Sister Austin Doherty, S.S.S.F.
August 10, 1927 - February 8, 2015
A Life of Service and Education
Sister Austin Doherty

- teacher
- mentor
- educator
- student
- professor
- feisty
- scholar

Alverno College

- family
- service
- community
- mentor
- communicator

Academic Dean

- feminist
- scientist
- educator
- Irish
- St. Francis

Alvernia

- futurist
- family
- commitment

Pius XI

- scholar

BA, MA, Ph.D.

Doherty

- communicator
- professor
- author
To say that Sister Mary Austin Doherty, S.S.S.F., led a full life is the ultimate understatement and to define the essence of who Sister Austin was would take hours of happy storytelling. The impact that this diminutive woman had on the lives of those she met, taught, mentored and led would not only change the course of their personal lives but would help to change the course of modern education, women’s history, institutions and specifically Alverno College.

Sister M. Austin Doherty
Instructor, History and Psychology
1961-1967
Assistant Professor, Psychology
1967-1971
Psychology Department Chairperson
(Established psychology minor/major programs)
1968-1975
Associate Professor, Psychology
1971-1976

Sister M. Austin Doherty
Assistant Dean for Curriculum Development
1975-1978
Academic Dean
1978-1991

Sister M. Austin Doherty
Vice President for Academic Affairs
1982-1999
Director Alverno College Institute
1999-2005
Special Assistant to Academic Affairs
2005-2013
Mary Therese Doherty, born August 10, 1927 was the daughter of Irish immigrants, James and Rose Doherty, and sister to three brothers: James, Thomas and Francis. Doherty’s father died during her early childhood in Chicago, Illinois, and her mother resolved to raise and educate her children in the United States rather than returning to extended family in Ireland.

Austin attended catholic schools in Chicago, receiving her elementary school education at St. Veronica parish. She graduated from Alvernia High School on June 7, 1945. Doherty matriculated to Chicago’s Loyola University in the fall of 1945 and was a part-time student there through 1951. While studying at Loyola, Doherty also worked as a secretary at the University and held other outside jobs to support her studies and family.

On December 9, 1951 she applied to Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and was admitted with junior status. She received a B.A. in History from Alverno College in 1954. Her catholic upbringing and education inspired her to enter the School Sisters of St. Francis religious community in December of 1951 taking the name Sister Mary Austin. Sister Austin professed as a Religious taking her final vows in June 1954.

Austin, described by many who knew her, was ‘Irish to the core’. Fiercely loyal to her heritage and family, often touting her brothers without reservation as the most outstanding men in the world. Her steadfast loyalty to family, friends and her beliefs was a common thread in all that she endeavored to do.
This graduation photo is of the Alverno College Class of July 1954. Sister Mary Austin Doherty can be found in the second row from the bottom, and is the second sister from the right.
Sister Mary Austin Doherty took her first teaching position at Pius XI High School in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She taught there from 1954-1961. While teaching at Pius she pursued her master’s degree in history from Marquette University and received a Master of Arts in 1960.

Doherty then began teaching at Alverno College in 1961 as a history instructor. In spite of her teaching duties through 1964, Austin’s keen intellect and desire for learning brought her back to her studies at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois pursuing and earning her M.A. in Psychology in 1965. Sister Austin continued her sabbatical from Alverno to complete her doctoral work in psychology at Loyola. While there she was honored as the outstanding graduate student in 1967 and was subsequently awarded her Ph.D. in 1968.

Returning to Alverno College in 1968 to resume teaching, Doherty also chaired the psychology department until 1975. She established the curriculum for a psychology minor beginning in 1969 and a psychology major beginning in 1971. The courses she taught included experiential psychology, personality theory and learning development. She received the Uhrig Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence in 1969. These were years of great development and change at the college. Years that would prove to change the course of education and learning at Alverno and for which Doherty played a pivotal role.

[http://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2916&context=luc_theses](http://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2916&context=luc_theses)
Sister M. Austin had a great interest in the importance of educating and preparing young women to take their place in an ever-changing world. In September of 1966, she visited her high school alma mater, Alvernia, as a guest speaker providing insights into the topic, Our Daughters: Yesterday's Dream, Today's Challenge, Tomorrow's Hope.

With our fast changing world of today there are many new problems our daughters face. In the first meeting of this school year a panel of guest speakers will give their discerning views on OUR DAUGHTERS: Yesterday's Dream, Today's Challenge, Tomorrow's Hope.

Before the panel discussion Sister Alfonsine, O.S.F., Principal, will welcome the APFA to a new school year.

