

HISTORY
of the
SCHOOL OF HOME ECONOMICS

prepared for
The University Survey Committee

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HOME ECONOMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

The program of home economics at the University of Alabama has had a steady and sound growth. The early courses were introduced to meet the demand of women coming in increasing numbers to the State University, to contribute to their cultural development and to the improvement of homemaking in Alabama. The recommendations of the 1919 Educational Survey Commission, the expansion of facilities for women at the University, the changing status of women and the increasing emphasis on a college program training for home making and a career, have all contributed to the accomplishment of a home economics program, offering courses to any young woman in the University, as well as a group of curricula training for the wide range of positions now being filled by home economists. This steady, sound growth has been due, in large measure to a progressive and understanding co-operation on the part of the administration of the University, and to a changing ideal in education which has brought a wider horizon to home economics.

Early History

The summer school catalog of 1911 listed the first courses offered in home economics at the University of Alabama. Dr. James J. Doster, then director, appointed Miss Stella Palmer, trained at Columbia University, to serve as instructor. Several sewing machines and kerosene stoves were given to the college and lecture and laboratory work begun in a large room on the second floor of Comer Hall, the engineering building.

Summer school courses continued to be offered until 1917. In the University catalog for 1916-17, for the first time, two courses were offered in the regular session. They were listed as Foods, Cookery, and Household Management, and Sewing and Dressmaking. The following year these were increased to five and this announcement was made:

"This department was organized in 1917, offering an elementary course in domestic art and one in domestic science. This year these courses will be supplemented with more advanced ones, it being the plan to add these, as conditions demand, until a four-year course, leading to a degree, has been attained."

In the ten-year period which followed, from 1917 to 1927, from five to seven courses were offered as electives in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Educational Survey of Alabama, 1919

The Survey Commission of 1919, an expert and impartial educational agency considered the whole problem of home economics in the higher institutions of the state and definitely recommended that the University offer a home economics program both on the undergraduate and graduate levels. This is indicated in the following paragraph:

“The students who enter these courses should have completed the courses which the high school offers in home economics and be prepared to enter upon college courses in the subject. These courses should deal with the scientific, economic, and social phases of the subject, and should offer opportunity for experimental work.”¹

Program approved by Alabama Council on Education

In 1927, the Alabama Council on Education approved the establishment of a program in home economics at the University. In a brief, prepared by Dr. John R. McLure, on “Home Economics, an Essential Factor in the Education of All Women”, he pointed out, “In line with plans for improvement of instruction and service in all its departments, the University, in the interest of its 500 women, proposes to increase the number and variety of courses in home economics. The primary purpose is to give University women the training that will enable them to function more intelligently and effectively in the maintenance of a home, consequently in the betterment of moral, social, and economic conditions in the State.”

In his brief, Dr. McLure also stated:

“It is surprising, however, to know the appalling lack of information on the true basis of co-education, even among intelligent people. Some still regard it merely as a means of education whereby men and women attend the same institution and study the same subjects in the same classes. It is considered by the uninformed that in co-education women are merely admitted to men’s colleges to take the courses and subjects adapted particularly to the interests and needs of men. According to this erroneous idea, women at co-educational institutions are, as it were, ‘strap-hangers’ on the men’s educational car. Nothing is further from the truth. Co-education rests firmly and securely on psychological, social, and spiritual principles and conceptions which indicate the desirability of large numbers of men and women receiving their education in a complete and normal school situation, that is, in contact with each other. Co-educational institutions are maintained in order to provide a more perfect environment in which the educative process may proceed. It is understood that in this kind of environment women can and

¹ The Educational Survey of Alabama, p. 296

must have those activities, subject and curricula peculiar, or even exclusive, to their own interest and needs as well as access to those general activities, subjects, and curricula which are common to the need of both sexes. And this is just the point which is often overlooked by the superficial thinker. Co-education, properly organized, gives to young women all that is significantly their own and a great deal more. It gives them what is theirs not in an isolated and restricted environment, but in a broader and more varied as well as more stimulating and satisfying environment, the kind they probably will live and work in after college."

Department Expanded

In the fall of 1927, President George H. Denny appointed a Dean of Women who also served as head of home economics. It was his idea that the development of a home economics program would be an integral part of the development of a program for women at this University. It was possible to expand the offerings. Twenty-three courses in home economics were listed in the 1927-28 catalog, as a department in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Facilities and equipment were meager. Two rooms on the second floor of Comer Hall were used for lectures and laboratory. The faculty included one instructor and a part time head. There were no offices nor storage space and a limited amount of teaching materials. The location was inaccessible and far from Tutwiler Hall, the women's dormitory. This setting did not exemplify the principles for which home economics stood. Nor did it meet the needs of the increasing enrollment in home economics classes.

Home Economics Majors in College of Education or Arts and Sciences

Expanded facilities and the increased home economics offering were attracting more women. While there were 537 women registered at the University in 1927-28, this number had increased to 855 by 1930. Of this latter group, 258 were enrolled in home economics classes.

