

2013

Bryn Mawr Talks: Karen MacAusland Tidmarsh, Undergraduate Dean of Bryn Mawr College (1990-2010)

Karen M. Tidmarsh
Bryn Mawr College

[Let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.brynmawr.edu/bmc_books

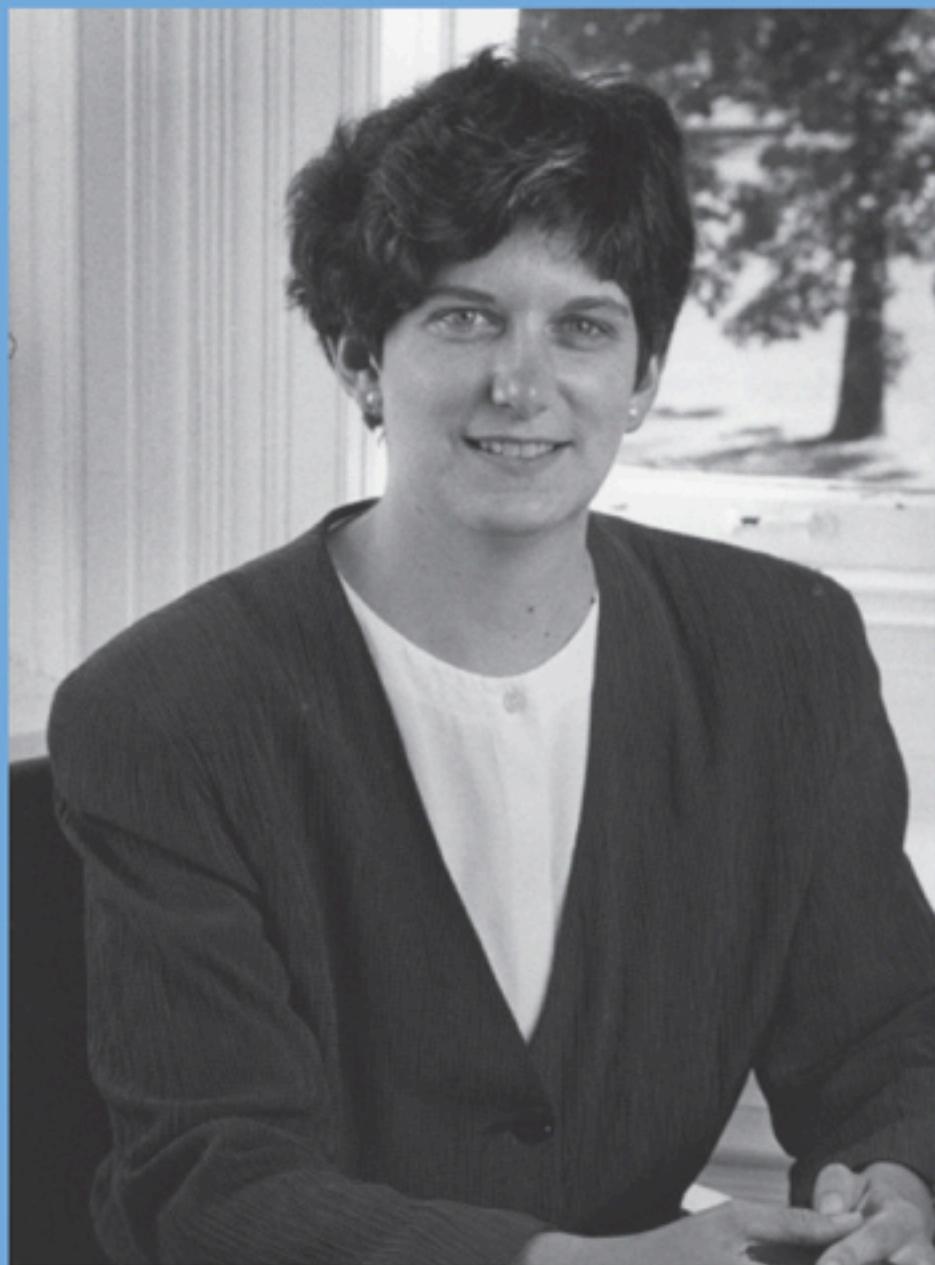
Custom Citation

Karen MacAusland Tidmarsh, *Bryn Mawr Talks: Karen MacAusland Tidmarsh, Undergraduate Dean of Bryn Mawr College (1990-2010)*.
Bryn Mawr College, 2013.

This paper is posted at Scholarship, Research, and Creative Work at Bryn Mawr College. http://repository.brynmawr.edu/bmc_books/23

For more information, please contact repository@brynmawr.edu.

BRYN MAWR TALKS



KAREN MACAUSLAND TIDMARSH
Undergraduate Dean of Bryn Mawr College
1990-2010

THE BRYN MAWR ALUMNAE BULLETIN Spring 1990

*An interview with Dean-Elect of the Undergraduate College,
Karen Tidmarsh '71*

Finding Common Ground

Nested in Karen Tidmarsh's office are conference areas for large meetings or for just two people. Chimney stacks of paperwork rise from table and desk; on one of them lies a cartoon of Tenniel's Alice in Wonderland admiring Dorothy's ruby slippers from Oz: "Love your shoes," Alice says. "It's a long story," Dorothy replies.

Finding common ground in differences has always been a Bryn Mawr experience, but the oil painting on the wall, *High School Girl*, emphasizes the commitment to diversity that Tidmarsh brings. The portrait of a young black woman was exhibited by artist Maurice Stern in Venice in 1932. Tidmarsh discovered the painting, unframed, in the College's art storage area last summer and had it hung in her new office.

"If we're talking about real diversity, yes, Bryn Mawr educates the elite, but elite should be defined by intelligence, not by socioeconomic background," Tidmarsh said during an interview with the *Bulletin*. Bryn Mawr needs to find ways to "attract more students who might not think of Bryn Mawr and let them know that we want them here. But we also need to make Bryn Mawr a place where a more diversified student population will feel comfortable."

Tidmarsh, who was appointed to the position this spring after serving as Acting Dean for the 1989-90 academic year, is described by students as a strong and trusted figure within the community, but one who is still asking questions about the institution.

"It came out again and again that Karen had the overwhelming support of students and faculty," said Professor of Geology Bruce Saunders, a member of the search committee that made its recommendation for the appointment to the College's Board of Trustees.

Some of that support reflects a call for diversifying the campus, but Tidmarsh said she is frustrated by mixed student response to the workshops begun last year to open up discussion on issues of cultural pluralism. "I feel as if whatever kind of mandate (the program) had from students initially is pretty much gone," she said. "Maybe we just need to start afresh." She and Joyce Miller, Director of the Office for Institutional Diversity, are setting up a student, faculty, and staff advisory group to reevaluate the program. Tidmarsh is also working with the Alumnae Association and Career Development to

bring minority alumnae to campus to discuss their experiences at Bryn Mawr and in the outside world. Ideally, she said, these alumnae would be available to students for mentorship relationships.

Other priorities for Tidmarsh are developing student leadership and encouraging more community service. "I'm also very anxious to figure out more ways to provide a livelier agenda of non-academic activities for students to use to relax," she said.

As an undergraduate, Tidmarsh had not envisioned herself ever working at Bryn Mawr. But she returned briefly in 1975, after her first year of graduate studies at the University of Virginia, to teach English in the then bi-college, now tri-college pre-freshman summer program. In 1979, after starting work on her doctoral dissertation, she took a one-year, half-time leave replacement in the dean's office. "The notion that this would be a different kind of job where I'd be learning different kinds of skills was quite appealing," she said.

"I found Bryn Mawr students really refreshing after the students I'd been teaching at Virginia, many of whom were very bright and very interesting, but who were, on the whole, like the students of the '70s and '80s that I kept reading about in *Time* magazine. The Bryn Mawr students still seemed to me to be in college because they wanted an education and wanted to grow and to find out things about themselves and the world; they weren't talking primarily about which MBA program they could get into or what their GPA had to be for law school. They were asking bigger questions and letting you in on that, so you felt in a dean's role as if you were teaching in an important and fundamental way."

At the end of that year, Tidmarsh applied for an opening at the College for associate director of admissions.

"Having gotten my foot into administration and discovered that it was wonderful, and maybe exciting to me in ways I hadn't thought of before, I decided to give admissions a go. I found it tremendously challenging, really hard, especially the first year. The administrative tasks one is given in one's first year in a dean's office are complicated, and I certainly worked very hard, but faced nothing, I think, like what hits you the first year in an admissions job. You're planning programs and traveling all over the country talking to groups of strangers about Bryn Mawr College. In some ways, it was a turning point, because a barrier of shyness and unsureness that I'd felt all the time I'd been teaching fell down at some point in November and never came back again.

"The longer I stayed in admissions, the more interesting I found it.

In some ways the questions for colleges like Bryn Mawr are admissions issues as much as anything else—who should be here, how do we get them, what kinds of students really thrive here. But I really felt that I'd trained for a lot of years to be a teacher. In the dean's office, you have a real chance to watch students grow—see where they start and where they go through hard times, and then where they come out. I think Director of Admissions Betty Vermey does a wonderful job at trying to keep in touch with people, but that's not easy to sustain."

Tidmarsh returned to work full time in the dean's office in 1983, completing her doctoral dissertation in 1988, "The Art and Science of Fiction: The Development of Theory and Practice in George Eliot."

At Bryn Mawr, she has taught advanced courses in composition and lyric poetry, and in the Freshman English program. She has also taught secondary school English at Germantown Friends and the Shipley School, and in the Upward Bound program at Virginia.

The Landscape of Student Life

In recorded interviews with the *Alumnae Bulletin*, Karen Tidmarsh '71 spoke at length about her responsibilities and concerns as Dean of the College: "The best part about being a dean at Bryn Mawr is really very similar to the best part of being a student here, which is the people with whom you interact. The commitment of faculty, students and staff here to the enterprise we're involved in is extraordinary.

"On any day of the week, it would be equally important and appropriate for me to be at the lacrosse game, a curricular discussion, the concert, the meeting with the Sisterhood, a meeting with Jewish students to discuss their need for more space on campus, and several academic lectures. I have to juggle constantly the kinds of involvement that matter and for which this job is, within the administration, supposed to be providing leadership.

"Our students are relentlessly critical of themselves and of everybody around them. That's one of their better traits. It also makes it a constant challenge to be working with them. The real effort has to be for me not to lose touch with the concerns of individual students and for them still to feel that their concerns are being heard in this office. I don't think that's impossible."

What about student social life?

"It's not new for Bryn Mawr students to say, 'I love it here academically, but I wish the social life were better.' I think there's new legiti-

macy in some ways for their complaints; with Haverford being fully co-ed, the gender imbalance in the community is one that students really do feel. I think that changes in alcohol laws, especially in enforcement and liability relating to alcohol laws in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, have drastically affected what had become the social norms of this community and most, where students did see a party as beginning and ending with beer and potato chips. We've said, 'That can't be the center of your social life anymore,' which they've been extraordinarily good about accepting, and there were lots of them who weren't convinced that was their favorite kind of party anyhow.

"A lot of the old forms that made for social life—maybe not always such wonderful social life—like mixers? They're gone. Now, if you were to even mention a mixer or what it was all about, students would think it sounds dreadful, yet they can't figure out how to meet students from other campuses or how to get students to come here. They've had to be a lot more creative, and by and large it costs more money.

"The College never did provide the alcohol; so there hadn't been much budgeted for student parties. Now they have to be able to hire decent bands or get a comedian who people want to hear or various other kinds of groups and activities that will draw people from other colleges. Competing seriously for good bands takes long-range planning. We've created a half-time position this year in student services for someone who helps students organize events they want to have—not to give them the ideas, but to help them make those ideas real. It's made a huge difference and the students are very excited about that. We have to keep moving in that direction.

"I also think it's terribly important for our students to get off campus. A lot of our students are involved in community service—a disproportionate number relative to other institutions—but the students I worry about are the ones who don't have as much initiative, who don't feel as comfortable here, for whom community service might in fact be more important than it is for some of the others. They need to have the channels made a little smoother to finding where service is needed and where their skills can be used.

"I do care a lot about working on student leadership, because I think the political context today has made them very distrustful of leaders and wary about taking on those roles. As a women's college, we have a particular responsibility to give women the confidence and the level of concern that will enable them, or some of

them, to take on leadership positions in whatever area of endeavor they choose. We're going to try to continue a program we started this year of leadership training for students and mentorships with administrators and faculty members for students who do take on demanding responsibilities. Bryn Mawr's theory is still that you give students the responsibility of adulthood while they're undergraduates. You ask them to run their own organizations, their own lives, and rise to those expectations; they learn a great deal from the trial and error process. I think we get much more responsible and mature behavior from students because we give them all this trust. What they're saying is, "Thanks for the trust—now would you tell us how to manage a budget?" or how to stand up in front of 400 people and speak in a way that they can feel proud of."

What changes have taken place in the Freshman English program?

"One of the biggest changes has been to involve people who are not members of the English department and have them teach courses where literary texts may not be part of the reading at all. That's been done very successfully. Students have for a long, long time had a large range of choices: different kinds of literature, periods and themes. But now they have a choice of some courses based on non-literary texts, and for some students that's much more interesting. The faculty as a whole is more involved in the writing program and seeing that as central to the curriculum at Bryn Mawr.

"One of the other changes has been a real effort to diversify the kinds of authors on the reading lists so that there have been, for example, many more African-American writers, Jewish writers writing explicitly about the experience of being Jewish in America, Asian-American writers. That's been very exciting for entering students—exposing them to texts that many never dealt with in high school. In other ways, the program has been very stable. The first semester still involves essentially a weekly essay. They're still meeting individually every other week with the instructor. That's where a lot of the teaching of writing goes on. The courses try to stay pretty much to the same schedule, so students have a sense of a shared experience."

Are the kinds of criticism taught at Bryn Mawr concerned with describing the world rather than changing it?

"I think at one time there would have been tremendous resistance here to more political approaches, but now there's a relatively peaceful coexistence between faculty members who are still very much at work in the kind of criticism that describes and ones who are very much more involved in work that seeks to change. Our

faculty is concerned that students are well prepared if they want to go on to graduate programs, and we'd be serving them really badly if we ignored the major kinds of criticism that go on or the kinds of approaches to history that are important. For students who aren't going to go on, there's the sense that the program here has to be as all-inclusive as it can be, although on some levels obviously that's just an abstract goal; no small college is going to do everything."

What's happening in women's studies?

"There's tremendous student interest in women's studies, and I think that's very natural; it's one of the liveliest fields of research and teaching and, since we have a student body that is all women, it's also natural that they should find learning about themselves and testing out the analytic skills on issues that are very close to them most appealing. They have a great deal to gain from studying their own history and their own voices at a time in their life when they're trying to define themselves.

"The original Bryn Mawr curriculum was aggressively modeled on the male institutions to make the point that if that was the curriculum perceived as serious, which had credibility, then that would be Bryn Mawr's curriculum. That's a source of an early bias here that anything that wasn't part of the traditional curriculum was maybe a lessening in quality or a moving away from rigor. I think our being behind in women's studies also has to do with the fact that Bryn Mawr is very departmentally structured so that interdepartmental programs always to some extent cut across the grain of the institution.

"But now we certainly have faculty members here and at Haverford who are doing much of their writing and teaching in courses that focus on women. They're all people affiliated with departments that look to them to provide a lot of other basic courses—so they often are very torn. I think the College has to work to free some of them up to teach more in women's studies and to bring in visitors who can teach in areas that we don't have currently represented on the faculty.

"We have had some students majoring in women's studies—they can do it now through the option of designing an independent major. But even faculty members who would argue that it would be a very good undergraduate major and serve a lot of needs agree that we simply aren't ready for a major program in women's studies. We don't have enough courses offered regularly in enough departments to provide what would be a first-class women's studies major. Our

students are served better at this point by taking a departmental major and doing a bi-college concentration in women's studies.

"The whole issue of opening up the curriculum to women's studies is just a piece of opening up the curriculum to a more diversely prepared population of students. There are important areas of study and research that are simply underrepresented here; students and faculty are very anxious to see more courses that focus on American minority groups, more courses that look at non-Western history and culture. We're making headway in those areas by making key new appointments, by finding faculty release time to redesign courses, and increasingly by cooperating better with Haverford and Swarthmore so that we can each be growing in some ways without literally growing in number of faculty members, which at Bryn Mawr right now is simply not possible. That's a major challenge—to figure out how to develop within all the financial constraints we face at this time."

What are the origins of the pluralism program?

"We've known for a long while that this community needed to be a more diverse one, more representative of American society and of the world, and that this was an important part of the education students would get here and an important part of Bryn Mawr's mission as a college. But we also had the case made very powerfully for us, two years ago this spring, from a number of minority students that their needs were not being very well met in the community. A lot of what they discussed were attitudes in and out of the classroom—incidents that showed insensitivity and ignorance, and that happened often enough to make them feel uncomfortable here and to make them feel that even though Bryn Mawr was talking about wanting greater diversity, it wasn't doing very much about making that work. For a lot of us, that just crystallized things we'd been talking about and worrying about but for which we didn't have a very clear plan.

"After a spring of discussing with students and faculty the two petitions that came from a number of student groups, goals were developed for admissions recruitment, faculty searches, and a real commitment to an educational program that would help teach Bryn Mawr students how to live in a multi-cultural, pluralistic community and not just feel threatened, or, in the case of many minority students, alienated. We modeled our program on one run at Brown. The notion was that at the end of four years, every student in the College would have participated, and that we would try as we went along to involve more faculty and staff members in doing the train-

ing and participating in the program. One program would be geared to entering students; others would be directed at upperclassmen and minority group members themselves, who often have needs other than being sensitized to issues.

“The program has met with mixed success. I think we’re asking it to do an awful lot, but at least we aren’t throwing students together and saying, ‘See if you can work this out in a way that’s positive and helpful.’ I think, given what’s been happening on this campus and on other campuses as evidence of fear and distrust and, in many cases, hatred, surrounding differences, it’s terribly important that we keep working on our program and keep figuring out how to make it better.”

What are some of the effects of diversifying the student body?

“Bryn Mawr’s curriculum has adapted in many ways to some of the changes in secondary schools over the years. We see ourselves as having some responsibility for helping them improve, but it’s a much bigger problem than we are and we’re not going to have a lot of effect on the whole nation. We offer much more language at the elementary and intermediate level than we ever used to, because a higher percentage of our students come in with three or four years of secondary school foreign language but haven’t learned enough to move from grammar to the level of literature, history and culture in our curriculum. That’s not been a happy adjustment for the language faculty to make, but they certainly made it. Intensive programs at the elementary level allow students who are willing to semi-immense themselves move through the program more quickly. It’s also meant that the non-intensive classes function better for students who find languages difficult, because the ones who have near-native ability in about two weeks are in another class.

“In other areas of the curriculum, we’re still acting as if all students come in at essentially the same point. In individual areas, some students may need a semester-length course before they start our regular curriculum. A lot of students have felt a lot of their options were closed off after a semester here because they’d done so badly in introductory courses. We know they’re all bright—we’ve looked closely at their ability to do the work here and we think they have it. But to pretend that the student who comes to us from the best prep school in America, or in many cases best schools around the world, is at the same place as a very bright student who comes out of a really third rate American high school—we have a lot of them in every class and if we didn’t, we’d be becoming a more and more rarified

and isolated kind of institution, which we don't want to be—to pretend that there's just the slightest difference and that the burden is on the student to adjust and make up for that difference in the first semester doesn't seem fair.

“Some of the catching up can be done by giving a more structured kind of academic support than we've offered in the past. For a number of years, Harvard has given all their entering freshmen a study and learning skills assessment test, and based on the results of that have urged a good proportion of the freshman class to start right off getting quite intensive work on study and learning skills as they do their academic work in the first semester. We're moving to that for next year. We've always found that the students who show up voluntarily for programs are the most anxious, compulsive students saying, 'Oh, I'd better learn more about study skills.' A lot of the others don't even know they have the need or are too overwhelmed by the first two weeks at Bryn Mawr to show up at the right place at the right time. By giving all entering students a test, we're not making any assumptions, we're not saying, 'You, coming from your high school, you must be a mess,' because of course that doesn't hold true either. Some students have family help or are voracious readers on their own, but others haven't had any means of overcoming a bad curriculum. We're working now to develop a program of professionals doing an on-going learning and study skills program to which the students would bring their actual assignments—it wouldn't be just talking in the abstract about the six basic steps in reading a text, but what are you supposed to be reading this week in history, what kinds of problems do you have with that? How do you approach 300 pages of reading for Monday if you've never been assigned 300 pages at a crack in your whole life? We also want student tutors who have gone through a training program.

“Students will do everything they can to avoid their area of weakness, especially if they're confident about being very good in another area. Our curriculum, of course, doesn't allow that very much, so a lot of the students who are lop-sided and committed to remaining that way don't choose Bryn Mawr. Mostly we see a lot of goodwill and even eagerness among students to take on the requirements. For example, now that we have a quantitative requirement, we know that we'll pick up a fair percentage of students who stopped doing math as soon as they could in high school, had decided way before high school they weren't good at it. I think our math department has done an extraordinarily good job of meeting their needs and seeing

that as part of their mission. It's not fair to say, 'You all have to take math. Now come on down here and we'll humiliate you.' Part of what they're doing is making women feel more capable in quantitative thinking, and they're doing that very well. At the same time, they have more majors than ever, so they're clearly serving the needs of the students who have high ability in math."

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 1990

It has been very good over the last few days not only to welcome the new freshmen, guests, and transfer students but also to see the upperclassmen returning, many from a year or semester away. Everyone looks relaxed and refreshed and ready to whip the College back into shape. We who have been feebly minding the store during your absence are happy to have you back.

One of the nicer parts of the summer was receiving letters from the entering freshmen introducing themselves to their deans. Don't worry—this was not a spontaneous gesture by the class. That I'm sure would strike cynical upperclassmen as the last straw. Actually, I wrote asking them to do this and to tell us something about themselves, their expectations of college, and so on. Not long ago, many of the upperclassmen used to give offerings to several deities in gratitude because they had entered before the quantitative requirement was established. Now you have something else to be grateful for. You escape the grueling "letter to the dean." Because I'm so pleased with the results, I hereby declare it to be a tradition, to be endured by generations of Bryn Mawr students.

In any case, they were very good letters and at least gave the deans some small consolation during those long empty months when you were gone. It was, however, shocking and somewhat worrisome to me to realize what some of the worries that the new students bring with them are. Several hoped they could learn to peacefully coexist with other people, and more than one defined that as keeping her things on her side of the room. A large number said they worked best under pressure, and even more cited procrastination as their number one worry about themselves and college. This is of concern to me, because these are problems we haven't encountered in this community before. But we will do our best to help you out. And uncomprehending seniors will try to understand what you are going

through and at least sympathize where they can't empathize.

In answer to my question about what they expect from college, many took the tack of saying what they thought that college was the time for. Their answers were often very wise. I was reminded of that man who has become quite rich by discovering that everything he really needed to know was taught in kindergarten. Many of the freshmen seem to have learned most of what we teach on their campus tour.

In reading about what freshmen believe that college is the time for, I was reminded of what the McBride Scholars, or women considering their kind of nontraditional route to and through Bryn Mawr, often say. They remark that it is their turn now. College is the time for them. These women, who this year number 50, including 18 new students, range in age from 20 to 72. Some have had no college experience, while others bring years of work from many other institutions here and abroad. Their educations have been for one reason or another interrupted. In the time away from the classroom they have been anything but idle. They are homemakers, poets, sculptors, graphic artists, computer experts, journalists, secretaries, community organizers, business owners, and nursery school teachers, to say nothing of authors, grandmothers, wives, divorced women, widows, and single women. They have in many cases put their own education on hold in order to nurture children, support families or themselves. Beginning at Bryn Mawr signals that the time has come for their own needs and interests, their education to come first—or at least to have its place. When women who have put their own education on hold for years are finally given—or finally seize—the opportunity to nurture themselves, one might think that there would be lots of anxiety to accompany the excitement, but little or no guilt. The statement that “it’s my turn now” suggests that it’s also about time for that. But of course there is lots of guilt—about children and partners who will have to carry more responsibilities, receive less attention, about workplaces which will have to cope with less or none of their skills and talent, and about family budgets that will have strained in very uncomfortable ways. And all for this high-minded but rather ineffable goal of a liberal education.

So, since among other things college is a time for yourself and your own self-discovery, it’s also, especially for women, a time for guilt. It can feel very selfish to our traditional age students as well as to McBride Scholars to see families struggling often in jobs that don’t particularly interest them, to allow you to come here to study whatever

interests you most. And in recent years it's become fashionable in Washington to depict college students as enjoying a four-year orgy, punctuated by weeks in Fort Lauderdale, and supported by government loans which they have no intention of repaying. This image is infuriating because it has nothing to do with students at most institutions, certainly not this one, and yet it can do great political harm in the battle to attract desperately needed aid money to students, their families, and their institutions. And it can increase the guilt.

College students are certainly privileged. They are being supported in most cases by others—whether family or scholarship-granting institution—but they are definitely not on an extended vacation. They are doing hard work, and society is supporting them for a few years when they might have been self-supporting out of a certainty that they will contribute far more in the long run because of this period of education.

So I would urge all of you to appreciate the privilege of having time set aside, even if it's only part of your time, to learn about what interests or puzzles you, to explore and test your ideas, to change your minds, to discover what and who you want to be, but not to feel guilty about it. College is the time for you, yourself, but if it works, it ultimately replays everyone whose lives your touch.

To close, I would like to quote from one of the wise freshmen who seemed to me to sum up nicely what college is a time for when she wrote: "It's a time to start biting off more than I can chew; it's time to be truly responsible, not just fake it; and it's time to really think about the decisions I make."

Good luck. There won't be enough time for doing all that college is the time for, so you should really get started.

* * * * *

PARENTS' DAY 1990

In Senior Exit Surveys and Interviews conducted by a group of administrators and faculty each spring, we hear from seniors about what they like and dislike, what they want to see changed, and what they hope will never change. Ninety-seven percent of the class of 1989 expressed satisfaction with their academic experience here. That's very impressive but not terribly surprising. Students tell us that they choose Bryn Mawr for its academic reputation, and while

they are never uncritical—I'm sure you've noticed that—they are probably less critical of that aspect of their experience here than of any other.

In many ways, that is as it should be. We are, above all else, an academic institution, and if we weren't doing a good job with that part of our program, we should be worried indeed.

But the high praise that the academic program gets—and the demands it makes on students—sometimes lead to the assumption that that is all that really matters here. The rest of the program—athletics, the arts, residential life—are all here by accident or were created to occupy those few weak-minded sorts who couldn't be fully satisfied in the library.

I would like to say just a little about why I disagree with that assumption. I disagree partly because of my own experience. I remember as a senior telling some visitors to the campus that I felt I had learned as much or more at Bryn Mawr outside the classroom as in it. At most residential colleges, that would be assumed. Here it was seen to be something of a heresy, and I remember some shocked looks. But I meant it. And in returning to the College to work, I have gained a stronger and stronger sense of how much of the very unstructured-looking non-academic program is the result of careful design, not accident. Its goals are the same as those of the academic program, and for most students the hope is that the experience becomes a unified one in which academic and non-academic learning reinforce each other.

