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## From the President

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# From the President

William D. Adams



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The Annual Report of the President, my opportunity to share with you reflections about the academic year just past, begins this year with a peek at the near future. Although it seems incredible to contemplate, Dean Parker Beverage and his colleagues in Colby's Admissions Office are now recruiting Colby's bicentennial class, the Class of 2013. As venerable an institution as Colby seems in many ways—in the maturity of its academic program, the timeless beauty of its campus, the influence of its alumni around the world—the feeling in the air on Mayflower Hill remains fresh and full of the excitement of striving for goals, of never being satisfied with *good enough*. That's the kind of atmosphere that makes you fall in love with a place, as I certainly have in my years as president.

Even as I reflect on the 2007-08 academic year, I have that bicentennial class in mind. Much of what transpired at Colby last year will have a direct bearing on the Colby those students will come to know. The bicentennial theme, "In their Footsteps," describes both our debt to the thousands of students, teachers, and staff members whose lives have inflected this College for two centuries and our sense that we, too, will leave footprints for others who follow us. Last year, faculty and staff colleagues, the Board of Trustees, alumni, parents, and students contributed to the lasting legacy of Colby.

## Access Expanded

In January, at their meeting in Boston, Colby's Board of Trustees authorized a bold initiative to increase access to Colby for students from many socioeconomic groups. No longer will our students be required to take out loans as part of a Colby financial aid package. Of the handful of American colleges and universities that have established such programs in recent years, including Harvard, Princeton, Davidson, and Stanford, Colby is among those with the smallest endowments. This is a stretch for us, a reach for an appropriate star. Students and their families stand to save tens of thousands of dollars thanks to this program, and Colby students will be able to graduate unburdened by loan debt. We can only begin to imagine what that may mean for these students in their lives after Colby, but we hope it will allow them to make career choices, choices about graduate education, and the like based more on the urgings of their hearts than on the drag on their wallets.

## Curriculum Review Underway

As the College concluded the process that resulted in our reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the senior administration and the faculty decided that it was time to assess Colby's curriculum in light of what students told us about their sense that they could gain more mastery over the skills that are the hallmarks of educated persons. (See my essay in the 2006-07 *Annual Report of the President* for details.)

In consultation with Vice President for Academic Affairs Ed Yeterian and me, the faculty empanelled three curricular planning working groups, composed of faculty but with administrative support from the Office of the Dean of Faculty and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, to delve into areas of critical importance for the present and future success of Colby students. The groups, which are due to present their findings in February 2009, are tackling ideas such as



PHOTOS FROM LEFT: KENDYL SULLIVAN '11, ROB KIEVIT '09, LING ZHU '09

how best to engage students in academic and other activities in order to inflect the intellectual atmosphere on campus; how ought senior year be organized in order to best send graduates out into the world; and what array of skills should students be certain to develop and hone in order to thrive throughout their lives. There will be much more to say about this effort in upcoming president's reports and other communications; it could have profound effects on the way education is shaped on Mayflower Hill.

### Re-imagining Student Life

Under the leadership of Vice President Jim Terhune, the Student Affairs Division launched Colby 360, a wide-ranging approach to student life that seeks to blur the lines between classroom and out-of-class activities. Colby 360, about which you may read much more on Colby's Web site, "asserts as its guiding principle the idea that a residential college affords students opportunities to learn and develop in all aspects of their college lives." Its statement of purpose continues: "However, where traditional approaches to student affairs in residential colleges tend to focus on creating policies and procedures, Colby 360 establishes a setting for student life designed to achieve five specific learning outcomes: 1) development of life skills; 2) appreciation of and engagement with diversity and human difference; 3) understanding democracy and civic responsibility; 4) promoting wellness and healthy lifestyle choices; and 5) leadership education for the 21st century."

The College's commitment to Colby 360 will require us to re-imagine student life on Mayflower Hill. We anticipate that the more responsibility students have to craft community for themselves, the more opportunity they are afforded to engage with Colby's fundamental values and with the faculty's hopes for their development as intellectually curious and actively involved citizens, the more confident they become that they are developing skills and habits of mind that will serve them throughout their lives, the more powerful and valuable their time at Colby will be.

As with our curricular planning, we have a distance to travel in order to reshape student life. We began one leg of this journey on the last day of classes in May 2008, when seniors gathered at Miller Library for the "champagne on the steps" celebration. Begun about a decade ago as a brief toast by the graduating class to itself, "champagne steps" has had a troubled history marred by excessive alcohol consumption with all its predictable results.

At their meeting in May, with the full support and encouragement of the administration, trustees passed a resolution eliminating the "champagne steps" and directing the administration to take any and all steps to eliminate the culture of excessive drinking on Colby's campus. That work began in earnest this fall with the establishment of the Campus Culture Working Group, chaired by Jim Terhune and including trustees, students, faculty, other administrators, parents, and a member of the Waterville Police Department.

We are fully dedicated to the task of reducing alcohol's central role in too many student social events. Our approach is dependent on rejecting an "us vs. them" mentality that can infantilize students and relieve them of accountability for building a community of which we can all be proud. The College has and will continue to enforce clear policies on alcohol abuse, but meaningful progress in reimagining social life on campus cannot be made in a cat-and-mouse atmosphere where we set rules and students look for loopholes. Working on this issue in the context of Colby 360 puts us shoulder-to-shoulder with students.

### Stay Tuned

There will be much more to say about all of these topics as academic year 2008-09 unfolds, and those of you with access to the Web needn't wait until next year's President's Report to learn more. The online version of this essay contains active links to information about initiatives mentioned here, and Colby's home page serves up a daily menu of stories about the College and its people. I invite you to visit often.

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