

Week of April 17

Last year, Jerry Pierce outlined a speech for me to deliver to a group of young leaders from Byrd High School in Shreveport. He built it around Ohio State Football's pursuit of the 2015 national championship. The team overcame a series of misfortunes and obstacles en route to the title, but persevered and emerged victorious. The players all wore scarlet and grey wristbands with the simple formula $E + R = O$ (Event plus Response equals Outcome). Events happen, and often they are unpredictable, inconvenient, or uncomfortable. What we control, completely control, is our response.

So often, we fall prey to the temptation to blame events for the outcomes we produce or experience. If the outcome we seek at NSU is to serve more students with higher rates of success who are better prepared for life and career, we have plenty of "events" to use as scapegoats if we fail. We can blame K-12 education. We can blame the policy environment for a misguided, myopic focus on process rather than outcomes. (By the way, some have suggested the bureaucracy wants to fiddle with admissions criteria again...for entering freshmen of 2016! If true, we will ignore. If Ghandi can free a nation through civil disobedience, surely we can influence those in Baton Rouge with thoughtful disregard.) We can blame the legislature for a lack of adequate funding. The list goes on and on. While we will work to influence these events, our responses to these events are what will secure our future.

Our strategic planning team is making great progress on a comprehensive approach to our organizational response to the events of the day. Their work will enable us to realize our vision. That said, each of us has the opportunity to utilize that equation every day. When you interact with a student, a colleague, or a stakeholder, ask yourself whether your response helped achieve the outcome you desired. If we all, collectively and individually, consistently respond to events with the $E + R = O$ mentality, our growth and retention goals will take care of themselves.

On May 6, we will celebrate commencement. As important as it is for our graduates to participate in this commemoration of such a meaningful accomplishment, I think it is also important for you to take a moment to reflect on your own contribution to the moment. Each of us plays a role in student success. If you can attend either ceremony, delivered in NSU style, you will not regret it.

The Week

Sunday afternoon, Tonia and I enjoyed a wonderful concert at the beautiful home of Jim Bob Key. The event was a fundraiser for Phi Mu Alpha's efforts to assist Grant Parish's music programs. I am not sure what is more impressive: the talent of our voice faculty or the way they seem to enjoy their work.

Monday morning, we held a departmental visit with the Dean of Students and several offices under her purview. We talked about the increasing demand for counseling and disability services. We also talked about Title IX matters.

Lily Pharris, Steve Horton, and Roni Biscoe visited with me about the future of our IR operation. While we do a great job with reporting, we have opportunities to more purposefully incorporate labor market information and predictive analytics in a true decision support enterprise. I think that will become increasingly important.

The departmental visits continued with the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences/Graduate Studies.

Monday afternoon, Darlene Williams, Chris Maggio, Steve Horton, Dana Clawson, Vickie Gentry, and Margaret Kilcoyne joined me for brownies and Kumbaya... We reiterated the importance of every student and potential student. We agreed we would know the name and circumstances of every student who is not registered for Fall 2016, and be able to sleep well knowing we did everything in our power to help the student be successful.

Tuesday morning, Michael Rorex and the NSU Men's Chorus provided this little treat:

https://www.facebook.com/NSUpresident/posts/1316978554984561?notification=feedback_reaction_generic¬ification_id=1461382955533683

My goodness, we are blessed with talent...

Jerry Pierce and I rode to NSU supporter Pete Abington's office in Many for the Vulture's Fish Fry. Several former Demons and a few who attended the wrong college but have since seen the light gather monthly for fellowship and deep philosophical discussions. I was able to update the group on our

efforts at NSU while Jerry lead a case study discussion that should be part of any broadcasting curriculum.

Tuesday afternoon, I was delighted to visit with the faculty and staff of the NSU Elementary and Middle Lab Schools in the E-Lab library. After a general update on university matters, we talked about our partnership and ways to improve our joint efforts.

Over in the College of Education and Human Development, honors awards were distributed to graduates. The large number of family and faculty in attendance testified to the importance of the recognition. We will graduate a number of extraordinary students May 6. We always seem to have a new class step forward to take their places, but it sure will hurt to see these young leaders go.

