

February 14, 2008

BMC and McAuliffe: Love at First Sight

Last Friday at about 12:45 p.m., the bell in Taylor Tower pealed riotously as an e-mail invited the campus community to an afternoon reception to meet Bryn Mawr's next president. Despite the short notice, hundreds of community members packed into Thomas Great Hall to meet Jane Dammen McAuliffe, the Georgetown University dean and Islamic-studies scholar who had just been appointed president-elect of the College. McAuliffe, the Board of Trustees announced, will replace Nancy J. Vickers on July 1.

"I had been told that the Bryn Mawr community is both close-knit and welcoming, but I was still overwhelmed by the outpouring of warmth I received from all corners of the campus when my appointment was announced," McAuliffe told members of the Alumnae Association's executive board at a lunch on Saturday. "I'm delighted to be joining such a caring, engaged community."

A Facebook group titled "The Jane Dammen McAuliffe Fan Club" had attracted 133 members at last count. Students, who fondly refer to Vickers as "Nancy J.," have already christened McAuliffe "J-Mac."

Vickers had nothing but praise for her successor-to-be. "She brings a wonderful range of experience to the job, and I am very excited about what her presidency portends for the future of the College," she said. "I think she's going to be terrific."

"We're exhilarated by the positive responses from the community," said Professor of Social Work Cynthia Bisman, who served on the presidential search committee. "The outpouring of support for this appointment makes all our hard work worthwhile."

McAuliffe's background as an expert on Muslim-Christian relations inspired particular enthusiasm. In addition to producing a formidable record of scholarly publications on Islamic perceptions of Christianity and its sacred texts, she has served both the Vatican and the Anglican Church as an adviser on present-day relations between followers of the two religious traditions. She plans to continue that work after assuming the presidency, she says.

Sabra Bhat '10, the co-president of the Bryn Mawr-Haverford Muslim Students' Association, met McAuliffe on Friday afternoon.

"I'm so excited that our president is going to be a scholar of Islamic studies," she said. "I think that will really open doors for people to learn about a religion that has been badly misunderstood."

Trustee Cheryl Holland '80, who was a member of the search committee, cited McAuliffe's work on Islamic-Christian relations as a significant factor in McAuliffe's appeal.

"She has a history of bridging communities, of promoting understanding between cultures," Holland said. "She speaks very eloquently of Bryn Mawr's potential as a platform for advancing the cause of women's education globally, and she has the international, intercultural experience to develop that potential."

Search committee member Elizabeth McCormack, a professor of physics, was impressed by McAuliffe's commitment to the sciences.

"It is exciting that someone with her scholarly background in the humanities has such a solid command of issues in science and math education. She understands how important scientific literacy is to informed citizenship, and she believes that women's colleges have a leadership role in addressing the gender imbalance in science and technology fields."

Those who met her also noted the apparent ease with which McAuliffe establishes personal relationships.

"Everyone noticed how well she listens," said Diane Crow, who served as the Staff Association's representative on the search committee. "On a campus visit, she was introduced to several members of the staff from all three categories—administrative-professional, service-craft, and clerical-technical. She engaged all of them in conversations about what they do at the College and seemed to enjoy learning about their work."

Alumnae Association President Mary Berg Hollinshead '69 agreed that McAuliffe is "a superb listener. She struck us as enormously intelligent and effective, and she clearly focuses that intellect on the person who is speaking to her. She pays high-quality attention."

Hollinshead said that the members of the Alumnae Association's executive board appreciated the fact that McAuliffe and her husband, Dennis, stayed at the College another day after her appointment was announced in order to meet with the alumnae group.

Dennis McAuliffe is a distinguished scholar of medieval and Renaissance literature who will have a faculty appointment in Bryn Mawr's Italian department. The couple has four adult children.

"It's gratifying, for many alumnae, to see a woman with children reach this level of academic achievement," said Hollinshead, a classical archaeologist who is on the faculty of the University of Rhode Island.

