

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

THE NORMAL SCHOOL: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR  
RURAL WOMEN, 1916-1925

HISTORY 489: RESEARCH SEMINAR

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the effect Normal Schools had on the rural women who attended the institutions, using Eau Claire Normal as a case study for the larger Normal School movement and women in higher education from 1916-1925. This paper examines the school and the town where the school resided, student activities, the different programs for one could enroll, student experience in the school and after graduation, and employment for the graduates. These sections explain how the rural women attending the Normal school used the institution to expand their intellectual, cultural, social, and economic abilities.

## Introduction

At the time of the American Revolution, the newly founded government needed public support. The most effective way to achieve that goal was to educate the children. Republican Motherhood, the ideology of mother's teaching their children to embrace the values of liberty, civic responsibility, and rule by the people at a young age, was necessary for the future of the United States. Mothers had a civic duty to properly instruct their children and were the most qualified to train and educate their children. The purpose was for early American mothers to shape their sons' values and knowledge, which allowed mothers a direct impact on the nation's future. Republican motherhood had two significant effects in regards to education. First, it allowed women to be educated so they could teach their children. Second, it established the precedent of women as educators in the public sphere. Women gained the responsibility to teach because society presumed their gender was more virtuous. Women alone had the morals to "plant the seeds of virtue in their offspring,"<sup>1</sup> making women alone capable of forming American children's minds.

During this period, education was obtained privately. In 1785, the United States passed the Land Ordinance, which set aside a portion of land in each township in the unincorporated territories for the purpose of education. In the settled communities of our country, education was privatized. In the 1830s, American education underwent a change with the help of reformers. The secretary of education in Massachusetts, Horace Mann, called for public education in 1837. Mann helped create a statewide system of elementary education for all, regardless of income, sex, or race. Mann referred to the schools as common schools. From Massachusetts, common schools spread to the surrounding states setting the standard of education. By 1860, most states

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<sup>1</sup> Woloch, Nancy. *Women and the American Experience* 3d ed., (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000), 93.

had free public schools for grades one through eight.<sup>2</sup> Mann, and like-minded reformers, believed that government intervention in education fostered the nation's development.

The need for teachers was created by the national spread of common schools and the advancement of secondary education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because of the standard of Republican motherhood and the societal belief that teaching was an extension of women's role in the home, women entered the field of education. Like common schools, normal schools were institutions founded in New England during the reform movement to teach methods to those who chose to teach. When Eau Claire Normal was founded in 1916, Wisconsin had already established nine state-funded Normal schools.

Christine A. Ogren, author of *The American State Normal School*, proposed that normal schools afforded women the opportunity of advancement through higher education. From her research, Ogren concluded that normal schools were used as a mode of social mobility for women, many who came from rural or working class families. The institution's educational and social opportunities, as well as job placement after graduation, gave the female students a means in which to socially elevate themselves. Ogren's research correlates well with Eau Claire Normal because the women who attended the school were lower to middle class, resided in a rural state, and took advantage of the academic, social, and intellectual prospects available.

For the rural women of Wisconsin, the Eau Claire State Normal School gave them the opportunity to elevate themselves socially, culturally, intellectually, and economically. Socially and culturally, these women were able to join organizations, attend music performances, theater, and dances that were not available in the female students' hometowns, and meet people from other small communities or from larger urban areas. Women were involved in an intellectual

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<sup>2</sup>Ogren, Christine A. *The American State Normal School: "An Instrument of Great Good"*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2005), 9-10.

community of classes and student organization, both of which explored a variety of topics not available at their previous schools. Economically, the women who attended the Normal School were taught a skill that would provide them with a respectable, well paying job. For these reasons, the rural women who attended a Normal school had the opportunity to elevate their status in society.

## Brief History of Women in Education

At the time of the education reform movement of the 1830s, students were taught in the home, at private schools, or through the church. The reform movement strove for universal elementary education. The demand for teachers increased as more students went to school and popular women's magazines of the day embraced the ideas of Republican Motherhood. Catherine Beecher was a strong proponent of female teachers in the mid-nineteenth century. Beecher's goal for education was to elevate women through the profession of teaching. She lobbied for the establishment of teacher training schools throughout the nation. Her vision was for teaching to become a distinguished profession for women, a profession that was comparable to motherhood and to the male professions of law, medicine, and the ministry.<sup>3</sup> Teaching was a suitable career for women who must work to earn a living; it was distinguished and women were treated far better in the schools than in industry. By the end of the Civil War, Beecher convinced many that women were the best and the most economical option for common school teachers.

The motivation for women as common school teachers was economic. Female educators were paid low wages. The school boards of the district were responsible for paying the schoolteachers and chose to hire a woman because they required half the wages that men received. At the same time, the professionalism of teaching occurred by the standardization of methods and curriculum. Women flooded the field as teaching became more professional and a socially accepted position for respected woman. Conversely, as more women joined the ranks, men left the field. The combination of low pay and low status of teaching created an opening where men left a vacancy that allowed women to dominate the field. Lower and middle class

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<sup>3</sup> Woloch, 134.

women held these positions. These women were trained through short and inexpensive programs that accommodated to the lower to middle class woman.

Common schools were the first public schools in the United States. The schools were publicly funded by local taxes, did not charge tuition, and taught up to eighth grade. Women as educators received increased acceptance because there was a shortage of teachers when the common school system was expanded. Women were originally restricted to only teach girls in the summer programs during the 1920s; however by the 1830s, women were teaching boys and girls in primary school for the full academic year.<sup>4</sup>

The normal school was a teacher training institution created to train the many teachers necessary for the rise in common schools. In the early years many of the women trained only had an elementary education themselves and were trained in methodology to teach the primary grades. With the rise of the number of high schools in the late nineteenth century, a number of the normal school matriculates were high school graduates. The elevation in the students' knowledge allowed the normal schools to train teachers in the rapidly growing number of high school teaching positions.<sup>5</sup> The elevation of public school education increased the standards for normal schools as well.

