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## Poignant 'Booksmart' sets tone for a new generation

In "Booksmart," actress Olivia Wilde's ("The O.C.," "House") directorial debut, Molly (Beanie Feldstein) and Amy (Kaitlyn Dever) are valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively, of their high school graduating class.

Molly is headed for Yale, and Amy will spend a gap year in Botswana before matriculating at Columbia University.

The vibe at their progressive school, where Wilde's husband Jason Sudeikis plays the beleaguered principal, is so touchy-feely that students are discouraged from discussing where they have been admitted to college.

Overbearing, overachieving Molly overreaches by delivering a coup de grace to classmates, congregated in the apparently genderless bathroom, who dis her behind her back. The hurtful barbs of these losers don't matter to her, she's going to Yale.

Molly, the smug super achiever, is shocked to learn her tormentors will be Ivy Leaguers too — except for the guy who's going straight to a six-figure coding gig at Google.

"You guys don't even care about school," Molly cries.

"No," a fellow future Bulldog corrects her, "we just don't only care about school."

Acerbic Molly and introverted Amy never partied because they wanted to get into good schools. As a result, nobody knows they're fun.

Now, on the eve of graduation, they have one night to make up for lost time. Their goal is to find their way to the senior class' unchaperoned blowout house party. Otherwise, their teen years will have been significantly squandered.

It is the road trip to the party that marks their true commencement.

Director Wilde, who views her own career as having been limited by blonde-seductress typecasting, told The New York Times that directing "Booksmart" was "the first job I've ever had that wasn't entirely dependent on and connected to my looks."

Conscious and confident even within the movie's R rating, Wilde doesn't gratuitously embed the scatological male-pleasing tropes that are



**REBECCA L. FORD**

REBECCA L. FORD is counsel at Scharf Banks Marmor LLC, and concentrates her practice on complex litigation, compliance, board governance and specialized employment issues. She is the former executive vice president for litigation and intellectual property at MGM. She can be reached at [rford@scharfbanks.com](mailto:rford@scharfbanks.com).

foundational to many coming-of-age movies.

Wilde firmly sends the message that one can be intelligent and convivial, socially awkward and socially engaged, independent without being isolated and sexual without being exploited.

Amy's lesbianism is treated matter-of-factly and with good humor as both girls suffer the agony of first crushes and the anxiety of separation that looms on their horizon.

"This is not a movie about two nerdy girls trying to assimilate," Wilde told the Times. "It's about them learning to accept others."

Jessica Williams ("The Daily Show," "Two Dope Queens") is the hip young teacher who has trouble establishing boundaries with her students. Lisa Kudrow and Will Forte play Amy's cluelessly accepting parents. Mason Gooding, son of Cuba, plays Molly's hunky crush, and Billie Lourd, daughter of Carrie Fisher, is a wacky Harvard-bound classmate.

Part "Bridesmaids," part "After Hours" and part "Risky Business," Wilde's girl-buddy movie is the "Superbad" of its generation. ("Superbad" star Jonah Hill is Feldstein's older brother.)

Poignant, gender-positive and hilarious, "Booksmart" is destined to become the defining coming-of-age movie for the next decade of the millennium.