

Opening Remarks
Spring Conference 2008
Jennifer Cook

“Creating a balance.

A tough theme during difficult times.

Just like many of you, I have felt the pressure of budget cuts, increased workload, and competing priorities.

It is tough to look to the future when the present seems hard enough to get through.

The Spring Conference Planning Team felt this dichotomy as well.

Throughout our discussions and planning, we sought to capture the vibrancy of our campus without neglecting the difficult times that we face.

We asked the question,

how do we, as the Planning Team, find a balance between decreasing financial resources and the need to gather together as a campus?

How can we look at Spring Conference differently than we have in the past few years?

These questions drove our planning.

And we answered them in four ways.

First, we want your input.

The Spring Conference Planning Team seeks to provide enriching and valuable experiences on this rare day that the college is closed.

Evaluations from previous years have provided some rich information.

Some of you have loved the keynote speakers, and some of you have hated them.

Some were tremendously excited about breakout sessions, and some liked having sessions, but wanted different topics.

These past evaluations have shown a variety of opinions about specifics.

These evaluations, however, did not ask address more fundamental questions.

You could share your impression about a keynote speaker, but we have not asked how important you feel a keynote speaker is as part of the Spring Conference day.

These fundamental questions are the key to the survey you will find as the last page in your handout.

With this survey, we are seeking to learn

how important you believe different aspects of Spring Conference are.

And there is room for you to add write in pieces as well.

Please note, this is not an evaluation of today's content.

It is a planning tool.

Please take advantage of this opportunity

to make a personal impact

in the planning for Spring Conference 2009.

The second way we answered our driving questions was through highlighting the work of our students, and to have a little bit of fun ourselves.

We have amazing students whose talents and skills are brought to life through the incredible work of our faculty and staff.

So Sparky Roberts from the Theatre Dept has worked with our students to share their comedic take on “Life in Counterpoint”

The Planning Team’s third approach to addressing the question of how can we look at Spring Conference differently than in the past was to tap into the passion and expertise of our own people.

This is accomplished through a video exploring the creative and various ways we create balance in our daily work-lives.

We will show one piece of the video this morning—the rest will be viewable on the Spring Conference website.

College Council will lead our discussion for a majority of the morning about visioning for the future.

And this afternoon, just a few of the exciting sessions include topics such as:

- Creating a Balance between Students’ Right to Succeed and Freedom to Fail
- Creating Balance from 8-5
- And an incredible assortment of fitness and wellness sessions put together by Wendy Simmons

These breakout sessions and much more are described in your Spring Conference handout.

And last, but certainly not least, we sought to achieve a financially sustainable conference.

First, we did not bring in an outside speaker—our desire to learn from each other far outweighed the cost we would have incurred by inviting a guest speaker.

We also streamlined our catering.

By partnering with the Center for Meeting and Learning, including the incomparable spirits of Paula Westgate and Chef Sarah Wong, we created a lunch menu that allowed for our incredible Conference and Hospitality staff and faculty to work smarter, not harder.

The menu for your lunch is the most popular menu this conference season—
so you are getting the best of catering,
while our culinary geniuses order in bulk and save some money.

Please take the opportunity today
or in the near future to thank
Chef Sarah and her staff for the amazing culinary goodness
and excellent service they give us throughout the year.

I would also like to extend thanks to the CML
for their tireless work to make our in-services and conferences possible.
Join with me in giving them a round of applause.

(applause)

Let me introduce you to the Spring Conference Planning Team.
This team has worked for months
to bring you an inviting and enriching conference experience.
Our team this year, please stand up with I say your name, included:

- Adrienne Mews, Coordinator, Faculty Professional Development
- Kyle Hammon, Chair, Management Professional Development Council
- Michael Levick, Co-chair, Classified Professional Development Team
- Tina Jones, Co-chair, Classified Professional Development Team
- Katie Morrison-Graham, Innovations in Instruction
- Sonya Christian, Vice President of Instruction & Student Services

(applause)

As mentioned before,
for the past several weeks,
many of our colleagues have shared their perspectives
on how they approach their life and their work.

A few of those perspectives will be shared
through the video we are about to see.

The many others will be viewable on the Spring Conference website.

Three themes emerge as we discussed the concept of life balance:
passion,
joy,
and impact.

When we fill our time with things for which we are passionate,
our energy levels rise,
our perspectives become more hopeful,

and our ability to endure tough circumstances increases dramatically.

I was thinking about these things as I drove home the other night
And the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to mind.
This man had great passion
for his message
and the work he was doing
which provided a foundation
that allowed him
to endure through some of the most difficult of circumstances.

Joy is another key to gaining a sense of balance in life.
In a few minutes you will hear from J.S. Bird,
one of our very talented faculty in the Arts division,
share how when he focuses on those aspects of life that bring him joy,
he can more easily address and move on from those things which can drag him down.

The third theme is that of impact.
When we can invest ourselves
in those areas of life
where we believe we can make an impact,
the sheer force of those small and large differences,
especially when experienced in areas of passion and joy,
provides positive momentum
for whatever life brings.

There is a quote, often attributed to Nelson Mandela, but actually penned by Marianne
Williamson, speaks to this very theme. She writes:

‘Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves,
Who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous,
talented,
fabulous?

Actually, who are you *not* to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small does not serve the world.
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people won’t feel insecure around you.

We are meant to shine, as children do.
We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.
It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.'

Today is about impact.
It is about igniting our personal agency
to mold our present circumstances
and to envision how to create our future.

With that, I leave you to the wisdom of our colleagues
and the passionate joy of our students."