



## No Guarantees

When I read Corinna Yazbek's article "Coming Out About Class" (summer), I yelled out to my husband, "Yes! Finally someone knows how I feel!"

Coming from a working-class family to Mount Holyoke, I had to deal with class misperceptions. I had friends who didn't understand why, when I had only \$20 in my bank account, I couldn't just call up my parents for more money. An adviser expressed confusion when I revealed that I had no idea what an independent study entailed; I had never attended a private school where an independent study was part of the curriculum.

I was willing to endure those little embarrassments because I fully believed that I would be leading a stable, middle-class life after I received my Mount Holyoke degree. However, in the seven years since leaving Mount Holyoke, I have ridden the highs and lows of the job market (and my savings account), from working in a cushy job at a university to a backbreaking job in retail. Like Yazbek, I think,

"I didn't go to Mount Holyoke to do this."

Thank you, Corinna Yazbek, for telling those of us struggling that "a Mount Holyoke degree is no guarantee that we will never ... have to do whatever it takes to earn enough money to survive ... and this is all okay; it doesn't mean we've failed."

**Gabriela Valdez Burgman '00**  
*Woburn, Massachusetts*

## Questioning Themselves

I truly enjoy every issue of the Alumnae *Quarterly*, but the articles by Katie Alton '05 and Corinna Yazbek '01 have prompted me to finally get off my duff to thank the *Quarterly* staff for printing articles from fabulous young alums. It's a joy to see these women questioning themselves, their surroundings, and their core beliefs. Young women like Katie and Corinna make me even more proud to be an MHC graduate!

**Candy Moot '75**  
*Montpelier, Vermont*

## Limits to Tolerance

The summer *Quarterly* letter from Suzanne Corriell '00 and Regis Ahern '01 was a stunner.

Not living in the Boston area, I never saw the newspaper article about the undergraduate who has undergone gender reassignment surgery to become a male.

I have very much come to terms with the fact that the world is, by sexual persuasion, a very different place from what it may have been when I attended Mount Holyoke. From what I can figure out, there is a tolerance that is a credit to the institution.

However, I cannot agree more strongly with the writers that the young woman who is now a young man has absolutely no business attending Mount Holyoke. Without a doubt, the surgery was done after the kind of agonizing soul searching that very few of us have had to undergo. But Mount Holyoke's alumnae and undergraduates have repeatedly made it plain that the college is to remain a *woman's* college. I support the writers' statement: "There is a limit to tolerance and acceptance; there is a point at which Mount Holyoke must demand that its mission be respected."

**Sylvia Smith Campbell '52**  
*Denville, New Jersey*

## ... Or Not

I vehemently disagree with the viewpoints of Ms. Corriell and Ms. Ahern. Mount Holyoke is not going coed passively; it is providing a much-needed support network and a safe space for transgender students. Above all, a female-to-male transgender individual's experiences as a woman are not erased just because she becomes a man.

Transgender students at MHC are going through the process of self-discovery while attending college. To force a student to leave during this period of gender exploration would be a terrible blow, forcing the student away from a wonderful and supportive community. In my opinion, it is the option of the student to decide whether or not to remain at a women's college.

Mount Holyoke provides transgender students with a safe space. Those of you familiar with the story of Brandon Teena (a transgender youth killed in Humboldt, Nebraska, because of his gender identity) will recall that the outside world is not kind to those who transgress gender boundaries. There

**We welcome letters** reflecting the varying viewpoints of the Mount Holyoke community. Letters should be no more than 300 words, and we reserve the right to edit them for accuracy, clarity, and to meet space needs. Letters addressing topics discussed in the previous *Quarterly* are given priority. On any given topic, we will print letters that address it, and then in the next issue, letters that respond to the first letters. After that, we will move on to new topics. Send your thoughts, with your full name and class, to Mieke H. Bomann, 50 College St., South Hadley, MA 01075-1486. Send e-mails to [mbomann@mt holyoke.edu](mailto:mbomann@mt holyoke.edu).

is not a limit to tolerance and acceptance. Mount Holyoke is a supportive place for transgender students and I am proud to have it as my alma mater.

**Molly Hazelton '02**  
*New York, New York*

### Safety Issues for Big and Small

Two issues: First, I found the picture of the class of 2007 (summer) disturbing. Even with full views of only the first row and ends of rows, there appear to be a lot of overweight people in this picture! What is the college doing to encourage wellness, exercise, and healthy eating among students?

Second: The article on nanoscience says nothing about the very real safety issues inherent in nanomaterials. Exactly because of the exceptional ways in which nanoscale materials behave, there is an urgent need to ensure that we fully understand their effects on the human body, other organisms, and the environment as a whole before we employ them. Someone must develop extensive testing for the unintended effects before release of new nanomaterials. Such

testing may require creative thinking, since common tests used for conventional materials (food, drug, and cosmetic tests) may not be sufficient. We must not let the market alone determine how nanomaterials are used.

**Susan Bobbe Van Hemel '65**  
*Washington, D.C.*

### Fiftieth Reunion Class Remains at Reunion I

I write with important news about upcoming reunions. The Alumnae Association previously announced a new pilot program for reunion, to commence in 2008. We based the new format on the recommendations of our Reunion Ad Hoc Committee, which spent a year and a half gathering extensive alumnae feedback about reunion.

The committee, with board approval, recommended that we continue to hold Reunion I during commencement weekend. Classes would include the 2nd, 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th, 70th, and 75th reunion classes. Reunion II would be held the following weekend, and would include the 30th through the 65th reunion classes. Classes

were divided in this way in response to numerous surveys where you let us know you wanted reunion programming tailored to the specific preferences of your classes.

While the response to the new format was largely positive, a number of alumnae and students raised concerns. These focused primarily on the historic relationship between the 50th reunion class and the graduating class. This intergenerational legacy includes a 50th reunion class gift to seniors, the presence of the 50th class during the laurel parade, and social events between the two classes. After carefully considering the feedback, the Alumnae Association staff and board and the Ad Hoc Reunion Committee decided to move forward with the anticipated three-year pilot program with one significant change: we will keep the 50th reunion class in Reunion I.

The rest of the pilot program remains the same, and will feature enhanced programming based on your requests. Please keep in mind that the new format is an experiment.

Your feedback and comments will guide us in our future planning. In the meantime, here's what to expect next year:

For classes fewer than 30 years out, we'll offer practical programming, such as finance and career workshops, expanded programs for families and children, and opportunities to connect with professors and alumnae from other classes.

For classes more than 30 years out, we'll create more opportunities for class socializing, and deepen the academic content of the Back-to-Class offerings, which will also include workshops on life and career transitions, health, retirement, and travel.

Each reunion will include class dinners and social hours, an alumnae parade and alumnae meeting, and Teen Scene. Each weekend will also offer a chance to meet with the college president. We are excited about creating special programming to celebrate and honor all generations of alumnae—and we look forward to seeing you next spring.

**W. Rochelle Calhoun '83**  
*Executive Director, MHC Alumnae Association*