



August 23, 2012

Dear Lafayette Alumni:

This week, 629 bright and eager members of the Class of 2016 – selected from the largest applicant pool in Lafayette's history – will arrive on College Hill to begin their undergraduate careers. As we prepare to welcome them, we thought this would also be an appropriate time for us to update alumni on the state of the College and other important matters, including several serious issues which the Lafayette community will be addressing during the coming months.

Last year's record-setting number of applications for admission (a remarkable 17% more than for the Class of 2015) and the impressive quality of the applicants' high-school records are just two of many indications of the strength of Lafayette. We are especially proud to be able to say that the College has never provided greater educational value to its students. By adding faculty each year while keeping the size of the student body relatively stable, we have steadily increased the level of one-to-one mentoring professors can provide and the amount of time they are able to devote to supervising independent study and honors projects and undertaking collaborative research with students.

The additional faculty has also resulted in our ability to add depth and breadth to our curriculum by offering new classes in established majors and creating new degree programs. These include environmental studies (A.B.) and environmental science (B.S.). The success of our students and recent graduates in securing Goldwater Scholarships, Fulbright grants, National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships, and other prestigious awards and honors is further evidence of the strength of our academic program and quality of our faculty.

Lafayette's commitment to maximize students' success is equally evident in campus life more broadly. Grossman House, a special-interest residence hall for students intrigued by global

topics, will welcome its first occupants this month, as will the new 31-bed off-campus residence at the corner of Cattell and March streets. College-owned housing along Monroe Street will be home to 13 new Living Learning Communities, each focusing on a specific academic theme (including Chinese, mathematics, French, theater, classical civilizations, food, and Wall Street) chosen by the residents. Student applications for these theme houses have exceeded both capacity and initial expectations, as has the interest of faculty members in participating in these programs. These initiatives are part of an overall effort to create a living-learning environment that supports all students and seeks to foster an enjoyable and stimulating social experience and to provide a valuable educational environment.

When the ambitious two-year project to renovate the Quad is completed in the late fall, the campus core will be safer and more accessible, more environmentally sustainable, and more strikingly beautiful than ever. During the coming months we will also be finalizing the designs for the Williams Arts Campus and the Oechsle Center for Global Education and continuing to develop the exciting programs which those facilities will house. The planning continues for a new biology building as the first phase of new Center for the Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences. In addition, preliminary planning work is underway on a new welcome center which will become the home for admissions and financial aid.

We are also pleased to note that leading foundations and other influential organizations single the College out for special recognition and support. In Bloomberg BusinessWeek's recent in-depth report on the value of the college degree, Lafayette ranked 17th among 1,248 colleges and universities nationally (and second among liberal arts colleges) in net 30-year return on investment. An analysis by PayScale places us fifth in the nation in starting median salary and tenth in mid-career median salary among leading liberal arts colleges. Major grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute earlier this year provide further evidence of the quality of our programs, as does our receipt of a 2012 Overall Improvement Award for Fundraising from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), an international association of educational institutions. This award recognized Lafayette's success in rebounding from the impact of the recession, a recovery that would have been impossible without the steadfast loyalty and generosity of our alumni. The results for the 2011-12 fiscal year show impressive growth in both the number of alumni donors and in the total gifts received.

These and other noteworthy successes notwithstanding, there are several issues about which we continue to be extremely concerned. We view these issues to be of such import that if we are not able to make material improvements in them, they run the real risk of preventing Lafayette from continuing to achieve its ambitious goals, including maintaining and improving its present hard earned reputation.

As many of you are aware, on May 5, All-College Day, Everett Glenn '15, a popular student,

an academically successful engineering major, and a talented varsity fencer, was taken by ambulance from his campus residence hall to Easton Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The cause of death was acute ethanol intoxication. Everett was one of several students who were transported to the hospital that day after excessive alcohol consumption and among the 35 students who were hospitalized during the year from alcohol use. At least several of them were required to be placed on ventilators, with their lives in jeopardy. Additionally, 32 students were arrested by the Easton police on All-College Day and convicted for alcohol violations, with a great deal of attendant negative publicity. Not surprisingly, many parents of both current and prospective students have expressed concern about what they perceive to be a campus social culture that tolerates unhealthy and dangerous behavior. Without improvement, there is a real risk that the progress we have made in admissions and academic reputation will suffer substantially.

Few things are more difficult for a college president or board chair than mourning the loss of a student under such tragic circumstances. It is widely recognized that excessive alcohol consumption is a major social issue and alcohol abuse has reached epidemic proportions on American college campuses. Lafayette's peer institutions are all struggling with similar concerns. These facts cannot serve as excuses however. They only highlight the need for us to address our problems directly and with fresh approaches if Lafayette is to remain true to its commitment to ensure the health and safety of its students and to provide them with a supportive environment in which to learn and grow. We must change the culture on campus so that our students define having fun and socializing in terms that do not center on alcohol use.

