



LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

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**BALANCING PRIORITIES:
A REPORT TO THE LAFAYETTE COLLEGE COMMUNITY**

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In setting the right course for Lafayette during this period of extreme economic instability, we are well served to keep listening to students like Christopher Haight '09. A Policy Studies major, a catalyst behind the powerful 2007 *Speak Out Against Darfur* video, and the inaugural recipient of the College's Caine Scholars Award in Global Leadership, Business, and Policy, Christopher has a succinct explanation for why Lafayette has been the perfect place for him: "I wanted to combine education and action."

What Lafayette does best – as Christopher and his peers and generations of grateful alumni can attest – is provide a dynamic learning environment for bright and exceptionally motivated young people. The strategic plan adopted by the faculty and trustees 18 months ago underscored our commitment to strengthen this commitment to academic quality.

Although the uncertain and difficult economic climate has necessitated adjustments in the timetable for implementing the plan, I am pleased to report that exciting progress is already being made in key areas. The following paragraphs also highlight the careful work being done by our trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni to ensure that the College undertakes the fiscally responsible measures that are essential during this unusually challenging time.

Throughout this process, we remain mindful that the success we enjoy today would not have been possible if the College's leadership over many decades had not taken the prudent long view. We must continue to balance the needs of our current students with our obligation to be attentive stewards so that students in the future can benefit from equally remarkable opportunities.

Unprecedented Academic Opportunities

The single most important goal of the strategic plan is to strengthen the student-faculty interaction that has always been a hallmark of a Lafayette education. And the single most ambitious step we are taking to achieve that goal is to reduce the student-faculty ratio from 11:1 to below 10:1, a reduction we will achieve primarily through the addition of 35 full-time faculty positions over the next three to five years.

Searches are now under way for the first eight of these positions: a cultural anthropologist with expertise in East Asia, South Asia, or the Middle East; a developmental biologist; an economist; a historian specializing in the Middle East; a philosopher of science with a special interest in bioethics; a behavioral or clinical neuroscientist; a specialist in Asian religions; and a professor

and director for the women's and gender studies program. Thanks in part to the economic downturn, which has forced many of our peers to curtail or freeze hiring, we have a special opportunity to select from an exceptionally qualified applicant pool in filling these positions.

The curriculum is growing, as well. Under the direction of Provost Wendy Hill, ad hoc faculty committees are developing specific recommendations for new programs in global studies, environmental studies, and the life sciences, as well as initiatives that will strengthen the integration of engineering and the liberal arts. In the coming months you will learn more about these and other exciting developments and the impressive facilities, endowed professorships, and additional resources that will support them.

Those of you who have been on campus recently have seen the considerable activity at 714 Sullivan Lane (the former Phi Delta Theta house), which is undergoing extensive renovation in anticipation of its new identity as Scott Hall. Named in recognition of the generosity of Walter '59 and Kate Scott, the building will house the Office of the Dean of the College, the Academic Resource Center, and the new Center for Innovative Pedagogy and Scholarship (which will begin operating later this year). These programs, which are coordinated by Dean Hannah Stewart-Gambino, all directly support student success. With the opening of Scott Hall at the end of the summer, we expect to build on the demonstrable progress that is already being made in such areas as the quality and effectiveness of our tutoring and advising programs, the support we provide for students applying to law and medical schools, and the number of students who are selected to receive Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Fellowships, Morris K. Udall and Goldwater scholarships, Fulbright grants, and other prestigious fellowships and awards.

Although most of these initiatives require substantial new or augmented funding, we are also seeking to benefit even more fully from resources that are already in place, including our extraordinarily dedicated faculty. These synergies have been particularly evident in efforts to strengthen the core curriculum and foster interdisciplinarity.

Access and Affordability

As diligently as we're working to create an even more faculty-intensive and student-focused learning environment, we remain equally committed to keeping our programs within the financial reach of the young men and women who have the potential to benefit most fully from them. We were therefore delighted earlier this winter when three influential publications singled Lafayette out as a "best value" in American higher education. Under the eye-catching title "Colleges That Pay Off," *The Wall Street Journal's SmartMoney* magazine rated Lafayette third among liberal-arts institutions in a survey that factored in each school's tuition and the earning power of its graduates. *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* ranked us 18th among the top 50 liberal-arts colleges. We were also included among the 50 top colleges in the 2009 best-value list compiled by *The Princeton Review* (and published by *USA Today*).

This recognition reflects the substantial investment Lafayette has traditionally made in financial aid – an investment that must now increase even more dramatically if we are to keep pace with students' demonstrated need at a time when families are facing unprecedented financial pressure. Effective with the current academic year, loans have been eliminated from the financial-aid packages awarded to students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents and whose family

income falls below \$50,000. Starting in 2009-10, students with a family income of between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will face a maximum loan burden of \$2,500 per year. Because these income ranges encompass roughly 80% of all U.S. households, the initiative will limit – and in many cases eliminate – the loan burden facing many of our graduates.

