

I Am Both Mad and Disappointed

Scott Racine | Guest Writer

Things must change. This is a fact of life. There are many ways to respond to change. Refusing to believe change is happening is dangerous. Trying to respond to change can also be treacherous.

I am sympathetic to the situation the SNC administration was and is in. I understand there are many factors that are resulting in less certainty in the realm of higher education, especially for a small, private, liberal arts college. I am even sympathetic to the idea that the administration needs to put a “positive spin” on the current situation and the future of SNC in order to market to prospective students, donors, and other types of partners.

Despite this, I cannot help but think that we, the students, have been sold a false narrative, and I am struggling to understand why.

If the administration had been frank with the student body about the problems facing SNC, explained the financial burdens and responsibilities, and indicated that painful but necessary cuts would have to be made, well, I think students would have been sad, and even upset, but not at the college. Because, in this version of events, it would be made clear that these changes were a product of the greater environment, and I believe the students here would have been mature enough to understand the situation.

Instead, what we have been told is that SNC is not only going to survive this rough period, but it is going to be “stronger” for it. We have been sold this line. It angered me, and I think other students as well (I won’t speak on behalf of the staff or faculty, though I think their feelings have been made known). I was angered by this language because it implicitly suggested that by getting rid of things SNC would be made better, which implies that certain programs, staff, and faculty were actually bad for the college?

Getting rid of programs (studio art major and minor, history major, theoretical math major, applied math major, physics major and minor, spanish major, theatre studies major and minor,

theology and religious studies major and minor, etc.) is the way to make SNC better?

Terminating 27 faculty members is how we make SNC better?

In addition to the initial failure of communication, the administration has continuously refused to admit any fault despite receiving pushback from multiple directions. We are always assured that SNC is keeping its “liberal arts values” in mind while in the same breath chastising anyone for voicing criticisms or complaints. Criticisms that were often valid. Sure, the administration has claimed they care very much about transparency and community, but the real message I have seen is “We are in control. Trust us, and go along quietly, and everything will be great.”

I, a senior, had considered auditioning to give the commencement speech at this year’s graduation. Sadly, I did not feel like I could honestly offer praise to SNC in light of what has been happening in recent years. I made the choice to come to this school, at great personal expense, because I felt it would be a worthwhile experience, and it has been for me. It is not so much that I have been directly mistreated, neither my major or minor was cut, but I feel for all the people who did have theirs cut. I feel for the future students who will not be able to have the same opportunities as I did (such as studying Japanese) or as others did. Or to have the pleasure of being taught by great faculty members, who have either already been ousted or are on their way out.

I am not asking for anything unreasonable. I am not ignorant of the underlying causes of the reality we are currently in. I am both mad and disappointed because I know things didn’t have to be this way. The administration could have lived up to the ideals it claimed to hold so dear, communicating honestly and clearly with faculty, staff, and students in these difficult times. And by doing so, keep a strong sense of *communio*, making everyone understand we are in a struggle, but in it together, and all on the same side.

Instead, the administration decided to piss on our legs and told us we will be better off because of it.