Tuesday evening, the 40th Anniversary issue of Argus was released. In attendance, among others, were the founding Argus Advisor Dr. Christine Ford and a faculty member whose instruction continues to influence my writing and thinking after 25 years, Dr. Sara Burroughs. The 2016 editor, Maggie Harris, put together an issue quite worthy of such a significant anniversary under the guidance of Dr. Julie Kane. If you have not seen it yet, do yourself a favor and check it out.

Wednesday morning, I traveled to Shreveport to attend the Committee of 100 Education Committee meeting. We talked about legislative matters including funding to higher education institutions and TOPS. The general consensus from the business leaders in attendance was national rankings of 48th in funding per student and 49th in educational attainment are simply unacceptable.

After visits with several business partners in the Shreveport area, the departmental visits continued with the College of Nursing, the Child and Family Network, and the Department of Radiologic Sciences.

Thursday morning, Steve Horton joined me for a conversation with the visiting team from the National Association of Schools of Theatre. We talked about the increasing relevance of performing arts education in general. We talked about resource and facilities challenges. We also talked about the extraordinary quality of our theatre program despite those

challenges. If you saw “Oklahoma” this weekend, you got a little taste of that quality.

Later Thursday, Tonia joined me for another trip to Shreveport. We attended the funeral services of an extraordinary business leader, Fred Moffitt. Mr. Moffitt left an Illinois high school at the age of 17 to enlist in the U.S. Navy. After the war, he found his way to Louisiana where he launched one of the state’s most successful automobile dealerships. His philanthropic support of numerous causes and his community leadership will be greatly missed in North Louisiana.

Thursday afternoon, at the Shreveport Convention Center, students and community leaders gathered to recognize volunteerism and accomplishments in various Junior Achievement programs.

Friday morning, the Taurus group gathered for the monthly employee breakfast. In addition to fellowship, we talked about some challenges and opportunities facing the university. We also talked about the discomfort of uncertainty and change, and the extraordinary potential of our university if we are willing to face both.

After a visit with Davina McClain and another one with Chris Maggio, it was back to Shreveport for me. On the way, I participated in the weekly UL System conference call along with several others from our team. In Shreveport, Greg Burke, Adam Jonson, and I joined NSU Alum John Manno for a visit with Eagle Distributing to discuss sponsorship opportunities. John, Greg, Adam, and I continued the discussion over lunch.

At the College of Nursing/School of Allied Health campus, students were enjoying crawfish at the Spring Carnival. The environment felt like a college campus. While that may seem to be a trivial observation, trust me, it is not. Congrats to Whitney, Tara, and the entire team that helped pull this off.

After a quick trip back to Natchitoches for a couple of business matters, Tonia joined me for a drive to Bossier to attend the visitation for the Great John McConathy, Demon legend and father to Coach Mike McConathy. Doug Ireland tells the story of this extraordinary man here:

<http://www.nsudemons.com/news/2016/4/19/demon-basketball-nsu-legend-john-mcconathy-passes-funeral-saturday-in-bossier-city.aspx>

That evening, Tonia and I attended the induction ceremony for Sigma Theta Tau at East Ridge Country Club. The accomplished nursing students honored at the event were treated to a masterful performance by our own Katheryn Arterberry. I've paid to see comedy shows with less laughter. Dr. Patricia Thompson, NSU Nursing alumna and Chief Executive Officer of Sigma Theta Tau International, provided the keynote at an event that showcased the excellence of our College of Nursing.

Saturday morning, I attended a conversation initiated by Holy Cross Church Pastor Fr. Marc Noel. He introduced us to an organization called FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students). The faith community has long contributed to the quality of student life at NSU in formal and informal ways. Look no further than our own Baptist Campus Ministry as an example. Any efforts to further engage our students are appreciated.

At lunch, I gave the keynote address to the State Lions Club Convention at the Natchitoches Event Center. Afterwards, Tonia and I were treated to an amazing performance of "Oklahoma." Just wow...

After joining most of the City of Natchitoches at the wedding of Danielle Rhine and Bryan Stamey, Tonia and I headed to DemonFest. The turnout was great, and the audience reflected the remarkable diversity that is Northwestern State. NSU Police did an exemplary job of ensuring order and safety in a professional and unobtrusive manner. I have received numerous messages from students praising the event as a great capstone to the year. Congratulations to the KNWD team, SAB, Daniel Thiels, Yonna Pach, and everyone else involved with bringing an event of this caliber to our students.

Please contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns.