“As a new staff member what are you looking forward to about the 2012 Winter Carnival?”

Kelly Johnson, Financial Aid
“I am looking forward to being a part of the Winter Carnival festivities again. (I am a Michigan Tech grad). I volunteered to be a judge for the statue competition.”

Shellie Hubert, Enrollment Services Information Systems
“I am looking forward to sharing the sheer size of the snow sculptures with my boys. I can't wait to see how big their eyes get when they stand next to some of the tall month-long sculptures. I am also looking forward to participating in building an all-nighter statue with our church.”

Mel Pearson, Athletics–Hockey
“I remember Winter Carnival from my days as a student athlete and coach at Michigan Tech and I am looking forward to seeing the snow statues that the students create. I am also looking forward to large crowds at this year’s carnival hockey games!”

Katie Cooper, COMPASS
“I am most looking forward to the excitement that builds up as everyone works on their month-long statues! And, of course, all of the snow we will hopefully have!”

Mike Malloy, Housing & Residential Life
“I am excited for the opportunity to help judge all the completed Winter Carnival statues, I've been impressed by the number of students out braving the elements to complete their statues. I am sure that all of the hard work will add up to amazing finished projects!”

Tara Evans, International Programs & Services
“I’m looking forward to the celebration of winter, as I lived in Buffalo, New York all of my life and never celebrated winter! I’m also looking forward to the many different ice sculptures and the Human Dog Sled Race.”
Every few years it happens. There is a buzz before the semester begins and grows louder as January progresses. “Can you believe this weather?” “Where’s the snow?” “What’s the back-up plan?” “How will Winter Carnival happen if it doesn’t cool down soon?” Luckily, the snow has arrived, temps have dropped, and it looks like the tradition of a robust Winter Carnival will continue.

And while snow in late January in the Copper Country is as sure as our graduates getting good jobs, this past month’s talk around town about the weather reminds me a bit of a recent article in Fast Company magazine. The article, titled “Generation Flux”, discusses the skills today’s work force needs to survive in a chaotic and complex world where change is rampant. The author depicts the current environment where this change, both culturally and economically, is accelerating exponentially and as it does the clarity and predictability of the future declines.

How are today’s generation of entrepreneurs and innovators able to survive and thrive in this messy world where plans, as soon as they are made, become obsolete? How will they succeed when previously successful strategies are now called into question as it becomes clear they no longer work? The answer is agility and creativity. Only those who embrace the willingness to constantly change and innovate will survive. Relying on the notion that the world will remain static is no longer possible. The leaders of tomorrow will not be those who successfully predict where the future will be, the leaders of tomorrow will be those who are quick, flexible, and creative enough to help steer the change in a positive direction.

So what does this have to do with Winter Carnival? Canceling this famous tradition is not an option (can you imagine?). And failing to prepare our students for this new world isn’t an option either. Not unlike those individuals featured in the article, our students must be prepared to deal with uncertainty, economic volatility, and cultural change and at the minimum, the weather. They must be open minded; know how to work in teams; be able to take some risks while managing fears; and be prepared to recalibrate plans, given the contexts of any situation.

As our students prepare for Winter Carnival and all that goes with, I think the skills needed to be successful in “Gen Flux” are not that dissimilar than the skills we need to ensure Gen Flux’s success. Winter Carnival is just one facet of how students are prepared to meet the demands and succeed in a chaotic and exciting world. We may not be able to predict the future but I’m fairly certain that we are giving students the skills they need to create it.

Thanks and you have my best wishes for a wonderful Winter Carnival experience!

Les

What are our students looking forward to at this year’s Winter Carnival?

Kodi Padilla, Civil Engineering—“My favorite thing about Winter Carnival is how the entire community (students, faculty, and family) takes a break to enjoy the ice sculptures, Broomball games, and snowy weather.”

Tim Ward, Computer Science—"My favorite thing about Winter Carnival is the atmosphere. I have always been somewhat of a party guy so the constant buzz of energy all night is just intoxicating. I love it!"

Lisa Shoemaker, Biomedical Engineering—“My favorite parts about Winter Carnival are how much it brings the community together and having fun in the snow with friends!”