

Who are we?

Each year the incoming first-year and transfer students are required to complete a reading and writing assignment in anticipation of beginning a new intellectual life at Wheaton. Although the study topics change from year to year, the goal of the exercise remains constant—to expose students to multiple perspectives on engaging controversies. This year’s topic is identity, and students have read Amin Maalouf’s *In the Name of Identity* and their choice of either Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* or Lori Arviso Alvord’s *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*.

When they arrived on campus in late August, these students discussed their reading with their First-Year Seminar (FYS) professors, and Alvord will come to campus in late October to speak with students about her book. Generally that’s the end of the conversation. Not this year. Jennifer Sanborn, assistant director for Academic and Campus Life at the Marshall Multicultural Center, and Alice Zaff, director of Principal Gifts and an FYS administrative mentor, have launched an initiative to broaden this year’s examination of identity by inviting Wheaton’s staff to participate. Many staff members have read the assigned books, and we plan to meet in late September to consider how the authors discuss and define identity and how identity intersects our lives and our work.

Although Wheaton staff members interact academically with students nearly every day—often in profoundly important ways—most are hesitant to identify themselves as full members of the college’s *academic* community. Why? Do outside forces tell us that we are lesser intellectual players, or do we self-impose limitations on our academic participation? Or is it, as Maalouf posits, a combination of both types of constraint and perhaps many others. When we think about how these questions play out in our own lives, it’s even easier to imagine how difficult it might be for those people around us who must wrestle with much more complex layers of identity: class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, etc. Who are we, and how do we know?

The feature pages of this issue of the *Quarterly* do more to raise questions about how we identify ourselves than provide answers. The Class of 2005 arrived at Wheaton in late August 2001 with some ideas about their studies and their lives; two weeks later, everything changed. Five of these students talk about their new priorities as citizens of the world. Psychology Professor Bianca Cody Murphy is involved in a number of campus initiatives in and out of Wheaton’s classrooms, but she and her students find the time for another passion—creating safe schools nationwide. And Debby Dluhy ’62, a nationally respected educator and the dean of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, talks about the challenges of leadership of her own challenges with education.

Each of them, like each of us, excels in their chosen avocations, yet struggles daily with reconciliation of identity and role. In the end, I guess we’re all students in the same academic community—the world. 📍

—Jayne M. Iafrate, editor

LETTERS

“Classics” will be missed

As a classics major from the Class of 1989, I was deeply saddened to read about the passing of Professor Ann Marshall, assistant professor of classics from 1987 to 1993. During my last two years at Wheaton, I had the great pleasure of getting to know Professor Marshall, both as an educator and as a mentor. I took five of her classes and spent many mornings translating ancient Greek with her—at times one-on-one. One example that best describes Professor Marshall involves our first meeting in the fall of 1987. As a junior and second-year Greek student, I enrolled in my first Advanced Greek class only to discover that we would be translating one of the most difficult Greek texts—Euripides’ *Bacchae*. While I was worried that I wouldn’t be able to keep up with the pace, Professor Marshall kept reassuring me that, with hard work and her helping hand, I could handle it. I wondered how she could be so sure, especially since she didn’t even know me, but Professor Marshall was right. From that point on, she became a constant source of encouragement and had a tremendous impact on my life. Ann Marshall was an inspirational professor, a great person and a true classic. She will be sadly missed.

—Kristin Sanna Ferruolo ’89

The *Wheaton Quarterly* has just arrived and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. What a wonderful surprise to see the tribute paid to my friend Mabel Woolley on the inside back cover. I had the delightful honor of transporting Mabel to Wheaton on various occasions. We had a grand time on the trip over to Norton and back to her home. She was a woman interested in the world, in politics, in Wheaton, and was willing to share her views with her friends. She was fun and she loved to laugh. Thank you for the tribute; I can hear her now, saying, “Oh, my!”

—Betty Jane Owen ’60

Letters to the editor: The *Quarterly* welcomes letters to the editor on topics you’ve read in these pages or on other topics concerning the Wheaton community. Please address your letters to:

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