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Princeton’s Shirley Tilghman Inaugurates ADVANCE Program Lecture Series
Speech Part of Ongoing University-wide Diversity Initiatives

By David Poratta

Princeton University President Shirley Tilghman addressed a receptive audience of faculty, students and the general public in Casa Ialiana on March 24, delivering the Earth Institute’s inaugural lecture in its ADVANCE program series. Her speech, “Changing the Demographics: Recruiting, Retaining, and Advancing Women Scientists in Academia,” addressed the consequences of gender inequity in the sciences and what steps need to be taken to combat the problem.

Tilghman structured the lecture on a national scale. By refusing to recognize and address the economic costs inherent in these inequities, the nation is jeopardizing its ability to prosper and remain competitive, she said.

Tilghman noted since World War II, science and technology have become a synthesis of the evolving government-university alliance that has created much of the country’s vitality and economic success.

“Those involved with science need to understand the ways in which women and minorities are to science what varied wavelengths are to a prism: The more wavelengths, the richer the view.”

Tilghman said that failing to attract qualified women to the sciences will be other every disciplinarian’s gain. “If women continue to be underrepresented in science, engineering and mathematically, these fields will look increasingly anachronistic to students. As law, medical and business schools reach gender parity in their student bodies, science and engineering will become increasingly unattractive vis-a-vis those fields,” she said.

“Universities stand at the end of a long and improperly constructed pipeline that is partially controlled by others,” she said, “yet this does not excuse us from fixing leaks— and there are many—in the section of the pipeline that we do control.”

For Tilghman, the coefficient of an education system is the result of the pipeline that we do control, and there are many—in the section of the pipeline that we do control.

By Kristin Sterling

For more than five decades, Peter Brook has been an unconventional pioneer in the arts world, revered for his work that spans theater, film, opera and non-fiction writing.

This is why it is particularly meaningful that only now, and only at Columbia University, Brook and his international theater company are integrating their work into the life and culture of a large urban university through a month-long residency organized by the Columbia University Arts Initiative.

The centerpiece of this residency is the U.S. premiere of Tierno Bokar, a theatrical exploration of the power of tolerance, set in 1930s French-ruled Africa. The work is a co-production of Brook’s International Center of Theatre Creation (CICT) in Paris and his Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, and was adapted by Marie-Hélène Estienne from the West African writer Amadou Hampâté Bâ’s Life and Teaching of Tierno Bokar, the Sage of Bandiagara. For more information on the performance, which runs through April 26, go to www.tiernobokar.columbia.edu.

The production is based on the life of Tierno Bokar (1875-1939), a Sufi sage, a member of a distinguished clan and a spiritual leader in his village in Mali. His clan, exponents of repeating a Sufi prayer 12 times, was embroiled in a debate with a rival clan that advocated repeating it 11 times, which devolved into a conflict over power and leadership in the Tijani Sufi Order. When Bokar eventually became a follower of Hamahall, a member of the rival clan, he was cast out by family, relatives and clan, branded a traitor and forbidden to teach or pray publicly. His enemies further ostracized him by collaborating with the colonial powers, portraying him as a fomentor of rebellion against French rule. Bokar died impoverished and isolated.

Columbia’s newly created Task Force on Diversity in Sciences and Engineering, and the Earth Science’s ADVANCE program, among with mentoring efforts and the need for universities to be more