

NOTES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Volume Fourteen, Number Five (June 2013)

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

(W. Wordsworth, from "The Prelude")

NOTES FROM READERS

>>What you think<<

Happy summer all. I have included in this issue of Notes four separate pieces that reflect an institutional journey here at Augsburg over the past year – a year marked by significant internal and external challenges, while at the same time a year where a framework for our strategic future began to emerge. I begin with my personal leadership reflections on the year (part of my self-evaluation process with our Board). I then include the draft strategic framework – mission, vision and key strategic themes – we have developed as a community during the past several months. I also have included two pieces that reflect our college at work. The first is a framework for decision-making around building public will on important social issues. The second is a Huffington Post blog by one of our faculty members that offers a case study of how we are educating citizen-professionals for our democracy. I hope you will find in these various pieces examples of reflective practice at work within one particular institution.

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

>>Reflections on the year<<

As I conclude my seventh year as Augsburg's president and look back at the goals I set for the past year, all I can say is "what a difference a year makes!"

We have weathered what I euphemistically call "the perfect storm" of disruptions and transitions in our lives as a college community during the past year.

- Disruptions of the public discourse that led to increased scrutiny and skepticism about the purposes and values of higher education, calling into question much of what we do and how we do it.
- Disruptions in the demographic profile among prospective students and their families that have led to ever-shifting changes in the historic assumptions undergirding our enrollment and revenue projections and results.

- Disruptions in the economic model for higher education, meaning that our labor, technology and facility-intensive financial profile is less and less sustainable without significant changes.
- Transitions in our academic calendar and programs that have required an intensive reshaping of course design, faculty loads and enrollment/retention strategies.
- Transitions in the leadership of two key areas at Augsburg – Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management – and the resulting implications for communal reflection on what we hope for in leadership, not to mention the many ways transitions such as these uncover difficult issues related to workload, decision-making and accountability.
- And transitions in my own leadership as I recommitted myself to Augsburg after exploring another position in spring 2012, and worked to imagine a next era of my leadership.

And yet, with all of these disruptions and transitions, we end this year with much to celebrate – a surplus budget, strong capital campaign results and a transformative gift, a new academic calendar and adult undergraduate program design, international recognition for our student achievements, new support services to ensure student success, a stable outlook from Moody's, and perhaps some of the most important planning work ever done at Augsburg. We are bruised from all of the disruption and transition – there have been inevitable costs to pay on many levels for the challenges we have faced this past year – but we also are more proud than ever of our mission and values, and committed to working together to ensure a vibrant future for Augsburg.

As I reflect on the past year, I would admit that it was likely the most difficult year in my long career in higher education. I returned from my sabbatical in Chicago last summer hoping to build upon the work of the three planning efforts undertaken in 2011-12 – the Commission on Academic Opportunities, the Commission on Strategic Finance, and the Strategic Enrollment Planning process – and to focus our work on enhancing the integration and alignment between excellent academic programs, a mission-based and market-relevant enrollment plan, and a sustainable financial model. Instead, I returned to enrollment and revenue projections for the new academic year that were a moving target in the wrong direction – ultimately reaching a more than \$4 million negative revenue outlook – and that set off a community reaction that bordered on panic.

We then needed to respond both to the budget challenges, working on all fronts to deliver the budget results promised despite the revenue shortfalls, and at the same time to the distrust and fear in the community, which required constant communication, engagement and compassion. Starting with my State of the College address in September 2012 and continuing through the spring budget planning process, we sought to restore trust and stability in the midst of a volatile environment. I certainly would not claim that all is well with our community as we conclude the year, but I would say that there is a sober realism about our situation, coupled with a willingness to sacrifice and work hard and smart to get Augsburg back on track. That, it seems to me, is success in this moment.

And through all of this turmoil, I have been reflecting on the sort of leader I need to be as we go forward. The skills and experience for which I was first elected president of Augsburg in 2006 – the ability to tell our story, a commitment to the Lutheran faith, the liberal arts and civic engagement, and fundraising – are still valuable, I would argue, but there are other skills I must now cultivate and deploy as we navigate toward the future. This reinvention of my leadership for the future must focus on political and relational work, on more strategic use of my time and influence to advance our mission, on the courage to make tough decisions and stand for hope in our future.

This reinvention is already in motion, I would suggest, in the ways in which the past year, as difficult as it has been, also may have been the most meaningful in my career. We faced tough news with calm and resolute action. Emotional intelligence became perhaps my most important skill as we negotiated budgets and leadership transitions. We also found and celebrated signs of hope for the future – signs like the Moody’s outlook, the early and positive enrollment outlook for fall 2013, a balanced budget for 2013 and 2014, a \$10 million gift for the CSBR campaign, the strategic planning process, and the successful conclusion of searches for a new Provost and Vice President for Enrollment Management. We stand poised now – fragile, though stable; bruised, though resolute; anxious, though hopeful – for what I believe will be a strong and vibrant future for the college we love so dearly.

