

February 4, 2008

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are delighted to have your students back from winter break. I am proud of all they have accomplished so far this year and look forward to sharing in their continued successes.

While your students were at home, we made several changes on campus. In particular, we have upgraded security in the residence halls by installing a new card access system, and we renovated some parts of the Athletic Center Complex, including installation of all new exercise equipment.

At the same time, our architects have been finalizing plans for the new fitness center, scheduled to open in the fall of 2009. Once the new facility is ready, the existing fitness center will be renovated to create 2,500 square feet of space for aerobics, dance and other group exercise and sports programming.

More campus renewal is planned for this summer. Three more classrooms will be renovated, including Bill Hall 106, the most broadly used teaching space on campus. We will begin renovations of Jane Addams and Plant residence halls, upgrade bathrooms in Freeman, Harkness and Larrabee, and undertake critical structural work on historic New London Hall, among other projects.

Earlier this week, we celebrated the opening of our new Women's Center in Smith-Burdick. It will provide the campus community with programming, activities and resources on women and gender issues. A group of thoughtful, committed students worked closely with faculty and administrators to plan this important center.

In November, Marc Zimmer, the Barbara Zaccheo Kohn '72 Professor of Chemistry, was named Connecticut Professor of the Year. Marc is an extraordinary teacher, scholar and mentor. Together with Professors Anne Bernhard, Joseph Schroeder, Doug Thompson and Deborah Eastman, he is implementing a new program to help attract and support underrepresented students into the sciences.

The College recently received a major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, another recognition of academic excellence. The grant will bring to the College five post-doctoral fellows to work with students and faculty in our interdisciplinary academic centers. The College will benefit from the fellows' expertise in emerging fields of study, and our experienced faculty will mentor the fellows in their development as teachers and researchers.

We have also made several important staff appointments. Christina C. Curtiss, a highly experienced health educator, has been appointed to the newly created position of Director of Student Wellness and Alcohol/Drugs Education. And Tom Hogarty joined the College in December as our new Director of Campus Safety. Tom is a former Connecticut State Police lieutenant with national experience consulting with colleges on campus safety issues.

Additionally, we have added staff and resources to our program that helps students obtain post-graduate fellowships. Please encourage your student to investigate these opportunities, which are listed under the “Scholarships & Fellowships” section of our Web site. It’s never too early. Academic choices made in the first or second year of college may affect students’ chances of winning one of these prestigious post-graduate awards.

In closing, let me thank all of you who have made gifts to the Parents’ Fund. We are experiencing a very strong year in fundraising. The percentage of alumni contributing to the College is rising—a sign of how our graduates value their education. The \$8 million fitness center project is being financed entirely by gifts from parents and alumni, and I am grateful for their generosity.

I hope to see many of you this spring on campus or in my travels for the College. Until then, thank you for your support and for the pleasure of knowing your students.

Sincerely,

Leo I. Higdon, Jr.  
President

**Please note: This semester’s test of Connect-Ed, the College’s emergency communications system, will take place on February 13, 2008. If your student has listed you as an emergency contact in the Connect-ED system, you can expect a test message by noon on Feb. 13.**