JOINING THE RANKS OF 17 FORMER U.S. PRESIDENTS AND SEVEN OF THE NINE CURRENT U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICES, 24 HWS STUDENTS ARE INDUCTED INTO PHI BETA KAPPA

by Melissa Sue Sorrells '05

One Percent

Joining the ranks of 17 former U.S. Presidents and seven of the nine current U.S. Supreme Court Justices, 24 HWS students are inducted into Phi Beta Kappa

by Melissa Sue Sorrells '05

One of the oldest undergraduate honors organizations in the country, the Phi Beta Kappa Society (PBK) recognizes high academic excellence, encourages the pursuit of wisdom and promotes a true love of learning. Membership in the Society is exclusive: each year, about one percent of students graduating from colleges and universities nationwide are invited to join. Since 1776, when five students at the College of William and Mary founded PBK, just more than half a million members have been inducted from chapters at 276 liberal arts colleges and universities across the country.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., PBK is widely recognized as the first society to have a Greek-letter name and originated many of the common tropes associated with Greek societies, including the secret handshake and the elaborate initiation ceremony. Above all, its founding members valued freedom of inquiry and intellectual pursuit, and those standards have remained the hallmarks of the organization for more than two centuries.

Alpha, Beta ... Zeta

Zeta of New York, the Hobart and William Smith Chapter of PBK, was established in 1871, making it older than 90 percent of all of the chapters in the nation, and it’s got a long and storied history to match.

The most popular Zeta legend includes one of the most influential figures in American history. In 1929, then-New York Governor and future American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, L.H.D. '29 was elected into Zeta as an honorary member after offering the Commencement address on campus. His signature—like the signature of every member inducted into PBK—is listed in the chapter rolls.

“We gave him a key and everything, and he wore it often in photos during his time in the White House,” recalls Honorary Trustee Barbara L. Springstead ’57, L.H.D. ’90. “Teddy may have been elected to PBK in his own right, but FDR wore his key everywhere!”

Adding their names below FDR on the chapter roll are faculty and staff PBK members, no matter where or when they were inducted. In 2007-2008, there were 28 faculty and staff members, like Associate Professor of Biology Sigrid Carle ’84, in the chapter as well as several emeriti faculty, alumni and local community members, like alumna and Genevan Springstead.

“Our chapter is and always has been very nice,” she says. “We’re a bit feisty, and we’re very proud of our historical traditions. Our induction ceremony has been handed down for years. Our younger members take pride in the fact that it has come down to them after being performed for so many years.”

Among the many much-beloved PBK traditions is the Zeta chapter song itself: De Brevitate Vitae from Brahms’ Academic Festival Overture in the original Latin. Throughout the years, several faculty members have had some fun with the song and Zeta, much to the other members’ amusement.
In 1929, then-New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt, L.H.D. ’29 was elected into Zeta (the Hobart and William Smith Chapter of PBK) as an honorary member after offering the Commencement address at HWS.

Phi Beta Kappa graduate Dr. Priscilla Schaffer ’64, Sc.D. ’94, who has devoted her career to health care, agrees. “The education I received at William Smith is the cornerstone of my life as a scientist and professor,” says the recent Blackwell awardee and former Chief of the Laboratory of Molecular Virology at Harvard Medical School. “Having been given every opportunity to succeed in my chosen profession, I am both grateful and proud to be a graduate of William Smith College.”

Some of the Colleges’ most notable alums, including President of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts Reynold Levy ’66, Executive Editor of The New Yorker Dorothy Wickenden ’76 and financial planner and vice-board chair Maureen Collins Zupan ’72, are also PBK recipients. “Thinking about my experiences as a PBK has made me realize how grateful I am to have it on my resume,” says noted children’s author Kristen Welsh.

“Being elected as a junior allowed me an incredible opportunity to invite an international speaker to campus and execute the event,” says Snyder. “I learned a lot from coordinating with different offices to make PBK more visible on campus.”

Each of these students excelled academically, engaged in intellectual inquiry outside of their discipline and displayed a pervasive love of learning,” says Welsh. “Being inducted into PBK is a family that unites Hobart and William Smith students with other Phi Beta Kappas nationwide,” says Abigail Slowick ’08, a masters student in clinical psychology at Loyola University. “Being inducted in front of the faculty members and peers who helped me grow into a driven and successful student really made me appreciate going to a small, liberal arts college where students are encouraged to pursue a wide range of interests and are celebrated and recognized for being individuals.”
FEATURE STORY

From working as a professional foodie to healing with dance, these nine PBKs are putting their passion for learning into job satisfaction.