Perhaps most hopeful for me are the initial outcomes of the strategic planning process – the sense of common purpose around the planning tables, the resonant values of faithful and relevant that framed our conversations, and the clear articulation of a vision for 2019 that has captured our imaginations: “In 2019, Augsburg will be a new kind of student-centered, urban university, small to our students and big to the world.”

And so we shall be. This future direction for Augsburg is exciting and compelling – for me and for our community – and affirms that all the work we have done together for the past seven years has set a firm and mission-based foundation for our ongoing strength and vitality. As I declared last year, we will not simply survive; we will thrive!

>>The way forward<<

AUGSBURG 2019

Mission: Augsburg College educates students to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers, and responsible leaders. The Augsburg experience is supported by an engaged community that is committed to intentional diversity in its life and work. An Augsburg education is defined by excellence in the liberal arts and professional studies, guided by the faith and values of the Lutheran church, and shaped by its urban and global settings.

Vision: Augsburg is a new kind of student-centered, urban university that is small to our students and big to the world.

In 2019:

- 1) OUR ACADEMIC DISTINCTION: Through curricular and co-curricular programs, Augsburg students are successfully preparing for lives of meaningful work and service.**
 - a) Through interdisciplinary educational experiences that intentionally integrate the liberal and practical arts and that prepare students to think and act across the boundaries of ideas, attitudes and behaviors.
 - b) Through experiential opportunities that integrate community-based programs, faculty-led research, internships, service learning, study away, and other forms of experiential learning— all linked to our distinctive urban location, our abiding commitments to civic life, and the gifts of our diverse community.
 - c) Augsburg meets its students where they are, helps them to persist, and challenges them to achieve.

- 2) **OUR REPUTATION & MARKET POSITION:** An intentional mix of students comes to Augsburg through our reputation and visibility in key networks; they leave Augsburg equipped to follow their vocational journeys and to compete in the selective job market of 2019.
- a) Augsburg is a welcoming, inclusive community which values the diversity of persons, perspectives, and convictions.
 - b) Augsburg continuously innovates, refining its academic programs to the needs of the marketplace and the demands of civic life. The Augsburg community provides leadership in the dialogue on workforce needs and social challenges, and makes the case for our graduates as prepared to make a difference in the world, no matter what they choose to do.
 - c) Augsburg graduates can articulate what they have learned in their labs, campus activities, and off-campus experiences and how those distinctive educational experiences translate to the requirements and expectations of a selective job market and a global society.
- 3) **OUR INSTITUTION:** Augsburg is deliberately organized as a 21st century university, designed to keep its promises to students, modeling an engaged and accountable community.
- a) Because students are at the center of Augsburg's life, fully engaged as citizens, stewards, learners and leaders, Augsburg is organized around the outcomes of its distinctive educational experiences.
 - b) Augsburg is lean but effective, intentionally organized to be nimble, collaborative, financially vital and data-driven; Augsburg faculty, staff, administration and board are accountable to each other and the wider public.
 - c) Augsburg College is an employer of choice, welcoming the gifts that our employees bring to our collective work, and committed to supporting our employees as they seek to match those gifts with the needs of the College and our larger community.

PRACTICE THIS

>>Building Public Will<<

We've recently been involved here at Augsburg in thinking about when and how we take positions on important social issues. As part of these deliberations, we've adapted a "Decision-Making Guide" from one of our sister organizations, Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, which provides a framework for discussion and decisions about how to build public will around sometimes difficult public issues. I share the draft guide with you in hopes that you might find it valuable for your organization and I welcome your thoughts about its utility.

What is building public will? Generating awareness, discussion, and providing opportunity for action that builds on community values to achieve change over the long term. In particular, for Augsburg the work of building public will always should reflect our academic mission that values conversation, civility and citizen engagement.

Augsburg participates in public will building by:

- Leading by doing. Through leadership in educating students, innovation in programs and services, and advocacy in public policy, Augsburg models a way of *being in community* that illustrates how institutions can help solve public challenges
- Sharing stories and issue information through Augsburg publications, and through public commentary from Augsburg leaders.
- Publicly engaging students, faculty, staff, alumni and neighbors to be part of the solution, and encouraging a sharing of various perspectives and experiences in a civil manner.

Public will decision criteria – when does Augsburg build public will around an issue?

