

# The Liberal Arts Deliver

**We all know** that the free and open exchange of ideas is one of the most important catalysts for learning and growth. Students arrive at Wellesley as independent achievers, ready to strike out on their own, intent on accomplishment. But they leave with more than just the realization of their personal goals; they have learned to hear and appreciate diverse points of view, synthesize multiple perspectives, and take a leadership role in creating solutions to the big problems of the future.

We now have two groundbreaking initiatives that are demonstrating to our students and the world the fundamental value of Wellesley's liberal-arts curriculum: the new Madeleine Korbel Albright Institute for Global Affairs, and our anchoring role in one of the "Grand Challenge" regional summits.

## THE ALBRIGHT INSTITUTE

When an Albright Fellow was recently asked if there was any feedback that she would like to share about her experience, she wrote, "We always talk about the value of the liberal arts, but I never really

appreciated it until I saw how valuable it was to work with people from a diversity of backgrounds and really try to understand their points of view."

The student was one of 40 extraordinary young women—Albright Fellows all—who returned to campus in January for the institute's inaugural session. From different backgrounds, pursuing different majors, aspiring to different life goals, they were divided into eight teams, each of which was assigned one of

the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (such as eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the achievement of universal primary education, and the promotion of gender equality and female empowerment) on which to focus.

This first class of Albright Fellows came together as very different people, with often conflicting ideas, and they spent the better part of three weeks asserting, arguing, worrying, laughing, explaining, listening. And day by day, debate after debate, they honed their ability to collaborate. They came to trust one another, recognizing

the potential of connecting opposing viewpoints to lead to breakthrough ideas. As one Albright Fellow said, "It changed my life. Empowering. Humbling. Exhilarating. Frustrating. Confusing. In the end, fantastic. Thank you." (For more on the institute, see "A Crucible for Global Leadership," on page 30.)

## THE 'GRAND CHALLENGE' SUMMIT

In April, Wellesley, along with Babson College and Olin College of Engineering, cosponsored an important interdisciplinary summit, "Educational Imperatives of the Grand Challenges." It was part of a series under the auspices of the National Academy of Engineering, in partnership with the National Science Foundation, focusing on 14 global problems, or "Grand Challenges," that must be addressed to maintain national security, improve global living standards, and ensure a sustainable future. It brought together educators, business leaders, scientists, sociologists, psychologists, students, government officials, and policy-makers to discuss the educational strategies that will be required to prepare students to tackle global problems in energy, health, and the environment.

The April summit was a first—for Wellesley, and for this series. Wellesley is the first liberal-arts college ever chosen to host one of these events and, of course, the first women's college. When the engineers joined liberal-arts scholars in Houghton Chapel, it demonstrated our mutual conviction that the "grandest challenges" require the most holistic solutions.

The event was moderated by our own alumnae trustee, Linda Cozby Wertheimer '65, and featured Paul Romer, a specialist on economic growth and senior fellow at Stanford's Institute for Economic Policy Research, who has also been named one of *Time* magazine's 25 most influential Americans, and Aneesh Chopra, President Barack Obama's chief technology officer.

My colleague Rick Miller, president of Olin College, explained our goal very well: "While technology will play a key role in confronting each of the grand challenges, it cannot solve them alone. Solving these problems will require unprecedented levels of cooperation and integrated approaches . . . and these require innovation and cooperation among many fields."

These two Wellesley events share a common theme: Solutions to complex modern problems require not just leadership, but cooperation and the willingness and ability to collaborate. There is no better foundation for integrating knowledge across disciplines than a liberal-arts education, which creates the broader context in which the social, psychological, technological, political, and economic ramifications of any innovation can be considered, and in which positive unanticipated consequences can be recognized and cultivated.

We are pleased to be at the forefront of this kind of thinking. And we are gratified—once again—to be taking a leadership role in making the world a better place.

H. Kim Bottomly

RICHARD HOWARD



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