Record Crowd of More Than 600 Attend 83rd Annual Varsity ‘C’ Awards Banquet

By Bill Steinman

A record crowd of more than 600 attendees turned out for the 83rd annual Varsity “C” Club Awards event on May 5. Having outgrown Roseie Arledge Auditorium, Wollman Auditorium, and the Low Library Rotunda, the event was held for the first time on “home territory,” in Levien Gymnasium, transformed into a banquet hall.

More than 50 special awards were distributed to students, including the prestigious Eisenhower and Monroe Phillips Watches for academic excellence and the Manniarty Awards for Athletic Excellence.

The program, emceed by Varsity “C” Club President David Filosa, CC’82, was punctuated by a student band, drum line, which was divided into three segments for the fall, winter and spring seasons. The drumline’s acting and rendition from every varsity intercollegiate team and offering quotes from many of the event’s recipients. A video montage was shown at the end of the banquet, and commissioned by the Undergraduate Athletic Council, an organization made up of Columbia sports captains, and was produced and edited by Marisa Marinetti, CC’05, a film major and standout softball player.

Four major awards were presented: the Athlete of the Year award to an outstanding and loyal alumnus or alumnna, outstanding contributor to Columbia athletics in any sport, the Eisenhower Watch to the male student-athlete who achieved the highest cumulative academic average through the senior year and who had earned at least two Varsity “C” letters; the Marion R. Phillips Watch to the female student-athlete who had met the same criteria; and the male and female winners of the Connie S. Manniarty Outstanding Senior Student-Athlete Award.

Ali Haji, CC’04, of Karachi, Pakistan, a standout on the men’s golf team, was awarded the Eisenhower Watch after compiling a 3.88 academic average as an economics major in Columbia College. Haji is a perennial All-Ivy League honoree, the two distance runners hold more than a dozen school records between them.

A former athletic standout, Michael C. Brown, CC’80, of Paramus, N.J., was awarded the Alumni Athletic Award for outstanding contributions to Columbia Athletics since graduation. Brown, the outstanding player on both the football and baseball teams during his college career, is the chair of the Baseball Alumni Advisory Committee and a former president of the Varsity “C” Club. His father, Charles Brown, CC’56, and son, Michael, both were intercollegiate athletes at Columbia.

The program featured a new award, the Joseph Ryan Allen Memorial Award for baseball, donated by former Columbia head coach Joseph Allen, CC’82, and his sister, Jennifer D’Auria, in memory of their brother, Joseph Ryan Allen, who was killed in the World Trade Center on 9/11. An existing award, the William Terminello Award for men’s golf, was expanded to include a women’s golf recipient; women’s golf was instituted as a varsity sport in the fall of 2003.

From left, athletics award winners Christina Kubacki, Ali Haji, Caitlin Hawkins and Steve Sundell.

The 2004 Presidential Awards for Outstanding Teaching were recently bestowed on five professors and three graduate students. Faculty winners receive a citation and an award of $5,000, while graduate students receive a citation and an award of $2,500.

The faculty awardees are Suzanne Bakken, Alumni Professor of the School of Nursing and Professor of Biomedical Informatics; Amanda Claybaugh, assistant professor of English and comparative literature, Department of English and Comparative Literature; E. Tony Higgins, Stanley Schachter Professor of Psychology and professor of business, Department of Psychology and Graduate School of Business; Patricia E. O’Toole, lecturer in writing, School of the Arts; and P. Michael Teresi, professor of physics, Department of Physics. The student awardees are Timothy M. Connor of Law; Gabriel E. Perez-Giz, Department of Physics; and Nader K. Uthman, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures.

For the faculty awards, there were 275 nominations for 164 separate faculty members. For the student awards, there were more than 150 nominations for nearly 100 separate graduate students. For more information, visit www.columbia.edu/cu/presawards.

On April 24, student volunteers pitched in to help out at some 40 sites citywide in Columbia Community Outreach’s annual Day of Service.

Photo by Dave Bianculli

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ive Columbia professors were recently elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS). This year, the academy announced 17 new fellows and 24 foreign honorary members from across many disciplines, including the arts, sciences, business and public affairs.

“I am honored to welcome these outstanding and influential individuals to the nation’s oldest and most illustrious learned society,” said AAAS President Patricia Moreno Spacks. “These new members have made extraordinary presentations to the fields and disciplines through their commitment to the advancement of cellularly and creative work in every field and profession.”

New member Marian B. Carl- sen, Columbia professor of genetics and development and of microbiology in the College of Physicians & Surgeons, has focused her research on gene expression in yeast. She said that the “discovery of genetic proteins studied in her lab has potential therapeutic applications for diabetes and obesity. Carlson is a former president of the Genetics Society of America and serves on the National Institutes of Health’s Scientific Advisory Council.

Also, two Columbia professors of law were elected: Thomas W. Merrill and George P. Fletcher. Merrill, the Charles Keller Beekman Professor of Law, came to Columbia last year from Northwestern University, where he had taught law since 1981. His teaching and research interests currently lie in areas of administrative law, property, and environmental law. He formerly served as deputy solicitor general from 1987 to 1998 in the Department of Justice, where he represented the federal government before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Fletcher, the Cardozo Professor of Jurisprudence, focuses on the jurisprudence of war and biblical jurisprudence. He is also a former professional television moderator and commentator on legal affairs and, in the 1990s, founded a journal of philosophy and Judaism called S’vara. Fletcher is the author of nine books, including Rethinking Criminal Law, which received an Order of the Coat Award from the American Association of Law Schools; Our Secret Constitution: How Lincoln Redefined American Democracy, designated by the American Association of Publishers as the best book on law published in 2002; and, with Steve Shepard, American Law in a Global Context: The Basics, which will be published in the fall.

Alfred H. Mueller, the Enrico Fermi Professor from Columbia’s Department of Physics, was also elected. Mueller is playing a major role in the study of high-energy quantum chromodynam- ics (QCD). He has developed concepts and techniques in QCD that permitted accurate predictive predictions and experimental tests, thereby helping to establish QCD as the theory of the strong interactions. Mueller is also recipient of the Sakurai Prize from the American Physical Society.

Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, the David Eisenstein Professor of Humanities from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, was also honored. Pérez-Firmat is the author of numerous works of poetry, fiction and literary and cultural criticism, including Tongue Tricks: Logo-Eroticism in Anglo-Hispanic Literature and a soon-to-be-published collection of poems, Scar Tissue: A Journal of Recovery and Reconnection. In 1997, Newsweek selected Pérez- Firmat as one of the “100 people to watch as America prepares to pass through the gate to the next millennium.” Among many other awards, he was the recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Memori- nal Foundation fellowship.

This year’s academic induction ceremony will take place in October in Cambridge, Mass. Founded in 1780 by John Adams, John Hancock and other contem- poraries, the academy was estab- lished “to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honor, dign- ity and happiness of a free, inde- pendent and virtuous nation.”

The new initiatives will join the ranks of some of the brightest minds in American history, including such luminaries as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Ralph Waldo Emer- son and Albert Einstein.

The current membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences totals more than 4,500, including more than 150 Nobel laureates and 50 Pulitzer Prize winners.