

FREDONIA STATE

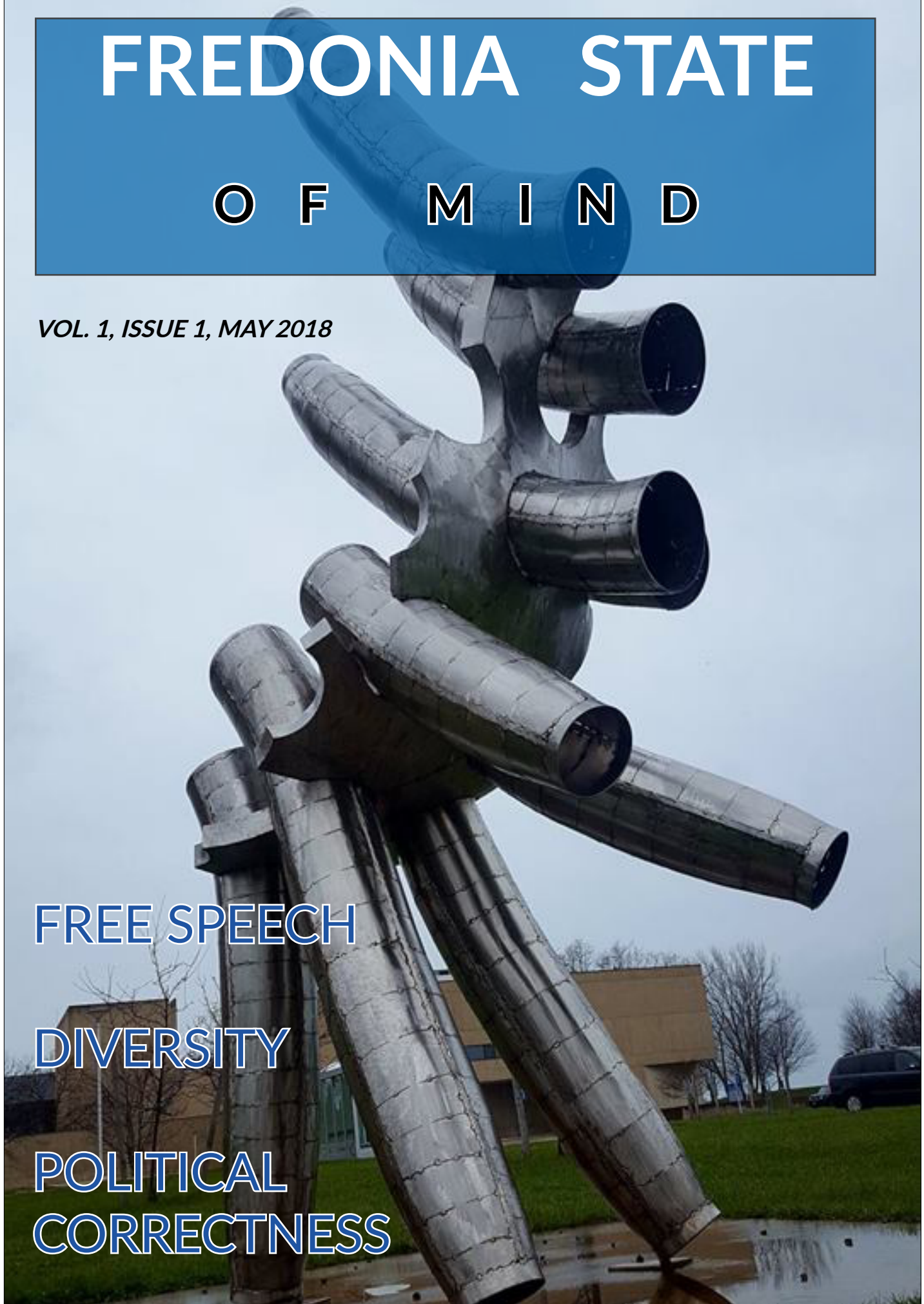
O F M I N D

VOL. 1, ISSUE 1, MAY 2018

FREE SPEECH

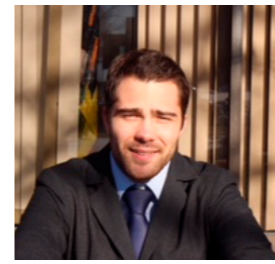
DIVERSITY

POLITICAL
CORRECTNESS



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MAY 2018



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Campus blooms with Fredonia Gazebo in the background
Photo by Victor Schmitt-Bush

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INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

A BRIEF OVERVIEW



FRED leans left, but does that make it right?

The campus's socio-political climate

Here is a list of political issues that are commonly discussed on the Fredonia campus: feminism, cultural appropriation, microaggressions, sexism, racism, homophobia, diversity, political correctness, transphobia, immigration, fracking, whitewashing, and a number of other progressivist issues.

Fredonia is a liberal-minded progressive campus with the intent of creating a safe and caring environment where students of all genders, sexualities, identities and creeds are welcome.

Most students at Fredonia are of a liberal mindset. Those who have republican or conservative values will most likely not feel at home here. Seldom are events held on campus that heir on the side of typical repu-

blican talking points. When issues such as political correctness, Second Amendment rights and smaller government are brought up, the conservative points of view are often ridiculed. They are not taken seriously or are met with clear derision.

Some professors think that Fredonia is limiting their freedom of speech

Liberal talking points are treated as common sense on this campus, but there are some professors on this campus who feel as if their freedom of speech and expression are being threatened. A number of students feel this way, too.

Even so, a majority of these

students are quiet because they are afraid of the shaming and consequences that may arise as a result of them speaking their mind.

Typically, these students and professors are not even conservative. Most of them are liberal, too, but they fear that the atmosphere on this campus is so liberal that it has become militaristic and cult-like. They feel that free speech on campus is limited because only the liberal side of things is taken seriously.

As for the rest of the campus community, students and staff are relatively pleased with the atmosphere. Most students said that they feel very welcome on campus, especially when politics is taken out of the equation. ☞



Photos by Victor Schmitt-Bush



"There's not an openness to ideas, because [Fredonians] are not interested in any of these sort of traditionalist or Christian and/or Jewish ideas," he said. "They don't get discussed..."

Professor Stephen Kershner thinks Fredonia is not open-minded. See more on page 13.

IS FREDONIA OPEN-MINDED?



Fredonia sculpture near Fredonia bus loop in between Maytum and Thompson Hall. Photo by Victor Schmitt-Bush.

Fredonia diversity vs. open mindedness

Correlation does not equal causation.

It is hard to take politics out of the equation when determining just what kind of intellectual atmosphere the Fredonia campus consists of. Most liberals would consider this campus as unquestionably open-minded. People who lean more to the right however would have a lot of criticism to offer. Objectively, it is important to take note that any institution with an atmosphere that leans one

way or the other on the political spectrum is sacrificing diversity of thought and replacing it with some form of emotional security.

For this reason, there exists, at the very least, some level of closed mindedness on this campus.

Students on this campus value racial, ethnic, sexual and identity-based diversity, and they feel that Fredonia does not quite live up to their expectations.

According to CollegeFactual.com, Fredonia's undergraduate population is 77.8 percent white, which is on par with the national average. Hispanic and latino comes in at a far off second with

6.8 percent and black at third with 5.9 percent.

