

Memorial Minute for Mary Maples Dunn
Read by Robert B. Merritt at the September 13, 2017 Faculty Meeting

Mary Maples Dunn served from 1985 to 1995 as the eighth President of Smith College. Her road to Smith wound through the College of William and Mary, where she earned an A.B. in History, Phi Beta Kappa, followed by a Fulbright year in Scotland and almost three decades at Bryn Mawr College. Mary earned her M.A. and Ph. D degrees from Bryn Mawr and joined the faculty there as an Instructor in the year prior to completing her doctorate. She rose through the academic ranks at Bryn Mawr, becoming an award-winning teacher, a respected scholar and a gifted administrator - serving as Dean of the Undergraduate College and Academic Deputy to the President.

As a scholar, Mary authored, co-authored, edited or co-edited nine books and over a dozen articles and book chapters. Mary was a Penn scholar and with her husband Richard co-edited a four- volume set of *The Papers of William Penn*. By mid-career, Mary's scholarly interests had widened to include the history of women and religion in the early colonial period and a number of her later publications focused on this topic. Not surprisingly, Mary's teaching at Bryn Mawr reflected her scholarship with courses on colonial American history and the history of women. Mary came to Smith as a respected teacher, scholar and administrator with a strong commitment to social justice and an appreciation for the role of women's colleges in addressing issues of gender equity.

Mary's years at Smith were challenging ones that included addressing racial unrest on campus, a student occupation of College Hall, divestment from companies doing business in South Africa, an antiquated administrative structure and two major budgetary reviews that required both moving away from a need-blind admission policy and downsizing the faculty and staff, all while widening the institution's commitment to racial and socio-economic diversity. Mary was able to see these challenges as opportunities and had an incredible ability to generate understanding across all areas of the college, engendering a sense of shared purpose in spite of frequently differing

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perspectives. She fostered a sense of community and trust that made working with her both rewarding and joyful. During her tenure, Mary created a different, stronger Smith that was well positioned for the challenges facing liberal arts institutions and all of higher education.

Mary's retirement following her ten years at Smith was short-lived. She was almost immediately named to head the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America and subsequently appointed interim president of Radcliff College to oversee its integration with Harvard and the creation of the Radcliff Institute. Mary's final administrative position was to serve along with Richard as co-executive officers of the American Philosophical Society. How remarkable that a woman from Sturgeon Bay, a town of 5000 on the western shore of Lake Michigan, would come to hold leadership positions at three of the Seven Sisters.

The Radcliff Institute, Smith and Bryn Mawr all held memorial services for Mary last spring. My colleague Ann Burger and I attended the services in Boston and Northampton and we were struck by both the warmth and admiration reflected in her colleagues' remembrances and by the almost universal reference to Mary's love of parties and entertaining, references that were repeated in the articles written about her life. Mary Maples Dunn was certainly fun to be around - fun to work with, talk with, dine with, laugh with. Mary's love of social events played a significant role in her success as an administrator. For Mary, it was not simply that she enjoyed lunch with colleagues at the College Club, a dinner or cocktail party at the President's house or a reception after a college event. She understood that such gatherings helped create a sense of community, built trust and provided an essential opportunity for informal discussion of the many challenges facing Smith and higher education. People and institutions trusted Mary because they got to know her and she was always the same Mary: lively, caring and committed. Smith, the Smith community and this speaker will forever be in her debt.