Sister M. Austin, O.S.F., a graduate of Alvernia High School, will be one of the guest speakers. She is a graduate of Alverno College and received her Master's in history at Marquette University. Sister has taught at Pius XI High School in Milwaukee and at Alverno College. She is now a full-time student in the Graduate School of Loyola University working on her PhD in Psychology.
Sister Austin’s dissertation, *Relationship of the Global-Analytical and Open-Closed Dimensions Within and Between the Sexes in Cognitive Activity* was submitted for defense to the Graduate School of Loyola University in June 1968.

[http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/933/](http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/933/)
This photo from the late 1960s shows Sister Mary Austin teaching a continuing education class.
Sister Austin had a deep concern for social justice and the inequalities facing women in society. Throughout the 1960s Doherty spoke to Wisconsin groups about women’s issues. She attended the organizing conference for the National Organization of Women (NOW) held in Washington D.C., October 29-30, 1966 and was elected to NOWs’ first board.

Doherty’s activism in these areas brought her to the forefront of the women’s movement in Milwaukee when in 1967, she, Catherine Conroy and others established the first Milwaukee chapter of NOW. Sister Austin helped to organize numerous conferences and seminars held at Alverno College addressing the roles of women past, present and future.

Doherty was a featured speaker at a NOW meeting in Chicago, Illinois, July 16, 1970.
Creation of the RCW…

Austin’s deep commitment to equality for women and women’s rights could be seen through her work in the establishment of the Alverno College Research Center on Women (RCW) in 1970. Created “in the hope of contributing empirical and historical data to the study of women”, the RCW began its functioning conceptually as three centers: a resource center on women, a research center about women, and an outreach center for women. The center was developed through the work and efforts of Sister Austin Doherty, then Chair of the Psychology Department; Barbara Mulligan, Director of the Continuing Education Division; and Victoria Hinshaw, Political Science Instructor.

The RCW was established to "provide the setting and impetus for women to seriously examine their own status, to identify and understand the many historic and contemporary forces which have determined that status and then create the desire and devise the strategies by which women with assurance and self-respect, will lead the way toward the requisite social changes."

Early projects of the RCW included Women in Public Life (research and conference), Spiritual and Religious Experience of Women, and an Oral and Visual History of Suffragists in the Midwest.

Over the years the RCW has seen many changes while continuing to provide invaluable research, curriculum development and institutional guidance in response to current women’s issues. The Research Center for Women and Girls was opened in 2009 as a result of RCW Interest Group members’ research and reporting on the status of women and girls in Wisconsin. For more information on the RCW/RCWG follow the link to the Archives online exhibit at: Archives RCW Exhibit (http://lampout1.alverno.edu/archives/rcwexhibit/)
Sister Austin was a true student of education and the educational process. Her intellect, focus and insightful observations of students’ learning needs, and in particular the education of women, made her a natural leader among the Alverno faculty as they tackled the difficult process of evaluating and re-designing the Alverno College curriculum model during the early 1970s. Her work on the Academic Task Force helped to lay the groundwork for implementing the Alverno College Competence Based Learning curriculum, now known as Alverno’s Ability Based Curriculum.

Designing the Form and Structure of Curricular Change

The Academic Task Force or ATF was charged with synthesizing faculty ideas into a blueprint for curriculum. Faculty institutes and meetings during this time focused on critiquing and implementing curricular design. Here is a photo of the academic task force with then Academic Dean, Sister Bernarda Handrup.

Back row left to right: Sister Georgine Loacker, Sister Austin Doherty, Jack Cooper. Front row left to right: Brian Nedwek, Sister Bernarda Handrup.
Challenges and challenging times never seemed to daunt Sister Mary Austin Doherty. As a faculty member of Alverno College, she answered the call time and again to find solutions on how best to educate and serve students. Her work on curriculum and assessment development from 1971 through 1976 highlighted her leadership acumen, creativity, analytical ability, frankness, and mediation skills.

In August 1977, Austin was challenged once again when Alverno’s Academic Dean, Robert G. Pitman would ask her to step in as Acting Dean while he took a medical leave for an extended illness. Her professionalism, focus and steady guidance would prove crucial in the year that followed as Acting Dean Doherty worked with Alverno President Sister Joel Read and faculty to launch a new program, Alverno Weekend College. The program, launched in fall 1977, was developed to assist working women to obtain a college degree while maintaining a full time job and family obligations.
The role of Acting Dean was bittersweet for Doherty when her dear friend and colleague, Dean Robert G. Pitman died July 23, 1978. President Joel Read asked her faculty and Board of Trustees for feedback on Doherty’s performance of duties while Acting Dean so Read could decide how best to fill the position of Alverno Dean.

