

Dear LSC Community:

Maple and birch colors are beginning to pop, there is a chill in the air in the evenings, and my bird feeders have twice been raided by bears. Fall is definitely here.

I have been out and about quite a lot lately...walking around our campuses, chatting with staff and students. Things seem to be moving along fairly well: most everyone is practicing safe masking and physical distancing procedures, we have very good participation in our COVID assessment reporting, classes are carefully conducted to protect students and faculty, our amazing facilities teams have outdone themselves keeping our campuses clean and safe, and everyone is focused on ensuring the success of our students.

And...

I have also noticed how much energy it takes from everyone in our LSC community to ensure that all of these positive things are possible. As I have discussed in past campus messages, we are under stress over COVID, worries about our personal and family safety, deep concerns and fears about the unrest and upheavals sweeping our country, and on and on. I want to pause a moment to acknowledge the toll this takes on all of us during these very difficult times. I want to acknowledge the compounding stress and health effects for those who live at the intersectionality of so many of these challenges. I hear you, I see you, and I send all of you caring and compassion.

So, what do we do to help and support each other?

I want to suggest two simple things. The first bit of advice comes from the Dalai Lama:

“Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.”

Simple. Clear. And it provides a challenge for all of us to first pause, breathe, and then respond; rather than react and lash out with anger or belittling. We can choose to be angry and upset with all of the stress and fears we carry, and in turn pass that on in how we interact with others **OR** we can pause, reflect, seek calm, think. Then respond with kindness. It is always possible.

The second thing I'd like you to consider comes to us from a small book called “The Question Behind the Question” by John Miller. Chapter eleven opens thusly:

**“Most of us have heard the saying ‘Creativity is thinking outside the box.’ There’s a lot of truth in that, but to me true creativity is this:
Succeeding *within* the box.”**

Let’s focus on that concept: **succeeding within the box.**

I have heard our faculty worry that they are not doing enough for their students. Staff worry that they are not able to reach students and address all of their needs. Students want to do more yet feel constrained by the required practices. Or they worry that they may not be able to succeed in this different environment. Our administrators and supervisors worry that they may make errors in practice as new challenges arise from the changing nature of the two pandemics: COVID-19 and systemic racism. The common theme in all of this is thinking too much about what we wish were true or our wish for new

tools to use, becoming bogged down because we cannot fulfill our wishes or don't have those tools, then freezing because we assume we cannot succeed unless we have all of these things in place.

I suggest instead that we pause, reflect, seek calm, think. Then respond by using the *tools and practices and processes we have available right now*. Miller notes: "Ironically, succeeding with what we have makes us more likely to get the things we wanted in the first place."

Remove the pressure of wishing for something outside of our current situation or assuming the answer is outside of what we have available: Concerns over climate change on Earth are not solved by wishing we can move to Mars, thus freezing in our earthy actions because that move cannot happen tomorrow. The exhaustion we feel by spending our days on Zoom does not go away by wishing we could just have a big face to face class or meeting, then cancelling or not attending our Zoom class or meeting because we are restricted by the realities of best health practices. **Wishing outside the box in this sense isn't being creative: it is an argument with reality and only adds to your stress. Let's remove that added stress.**

So, two ideas that work together: practice kindness and allow yourself and others to work well with what we have. We ensure success in all we do if we succeed together within our institution. Instead of thinking all of the external pressures and challenges have us boxed in, let's think instead that we have the opportunity to use and improve upon what we do have!

It is ironic that when we think outside the box in the old sense of the phrase, we assume creativity and innovation are not part of the stuff in the box. I can attest to the fact that there is a plethora of creativity and innovation and energy in the LSC box right now. The stuff in the box is definitely the stuff we want to keep and enhance. Yes, we will keep improving and enhancing and innovating, **and** we will strive for greatness in all we do. We will build on the great stuff already inside the box: academic programming, student and staff services, building enrollment and retention, beautiful facilities, positive actions that enhance our regional community, amazing graduates who make a major difference in the world, and of course all of YOU and your dedication to LSC.

Be well, be safe, find time to decompress this weekend and enjoy the fall colors.

Patricia L. Rogers, Ph.D.

President

Lake Superior College

Pronouns: She, Her, Hers -- [More about pronouns](#)



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AND NEITHER DO WE.**

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