At the turn of the century many normal schools, especially in the Midwest and the West, exceeded their original function of teaching only methodology and offered general education.<sup>6</sup> This second phase of the normal school movement followed a separate mission than the primary goals, to teach only methods. The schools recognized their students' desire for further education

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>5</sup> Ogren, Christine A. Education for Women in the United States: The State Normal School Experience, 1870-1920. Dissertation. UW-Madison, 1996. , 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8.

in the liberal arts and the schools complied. The new phase taught general courses in history, language, science, and mathematics. The schools also taught every subject in separate, intense phases, mirroring the pedagogy of colleges and university programs of the time. There was a heavy focus on scholarship with a smaller emphasis on methods. The third and final phase of the normal school movement was also centered on scholarship; however, scholarship was used as a means to becoming a professional educator. It was an ideology was similar to that of a law or medical school—that being, an institution to best train and prepare those in the profession. It benefited the future teachers to have a specification in their work.<sup>7</sup> The progression of the normal school movement shows how common school teachers were educated holistically. The Normal schools taught methods and pedagogy, while valuing liberal arts in the Normal's coursework.

Eau Claire was a combination of the second and the third phases of the normal school movement. The students were properly trained in pedagogy, and given the opportunity to study subjects in areas other than those they might have taught. The school maintained in the Eau Claire Normal Bulletin the desire “to be definite in aim, liberal in outlook, and democratic in spirit. We are a teacher-centered school, not a college.”<sup>8</sup> The focus was to train teachers; however, the students had the flexibility to make what they wanted out of their experience at Eau Claire Normal.

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<sup>7</sup> State Department of Public Instruction. 1925. *History of the Special Departments of the Normal Schools of Wisconsin, 1914-1925*. State Department of Public Instruction, Madison, WI, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> State Normal School, Eau Claire. *Bulletin of the State Normal School*. Eau Claire: Board of Normal School Regents, 1920, 20.

## Wisconsin as a Rural State

When Wisconsin became a state in 1848, the state was predominately rural. By today's standards, Wisconsin was ninety percent rural. By 1900, thirty-eight percent of residents resided in cities. At the turn of the century, seventy percent of the rural populations were family farmers.<sup>9</sup>

The Census Bureau defines "rural"<sup>10</sup> as an incorporated place with a population less than 2,500, while small cities and villages ranged from 2,500 to 50,000.<sup>11</sup> The census data does not record city populations; instead, the populations of counties determine census data. The census bureau does not provide a definition of a rural county; however, Milwaukee was the only major city that could claim to be a major urban center that had a county in 1920, with a population of 539,449, more densely populated than any other county in the state. This resulted in the rest of the state consisting of a rural population. Using the Census Bureau's definition of rural, forty-eight percent of the United States was rural territory in 1920. In the same year, Wisconsin's total population was 2,632,067, with 1,387,499 rural inhabitants. The rural citizens were present in one of two groups—those who resided in incorporated places and those who lived in unincorporated territory. In 1920, the incorporated rural population in Wisconsin was 271,900 with an unincorporated population of 1,115, 599.<sup>12</sup> This meant that 80.4 percent of Wisconsin's rural population consisted of a population that lived in unincorporated territory in 1920, meaning

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<sup>9</sup> Wisconsin. *State of Wisconsin Blue Book 2003-2004*, 109.

<sup>10</sup> The definition of "rural" is the same in the twenty-first century as it was in 1920.

<sup>11</sup> Wisconsin. *State of Wisconsin Blue Book 2003-2004*, 108.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce 1921, 43-46.

that not only did the majority live in rural communities, but the communities were very small with fewer than 2,500 residents.

In the first two years of the Eau Claire Normal School, a large percentage of the students were Eau Claire city residents. In the opening of the school in 1916, 48.4 percent of the Eau Claire Normal students resided in the city of Eau Claire; 24.4 percent of the students lived outside of the city limits, either in Eau Claire or Chippewa counties. This meant that 27.2 percent of the students to originate from rural counties in the state.

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

### **Map 1 County of Origin of Eau Claire Normal Students, 1916-1918.**

The 1917-1918 records are comparable to the admission records of schools first academic year, with the Eau Claire residents accounting for 53.1 percent of the enrolled students, the Chippewa county and remaining Eau Claire county students occupying 19.7 percent of the

student body, and 27.2 percent of the students originating from rural counties.<sup>13</sup> The rural student body at Eau Claire Normal was congruent with normal schools nationally. Many of the students were children of farmers who had limited access to any other kind of higher education who were from very small and rural towns and villages.<sup>14</sup>

Roughly a quarter of the students during the first years of Eau Claire Normal were from rural counties.<sup>15</sup> In 1920, the county population of Eau Claire was 35,771, with an average of 561 people per square mile, compared to Milwaukee County's total population of 539,449, with 22,959 people per square mile. Reviewing this information about Eau Claire County gives a measure to compare the density of a county, which allows comparisons between the counties in which the students lived before their arrival to Eau Claire County. Chippewa County had 351 people per square mile, and Clark County had 288 people per square mile. One student came from Iron County, which had 130 people per square mile. Many students came from Trempealeau and Buffalo Counties, which had 328 and 227 people per square mile respectively.<sup>16</sup> These numbers indicate that for many of the students at Eau Claire Normal, the change of location offered more than just an education at the school. Higher populations offered diversity and the opportunity to have different experiences than those offered in the area where

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<sup>13</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School, Applications for Admission 1916-1917: Registrar. L.E. Phillips Library, Eau Claire, WI.

<sup>14</sup> Ogren, 4, 72.

<sup>15</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School, Application for Admission 1916-1918.

<sup>16</sup> University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser* [updated 2007; cited 10 December 2007]. Available from <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/php/county.php>.

they grew up. This made the experience of attending Eau Claire Normal unique to the rural students who moved to the city.

