

Renewing Community Dialogue

BY DALE ROGERS MARSHALL, PRESIDENT



Patricia King '63

More than half of all Americans don't feel they understand stem-cell research well enough to decide the ethical issues that it presents. That's why we look to leaders in the field, like Patricia King '63, professor of law, medicine and ethics at Georgetown Law, and co-chair of the 1993 National Institutes of Health embryo research panel.

In early July, just as President George W. Bush's deliberations over stem-cell research began to

dominate headlines, many people turned on the television to find the new chair of Wheaton's board of trustees helping to fill the nation's knowledge gap, offering a primer on the issue to viewers of Fox News' *Special Report with Brit Hume*. The clarity of Pat's comments and her obvious command of this complex subject led me and many others from Wheaton to feel great pride in our college and the accomplishments of its graduates.

Indeed, that is the response that Pat has inspired in alumnae/i around the country by agreeing to chair the board of trustees—the first alumna to hold this critical position—and help guide the institution to a new level of excellence. At the Alumnae/i Association meeting in Cole Memorial Chapel at Reunion, I talked about some of Pat's exciting plans for alumnae/i, which will become part of our new strategic plan, Vision: Wheaton 2005. She is committed to bringing trustees and the Association closer together. We'll start from a good place because there are already five alumnae/i trustees on the board. Serving five-year terms, they are important members of both the trustee and Alumnae/i Association boards. We also have a President's Commission, which meets twice a year and gives advice to me and the board. However, we want to promote a wider dialogue between alumnae/i and trustees so the college benefits from the wealth of insight and expertise that everyone can contribute.

The Alumnae/i Association has taken a leading role in this effort with the long-range planning process that began in the spring and will continue into spring 2002. The goal is to widen

the circle of alumnae/i involvement in the life of the college through the activities of the association. Alumnae/i Association leaders conducted a number of extremely valuable focus-group discussions on these topics in major cities on the East and West coasts this year, and plan more for the fall. In addition, the association will conduct a survey to gather more feedback from alumnae/i across the country.

Themes emerging from the planning effort include the interest of alumnae/i in a variety of activities, including expanding career-planning workshops for graduates, recruiting new students for Wheaton, establishing internships for current students, strengthening club and class activities, and increasing fundraising. The use of technology, the special interests of male graduates and the lingering sense of betrayal over the timing of the college's transition to coeducation are additional themes that the Alumnae/i Association believes are important to address.

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The *Quarterly* itself will be changing based on alumnae/i input. The college surveyed a broad sample of alumnae/i about the *Quarterly* and *Wheaton Matters* this spring and expects to make changes to its publications by the end of the 2001–2002 school year. One

change we're already making is to publish articles that fully explore Wheaton issues in a balanced way, considering the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the college. The articles in this issue reflect our commitment to a thorough and critical examination of subjects, which is, after all, the bedrock of the liberal arts tradition at Wheaton.

So, consider this magazine an invitation to make your voice heard. We particularly hope to hear more from the classes of the '70s, '80s and '90s, where the college is looking to find its future leaders. Wheaton needs your advice and participation to help it thrive in a changing world while remaining true to our traditional values, including the value of equal opportunities for women. Pat and I look forward to working with all of you to build a Wheaton of which we can all continue to be proud.

