

Class of 1987 well-prepared for challenges of college

College enrollment high, diocesan statistics show

By Richard A. Kiley

The statistics vary somewhat from school to school, but their meaning is the same: graduating high school seniors view the college diploma as a necessity now more than ever.

And judging by an upcoming book written by a prominent analyst of schools, seniors graduating from Catholic schools within the diocese of Rochester should be well prepared in their quest for a college degree.

In his book, James C. Coleman, who was assisted in his research by Thomas Heffer, argues that Catholic high schools "in general do a better job of educating students and have lower dropout rates than do public schools or most non-Catholic private schools."

Coleman's book also will reveal data indicating that non-Catholic private schools have dropout rates comparable to those of public schools and much higher than those of Catholic institutions.

Guidance personnel at diocesan high schools offer figures and commentary that echo Coleman's sure-to-be debated report and illustrate that diocesan secondary schools are not only keeping kids in school, but are also making students aware of the importance of a college education.

According to Sister Carol Cimino, director of development at Nazareth Academy, 70 to 73 percent of the current graduating high school seniors will attend either two- or four-year colleges this fall.

"But 95 to 98 percent will have some college eventually. It takes some of them a little longer because of the (rising) cost of college," said Sister Carol, who is leaving the all girls school to become associate director of New York Catholic School Administrators' Association.

"Some take a year or two off and earn money for school," she remarked. "I still see kids (who have graduated) coming into school for their high school transcripts two years later."

Sister Carol takes extreme pride in the high percentage of Nazareth students who seek higher-learning because the school accepts many students "who couldn't have made it in another high school."

Nazareth's Master Learning Program also allows students to acquire high school credit while becoming acquainted with the Rochester-area business community.

"We have the largest business department around," Sister Carol observed. "And once our kids get jobs, some places even send them to school. People see promise in them and send them on to get their bachelor's degree."

At Aquinas Institute, 88 percent of this June's graduates will be going on to further studies, according to Father Peter Etlinger. That figure marks a 3-percent increase from the college-enrollment figures of AQ's last graduating class.

"And of those left, 4 percent go into the military and 5 percent go on to work," said Father Etlinger, who has been director of guidance at Aquinas for the past 20 years.

Father Etlinger said he sees students flocking to careers in engineering, business, the legal profession and communications. Some also seek such health-services careers as nursing, psychology and physical therapy.

A cooperative relationship with St. John



Michael N. Aydogan

CAPPING IT ALL OFF — What do many of 1987's graduating high school seniors have to look forward to? Four more years of hard work — and jubilation when they receive their college diplomas. Here, members of St. John Fisher College's 1987 graduating class toss their caps high into the air in celebration.

Fisher College also allows AQ students to get a jump on their college careers. "We get quite a few instant sophomores at Fisher; students can just about pick up 20 credits," Father Etlinger noted.

Because Aquinas does not offer such remedial programs as BOCES, the school's "board of trustees will continue to insist that this be a college prep school," he remarked.

According to Sister Jacqueline DeMars, who has been director of academics at Our Lady of Mercy High School for four years, 96 percent of the students there go on to further education — in all areas.

"What is so encouraging is that their interests are so diversified; they're not as slotted toward one area (of study) as once was true," said Sister Jacqueline, who has been at Mercy for 19 years.

couraging that the problem (of students not happy with the school they chose) is not widespread."

What may become a problem for students, however, is the New York State Board of Regents' recent decision to increase the difficulty of obtaining regents-endorsed diplomas. The graduating seniors of 1989, who are now completing their sophomore years, represent the first high school class to face these tougher requirements.

"It's going to decrease the number of people with regents endorsements, and I'm wondering how long it's going to take colleges to learn that," Sister Jacqueline said. "I hope that the learning period is not too long. It's going to be interesting."

At McQuaid, approximately 98 percent of last year's graduating seniors went on to two- or four-year colleges. "Most are oriented to it before they come here," said Father Tom Kenny, director of guidance at the Brighton boys' school. But he noted that rising college costs are becoming prohibitive to a larger number of students.

One of the primary goals at McQuaid, Father Kenny said, is to get the students to establish good study habits early, so that they won't fall behind in their course work once they leave high school.

"One of the things they seem generally quite happy about is that they've learned how to study here," Father Kenny said. "We want to establish good study habits. We want them to realize they have to work consistently to succeed."

Forty-four of the 46 graduating seniors at DeSales will be going on to further their studies, according to John D. Fahy. And they will enroll at 32 different colleges.

Outgoing DeSales students traditionally lean toward such Catholic colleges and universities as LeMoyné, Notre Dame, St. Bonaventure and Nazareth College.

"Nazareth is the big one," Fahy said. "Six students will be going there next fall. We have a nice affiliation there."

Partly, this bond is established through advanced-placement courses, which give DeSales students a jump on their college requirements. But the AP connection is not limited to the two Rochester Catholic colleges. According to Fahy, one DeSales student received AP college credit from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Joseph Biondolillo, first-year guidance director at Cardinal Mooney, points to statistics that parallel Fahy's figures — but on a much larger scale.

Ninety-four percent of this year's 335 Mooney students will go on to college, seeking careers in such areas as engineering, pre-medicine, accounting and political science.

"We offer a great many advanced-placement courses here," Biondolillo said. "If there's an advanced-placement course, we've got it here."

Monroe Community College, a two-year junior college offering associates' degrees, is also popular. In addition, Biondolillo said he sees a growing trend toward SUNY schools, primarily because private schools' costs are becoming out of reach for many students.

Yet another trend is outlined by Gerard Farrell, director of guidance at Bishop Kearney High School. Farrell observes computer science is beginning to take a back seat to liberal arts and teaching, which had suffered from declining popularity among previous graduating classes.

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