

president's message

STEPHEN C. AINLAY, Ph.D.



Preparing for new frontiers

When Joseph-Jacques Ramée met with President Eliphalet Nott in 1813 and began his plan for Union's campus, history was made. Ramée and Nott created the first campus master plan in the United States, laying out the location of future buildings and gardens. They also gave architectural form to a vision for a learning community that still informs life at Union today. Visitors to the campus are always impressed, and many students talk about how they were smitten by the beauty and feel of the campus when they first visited Union.

Paul Turner, Union Class of 1962 and professor emeritus at Stanford University, has perhaps best preserved and explained the genius of the Ramée plan in his beautiful book, *Joseph Ramée: International Architect of the Revolutionary Era* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Its component features—a large courtyard framed by buildings and linked by arcades, extensive gardens and a central rotunda—are well known. It was located on a hill overlooking the Mohawk Valley, and part of the genius of the design was that it took advantage of a vista intended to remind all those who studied here about the promise and challenges of the then new frontier to the west.

In a very real sense, Union has always been focused on new frontiers. It has always asked: How do we best prepare students to engage the world, respond to the challenges it poses and make a difference? Since its founding, Union has always asserted that being liberally educated is essential to that preparation. Through every era, it has pressed itself to think clearly about just what it means to be liberally educated, continually adjusting its curriculum, adding to its faculty and updating its facilities so that a Union education continues to speak to emerging frontiers. We continue this process today, as evidenced by the second symposium on engineering as a liberal art, covered in this issue, and by new curricular options we will offer to our students, including new majors in bioengi-

neering, religious studies, Asian studies, and environmental science and environmental policy. All will better prepare them for the frontiers of this new century.

As a result, graduates of Union College have been well-equipped for a wide range of career paths. They have carried with them a spirit of innovation and a commitment to the highest standards of performance. Our history is replete with examples, and issues of this magazine remind us of the many ways in which Union graduates have transformed the world. This latest issue reminds us that today's Union students are committed to doing the same. When reading about our Minerva Fellows, one cannot help but imagine the possibilities ahead of them and the contributions they will undoubtedly make.

In this issue, you also will read about Union's impact on popular culture, especially on the film and television industries. I think you will agree that the impact has been remarkable. In much the same way that Union's "fingerprints" are on the buildings, tunnels, subways, and bridges of New York City, many productions (often groundbreaking) have been created, acted, directed, scored and steered by alumni of this College. It is testimony to their talent to be sure. It is also testimony to the role that faculty and this College played in shaping their aspirations, dreams and careers.

This issue also reminds us that the quality of a Union education has always depended on the support of people who believe in our distinctive educational mission. Lippman Hall, as I said at the groundbreaking ceremony during ReUnion, will provide updated and important teaching and learning space for many faculty and students and will serve as a magnet to those considering Union as their educational home.

All of us at Union are grateful for the ongoing support we receive. For our part, we pledge to continue our efforts to ensure that today's Union students are ready for whatever their own new frontiers might bring. ■