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## From the Publisher

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# From the Publisher



When a character on the old television drama, *The West Wing*, asked whether President Bartlett was angry about her politically damaging lapse in judgment, she was told, “He is actually more upset that you could not come up with a retort better than, ‘If the shoe fits, wear it.’”

The tiresome use of a hackneyed expression often shows a lack of imagination, as this character joked. Sometimes, however, using a well-worn phrase is the best way to express a truth. Applying hackneyed higher education expressions to NECU colleges and universities in 2020 is a case in point. Two of them—“you are not just a number” and the “college experience”—tell the truth about our institutions as they have responded to the challenges of Covid-19 and sustained their educational missions when doing so.

“You are not just a number” at our colleges and universities, we often proclaim. It is a hackneyed expression, but at NECU institutions, it is also the truth. Care for students as individuals is real at our schools, even under the conditions of the pandemic. NECU colleges and universities attended to student success and well-being long before the higher education industry discovered “student-centered” education, and our commitment to students has not waned or been de-railed because of Covid-19.

We also offer an “experience” that allows students to grow into their fullest capacities as ethically informed and spiritually astute persons. This type of educational “experience” is the truth at our colleges and universities, and it has remained so even during the pandemic. Despite the pandemic’s complications, many students have been anxious to return to our campuses. A number of NECU institutions have even seen retention numbers rise. That’s because students are not just “numbers,” and because they “experience” an education that calls and empowers them to serve the neighbor so that all may flourish.

Please do not misunderstand. Adjusting to the pandemic has been incredibly tough. The pandemic has pushed already stressed budgets to the breaking point, requiring many beloved campus employees to be furloughed or laid off. Administrators and faculty have had to work continuously since last spring to revise and restructure instructional practices and campus life. Nothing is close to what we used to call normal. Nonetheless, core truths about higher education, encapsulated by expressions often over-used when times were much easier, still describe our realities.

The pandemic has ravaged our nation and world. It has threatened the well-being of our college communities. Our schools, however, have “risen to the challenge”—a third well worn, but truthful, phrase. Through the herculean efforts of governance boards, administrators, faculty, and students, the mission of Lutheran higher education is alive and well. In the NECU community during the Covid-19 pandemic, the hackney expressions are the simple truth.

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