

What Unites and Divides This Community?

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Since I am the student member on this panel I would like to expand Dr. Mullin's statements regarding the students here at Augustana. I will continue with the intellectual discovery element of this institution because I agree that it should be the overriding goal and the goal that unites the people here.

What deters students from this quest for knowledge is the "culture of busy-ness" fostered on campus. I have heard many people say that "Augie students are involved in everything." or "If you aren't in five groups you aren't involved enough." While I think it is important to be involved in groups you feel passionately about, I must agree that learning should take center stage. Choir meets five hours a week; planning meeting takes an hour plus the actual meeting takes another; you have to be in every theatre production or volunteer for every committee. Activities accumulate and classes, oh, well, sometimes those just have to squeeze in to our packed schedules. So, when is there time for learning?

Again, being involved is beneficial and busy-ness can help people manage time wisely, but these activities also divide the student body. We are not all here for intellectual discovery. I believe if we were here for the same reason we would not have such visible cliques on campus. Some people are here to play sports and they will only sit on the west side of the cafeteria and they will have few non-athlete friends. Some students are involved in every Christian gathering possible. Some are involved in choir ensembles that seem to do most things together. Some are involved in the partying scene and do little on campus and are definitely not here for intellectual discovery. But there is little reason to change or support to experiment and break the divisions. Once the first two or three weeks of school roll around, the groups are set and there isn't much trading. For example, how many students complain about the athlete's tables in the Commons and how many actually sit there to make a change? Perhaps this is a weak example, but it is a division among the students. If we are divided in how we sit at the cafeteria, can we be united in our quest for knowledge? Will my fellow students ever stop looking at me like I'm a goodie-tooshoe when I say I want a challenging professor, I want to learn the information, I want to apply the material to life?

Many students, and I risk it to say professors, too, play the game of school. We talk about this in education classes. We do what we must do to pass or to make the teacher *think* we know the information. It's all wrong. We have a bad attitude. We are too busy, and perhaps we think the professor isn't putting enough effort in so why should we?

Personally, I am finished playing the game, and I wish my peers were, too. When I am looked at funny when I actually do the reading or spend more than ten minutes on

a project, I wonder why people have so much hope in my generation. These are my fellow co-workers? These are the people who are going to run the businesses that I will buy from in the future? If they don't learn what to do now, when do they expect to learn it?

I don't want to end pessimistically, because I do see hope. There are handfuls of professors at Augustana that the students like, even though they are challenging, perhaps because they are challenging. I encourage the administration and faculty especially, but the support staff can be involved, too, to encourage the students to focus on learning. Professors, challenge us. Show us that you have put effort into the course and that you know the content and demand us to learn it, too. Demand us to use the information by making classes relate to what we can do with the information. Help us to see that now is the time to learn and that learning is an exciting adventure.

If each of the four constituencies really did focus on this noble objective, Augustana would be a great college. I venture to say that we would have less problems in the dorms with partying and drinking, we would have more school pride and students would not feel isolated if they were less involved in campus activities and more focused on learning. Students, let's re-prioritize. Place learning first. The recruiters and the faculty have their part to play, but we must transform our thinking. Don't be busy just because. Be busy because you are learning, serving and finding your vocation.