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Faculty File

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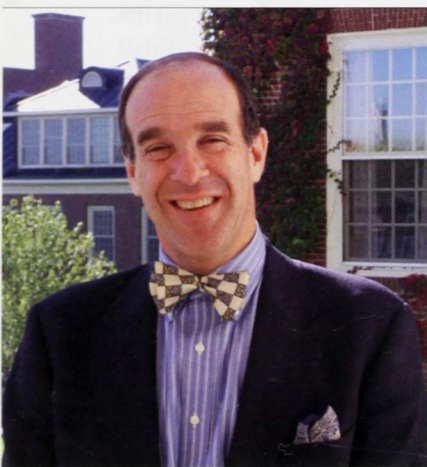
See Dick (Not) Run

Maisel's controversial study of candidate emergence continues

By Stephen B. Collins '74

It's the autumn of an odd-numbered year, close to the zero hour for those Congressional candidates who must decide whether to throw their hats in the ring if they are to make filing deadlines for the 2000 national election.

Ask L. Sandy Maisel, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Government, about who is running—and who is not—and you'll get the informed insights



BRIAN SPEER

Sandy Maisel

of an expert who has studied Congress for three decades. Who is not running is now Maisel's primary research interest, and it's also research that generated more controversy than the National Science Foundation (NSF) would have predicted when it offered funding.

Maisel and Walter Stone, a professor of political science at the University of Colorado, received \$175,000 from the NSF for their Candidate Emergence Study, which started in 1997. The goal was to understand the decision-making process of potential candidates—those who run and especially those who decide not to. First Maisel and

Stone obtained the names of Democrats and Republicans considered strong potential candidates for Congress in 200 selected U.S. House districts, whether or not those possible candidates had shown any interest in running. Next they surveyed these ideal candidates about their political ambitions, likelihood of running for office, perceptions of their districts and incumbents, view of their chances of winning and what opportunities, costs and benefits were associated with seeking a seat in the House.

The inquiry made some members of Congress nervous. The initial mailing prompted calls from about 20 congressional staffs, most of whom were mollified once Maisel and Stone explained the scientific nature of the study, that it addressed 200 districts and that it involved both Democrats and Republicans. One was unconvinced, however, and this Congressman went on the attack. Rep. Bill Clay (D-Mo.) issued a press release in June of 1997 expressing "outrage" that tax dollars were being "wasted" when "there is never any shortage of good and qualified people who feel they could serve in Congress."

When the press picked up the story, "our phones rang nonstop," said Maisel. Clay and three other House members pressed for investigations of the study by the NSF's inspector general and the General Accounting Office (GAO).

Though the NSF investigation cleared the study as being "fully consistent" with the research proposal the foundation had agreed to fund, Clay and his colleagues attacked the study on

the House floor and implied that the NSF regretted funding it.

The controversy did not fade after this symbolic attack, and things got hairy when the GAO's investigation ordered Maisel and Stone to breach the confidentiality of their informants (confidentiality is required by guidelines of the NSF and guaranteed in the human subjects law governing scientific research). Colby and University of Colorado attorneys entered negotiations with the GAO and the NSF's unsympathetic general counsel and, at one impasse, "were prepared to fight a congressional subpoena," Maisel said. At that point Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and others persuaded Rep. Clay to ask the GAO to wrap up its investigation. The subsequent GAO report blandly concluded that the grant proposals "were submitted, reviewed, and processed according to the NSF's grant policies and procedures."

The political science lesson for Maisel was one of political power. "Just because you know you're right, and everyone knows that you're right, doesn't mean you're going to come out ahead," he said.

The sideshow overshadowed research that reached interesting conclusions and warranted a follow-up study on how potential candidates' views change. "The NSF said 'of course you can apply,'" Maisel said of the sequel study, "but they begged us not to." In September he and Stone received \$138,580 from the Smith Richardson Foundation for a two-year study titled "Who Runs for Congress and Who Doesn't Run: The

Candidate Emergence Study."

The initial study found that "the better they [potential candidates] were, the less likely they would run," Maisel said. Often it was a practical decision based on their sense that they couldn't win against incumbents. But a greater concern was the perception that Congress is no longer a place where people can solve the nation's problems, a phenomenon Maisel attributes to the success of the Reagan revolution, which shifted power to state and local policymakers. That and the perception that politics and Congress are too negative and are held in low regard have had a notable effect on people's willingness to serve.

The negativity—the partisan bitterness—worries Maisel most. "I have always enjoyed having conservative students in the classroom. I love having someone like Joe Reiser [assistant professor of government], who is very conservative, in the department." Congress, however, has changed greatly in the last 15 or 20 years and has lost the code of comity that permits friendships across the aisle, Maisel says.

"How do you maintain a civil debate when the other side takes an absolute position?" he asked. It's a dilemma that he attacks as a teacher by making students take the side of a debate that runs contrary to their own beliefs.

