MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Often, I start my greetings “Dear Honors Friends,” and over the past few weeks, I have been reading and thinking more about this term we use so freely and casually. Friendship is the most universal relationship, one we all experience. The term “friend” describes a range of personal and professional connections. From Aristotle, we learn to distinguish friendship from other kinds of love, and from St. Thomas Aquinas’s response, we learn to ask questions about friendship’s spiritual value. In Aristotle’s assessment, friendship is a kind of love that does not seek good things for the self but wishes good for another. Ever the scientist, Aristotle needed categories in order to understand his world. Aquinas asks simply: Is charity friendship? He turns more urgently to matters of the heart and the community, yet he does not entirely oppose his philosophical predecessor. Because Aquinas pursues the truth, he first acknowledges the wisdom of Aristotle’s way of thinking then establishes the grounds for his own point of view. We can learn from this ancient way of arguing with respect and by concession. It seems particularly important as we enter a season of debate that will culminate in choices about our future community. I also am learning from these ancients how to think about friendship as central to our community models, advancing the virtue of mutual understanding and generosity even in difference.

This end of the school year has been joyful but poignant for me. I find myself balancing philosophy and feeling as I grapple with the loss of my dearest friend, but I am bolstered by the purpose-driven students I get to see every day, students who seek wisdom through academic study and service. I look forward to the continued growth of community service and academic events sponsored by our thriving Honors student organization WHEAT. I look forward to continuing partnership with Student Involvement to integrate service opportunities into the Honors curriculum and to promote research-based reflection about local and global needs. And, I look forward to increased engagement between alumni and students as we learn more about the legacy of WSU Honors and work toward a strong future.

Many congratulations to our Honors graduates! Thank you to all of you for your dedication to the WSU Honors community and for the model you provide to our campus and beyond. We have had a glorious, if soggy, spring in Wichita. It gives me hope for a green summer.

Please send news about your summer accomplishments. We want to hear from you!

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