Bryn Mawr's two male presidents—James E. Rhoads, who held the office from 1885 to 1894, and Harris Wofford, whose term ran from 1970 to 1978—were parents while they held office, but none of the women who have led the college has had children or a spouse.

Talia Greenwald '09, the undergraduate representative on the committee, said that her role in the search, though intensely demanding, was an education in itself.

"I had never realized how many demands there are on a leader from different sectors of the community. One of the best things about Jane is the way she can adapt herself to the people she's dealing with. There's no one way to talk to, or listen to, everybody in the Bryn Mawr community. And she is very sensitive to the nuances of communication with individuals. You can see that in her sense of humor—she knows when to crack a joke and when she shouldn't."

Greenwald was also impressed by McAuliffe's determination.

"She has faced some serious obstacles in her life, but she has always found a way," Greenwald said. "She didn't go about her education in the most conventional way; she forges her own path, and she hasn't let her past determine where she goes. She came from a strong Roman Catholic background, for example, but she has become one of the world's foremost authorities on Islam."

Search committee chair Arlene Gibson '65 summed it up: "Looking at the list of attributes we articulated as desirable in a president in our call for nominations, I see that Jane McAuliffe fulfills all, especially the last, 'a flexible mind and thoughtful spirit.'"

The Admissions Office's Roller-Coaster Video: Not Your Standard Virtual Campus Tour

The car's clickety-clacks slow perceptibly as the track ascends into a crisp autumn sky. You hesitate for a second at the apex; then you pitch forward and hurtle down ... not toward a carnival midway or an amusement park's grounds, but into the Bryn Mawr Campus Center. You pause for a look around before shooting off to the next destination on campus.

The effect is produced by the Admissions Office's "[Roller Coaster Tour](#)," a playful and inventive approach to the virtual campus tour that is now posted on the Bryn Mawr Web site as the capstone video in the "Webisodes" series.

The tour takes viewers on a five-minute circuit of campus that includes a dining hall, a dorm living room, a library, classroom and administration buildings, athletic playing fields, and other important sites of student activity. It pauses for a longer look at campus landmarks, and student tour guides are introduced at a few critical locations.

Director of Admissions Communications Maureen McGonigle '98 dreamed up the roller-coaster tour.

"Our campus is one of our best assets," McGonigle says. "Prospective students who visit fall in love with it. So I was looking for a way to show it off to people who may not be able to visit, and I thought that casting the tour as a ride on a roller coaster was a good way to grab people's attention."

To translate her vision into virtual reality, McGonigle turned to her Bryn Mawr classmate Sheena Joyce '98, a Philadelphia film producer whose documentary *Rock School* earned critical raves. Joyce's 9.14 Productions has partnered with the Admissions Office before.

"Maureen called me and said, 'I've got this crazy idea—is it even possible?'" Joyce recalls. "I loved it. I said I thought it was really inventive, very cool, and totally unlike any college admissions video I'd ever seen. I said, 'Absolutely. We can make this happen.'"

Joyce and her partner, director Don Argott, met with McGonigle, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Jenny Rickard, and several undergraduate tour guides to examine campus maps, decide what campus attractions were essential, and work out a route.

"Then we came back to the office and hammered out the logistics—what cameras to use for what shots, what our entry and exit points should be for interiors, how to pause long enough to get a good look at the buildings but keep the movement fluid," Joyce says.

"We couldn't get as high as an amusement-park roller coaster goes without hiring helicopters, and that wasn't in our budget. But I think we did a good job simulating the experience of a roller-coaster ride using a combination of cranes and steadicam shots."

The video was shot over two days last fall. Joyce brought two film crews so as to cover as much ground in as little time as possible; the editor moved between crews to ensure that the shots matched at places where they would later be joined.

"Everyone involved really enjoyed this project," Joyce says. "It goes without saying that it's a beautiful campus, and it's always a pleasure to spend time there. We were blessed with great weather, and the people we worked with could not have been more accommodating."