A major goal of this College, and most all of them, is to help students prepare to live as mature, responsible, and independent adults. Most come here having been entirely dependent on their families for financial and emotional support. But their expectation and ours is that in four years they will be prepared to support themselves financially, make good choices about careers and relationships, and function effectively in wider communities.

In the classroom that goal is achieved by asking them to define, articulate, and defend their own ideas as they test them against those of others, and to work increasingly independently. By senior year, most students are engaged in some independent research. Outside the classroom, even greater efforts are made to help students develop independence. They are asked almost from the beginning to take full responsibility for a complex system of self-governance. They plan a budget, argue over a budget, make and revise policies, and represent student views to other constituencies in this community.

Students—and parents—are sometimes shocked to find how little adult supervision there is—that there are no faculty “advisors” for most of our student organizations as there were in high school. The chess club, the literary magazine, the debate team, thrive or falter depending on the degree of student leadership, interest, and initiative. Often it would be much easier or more efficient for the College to take over control of a particular budget or event, but that would really miss the point—which is to give students the freedom and responsibility to run their own lives. In the Honor Code they are given tremendous trust. Cynics sometimes think that this is foolish. But the assumption is that this is a very effective way to make people trustworthy. And we are rarely disappointed.

Another of this College’s fundamental goals is to help students to know themselves, their talents, and their weaknesses—to discover, in effect, their most authentic selves. Academically, they move through a curriculum that asks them to explore a number of disciplines before selecting one in which to concentrate and achieve some sense of mastery. All the while they are testing and discovering their abilities, and, we hope, developing the real confidence that grows out of real challenge. But we all have important skills and talents that we didn’t acquire or discover in academic work. Working in the dining service or post office, mediating a discussion as a hall president, counseling a younger student, or organizing a political group may well be the activity in which one discovers one’s life work. Our coaches are quick to point out that in any field hockey or volleyball game you encounter most of the interpersonal dilemmas you will face in life. If you learn how to control your anger, or work with someone you don’t much like, or deal with an opponent you don’t respect, you’ve learned a lot.

Another of Bryn Mawr’s goals is to produce the educated citizenry needed if this and other democracies are to survive. For those who choose to be involved in some way with the self-government system here, there is a wonderful training in citizenship. In a small, sometimes manageable community, each generation of students is given the opportunity to create a government. They struggle over fundamental issues of freedom and authority, the rights of individuals and minority opinions, which are at the heart of any political system. They also participate in important ways in shaping and running the institution as a whole. Students sit as members of the faculty Admissions Committee, the Curriculum Committee, and as representatives to the Board of Trustees. They learn a lot about the frustrations,

responsibilities, and satisfactions of running an institution. None of this is accidental but reflects the College's belief that to help students achieve adulthood you must trust them as adults and not as overgrown children.

Finally, we are, as a women's college, especially concerned about teaching women to learn to balance competing claims on their energies and to make good choices about how to use their time. The academic program here could absorb all of a student's time—just as the jobs that most of our alumnae take could fill their lives as well. But for most people, a life that was all one kind of work would not be a happy or productive one. Students complain about how hard it is to juggle academic and non-academic commitments here—and it is hard—but they are learning life skills, not college skills. There will never be enough time for all the things that matter—keeping up with one's work and talking to an upset friend, caring for a sick child, writing to a congressman, and getting to a play you really want to see. The struggle to balance responsibilities, needs, and desires is the hardest lesson to learn here—but probably also the most important.

So, I guess I would argue that Bryn Mawr's goals for its students outside the classroom are just as high and just as important as they are within it. Participating fully, and learning to balance different kinds of engagement is what it is all about. This is a demanding community to live in, and we try to offer students a lot of support for the very real and hard challenges it poses. But we also see the growth that it produces and we are proud of our alumnae who are living rich, satisfying, and much too full lives.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 1991

I would like to begin by thanking the dozens of deans, customs people, faculty members, student life personnel, and staff members in offices like the Registrar's, Comptroller's and Financial Aid, who have spent much of their weekend helping to welcome, orient, and advise the new students. Judy Balthazar and Jennifer Goldberg have only been here a matter of weeks, yet I'm sure it feels like years—and if one figured it by person-hours, it probably is. I would also like to thank the admissions committees and staffs in the Undergraduate College and the Division of General Studies for bringing

us such wonderful new students. They have been patient and good humored, even when it was 98 outside and hotter than that in their rooms.

It is very appropriate that I am the last to speak this year—and that we are almost out of time. Because I want to say just a few brief words about the cheering fact that you won't have enough time for all the things you want to do this year or in four years of college. This will be your constant frustration and ever ready excuse, so we might as well get it out on the table now. In fact, time and its use and abuse will be the focus of much of your thinking and, with luck, of much of your learning at Bryn Mawr.

One of the great ironies about time, at least in this harried society, is that we are constantly making less of more. The human life span, for those privileged enough to have access to adequate food and medical care, has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. In the main we have significantly more time than our ancestors did for accomplishing our goals. Yet everyone I know feels more frantic and busy than ever before. Studies published this summer showed that both men and women reported having significantly more uncommitted time than they did even a few years ago. Improved technology has made the provision of basic needs such as food and shelter far easier and faster than it ever was. Yet people seem to feel that they have less time every year. It really is very discouraging. The simple answer is that everyone is simply upping the ante. As less time is required for basic survival, more non-essential activities become feasible—and before long those add-ons are considered essential and feel just as burdensome as it once did to prepare the fire for cooking a meal. The sad thing is that we pretend it is all beyond our control. Some of it certainly is, but we are making choices that go unrecognized.

Students can't pretend that they have no choices about time. The whole point of academic communities like this one is that you have been freed from the necessities of supporting and feeding yourselves in order to give you time to get an education. Your primary work for four years is learning, and unlike in most secondary schools, you have many choices to make about what, when, and how you will learn. The freshmen are still stunned to realize that on many days they will spend only one or two hours in class. They seem, for the first time in their lives, to have ample free time for doing whatever they want and need to do. Sophomores debate whether to disabuse them of this pleasant illusion right way or to let them come to it on

their own. Very soon that insidious local recipe of one part work, two parts procrastinating while complaining about work, will expand to fill all the time available and then some. But still you can't pretend that there are no choices to make, and that, of course, makes life harder. I tell students who have a very hard time structuring their time here that it never really gets more difficult than this. Once you are in the working world, the penalties for oversleeping or missing deadlines are more compelling than the guilt that accompanies those same mistakes in college. Having a full-time job and/or raising a family means that other people's needs control, to a very large extent, how your time is used. Talk to one of the McBride Scholars or graduate students who are juggling children, jobs, and course work, and you will see that there are many fewer choices about use of time than the traditional undergraduate students have. While those overcommitted people would love to experience the luxury of choice just once in a while, they are also free of its dilemmas. Many full-time students would be happy to have fewer opportunities to make choices they regret.

I know this because we in the Dean's Office spend a great deal of our time talking to students about their time. They often come to see us because time has run out. They didn't have time to come in any earlier. After a while some patterns emerge. I would like to pass on a few observations that may be of some help as you make new resolutions about your time this year.

1. Happy people never have enough time. People who talk about how slowly time passes for them are usually describing a painful situation.
2. You are in college to learn, not simply to study. Sometimes it is very important to take time away from studying to learn. That learning may come from talking with a friend or a new acquaintance, attending a lecture or a poetry reading or a concert, playing basketball, or spending an afternoon tutoring a 10-year-old. Any one of those can turn out to be worth much more to you than the time you invest. Students who decide that they have time for nothing but studying may miss some of the most important opportunities for education that college allows.
3. Work expands and contracts to fill time allotted to it, with limits. Ten-page papers can't be written in two hours, although I've known of some valiant near-misses. But you will find that making more commitments for your time makes you more efficient. Busy people do get more done.

4. The most important things may not have deadlines. It is very easy to spend all of one's time rushing to meet the next deadline and never finding time for the project, the person, or the thinking that really matters most to you. Set your own priorities, and allow contemplation and relaxation to be among them. Investing 10 hours reading a wonderful book but not finding one hour to think or talk about why it puzzles or impresses you is wrong. All of these trees on this lovely campus are meant to invite students to sit under them and talk or think about what they are learning. They shouldn't ignore the invitation.

I used to think of time management as one of those lesser skills like balancing a checkbook or changing a tire. They make life easier, but they don't lead to Nobel Prizes. It has come to me lately that "time management" is really the art of living, what it's all about. Everything you are learning or have already learned should finally be helping you to decide how to manage your time, to make choices about what really matters to do today, tomorrow, or in a lifetime.

So I wish you all a very busy year. Be glad that there isn't enough time, and be sure to enjoy what there is.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 1992

It is a great relief to see you all here. Many of us have spent the past several weeks preparing for the arrival of new students and the return of old, and since we were clearly going to go on indefinitely planning, and rethinking, and replanning until you arrived, I'm glad you're here. Enough is, after all, enough, and at Bryn Mawr enough is usually too much.

Since on the academic calendar the time for "new year's resolutions" is late August, I am sure that most of you, like me, have been busy making private vows to study more or study less, to sleep more or eat less, get much more involved or learn to say no. In my experience those resolutions have a very short life, but they do add to the sense of a new beginning, and that is important. Deans are expected to have an extra store of useful resolutions to impose on anyone who gives them an opening, and I take that charge seriously.

I have recently been reading a fascinating talk by Harold Stephenson, a psychologist at the University of Michigan, which was sent to me by a faculty member. It seems to me to suggest some important

rethinking for us as a nation that is doing quite poorly at educating many of its children. But it also implies some more local lessons for us at Bryn Mawr. I'd like to tell you first about Professor Stevenson's findings, and then about their usefulness for us.

Professor Stevenson has studied representative groups of school children in similar cities in five countries—the United States, Japan, Peoples' Republic of China, Taiwan, and, to a lesser extent, Hungary—to see how mathematics is taught and learned in those different cultures and, in a larger sense, how education is valued. Studies of children's achievements in mathematics show that those in the United States lag dramatically behind those in the East Asian countries, which he examined at every grade level, and the gap increases greatly from grades one to 11. That isn't really news, although it is very worrisome. We in the United States spend a higher percentage of our GNP on education than any of the other countries studied, but our children learn less. What is fascinating and new, is Stevenson's analysis of the reasons for the discrepancy.

Among myths he disproved was the notion that American children fritter their lives away watching TV while Japanese children study incessantly, living in suicidal terror of exams they must take when they are 11. This image has always been reassuring to Americans. If that's what it takes to teach children a lot of math, then ignorance is bliss. In fact, Japanese children watch more television than those in the United States, and less of it is educational. So TV can't be the scapegoat.

Another favorite target is American teachers, who are suspected of not working very hard at all and then demanding enormous pay hikes. This is also a popular belief, since it leaves the children, as in Lake Woebegone, all above average, and suggests that it is simply their ignorant and lazy teachers who fail them and us. This indictment of teachers has extended to include the professoriate, who, it has been discovered, hardly teach at all. For the salaries teachers make—well above the minimum wage—they ought to teach a good solid eight-hour day. Then maybe our children would learn something. Actually, Stevenson and his colleagues found that teachers in the East Asian schools teach fewer hours a day than their American counterparts. They are given more hours during the day for preparation, discussion with colleagues, and consulting with individual students. Being ready to teach well a few times a day is, in the East Asian schools studied, considered a very demanding—and very respected—job. Instead of underworked, Stevenson found the

American teachers to be exhausted by their schedules, effectively prevented from giving their teaching the energy, imagination, and preparation it needs to go well.

Finally, we hear a great deal of speculation about the longer hours which East Asian children spend in school, and that, too, is seen to account for their greater success. They are perceived as chained to their desks, being drilled by the hour, and turned into little test-taking machines. No wonder they outperform our kids who are allowed to be children! Well, in fact, while the American children studied usually had one brief recess and a 20-minute lunch period each day, the East Asian children had a recess after every substantive lesson and a 60-90 minute lunch break. The last two hours of their day were spent in a wide range of extracurricular programs available to all children, not only those whose parents could afford special opportunities. The actual hours spent in academic instruction by the different groups of children, U.S. and East Asian, were about the same. The image of repetitive drills that is often touted by the back to basics advocates in this country as the only way to help children learn is completely inaccurate as a depiction of East Asian schools. The teaching style there was far more interactive than it was in the American schools studied. Teachers in China and Japan teach a small segment of a lesson, give children a chance to practice it, and then elicit feedback and provide evaluation. They downplay the importance of right answers and urge children to discover new methods of finding them. American teachers tend to provide long periods of instruction during which children are largely passive, and then give them long periods for working alone, often without any evaluation of what they are doing.

Clearly, the study Stevenson presented raises important questions about how our schools are structured. It shows as well that cultures where education is valued more than it is in this one give children far more incentive to learn in school, and that East Asian children and their parents have far more faith that studying hard—when they study—is the basis of success. But it also offers, at least to an ever alert dean, some useful wisdom for students at this not very typical American college, where education is valued and studying hard is respected. I offer four useful implications to you now:

1. Those of you who watch *General Hospital* or *Beverly Hills 90210* do not necessarily represent the downfall of American education. Depending on what else you do with your time, you might even be on to something important.

2. You need lots of recess. There's a new high-tech playground in the gym, and there are plenty of beautiful places to walk, and interesting people to meet. We've lost Mapes but gained two espresso bars surrounded by acres of enticing books. All of these can provide good study breaks, and you'll learn more if you use them well. The Bryn Mawr formula of periods of intense study interspersed with long periods of procrastinating and worrying or, occasionally, for fun, talking about how much you have still to do, does not seem to be the most effective, based on Stevenson's findings.

3. Don't apologize any more for spending an hour in the dining hall enjoying a meal instead of inhaling it. That's normal. You might even return to work refreshed.

4. We now have scientific proof that extracurricular activity is not bad for your mind. Quite the opposite. Devoting significant periods of time to athletics, the arts, community service, political activity, or the like, would appear to enrich the learning process.

So I wish you all a good semester, full of both work and play, and I hope that we who are lucky enough to be part of a school where teaching and learning do thrive will find ways to help transform the places where they don't.

Thank you very much.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 1993

In a few minutes, you will have a chance to speak with faculty or senior students in virtually all departments. Within the next few days, you will select a first set of courses.

I want to say a few words about the point of it all. You are going to feel quite overwhelmed with all the choices you are asked to make. Lots of us are here to help—faculty, staff, upperclassmen—but the agony of choices and learning how to make them is really a large part of the context of a liberal arts education.

A liberal arts education, as Bryn Mawr defines it, is designed to be broad, to introduce you to many ways of thinking and learning. Every one of us is born into particularities—we grow up in a particular kind of culture and community, with a family with particular values, traditions, histories and each has her own particular talents and weaknesses. Often we feel trapped and very limited by them—you are already meeting people here whose backgrounds seem much

broader than yours, who have lived in five countries, traveled, etc. On the other hand, they may feel restricted because they will never know what it is to grow up in a small, close community, to be known well by the same group of people at every stage of one's childhood. This, too, offers a kind of self-knowledge and learning that is very valuable.

The point is, we can each experience only a small portion of the possibilities life offers, and we all yearn to enlarge ourselves. The goal of a liberal arts college like Bryn Mawr is to take you intellectually and imaginatively into worlds, points of view you could or will never live in—worlds of the past, of fiction, of nature—and allow you to put yourself in a broader perspective. You will over the next few years make major choices about what you want to learn and do, who you want to know and love—and you shouldn't have to base these choices on the particular set of experiences you happen to have had.

Some argue that this is a useless kind of education because it purposely does not prepare you for any particular job or career. The world is so full of problems that need solutions, today—why should you spend time reading philosophy or theoretical physics or anthropology?

I reply to that: What the world needs most are people who can respond to its problems with broad vision and deep understanding. If quick, simple solutions were the answers, they would have worked before this. Liberal arts training aims to develop in you habits of mind which should prepare you to do whatever you chose to do better. These include:

- Self discipline (many students have spoken of struggling with procrastination);
- Hard work and high standards (the qualities of “excellence” and “rigor” are heard often here);
- Deferred gratification (no course is exciting every day; one has to master basic, sometimes tedious material before you can experience the excitement of an original idea, or understand and agree or disagree with a very complex hypothesis);
- Setting priorities;
- Working with other people;
- Flexibility;
- Creativity;
- How to argue effectively (use evidence to support your position);
- How to select a position (make a decision);

- How to differentiate what is false from what is true;
- How to find out what you don't know (to know how much you don't know and how much you do).

But, it isn't good enough to simply pour all of this into your heads. The only justification for such education is the use you make of it. That use is not for us or anyone else to decide on. But you must choose a use or many uses that are important to you and the world. (We are proud of the many and often unpredictable roles our alumnae play in this country and others—often using their education and talents to affect thousands of others.)

This kind of education requires solitude, quiet, freedom from everyday responsibilities. It requires easy access to faculty, libraries, fellow students—that's how residential colleges developed. Take advantage of it. Don't fill your life with so much frantic activity that you never have time to think over what you've read and heard.

It may seem ivory-tower and elitist to provide all of this for so few students. But if you make good use of this education, you may affect thousands. You have been selected as people who have the ability and motivation to use your education well, and that is your responsibility.

What does this mean for you now, today? Take risks—don't simply shore up your known strengths. Try new fields. The point is to broaden and test your mind. And the more you know about any subject, the more interesting you will find it. So one course can open up a whole world.

Take advantage of what your teachers offer. They work very hard, but a teacher cannot be a better teacher than you are a student. Teaching is not one-sided. Let your teachers know when you are confused, frustrated, excited. No one can force you to be interested, to really commit the time required to understand something.

That's another choice you have to make for yourself. So it all comes back to choices. You start choosing courses, then a major—and none of it is trivial or easy. It's all part of a process of choosing who and what you want to be. It may feel overwhelming now, but I hope it also feels very exciting. Most Bryn Mawr alumnae would give anything for the chance to be where you are today, to have it all ahead.

Good luck and enjoy it!

CONVOCATION 1994

Good morning. I want particularly to welcome all 12 undergraduates who haven't already been here for at least a week being trained to mediate disputes, operate computers, orient new students, play field hockey, drill French verbs, or whatever. It must feel kind of lonely to return apparently on time and find everyone already hard at work, but we are glad to see you, and you obviously serve a vital function, since someone has to be the recipient of all of the help and instruction everyone else is now prepared to give. A special thank you to everyone who has worked to make this Customs Week such a good one. The weather, cooperative and perfect for once, has certainly helped, but so have a lot of students, staff, and faculty.

Everybody, new and returning, is about ready for the preliminaries to be over and the "real" work—classes—to begin. New students have been assured that everyone, except, of course, the informant, works all the time here: like all of the other stereotypes and generalizations that have been offered to terrify, reassure, or just amuse you, it is a little bit true and a lot not. People do work hard here, and standards are high, but what we really excel at is worrying about work and talking about our worries. Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Procrastination is a high art, and it leaves a lot of time open for worry.

This year we did a number of things differently during Customs Week. One was that we took all 350 new undergraduates and about 80 Customs Persons to Philadelphia on the 11:54 local, Sunday morning. We had warned SEPTA, and they had put on extra cars, but there was no way to prepare the three regulars, who are used to a peaceful, empty platform and comfortably vacant cars at that hour. They are, I'm sure, still recovering, and we apologize.

The point of that fairly amazing event, skillfully planned and directed by Sonya Mehta and Heidi Van Es, was to show newcomers an accessible, exciting city that provides a wonderful place for all kinds of activities, including, if you must, procrastinating. There are two things it was not meant to do—which some assumed it was. Let me explain. First, some assumed we were trying to show you a glimpse of the so-called real world. That makes no sense to me. For one thing, while Bryn Mawr is certainly an eccentric place, I would say that it is no more so than the destinations I heard the most about—Independence Hall, South Street, and The Gallery. They all, you will have to admit, have their own peculiarities.

The notion that Bryn Mawr, or Haverford, and places like them are

set apart from what is real is strongly held, but, fortunately, it gets harder and harder to defend. True, the fact that the essential work of this place is intellectual, that what is produced and exchanged here is ideas, hypotheses, and arguments, instead of microchips or Tasty-cakes, makes us odd, especially in a culture still deeply distrustful of intellectuals. And the fact that the purpose for which the whole institution was created is not profit but education, changing minds and changing lives, is also different. But what most people mean when they talk about colleges as unreal worlds is that they are privileged, protected places isolated from the real problems of day-to-day life. That was far truer 50 years ago than it is today, with good and bad effects. Even if you never left this campus, you couldn't avoid the social and economic realities of the wider world.

Once, Bryn Mawr and colleges like it were indeed very different from the society around them. Their students and faculties were virtually all white, all upper middle class, and all from quite similar schools and communities. That, thank goodness, is no longer the case. Some do regret the easy, comfortable communities which colleges were 30 or more years ago, when no one worried much about political correctness, harassment suits, or the other specters of Academia 1994. Colleges were easier, safer communities for their privileged inhabitants 30 years ago, but the comfort and safety resulted from barriers and denials which couldn't and shouldn't last. Many barriers are down; Bryn Mawr students, faculty, and staff represent a far more realistic cross section of the population of this country and the world; and we are much stronger for it. It is certainly harder now to achieve a sense of community and unity, since so many more experiences and perspectives must be included. We are still learning how to do that, but the community we build, complicated as it is, is much richer, more complex, and certainly a better, if harder, place in which to learn and grow. So, we didn't send the new students to Philadelphia to show them the real world—just other realities that put this one in perspective and that have much to offer us and much to gain from our involvement.

The other reason we didn't need to send the students to the city was to pull their heads out of books. The notion that it's easy to study all the time here, that the hard thing is to do anything else, is another very outdated myth. The contemplative life, free of worldly distractions, is not much easier to achieve here, despite the libraries and laboratories, the gardens and window seats, than it is anywhere else. It is true, you will have to struggle to get yourselves back into

Philadelphia, or onto playing fields, or into any kind of important, non-academic commitment. And that struggle is worthwhile. But you will also have to work very hard to insure the time and place to read, to write, to reflect. This is supposed to be about the best place in the world for such pursuits, and it may well be, but it is just about as plagued by distractions and demands that destroy contemplation as anywhere else. Telephones, TVs, VCRs, e-mail, unpaid bills—all have made this College more like the rest of the world than it once was, for better and for worse. While it is no longer easy to find time to read and ponder even here, it will only get harder elsewhere. This is the time of your lives when you really are entitled to make such activities your first commitments. Don't let that opportunity pass. The hardest reality, in this quite real world, is that worry and distraction come easily, but real engagement, whether with work or play, with this community or others, comes hard. The effort is worth it, and I urge you to make it. Good luck.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 1995

Good morning. It is very good to see you all back. The campus, as you may have noted, has looked lovelier in September. Somehow, the combination of dead grass, drooping and even dropping parched tree limbs, and miles of chain link fencing is a little grim, but they are considerably less noticeable now that hordes of eager learners are here to enliven the landscape. The new students are extremely nice, but they are a little disconcerting. Day after day during Customs Week they kept appearing where and when they were supposed to. There is no reason to assume that such behavior will continue, once they learn the norms of this community, but it might, so I warn you to be prepared. In every other way, they seem to be fitting in and adapting extremely well, and I think you will enjoy getting to know them.

I am happy to announce two very recent and very important appointments. In each case, they were chosen by search committees comprised of students, faculty, and staff who gave time all summer to review applications and interview finalists. Their efforts paid off. Rona Pietrzak, already known to many of you as a faculty member in the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, and as someone who has worked with undergraduates on mediation train-

ing and the NCBI workshops, is the new Assistant Dean and Director of the McBride Scholars program. Marie Flamme, who for 20 years was an international student advisor at Berkeley, will officially begin next Monday as the advisor for our international students. We welcome both Ms. Pietrzak and Ms. Flamme to their new roles. They bring wonderful experience and skills.

The new students have been very good humored about being bombarded with Bryn Mawr lore, some of it wonderful, some just weird. Now I would like to take just a few minutes to talk about what we don't talk about—and why. As the newcomers have no doubt heard, you aren't supposed to discuss grades at Bryn Mawr. In fact, some claim it is a violation of the Honor Code to do so. That particular warning has never made any sense to me, particularly since the Academic Honor Code is about integrity and there is nothing dishonest about announcing what grade you received on an assignment, even if in some contexts it may be inappropriate or even obnoxious. What does make sense to me is that a cultural norm that strongly discourages comparison of grades with others serves some important functions for this College. Bryn Mawr is, after all, a community of ambitious, competitive people who care a great deal about doing their work well. If grades are one way in which work is evaluated, they probably care about them. Yet, students coming to Bryn Mawr have already been pushing themselves for 12 years to achieve good grades, watching themselves being evaluated in those terms, and many are sick of the game. The time has come to really work for larger, less tangible, and more meaningful rewards than marks on a transcript. Most Bryn Mawr students like—at least on good days—to believe that learning is its own reward and that they would work even without the incentive or threat of a grade. Not discussing grades is one way of maintaining at least the illusion—for yourself as well as others—that grades really don't matter to you. And, in a small community like this that can be a pretty intense place—even on good days—cooperation is more desirable and far more comfortable than competition. So, de-emphasizing grades, asking students to repress their more competitive instincts, and develop their latent or not-so-latent cooperative selves, is useful.

This is not, in fact, just some recent student invention. The College colludes in the effort to downplay the significance of grades here and has for a long time. There is no Dean's List, no Phi Beta Kappa or other society whose membership is based on grades, and we do not rank students for their own information or that of the outside

world. This has always seemed to me very sound. If we argue that grades aren't the point of all this but learning is, that it is more important to seek challenges and take risks in getting an education than to protect a GPA, then we would be inconsistent if we constantly gave out rewards based on grades.

By the time Latin honors are awarded at Commencement—a topic much discussed by the faculty in recent years—your lanterns are packed and the time for competition and cooperation is behind you, so it's time to celebrate one kind of accomplishment.

But, as you may have noticed, things can sometimes be overdone here. If the taboo prevents students from thinking about and discussing grades in useful ways, especially with the professors who gave them, then it is destructive. Because the reason that faculty members agonize so long and put so much effort into grading is that they do see it as part of what they have to teach. If a single grade were the only evaluation of one's work in a course, it would not say enough. But when it is added to a series of evaluative comments and prior grades, it is a very useful piece of information about the quality of the work a student has done on a series of tasks. And such evaluation is what ought to help a student improve her or his work. Without such criticism, learning would come much more slowly. Instead of pretending that one doesn't care about grades, it might be even more high-minded to try to see them as part of an ongoing teaching/learning process. In that sense, someone else's grades really aren't very important or very useful to you, but your own can be.

