

## Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

---

Volume 54

Article 13

---

September 2018

### An Historical Moment: Saint Joseph's University: Jesuit Education Since 1851

Katie Smith

Paul Burson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Smith, Katie and Burson, Paul (2018) "An Historical Moment: Saint Joseph's University: Jesuit Education Since 1851," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 54 , Article 13.

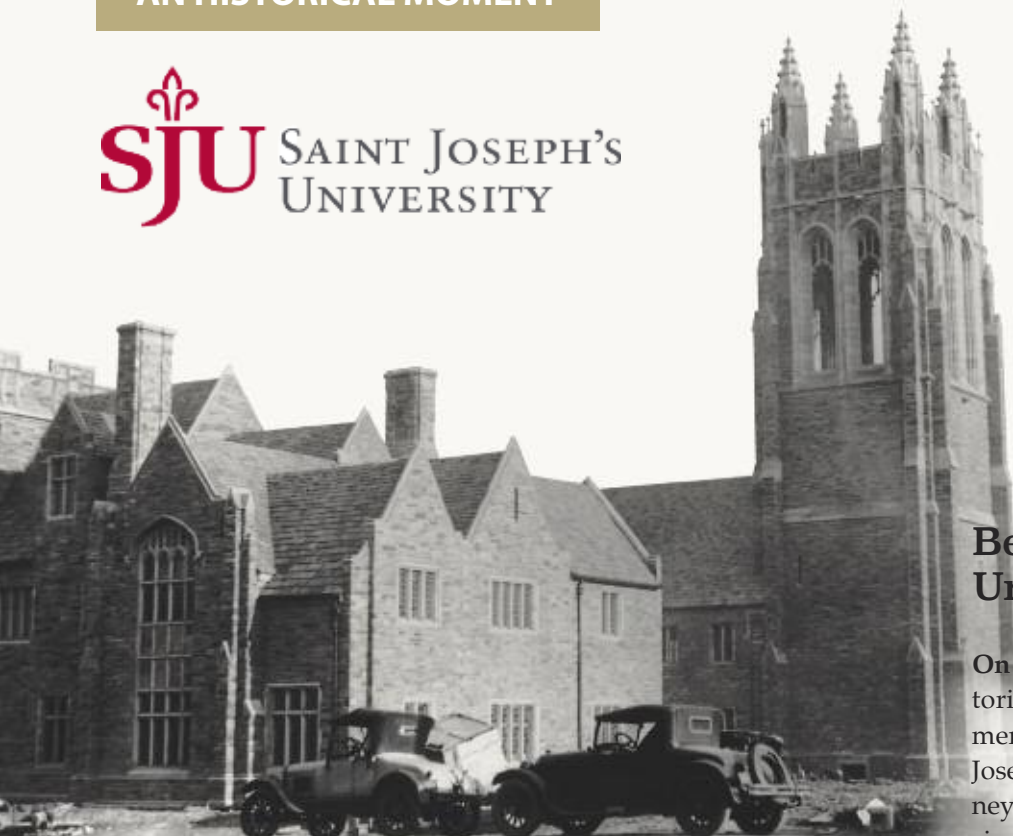
Available at: <https://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol54/iss1/13>

AN HISTORICAL MOMENT



# Jesuit Education since 1851

By Katie Smith



Barbelin Hall in 1927

## Becoming the University on the Hill

On September 15, 1851 – just steps from historic Independence Hall – nearly 30 young men gathered in the courtyard of Saint Joseph’s Church and began their college journeys. Complete with High Mass and class assignments, the morning marked the birth of Saint Joseph’s University.

That humble first campus, home of Philadelphia’s first Catholic church and now affectionately dubbed Old Saint Joseph’s, would welcome hundreds of undergraduates in search of a Jesuit education under the leadership of founder and president, Fr. Felix Barbelin, S.J. As enrollment at the college grew, so did its needs. The college moved to Stiiles Street, now the campus of Saint Joseph’s Preparatory School, in 1861, before finally landing in its current location on City Avenue – “Hawk Hill” – in 1927.