## The School

The state legislature passed the bill selecting Eau Claire as the location for a Normal School in 1909. This was to be Wisconsin's tenth State Normal, joining Platteville, Whitewater, Oshkosh, Superior, Milwaukee, Stevens Point, River Falls, La Crosse, and Baraboo.<sup>17</sup> The school Built for \$225,000, and the school was situated on a 12-acre tract of land on the banks of the Chippewa River. After three years of construction, Eau Claire Normal was ready to start its inaugural semester on September 18, 1916.<sup>18</sup>

The local residents of Eau Claire and State Regents Board considered the city an ideal location for a Normal school. The Normal Bulletin boasted of the unique experiences the school and community offered. The school contained a large auditorium with seating for 750, as well as home to a large gymnasium and a library filled with 8,000 bound volumes and 1,400 pamphlets.<sup>19</sup> Students were able to access large laboratories for science and special rooms for music and drawing.<sup>20</sup> The community also had much to offer. The city's population was about twenty thousand with thriving businesses and industry. A well-run train service on the Omaha, Soo, Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railways ran through Eau Claire that allowed convenient transportation from Eau Claire to anywhere in the state.<sup>21</sup> This allowed travel for students to be uncomplicated, events to easily travel to Eau Claire, and to bring performers to showcase their

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<sup>17</sup> These state Normals were not the only teachers' institutions in the state, there were also many county sponsored Normal schools.

<sup>18</sup> State Normal School, Eau Claire. *Bulletin of the State Normal School*. Eau Claire: Board of Normal School Regents, 1916, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> State Normal School, Eau Claire. *Bulletin of the State Normal School*. Eau Claire: Board of Normal School Regents, 1926, p 9.

<sup>20</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1916, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1926, 8.

talents in the city. The city was home to beautiful churches, an impressive public library, and a large Opera House that was able to book the same talent that was offered in larger cities.<sup>22</sup> The school and community offered the Normal students interesting entertainment and educational experiences.

The city also had many lakes, rivers, and parks. The school sat along a bluff on the Chippewa River, and was adjacent to Putnam Park, which boasted 38 varieties of native Wisconsin trees. Behind the Normal was Little Niagara, a small trout stream. The school boasted that Eau Claire allowed the students to have the experiences of a city without the danger experienced in larger cities.<sup>23</sup> For female students from small towns, the woman's safety would have been an important aspect of attending the Normal school, for both the student and her family.

Table 1 Tuition and Fees for Eau Claire Normal Students 1916-1922

Fees	Per Semester
Tuition for Wisconsin Resident in declaring to teach after graduation	FREE
Tuition for Wisconsin Resident not declaring to teach	\$35.00
Tuition for Wisconsin Resident enrolled in the College Course	FREE
Tuition for Non-Resident in College or Teaching course	\$35.00
Incidental fee for students in the regular Normal courses, book rent included	\$5.00
Incidental fee for students in College courses, or for Normal students not declaring to teach, book rent included	\$14.00
Laboratory fee for students in the regular Normal course: For Geology, advanced Biology, and Physics	\$2.00
For Chemistry	\$3.00
Laboratory fee for students in College courses, or for Normal students not declaring to teach For Geology, Biology, and Physics	\$4.00
For Chemistry	\$5.00

<sup>22</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1916, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

The Eau Claire Normal Bulletin reported a moderate price for their students. In 1919, the average American in Chicago spent 178 dollars on food and seventy-seven dollars on housing, which totals 255 dollars.<sup>24</sup> However, the cost of living in Eau Claire would be less expensive than in a major city. As explained in the *Bulletin of the State Normal School* for Eau Claire Normal, the total expense for the 1916-1917 academic year should not have exceeded two hundred dollars.<sup>25</sup> By the 1919-1920 academic year, the school projected that the total cost for the school year would not exceed 275 dollars and in the 1920-1923 academic years, the cost of the school would not exceed 325 dollars.<sup>26</sup> The Bulletin reported that room and board could be attained in private homes starting at six dollars per week from 1919 through 1926; the Bulletin also stated that students should not have difficulty finding an adequate room in which they could surrounded with all the comforts of home.<sup>27</sup> In a city the size of Eau Claire, there were many opportunities for “ambitious young men and women to pay part, and sometimes all, of their expenses by working outside of regular school hours. There are frequent opportunities for girls to work.” If a student desired to work for room and board while in Eau Claire, the Bulletin suggested that they write President Schofield two or three weeks prior to their arrival.<sup>28</sup> This was

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<sup>24</sup> Derks, Scott. *The Value of a Dollar: Prices and Incomes in the United States, 1860-2004*. 3d ed. Millerton, NY: Grey House, 2004, 127.

<sup>25</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1916, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1920, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1919, 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

a common practice for Normal students nationally—many students worked while enrolled to meet their financial burdens.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than tuition based on the number of classes, the student's declaration to teach and their residency determined tuition. If the student was a resident of Wisconsin and agreed to teach in Wisconsin after graduation, tuition for the student was free. Free tuition also applied to resident college course students. If the student was a non-resident college course, a non-resident not declaring to teach or a Wisconsin resident choosing not to declare to teach in Wisconsin, tuition was thirty-five dollars.<sup>30</sup> Other fees were also affected by students' choice whether to teach in Wisconsin. For students choosing the College course or unwilling to teach in Wisconsin, the cost of attending Eau Claire Normal was more expensive—thirty-five dollars a semester. However, most students did teach in Wisconsin after graduation. The "Alumni" section of Eau Claire's yearbook reported that a vast majority of the students who attended Eau Claire Normal to pursue teaching found placement in schools throughout the state. Of the rural women that graduated in 1919, twenty-four of the thirty teaching students found placements throughout the state.<sup>31</sup> Although this does not prove that the rural women made the declaration to teach, many women did teach the year following their graduation from Eau Claire Normal.

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<sup>29</sup> Ogren 2005, 72.

<sup>30</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1916, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1919, 38-39.

