

STATE OF THE ADLER GRADUATE SCHOOL (AGS) – SEPTEMBER 2016

Introduction

First, on the heels of fiscal year 2015/2016 (ending June 30, 2016), and as we now proceed through the early stages of fiscal year 2016/2017, I want to thank everyone for contributing to the Adler Graduate School's (AGS) continuous improvement and for diligently and persistently working toward that goal. In pursuing the goal of continuous improvement, AGS has focused on Board-approved Strategic Priorities such as the ones listed below – which are current. While they are presently being updated, AGS's senior administrators have monitored current Strategic Priorities through planning teams that serve to monitor the de-centralized strategic planning activities of all AGS programs, institutional units and standing committees.

AGS Strategic Priorities – Fiscal Year 2015/2016

- Sustainable growth characterized by fiscal solvency, and the high quality and continuous improvement of AGS's educational programs
- Continuous development of Social Interest in the community, as characterized by an ongoing commitment to community service and to AGS's and the community's bi-directional influence on one another
- Ongoing commitment to the diversity of AGS's student body, faculty, staff and Board of Directors
- Ongoing commitment to and continuous development of AGS's foundations in Adlerian Psychology
- Facilitate access to and reach of AGS's educational programs by diversifying and strengthening both the educational programs and the methodologies for delivering AGS's educational programs

Since we have recently completed fiscal year 2015/2016 and have just begun fiscal year 2016/2017, this State of the School message – like recent years' messages – is intended to update constituents of the Adler Graduate School (AGS) about our activities and growing edges.

I encourage all AGS constituents to read this State of the School message and, subsequently, to contact me or Chris Helgestad, AGS's Vice President for Academic Affairs, or Kathy Bengtson, AGS's Vice President for Finance and Administration, if you have comments, concerns or new ideas you wish to share. In the meantime, once again, thank you to everyone for contributing to AGS's ongoing pursuit of continuous improvement and for diligently and persistently working toward that goal.

Fundamental Principles

The Adler Graduate School continues to be guided by and committed to three fundamental principles, or foundations – Adlerian Psychology, a Customer Service Orientation and Organizational Diversity. Hopefully, our commitment to these principles will continue to set AGS apart from other institutions. In fact, when AGS constituents are surveyed, results consistently support Adlerian Psychology, our Customer Service Orientation and Diversity as the primary reasons for their interest in and commitment to the Adler Graduate School; thus, reinforcing AGS’s commitment to these fundamental principles, going forward. In fact, these principles appear to be directly related our place of importance among local and regional graduate schools and other providers of professional training.

- **Adlerian Individual Psychology**

The Adler Graduate School is dedicated to the principles of Adlerian Individual Psychology – as informed by Adlerian theory, specifically, and Adlerian philosophy, generally. This has been the case since our organization was established during the middle of the last century and subsequently incorporated in 1969 – 47 years ago. In fact, AGS will work to continuously improve upon this commitment whenever and wherever it becomes clear that we can do a better job.

- **Customer Service Orientation**

The Adler Graduate School seeks to serve our students, as well as the best interests of our community, in general. More specifically, our priorities include our students and their educational objectives, the professions for which we are training our graduates, the Adler Graduate School and, ultimately, the broader community.

An effective Customer Service Orientation is a labor intensive orientation. For example, we often set aside other important activities and uses of our time because, at any given time, displaying a distinctive customer service orientation is perhaps the most important thing we can do. Indeed, dropping everything we might otherwise do as we display a distinctive customer service orientation is important not only on a philosophical level, but also for practical reasons.

On a practical level, although a distinctive customer service orientation may seem like an incredible investment of time, ironically, it may be the very investment that saves time, in the long run, and constructively deepens a relationship. Never underestimate the contribution of your time to a person in need.

As I have said many times, in recent years, I sincerely hope and expect that the Adler Graduate School will one day be perceived as the Disney of local graduate schools – as it concerns our combination of high standards and stellar customer service orientation.

Indeed, the Disney Corporation demonstrates, every day, that it is indeed possible to display both high standards and an extraordinary customer service orientation.

Clearly, excellent customer service naturally flows from healthy human relationships. As such, the Adler Graduate School is a relationship-intensive organization – where we work very hard to be both constructive and direct in our communications with one another – where we talk to one another, not about one another. Indeed, AGS encourages constructive, person-to-person working relationships among students, faculty, staff and community members, believing that high-quality relationships are critical to meaningful training experiences, effective professional behavior, the success and health of our School and, ultimately, the well-being of the communities we serve. As you can see from the Executive Summary attached to this State of the School message, healthy, constructive communications patterns and the standards which inspire them are very much a part of the Adler Graduate School.