The critical thing is to remember how little of one's learning, even in an academic community, is or can be graded. The curriculum articulates a set of tasks and skills necessary for our degree. They are not arbitrary, but nor are they absolute. We are currently reconsidering what measurable tasks and skills our curriculum should include and what standards should be applied. Whatever they are, we know that they will never represent all that we value in our students or our graduates. A set of grades is crude, shorthand for a student's achievement in a series of fairly narrowly defined tasks. Only the student herself can know what kind of background and talent she brought to these tasks—which ones are small accomplishments and which enormous, which teachers helped her to truly stretch and grow and which offered high praise for relatively slight achievements. We do not pretend to be evaluating you, nor your most significant accomplishment. That may well take place outside the

classroom, in activities very important to you and to this community that can't be assigned numbers.

If up until this point grades have been a large part of the basis for your self-esteem, this is the time to begin rethinking that, viewing grades as one source of information about one part of what you do and care about, but hardly a good evaluation of who and what you are and hope to be. Learn from them, discuss them when it is useful, and then remember all of the other achievements and evaluations which can't be quantified.

Good luck—and enjoy the semester.

* * * * *

PARENTS' DAY 1995

Liberal Studies and Academic Values

I generally enjoy very much the opportunity to speak on Parents' Day and to have a chance to meet and talk with parents. The program that I direct—the first year composition course and writing center—involves more students than any other single program on campus, as every student is required to take a first-year seminar, and a large number use the Writing Center throughout their time as students here. In fact, it is the only program with which every student will have some contact. It is therefore a program that you as parents are quite likely to have heard about, especially if you are parents of first-year students who call you up to express their frustration over the weekly essays! In many cases, it is the staff of the first-year seminar program who get to know your daughters best in their freshman year. Because our classes are relatively small and because of the weekly writing and biweekly conferences, teachers of the first-year seminar are often the faculty members with whom Bryn Mawr students have closest contact in their first months at college and therefore perhaps are some of the teachers you're most likely to have heard about. Obviously the College places this course and the work students do in it in a very central location in the curriculum, maintaining one of the stiffest writing requirements in the country.

The fact is that in our view, the course required of freshmen is much more than a composition course or a writing course as such courses are often defined. A "composition" course is often thought to be a course in which the technical and mechanical skills necessary to writing Standard English are taught and practiced. Grammatical

exercises form part of the homework, grammatical, and rhetorical principles are discussed in class, and essays are treated as exercises in form rather than in content.

This is not the kind of course we offer. Of course we wish to make sure that our students have all the grammatical and rhetorical resources they need in order to write the most successful college essays they possibly can. This, by the way, is not an issue of remediation but a concern we have about all our students. Certainly, one reason to be concerned with basic skills is to make sure that students are able to produce sentences that are free of errors. However, there is a higher and more complex goal than the elimination of error, and that is the development of strength. Students who write Standard Written English well, who never or rarely commit errors in grammar or syntax, still need to develop their strengths. For example, a student may learn from her reading or from her teacher's feedback on her essays that it is possible to create more complex sentences or paragraphs than she is accustomed to writing. She might learn that she has grammatical and rhetorical options that she has never considered before. Her range of choices and options is increased, allowing her writing to become more capacious and flexible. In short, she might begin to develop her style.

Although this development of strength and flexibility at the level of basic skills is one goal of the course and of our program, it is not the only or even the primary goal. We primarily regard this course as the place in our curriculum where students are introduced to the concept and the practice of the Liberal Arts. After all, all of them have chosen a liberal arts college, although many come to campus not yet fully aware of what that choice implies. Many think that "liberal arts" means, in some vague way, selective: the "liberal arts" colleges are the good ones. Some others define "liberal arts" by what is NOT offered: a liberal arts college does not have business or nursing programs, for example. Of course, their Bryn Mawr educations are an extended discovery of what a liberal arts education offers and means, but the first place they confront this new perspective directly, and the place in the curriculum explicitly devoted to helping them make the transition into a liberal arts "culture," if you will, is the first-year seminar. (I call the liberal arts a "new" perspective; of course, some of our students have come from a secondary environment where preparation for the liberal arts was a central focus, but most do not.) In any event, in this academic year we have retitled our course to emphasize this function of the course. What was previ-

ously English 015-016 is now Liberal Studies 1, and our courses are not called freshman English seminars any more but liberal studies seminars.

I called the liberal arts a “culture” a second ago, which it is of course not in the strictest anthropological sense. But in so far as the term “culture” implies a body of assumptions and beliefs about the world which are shared by a community of people and transmitted from generation to generation, it provides a useful model for thinking about the process of a liberal arts education. I would argue that it is very helpful to think for a while of the liberal arts as a culture—to entertain that model, or metaphor. But maybe first a little history.

The concept of the liberal arts dates back to the medieval European university, as do the academic cap and gown that American scholars wear for important ceremonies. There were, in the medieval European curriculum, two divisions: the trivium, consisting of the three “language arts” of grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and the quadrivium, the four “mathematical” arts of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. (Music was considered “mathematical” as the study of intervals and measures, and astronomy, the study of the “music of the spheres” was clearly an extension of geometry.) These “arts and sciences” were designated as the “liberal arts” from LIBER, the Latin root for “free”—they were the studies appropriate to “free people,” which in medieval Europe meant chiefly males of the ruling class. The idea was that people who were free from the immediate necessity of earning a living, who were removed from the press of practical concerns, could devote their full and disinterested attention to studies that are both fundamental and elevated.

At any rate, when we wear our caps and gowns at Commencement, we recall and commemorate the origins of modern American academic institutions in this medieval European tradition. Of course, our institutions resemble their ancestors very little. This is most obviously true in our curricula; although the central focus on language arts and mathematical studies remains clear in many curricula featuring writing and math requirements, we now organize knowledge very differently and much more complexly, and of course there is very much more knowledge to organize. Further, we are aware of living in a much larger world than were the scholars of medieval Europe and have made continual progress in incorporating into the academy the perspectives and histories of other nations and peoples. Most important, perhaps, is that the history of education in American has been shaped by the impulse to “democratize” higher educa-

tion, to extend the benefits of liberal learning to talented students from a wide range of class positions. This has meant that our notion of the “liberal arts” has grown and developed: we talk not about the liberal arts as the studies appropriate to “free people” so much as we do of the liberal arts as the studies that free people: the studies that, because they are not bound to the specific skills or information needed to practice any trade or profession, free people to learn and grow as their talents lead them; the studies that, because they are not confined to the ideas and values of the specific time and place in which we happen to live, free us from parochialism and narrow-mindedness.

I said above that it can be useful to think about the liberal arts as a culture. “Culture,” like “liberal arts,” is a term that might require some definition. There is a sense of it I cited before, the sociological idea that a culture is a world-view, which, with its associated practices, defines a human community and is transmitted from one generation to the next. There are other relevant meanings as well, of course: the idea of “culture” as acquaintance with the best that has been thought and said, as familiarity with human achievement in the arts and sciences; and then there is “culture” in the agricultural sense—the sense of encouraging growth and fertility. All these meanings converge; a liberal arts college is in the business of “cultivating” both knowledge and young people, encouraging growth and fertility in research and through teaching. One way growth can certainly be encouraged is through exposing students to “culture” in another sense: that is to outstanding human achievements in arts and letters, especially as long as we’re flexible and open-minded as to what counts as an outstanding human achievement. And the best result of a liberal arts education is to make students members of a culture that supplements or enhances their national or regional or ethnic cultures, to give them a way of living in the world as educated and thoughtful women.

What is that way, exactly? What way of living in the world is transmitted from one generation of scholars to another through the process of an education in the liberal arts? Certainly, it is characterized by intellectual freedom: it is defined by an unwillingness to be bound by unexamined assumptions or historical or geographical or personal limitations and considers no question unaskable and no idea unspeakable. The “culture” of the liberal arts also values curiosity and flexibility, the qualities that allow a person to seek out and to cope with new ideas, information, images, languages, and obser-

ventions. Honesty and integrity—the ability to look hard and say as accurately as possible what we really see and think—are part of this culture, as is courage, because it is not always easy to be honest in this way. For this same reason, civility and respect for persons is essential: the energetic and honest exchange of ideas is made constructive only by a vigilant respect for persons and for civil discourse.

A colleague of mine received a letter from a former student last week. This student graduated last year from Bryn Mawr and is spending this year exploring her options and wondering whether and when she should consider graduate school. (In this she is typical of a great many of our graduates a few months after graduation!) I would like to quote from her letter:

“Perhaps what I am most proud of having come to while at Bryn Mawr was also what held me back most. And I think it may best be summed up as an acute awareness of the profound, an awareness that comes, say, from encountering a poem that goes so deep in the heart of things it uncovers a multitude of almost inexplicable ambiguities and philosophical problems. I can now recognize in myself a desire to grapple with what is most difficult and abstract, a desire which was not there before I came to Bryn Mawr, simply because I am now able to conceive of the existence of such things. Along with this comes a valuable (I think) humility. To me, good thinking does not begin until the enormity of the task is perceived. And that is what I think I’ve learned—an appreciation of the enormity of the task of thinking and a sense that I must start my work from that vantage point if it is to be worth my time or anyone else’s. And while it was exciting to come to this, it was also terrifying. If you are going to insist on humility, you have to rely on courage to get your work done. The less humble you feel the less courage you need.”

“An acute awareness of the profound,” “the desire to grapple with what is most difficult and abstract,” humility and courage—these are the qualities a liberal arts education seeks to cultivate.

How is it, then, that a liberal arts education “teaches” or “transmits” these qualities? Our letter writer talks about “having come to” an awareness of what her Bryn Mawr education has given her, and certainly this kind of consciousness is not something which can be taught in any conventional sense but rather must come to be through an uneven and cumulative process. In this way an education adds up to more than the sum of its parts. It is more than a total of 32 courses; more than Biology and English and Theater and Economics and Russian and Mathematics and Political Science and Art

History and Philosophy and History, although certainly in any one of those courses there can be definitive moments such as the one the letter describes in encountering the poem “that goes so deep into the heart of things.” It is the cumulative effect of time spent thinking, reading, writing, and talking with others who are engaged in education too, of moving among and between courses and the library and the movies and the language lab and anywhere else you might happen to go with alertness, curiosity, and open-mindedness. Along the way you will be learning many discrete things: how to make graphs or Chinese characters, what “mannerism” means or how infants respond to sound or how to date a pottery fragment. You may even become expert in some of these things, but expertise in itself is not the central value of this education; the cultivation of curiosity, flexibility, honesty, integrity, courage, humility, civility, freedom and respect are, and we believe that many of these qualities are honed in the quest for expertise.

I have said both that the liberal studies seminars are specially designed to help students make that transition into the culture of a liberal arts education and that no single course can “teach” it to students. We can only begin, with first-year students, to make sure they have the tools and concepts they need to begin their learning. What are these? Well, certainly, as I began by saying, a flexible and capacious sense of the English language—the ability to read, write, and speak, engaging the full potential of the medium. But there are other things. We try to make sure they have developed the habit of attention—what a colleague of mine calls “mindfulness”—which allows them to pay alert and intelligent attention to the texts they read, the experiments they are performing, and to what other people have to say about them. We hope they will develop flexibility and so we try to design seminars in which variety is emphasized—variety of texts, variety of interpretations, variety of perspectives. We set high standards and offer daunting challenges, and by insisting that they recognize the profound when they encounter it we hope to give them humility. By conducting class in seminar format, we hope to model for them a new kind of conversation in which critical thinking is distinct from a critical tone, in which genuine differences can be addressed with civility and respect.

This is the ideal, at any rate, although of course on any given day in any given classroom we may fall short of it. But even at its best, an education founded on the notion of asking difficult questions, establishing a critical distance, and taking liberties with received

wisdom can create some predictable difficulties. First-year students, particularly those who have been successful in high school, as all of these who are admitted to Bryn Mawr have been, are often confused. Old boundaries are challenged, old assumptions interrogated, and, as they often tell us, they just don't know what we want. In a conference yesterday one of the students I am teaching this semester was telling me how a teacher in another course had responded to a research paper she had written. She thought she had done a good job—the paper was on medieval theater—and my student felt she had learned a great deal about the subject and organized an impressive number of facts in her paper. The professor had returned the paper with a middling grade and the comment, “You have told me everything about this topic except what I really want to know—and that's what you THINK about all these facts!” After expressing her frustration over the grade to me, however, the student said something quite wonderful. “I guess,” she said, “that in college it's really more about the individual. I'll have to put myself into my papers.” Exactly so, and although putting oneself into one's work takes courage, it is the only thing which makes the work meaningful.

There is another way in which the process of liberal learning can be difficult, as you may already have noticed. As students learn what we are teaching them, as they learn to ask hard questions and demand sound answers and question assumptions, they are likely to turn these new skills on us, their parents and teachers. They may explore new arguments or ideas that we find shocking, they may poke holes in our cherished beliefs and criticize our tastes, they may reject values we have struggled to instill in them. It may sometimes seem that the “culture” of the liberal arts is inimical to the cultures in which we have raised them; we may occasionally wish their learning were not quite so liberal. We may worry about whether the young woman so ardently interested in the folklore of the ancient world will ever be employable. (College can be a rather rocky four years from that point of view.) A liberally minded daughter can occasionally be exasperating; she is almost always interesting; she is always employable, if sometimes in surprising ways; but most importantly she is a reliable source of energy and ideas for her family, her profession, and her community.

CONVOCATION 1996

Good Morning. It is very good to have this, the last of weeks of opening events and ceremonies, upon us and to finally settle into the frenetic rhythm that passes for normal around here. We have, as usual, thoroughly exhausted all of the new students with our tri-college, bi-college, my college, traditional, multicultural and international welcomes, but they have been good sports and seem eager for more.

That's good, because with Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and the United States all seeking presidents, it should be an especially lively year. Actually, Bryn Mawr can be a strange place to be at the time of an election or any significant national or international event, since it's relatively easy here to immerse oneself in a text or a laboratory or a data set and come up for air only to discover that the world has changed in some important way while you were struggling with what happened in the 6th century, or as a result of a laser-generated beam, or in Beijing five years ago. But distant events can also come home here in a way they don't in other, more typical communities, because what's happening in a remote part of the world is often directly affecting someone you've come to know and care about—the woman who's flown from half-way around the world for her sophomore year.

But how else might studying at Bryn Mawr affect you in this election year—or any future election year, in this country or another? I hope profoundly. Bryn Mawr's founding mission statements talk much less of educating leaders and citizens than those of many colleges. This was a college founded to give women the full use of their minds and talents. By enabling them to earn graduate degrees, it intended particularly to open the door, for women who wanted it, to college and university teaching, but Bryn Mawr's graduates were to choose for themselves the use they made of their education. Once they had learned how to learn, they could in fact do almost anything or anything the world would let them do. I can think of lots of reasons why training citizens was not highest on the minds or rhetoric of Bryn Mawr's founders. For one, women couldn't vote in this country when the College was founded—or for many years thereafter. That must have made citizenship a somewhat sore subject.

But, perhaps in spite of itself, perhaps according to a design that unfolded quietly as the College grew, Bryn Mawr—like Haverford—provides one of the best educations for citizenship that I know of.

This turns out to be a very good place to prepare for this election year, and those to come.

From early in its history, Bryn Mawr gave its students extraordinary levels of responsibility for governing their own behavior. M. Carey Thomas, who was attacked for thus allowing young women too much freedom, insisted that since women like her own mother who had not had the opportunity to attend college were considered perfectly capable of raising children and running households at age 18, it was absurd to treat those who did attend college like children needing protection and regulation. Thus, at a time when women's dorms almost everywhere else had "housemothers," strong parental figures intended to maintain discipline and model decorum, Bryn Mawr had wardens—a term taken from the British university system rather than American prisons, I hasten to add—who were graduate students only slightly older than the undergraduates, there as resources and models of scholarly commitment but certainly not as surrogate mothers.

Students here are now, and have been for many years, asked to create and regulate a democratic community. From the Honor Code they take some fundamental values such as treating each other with respect and trust, but they still must grapple every year with the issues on which democratic societies are founded: who leads and how; what degree of regulation is needed; how should conflicts be resolved; how much deviance from the community norms can and should be tolerated. While these issues are those which our government and others struggle with as well, they often feel very remote, and our involvement quite ineffectual. At Bryn Mawr, the stereo blaring next door, the smoke seeping into your room from your neighbor's in your supposedly smoke-free dorm, the junior who seems not to have begun to learn the rules of civil discourse, are never remote, and the solution to these problems is put squarely on the individual student, with a good deal of support available.

Students must learn to speak up on behalf of their own rights or someone else's, and, what's even harder, to listen when it's their own behavior which is called into question. They agonize over the wording of plenary resolutions, and become frustrated and angry when a trivial matter gets all of the airtime while a more substantive one is shelved. This is a wonderful, if stressful, education for life, and certainly for citizenship. As this community has become a more inclusive one, representing a far wider range of backgrounds and beliefs than it did even 10 years ago, making a participatory society

work has become more difficult but also much more worthwhile. Students work hard at it, and I commend them.

Bryn Mawr talks much more about its cussed individuals than it does about the triumph of forging a community with such unlikely material. But it is a triumph—perhaps a miracle—and I urge you to participate in what can be one of the most rewarding and most useful aspects of your Bryn Mawr experience. The world is in desperate need of educated, thoughtful, responsible citizens, and Bryn Mawr produces more than its share. Vote early and often.

* * * * *

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN
West Chester, PA 1996

Good Evening. It is a pleasure to be here tonight to discuss an issue we all care a lot about—the kind of education that can best prepare women whose adult working lives will be lived in the next century. At Bryn Mawr and other colleges and universities across the country we have just finished registering the Class of 2000, so the reality of that number has really hit home.

Who are these students who will enter college in one century and graduate into another? They are in many ways harder to typify than college students have ever been. They come from a broader range of socio-economic, racial-ethnic, and religious backgrounds than ever before. They also represent a much greater portion of the age spectrum. Even at many traditional liberal arts colleges like Bryn Mawr, entering students may be 17 or 60. Over the past two decades, colleges and universities have been struggling to educate themselves about how to meet the needs of this much more diversely prepared population. Our communities have been tremendously enriched by the varied backgrounds represented in our classrooms and dormitories, but they have also been challenged and stretched. We are more complicated places in which to live and work, but we also offer far better preparation for the complicated world our graduates must both navigate and lead.

Can such a diverse student population be characterized accurately? Arthur Levine, a psychologist who was at Harvard for many years and is now President of Teacher's College, Columbia, has been conducting a long-range study of college students since 1978. For the first 15 years, his data were very consistent over a

large, national sample taken every year. About 91 percent of those interviewed were optimistic about their own futures, but only 41 percent were optimistic about society's future. Their sense was that they had enough to do worrying about themselves. They described many of their hopes and goals in economic terms. They wanted a big house, good clothes, a late model car. The biggest events in their childhoods—Watergate, the Vietnam War—had all affected them negatively. Most said they had no heroes. A few would cite famous athletes or entertainers.

That picture—a pretty depressing one—persisted in each annual survey until 1993. That year, while 91 percent were still optimistic about their own futures, 67 percent were suddenly optimistic about society. The biggest events in their lives—the Persian Gulf War, the Challenger explosion, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, the Rodney King Affair—had all affected them negatively. They have never known a world in which AIDS was not a factor. They are angry—feel that they have inherited enormous problems from previous generations—and they don't believe in quick fixes or large, programmatic solutions. But, compared to students of just a few years ago, they do find more to believe in. They believe in working in their own backyards. They believe in their own generation and its capacity to improve the world because it is more realistic and practical than previous generations.

Fifty-five percent of this current generation of college students, as surveyed by Levine, do have "heroes"—although they prefer to call them "models" or "examples." For 29 percent of them, their heroes are their parents. For 14 percent, their heroes are religious figures, and for 12 percent, they are relatives, friends or neighbors. They have, in other words, "local heroes"—people they can know well.

They have no respect for politicians—56 percent of them believe that the traditional political system cannot create meaningful social change. (Compare that to 1969—the height of the "radical sixties"—when only 50 percent of college students rejected the traditional political system as a route to change.) So they are very cynical in many ways but not about themselves. They feel that their generation must bring about needed social change—around issues of race, the environment, and so on. But Levine found their hope to be very frail. They feel tremendous tension between the need to do well—economically—and to do good. Many can't and don't handle the tension well. About one third of college students are heavy drinkers, and drugs other than alcohol are on the rise. Many worry that they

will have to give up their dreams for practical reasons.

They need a lot of support and reassurance from adults. While parents have been less of a physical presence in their lives, they have been more involved in their children's institutions—from day care to schools to college. That has good and bad effects. Many look to adults or authority figures to make things right—and feel less confidence in their own abilities as individuals to cope. The frightening rise in depression among children and adolescents reflects parental over-protection as much as parental neglect.

All of those factors affect these students as a group. But what about differences in race and gender within this generation?

Race is a loaded and unresolved issue for them, and they avoided questions on it whenever possible, but Levine's researches found that the biggest tension is not between races but between genders. Students report that they don't have models for long-term, loving relationships, and they feel a great tension between wanting closeness and needing distance.

The gender gap which college students feel is not very surprising in light of a number of recent studies of gender equity—or the lack of it—in schools. It is interesting to note that during the decade of the '60s when, primarily because of financial pressures, many of the highly selective, independent institutions (college, universities, and a bit later independent schools) decided to admit students of the opposite sex—almost no research was done on how children learn best, or what sort of environments are most conducive to learning for each sex and at which different stages along life's way. The major issues we seemed to focus on were issues of access to the facilities and opportunities for baccalaureate and professional education for women.

Today we may say that access, in terms of available programs and of admission to them, has been gained. Now over half of all college students are female, and graduating women are finding their way in increasing numbers into almost all the paths of work that were formerly closed to them. If the struggle for access has been largely won, however, the struggle for equity in education has not.

Two eminent researchers at The American University in Washington DC, David Sadker and his late wife Myra, studied classroom behaviors relating to gender discrimination for well over two decades. Their sixth book, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*, makes it abundantly clear that, while textbooks and classroom practices radically favor boys and significantly cripple many girls'

involvement in their education and lower their chances for success, boys too are poorly served by the discriminatory practices that on the surface would seem to favor them. The patterns of female invisibility and subsequent disengagement are matched in all too many cases by patterns of male disruptiveness and the toleration of destructive and demeaning behavior. In a discriminatory situation, we should have learned by now in this country, neither side wins in the long run.

The hard scientific evidence for gender bias amassed by the Sadkers and their researchers shows that, in spite of tokenism and misleading display ads, women are omitted from the bodies of textbooks even when their legitimate contributions to history and culture would warrant their inclusion. That classroom posters and audio-visual materials often broadcast the same errors of omission. That as teachers we unconsciously, in spite of apparently good intentions, continue to invite participation by boys with disproportionate frequency. That we tend more often to tolerate their outbursts and offer them substantive assistance, while insisting that girls follow the rules and be content with comments on the neatness or completeness of their paperwork. That we allow boys more time than girls to arrive at an answer before moving on to another student or question. The discovery of such evidence of unconscious bias is shocking, the Sadkers found, to many teachers who consider themselves fair and aware and who had welcomed the research team into their classrooms.

The lowering of teenage girls' confidence and self-esteem, the encouragement of passivity, silence, and disengagement, is not the only consequence of such so-called "hidden lessons." The perpetuation of male stereotypes is just as pervasive and demoralizing. Arriving at school at a young age already as the "entitled" gender, boys have been found by researchers to experience greater difficulty in adjusting to school. The Sadkers report that boys are nine times more likely than girls to suffer from hyperactivity and higher levels of academic stress. By middle school they are far more likely to be grade repeaters and dropouts. They represent over three-quarters of the students in programs for the learning disabled and the emotionally disturbed, and why this selection pattern is so bears a great deal more research. Boys are three times more likely than girls to become alcohol-dependent and 50 percent more likely to use illicit drugs.

I wish that I could report that their research demonstrated that the teaching in selective liberal arts colleges and in universities is much

more enlightened. But the Sadkers report that “At the highest educational level, where the instructors are the most credentialed and the students the most capable, teaching is the most biased... Women’s silence is loudest at college, with twice as many females voiceless.”

So we have a college generation that is struggling to be both idealistic—to want to make the world better—and practical, but we are still preparing children and adolescents with cultural attitudes which mean that they are often, as Levine puts it, very “damaged” by the time they reach college. And of course the ones who make it to college are the lucky ones—the survivors of an educational system that still loses too many children and teenagers along the way. And while many more women and persons of color are among the survivors than once were, they are still not given an equal chance to learn and lead. And white men—the supposed favored group—are hurt by the roles it casts for them.

It isn’t, of course, a problem that can be solved simply in the schools, because it doesn’t begin there. Teachers do need to become more self-aware of their own assumptions about gender and race and how they affect their behavior in the schools, but much of what children experience in school reflects the mass culture which they absorb every day in television, videos, on the Internet, and in magazines. Mary Pipher, in her book, *Reviving Ophelia, Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, notes that the violence in which our children grow makes adolescence a far more frightening time today than it was even 20 years ago. Most teenagers know someone—a friend or relative or a friend of a friend—who has been the victim of violence. That was simply not true for my generation except for those growing up in the poorest, most troubled neighborhoods. Pre-teenage girls feel that they must either ignore completely the sexual assaults—verbal as well as physical—which boys their age are socialized to hurl at them in school and on the streets—and then be rejected as a “prude,” or go along with unwanted and often very unfriendly sexual advances and be labeled a “slut.” They don’t see positive options for being 13 and female, and that is very sad. We have to reassert some control over the images and stereotypes, which are overwhelming children and making adolescence very painful, but it’s a large task.

Single sex schools for girls and colleges for women are an important option to preserve, although they are not right or possible for every student. I think that boys’ schools can also offer great benefits for some of them and am sorry that men’s colleges are largely gone.

Allowing students different choices at different stages of their lives ought to be one of the great benefits of American higher education, which offers more diverse kinds of institutions than any other country in the world. More and more, however, we are trying to steer all students towards the type of institution that has been labeled the norm or the best, and discourage other choices. The pernicious ranking systems that have emerged in recent years have certainly not helped, since they imply that you can decide what is the “best” college or university for everyone.

Up until the late 1960s, when Harvard, Yale, Princeton and a host of other formerly all-male colleges went coed, single-sex education was considered a very good option for both men and women. It’s interesting that once the most powerful male schools went coed, coed became the “good” option and women’s colleges were suddenly suspect. While the academic and professional successes of their alumnae are easy to document, questions raised about women’s colleges often focus on social and sexual development of women—whether this can happen properly within institutions for women. Back when Yale and Princeton were all male, there was very little worry about whether men going there would end up gay or divorced. Young men choosing an all-male Harvard certainly were never asked whether they were afraid of girls, and their mothers didn’t fret about whether their sons would emerge from a single-sex college unable to make it in the real world.

Women’s colleges—like women’s networks—suggest the possibility of women’s independence. They are the most visible and effective examples in our society of institutions run for and mostly by women. The men who teach and administer there are of course very supportive of women’s independence. But maybe the fact that women’s colleges still make some people uncomfortable is good evidence that they are still important and necessary.