## Courses

Eau Claire Normal offered seven programs for students—four in teaching, two for principals, and one college course. Each program lasted from one to three years. These programs had their own curriculum, which were determined by the demographic the students planned to teach.

Table 2 Length of Programs at Eau Claire Normal

Programs	Length of Program
Primary Grade Teachers (Grades 1-4)	2 years
Grammar Grade Teachers (Grades 5-8)	2 years
Graded School Principals	2 years
High School Teachers	3 years
High School Principals	3 years
“Minimum Qualification” for rural teachers	1-2 years
Two-year College Course	2 years

The Primary program was for students who intended to teach grades one through four. Those who intended on teaching grades five through eight enrolled in the Grammar program. Normal students who planned on teaching above grade eight participated in the High School program. The two Principal programs were Grade School and High School. The rural teachers’ program was called the “Minimum Qualifications” course. The final program was for students who chose not to be educators, enrolling in the Two-Year College course.<sup>32</sup>

The Primary program focused on the skills an educator would need for grades one through four. The Normal recognized that “the work of the teacher in the early grades is so entirely different from that of the upper grade teacher,”<sup>33</sup> which affected how the courses were

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<sup>32</sup> State Normal School, Eau Claire. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1916, 14.

taught and the type of students that enrolled. The Normal student was required to have an academic and psychological understanding of subjects beyond those that they would be teaching which gave the student a broader outlook.<sup>34</sup> This allowed the future teacher to have a broader understanding of their mission in education.

The Grammar program differed from the Primary program. Eau Claire Normal believed that the teachers for grades four through eight needed to be broadly educated because many children did not continue their education after eighth grade. The Bulletin reported “the great majority of boys and girls get no higher schooling than that obtained in the grades below high school.”<sup>35</sup> The teacher of these grades needed to have a complete and thorough knowledge of the subjects, as well as the methods of teaching. Normal students focused not only on the theories of education, but also the practical application of these theories in a real classroom. They observed and taught in the Model School on campus, which gave the students an opportunity to work with their teacher and principal in the practical setting.<sup>36</sup>

The students at the Normal learned basic psychology to understand the changes their students were experiencing in order to be able to interact with their students intellectually and sympathetically. With this psychological education, the Normal school was infusing values of respect, awareness, and understanding into their future teachers. The school required Grammar education students to take two quarters of psychology and six courses in methods.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.,14.

<sup>34</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1917, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>36</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1923, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1920, 32.

The Primary and the Grammar students used the Model School as a learning tool. Local students from kindergarten through ninth grade were taught at the Model School at Eau Claire Normal. The Model School was located on the first floor of the Normal's main building, commonly referred to as Old Main by the students. The school was technologically up to date, with adjustable seats and desks. The model students were taught in the common branches of education, and were taught by Normal students who were supervised by their professors. For student teachers to be eligible to teach at the Model School, they first must be familiar with the subject material as well as competent in classroom management.<sup>38</sup> The Model School was integral to the students' education because they could practice their learned skills of classroom management and instruction.

The Principal program for grade and high schools focused on organization and management of the school and the grounds. Administration and supervision were the main duties of a grade school principal. The future principals of grade schools had to have an understanding of the interconnections between the grades. The Normal required that the students of the Principal course to be able to teach high school courses as well as supervise the school. The student observed classes, took method, supervision, and management courses, and made special preparation for teaching in one or more area—at most schools of the time, the principal taught the more advanced grades in the school.<sup>39</sup> Allowing the students to have many electives accomplished this goal. This emphasis allowed the students to further their education in areas other than methods courses.

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<sup>38</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1921, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1917, 14-15.

The High school teachers' course was a three-year program designed to prepare students for the challenges of teaching in a small town high school. The students specialized in two areas of study.<sup>40</sup> Their major subject was pursued continuously through their three years at school, whereas a minor is a program is taken for two years. A study of smaller high schools of Wisconsin showed that the most common combinations were History and English; Science and Mathematics; English and French; History and French; Latin and French; History and Mathematics; French and Mathematics; and English and Science. In addition, most high school teachers were required to teach Algebra, English, Agriculture, and History, regardless of their major or minor.<sup>41</sup>

High school teachers were expected to teach two or more subjects and to take part in the extracurricular activities of the Model school as well as participate in the community. To do this work required a thorough knowledge of the subjects taught, a sincere interest in the young people at a difficult age, a degree of leadership, and more than ordinary poise and control.<sup>42</sup>

The "Minimum Qualifications," later called the Rural Course, had two options. The one-year program offered a diploma that allowed the student to teach for five years in an Eau Claire County common school, provided that the student had previously taught in a rural school for one academic year. The two-year program allowed the student to teach in a common school in the state of Wisconsin for as long as they desired.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>41</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1920, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1918, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1921, 24.

The College Courses were separate from the Normal courses because the programs were designed for students to transfer to a four-year university. There were courses in Agriculture, Home Economics, Commerce, Journalism, Pre-Legal, Pre-Medical, Letters and Science, and Engineering.<sup>44</sup> From 1916-1925, none of the rural women researched enrolled in the College Course; however, many rural men used the Normal school as a stepping-stone to the University of Wisconsin located in Madison.

Each program is described by the Bulletin as valuing professionalism. This emphasis on professional training was for the student as a teacher as well as a student at the Normal school. Normal schools were not the only teacher training institutions—high schools and counties had their own programs to train educators. The emphasis on professionalism was put into place because the school was a business that had to compete with other institutions and to differentiate itself from the smaller, more local institutions. Professionalism was needed for future teachers as well, allowing them to be efficient in their instruction and management.<sup>45</sup> Written communication was an important aspect of education and students were held up to the basic standards of professionalism. If the student lacked proper penmanship and spelling, the student would be required to enroll in a course to learn the correct rules of writing.<sup>46</sup> This focus on penmanship and proper spelling was an indicator of the professionalization of teaching. There were standards that Normal students had an obligation to fulfill.

Each program had a strict schedule that each student was meant to follow. For the Primary, Grammar, and Rural courses, the academic classes required some or all of the following

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<sup>44</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1920, 32-33.