- **Organizational Diversity**

The Adler Graduate School aspires to growth according to principles of inclusion – not exclusion. As such, another one of the Adler Graduate School’s fundamental principles is our commitment to a diverse organizational environment. As has been stated many times, the Adler Graduate School is training an increasingly diverse student body, with increasingly diverse professional and personal objectives, for service to an increasingly diverse community.

The Adler Graduate School gratefully accepts its obligation to supply our increasingly diverse community with increasingly diverse professional resources; believing such a contribution will facilitate broader access to important mental health and other human resources – especially among people who have not previously enjoyed access to such resources. We also believe such a contribution to the overall diversity of our community will make both the Adler Graduate School and our State stronger. More specifically, the Adler Graduate School aspires to inclusivity in our patterns of admission, matriculation and, ultimately, graduation and continuing education.

Communications Standards – Adler Graduate School

Earlier this year, an ad hoc team came together to carefully consider the communications methods we most often use here at the Adler Graduate School and, most importantly, the methods and standards to which we aspire as a group of people and as an institution

The ad hoc communications group met for three sessions and then a subset of this group continued the process by working to review and articulate the initial group’s dialogue. After creating a working, Communications Standards draft, this sub-group asked the initial ad hoc group for feedback and then prepared and adopted a final set of Communications Standards.

Although it is always a struggle to articulate standards for any behavior, and trying to define communications standards for an organization that seeks to train professional communicators may seem like a daunting task, who better than a graduate school operating in the fields of mental health and education to take on the task of identifying general standards for healthy, constructive communications.

I emphasize the word general because the standards identified below are somewhat general. Although they will be emphasized, in the foreseeable future, as the Adler Graduate School's adopted communications standards, every individual here at AGS should feel free and empowered to build upon these baseline standards, consistent with her/his own high standards for interpersonal communications. Please keep these standards close at hand as you discharge your responsibilities and as you relate to our students, your colleagues and the members of our broader community.

- In all communications, strive for that which helps, in any given situation; that is, those communications that add value.
- In all communications, look inwardly for those things you can uniquely contribute that add value; that is, those things for which you can take responsibility.
- In all communications – whether agreeable or disagreeable, in any given situation – dedicate yourself to considering what can be learned from each communications experience.
- In all circumstances, strive to communicate in a manner that reflects your “better self”.
- As Paul Wellstone frequently said – and he might as well have been speaking about healthy, constructive interpersonal communications – “We all do better, when we all do better”.
- Strive for composure in all communications.
- Strive for civility in all communications.
- Strive to keep members of the organization well-informed, as appropriate – especially those persons for whom you may have administrative/supervisory responsibility.
- Distribute frequent, regular and de-centralized communications on a program-by-program and institutional unit-by-institutional unit basis – especially with those persons for whom you may have administrative/supervisory responsibility.
- Conduct de-centralized exit interviews with persons who leave AGS by graduation or other routes – de-centralize these interviews at supervisory/program/unit-specific levels – especially with those persons for whom you may have administrative/supervisory responsibility.
- Make use of email and other electronic/written communications strategies whenever appropriate but, as a general rule, communicate on an In-person basis whenever the sensitivity of a message suggests that in-person communications are/will be more constructive/effective than electronic/written communications.

- As it concerns email and other electronic/written communications strategies, as a general rule, strive to never write what you are not willing to say on an in-person basis.
- When you are part of a group meeting (e.g., council, committee, discussion forum) , please do not bring or use electronic devices such as cell phones and computers unless, for example, you are the convener and may need to access information in order to effectively facilitate proceedings. Please keep in mind, it is acceptable to either not attend a group meeting or to step out of a group meeting if you need to address pressing matters, on any given day, and you believe that is the best use of your time.
- Address issues on a situation-by-situation basis. For example, if an issue is better addressed on a one-to-one basis than as a group, then strive to address that issue accordingly and do not treat it as a group issue.
- Strive to courageously confront gossip whenever you hear it – do not rely on others to stand up to gossip. Strive to uphold the standard – “Talk to people – not about people”.
- Conduct conversations with everyone in such a way that if our students were listening you would be proud to stand behind your conversations.
- Consistent with our commitment to diversity – including the diversity of perspectives, beliefs and opinions, and our commitment to constructive communication patterns – communicate in a manner that honors the belief, we are all related.

