July, 2010

Dear Parents and Guardians of the Class of 2014 and Transfer Students,

We are delighted that your daughter has chosen Bryn Mawr, and we are looking forward to her arrival. Please find enclosed some notes for parents about the start of school and student health and well-being. We ask that you complete and return the enclosed Student’s Guardian Information form, so that we may contact you in the manner you prefer.

Bryn Mawr is committed in both philosophy and practice to taking students seriously -- as women and as scholars. There is a long tradition here of treating students as adults, beginning with the granting of self-governance to the students in 1890, long before it was seen as possible at most other institutions. Bryn Mawr’s honor system also assumes integrity and responsibility in the way students conduct themselves. In advising undergraduates, we speak directly with them about issues of concern and encourage them to take responsibility for their education. Like you, we try to strike the right balance between offering advice and allowing students to make their own choices. We strive to express confidence in their good judgment, to respect their privacy, and to earn their trust.

Parents often ask what their role should be in their daughters’ lives at Bryn Mawr. As your daughters leave home, your support and understanding are crucial. Your daughters want -- and need -- to be increasingly independent, but they also need to know that help is available if they encounter difficulties.

This summer, all of us are focusing our attention on your daughter making a good start at Bryn Mawr. Once the semester begins, parents continue to play an essential role in helping students adjust to college. Especially at the beginning of the year, parents are the ones most likely to hear about anything that goes wrong. I will reiterate what you have probably heard from others about the first weeks or learned from your own experience with an older son or daughter who has left home. Please don’t panic over a few unhappy phone calls at the beginning of the semester. They usually just signal the normal ups and downs of adjusting to a new environment. If things do not improve, however, and you become concerned, please call or urge your daughter to speak with her dean if she has not done so already. We can only help if we know when your daughter needs our assistance. We want to support her and do what we can to ensure that her first weeks at Bryn Mawr will be good ones.

In many ways, it was easier for parents of college students to strike an appropriate balance between involvement and distance before technology made constant contact as possible as it is for many families today. Cell phones, email and text messages are wonderful when you need to reach your daughter immediately, but they also make it tempting to stay in such constant contact.
that it is almost as if your daughter never left home! While that may sound wonderful on those
days when the prospect of saying good-bye is painful, it can also undermine a student’s
opportunity to feel that she is on her own. Your daughter needs to realize that she can handle
some of life’s challenges by relying on her own judgment and experience. She will probably
make some mistakes and experience some anxiety in the process -- most of us did, too. But in the
end, it is the only way she will develop real self-confidence. However ambivalent parents may be
about the prospect of a daughter growing up and becoming independent, that is what most of you
truly want for your children at this stage in their lives. Developing the confidence to combine
healthy self-reliance with a willingness to ask for help when it is needed is crucial to true maturity
and independence. You as parents and we as deans and teachers can work together to help
students achieve this. It is enormously satisfying to see this growth happen in the course of four
years.

While our advising relationship is with your daughter, be assured that we will often encourage
your daughter to speak with you about the problems or concerns that she brings to one of us. You
can be confident that in serious situations, we will insist that your daughter contact you or ask her
to let us do so. In emergency situations or when we discover that a student’s health or well-being
is at serious risk, we will, of course, contact you. Accordingly, please remind your daughter to
place your emergency numbers on file with the Registrar when she is reminded to do so by email
and to be sure they are updated each semester.

As a brand new member of the Bryn Mawr community myself, I look forward to forging a special
connection with the Class of 2014 as we learn from each other in the years ahead and absorb and
celebrate the traditions and values of our remarkable college. I hope that you and your daughter
have a good end of summer and that the transition to Bryn Mawr goes smoothly for all of you.
Please know that my colleagues and I want to do everything we can to help make that possible --
please call on us and encourage your daughter to do the same.

Sincerely yours,

Michele A. Rasmussen
Dean of the Undergraduate College

P.S. Remember that Parents’ Weekend is not too long after arrival day! It is scheduled for
November 5-7, 2010. More information will follow and soon appear on the Parents’ gateway on
the website (http://www.brynmawr.edu/gateways/parents/). Information will be updated here
regularly.
NOTES FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS ENTERING IN FALL 2010

Arrival and Customs Week
Most members of the class of 2014 will be coming to campus on Wednesday, August 25th for the start of Customs Week, but some members of the class have been invited to move in earlier to participate in pre-season athletic team practices, the International Students Orientation, or the Tri-College Summer Institute (on Bryn Mawr’s campus this year). All new students are officially welcomed on the 25th. Arrival day and the Customs Week are designed to assist entering students as they embark on their college experience.

