

Convocation: Where Justice Meets Academics

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With the academic year underway there is no better way to begin the semester than the annual Convocation Ceremony. Since 2008, Dean for Students, Lisa Bardill Moscaritolo, and a committee of dedicated faculty and staff have organized the convocation. The word “convocation” is derived coming from a Latin word meaning “to call or gather for a special purpose”. In the case of Pace, Dean Lisa, along with Dean Marijo Russell- O’Grady of the New York City campus have provided incoming students of both campuses an opportunity to meet the each other and begin the academic year by speaking about various themes pertaining to student life, such as justice.

“The idea is to introduce the newest members [students] to the Pace community,” said Dean Lisa. “Convocation sets the academic tone for the year and we at Pace chose to tie it to our academic theme.”

During committee meetings, Dean Lisa, in conjunction with Professor Sue Maxam and Associate Provost, Mark Poisel, organized this event to provide our community with a sense of support. The planning for convocation begins about eight months prior to the start of the academic year. With debriefs and attendee feedback in mind, the theme and common reading are carefully selected with the student in mind.

“Last year’s theme was justice and when we were brainstorming for this year, Associate Provost Uday P. Sukhatme suggested keeping the theme for another year to build traction, which would allow students and professors to incorporate justice into their classes.” said Dean Lisa.

Keeping the theme as justice allows students to develop an understanding of what justice is. Professors are now able to further integrate the theme into their courses and hold discussions about this year’s common reading, *Class Matters*. The common read touches all aspects of justice, specifically social and economic justice. But having students recognize and understand the purpose of justice is not only about what they read, but what they hear as well. This year’s convocation speaker, Professor Susan Herman of the Department of Criminal Justice and Security, addressed the 1,800 attendees, first year and transfer students from both campuses, in the Goldstein Fitness Center with her experience in the justice system.

Students tend to ponder what exactly goes on during the planning process of convocation. Dean Lisa and her committee take pride in what they do to serve the students, as well as their work getting the students involved in the university. Since the project is a rather large commitment, the convocation committee has reached out to students for their input on the keynote speaker, as well as the common reading, through surveys and other forms of feedback. Students who do become involved with the Convocation Committee work with Professor Maxam on selecting the common reading and report back to the committee with their thoughts. After careful

consideration, the reading and annual theme become parallel, resulting in the event that will impact incoming students in a positive way, encouraging their involvement and resulting in university unity. Is a better way to kick off the academic year with an event that may drive your outlook on life and what is “just?”