



Breaking Glass Ceilings By Design

By Beth Hammock

Distinguished Alumna of the Year Amy Eckhoff is a Leading Missouri Architect





In the male-dominated field of architecture, Cottey alumna Amy Eckhoff, Class of 1994, breaks through barriers and makes her voice heard. Eckhoff is a partner at GastingerWalker&, a design and architectural firm based in Kansas City. With a focus on renovation work, Eckhoff was the perfect fit for Cottey's recent facilities projects. She designed the Judy and Glenn Rogers Fine Arts Building and the P.E.O. Hall Parlor. She also is the creative genius behind plans for a student center in the lower level of the Chapel and terraced patios on both sides of the building.

"Amy shows an understanding of how Cottey students love the college and what they would appreciate in a student center," says Judge James Bickel, Cottey College Trustee. "She draws on her experience at Cottey to add aspects to the initiative that future students and returning alumnae will both love."

Because of her service, the Cottey College Alumnae Association awarded Eckhoff the Distinguished Alumna Award at this year's Founder's Weekend.

"Amy Eckhoff is a wonderful role model for Cottey students," says Dr. Jann Weitzel, President of Cottey College. "She followed her dream of becoming an architect and succeeded in earning a place at the table at a large firm. Amy also gives back to the community in multiple ways."

Eckhoff grew up in Alaska, surrounded by mountains and water. On childhood trips to Washington, D.C. and New York, she became fascinated with architecture.

"I first thought I wanted to be an architect in seventh grade," Eckhoff remembers. "I took drafting, and I think I was the only kid in that class who actually liked it. Something my last year of high school made me kind of chicken out. I thought I wasn't creative enough or just didn't have what it took to be an architect."

She learned about Cottey College at a college fair at her high school. "Something about it just clicked with me," Eckhoff says. "Cottey was a good fit for me at that time because I wasn't sure of my direction and I could find my way while I was here and it redirected me and gave me that confidence to pursue what my real dream was."

Eckhoff earned her Associate in Arts from Cottey in 1994, then transferred to the University of Kansas School of Architecture, earning a Bachelor of Architecture with Honors in 1999. She became a licensed architect in 2003.

Her career highlights include converting a former prison hospital at Fort Leavenworth into an educational facility. She also led the reconstruction of the Eagleton Federal Courthouse in St. Louis. Eckhoff has designed more than 75 projects on the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City and numerous improvements at Starlight Theatre.



She has served on the board of the Kansas City and Missouri State Chapters of the American Institute of Architects and just completed a term as president of the state chapter. She also serves on the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee and on the Board for Powell Gardens, Kansas City's Botanical Garden.

"Her knowledge of construction, keen attention to detail, and ability to engage a variety of parties in the design process is exceptional," her firm states on its website, going on to say, "Amy's expertise with corporate and public clients includes complex and challenging renovations with budgets ranging from \$30,000 to \$38 million."

Eckhoff's leadership in the field of architecture is more impressive when one considers the lack of women in the field. Approximately 20% of licensed architects are women and 17% of partners or principals in architecture firms are women, according to a New York Times article published December 15, 2018. Women were not even admitted to architecture schools until 1972, when Title IX took effect.

"Architecture is still very male-dominated in leadership roles and in partnership roles," Eckhoff reflects. She says Cottey influenced her ability to lead.

"When you're in a single-sex environment, you just naturally have your voice," she says. "There isn't that extra factor in play that would keep you down or diminish your voice. It stops occurring to you when you don't encounter it. I think it prepared me well to be who I was and empowered me when I went out into the business world."

Eckhoff believes Cottey's place in the educational landscape remains as important as it was when she graduated 25 years ago. "It's an interesting time for all women, and I think Cottey is an environment where women can thrive and make a future for themselves," she says.

The beauty of the campus also speaks to Eckhoff. "This is such an unusual campus—the amenities students have and the size of the campus for the number of students are really remarkable."

While Cottey's historic buildings, such as Main Hall, are part of what makes the campus unique, Eckhoff is guiding the modernization of many buildings. She works closely with college leaders to ensure new buildings continue to fit in with the style of older ones.

"Her approach is particularly seen in the remodeling of P.E.O. parlor. It incorporates modern amenities that current students desire along with keeping many historical aspects of the previous design," Bickel says. "The format for the student center and renovation of the Chapel both blend in so well with the existing campus. Everyone who has seen the drawings and model, in my presence, have been extremely excited and happy with proposals."

