

Vision: Wheaton 2005

BY DALE ROGERS MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

Inspired by the reflective mood of the millennium, the staff of the Madeleine Clark Wallace Library started the New Year by launching a time capsule. The librarians will spend the spring semester gathering Wheaton artifacts from students, faculty and staff. Near the time of Commencement/Reunion, the library staff will seal the contents in a formal ceremony and store the container in a secure spot, leaving instructions for it to be opened in 100 years.

What will go into the college's time capsule? Athletics donated a toy lion to represent our outstanding achievements in sports and Student Life contributed a "We are Wheaton" button to symbolize our close community. As the semester goes on, we will continue to collect items and memories that define our lives at Wheaton.

It's intriguing to think about what Wheaton will be like at the end of the 21st century, and about how students, alumnae/i, faculty and staff then will view our own era. I suspect that they will recognize this period as a particularly historic time. The fact is that Wheaton has never been stronger. Wheaton's recent 10-year reaccreditation report made that point in unequivocal terms. Record numbers of high school students seek to enroll; students and faculty are reaching new heights of academic achievement and supporters of the Campaign for Wheaton have given the college new financial strength.

In every way, Wheaton is well-poised to set new goals for excellence, and that is the starting point for *Vision: Wheaton 2005*, a new strategic plan for the college that will guide us to new accomplishments over the next five years. This fall, I charged planning committees on campus to rethink and sharpen strategies on enhancing academic life, diversity on campus, student retention and satisfaction, the role of technology and the financial plans to support our objectives.

This period in which Wheaton has been so successful will also prove historic because of the challenges that face our college and other residential liberal arts colleges. We must proceed with a sense of competitive urgency to confront the continuing market-

place challenges, from for-profit providers using new technologies to lower-cost public institutions, as well as from our traditional competitors—other selective private liberal arts colleges. This competition is stimulating rapid changes in higher education, just as it is in other sectors of society, such as health care. And the pace of change seems never to slow. This new state of perpetual change is often described as "permanent whitewater." We must learn to thrive in turbulence rather than imagine we can simply ride it out.

We know that Wheaton's combination of rigorous academic work in a traditional liberal arts curriculum with internships, volunteer service and other forms of field work make for a powerful, high-quality learning experience. What's more, alumnae/i consistently reaffirm the impact of working closely with Wheaton's first-class faculty members in the classroom and on independent projects. Through *Vision: Wheaton 2005*, we must find ways to respond to our rapidly changing world without losing sight of what makes Wheaton special.

To be successful will require bold thinking and creativity. We want to transform, not move incrementally. This is not a time for just tweaking. We want to be mission-driven,

while also being aware of the market; we want to be innovative, launching initiatives that have both substance and sizzle. In a way, it's extremely fitting that the college wrestle with questions about how to flourish in the future because we touch the future. Today's students are the leaders of tomorrow and they will face the very same challenges of excelling in a constantly shifting world. We must ask ourselves: What will tomorrow's leaders need to know? How can we expand students' ability to integrate traditional knowledge with new ways of thinking? What else can we do to help students develop their ability to be creative thinkers, careful observers, effective communicators and dedicated citizens in the brave new world to come?

I encourage each of you to dream exciting dreams about Wheaton's future and to share your ideas with me.

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College Archivist Zeph Stickney and President Marshall review time capsule materials.