

# Collins, Connecticut, and Claire

by K. Rebecca Brooke

*What does a residence center on the Bloomington campus have in common with a small liberal arts college overlooking Long Island Sound? Ask Claire Gaudiani.*

**C**laire Gaudiani doesn't fit the stereotype of a college president: stern, bespectacled, with a conservative tie. She wears a navy blue miniskirt and sports a gold ankle bracelet. Her skin is deeply tanned from the sailing trips she takes with her family whenever her schedule permits.

Probably none of the 550 students now residing at Collins Living-Learning Center on the Bloomington campus realize that the first live-in "coordinator of residence life" at Collins nearly 20 years ago is now a college president. And she's still immersed in the small liberal arts college atmosphere she helped create at Collins.

As campus enrollments at IU burgeoned in the early 1970s, "the sheer size of the campus" could be "somewhat bewildering and overwhelming," recalls Gaudiani, MA'74, PhD'74, especially "for a 17- or 18-year-old who had never before lived away from home." With Foster already existing as a prototype, the university responded with a center for students who "would benefit from a closer-knit community, one that would recreate the feeling of a small liberal arts college...a campus within a campus."

When Collins's first director left only a year after its founding, Gaudiani's husband, David Burnett, PhD'73, became director. And Gaudiani and Burnett became its first resident couple. Along with their young son, Graham, they lived in the center for two years

while completing their PhDs in French literature. Together they managed the resident assistant staff, developed academic and co-curricular activities such as art and music, and provided counseling services to student residents.

Today, Gaudiani is president of Connecticut College in New London, Conn. She continues to implement ideas that impact the lives of the college's 1,650-member student body, just as her ideas for Collins enriched the lives of both past and present IU students.

## Research and Global Studies

From her office on the lush green campus overlooking Long Island Sound, Gaudiani talks about her plans for the college, the same college she herself attended as an undergraduate.

Since her inauguration as Connecticut College's eighth president in July 1988, Gaudiani has implemented several programs that not only have received high praise from educators across the country, but also have put the college in the national spotlight. The programs, which have been written up in publications including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The New York Times*, *Mirabella*, and *Time*, were specifically designed to prepare students for what Gaudiani refers to as "the global society of the future."

"Even if a person never plans to leave the United States," she explains, "it's highly unlikely that his or her life will remain untouched by the international changes going on today."

"The task of those of us in education in the '90s is to help students explore the relationship between the sameness and difference of the world's people," she says. "We must teach them to recognize and appreciate the similarities, while at the same time respecting the differences."

One way Gaudiani hopes to accomplish this is through the Center for In-

ternational Studies and the Liberal Arts, founded two years ago. The Center is an undergraduate version of the Lauder Institute for Management and International Studies at the Wharton School, which Gaudiani helped create while a professor of Romance languages at the University of Pennsylvania.

Under the program, Gaudiani expects 40 percent of Connecticut College's students to go abroad, "not just to travel and visit," she says, "but to work."

A second program implemented by Gaudiani during her tenure as president calls for more original undergraduate research in the sciences. Students work individually or in teams with faculty mentors, continuing experiments originated by Connecticut College professors in such areas as lake acidity, cystic fibrosis, and computerized music programs.

## Love, Marriage, and Exams

Gaudiani's explanation of the science program is interrupted by a ringing phone, which she jumps up to answer. It is, she says, "my favorite husband."

Gaudiani met her husband of 23 years in a class taught by the late Research Professor of French Robert Champigny, only three months after she arrived at IU in 1966 to study French literature.

"Our courtship paralleled our doctoral work," says Gaudiani. "We were studying the same subject and taking the same classes together. At the end of our first year, David wrote me a pastiche," an exercise, she explains, written in the style of a particular author. "The pastiche he wrote for me was a sermon on marriage based on one written by Bossuet in the 17th century. It was very romantic."

Gaudiani and Burnett were married two years after they met. The birth of the first of their two children three years later didn't change Gaudiani's plans to complete her doctorate. But, she ad-





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mits, being a wife, mother, full-time student, and associate instructor proved difficult at times.

"We couldn't afford a sitter and there was no such thing as daycare," she explains. "At first, I tried to do everything myself. I believed it was my responsibility as a wife and mother to take care of everything."

As the oldest of six children of a New Jersey housewife and an RCA executive, she adds, "It was the way I was brought up. David was perfectly willing to help, but I wouldn't let him."

After becoming seriously ill and being hospitalized from exhaustion, however, she turned over half the chores to her husband. "In the cycle of change in American society, we were way ahead of our time," she says. "We shared the responsibilities of home and baby and ended up with a truly modern marriage long before such marriages were in vogue."

Gaudiani and her husband weren't the only ones who had to adapt their routine to accommodate the new baby. "I was nursing my son when I took my written exams," remembers Gaudiani with a broad smile. "It was an eight-hour test, and I had to leave in order to feed him. The committee had never had a graduate

student leave the building during an exam. They had to have a special meeting to discuss what to do."

Gaudiani's experiences as a working mother and student made her realize how difficult motherhood could be, especially if there was no partner to share the financial and emotional workload. While still at IU, she helped form Matrix Lifeline, an organization that provided support to unmarried mothers and mothers-to-be in the Bloomington community. Lifeline provided counseling, supplied baby clothes and furniture, and gave expectant mothers the courage to stay in school.

"We provided a 'community of concern' for women in a tough situation who didn't have the normal support of a husband or family," says Gaudiani. "We helped them get their lives straightened out."

#### **Ehrlich Her Penn Colleague**

After Gaudiani completed her PhD, her schedule did not let up. Following time spent abroad in France with her husband and son and the birth of daughter Maria, Gaudiani taught briefly at Purdue before joining the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. One of her

colleagues at Penn was Tom Ehrlich, now president of IU.

Together Gaudiani and Ehrlich worked to establish programs that helped connect the university with the city of Philadelphia. One such program strove to enhance local elementary school education through the teaching of languages to inner-city children.

"The project was just one of many Ehrlich started when he arrived at Penn that truly demonstrated his commitment to people less empowered," says Gaudiani. "Ehrlich believed it was the duty of the university to help everyone in the community, even if they weren't directly connected to the school."

That philosophy is one Gaudiani has adopted as her own. Perhaps the most innovative program she's initiated as Connecticut College's president is the High School Students Advancement Program, which was recently featured on ABC's "World News Tonight."

The program brings 100 tenth-graders from Hartford, Boston, and New York to the Connecticut campus for a month of college-level classes in computers, music, literature, and science. By reaching teenagers who might not consider higher education without extra encouragement, the program aims to expand the pool of minority students who apply to college. The program is unique in that it doesn't target the top 10 percent of high school students.

"We target the second- and third-tier students," explains Gaudiani— "bright kids who aren't living up to their potential, and who just need an extra push." After all, she says, "white students who aren't in the top 10 percent of their class go to college. Why shouldn't these students have the chance as well?"

Claire Gaudiani is just the person to give them that chance. **IA**

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