

Celebrating Collaboration

As I headed toward the Wellesley Room in Olin Hall at Babson College on Sept. 9, I reflected on the appropriateness of the name of the venue. I joined Olin President Richard Miller and Babson President Leonard Schlesinger there to launch our new three-college alliance. A front-page story in the *Boston Globe* two weeks earlier reported on this new model for academic partnership.

In a wonderful case of serendipity, the idea to formalize this alliance evolved from conversations that the three presidents had while we were coteaching a course called Leadership and Ethics to cross-registered students from the three campuses. Each of us appreciated the success of our respective institutions' past collaboration efforts—Wellesley students, for example, are able to earn Olin engineering certificates, and our Chinese-language class is very popular with Olin students—and we wanted to facilitate and enhance what we see as our communities' important—and

growing—impulse toward collaboration.

Inspired by the momentum of faculty and students that was beginning to bubble up everywhere, we decided to do more than just support existing collaborations: We wanted a uniquely transformative partnership that would allow the three schools to do things together that no one school could do alone. For those faculty and students who are interested in this type of collaboration, this

alliance will provide strong support and encouragement.

At Wellesley, our focus is, of course, on the social sciences, the humanities, the sciences; we seek critical perspectives on the many realms of human endeavor. Olin's focus is engineering and design and innovation. The heart of Babson's business study is entrepreneurship.

Our aim is to bring the schools' complementary strengths together, as appropriate, to involve our students in tackling specific major issues of the day. At all three colleges, students are taught how to think critically and how to analyze

problems—but they come at problems from their very different directions. As Kenneth Burke said, "Every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing." By encouraging the integration of different ways of seeing, we can anticipate deeper and more creative insight into problems and broader learning. Wellesley students and faculty will benefit from interaction with these different ways of formulating a problem, just as surely as they benefit from the presence of international students on campus and studying abroad, and for many of the same reasons.

And our students are eager to tackle the issues that will be important to them in the 21st century. They passionately agree that progress on such issues as sustainable energy, health care, national security, and infectious diseases will make the world a better place. But progress is born of an understanding of history, languages, philosophy, sociology, science, and economics, as well as business, engineering, and technology. The ability to affect change in the world is enhanced by an education that involves exposure to distinct and diverse viewpoints converging on important issues.

We are fortunate that geographic proximity allows the three schools to collaborate easily as a metacommunity. Faculty members are able jointly to develop programs, and students are able readily to attend them. We may eventually realize some budgetary benefits from this collaboration, but the larger opportunity is to innovate a model for higher education that produces new insight, new discoveries—in short, new knowledge.

The alliance in no way deflects from the strong ongoing collaboration Wellesley enjoys with MIT. We benefit from a variety of cross-registration and degree opportunities with MIT, and there are even undergraduate-research opportunities for Wellesley students to join the research efforts of MIT faculty. This all will continue, along with our other collaborations. The new alliance is yet another opportunity to expand our breadth and broaden our borders.

And so we were there that day, in the Wellesley Room in Olin Hall at Babson College, to call on our various communities to think big about truly interdisciplinary approaches to important problems. We were there to celebrate our faculty's ability to integrate different types of knowledge and learning. We were there to advocate that our staffs first imagine and then forge best practices across campuses. And we were there to encourage our students to focus not just on their intellectual development but also on how they can put those abilities effectively to use in the world.

It was a very good day.

H. Kim Bottomly



Babson College President Leonard Schlesinger (left) and Olin College President Richard Miller (right) with President H. Kim Bottomly