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**FROM THE DEAN’S DESK**Now that we are in the final stretch of the Winter term, the dust is clearing enough to survey where we have been.  The seemingly clueless freshman you taught four years ago just snagged departmental honors, those you have mentored are getting word of graduate school placements and job offers and opportunities abroad.  We are all tired in that well-earned way of our profession.  But there are other reasons, as we make the final turn for the finish line of 2015-16, for a distinctive sense of accomplishment.Forgive me for having figures at the tip of my pen, but they’re handy because this summer our office will be engaged in producing our Quadrennial Report.  This reflection on our last four years gives us indices that suggest how far the College has come and what all we have accomplished.  We have added 58,712 square feet of instructional space.  AWRI vessels have carried 23,573 people—so, the population of Walker—including elementary, middle, and high school students as well as GVSU students, community members, and other visitors.  Science Olympiad has hosted 6,797 participants.  In the last 4 years, we’ve graduated 9,923 people from CLAS—and it’s tempting to conclude from persistent swelling that I shook hands with most of them.  Their happiness with their accomplishments and prospects is profound; we have been, in our way, life-changing. So all we have to do is finish (a big part of which is getting your grades in on time, smartly before noon on May 3rd).  Finish—what a beautiful word!Thanks to all of you who participated in commencement.  You make it possible for your students and their families to witness the community that has catalyzed the growth that they see in their graduates.  You have my gratitude for a terrific year in the face of many changes and challenges.Next year, ramping up to accreditation, we will be gathering the evidence of what the university has accomplished over the last ten years and documenting the direction we are going and the standards we uphold.  The goal is not simply to gain the longest period of accreditation we can (although that would be nice), but also to use this reporting opportunity to check whether we are the university we think we are, and are moving toward the university we aspire to be.   Our future will (and should) be strategically-informed and outcomes-guided.  But at the end of an academic year with such distinctive successes, we know that can’t be the whole story.  Planning may have the effect of focusing our minds and efforts, assessing outcomes will fine tune them.  But the head can’t move without the heart; we need to be moved by our own commitment, driven by our values, animated by the desire to keep giving students a liberal education with the range and resources of a large university and the personal and professional commitment to each individual student that many people suppose you only find in smaller, usually exclusive private colleges.We are, then, the vanguard of a bold experiment, the outcome of which is still up to us.  Can we tap the zeal we share for liberal education to engage with each other at colloquia, through the arts, in governance, through college events, through unexpected collaborations?  Can we prevent justified pride from hardening into self-satisfaction, and assure that the inertia of “this is how we’ve always done it” always gives way to the professional kinesis of getting better for our students?  2015-16 made clear that our answer, every day and most profoundly at this time of year, is yes.  Yes, CLAS is strategically-informed, and yes, we are guided forward in our professional lives by outcomes.  I think, though, the exhausting, exasperating and rewarding end of our academic year reveals why above all in our professional lives we must remain driven, and lifted, by the heart.  |

**June 15—A Day Out to Support the CLAS Scholarship Endowment**

CLAS on the Green golf scramble is a great way for golfers at all levels to have fun and support our scholarship for just $95 (18 holes).  Lots of games and prizes.  Sponsorship opportunities too.  Not a golfer?  We could use a few more volunteers (clas@gvsu.edu) or you can attend just the cookout dinner at The Meadows for $25.  Register for golf, sponsorship or dinner only here:  [http://www.gvsu.edu/clas/clas-on-the-green-382.htm](https://t.e2ma.net/click/ahmvm/atj1em/ifyhte)

## Resources From Out of the Box

The CLAS Faculty Council has brought together a great content collection on a Blackboard site called [CLAS Faculty Out of the Box Book Discussion](https://t.e2ma.net/click/ahmvm/atj1em/y7yhte) which you can access to read relevant articles on teaching the modern student.  Here is another taste:

Are there really different “learning styles” (the idea that individuals differ in what mode [words vs. pictures vs. speech] of instruction is more effective, so instruction should be tailored accordingly)?   Despite common beliefs about “visual learners” and “auditory learners”, hot-of-the-press research found that “there is no adequate evidence base to justify incorporating learning styles assessments into general educational practice.”

Pashler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., & Bjork, R. (2009).  Learning styles: Concepts and evidence.  *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 9(3),* 105-119.

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**Perpetual Learning and the American University**

Associate Professor of Chemistry Felix Ngassa is clearly a person of great capacity.  He’s been hailed as an outstanding educator by both students and the alumni association, has helped to represent GVSU as part of an international delegation, received laurels for his mentoring from CSCE, was celebrated this year by CLAS as recipient of the Annual Faculty Service Award, has many papers to his credit, and takes his personal commitment to lifelong learning very seriously.  With his PhD in Organic and Physical Chemistry already in hand, he decided out of interest in leadership and management to complete the MBA from the Seidman College of Business.

Somehow, despite all of this successful activity, Felix has an aura of calm and seems motivated by a sense of responsibility to all aspects of his profession.

“I enjoy shared governance,” says Felix who is also the Vice Chair of ECS/UAS, “participating with faculty, staff, administrators, students, and the Board of Trustees to maintain a high quality future of the profession.  To keep it where we want it to be—broadly and at Grand Valley—we need to shape it.”

He also likes the perspective it gives him.  “You see all the sides of it, from administration to the Board, every part of the puzzle comes together in collaboration, mutual respect, and collegiality.  In the summer, with Karen Gipson [chair of UAS] we met with all of the deans to review and forecast and get input.  I found that deans are very happy to meet with us and very open to sharing, so we are incorporating their input and working based on consultation and research.”

Felix notes that while he once knew primarily his chemistry colleagues and faculty he met at the annual FTLC Conference, now he knows colleagues from all over the university.  His own path to his current post was through the International Education Committee and the Grievance Committee.  “I was involved in a big grievance issue so it was interesting service,” he notes.  He also served as a sabbatical replacement on FSBC and served on the Student Scholars Day Committee.

“I like progression,” Felix explains. “I want to be prepared to make a better contribution, to know more about the university.  After two years in the Senate, I got involved in leadership—by then I felt prepared and I feel that I know what is going on.”

UAS reports online, but Felix alerts people in his department when critical issues emerge and need input.  He knows it improves his contributions to departmental discussions.

“As Vice Chair I’m in charge of the new program council, checking SAIL, scheduling meetings 4 times per semester, sending meeting papers to the voting members and ex officio and others with input such as deans, backing up the chair and helping in the processions at Convocation and Commencement,” Felix describes.

“Roberts Rules was a bit new,” he admits and immediately offers that Charles Pazdernik “is quite good at it.”

“I also take notes during meetings so that Karen has something to refer to right away. That keeps me talking less and listening more.”

Other benefits of his participation include getting some good curricular ideas and seeing supporting documentation that helps you see what you might not have otherwise.  Felix has always liked administration and leadership (hence the MBA) and he knows it has helped his teaching.  His perpetual learning has convinced him of the usefulness of case studies and group work.

“I hope everyone gets involved—the great thing about American universities is faculty direction.  Administrators are teachers first.  All have a stake in keeping the quality in education and that’s why we should take it seriously.”