

Justice Powell's opinion in the *Bakke* case has been instrumental in forming what has become the ideological foundation of diversity efforts on both college campuses and in business nationwide. In *California v. Bakke*, Alan Bakke, a white student, challenged the policy of the University of California at Davis Medical School that reserved 16 of 100 places in the entering class for minorities. Justice Powell cast the tie-breaking vote invoking the First Amendment to permit the use of race as a diversity factor, characterized as a "plus factor," as long as there are no set-asides or strict numerical quotas. The amici strongly support the *Bakke* decision because they feel it allows a workable balance in the

consideration of race as one factor while not compromising the integrity or the competitiveness of the admissions process.

Other amici on this brief include American University; Boston College; Brandeis University; Case Western Reserve University; Carnegie Mellon University; California Institute of Technology; Dickinson College; Emory University; New York University; Northwestern University; Occidental College; Pepperdine University; The University of Notre Dame; and Washington University of St. Louis.

—Thomas White

Creative Act Committed on Campus

Writer **Kurt Vonnegut** spoke to a packed house in Lee Chapel on February 4 as a guest of the Contact Committee. The ambiance was more comfortable than formal. The 80-year-old's iconoclasm has become downright avuncular, yet his perception no less pungent. His territory in American letters lies between the lands of Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce, contiguous to both. Vonnegut's trademark so-it-goes sense of humor, which so eloquently acknowledges the surrealism of the human condition, informed his observations on topics both timely and timeless. He used a chalkboard to diagram the plot lines of several famous literary works



across the centuries, explaining how the dynamics of a story work in many of the same ways as music. He also encouraged students to commit acts of creativity as often and as lovingly as possible, and entreated the entire audience to notice and appreciate just how nice things really are. Vonnegut's wit and wisdom were a winning combination.

—Patrick Hinely '73

Senior Named Fulbright Scholar

As a youngster, **Patrick Lawler** spent weekends playing with a miniature model of the human brain in his father's research laboratory, where his passion for science and research were born. By high school, he was working alongside his father, Dr. Jack Lawler, a pathology professor and cancer researcher at Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel-Deaconess Hospital in Boston. By early college, he had co-authored articles in medical journals.

As he prepares to graduate, Lawler will take on his greatest challenge yet as one of a select group of American students chosen to study abroad as a Fulbright Scholar. The fellowship will allow the 22-year-old biology major to continue his scientific work before entering an M.D.-Ph.D. program to become a physician and researcher in cardiology.



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On my way to work recently, I ran into Bob, a good friend and fellow W&L alumnus. Our topic of conversation frequently includes W&L, and that particular day was no exception. Bob asked what was going on with the W&L Alumni Board, and I told him that over the past year or so, we have been examining the effectiveness of alumni relations.

GOOD ADVICE

I have always admired Bob's direct style and clarity of expression. When, for example, most people might choose 25 words to convey a simple thought, Bob can get the job done with five. (A rare quality indeed, particularly among those who, like Bob, make their living as lawyers.) When I let it slip that a task force had been created to spearhead our study, Bob's eyes narrowed a bit and he made a request: "Well, please don't screw anything up."

Not exactly the expression of confidence in our project that I had expected, but I think I understand Bob's point. After all, isn't it a basic law of human nature to question the necessity of a task force to study anything—particularly an area with a history of strong success such as alumni relations at W&L?

So I want to assure the rest of you who might have the same advice for us as Bob. Don't worry. We have no plans to suggest a change in anything in which we have enjoyed past success.

But with due respect for Bob and others who may share his opinion, it is time to take a comprehensive look at what we do. After all, the basic alumni relations framework currently in place was developed long before the advent of today's technological craziness. Everyone, everywhere, immediately begins to fumble wildly for a cell phone at the sound of their own personal electronic tune. We leave voice mails

while our e-mails back up, and vice versa. Spam is not just a canned-meat product, and a hit is no longer just a baseball statistic. We know that for continued success, our alumni relations effort must compete in an age where the standard for acceptance is an immediate, informational connection.

But even in the face of new challenges, we have good reason to expect a bright future. We have reaffirmed with our study the timeless

value of the many ways that we remain connected to the unique quality of our experience at W&L, no matter how long ago we left Lexington.

While our work is not yet complete, we are confident that we are on to some suggestions that will improve the quality of the experience for our alumni volunteers and at the same time enhance the value of alumni involvement for W&L. With a system that has as its solid foundation the passionate loyalty of alumni for this extraordinary place, our job has been surprisingly easy.

I think even Bob will agree with our suggestions. ■

