

History of Russell Sage College

Presidents of Russell Sage College

	Years
Eliza Kellas	1916-1928
Dr. James Laurence Meader	1928-1942
Helen McKinstry	1942-1946
Dr. Lewis A. Froman	1948-1969
Dr. Charles U. Walker	1970-1975
Edgar S. Pitkin (Interim)	1975
Dr. William F. Kahl	1976-1988
Dr. Sara S. Chapman	1988-1995
Dr. Jeanne H. Neff	1995-2008
Dr. Susan C. Scrimshaw	2009-2017
Dr. Christopher Ames	2017-2024
Dr. Matthew Shaftel	2024-

Founded in 1916 by Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage and named for her husband, Russell Sage College is the outgrowth of the Emma Willard School, the oldest preparatory school for women in the United States. An 1847 graduate of Emma Willard, Mrs. Sage began a teaching career before marriage. In later life she became the custodian of a large fortune bequeathed by her financier husband and became America's foremost woman philanthropist. When she was almost 88 years old, Mrs. Sage decided that the three original Willard School buildings in downtown Troy, N.Y. should be the nucleus of something "entirely different" from the preparatory school.

With Eliza Kellas, principal of Emma Willard, Mrs. Sage approved a blueprint for a curriculum that offered women students a new concept in American education: a combination of traditional liberal arts study with preparation for specific careers. Russell Sage College opened its doors in September 1916 as a "School of Practical Arts," and students arrived from as far away as Oregon and Hawaii to enroll.

By the time of its first four-year graduation in 1920, its academic program was solidly established, and the extracurricular life on campus was lively, complete with student government, student publications, clubs, and social events. On December 29, 1927, the New York Board of Regents granted a new and separate charter for Russell Sage College, reaffirmed the status of Emma Willard as a secondary school, and approved the legal transfer of property to the college. During World War II an Emergency Men's Division was created which later became a coeducational Albany Division established in 1949 to offer associate, bachelor's and master's degrees to government workers and returning veterans.

With a charter change effective July 1, 2020 and beginning with the fall 2020 semester, Russell Sage College, Sage College of Albany, and Sage Graduate Schools united under a single name: Russell Sage College, one college with two co-educational campuses in Albany and Troy, New York.

- History of Russell Sage College on Sage.edu: [sage.edu/about/mission-history/](https://www.russellsage.edu/about/mission-history/)

History of the Sage College of Albany, 1949-2020

In 1949 Russell Sage College for women in Troy, NY, opened a coeducational Albany Division. Intended to serve the large number of veterans returning from World War II, state government workers, and others seeking an education related to workplace needs, the Albany Division offered associate, bachelor's and master's degrees in an evening schedule to an audience of working adults.

The first classes were offered in buildings located in downtown Albany. In 1957, noting the absence of a public community college in Albany County, President Lewis Froman received approval to establish a “private junior college” operating on a daytime schedule in the same buildings. In the summer of 1959, the College purchased a portion of the site of the Albany Home for Children at New Scotland and Academy Road and a year later the entire Albany Division moved to the new campus, continuing to coexist in the same buildings in daytime and evening schedules. In 1962, the Junior College of Albany received its own degree-granting power, and henceforth all associate degrees (day and evening) were awarded through JCA.

During the 1970’s, art and design became signature programs for JCA and earned prestigious NASAD accreditation. For many years, the evening division continued to offer bachelor’s and master’s degrees under the charter of Russell Sage College. During the 1980’s, the umbrella institution began to be known as The Sage Colleges, the two-year college as Sage Junior College of Albany, and the evening division as the Sage Evening College (now called School of Professional & Continuing Education, SPCE) and Sage Graduate School. In 1995, these names were formalized, and the Sage Graduate School received separate degree-granting powers.

In 2001, responding to the wishes of the SJCA students to remain at Sage for four years, the rising credentials needed for entry-level professional positions, and the emerging workplace needs of the 21st century, Sage Junior College of Albany and Sage Evening College were replaced by a single four-year entity, Sage College of Albany. SCA offers many innovative and interdisciplinary degree programs, retaining its historic prominence in art and design, and the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, SPCE, offers upper-level, bachelor’s degree completion programs for working adults.

With programs characterized by interdisciplinary values, multiple pathways, and learning for application. Designed and delivered by a faculty committed to working with students to reach their unique learning goals. For students of strong potential and promise; In an active learning environment.

Special emphasis was placed on preparation for new and emerging professions that draw upon the College’s core competencies in art and design, computing technologies, business, legal studies, writing and information sciences. Applied programs in the liberal arts and sciences complement these central areas, while general education requirements at both introductory and upper levels add value and depth to professional studies.

The innovative iThink curriculum (ITK) emphasized problem-based learning and prepares students for the contemporary workplace. With multiple opportunities for internships and students tested their education and skills in the real world.

Beginning in fall 2020, Sage implemented the one college format (combining Albany & Troy programs) including the formation of one general education program. Sage College of Albany was re-named as Russell Sage College.