

At Wheaton, students take flight

With Commencement approaching, I find myself thinking about some of the outstanding students who will soon graduate. Without question, each will leave a mark on Wheaton for at least one obvious reason: Each was so wholeheartedly engaged with whatever most interested them that they made the college a better place than they found it.

Like most presidents, I come to know best those seniors who are passionately involved in student government or with issues of common concern to the administration. Some have been award-winning scholars or athletes; others have been students appealing to me for relief from sanctions imposed by the college. Their interests and backgrounds vary widely, but each has distinguished himself or herself in campus life.

Consider the cases of Karin Seeber, editor of the *Wheaton Wire*, and Laurel Mulherin, general manager of radio station WCCS. These media organizations are essential to the health of the community and are significantly higher in quality than one might expect at an institution of Wheaton's size. Jayne lafrate, editor of this magazine, has been adviser to the paper for Karin's four-year involvement. She says, "Few students at Wheaton today have done as much to advance campus discourse as Karin Seeber. She and her staff love journalism, and every week they work countless hours to give us the gift of a weekly newspaper that people look forward to reading."

Like the *Wire* editor, who works at least 20 hours a week

on the paper without academic credit, the general manager of WCCS puts in incredible amounts of time. Laurel Mulherin assumed her post in her first year and has since become synonymous with the station. "Laurel is an energetic worker who has the long-term view that big projects require," says Shontae Praileau, assistant director of student life. The Balfour-Hood student center recently mounted its ongoing exhibition of community art, an 18-month project Laurel spearheaded, she notes.

Laurel herself says that WCCS "has satisfied me in more ways than I can begin to count or even imagine. It picked a girl from a town of 100 people, who was told by her first-grade teacher that she would never learn how to read and turned her into someone who believes that everything and anything is not only probable, but possible and easily doable." I should point out that Laurel can not only read, she is valued by faculty as a research assistant and has posted a fine scholarly record.

Jared Duval comes to mind when I think of campus politics. A Udall and Truman Scholar, his passion for progressive politics has led him to leadership in the Activist Coalition to arranging conferences and speakers on topics such as diversity and anti-war activities. Recently, Jared and I discussed Wheaton's possible participation in The Roosevelt Institute, a new student-organized think tank at Stanford University.

Some of my acquaintances are best known for their athletic

prowess and intensely competitive nature. Matt Ristuccia, for example, is a Dean's List starting forward on the men's soccer team. He won all-conference and all-region honors while becoming the fourth-leading scorer in Wheaton history. In January he tried out for the New England Revolution, only the second Wheaton player invited to try out for a major league soccer team. He is co-president of the Wheaton Athletic Mentors (WAMs) and interned for Director of Athletics Chad Yowell. Then there is AJ Vasiliou, women's lacrosse starting goalie and all-conference player, another Dean's List student. Co-president of WAMs, she was the catalyst for this year's first annual Big Event, a highly popular—and entirely non-alcoholic—student weekend that raised \$2,000 for the nearby New Hope Shelter.

I am, of course, also acquainted with students who are remarkable young scholars. Tyler Matteson and Liza Semler, our two Watson Fellows this year (two of 50 selected nationwide), share an interest in the ways that

contemporary life intersects with rural traditions and each will travel abroad for a year to conduct research. Tyler will study the influence of the electronic drum in traditional world music, and Liza will examine the lives of elderly dairy farmers whose businesses will cease rather than modernize. Rhodes Scholar Carolyn Wills, a philosophy major who plans to pursue a career in medical ethics, is the second Wheaton student in the past four years to win the prestigious award. As you read in the spring 2005 *Quarterly*, she also happens to be a quality midfielder for the conference champion and NCAA semifinalist women's soccer team.

These seniors are examples, I believe, of students taking flight at Wheaton College. I believe that the faculty and staff do an exceptionally good job of making it possible for students to identify and pursue their interests and goals. For them, and for the college, it is a matter of reaching their potential. I have no doubt that the opportunities for engagement that we offer have much to do with their success. □



Wheaton students have excelled this year throughout the strata of campus life and beyond. Student Government President Alex Dewar (above) is among the Wheaton scholarship winners so far this year (see page 8).