<sup>45</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1921, 22.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

classes: Arithmetic, Psychology, Grammar, English Composition, Geography, American History, Literature, Nature Study, General Science, Citizenship, and Civics. There were artistic classes of Drawing and Music, and practical classes of Sewing, Cooking, Agriculture, and Sanitation and Hygiene. The Normal required the students to enroll in Teaching and Management, Principles of Teaching and Observation, and Supervision and Observation in order to learn the methods of teaching. In addition to these courses, students were given space during their senior year to take elective courses. These electives were designed with the intention of giving the students “more thorough preparation in one or more branches for departmental work.”<sup>47</sup> Elective courses included Advanced U.S. History, Ancient History, Modern History, Physiography, Commerce and Industry, English courses in Literature and Modern Literature, and Science and Mathematics, such as Algebra, Plane Geometry, Unified Mathematics, Biology, Physiology, and Physics.<sup>48</sup> Elective courses were to be practical; however, not all rural teachers were going to teach Physics to their students. The electives coursework was occurring nationally at each normal school. The intent of the elective courses was to broaden the students’ exposure to the liberal arts and to expand their perceptions of the world.<sup>49</sup> Electives allowed students to further their academic interests in topics that may not be necessary for their future careers. The elective classes gave the students an opportunity to study topics because of their interests.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>49</sup> Ogren 2005, 48.

### Clubs and Activities

Students at Eau Claire Normal had the opportunity to participate in many different group organizations in addition to their course load. Since the Normal's inaugural year in 1916, students formed literary, religious, musical, social, and service oriented clubs. Students from rural counties were as active in extracurricular activities as students from larger towns. In the first graduating class of Eau Claire Normal in 1917, seven of the forty-six students were from rural communities. Each of these students participated in at least one of the clubs and each academic program participated equally. In the 1916-1917 academic year, six extracurricular groups formed and had regular meetings. In addition to these groups, there were parties, mixers, and dances. The Periclean Literary Society was the most attended group during Eau Claire Normal's inaugural year. The literary society staged oratory and debate contests that focused on contemporary issues in politics and culture.<sup>50</sup> Although the rural students did not participate in all of the activities, the opportunity for extracurricular activity was available.

Eau Claire Normal's second year had more graduates and these students created more extracurricular groups in which to participate. Out of the twenty-three rural female graduates, fifteen participated in groups. The most popular clubs were the Y.W.C.A. and Alpha Rho. The Y.W.C.A. was a religious and public service organization. The students in Alpha Rho studied art and its history and held discussions about how to enjoy the subject. One of their discussions focused on Egyptian art. Students also presented a senior class play, historical pageants, and the singing ensemble—the Cecelian Clubs.<sup>51</sup> The Cecelian clubs' purpose was to “advance the

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<sup>50</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope*, Vol. 1. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Wisconsin State Normal School, Eau Claire, 1917.

<sup>51</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope*, Vol. 1. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Wisconsin State Normal School, Eau Claire, 1918.

appreciation of good music and a spirit of fraternity; to bring ensemble singing to the highest possible excellence; to train voices; to help create better school spirit; and, in general, to help the Normal not only in its school activities, but also in the community.<sup>52</sup>

Many of the rural students joined clubs as well. For the 1918-1919 academic year, twenty-four of the thirty-five graduating students were from rural backgrounds participated in student societies. The Y.W.C.A. and Alpha Rho continued to be popular amongst the students. While Alpha Rho was active fourteen rural students were members, which was twenty-six percent of the total Alpha Rho participants.<sup>53</sup> The percentage was similar to the percentage of rural students attending the Normal. The members of the student Y.W.C.A. on the Eau Claire Normal campus viewed its organization as an important factor in the social and religious life of the women involved. The group was a social enterprise; however, the women participated in some unique endeavors. For example, In December 1920, the women held a Japanese tea ceremony, where a female missionary displayed her souvenirs from Japan.<sup>54</sup> Guest speakers were invited to lecture on their experiences as missionaries. In 1922, the organization gave a liberal supply of food to a needy family at Thanksgiving and also at Christmas.<sup>55</sup> In 1917, a student was sent to Geneva to the College Y.W.C.A. Camp. Although not all students could go to Geneva, they could learn from their club mate's experience. By meeting other chapters of the

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<sup>52</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope*, Vol. 1. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Wisconsin State Normal School, Eau Claire, 1920, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1918.

<sup>54</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope*, Vol. 1. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Wisconsin State Normal School, Eau Claire, 1921, 46.

<sup>55</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope*, Vol. 1. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Wisconsin State Normal School, Eau Claire, 1922, 70.

Y.W.C.A., the Eau Claire chapter had the opportunity to learn from other chapters' experiences, attempt different programs, and learn more about the available service opportunities.

During the 1918 academic year, Eau Claire Normal instituted its first Catholic Student Organization.<sup>56</sup> The Newman Club describes itself as a group that

Promote[s] friendship, unity and charity among its members, and the spirit of co-operation in all school activities. It is socially efficient, as well: a fact that is demonstrated at all of its meetings. These meetings are held once or twice a month, usually at the local Knights of Columbus hall. The order of events is as follows: First, the business of the meetings is transacted; second, follows a short program of interesting talks and musical numbers; third, the remaining of the evening is spent in dancing. Refreshments are also served.<sup>57</sup>

This description of the Newman Club meetings demonstrates how the student activities offered rural women the opportunity for social interaction with individuals from other areas and ideas and an education outside of the classroom.

From 1919-1925, students maintained the clubs of the previous years, and also created new groups. One such group, the Home Economics Club, was founded in 1919, and successful from the beginning. Meetings were held monthly.