The feedback was resoundingly positive, citing Doherty as: “creative”; “holds a deep and abiding concern for the personal and professional development of individual faculty”; “shows great strength and skill in bringing together diverse viewpoints”; “promotes constructive debate”; and “has the ability to elicit a spirit of cooperation”. The feedback confirmed what Read was considering, to appoint Sister Mary Austin Doherty as Dean of Alverno College.

An official news release was made on October 2, 1978 that the Alverno College Board of Trustees confirmed the appointment of Doherty as Academic Dean of the college.
Dr. Mary Austin Doherty, S.S.S.F. was officially appointed Academic Dean of Alverno College effective August 1, 1978. Featured at left is the Milwaukee Journal article dated October 5, 1978 and below is the college announcement for Sister Austin.

During Dean Doherty’s first formal speech to Alverno faculty:

…she pledged to maintain “a light touch in this serious work” and observed that, while a dean must exercise leadership, “You only lead people where in their hearts they want to go”.

The years that followed Doherty’s appointment as academic dean would be highly productive for her and for Alverno College. She would serve as: Academic Dean from 1978-1991; Vice President for Academic Affairs from 1982-1999; Director of the Alverno College Institute from 1999-2005; and Special Assistant to Academic Affairs from 2005-2013. Doherty received Alverno College’s Outstanding Alumna Award in 1982.

While she accepted numerous speaking engagements, authored scholarly articles, was a consultant to colleges and universities around the world, sat on committees and held community board memberships, Doherty still found the time to walk around Alverno College and engage students in conversations. She regarded each interaction as a teachable moment for the student and for her. Teaching and learning was always at the core of everything that Doherty did. The learning process was to be experienced and was a lifetime endeavor.

Some of Doherty’s many Board responsibilities included:

1985-1988 American Lung Association of Wisconsin, Evaluation and Research Committee of Board
1985-1992 Association of American Colleges Board of Directors
1988-2006 Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
1989-1992 North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Institutes of Higher Education
Executive Commissioner
1990-1994 Assessment Advisory Committee, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Institutes of Higher Education Executive Commissioner
1978-2015 World Future Society, Milwaukee Chapter Steering Committee
1994-2015 Youth Leadership Committee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Board of Directors
2000-2015 Tanzanian Economic Development Initiative, U.S. Board Member
(Left-right) Judy Heikkinen and Kathy Bretl (1985; 1988), a mother-daughter student team, discussed the 1981-1982 Weekend College schedule with Dean Doherty. The photo was featured in the publication Alverno Today, Spring 1981.
Photo of Sister Austin Doherty taken during a lecture demo on communication, circa 1980s.

This photo of Sister Austin and student Amy Post (1984) was taken inside the Alverno Library in 1982.
Alverno College President Sister Joel Read and Academic Dean Sister Austin Doherty preview the results of the first *U.S. News and World Report* survey on top colleges. This photo was taken November 11, 1983 by photographer Frank Miller. To the right of the photo is the cover of the 1983 issue.

Photo left, Austin Doherty and Pam Tate at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) meeting in San Diego California, November 1991. Doherty was a CAEL board member from 1988-2006.
Vice President for Academic Affairs, Sister Austin Doherty is seen returning to her office in Alverno’s LA building (now Founders Hall) in this 1984 photo taken by Paul Biwer.
Above, congratulating an Alverno graduate on May 20, 1997 are, from left to right, Sisters Kathleen O'Brien, Austin Doherty and Joel Read.

*Photo by Lila Aryan.*

Below, Sister Austin delivers a speech during the Alverno OCEL Banquet, April 26, 1988.

*Photo by Frank Miller.*
The photo above shows Sister Georgine Loacker (left) and Sister Austin Doherty previewing a copy of the second edition of *Assessment at Alverno College*, copyright 1985.

The photo below was taken during the May 1992 graduation activities. Pictured from left to right: Linda Peterson, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Sister Austin Doherty, President Sister Joel Read, Circuit Judge Janine Geske and Maureen Sander.
Photo left, students seated at the table behind Austin Doherty are taking part in an assessment of their social-interaction abilities. The other assessing faculty members present include (background, l-r): Sister Mary Georgia Matlock, Jim Roth, and Marilyn Thanos.