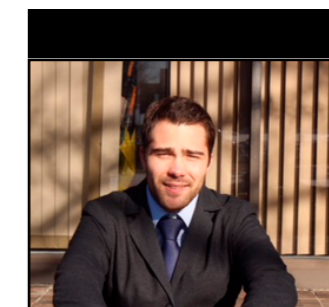
In terms of gender diversity, the male-to-female ratio is pretty balanced. The undergraduate population is comprised of 2,017 males and 2,565 females, according to CollegeFactual.com.

Judging by these statistics, the student demand for increased diversity doesn't seem to be all that unreasonable. Even so, one might ask, "What is more important? Diversity of thought, or diversity of appearance?"

It could be called into question whether or not it is the case that having a more racially or gender diverse campus is the same thing as having a more open-minded campus.

It is a question worth looking into. Students and staff at Fredonia have noted that there seems to be a positive correlation between factors like ethnicity and sexuality when forming an analysis of levels of diversity among beliefs, ideas and values at this institution.

There is no certainty here. There have been no studies conducted to prove this, but the overall consensus is that students at Fredonia value diversity above all things, and are likely to argue that through diversity, open-mindedness will follow suit. ☞



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VICTOR SCHMITT-BUSH

is the assistant news editor for the Leader, a school newspaper at the State University of New York at Fredonia. He is a senior journalism major with a minor concentration in philosophy.

He is also the website administrator to Thisisyourstoryblog.com. *This Is Your Story* is a self-improvement website dedicated to helping people to become emotionally, intellectually, financially and spiritually independent. Schmitt-Bush is a familiar face on the Fredonia campus and is known for his willingness to cover a range of events, activities and stories at Fredonia.



F I R S T L O O K

STUDENT FORUM



K U R E F E
E J E K P O K P O

HIGHER EDUCATION CHANGES PEOPLE

“My dad always says, ‘no knowledge goes wasted.’”

Every university is different, but all colleges have at least one thing in common. Higher education changes people. No one ever comes out of the four-year experience the same as when they started.

Perhaps that is the ultimate goal of any college.

Maybe it isn't just about preparing students for that career that they've been working towards. Perhaps college is meant to be a safe place where students and staff can work together to solve problems and create change.

“My high school teacher told me that college is important because it affects everything that you do from then on,” said Kurefe Ejekpokpo, a junior public relations and media management major.

Ejekpokpo is a familiar face on the Fredonia campus. She has been involved in a number of cultural events and clubs. She is an active member of Black Student Union (BSU), an executive board member for African Student Union (ASU) and the publicity chair to Under this Bonnet (UTB). She was even the Student Association representative for S.T.E.P.S. for one semester.

Ejekpokpo has been saying for quite some time now that college is meant to be a place of comfort where ideas and beliefs can be discussed maturely.

“I think the most important thing that we should learn at college is this: you should listen to what someone says, not just to give an answer, but to really understand what the perspective is,” she said. “I think that really affects your decision making process.”

She also believes that college should be a place that is fun-filled and full

of life lessons that you couldn't get anywhere else. It isn't just about that GPA. “Not only do [students] want to learn, they want to find friends,” said Ejekpokpo. “They want to enjoy it. They want to see comfort. They want to break down sometimes, break apart and pick up the pieces and grow from it.”

According to her, the clubs on campus make that possible. They give students a brief moment of reprieve from the constant stress of school, e-boards, relationships, financial obligations and a number of other things that students typically have to worry about.

“I'm in cultural groups. What I've learned from general body (GB) meetings is that people really do want to learn, but they also want to escape from life in general,” said Ejekpokpo. “For example, ASU educates its club members on African culture, but we also understand that there are people who just want to come to celebrate, enjoy and relax. We love having discussions.”

As far as discussing controversial subjects, Ejekpokpo does her best to stay fair and open-minded.

“For me, my immediate reaction to something is my own opinion,” she said, “but sometimes I try to, I don't always succeed at it, but I try to put myself in someone else's shoes.”

She recalled a racially charged incident that happened at the Fredonia Radio Station in the Fall semester of 2017.

“Once [my friend told me about what happened], I gathered BSU, I gathered everyone; not the clubs themselves, but the people in the clubs,” said Ejekpokpo. “I guess that was controversial. We were all trying to figure

out what happened. We didn't make any assumptions even from the start.”

According to her, it is important for everyone in the campus community to reserve judgement until they have been given a hold of all of the facts, but it is also important to stay on guard. She recalled that some professors have also acted out on this campus.

There are some friends of mine who talked about this one professor who keeps making sexist jokes,” said Ejekpokpo. “He was doing it in class to students.”

Even so, Ejekpokpo noted that her experience with her professors is a lot different. She feels that a number of the professors on this campus are very good at keeping an open-mind and treating students with respect.

I mostly pay attention to people in the Communications department, but there's Mike Igoe, and Ted Schwalbe,” she said. “I think they are really good professors because they want you to know what you are doing. These professors want to give you room to grow and benefit from your experience. I don't think their beliefs would ever get in the way of your own education. That makes them open-minded.”

That's exactly what has happened with Ejekpokpo. She is not the same person that she was when she began her college career.

“Me being away from home made me grow,” she said. “I think you just have to be open to being wrong or not being completely right. You can't be a know-it-all when you're meeting new people. Sure, sometimes your opinion could be the right one, but it's important to know the other opinion so that you can learn from it and possibly rebuttal it.”

She concluded, “My dad always says, ‘no knowledge goes wasted.’”

NICK CRAMPTON



SPECTRUM PRESIDENT ON DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT

“I learned that treating people respectfully and kindly when you first meet them will take you a long way.”



Nick Crampton smiles for the camera in his shades. Photos by Nick Crampton.

When it comes down to it, becoming open-minded doesn't just come from the amount of experiences that we have had. It is greatly affected by the quality of our experiences, too.

It is entirely up to us to choose to expand our minds. The extent to which we are willing to learn from every situation is determined by the attention to detail that we give to every interaction.

According to junior social studies education major Nick Crampton, who is also the president of Spectrum Entertainment, it is who we surround ourselves with and how we treat them that matters.

“I learned that treating people respectfully and kindly when you first meet them will take you a long way,” he said. “The nicer the person you are, the nicer people you will meet. You can't do everything on

your own, so you need a support system to help you through whatever occurs.”

Crampton has dedicated much of his time to making connections and establishing good rapport with the campus community. He and his team have worked tirelessly to collaborate with other clubs, and they continue to carry on Spectrum's legacy as Fredonia's most effective and well-known events planning organization.

“We do a wide range of things, from Dinosaur BBQ, Bingo, Welcome Back Week, Activities Night and the [Spring Concert,]” he said. “As for values, I would say people want to come to an event where they can feel welcomed and have fun. We try making our events exciting, fun and a place for people to meet each other.”

Crampton feels that planning events on campus is easy because he

gets along well with his colleagues. Everything is easy to put together because he and his team are almost always on the same page.

“Everyone [at Spectrum] has done a good job at helping each other out, and it has led to a successful semester,” he said. “I would say they are all very easy to talk to as well.”

According to Crampton, when it comes to handling conflicts, “You have to understand where someone is coming from.”

“Conflicts are not meant to ruin friendships or work relationships. They happen. You just have to be mature about them and work through them to find a solution.”

To Crampton, that is part of what it means to be open-minded. He believes that being pragmatic about problems leads to quicker and better solutions. When everyone on the team is listening to each other intently and being extra careful not to let their pride get in the way, Crampton feels that solutions aren't just found, but remembered.

“We learn more from each other when there aren't as many road blocks,” he said. “It only makes sense. When something happens smoothly, you're going to take note of it and remember to do things the same way the next time.”

