their sense of what is possible and develop in them a powerful sense of purpose.