A Letter from the Dean of Students

Dear Parents,

The year is off to a wonderful start and again I am encouraged and renewed by the energy and enthusiasm of our students. My staff has characterized this incoming class as vibrant, service oriented, and engaged. What a great way to describe students— makes me grateful to serve at Westmont. These characteristics were recently evidenced during United Way’s Day of Caring which sends volunteers from the Santa Barbara community to assist in designated projects throughout the city. The Westmont team of 144 volunteers (even with some of our students turned away) was the largest in the history of this event. In fact, the next largest team had 74 volunteers!

My gratitude for each student was made even more poignant to me when last week I received news that one of 2006 graduates, Will Wiersma, was killed in a car accident. Will was one of “our best and our brightest.” He was involved in student leadership from his first year at Westmont, and last year after spending his senior year at Oxford University in England, graduated magna cum laude in Political Science. Will’s life, and the life of so many other Westmont students, is an excellent model of how to live out our love for Christ with passion, with intensity, with faith, and with love. He was a dreamer. Whether young (as our students) or growing old (as we parents), we need to find ways to live our lives with similar passion.

As the Dean of Students, I know I want to listen more closely when students share their passions. I want to find ways to loosen the bureaucracy that sometimes can hold back these dreamers, while teaching them to patiently and respectfully navigate necessary bureaucracies. I want to find ways to help students be able to handle the tragedies of life, the losses that are numbing. I want to encourage more students to put their dreams into action. And finally, I want to find ways that we as a community might be a place where all voices matter and all stories are valued.

Thanks for your part in raising these students who have so much potential. Walk beside them as they “flap their wings.” Allow them to stumble in order for them to learn that they can succeed, not because of your strength and competence, but because of their own. Encourage them to find their own voice, their own dreams, and their own gifts. And through it all, trust that the God who loves them, even more than we do, is at work in their lives, shaping them through life’s challenges and successes into living their calling.

Know that we at the college are doing the same. Your sons and daughters are gifts to us, and we take these years seriously. May God grant us (faculty and staff and you as parents) the insight to see them as He sees them, that we might be the kinds of mentors and “trail guides” that will encourage their spirits to soar, their dreams to be known, and their lives to flourish.

Warmly,

Jane Hideko Higa
Vice-President for Student Life and Dean of Students

First-Year Parents Weekend is November 3-4, 2006.
The goal for this weekend is simply to provide an opportunity for you and the rest of your family to spend time with your student. While your student and other children are sleeping in on Saturday morning, we’ll have some parents-only time to update you on what is happening in the residence halls and classrooms. There is no cost for the events, but we’d still like to know you’re coming!

*Please RSVP by October 26 to (805) 565-6056 or parents@westmont.edu*. See you in November!

You can find this info and more on the Westmont Parents Web site
To unsubscribe click here, and write unsubscribe to Parent SupportNet in the subject line