1. Is it literally our mission or vision?
2. Is it of obvious strategic interest?
3. Is this an area where Augsburg has unique experience or expertise?
4. Does it affect the students, faculty, staff, alumni and neighbors we support and serve?
5. Is Augsburg called to leadership?
 - a. Will an Augsburg stand change or reframe the debate?
 - b. Are there partner organizations with whom to collaborate?
 - c. Does Augsburg's role in local community life further define a need to respond?
6. Do we align with or bring value to our church body by taking a position?
7. Can the Augsburg stand speak to the value of nonpartisanship?

What level of visibility should our public will building take?

Lead (high) – The issue IS Augsburg's mission or vision or represents an obvious strategic priority. Augsburg provides high visibility and high public leadership.

- *Access to and readiness for higher education (Generation Next, College Possible, Wallin Foundation, AVID), government policy on education (MPCC, CIC, NAICU), the command to love the stranger as neighbor (immigration policy, community building, public safety)*

Engage (medium) - Clearly a priority based on criteria, and based on available resources, Augsburg will take leadership, often with other partners.

- *Equality and equity issues for all people (Marriage Amendment), same-sex relationships (Reconciled in Christ), neighborhood infrastructure and place-making (Cedar Riverside Partnership and Central Corridor Anchor Institutions), Voter ID, charitable deduction, anti-racism (YWCA), anti-poverty, climate change and environmental policy (President's Climate Commitment), veterans' services (Yellow Ribbon), peace and justice issues (Nobel Peace Prize Forum)*

Position (low) – Augsburg holds a position and selectively shares the position as needed with key constituencies, often privately.

- *Nonprofit property tax exemption, specific neighborhood issues (Minneapolis Park District, Minneapolis City Council and city departments), raising taxes (as relates to funding higher education priorities)*

Comment [LBA1]: This category of stranger-as-neighbor does not seem clearly distinct from the place-making and peace/justice issues that are in the "Engage" section below. Hard to draw lines! But these examples are all otherwise great and very clear.

No Position – Augsburg defers to the social teachings of the ELCA or the issue doesn't meet our criteria.

- *Abortion, healthcare coverage*

>>Citizen teachers<<

I have the privilege to work closely with Dr. Harry Boyte, director of our Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg, who is providing remarkable leadership to a wide-ranging public effort to reshape our understanding of citizenship and work. In particular, he and his colleagues have had a significant impact on our professional programs (teaching, nursing, social work, etc.) in helping students to imagine themselves as citizen-professionals. Here is a recent Huffington Post essay specifically about our efforts to educate citizen-teachers for special education classrooms. If you want to know more, let me know – it's important and impressive work.

“A 21st Century Freedom Movement

Posted: 06/12/2013 12:11 pm

By: *Harry Boyte and Jen Nelson*

What do 21st century freedom movements look like?

There are still tyrannies where oppressors have a face and name. But the more difficult freedom struggles of our time may be those involving patterns of control animated by good intentions, clothed in the garb of science. High stakes testing, government regulations on sugar contents in food, and an ever-expanding number of other areas in which experts direct, or more gently "nudge" in the phrase of former Obama adviser Cass Sunstein, are cases in point.

Public Achievement in Fridley Middle School, just north of Minneapolis, offers a striking example of a freedom movement transforming subtle domination. In a Federal Setting III program, Project Star, "citizen teachers" Michael Ricci and Alissa Blood have changed special education into an empowering learning environment.

Kids take the lead in designing their own learning, built around largely self-directed public work projects of their own choosing. In the process, students labeled "EBD," subject to what are called "Emotional and Behavior Disorders," and "OHD," or "Other Health Disabilities," have become community leaders. "In all the other classes, the teachers tell you what to do," says 7th grader Whitney, in a video about [Fridley Public Achievement called "Real Power."](#) "In PA, the teacher says okay, what do you want to do?"

According to the Wikipedia definition, special education is designed for "the education of students with special needs in a way that addresses the students' individual differences and needs." Students with "OHD" are also in the Project Star because of behaviors that often interrupt the general education classroom.

The problem, as the Wiki definition of "EBD" also notes, is that "both general definitions as well as concrete diagnosis of EBD may be controversial as the observed behavior may depend on many factors."

Put differently, is the "problem" the kids or their environment? "The kids in our special education classroom weren't successful in mainstream classrooms, where the format has been the same for the last 100 years," explains Ricci. "The world has changed, but the classroom is pretty much the same."

Susan O'Connor, director of the Special Education graduate program at Augsburg College, wanted to try something different. "Special Education generally still uses a medical model, based on how to fix kids," she said. Working with Dennis Donovan, national organizer for Public Achievement with the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, O'Connor and other faculty and graduate students at Augsburg partnered with Ricci and Blood, graduates of their program, to design an alternative.

