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nature of human existence; it draws us into more activity than we’d thought ourselves capable of.”

Fifth: Columbia, as the quintessential great urban university, is—unexpectedly—the ultimate college town. One of the most surprising things about this university is the number of students, faculty, and staff living within just a few blocks of where we are now gathered. Life here is exactly the opposite of what people commonly assume about a great university in a colossal city such as New York. It is like classical Athens, where citizens could throw on their tunics and walk to the forum and consider the world. The atmosphere is pervaded by thought and discussion; it is a community not just a campus.

Sixth: Columbia is integrated into the fabric of the neighborhoods and the City. We share life with our neighbors and we have great responsibility to them. For New York City, Columbia University is immensely important. The University brings in well over a billion dollars a year to the City economy, generating last year more than 10,000 jobs. Columbia is New York City’s largest educational center, spending $418 million on research last year (27% of all academic research spending in New York City).

This carries over more immedi-
ately to Morningside Heights, Harlem, and Washington Heights. We spend $42 million annually for goods and services from Upper Harlem, and Washington Heights. We spend $42 million annually for money, although it is always smarter to build this New Columbia—most of all to make Columbia a university, just as it is of a parent, is smarter to build relationships with the leading institutions of the City, such as those already taking shape or are taking shape at the United Nations, the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Museum of Natural History, the New York Botanical Gardens.

And a third critical area for development is the need to be in New York City and not take advantage of the location to create a greater School of the Arts. Our young and quite extraordinary School of the Arts can become truly unique, in part by building alliances and connections with the City makes possible. What I am calling for is about more than support for the arts. It is about building relationships between the various kinds of creativity a university and the contemporary arts world have to offer, and creating something new in the process. That is why I am so pleased to be working on a partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company and The Apollo Theatre of Harlem.

But, above all, we should want the most viral expression in the arts because of what it can say to us about ourselves. I want to close with two thoughts. The first is to recognize that we do all

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that we do in large measure to help
us nurture the next generation of men and women, who will act on what we now observe and discover. A measure of the general health of a university, just as it is of a parent, is the degree to which we actively seek to help develop the youngest among us. Columbia has much to be proud of on that measure. But, of course, there’s still more to do, and we will continue, for example, to strengthen our academic advising.

The second closing thought is more of a message to our alumni here today and around the world. All of you are important members of Columbia’s extended family, and it will be something that the future will take pride in and draw inspiration from just as we do today.

All were invited to enjoy a New York-themed buffet lunch on South Field.

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A steady rain started to fall by evening, but no one, especially President Bollinger, was deterred from watching the festivities on Low Plaza.

Students displayed their talents during a showcase of events that helped introduce President Bollinger to Columbia’s extraordinary student body.