University Founder Receives Medal at Fall Commencement

GRACE ELLSWORTH (HON. ’77) HAS BEEN A STAUNCH SUPPORTER FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS

At this year’s Fall Commencement ceremony on Dec. 3, University founder Grace Ellsworth received the University Medal for Distinguished Service in recognition of her many years of unwavering support. Ellsworth, who also holds an honorary degree from the University and The Hartt School’s prestigious A. C. Fuller Award, was one of the visionary community leaders who banded together 50 years ago to make their dream of a private university for Hartford a reality.

Over the past five decades Ellsworth has served regularly on the University’s board of regents, offering her advice to five University presidents and 10 chairmen of the board of regents. She has also served with particular distinction on the Physical Plant Committee, which oversees the planning and building of structures and landscape design. A citation read at the ceremony called her “one of the enduring ‘architects’ of the University of Hartford campus.”

The University community, along with family members and friends, gathered in Lincoln Theater to celebrate Fall Commencement. The 107 graduates who took part in the ceremony completed their degree requirements in either September or January. President Walter Harrison, who gave the Commencement address, called the graduates “the guardians of tomorrow” and urged them to use the knowledge they gained at the University of Hartford to better the world and the lives of others.
Do You Know the Wiki Man?

JIMMY WALES, FOUNDER OF WIKIPEDIA, GIVES THE ELLSWORTH LECTURE

Students, faculty, staff, and University friends gathered in Suissman Lounge in Gengras Student Union on Nov. 15 for a prelecture reception with Jimmy Wales, founder of the free online encyclopedia Wikipedia. Wales mingled with students and faculty, answering questions about the origins of his successful Web site, new projects, and Wikipedia in other countries.

Wales was at the University to give a John Ellsworth Lecture in Public Policy and the American Entrepreneurial System. The lectures were established at the Barney School of Business in 1979 by Ensign-Bickford Industries, Inc., to honor its former chairman.

Before an audience of several hundred in Lincoln Theater, Wales began his talk by describing the phenomenal success of Wikipedia, which was founded in 2001 and now contains more than 5 million articles in 250 different language editions. Since 2005, the Wikimedia Foundation, which supports Wikipedia and sibling projects like Wikinews and Wiktionary, has been entirely funded by grants and donations.

The title of Wales’s lecture was “Free Knowledge for Free Minds,” which reflects his goal of seeing that “everyone on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.” Wales explained that Wikipedia uses a type of software, called a “wiki,” that allows visitors to the site to edit the content of its articles and post new ones. According to Wales, the pages become collaborations between various users; the authors and editors are all volunteers. He added that all content can be distributed by users in original or edited versions at no charge. Wales defended Wikipedia against charges that its content is not reliable, saying that quality is very important to the Wikipedia community.

Also making an appearance at the reception and lecture was John Ellsworth’s widow, Grace Ellsworth (Hon. ’77), who is one of the original founders of the University of Hartford.
Connecticut artist Edith Dale Monson painted from the turn of the previous century until her death in 1977 at age 102. The Mortensen Library board of visitors presented an exhibition of her work titled *Edith Dale Monson: Hartford's American Realist*. The 20 paintings selected for display in The 1877 Club came from the Holcombe family collections. Monson was the aunt of Shepherd Holcombe Sr., a corporator of the Hartford Art School and library board member. She was trained by Robert Henri, founder of the Ashcan School of art in New York City.

**Why We Don’t Put That U in Color and Honor**

WEBSTER CAMPAIGNED FOR AN AMERICAN IDENTITY

In September the Mortensen Library board of visitors presented a symposium, “Defining Moments—Samuel Johnson and Noah Webster: Dictionaries, Words, Language, and Culture.” On display was the University’s first-edition copy of Johnson’s 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language*, along with a first edition of Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*. The Webster dictionary was on loan from the collection of Shepherd Holcombe Sr., a member of the library’s board. Wilde Auditorium was standing room only by the time the presentation began.

Experts on hand for the discussion were Christopher Dobbs, executive director of the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society; Humphrey Tonkin, president emeritus and University professor of humanities; Jennifer Brown, assistant professor of English; and Mark Blackwell, associate professor and chair of the departments of English and of Rhetoric, Language, and Culture.

Much of the discussion concerned how the two dictionaries reflected their authors’ religious, political, and moral viewpoints.

**Students Taking Test Drive in the Spotlight**

There is no better training ground for students of theatre than the polished, well-worn boards of a professional stage. For a number of years, Hartt School faculty, students, and alumni have appeared in Hartford Stage productions and in other artistic capacities. The Hartt School/Hartford Stage Partnership in Training program recently formalized this rewarding relationship.