And coed institutions of course have a long way to go before they achieve true coeducation. That would mean that the leaders of student government are as often women as men, that science majors are as likely to be female as art history majors are to be male, and that the faculty at all levels—as well as the administration and trustees—presents role models to both male and female students. Some coed schools are closer than others, but most have much work to do before they embody anything like gender equity.

So while women have achieved access to most forms of higher and professional education in this past century, the next must be the

one in which we work much harder to educate all children in a way that prepares them to lead a very complicated world. We want them to be able to both dream and eat, and we aren't yet doing a good enough job at nurturing their best talents and hopes. I am optimistic, but I know that educators won't do it without the support of—and pressure from—the wider community. So I am very happy to see groups of women like this one working together. It will take all of us.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 1997

Good morning. None of us are more relieved than the entering students that we have finally stopped welcoming, shepherding, and orienting them and will allow them to get on with what they actually came here to do. We are certainly happy to have them and their wonderful variety of talents and experiences in our community.

Among them is the former Head Girl of a famous school in India (who might, I think, have some useful tips for our new Head Woman, Nancy J. Vickers), marathoners, one who plays the harp and goes white water rafting— although not simultaneously, one who spent the summer excavating in Pompeii, a former Senate page, a dedicated volunteer in an AIDS hospice, and a published, prize-winning poet. To think that so many extraordinary people would come so far to the fifth worst party school in America is sobering, to say the least.

Much is being said and written these days—hardly for the first time—about the need to curtail costs and increase efficiency and ethnicity in higher education. Many think that this means that students should know why they are going to college, where they are headed afterwards, and study only what serves their goals. While I agree that we need to think a lot about costs and value in higher education, I strongly disagree that it needs to become more practical and focused to be more valuable to society or to the students themselves.

Some very talented people know quite early what they want to do with their lives and pursue their goals with single-mindedness. Most of us heard many times in our youth that by the time Mozart was our age, he was dead. Many others—equally talented— must search much longer and pursue a number of dead-ends, or extended layovers, before they find a clear direction. Bryn Mawr and similar liberal arts institutions make it not only possible but also mandatory

to pursue a number of different interests and to try out many disciplines before focusing on one or two. And those you focus on may or may not bear any relation to what you do in the future. Many of the students who come here from outside of the United States do so precisely because the university system in their own countries would insist that they close off some of their very serious interests too early. McBride Scholars and Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical Students are here because the straight-shot usual race to their educational goals didn't make sense for them. This institution is very committed to allowing individuals to choose their own best timing.

So, in the nanoseconds that remain before we launch into the frenzied race which we all run during the term, I urge you to slow down. Many of Bryn Mawr's most interesting, effective alumnae and many of the world's most important contributors, found their calling at 26 or 36 rather than 16. Take your time and pursue what interests and engages you now, for its own sake. What you learn is not immediately practical, but its importance and usefulness reveal themselves over time in powerful and important ways.

I am not urging you to wait patiently in the library for your vocation to be made clear. It could happen there, but it is likelier to happen as you test out your newly developed interests in internships, service opportunities, summer or post-graduation jobs. The opportunities to try out practical applications of different ideas increase every year. Take advantage of them. This fall, an expanded version of the collaborative community service program sponsored by the Undergraduate College and the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research will move into a renovated space in Canwyll House. (Why we ever thought a Game Room would succeed in this serious place, I'll never know.)

That, combined with the opportunities available through Haverford's Eighth Dimension Office, will help you locate, train for, and learn from numerous forms of involvement in the wider community in which we live. A new Coordinator of Internships in Environmental Studies, Jan Newberry, will work with both faculty and students to find ways to create academic internships, which take students off campus and into many other contexts.

Seize these new opportunities, but not with desperation. Taking your time, trying many possibilities is for most people the only—and therefore the shortest—route to discovering meaningful and satisfying life choices. Enjoy the search and the stops along the way.

PARENTS' DAY 1997

Welcome—I hope that you have come and found your daughters to have grown and changed in ways that you may or may not have anticipated. We see a lot of growth in students year by year, but you are in a much better position than we are to really assess how this particular college education is changing your daughters because you've known them longer. I've been thinking quite a lot lately about why this College does seem to have such a profound effect on its students. I think that a good deal of the credit—and I do believe that most of the changes I see are good ones, so I'm talking about credit not blame—goes to an educational ethos which Bryn Mawr rarely articulates but quite consistently observes. It has to do with asking—even forcing—students to shape their own lives rather than imposing a shape on them.

Last weekend I saw two movies—a very rare event in itself. Often I go for weeks without seeing one. But what was especially interesting was that they both were focused at least in part on the conflicts between parents and adolescent and young adult children. One was the adaptation of Henry James's *Washington Square*; the other was Ang Lee's frightening picture of upper middle class America in the 1970s—*The Ice Storm*. They were both wrenching, and neither took me away from the issues I think of daily in my work. I commend them both to you—but not for the same weekend.

In any case, the draining juxtaposition was useful in that in one you see a father who has so little respect for his daughter that he can't allow her to make her own choices. His need to control her destroys any possibility of a loving adult relationship between them. In *Ice Storm*, the contrast is dramatic. The adults are so confused and caught up in trying to meet their own needs that they have effectively abandoned their children. Left to make their own choices in a wildly unstable society, the children fare very poorly.

Not only do the two films depict two equally disastrous ways of parenting, they also reflect the two extremes of educational philosophy found in American colleges and universities. Some set quite elaborate systems of rules for behavior and expect students to follow them or leave. Others have very little to say about students' lives outside the classroom. Bryn Mawr is obviously one of the institutions that ask students to help discover their own solutions to the problems of negotiating their lives in college. But we also want them to know that the adults are here and prepared to help. It's a tricky

balance, and absolutely analogous to the one which many of you are trying to strike as parents.

Where codes of behavior are clearly delineated, much less time and energy goes into making choices. Bryn Mawr students put significant amounts of time into shaping and running their lives and this community. Even our supposedly structured curriculum provides hundreds of choices to be made each semester, and many students agonize for weeks over course choices. A required core curriculum would make life much simpler, at least in some ways. But Bryn Mawr's education ethos was never about simplifying things for young women.

When M. Carey Thomas, our renowned second president, was asked to defend the radical choice (for 1890) of allowing young women to be self-governing, she talked about her own mother. She had been 17, Miss Thomas noted, when she married and proceeded to run a household, bear and raise children, and so on. The idea that students of the same age should not be given similar control over their lives, simply because they were studying instead of marrying, seemed to her absurd. That recognition that women in college could and should be treated like young adults instead of old children took a long time to find acceptance at most colleges, but it shaped Bryn Mawr from the start. There were never "housemothers" here—the traditional older women who, having raised their own children, now took on a college dormitory of women for which to act as surrogate mothers. Instead, even from the beginning, Bryn Mawr had graduate students, only slightly older than the undergraduates, living in the halls and modeling the life of a scholar. They were called "wardens" in the tradition of English colleges—not of American prisons. A warden and a housemother were, both symbolically and practically, worlds apart. Now we have of course gone another step and replaced wardens with hall advisors, trained upperclassmen, and the housemother model has pretty much disappeared everywhere.

So Bryn Mawr has a much longer tradition of viewing its students as young adults capable of taking responsibility for their own behavior than most colleges. We also seem to have much more success with the model than most other institutions. I think that there are many reasons. It certainly works best in a small college, because it requires educating all the students to a set of values which is much more ambiguous and complex than a set of clear-cut rules. The Honor System is strong here, but it is harder for students to pass one and manage than it was 20 years ago when Bryn Mawr had 750 un-

dergraduates. I am not surprised when institutions much larger than this can't make one work.

From an administrative point of view, a system that invites students to help make the rules instead of merely learn and obey them is certainly more time-consuming. In a large institution where efficiency is highly prized and education outside the classroom is not worried about very much, opening virtually every task force, faculty committee and search process to full student participation seems absurd. For one thing, you need a lot of students interested in taking on responsibility, and a self-government system capable of finding them. Few institutions have either one of those.

So I think that Bryn Mawr is unusually well suited by virtue of history and size to put students through a rigorous and exciting course in participatory democracy. It is an enormously important part of the education we offer. Many women have not seen themselves as shapers of their communities in high school or before. Society still doesn't encourage girls to become leaders as much as it does boys. Carol Gilligan's studies and subsequent ones showing how far ahead 11-year-old boys are of 11-year-old girls in terms of self-esteem are frightening. Something is happening to children which we do not intend but which powerfully affects their lives. So bringing students into a community where they are given great trust and responsibility and forced to make hard choices seems to be critical to our mission as a women's college.

In the world they enter at the end of four years, the rules are anything but clear cut, and the choices are hard. If they can find their own values and voices here, they are far more likely to take on the task of shaping that world. We want them to do that, both for their own sakes and ours.

* * * * *

REUNION 1998

How Curricular Changes Reflect a Changing World

I will discuss four major kinds of change that we see not only in Bryn Mawr's curriculum, but also in that of most liberal arts programs for undergraduates. They do, indeed, reflect ways in which the world outside and within the academy has changed.

1. First, the curriculum has become much more broadly focused and more inclusive in terms of cultures, races, genders, and so on. We

live in and must prepare students to work in a broader world than that reflected in college and university curricula of even 20 years ago. That broader world is represented on our campuses and affects our lives every day. Women, racial and ethnic groups of color within the United States, non-Western cultures and traditions, religious groups, and socioeconomic classes that were once largely ignored in college courses are now taught. This makes for a much more varied, realistic, and challenging intellectual experience for students, but it also poses complicated challenges for all institutions, but especially small ones, about what to teach and how.

Even if a faculty could offer courses on all cultures and peoples (which none can), our students have a limited amount of time in which to study vast areas of knowledge. Priorities must be set. Deciding what matters most, what goes into "the canon," is hard and contentious. The recent (and unresolved) debates over "political correctness" often reflect, in very confused and politicized ways, the uncertainty over what is most essential in the newly expanded curriculum.

2. Technology has had dramatic effects on the curriculum and it will continue to do so. Not only is computer science itself a major area of teaching and research, but technology has also affected teaching and content in virtually every department. The use of computers in science labs drastically alters what students can do in experiments. The counting of drips or hits or other significant measures that occupied almost all of a student's attention in my day is now done by the computer. The student can turn her mind to hypothetically varying the conditions of the experiment, asking the computer to project results, and then analyzing their importance. That entails a lot more thinking and understanding and a lot less measuring. Foreign languages are taught using interactive videos, which demand that a student stretch her skills, and provide photographs, music, and maps to make the learning process richer and more rewarding. Reading a difficult text in a foreign language is an entirely different experience when you can highlight any word or phrase you don't know and have it defined, read aloud, or used in different contexts without ever turning away from the screen. Data sets are available on-line, which allow even beginning undergraduates to learn the techniques and experience some of the satisfactions of significant social science research. In every field, communication between individual students and teachers or among the members of a class goes on continuously, outside the boundaries of the classroom or of office

hours, and this can make the experience in the class far livelier and more productive.

3. Much more teaching and learning is experiential, with students in the field, laboratory, or community setting. From the first introductory course in Education, those who are hoping to become teachers are observing and assisting in elementary and high school classrooms. Those studying the city are working in its agencies and interviewing its citizens. The emphasis on environmental science means that many more laboratories are conducted out of doors. This does not mean, at least not at Bryn Mawr, that we are giving academic credit for internships. There must be some academic content—reading, analyzing and writing up results, researching focused questions—otherwise the experience may be very worthwhile but is not best done in an academic context and for college credit. Adding the experiential work to the more traditional forms of library research engages students and provides opportunities for understanding that one must leave the campus to achieve.

4. Finally, the boundaries between the disciplines that emerged from German universities in the nineteenth century are blurring. Many courses and departments now define themselves as “interdisciplinary.” A “text” can be literary, visual, popular (such as television shows or rap lyrics which reflect cultures very vividly), and often many different kinds of texts are studied within the same course. Area studies, which look at cultural and geographical regions such as East Asia, Africa, and the southern U.S. from the perspective of many disciplines, are growing in importance in the curriculum.

Just as the curriculum is changing, so too are the students in our colleges. They have, of course, much in common with their predecessors. They are smart, curious, hard working. But they are also distracted by the same technology that has enriched their education and their lives in so many ways. They bring with them to college telephones, email connections, televisions and VCRs. All of these serve some important and useful functions, yet all of them take time away from the reading, writing, and face-to-face interaction that are essential to undergraduate education.

So much information is available to and even forced on students that they are often overwhelmed. Researching a four-page essay may yield a list of 300 possible sources on the Internet, and it takes quite a lot of training before students know how to sort out the valuable from the useless. Years ago, a college’s librarians had already done that in trying to have on the shelves only what seemed worth-

while and significant. The volume that confronts students now can be another form of distraction from real education.

Worries about the high cost of their education and the importance of turning it into a lucrative job also distract students far more today than they once did. Ninety percent of high school seniors now work for pay—usually about 20 hours a week or more. Meanwhile, and not surprisingly, the average high school student spends only about four hours a week on homework. While many applaud the job skills that they are learning in their after-school hours, there is no question that academic skills have suffered in this exchange of priorities. Students in high school and college need to be taught to focus, reflect, and revise. The pace at which they live their lives and receive information makes these slower tasks very foreign, but they are essential to true learning.

While curricular change inevitably reflects the ways in which our lives and our world have changed, it must sometimes also resist such externally imposed change. Students are being hurt in some significant ways by forces in our culture, and it falls to schools and colleges to provide through their curricula counterforces that undo some of the damage. The liberal arts have long claimed to teach students to analyze, organize, and assess information, to think critically and objectively, to be mindful—ultimately, to live aware, deliberate, and constructive lives. These skills have simply become more important—and more difficult—to teach students today.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 1998

I would like to begin by thanking the dozens of deans, customs people, faculty, and staff members from across the campus who have spent much of their weekend and the days before it helping to welcome, orient and advise the new students. Angie Sheets had been here only a few weeks before she was running the training program for Hall Advisors, and Li Chen Chin arrived just a few days before the international student orientation began, but they have both done a terrific job. I would bet that it feels as if they've been here for years, and if you calculate person hours, they probably have. I would also like to thank the Admissions Committee and staff for bringing us such wonderful new students. They have been patient and good humored even when it was 98 degrees outside and hotter than that

in their rooms.

While there has been a lot of time devoted to planning and doing for the entering students, I would like to focus for a few minutes on what they do for me and for those of us who meet them as they are just beginning. It's awfully easy here to be far too busy getting through the tasks of the day or the week to remember the point of it all. The culture of complaint is powerful, and once the weather becomes more reasonable, we will turn to the lack of parking, comparative (and competitive) levels of fatigue, and other scintillating topics for kvetching. Entering students are still looking at this place from the outside, and they can provide wonderful reminders of why Bryn Mawr College matters. I'd like to read you some brief excerpts from some of their letters that remind us all of why they've come and what we owe them. I apologize for quoting without asking the authors' permission, but there was no time. I have tried not to reveal any identities.

One woman who has lived in North Africa and the Middle East wrote: "I don't want to deliver a chronological story of my life—or what I hope to do in life, because it would be a lie. I don't know what I want to do. But I know who I want to be. I want to be the person who plays me in my dreams. I want the person's guts, pugnaciousness, hopes, and courage. That is the person I want to be, and I try to be, but something is missing. I have to find that missing piece. That is my goal during college."

Another, whose family moved last year from Toronto, Canada to the deep South, wrote of the transition: "Making new friends wasn't hard because people are overtly friendly here, and they have fewer inhibitions about being cordial to new 'folks.' However, my sister, who was rebelling and had shaved her head and wore all black, was not so well accepted..." She decided to come to Bryn Mawr not because her sister would fit in here—although she would—but because of the women she had met who had attended Bryn Mawr. She wrote: "They were some of the strongest, smartest, funniest and proudest women I have ever met." She goes on, "If you were to ask me very simply, 'what do you want?' my answer would be, 'I want to be really smart.' So in the long-term I hope to gain as much knowledge as is possible during my years at Bryn Mawr. It may sound banal or selfish but I want to be as easily respected as all the BMC grads I know. I want to be seen as a person before I am seen as a girl, or a woman. I want to achieve the confidence, perseverance, and intelligence I see in my mother. It is a lot to desire, I know, but I believe

that if any school can help me achieve these goals, it is Bryn Mawr.”

Some have more focused interests and aspirations. A student whose parents came to the Bronx from Jamaica 20 years ago aspires to first become a prosecutor in the New York D.A.’s office and then use those experiences as fodder, to become a writer and social critic. She chose Bryn Mawr because, “I wanted a college that would provide me with the freedom to learn what I love, and the intensity to love what I learn.” I think she chose well.

This wouldn't be Bryn Mawr if there weren't some potential archeologists in the class, and there are. One wrote: “I'm sorry that this letter might be a little late. I convinced my Mom to come with me on a volunteer archeology dig in northern Wisconsin for the National Forestry Service, so we've been busy. I love dirt. This summer I also followed my Dad on a business trip to England and while he went to meetings, I joined a field school and dug up Roman bricks and medieval ceramics in the rain. That was the best week because it was so totally different from all my past experiences digging in the Midwest. Last summer I spent 6 weeks in the tiniest town in southern Illinois on an NSF field school scholarship researching and digging. The amazing part was that it was so much like a puzzle and we worked so hard to simply find the pieces.”

It's not only the archeologists here who work very hard “simply to find pieces,” so I'm very glad that she enjoys the process.

These women, and many others among the new students, bring with them a mature understanding of why they have come that impresses me very much—I worry that it may depress the sophomores, who are just embarked on the most confusing year of all, unless of course you consider the seniors. But there are glimpses in the letters from the Class of 2002 that sound reassuringly familiar and almost as unfocused as we were then.

One woman wrote: “I am arriving at Bryn Mawr with a yearning for challenge (even if it's a difficult path to travel) and a philosophical mind. I am curious to learn more about psychology, media studies, gender studies, French philosophy, creative writing, poetry, and art history. I think I will especially enjoy social psychology / media studies, as I have maintained a long-standing interest in the human condition and view myself to be intuitive about people and society. I plan to (hopefully) do my junior year abroad in France, as I love the French culture and its literature. I enjoy math because it is challenging, although I struggle to be a good math student. I have a strong interest in business (marketing, advertising, public relations,

accounting), and I would like to take classes at Wharton (my father's alma mater) sometime during my college years."

Another student's letter arrived by fax just hours before she herself did. She wrote:

"My specialty is burning the candle at both ends. Therefore, when people ask me what I will be majoring in, I answer 'being a freshman.' I am completely, infinitely, and hopelessly undecided. The problem is that I am interested in too many things." After describing her typically long and crowded day in high school, she went on: "I leave school at 5:30. Then I do about two and a half hours of homework (I tend to work and read very slowly, so everything takes me twice as long) and talk on the phone for about an hour. On weekends I hang out with my friends till the wee hours of the morning at local diners, do community service, and take pictures... I would definitely consider elementary education as a profession. Of course, I would also consider art history, anthropology, archeology, photography, drama, and too many other things. Other tendencies are leaving things to the last minute (which is why you are getting this so late—I am so sorry), listening to punk, and constantly hanging out with friends."

* * * * *

REUNION 1999

As President Nancy Vickers' remarks suggest, the year has been very full—but also very satisfying. The self-assessment and planning work has gone on against the noisy, dusty background of the Rhoads renovation, in which half of that hall was closed down for semester two. Simultaneously, and of necessity, we reopened Glenmede's main house as an undergraduate residence for about 24 students who do their own cooking. It is a huge success, and next fall Batten House, which has in recent years housed Russian language students and then McBride Scholars, will become a cooperative living space for students who are committed to being environmentally conscious and responsible. Many of the students who choose to live there are also hard at work with our Facilities staff and Environmental Safety Office in an effort to make the entire College greener. Not surprisingly, they call themselves the Bryn Mawr Greens.

I thought I would focus on a few of the most interesting changes and emerging programs which will be new to at least some of you

and then, as Nancy said, we'll be happy to answer your questions.

We graduated 15 McBride Scholars this year, the largest number ever. As a group and individually they continue to have an enormous impact on the College and to thrive. This summer, one will be studying in our program in Avignon, another will do research with Weecha Crawford in Southeastern Alaska, and another will work with Mary Osirim in Zimbabwe. They do all this while juggling the care of children and aging parents, and provide a very inspiring and also sobering example for traditional-age, less encumbered undergraduates. One, who gave birth to her third child midway through the first semester, reported regarding the required Geology field trip as a "rest" since she decided not to bring the baby along. That's helpful for those sophomores who view the same trip as a heavy burden.

The Committee on Academic Priorities, the faculty group charged with recommending to the President which requests for new or replacement faculty positions should have priority, recommended the creation of two new tenure-track positions. Their subject matter says a lot about what's going on in the curriculum. One is in Computer Science—it will be our second in that area. Five years ago, we had only adjunct positions in Computer Science. The second is for an African historian—a critical position for our Africana Studies Program, which has been filled by a series of temporary adjuncts for two decades.

The increased need for courses and a strong concentration in Computer Science will surprise no one. What makes the field especially exciting and important here is that it is preparing women to go on to graduate programs and jobs in which they will specialize in various aspects of Computer Science. There is an enormous need for students, and especially female ones, who have been broadly, rather than technically, educated in this field. Many of our Computing Science specialists combine it with majors such as Art History, Geology, or Russian. Our program and the Bryn Mawr context encourage them to see the fascinating connections between questions being raised and answered in fields such as artificial intelligence with those in more traditional disciplines, and the combination is intellectually and professionally very powerful. Keeping our curriculum in Computer Science strong and collaborating effectively with Haverford College, Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania in this area is critical.

The new position in African history highlights another major

challenge for the College. Faculty and student interest in interdisciplinary studies is strong and growing. Programs such as Africana Studies, East Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, Environmental Science, Neural and Behavioral Science, and Comparative Literature have large enrollments and increasing demand for courses. Figuring out how to support them better, to free up faculty to teach in them, while not undermining the traditional disciplinary programs to which those same faculty are committed, is not simple.

The new College Seminar program, currently under review as it ends its second year, introduces all new students to college-level thinking, reading, and writing in interdisciplinary seminars. There have been some exciting successes in that program, and faculty have really benefited from designing and teaching these courses with colleagues from very different disciplines. But staffing them is challenging for the same reasons. To teach one of them is to not teach one of the courses you would have offered in your department. Both are important to the College, and balancing the two needs is complicated but critical.

Another program that has seen enormous growth in recent years is foreign study. Three years ago we changed the way we administered that program to allow students who require financial aid to attend Bryn Mawr to receive that same level of aid for foreign study, assuming that they participate in approved programs beneficial to their academic plans. This made the foreign study option equally available to all—enabled language programs, for instance, to recommend that all of their majors spend at least one semester in which they were immersed in the language they were studying. To show the impact of this change:

1. In 1995-96, the last year of the old system, 81 Bryn Mawr College students participated in foreign study programs. In 1998-99 we have 141 students participating in foreign study programs, of whom over 50 percent receive financial aid. This is not inexpensive. It currently costs two million dollars in aid—but the benefits are enormous.
2. In addition to traditional destinations, such as Paris, Rome, London, and Madrid, students now regularly study in Moscow, Mexico City, Melbourne, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Chile, New Zealand, Africa, Egypt, and the Dominican Republic.
3. Subjects of study include not only foreign languages and cultures, but also anthropology, environmental studies, physics, economics, history of art, creative writing, psychology, urban development, chemistry, and political science.

4. Students often gain practical experience by doing fieldwork or participating in internships in addition to their academic coursework. In the past year or two, students have arranged internships with Radio Berlin, the Office of the Vice-Premier of France, and the Stockholm City Representative in St. Petersburg. Students have recently done fieldwork projects in such areas as tropical field studies in Costa Rica; archaeological digs in Greece, Italy, Israel and Turkey; and AIDS-related issues in Africa.

5. Bryn Mawr has formed an Africana Studies Consortium with Haverford, Swarthmore, and the University of Pennsylvania, which runs four programs in Africa. Bryn Mawr directs the program in Nairobi, Kenya (where two students are currently studying) and sends students to the other programs in Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Senegal. We have this year established an exchange agreement with Keio University in Japan, where Bryn Mawr students in the International Economics Relations program will be able to study economics and political science as well as Japanese language and culture. (This agreement in a way brings us full circle, as Bryn Mawr's first foreign study program was an exchange with Tsuda College in Japan, established in 1899.)

6. There are, in addition to the ones you would predict, unexpected benefits of foreign study. Even when things get dicey in international politics, students seem to benefit. When students had to be evacuated from Indonesia last year due to the political situation, the program moved them to Bali to complete their semester abroad. They had no objections. A Mawrtyr who was adopted as an orphan in the United States located her biological family while studying in Columbia. She even found her twin sister, also separated from the family at birth, and reunited the entire family.

The last program I wanted to highlight is the Bryn Mawr-Haverford program in Education. This has become one of the strongest, most creative education programs in the country, having been almost moribund 15 years ago. At that time, student interest in becoming certified to teach in public schools had diminished to the point that we asked Swarthmore to allow Bryn Mawr and Haverford students to do much of their preparation for certification there. Since their numbers were low as well, they were quite willing. Suddenly, within a few years, interest had shot up on all three campuses, and Swarthmore had no room for our students. We had to either re-establish a strong program here, with Haverford's involvement and financial support for the first time, or stop offering certification.

After several years of heated debate on the place of education within a liberal arts curriculum, those of us who felt that a strong education program was vital here won out. This year, one of the faculty positions in that program was converted from adjunct to tenure-track status. There are, in addition, one and one-half continuing faculty positions and a full-time administrator in the program. We are certifying 8–10 Bryn Mawr/Haverford students a year, but, more important, the program serves 30–40 students in each class who are not interested in certification—at least not at this time—but who are very interested in education—perhaps in teaching in independent schools, or pre-school, or at the college level, or in pursuing education policy work. Since 25 percent of our alumnae have traditionally entered the field of education, it is exciting and appropriate to see them having rigorous, engaging courses and classroom experiences to prepare them.

I'll mention just three features of this program that make it unusual:

1. Students have experience observing and participating in classrooms at every level from introductory courses on up, in all kinds of schools—suburban, urban, elementary, secondary, and experimental.
2. Area high school teachers are involved in designing and teaching advanced courses. This adds a practical dimension which those contemplating teaching sorely need, and it exposes the experienced teachers to new work in theory, which they find very beneficial to their own work.
3. We aren't simply preparing our students to teach elsewhere. Outreach within the College to those wanting to improve teaching has resulted in a large number of workshops for groups at Bryn Mawr—librarians, graduate students, and the College Seminar faculty, to name a few. In this way the program is helping to improve pedagogy on the Bryn Mawr campus as well.

It is not surprising that several of our seniors this year, as in the past, are going into the Teach for America program. A number will be teaching in the Philadelphia public schools and, of course, in other parts of the country and abroad.

In addition, this year's seniors have had great success entering less traditionally Bryn Mawr fields—consulting and investment banking. Lisa Bernard also reports increasing interest in advertising and public relations, communications, and culinary management.

