



# A Global Imperative: Liberal Arts in the 21st Century

## **As you read this, the College will have just inaugurated**

its major new center, the Madeleine Korbel Albright Institute for Global Affairs. The Wellesley community has embraced the broadening of our mission to include a crucial—and timely—dimension: Wellesley's core value—to make a difference—will now, more than ever, be positioned to play out on the global stage.

In addition, as a laboratory for real-world applications of the liberal-arts disciplines, the Albright Institute showcases the ongoing advantages of a classic liberal-arts education—even now, perhaps *especially* now, in the digitally driven 21st century.

The Albright Institute at Wellesley will offer outstanding academic and cocurricular programs, and by encouraging intellectual exchange among a diverse mix of students, faculty, and global thought-leaders and policy-makers, the Institute will accelerate our efforts to learn from—as well as serve—cultures and communities

around the world. This commitment to a broad, interdisciplinary approach stems from the Institute's conviction that global understanding is not just about political science; it is also about economics, anthropology, philosophy, about history, culture, and religion.

But make no mistake: The mission of the Institute is not just to increase students' understanding of the world; it is to educate Wellesley women for leadership in that world.

Let me give you some highlights of our inaugural session.

In January, former Secretary of State Madeleine Korbel Albright '59 began serving as the Institute's first Mary Jane Durnford Lewis '59 Distinguished Visiting Professor, working with scholars and students as they explored new ways of thinking about global issues and pressed towards new solutions to some of the world's greatest challenges.

On Jan. 19, during a panel called "Dialogues with Secretary Albright," the Secretary and I were joined on stage by President Lee Bollinger of Columbia University and President Beverly Tatum of Spelman College for a lively and far-reaching discussion, "Call to Action: Higher Education's Role and Responsibility in Global Affairs."

Over the course of the initial three-week session, there were more than 30 panels and presentations by Wellesley faculty and distinguished outside scholars and practitioners, with titles such as: "Religion

and Violence"; "Corporate Social Responsibility: How Companies Do Well by Doing Good"; "Science Without Boundaries in a Changing World"; "Leadership Lessons from Alexander the Great: Why History, Language, and Culture Matter the Most"; and many more.

And at the center of the session were the 40 Albright Fellows: juniors and seniors—even a sophomore—with a wide variety of majors ranging from international relations and economics to religion, biology, and studio art. Divided into eight small groups, they each focused on one of the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals—including eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, and promoting gender equality and empowering women. The students spent two weeks studying how to achieve their group's goal, conducting research, interviewing recognized experts in the field, and debating the possibilities. Each group presented its final report to Secretary Albright during the third week of the program.

It was clear to me—as the purposeful, collaborative, *productive* learning experience unfolded throughout January's Wintersession—that the strength of our new Albright Institute rests on the existing power of our liberal-arts education.

A student's mastery of a broad range of intellectual and cultural content lends perspective to all her decision-making and also helps her cultivate curiosity; the discipline to interrogate closely, argue cogently, and judge fairly; and the "moral awareness" to draw ethical lines and set appropriate boundaries.

Wellesley education emphasizes two sets of skills that are essential for future success: the ability to communicate effectively (to think and write clearly and speak confidently); and the ability to manage and navigate "human systems." Wellesley women—including Secretary Albright—are known for uniquely effective leadership. Whatever the arena in which they move, they are able to establish a vision, promote collaboration, create consensus, and build community to achieve their goals. Wellesley women are adept at negotiating inter- and intra-group interests and concerns with a sure touch, anticipating and navigating sticking points, solving problems. They demonstrate an uncommon ability to "get things done."

All these skills—rooted in liberal-arts disciplines—are the rewards of a Wellesley education. They are also the assets that the young women of Wellesley need for the expanded roles they will be called upon to play on the world stage. Never before has the world had greater need of the panoptic education, nuanced understanding, and social-navigational skills that Wellesley women can bring to the international arena.

Never before have the benefits of a Wellesley liberal-arts education been more apparent. And never before have women—Wellesley women—been better suited, and better *prepared*, to make a world-changing difference in our shared future.

H. Kim Bottomly

*For more on the Institute, see page 10.*