



## FROM THE POLITY

### CSL Report: Forum on the relationship between the city of Annapolis and St. John's

The first CSL forum after Spring break was held last Wednesday, March 20th. Despite the sophomore writing period many attendees were sophomores. The topic of the forum was the question of the relationship between the college community and the wider city of Annapolis. Mr. Huntley, Chair of the CSL, explained that there is a need for this forum due to recent conversations surrounding the plan of the city of Annapolis for College Creek Connector which seem to relate to this question. The conversation was also supposed to offer a space to prepare for the Bike Path Forum with Mayor Buckley and other people involved with the project to be hosted on Wednesday, March 27th.

The consensus among attendees of the forum seemed to be that the college community should strive for more personal interactions with the residents of Annapolis. But the group identified a number of hurdles that might contribute to students isolating themselves from the wider city life.

While many participants voiced the desire for more interactions with Annapolitans, many felt as if the city is not particularly inviting to college students. The downtown area, while walkable, is too expensive for most students' budgets, too touristic, and the Naval Academy seems to have an overwhelming presence. But there was the acknowledgement that there are many events and resources that are useful and interesting to Johnnies such as events offered at Maryland Hall.

The conversation also touched upon the concept of the "Johnnie Bubble." One participant characterized the student life at St. John's as a "non-secular monastic lifestyle" which many interpret as inherently insular. However, some participants argued that this monasticism should also include some outreach and engagement with the world. The argument was made that some people interpret the program and the reading list in a more action driven way than others. In the context of social engagement, the question was raised whether more students should "put the program into action" while being in college and not wait until after graduation to do so. This kind of engagement could improve relations with more marginalized groups in Annapolis as well. (*Cont. on p. 2*)

## INTERVIEW WITH WALTER STERLING JR.

### Incoming Santa Fe Campus President Discusses Background, Thoughts on the Future of the College

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

#### How would you introduce yourself to the students of Annapolis?

In terms of my background, I'm Walter Sterling. I'm a longtime tutor at the College. I joined the faculty in 2003, and had the opportunity to serve twice as dean, including over the past five years. I'm also a graduate of the college, graduated Annapolis, '93, started with the class of '92 in Santa Fe, took a year off, and then spent two years with the class of '93. As many people know, my father is a tutor emeritus in Annapolis, and as maybe fewer people know, both of my parents are alumni of the College. So it's fair to say that the College has been my life in a lot of ways.

But it's been important to me that I've had other experiences out of St. John's. I went to graduate school in philosophy, I taught at some other colleges and universities. I left academia for a few years to work for a nonprofit in Philadelphia. I might just build on that comment to say I've always been restless about not being just inside the classroom, the world of books and study. As vast and important that world is, and as much as it shaped me, I've wanted to make a practical difference with part of my energy too.

#### Why did you feel yourself called to apply for the position of president?

Part of making that [practical difference] is doing the work that creates conditions that allow the heart of what we do to flourish, and thrive, and survive. That's the sense of calling that connects to the work of the presidency. The way I put it in an interview for the Santa Fe New Mexican is that as a tutor, I've looked down the bench and seen other tutors who can do that work as well or better than I can. I see fewer people that have one foot in both worlds, deeply rooted in the mission, deeply shaped by it, but also deeply interested in budget, finances, marketing, fundraising, and all the practical exigencies. I've always wanted to stitch the academic and practical together, and wanted to have a foot in both worlds.

#### How do you plan to address the some of the financial challenges the College is facing?

I would say that pretty much for as long as I've been at the College, we have faced fiscal and enrollment

challenges. It's just been the long arc of experience at the College. We've never been a luxurious institution. We've always been a small place focused on our mission and the character of our community, and trying to preserve that, make it available to folks and keep it as vital as it can be, but we've always done that in a lean way.

I would say, above all, what we need is to keep the education strong, keep the community of learning strong, so that we never want to do anything that leads to a steady weakening of the heart of what we do in and around the classroom. That's why we're all here. That's what we're trying to support, and that's what gives us the opportunity to go out into the world and say, "come as students, come as faculty, come be a part of this 'community dedicated to liberal education.'"

That's the phrase that starts the statement of the program that I like to cite over and over again. To keep that community strong and vital, we have to make it visible; be strong in our advocacy for it, and the difference it makes in our lives and in the world; fundraise in the name of that; and recruit students that are going to benefit from this by putting it out there for all to see and making it financially accessible to students for whom cost might be an obstacle.

