



The best is yet to come

Leo I. Higdon, Jr.

CONSTRUCTION CREWS were everywhere this summer, preparing the campus for Centennial Fall Weekend Oct. 21-23. Join us for the celebration — alumni, families and friends are all invited. When you get here, you'll see new roads, pavement and plantings; a redesigned Harris Refectory; a new café in Harkness House; and the ongoing construction of our new Science Center at New London Hall, which will be heated and cooled by geothermal wells drilled deep beneath Tempel Green.

On Saturday, Oct. 22, we will gather in Palmer Auditorium for “100 Years of Great Beginnings,” a 75-minute celebration of the Connecticut College community and its impact on the world through the experience of artists, activists, humanists, scientists, entrepreneurs and more. I hope to see you there.

Before I became president in 2006, I read Gertrude Noyes's “History of Connecticut College” from cover to cover. I was drawn by the story of a women's college established as a response to discrimination against women elsewhere. I enjoyed reading about Wesleyan alumna Elizabeth C. Wright, New London headmaster Colin Buell, the millionaire yachtsman Morton Plant and other founders. I also learned that the 1969 transition to coeducation had gone smoothly because this was a community more focused on the future than the past.

Today, we remain focused on the future — but we are taking advantage of the College's 100th birthday

to look more deeply into the College's past. Thanks to the Centennial, the College's history is now more widely known on- and off-campus. In fact, we now know the story well enough to recognize and debate its underlying complexity. Over the past year, distinguished alumni, including historian Linda Eisenmann '75 P'03 '07, feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe '60 and historic preservationist Blake McDonald '10, have provided us with a more economic, political and economic context for the College's establishment and subsequent development. Professor Julia Kushigian and author Paul Marthers offer further historical analysis, on pages 48 and 56, respectively.

Also in this issue, we present a decade-by-decade retrospective on the College's growth and development, starting on page 5. Given the limits of space, this collection of stories is far from comprehensive. But in its depth and variety, I think you will see how our institutional priorities today — our commitment to the liberal arts and sciences, to internationalization, to residential education, and to financial aid for deserving students — express a continuity of values that originated in 1911.

“History is who we are and why we are the way we are,” says historian and author David McCullough. To this I would add that knowledge of our history is the foundation without which no enduring future can be constructed. Or, as the urban activist Jane Jacobs once wrote: “Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings.” We are committed to the best of both. ■

Eisenmann's Founders Day speech, Enloe's Centennial Commencement address and McDonald's prize-winning thesis, “The Architecture of Connecticut College,” can be found at <http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu>.