Legislative Update

For the first time since 1984, Columbia proposed an on-time budget for fiscal year 2006 (Oct. 1, 2005, through March 31, 2006). The bipartisan bill passed both the Assembly and Senate with few amendments and now awaits gubernatorial signature or potentially some lame-duck vetoes. The legislature has agreed on student aid areas, and Columbia’s students will be pleased if the executive branch agrees to the restoration of the Tuition Assistance Plan (TAP) funding by eliminating the performance-based prioritization in the executive budget. In addition, Columbia Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) students will be happy that the previous 5 percent reduction percentages have been restored.

The new budget will provide $1 million for a social worker loan forgiveness program for full-time students and would allow loan forgiveness awards for licensed social workers who practice in under-served areas of New York state. The budget also will provide $2 million for a new nursing faculty loan and grant program. The nursing program proposal is an investment of up to $15,000 a year for nurses who agree to teach nursing students or provide service in the under-served New York areas. No final proposals on the matching medical student loan program has emerged, but all indications are that the matching program for facilities to meet university and college commitments will provide millions of dollars for private colleges and universities.

At the legal level, the initial components of the budget process for fiscal year 2006 (Oct. 1, 2005, through March 31, 2006) are proceeding. The procedural bill proposing a budget to Congress in February, and the House and Senate budget committees have developed nonbinding budget resolutions that set the broad blueprint for reviewing annual funding and authorizations. For the next steps, the House and Senate budget committees meet to work out their differences for the budget bill resolution. The blueprints are very detailed. Senate, added amendments to increase funding for Perkins loans, TRO programs, the NIH and the Hope tax credit.

The long trip is over. Students are planning for April 5 and 6 so that students can communicate with their legislators. Please visit www.columbia.edu/cu/legdays/about and contact Senator Coelho Relations Associate Nicholas Monstakas (nmonstak@columbia.edu) for information. Separately, a trip for Columbia’s renowned Double Diploma program, staff and students will be organized to seek restoration of federal programs at the undergraduate and graduate school programs at Columbia and many institutions in the country for more information, go to www.columbia.edu/cu/legdays/dlia.

Columbia Focuses on China’s Second Economic Emergence

C hina’s rapidly changing economy is the focus of a two-day international symposium at Columbia University. The symposium, bringing together top global thinkers, will explore China’s role in shaping our world today.”

If you want to understand our times, take a look at the architecture around you!

By Paul Spencer Byard

The architecture of Morningside Heights gives us lots to think about. Its lessons start with the familiar background stock of speculative apartments from the first half of the 20th century that developers richly decorated for prospective settlers. Set against that background are the modern buildings of Morningside Heights, some of them, like old St. Lukes or the ones on the Columbia campus, offering the satisfactions of truly distinguished architecture.

Then in the second half of the century comes a big change of character in buildings such as Barnard’s Lehman Library—the neighbor-hood’s first goal toward Modernism—and then a jump in scale in buildings, from Barnard’s to Columbia’s International Affairs. That was after World War II, when Morningside Heights institu-tions joined to form a national effort to meet social needs by new means and at a new scale — to give us the area’s rather ham-handed embrace of Modernism.

Then comes catastrophe. Outrage at Columbia’s misguided progress was so strong, at one time it was one—put Morningside Heights right on the battlefront of the global upheaval that ended the Modernist project three-quarters of the way through the century. The reaction against Modernism with us still, in the nation and in Morningside Heights. If we look in Morningside Heights for thoughtful architecture in the last quarter of the century after the construction of the gym, we mostly won’t find it. There’s a small corner of the Far and West Hall building, though, where the internal stoves, where the overburdened ramps and the and the ‘contextual’ architecture caved over all them, in an update of Paul Klee’s famous Revolt of the Aqueduct.

Getting what’s going on in this architecture is what historic preservation is all about. What we learn from ‘reading’ this architecture is very serious.

It’s like what a hard look at the architecture of the World Trade Center would have made obvious about the tragedy that the choice of this target had more to do with global economic inequality than some imagined assault on American liberty.

Likewise, a discarding look at the architecture of Broadway makes it clear that it’s not about history but about comfort and denial, and about papering over the difficulties and possibilities of our times.

We do have choices. Columbia’s new campus in Manhattanville has every promise of being something very different. Interestingly, its design is not postmodern like much of this target had more to do with global economic inequality than some imagined assault on American liberty. But we see how they pretend to be old and try to hide all their interesting components—like Columbia’s new primary school that should have been such fun to develop. This is the way through the century. The imitation architecture of Modernism is not postmodern like much of the imitation architecture of Modernism. It doesn’t just demon-