We've got to continue what we've been doing in recent years, which is to try to raise more money to keep up with the increasing costs of doing what we're doing; and to continue to fight a difficult battle in contemporary culture, to show that this education is not only still relevant and vital, but that it's needed now more than ever.

#### Could you say more about advocating for the liberal arts outside of St. John's, and how that fits in with the role of president?

In terms of the role of president, we all know our presidents have many important roles on campus, but the presidents are also the primary face and voice of our institution to the outside world. They are the people that get in front of other educational leaders, potential friends and donors and foundations, and folks who are interested in supporting the College. They are the folks that can get a quote in an article here, or get a talk in there, etc., etc. ) So it's always important for our presidents to be out there making the case for liberal education. (*Cont. on p. 2*)

### This Week in Seminar

#### Freshman:

- 3/28: Euripides: The Bacchae
- 4/1: Aristotle: Poetics, Chapters 1-19

#### Sophomores:

- 3/28: Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part I
- 4/1: Shakespeare: Othello

#### Juniors:

- 3/28: Rousseau: The Social Contract (See official list for selections)
- 4/1: Molière: The Misanthrope

#### Seniors:

- 3/28: Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse, "The Window"
- 4/1: Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse, "Time Passes" and "The Lighthouse"

#### Friday Night Lecture:

The Value of Suffering, delivered by Gregory Freeman at 7:30 pm in the FSK Auditorium

### Upcoming Events:

#### Friday, 3/29:

- Pangaea's Soccer vs. Football game, 4:30 pm, Lower Field

#### Saturday, 3/30:

- Much Ado About Nothing, presented by the KWP, 7 pm, FSK Auditorium
- Essay Hell, 9 pm, Great Hall

#### Sunday, 3/31:

- All-Day Knit-a-thon, 1 pm, Mitchell Museum
- Much Ado About Nothing, presented by the KWP, 7 pm, FSK Auditorium

#### Wednesday 4/3:

- Erik S. Kristensen Memorial Lecture, 7:30 pm, Great Hall

## COMMENTARY ON FROG AND TOAD

### Bk I, Ch. i: "Spring"

The indifferent raptures of a cozy bed are by no means unfamiliar to any of us. Every day, so it seems, our wonted cradle holds tightly to us, and no more wants us to leave it than we want to do so. Thus we find lethargic Toad, overcome utterly by the lulls and ablative inebriation of a deep stupor, while outside his den the yellow-green tongues of Spring flick forth from the April branches. Verdant Frog him awakes but to no avail—for Toad will not have any disturbance to his slumber, insisting that he be let to sleep until "half past May." Polytopic Frog moves to his calendar, unattended since late Fall and still bearing the face of November. He updates the calendar—and continues to pull the pages off until he is greeted by May, which, having been shown to Toad awaking, convinces him to get up, and they take to the fresh road of Spring together.

The core aporia of this chapter is the beguilement of a friend. Frog subtly deceives Toad—for what end and at what cost? Frog says that he will be lonely without Toad in the coming month if he awakes not, implying also his loneliness during the winter, which, given his surprise at the calendar's unattended state,

was borne by him in Toad's absence. Toad, overcome by the coils of sleep, is unmoved by his friend's pleas, which friend is moved to trickery.

This trickery cannot have gone unnoticed by Toad for very long, for the environment of April is, of course, quite different from that of May. Nor is it in Frog's interest for Toad to be thus permanently deceived—for then he would make his next hibernation in October, quite before his wonted time, which would grieve Frog no doubt. Nor is it at all the intention of Frog, a true and loving companion, to so drastically deceive his friend. Frog wishes instead to rouse his buddy in time to bear witness to the nascent verdure and accompany himself in his delight of Spring. Is it not in the nature of a true friend to want to, having enjoyed something of great delight, introduce his friend to such pleasure?

The foolish reader conceives of Frog as a knave, a selfish deceiver who manipulates his pal for his own pleasure. But the wise reader knows that Frog has no ill intention at all in his guile, for by this little noble

lie he exposes to Toad the grandeur of a not-yet complete Spring and the largeness of the flowering April, while if Toad had remained in his languid state until halfway through the month of May, he would have beheld only the trailing tail of primaveral beauty (and would have been in grave danger of sleeping through my birthday on the tenth of the latter month).

