



Inside Outreach

November 24, 2004

Dear Colleagues,

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

--Albert Schweitzer

As Thanksgiving approaches, I have been thinking a lot about gratitude, and about two related issues: first, I deeply appreciate the excellent work of all of my colleagues in Outreach; and second, I am very mindful that we each approach the Thanksgiving holiday from our own private perspectives of appreciation.

As Vice President of this great organization, I view this holiday from a twofold perspective, one organizational and one deeply personal. As you can imagine, I most often hear about the very good and the very bad ends of the spectrum, and the news I do hear is often filtered through others' perceptions. Sometimes I hear news that requires me to take immediate action, to provide financial support, make a personnel change, or even tell someone that they are wrong and someone else is right. On the other hand, my position allows me to hear of amazing successes and huge contributions from the Outreach staff. I'm thankful that I have had an opportunity to get to know you, through visits to our many workspaces, meetings, and hallway conversations. But I've also had the privilege of sharing your lives as I sign birthday cards, get well cards, and, unfortunately, letters of condolence. Through them I have developed a deep understanding of the personal joys and crises that touch so many people daily in our organization.

Each of us works within the context of our personal lives. I'm thankful that the University allows us to temper our organizational needs with "heart." And I am thankful for the leadership, compassion, and community that I see in all of you.

With that in mind, I want to look at our progress in integrating the four pillars of Outreach-Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Service, and Learning and Community-into the soul of our organization

Entrepreneurship

Does an entrepreneurial spirit infuse the work of each Outreach employee? No not yet. However, from my seat, I see so many individuals in Outreach working to turn the Outreach bus from a slow cumbersome bureaucracy to a spirited enterprise. Examples of progress toward this end abound throughout Outreach: from the new revenue-sharing model in the World Campus; to the aggressive pursuit of lofty financial goals by the

Client Development and Management Development units; and to the tenacious work of the new grant team, Public Broadcasting, the Justice and Safety Institute, Cooperative Extension, and Development to pursue new avenues of funding through grants, contracts, and foundations. The examples are endless. There are many individuals that have participated in the foundational work to advance our innovative efforts to focus on three strategic programming areas, advancing a whole new way of approaching our work to address key societal issues (and to saying no to unrelated opportunities). There are teams within business services, marketing, and information technology that are looking at streamlining processes to turn our aircraft carrier into a swift boat. Efforts to create an entrepreneurial and innovative culture cross all areas within Outreach. But our work is not yet done in transforming our organization into a much leaner, more responsive and innovative enterprise.

Excellent Service

I have said that our goal is to exceed the expectations of our customers, listeners, viewers, clients, and students. In this area, I also believe that we are making great progress. Recently, the three associate vice presidents and I met with every University Park Dean and campus CEO to discuss how Outreach can provide better serve and support their strategic priorities. I wish you could have been with me in on these meetings to hear the positive feedback we received about all units in Outreach. In addition, each week, I receive at least one complimentary letter or e-mail stressing gratitude for the excellent service provided by an Outreach employee. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard from campus leaders that there is a "new Outreach." Because of your hard work to provide excellent service and your willingness to face the "brutal facts", we are changing the perception of Outreach-we are evolving to be viewed as a true partner, willing to do our best to exceed the expectations of our external constituents.

Leadership

Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, recently wrote a book adding an eighth habit. He contends that empowering individual leadership and placing the responsibility to change an organization squarely on the shoulders of each employee is a key habit to achieve success. Since I joined Penn State, I have preached that each Outreach staff member possesses leadership skills, with the expectation that each of us must use these skills to advance our organization. Everyone is charged with leading to make us better. I think over the last year, there have been many opportunities for individuals to provide formal and informal leadership through our various planning and study teams. But there is much work to do, and we are a long way from each employee believing that it is their right and responsibility to make their voice be heard, to lead us to a better, more effective Outreach.

But there is great progress to celebrate. I remember when I spoke to the Marketing team for the first time about everyone assuming a leadership role in Outreach. I was challenged by a staff assistant who gingerly asked how she could lead as a staff assistant. I must admit, I was stumped-until I became aware of the recent leadership work of the VP Council's Assistants Team* led by Tami Mizikar and their efforts with the FISH training program. Seizing an opportunity, the Team planned, managed registration, promoted,

scheduled, and implemented the two highly successful FISH seminars. Both sessions were full with a long waiting list. These two seminars came about because this group of staff assistants thought it was important and valuable for the entire Outreach staff to attend-so they provided the leadership to get the program offered. Each of us brings our own unique leadership skills to Outreach, we all must nurture a culture that encourages each person to speak up and act.

Learning and Community

This may be the most important foundational element of all. First, learning. Our learning environment is robust. Clearly, we are providing learning opportunities through many diverse programming formats and delivery systems throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. Internally, we have many, many people pursuing various levels of formal education with considerable personal sacrifice. In addition, we just selected this year's Outreach interns and continue to encourage professional development opportunities across Outreach. Most importantly, we are in the process of hiring a trainer and development specialist to develop a comprehensive training program for Outreach.

Second, community. This gets me back to my original commentary on our individual connection to Thanksgiving. Holiday celebrations are a combination of joy and a reminder of our losses. This Thanksgiving please keep in mind those Outreach colleagues that are facing their first holiday without a family member or close friend. This is how we become a community. Charting and achieving an aggressive Outreach United Way goal is another way to develop community. Another way is the caring response of Marketing's Scott Moore. He has proposed that each employee wear yellow today to show a colleague facing treatment for cancer how much we care about her-another example of how we in Outreach are a close-knit community.

Being an employee of Outreach is only one facet of who we are. Be sure to focus on the important things this holiday, and most importantly be grateful. I truly appreciate your work, your commitment, and your passion. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving Day is a jewel, to set in the hearts of honest men; but be careful that you do not take the day, and leave out the gratitude. --E.P. Powell

*Cathy Bloom, Mary Ann Clark, Kathie Conklin, Carolyn Cosolito, Carol Dreibelbis, Denise Gladd, Nikki Houck, Chrissy Johnson, Chrissy Laird, Tami Mizikar, Barbara Sherry, Brenna Swires, Tami Torquato, Megan Warefield

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