



FROM THE BRAFFERTON

# William & Mary Means Teaching & Research

BY W. TAYLOR REVELEY, III  
*William & Mary President*

People know William & Mary is a splendid place to go to college. But it's surprising how few people know W&M is also a university and has been one since 1779, when our law school was created. Although the University of Pennsylvania lays claim to having been the nation's first university, William & Mary's competing claim — by virtue of establishing the first law school in America — is at least as strong. This creates a semantic paradox: Harvard University as the nation's first college, but the College of William & Mary as the nation's first university. We need to make the College's university status more clear.

It will help to focus more on the reality of the significant research being done at William & Mary. You may have seen the feature article on W&M research in the spring issue of this magazine. In it, Joe McClain, our director of research communications, nicely sketched the breadth and depth of the work our professors and students are doing to expand human knowledge. "William & Mary's research footprint is distinctive, if not huge," Joe concluded. "It is characterized by collaboration, interdisciplinary cooperation and a tendency to spawn projects that involve all levels of the university community and braid research with scholarship. In short, as [Vice Provost for Research Dennis] Manos said, William & Mary-style research is about relevance driven by the beating heart of the liberal arts."

*Relevance driven by the beating heart of the liberal arts.* That last phrase of the last sentence of Joe's 3,000-word essay nails what we mean by research at William & Mary.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (the classification arbiter for research institutions) lists William & Mary as a doctoral-granting research university with "high research activity." This means we are an "R2" institution, and one of six in the state which are either "R2" or "R1," R1 being "highest research activity."

The April 16 edition of *The Economist* has become known on campus as the "Green & Gold Edition," with two features on separate research efforts at W&M. This international magazine included an article about research by AidData, a "think-and-do tank" at William & Mary that brings together professors and students to answer important questions and raise new ones about the distribution of international development aid. *The Economist* used William & Mary's massive database on foreign aid to explore connections between United Nations votes cast by African nations and the aid those nations received from China. In the same issue, the magazine profiled Sonic Nets, the result of a W&M collaboration by professors in applied science and biology that uses speakers broadcasting frequencies of a sort that discourage birds from gathering in spaces where they can become a nuisance or a danger. The article focused on the potential of Sonic Nets to improve safety at airports.

This summer we will open the third phase of William & Mary's Integrated Science Center (ISC 3), a marvelous new 113,000-square-foot building. It reflects a concept — one our university embraced more than a decade ago — that in the sciences it is crucial to break down departmental silos and spur interdisciplinary research. In ISC 3, for example, the first floor will include a neuroscience lab overseen by a psychology professor. Next door, another neuroscience lab will be led by a professor from applied science.

In April, the governor announced that William & Mary's Law School and School of Marine Science (home to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, or VIMS) will work with Old Dominion University in a new center to study the growing reality of coastal flooding, investigate its social and economic consequences, and think about potential ways of ameliorating them.

A leading undergraduate teaching institution and a serious research university do not have to be mutually exclusive. William & Mary stands among a handful of universities where research and teaching enhance one another at the undergraduate level as well as in graduate and professional schools.

Vice Provost for Research Manos is eloquent on the subject. "My conversation lately," he says, "is about how a research university can retain the beating heart of a liberal arts core. I cannot conceive of a useful research university of the near future that does not have that beating heart, or who does not add it in the next 25 to 30 years."

We're already there. And word is spreading about the serious research that goes on in our university as well as the splendid teaching that goes on in our college.