

Kolbert to speak on the environment

Elysia Glover
GUEST WRITER

With the upcoming William Starr Lecture by investigative journalist Elizabeth Kolbert, the Class of 2012 will get a taste of the dialogue surrounding the issues of global warming and climate change.

The Starr Lecture, part of the Office of Campus Life's First Year Program, is held annually as an opportunity for a prominent author to meet with the freshman class and discuss his or her life's work.

The event is also used as a chance to introduce new students to conversations surrounding a key topic.

"Vassar has a long tradition of shaping dialogue and conversation around critical issues, and this is one of those areas where the campus, and particularly first-year students, can impact the conversation's terrain," said Associate Dean of the College for Campus Life and First Year Programs Edward Pittman '82 in an e-mailed statement.

This year's issue is human impact on the environment. When Kolbert meets with the freshman class on Thursday, Sept. 25 at 3 p.m., she will discuss her most recent book *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change*, the common reading for the Class of 2012.

A collection of essays that uncover the scientific, political and cultural impacts of climate change, *Field Notes* was selected by members of the Vassar faculty who felt that Kolbert's approach and skill as an investigative journalist highlighted the issue of climate change in an effective yet non-threatening manner.

Expanded from an award-winning three-part series written for *The New Yorker* in Spring 2005, *Field Notes* is a further attempt by Kolbert to present the science surrounding climate change in a way that is both detailed and accessible.

Sustainability efforts, such as the dorm energy challenge to reduce electricity use and the All Campus Dining Center's recent move to a tray-less dining room, reflect the growing attention paid to on-campus environmental issues on campus.

According to Pittman, the time is right to discuss the topic even further. "Global warming and sustainability are very pressing issues for our nation and the world, so it is quite timely to have a text, author and lecturer who can address the topic," he said.