Crampton feels that controversial subjects are handled well at Fredonia. He thinks that there is a time and place for everything, and that the classroom is the best place to get it all out.

“For example, in my upper-level political science class last semester, we had to discuss [a lot of controversial things], and of course there are different views, but that is OK,” said Crampton. “Everyone there knew that people had different opinions and that it isn't black and white. There is a lot of grey area in politics which is very important to understand.”

According to Crampton, this kind of thinking proves to be effective in all types of day-to-day living. He stressed the importance of stepping in another person's shoes.

“I think the best way to react to opinions that are not your own is to first understand where that person is coming from,” said Crampton.

“Then you can go on to getting to why they think that. Neither person needs to change the other's opinion, but each person should respect that the other has different opinions and that is OK. If everyone agreed with everyone, that wouldn't be good.”

VETERANS CLUB VICE PRESIDENT ON CAMPUS ATMOSPHERE

“Just listen to people when they talk. Even if you don’t agree with them. Hear them out.”



Megan Howes lifted up by Carbon Leaf band members at the Carbon Leaf 25th anniversary tour in Buffalo, NY. Photo courtesy of Megan Howes.

Not every student’s experience at Fredonia has been a positive one. If the campus community can be described as diverse, some students would be quick to claim that it too is diverse in terms of its friendliness.

According to senior journalism major, Megan Howes, who is also the vice president of Veteran’s Club, Fredonia is not an open-minded campus.

“I’m so afraid that if I speak my mind, people are going to get really upset and possibly pick a fight with me,” she said.

Howes does not feel at home on campus. She feels that it is too liberal.

“Our campus is very political in its own way,” she said. “Most students are on the opposite end of the political spectrum as me. I’m surrounded by people that I disagree with 90 percent of the time on major issues.”

She does recall having a few reasonable arguments with a number of students, but those have been few and far between for her. When she wants to get into those kinds of discussions, she calls home because that is the only way she feels safe.

Howes also feels that the campus community is very self-centered.

“I can’t even get a smile,” she said.

“The people on this campus don’t care about other people. It’s just very much, ‘OK, what do I have to do today? Where am I going? What am I doing?’”

Howes tries to lift the campus community’s spirits up by giving people a smile and waving to them, but she doesn’t feel that her kindness is reciprocated in anyway.

“I’ll smile at somebody and they’ll just wave me away. It’s very closed-off,” she said. “If you aren’t in some kind of social group, it’s really difficult to feel welcome here.”

For these reasons, Howes has found happiness and has consolidated her well-being on her own.

“This past year, I’ve learned to rely on myself. I’ve learned that spending weekends by myself isn’t always a bad thing,” said Howes. “It’s shown me how I can be happy with myself.”

Even though Howes might find it difficult to make friends at Fredonia, she has been active in assisting the veteran community on this campus. She has learned a lot about veterans and has noticed a stark difference between how veteran students treat college in comparison to typical students.

“Students at Fredonia who have

in the military are more serious about their education,” said Howes. “They see it as a privilege. We see it as something that we have to do to get to where we want to be.”

Howes feels that her experiences with veteran students and faculty are much more positive than her experiences with students her age. There is a level of mutual respect and understanding that she has with veteran students that she doesn’t have with the rest of the campus community.

This goes hand-in-hand with how she and the president of Veteran’s Affairs, Jeremy Coon, get along and work together to coordinate events.

“There’s never really been a conflict with him and I because we’ve always been on the same page,” said Howes. “The president and I have our own way of interacting with each other because obviously he and I work closely together with every event that we do.”

She is very thankful for the opportunities that she has had in assisting with and learning about veterans on this campus, but she feels that she has otherwise been duped socially by the rest of the campus community.

“I think I’ve kind of shrunk. I’ve started losing myself because I’m trying to fit into the [liberal] mindset,” said Howes. “I’m trying to force myself to agree with them when really I just can’t.”

She hasn’t had all that many issues with professors, though. In fact, Howes has felt that the majority of professors on this campus have enriched her educational experience.

“I would say that some of our professors are open-minded,” she said. “Particularly in journalism, a lot of the professors are open-minded because they have to be. I’ve had a lot of really cool discussions with them.”

According to Howes, the students on this campus could learn a thing or two from these professors about how to act.

“I think an intellectually honest person is someone that is confident enough in themselves to be able to hear what the person is saying, and give an argument back,” she said. “I’ve noticed that morseo with professors and less with students. The students I’ve come across typically yell and scream at each other.”

As far as open-mindedness goes, Howes concluded, “Just listen to people when they talk. Even if you don’t agree with them. Hear them out. You don’t have to get into an argument,” she said. “You don’t have to threaten them. Just have a civil discussion with them and you may in fact learn something.”



M E G A N
H O W E S

AFRICAN STUDENT UNION CLUB PRESIDENT DISCUSSES CAMPUS CULTURE COMPETENCIES

"Communication is key"



A rainy day at Fredonia. Student carries an umbrella and crosses the sidewalk between McEwen and Jewett Hall. Photo by Victor Schmitt-Bush

For some students, choosing Fredonia wasn't just some last-minute decision. To senior molecular genetics major, Mam Deng, it was an obvious choice, and as the years have gone by, Fredonia has become a way of life for him. He not only feels welcome and at home on this campus, but he is also looked up to and respected by many.

Deng was born in South Sudan but he grew up in Buffalo, New York. He considers himself a natural leader, and his persisting involvement with the campus community shows this.

"I lead a number of clubs, including African Student Union, Health Professions, and Korean International Student Society," he said. "I'm active in a number of other clubs, too, ranging from Black Student Union to Caribbean Student Association."

He hosts a majority of the big cultural events on campus, such as Culture Fest and the Culture Cook-off. Deng recognizes that it is never easy to kick events off to a good start, but he is confident in his ability to make sure that things go well.

"Communication is key," he said. "In all types of events, the interest is certainly there among the Fredonia community, but effective delivery of information is what makes a successful event."

He believes that the three things that students value the most on this campus are time, organization and quality.

"Students here have high expectations. This can make planning an event difficult," said Deng. "You want it at a good time, you want it to run for a good amount of time, you want it to be organized, and you don't want to be presenting garbage to whoever shows up."

According to him, planning events bleeds into a bunch of different areas; including mic setup, room design, seating, decoration and a

number of other things. "That's why it has to be a team effort," said Deng. "I would say that the majority of the people I work with are very easy to prepare and coordinate events with. We're all like a big family, so we're usually on the same page."

He does recognize however that sometimes things don't always go as planned. The people that he works with are all different in their own way. Even though he feels that they are typically open-minded, they are all individuals, and everyone handles conflicts differently.

"There are a wide range of personalities among my various organizational teams," he said. "Some people are less approachable than others, but part of leadership and communication is learning how to efficiently deal with different types of people."

Even so, Deng expects professionalism, and he has high expectations from everyone on his team who is involved in planning and operating events. He never settles for less than his own standards.

"We are friends so it is easy to talk to each other," he said, "but whenever there are issues pertaining to specific responsibilities, I find myself having to be the one to address it for the overall benefit of the team."

Deng typically has no issue speaking his own mind on campus. He even makes a concerted effort to engage with people in political discourse. He has his own philosophy on politics.

"I not only feel comfortable talking about controversial subjects," he said, "I think it's critical to progress and as such I'm a strong advocate on talking about controversial topics."

A lot of the time, Deng finds himself discussing politics with his professors. He believes that the majority of them are very easy to talk to. He has learned much from them.

"Some professors choose to be stuck in their

ways, despite seeing and understanding my points," he said, "while others really listen to others' opinions and adapt to them appropriately."

