

A buffet for the curious

One of the great pleasures of life in an academic institution is the license it affords one to continue learning. Every September introduces a new beginning. Each entering class of students brings with it an invitation (and command) to gain new perspectives on the world. Faculty colleagues and distinguished visitors to campus spotlight interesting ideas and concepts in their lectures and performances. The college campus is an unlimited buffet for an endlessly curious person, and I have always been hungry for the start of each new school year.

This fall marks the start of an intense learning period for me, and I couldn't be more eager to begin. While I learned much about Wheaton from campus visits, discussions with members of the community and study of its publications, I expect to dig much deeper in the months ahead. I look forward to attending classes, lectures and athletic events; talking with students in the residence halls and eating with them in the dining halls; working with faculty and staff to manage the college's daily operations; and listening to the advice of alumnae/i, parents and friends.

As with the high school students who were chosen to be members of the Class of 2008, I am pleased to be here and to have been selected as Wheaton's seventh president. It is both a great honor and an enormous responsibility to be entrusted with the leadership of an institution that represents 170 years of commitment and

contributions from so many people.

During the early stages of the search process, I was somewhat skeptical of the claims about the collaborative and cooperative nature of the college community. It was difficult for me to imagine that a college could sustain such a culture. However, several meetings with the members of the search committee and ultimately one full day on campus, convinced me that this is truly an unusually collaborative community. To me, the title of my column, "Convergence," represents a particular quality of interaction indicative of the Wheaton culture. The verb "converge" means "to come together and unite in a common interest or focus." The "common interest" at Wheaton College, of course, is to transform the lives of its students.

I passionately believe in the capacity of higher education to transform lives. Indeed, as the first in my immediate family to complete a university degree, I am an exemplar of this transformational power and feel very privileged to have had many mentors and role models throughout my life. It is precisely this kind of highly personalized learning experience that Wheaton makes possible for each of its students.

The college has grown tremendously in strength during the past decade, and it is developing an enviable niche in higher education. A dynamic and distinctive liberal arts and sciences institution, Wheaton challenges and sup-

ports students as they transform themselves into young adults, capable of living, working, and continuous learning in a global society. Wheaton approaches learning with a commitment to fostering connections among disciplines, between academic coursework and contemporary issues, and with a world of learning opportunities at home and abroad. Not only is the Wheaton Curriculum innovative and distinctive, but it also makes the most of the college's personal and collaborative atmosphere.

With such promise, the responsibility of the presidency would be weighty, indeed, overwhelming were it not for the

active community of support that has powered Wheaton all along, and will continue to do so. I know well that it is the dedication and skill of the college's faculty and staff and the loyal support of students, alumnae/i and parents who help make the college what it is today.

In the short time I have been on campus, the Wheaton community has been welcoming and encouraging to me and my family. I have already met with many faculty, staff, students, parents and alumnae/i. I look forward to meeting many more of you in the months ahead and to working together with you to forge the future of this very special place. 

