

# Colby



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## Readers Write

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**No Arms in College Race**

Colby is about education and not about winning wars. The article "Vying for Scholars" (Jeff Wuorio '79, fall 1999 Colby) is filled with war references. "Colby and other elite colleges and universities are engaged in a type of war with one another—vying to lure the best and brightest that they can, to recruit gifted faculty, to continue to win grants for new buildings and for new academic and extracurricular programs. That requires an expensive arsenal of superlative programs, facilities and services. . . . The battle is not merely fueled by other institutions. . . . But if the arms race analogy is valid, how do you measure if Colby is winning? . . . Then there are the 'win rates'—how often Colby won the tug-of-war when applicants also were accepted at other colleges. . . . If the analogy of a war among elite colleges is accurate, and if one of the costs of the war is the pricetag on a Colby education, the victor in the conflict isn't necessarily any one school whose win rate is better or whose dorms sparkle the most. . . ."

The analogy to war is offensive and inappropriate in a world tormented by war, which has cost millions of lives and injuries and yet still threatens to destroy humanity. Surely there are better analogies to use to describe Colby's effort to be an excellent college.

Stephen Schoeman '64  
Scotch Plains, N.J.

**Dander and Economics**

Boy, the last issue really got my dander up. Let's start with the top: the "Vying for Scholars" article. I agree with the mission statement for Colby: "provide superlative academics to the most qualified students, regardless of their ability to pay."

However, the article remarks that it's the "amenities" that attract the kids, going on to quote one student who came for the dorms, and President Cotter giving the stamp of approval to "expect first-rate everything." I ask: Is Colby running an academic institution or a resort?

If alums' giving is spent—even in part—to provide swank play areas for students, so that Colby can get the "best" students and therefore push Colby ever higher on the college ranking systems and thus permit us alums to feel better about our undergraduate

college, I suggest the current leadership of Colby has gone astray. I'm still enough a child of the Sixties to support the notion: "Live simply, that others may simply live."

What would I do? Cut all frills, put the students to work, and set up a giant philanthropic institution. Take \$10,000 of each student's yearly cost, which works out for 1,400 students [current enrollment is 1,764] to an annual total of \$14 million, and give it to people and organizations working to improve life for other humans and species (such as Kent Wommack '77's Nature Conservancy).

So are students at least getting good academics? Not judging by the quality of the economics in the article by Stephen Collins '74, "The Erstwhile Elm City." Collins outlines, and I applaud, President Cotter's involving Colby in a downtown revival of Waterville, an effort near to the hearts of those of us who hate sprawl.

But the article itself lacks data, containing instead a list of companies which have left, companies which remain, and companies which have arrived. How about a measure of how well the efforts have worked? Do the downtown businesses have more revenue or less? Do they employ more or fewer workers? Is the effort accomplishing anything?

Looks to me as though Colby's effort to attract quality students by building beautiful dorm rooms is working, but the resort-like atmosphere has left them fuzzy in the head, able to write only generalist articles.

Chalmers Hardenbergh '67  
Yarmouth, Maine

**Missed Spellings**

The new CBB international centers, opened with an award from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, are testimony to the fact that Colby is an outstanding institution of higher learning. What would the foundation say (not to mention Bates and Bowdoin), however, if it were to read your article and notice the incorrect spelling of EQUADOR, rather than the correct ECUADOR? Capetown, moreover, is commonly referred to as Cape Town, at least according to my graduate professors and the dictionaries I perused. Otherwise, well done!

Christopher R. Tompkins '89  
DeSoto, Texas

Colby

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