

An inclusive process, a worthy successor

“This is terrific news and a wonderful choice. Dr. Crutcher is a worthy successor to President Marshall. Kudos all around!”

That was the response from one alumna after receiving an e-mail from me about the announcement of Ronald A. Crutcher as Wheaton’s seventh president. Her sentiments summed up the comments I heard from a great many Wheaton people following his appointment. Naturally, I agree. He shares Wheaton’s long-standing commitment to equality for women and men, values the life of the mind and appreciates the collaborative atmosphere of the college’s liberal arts and sciences programs.

The fact that Dr. Crutcher “fits” Wheaton so well is hardly surprising. Despite being confidential, the search process was extremely inclusive. The Presidential Search Committee took extraordinary steps to seek advice from alumnae/i, parents, students, faculty, staff and friends of the college. During the search process, the committee held 17 stakeholder meetings, mailed thousands of

letters asking for your thoughts, and conducted conversations with numerous members of the college community. The effort paid off: committee members had many intense, thoughtful conversations with members of the community and received more than 150 messages with nominations and suggestions.

The numbers tell the story. In less than 10 months, the committee conducted 12 meetings, 12 conference calls, 170 telephone interviews and consulted with 72 expert sources for search guidance and nominations. From this activity, the committee recruited more than 300 candidates and then narrowed the pool to 30 well-qualified prospects who were seriously interested in the position. Interviews and references led the committee to identify 12 semi-finalists; campus visits unanimously confirmed that Wheaton had found one outstanding new president.

As a professor myself, I know that leadership of a college requires an exceptional person, particularly when, like Wheaton, the institution is


dynamic, vibrant and committed to quality. As members of the Wheaton community reminded the search committee, the college’s leader must have the ability to listen closely and to hear each individual voice as well as the confidence to orchestrate many talented people to create a harmonious whole, someone who understands the importance of collaboration as well as the value of an inspiring solo. In short, it takes a person with intellectual breadth, creativity, energy and skill.

In President Crutcher we have found a scholar of distinction and an experienced leader. As a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Miami University of Ohio, he studied at Yale University as a Woodrow Wilson and Ford Foundation Fellow. Remarkably, he was the first cellist to earn a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Yale and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach and study in Germany. Since then, he has held teaching and senior leadership positions at the University of Texas at Austin, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Wittenberg University before returning to his undergraduate alma mater as its provost.

In the past five years, Dr. Crutcher has focused on initiatives that have enhanced the quality of education at Miami, revitalizing the University Honors program, revamping the first-year experience to intensify academic rigor, and establishing a new Center for American and World Cultures. And he has remained active as a teacher and scholar. He is a

founding member of the highly regarded Klemperer Trio, which will soon be celebrating its 25th anniversary; a board member and executive committee officer of the Association of American Colleges and Universities; and has been advisor to numerous educational and arts organizations such as the Fulbright Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The success of the search is a tribute to the good work of the committee members, who provided outstanding service to the college. Trustee Thomas Hollister, who chaired the committee, and trustee Deborah Haigh Dluhy ’62, as vice chair, put in countless hours as the leaders. Every member served beyond the call of duty, including senior Todd Pang ’04, a Hawaiian native who found himself getting up very early in the morning to join conference calls during the summer and winter breaks. We owe every member of the committee gratitude for the care and commitment with which they approached their responsibilities.

The search committee’s work, and ours, is not done. The committee has agreed to continue to serve as advisors to Dr. Crutcher, President Marshall and the Board of Trustees as the transition plan unfolds. The coming year will be important as our community comes together to support our new president. As alumnae/i, we have an important role to play in maintaining Wheaton’s strength and in building on it for the future. I hope you will join me in welcoming our new president, and in lending your energies to lifting our alma mater to new heights. 



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