Among the employers who have hired this year's graduates are: McKinsey Consulting, Price Waterhouse, Anderson & CSC Consulting, Goldman Sachs, Ford Motor Company, Nathan Cummings

Foundation, and numerous law firms. Many of these are through alumnae connections.

It is not surprising that our graduates are doing well as they seek jobs. Like parents, we sometimes see them up too close and at too many crisis points and lose sight of how impressive they are in comparison to many of their peers. Outside reviewers who visited the campus this year remind us—yet again—of how they stand out.

We recently had an outside team review our Community Service program. They met with many of us on campus—faculty and staff—but the students were what really impressed them. I quote from their report:

“Clearly the students whom we met at Bryn Mawr College are extraordinary. The most impressive element of our day visiting Bryn Mawr was the time spent with the students. In addition to their authentic commitment and excitement for public service, they were remarkably frank with us as we asked about all aspects of the service program. Their comments were notably cogent and illuminating.”

The team who did our Middle States Re-accreditation Review spent three days on campus. They wrote, and I quote from their final report:

“What is most unusual about Bryn Mawr students is their willingness to attribute without prompting important aspects of their growth and development to their years at Bryn Mawr. They chose the College because they wanted a small, academically challenging environment in which people cared about one another and valued a sense of community. Bryn Mawr has met those expectations and has fostered other changes they value but might not have foreseen: students feel they have become stronger, respectful of other women’s capabilities, and therefore more confident of their own. They have learned to work hard and to set high performance goals for themselves, not because they are actively competing with others, but because they value the respect they feel faculty accord their abilities and want to continue to earn that respect.

“Important to shaping the campus environment is the Honor Code. As one student said, “The Honor Code is Bryn Mawr.” Others agreed that the academic code helps people be self-critical rather than dependent on external judgment, and encourages personal integrity, which, even when it fails to govern their behavior, makes them consider the impact of the behavior on others, and further distinguishes Bryn Mawr (“I forgot there was no Honor Code in the ‘real’ world”). The social Honor Code empowers students by requir-

ing that they both confront conflict and attempt to resolve it through mediation, rather than relying on the authority of others. Acknowledging that it does not work all the time (“it is an ideal, but it isn’t ideal”), they nevertheless asserted that it strongly influences student attitudes and behavior.”

It is a pleasure and a privilege to work with these students and to watch their growth over four years.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 2000

Good morning. I want particularly to welcome all 23 undergraduates who haven’t already been here a week being trained to mediate disputes, operate computers, orient new students, play field hockey, drill French verbs, or whatever. It must feel kind of lonely to return apparently on time and find everybody already hard at work, but we are glad to see you, and you obviously serve a vital function, since somebody has to be the recipient of all the help and instruction everyone else is now prepared to give. A special thank you to everyone who has worked to make this Customs Week such a good one. The weather was pretty horrible, but the new students were good sports, and the program went very well, thanks to the efforts of many students, faculty, and staff.

Now it’s time for us all to get busy with the real work of the semester, but first I’d like to take a few minutes to comment on what it means to be busy. I used to think that being busy was wholly admirable. A “busy person” was someone who was tied up in important matters and should not be bothered lightly. Nowadays, I would easily fit most people’s definition of busy, but so would virtually everyone I know. We live in a very busy society, and anyone who isn’t busy is either deviant or dead. Unfortunately we seem to be busier and busier with demands for immediate responses that could easily have waited if technology hadn’t let everyone to expect immediacy. Often we are too busy with these incessant, trivial demands to give proper time to what does really matter to us.

If that weren’t bad enough, we are able—and therefore expected—to be busy with several activities at once. They call it “multitasking,” and it means that if you aren’t making phone calls while driving, or emailing when you are stopped in traffic, you are wasting time.

I rode on a train from New York to Philadelphia recently with a

woman who was called five times on her cell phone by a friend trying to determine what kind of salad dressing she wanted that night. I have no doubt that her friend had her best interests at heart, but by the third or fourth call, I could tell that she no longer wanted salad at all, and—worse—her life was in some danger from a whole car of irritated riders who had had to hear the whole saga while they were trying to read, sleep, maybe even think. We were not happy, and neither was she, with this instance of multi-tasking.

Much has been written lately about the toll this constant busyness is taking on the lives of families and individuals. Coming home from work for many means simply switching from one computer to another, and evenings, weekends, and vacations are vulnerable to email messages, faxes, pagers and cell phones, all ensuring that the demands of work, friends, and distant family members can interrupt you virtually anywhere. Freshmen were advised the other day by an upperclasswoman who has developed some survival strategies that getting a speakerphone would allow them to get work done while they were speaking with family and friends far away. She's right, but how much has she, like the rest of us, sacrificed in the name of efficiency?

I worry about the toll this new level of busyness has taken on the quality of our lives, but it seems to me especially pernicious to students trying hard to get a first-rate undergraduate education. You've come here from all over the world to be in a place truly suited to learning. Interested teachers and scholars, rich library holdings, first-rate laboratories, and peers who are smart, challenging and independent are all available to you as they never will be again. There are also vocal and instrumental groups to perform in, teams to play on, service opportunities to commit to. All of these can contribute to your education; they all demand serious engagement, which busyness can interrupt. This is your true place to make new friends, to immerse yourselves in ideas and arguments, to test methodologies and question assumptions. You are preparing yourselves for lives in which you will devote your energies to the goals of various sorts of institutions, corporations, and communities, but for now your primary goals are your own: to discover your interests and talents and to learn how to learn.

The challenge, which is harder for you than it ever has been before, is not to be so busy communicating with and satisfying demands from all around that you can't invest yourself in what's here and what you've come to do.

Learning requires concentration, sustained effort, and solitude. If they are hard to achieve here—and they are—it will never get easier. Don't allow yourselves to be too busy to get your real work done.

The larger goals you all have for yourselves don't ring or beep nearly as regularly or loudly as the various devices demanding your attention. They make fewer demands and give greater returns, so don't neglect them.

I leave you with a sentiment that some juniors painted on the ceiling of the Denbigh smoker in the middle of a long, clearly desperate night. They wrote, "Flapping your wings is not flying" in vivid orange. It was painted over in due course, at their expense, but it made a lasting impression on freshmen like me. Keep it in mind when you are very busy.

* * * * *

REUNION 2000

The year has been very full and very productive. The undergraduates are excited about many aspects of the plan that President of the College Nancy Vickers has outlined, so the future looks good to them, and they have seen a number of recent changes that have made them quite happy so they are quite pleased with the present as well. I would like to report on developments in several areas of the College.

1. Residential Life

The quality and variety of residential options has improved considerably. I'll mention a few of the changes that were felt in very positive ways on campus this year.

- After putting up with a dirty, noisy year of renovation in Rhoads, students returned to a spectacularly successful result.
- By this fall all of the residence halls were wired for the network.
- The main house of Glenmede has been converted from graduate to undergraduate housing, and it provides an elegant place for about two dozen upperclassmen to live cooperatively on a country estate.
- Batten House is now a cooperative residence for 12 students committed to protecting and improving the environment. They pay a great deal of attention to how they use energy and what they eat, and they have made the house a center for environmental activism on campus. Speakers who come to talk with students and faculty about environmental issues are fed and entertained before or after-

wards in Batten. (It interests me that a generation of students that here, as well as elsewhere, finds it harder than ever to share a room also manages to handle cooperative living very successfully. A good example of why it never pays to generalize about them.)

- A late night study space, complete with computers and a coffee bar, has been created in Canaday in the former Reserve Room. It remains open after the rest of the library closes, something students have been requesting for years.

2. Curriculum

On the Academic front, a number of new faculty are bringing areas of expertise to the campus that will expand our curricular offerings in important ways. A scholar whose specialty is documentary film is joining the English Department with the explicit purpose of bringing order and structure to our heretofore fairly random offerings in film. While we won't suddenly have a film studies program, we will have a series of courses that a student who is very interested in this area can follow to achieve increasing competence. A new African historian will bring a crucial core to our Africana Studies Program, which has made do with a series of adjunct appointments in that area for many years.

The Curriculum Committee brought to the faculty a proposal for structuring the types of courses that incorporate off-campus fieldwork. Such courses are currently scattered throughout the curriculum, especially in fields such as Anthropology, Cities, and Sociology, but students and faculty would like to see more. We are extraordinarily lucky in being so close to a major city in which students can do research and outreach in almost any field, and which also has easily accessible, varied natural habitats where environmental science students can study. What is needed to expand the offerings in which fieldwork is a key component, courses that bring together theory and practice in exciting and important ways, is support in locating appropriate off-campus agencies and sites, arranging transportation for students, and help supervising their work off-campus. A faculty member can't find appropriate placements and provide on-site supervision for a class of 25 students. Next year we will have three part-time internship coordinators working with faculty and students to help make such courses possible. The Curriculum Committee has also developed guidelines for a student who wants to receive academic credit for an off-campus internship she pursues independently. A written proposal, as well as close work with a faculty member culminating in a final written project and oral presentation,

will be required. We believe that such courses can be extremely valuable and want to encourage students to pursue them, but we also want to make it clear that we will not do what many colleges have done and simply award academic credit for an internship pursued off-campus with little or no faculty involvement. Such work may be very valuable, but it isn't part of her academic program.

3. Co-curricular Life

We have already begun work on a number of the initiatives mentioned in the President's Plan to improve co-curricular life on campus. For many students, the best way to enjoy Bryn Mawr's famous—even infamous—academic intensity is to balance it with another passion, also pursued intensely. This may be a varsity sport, commitment to one or more areas in the arts, or community service. Our programs in all of these areas have never been better, and students are turning to them in increasing numbers. As most of us have discovered in our lives after Bryn Mawr, multiple commitments force one to be more organized and to waste less time. At Bryn Mawr, the athletes and dancers and volunteers in local middle schools have less time to spend complaining or stressing about how much work they have to do, and more energy and perspective derived from time spent immersed in other kinds of activity to bring to bear on their academic lives. So, improving support and facilities in areas such as athletics, the arts, and service has a lot to do with strengthening, not undercutting, the academic experience at Bryn Mawr.

In Athletics, we begin the year with a new Director. Jen Shillingford retired last June after 20 years, and she was replaced by Amy Campbell, who had been the Senior Associate Director at Princeton. A lot of exciting changes are underway, and I will just mention a few.

A small group of students in this year's graduating class surfaced as freshmen to announce that they intended to start a crew program at Bryn Mawr. At first, Pat McPherson, Jen Shillingford and I all listened politely and explained the financial realities of starting a sport like crew. They, too, were polite and sensible, but they were also persistent. They were willing to do much of the groundwork themselves, they said, and they did. They persuaded SGA to give them enough funding to buy their first shell, and then came to Jen and me with the interesting problem of where to put it. To make a long story short, they overcame every obstacle and this year rowed in the Head of the Charles and in the Dad Vail regattas. In the latter, which took place on Commencement weekend, they finished as one of the top

18 boats in the Women's Open Eight competition. To give you some sense of what that means, Villanova and Purdue were also in that category. It's a wonderful success story; crew seems to be the sport that Bryn Mawr women were destined for all along, and next year it will be a varsity team for us.

Our fledgling club program in Cross Country is now also a varsity sport, along with Indoor and Outdoor Track. Badminton continues to be a very strong sport, and we won the State Collegiate competition at Swarthmore.

In Volleyball, we came in third in the Seven Sisters tournament, the best we've ever done. We still have a long way to go to be as competitive as we would like to be in the Centennial Conference, but our coaches are working hard under Amy Campbell's direction to learn to effectively recruit scholar-athletes—students for whom Bryn Mawr is appropriate in every other way but who need to be persuaded that they will be challenged and successful in our athletic program as well as in academic areas. Not surprisingly, we have more women on the Academic Honor Roll in the Centennial Conference than any other college or university.

We still have our two-year Physical Education requirement, and we have been working to broaden the offerings there. A Women's Health series, taught by physicians, nutritionists, and other experts from the community, was targeted particularly for the McBride Scholars, but it attracted faculty, staff, and traditional undergraduates as well. This carried Physical Education credit. More lifetime and outdoor activities are offered for credit as well. This year, rock climbing, and kayaking were extremely popular courses. We hope to add an outdoor specialist to the staff in another year or so to develop more courses and to work with the very active Outing Club. More recreational programming in the gym itself is intended to draw the less athletically inclined down the hill. A showing of the film "Jaws" in the pool attracted about 50 Bryn Mawr and Haverford students, who bobbed around in inner tubes and screamed at appropriate points.

This summer the gym will get a new wooden floor to replace the old composition one. This will cut down on injuries and help us attract (or at least not repel) athletes in sports such as badminton, basketball, and volleyball.

Three athletic camps for high school students will take place at Bryn Mawr this summer—Merestead, an old and respected program for field hockey and lacrosse players, the All-American Lacrosse

Camp, and a new Scholar-Athlete Basketball Camp.

In the Arts, activities are just as lively. The Pembroke Dance Studio will also get a much-needed new floor this summer. Our Creative Writing program has expanded dramatically over the past five years. One can now do a creative writing track within the English major and that is interesting to many students. Nancy mentioned that we are very excited about Karl Kirchway coming to give leadership there.

The bi-college orchestral and choral vocal groups are strong and thriving under excellent directors, and theater is limited only by the availability of stages. A wonderful student-directed performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was mounted in Thomas Great Hall on risers, and Founders at Haverford has been used with some success, as well as dorm living rooms.

The Community Service Office opened three years ago in Canwyll House (which some of us remember as the College Bookshop). It had a 25-hour/week director and several student interns from the Graduate School of Social Work and the Undergraduate College. We have just hired a new director for a full-time position since the job turns out to require 60 hours a week, not 25. Jennifer Nichols, a graduate of Swarthmore and our own Graduate School of Social Work, is off to an excellent start. The number of students involved in that program has grown exponentially, and our Math Department is very excited to be helping establish an America Counts program to add to the America Reads program in which our students serve as tutors to elementary school age children at the Ardmore Community Center. While we have a lot of students working in various parts of Philadelphia, we are pleased to be serving more and more in the areas of Ardmore and Overbrook, our own neighborhood, where the needs are great as well.

4. The Entering Class

Once we overcome the challenge of housing the biggest entering class in Bryn Mawr's history, we will be very glad to see them. They are a strong group, and I thought I'd close by giving you brief sketches of a small sample.

One, coming from Kansas, impressed her alumnae interviewer very much. She described her as "independent, active, interested in disparate things, a voracious reader, and serious about learning." The student's own application essay confirms her impressions. I'll read a brief part of this wonderful essay.

"I have always been regarded as a little strange, whether it is for

dressing flamboyantly, the love of math, or always having an opinion. My friends admire my synthesis of spontaneity and rationalism (“Think about it rationally... Spontaneity is the basis of fun!”), optimism and cynicism, and observations of both the macrocosms and microcosms of life. My non-friends tend to say, “You like math and theater? Weird!” Personally, I don’t care what they say. I couldn’t dream of my interests being anything other than the status quo. My attitudes and interests suit me. If they are a little off the norm, so be it. True genius requires a little innovation.

“My childhood is best described as disorganized. In my younger days my family was distressed with recurring family traumas. When I was three, my younger sister Kathrin was diagnosed with cancer. I myself was born during a tornado. Twelve hours after I was born, my older brother Jeff, who has diabetes, entered the emergency room flat out with an insulin reaction. Twelve years later I found myself holding the IV glucose bag for the medics while Jeff convulsed below me. I was supposed to be meeting my Dad in Emporia for a national award for the Duke Talent Identification Program. But my brother’s life was in peril and by then Kathrin was long gone, freed from interminable pain. My parents were in the middle of a nasty divorce. My brothers had flown the coop to college and beyond...

“So when anyone shuns me as weird, I don’t let it get to me. I am a happy weirdo. I look forward to college because I think I will find my true calling somewhere inside those walls. I look at the future not with apprehension but with an excited uncertainty. I can feel in my veins that the best is yet to come. I am ready for it.”

Another, from Virginia, is interested in archaeology and has already worked on excavations in the American Southwest. Her teachers describe her as an exceptional intellect, emotionally mature, and tirelessly committed to outstanding academic performance. She had a good answer to the question on the application that asks “Why Bryn Mawr?”

“When I arrived for my first visit to Bryn Mawr, I was determined not to like it. I had been in the car for hours. I was hot, tired, and ready to forget the whole college thing and move to Florida to be a migrant orange picker. Why would I want to spend four years in Pennsylvania studying really hard with 1200 women? I realized why by my second visit. I spent the night in a dorm, went to classes, talked to students, and asked questions. Throughout this trip I kept asking myself, “Would I be this comfortable, this outgoing, this

focused, in a coed environment?" I was surprised with my answer: an emphatic "No." I was greatly impressed by the high degree of integrity that is expected of the students in the Honor Code, and the seriousness and respect with which they treat it. Bryn Mawr's de-emphasis on grades is refreshing and fits with my concept of the purpose of education. The entire atmosphere of the College also appealed to me. I had a deep feeling that I would be comfortable living there and that Bryn Mawr is a community I would love to contribute to."

An American student who has lived most of her life in Africa—in Burkina Faso, Niger, Madagascar and Morocco—writes:

"Although I am an American citizen and a California resident, given the choice I would pick sandy West Africa over hilly San Francisco. My childhood taught me that the world offers more than movie theaters and McDonalds. The places that I grew up in seem to be a universe apart from those of my peers in the U.S. In Madagascar I ate exotic lychee fruits by the handful and heard the mournful Indri-Indri lemurs cry out in the mist-filled morning of the rain forest. Here in Morocco I hear the prayer calls from the mosque down the street every day. With the magnificent, I have seen the appalling. I lived next to a small Malagasy village where most of the children suffered from malnutrition. Every day I saw the same destitute woman, deformed by leprosy, begging on a street corner.

"Unfortunately I have not yet had the opportunity to significantly help people who are not as fortunate as I am. I hope to join the Peace Corps after I obtain my bachelor's degree. This would allow me to finally work with people at their own level and not from the gilded chariot of most expatriate children. Peace Corps is also a natural stepping stone into USAID or the State Department, from which I could work directly with the governments of third world countries, if I decide to do so.

"As a teenager, my experiences separate me from many of my American peers. I have never seen an episode of *Dawson's Creek*, I don't know who the latest band is or what that song is called. I see beauty in traditional West African facial scarring and colorful, hand-printed boubous (typical African dresses). Occasionally I long to be a normal American teenager but I have come to prize these differences, for they are an essential part of me."

The international students in the class number 40 and include many extraordinary women. One, from Canada, has a list of academic honors so long that it already fills two pages. And it doesn't

include the puffery which some American students enlist—no inclusion in “Who’s Who in American High Schools” or the equivalent. Most of her awards are in mathematics, but some are for prose writing or history. She attends one of the outstanding high schools in Ontario, and her teacher wrote, “Of all of the students I’ve taught in over 30 years, she is the one most destined for greatness.”

Another student comes from Bosnia. She commuted to Tuzla from her small town for high school, despite the dangers and hardships of the war, because she wanted the best education possible. While in university, she began working in 1997 as an interpreter at the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) office. She was promoted several times and is now the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff and Operations. The Ambassador to the Mission wrote that, while her departure would be a great loss to their operation, he fully supported her desire to come to Bryn Mawr for a first rate education. She deserves one. For obvious reasons we are excited about welcoming these students.

* * * * *

WELCOME SPEECH 2001

It is wonderful to see you all here. We in the Dean’s Office feel as if we have already begun to get to know many of you because of the very interesting letters of introduction you wrote this summer. They really did make us eager to know you better.

There are only two days in your whole college career in which this many of you and your families are together—this one, the beginning of it all, and commencement. They are both exciting and happy occasions for Bryn Mawr—we love to greet new students who we know will challenge and chasten us for four years, and we take great pride and pleasure at graduation in seeing the young women who leave here as alumnae, ready, we hope, to challenge the world. But while for us these occasions are very pleasant, we know that they are much more complicated for all of you. We, after all, have not been packing and unloading cars for the past several hours, in some cases, days.

We are also saying hello, which is much easier than saying goodbye, as you are, even temporarily. You are beginning a new phase of your lives—whether as students or parents or siblings—and that’s exciting but never easy. For one thing, you always leave a lot behind.

In your cases, good friends, family, good teachers, faithful dogs, cats, horses, and sheep—all of which we really do hope you've left. You are used to having people around who have known you for years—whom it's easy to relax with and easy to turn to when you need help. It will take a while to replace them here. I urge you to be patient, and I want to reassure you that all of us have been through the kinds of hard adjustments that you are facing now—some of us even sat where you are sitting as freshmen or transfers and felt the same mixture of emotions you are feeling. We are here to provide as much help and support as we can, both for entering students and departing families. A lot of our strangeness and your sense of unsureness will wear off very quickly, and you will begin to feel comfortable and a part of this community.

Not, I hope, too comfortable, though. You have come to college to be challenged—to grow intellectually and personally—so we owe you a healthy combination of hard tests and real support that will help you grow to meet them. I think that Bryn Mawr is unusually good at providing that combination to able young women, and the success and loyalty of our extraordinary alumnae group suggest that our method works. This institution treats its students with great respect—your teachers simply assume that you are smart, serious, and interested—and you will be amazed at the effect that has on your attitude towards your work and yourself. Our Honor Code assumes that you are trustworthy, that you will live and work with integrity. That is a high and hard expectation for anyone, but for the sort of students who choose Bryn Mawr, it seems to work very well. This is an institution founded on the belief that human beings do rise—or stoop—to meet expectations, and we set high ideals and are rarely disappointed.

You have probably already gotten a sense that this Customs program is largely planned and run by students. Getting a chance to run things—be it your own lives or five-day Welcomes for 380 new students—is part of your education here. We would like to see you running families and businesses and research centers and countries a few years from now. Our curriculum and our student self-government system both leave you all kinds of difficult choices to make about what you want to study and how you want to shape your entire college experience. At times you may feel that a little less choice would be fine, and we certainly urge you to seek help and advice for dilemmas, but overall making your own decisions is the only way to begin to function independently and confidently in a very compli-

cated world, and in the end that is what we want for each of you.

So, welcome to a community that believes in challenge—and has selected you because you seemed likely to challenge us as well. We are very happy to have you here.

[The speech ends with Karen introducing her colleagues and giving the schedule for the afternoon.]

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 2001

Welcome. This Customs Week has gone especially well. The weather has certainly helped, and we have had extraordinarily good leadership from upperclasswomen in every area—the SRPs at Tri-Co, team captains welcoming new athletes, the aides who have guided the new international students and the Customs Committee, Customs People, and all of the HAs. The new students have responded with enthusiasm and good humor. You have chosen wisely and come to a very special place where all things are possible, except of course, parking, so enjoy.

Last May we had a wonderful convocation address from alumna and trustee Drew Gilpin Faust. She is a southern historian who is the first Dean of the newly conceived Radcliffe Institute at Harvard. She recalled President McBride addressing her own class when they first arrived and advising them to “be humble in the face of your ‘work.’” Drew remembered that she was pleased to realize that she had “work,” since up till then she had not found quizzes and essays and tests to add up to something significant enough to call “work.” She was also very moved by the new-found veneration for scholarship and learning which Miss McBride’s address instilled in her. Drew sees that reverence of one’s work as the essence of the Bryn Mawr experience, and I would agree. But, as much as for her it opened a new world—one that she would make her life’s work—Drew worried that it can also lead to what I’ll call the dark side of Bryn Mawr—the tyranny of devotion to your work. I’ve been mulling all summer over what being humble in the face of one’s work means, and whether it has an inevitable downside.

I’ve tried to remember whether Miss McBride told my class to be humble, since we arrived just three years after Drew Faust’s class had, and we were certainly addressed by Miss McBride. Unfortunately, while I can call up quite vivid images and impressions from

those first days of college, I can't remember what any individual said. That certainly keeps me humble—I know that for most of the entering students the past few days of orientation are already beginning to blur. But all is not lost.

The thing I do remember, and that I hope that many of you will as well, is that everyone who spoke to us—from the President to faculty members and upperclasswomen—spoke about why what we did here mattered. The traditions were all very nice, but what I really noticed was that this was a place with values and a sense of purpose. I realized for the first time that no one at my small public high school had ever talked about why we were there. We were called together mostly to hear about some awful thing that someone had done, and to be warned that if we did anything similar we might not be there very much longer. That, for me, was never inspiring. Suddenly, at Bryn Mawr, the Honor Code, the curriculum, how I chose my words or arranged my sentences, really did matter, and I, like Drew before me, was inspired and quite willing to be humble.

But what about the dark side of that reverence for academic work? If it is so important and so difficult, how do you justify putting it down, calling it done and turning it in, warts and all? The seniors pose this same dilemma every spring when, in the Senior Exit Interviews, they say that the best thing about Bryn Mawr was the academic intensity. And, in the next breath, the worst thing about Bryn Mawr was the academic intensity. I know what they mean. There is a dark side to doing anything you really care about. It can come to matter too much. But, after observing this place and its inhabitants many years, I'd like to offer a different way of understanding the admonition to be humble in the face of your work.

If you really take academic work seriously and commit yourself to getting an education, not simply a credential, you not only respect what you are doing, you respect yourself in the process. You do, indeed, now have "work" that matters, and that is one crucial part of a happy life. It's a kind of work that demands concentration, mindfulness, and commitment if you really want to understand the ideas of others and learn to engage and challenge them with ones of your own. That kind of work can't be done half-heartedly, and I think that Bryn Mawr does suggest that half-hearted isn't good enough.

But the concentration and mindfulness are effective only for relatively brief periods. Most serious and productive writers work for three or at most five hours a day. They spend the rest of their time resting, recharging, and engaging in experiences, which will them-

selves become subjects for another chapter. They don't even pretend that they can or should write for 12 hours a day.

There is a lesson there. If you really care about your work, you will do it and yourself the honor of balancing periods of full attention with periods of full inattention. We all know that our best ideas often come when we aren't looking.

Putting an academic project aside to talk with a friend, play a sport, or make music allows you to return to it refreshed, often with new perspective and wisdom. Your work here is to learn how to learn. That is daunting—humbling—but also very exciting and freeing.

I'd like to close by reading from a letter, which a student who graduated a few years ago sent to one of her professors about six months after commencement. She, too, speaks of being humble and explains its importance.

"Perhaps what I am most proud of having come to while at Bryn Mawr was also what held me back most. And I think it may best be summed up as an acute awareness of the profound, an awareness that comes, say, from encountering a poem that goes so deep into the heart of things it uncovers a multitude of almost inexplicable ambiguities and philosophical problems. I can now recognize in myself a desire to grapple with what is most difficult and abstract, a desire which was not there before I came to Bryn Mawr, simply because I am now able to conceive of the existence of such things. Along with this comes a valuable (I think) humility. To me, good thinking does not begin until the enormity of the task is perceived. And that is what I think I've learned—an appreciation of the enormity of the task of thinking and a sense that I must start my work from that vantage point if it is to be worth my time or anyone else's. And while it was exciting to come to this, it was also terrifying. If you are going to insist on humility, you have to rely on courage to get your work done. The less humble you feel the less courage you need."

