

2001

FACULTY ADDRESS

**PRESENTED
BY**

DENNIS C. SPELLMANN

PRESIDENT

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“Learning-Oriented Means Student-Oriented”

1. This morning’s address is about some of the basic assumptions of the Teaching University -- namely that:

- We are here for the student.
- We don’t admit anyone that we expect to fail.
- We cherish the individual character and unique personality of each of our students.
- We offer the highest possible level of individual attention.
- We help the whole student develop – spiritually and socially as well as intellectually and physically.

*It is important for us to remind ourselves of these ideals every once in a while, especially the first assumption: That we are here for the student, not just to perpetuate this university or our careers – or even our disciplines.

2. This is an attitude and a way of life for all members of the Lindenwood Community, and it is what I want to talk about today.

*I’d like to share my views on

- the kind of school I think we are,
- how we actualize our philosophy, and
- how I think we can all help improve our service to the student.

3. We need to ask ourselves why many students choose to study at an independent university with traditional values in this day and age – What do they want from their chosen school?

Surveys of college students show that students choose schools like Lindenwood because:

- They get strong academic advising.
 - (These surveys found that students expect their university to tell them what is academically important.)
- Full-time faculty members do most of the teaching.
- Independent colleges and universities are more concerned with development of the whole person.
- Students get opportunities to conduct research with their professors.

*Firms conducting these surveys tell us that successful independent universities will build on these strengths, rather than “trying to be smaller versions of large research universities.”

*Most of these student preferences have to do with individualizing the college experience – something that Lindenwood has been cited for doing better than most other universities.

Shining examples of this...

*Ed Perantoni, who has been selected as this year’s recipient of the Emerson Award for Excellence in Teaching....

*and Emilie Johnson, this year’s recipient of the Governor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. Their expertise, dedication and high standards make them invaluable assets to the Lindenwood community.

Please join me in congratulating them...

4. These two individuals teach for all the students, not just the top of the class. It is important to remind ourselves of this occasionally.

Alexander Astin – one of today’s most widely respected higher-education analysts – has addressed this idea, and stated that:

- Mainstream higher education wants to cling to its elitist orientation in the treatment of students, but it is wrong and perilous to do that.
- American higher education started with the philosophy that the main task of higher education is to educate, but we have lost sight of that basic principle.
- The chief problem in higher education is our attitude toward students’ problems – that we are not responsible for helping resolve those problems, and that students with problems should be allowed to fail.
- Yet the stakes are high: Numerous studies demonstrate that a person’s educational development is the most important factor determining his or her *ability to become a productive, contributing citizen . . .* more important than family wealth, gender, or race.
- Astin uses an analogy to characterize our tendency to ignore students’ learning problems:

“Well, you know, the problem with health care is that people get sick. If people didn’t get sick, the health care system would be in much better shape. We could do a much better job if people could just stay well. So let’s not treat the sickest people.”

In the August 2001 edition of *The Teaching Professor*, Dr. David Locher made the following observations:

“Good students do what they are told, can figure out how to do so, and seem to value what we give them. They often benefit most from our teaching, and walk out knowing more than when they walked in. We forget that we are merely helping them do something that they already want to do.

“The “poor students” show us how well we teach. They are unmotivated. They often lack important skills. They might not know things that we assume they should know. To get upset over it or (worse yet) stop trying to teach them because of these inadequacies is both childish and negligent. Alternatively, I have developed a radical solution: I teach them.”

Other schools have lost sight of what is important.

We have a different approach. It’s changing lives...and making a difference. I think we should be proud of it. ~~x~~ Other schools are more concerned with institutional prestige...with rejecting students instead of helping them succeed. They are focused on who is “coming in” instead of who is “walking out” and how prepared they are for the world.

Who walks out of Lindenwood is really what we are all about. It is the fruit of our labor. It is our “second paycheck” so to speak. But isn’t that our most important paycheck? As these students come back and tell us about their successes, **WE KNOW** we have done our job.

I wonder if in the eyes of other institutions, Lindenwood can be prestigious if we have nobody fail? I think so...I think that is a success.

5. What you can do to reach all your students, including those who actually need a teacher:

- Show interest in every student – when you meet them, hear their questions, and talk to them, both in class and after class.
- Show respect toward every student – those with the mundane questions, as well as those who challenge you with their queries.
- Let the students know that you are interested in them as individuals and that you are available to help them.
- Post and keep regular office hours, and welcome the students when they actually show up at your door! They are not an interruption. They are the reason we are here.
- Make sure that every student has the prerequisites and necessary background to take your course – assess early and often.
- Make sure every student has a book. If he or she can't afford the book, send the student to the dean of faculty for assistance.
- If some students just don't get your points, try one or two different approaches to getting the points across.
- If a student seems to have an incurable problem, try to get to the bottom of it – personal, family, financial, medical, or something else – and help the student resolve the problem, or send him or her to Campus Life, the Dean of Faculty, Financial Aid, or whatever office can be of help in the matter – including my office.

6. We are actively looking for a Chief Advising Officer to work in Academic Services. He or she will do the following to help our students:

- Scheduling problems
- Achievement problems
- Advising problems
- Other

7. Champions of Character

Very big push throughout the NAIA in athletics... We are on the cutting edge; out in front... Seminars recently with national leader in the field; for our athletes and for our coaches... more seminars to come •

We believe athletic competition builds character, just as education increases knowledge... athletic competition blends with education to build well-rounded individuals.

We want our coaches to be role models and not just teach our athletes to win... but how to be good people... teach them the importance of sportsmanship and help them buy in to our belief that character and values are the foundation for a successful life.

8. Helping students to develop character in two ways:

- By instruction in values and ethics in discussing classroom subject matter – many of you already do a very good job of that

- By daily action and example:

Showing respect for and pride in the University and its culture and ethos:

- the attitude we communicate
- how we leave our classrooms : faculty members are responsible for keeping the classrooms in order, i.e. putting the shades at half mast, ensuring excess trash is taken directly to the dumpster, moving furniture back to its original placement, securing the room and equipment, etc.
- supporting the rules of the University

More on Campus Culture, uniqueness of Lindenwood

- A. Respect, courtesy
- B. Good grooming
- C. Academic Honesty—fabric of our integrity
- D. Encourage our students to understand why they are in college...focus on that...set up a daily schedule...talk to them about commitment...yours and theirs...remind them that your commitment is wasted if it isn't met with an equal commitment on their part...this is the Lindenwood way...the Lindenwood culture...
- E. We are examples for all of this....

Outward signs are not most important but they are indicative of the all-important inner attitude – thank you all, and have a good semester!