Learn more about the Chapel/Student Center project on the next page and at cottey.edu/connect and Youtube.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE CCAA CHELLIE-BRATION!!

By Rebecca Zeltinger, Class of 1994, CCAA Board Member

Cottey is a student-centered college, with no student center. But no more. You've read about the \$3.2 million initiative to refresh the Chapel and create a 5,000 square foot student center in the Chapel's lower level. At the very heart of this student center will be the new location of our beloved Chellie Club--continuing its history moving from place to place through the years.

To preserve the "Chellie Club" name and add an Alumnae Association attribution we must raise \$50,000 by the end of September. Help us Chellie-brate and continue our collective Chellie Club connections by contributing a financial gift in an amount significant to you.

To learn more about this initiative and give your support visit: cottey.edu/connect. Once there, click the "Give Now" button, then select the "Designated: CCAA Chellie Club" gift option. Thank you.

More on



[Youtube.com/CotteyEdu](https://www.youtube.com/CotteyEdu)

INITIATIVE LAUNCHED FOR NEW STUDENT CENTER AND CHAPEL IMPROVEMENTS

By Beth Hammock

Imagine a campus with a bustling student center—a place where students get together for coffee, meet in modern study rooms, and buy books and college gear. Alumnae at this year's Founder's Day got a peek at just such a place. Rebecca Zeltinger, Class of 1994, Washington, D.C., announced the Connect Chapel/Student Center Initiative at the Founder's Day luncheon. The initiative will raise \$3.2 million to create a new student center in the lower level of the Chapel and refresh the upper level, which will include air conditioning.

"The student center will give the entire campus as well as visitors a place to interact on a daily basis," said Dr. Jann Weitzel, President of Cottey College. "Students, faculty, staff and visitors will study, eat and socialize here. This exciting initiative will strengthen the Cottey community and create a more vibrant campus environment."



Two large patios will flank the Chapel.

Both the Cottey bookstore and the Chellie Club snack bar will move to the student center. To make the lower level both accessible and more engaging, terraces will be constructed on both sides of the Chapel. Today, the Cottey bookstore is in the lower level of Main Hall. The bookstore serves many purposes. First, it's an academic resource center for students, faculty and staff. It's also a souvenir and spirit shop for all, including visitors. Lois Witte, the bookstore manager, has worked in this position for 25 years. She is excited about the store's move to the Chapel building.

"The location of the student center will bring people together," Witte says. "This exciting change will enrich the experience of all involved with Cottey College."

With the addition of air conditioning, the Chapel will be a desirable venue for concerts, lectures, weddings and other special services. A separate room will provide a place for interfaith worship and meditation. Dr. Erica Sigauke, Coordinator of Spiritual Life and Campus Diversity, works with students to serve their spiritual needs.

"The development of the student center and renovation of the Chapel supports academic excellence and the work of faculty," Dr. Sigauke says. "It affirms the work of the community."

Dr. Sigauke, who is from Zimbabwe, sees the Chapel as a place to celebrate diversity.

"The Chapel connects cultures with the common spiritual themes of love, respect and gratitude," she says. "The renovation of the Chapel, as well as the move of the bookstore and Chellie Club, will increase the love here!"

The non-denominational Chapel is the site of many all-college services such as a commemoration of Virginia Alice Cottey on Founder's Day, Hanging of the Greens at the holidays and a Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration.

"The Chapel symbolizes what we love about Cottey—support for each other, community and commitment," says Kidest Ketema, Class of 2019, Ethiopia. "The Chapel built in the middle of campus is seen as the heart of our College. We are excited about its future!"

The Chapel was constructed in 1956 with gifts from the BILs, the spouses of members of the P.E.O. Sisterhood. BILs also are taking an active role in fundraising for the current initiative. Chuck Baker, BIL of Sue Baker, President of the P.E.O. Sisterhood (2017-2019), is one of the initiative's leaders. He says the lower level of the Chapel is a perfect place for the student center.

"Because it is the perfectly sized space, we are able to stay within the existing footprint and get a lot more bang for our buck," Baker says. "Natural light from the large windows also makes the space desirable."

The project is being designed by Kansas City-based GastingWalker&. The lead architect is Amy Eckhoff, a Cottey College alumna.

Construction will begin when all funds necessary to complete the project have been committed. The anticipated timeline for completion is one year after funding has been secured. Visit cottey.edu/connect to make a gift online or contact Sherri Taylor, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, at 417-667-8181, ext. 2120 or staylor@cottey.edu.



The Chellie Club: An Entrepreneurial Lab will move to the Student Center in the lower level of the Chapel.