

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It was a great pleasure to meet so many of you during Fall Weekend and the more recent holiday parties, and to hear about your students' experience here. Now, spring semester is well underway and I want to share with you some recent highlights from campus.

Under the leadership of Dean of the College Community Armando Bengochea, we are launching an initiative to enhance the residential life experience. This includes developing new approaches to advising, increasing faculty/administrator-student interaction in the residence halls, and increasing academic and co-curricular programming in the residence halls. Our newly named Dean of Student Life, Jocelyn Briddell, who joins us later this month from Douglass College at Rutgers University, will be instrumental in moving this initiative forward. I look forward to sharing further details with you in future letters.

After six months on campus, I am increasingly impressed by our students' creativity, passion and ingenuity. I want to draw your attention to just a few examples of this. There are many I could have noted.

- A small group of students entered a national contest sponsored by MTVu and GE to further "green" our campus. The entry, which proposes commercial-sized compost units at the College, is now among the top 10 finalists. All the other finalists are from large universities, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the winner will be decided in part by an American Idol-style online voting. Please visit the Colleges Web site at www.conncoll.edu to read more about this project — and find out how to vote to support it. It takes only seconds and could make a difference for our students.
- Students have raised the issue of socially responsible investing and, in particular, whether colleges and universities can have a positive impact on the tragic situation in the Darfur region of Sudan through investment decisions. The College has no direct investments in Sudan, but, like most institutions, does invest in commingled funds which may include small investments in international companies doing business there. In response to the campus discussion, I have sent letters to our investment fund managers urging them to divest from companies doing business in Sudan, and I am reaching out to presidents at other institutions to ensure that we are aware of all possible approaches to this issue. We are continuing this conversation on campus and hope to develop additional actions our community can take to help improve the situation there.
- Last weekend, more than 100 students were involved in four musical theater productions here, a unique undertaking for a college with fewer than 2,000 students. The productions are the result of an expanded musical theater course offering this year, made possible in part by the Dayton Artist-in-Residence program. The program, funded by The Oakleaf Endowment Trust for Connecticut College, enables students to learn from performers who are not typically accessible in an academic setting.

I am very proud of all of our students. Their achievements clearly demonstrate their ability to excel in an environment that offers a broad variety of learning opportunities, inside and outside the classroom. I don't have room here to mention everything our students are involved in, but you can read more on our Web site and in the newsletter we e-mail parents each month. If you are not receiving the newsletter and would like to, please send your e-mail address to barbara.nagy@conncoll.edu.

I hope you visit our Web site frequently, as we continue to profile students there and post news of interest to the College. This spring, we launch a renewed Web site that will enrich our online visitors' experience and better convey the strengths of the College with improved navigation, and more focus on student life and interdisciplinary studies.

The Web site redesign is part of a concerted effort to raise the profile of the College. We know Connecticut College provides an outstanding liberal arts education, and we want to make sure that when your student moves into a career or applies to graduate school, others fully recognize the value of a Connecticut College degree as well. We are already seeing success in this effort as our Dean of Admission reports a record number of applications for next year's freshman class.

Looking forward, we will continue improvements to our residence halls over the coming summer. Marshall and Hamilton, which underwent dramatic renovations last summer, will be completed in '07 and other renovations will be started. Renovating our residence halls is a priority, and we have a schedule mapped out that will refresh living spaces, upgrade heating and electrical systems, and broaden accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The renovations are part of a \$53 million program that will upgrade, renovate and beautify the campus over the next several years, including classrooms, residence halls and community spaces. We will be fundraising actively to support this important initiative.

Upgrading the athletic center is another important priority for me, especially since more than three-quarters of our students use the fitness center regularly. I attend as many games, meets and matches as possible, and I am pleased to note the sportsmanship and team spirit of our students. In our New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), athletics and physical fitness are an integral component of the educational experience. I am proud to see how our students, whether they are participating in varsity, intramural or club sports, embody the NESCAC ideal of the scholar-athlete.

We hope to see you over the semester — at sporting events, dance, music or theater performances, lectures, or at Commencement on May 20. Deep-sea explorer Robert Ballard will give the keynote address. His determination, knowledge and thirst for discovery aptly parallel the experiences of our students at Connecticut College, and we are thrilled he is joining us on this important day. I hope you can join us as well.

Sincerely,
Lee Higdon