Photo right, Professor Georgine Loacker and Dean Austin Doherty explained the Alverno competences during a workshop. The event, held on April 6, 1989 was attended by one hundred educators.
25th Anniversary of the Research Center on Women 1970-1995

A series of brown bag luncheon sessions were held during the fall of 1995 in honor of the 25th Anniversary of the Research Center on Women. The capstone event, a presentation by Sister Austin Doherty on the history of the RCW, was held on November 8, 1995. A fortuitous coincidence was the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing earlier in 1995--a fitting focus for the 25th Anniversary luncheon series. Other luncheon speakers included: Dr. Sarah Harder, Professor UW-Eau Claire; Marie Kingsbury, Executive Director of the Women's Center--Waukesha; and Ellen Bravo, Executive Director, Nine to Five. All of these women were participants in the Beijing Conference.
Honoring an Educator, Administrator

On November 8, 2005, Alverno College President Mary Meehan announced that the Campus Center (formerly Loretto Hall) would be renamed Austin Hall in honor of Sister Austin Doherty.

During a Celebration of Giving dinner where the School Sisters of St. Francis were being honored for their generous support of Alverno College, President Meehan commented that Sister Austin exemplified the service, dedication and spirit of the S.S.S.F. foundresses. Meehan continued to say that no one on campus has led a more student-centered life than Austin and so it was fitting that a place where students lived, worked and studied should be named in her honor.
In the fall of 2007 the first *Status of Girls in Wisconsin Report* was released by Alverno College, Girls Scouts of Milwaukee Area, Inc., Girls Scouts of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Women's Council, and the Women’s Fund of Greater Milwaukee. Alverno College was an integral part of this research project that looked at the lives of girls ages 10-19 and the impact of socio-economic factors on their health, education, future employment and their aspirations.

Sister Austin Doherty was a member of the Alverno research team which also included: Sandra Graham, Chair; Megan Kemmet, primary research coordinator; Russell Brooker; Kimberly Miller; Kathleen O'Brien; Julie Rice and Julie Ullman. Updates to this first report were released in April 2010.
Sister Austin Doherty

August 10, 1927 - February 8, 2015

“Listen Buddies, Carry On”
A Life of Service and Education
August 10, 1927 - February 8, 2015

Sister Mary Austin Doherty died on February 8, 2015. Her funeral mass was held at the St. Joseph Convent Chapel, home to her School Sisters of St. Francis community. Sister Kathleen O’Brien, Alverno College Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs delivered the eulogy for Austin. O’Brien eloquently recounted stories and memories of her friend and mentor. Quoting a prayer by Saint Thomas More that O’Brien felt epitomized Austin’s faith and spirit, she read:

Pray for me, as I will pray for thee,
That we will merrily meet in heaven.

O’Brien followed that with a favorite phrase that Sister Austin would sometimes use to punctuate a point she was making; a phrase that she imagined Austin would be saying to all those who loved her:

“Listen buddies... carry on!”


Sister M. Austin Doherty SSSF
Doherty, Sister M. Austin, SSSF February 8, 2015, age 87.
Sister Austin Doherty was a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis for 63 years. Sister's primary ministry was Alverno College where she was a professor of psychology and Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs.
Sister Austin was beloved daughter of the late James and Rose Doherty, and sister of the late James (Rose), Thomas (Elaine) and Francis (Helen) Doherty. She is survived by nieces and nephews.
Visitation at St. Joseph Convent Chapel, 1501 S. Layton Blvd, Milwaukee, WI, Thursday, February 12, 2015, 10:30 AM-12:00 noon, Wake Service at 11:00 AM. Mass of Christian Burial at St. Joseph Convent Chapel, 1501 S. Layton Blvd, Milwaukee, Wednesday, February 12, 2015 at 12 noon. Interment Thursday 2:30PM at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Milwaukee.
Memorials to Alverno College, 3400 S. 43rd Street, Milwaukee, WI or to the School Sisters of St. Francis Development Office, 1501 S. Layton Blvd, Milwaukee, WI are appreciated.
HERITAGE FUNERAL HOMES Altstadt-Tyborski- Johnson-Reiss-Klemmer 414-281-5533 Guest Book & Directions

Funeral Home
Heritage Funeral Home
4800 South 84th Street Greenfield, WI 53228
(414) 281-5533
This memorial tribute to Sister Austin Doherty ’54, SSSF was featured in the spring 2015 edition of *Alverno Magazine*. It included eulogy excerpts from Sister Kathleen O’Brien ’67, SSSF.

The article also provided information about a scholarship fund being created to honor Sister Austin’s legacy. The fund, named Doherty Scholars, would become an integral part of a new program, The Doherty Scholars Learning Community. Doherty Scholars would be part of a learning community selected by the Center for Academic Excellence drawing together students from across college disciplines seeking academic challenges and research opportunities.

