

Wellesley's Annual Giving Focus: Participation

By Molly Tarantino

The year 2010 promises many exciting events and new ventures on the Wellesley College campus—everything from the launch of the Madeleine Korbel Albright Institute for Global Affairs last month [[link to MKAI site](#)], with the former Secretary of State and esteemed alumna as the distinguished visiting professor, to a new facility housing honeybee hives, allowing students to learn about animal behavior without leaving campus. [[link to story](#)]

2010 will also be a year of rebuilding, as the College begins to emerge from the effects of the global financial crisis. During an average year, the College relies upon income generated from the endowment to fund its budget, including about 80% of the \$40 million Wellesley spends each year on financial aid. With endowment losses in one year nearing \$400 million, the College has struggled to meet the massive deficit.

“We have all weathered difficult times during the past year, one of the most challenging of our history,” said Wellesley College President H. Kim Bottomly. “Although we’ve made many sacrifices, our commitment to a need-blind admission process has never wavered and financial aid remains our top priority. This year, more than ever, the continued generosity of alumnae is needed to ensure the fulfillment of our educational mission.”

The financial crisis also underscored a nationwide trend of declining annual giving to colleges and universities and other non-profit organizations. During the past decade, Wellesley has seen a 10 percentage point drop in the number of alumnae who give to the College each year.

Annual giving provides unrestricted funds for Wellesley to meet urgent needs and to take advantage of unexpected opportunities. Gifts also support a world-class faculty and aid our commitment to affordability. Wellesley remains one of only a handful of colleges and universities that provide financial aid to more than half its students. The average aid award granted to students in 2008-2009 was \$33,843.

“Frequent, regular giving allows the College the flexibility to use funds where they’re most needed, which is so important in these uncertain times,” said Annual Giving Chair Sandy Yeager ’86. “A Wellesley education has been my greatest gift, and I want to do all I can to pay it forward to support future generations of Wellesley women.”

For those with a personal connection to the College, there is no question that Wellesley lives up to its motto of educating women who will make a difference in the world. For potential students and the larger world, Wellesley has long benefitted from successful alumnae in all spheres of public and private life as well as high rankings in national publications.

Many collegiate rankings, such as *U.S. News & World Report*, determine a school's rank in part by the percentage of alumnae who give annually, considered a measure of satisfaction. For years, Wellesley has consistently been among the top four national liberal arts colleges, and while there is no category for women's colleges, Wellesley is the top-ranked women's college in the nation. The College has also received high marks for racial and socio-economic diversity.

"Annual giving demonstrates the quality of an institution, reflects alumnae confidence, and reinforces Wellesley's place as the top college educating women," said Marissa Ann Harris '99. "We have all benefitted from the generosity of alumnae who came before us and while young alumnae, like myself, may not have a lot to give, it's so important to make a habit of participating each year to support those who will come after us. Making any gift is a vote of confidence in Wellesley College that will reverberate around the world."