

Student-faculty relationships a key to success

Leo I. Higdon, Jr.

›AT REUNION THIS YEAR,

Diane Y. Williams '59, the first woman to become an officer of one of the world's leading financial services companies, was presented with the College Medal. Accepting the award, she told the crowd she planned to share it with her former economics professor.

It turns out that, 50 years after graduating from Connecticut College, Diane Williams continues to speak frequently with Ruby Turner Morris, the Lucretia L. Allyn Professor Emeritus of Economics, now 101 years old. She said she first explored advanced concepts in economics with Professor Morris, and the two women eventually turned a strong student-professor relationship into a lifelong friendship.

Every day, I see similar relationships forming across our campus. Science professors and students collaborating on advanced research, arts faculty working closely with students to explore new styles and techniques, humanities and social sciences professors taking discussions about literature, philosophy, history and more to new levels — faculty in every discipline are deeply engaged in their students' learning.

In this economy, we are looking closely at all our costs and being very disciplined with respect to areas that don't directly impact students. This strategy has allowed us to continue investing in priorities that enhance the student experience and to continue nourishing these critically important faculty-student relationships.

With the start of this school year, we

have expanded a residential education initiative that further integrates academic and residential learning by creating new ways for faculty and students to interact outside of the classroom. Eleven new faculty Residential Education Fellows, led by Professor Eugene Gallagher, the head fellow, serve as liaisons and mentors and work closely with the student residential house leaders to give and sponsor informal talks, plan educational programs and host study breaks.

The Residential Education Fellows program supports the kind of learn-

(Our) faculty in every discipline are deeply engaged in their students' learning.

ing relationships that keep a student in close contact with a professor — even 50 years after graduation. These relationships have been growing across campus for decades. Now, with an added structure and a more formal role for professors in the residential houses, we are building new connections in very purposeful ways.

Another strong faculty-student relationship came full circle this fall when



HAROLD SHAPIRO

we welcomed 11 new tenure-track professors to the College. Among this extremely talented and diverse group of professors is Mohamed Diagne '97, a native of Senegal who majored in physics and mathematics at Connecticut College and earned his doctorate in electrical engineering from Brown University.

As an undergraduate, Diagne's mentor was Arlan Mantz, the Oakes Ames Professor of Physics. Professor Mantz retired this year, but students will continue to know him as a senior research scientist at the College. Best of all, his former student, Mohamed Diagne, is the new Oakes Ames Associate Professor of Physics.

In another 50 years, when the graduates of 2010 are at their Reunion, they likely will be giving credit to Professor Diagne — or any of this College's amazing faculty members — for helping to transform their lives and achieve their goals.

Who was your mentor at Connecticut College? If you'd like to share your story, I'd love to hear about it. ■