Above: Founder and president, Fr. Felix Barbelin, S.J.



Left: Students reenact the 1851 opening of Saint Joseph’s College at its original campus during the 1951 centennial celebration.

## An Eye Toward the Future

Since the establishment of the original 23-acre campus, Barbelin Tower, its original building, has borne witness to decades of growth and expansion. In 1943, Saint Joseph’s founded its evening college, welcoming professionals and people with families to pursue degrees. To continue to increase access to Jesuit education, the college welcomed its first full-time female undergraduates in fall 1970.

Pennsylvania’s secretary of education recognized Saint Joseph’s as a university in 1978,



ushering in a period of strong growth. The university founded a college of business administration, now the Erivan K. Haub School of Business, to complement the existing College of Arts and Sciences. SJU's expansion dramatically shifted its student body from primarily local commuters to undergraduates from outside of Pennsylvania.

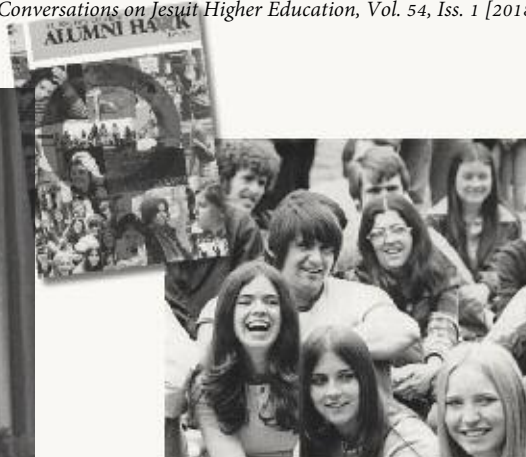
All of these bright young minds needed on-campus housing. So in the 1940s, Saint Joseph's acquired several homes adjacent to the campus and converted them into its first student residences. Over the next 70 years, SJU would grow to comprise 88 dormitories, class buildings, libraries, and recreation spaces and nearly 5,000 undergraduates annually. With the 2008 acquisition of the 38-acre Episcopal Academy campus, named for James J. Maguire ('58), the university further expanded its footprint along the region's historic Main Line.

Most recently, Saint Joseph's acquired the former Cardinal's Residence from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 2012. Renamed the Marcy Dugan Wolf-

Above: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during his 1967 address at Saint Joseph's University.

Above center: Students celebrate the first women to complete four years as undergraduate day students in 1974.

Right: Pope Francis shakes hands with University President Mark C. Reed, Ed.D., during his visit on September 27, 2015.



ington Campus, the 8.9-acre property, housing enrollment, admissions, and career development, highlights the university's Philadelphia Catholic roots to prospective students and their families.

## Jesuit Values in Action

Justice has always been at the core of Saint Joseph's mission. Pope Francis, the world's first Jesuit pontiff, visited SJU on September 7, 2015, during the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. His Holiness blessed the campus's interfaith statue "Synagoga and Ecclesia in Our Time" in commemoration of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II document on interfaith relationships.

On April 16, 2018, Congressman John Lewis (D-Ga) addressed the cam-

pus and surrounding community, drawing on his experience as a civil rights crusader and champion of social justice. His visit marked the 50th anniversary of another historic visit in 1967 by Lewis's friend and mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. As support for the civil rights movement waned in parts of the United States, Saint Joseph's welcomed Doctor King, who presented "The Future of Integration" to an audience of faculty, students, and community leaders.

As the Jesuit university in Philadelphia, the nation's birthplace of independence, Saint Joseph's continues to answer the call to justice offered by such distinguished leaders.

*Katie Smith is an alumna of and staff writer for Saint Joseph's University. She is also a former Jesuit Volunteer (Austin 2015-16).*



Saint Joseph's University today