Natural Resources

The Adler Graduate School continues to organize its programs and institutional units around three primary natural resources – Human, Financial and Physical Resources. These natural resources are carefully developed, distributed and monitored.

- **Human Resources**

During fiscal year 2015/2016, the Adler Graduate School worked with approximately 120 individual faculty and staff members. As such, compared to past years, AGS’s human resources have continued to grow as we build the infrastructure necessary to serve and support our students. As part of this commitment, compared to previous years, both the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 fiscal year budgets appropriated significantly more financial resources to faculty and staff members.

- **Financial Resources**

The Adler Graduate School is financially healthy and continues to invest in both our educational programs and the human resources that support these programs. This

commitment is mission-sensitive and consistent with the Strategic Priorities identified above. It is a commitment that will continue, going forward.

The Higher Education community is currently in the midst of a marketplace transition. The Adler Graduate School is part of this transition and, as such, presently responding to a changing marketplace. Ironically, when the economy is strong, especially as measured by unemployment rates, many higher education programs' admissions patterns change. This is particularly true of graduate schools; especially schools in domains other than high technology and business, for example.

As part of AGS's unique marketplace transition, for the first time in many, many years we experienced a budgetary deficit during fiscal year 2015/2016. As a result, while we remain very healthy, financially, we have intensified our development of new and/or expanded revenue streams, as well other strategies for bringing greater visibility to the Adler Graduate School.

- **Physical Resources**

The Jim Ramstad Community Services Building – our building – is home to both the Adler Graduate School and an ever-expanding group of non-profit tenants. More specifically, AGS occupies the Ramstad Center's entire top floor, as well as the new Presentation Hall and Non-Profit Incubator on our first floor. Our tenants lease the rest of the Ramstad Center's first floor and will eventually occupy approximately 12,000 square feet on the lowest level. These tenants include some of the finest non-profit organizations in the Twin Cities community, such as Canvas Health, The Family Partnership, The Miriam Pew Counseling and Family Education Project – doing business as Encouraging Life Resources.

Admissions

The Adler Graduate School has displayed a robust admissions pattern for most of the last decade, since moving to the Jim Ramstad Community Services Center in 2006. That said, as has been the case with most of the higher education community across the United States during the past few years, admissions for fiscal years 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 have been down slightly. As a result, the Adler Graduate School has increased its investments in the human and financial resources necessary for effective marketing and admissions-related activities. These investments have begun to produce positive results.

AGS's admissions policy continues to emphasize a balance between clear admissions criteria and flexibility, as appropriate. Based on AGS's pattern of admissions and subsequent patterns of retention and graduation, approximately 400 students are associated with the Adler Graduate School, at any given time.

Student Services

The Adler Graduate School's Student Services constitute a rapidly developing institutional unit. In addition to our ongoing efforts to improve student services such as writing support, advising and internship support, we continue to build upon our foundation of student services. For example, during the past year, AGS has hired a Director for Student Success Services and is presently re-shaping its Career Services Office, which will be re-integrated into the Adler Graduate School during fiscal year 2016/2017. Clearly, AGS is dedicated to the continuous improvement of our student services as we support an increasingly rich and diverse student body.

Financial Aid

AGS students make active use of federal financial aid. More specifically, although AGS students also make use of other sources of financial support, federal financial aid is used by approximately 85-90 percent of our students. Administrators monitoring AGS's relationship with federal financial aid work hard to facilitate our students' prudent and conscientious use of funding resources, whatever their source. As a result, AGS is proud of the low student loan default rate displayed by our students and graduates.

In addition to the sources of financial support identified above, in most years, the Adler Graduate School appropriates a small fund for Social Interest in Action Scholarships – based on applicants' financial need, their community-centric internship activities and/or their future plans for addressing pressing community needs, and their relative integration into the life of the Adler Graduate School.

Academic Programs

The Adler Graduate School is accredited to offer one Master's Degree – in Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy – with six related Emphasis Areas (sometimes referred to as Majors). AGS is also accredited to offer six Certificates – some of which are presently inactive. Emphasis Areas and Certificates are listed below.