Deng thinks that this kind of discourse goes both ways, though. He makes a point of never assuming the moral high and/or intellectual highground.

"I'm not saying I go out and preach my opinion as fact to everyone," said Deng. "I just converse with people and hope that both parties get something out of the conversation."

Deng would consider himself an intellectually honest person, and he does his best to surround himself with people who are also open-minded. His idea of what an open-minded person is has changed over the years, but he still believes efficiency is important, even though, according to him, it is a virtue that is often overlooked.

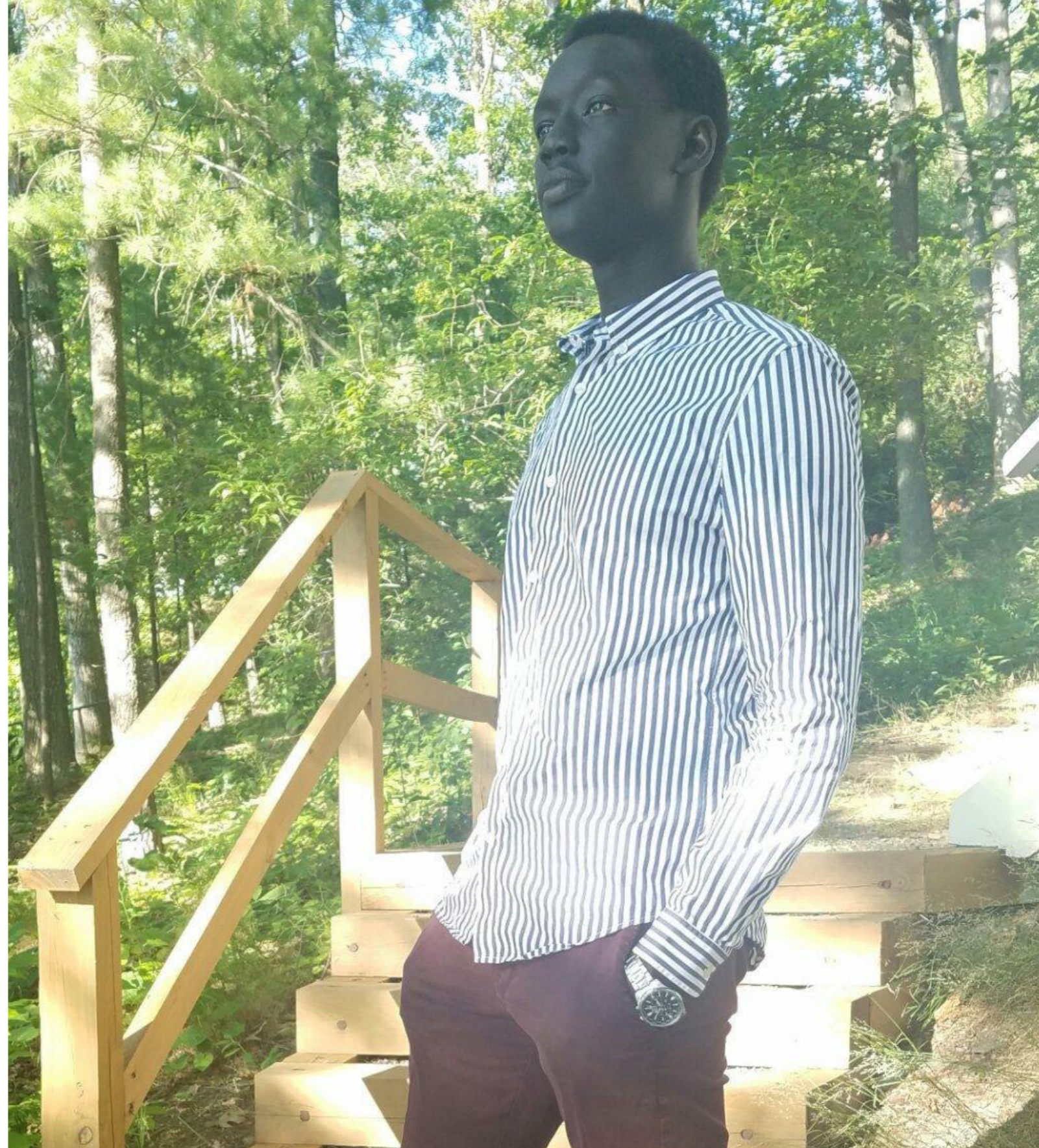
"An intellectually honest person is someone who is both intellectually and socially efficient," Deng said. "It's someone who can listen and thoroughly understand different opinions and where they come from. They can decide whether to appropriately agree, disagree, or give their point of view."

Deng feels that a lot of people on campus are trying to be open-minded, but he understands that it can be difficult.

"That's a big issue that a lot of people have on this campus," he said. "If it's an uncomfortable topic or if it's something someone feels strongly about, oftentimes they are not willing to listen to another person's opinion."

The trick, according to Deng, is to "Listen to what someone has to say. Don't go into the conversation with the intention to teach."

He concluded, "Instead, both parties should be going into the conversation expecting to learn something." ✎



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2 N D L O O K

FACULTY FACEOFF



V I N C E N T
Q U A T R O C H E

POET & LECTURER ON FRED STATE OF MIND

Fredonia's eerie resemblance to the dystopian novel, 1984



Lecturer and poet Vincent Quatroche, sits in his office in McEwen. Photo by Victor Schmitt-Bush.

Fredonia's socio-political climate draws many similarities to George Orwell's dystopian novel, 1984, according to long standing adjunct communications professor, Vincent Quatroche.

Quatroche has been with Fredonia since the late '80s. He has taught virtually every foundations course that there is to offer in Fredonia's comm department, and in recent years, he has noticed a chilling shift in the way that political correctness is governed on campus.

"I know that I have become much more guarded," said Quatroche. "My mouth in the classroom 15 years ago would have gotten me probably fired today." According to him, independent thought is very limited on this campus. It is monitored, and quotas are shoved down not just the students' throats but the faculties', too.

"We're in an atmosphere, in my opinion, where intellectualism is tolerated to the point that it is expedient," said Quatroche. "This is where we go back to doublethink and this is where we go back to [the novel,] 1984. If you remember the three principle elements of Ing-soc: Freedom is slavery, war is peace, ignorance is strength."

He alluded to the term Newspeak, which is the language of Oceania from the novel, 1984. It is ambiguous language broken down to eliminate double entendre and to utterly limit one's ability to express themselves with words.

"[Because of the regulations,] a lot of stu-

dents perceive college through the narrow corridors of whoever is in charge of the classroom," he said, "and the curriculum defining what constitutes intellectual activity. It's very, very arbitrary." Quatroche feels that there is a lot of resentment happening on this campus, and a lot of it has to do with how the campus administration interferes with the classroom setting."

"Some [staff] are so fed up with their departments having their autonomy usurped and personnel issues," he said. "Even their own classes are monitored, and they are told to teach in a specific way."

According to Quatroche, the Fredonia Foundations plan that is going to replace the CCC's is an absolute trainwreck.

"Faculty associated have to re-submit their syllabi for approval by a committee," he said. "The committee looks at it and says, 'Look, there's not enough diversity in there,' or 'We don't feel the goals are realistic.'"

Faculty at Fredonia actually have to adhere to these recommendations in order to get their classes accepted, and these are foundations classes that students have to take.

"I am doing an education seminar with a bunch of staff later in the month," said Quatroche, "and I'm going to talk about political correctness. I call it 'The PC police,

and there's a warrant out for your arrest.'"