At these meetings short programs were given and refreshments served. It is hoped that the activities of the club will be continued next year. A great deal of success of the club is due to Mrs. Lyla D. Flagler, head of the department of domestic science and the domestic art of the Normal School. The club is planning an outdoor fete to be given before the close of the school year.<sup>58</sup>

Each club was created both to study some aspect of society as well as to partake in social activities. These groups gave students a chance to interact and discuss with new students outside of their academic programs and from different communities than those from which they

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<sup>56</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1919.

<sup>57</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1920, 45.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

originated. The Home Economics Club provided the rural women with instruction on the proper social procedures of the middle class. For women of lower class means, the Home Economics Club was a way to elevate her social standards.

Theater and music societies also had a prominent place in Eau Claire Normal society. The Normal Orchestra was organized during the school's third year, giving the players and their audiences an opportunity to experience different styles of music. The orchestra, the Cecilian Club and Cecilian Roll, Choral Club, Men's Glee Club, historical pageant, and for one year, the Mandolin Club, were active clubs. The Orchestra and the Cecilians performed at the graduation ceremony as well as at their own concerts. Students held recitals for the musical groups and the many of the pageants presented by students were festive engagements. The students at Eau Claire Normal had the opportunity to listen to different styles of music several times a month.

Not all student groups that formed returned each fall. Alpha Rho, the art appreciation society, formed in the 1917-1918 academic year, was only maintained for two years. Likewise, the Benis-a-nepay Camp Fire, the Home Economics Club, class plays and musicals in existence for only a few academic years. Even though they did not have the same longevity as other groups, they still succeeded in providing the students opportunities to participate in educational and social groups.

For the 1919-1920 school year, the graduating class was divided into groups. The five separate groups each containing twenty to thirty students, had their own colors, mottos, leaders, yells, and social activities. Each group held their own socials as well as hosting events for the other units. The groups engaged in friendly competition, including girl's basketball, in which Group Five<sup>59</sup> won the group tournament.<sup>60</sup> The students in each group organized and attended

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<sup>59</sup> Group Five contained the highest percentage of women from rural communities.

many events together. They organized informal gatherings, such as dinner events or “feeds,” dances and socials, “secret Santa,” sold concessions at Normal sporting events and hosted mock trials. The students also used the groups for higher pursuits, where they brought speakers to Eau Claire, held small theatrical performances, and staged debates. These events gave the students an opportunity to have fun with their peers, as well as expand their civic involvement. Many of these activities had a triple purpose; they were also designed to raise funds, allow students to develop their own ideas, and to express themselves creatively.

Although students were not prohibited from participating in the student groups, not all students could afford to join. Many organizations had dues, that ranged from one to three dollars per semester, took time away from the students’ studies, and, if they worked for their room and board, their jobs. This created an economic divide. From their yearbook, the *Periscope*, there is evidence that the students from the cities of Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls participated more in student organizations; however, these students were a higher percentage of the students in attendance at the Normal. This could also be because the Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls students’ lived in urban areas that offered more job opportunities and their families earned more. Students from rural counties that had a large farming industry did not always participate in the same groups as the students from the larger city of Eau Claire; however, the rural and urban students participated in the same percentage as the enrollment percentages of rural to urban students. Female rural students actively participated in the groups. Of the thirty-three rural women graduates of the class of 1919, fifteen participated in the Y.W.C.A., seven were in a musical group, ten joined Alpha Rho, five were in Newman Club, and two women wrote for the *Periscope*. The women who joined also held leadership roles and were chair holders in many of

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<sup>60</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1920.

the clubs.<sup>61</sup> The percentages that rural women participated in groups were equal to their enrollment, showing that they were, percentage wise, as active as the urban students.

Each month that school was in session several social groups entertained parties, in which each group took a turn organizing and hosting the event. In the fall of 1922, there were two events that focused on the rural and urban populations at the Normal. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, the female students whose families resided in Eau Claire hosted a party for the out-of-town female students. Ten days later on October 5<sup>th</sup>, the out-of-town female students hosted a gathering for the Eau Claire girls.<sup>62</sup> The two parties were within a fortnight of each other perhaps reveal the desire of the female students desire to learn about the lives of each group. This effort by the two groups of women demonstrated their desire to know the other demographic at the school.

The Literary sections of the *Periscope* from 1917-1923 contained student essays. These essays broached many topics, including the Massacre of the Armenians, the experiences of immigrants in Wisconsin, European nationalism, and patriotism. Female students contributed writing selections, although not as actively as male students. In 1920, the Debate Team got its first female member. The Debate Team competed against other Normals in the state. In 1920, Eau Claire placed second out of the three teams between Superior and River Falls Normal Schools. The topic of debate was “resolved, that the United States should enact a law providing military training for all male citizens between the ages of nineteen and twenty, for a period of not less than nine nor more than eighteen months.” The topic of military training was relevant to the students of Eau Claire Normal. The First World War instilled the draft of soldiers in the United States. The topic was personal to the students and the competitors used “pep and fiery logic” to

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<sup>61</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1919.

<sup>62</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope*, Vol. 1. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Wisconsin State Normal School, Eau Claire, 1920 1923, 117.

persuade the judges and audience.<sup>63</sup> These groups allowed students to break away from the technical knowledge they were learning in their classes and to expand their creative and intellectual boundaries.

The clubs that women formed reflected the women's sphere. Women did not participate in the Oratorical Contests, the Senate, and Athletics.<sup>64</sup> However, there were a few exceptions. Women had their interschool basketball league, a limited number of women on the Debate team, and each graduating class had one female of the four positions as a class officer from 1916-1925.<sup>65</sup> In the all male Senate, the men discussed local government by breaking into committees, reporting on candidates, and discussing each candidate the following meeting.<sup>66</sup> Women at the Normal participated in religious and social groups that benefited their school and larger society. An example of how the Normal female students acted in their women's sphere was in their extracurricular groups, such as when the Y.W.C.A. served an afternoon luncheon to the football team.<sup>67</sup> The women's religious group had no affiliations with football; however, these women viewed it as their duty, as women, to provide a meal for the team.

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<sup>63</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1920, 53.