Lafayette has studied this issue extensively in the past and has undertaken many initiatives to create a safe, healthy, engaging and fun social and co-curricular environment. Clearly, however, more is required. The seriousness of the problem as it unfolded during the past year prompted us to call for an immediate re-examination of our policies and practices. To facilitate that process, an Alcohol Policy and Procedures Review Group was formed in June. The group has met several times over the summer and conducted three open meetings in order to develop suggestions involving a holistic approach to the issues. These suggestions include enhanced student and parent education related to alcohol use and abuse; improved communication with students and parents and broadened parental involvement; a review of campus cultural issues such as an honor code; and a review of our disciplinary policies and processes. Campus wide social activities, their appropriateness and the development of alternatives, are fundamental to developing a new campus culture. These suggestions will be reviewed by the appropriate campus governance committees in the fall. Those committees, in turn, will develop specific recommendations for consideration by the President and the Board, followed by implementation as quickly as possible.

Considerable time and thoughtful attention has also been devoted to ensuring that the

College's current Greek organizations contribute positively to the quality of campus life and that their members meet the high expectations for personal conduct and academic achievement that we have of every student. Many distinguished alumni comment on the life-long friendships and the leadership skills they learned while serving as officers and residents of their fraternity. There should be no question about how much we appreciate, endorse and want to perpetuate each of these values for all of our students. However, we also cannot overlook the recent studies which indicate that current members of our fraternities generally perform at a lower level academically and faced many more serious disciplinary sanctions than our undergraduates as a whole. The Working Group on Greek Life and Campus Community, a group of trustees, faculty, students, and alumni formed in 2009 to study the extent to which Greek organizations support and enhance the College's broader mission, focused on these concerns as well as on the degree to which our Greek system falls short as a model for diversity and inclusiveness. The Working Group, which was co-chaired by trustee Barbara Levy '77 and student government president Ashley Juavinett '11, submitted its final report in May 2011.

After reviewing recommendations developed by the Working Group and by the Faculty Academic Policy Committee, the Board of Trustees reiterated its commitment to build a residential life program that serves the educational and developmental needs of all students. In so doing, it identified four specific objectives for Lafayette's fraternities and sororities to achieve. These objectives focus on academic performance, disciplinary profile, inclusivity, and effectiveness in facilitating learning opportunities. Progress toward achieving these four criteria is being overseen by the Implementation and Assessment Group on Greek Life (IAGGL), which was formed earlier this year, with members chosen from the trustees, faculty, administration, and Greek and non-Greek student and alumni bodies. A detailed summary of the goals and deliberations of the Working Group and IAGGL, as well as the metrics developed for the assessment IAGGL is conducting, can be found at http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=001EoQ9WDk-ukihjnPML4_EykMIZVqBm_kUXnaD3qQMrZ6u2K347Kt2IxZtchIDJZtdafk-w2huEioBNMHw3ImWtg-1NSe3Wq8fRAq2u4WUHQ8QnXz6yEsvco80inex148e9JSV_BjRR8U=. We encourage you to visit that site for additional information about this important initiative.

The Board was both disappointed and frustrated to learn that, in the relatively short period since IAGGL began its work, there have been several serious and very disturbing incidents involving Greek organizations that resulted in disciplinary action through Lafayette's internal student-conduct process. Although we cannot comment specifically about those incidents because the formal hearing and review procedures have not been completed, we can say unequivocally that the Board and the administration remain deeply concerned about the patterns of behavior that necessitated these responses. The Board and the administration will not tolerate the behavior on the part of any individual or organization that endangers the health and safety of any student much less undermines our efforts to provide a positive and

productive living and learning environment. In order for us to become the vibrant, engaged, and mutually respectful and supportive community we aspire to be, we must ensure that our students' residential and social experiences match the quality of the other opportunities for personal growth that are available to them at Lafayette. This objective will be one of the highest priorities of the administration and the Board in the coming months.

As most of you are aware, the coming academic year will be Dan's eighth and final one as president. This will not, however, be a year in which we will lower our expectations in terms of what we hope to achieve. We are proud of the work that has been accomplished over the past seven years – work to which many of you have made significant contributions. And we are fully committed to building on that momentum throughout 2012–13.

The two of us are equally committed to ensuring an exemplary transition as Lafayette's 17th president is identified and prepares to lead the College. We are grateful to Board members Alan Griffith '64 (chair) and Elisabeth Hughes MacDonald '81 (vice chair) for directing the search process and the efforts of the dedicated members of the Lafayette community who serve on the Search Committee. We will support their work as fully as possible.

Throughout this critical transition period, it is also our intention to keep the channels of communication as open as possible. We welcome your questions and comments about any of the topics we have covered in this letter or about any other aspects of Lafayette's operation or goals about which you would like to share your thoughts, and we encourage you to communicate with us directly (president@lafayette.edu or boardchair@lafayette.edu).

If you have not seen the campus recently, we hope you will have an opportunity to do so during the coming year. The fall semester would be an especially exciting time for you to visit as we complete the transformation of the Quad, dedicate Grossman House, celebrate the 50th anniversary of the McKelvy Scholars program and the 10th anniversary of Oechsle Hall and the Pfenning Alumni Center, and mark other special milestones.

Without the input, commitment, and engagement of its alumni over many decades, Lafayette would be a considerably less distinguished and successful college than it is today. You have been instrumental in the recent achievements we have reviewed in this letter, and we look forward to your continued involvement as we undertake the important work ahead.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward W. Ahart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Edward W. Ahart '69

Chair, Board of Trustees



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