Food for Thought
by Jessie Meyers ’10

Inspiration hit Becky Selengut ’92 while she was working at The Herbfarm, a Seattle-area restaurant that grows its own produce. “I started asking myself questions like, ‘When does rhubarb start growing? When do morel mushrooms go out of season?’” she says.

With the help of 20 farmers, fisherman, foragers and fellow chefs, Selengut began cataloguing the seasonal lives of more than 290 foods commonly grown in the Pacific Northwest, which she put online as a public service. And so, in 2006, www.SeasonalCornucopia.com was born.

To date, the Web site has received about 150,000 searches, sponsorships from local farms and businesses, and even a grant from environmentally-friendly clothing company Patagonia. And Selengut just keeps adding to her plate.

Selengut, the recipient of the Outstanding Culinarian of the Year Award, has translated her success into work as a freelance writer for Seattle Homes and Lifestyles and a career as a private chef and cooking teacher. She’s also the co-author of The Washington Local and Seasonal Cookbook.

And, when she’s not working, Selengut volunteers her time, raising money for organizations such as Sustainable Ballard, King County Sexual Assault Resource Center, Shoreline High School’s Culinary Arts Program and the Cascade Harvest Coalition.

What’s her recipe for success? “Follow your heart and follow your passion.”

Bridging Passions and Cityscapes
by Joshua Unikel ’07

As children, most of us draw stick figures living in cartoon landscapes of smiling suns and puffy trees. But when Elisabeth Millspaugh Schroeder ’78, P’11 was a girl, she drew structures - always structures. “From a very early age, I started on a path toward architecture and architectural design, even in my childhood doodles,” explains Schroeder.

Since graduating from William Smith and earning an M.S. and a William Kinne fellowship from Columbia University School of Architecture, Schroeder has been pursuing her passion for revitalizing cities by re-conceptualizing urban areas across the eastern seaboard.

“I’ve had the good fortune of falling into situations that allow me to tackle urban problems,” says Schroeder. “The main challenge of my career has been to fill in and restore various cities’ environments while adding to their amenities.”

Schroeder is currently focusing her efforts on Pittsburgh as executive director of the Riverlife Task Force.

“I spend a lot of my time fashioning the plans involved in the Three Rivers Park Project and forming a web of people and resources to facilitate it,” she says. “Our master plan for the Three Rivers Park Project is simple: connect 13 miles of riverfront with a ribbon of green park space so that ultimately everyone can find their way across the city.”

Schroeder is also connecting the things she loves in life with her career. “I love relationships, conversations and contact with people,” says Schroeder. “I also have a great love of learning. But my family is what I love most in life. All of these are at play on a daily and momentary basis in my professional life. My career focus is simple: to make the best possible urban environment for my family and for future generations.”

Career Hop
by Abigail Slowik ’08

Doug Edlin ’88 left a successful career as an attorney to become a Professor of Political Science at Dickinson College where he shares his passion for law and policy in a liberal arts environment.

Q: What do you remember most about the Colleges?
A: When I think back on my time at Hobart, three things immediately come to mind: my friends, the faculty and the campus. I have maintained connections with my friends from Hobart and they are the closest friends I have ever had. The effect my relationships with faculty had on me was the biggest surprise. They simply changed the way I looked at myself. The campus is so striking and it stays with you.

I felt fortunate for the opportunity to be in that beautiful place with those extraordinary people at that important time in my life.

Q: How did HWS prepare you for your career?
A: HWS gave me the chance to attend

PHOTO BY MARK ESKENAZI
HWS: The Video Game

by Joshua Unkel ’07

It’s common for your typical Phi Beta Kappa to upload passions from high school and college days and translate them into a career. But it’s not quite as common for those passions to be programmed into video games sold to millions of button-mashing gamers worldwide.

But keeping gamers on the cutting edge is just another day at the office for Hiroki Kobayashi ’96, a software development lead at Microsoft. “I manage some projects in Xbox LIVE,” Kobayashi explains, referring to his company’s online gaming system. “This involves making technical decisions, planning for the future and working with other teams. I also manage a group of software engineers who write our server software.”

Before he started managing people, Kobayashi wrote a piece of code known as a ‘software library’ for the Xbox games Jade Empire and Forza. “Later, it was used to support new Xbox 360 titles, including Forza 2 and Viva Pinata,” he says. “While deadlines were a bit crazy, I had fun with it, and it’s always nice to see your work being produced so that the end product is displayed on a store shelf.”

