

Reflections of the Class of 2007

By Austin D. Williams

One is often told that the college experience is transformative. You learn a great deal about yourself: you have the opportunity to explore your own interests and begin to develop the person you will become later in life. Franklin & Marshall gave us, as students, the chance to do even more; it offered the opportunity for US to also transform IT.

We arrived on campus nine years ago, just shortly after President John Fry took office. We were greeted by the faculty with the same enthusiasm for teaching and learning as our fellow alumni were for the past centuries, and that current students still experience today. We set out to explore this magnificent campus and found many things that caught our interest: the memorable food at The Common Ground, the practice fields at Baker Campus, and the laboratories in Fackenthal to name a few. We all settled into what would be our homes for the next four years. We each have unique and lasting memories of our freshman halls and the seminars we shared with them. And, indeed we all have that one, special professor that ignited in us a passion for learning that we never knew existed. But as we celebrate this Fifth Reunion, it is the common memories and lessons that bring us back to this extraordinary place. Two in particular.

The first is Facebook. The website was (and is), after all, a college student's best procrastination tool, and it came to Franklin & Marshall during our second year. Way before liking a status, and checking into your current location, our class began to connect in a digital world just as we had in our residence halls. What's more, unlike previous classes at Franklin & Marshall, upon graduation we had an easy way to keep in touch with one another. We shared, in real time, with one another the good and bad days working our first real jobs, our graduate school successes (and frustrations), and the news of our engagements, weddings, and even the birth of children. Facebook has allowed us to remain connected in ways that were impossible before.

The second common experience we bring back with us is learning to be leaders in a community, and affecting positive change. Our memories and the lessons we learned are inextricably connected to the clubs we started, the events we organized and simply the ideas we discussed with one another in and out of the classroom. This campus looks much different than it did when we arrived nine years ago, and that is partly because of the input we as a class had, and the leadership the administration gave us. The bookstore moved from across Harrisburg Pike onto campus during our time here at the suggestion of a student. Our class embraced environmental responsibility and erected solar panels as our class gift. And we didn't stop there. What we as a class bring back to Franklin & Marshall

this weekend, just five years after our graduation, is living proof that these exercises in leadership were worthwhile, and are now having positive impacts across the globe.

We are extremely excited to be able to join our senior alumni as the youngest class at this Reunion Weekend. We are energized to see the support of the College by those who graduated long before we knew what Franklin & Marshall was; we hope to continue on in their legacy. And we are privileged to count ourselves among the heirs of the rigorous liberal arts education of this College and as members of this accomplished and diverse group of alumni.