

Rohrer First Generation Endowed Scholarship

Ada Corinne Rohrer Dixon grew up in a rural community in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The area was politically and socially conservative and predominantly Mennonite and Amish. Her father farmed a small farm and her mother was a housewife who also helped on the farm. In her small community, neither farm girls nor farm boys went off to college. Most continued working for their parents. Young women worked after high school until they were married. Once married, it was assumed they too, would be housewives.

School was a one-room school for grades one through four and a second room for grades five through six. In the third grade, Corinne fell in love with her geography book, with its pictures of mountains, deserts, cities and other cultures with people who did not look like her. She then set her mind and was determined to leave the farm and see the world.

In junior high, Corinne attended a larger school with students beyond her small community. Many of those students, including the young women, went to college. She signed up for the college preparatory track, following her sister who went to a three-year hospital nursing school and obtained a R.N. degree, a deviation from the family tradition. Corinne's parents knew she did not want to be a nurse and just shook their heads when she insisted on going to college. College was a much more expensive endeavor than nursing school. There was little extra money on the farm. Following her graduation from high school, Corinne spent a year working as a laboratory technician for a local company in the city. In that year, Corinne saved almost enough for one year of college – which was a lot less expensive then. She applied and was accepted. Her plan was to do one year at a time, if necessary. But she would go to school. Seeing her persistence and tenacious spirit, her parents were then convinced and assisted her with loans.

Corinne completed her undergraduate studies with a bachelor's degree and then obtained a Masters of Education. After several years of teaching, she went back to school and graduated law school with a Juris Doctorate. She practiced law in Tacoma for about 30 years. And, just as she dreamed of while reading her geography books as a child, Corinne has traveled the world and very much enjoys learning about and experiencing different places and cultures.

Corinne's own struggle to overcome her family's biases and economic hardship has made her empathetic to first generation students. She established this scholarship to assist those able students who desperately want a college degree but see no way to attain a degree due to lack of financial resources. She strongly believes that resources should not determine who goes to college. The name of the scholarship is meant to honor her parents and the sacrifices they made to help her.

Additionally, Corinne has a deep relationship with the University of Washington Tacoma. She has served on the advisory board of the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences since the board's inception in 2012. Corinne's own desires to continuously seek knowledge and learning align well with the mission of UW Tacoma to educate diverse learners and transform communities by expanding the boundaries of knowledge and discovery.