In addition to underwriting this ambitious loan-relief program, we face the further obligation to do as much as we can to provide direct grant support to the students who will be matriculating in August and to our returning students, including a number who have not qualified for aid before. To address these needs we will be increasing the financial-aid budget by approximately 8% next year, considerably more than any other operating program will receive during a period of steeply declining revenues from the endowment and reduced support from fundraising. The Board of Trustees has also limited the increases for tuition (4.5%) and for combined tuition, room, board, and fees (4.81%) to a level that we hope will not be unduly burdensome for our families.

Despite having taken these and other aggressive steps to counter the perception that a Lafayette education (and enrollment at leading private colleges in general) is beyond the means of any but the wealthiest families – a perception that has generated record-breaking application numbers for public universities – we anticipate a decline in applications of around 10% this year. Even so, we are in the enviable position of attracting more than nine applicants for each of the 620 anticipated openings in the Class of 2013. We have the further satisfaction of knowing that these students will benefit from some of the most outstanding instruction, facilities, and opportunities for intellectual and personal enrichment offered by any college or university.

A Milestone Anniversary

Even a gala year-long celebration can hardly do justice to what the Morris R. Williams Center for the Arts has meant to the College and to the Lehigh Valley over the past 25 years. In addition to housing popular academic programs in art history, music, and theater, the Center hosts residencies by acclaimed performers and visual artists, delights audiences by offering world-class performances on its main stage, and supports gallery exhibitions that engage the eye and capture the imagination.

Ellis Finger, the Center's visionary director since it opened in 1983, has ensured that the 2008-09 concert season will be an especially memorable one. This semester's schedule features three concerts by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, long a "fan favorite" at Lafayette. The first of these performances included the world premiere of Ravi Shankar's Concerto No. 3, with his daughter, the immensely gifted sitarist Anoushka Shankar, as soloist. This marvelous composition, which was commissioned in honor of the Center's anniversary thanks to the generosity of a local donor, was then performed by Orpheus in Carnegie Hall two nights later.

In addition to giving two more concerts at Lafayette this season, Orpheus will soon fill an unaccustomed space in the Williams Center: the walls of its art gallery. To honor the Center's 25th anniversary, the College commissioned the noted American photographer Larry Fink to work with Orpheus during rehearsals in Manhattan and performances at Lafayette. *The Sense of Sound*, an exhibit of the black-and-white images that resulted from this extraordinary collaboration, will be on display from March 22 through May 10.

Planning for the Future

As proud as we are of the Williams Center's transformative impact, space constraints now seriously limit the building's usefulness. Even with the relocation of several of our arts programs to other facilities, including the Williams Visual Arts Building, the Williams Center no longer adequately supports the full range of programmatic needs it was designed to address.

The expansion of the Williams Center was among the most pressing capital needs identified in the strategic plan. To assist us in addressing physical needs of this type in a systematic and timely fashion, the College engaged Ayers Saint Gross, an architectural services and planning firm whose clients include leading colleges and universities, to develop a master plan for the campus. The planners presented their final recommendations to the trustees last month.

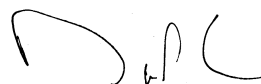
The proposed plan, which would be implemented in phases as funding and other requirements are met, addresses specific construction and renovation needs and also offers a comprehensive vision for unifying the campus, enhancing its beauty, and creating buildings and spaces that are more environmentally sensitive. The planners have encouraged us to renew our focus on the Quad as the center of the campus by making it a more attractive and pedestrian-friendly space. The plan also identifies opportunities for incorporating additional state-of-the-art educational facilities, including those that would support instruction in the sciences and technology and global studies, and for improving the major campus gateways, most notably the North Third Street and Cattell Street corridors. Thanks to the remarkable generosity of alumni, parents, and friends, we are already moving forward with several major campus improvements, including the Scott Hall project to which I referred earlier.

Loyalty and Commitment

Every gift – whether it supports a construction project or a professorship, advances the work of the Annual Fund, endows a scholarship, provides equipment for a lab or for a student-athlete, or assists Lafayette in some other way – is particularly welcome during a time when so many of our donors are confronting the same economic uncertainties the College is facing.

We also benefit immeasurably from the service provided so tirelessly and enthusiastically by our volunteers. Their efforts strengthen the ties between the Alumni Association and the campus, enhance Lafayette's appeal to talented high-school students, create internship and externship opportunities for undergraduates, and support our mission in countless other ways.

Our strengths as a community have never been more apparent – or more important – than they are today. Thank you for keeping the College among your personal priorities during this unusually challenging time.



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