In keeping with the Jesuit focus on social justice, Saint Joseph’s College began the first evening classes for adults in 1915 at Seventeenth and Stiles Street in Philadelphia. The Catholic Alumni Sodality of Philadelphia, consisting of former alumni of Saint Joseph’s, supported the new program.

More than 900 working adults registered as non-matriculated students in the first year and pursued classes that enabled them to improve their education and employment potential. Courses covered practical subjects such as commercial mathematics and business English, along with civics, Latin and modern foreign languages. Surprisingly for the time period, the evening school admitted both men and women into the all-male college, and all religious denominations were clearly made welcome. Declining enrollment, perhaps due to war-time, caused the program to close for a time.

In 1935, Saint Joseph’s started the School of Social Sciences and provided for-credit evening classes on the campus at 5400 City Avenue and at Saint Joseph’s Preparatory School at the Seventeenth and Stiles Street location. This program ran until 1942 and some feel that it provided a foundation for the “Night School” that opened in 1943.

The Night School was the first to offer courses with the intention to complete a degree. In 1946, this coed program became a full evening school that offered a college degree through a five-year program. The program became one of the largest in the city. In 1981, the evening school transitioned to a separate college and was re-named University College. This allowed flexibility to meet the recruitment, scheduling and learning needs of the adult population.

Today, the Professional and Liberal Studies program continues to evolve in order to meet the ever-changing needs of the adult student. Courses are offered on campus, online, and in accelerated as well as traditional semester formats.


Celebrating 100 Years of Adult Student Education live greater. That’s the Magis.