

NOTES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Volume Fifteen, Number Six (August 2014)

"What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how."

(W. Wordsworth, from "The Prelude")

NOTES FROM READERS

>>What you think<<

Students are back, there is a bit of a nip in the air (at least here in Minnesota!) and I begin my 39th straight year on a college campus. Why? It keeps me young – perhaps. It gives me hope – most certainly. What a privilege to accompany the students who come to our community each year, inspiring in their aspirations for their lives and the well being of the world. Here's to another great year!

Occasionally, I (or my colleagues) refer to items from previous issues of Notes. If you have not been a subscriber previously, and wish to review our conversations, past issues of Notes are available on-line at www.jgacounsel.com. The website version of Notes also includes helpful hyperlinks to sources for purchasing or subscribing to the various publications mentioned in Notes. I thank my friends at Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates for their many years of abiding support for our reflective practice.

REFLECT ON THIS

>>All well and good<<

I was asked to spend some time this summer reflecting on the “case for ethics” in the fundraising profession. What follows is an annotated outline of that case – specifically set in the context of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) mission that promotes ethical and effective fundraising. I welcome your thoughts. This case likely will be used to communicate even more proactively the values we espouse as fundraisers and the public trust we uphold.

The premise

- Society's most deeply held values are expressed in the work of nonprofit organizations.
- Philanthropic support for these organizations thus is critical to a vital nonprofit sector and healthy democracy.
- Those charged with raising this support – both professional fundraisers and other paid and volunteer organizational leaders – thus have dual obligations: to effective fundraising to support mission-based organizations and to ethical practices consistent with mission-based values and the demands of serving the public trust.
- The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) has long stated its commitment to ethical and effective fundraising.

- It now is vital that this dual claim - that we must simultaneously do well and be good – be proclaimed as central to the work of philanthropic fundraising on behalf of the public goods we serve and support.

The logic

- The AFP mission statement aspires to promote fundraising practice that is both ethical and effective in service to the public trust and a healthy democracy
- The obstacles to the mission are many: from messy scandals that taint us all to public perceptions that fundraisers are used car salespeople or pickpockets.
- Beyond scandals and misperceptions, there also is the reality that the work of philanthropic fundraisers often involves matters of personal relationships, intimate knowledge and financial resources – all sources of potential trespass – and that the work of fundraising also extends to other organizational leaders (both paid and volunteer) who may not be aware of the links between effective and ethical practices.
- The claim that we can do well and be good at the same time first requires a reframing of the work of philanthropic fundraising.
- Philanthropic fundraisers (and other nonprofit leaders) serve the public good – they are, in that way, public servants. The work they do serves causes that reflect society’s most deeply-held values – education, health, justice, environmental well-being, vital arts and culture, and so on.
- The organizational missions fundraisers help promote and support thus are critical to our ability as a society to achieve our highest aspirations.
- *If our fundraising is not effective*, then our highest public values may languish.
- *If our fundraising is not ethical*, then our highest public values will be tainted by misbehavior, again threatening our ability to further those values.
- *And thus, we embrace the inextricable links between effective and ethical fundraising on behalf of the public trust.*
- For more than 50 years, the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), formerly the National Society of Fundraising Executives (NSFRE), has been vigilant and focused in its commitment to ensuring that its member fundraisers live up to the highest ethical standards. The self-regulation of the profession by its membership has aimed at securing the public trust.
- That self-regulation has evolved to a dual focus: on ensuring that ethical principles and standards for practice set a high bar for professional behavior, and at the same time, offering a vision of individual and common professional character.
- We believe that our commitments to ethical and effective fundraising must be embraced by all who seek to serve the public trust through non-profit, mission-based organizations.
- To that end, we invite all those engaged in philanthropic fundraising to embrace the commitments of AFP members, who are guided in their ethical decision-making by the AFP Code of Ethical Principles and Standards, which in turn is grounded in a set of values that fundraisers aspire to honor in their lives and work.
- We contend that those engaged in effective and ethical fundraising aspire to: observe and adhere to the AFP Code and all relevant laws and regulations; build personal confidence and public support by being trustworthy in all circumstances; practice honesty in relationships;

be accountable for professional, organizational and public behavior; be transparent and forthcoming in all dealings; and be courageous in serving the public trust.

- These values are at the heart of our public character as those engaged in philanthropic fundraising – and essential to our doing both well and good. We are committed to supporting the continued growth of all our members and their organizations in ethical understanding and practice – on behalf of the public trust we have the privilege to serve.

>>What is required of you?<<

It is worth reprinting here my opening convocation address to our entering students – it stands the test of time as a durable charge to all of us as we seek to learn and live...