The main thing that Quatroche plans to cover is the history of political correctness and how it ties in with the state of affairs we see now.

"It's basically a Marxist concept that goes back to the thinkers of the revolution in the late 1800s," he said.

Political correctness was adopted early on as an attempt to level the playing field by getting people to look at each other as individuals and not as categories.

According to Quatroche, every 10 or 15 years, another political party adopted a variation of political correctness.

"Finally, in the '70s, it was seized upon by the conservatives and then hijacked by the liberals," he said. "All of a sudden, it became an unspoken code of conduct that began to encroach into all areas of organizational communication."

Quatroche explained that even though he feels strongly against Trump and his administration, he sees the results of the 2016 election as a clear backlash against "the PC police."

"I see it even in the classroom," he said. "If it is apparent that you are espousing some kind of orthodoxy or even a political point of view, or you make an offhand jest, that can be misconstrued very quickly."

He noted that he can see the look on some of his students' faces daily. Some of them are looking to jump on him for saying anything that might, as he called it, "relate to some form of ism."

Students need to realize that the real world is not politically correct, and that it doesn't have to be, nor should it be, according to Quatroche.

"In an academic fishbowl, in a closed system such as the Fredonia campus," he said, "you can have principles and modes of thought or current trends that seem to support and indoctrinate young people into thinking this is the way the world works. It isn't."

Quatroche believes that when campuses pressure students to be politically correct, they are actually doing more harm than good.

"It doesn't open the mind up. Being politically correct makes you weary and closes it," he said. "The first time you start to spout off in the workplace about political correctness, you'll be branded as a kind of character."

It isn't all doom and gloom for students, though, according to Quatroche. Being politically correct can certainly help students to become more empathetic, and it is a virtue to be able to step in other people's shoes.

"It all has to do with moderation," he said. "Things are never as they seem. You have to keep being aware and respond to every situation in its unique context as best you can with an open mind."

Even so, Quatroche warned prospective students not to step outside of the liberal mindset with a faint heart.

"Big Brother is watching you," he said. ☞

FREDONIA IS THE GO-TO CAMPUS FOR U.S. ARMY VETERANS

ResNet and Veterans Affairs coordinator on student decorum



Mark Mackey (third from right) makes a special appearance at the official ribbon cutting ceremony held April 18, 2014, for the Veterans' Lounge. It is a relaxing area in Nixon Hall made for student veterans and dependents of the military who go to Fredonia. Photo courtesy of Veteran Affairs office.

For the seventh year in a row, Fredonia has earned the Military Friendly® School recognition from Victory Media, “an organization that promotes positive reinforcement for American organizations to invest in programs that improve the lives of veterans,” according to the homepage of the website, Military Friendly.

This means that Fredonia is among the top 20 percent of colleges that work toward the social and pedagogical benefit of U.S. veterans.

Faculty and students who are veterans are embraced and treated with respect by this organization, but Veterans Affairs coordinator and ResNet administrator Mark Mackey who is also a veteran himself feels that the campus community on its own has been very friendly and welcoming.

“I will admit, I enjoy working at Fredonia because I’m five minutes away. It’s easy on gas,” he said. “But I enjoy the people. The students I work with are all great. I haven’t had any issues.”

Mackey has been working with a tight-knit group of students in both the Veterans Affairs and ResNet office for quite some time now, and the effect that they have had on him and his work has been positive. He does admit that sometimes, things don’t go as planned.

“Everybody I deal with works well with one another,” said Mackey. “I’ve learned that there are, as in any organization, some bad apples that are harder

to work with than others.”

Even so, Mackey and the students that he works with have a strong relationship. A majority of students who visit the ResNet office go there just to get their computers fixed, but there are a select few with whom he treats as his own children.

“The group I’ve had, I’ve had them for three years. From what I’ve seen, I would say that they handle conflicts well,” he said. “They’re all very easy to talk to. I talk to them all of the time. When they do have issues, life issues or something, I guess they think of me as like their father. They come and talk to me.”

He doesn’t get to see a whole lot on campus, though. Mackey works with six students in the ResNet office and a few others at veterans affairs. He was in the military for 22 years, so he is used to working with a tight-knit group of people. He doesn’t mind working in a somewhat closed-off environment.

“Most of my career in the army, I advised young people, and I enjoyed it. To me, I treat this as the army. I don’t need to deal with a lot of people to know that everybody has issues. I know how to talk to people,” he said.

When it comes to politics, he isn’t interested even in the slightest.

“I think that has to do with my military background because it didn’t matter who the president was. We had to do what he told us to do,” he said. “It didn’t

matter who was in charge of us. We had to do what they told us to do.”

Even so, he said that if anyone were to come up to him and ask him what he thought of a particular issue, he wouldn’t feel uncomfortable telling students his opinion on things.

“I’ve got nothing to hide. I’m not that political of a person,” said Mackey. “I would like to think that I’m reasonable in what I believe, and I think that the students I work with are, too.”

According to Mackey, opinions and belief systems are hardly one way or the other. There’s usually a lot of gray area involved.

“You just have to take opinions and beliefs with a grain of salt,” he said.

Mackey recognizes that many students have been complaining about the college being silent on issues that they care about, but he assures them that the college is listening.

“I know that there have been many protests around campus. Students are upset about a lot of things,” he said, “but from what I’ve seen, and especially from working here, there’s some things that I am privy to that students aren’t.”

According to Mackey, sometimes the college can’t respond to certain issues right away because there are a number of roadblocks in the way that students are typically unaware of.

Even so, he concluded, “Keep speaking your mind. People are listening. Things will change. You have to be patient.”



M A C K E Y
M A C K E Y



STEPHEN KERSHNER

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT CHAIR DISCUSSES CAMPUS FREE SPEECH

The Fredonia campus is not just too left-leaning. It is so liberal that it has become unconstitutionally so, according to Stephen Kershner, the chair of Fredonia's philosophy department who has also been a registered lawyer for 26 years.

The campus claims to be welcoming to people of all creeds and backgrounds, but Kershner disagrees. He feels that political correctness has run amok at Fredonia.

Perhaps it has.

According to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), the State University of New York at Fredonia has a speech code rating of

policy that both clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech."

"FIRE is like the ACLU on campus," said Kershner. "Some of their charges I agree with, and I sort of laid out the ways in which I think the campus speech code is unconstitutional in one of my columns that I wrote for the Dunkirk Observer."

On the Halloween of Fall 2017, the boyfriend of Fredonia student Ashley Tollner wore blackface as part of his costume. They took a snapchat picture of their costumes. According to Kershner, he also wore a multi-colored wig, so his intent was unclear.

Kershner noted in his Observer article headlined, Drawing the Line of Free Speech, that this incident was handled unconstitutionally. He believes that the university had no right to get involved.

The student and her boyfriend did nothing illegal and their actions did not warrant the campus's call to gather information. The student and her boyfriend were not only "counseled" but instructed to issue a public apology.

"The Snapchat post is clearly protected by the First Amendment. SUNY Fredonia is a state institution and so must satisfy the First Amendment right of free speech," said Kershner. "There are exceptions to the First Amendment such as those made for fighting words, clear-and-present danger and harassment, but they do not apply here."

Kershner also noted that the First Amendment protects halloween costumes. It doesn't matter if people get offended. All forms of expression, no matter how vile, are protected.

"This can be seen in Schact v. United States (1970), where the Supreme Court has said the First Amendment protects wearing military uniforms at protests," said Kershner. "Similarly, the Fourth Circuit said that the First Amendment protects allegedly racist and sexist costumes and skits at state universities."