I wish you humility and courage, and the good sense to put your work down as well as take it up. Good luck.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 2002

I would first like to thank everyone who worked so hard—returning students, faculty, and staff—to make the past two weeks of orientation programs so successful. Cynthia Chalker, who gave

leadership to the Tri-College Summer Institute, Amy Campbell and Pre-Season Athletes, Li-Chen Chin and the International Students' Orientation, and Check Heyduk, Caitlin Piccarello and Megan Bartley, who direct Customs, have all done outstanding jobs. The new students are to be thanked for their patience with lines, rain, bees, and a few too many welcomes and warnings. We mean well but sometimes get carried away.

The entering class comes from a wonderful variety of backgrounds and experiences. One grew up on a tiny, remote island in the San Juan archipelago, where she attended a one-room schoolhouse through eighth grade. Another grew up in a family that farms a monastery, has shown Holstein dairy cattle locally and internationally, and considers 22 Trappist monks to be her "other" Fathers. Others come from Israel, Pakistan, Herzegovina, and Swaziland—to name just a few places. One was the only female member of her urban high school's boys' wrestling team. Still another—a McBride Scholar—has managed a state liquor store for many years. There is no question that they will challenge and enrich this community, and they express great excitement about coming to one of the worst party schools in the nation.

We are at least as excited to welcome you. The curriculum has never been so rich, which probably explains why so many of you have had such a hard time reducing your lists of interested courses from 10 or more to four.

Only one thing makes this a less than ideal time to be entering college. The world seems to be on the verge of explosion in many places, and the United States frequently has a central role as target or aggressor or both. As we approach the anniversary of September 11th, much of the shock is gone, but the sense of uncertainty and danger—to us and to many more vulnerable people elsewhere—is greater than ever. This is a time when it can feel very uncomfortable to leave home and to choose to immerse yourselves in the life of the mind. I was in college during the Vietnam War, and I remember well the difficult tension between academic work and political realities that seemed to demand immediate attention.

You have come to a college like Bryn Mawr to seek understanding, to examine and debate issues in a place open to different viewpoints, where intellectual risk-taking and experimentation are encouraged. You will learn to think and speak and write more clearly and effectively, and to use those clearer voices to argue and persuade. You are learning to approach problems with an understanding of their

full complexity, to avoid overly simple answers, even when they are what most people want. All of this is difficult and takes time and can often seem irrelevant to the crises and enormous needs of today.

On the 11th, when we gathered on Merion Green, one first year student stood up to say that she felt that what she was doing here was ridiculous, that she had nothing to offer the victims in New York and Pennsylvania and Washington. I felt very bad that no one responded to her directly, because so many others were in line to voice their own concerns.

In retrospect, it is very clear that most of us were not needed or wanted to help with the immediate crisis at the World Trade Center. What we do need to do is to try to understand all of the forces that led to that event and others like it in the world. We need to understand before we can act to try to prevent further tragedies. That is precisely what you are preparing to do here. A liberal education is intended to free you from the particularities of your own life—from the cultural assumptions that bias us all—and to learn to see yourselves and the world from other perspectives.

If there were more leaders who had learned to do that somewhere along the way, the world would not be as dangerous as it now is.

Living and studying in a community where so many different experiences are represented, you would have to work hard not to reconsider some of your own assumptions. Your talents are desperately needed, but the world needs you to be trained to use your full potential to think deeply and clearly and confidently about problems we can't even fully anticipate. We are glad that you have come here from so many parts of the world. What you are doing is important both for yourselves and for all of us. Work hard and remember to sleep, relax, and even party. It all matters.

Thank you.

* * * * *

REUNION 2002

Good morning—it's wonderful to see so many of you here. This has been a very difficult year for students and for those who work to support them. Their sense of safety and security has been shaken, and there are wars going on or threatened in parts of the world that affect and frighten them—as they do us—on many levels. They have coped remarkably well.

There are many reasons why they might not have done so. Most have grown up knowing only a society characterized by great prosperity and security. Despite this, virtually all studies of adolescents and young adults in this country show them to have high levels of stress and depression—and those studies predate September 11. They are hard working—some would say driven—but they are remarkably overscheduled and most spend large amounts of time enjoying—or suffering—the results of technology. They use email and instant messaging, surf the web, talk on cell phones, and use TVs and VCRs far more than previous college generations, simply because they have grown up with them and come to structure their lives around them.

That leaves less time for all the other things they need to do in college—academic work, work for pay to help support themselves, talking face to face—and that contributes enormously to their sense of stress. Many are more comfortable communicating electronically than in person. They are consistently sleep deprived. (I know that we were, too, but I believe that it has gotten worse. Our parties did not begin at 11 p.m.) Their attention span, used, again, to increasingly rapid technologies, is shorter—so 90-minute lectures feel longer. They very much want to have fun away from work, but some have very little sense of how to relax. Partly because most have grown up with two working parents, their time has had to be more structured and supervised. Out of school time has been spent in day care, soccer leagues and camps, with less time for independent and imaginative play. Few have even shared a bedroom. In their high schools, they report, cheating is the norm. Overall, they are very differently prepared for an academically intense residential college with an Honor Code, lots of traditions, and very little parking.

How well does Bryn Mawr work for this new generation? Extremely, surprisingly well. Many aspects of Bryn Mawr's past have proved themselves wonderfully adaptable and serve its present and future well. Perhaps it's due to Quaker prescience, but some good fortune has a role as well.

I'd like to give a few examples of what I mean.

First, the built environment of this campus serves our students better than most modern alternatives as they work to build a community made up of students from vastly varied backgrounds.

A few years ago, as more and more colleges were building apartment complexes instead of dorms, I worried that we simply had to make the best of our very beautiful but old fashioned Gothic hous-

ing. More recently, I'm grateful every day for what we have. While our dorms are more densely populated than they once were, since we have taken over top floors once used by housekeeping staff and turned some "smokers" in now largely smoke-free dorms into bedrooms, we still have over 70 percent single rooms. Many of our doubles and triples are suites. That allows students to have privacy as well as company and means that 95 percent of our students are residential for all four years. On many campuses, the dorms are for first and perhaps second year students only—the others move out. Students who live in apartments, whether on campus or off, interact only with those with whom they have chosen to live. That greatly undermines the value of diversity. I can't tell you how much we benefit by having seniors still living quite happily with the younger students. We have no staff living in our halls, no graduate student "wardens," but we train juniors and seniors to provide leadership and be resources in times of emergency. Our older students genuinely enjoy mentoring the younger ones, and they all benefit in the process.

Our halls also have large, gracious public spaces and wide corridors and landings appropriate for late night gatherings. Few modern dorms provide such space, yet we desperately want the students we have deliberately brought together from all over the world and from the fullest possible range of socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds to come to know and understand each other. Space can either aid that process or impede it, and ours most definitely does the former. When the architect Edward Larabee Barnes, whose mother went to Bryn Mawr, came to campus for the opening of the Guild Computing Center, he talked about the importance of the deliberately human scale of this campus. He pointed out that the dorms are designed so that someone leaning out a top floor window could easily call out to someone walking on the path below. That feels very different than walking between skyscrapers, or even five or six story dorms, and it reinforces the notion that this is a community.

Other old spaces, dating from the earliest days of the College, have been reconfigured to serve new needs. They do so remarkably well. The old gym is in precisely the right position on campus to function effectively as a campus center. Many colleges and universities are building new, enormous "campus centers," but if they stand on the periphery, they will have a hard time bringing the community together.

No space was provided in the original campus plan for student activities. We are in the process of converting the houses on Faculty Row to serve this need, and it will make a great difference. The first conversion turned Laurence Stapleton's former house into a Multicultural Center. It opened in January and provides meeting and storage space for a dozen cultural groups—South Asian Women, Muslim Women, *Mujeres*, to name just a few—which are among the liveliest organizations at Bryn Mawr. They provide a lot of programming for the campus as a whole, but have had no place for regular meetings or work. The Multicultural Center is already heavily used.

As the other houses are renovated, they will provide meeting space and offices for our religious groups and advisors—again, strong important groups in the lives of many students, but with virtually no suitable space. The religious advisors are currently housed in Dalton basement, for instance. One of the houses will have kosher and halal kitchens, and large meeting spaces, which can be used for celebrations of religious holidays, interfaith speakers and events, and regular meetings. Another house will provide space for SGA and the Honor Board. We consider them fundamental to the function of this community, but they've never had their own meeting spaces. The Social Committee and the Coordinator of Student Activities will no longer function out of a closet, and the Women's Center will be properly housed and supported. Giving these activities space is important both practically and symbolically. Several houses will have living rooms and attached kitchens which any group—a class, a club inviting a speaker and so on—could reserve to prepare and eat a simple meal together. In overcrowded schedules, mealtime meetings are often the only ones that work, but it's hard to meet in a large, noisy dining hall.

Another highly successful reconfigured space, dating not from the founding of the College but from my era, is Canaday's former Reserve Room. With electronic reserves more and more the norm, that large a space wasn't needed for its original purpose. It has now become a cyber cafe run by students and known as the Lusty Cup. They love it, and have asked that it be open 24 hours to provide an all-night study space. We've agreed to about 22 hours, closing it at 5 a.m. so that it can be cleaned before it reopens at 7. So we benefit today from a lot of spaces designed long ago for other generations and purposes.

Another "old" idea—articulated when the College opened, has proved remarkably important to its strength—and that is its loca-

tion. Bryn Mawr was built just a mile from Haverford so that the two could exchange professors and enjoy each other's facilities. That was a good idea in 1885. In 2002 it's essential—and we are grateful to be near Swarthmore and Penn as well. As we have all worked to expand our academic offerings from very western-focused to more fully global, and to incorporate new and crucial fields such as film studies, peace and conflict studies, American ethnic studies, environmental studies and computer science, cooperating with other institutions is essential. We can't each do it all, but there are many new needs we can't ignore and remain first-rate. Sharing faculty, facilities, and parts of the curriculum is essential, but sharing works far less well when distances are greater. A mile apart was a very good idea.

The other piece of our location that becomes more and more important every year is our proximity to Philadelphia. One of the ways this new generation of college students learns best and most happily is when they are asked to connect the theory they are learning to practical hands-on experience. Their anxiety about discovering what they want to do professionally and developing the skills needed in the workplace is also greatly relieved by experiences which bridge the gap between campus and community. Having a major city, as well as a variety of suburban and small-city communities, within easy reach makes these kinds of bridging experience much more varied and rich.

Curricularly, we have developed a program called "Praxis" in which academic credit is given for courses or individual projects involving fieldwork or internships in the community. They must be taught by a faculty member, and some reading, writing, and oral presentation to contextualize and develop the fieldwork is essential, but the community-based learning is a serious and significant part of the work. A few courses of this sort have existed in the curriculum for quite a while, such as Judy Porter's Sociology of AIDS and all of our Education courses, which include some involvement in a local school. But the numbers and variety are growing rapidly now that guidelines exist and we have an internship coordinator who works with faculty and students to arrange placements in the community and help with transportation and supervision. This year courses on Conflict Mediation, Mapping Lower Merion, Mental Health, New Pedagogies in K-12 Math and Science, Women's Health, and Feminist Theory were all taught as Praxis courses. About five more will be added next year.

Many students become so involved with an agency while placed

there for a course that they continue to serve it as a volunteer after the class ends. This is in keeping with the huge increase in community service involvement among our students. We now have a fully staffed Community Service Office, and that level of support makes a big difference. One fourth of our students are involved in one of 12 tutoring programs all around the city, and they all receive some training and support for doing it effectively. I, too, tutored in the city when I was at Bryn Mawr, but with no training or resources I mostly felt and was inadequate. We want community service to benefit both our students and the community they want to serve.

This pattern of helping students explore service and professional opportunities in the community is further reinforced by our increased support for summer internships. We now offer 60 paid summer internships, allowing students to work in science labs on campus and in a wide variety of off-campus businesses and agencies. For some, a summer of work for Raptor Rescue, Habitat for Humanity, or a small business helps them choose a life's work. That, too, is an important goal of their time here, and it is wonderful to be able to support it better.

While I noted in the beginning how differently prepared today's students are, they also self-select for Bryn Mawr for many of the same reasons we did decades ago. They are smart, serious, independent, and looking for both challenge and direction. They need to learn how to pause and reflect, how to learn, how to use and value their own minds and voices, how to take charge of themselves and their communities. Bryn Mawr is remarkably well designed—physically as well as intellectually—to help young women do that. From self-governance to the Honor Code to the once-radical notion of giving students inclusion in shaping and running an institution, old values serve them and us well.

As a final bit of evidence, I will quote from an essay written by a student from Pittsburgh who will enter in the fall:

"Going to college next year is going to be the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. Ever since I was 5 years old I have had an ideal of college in my mind and have been searching for the school that is a manifestation of this ideal. As a junior I found such a place in a college catalogue: green quads, wonderful academic programs, good relationships with professors, intellectual and social respect, and a strong Honor Code. I was sure I had found my ideal college, so I scheduled my visit to Haverford. My mother suggested that because I would likely concentrate in Neural and Behavioral Sciences at Bryn

Mawr we should visit there as well, especially because they were having visiting days the weekend we had planned our trip. I was reluctant to spend so much time at a school that I had no real intention of attending but consented that it was a good idea. So it happened that I spent two days at Bryn Mawr in early October and stumbled into my ideal school in a place where I least expected it: a women's college.

"The level of respect at Bryn Mawr, personal, intellectual, and social, struck a chord in me. The thought of not having to prove anything to anyone, of being treated as an intellectual and thoughtful woman before all else, is very appealing. Visiting Bryn Mawr made me realize that a women's college will provide me with this. One thing that I heard from almost every woman with whom I spoke was that Bryn Mawr is a place where ideas and opinions can be explored and expressed freely. 'Bryn Mawr is a safe place to grow' seemed to be a general campus sentiment. I want my college experience to be one in which I move beyond my familiar intellectual and social experiences. Bryn Mawr is a place where it is safe for me to reach out and explore, without worrying that I will lose the respect of other members of the community for my opinions."

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 2003

I want first to thank all of the faculty, staff, and students who have worked so hard to help orient the new first years, McBrides, Post-Bacs and transfers. Extra thanks are due to the members of the Customs Committee headed by Cora Marty and Annaliese Zimmerman, to Chuck Heyduk, who worked so closely and well with them, and to Linda Haviland, who has put in countless hours trying to get everyone sectioned in College Seminars.

The new students are wonderful. Their one strangeness—that they kept showing up when and where they were supposed to be—took some getting use to, but it made life much easier. Perhaps it will rub off on the rest of us.

The letters and essays written by the new students give valuable insights into who they are and where they've been. Many report confusion and multiple ambitions and interests, but that's fine.

One, who adores literature that introduces her to alternate realities—things she will never experience—also loves music, all sorts.

She writes:

“My absolute heroes are John Lennon and Bono, and U2 is my favorite band, hands down. It’s the great dream of my heart to talk with them some day, as silly as it sounds, but I’ve always been a fanciful person, and—as odd as it may be—I don’t want a small life. I want the world to remember me for what I created, whether it’s my writing or my music or my art. I want to make a Bang! in history.

“Mick Jagger, fittingly enough, is telling me through my stereo right now that you can’t always get what you want. I know that, I really do. But it’s my job in the world right now to make up big, unlikely dreams and extravagant plans for the future: It’s what 17-year-olds DO. I can’t let the side down now, can I?”

Absolutely not.

Another writes of the need to learn what she’s really good at.

“One concern that I have is that I really don’t know where my talent lies. I don’t know quite what to do with myself—I know what I love, but I’ve no gauge of whether or not I am any good at it. I hope to find enough direction and enough challenge at Bryn Mawr to see what skills and talents I really have to work with.

“As to career options, I am considering teaching. I’m not sure what I’ll teach yet, but the idea of being an educator has always appealed to me, even with the perks of weird extra hours, tons of homework, stupid meetings, rowdy kids, extra paperwork, and pitiful pay. Both of my parents are or have been teachers, you see, so I understand that world a little better than most my age.

“Or, I could be an actor (a slightly more viable option, perhaps?). I have always loved acting with more passion than any other pursuit. But here again, I have no idea if I am any good at it, as I have never taken a theatre class and have only worked in high school productions.

“Thus, I am resolved not to worry about my career just yet.

“However, there are some thing I know I want to study; theatre is, obviously, one of them. In this list I must also include physics (which I dearly love), music, philosophy, psychology, outdoor studies, electronics, English language and literature, Spanish (the language of my childhood), and Russian.”

Another took a year off between high school and college to help resolve some of her uncertainty about the future. She had a remarkable time and still arrives with lots of unanswered questions, which she faces with excitement.

“The idea that there might be a life for me that was dominated

by something other than good grades and professional accolades came to me during a week I spent in Terra Alta, West Virginia, the summer before my senior year. During the week of the Appalachia work camp, I painted a house purple, built a deck, and gave piggyback rides to a little boy who called me a fat horse. I also learned how happy I could be simply hammering nails for another person. I didn't want to head off to college and no sleep for four years just because I was good at it and I was supposed to.

"A little more than a year later, I have worked for a rather unique lawyer, helped Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity, taken a silver in my first fencing tournament, grappled with America's top ranked Jiu-Jitsu female competition, and been named Starbucks Partner of the Quarter. I have discovered what it is to read, having asked the questions the authors seek to answer. I have changed my intended major to everything from Economics to East Asian Studies to Religion. Most importantly, I discovered that I love to learn and I love to do well at whatever it is I do. Now, as I try to decide which set of sheets to buy from the bookstore, I do so knowing that there is no place I would rather be for the next four or five years than Bryn Mawr.

"My current plan is to study psychology, English, education, religion, and French, in that order of interest. I would like to spend my summers during and after school doing some sort of work in Haiti or some place where construction and education are needed. At some point, graduate school and more teaching will follow, hopefully working towards some sort of position where I will be able to study developmental psychology and how children and people learn. However, I'm sure this all will change in the next week, and I will be planning to study Mandarin Chinese so I can be Jennifer Garner in *Alias*."

Still another wants to run New York. She writes, "I aspire to be the mayor of New York City. It has just enough power than you can get things done and you can actually work with people (as opposed to the President, who is too far removed from the effects of his decisions). I love to swim and want a red Corvette when I 'grow up.' I enjoy reading and watching documentaries on the history of NYC as much as I like *Everybody Loves Raymond* and playing with Legos. This summer I am interning at an Arab American newspaper and it is quite enlightening. I am Italian-American and can't cook. Due to my tomboyish nature, my grandma has always told me to marry rich. I prefer to not marry and be rich in my own right."

The students wrote a lot about their families. Many have coped with complicated situations and emerged strong. Some families are remarkably happy. We have two out of four quadruplets here now. The other two are boys, and I'm sure are missed. Another new student is the eldest of nine children. She cites spending time with her family and helping to care for her younger siblings as one of the things she enjoys most. Another, describing some very painful family issues, concludes, "I love my family to death, but can't get along with them at all."

A Cypriot woman attended the first Children's World Festival in 2000 and emerged with the title "Young Ambassador in the Culture of Peace." She intends to study Political Science and International Relations to prepare her to work in the name of peace. After the World Festival, she was chosen to attend the "Seeds of Peace Camp" in Maine. She writes, "There I met for the first time Turkish-Cypriot teenagers. There I realized that there are many more things that bond us than those that separate us: our common culture, our agony for the future of our common home, the friendships that developed between us, our love for peace..."

"I saw Israelites cry when they heard for the first time about the terrible conditions Palestinians lived in, in the refugee camps. I saw other Arabs (Jordanians, Moroccans, Egyptians) being overwhelmed with emotion as Israelis told stories of their history as a nation and the everyday tragedies they experience. What I know is that many of them continue their friendships, even with all that is happening in the Middle East."

This student's experience at an extraordinary camp is remarkable, but it is not so far from what we hope will happen for these thoughtful, open, and very different women here at Bryn Mawr.

A number of faculty and staff discussed with the new students a series of readings on "Diversity and Community at Bryn Mawr College" last Friday. The first selection was from Martha Nussbaum's piece called, "The 'New' Liberal Education." Nussbaum's "new" definition is not so new—she traces it to Seneca. But it is very different from the old and dominant definition in Seneca's time. That was that a liberal education was one designed for free citizens—those wealthy and privileged not to be slaves. The "new" definition is that a liberal education produces free citizens—free not due to wealth or birth but because, as Nussbaum puts it, "They can call their minds their own." They have ownership of their own thoughts and speech and will not simply defer to convention or popular opinion. They

want to learn a good deal about other ways and people in order to be freed from the particularities of their own lives, from the cultural assumptions that bias us all.

It is very difficult to teach critical thought and respectful, civil argument and an awareness of the histories and cultures of groups with whom we interact but don't identify—whether within the country or internationally—if the community of learners is all from the same culture. You can study the “other” in books, but the experience is much richer if you actually live and work with people whose beliefs and experience are very different from your own. That's what the entering student found at the Seeds of Peace Camp, and it's what we hope many of you will find a Bryn Mawr.

Take the time, inside of classes and out, to really talk and listen with those around you—students, faculty, and staff. We have a lot to learn from each other, and that learning is a critical part of your liberal education. Welcome.

* * * * *

REUNION 2003

Good morning. I am often asked by alumnae how Bryn Mawr students have changed since my day—or their day. I will try to give you a quick sense of that, and then describe some of the ways the College is changing to better meet their needs.

One evening about a year ago we invited college counselors and upper school heads from four outstanding local schools—Friends Central, Strathaven, Agnes Irwin, and Masterman, a Philadelphia public school—to talk about the changes they see in how their students prepare for and anticipate college. They saw them as hardworking—often driven—overscheduled, and very eager for the challenge of college. More than anything, their students want to be fully engaged—to find friends, interests, wonderful teachers at college—and they want it immediately. Patience is not their virtue. They want to have “fun” but often have very little sense of what they mean by that or how to relax. Their attention spans are briefer than they were for adolescents even a decade ago. The counselors described in ways that were both funny and appalling how these students do homework. Many of you, I realize, live with this. They are at their computers working and instant messaging with a dozen friends and playing music—maybe two kinds simultaneously, often

while also talking on the phone. It was sobering but useful for a group of our faculty to hear how challenging it will be for such students to be expected to sit and focus on a 90-minute lecture, taking good notes. That is harder for them than it is for most of us—and we didn't always find it easy.

From the moment new students arrive on campus they are indeed remarkably over-scheduled and spend large blocks of time enjoying—or suffering—the results of technology. Because they have less time to devote to academic work, they feel considerably more stress. Most must work more hours for pay to help with college expenses than we did. Many are more comfortable communicating electronically than in person. Because they have grown up with two working parents in a world that feels very unsafe, their time has had to be more structured and supervised. Out of school time has been spent in day care, soccer leagues and camps, with less time for independent and imaginative play. So they are different.

Yet you would feel a tremendous sense of familiarity in the way they describe their Bryn Mawr experience. Every year, the seniors tell us in their exit interviews that the best thing about Bryn Mawr was the academic intensity. A few questions later, when asked what was worst about Bryn Mawr, it was the academic pressure. And most of us would agree with them on both points. They love the traditions, the faculty, the beauty of the place, the amazing group of people—eccentric, smart, funny—they encounter here and take away as life-long friends.

The most popular majors are English, Math and Biology, with Political Science, Psychology and Economics not far behind. That isn't startlingly new, except for the ascendancy of Math and Economics. But, as Nancy [President Nancy J. Vickers] mentioned, the curriculum has opened up in many areas, which matter tremendously to them. Creative writing, Computer Science, Comparative Literature, Environmental Studies, and Film are just a few that were hardly present in the curriculum a decade ago and are now minors or concentrations or even majors.

You would not recognize the offerings in Physical Education. Relaxation, a course dear to many of us, is gone, but yoga, kickboxing, rock climbing, African Dance, orienteering, tai chi, and jazz dance have been added—to name just a few.

We are trying to connect their academic experience on campus to more practical work in the community to help them to see what we truly believe: that what they are learning in liberal arts courses

will prepare them well to work in and change the world. It's also healthy to get them out of what they call "the Bryn Mawr bubble" for at least a little while every week. A program of Praxis courses has been developed in which an internship in a school, social agency, archive or other community-based setting is part of the requirements of the class. An internship coordinator works with the faculty teaching the courses and individual students to help them find suitable placements. While many of our Cities and Sociology and all of our Education classes have for some time required work off-campus, Praxis has now drawn in departments and programs such as Dance, English and Psychology. For many students, these courses are life changing.

Many more students also connect their academic work here with a wider world by studying outside of the United States for a semester or two in their junior year. About one-third of each class goes, and they go in greater numbers every year to places like Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, China, Egypt, India, Japan, Kenya and Senegal—destinations that were very rare just a few years ago. Edinburgh, London and Paris are still popular, but they have much more competition. Today's students have seen more of the world before they reach college and are eager to explore cultures very different than their own.

We now have a Community Service Office staffed by a full-time director, an assistant director, and a VISTA volunteer. They help connect students to over 40 student-led service projects, as well as opportunities for individuals to work independently. We now have over a dozen tutoring programs in various parts of the city, in Ardmore, and so on, and the Office provides training and support for tutors so that they go out much better prepared to be successful and truly helpful.

Because students can isolate themselves in their rooms and still, with their computers and cell phones, be connected to far-flung family and friends, we need to do more to draw them out and encourage interaction with the flesh-and-blood, non-virtual community we have brought here from all over the world. One of the biggest problems for a lot of our liveliest student organizations has been lack of space in which to store records and materials, to meet, and to work on projects. The Multicultural Center on Roberts Road houses about a dozen cultural groups, including Sisterhood, Mujeres and South Asian Women, to meet and work and host small events. Soon, far more of the original Faculty Row houses will be ready to provide space for various student activities, including our religious groups

and their advisors, which have never had a dedicated space to hold services, host speakers and celebrate holidays. They are important in the lives of many students, and providing a space will encourage and acknowledge that. Similarly, SGA and Honor Board will have spaces suitable to their importance in the community. Community Service, as you could probably tell from my description of the volume of their outreach, has outgrown its original home and will now have adequate space. Many of the spaces will be shared—places where clubs, of which we have an extraordinary number these days, can work and use shared computers, printers and so on—and living rooms, with attached small kitchens, which groups or classes can reserve to gather over dinner for a meeting.

Other important space changes for students include moving Career Development from very inadequate space in Thomas into a wonderful location on the second floor of the Campus Center. It is crucial that we make it as easy as possible for students to plan for summer jobs, externships and internships, which are critical to help them explore careers and prepare resumes that will enable them find first-jobs in a very tough market. Having Career Development in a central and welcoming space has already increased traffic dramatically, and that is what we want.

Finally, a word about fun. The high-school counselors we met with mentioned this generation's hope that college would include "fun" but also its lack of clarity about what would be fun. We consistently rank among the 10 worst party schools in the country, so that isn't the fun they come here for, but they find it in many expected and unexpected places. Athletes find a great deal of fun playing sports they love; students in dance, music or theater find fun in performing and preparing for it. But students also create fun where you might not expect it. All first-year students who want or need to work for pay on campus work in Dining Services. Over the years we have wondered about whether this is a harsh or difficult introduction to Bryn Mawr, but student satisfaction with the experience has skyrocketed. Dining Services has developed an elaborate system of student managers, and it has become a source of respect to be chosen to be a manager. I recently read a group of essays about the experience of working for Dining Services written by students at all levels. What struck me, in addition to how much they were learning, was how much fun they were having. That says good things about out students and also about how staff have learned to get the most—including humor—out of smart, independent workers by giving them lots

of responsibility.

