

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Liberal Arts: Put to a Public Purpose

*“Over the 127 years of Gettysburg College’s existence, its graduates have, in many ways, served the cause of freedom and of justice. May the years ahead be as fruitful as those which you now look back upon with such pride and with such satisfaction.”*

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Founder’s Day, April 4, 1959

Today, nearly 50 years after President Eisenhower noted the contributions of our alumni, we continue to be proud of their accomplishments in the professions, in business, in health care and education, and in public



service. President Eisenhower was an ardent advocate of higher education as the means to create informed, engaged citizen-leaders, whom he believed held the power to bring about a more peaceful, equitable society.

Eisenhower urged students to explore the issues of the day and refine their understanding so that they might help shape public discourse and emerge as thoughtful citizens with a com-

mitment to make a difference in public life.

One of the legacies of Ike’s passion is the Eisenhower Institute (EI), which became an integral part of the College last year. Our goal is to develop the Institute, both at its Washington, D.C. and Gettysburg locations, as a premier organization for research, dialogue, and outreach on issues of public policy and leadership and to create one of the nation’s strongest undergraduate programs in these areas.

This fall, we took a giant step toward that goal with the appointment of Jeffrey Blavatt ’88 as the EI’s new chairman and chief operating officer and Susan Eisenhower as chairman of leadership and public policy programs and chairman emeritus. I could not be more pleased and confident in this new leadership team. Susan combines expertise in international public policy, former experience as both president and chair of the EI as well as family legacy. Jeff has provided outstanding volunteer leadership as chair of the EI board, as a member of the College’s Board of Trustees, and as the former president of the Alumni Association.

I believe Ike would be proud that the College is committed to making the Institute that bears his name a magnet for influential scholars who spark discussions on issues of political concern. During the fall the EI provided students with the opportunity to interact with several thought leaders on

civil rights, the space program, foreign policy, and international relations.

The Institute is a natural partner of the College’s distinctive programs in Civil War Studies, its strong liberal arts programs in political science, history, globalization, and Africana Studies, and its nationally renowned Center for Public Service. The EI’s focus on civic engagement echoes Samuel Schmucker’s commitment to create an institution that would have a salutary influence on our young nation. It underscores the College’s role as witness to some of our country’s most defining moments, and it draws on its link to some of the nation’s most passionate leaders: Thaddeus Stevens, who helped shape the debate that resulted in the abolition of slavery; Abraham Lincoln, whose famous address was the 19th century’s most eloquent expression of freedom and liberty; and Dwight D. Eisenhower, who led the Allied Forces to victory over 20th-century threats to liberty and freedom.

Lincoln, Eisenhower, Stevens, Schmucker were all great men, all dedicated to public purpose — all thoughtful and selfless leaders. For decades their powerful sense of purpose has inspired scores of Gettysburg students who have championed civil rights, shaped public policy, and counseled presidents.

In the College’s recently approved strategic plan, we created the blueprint of a bolder, stronger Gettysburg that would emphasize academic engagement and social responsibility, creativity, cultural understanding, intellectual flexibility, and a sense of place. These values are part of our tradition and also part of our future. We will build on this foundation and sharpen the College’s distinctive legacy to inspire new generations of students. A focus on the “public purpose” of the liberal arts in this College’s resonant setting emphasizes the obligation, the responsibility, the opportunity of a Gettysburg education. Ike would be proud.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine Haley Will". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katherine Haley Will  
President