See more on the Supreme Court and Halloween costumes at Iota XI Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity v. George Mason University (1993).

Kershner feels that controversial speech and expression is worth protecting, even if the end result is that minorities feel uncomfortable. He alluded to John Stuart Mill and the marketplace of ideas.

"Just as the marketplace of goods tends to lead to better and cheaper goods being bought and sold, the marketplace of ideas leads to true and better justified ideas being accepted and disseminated," he said.

Mill said that offensive speech and false ideas are an important element of the growth of society. When these ideas are stymied via legal ramifications, society is left in intellectual limbo.

"The public expression of bad ideas," according to Kershner, "lead[s] people to discover why their beliefs are true, that is, what justifies them."

Kershner feels that this campus is far from open-minded because it has a history of issuing preventative action against public lectures that are controversial.

Back in 2008, according to Kershner in his article headlined, Once again, the left shuts down opponents' speech, "In front of the Reed Library, a father-daughter team (Jim and Michelle Deferio) came to argue for their Christian views, among them that God condemns homosexual acts and that they are wrong."

The campus left proceeded to bully the two speakers into submission, according to Kershner. Fifteen hundred people showed up to protest their message. There was drumming and chanting that was so loud that it drowned out their voices. They were even partially encircled by a large white sheet. According to Kershner, "President Hefner and around

350 attendees met that night at the campus Peace Pole for a moment of silence and then sang 'Amazing Grace.'"

Even more drastic measures were taken. This event was treated as if it was some kind of catastrophe.

"In response to the speakers," he continued, "The Leader reported that University Counseling Center staff were on-site to 'provide help for students who were visibly shaken and disturbed.'"

Kershner concluded, "This incident points out that the campus views its students as children. The presence of counselors to care for psychologically injured protesters and the administration's advance meetings with gay and other groups suggests a view of the students as too pure and delicate to face opposing views."

Fredonia is continuing to delve deeper down the liberal rabbit hole, according to Kershner, even to the point of becoming dystopian in nature.

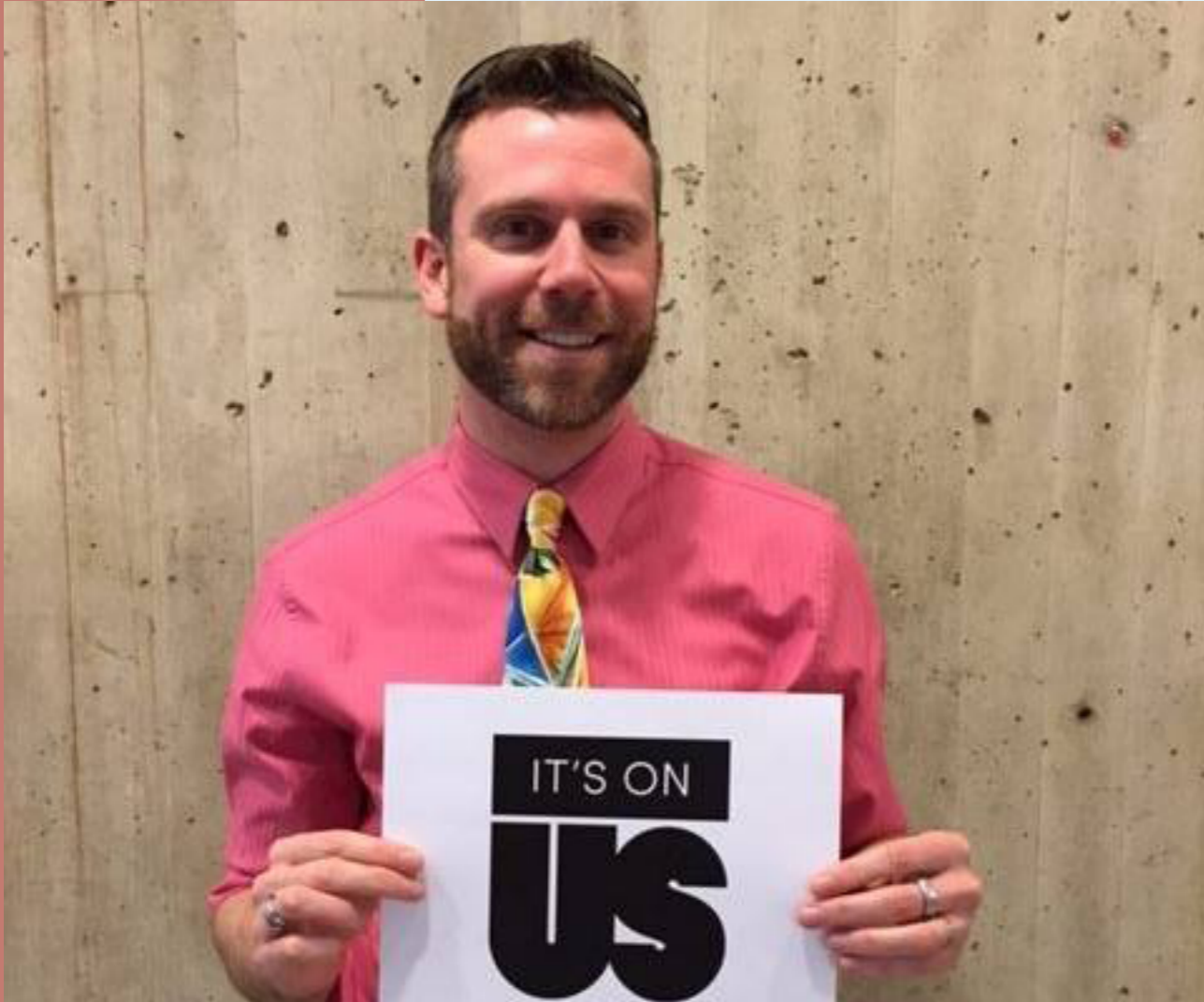
"There's not an openness to ideas, because they are not interested in any of these sort of traditionalist or Christian and/or Jewish ideas," he said. "They don't get discussed, so I don't know why people think there's this openness at this campus. Fredonia is more Orwellian than anything. I don't think it's open-minded at all." ❧



Chair of Fredonia Philosophy Department Stephen Kershner. Photo Courtesy of Stephen Kershner.



Welcome to Fredonia structure near Brigham Road. Photo by Victor Schmitt-Bush



WILLIAM BOERNER

CREATING A MORE DIVERSE, EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE CAMPUS

There are a lot of things that go into building an institutional culture. Nothing is ever set in stone, and faculty and student values are always changing. They are always diverse in scope, according to Fredonia's Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Bill Boerner.

"We might see patterns, but everyone is unique. We can't put people in boxes," said Boerner. "If we want to see an increase in diversity and inclusivity on this campus, that is something that we really need to keep in mind."

According to Boerner, it's no easy task to incentivize students to be more inclusive while at the

same time being careful not to do anything that would restrict their First Amendment rights.

"You can't be biased politically," he said. "You have to take all matters into account and find ways to push the campus into both a diverse and unified direction. Mixing those two values is very difficult."

Boerner feels that he is up to the task, though. He has led Fredonia's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as its Title IX (civil rights in education) coordinator since July 2013. At that time, he was also appointed as the Chair of the Affirmative Action Committee. Boerner also has a doctoral degree in educational leadership, marking him as a clear go-to source in terms of discussions about in-

clusivity, diversity and the like.

