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**PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING POET MARY OLIVER TO FILL
ENDOWED CHAIR AT BENNINGTON COLLEGE**

BENNINGTON, VT—Beginning in 1996, the Catharine Osgood Foster Chair for Distinguished Teaching at Bennington College will be filled by poet Mary Oliver, who won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984. The Foster Chair, established in 1992 by an anonymous donor who contributed \$1 million to The Campaign for Bennington, was endowed to honor Catharine Osgood Foster, who taught literature at Bennington from 1934 until 1968. This is the first chair appointment in the history of the College.

Mary Oliver has published eight books of poetry, most recently *House of Light* (which won the Christopher and L.L. Winship Awards), *New and Selected Poems* (which won the National Book Award), and *White Pine*; two chapbooks, *The Night Traveler* and *Sleeping in the Forest*; and two prose books, *A Poetry Handbook* and *Blue Pastures*. In addition to the Pulitzer Prize, Oliver has won the Shelley Memorial Award, the Alice Fay di Castagnola Award, Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts grants, and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Achievement Award. Currently writer-in-residence at Sweet Briar College, Oliver has also taught at Case Western Reserve, Bucknell, and the University of Cincinnati. This fall she will be the William Blackburn Visiting Professor in Creative Writing at Duke University.

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Of Oliver's work poet James Dickey has said, "Far beneath the surface-flash of linguistic effect, Mary Oliver works her quiet and mysterious spell. It is a true spell, unlike any other poets, the enchantment of the true maker"; and Stanley Kunitz called her poetry "fine and deep; it reads like a blessing."

In addition to honoring the long-time faculty member, the Catharine Osgood Foster Chair emphasizes the accomplishments of exceptional teaching. At the time the gift was made, President Elizabeth Coleman noted that Kit Foster was "an extraordinarily compelling teacher [who] had a transforming and liberating influence on her students. This was particularly so for the donor, and the form of this Chair is a way of expressing gratitude for that experience, and at the same time assuring the continuing recognition of the power and importance of the craft of teaching." Of the appointment of Oliver, Coleman noted, "As a teacher-practitioner of the first order, Mary Oliver embodies the Bennington ideal; her addition to our literature faculty marks Bennington's continuing emergence as an especially compelling setting for the study of literature and writing." In accepting the appointment, Oliver expressed her eagerness to "be a part of Bennington's present enactment of courage and risk and inquiry on behalf of a finer and more meaningful educational forum."