They created an experimental adaptation of the youth civic empowerment and education initiative called Public Achievement. Public Achievement was founded in 1990 by Harry Boyte as a contemporary version of the Citizenship Education Program (CEP) during the civil rights movement, which had shaped him as a college student. CEP taught African-Americans, and some poor whites as well, skills and concepts of constructive change. The experiences had often dramatic impact on identity, shifting people from victim-hood to agents of change and civic role models for the nation.

In Public Achievement, young people learn the skills, concepts and methods of empowering public work. They work as teams guided by coaches, who may be young adults, college students, or teachers. Coaches help guide the work but do not dominate. They also are highly attentive to the development of young people's public skills and capacities. The initiative has spread widely, now used in schools, colleges, and communities in the United States and many other societies, including Poland, the West Bank and Gaza, Israel, and Northern Ireland.

Both Ricci and Blood believed that an approach which gives students the chance to take leadership in designing their own learning was worth a try. "The idea of trying something different that might give school a purpose for our kids just made sense," Blood explained. Public Achievement offered resources.

In the self-contained Project Star classroom, where the primary concern is to teach students strategies that help them manage disruptive behaviors that interfere with learning in school, there is latitude for innovation. "More evidence would be needed [in a mainstream classroom] to allow us to go to the level we did, where we turned Public Achievement into a core part of the curriculum," Blood described.

As a result of the PA experiment, Setting III students who in many schools are confined to their classes became public leaders. They built relationships and received recognition not simply in the school, but also in the larger Fridley community.

Their Public Achievement work brought them into contact with school administrators, community leaders, elected officials, and at times media outlets like the [local paper](#) and [Minnesota Public Radio](#). Kids once labeled "problem students" are becoming [known as "problem solvers."](#)

The PA approach also transformed the work of Ricci and Blood.

"My role is not to fix things for the kids but to say, 'this is your class, your mission. How are you

going to do the work? Our main task is to remind them, to guide them, not to tell them what to do," explains Ricci.

The teachers became partners with their students, who choose the issues and learn how to work to address them effectively. Issues this last year included rewriting the school's bullying policy, hosting a district wide "Kindness Week" to reduce bullying, making murals to motivate peers to get exercise, visiting children in hospital waiting rooms, and educating the public about misconceptions regarding Pit Bulls.

Such work creates multiple opportunities for students to develop academically if teachers are intentional about making the connections. Students compose well-written letters to seek permission from the principal for a project. They use math to figure out what scale their mural will be so they know how much wall space they need.

Teachers also change -- from "teaching to the test," to working alongside young people as they develop. Their curriculum builds citizenship skills and habits such as negotiation, compromise, initiative, planning, organizing, and public speaking. It also develops what Blood calls "a public professional persona."

Both teachers are convinced that these skills, habits, and civic identity will serve the students well throughout life.

The change in the young people, eloquently described in their own words in the "Real Power" video, is inspiring. So is the new model of "citizen teacher" which Michael Ricci and Alissa Blood are pioneering.

In an educational environment today where teachers feel powerless, they are forging an alternative in which educators reclaim teaching as a great civic vocation. They are also helping to create a freedom movement not only for the students but for themselves, in which teachers and students are agents and architects, not objects, of educational reform.

Harry Boyte is Director of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College and a Senior Fellow at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Jennifer Nelson is Producer and Director of "Real Power," and a graduate student in public policy at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

PAY ATTENTION TO THIS

>>Resources for your reflective practice<<

In light of the themes highlighted above, here are a couple of texts I have found helpful during the past year:

My Board chair, Jodi Harpstead, suggested John P. Kotter's (with Dan Cohen) *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2002), which reminds us that change management is often more about emotions than data!

Also, I have *The Primes: How Any Group Can Solve Any Problem*, by Chris McGoff (Wiley, 2012), which is a thoughtful guide to building effective teams and groups.

>>This land is your land<<

There are some who believe that “This land is your land” should be our national anthem. In honor of the 4th, here are all the words...

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

words and music by Woody Guthrie

Chorus:

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California, to the New York Island
From the redwood forest, to the gulf stream waters
This land was made for you and me

As I was walking a ribbon of highway
I saw above me an endless skyway
I saw below me a golden valley
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

I've roamed and rambled and I've followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts
And all around me a voice was sounding
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

The sun comes shining as I was strolling
The wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling
The fog was lifting a voice come chanting
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

As I was walkin' - I saw a sign there
And that sign said - no tress passin'
But on the other side it didn't say nothin!
Now that side was made for you and me!

Chorus

In the squares of the city - In the shadow of the steeple
Near the relief office - I see my people
And some are grumblin' and some are wonderin'
If this land's still made for you and me.

Chorus (2x)

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>>Topics for upcoming issues<<

- Reinventing governance
- Citizenship and work
- Giving circles

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