The study's findings underline the need to maintain civil discourse in politics as one foundation of a functional democratic system. Otherwise, "you don't have people dedicating their lives to making the system better," Maisel said. "That's scary as hell to me."

Exceptional Faculty Recruits

This fall, Colby welcomed new members to the faculty, including six assistant professors who are in tenure-track positions and Robert Gastaldo, chair of the Geology Department and the first Whipple-Coddington Professor of Geology.

Gastaldo, who was the Alumni Professor of Geology at Auburn University in Alabama, holds a doctorate in geology from Southern Illinois University. A Gettysburg College graduate, he decided to move to Maine, and from a large university to a small college, for the satisfaction of teaching in a liberal arts setting. "I always had undergrads in my lab," he said. "I always found it a rewarding thing. It's at that point that students decide seriously what they want to do." Colby's emphasis on re-

search as the best way to teach science was another attraction.

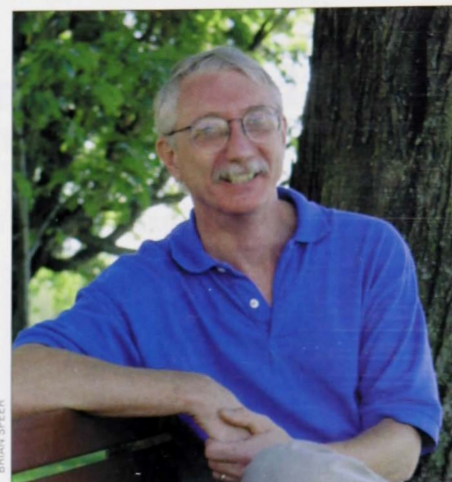
The ability to recruit a seasoned and respected senior professor like Gastaldo to lead the geology program is a testament to the value of endowed chairs, President Bill Cotter said. The Whipple-Coddington chair, given by Trustee Emeritus Jane Whipple Coddington '55, is one of 31 named professorships at Colby, 27 of which have been endowed in the past 10 years.

Six tenure-track positions also were filled, including a joint appointment in African-American studies and anthropology filled by Maritza Straughn-Williams, who completed her doctoral studies in anthropology at the City University of New York. She specializes in the Caribbean as

well as in medical anthropology.

Three new Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professors of Biology are Catherine Bevier, Judy Stone and Andrea Tilden. Bevier, who received her Ph.D. in ecology from the University of Connecticut, brings expertise in animal behavior and behavior ecology. Stone holds a doctorate in ecology and evolution from the State University of New York at Stony Brook and specializes in pollination biology, ecology and the evolution of flowering plants. Tilden earned a doctorate in physiology from the University of Oklahoma with specialization in neurobiology and comparative animal physiology.

Dasan Thamattoor, assistant professor of chemistry, has a doctorate in chemistry from



Robert Gastaldo

Princeton. His specialty is physical organic chemistry.

Peter Ditmanson holds a joint appointment in East Asian studies and history. He earned his Ph.D. in history and East Asian languages from Harvard University and specializes in intellectual and cultural history.

A Grant to Study Francophone Women

When Professor Suellen Diaconoff (French) started to pull together information and support for a new interdisciplinary program on French-speaking women in Africa and the Caribbean, she was amazed at how a campus in rural Maine is so thoroughly engaged in international affairs and activities. "It was really fantastic," she said.

As a result of her initiative, this involvement becomes even deeper this semester. Diaconoff was the leader of a coalition of faculty members who won a U.S. Department of Education grant to support a two-year project titled "Focus on Francophone Women in Africa and the Caribbean." The program

will help add new courses in several departments, will offer possible Jan Plan trips to Guadalupe and North Africa and next year will bring a foreign scholar to Mayflower Hill for part of a semester.

Dean of Faculty Ed Yeterian sees the program as an extension of the progressive revisions that the French Department has made to its curriculum in recent years. When the numbers of French literature majors started dropping, the department became the first at Colby to expand traditional language instruction to include cultural studies as well. In 1994-95 it began offering French studies and discovered it was a popular option. Many students now double major in French studies and international studies.



Suellen Diaconoff

This new program reaches a bit further and combines the resources of the French Department with the international studies program and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Diaconoff is particularly pleased that it will focus on geographical regions and cultures that are often not only underrepresented in the formal curriculum but are historically undervalued by Western civilization.

The program will investigate issues of civil society through the status of women in the former French colonies or territories of Africa and the Caribbean. Conflicting claims of tradition and modernity and socioeconomic, political and cultural transformations in those societies will be studied.

The emergence of new roles for African and Caribbean women—intellectual politicians, educators, health-care givers, film makers, writers, and artists—will be examined, as will the challenges that they face in the coming century.

The program offers exciting opportunities for students whether they enroll in the courses or not. An African and Creole film festival was scheduled for the beginning of October, all-campus lectures are in the offing, and self-instructional units on African and Caribbean languages—perhaps Arabic, Wolof, Bambara and/or Creole—will be added to Colby's state-of-the-art Language Resource Center.