

Citation for Robert F. White '77, P'15
Presented by Andrew C. Rudalevige, Thomas Brackett Reed Professor of Government
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Robert White – entrepreneurial executive, political counselor and “wingman,” philanthropist, educator—we honor you for your service to your community, your country, and not least your college.

You came to Bowdoin from working-class Woburn, Massachusetts, as a first-generation student majoring in economics and mathematics in the class of 1977. Here you bridged the divides between campus cliques and plugged the gap between the goalposts; you won not just the ECAC ice hockey championship but prestigious leadership positions and *magna cum laude* honors too.

Soon a CPA and then an MBA, you joined Bain Consulting and were the first to join Willard “Mitt” Romney as he launched the new Bain Capital in 1984. That professional and personal partnership would ultimately enter the political arena and cross a vast terrain of public policy and public service, including stops at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, the Massachusetts State House, and then the national hustings. As Governor Romney’s presidential campaign chair, you were lauded as his “wingman in the war room”—expert, trusted, calm, discreet. In 2008 you said you were on your “fifth ‘once in a lifetime opportunity’ with Mitt” – and this before you helped him win sixty-one million votes four years later as the Republican nominee for president of the United States. Since 2014 you have been a professor at your other alma mater, Harvard Business School, teaching in the Entrepreneurial Management Unit, while serving on numerous nonprofit and company boards.

Throughout, your love of *this* college has been transformative—most crucially for the innumerable students for whom your leadership and remarkable generosity have underwritten their own ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunities. Through three decades on the Board of Overseers and the Board of Trustees, you helped Bowdoin grow and prosper. Your capstone service as chair of the trustees required all your managerial—and yes, “wingman”— acumen to help pilot the College safely through the existential turbulence of a global pandemic.

The Book of Proverbs tells us that “Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom.” It is no coincidence that so many individuals and institutions have found that to get wisdom, they should get Bob White. Bowdoin is so very grateful it has received the fullest measure of not just your wisdom but of your energetic devotion and beneficence as well.

President Rose, on behalf of the College, it is my honor to present Robert F. White for the degree of doctor of humane letters, *honoris causa*.