

CLASS of 2011- WELCOME

Saturday, August 25, 2007

Martha C. Merrill '84, Dean of Admission & Financial Aid

Welcome to Connecticut College! Congratulations to the parents in the room for surviving the college application, admission and selection process. And to each and every newly enrolled student, first years **and** transfers, kudos to you. You made it!

Students, I'll always have deany advice for you, but like many of the adults here today, I am the parent of a college freshman. So this time, I may look to all of *you* (parents and students alike) for advice, empathy and excitement as my husband and I deliver our daughter to *her* college on Monday.

My staff and I have had the pleasure of meeting many of the members of the Class of 2011 in person, but most of you I have gotten to know only through your application. What is most interesting to me is that many of you (382 I am told) have already gotten to know *each other* electronically via FaceBook's Conn College Class of 2011 group. What a change from the days when you only knew your roommate when you first arrived – and only through a written letter and one or two photos of him or her and possibly their pet dog Ralph.

Don't let your electronic "friending" replace the real friendships you will make while here at Connecticut College. We are a residential living and learning community. Take advantage of that fact while you can! Take time to get to know your housemates and members of your classes. Sure, you already know what kind of music, books and movies your classmates enjoy (from reading their profiles), but take time to sit down with a new friend and share your music tastes in person; discuss your favorite novel over a cup of coffee at the Blue Camel Café; or invite your Freshman seminar professor and a few of your seminar classmates for dinner in a dining hall to discuss that day's class conversation. True friendships take time and nurturing, and I would argue that true intellectual discourse is only going to take place in person. Don't let electronic "friending" replace the true bonds one can only make through dialogue and debate on a regular and personal basis.

OK, enough from the middle-aged mom of an entering freshman.

Before I turn you over to the associate dean of studies for freshmen and sophomores, allow me to introduce you to your class.

- 4,742 students applied for admission last year – a record number of applications for the college, and 34.5 percent or 1,638 were offered admission. 493 of you chose to enroll. Fourteen others selected to defer their enrollment for one year. (Eighteen transfers also join us this afternoon as well as seven students who were admitted a year ago and chose to defer enrollment until now.)
- You applied to nine colleges on average and were offered admission to four of them.
- 202 of you – or 41 percent of the Class – made your "first choice" declaration as Early Decision candidates. That also means that 4,540 applicants competed for the remaining 291 spots in the Class during Regular Decision. In other words, there were nearly 16

applicants for each place in the Class, so each student's presence here is an accomplishment of significant merit.

- For those who come from high schools that rank, 59 percent ranked in the top 10 percent of their high school while 87 percent ranked in the top quintile.
- You hail from 366 different high schools. The smallest high school attended had a senior class of 17, while two of you graduated from a high school with 1011 seniors.
- Top anticipated majors include Biology, International Relations, Psychology, English, Economics, Environmental Studies, Government, History, Dance and Mathematics with only 15 percent of you "undecided" – or clueless – but that doesn't surprise us.
- This year's class is also quite diverse. Fifteen percent of the Class is made up of domestic students of color, 19 of you are foreign citizens and 60 students have an international background representing 35 countries.
- Twenty nine students in this class are children or grandchildren of Connecticut College alumni (several are double legacies – both parents are alums – with two students in this Class that are products of my classmates!) Sixty students, or 12 percent of the Class, are in the first generation of their family to attend college.

You come together as Connecticut's 92nd class from Puerto Rico, DC and 29 states as well as 17 countries, including Afghanistan, Botswana, Italy, Ecuador, Nepal, Turkey and Malawi to name just a few. Nearly 20 languages are spoken in your respective homes, so it won't be unusual to hear students chatting on their cell phones in Tagalog, Portuguese, Korean, Urdu, Russian, or Japanese.

You are the children of the famous and the not so famous. Several college professors and teachers, a boat builder, truck driver, author, state trooper, a college counselor and a psychic all have children in this Class. Quite a few lawyers and doctors, an interior designer, musicians, letter carrier, locksmith, CEO of an opera company and a few librarians are your parents.

Some of these parents were creative when they named you and may have had travel destinations on their mind when you were born: there is a Jordan, an Asia, Chad and Victoria. As parents growing up in the 60s I wasn't surprised to find flower children such as Daisy, Jasmine and Flora.

Interestingly, many parents were drawn to the same name. So, here's a tip for class discussion as you begin your freshman year: if the professor calls on Emily, Sarah, Katherine (with a K or C), Elizabeth, David, Michael, John or Robert look around you before you offer an answer. (Students with these names represent 14 percent of the Class.) And your last names create some interesting patterns – there's a *Mayo* and *Bacon* – but no lettuce and tomato; a *French* and *Fries* that would go nicely with a cup of *Earl* and *Gray*. It's often noted that you might find your life partner while in college. Wouldn't it be funny if the student named *Love* falls for the student named *Truelove*?

While many of you held jobs in recent years, a significant number of students answered the call of activism. Indeed, service highlights most of your resumes. One of you is the founder of a whiffle ball team that raised over \$10,000 for various medical foundations and will become an

official non profit organization with government funding, while another helped raise over \$87,000 through Relay 4 Life. Many of you assisted with Hurricane Katrina relief projects and I expect our campus to continue in its “green” vein as there are many among you who were recycling and environmental coordinators at your high schools.

And while we know all of you performed well in the classroom, the Class of 2011 boasts students with unique and impressive activities and accomplishments:

- your class includes a licensed pilot
- several of you conducted interesting scientific research – including one who did research on the sexual behaviors of fruit flies. Another was selected for membership of the NJ Science League and attained the top score in her regional competition
- many students are accomplished athletes, but the nationally ranked archer, swimmer, sailors, squash players, and rower as well as the Tae Kwon Do medalist who took home the Bronze in the Junior Olympics all stood out. So did the two students who came from families that sailed across the Atlantic or half way around the world.
- talented artists abound – among you is a singer in the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, a group that has performed at Carnegie Hall and won a Grammy Award; a guitarist for a band called Romulus Rex; a champion Irish step dancer; a harpist selected to perform in the harp choir at the 9th World Harp Congress in Ireland; as well as an accomplished opera singer who has recorded on CDs sold in music stores nationwide
- one student noted she had reached the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro (while another wrote his essay about *wanting* to climb Kilimanjaro)
- and finally – three of you noted in your applications that you come from households that do not watch TV. (You never know what will catch the eye of an admission dean. I too come from a NO TV Household.)

All of these traits we wish to have on our campus. I am confident our faculty will enjoy having you in their classrooms!

Thank you for allowing the admission staff and me the opportunity to get to know you through interviews, high school visits, numerous e-mail exchanges and your applications.

You indicated that you chose to apply to Connecticut College because of our interdisciplinary centers, research and funded internship opportunities, the honor code and sense of egalitarianism, our international focus and study abroad programs, our reputation and location near the ocean and several of you commented that our mascot, the camel, is pretty cool. Be sure to take advantage of all that the College offers including that which you cited and other opportunities that you will soon discover. We intend to challenge, encourage and support you so that you continue to succeed here at the College and beyond.

Enjoy the adventures that lie ahead. You took the time to share your inner thoughts, dreams and aspirations with us and I admitted you with all great hopes and expectations that you will accomplish them and more!

Now it's my pleasure to turn the Class of 2011 and the transfer students over to the Associate Dean of Studies for Freshmen and Sophomores, Andrea Rossi-Reder.