"We are at a unique time in our nation," said Boerner. "There are a lot of divisive issues that are happening across my area on our campus in regards to racial divides, gender concerns, sexual orientation, violence and sexual violence."

He feels that it is important to recognize that there are issues of bias that affect how we work and engage with one another, especially when attempting to tackle problems like these.

"These are real issues, and we're still feeling that impact on our campus here as well," Boerner said. "We're a really friendly and accepting campus, but we are also bringing diverse groups of people together. It only makes sense that drama would occur." But Boerner feels

that with a little guidance, students and faculty can learn how to work better with each other. Fredonians can get along even though they might have major differences in terms of their politics, race, sexuality, religion, or anything for that matter.

"Most of us don't work in isolation," he said. "We also don't work in absence of being able to engage with people who are different from us. Hopefully, that's going to be something that individuals learn on our campus."

To Boerner, being open-minded is simple. "Open mindedness is our willingness to understand things from different perspectives," he said. "It is a willingness to let go of our own opinions or values or beliefs, or allow those values, beliefs and opinions to perhaps be flexible."

It is a recognition of other, according to Boerner, and having a respect for that.

"Someone else's beliefs might not necessarily be aligned with my beliefs or what is perfect for my values, but I can still respect someone's values and beliefs," he said. "Open mindedness, to me, aligns with an inclusive society."

Boerner stressed a necessity to call out a common misconception that is usually associated with the term, "inclusive."

"Inclusive society doesn't mean that everyone has the same opinions and values and beliefs as me. That's one-sided. Inclusion means that we're welcoming of all values and beliefs and backgrounds," he said.

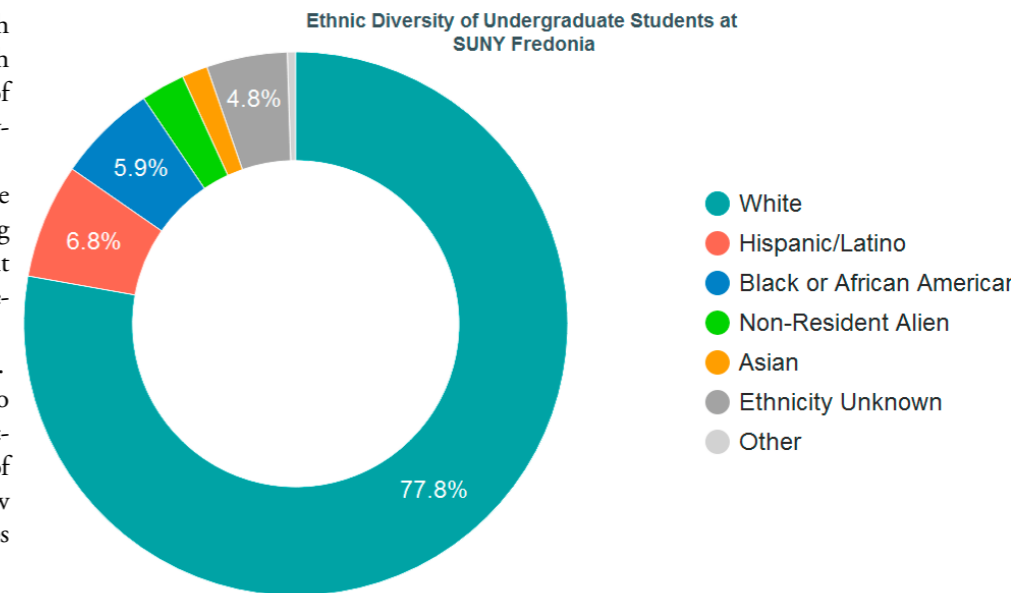
To help push Fredonia to become a more inclusive society, Boerner does his own behind the scenes work.

"There's a side of this work that I do that's in the compliance world," he said. "We are required to have a nondiscrimination policy and an internal discrimination complaint procedure."

Since he is also Fredonia's Affirmative Action Officer, he takes complaints from students and handles them accordingly. He ensures that these incidents are dealt with in a way that promotes healthful awareness throughout the campus community.

"It's components of claims of discrimination being filed, investigated and managed," Boerner said. "Issues are attempted to be resolved. That's the behind the scenes work that I do."

He doesn't just receive complaints from



students who have been wronged. "Sometimes it's a person who feels like they did something wrong, or maybe need to learn something about a specific issue," Boerner said. "They're coming to me for that type of support as maybe some kind of educational resource or an intervention."

Boerner is more than happy to provide support for students, but even he admits that the support that he can provide pales in comparison to some student-run clubs and organizations on campus.

"There's a lot of resources. A lot of students from marginalized groups often seek support from one another," he said. "That's why we have a lot of clubs and activities surrounding support of students in that realm."

Boerner has also had an influence on the general education curriculum. He has contributed to the establishment of Fredonia's new core curriculum, Fredonia Foundations.

"There are three themes as part of that curriculum that students must complete coursework on," he said. "One of those themes is around diversity and globalization, so it's really centering that as part of our curricular experience for students."

Not everyone sees Fredonia Foundations the same way he does, but Boerner feels that the new CCC structure has come a long way forward.

"Sometimes someone needs to be the

champion for these issues. I'm happy to serve in that capacity," he said. "But like any new initiative on campus, we have our cheerleaders, and then we have our complaint department."

Some professors and students might not see the value in this program, but Boerner feels they are few and far between. He sees this program as exemplifying the fact that he cares about all students.

This program gives all prospective students a clear incentive to learn about different cultures and belief systems, something he deems is an obvious way to help students to become more open-minded.

"Diversity is changing on our campus as well, so it only makes sense that we do this," he said. "Inclusivity is not necessarily changing at the same pace. That's where the work lies from my perspective. That's where my ethic of care comes into play to make sure that that happens."

And that is exactly what he and the organization is doing. Boerner recognizes that even though things are looking good for Fredonia in terms of increasing its diversity, these good intentions could backfire.

Even so, Boerner concluded, "The No. 1 thing that I would want folks to know about is that I care. I really care about this stuff," he said. "It sometimes means that I have to manage priorities and manage where we're moving forward, but it's an extraordinarily complex system to navigate." ❧

"Inclusive society doesn't mean that everyone has the same opinions and values and beliefs as me. That's one-sided. Inclusion means that we're welcoming of all values and beliefs and backgrounds."

L A S T L O O K

FINAL THOUGHTS

A QUERY ON OPEN-MINDEDNESS

The Paradox of ignorance



Typically, when people think of the term, open-minded they envision someone who is kind, thoughtful and receptive to new ideas. It is the mark of a man or woman who has grown wise and fair, virtuous and bold. It is a badge to be worn but not flaunted. To be open-minded is to peer into the unknown with a kind and gentle, yet resilient and inquisitive heart.

But to be open-minded is also to contest ignorance, whatever that may be. It may not directly correlate with the necessity to call to action, but it is in some form or another connected.

But it has levels. It has dimensions and it zigs and zags and twists and contorts. What might seem to be virtue from one perspective could be viewed as ignorance from another.

For this reason, it is important that when we contest ignorance, that we do not shut down the opposition, but bring it to the light for all to see. Let the audience determine for themselves where virtue stands. If someone says something that is hurtful, immature or uneducated, we must understand that to win against ignorance is to give it a voice.

It might be overbearing. It might win sometimes. It might win often, but it is a mark of strength and virtue to win against tyranny in open contest.

Paradoxically, it is a mark of tyranny to silence with force even those who seek to oppress.

According to Dictionary.com, the definition of open-mindedness is as follows:

Having or showing a mind receptive to new ideas or arguments.

