
Message from the President

President Laura Walker <president@bennington.edu>

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BENNINGTON COLLEGE

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

As spring kicks into full gear, I am writing to say hello and share what I have been thinking about lately. First of all, thank you to the many students, faculty, and staff involved in making this past weekend's BenningtonWorks event such a tremendous success. Hundreds of people, prospective students and their families, came to campus to learn more about this vibrant creative community and its potential to reshape the world.

As you know, it is a world in need of reshaping. I am very concerned about the continued attacks on [Black people](#), [liberal arts education](#), [academic freedom](#), [DEI programs](#), [the LGBTQ+ community](#), and the [right to abortion](#). It is appalling that many want to ban books, access to health care, and the mention of diversity, equity and inclusion, but not restrict the use of guns that are causing such tremendous [harm all over this country](#), even [in our own area](#).

I and many of you at Bennington embrace these rights that others are trying to destroy. I believe we must come together to fight these attacks.

According to [a recent poll](#), one in four college-bound students decided against applying to a college this year solely because of the politics in the state. Given [recent events at New College](#) in Sarasota, FL, students must also think deeply about whether a college might be vulnerable in the face of a politicized takeover. Bennington is independent and will always be.

At a Town Hall Meeting with U.S. Senator Peter Welch on campus a few weeks ago. A student stood and gave voice to the frustrations of living in America today and to the utter exhaustion many students feel in the face of a seemingly constant barrage of political, social, and environmental challenges. It was an important message for the audience to hear, and I thank him for speaking out.

Senator Welch's response was empathetic and wise. It was a message that I, myself, need to call to mind when I hear yet another troubling news story. He implored the student and all of us to do whatever we can, no matter how small, to help our neighbors, colleagues, and classmates and to fight for the values and causes we care about. "There's joy in that," he said.

Not only do those acts restore us for the work ahead; they add up. The actions we take bloom into stirring art, writing, and performance. They motivate social research and uncover solutions. They drive discovery. Empowered by Bennington College's revolutionary history, we have the courage to create and do. Our faculty, alumni, and students exemplify that every day.

Bennington, at its core, is a place where we can find strength in each other, a place where civil conversation can occur between those with different viewpoints and lived experiences. We can have open, constructive, values-based conversations and debates that respect intellectual diversity and appreciate differences.

I believe that now we need to stand firm and fight for academic freedom, for access to abortion and health care, and for the rights of and respect for our LGBTQ+ community and to dismantle systemic racism. I am eager to connect on our common ground, to build a community that is welcome to all, and (as our mission proclaims) to "work toward a world more beautiful, sustainable, democratic, and just."

I am continually inspired by the opportunities Bennington offers to learn, spark creativity, engage in critical discussions, and take action. As the Spring 2023 term draws to a close, please review [upcoming events](#) and participate in the ways that

would be most meaningful to you.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Laura".

Laura