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Lawrence University

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# Lawrence University Convocation Series Explores the Mind, the Environment, Personal Inspiration and Our Funny Bone

*Posted on: August 19th, 2003 by Rick Peterson*

Humorist David Sedaris, cognitive scientist Steven Pinker, best-selling author Susan Ariel Rainbow Kennedy (SARK) and environmental historian William Cronon will visit the Lawrence University campus in the coming year as part of the college's 2003-2004 convocation series.

Richard Warch, who begins his 25th and final year as Lawrence University president, opens the convocation series Thursday Sept. 25 with his annual matriculation address.

Sedaris, an author, playwright and National Public Radio commentator, will break with Lawrence convocation tradition with a rare evening appearance when he speaks Tuesday, Oct. 14 at 7:10 p.m.

A regular contributor to Esquire magazine, Sedaris was named humorist of the year in 2001 by Time magazine and is a past recipient of the Thurber Prize for American Humor. He is the author of several best-selling books, including "Barrel Fever," and "Holidays on Ice." His most recent book, "Me Talk Pretty One Day," is a series of humorous autobiographical essays.

Pinker, professor of psychology at the Center for Cognitive Neurosciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presents "The Blank Slate" on Tuesday, Jan. 20.

Named one of the "100 Americans for the Next Century" by Newsweek magazine, Pinker is considered one of the world's leading cognitive scientists. His book, "How the Mind Works," was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 1998 and his most recent work,

2002's "The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature," has thrust Pinker to the forefront of public debate about human nature and the development of the human mind.

SARK, a frequent guest on National Public Radio, presents "Make Your Creative Dreams Real" on Thursday, March 4. She has written 11 personal growth, inspiration and creativity books, including the 1997 self-help best seller "Succulent Wild Women." She wrote her first book at the age of 10, and currently has more than two million books in print. She was featured in the PBS series, "Women of Wisdom and Power" and the documentary film, "The World According to SARK."

On Tuesday, May 25, Cronon headlines Lawrence's annual Honors Convocation with the address "The Portage: History and Memory in the Making."

The Frederick Jackson Turner Professor of History, Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 1992, Cronon studies American environmental history and the history of human interactions with the natural world. He has written four books including "Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West," which earned Cronon the 1992 Bancroft Prize as the best work of American history published during the previous year and was one of three nominees for the Pulitzer Prize in History, and 1995's "Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature."

Cronon was named a Rhodes Scholar as an undergraduate at UW-Madison, and has since been honored as a Danforth Fellow and as a Guggenheim Fellow. In 1985, he was awarded one of the MacArthur Foundation's prestigious "genius grants."