I'd like to read two brief statements, the first from a rising senior—a brilliant biologist.

"Before I came to college I never envisioned myself spending three years of my life working in a dining hall. I certainly never thought I would enjoy it; the knowledge that I would essentially be indenturing myself to attend my dream college was the only blemish on my happiness in coming to Bryn Mawr. Fortunately, I quickly discovered the benefits of working in the dining hall my freshman year. I acquired a huge group of friends; I learned managing skills to balance my job and my classes; and I gained at least eight hours a week in which I could not think about academics. The latter two are particularly important at an intense college like Bryn Mawr because I found it far too easy to allow myself to get mired in academia. Having a part-time job forced me to learn to divide my time wisely and work efficiently to ensure that I had time for classes, work, and a social life. And since my social life is always the first to go when I am busy, work became the mandatory time for shifting my mental gears away from class.

"But Dining Services is not just a diversion from classes and it is much more than a repetition of tasks—it's about people I interact with and the friends I make along the way. The friends I have made there are my sanity, and I have more friends from my years in Dining Services than from my Customs group. These wonderful people color all of my memories of college: my supervisors were a ready source of wisdom when I was a freshman; my managers were friends who shared my interests and really knew me; and my coworkers were up for anything long after the shift ended. Today I do my best to recreate that experience for the freshmen that I work with as a supervisor. There is no moment that is representative of my time with Dining Services; we are all united by a shared history and many memories of hilarious and absurd happenings during our shifts. As a student work force, we do our best to make our work as fun and rewarding as possible, and I would never change a single minute of it."

The second statement, from a student just finishing her first year, gives specifics.

"By the end of first semester Friday breakfast in Erdman had become somewhat legendary. Many students knew that if they woke up in time to get breakfast on Fridays they would have a good time, or at least see other people having a good time. There was always

music playing, workers dancing, and occasionally some flying fruit. We called it the best party on campus. I think part of what made Friday breakfast so fun was the combination of a great group of student workers and the festive atmosphere that just goes along with its being Friday.

“The Friday breakfast parties just grew spontaneously through the semester. It started with Stephanie bringing her CDs with her to work. Stephanie has a great collection of CDs that are fun to dance to. We took to having shift-wide dance numbers to every sort of music, from *Grease* to U2. Then we discovered that Stephanie knows how to juggle. After that, washing fruit for the salad bar became that much more entertaining, with Stephanie demonstrating her juggling skills on the oranges. One of the great things about the shift was the spontaneous things that would happen. One day around Halloween, Shannon wore a Frankenstein mask when she was working on hot-line, and another time Health Center ordered “a little of everything” and so Anastasia made them an omelet. What made Friday breakfasts so unique? I think it had to do with the way all of the workers on the shift bonded and strove to make the job fun. And to an extent, this is what Dining Services is about. We even made the full-time staff laugh. I remember one morning, our manager Paul Somerville walked by and turned down the volume on our music saying, “Dance, but work and dance.” Which, of course, is what we did.”

Bryn Mawr is a wonderful place for this new generation to learn to encounter face-to-face, not simply on-line, a microcosm of the world’s diversity. They work hard at building a community here, and they learn a great deal in the process. They need to learn attentiveness, how to focus intensely on subjects and objects outside themselves in order, ultimately, to figure out who they are and what they want to become. This is what Bryn Mawr does best, and I see the current generation benefiting from a college like this as much as any previous one—or more. It is a great privilege to work with them—and lots of fun.

* * * * *

CONVOCATION 2005

Good Morning. Many thanks to all of the students, faculty, and staff who have worked so hard over the past few days to welcome the new students and to make their adjustment here a little easier. Spe-

cial thanks to Amanda David and Laine Edwards and the Customs team this year that has done such an outstanding job. The weather cooperated, for once, and the new students have been appreciative and made all the effort seem worthwhile.

Reading their letters of introduction and speaking with the entering students has again left me amazed by the breadth and richness of the experience they bring to this community. They have been nannies to families of five children, camp counselors for those with special needs, caretakers to young lions in South Africa, and volunteers in many settings. And they have tended to be very thoughtful participants in these varied experiences. One who worked in a hospital noted, "The experience of working with those in pain and loss has heightened my appreciation of the mystery of life." Most describe themselves as readers, and one wrote, "Reading has replaced breathing as my most important bodily function. I read everything that falls prey to my hands (including water bottles)."

They not only read everything, but they want to study everything. One student's perusal of the catalogue had enabled her to narrow her interests to: English, Comparative Literature, Linguistics, Latin and Classical Studies, Archaeology, History, Anthropology, Political Science, Philosophy, Gender Studies, and Growth and Structure of Cities—even though she confesses being unsure what the last one is.

Their goals and aspirations are daunting. One writes, "I want to become an expert. I want to study things and understand them and know them for life. I want to know all about urban development, AIDS, feminism, the African-American experience in the twentieth century, Margaret Atwood, and the Pentagon Papers." Another can't wait to work with brilliant girls alongside her to save the world. One, whose interests are based primarily in conflict resolution and human rights, believes that "if a greater level of sensitivity [to cultural differences] were brought to our discourse with friends and enemies alike, we would find diplomacy a more effective tool in constructing international policy. In short, I would like to serve as a catalyst to change the way the United States conducts itself overseas. Nothing too ambitious." Another, also interested in international relations, would like to become an ambassador. She writes, "At the risk of sounding like a beauty contestant, what greater cause is there than the pursuit of world peace?" She's coming to college hoping to find out how to achieve it.

One of my advisees ruminates on having been called "nice" and "sweet" an awful lot. She was even voted the "sweetest cast mem-

ber” in a play she helped put on. She finds it almost an embarrassment, and has often heard people note, “Nice is not enough.” Still, she thinks of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s line in *The Great Gatsby*: “A sense of the fundamental decencies is parceled out unequally at birth.” She worries that as American society becomes ever more competitive, we may be placing too little value on the fundamental decencies. Just as “nice is not enough,” she would argue that “smart is not enough” and that she prefers “kind” and smart to “shrewd” and smart. I think she’s very smart to have sorted that out.

I hope that the “fundamental decencies” still do count in this community. We hope to teach you to think, and that involves focusing quite a lot on your intellectual habits and abilities. That’s a major reason that most of you have come to college—to learn to use your minds well. We also want to teach you to work. Anne Truitt, a Bryn Mawr alumna who became a very respected sculptor and writer and died just a couple of years ago, visited the College in the 1980s. She was asked, inevitably, what her Bryn Mawr education had had to do with her becoming a sculptor, since in her day there were virtually no fine arts classes offered. She said that what Bryn Mawr had really taught her was that the shortest distance between two points was hard work, and that had served her as an artist and a person very well. At least one member of the Class of 2009 would agree. She wrote, “As a kid whose entire educational career has been spent at the low end of the socio-economic spectrum, I assert that the mere act of believing hard work pays off is part of the reason I have managed to get where I am today.” Hard work counts a lot here.

But thinking well and working hard don’t matter very much if you don’t care about anyone else—if all you want to do is win. And that gets back to the “fundamental decencies” and why they matter so much. A student who is returning to Bryn Mawr after a very hard and very productive year away has given up her belief that she can change the world, at least in the largest sense. I applaud those who have very ambitious goals—it is good and appropriate that you do—but I also like her more modest, entirely attainable ones. If she can’t save the world or change the past, she writes, she can “decide what my future will look like, choose how I relate to my family, and make a conscious decision to do my part in making life a little bit easier for those around me.” I hope that at Bryn Mawr you all learn to think well, work hard, and make life at least a little easier for those around you.

Good luck.

PARENTS' DAY 2005

Over breakfast I was skimming the sections of tomorrow's *New York Times* that came to me today, and one was Education Life. In it, Charles McGrath reviews two recent books that purport to provide an inside look at college life today. One is written by Cathy Small, an anthropology professor at Northern Arizona State, who spent a year posing as a student to produce *My Freshman Year*. She concludes, as Michael Moffatt did in his 1989 study of Rutgers undergraduates, that most don't study very much, sleep more than we think, and spend most of their waking hours in pursuit of fun. Ms. Small finds that the Northern Arizona State students cheat quite a lot and are very pressed for time, mostly because many of them are working virtually full time while trying to be full-time students.

Barrett Seaman, the other author that McGrath reviews, has just published *Binge: What Your College Student Won't Tell You*. He looked at 12 campuses, including selective small liberal arts colleges more like Bryn Mawr than Northern Arizona. According to McGrath the students he interviewed don't study much either. They drink a lot and put tremendous energy into having fun.

McGrath argues that it has been ever thus, however much parents want to look back on their own collegiate experiences as very different. He notes that Edmund Wilson wrote of "prevalent drunkenness, cheating in examinations, indiscriminate mockery, general ignorance" at Princeton before World War I. Based on this fairly thin evidence, McGrath concludes that "At any point in American's long collegiate history, it seems safe to say, only a tiny percentage of students have been serious scholars." So, as Bryn Mawr parents, you may wonder, is it really that different here?

I would argue that it is. We believe that college is about getting an education and that this requires rigorous academic work. I disagree with the dichotomy that McGrath sees between academic work and "having fun," although I certainly acknowledge that even for serious students with wonderful professors, academic work requires a lot of preparation and study that may not be fun in order to achieve those illuminations and achievements that qualify as "fun" of the best sort.

While Bryn Mawr is not a "typical" American college and our students are fortunate to be more talented, more serious, and more ambitious than most, we are not unique. A lot of American students today work hard. Where I do agree with McGrath is when he says that much of what they have to learn is how to juggle their commit-

ments, study more efficiently and effectively, and take care of themselves. Not all of what you learn at even the most serious college is academic, and that's a good thing.

I have come to recognize more and more that the increased stress we see in college students is not primarily because the academic work is so demanding or, for most, the only thing in their lives. The very balance we tout is as stress producing as anything else. It is because they are trying to do serious academic work along with so many other things that they are often overwhelmed by their multiple agendas.

I don't think there are easy answers, especially since we—the adults in their lives—model for them overscheduled lives with too many competing agendas. But I do think that acknowledging the struggle they face is a first step in helping them manage it. And the good news is that many do become very skilled at setting priorities and juggling many commitments.

What they want most to achieve in college is what we want for them:

- To develop their academic and intellectual potential—to find a subject they are passionate about and develop some sense of real competence in it.
- To improve their writing, speaking, reading, critical thinking, analytic, creative and problem solving skills.
- To learn how to learn.
- To develop ethically—to learn to take responsibility for their own actions, to be willing to speak out when they see wrongs, to live with respect for themselves and others.
- To value and engage diversity and to develop some understanding of people whose experiences, beliefs, or values may be very different from their own.
- To re-examine their own beliefs and know that theirs is one way—not the only way—of understanding the world.
- To be better able to make informed judgments—to demand and weigh evidence offered in support of one argument or another.

They hope to find a life's work to which they can commit—for which they are preparing—or at least a clearer sense of how to begin that search. They want to become independent and self-reliant, which involves knowing when to ask for help.

All of it falls in some way under the goal of knowing themselves better—recognizing their talents, values and interests. That's a life-long task, but it's never as intense as it is during college.

All of these goals are worthy—a tremendous number of them are accomplished by your daughters. It's not always easy, and it's certainly stressful. In real, everyday terms, it means that they are juggling:

1. Academic work;
2. Work for pay to help with the cost of their education;
3. The demands—and pleasures—of residential life—living in shared spaces, getting to know a wide array of people;
4. Career exploration—externships, workshops, internships, summer jobs;
5. Extracurricular commitments;
6. Developing and nurturing friendships and intimate relationships;
7. Taking care of themselves—getting adequate sleep, exercise, nutrition, and real relaxation that is not the sedation brought on by overusing alcohol and drugs.

That is a long list of demanding and often competing commitments, none of which is optional. Some try to treat sleep as the one that can go, and that is a terrible choice that undermines everything else. Others decide to postpone career exploration until senior year, but that is far more stressful than engaging it from the beginning.

Many make poor choices. But dismissing them as lazy hedonists is way off the mark. Even the binge drinking they cite is often more about stress relief—a poor approach of course—than having fun.

I think it's very important that you—their families—and we—their professors, deans coaches, counselors—acknowledge how much they are asking of themselves. They need help to set realistic expectations, to keep in mind the larger goals and not become overwhelmed by what's due on Thursday, and to ask for help and support when they need it. They are very fortunate—they are ambitious, high achieving, and have been given the opportunity for a first rate education which will enable them to attain their goals—but they are also being asked to accomplish a great deal. We wish them well and respect their efforts.

* * * * *

HELEN TAFT MANNING AWARD (2006)

Since 1980, the College and the Alumnae Association have recognized dedicated and important service to the College with the Helen Taft Manning Award. Named for a former Professor, Dean and

Acting President of Bryn Mawr, this award is given jointly by the institution and the Alumnae Association.

In 2006, the award was given to Karen M. Tidmarsh '71, Dean of the Undergraduate College, on May 28 by President of the College Nancy J. Vickers and President of the Alumnae Association Mary Berg Hollinshead '69, Ph.D '79 after Vickers' State of the College remarks.

"In some way or other, Karen's work shapes just about every part of the Bryn Mawr student experience, academic and co-curricular," commented Vickers. "During her tenure, Karen has guided a number of important curricular reforms through the faculty.

"She has played a central role in the creation of the College Seminar Program, and has greatly expanded the academic resources available to students in such areas as writing and peer mentoring. She has used her influence (and often her budget) to support faculty/student interaction outside the classroom. She is a passionate advocate for the importance of giving students a meaningful voice in governing the institution.

"She is equally persuasive on the importance of giving students room during their years here to become independent decision-makers and to make the transition to adult life. ... Karen is a passionate steward of the College's values, and she brings a deep sense of those values to every conversation and every meeting, for which I am very grateful."

Hollinshead said, "Karen's accomplishments are many and large, but they have been achieved in daily diplomacy, hard work and humor, in the acts and decisions of an empathetic and ethical person. ... It is fascinating to see how many students and staff, past and present (myself included), believe she belongs to them. They are right, she does. And all of us belong to her."

* * * * *

REUNION 2006

Those of you who have been helping children with the now frenzied and hysterical phenomenon called the "college search"—and you have all my sympathy—may know a book called *Colleges That Change Lives*. Bryn Mawr isn't in it. The book's purpose, and it's a good one, is to draw attention to a number of small institutions less well known than places like Bryn Mawr or Haverford, colleges that deserve more recognition than they get because they do, in fact, offer

wonderful educations that change lives. I understand why we aren't included in that volume, but we certainly are and always have been an institution that changes lives. The students who came here in 1885 could not have received the kind of rigorous, serious education that was transformative for them in many other places.

On the face of it, that is much less true today. Our students would all be going to college somewhere, and they could find challenges in a wide variety of institutions. Still, they feel as most of us did, that Bryn Mawr has been a very important and, indeed, life-changing experience for them.

They have a great deal in common with earlier generations of Bryn Mawr students. They are smart, serious, sleep-deprived, and independent. They love what we loved—the professors and the academic challenge and mentoring they provide, the wonderful friendships that develop here, the beauty of the place and the power of traditions. What to us smacked of Camelot to them is all Hogwarts, but it is inspiring just the same. Still, the fact that there are profound similarities in Bryn Mawr's current students to previous ones does not mean that they are the same. They are certainly more diverse by almost any measure—socioeconomic class, race and ethnicity, geography, age, or religion—than previous generations.

While many of our students come from very privileged backgrounds, 55 percent could not be here without financial aid. Over 15 percent are eligible for Pell Grants, meaning that their family incomes are below \$40,000—less than what it now costs to attend Bryn Mawr for one year. The McBride Scholars have added the perspective of women in their 40s, 50s and 60s to classrooms and SGA meetings. Thirty percent of our students are members of American minority groups and about 10 percent are foreign or dual citizens. They come from Bulgaria and China and Ghana and Vietnam and about 40 other countries. Students value and learn enormously from this diversity, even when they find it challenging.

Current students, even those from down the road, bring with them knowledge and experience of a wider world. They have traveled and had summer internships in very different cultures. The curriculum has had to expand rapidly to keep pace with their interests and expectations. East Asian, Latin American, and Africana Studies are thriving, and Middle Eastern Studies is emerging as a cluster of courses that will become a formal program quite soon. Next year, in conjunction with Haverford and Swarthmore, we will add Arabic instruction. We have already added Chinese, Japanese, and Swahili,

and our students go to Penn for Hindi, Korean, and Irish, to say nothing of Old Egyptian. About a third of each class now spends one semester or more studying outside of the United States. While London, Madrid, and Paris are still popular, we have numbers every year going to Egypt, Japan, Chile, New Zealand, Senegal and many other countries that students never used to consider.

Perhaps the best way to give you a sense of some of the differences in students' backgrounds and in their experiences while in college is to look at a few examples. These women are not "typical"—I'm not sure what typical would be—but, if time allowed, I could have found many more with equally interesting profiles.

One student who just graduated came here from Kansas, planning to major in Political Science and Spanish. Her mother teaches in an elementary school where most of the children are Hispanic, and she shared her passion for their culture. Her first semester College Seminar was taught by Steve Salkever, and she became intrigued by political theory. She was also very interested in the environment, had spent many hours as a child driving through Kansas farmland, and was active in Bryn Mawr Greens, the Clean Air Council and the Sierra Club. In her junior year, she spent a semester in Botswana living in a rural village and carrying out field research. The daily struggles of the family she lived with to find enough water and firewood brought home to her the ways in which a single village depends on the land and the way the land requires proper care for its sustained viability. That led her to think critically about development itself, as well as rural experiences with power and the State. She returned intent on continuing her engagement with the relationship between people, land, and politics as a professor of political theory. A Hanna Holborn Gray Fellowship last summer allowed her to begin her senior thesis. She won a Fulbright to study in Britain next year, but has turned it down to accept a fellowship at the University of Chicago. Several of her professors described her as one of the best students they have ever taught, but one noted, "Within that top group, she is without peer in the joy with which she pursues her studies." She has truly found a way to make her passion also her work.

Another student came to Bryn Mawr from Brooklyn. She wrote in her application for admission, "My mother gave birth to me when she was 13, which is a surprising fact and makes me wonder if everyone else is as amazed as I am at how stable a figure she has been in my life." Her mother faced racism and mental illness within her family and was given very little support. She worked at temp

jobs and attended community college, finding solace in religion and remaining absolutely committed to raising her daughter. When she couldn't afford to get the electricity turned back on, mother and daughter did their work together by candlelight. The student went on to write, "My mother is indomitable. Watching her struggle to provide for me motivates me. She has influenced me to give back to the community. Witnessing my mother's perseverance with a child as her only moral support, I realized that I wanted to help people like her."

She first visited Bryn Mawr when she was invited on an all expense paid bus trip to the campus. She sat on the bus, pretending to read her textbook, and listened to conversations around her. Most of the other women on the bus seemed to be from private schools in New Jersey and Connecticut. As she puts it, "They were enrolled in classes I had never heard of. Honestly, I was intimidated before I even arrived on campus. I wondered why I was even putting myself through such a trial. The "spec" she was paired with said that she wanted to study Romance Languages and trace the English language to its origin. Her day was saved when an older student noticed how miserable she looked, and explained that she, too, had felt entirely out of her depth when she first arrived from the Bronx but had found friends and a way to be a leader in this community. By the end of her visit, the student had met many women who both welcomed and inspired her, and she applied, was admitted, and came.

She is doing well as a Psychology major with a French minor. She has been awarded a funded internship this summer and will work in an AIDS hospice in New York. She will interrupt that for five weeks to attend Bryn Mawr's summer institute in Avignon to study French literature and culture. During the academic year, she is active in Sisterhood, the campus African American affinity group; she tutors children in Ardmore; and she volunteers at Manna, a Philadelphia center for feeding those with HIV and AIDS. Her mother's struggles have produced a most impressive young woman.

Another student comes from Katmandu, Nepal. She came here to study math, and she is double majoring in Math and Economics, but she has also developed many other interests. As she wrote recently, "Poetry has become a new way of expressing myself. A few piano lessons given to me by a friend this summer became daily tunes for an evening musical prayer of my mind. There are so many more things I am keen to learn to practice before I graduate!"

In the summer after her first year, she couldn't go home and received funding to do research with Professor Paul Melvin in Math. He wasn't sure that a rising sophomore could be terribly helpful in his research, but before leaving for a two-week conference in Turkey, he gave her the task of transforming a large collection of diagrams into a numerical format that could be put into a computer program which Paul had created. He thought it would take her all summer to complete that task and was startled a week later when he received an email message saying that she was done. She had found an ingenious way to organize the transformation process. The summer took off from there and by the end they were co-authoring cutting-edge research. Paul had never known—directly or indirectly—of a first year student doing that in mathematics.

She continues to excel academically, but instead of simply continuing her research the next summer, this student applied for and received funding from the College that enabled her to return to Nepal to work with street children at a haven for them called Shrine Academy. She taught English and Mathematics for grades 4-10 and is returning this summer to work for and with these children.

What these stories illustrate is not only that we have extraordinary students here who might never have found their way to Bryn Mawr in my day. They also show how important study outside the United States, summer and term held internships, and volunteer experience have become in allowing students to discover and pursue their full talents. All our students have commitments to changing the world and might, in institutions encouraging more randomly focused practical training, have acquired the basic skills they need to do that. But Bryn Mawr has allowed them to make wonderful connections between their intellectual and artistic talents and their desire to make a difference. They—and many other gifted women—are making the best possible use of the freedom they find here to cultivate curiosity, empathy, flexibility, integrity and in the process to find out who they are and what they might become.

This kind of education is rare and expensive, and it is a great privilege to be a part of it—whether as a student or a faculty member. It continues to be possible, and available to many whose families could not afford to provide it, only because of the generosity of Bryn Mawr's alumnae and friends. When you see the kind of women who work so hard and effectively to put it to the best use, it does seem a powerful force for good in the world. Thank you for all that you do to make it possible.

CONVOCATION 2007

Good Morning! I want to add my thanks to all of the students, faculty, and staff who have given so much time to help welcome and orient the entering students, and to the new students themselves for being patient with and even appreciative of our endless greetings and advice. It's now time for us all to get busy with the real work of the semester, but I want to take a couple of minutes to urge you to think about the kind of "busy" you want to be.

We live in a very "busy" society, and anyone who isn't busy is either deviant or dead. Unfortunately, we seem to be busier and busier with demands for immediate responses, which could easily have waited if technology hadn't led everyone to expect immediacy. Often we are too busy with those incessant, trivial demands to give proper time to what really matters to us. Coming home from work for many means simply switching from one computer to another, and evenings, weekends, and vacations are interrupted by email messages, faxes, pagers, and cell phone signals. The demands of work, family, and distant friends can interrupt you virtually anywhere. The challenge we all face is to harness technology and all its possibilities to serve our own ends and not allow it to drive our choices. That is not easy.

The entering students have grown up with computers as an important part of their lives, as the short survey they completed at the Information Fair last week shows. One hundred percent of you reported having access to a computer at home. Eighty-six percent had looked up your roommates on Google or Facebook before arriving (for both better and worse). On average, you reported learning to use Power Point in sixth grade, but some of you did that in kindergarten. The biggest change from a similar survey conducted when the class of 2004 entered 7 years ago is in the time you spend on computers for personal use. On average, that's 12 hours up from 7 years ago. That's a 70 percent increase, which is striking, but what is staggering is that 13 percent of you spent an average of 44 hours a week on the computer for personal, non-school related use last year.

There is no question that computers will always be an important and often enriching part of your lives, both academic and personal. Most—probably all—of your courses will require you to use them in some way. But you will have real choices to make about how you use your personal time, and I urge you to make them thoughtfully. Computers can either be an enormous asset or a real threat to the

process of education and growth that you have come here to experience.

You could, of course, have chosen to go to college via computer. Many of your peers worldwide will be entering virtual classrooms for on-line courses. But you have made a very different choice—about as different as it could be.

You've come to a peculiarly American institution—the small residential liberal arts college. (One that, as many of you noted, looks a lot like Hogwarts.) You are very fortunate to have access to three of the best of that “liberal arts” breed for your academic and non-academic life over the next four years. Much of what you have come here for is special, and won't always be available to you, as Google or its descendants will be.

You've travelled from all over the world to be in a place truly suited to learning. Interested, inspiring teachers and scholars, rich library holdings, first-rate laboratories, and peers who are smart, challenging, and fiercely independent are all available to you for face-to-face, real encounters as they never will be again. There are also vocal and instrumental groups to perform in, teams to play on, a city with both wonderful offerings and serious needs for you to engage with. All of these can contribute immensely to your education, but they all demand serious engagement, which technology can either enable or subvert, and that's up to you. This is your time and place to make lifetime friendships, find wise mentors, immerse yourselves in ideas and arguments, projects and groups. You are here to test methodologies, question assumptions, and challenge institutions—especially this one—to change. All of these things are easier to do here than they will be in most other phases of your lives because this place is designed with education as its primary purpose.

So before you get too busy responding to messages and calls from afar, take time to think what you want most from Bryn Mawr. Some of it will involve choosing uninterrupted solitude and concentration or noisy engagement with the people and possibilities around you over the demands beeping and blinking at you from elsewhere. Good luck with those choices, which are never easy. We look forward to helping you as you change, and change us, in important, unpredictable ways.

CONVOCATION 2008

I have to say that we killed ourselves getting ready for the new students—hours of work by staff, faculty, and students all summer long—and at first they were a real disappointment. The most common first name is “Sarah,” as it often is, their most common middle name is “Elizabeth,” as it always is. No excitement there. So many Sarahs and not a Sarah Barracuda among them, as far as I know. Their most common sun sign is Gemini—another coals to Newcastle story. I checked the description of Gemini traits on the web and I quote, “Gemini’s are bright, quick-witted, and the proverbial life of the party.” Just what we need at the college once again ranked as one of the worst party schools in America.

But they are here now and we must make the best of it. So—welcome Class of 2012, *Anassa Kata* new transfers, Post-Bacs, McBrides and guests. And many thanks to Lena Kadota and Ashley Madden and Chuck Heyduk and all those who helped to orient them and keep the rest of us in line.

We have been impressed at how well they follow incredibly Byzantine instructions. Despite our best efforts to confuse or rattle them, they kept showing up when and where they were supposed to... Presumably that won’t last as they discover their Bryn Mawr cursed individualism, but it’s nice for now.

