

WABASH COLLEGE

Geoffrey W. Coates '89 Doctor of Science

“The record achieved by Wabash in science in the 20th century is one of the College’s claims for national distinction,” wrote President Byron K. Trippet in his memoir, *Wabash on My Mind*. Had he not passed away years before you enrolled at the College, President Trippet might have been speaking of you, Geoffrey W. Coates.

Native of Evansville and son of a scientist, you were an exceptional student during your time at the College. A chemistry major and mathematics minor, you received the Edgar Britton Award in Chemistry, the Frank Hugh Sparks Award, and earned distinction on your comprehensive exams as a *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa graduate. You were also involved across campus in the Sphinx Club and Student Senate, and as a contributor and photographer for *The Bachelor*, *The Wabash*, and *The Wabash Review*.

You earned a Mackintosh Fellowship, which you took to Stanford University where you specialized in organic chemistry and earned your Ph.D. in 1994. After completing a Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Caltech, you joined the faculty at Cornell University in 1997. Your talents as a teacher and innovative researcher rocketed you to full professor just five years into your career, and in 2008 you became Cornell’s first Tisch University Professor. For more than a decade, you have worked with a large team of post-docs in The Coates Group, your research lab that takes a fully interdisciplinary approach to its work developing new catalysts that can be used for the synthesis of very small molecules and polymers. You have done groundbreaking work in the creation of environmentally friendly polymers, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels to produce plastics of all types. Your innovative approach and novel synthetic methodology has led to important discoveries and new cost-efficient processes for use in both basic and applied polymer science.

An Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow, you have received significant awards from the American Chemical Society, including the Award for Affordable Green Chemistry and the Carl S. Marvel Creative Polymer Chemistry Award, as well as the Special Creativity Award from the National Science Foundation. While running a major innovative research lab, you continue to be an exceptional and inspiring teacher. In 2006 you received the Stephen and Margery Russell Distinguished Teaching Award at Cornell, and in the same year you became a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 2011, Thomson Reuters named you as one of the world’s top 100 chemists on the basis of the impact of your scientific research, and you were inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

You are the scientific co-founder and Chief Science Officer of Novomer Inc., a sustainable chemistry company specializing in high performance, environmentally responsible polymers, and you are the holder of some 60 patents. You also serve on the editorial advisory boards of the *Journal of Polymer Science*, *Chemical Reviews*, *Dalton Transactions*, and *ChemCatChem*, and you are an associate editor of *Macromolecules*.

In 2012, you were awarded the Royal DSM Performance Materials Award in recognition of your “exceptional contributions to the advancement of polymer chemistry and the materials sciences.” The citation proclaimed you as “one of the world’s most original scientists in the fields of polymer chemistry, catalysis and novel materials.”

Wabash has a long and distinguished history of tough but inspiring professor scientists — Howell, Haenisch, Zimmerman, Phillips, and Feller, to name a few — whose high expectations continue to bring out the best in their students. In so doing, Wabash encourages and develops students’ ambitions as scientists and prepares them for great success in teaching and research, in business and industry, and in innovative entrepreneurship.

Geoffrey W. Coates, you are an extraordinary example of the legacy of excellence in all these areas and your alma mater is proud of your accomplishments as a researcher, entrepreneur, and teacher of future generations of scientists. Therefore, by the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wabash College and delegated to that Board by the State of Indiana, I do hereby confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities thereunto appertaining, of which this citation shall be a permanent witness.

Patrick E. White
President, Wabash College
May 12, 2013