



THE MEANING OF  
SWARTHMORE

## COMMENTATORS

## ALIX WEBB '92

As students, Alix Webb and seven other women formed the a cappella group Frionas. Their search for songs that reflected a variety of different cultures further deepened Alix's social consciousness. After graduation, she headed the community service organization CIVIC and later worked with North Philadelphia's Kensington Welfare Rights Union. She is currently working in Philadelphia with the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign.



## DAVID BALTIMORE '60

David Baltimore's research on how cancer-causing RNA viruses infect healthy cells earned him the 1975 Nobel Prize, which he shared with Howard Temin '55 (Dec'd.). As a scientist and educator, David has been at the center of national science policy initiatives on topics ranging from recombinant DNA research to the development of AIDS vaccines. He is president of the California Institute of Technology.



## LENA SZE '01

Activism and service characterized Lena Sze's years as a Swarthmore student. Lena coordinated the Chinatown Tutorial, a program for youth in Philadelphia's Chinatown neighborhood. She also served on the College Diversity task force and was coordinator of the Conscious Consumers economic justice group. An Honors Latin major and a poet, Lena plans to work in South Philadelphia on a school-based project that integrates art and politics.

PHILIP JEFFERSON, *associate professor of economics*

In 1996, while researching monetary policy at the Federal Reserve, Philip Jefferson led a one-day seminar for Swarthmore faculty about the effect of interest rates on economic activity. His listeners were mesmerized, and they encouraged him to join the Swarthmore faculty in 1997. Philip has earned respect as an inspirational teacher, a renowned scholar in the field of monetary economics, and a leader in the campus community.

SHARON FRIEDLER, *professor of dance*

Professional dancer and teacher Sharon Friedler joined the Swarthmore faculty in 1985. Her interests in dance are diverse, including cross-cultural explorations of women in dance, choreography and performance, and Ghanaian dance. As director of dance, Sharon has greatly expanded opportunities for student involvement in dance, which she sees as an ideal discipline for building bridges between areas of study, individuals, and cultures.



## RODNEY MORRIS '01

As a student, Rodney Morris was a respected leader on a range of complex issues that faced the campus community. Rodney was vice president of the Swarthmore African-American Student Society and served on Student Council. A Eugene M. Lang Scholar and an Honors English major, Rodney is currently working on a novel, parts of which he's adapting as a one-man theater performance.



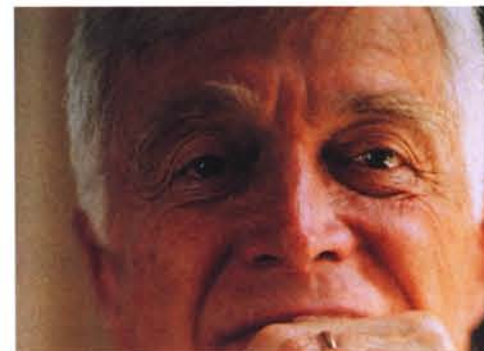
## SARAH JAY '01

Sarah Jay found Swarthmore to be both an eye-opening and world-broadening experience. An Honors English major, Sarah captained the women's soccer and track teams, worked with the Diversity Coalition, and was a member of the Athletic Review Committee. A highlight of her student years was her acting debut in *The Vagina Monologues*, a campus adaptation of an off-Broadway production that deals with women's self-image.



## JACK RIGGS '64

A few years after graduating from Swarthmore, Jack Riggs found himself in South Vietnam, where he worked on land reform for the U.S. Agency for International Development. That experience jump-started a career in public service that has spanned more than 30 years. Today, he is the executive director of the Program on Energy, the Environment, and the Economy at the Aspen Institute.

ROBERT SAVAGE, *professor emeritus of biology*

Adapting as always to important trends in contemporary science, Swarthmore hired cell biologist Bob Savage in 1967. During the ensuing 28 years, Bob became one of the College's most beloved and admired faculty members. He has been an adviser to the National Science Foundation and to many college and university science departments and has numerous publications to his credit in cell and molecular biology. He retired in 1995.



