

30 Years of Speakers, 30 Opportunities for Engagement

*An impressive array of Mueller Fellows
has enlightened F&M students*

Libby Sternberg

What do NPR's Nina Totenberg, *Monsoon Wedding* director Mira Nair, filmmaker Spike Lee, historian David McCullough, Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun and *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman all have in common? They, and numerous other distinguished individuals, have been Mueller Fellows, invited to the Franklin & Marshall campus to deliver a public speech and spend meaningful time with students.

While colleges and universities often bring famous speakers to campus, the Mueller Fellowship goes beyond a public lecture by asking its participants to stay on campus for more than one day. During their visit the fellows go to classes and meet informally with students in addition to delivering a public lecture.



This enriched approach to guest speakers was the vision of the Mueller family, in particular Judge Paul A. Mueller Jr. and his wife, Jane. Paul Mueller, who has served on F&M's Board of Trustees and as the College's attorney, created the fellowship in honor of his father, Paul Mueller Sr. '21, who also served on the Board and later received an honorary degree from his alma mater.

Beyond the Lectern

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Mueller-endowed program that has enriched the lives of students and Lancaster community members alike. Mueller first got the idea after his daughter, Elizabeth, told him how much she enjoyed a similar experience—the Montgomery Fellow program at Dartmouth College.

"The real key was the interaction of the speakers with the students," Mueller says. He pitched the idea to then-F&M President Keith Spalding in 1980, who wrote he greeted this idea with "wholehearted enthusiasm." In an August 1980 letter, Spalding continued, "In recent years, the interest of young people in having the chance to make close contacts with leading individuals, dignitaries, and opinion makers has grown markedly."

This close contact has become the hallmark of the Mueller Fellowship program and has yielded many memorable moments. The interactions have been casual and formal, spontaneous and structured—something as organized as classroom teaching or as simple as having pizza and soda with students.

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"These people have done things that students have dreamed about but haven't reached the age, maturity level and experience to accomplish yet," he says.

Early on, speakers were booked largely through campus contacts. For example, the very first speaker in 1981 was U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, who was a friend of Grier Stephenson, the Charles A. Dana professor of government.

Mueller himself was instrumental in bringing Pulitzer-Prize-winning writer John McPhee to campus in 1987; McPhee had been a year behind Mueller at Princeton University. Another connection was made with well-known historian David McCullough, who spoke in 1993, when the historian's son married the daughter of good friends of the Muellers in Lancaster.

Mueller credits Bruce Pipes, former F&M provost, with helping give structure to his dream. Pipes, who had worked at Dartmouth for 24 years before coming to F&M, understood immediately the gestalt of the Mueller Fellowship and helped organize the selection process.

Speakers are now chosen by a faculty advisory committee that also includes students and members of the Mueller family. The appropriate departmental chairs take charge of issuing the formal invitation and setting up ancillary events, making sure students get to know more about the fellow before his or her visit.

For Pipes, his special Mueller moments were when "great minds" also turned out to be great at interacting with students.

"Freeman Dyson—the physicist and mathematician—was able to spend a week, so in addition to teaching classes and interacting, he had office hours and went to pizza parties," Pipes says.

Mueller Fellows

- 1981: Harry Blackmun
- 1982: Irving Howe
- 1983: I. F. Stone
- 1984: Paul Ramsey
- 1985: Jean Strouse
- 1986: Sir David Attenborough & Michael Novak
- 1987: John McPhee
- 1988: Willie Ruff & Dwiki Mitchell
- 1989: Eugene McCarthy
- 1990: Francis Moore Lappe
- 1991: Jamie Galbraith & William Raspberry
- 1992: Martha Fineman
- 1993: David McCullough
- 1994: Cornel West
- 1995: James Burke
- 1996: Susan Estrich
- 1997: Martha Nussbaum
- 1998: Freeman Dyson
- 2000: Joseph Schwantner
- 2001: Laurie Anderson
- 2001: Paul Ehrlich
- 2002: Thomas L. Friedman
- 2003: Frank Deford
- 2003: Spike Lee
- 2004: E.O. Wilson
- 2005: Paul Solman
- 2006: Joe Klein
- 2007: Eric Schlosser
- 2007: Lynn Margulis & Dorion Sagan
- 2008: Jacob Needleman
- 2009: John F. Burns
- 2010: Mira Nair
- 2010: Steven Pinker
- 2011–12: Nina Totenberg (pictured at left)

Director Mira Nair, the 2010 Mueller Fellow, enjoys time with her nephew Sahil Nair '10 during her three-day visit.



"The composer Joseph Schwantner turned out to be amazing, too. He met with all kinds of students, talking to them about music and society. He was helpful to many students who were thinking of going to a conservatory after F&M, laying out for them the kind of dedication required if they went down that road."

Pipes recalls a particularly enriching experience for a student when filmmaker Spike Lee came to F&M in 2003. Randy Wilkins '01 was well known on campus as a blossoming filmmaker, so, Pipes says, they had no trouble getting Wilson and Lee together. The result? Lee recommended Wilkins for the film program at New York University, and Wilkins ended up working on several Spike Lee projects.

Even though the selection committee now has to deal with speaker agents and growing fees, the committee often finds that prospective fellows are attracted to the idea of doing more than just one public lecture.

This "more" is what makes the Mueller Fellowship program a distinctive event each year. "It's a richer experience," Pipes says. "The person is standing right in front of the students. The Mueller Fellowship is another example of how a small liberal arts education can get students directly involved with ideas and distinguished people." ■

Joining Nina Totenberg (second from right) prior to her speech are (l-r) Joe Leahy, Anne Mueller Leahy and President Daniel R. Porterfield.



Into the Wild

The generosity of the Mueller family extends beyond the Fellowship program. The Muellers also endow the Paul A. Mueller Jr. Summer Awards program, designed to fund projects for rising sophomores that "foster personal growth, independence, creativity, leadership and personal interests in the U.S. and abroad."

In 2010, Erin Kelly '12 used her Mueller award to climb mountains. Already an experienced hiker, Kelly wanted to challenge herself both mentally and physically while taking time for introspection as she thought about her future.

The spot she chose for this arduous journey was the Chugach Mountain Range in the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska, a two-week trip with 10 other hikers. "Being a liberal arts student, you tend to encounter a lot of topics that give you a lot of food for thought," she says. "The trip was meant to give me some time to reflect on them and to challenge myself."

Kelly, who eventually chose a special-studies major in business, sociology and anthropology with a minor in religious studies, says a typical day included an eight- to 10-hour hike each day. After that, she would set up camp, a meticulous process because "we were in bear country."

While she knew that hiking involved a lot of "excruciating pain," six straight days of rain added a new level of discomfort to the venture—"there was no way to get dry clothing."

Despite the physical hardships, Kelly stayed true to her inner mission by not bringing a book or other reading material to distract her from penning her reflections in a journal every night. "It was a pretty intense journal," she says. "I reflected on my future, where I'd want to work."

Her conclusion was that she'd like to secure a position in a nonprofit, preferably dealing with social responsibility, after she graduates this spring.

"My biggest takeaway from the trip is that the proper mental attitude can get you really far. If you have the will, you can get it done. F&M has taught me that in general," she says. "Incredible things are accomplished on campus every day." ■

Erin Kelly '12