This kind of receptivity does not necessarily entail that every argument

holds at least some kind of truth factor. That is just not true. To entertain an idea is not the same thing as accepting it as fact. To entertain an idea is to express interest in its potential for truth or falsehood. It would seem to be the case however that some arguments deserve more serious consideration than others.

Even so, an individual with an open mind is not just critical of all ideas. A person with an open mind is not just willing to accept that they could be proven wrong in any seen or unforeseen circumstance. A person with a truly open mind never assumes the intellectual or moral high ground. They are always working towards it, yet thriving under the realization that they may never reach it themselves.

A person with a truly open mind has no barriers. Preconceptions serve as foundations to learning and not as moral principles. What seems to be right is sought after, but a truly open-minded person realizes that there are no absolutes, not even in terms of morality.

This is something that a lot of political factions struggle with. They act as entities by themselves; with ideas, values and belief systems that are in strict opposition, typically with some other party. Most of the time, both parties will act as if their beliefs are absolute truths and will bat heads with each other, therefore stymying intellectual discussion.

For example, a truly open-minded person realizes that the Democratic stance on abortion is neither right nor is it wrong. The same goes for the Republican side of the issue. This person realizes that there are things that can be done and decisions that can be made to minimize damage, but to argue over who's right and who's wrong offers little

in the way of solutions.

It would seem to be more practical to take the information that is presented, and to use it to argue over the utility of certain actions rather than using culturally and institutionally ingrained moral absolutes to shut down the opposing party and its ideas.

Again, to combat tyranny, it is self-defeating to use tyrannical methods to enforce seemingly democratic principles.

If everyone was open-minded, there would be no limit to free speech. It would not be considered a threat.

It would still be considered dangerous, but it is in that danger zone that the will to offend would yield positive growth in terms of societal advancement. The worst of society would not be afraid to speak its mind, but the most virtuous would have such an influence so as to demoralize them. The ignorant would crawl back into their holes because over and above them, the light of the enlightened would cast too strong a shadow. ✎



Flowers outside of University Commons.
Photo by Victor Schmitt-Bush

THE FINAL VERDICT Is Fredonia Open-minded?

I wouldn't go so far as to say that Fredonia is open-minded. I also would not say that it is closed-minded, either.

But it is very diverse.

Some people are open-minded on this campus, and some others are not. In the same vein, some students and/or faculty are very scientifically oriented, whereas others are more conversant in the Arts.

The point being: no two people are the same, not even at Fredonia, especially not at Fredonia. This campus is not perfect. Faculty and students complain about racial, political and identity issues every day. Some faculty and students espouse ideas and beliefs that some others might not agree with. Some students handle these conflicts well. Others might not.

The campus itself, although it does lean pretty far to the left in terms of the general atmosphere of its community, provides students with a uniquely safe space to share conflicting beliefs, ideas and values. Students might get upset, but typically, emphasis on typically, violence does not break out on this campus when controversial subjects arise.

If students want to make friends at Fredonia, there are many clubs, activities, facilities and organizations that are available that can help students to find their niche. As long as students look diligently, keep an open mind and do not close themselves off based on political values, there is something for everyone here.

This is saying a lot when considering that this campus is in the middle of "nowhere" in a rural setting. It is quite lively for its size.

Even so, students are not always welcoming. Some of them can be rude, and the general atmosphere of the college varies based upon stress factors involved, such as mid-terms, long winters and Finals Week.

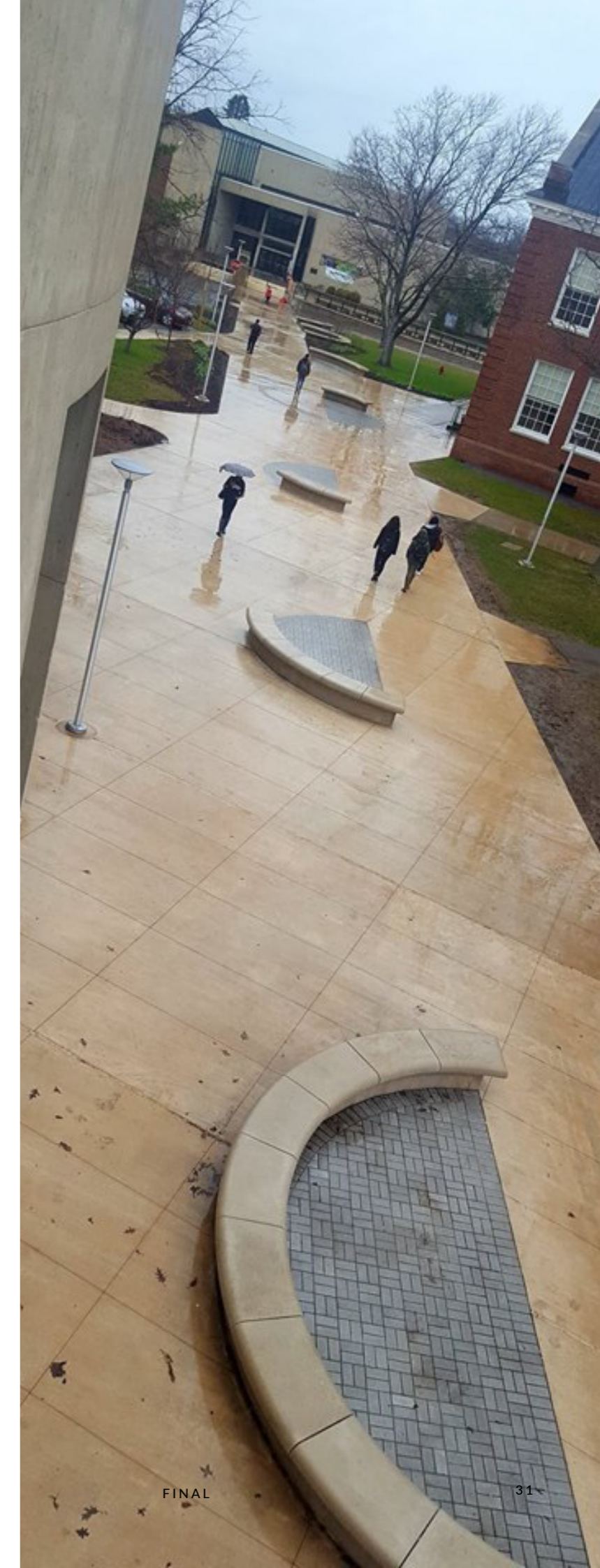
Fredonia is not for everyone. Students are challenged academically and are incentivized to study long hours throughout the day. Fredonia faculty typically have high expectations for all students. Course-work is rigorous, not only via its testing, but also in its emphasis on teamwork through group projects and the like.

The Fredonia Foundations plan that will be coming up for prospective and incoming students next Fall shows the campus's primary values of diversity, equity and inclusion. Students will be required to take cultural and identity-based courses that Chief Diversity Officer Bill Boerner feels will help further facilitate a more accepting and culturally aware atmosphere.

Some professors do not agree with this. Some feel that this is actually a culturally Marxist action that is nothing but a road paved to Hell under the guise of good intentions.

Regardless, this is the direction that campus is going to take, and it is up to prospective students to do their research and decide for themselves if Fredonia aligns with their values.

Only one thing is guaranteed at this college. Students who stay for the whole four-year stretch are likely not to be the same person that they were when they started here. If students are active and engaged with the community, exponential growth in maturity and intellect is an inevitable part of being a Fredonian. ✎





"In the right light, at the right time, everything is extraordinary"
-Aaron Rose

