

The College of Education at James Madison University
Affirmation of a Cause in the College's Centennial Year:
Cultural and Global Competence

As the College of Education at James Madison University observes its Centennial, a crisis continues to loom that threatens intercultural understanding, civility among all peoples, and preservation of the world's resources and the planet itself. As we commemorate our 100th year of service, the dehumanizing aspects of disease, malnourishment, poverty, bigotry, inequity and despair prevail in the lives of countless millions of the world's inhabitants. With the passage of time, the breach separating the rich from the poor—those with influence from those who are powerless; those who decide from those without voice; the privileged from the forgotten—seems to yawn ever wider. Social inequity imposes itself as a foundational aspect of the worldwide human condition, and *globalization*—the driving economic, political, and cultural engine wherewith so much of humankind's hopes reside—is not working for many of the world's poor and underprivileged, nor is it working for much of the environment.

Our most important challenge as educators and leaders is to discover what we can do to help societies of the world who would transform themselves. The most consequential drama of the past century—the struggle for civil rights for women, for the poor, for those without advantage, and for racial, ethnic, and other minorities the world over—continues to be played out. Its denouement and, hopefully, the subsequent enhancement of our personal and professional fabric, will be determined in large measure by this and future generations of students' persistent displays of humanity as they mature. What can we do to help young people develop their capacity for moral deliberation and action... to help humanize the world? What can we do to encourage and help prepare members of future generations of leaders to dedicate themselves to nourish the human spirit and to combat inequities wherever they exist? Helping our students, our colleagues, and our collaborative partners acquire greater cultural and global competence and a sense of moral purpose related thereto is a place to start.

The moral challenge of this moment—the commemoration of our college's 100th anniversary—is to affirm and advance a compassionate concept of education, of leadership, and of society. Humanity's greatness will not be measured in terms of its most celebrated scientific achievements, but in terms of how it harnesses new knowledge in attempts to eliminate injustice and inequity. We are all linked together by this time, by this place, and by our willingness to make overcoming indifference, intolerance, and injustice our civil religion. When one cares about the children of the world and the well-being of all cultures, denouncing all dehumanizing aspects of human discourse becomes a moral imperative. This is the goal and the professional cause that we affirm today, now and for all time.

Academic Year 2007-2008

Dr. Phil Wishon, Dean

Dr. Cheryl Beverly, Dr. Laurie Cavey, & Dr. George Font, Co-Chairs: College Diversity Committee