Customs Week involves new students in activities that help them get to know one another, the College community, its norms, and the many campus resources available to them. Understandably, parents are often concerned about getting students moved into their rooms and helping them make essential arrangements for living away from home. The residence halls open at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 25th. Keys are available beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Ward building next to the gym. New students and their families travel to Bryn Mawr from all over the world, so please do not encourage students to take a “first come, first served” approach to starting off the year in a double or triple room. Assignment of spaces within a room or suite needs to be negotiated in a way that includes all the students involved. While the majority of students arrive with their families, there are also students whose parents cannot be here on moving-in day. Please extend your help and courtesy to all the members of the Class of 2014.

Parents often ask about remaining for the first days of orientation. While we appreciate and share your concern about your daughter’s transition to Bryn Mawr, we do not recommend that you stay on or near campus through Customs Week. The vast majority of parents leave campus for home just before dinner on the arrival day.

If family members do remain in the area, we expect them not to stay in the dorms. It is important for students to participate fully in the Customs orientation, so family visits should be planned around the Customs program. Customs Week assists any students prone to loneliness or homesickness by connecting them to their peers and the College community as a whole. Students are introduced to classmates, advisers, faculty, and staff members. A brief description of the Customs as well as a schedule for parents on arrival day is available at http://www.brynmawr.edu/enteringstudents/arrival_moving_in.shtml.

Access Services for Students with Disabilities
Bryn Mawr College is committed to the full participation of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of campus life and welcomes students with disabilities to the College community. The Access Services office in Canwyll House provides individualized support and reasonable accommodations for eligible students with learning, physical, or psychological disabilities. If you think your daughter may need academic adjustments in the classroom or access in the dormitory or other campus facilities, please have her contact Stephanie Bell (sbell@brynmawr.edu, 610-526-7390), Coordinator of Access Services, as soon as possible. For additional information -- including the eligibility criteria and documentation requirements -- please visit the Access Services website at http://www.brynmawr.edu/access_services/.

Drug and Alcohol Use
In the remaining weeks before your daughter leaves for Bryn Mawr, it is important to discuss some of the challenges that she may face during her first year of college. In particular, she will need to be prepared to make informed decisions about using alcohol or drugs. Bryn Mawr does
not have sororities, fraternities, or other kinds of social clubs. It has far less alcohol and drug abuse than many other campuses do. Nevertheless, we are not immune to these problems. We are proud of the efforts of our students, faculty, and staff to address the problems posed by alcohol and drug use on campus. There is a strong campus consensus that stresses safety, responsibility, and care for fellow members of this community.

Parents play a vital role in reinforcing these values. We hope you will talk frankly with your daughter about your expectations and concerns. Useful websites for parents of students leaving for college include: http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/ and the section on Alcohol and the Law at www.lcb.state.pa.us. The interaction of alcohol with prescribed and over the counter medication is summarized at http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Medicine/medicine.htm. Campus policies, expectations, and services related to alcohol and drug use are available for your review at the entering students’ website: http://www.brynmawr.edu/enteringstudents/AlcoholDrugPolicy.shtml and the Health Center website: http://www.brynmawr.edu/healthcenter.

This summer, new students will be expected to complete an on-line education program College.alc as part of the first-year Wellness program. With a common knowledge–base in place about alcohol and its use and misuse, we will be better able to use the Customs Week and Wellness program to help students prepare for some of the most difficult challenges involved in living safely and happily in a college community: responsibility for one’s own behavior, responsibility to the community, confronting problems which arise, and using the supports and resources available.

**Health and Counseling Centers**

We also urge you to encourage your daughter to let us know if she has had medical or psychological problems in the past which might resurface under the stresses of adjusting to a new environment. Sometimes parents want so much for their children to have a “fresh start” as they begin college that they discourage them from seeing a counselor or local physician who can support them through the transition to college. While this is an understandable impulse, it can be a problematic one. As all medical and psychiatric information is kept strictly confidential, it certainly does not compromise your daughter’s privacy to inform our medical professionals of your daughter’s history. In addition, providers at the Health Center and Counseling Center can refer students to off-campus specialists in this area if that seems more appropriate or comfortable for the student.

Talking about sleep and nutritional needs is also valuable. College students tend to get far less sleep than they need. This deficit impairs their cognitive capacities at the very time when they need them most. Just as sleep deprivation is an issue at college, so, too, are body-image concerns. We share a full time-time nutritionist with Haverford, and any student may meet with her. The Body Image Council (http://bodyimagecouncil.blogs.brynmawr.edu/), a group for students concerned with body image and eating, meets weekly, led by a counselor with expertise in this area. Please encourage your daughter to take advantage of these services if she needs them.

Health Center staff will join the Dean’s Office staff at sessions for parents on Wednesday, August 25th. The location will be included in the Customs Week schedule. Kay Kerr, M.D., the Medical Director of Student Health Services and Reggie Jones, M.S.S., LCSW, Director of Counseling Services, will be available for individual appointments as well. If you and your daughter would like to make an appointment, please email Ronda Taylor at rtaylor@brynmawr.edu at the beginning of that week, indicating your availability on Wednesday and/or Thursday, August 25th and 26th, respectively.