## THE MEANING OF SWARTHMORE

The meaning of an institution is often reflected in its rituals and traditions, in what it honors and celebrates. And though much is honored and celebrated at Swarthmore, two rites of passage in the lives of students reflect that meaning in special ways. First Collection, held each fall, welcomes a new class into a TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE that extends back nearly a century and a half. Four years later, Commencement honors those students and marks their readiness for lives as citizens of a world that needs them.

Unrelenting excellence is one of Swarthmore's core values. In today's world, that's pretty rare – and extremely important. The world depends on it but is suspect of it.

DAVID BALTIMORE '60

On a late summer evening before the first day of classes, members of the entering class gather for First Collection beneath the tall tulip poplars in the

Scott Amphitheater. They listen as a Swarthmore student, a faculty member, and the president offer insight into what they should expect at the College, and WHAT IT EXPECTS OF THEM. They are encouraged to spend less time simply asking what and more time asking how and why. They hear about how ideas will excite their minds and stretch their imaginations, how different ways of seeing and knowing will add perspective and complexity to their views, how their Swarthmore education will shape their approach to life. They hear about COMPASSION AND JUSTICE and the importance of cultivating not just academic intelligence but ethical intelligence and social commitment as well.

In the winter of my sophomore year, I did an Urban Plunge to learn about homelessness. I had to survive for 48 hours on the streets of Washington with 35 cents in my pocket. I was in one of the busiest places, DuPont Circle, feeling invisible. My sponsor was a homeless person. He showed me how to get food, how to be safe. He was like Socrates. It opened my eyes – I realized that every person is important.

RODNEY MORRIS '01

There can be a great deal of frustration at Swarthmore because we have in our minds a vision of an ideal, and we have the potential to achieve that ideal but haven't been able to get it done all of the time. The College is never settled enough to rest on its laurels.

PHILIP JEFFERSON

After First Collection, a group of us were walking back to Pittenger. We stopped at Wharton, and someone showed us the whispering arch. I felt like they were unlocking the secrets of Swarthmore. I kept my candle lit all the way home.

SARAH JAY '01

Each student holds a candle. After the speakers have finished, one candle is lit, then another from the first, and so on until, as dusk turns to dark, some 370 separate dots of light form a collective glow, illuminating the night. The moment has weight and power and carries important messages for the incoming class. It acknowledges the **INNER LIGHT** in everyone gathered there as it unites them around the common purposes at the heart of Swarthmore's mission. And it brings each student face to face with a personal and a shared commitment to the search for truth.

For the next four years, that search for truth will take many forms. These students will live the life of the mind as participants in **A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS** dedicated to the highest standards of intellectual

It's a community of minds. It's not a peaceful community – there's debate and struggle. But there's great value in having people to think and learn with – to learn how to ask, to learn what to ask.

ALIX WEBB '92

At the Aspen Institute, we do something called "risky listening." It's where you listen with the idea that what you hear might make you have to change your mind. We try to get beyond our perspectives to the values underlying them. It's very Swarthmorean.

JACK RIGGS '64

achievement. They will learn from faculty members who, as gifted educators, actively seek to extend the boundaries of knowledge and at every turn encourage their students to join them in that pursuit. They will learn to **SUSPEND CERTAINTY**, subject their preconceptions to rigorous analysis, and engage the world in all its complexity, ambiguity, and imperfection. They will have an **UNPARALLELED OPPORTUNITY** to develop their unique interests and talents to the fullest.

Swarthmore is about community, intense engagement, open vision, creating ensembles across groups, connecting people and ideas, not just on campus but in surrounding worlds. The possibilities here ask you to go beyond your individual interests.

SHARON FRIEDLER

In my junior year, I did Winter Institute, a workshop about stereotypes and how we unconsciously judge others. Everyone goes in saying, "I'm not prejudiced." But then you come to the realization that some of your thinking is in these real strict grooves, and you have to step outside of that.

