

## A Message from the President

# First Commencement: A moment to cherish

*Tempus fugit* – time flies. In one moment last July I was moving books and journals into the President's Office in Memorial, and then – it seems – moments later I was presiding over Commencement for the Class of 2006.

Standing on the Commencement stage in front of nearly 400 graduates and 4,000 family members, friends, faculty and staff, I was moved by the powerful sense of community that defines Whitman. Intense feelings of pride punctuated the naturally festive atmosphere, making the celebration even more enjoyable and memorable.



Asiya Khaki '09

I also felt honored to celebrate the academic achievements of our students and the visions for the future expressed by our speakers. Throughout the ceremony, I felt professional affirmation about the choice my family and I made to come to Whitman — in hearing speaker Professor Ronald Takaki implore our graduates to critically assess the world around them and to question it relentlessly; in seeing our community honor the contributions of three high school teachers, including my former mentor; and in presenting awards for excellence in teaching and mentoring to six of our own faculty.

Listening to class speaker **Drew Lorona '06** humorously describe what makes Whitman great and **Penny Penrose Bignold '56** express her enthusiastic

affection for her alma mater reinforced my belief that the college continues to follow its historic mission of fostering and encouraging creativity, critical thinking and leadership skills.

In bidding the Class of 2006 farewell, I shared with them that earlier this year I told a group of visiting fifth-graders the best reason to go to college is to prepare oneself to help change the world. Throughout the year I received countless notes about students who, as evidenced by their academic achievements inside the classroom and out, through their athletic participation and through some of the most devoted and creative community service I've ever witnessed, are indeed prepared to help change the world. And as the Whitman community continues to become more diverse, and as our graduates surround themselves with people who are both like them and different from them, I expect to see even more evidence that our graduates are ready to lead a world far more complex than ours today.

Finally, I would just like to express, on behalf of my family and me, thanks to all of you. Thank you to every student, parent and family member, professor, staff member, donor, alumnus and alumna, and friend. Thank you for the vital role you play in the life of this amazing college and for helping to make my first Whitman Commencement a moment in time I'll never forget.

Sincerely,

George S. Bridges