I hope that what does last is their excitement about what lies ahead. They are eager to get involved to change Bryn Mawr, and be changed by it. What, exactly, does lie ahead? The Task Force that is looking critically at Bryn Mawr’s curriculum has had long, lively meetings this summer, wrestling with what is a huge and complicated project. There seems to be some agreement that the purpose of the kind of liberal arts education Bryn Mawr offers is to enable our graduates to lead lives worth living—lives of purpose and self-awareness. Exactly what kind of curriculum best leads to that result—and how it is similar to or different from the one we now have—is still very open to debate. We know that the education we want to give requires exposure to many points of view and ways of understanding the world, to different modes of inquiry, and to hard intellectual and personal challenges. We are eager to get more student voices involved in discussions about how our curriculum does and doesn’t achieve our goals and theirs. Despite the problem of the Sarah Elizabeths and the party people, I know that these new students can and will contribute. One of the things we can count on

is that the sort of students who choose colleges like Bryn Mawr and Haverford and Swarthmore are already engaged in the kind of honest, nuanced thinking about complicated issues that we are struggling with, and are eager to get involved.

Many in the class—over 10 percent this year—have come here from other countries, bringing a wonderful range of languages, cultures, and experience with them. Countless others have travelled and worked in places that profoundly changed their understandings of themselves. I'd like to read excerpts from an essay written by a freshman who traveled to Poland, Germany, and the Netherlands as part of a course entitled, "Facing History and Ourselves."

"It was February of my junior year, and I was in Poland. Up ahead, beyond the long scattered lines of my travel-worn classmates, stood the only unreconstructed gas chambers remaining from the Holocaust. It was cheek-bitingly cold, and I was secretly glad I had taken my father's advice on the ugly pink coat with the wind lining. To the right of me the city came to the edge of the camp, squat little houses crowded against flimsy fencing. It was quiet but for the muted sounds of traffic and our feet on the unpaved road.

"Then, out of the vacuum of our frozen breath, past the wooden barracks piled full of shoes and crockery, a young man on a bike pedaled past me. He looked like a college student, wore a backpack and a thick winter coat, and a bag of groceries sat in the basket affixed to the front of his bike. A loaf of French bread stuck out of the bag. As he disappeared over the hill at the other end of the camp, I realized he was going home, taking a short cut through the camp. The thought seized on me in the vague way that big thoughts do at first. The more I thought, the more absurd it was. A shortcut through a concentration camp; the concept became perhaps even more real to me than the camp itself.

"This was not Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the gas chambers were detonated and the workshops are a museum. This was not Plaszow, where nothing but stone memorials remained in a big muddy field, and Spielberg's rendition of the suffering there is more immediate than the actual physical place. This was Majdanek. This is a huge pile of ash, mass graves, and gas chambers with walls stained blue from the chemicals. You can walk through them. We did.

"I started out blaming the man on the bike for the emptiness of the camp, for the lack of care or guards. I blamed him for its existence at all. His indifference, or what I perceived as his indifference, was scary . . .

“But sometime during the interminable bus ride to Warsaw, I stopped thinking about Poland like this place I’d stumbled onto where no one thinks quite as clearly as I do. I stopped thinking about the people like they were cardboard cutouts, hard consonants to swallow, or leftover Eastern Bloc relics... This feeling was shameful for me to admit to, and hardest for me to cull. But we all live with the ghosts of past wrongs. In Boston, we’ve still not dealt with all that busing meant, or why my college preparatory exam school is predominantly white when the regular public schools are not. But this is my home, and I love it sometimes so much it hurts. To the man on the bike, Lublin was home and camp was landscape. And since I don’t speak Polish and he never stopped for a chat, I will never know his true feelings on its presence in his life. As such, I can’t blame him for the historical indifference of the people there, or for that fact that they still sell Jew dolls in the bazaar in Krakow. I can’t blame the man on the bike for how I felt walking through the gas chambers at Majdanek, or for the mountains of hair at Auschwitz.

“In ‘Facing History and Ourselves,’ the class that took me to Poland and Germany and the Netherlands, we learned that indifference is the enemy and blame is the most complicated thing in the world...

“At The Hague, directly after we watched an alleged war criminal smile and laugh from behind a wall of glass, we heard from an American prosecutor who talked about her commitment to truth and justice. To me, the fact that she was willing to do this work affirmed the purpose of our trip to Europe. It taught me that there are thousands of men on thousands of bikes riding through thousands of concentration camps, and the real problems are the boundaries we fashion between ourselves and those men, the ways we try to convince ourselves how different we are from them. We Faced history, and we Faced ourselves, even if we refused to see it so clearly while it was happening. And if there were no giant epiphanies or sweeping revelations, there were confirmations of the things I learned in Sunday School when I was 6, the small crucial things about breaking the bonds of indifference, and trying to see the terrifying other as one of your own.”

This entering student offers an excellent version—in her own very fine words—of what many of us on the Task Force reviewing the curriculum are trying to articulate. “Breaking the bonds of indifference” and “trying to see the terrifying other as one of your own” are surely what we hope happens here.

We welcome all of you to join us as individuals and as an institution as we work to understand how that can be fostered.

Thank you.

* * * * *

REUNION 2008

Life at Bryn Mawr is never boring, not even for a minute, but this year has had more than its share of excitement.

Two movies have been filmed on campus. One, called *Tenure*, stars Luke Wilson. His presence, and willingness to be photographed with many, many students, enlivened the first week of exams. Most recently, *Dare* was being shot in front of Thomas. Watch for them both at your local theater—I expect they won't be there long.

During the last week of the Democratic Primary, we had everyone from the star of *Ugly Betty* to Madeline Albright stumping on campus and we have of course had our own presidential transition to observe.

The year began with Bryn Mawr, like every other college and university, scrambling to review and improve safety procedures in the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy. Our consulting psychiatrist, alumna Eileen Bazelon, organized an excellent conference called "Dangerous Behavior Among College Students." It attracted deans, counselors, coaches, and lawyers from many campuses. The message we all took away made me very grateful for Bryn Mawr's size and culture. No high-tech early warning system of emergency plan can make campuses truly "safe." You need to know the hearts and minds of your students, and develop enough trust that they will come to you when they are concerned. That is the crucial safety net, and it's one that we can rely on far more than most campuses.

I am grateful for many other aspects of Bryn Mawr's culture and values as well. Let me begin with student initiatives—whether quiet or noisy, depending on the issue, persistence has led to important changes. Our rowing program and our Body Image Council are continuing legacies of recent generations' efforts. This year we had a Social Justice Pilot Program that involved 80 first and second year students and about 50 faculty, staff and older students in on-going small group discussions and activism on social justice. It was a student-driven response to bias incidents and an effort to use community education to prevent future crises—or at least some of them.

We have a very active chapter of Active Minds that works to ease the stigma attached to mental illness and increase support for sufferers, their families and friends. They have made it far more acceptable for a group of students to invite deans and faculty members to a discussion of how they handle their depression or anxiety or other mental illnesses while being students at Bryn Mawr.

Another student group has produced a wonderful course on Personal Finance that was piloted—to rave reviews—in this year's First Year Wellness Issues course. They believe that young women must learn the basics of personal finance early in their college careers. Next year they will offer a 10-week course on Personal Finance that will count towards the Physical Education and Wellness requirement. Their course—and their persistence in gaining administrative support for it—is a model. Similarly, a group of students helped spur on a cross-disciplinary faculty group to revise and revitalize the Latino/Latin American Studies concentration that had stagnated and needed their pressure to move forward.

Our students still talk about living in the “Bryn Mawr bubble” and in some ways they are, of course, privileged and protected in this community. On the other hand, as our student body has become more diverse racially, socio-economically and religiously, to name only a few of the ways, they learn from and struggle with conflicts and challenges that are as real and painful as those in the society around us. Cultural and religious groups proliferate, reflecting the identities present on campus. While we are still struggling with how to support spiritual and religious activity on a secular campus with no campus chaplaincy, the students have moved beyond Hillel, Intersarsity Christian Fellowship, and the Catholic students' group to add a Sikh group, Muslim Women, Habat, a fundamentalist Jewish group, a Mormon group, Bahai, an Atheist and Agnostic group, and, of course, a Quaker group—and that list is not really complete. Our students are not exactly “bowling alone”—they are forming multiple, sometime tiny groups to celebrate and support their identities. This pattern, too, mimics the wider society.

They also range far more widely off campus than they ever did before. Almost 40 percent of our students spend a semester or two in their junior year studying outside the United States. They are as apt to go to Asia, Africa, South America or the Middle East as they are to Europe. Funded summer internships allow another whole group of students to work with agencies in many parts of the world on projects that often lead to life-changing career decisions.

And whether in volunteer capacities or as part of Praxis courses that include off-campus internships, they are more engaged in the broader Philadelphia community than ever before. They have more opportunities than most of us did, but they certainly take advantage of them.

An entering student wrote of her interest in becoming a foreign correspondent. She said, "It has been increasingly important for me to gain a position from which I can bear witness to what goes on in the world, especially now with the erupting conflicts in the Middle East and around the world. (Africa is often overlooked by most of the world, and it is perhaps a place that deserves the most attention.) I feel that there are not enough people who are willing to get "down and dirty," to enmesh themselves in the hotspots. I want to do that. To me, living life fully means seeing and understanding, telling and remembering, and foreign correspondency is something that I think will allow me to do those things."

Their lives are adventures—as they should be—but they are also purposeful. I don't worry very much about their isolation in a "Bryn Mawr bubble."

That said, they still cite their academic work, learning how to learn and to push themselves harder than they ever have before, as their greatest achievements here. The fact that more of the work is hands-on (read, off-campus) just makes it better.

The most popular majors are Mathematics, Biology (now blooming due to interest in genetics and environmental studies), Political Science (including "International Studies"), English and Psychology.

Hot courses this year included: Environment and Society, Ecology, Poetry Writing, Pirates Travellers and Natural History (offered as History), American Girl: Childhood in U.S. Literature 1690-1935, Pediatric Psychology, Asian American Communities, Eating Culture: Food and Britain 1798-1929.

"Hands-on" learning has transformed courses you wouldn't expect. Introduction to Computing is far more popular now that every student taking it is presented with a robot that she has to program. A wonderful art history course, co-taught by Martha Easton and librarian Marianne Hansen, allowed a group of 12 students from Bryn Mawr and Haverford to develop an exhibit of the Books of Hours in our Rare Book Collection. They gave a presentation just before the exhibit opened explaining their roles in the group project and what they had learned. Their appreciation of what it meant to actually handle and examine medieval artifacts and of how much research,

collaboration, and conflict went into producing an exhibition was fabulous.

The faculty in the course of this year have participated in a two-day retreat to discuss their goals for their students and how pedagogy and curricula need to change to meet them. I am quite sure this is the first-ever faculty retreat. Through our Teaching and Learning Initiative, many have attended seminars and workshops on pedagogy, and in May they turned out in large numbers to hear Joshua Aronson, a social psychologist from NYU, discuss stereotype threat among students of color and the broader issue of the fragility of intelligence—how all of us perform better or worse, are smarter or less so depending on context and expectations. A number of faculty have volunteered to have trained students observe their classes and give them feedback about messages they convey to their students about who belongs there and expectations for different individuals that they may be unaware of. Some of our most senior and successful faculty members have participated and found it very useful.

These conversations are new to Bryn Mawr, just as the needs and expectations of some of our students are. It is exciting and gratifying to see how well the College is managing to examine itself critically, sometimes pushed by our students, sometimes by ourselves, and to stay strong and vital. Lantern Night and May Day and the Honor Code still matter—maybe more than ever—because they lend stability and social and historical continuity to our institution that is, and should always be, evolving.

* * * * *

REUNION 2009

I am often asked how today's students differ from those of earlier eras. It's not an easy question since—fortunately—most generalizations break down quickly in the face of our “cussed individualists,” as you will see in meeting some of the students who are here to help with reunion. They have much more in common with their predecessors than you might predict. They are serious and quirky; they love the faculty, the traditions, the beauty of the campus, even if for them it's Hogwarts and for us it was Camelot. They appreciate almost immediately the kinds of friendships they find here with challenging, funny, independent women who will support them for a lifetime.

One thing that is strikingly—and wonderfully—different is the racial, cultural, socioeconomic diversity of the student body. As Jane [President Jane McAuliffe] said, we have an extraordinarily diverse class entering in the fall. We have always known that a lot of the education that Bryn Mawr offers happens in the residence halls, but how much richer that learning is when the mix of backgrounds is so varied. Students need this experience of negotiating and learning from differences to prepare for the communities and workplaces in which they will spend their lives, but few will ever live in such close proximity to such a diverse community again. (I understand that some of you who slept in top bunks last night were startled by how close the quarters really are.) They take away something valuable, and they know it.

What else is different? They are stressed and sleep-deprived but so were we all. What has increased these factors is the amount of time and space that technology takes in their lives. Social networking sites, instant messaging, and constant access to cell phones all take away from the time and attention they have for what they are trying to do here—studying, making serious commitments to the arts or athletics or self-government, to jobs and internships and service work—and it takes a toll. That same technology does much to enrich their lives as well, but I am genuinely sad that they have far less sense of privacy, or access to the quiet and contemplation that serious intellectual work—and just growing up—requires at times.

Their relationship to their parents is of course utterly different. Technology plays a big role there, allowing consultation on almost any decision. Many parents struggle to give their daughters the independence that they know they need. My late 60s soul has stopped recoiling in shock when students refer to their parents as their heroes, or their best friends. I watch my own contemporaries who, like me, called home from BMC only every couple of weeks to give reassurance that we were alive, enjoy adult children with whom they are close in a wonderful way, and I realize that something good can come out of this new, intense parenting. But it is certainly different.

I guess one of the most interesting differences I see is how changed is their relationship to the world. Even students whose families have very limited resources arrive at college having had a school- or church- or foundation-sponsored trip to build a clinic in Guatemala or explore three cities in China. Even if they've not travelled so far, they've visited and worked in places that profoundly changed their understanding of themselves. I'd like to read you a brief selection

from the application essay of a member of the Class of 2012.

“Last summer my aunt presented me with the challenge to participate in a summer work program at the USDA Agricultural Research Center in Stoneville, Mississippi, where she is a director. I decided the potential benefits of this adventure far outweighed any risk of homesickness. During my stay in the Delta, I not only gained insight into the importance of genetics in the agricultural world, but I witnessed firsthand the poverty that permeates one of the poorest areas of our country.

“I worked in the Genomics Lab sequencing DNA of cotton, corn, soybeans, and catfish. My mentor was Fanny Liu, a medical doctor from China, and my lab director was Dr. Brian Scheffler, a plant physiologist from the Max Planck Institute in Germany. Using state of the art equipment, costing more than \$500,000, I discovered how genomics is used to improve the quality of food, clothes, and medicine worldwide. The results of the cotton sequencing I performed have aided in the development of disease resistant cotton varieties so farmers in Africa and India can grow cotton profitably without using environmentally damaging pesticides. The researchers conveyed to me a contagious love for their work. These world-renowned scientists, some well into their 70s yet still too full of ideas to consider retiring, convinced me that I had made the right decision to come here.

“My home life in Greenville moved at an easy pace and the people I encountered demonstrated genuine southern hospitality. I quickly learned that the population of the Delta is 80 percent black, and for the first time in my life I was the minority. This left me uneasy at first, but I decided to embrace this as an opportunity. I attended a Pentecostal church service that introduced me to a form of worship that encourages open and enthusiastic participation. I took in a community performance of *The Whiz*, which gave me a taste of local art. Very soon, my appreciation for this diverse culture developed, settling my feelings of unrest.

“What I gained most from this opportunity is that getting an education is more than just a high GPA; it’s about gaining knowledge to enrich one’s existence through both academic study and life experience. As a fellow human being I am morally responsible to use this knowledge to aid the community and the world. I learned that none of this could be accomplished without taking risks. I would not be the person I am today if I allowed my fear of leaving home to prevent me from going on this trip.”

How do we best build where these students begin? What should Bryn Mawr offer and require to challenge them? I have been working for a year now on the Task Force on Curriculum Revision that Jane mentioned. It is exciting—the Provost, a group of faculty from many departments and ranks, students and myself are looking critically at our curriculum as if nothing were sacrosanct. (Given a highly tenured faculty and budget constraints, this is not realistic, but we’ve tried to ignore that, at least in the beginning.) Last summer we read a lot and had long, lively discussions about the purpose of a liberal arts college in this new century. We disagree a lot, but there is a pretty strong consensus that a Bryn Mawr education should enable our graduates to lead lives worth living—lives of purpose and self-awareness. Exactly what kind of curriculum best leads to that result—and how it is similar to or different from the one we have now—is still being discussed. We’ve included the President in some of our meetings and have had several special faculty meetings in which we tested possible changes with the group that will ultimately decide these issues. This seems a moment when the faculty is very open to both considering and making serious changes, and it is exciting for all of us.

Because the task is so huge, a lot of our work is done in subcommittees. I convene one such group looking at the First Year Experience. We’re looking at the College Seminar, which is required of all students in their first semester. We’ve redesigned it to ensure that it will be taught almost exclusively by continuing faculty—not adjuncts. We also want to develop writing intensive courses across the curriculum that would provide not just writing assignments—we’ve always had lots of those—but opportunities for revision and real writing instruction within the courses. Eventually, we hope to be able to require at least one of these of every student.

We’re looking at our quantitative reasoning requirement and realizing that we need a test for all of our entering students and a course focused on real-world quantitative reasoning—problem-based and looking at how you determine if a particular item is actually a good deal, or whether conclusions drawn from a drug trial are correct, and so on. Students need these skills for life, but they also need them to negotiate our curriculum—courses in science, social science, and even the humanities require students to understand how to interpret data, and a portion enter without sufficient preparation in this area.

We are looking at our foreign language requirement. Instead of two full years of classroom-based instruction, can we offer more

summer or January immersion experiences that would enable students to work toward fluency much faster and free up important time for exploring and growing? Could we offer some six-week courses in many fields so that new students who are very unsure of their interests could be introduced to four new fields as possible areas to pursue instead of two, in their first year? Courses that begin in the classroom but end up in an internship or study trip to the area of focus need more of a place.

This is still work in progress, but the potential for offering a more current, more exciting experience to our students is very real, and they deserve it.

* * * * *

REUNION 2010
Curricular Renewal

While the diversity of backgrounds—racial and ethnic, religious, class and age—has been growing for decades, in just the past few years we have seen the numbers of first-generation, Latina, and international students increase dramatically. This is very good news, but it requires financial, curricular, and advising support that challenges the College to change and grow—also a good thing. I'd like to tell you about just a few of those changes that I have been most involved with in the past year.

The Curricular Renewal Working Group has spent two years rethinking the curriculum. It comprised faculty members from the Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Academic Priorities, two students, and two administrators—Kim Cassidy, the Provost, and me. Like many successful Bryn Mawr endeavors, it began with lots of reading and long, chaotic conversations that seemed anything but promising. This year, as we actually achieved something like consensus and brought our proposals first to the Curriculum Committee and then to the faculty as a whole, we have seen some of the most significant changes to the curriculum that have happened in over 40 years. No, we haven't abandoned all requirements or gone to a common set of core courses—though both of these proposals and more were on the table and were seriously discussed.

I will give you a quick overview of what the new curriculum—for those entering in 2011 and after—will look like.

1. Emily Balch Seminars. All students; one semester, writing inten-

sive, now taught largely by continuing faculty instead of adjuncts.

2. Foreign Language Requirement. Two semesters for all students—no one exempts. Students may decide to continue a language they have studied or to begin a new one. While some may worry that this is too light a requirement, we realized that second year courses were full of students who didn't want to be there. They often didn't learn significantly more language than they had in the first year—their only real goal was to get a high enough grade to complete the requirement. That created bad learning situations for everyone—including the faculty. Students with great fluency in one foreign language may either take an advanced literature or culture course or begin a new one. Since there will be fewer sections of second year courses, this change will allow more levels of first year courses—for heritage speakers, for true beginners, or with a Praxis component.

3. Breadth requirement. From two courses in Divisions I, II, and III—where the borders are ever blurrier as more teaching and research is cross-disciplinary, and students often didn't find the categories meaningful—we will now require one course in each of four kinds of inquiry: scientific investigation, critical analysis, cross-cultural comparison, and inquiry into the past.

4. Quantitative Skills. There will be two levels, quantitative literacy and advanced work in mathematics or data overlay. Many students have postponed our current requirement, often because they have failed it more than once, until senior year, so any competency learned was useless to them during their time at the College. Now, there will be a diagnostic test administered when new students arrive. They must either pass it or take a course in Quantitative Literacy during their first year. Understanding how to read and analyze data and how to construct arguments based on quantitative information is now essential to many courses in fields like Biology, Geology, and Psychology that didn't used to be considered especially quantitative at the introductory level. Students who lack quantitative literacy are at a huge disadvantage in many areas of the curriculum, and we must address that. A second level of the quantitative requirement would require all students—including those who passed the diagnostic test—to take another course that emphasizes mathematics or data analysis.

We will also be piloting during this next year three initiatives that offer exciting new options for students.

1. Kaleidoscope. A program in which students will take three or four integrated courses examining some theme from various angles. All

such programs will include off-campus, experiential learning—often including travel to another country for research purposes. These programs will allow students to experience interdisciplinary approaches to problems in a new way.

2. Seven-week courses—in Biology, Chemistry, Psychology, Education, and Archaeology—will allow students who are very undecided to sample more courses than a four-course curriculum usually permits. It will also enable students to recover from a bad choice by completing one seven-week course and beginning a second one, instead of continuing and doing badly in the first, or withdrawing and thus putting themselves behind in credits.

3. Pre-major faculty advising program. We will pilot this in the fall for about a third to a quarter of the entering class. Students will still have a dean who will work, as they do now, to be sure that general requirements are being met, and to help students encountering difficulties. Faculty Advisors will meet a couple of times each semester with about eight advisees. Students will be asked to respond to an on-line survey in advance, answering questions such as What has surprised you most? What course are you most excited by? How has your list of possible majors changed and why? etc. They will then have a conversation focusing on their goals for their education here, and how that might translate into course selection for the next semester. Deans rarely have time for that, with over 300 advisees. This new system should insure that students get to know at least one faculty member well, in addition to their Emily Balch Seminar professor, during their first year, and that they are pushed to think in terms of their larger goals for their education here.

Lots remains to be done—our writing requirement can't be just a one-semester course, the Senior Thesis experience needs to be made more consistently positive for students, etc.—but this is a very good beginning. Finally, there is much to be done to be sure that we are offering the kinds of academic and mentoring services that such a diversely prepared student body needs.

FACULTY MEMORIAL (2013)

Memorial minute for Karen Tidmarsh, composed by Emeritus Professor of English Sandra Berwind and Professor of English Jane Hedley, read into the faculty minutes on May 17.

Karen MacAusland Tidmarsh, Associate Professor of English and longtime Dean of the Undergraduate College, died at age 63 in her Haverford home on March 2, 2013, of end-stage carcinoid syndrome.

Born in Newton, Massachusetts in 1949, Karen devoted more than half her life to the College, from which she graduated in 1971 *magna cum laude* with Honors in English. She taught at Germantown Friends School and the Shipley School from 1971 to 1974, before proceeding to graduate work at the University of Virginia, where she wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on the novels of George Eliot. By the time Karen's Ph.D. was conferred, in 1988, she had returned to Bryn Mawr as an assistant dean of the Undergraduate College, in which capacity she served in 1979-80 and again from 1983 to 1986; from 1980 to 1983 she served as Associate Director of Admissions. She became associate dean in 1986, acting dean in 1989, and after a national search was appointed Dean of the Undergraduate College in 1990. Karen occupied the deanship for 20 years, until 2010; after that she continued to work on special projects for the College, with a particular focus on academic support services. She occasionally taught courses for the English Department, including *The Lyric*, *19th Century Novel*, and *Modernism*, as well as assorted College Seminars and the Working Workshop, English 125.

As Chair of the Curriculum Committee from 1990 to the mid-2000s, Dean Tidmarsh presided over major curricular revisions and innovations, including the development of the College Seminar program and the Praxis program. Having taught at the high school level and worked closely with Bryn Mawr freshmen in a teaching and an advising capacity, she was especially knowledgeable about the challenges students face in making the transition from high school to college. Under her leadership, the College greatly expanded its academic support services: the Writing Center, the peer tutoring, and peer mentoring programs, and most recently the Q-center were all initiated or expanded with her support and guidance, and it was during her tenure as Dean that the College began to participate in the POSSE program. In many other areas of student life, she pushed for the creation of new opportunities and new kinds of support, with a particular concern for equality of access: whereas in 1990 there was

virtually no financial aid for study abroad and no financial support for unpaid summer internships, the College now makes it possible for students to study abroad regardless of their financial means, and disburses more than half a million dollars annually to support summer internships and summer research.

On Karen's watch, a number of new spaces for student life came into being, including Cambrian Row, the McBride lounge, the renovated Campus Center, and a Civic Engagement Office that has been highly successful in getting undergraduates involved with organizations and communities in the greater Philadelphia area. Karen's own community service included the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Partnership (on which she served from 1995 to 1998), the Board of Trustees of the Baldwin School (from 1990 to 1999), and the Board of Trustees of the Domestic Abuse Project of Delaware County (from 1999 to 2002). On campus, her commitment to social justice and diversity was expressed through her leadership of the Diversity Council and the Social Justice Partnership Program.

In 2006, the College and the Alumnae Association presented Dean Tidmarsh with the Helen Taft Manning award for extraordinary service to the College. "Karen's accomplishments are many and large," said Alumnae Association President Mary Berg Hollinshead '69 on that occasion. "They have been achieved in daily diplomacy, hard work and humor, in the acts and decisions of an empathetic and ethical person. It is fascinating to see how many students and staff, past and present, believe she belongs to them. They are right; she does."

Claudia Ginanni '86, who worked for many years in the Office of Public Relations, recalls that Karen "had an extraordinary capacity to understand and appreciate the perspective of all parties to a conflict... She was steadfastly committed to giving people the benefit of the doubt... which is not to say that she was naïve, but that her intellect was as kind as it was keen." Faculty members who have served on the Honor Board with Karen can testify to the aptness of this characterization. During what seemed like interminable hearings, impatient glances at our watches gradually yielded to admiration for Karen's persistence. "I was always moved," recalls Penny Armstrong, Eunice M. Schenck Professor of French, "by her talent to find the right word, to read people's thoughts, and to bring us consensually to what felt like the fair judgment."

"In faculty meetings," says Richard Hamilton, Paul Shorey Professor Emeritus of Greek, "her presentations, both prepared and

ex tempore, were intelligent, well-organized, substantial, and well expressed. Many of the faculty came to fall convocation primarily to hear Karen's witty and original welcomes to the incoming students."

In the words of Steve Green, the College's Director of Transportation: "She was a beautiful woman with a warm, caring spirit. She was what the Bryn Mawr community reaches for. I can only smile when I think of her. Rest in peace, Karen. Job well done."

We would like to thank Dean of Studies Judy Balthazar, Associate Dean Chuck Heyduk, and assistant Deans Michelle Mancini and Raima Evan for their assistance with this memorial minute. We move that copies be sent to Gigi Green, Karen's aunt, to her cousin Cameron Lane, and to Judith Hoos Fox '71, Karen's college roommate and the co-executor of her estate

