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Reeling in the Years, Stowing Away the Time

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Winthrop University

Reeling In the Years, Stowing Away the Time

I realized the other day that this year marks the completion of my 20th year at Winthrop. I came here in the fall of 1993, and I have been thinking how Winthrop is different today from the way it was in 1994.

The most obvious differences are the buildings. A time traveler from 1994 would be startled by the sight of the West Center, the DiGiorgio Student Center, and Owens Hall on what used to be called “back campus,” as well as the Courtyard across the tracks. Carroll Hall and Dalton Hall would be shocks to former business and science majors. Look at that stock ticker! Look at these sparkling labs! And although not new, the recent renovation to Dacus Library make at least the entrance floor a new space.

These new buildings are indeed beautiful, and I must say I much prefer lifting weights and hitting the treadmill in the bright, airy West Center instead

of what weight room denizens called “The Dungeon” back in the day. But as welcome and functional and pleasant as all the new buildings are, that doesn’t really get at the heart of the way Winthrop has changed—it is only the most obvious difference.

Let’s go to the classrooms, the real heart of the university. In 1994, I always carried an extra piece of chalk in my pocket, since I could never be assured that I would find a serviceable piece when I went to teach my literature classes in Kinard. Now I would be hard-pressed to find a classroom on campus where I could use that piece of chalk. Now we have white boards, and I have to make sure I carry an extra dry erase marker with me.

Even more, most of our classrooms are now themselves “smart”: we have computers in nearly every class, with Smart podiums and Smart boards, and, in some

classes, even more advanced technology. Twenty years ago, we had the distance learning classroom in Thurman, but not much more that I am aware of. Now, nearly every classroom is a distance learning classroom, in essence.

Twenty years ago, we had email---and we were enthralled by that! Sometime soon after that we received class listserves, and we could communicate with our whole class, all at once. Today, our students will go three or four days without checking their mail—but we can reach them instantly through Facebook, Twitter, or text messages.

Twenty years ago, I gave my classes loads of handouts, composed in Word, then photocopied and distributed in class. Now, I post my handouts on Blackboard, along with PowerPoints and podcasts and vodcasts. (I can’t be totally sure students see them or listen to them, but they are up there.)

“The same big dogwoods are blooming this week, and most of the huge trees that were here when Winthrop was young, or here even before Winthrop was here, are once again leafing out as spring finally arrives. My favorite campus tree, the gingko in front of Margaret Nance, put out its new green leaves this week. Soon they will fill out to become graceful fans. I can imagine a student in the 1920s looking up to admire this beautiful tree, this tree that links her and me, across a century.”



Continued from page 1

What is the difference between the student of 1994 and the student of today? The most obvious difference can be seen by watching them walk across campus. Twenty years ago, I would look out my window in Bancroft and see individual students walking along the sidewalk, or students in groups of two or three, talking to each other and laughing. Occasionally, I might see a student plugged into a Sony Walkman, but that was a relatively rare sight.

Today, it is the rare student I see who is not walking all alone, smartphone in hand, hunched over, checking texts, composing texts, listening to music on that phone, checking Facebook on that phone, usually smiling, at something that none of us outside their world are privy to. (I used to joke with my students that, since they like tattoos and phones so much, the ideal solution for them would be to get a tattoo of a phone on their cheeks. But they never use their phones to talk anymore, so that joke has outlived its day.)

How are we as a faculty and staff different? Many of the people I looked up to and venerated as wise mentors and colleagues have now retired, although

a few remain, thankfully. We are a younger crowd, in the aggregate, and more diverse, in a number of different ways. I have not made a count of African American and Asian and Hispanic faculty and staff, but I know the numbers have increased. How many openly gay faculty members did we have in 1994? Back then, I didn't ask, and nobody told, but now...

For all these changes, much has remained the same. Most of the stately old buildings are still here, constant reminders of a long past, a link back to a long chain of students and faculty and staff. Thankfully, the new buildings fit in with the old, giving our campus the kind of beauty that attracts newcomers, the kind of place that tells prospective students and their families they will be welcome here and will enjoy their time walking across campus (if they ever look up from their phones!).

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green leaves this week. Soon they will fill out to become graceful fans. I can imagine a student in the 1920s looking up to admire this beautiful tree, this tree that links her and me, across a century.

And most of all, what has not changed is the caring sense of family that has always marked Winthrop. I was MC at the new employee luncheon this week, and I told to believe it when they were told that Winthrop was a family. I remember hearing that in 1993 when I first came here, and I remember thinking, “Yeah, right.” But it is indeed true. Like all families, we may fight sometimes, but we know we are all in this thing together, and we rally around one another, nurture one another. And that is especially true of the way we treat our students.

Time brings changes: new buildings, new technology, new teaching methods, new content and knowledge. But the things that really count are indeed timeless, and we hold on to them tightly, protecting them, across the years, across space, across lifetimes.

Congratulations and thanks to all who are about to retire, and welcome to the new!

Thanks For Helping Make the Teaching and Learning Center Work!

Winthrop's Teaching and Learning Center offers a wide variety of sessions each year for faculty and staff, on teaching, technology, professional development, and personal development. From leading class discussion to mastering the Smart podium to tenure and promotion to cooking soufflés, the TLC tries to make sure that all faculty and staff receive

the kinds of professional and personal development that will make them better teachers, administrators, and employees.

To offer this programming, the TLC depends on the talent, expertise, and generosity of our faculty and staff. We do not have a big budget to bring in outside speakers and experts. Even so, we are able to offer engaging,

timely, and valuable sessions every year on a variety of topics. We thank those who have offered their time and talent this year and in past years.

We also thank those of you who have attended TLC sessions. Your time is valuable, and we appreciate you taking some of it to enrich yourself through professional and personal development.

A New Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The Teaching and Learning Center is offering a new service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me at (803) 323-3679 or birdj@winthrop.edu.

Go2Knowledge—Learning On Demand!

Go2Knowledge is a website that offers a variety of video presentations on faculty and staff professional development. You will find presentations by nationally-known experts in seven categories: At-Risk Populations, Campus Safety, Organizational Development, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Technology,

and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

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Thought For the Week

"When your watch gets out of order you have a choice of two things to do: throw it in the fire or take it to the watch-tinker. The former is the quickest."
--Mark Twain