<sup>64</sup> Male athletics are well documented in the *Periscope*; pages are dedicated to each sport, game and tournament. Organizations on campus feed the athletes, sell concessions at games, and hold pep rallies.

<sup>65</sup> Ogren, Christine A. *The American State Normal School: "An Instrument of Great Good"* New York: Palgrave McMillion, 2005. The participation of women in male dominated activities was restricted. Women in sports could obviously only compete with other women. Nationally, women did take on leadership positions in all female and co-ed organizations.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>67</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1922, 70.

Extracurricular activities gave students an outlet outside of their course load. They could meet with students from different areas, who had similar or different experiences before arriving at the Normal.

### Gender Roles in the Course

Teaching was a socially sanctioned role for women to perform because it aligned with women's role in society. Society believed that women possessed the characteristics of gentleness, obedience, and patience, which lent well to teaching. Teaching was professionalized during the mid-nineteenth century, increasing the number of female teachers. Scholars of women in education characterize teaching as an extension of the unpaid services preformed by the housewife.<sup>68</sup> Women had been teaching their children in the home under the ideal of the Republican Motherhood. The United States took it upon itself to be responsible for teaching the youth of America, which could be achieved at a lower price by hiring female educators.<sup>69</sup> At Eau Claire Normal, the gender divisions were evident in each program. A majority of women chose Primary and Grammar Courses, while men enrolled in the high school principal and college courses.

This was congruent with the mission of most of the national school reformers. Male teachers did not want their profession to be downgraded because of the women who were the field. This affected women's roles within schools. As women entered as teachers, a gender hierarchy was established and men received higher positions within the schools. Men became the authority figures and decision makers in the school in predominately superintendents and principals positions, while women became the teachers who had to follow the men's decisions.<sup>70</sup> Women filed into teaching programs, whereas men applied for the principle programs.

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<sup>68</sup> Ogren 2005, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Lerner, Gerda. "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson." In *History of Women in the Unites States: Intersections of Work and Family Life, Vol. 5, part 1*, ed. Nancy F. Cott, 32-43. New York: K.G. Saur, 1992, 37.

<sup>70</sup> Ogren 2005, 12.

As a result of the predominance of women in teaching, Eau Claire Normal was primarily female. Nationally this was evident as well, at the turn of the century a majority of normal schools had more than fifty percent of female students.<sup>71</sup> At Eau Claire, women were most heavily concentrated in the Primary and Grammar courses and in the 1919-1920 academic year, fifty-seven percent of the students enrolled chose these elementary programs.<sup>72</sup> From this point, the percentage of students graduating in the Grammar and Primary courses ranged from 39.5 percent to fifty-four percent.<sup>73</sup> The female students at Eau Claire Normal fit properly into their role in the public women's sphere by focusing on the younger students; however, a growing percentage of female students were enrolling in courses that were considered more of an authoritative role in the classroom. The High School and Principals courses were more demanding academically, and also required a more professional attitude in order to keep control of the classroom.

Between the years of 1919 and 1923 women were active participants in the High school, Principal, and College courses. The women who enrolled in the college course resided in either Eau Claire or Chippewa Falls. In the span of five years, twenty-six women graduated from Eau Claire Normal in the College course; comparatively, sixty-six men graduated from the same program. Within the same time period, sixty-four women graduated with a degree in the Principals course, while only twenty-four men graduated the same course. Women also had high

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<sup>71</sup> Ogren 2005, 66.

<sup>72</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1920.

<sup>73</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1921-1923.

enrollment in the High school course, obtaining sixty-three diplomas to women, whereas only twenty-nine men graduated from the program in the five-year span <sup>74</sup>

Rural women participated in the Principal and High School course in large numbers. In the 1918-1919 academic year, six of the thirty-five female rural graduates were in the Principals course and four of the graduates participated in the School program. In the following academic year, five of the twenty-nine female rural students graduated from the Principal program. During the 1920-1921 year, fourteen rural women graduated from the Principal course, almost thirty percent of the rural female students. That same year, twelve graduated from the High School course. Although the percentages of women participating as a whole were relatively few in these programs, the Principal course never had lower than seventeen percent of the rural women in the program. <sup>75</sup>

In the programs' course descriptions, the pronouns are revealing of the sex of the students they were expecting to enroll. In the primary, grammar, and high school descriptions the pronoun is not gendered. The Rural course uses a female gendered pronoun. "In addition to *her* regular salary from the district for the first year *she* teaches under this diploma... and for each succeeding year *she* teaches successfully in the same district" (emphasis mine.)<sup>76</sup> In the principal course description 'he' is used throughout the depiction. The 1917 bulletin reads

In all state graded schools and in most of the ward schools in the smaller cities, *he* is expected, in addition, to do considerable teaching, generally in the higher-grade classes. The required work in this course is intended to fit the students to meet these demands. The large list of electives gives the student an opportunity to adapt *his* course to *his* individual needs or to tastes (emphasis mine.)<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1919-1923.

<sup>75</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1919-1923.

<sup>76</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1921, 24.

The choice of the male pronoun shows how society viewed the positions in the hierarchy of a school. The principal at the top of the hierarchy is responsible for the students, teachers, and school board; thus the position is viewed as a masculine position.

Men were a minority on campus. Between the years of 1917-1919, between two and six men graduated from Eau Claire Normal each year. In 1920, eleven men graduated from the Normal in the College, Principal, or High School training course.<sup>78</sup> Because of the low number of men in the school, a higher percentage of women could enroll in the more masculine courses. In 1919, nine women graduated in each program in the High School and Principals program and one woman graduated from the college course. This was not the majority of women, but it was a noticeable number. The same year, fifty-five percent of the students graduated from the Primary and Grammar Programs.<sup>79</sup> The number of women participating and graduating from the Principal, College, and High School programs continued, even when there were more men attending the school. In 1923, men were thirty-eight percent of the student population; however, women were still enrolled in the masculine programs, with fifty-three percent in the principal course, twenty-two percent in the college course, and forty-two percent in the high school course.<sup>80</sup> Because of the low number of men at the Normal school, women were able to enroll in these courses more easily, which allowed them to break gendered roles in the public school hierarchy.

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<sup>77</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *Bulletin of the State Normal School* 1917, 26.

<sup>78</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1917-1920.

<sup>79</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1920.

<sup>80</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1923.

The low numbers of men enrolling in the principal course is due to the high percentage of men enrolling in the College course. The *Periscope* reveals that the majority of the male students hailed from rural communities and chose to attend Eau Claire Normal to further their goals of being professionals in society. These men chose programs in Journalism, Pre-Law, Pre-Medicine, Commerce, and Engineering.<sup>81</sup> The men used the Normal as a means to later attend a four-year university.

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<sup>81</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1917-1923.

## Employment

Students who graduated from Eau Claire Normal were in an excellent position for employment—the school was built to train teachers. Many normal students nationally were of lower socioeconomic status, struggling financially, and viewed the Normal school as a means of advancement.<sup>82</sup> Once school was completed, the student was able to find employment.

If the Eau Claire Normal student declared to teach in Wisconsin were awarded free tuition and reduced costs at the school, the training was more feasible for people wanting to teach and an incentive to find a position in the state. In the Rural two-year training program, graduates who found a position in a state rural school received ten dollars a month in addition to their regular salary from the district for the first year as an educator and fifteen dollars a month for each succeeding year that they taught in the same district.<sup>83</sup> This state created an incentive for teachers to go to isolated communities.

Many students were placed in schools throughout Wisconsin and parts of Minnesota the year after graduating. The new teachers moved from the towns of their families to those of their teaching assignment. The graduating class of 1918 had a large majority of their students receive placements. Of these students, the students from rural areas also found positions. In the fall of 1919, twenty-five of the thirty-five rural students received placement. The graduating class of 1921 had high percentages of job placement as well. Forty-six of the forty-seven students from rural areas received a teaching position the academic year after their graduation from the Normal.<sup>84</sup> Students were placed in large and small communities of Mellen, Wausau,

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<sup>82</sup> Ogren 2005, 68.

<sup>83</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Bulletin of State Normal School* 1921, 24.

<sup>84</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1921.

Independence, La Crosse, Winter, New London, Arcadia, Augusta, Colby, Bloomer, Whitehall, Stanley, Menomonie, Chippewa Falls, and Eau Claire.<sup>85</sup> Many of these locations were far from the students' hometowns.<sup>86</sup>

The Principal, Grammar, Primary, High school, and Rural programs all had high placement at rural schools. The graduating class of 1922 had forty-nine students graduate from the five programs. Of the eighteen primary course graduates, it was reported that fifteen were placed. Two out of three grammar graduates found teaching jobs, as well as both of the High school course graduates. All three of the Principal course graduates found positions. The Rural students reported that thirteen of twenty-nine of the graduates found employment after graduating from their course.<sup>87</sup> These figures show that attending the Normal school allowed students to find gainful employment after graduation.

For the 1918-1919 academic year, the median wage for of the teachers in Wisconsin was sixty-nine dollars per month. Rural teachers averaged fifty-eight dollars per month, in comparison to seventy dollars for the Primary and Grammar grades. For the 1919-1920 year, the average wage was eighty-six dollars per month, with a state required minimum of sixty dollars a month. Rural teachers on average earned seventy-two dollars a month, and teachers in a state grade school earned an average of eighty-four dollars a month.<sup>88</sup> If the teacher were paid for

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<sup>85</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1919, 1921.

<sup>86</sup> In 1918, two College course women from Eau Claire Normal attended the four-year universities of the University of Wisconsin and Lawrence University.

<sup>87</sup> Eau Claire State Normal School. *The Periscope* 1922.

<sup>88</sup> State Department of Public Instruction. 1921. *Educational Progress in Wisconsin: Biennial Report, 1918-1920*. Prepared under direction of Cecil White Flemming, State Department of Public Instruction, Madison, WI, 170.

nine months, the salary would be 756 dollars a year. With these wages, a teacher could have a place to live, food, and possibly be able to save part of their wages for the future.

People who went into education did not teach for the entirety of their working years. The median number of years that the average teacher, ranging from Primary to High School, worked in the schools was recorded as four and a half years in 1918-1920. State grade school teachers taught for an average of 4.9 years and rural teachers worked for an average of 3.15 years.<sup>89</sup> Although the teacher may have taught for a number of years, the average time span at the same location was two years. Rural and state grade schools had a high turnover rate, resulting in teachers only staying for one year.<sup>90</sup> The length of the women's teaching career demonstrates that these women did not dedicate their lives to teaching; most likely these women married and had families, as married women were not permitted by many school boards to teach.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 174.

## Conclusion

Although historians of education do not place a great importance on the impact Normal schools had on American history, their presence is undeniable. The sheer number of graduates of Normal schools nationally affected the job market for women and men and the social and intellectual effects stayed with the women long after graduation.

The rural female students of Eau Claire Normal had the opportunity to attend the Normal and use the school as a means for social advancement. The many women who attended and graduated from the school joined organizations, attended activities, and made connections with others along the same path. The rural women who attended the school were determined to earn an education and gain skills. The female students were not radical—they kept within the proper sphere of womanhood, yet the female students were advancing themselves by entering a professional career. The graduates of the Normal school, as well as women in other institutions of higher education, created socially acceptable changes in what was acceptable for women to do. These women, although they probably did not think of themselves as such, were trailblazers for the economically disadvantaged and for the women of the following generations. Their effort continues today—roughly two thirds of the students at the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire are women.

The history of higher education impacts the modern day institutions. Eau Claire Normal, along with many other Normal schools, adapted to the needs of the students. The school changed over time, changed its name to Eau Claire Teacher's College in 1926, became a State College in the 1950s, and in the 1970s integrated into the University. The students who attend the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire continue to be impacted by the institution and its teachers, organization, and fellow students.

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