

A Brief History of Calvin College

The founding date of Calvin College and Seminary is 1876. In that year the Christian Reformed Church adopted a six-year curriculum for ministerial training. The first four of these years were spent in the Literary Department and the last two in the Theological Department. In 1894 students who were not pre-theological students were admitted to an expanded curriculum, and thus the school became a type of preparatory school or academy. In 1900 the curriculum was further broadened and made more attractive to students interested in teaching or in preparing for pre-professional courses in the universities. By 1906 the Literary Department, which provided the four years of preparatory and two years of college work, became known officially as the John Calvin Junior College. The two-year college in time became a four-year college, and the preparatory department was discontinued. In 1921 Calvin College awarded its first Bachelor of Arts degree.

The school, which had started with seven students, grew slowly during the early years, but by 1930 it had reached its pre-World War II size of 350-450 students. By 1950 the enrollment had climbed to 1,270 and now is approximately 4,300.

The curriculum has expanded to include professional training in a variety of fields, but the college maintains a strong commitment to its liberal arts curriculum as a means to develop students' understanding of God's world and their place in it.