On Campus

Anne McSweeney to Retire After 25 Years

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Anne M. McSweeney, a remarkably successful development professional who over 25 years helped steer Columbia through two record-setting capital campaigns, has announced plans to retire from her position as Deputy Vice President and Special Advisor to the President for Development effective June 30th. McSweeney, who came to Morningside Heights in 1977 from a career in advertising and public relations, served under three University presidents—William McGill, Michael I. Sovern, and George Rupp—during a period that saw annual fundraising totals climb from $32 million to an all-time high of $358.7 million last year.

In that time, McSweeney has worked closely with the President, Trustees, and top volunteers, along with successive deans and administrators in the schools and divisions. Her extensive travels on behalf of Columbia have provided an opportunity to forge strong ties with prominent alumni, business leaders, and government officials around the globe. During the past eight years alone, she has accompanied President Rupp to alumni events organized in 26 cities across the United States and another 25 worldwide.

“Anne has had an enormously positive impact on the University at a critical juncture in its history,” said President Rupp in expressing gratitude for her accomplishments. “So many of the new and renovated facilities that surround us on campus, along with the faculty chairs, scholarships, fellowships, and academic programs endowed over the years, are the products of the special relationships she has helped to build between the institution and our most generous benefactors. On top of everything else, Anne has been a consistently clearsighted and forthright advisor on a range of issues extending far beyond the usual purview of development and alumni relations.”

According to Trustee Chair David J. Stern, who chaired the second half of the extended Campaign for Columbia, “Working with Anne has been a real pleasure. She is smart and she is tough, and her success attests to the value of taking the direct approach. I appreciate her professionalism, integrity, and sense of commitment.”

Private philanthropy has become increasingly important for attracting new resources to America’s colleges and universities over the past two decades—a period in which Columbia has been engaged in capital campaigns virtually non-stop. Through it all, McSweeney has been a driving force behind the University’s unparalleled fundraising achievements. Following on the success of the original Campaign for Columbia, which raised $602 million between 1982 and 1987 under the leadership of former President Michael I. Sovern, she and her colleagues began laying the groundwork for another five-year effort to meet the growing list of needs. Together they planned and implemented a strategy for the historic $1.15 billion effort that had been announced by President Emeritus Sovern in 1990, and then was extended for another five years by President Rupp in 1995.

By the time the Campaign officially ended on December 31, 2000, it had generated a total of $2.84 billion in gifts and pledges.

On top of her fundraising and managerial duties, McSweeney oversees a range of other activities, including development communications, special events, and publications.

Among the deans to have worked most closely with her through the years is Columbia College’s Austin Quigley, who said, “Anne’s professionalism and integrity are evident in the close relationships she has established with major benefactors, in their enduring loyalty to Columbia, and in the many ambitious University projects whose successful completion resulted directly from her efforts.”

Added Meyer Feldberg, dean of Columbia Business School, “Anne McSweeney is a classy lady with style and substance. I will miss her professionalism and wise counsel.”

Reflecting on her quarter century at Columbia, McSweeney noted, “I am truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with some of the outstanding figures of our time—talented alumni, great New Yorkers, and so many others who have made a real difference. Every day has brought a fresh challenge, and today as much as ever I look forward to seeing what comes next.”

McSweeney is a longtime resident of Manhasset, Long Island. She and her husband, John, have a grown son and a daughter, along with four grandchildren.



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