Commencement Speakers Offer Sage Counsel to 2002 Graduates

BY JASON HOLLANDER

T he steps of Low Library turned blue under an equally blue sky as more than 10,000 students robed in the Columbia colors (light blue and white) graduated during the 248th commencement exercises May 22. Soap bubbles floated upward, beach balls bounced between graduates and newspaper confetti littered the plaza while President George Rupp congratulated the class of 2002. Over 20,000 family and friends basked in the morning sun, celebrating the completion of bachelor, master’s and doctoral degrees from Columbia’s 15 schools and two affiliates.

“I have never seen a happier, brighter, better prepared class in my nine years at Columbia than the extraordinary class of 2002,” Rupp told the graduates. “This is a time for celebration. But even as we shout and cheer and applaud you and your achievement, we know that your final year will also be forever marked by the tragedy that has come to be known simply as 9/11. The horrific events of that day are etched into our memories as vivid scenes of deliberately inflicted death and destruction and the loss of many of our friends and loved ones in the Columbia family.”

Officializing his last graduation before stepping down this June, Rupp then challenged the 2002 graduates to view the effects of globalization through the lens of 9/11, noting that 9/11 symbolized some of the most pressing issues that graduates will confront as the world’s future leaders.

“We are all at ground zero,” he said. “Our [country’s] destiny cannot be divorced from the fate of the rest of the world, including those furthest from us in geography, ideology and socioeconomic status.”

Rupp went on to speak of institutional responsibility, citing the recent Enron scandal as an example. He told the graduates that they must learn from the mistakes they witness in society.

“You will be not only players but also the theoreticians, the policymakers, the executives who help determine the rules of the game. In the confidence that Columbia has contributed to your capacity for such leadership, I wish each one of you all the best for all of our sake,” said Rupp.

In addition to the commencement exercise, graduates were also given sage counsel while attending ceremonies in their respective schools or colleges.

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Five CU Professors Win Mayor’s Science and Technology Awards

BY SUZANNE TEBBET

Recognizing the achievements of scientists and engineers in the success of New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg will present the 2002 Mibtex Awards for Excellence in Science and Technology on June 13 to five Columbia professors for their breakthrough research in neurobiology, applied mathematica, biochemistry, and physics.

The Columbia winners were honored in four of five categories and captured more awards than any other institution in the city for a second straight year.

Professor Brian Greene, a leading physicist in superstring theory and best-selling author of “The Elegant Universe,” is being honored for his impact on the public’s understanding of science through his acclaimed book and outreach to society that have increased awareness of the development of superstring theory, which has the potential of realizing Einstein’s long sought dream of a single, all encompassing theory of the universe.

Professor Thomas Jessell, the renowned neurobiologist who studies the molecular mechanisms that control the early development of the vertebrate nervous system, won in the biological and medical sciences category and Professor Joel Cohen of the Columbia Earth Institute and the School of International and Public Affairs, who studies human and nonhuman populations, won in the mathematical, physical and engineering category.

Professors Rafael Yuste, a neurobiologist, and Anna Marie Pyle, a biochemist, are

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Thousands Graduate on Low Plaza

More than 10,000 students graduated May 22 on a warm and sunny spring day (See more photos on pg. 9).

Arts & Sciences VP David Cohen To Step Down in Spring of 2003

BY VIRGIL RENZULLI

David Harris Cohen has announced that he will step down as vice president and dean of the Faculty of the Arts and Sciences following the 2002-03 academic year. He has served in this current post since 1995.

In a May 21 letter to the faculty, Cohen wrote, “Well before President Rupp announced his plans, I had assumed it would be appropriate for me to alter course at the age of 65, a milestone I will realize at the end of the next academic year. There are many things I would like to do that have been postponed because of the relentless press of administrative responsibilities. It is now time to pursue those threads of my professional life. Further, it has long been my conviction that there is a ‘lifetime’ for academic administrators and it is in the institutional interest that there be change.” Cohen is responsible for overseeing 29 departments of instruction in the humanities and physical and social sciences, and faculty of Columbia College, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the School of International and Public Affairs, the School of General Studies, Continuing Education and the School of the Arts.

His many accomplishments at Columbia include: Increasing the distinction of Arts and Science departments, most notably anthropology, economics and physics; Fostering an environment of scholarship across departmental and school borders; Improving funding for Arts and Science graduate students and enhancing their academic experience; Balancing the Arts and Sciences budget, making the administration more efficient, and creating a sense of forward momentum among the faculty; and implementing a faculty-driven academic review process.

“From his expert management of the Planet Conference, asserts that world hunger can be abolished.

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