

Community  
Expectations and Visions  
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When I was asked to be part of this discussion, I was apprehensive initially. But then I accepted because I would address the topic of community. I do not have a problem talking about that because I see this as an opportunity to talk about something of which I am very proud. It is the people at Augustana. Most of the people at these meetings have been faculty. I will talk about my group, the support staff.

Who are we? First, just the numbers. There are 121 staff people, 109 full-time. With a beginning wage of about \$17,000 a year, with the average person making about \$21,000 a year, it is probably safe to say that we are not all here because of the wages.

How are we a part of the Augustana community? We are a very diverse group, even more so than the faculty.

There's the housekeeping people who work in the residence halls, who get to work early Monday mornings to make a difference for the students. They rush through to clear the way of bottles and cans so the students don't have to go to class and walk through the weekend debris.

There's the security guy who loves the students and wouldn't miss working the senior banquet because he wants to greet them and wish them well.

There is another guy who bakes birthday cakes that the Augustana Auxiliary provides for the freshman students. When I teased him and said yeah sure, your wife does it. He said nope, these are my students and I do it. I sometimes do three or four cakes a year, whatever they need.

Then there's the clerical person who gets a call at night from a student whose car has been vandalized and let's her come over and use their garage because the windows have been broken.

This is just a tiny sample of what happens on this campus. These examples of

community are what makes this place worth the effort.

This community takes care of each other. If you haven't had any problems in your life, count your blessings. If you've had the misfortune to have any sadness or illness, this is a wonderful place to be. The professional and moral support that you receive cannot be calculated. A couple years ago when my husband's brother died very unexpectedly, the very first sympathy card we received at home was from someone at Augie. This came from a person who is someone I see when I go to campus gatherings just like this one, not someone I see frequently. That card left a tremendously positive impression on my husband about Augustana.

Community at Augie to me is not merely a sense of caring but stepping up to the plate and doing whatever they can to help you. Community is action, not just words. Sometimes it's institutional support in terms of sick leave, but most often it is person to person support. Taking meals to a family, taking on additional responsibilities when someone can't work, telling them that they care. Now I realize we aren't all touchy feely, but people here will toss caution to the wind about harassment, they'll even give you a hug.

As a support staff employee I feel especially fortunate to be able to work directly with the faculty. This is a very egalitarian environment. I get to see first hand the tremendous support the faculty gives to the support staff. I hear the way they talk in the halls with their students, that support staff are important to this institution. I wish the people cleaning the buildings at night or working outside the academic buildings could hear what I hear. This faculty works very hard to see that our benefits are maintained, be it tuition remission or healthcare. As at-will-employees we do not have a position to speak with as strong a voice as a tenured faculty person. For that support I am extremely grateful. Thank you for all you do.

Does this community have problems? Yes it does. We are just a bunch of flawed human beings. It is always easier to be concerned about ourselves, but it is also abundantly clear, that there are many people here who care about others.

Why don't we see more staff people at meetings like this? For one thing, staff people have a hard time leaving their post and don't know if they'd be welcome here. I think they should hear these discussions; to hear and know that they are an integral part of this campus. That what we do is important. I get a tremendous

amount of support in my environment. But some people are physically isolated from other groups on campus. **Everyone** (and here I am not just talking about staff), everyone should hear that what they do is important. The dollars aren't here to tell us that, but words can make the difference. It is precisely that kind of moral support that keeps us here. Talk can be cheap, but genuine appreciation is priceless. Without that reinforcement, this would be a much different place.

John is absolutely right when he mentions how we have been nurtured by some giants. I would include Pearl Anderson as another giant, who guided me. Her love for Augustana was right out there for everyone to see. That is a common thread with the giants, they love this place, and the people here.

Without the students, I know we would not be here, but without the caliber of Augie's people (the oaks, the shrubs, the thorny bushes) we have across the board, Augustana would not be the institution that it is today either.