“If you know your Hebrew Bible – and if you don’t, don’t worry, Religion 100 will help – you will recognize the allusion in my title this morning to the well-known passage from the prophet Micah, the sixth chapter, verse eight:

6.8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

And, if I was smart, I might leave it right there, because if each of us would behave as Micah claims the Lord requires, all would be well with the world. Justice, mercy and humility set a high bar for God’s faithful people, but the theological claim imbedded in Micah’s prophetic words is not mine to negotiate for you. The links between your faith, your relationship with the divine, and how you live in the world, are for you to explore and work out. We will provide a rich and challenging context for you to do just that, but we do not pretend to know how you will make sense of what the Lord requires of you.

On the other hand, there are some things that we can and do require of you. And that is the simple message I want to share with you this morning as you commence your Augsburg education. And maybe – just maybe – if you do what we require of you, you will find a pathway to understand what the Lord requires of you. That would be the bold claim at the heart of our education for vocation in the world, that how and what you learn here, that who you meet and engage here, that what you find out here about yourself and your various gifts, will offer you a clearer idea of what it is that you are called to do and be in the world.

So, what is it that is required of you?

Show up

The first requirement is really pretty fundamental and you already have begun to live up to it. You are here – on campus, engaged in your orientation, at this Opening Convocation, about to begin your college classes.

But as the coming days pass, you will be tempted by many distractions and late nights and other obligations to not show up, to miss a class or a meeting, to say that it doesn’t matter whether you attend every class session. I know this tendency – I lived it myself, making up elaborate excuses for why I could skip every 7th class session and no one would notice. And we might not notice every time, but you will notice (whether you fully get it now or not) that it is a slippery slope to not show

up. Statistics show that skipping even one class session has an impact on whether or not first year college students stay in school, let alone graduate, or perhaps most importantly whether or not they learn something.

But, of course, this is not simply about showing up for class. Showing up is also a sort of spiritual practice. It is about being present now. It is about being in relationship to a text, a classmate, and/or a teacher. It is about accompanying each other on a journey that is both solitary and social. The famous educational philosopher, John Dewey, said that genuine education is not preparation for life, it is life itself. And if you believe that – as we do here at Augsburg – then showing up, being present now, is the key factor in whether or not you get the education you need in order to live in the world.

Show up, please.

Pay attention

The second requirement is also quite simple. But the equally simple fact is that we live in a world full of distractions and paying attention doesn't come easy.

Like you, I'm on Facebook and Twitter (follow me at @paulpribbenow, if you must). I have an I-Phone and an iPad and a laptop. I read two newspapers each morning and probably have 20 magazine subscriptions. I do my best to lead this wonderful and complex college. I have two young children, a wonderful spouse who works at the kids' school and also manages Augsburg House, and a life full of things I "must" pay attention to – and it's hard work. And I'm old. You are young and you have grown up in a time when multi-tasking is not an option, it's an expectation. I really can't imagine how you keep it all together. I admire you, but I also worry about you.

So here I stand asking you to pay attention. Yes, I mean put away all the distractions that you can control. Turn off the cell phone occasionally, spend some time away from the computer. Focus in on what your teachers and classmates are saying and doing. Find ways to pay attention.

But it is more than that, of course, because even when you have put away all those sources of distraction, it remains your responsibility to figure out what is most important and how you can make what is important the center of your life. The sociologist, Robert Bellah and his associates, have written that "Democracy means paying attention," (from *The Good Society*) by which they mean that the psychic energy we use to pay attention is the key to the sort of person we hope to be – as individuals and as a society. If we continue to be distracted, our attention and the energy that it requires of us will also be distracted, and the values and people and ideas and causes we should care about and attend to will not get our energy. And we will not become the people we want to be. We will follow someone else's idea of our call.

Pay attention, please.

Do the work

The final requirement follows logically from the first two. If you show up and learn to truly pay attention, you will find that there is work that must be done.

Many days, the work will be assigned to you. Read this text, explore these ideas, test this hypothesis, run this experiment, play this scale, practice this drill. You know all about doing school work already, but please know that this is college and college signals a quantum leap in the work required of you. Don't get behind on reading and papers. Take advantage of the support we offer to help you manage your time and learn to study. Support each other and ask for help when you feel you need it.

Because more and more, on many days the work will be yours to discern and pursue. There will be no one there to tell you what to do. You will need to seize the work that needs to be done. The profound truth at the heart of our academic mission is that the work you learn to do here – in the classroom, on campus, in our neighborhood and around the world – is the basis for pursuing the important work to be done in the world – and we need you to do it. We are counting on you to do it. It is the work for which we were recognized last May with President Obama's Award for Community Service. That is why this college exists – to educate you to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers and responsible leader – not just because we think it would be nice if you were all of those sorts of citizens and stewards and thinkers and leaders, but because the world needs you. There is utility to this education, there is purpose and direction, there is work to be done by educated men and women. Work they are called to do. Work that might just have to do with what the prophet Micah claimed – the work of justice and compassion and humility.

