



## ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION OF MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE ELIZABETH TOPHAM KENNAN AWARD

*Presented to*  
Kristen A. Renn '86



KRISTEN A. RENN, class of 1986, we honor you today for your teaching and scholarship in the areas of student affairs administration and identity development in higher education.

After majoring in music at Mount Holyoke, you pursued a master's degree in education at Boston University. There, an internship in the area of student affairs launched your interest in issues affecting students' ability to adapt to campus life. You then worked as a student activities officer at Wheaton College before spending ten years at Brown University as a dean in the Office of Student Life.

During your tenure at Brown, you commuted to Boston College for your doctoral studies. Your thesis titled, "Claiming Space: The College Experience of Biracial and Multiracial Students on Predominantly White Campuses," was named Dissertation of the Year in 1999 by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

You worked as a consultant in policy analysis and institutional research for the Massachusetts Department of Education before becoming assistant professor of higher education and qualitative research at Southern Illinois University. Two years later, in 2001, you joined the faculty of Michigan State University, a powerhouse in the field of education. As associate professor of higher, adult, and lifelong education in the Department of Educational Administration, you teach courses on student development, diversity and equity, and higher education foundations. Your students are classroom teachers, college administrators, and student affairs professionals—simply put, the ripples of your influence are infinite.

Your research interests include mixed race college students; postsecondary race/ethnicity data policy; new professionals in student affairs; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues in higher education. Since 1997, you have published more than 100 scholarly papers, articles, journal entries, and book reviews. You frequently speak at conferences and have served on the editorial boards of publications such as the *Journal of College Student Development*, the *Journal of Higher Education*, the *Review of Higher Education*, and *Academe*. Your book, *Mixed Race Students in College: The Ecology of Identity, Race, and Community on Campus*, was a best-selling education title in 2004. You also co-edited *Women in Higher Education: An Encyclopedia*, which was named Outstanding Academic Title of 2003 by the American Library Association.

Since leaving Mount Holyoke's gates in 1986, your support for the college's mission has been unwavering. You always have credited Mount Holyoke with inspiring your personal and professional aspirations. It was here, you say, that you first felt the empowering potential of academia. Now you have embarked upon a groundbreaking study of the current status—and value—of women's colleges in a global context. That research was launched here on campus when you interviewed leaders from international women's institutions during the 2008 conference of Women's Education Worldwide, an association co-founded by former Mount Holyoke President Joanne V. Creighton. You subsequently have visited fifteen campuses on five continents. Data analysis is underway and your goal is a book that provides a transnational picture of how contemporary women's colleges fit within societies and systems of postsecondary education.

By providing post-secondary teachers and administrators with a solid foundation for understanding segments of the student population generally overlooked, you champion access and equity for all. In recognition of the lasting difference you have made—and continue to make—for college students throughout the United States and around the world, we are honored to present you with the Elizabeth Topham Kennan Award.

Cynthia L. Reed '80  
President  
Alumnae Association of Mount Holyoke College

Jane E. Zachary  
Executive Director  
Alumnae Association of Mount Holyoke College