The formal program began last year with the help and support of President Walter Harrison. The collaboration brings together an undergraduate conservatory program and a Tony Award–winning theatre. It allows students in Hartt’s 10-year-old actor training program and select music theatre students to apply their skills to the rigorous demands of a professional theatre setting. The program is one of only two such collaborations in the country.

Hartt Theatre Division students participate in classes, workshops, and discussions led by professional staff and guest artists. As seniors, Hartt students appear in the annual Hartford Stage production of Dicken’s *A Christmas Carol*. This year’s cast included Danielle Bryant, Ryan Cummings, Anna Dundon, Justin Fuller, Matthew Hennessey, Lindsay Mahoney, Renée Monico, Chip Rybak, Joseph Santos, and Jordan Slocum. Also participating were Hartt alumni Steven French ’03 and Renée Koher ’02 (dance coach for the production), as well as Hartt theatre faculty members Robert Davis, Johanna Morrison, and Alan Rust, Theatre Division director.

“The actors, directors, and other members of the artistic staff at Hartford Stage have embraced our students with enthusiastic support,” says Rust. “As a member of the *Christmas Carol* company and a member of The Hartt School faculty, it fills me with pride to watch our students enter the world of professional theatre with such great success.”

Hartt students in rehearsal for the 2006 Hartford Stage production of *A Christmas Carol*: (back row, l–r) Ryan Cummings, Anna Dundon, and Lindsay Mahoney; (front row, l–r) Renée Monico, Joseph Santos, and Jordan Slocum.

Photo by Stefania T. Campbell courtesy of Hartford Stage.
She might have been out taking photos somewhere on campus. From 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 14, through 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 15, students, faculty, and staff members all across campus could be seen taking pictures of their coworkers, their roommates, and each other. From the third floor of the Auerbach Computer Center to a night intramurals football game, flashbulbs were going off everywhere.

It was all part of “Day in the Life,” a project conceived and launched by the University’s Office of Communication in an effort to convey the spirit of the University as it approached the 50th anniversary of its charter.

Members of the Office of Communication team handed out 200 disposable cameras to faculty, staff, and students. All were encouraged to help document a 24-hour period at the University, from classroom activities to residence hall life. Some submitted photos taken with their own digital cameras or cell phones as well.

In January a team of staff members began combing through the hundreds of photographs received to select those that best capture the essence of campus life. These photos will be displayed during 2007 and will also appear on the University’s Web site at www.hartford.edu.

Retired staff member Jeff Feldmann took this photo of Hartford Art School students at the pottery kiln during the “Day in the Life” project.

Honing Connecticut’s Competitive Edge

University of Hartford students and faculty are working with industries throughout the region to keep Connecticut at the forefront of precision manufacturing and aerospace technologies and to develop a highly trained engineering workforce.

The work is being done under a $1.03 million grant from the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT). The grant, which was awarded to the University in August 2005, supports research and development of laser applications in manufacturing, with a focus on the aerospace industry. The grant also funds new educational initiatives in the area of laser manufacturing.

“The work under this grant breaks new ground for the University of Hartford in preparing a workforce in the state that will be competitive on a global scale well into the 21st century,” said Lou Manzione, dean of the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA).

Under the leadership of CETA Professor and Dean of Research Devdas Shetty, the grant has already produced many results. Graduate students, working with manufacturers and government organizations, have developed a number of new products and processes that are now being evaluated by various companies. Some of the students’ research has been published and presented at conferences around the country. In addition, the grant has made possible the development of a new graduate-level academic concentration in laser manufacturing and photonics, as well as interdisciplinary faculty research and a regional seminar on laser manufacturing processes.
I just received an invitation that has left me deeply conflicted.

I am being asked to join a national association that is “dedicated to advocating and serving on behalf of current and future college parents.”

I don’t know how to respond. I am both a provost (the university’s chief academic officer) and a parent. Depending on what hat I wear, I have a very different reaction to this invitation.

As a provost, at the start of every fall semester, I look out my window and see a swarm of “helicopter parents” arriving with our new students. Many of these parents are poised to hover over their sons and daughters, ready to swoop in and rescue them from the new challenges presented by campus life.

Universities don’t encourage this type of behavior. We want our students to make their own decisions, make their own mistakes, learn that actions have consequences, and mature into responsible, thoughtful adults while they are under our care for four years. We don’t want to be the ground crew for these helicopter parents.

What type of growth opportunity is provided to a daughter whose mother stays with her in her residence hall room for two weeks until the roommate decides that there is one too many in the room and complains? How is responsibility instilled when mom and dad swing by campus every Friday to pick up the daughter’s dirty laundry? And what does her son learn when the mother calls the provost to complain about a grade her son earned on a paper? (She informed me that she was an English major in college and the grade her son received was inappropriate because she had written his paper for him.)