"And we enjoyed the technical challenge," she adds. "It's definitely not your standard college video."

The roller-coaster tour is posted as streaming video on the Admissions Web site at <http://www.brynmawr.edu/admissions/webisodes/BMCTour.html>. It is also available on YouTube.

Dance Faculty Concert Offers Top Talent

Dance enthusiasts will find an embarrassment of riches at Bryn Mawr this weekend. After Friday brings [India Jazz Suites](#) to Goodhart Theater, Saturday offers performances by some of Philadelphia's top terpsichorean talent in the intimate and welcoming space of the Pembroke Dance Studio at this year's Faculty Dance Concert at 7:30 p.m.

The annual performance offers a chance to see the work of some of the accomplished dancers and choreographers who teach in Bryn Mawr's dance program, performed by professional dancers from Philadelphia's thriving dance scene. The choreographers will introduce their work, offering insight into their artistic intent and process.

On the program:

- David Brick, co-director of Headlong Dance Theater, with a new quintet, "Dirt Snap"
- Myra Bazell, co-director of Scrap Dance Collective with a preview of a work in progress, "Tide"
- Leah Stein and her company in an improvisation
- Nichole Canuso in a new duet, "Parallel You"
- Soloist Noemi Segarra in "NO" to the music of Descarga Cachao
- Students of Laura Katz Rizzo in a concise version of "Paquita", first performed in 1846.

The performance is free and open to the public and will be followed by a reception. For further information, call the Dance Program at 610-526-5208.

Q & A: Liza Jane Bernard on Getting a Job

On Friday, Feb. 22, representatives from 79 non-profit organizations will be coming to Haverford for the Bi-College Career Development Office's annual Not-for-Profit Career Fair. We asked Liza Bernard, director of the Career Development Office, about her advice for students as they go about their job searches.

What's the top piece of advice you'd give students as they prepare themselves for a job search?

One of the great things about these communities is the fact that students feel like they're competing with themselves and not against each other. However, when you're searching for a job, it's about trumpeting yourself in a way that makes some students uncomfortable. A job interview is not the time to be modest or shy about revealing your accomplishments. So we really encourage our students to learn interview skills and do mock interviews.

Does the Career Development Office offer mock interviews?

We do, and a number of students do take advantage of this service, but more should. Some students will try doing mock interviews with friends, and while that's certainly better than doing nothing, we strongly recommend practice interviews with a stranger—a CDO counselor, an alumna/us or other networking contact. Someone involved who has experience with the hiring process and /or your field of interest can give you a completely honest and unbiased assessment. We can also record a student's interview, which can be very helpful.

Is the job search any different for a liberal-arts graduate than, say, for a Wharton grad?

Doing a job search is an active thing. That's just as true for the student at Wharton as it is for our students. A student can't expect to post a resume online and have the offers come flooding in. Students need to capitalize on the networks in their lives—family, friends, alumnae/i—to help position themselves to be in the right place at the right time. The added challenge for a liberal-arts graduate searching for opportunities in some business and/or technology fields is that they need to be more detailed in their presentation of relevant and transferable skills they can offer. Sometimes it's up to them to make the connection for the employer as to why they'd be the right candidate for a given position, which takes us back to the importance of the interview as well as strong written communication skills.

Who can take advantage of the Career Development Office's services?

We serve both the Bryn Mawr and Haverford communities. We want to work with students throughout their College years; the process of career exploration and resulting searches for internships and /or jobs takes time to truly be effective. We also serve alumnae/i through the various career crossroads they encounter. A significant portion of our resources is available online and thus helps us to better serve both students studying abroad and alumnae/i who live at a distance from the College.

What about faculty and staff?

Faculty and staff are more than welcome to take advantage of all of our online resources. As time permits, we are also happy to offer advice regarding specific questions around career development issues for faculty, staff and/or their children.

For more information on the Career Development Office, go to www.brynmawr.edu/cdo.