Current Master's-Level Emphasis Areas

- Adlerian Studies
- Art Therapy
- Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Co-Occurring Disorders
- School Counseling

Current Certificate Programs

- Advanced Adlerian Studies

- Business Coaching and Consulting in Organizations – Inactive
- Career Coaching and Counseling – Inactive
- Co-Occurring Disorders
- Parent Coaching – Inactive
- Professional Life Coaching – Inactive

The Adler Graduate School's academic programs remain dynamic. Among other positive examples of growth and development, AGS's academic programs have been subject to comprehensive curriculum review, the expansion of advising, internship and writing supports, the expansion of on-line educational opportunities, the ongoing development of new educational programs and continuing education opportunities, the careful review of additional accreditation possibilities and the clarification of key policies and procedures, in general. AGS's New Initiatives Committee continues to facilitate the review of high potential programmatic ideas and opportunities.

Among the many academic and other growth opportunities AGS is presently either implementing or considering, the following examples stand out.

- The expansion of on-line programming in Greater Minnesota
- The expansion of continuing education programming
- The development of programming with international partners
- The implementation of modest discounts for select community partners
- The development of parenting resources
- The expansion of AGS's program-related service centers
- The development of doctoral-level programming

Community Visibility/Community Relations

The Adler Graduate School has become increasingly visible and, as such, more active with marketing and community relations tasks. AGS's efforts in the related areas of community visibility and community relations are wide-ranging. Examples of these activities are listed below.

- **Philosophy-Based Community Visibility/Relations** – Strong commitment to three fundamental principles; all of which are critical to AGS's community visibility/community relations (i.e., Commitment to a foundation of Adlerian Psychology; Commitment to a distinctive customer service orientation; Commitment to training an increasingly diverse student body for service to an increasingly diverse community)
- **Technology-Based Community Visibility/Relations** – Increased internet presence, Website upgrades and improved exterior signage

- **Service-Based Community Visibility/Relations** – Post-Graduate Supervision, supporting new graduates’ post-graduate supervision obligations and their movement toward licensure goals according to an affordable fee structure – Ongoing development of Mosak Family Institute; including its three current components, the School Counseling Service Center, the Art Therapy Studio, and the Miriam Pew Counseling and Family Education Project (operating as Encouraging Life Resources) – Expanding staffing support for AGS’s internship program – Imminent hiring of a Grant Writer/Resource Development Associate to focus on grant-writing and community relations
- **Relationship-Based Community Visibility/Relations** – Expanding collaborations with other higher education institutions – Working actively with AGS Alumni Association – Working actively with AGS Student Association
- **Events-Based Community Visibility/Relations** – Hosted 2016 annual meeting of North American Society of Adlerian Psychology (NASAP) – Preparing to host 2017 Congress (held every three years) of the International Association of Individual Psychology (IAIP)
- **Publications-Based Community Visibility/Relations** – Expanding AGS’s regular publications (e.g., annual report, newsletter) – Developed a Special Edition of the Journal of Individual Psychology (JIP), focusing on the intersection of human services and technology – Published *Lost in Translation*, a collection of scholarly Adlerian articles translated into English.

Growing Edges

The Adler Graduate School has many growing edges. We are proud of our flexible acceptance of change as an inevitable and necessary ingredient of growth and maturation. One challenge, of course, is pairing change with a prudent and sane pace. Another critical challenge is monitoring change for both its desired effects and, just as importantly, its unintended consequences – and, especially in the case of change’s unintended consequences, being willing to adapt the focus and pace of change based on important feedback loops. This 2016 State of the School message offers insights into some of the areas where the Adler Graduate School needs to keep improving. Moving forward, all faculty and staff members will play a significant part in this continuous improvement. Some examples of areas for ongoing improvement – or our growing edges, if you will – are listed below.

- Internal communications
- Integration of Adlerian principles
- Organizational diversity
- Customer service orientation

- Continuum of student services
- Educational technology
- Technological proficiency
- Fully integrated curriculum and internship programs
- Models for financial oversight and re-investment in AGS as an organization
- Models for the ongoing development of AGS's financial and physical resources
- Faculty and staff development
- Marketing/Visibility/Community Relations
- Community involvement
- Faculty/Staff/Board Member orientation
- Additional accreditation possibilities
- Additional clarification of policies and procedures

In closing this 2016 State of the School message, I would make one simple statement. The Adler Graduate School depends on feedback from students, alumni, faculty, staff, community members and Board members – whether this feedback comes in the form of comments, concerns, questions or new ideas. As such, please – PLEASE – do not hesitate in offering this feedback to anyone associated with the Adler Graduate School, including me. In the meantime, I thank every member of the Adler Graduate School for both their individual and collective contributions to the School and its students.

Respectfully submitted,

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