At that time, there were many openings in the high schools of the state to teach home economics, and teachers trained in other states were appointed frequently to Alabama positions. Students with a major in home economics who met the certification

requirements of the State Department of Education and the requirements of the College of Education of the University were permitted to teach "general" home economics.

Many students preferred a program other than teaching. They continued to enroll in the College of Arts and Sciences. A home economics major included such related sciences as chemistry, biology, and bacteriology, along with related art courses, psychology, sociology and economics. In addition to these courses a student was expected to meet the requirements of the College of Arts and Sciences regarding basic courses, majors, minors, and related subjects. A student would then have earned many more hours than were necessary for graduation.

To facilitate administration and to meet the needs of students interested in the many professions opening up for home economics trained women the School of Home Economics was organized, and was administered by the Dean of Women. The faculty included one associate professor and one instructor.

The catalog for 1931-32 carries this announcement of the functions of the School of Home Economics:

"The school of home economics, an outgrowth of the department of home economics, was established because of the demand of women students for the special training necessary for both home-making and the home economics professions, other than teaching, which are now demanding trained home economists.

"The courses in biology, chemistry, physics, modern languages, and sociology in the college of arts and sciences, and the courses in economics, accounting, advertising, and salesmanship in the school of commerce offer students of home economics of the University unusually fine opportunities to prepare themselves for those commercial and professional positions that required the services of well-trained home economists. Such positions call for: dietitians in hospitals and schools, in the Red Cross Nutrition Service, in cafeterias, tea-rooms, and public lunch-rooms; stylists and buyers in department stores; textiles and nutrition research assistants in experiment stations. The school of home economics has for its particular service the training of women for home-making and these newer home economics professions."

Curricula

In the 1931-32 catalog, the following programs for majors were listed:

1. General Course
2. Institution Management
3. Clothing, Textiles, and Art
4. Clothing, Textiles, and Chemistry
5. Nutrition and Chemistry

These curricula have had yearly revision. There is a flexibility within each which permits students to prepare for a number of different vocations within each field. The School of Home Economics has been set up as three distinct departments, Clothing, Textiles and Related Art, Foods and Nutrition and Family Life, and curricula are administered within each. The entering student enrolls in a freshman program basic to each and with the assistance of an adviser, chooses his major at the end of the third quarter.

In the 1942-43 catalog home economics curricula are:

1. Family Life

Plan A prepares for social work

Plan B offers training for Nursery School teachers

Plan C for general home economics training

2. Clothing Textiles and Related Art

A program for students interested in retail merchandising, the fashion fields, consumer education or the position of clothing specialist or consultant.

A program for students specializing in Interior Decoration.

3. Foods, Nutrition and Institution Management

Institution Management to prepare hospital dietitians

Foods and Nutrition

Plan A to train cafeteria, lunchroom or restaurant managers

Plan B to train for commercial demonstration work

Plan C to train nutritionists with community and public welfare organization

Plan D to train for research and college teaching

4. Home Economics and Nursing

Majors and Minors in Other Schools and Colleges

1. In addition to the curricula in the School of Home Economics the College of Education offers a B.S. in Home Economics Education and a B.S. in Education with a major in home economics.
2. The College of Arts and Sciences offers a minor in home economics.
3. The School of Commerce and Business Administration offers a curriculum in clothing and textile merchandising which includes a series of courses in clothing, textiles, and related art.

TABLE II
Master's and Bachelor's Degrees granted to majors in Home Economic and Home Economics Education 1929 through 1943.

SUMMARY

Graduates in Home Economics and Home Economics Education

MASTERS		BACHELORS			TOTAL BACHELORS
		A. and S.	Educ.	School of H. Ec.	
1929	1	3			3
1930	2	1	5		6
1931	4	1	6	2	9
1932	2		13	6	19
1933	4		14	10	24
1934	1		12	15	27
1935	2		12	16	28
1936	1		14	11	25
1937	1		11	22	33
1938	0		9	19	28
1939	3		17	26	43
1940	3		19	37	56
1941	4		21	34	55
1942	4		27	52	79
1943	2		20	39	59
Total	34	5	200	289	494

The first Master's degree was awarded to a major in home economics in 1929.

Since then with the exception of one year, at least one, sometimes as many as four graduates, have completed the requirements for the Master's degree. To date 34 have been awarded.

Since 1930, a total of 494 bachelor's degrees have been granted to students majoring in home economics. Of these 199 [200] were in education, 290 [289] were in the School of Home Economics. Bachelor's degrees were awarded to two students graduating in the School of Home Economics in 1931. Five years later in 1936 there were 22 and by 1942 the number had reached 32.

Three young men have graduated from the School of Home Economics, one each in 1939 and in 1940 in the Institution Management major, and one in 1943 in the Clothing, Textiles and Art major.