As if this weren’t enough to make any gamer jealous, he modestly adds, “I also had an opportunity to help with some Halo series games,” mentioning one of the most groundbreaking and influential video game series of all time.

What led this alum into the gaming world? “When I was in high school, I casually took a programming class where I learned how much I love it,” he explains. “I discovered my passion for mathematics in college. I spent long hours learning about both of them, and I’m still using those skills every day.”

So the next time you or one of your family members just can’t stop playing that hot new video game sweeping the nation, it may very well be thanks to our very own Kobayashi.

Healing Dance

by Cindy McVey

Susan Alger’s ’89 parents wanted the best for her – including a college education that would prepare her for a viable career. Susan wanted to dance.

“Professor of Dance Cynthia Williams was highly influential and really helped me believe in myself, learn to love to perform and have confidence that I could perform well,” says Alger. “She encouraged me to follow my dream to dance—to follow my passion. She’s also the one who told me I could be successful at it.”

While at HWS, Alger took a master class with Tony Award-winning choreographer Garth Fagan in her hometown of Rochester. Because she was a fan of his earlier work, Fagan suggested that she dance in his footsteps by studying in his former hometown in Jamaica.

She hopped a plane and spent a semester with the National Dance Theater Company at the Cultural Training Institute. There, she discovered a new purpose for dance and a new career interest. “I was very interested in how the Jamaican people had integrated dance into their culture as a healing art form,” she says.

She returned to HWS and graduated with majors in dance and English. She promptly grabbed a return ticket to Jamaica and danced with the National Dance Theater Company for almost two years.

Her next move was back to the U.S. and Rochester, where she earned her credentials as a dance therapist, even studying in Greece for some of her requirements.

After several years and a master’s in social work from Syracuse University, Alger has finally made it to the performance of her lifetime. Today, she runs private practice dance therapy programs in Oregon, “healing from the inside out through movement.”

For the past nine years, she was the director of the social work program at McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center. She changed jobs in June of this year and, in addition to her private practice, works with the Leukemia/ Lymphoma Society, providing counseling, educational programs and support groups for patients and their families.

“What I like most about my job is that every day I get to make a difference,” she explains. “I need to know that my work has meaning and that with my last breath I’ll know I made a difference.”

Q: Was it scary to leave your career in law to pursue teaching? A: Yes, it was definitely a little unnerving leaving behind a firm and a job I liked very much as an attorney. I was fortunate in my legal career, and I’ll always miss going to court, but I know this was the right decision for me.

Q: What was it like to live and study in England? A: Oxford was wonderful. I couldn’t believe how lucky I was to live and learn in such a breathtaking place. My research and dissertation focused on comparing the constitutional systems of the US and the UK. Oxford has arguably the strongest law faculty in Britain and almost certainly the strongest legal philosophy faculty in the world. I also had the chance to teach legal philosophy to Oxford students in two colleges, New and St. Edmund Hall.

Q: You won Dickinson College’s Ganoe Award for Inspirational Teaching. What do you think makes an inspirational teacher? A: The Ganoe Award is voted on by the senior class, and it’s announced as a surprise at the graduation ceremony. I still feel overwhelmed and enormously honored by it. I think what makes an inspiring teacher is the ability to convey to students not just what you know but how and why the subject you teach matters to you personally. I hope to impart some of my own interest and enthusiasm for the subjects I teach, to demonstrate their importance and to leave students asking questions that might continue to challenge them after they have left my class.

Susan Alger ’89

The Kobayashis

graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania and law school at Cornell University. That led to my time as a practicing lawyer. I ultimately decided to return to school to pursue my Ph.D. at Oxford’s Linacre College because I always thought that teaching was what I most wanted to do, primarily because of my experience at HWS. My professors taught me how to think critically, to write clearly and to see how a liberal arts education is meant to help people to be more fully human.

Q: Why did you decide to pursue law school at Oxford? A: I went to Oxford because it was one of the most prestigious places in the world to study law. My professors taught me how to think critically, to write clearly and to see how a liberal arts education is meant to help people to be more fully human.

Q: What was it like to live and study in England? A: Oxford was wonderful. I couldn’t believe how lucky I was to live and study in such a breathtaking place. My research and dissertation focused on comparing the constitutional systems of the US and the UK. Oxford has arguably the strongest law faculty in Britain and almost certainly the strongest legal philosophy faculty in the world. I also had the chance to teach legal philosophy to Oxford students in two colleges, New and St. Edmund Hall.