Let us therefore make no delay in welcoming Spring. We may learn from our tale that our greatest pleasures lie beyond our bed-covers; let us be not trapped by our idle chains, and let us venture beyond the warmth of our cozy haunt and into budding April, where the pleasant drops of Springtime ichor fall upon and reward us for our attentiveness. Let us join our friend Frog in welcoming the sunlight, and shed a little of our joy onto others.

*Tarik Mahmud*

## INTERVIEW WITH WALTER STERLING

(*Cont. from p. 1*) What is this case? It is, to use the phrase from the capital campaign, that it's about freeing minds. It's about education meeting the fullest potential of our natural faculties, both to live a good life, and to give us the kind of agency to be able to serve as able, humane, skilled, self-conscious and self-possessed people in all areas of life. It's also a requirement of citizenship in a democratic republic, and I think when we look out at the world and see constant and deepening crises that concern us on the political side, technological side, and social side. No one should pretend that liberal education solves those, but without liberal education, they're insoluble and irremediable. So, in short, we equip our students for private and public life.

Now, it's important that College education help people with careers, but at the heart of our dedication to liberal education, the case we have to make is that almost every trend we see on a wider social stage shows why liberal education is needed now more than ever. I think, even if they wouldn't express it in the idiom of liberal education, most people see the crises and they have a yearning for the kind of intellectual and spiritual resources that the liberal arts and liberal education are the natural home for, and we have to unapologetically carry that forward.

**What is the relevance of the Santa Fe president to Annapolis? In what way will your role impact us here?**

In a certain sense the most important role for the College officers on each campus in relation to the other campus is to maintain and sustain the health of our unified college. Our campuses only exist as part of this larger whole, and we stand and fall together, and always risk a certain kind of entropy, or a kind of benign neglect of each other. It's our job to keep us stitched together, to continue to understand that we have one program. It takes work and a high degree of collegiality.

I guess I could simplify my thoughts this way: the

president on the Santa Fe campus, and the officers on both campuses, need to both be caring stewards of their local campus community with all of the preoccupation and partiality that that brings with it, and counteract that with constant attention to maintaining the good of the whole.

**To end on a lighter note, I'll ask a question that in a very Johnnie way, can say a lot about a person: what is your favorite place to read?**

My favorite place to read is the library in Santa Fe, the Meem Library, which is my favorite building on campus. I find the architectural space warm but also sublime in its openness. It's always felt to me like a wonderful place to nest and read, and uplifting place to do it.

**Thank you very much! I appreciate your taking the time to meet with me.**

Thank you!

*El'ad Nichols-Kaufman*

## CSL Report

(*Cont. from p. 1*) But the concern was raised that to a certain extent more engagement with the outside world would come at the cost of being less able to be an active participant in campus life as most Johnnies have the tendency to overcommit to extracurricular activities.

Attendees expressed the sense that there is great value in interactions with non-students and people from all sorts of backgrounds and walks of life. How to have these meaningful interactions is ultimately each individual person's responsibility but for some projects and issues an attempt at a collective response to this question might be necessary as well.

*Helen Felbek*

## ABOUT THE ST. JOHN'S COLLEGIAN

The St. John's Collegian is the weekly newspaper of St. John's College Annapolis. We work to bring quick and timely coverage of important events going on, to help develop a more informed student body. If you're searching for more in-depth investigations and reporting, as well as essays, art and culture, check out the Gadfly, our affiliated publication, which is published once every three weeks.

Want to submit an article? We always need more writers, whether for opinion or reporting! Submissions for news articles should be between 400-600 words, while opinion should be kept short at 350 words. Just email [enicholskaufman@sjc.edu](mailto:enicholskaufman@sjc.edu) with your article, and we will work to get it in print! Longer form articles and more in-depth exploration of ideas should go to the Gadfly, which accepts submissions at [lbriner@sjc.edu](mailto:lbriner@sjc.edu).

Contributors for this issue:

El'ad Nichols-Kaufman, Editor

Tarik Mahmud

Helen Felbek

Croquet is coming up, and we are searching for people to cover the happenings around the game. If you are interested in doing player interviews, spectator fashion reviews or, actual coverage of the game itself, please write us to make sure we can give the biggest event of the year the attention it deserves.

### Aphorism of the Week:

Corruption can sometimes be healed only by fire. That is why we sometimes have to burn our own houses.