SARAH JAY '01

Their pursuit of truth will involve something more as well. This community of learners is an **INTENTIONALLY ETHICAL COMMUNITY**. It seeks to be a microcosm of a just, generous, and inclusive world and to place intellectual acuity at the service of developing such a world. The effort to meet that challenge

will be at times exhausting, at times exhilarating, and ultimately rewarding.

As their undergraduate years come to an end, the students return to the amphitheater, where their Swarthmore education began with the lighting of a candle. Commencement brings the entire College community together to celebrate these students' remarkable intellectual accomplishments and personal growth. It signals their readiness to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE**. It gives them an opportunity to hear and learn from individuals who have done just that, individuals who are part of the Swarthmore community and whom the College has chosen to honor not for reasons of celebrity but because they are **INSPIRATIONAL EXEMPLARS** of lives well and fully lived. It acknowledges the work that has

Christian Anfinsen '37, H'65 was a *C* student in biology and chemistry. He went on to show that the peculiar knot of a protein in space is related to the shape of the enzyme that that protein is catalyzing. He won the Nobel Prize for that.

BOB SAVAGE

It's important for students to see the world in a responsible way – that there are parameters in which you conduct yourself and consequences to your actions. You can enjoy what the world has to offer, but you're also responsible to that world. The world is *not* necessarily your oyster.

PHILIP JEFFERSON

been done while underscoring the importance of the work to follow.

The past half-century has been challenging for America's residential liberal arts colleges. In the public mind, highly focused training for a career has assumed greater importance than the development of a creative mind and the **EXCITEMENT OF INTELLECTUAL PURSUIT**.

Liberal arts colleges have come to educate a small and declining proportion of college students. Yet, during this time, Swarthmore has thrived.

The College has thrived through an uncompromising commitment to offering a liberal arts education of the highest quality, an education that helps students learn to question and explore, to think critically, to develop their imaginations, to act responsibly and

I was awed – not intimidated – by all the intellectual prowess. There's intellectual interest everywhere. Your academic sparring skills are honed.

LENA SZE '01

with conviction. It is an education that offers not only a path to a meaningful career but also the **FINEST PREPARATION FOR LIFE.**

Swarthmore means always to learn, to feel yourself in a community of ideas, with history behind you and a stretch of road ahead. The College gives you access to that road because it gives you access to ideas.

LENA SZE '01

The meaning of Swarthmore is about adhering to immutable core values—educational excellence, intellectual seriousness, the intrinsic worth of every person, ethical consciousness, and social commitment. It is about sustaining those values while adapting to a changing and interconnected world. It is about being able to see and understand that world in new ways, envisioning and passionately pursuing new frontiers. It is about confidence in a mission that has withstood the test of time and about **FAITH IN POSSIBILITY.**

The greatest problems in today's world are those that require new ideas to solve, and many of these ideas will come when there is a synthesis of knowledge across fields. Unless we're producing people confident with creating ideas, all hope is lost.

PHILIP JEFFERSON

One way of understanding the meaning of Swarthmore is first to stand on the front steps of

Parrish Hall on a clear day and look out over the hillside to the east. The landscape slopes away; within a quarter-mile, the campus gives way to the surrounding community, then to the tree-lined horizon, and then to the world beyond. What lies before you is a world of **POTENTIAL AND OBLIGATION.**

The central notion of this place is that the gifts you have are not yours to sit back and gloat about.

SHARON FRIEDLER

Then, walk through Parrish and out again into the academic quadrangle, and consider what and whom those buildings represent. They are the place where those with a passion for learning develop the resources of intellect and character they need to make that world beyond Parrish **A BETTER AND MORE HUMANE PLACE.**

It's not about how Rodney feels or what Rodney has. The foundation is working for other people—it's all built upon what Rodney can do for other people. You learn what's valuable and important in life.

RODNEY MORRIS '01

This has been Swarthmore's legacy, and this will be its future.

You come out of Swarthmore with a sort of relativism because you couldn't deny the intellectual power of people you disagreed with. We had to question our beliefs.

DAVID BALTIMORE '60



I've been cursed with the ability to always see multiple sides of an issue.

JACK RIGGS '64