Why would a parent, I’m sure well-meaning, engage in this type of behavior? It may be that today’s parents have become too accustomed to the role of advocate for their children through the K–12 experience. It may be that cell phones are omnipresent, too accessible, and function to keep the umbilical cord intact. It may be that students are entering universities without the level of maturity needed to successfully navigate in and around a challenging environment. It may be, more worrisome still, that many students don’t object to their parents’ behavior.

To wean parents away from their college freshmen, some universities have opened Offices of Parent Relations to handle and counsel parents, to provide special orientation sessions to help parents transition to a new role, and to allow their sons and daughters space to grow.

These programs are often effective. However, I personally have not made the transition. Although I work in academic administration, I am also a parent who sent my only child off to college this fall. I understand a parent’s desire to hover. Although I believe that we have raised an independent, resourceful young woman, I find myself wondering if she fully understands the significance of the decisions she is making in her first few months in college.

I know too well the importance of getting a bachelor’s degree, the high risk of students dropping out in the first few critical months of their college career, the consequences of failing to meet fixed deadlines for financial aid and housing, and the real dangers to the health and careers of freshmen presented with opportunities to experiment with drugs and alcohol. I hope, as any parent would, that a faculty member, a staff member, or an administrator will reach out to her and help her adjust to college life. In case someone does not, perhaps I should be ready to help her out.

How am I handling this conflict between being a provost and parent? With great restraint, I am not hovering (yet). I am trying to control my desire to do so to allow my daughter to navigate her own way through college.

I have not called the provost of the university where my daughter attends (yet). I am trying to offer advice and gentle guidance from afar.

I saw, but never fully understood, the emotion in parents’ faces when dropping off their sons and daughters in early September. Before this fall, I thought the drop-off would be a cause of celebration: the beginning of a worry-free phase in life. I may be wrong.

One thing I know for sure, this provost is certainly more sympathetic to parents struggling not to start their rotors.

How will I respond to the invitation? The stamp is on the envelope; I haven’t put it in the mail yet.

Provost Donna Randall

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The Long and Winding Road
HARTT STUDENT TOURS WITH PROFESSIONAL COMPANY

Douglas Lyons would have been a junior in The Hartt School’s musical theatre program this year, but he is playing hooky. He’s on the road with a national touring company of the Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning musical Rent. On the phone from Lincoln, Neb., Lyons describes having a touch of stage fright during the first night he appeared with the company.

“My first performance was intimidating,” he admits. “For the first time in my career, I was a little bit afraid.”

While his fellow Hartt School students are in classes and rehearsals for campus productions, Lyons is traveling across the country to fill in when the show’s lead actors are too ill or injured to perform. The travel is a little like being part of a minor league baseball team with long bus rides and one-night performances.

The New Haven native has had to learn six male parts in the production but mostly plays the roles of Steve, Paul, Benny, and Tom. He acknowledges that he is getting a valuable education every night.

“It’s a career step for me,” Lyons says. “I’m now at the professional level. It’s another type of training, but I’m not going to pursue it further until I finish at Hartt. I’m definitely coming back to school.”

The tour, which is being presented by the Maryland-based Ken Gentry’s NETworks Presentations, wraps up in May. Lyons won the chance to tour with Rent through an audition last April.

Journey to the Land of Oz
STUDENT SUTANYA DACRES ’06 EMBRACES THE LAND OF BOOMERANGS, KANGAROOS, AND SHRIMP ON THE BARBY

Sutanya Dacres ’06 has left her heart in Australia (or “Oz” to those in the know).

Dacres works in the University’s Study Abroad Office, where she talks enthusiastically to other students about the program. She knows exactly what she’s talking about. Last year Dacres spent her spring semester studying in Australia, and the experience opened her eyes to possibilities out in the world and within herself.

“By far, this is the best thing I have ever done in my whole life,” says the Bronx, N.Y., native. “It helped introduce me to my own curiosity and sense of discovery. I learned that I was much more independent than I thought I was.”

Asked why she chose Australia as a destination, Dacres says she felt that a lot of people view it as some strange, far away land and hold many misconceptions about it. “I wanted to find out about Australia for myself.”

Dacres lived in the Western Australian city of Perth, which she describes as a “medium-sized city with a small-town feel.” A double major in international studies and modern languages at the University of Hartford, she took courses in general education at Edith Cowan University in Perth.

But it was living in another country on the other side of the globe that was the real education for Dacres, whose roommates were from Kenya, Norway, Malaysia, and Australia. She says the experience helped her focus on what she wants to do for a career and that she is grateful to her parents and the University for supporting her in the adventure.

“I think about Australia every day,” Dacres says. “And I still keep in contact with my Australian friends.”

Now Dacres is planning to return to Australia to earn a master’s degree in public relations. She hopes to work one day in a job that allows her to travel.

“I’ll go where the wind takes me,” she says. “The travel bug has gotten hold of me.”