Do the work, please.

And that is what is required of you. Simple lessons that I hope you will remember: show up, pay attention and do the work. Lessons that should help you in college, I would argue, but most critically and urgently, lessons that will serve you for a lifetime of following your passions and calls for the good of the world. I can't wait to see what good you will do. Welcome to Augsburg – it's our great privilege to have you all here!"

PRACTICE THIS

>>Multiply your mind by giving it away<<

I will have more to say in a future issue of Notes about innovation and higher education – a primary theme for our work together at Augsburg this year. For now, just a couple of glimpses of how we are positioning this important work.

First, I have learned much from Mark Federman, a Canadian scholar whose writings on innovation include this provocative suggestion: "Multiply your mind by giving it away." And Federman means exactly what he says—be generous, be charitable, give instead of always taking. Because when you are generous with your mind, with your knowledge and education, you help to create organizations and neighborhoods and agencies and churches and schools that are marked not by the scarcity of the world but by the abundance of what's possible when generosity of mind and heart and spirit is our guiding principle.

Second, a *Harvard Business Review* article entitled "Two Routes to Resilience: Rebuild your core while you reinvent your business" (by Clark Gilbert, Matthew Eyring and Richard Foster, December 2012) outlines a two-track model of innovation. The first track seeks to reposition your core business, adapting the current business model to an altered marketplace. In other words, how do continue to

improve the relevance and sustainability of our core work and mission? The second track creates a separate disruptive business to develop innovations that will become the source of future growth. The compelling idea behind this two-track model is that we must not relegate the disruptive work to the margins of the organization, not should we give up on the need for ongoing quality improvement in our core business. We must do both and be transparent about how both tracks are crucial to the well being of the organization.

For higher education institutions like Augsburg, this two-track model provides a framework for keeping both current academic program review and improvement and the exploration of new markets and models firmly in sight, recognizing how the tracks may intersect (and perhaps collide!), share organizational resources, and ultimately help to ensure that our work is both responsive and resilient.

>>The grace of great things<<

I can't begin a new academic year without returning to Parker Palmer's wise words about how a teaching and learning community is formed and sustained. I'll let Palmer's words speak for themselves...

“By *great things*, I mean the subjects around which the circle of seekers has always gathered—not the disciplines that study these subjects, not the texts that talk about them, not the theories that explain them, but the things themselves.

I mean the genes and ecosystems of biology, the symbols and referents of philosophy and theology, the archetypes of betrayal and forgiveness and loving and loss that are the stuff of literature. I mean the artifacts and lineages of anthropology, the materials of engineering with their limits and potentials, the logic of systems in management, the shapes and colors of music and art, the novelties and patterns of history, the elusive idea of justice under law.

Great things such as these are the vital nexus of community in education...When we are at our best, it is because the grace of great things has evoked from us the virtues that give educational community its finest form...” (from *The Courage to Teach*, 1998, p. 107)

PAY ATTENTION TO THIS

>>Resources for your reflective practice<<

Our colleagues at St. Olaf College, one of our sister institutions in Minnesota, have published *Claiming Our Callings: Toward a New Understanding of Vocation in the Liberal Arts* (edited by Kaethe Schwehn and L. DeAne Lagerquist, Oxford University Press, 2014), which includes essays commenting on the intersections of education and vocation from a variety of perspectives.

At an international conference on higher education and democracy in Belfast earlier this summer, I was reminded of an important collection of essays edited by John Saltmarsh and Matthew Hartley entitled “*To Serve A Larger Purpose*” *Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education* (Temple University Press, 2011), to which I have returned for inspiration and guidance in my work here at Augsburg.

I am a faithful reader of *The Hedgehog Review*, published by the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia. The Summer 2014 issue explored the theme of “Minding our

Minds” and has several essays on one of my favorite topics, how we pay attention in an “attention-deficit disorder” society!

>>Forgetfulness<<

Quintessential American poet Billy Collins always provokes and inspires in his plain-spoken way – as in this poem on how and what we forget...

The name of the author is the first to go
followed obediently by the title, the plot,
the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel
which suddenly becomes one you have never read, never even heard of,

as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor
decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain,
to a little fishing village where there are no phones.

Long ago you kissed the names of the nine muses goodbye
and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag,
and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,

something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps,
the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.

Whatever it is you are struggling to remember,
it is not poised on the tip of your tongue
or even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.

It has floated away down a dark mythological river
whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall

well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those
who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle.

No wonder you rise in the middle of the night
to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.
No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted
out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

Billy Collins, “Forgetfulness” from *Questions About Angels*. Copyright © 1999 by Billy Collins.
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>>Topics for upcoming issues<<

- Citizenship and work
- Public work
- Generosity and place: a geography of hope

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