



## A HAPPY NEW (ENVIRONMENTALLY AWARE) YEAR

Dear Lawrentians:

As we ring in another New Year, it's usual to reflect on events of the year just past, as well as consider the possibilities of the year ahead. Certainly, the typical renewed optimism is tempered this year by a global economic crisis that has impacted us all, and indications are these economic challenges will endure for quite some time. We've made considerable progress in managing college operations through the downturn, reducing expenses campus-wide, but with an ongoing commitment to preserving our academic and artistic core. As difficult as this process has been, keep in mind that this is not the first time Lawrence University has experienced hardship, and, as in the past, I am confident we will emerge a stronger institution.

Now, a few reflections...

The formal theme of last year focused on the *Senior Experience*, a new graduation requirement designed to enable our students to demonstrate the outcomes of their Lawrence education. Seen by the faculty as an appropriate bookend to Lawrence's signature *Freshman Studies* program, we are delighted that *Senior Experience* was recognized by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with a grant of \$350,000. The grant will be used to support faculty and students in the implementation of the *Senior Experience*, as well as the appointment of a faculty member — Tom Ryckman, professor of philosophy — as Lawrence's first *Senior Experience* director.

Last year's *informal* theme was the Revitalization of Democracy, serving as a call to all Lawrence students to become more aware of and participatory in the presidential primary elections. Accordingly, Lawrence launched a political Web site — MyElectionDecision.org — and voter registration drives. A recent survey of Lawrence student voters revealed that an impressive 97 percent of students responding to the survey cast their ballot on Election Day. (That compares favorably with a 52 percent youth voter turnout nationwide.)

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), tracks how freshman and senior students feel about different aspects of their college education, measuring, among other things, the extent to which their college experience had contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development about voting in elections. In 2008, both Lawrence freshmen and seniors emerged as statistically stronger than their peers across the country in that regard.

The point is that theme years at Lawrence make a difference. Sometimes they result in curricular advances and external funding, other times they make a difference in how our students feel about what they are learning at their college.

Looking forward, it is my hope that this year's theme will be equally productive.

The theme on which we embark now, supported by Lawrence's Curriculum Committee, centers on our environment. As you will read, environmental stewardship is by no means a new idea at Lawrence. Students, faculty, and staff have long been supportive of varied initiatives to reduce our impact on the environment and to conserve natural resources. The success of these individual efforts has given us reason to consider, "How much more effective might we be, if the entire Lawrence community participated?" Thus, the Green Roots™ initiative was born last summer and its mission is "to establish an institutional framework within which we can cultivate habits of mind and dispositions that lead to ecological intelligence and environmental sustainability." Our hope is that this initiative, begun as a theme year, will become part of Lawrence University's culture for generations to come.

I am also very pleased that this issue of *Lawrence Today* celebrates the achievements of our talented faculty. We are fortunate to have an exceptionally creative, dedicated faculty providing unique, often life-changing, educational experiences. We are very proud to present their accomplishments in this annual president's report. Their scholarly and creative accomplishments are fascinating, and their work in the classroom is preparing a new generation of Lawrentians for lives of achievement, responsible and meaningful citizenship, lifelong learning, and personal fulfillment.

As we embark on a year destined to be challenge-filled, I am so proud of our students, our faculty, staff, and alumni, and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to you, a cherished member of our Lawrence family, for everything you do in support of our college. Your help is appreciated now, more than ever, and for that we are truly grateful.

Happy New Year,

Jill Beck