Doherty Scholars: honoring the legacy of Sister Austin

By Laura Sear

The Doherty Scholars Learning Community, one of the new programs launched by the Center for Academic Excellence, is named in honor of Sister Austin Doherty, O.S.F., ’54 (1927–2015).

A founder of Alverno’s abilities-based curriculum, Doherty was a significant leader in the national movement to reform college education to better serve student learning. She was widely known in the United States and internationally as a dynamic, caring and risk-taking educator — and a powerful contributor to many professional organizations that seek to drastically improve college teaching and learning.

Doherty helped found Alverno’s Department of Psychology, served as dean and eventually as vice president for Academic Affairs, and established what was then known as the Research Center on Women, one of the first such centers in the country. Her dedication to women’s empowerment compelled her to participate in the earliest conferences that led to the establishment of the National Organization for Women.

This article featured in Alverno Magazine speaks to the legacy of Sister Austin Doherty. The Doherty Scholars Learning Community exemplifies Alverno students exhibiting Doherty’s scholarly curiosity, initiative and collaboration as learners.


Center for Academic Excellence

Fiercely dedicated, compassionate and caring, Doherty exemplified Alverno’s commitment to seeking deeper connections and exploring multiple perspectives. She was never satisfied with “just enough.” Her legacy lives on in the Doherty Scholars, women who demonstrate a potential for strong scholarly accomplishment and curiosity, an understanding of themselves as learners, and the ability to take initiative to collaborate with peers.
The college website explains The Doherty Scholars Program.

Doherty Scholars Program (https://www.alverno.edu/center-academic-excellence/doherty-scholars-program.php)
Alverno’s website explains the Center For Academic Excellence and the many programs available to students looking for a more rigorous academic challenge.

Center For Academic Excellence (https://www.alverno.edu/center-academic-excellence/)
Programs available through the Center For Academic Excellence are highlighted on the college’s website.

[Center For Academic Excellence](https://www.alverno.edu/center-academic-excellence/)
For Sister Austin, words carried great meaning, value, power and mystery. So it’s not surprising to learn that in her wallet she carried several snippets of quotes from newspapers or articles that she read. The quotes spoke to Austin of beliefs that she valued, reflected upon and was moved by. Following are just a few of Austin’s inspirations.
In the intellectual order, the virtue of humility is nothing more nor less than the power of attention.

Simone Weil,
20th-century French philosopher
From ‘Gravity and Grace’ (1947).
“Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.” Marie Shear

[Reviewing A Feminist Dictionary by Cheris Kramarae and Paula A Treichler in New Directions for Women (1986)]
“To affirm the reality of love is to look its opposite in the face and do our best, throughout a lifetime, to stare it down. That activity is called hope.”

Reclaiming the Bible: Words for the Nineties
By Robert McAfee Brown 1994, page 142

Sisters Austin Doherty and Kathleen O’Brien
Materials used for this display come from the Alverno College Archives. For more information on the history of Alverno College visit Alverno College Archives website or link to our Archives exhibit page at:

https://www.alverno.edu/archives/exhibits.php

Time Line of Alverno History
http://lampout1.alverno.edu/archives/archome/timeline.html

Unfolding Understandings: A History of the Alverno Learning Process
http://lampout1.alverno.edu/archives/alphistory/

Reaching Out In New Ways: Highlights from the History of Alverno's Research Center on Women
http://lampout1.alverno.edu/archives/rcwexhibit/

Or contact the Alverno College Archives at: 414-382-6202.
Articles and publications:


Doherty, Sr. Mary Austin, Relationship of the Global-Analytical and Open-Closed Dimensions Within and Between the Sexes in Cognitive Activity, Doctoral Dissertation, June 1968


Archival Records highlighting the work of Austin Doherty:


Videotape— Competence Based Learning at Alverno, Presented by Austin Doherty and Georgine Loacker, 2-13-1982 (A25/Box 2)

Video Disc--Alverno Forum; Social Interaction Department Meeting; Presenter: Austin Doherty; Master Copy (A25/Box 8)

Video Disc--Alverno Forum; Social Interaction Department Meeting; Presenter: Austin Doherty; Master Copy (A25/Box 8)

Video Disc--Alverno Forum; Social Interaction Department Meeting; Presenter: Austin Doherty (A25/Box 8)

Photos/Negatives—Faculty/Staff; Doherty, Sr. Austin (A25/Box 11/File 26)

For more information on the history of Alverno College visit the Alverno College Archives website:
http://www.alverno.edu/archives/

For more information on the history of the School Sisters of Saint Francis visit their website at:
http://www.sssf.org/

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