

WE ARE MARQUETTE WORLD CAFE

An Evening of Reflection, Spirit, Energy and Direction Personal Thoughts on Marquette's World Café

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"We Are Marquette" You've undoubtedly encountered that phrase. Marquette basketball chant it loudly. I have a poster on my office door that proclaims it. Hopefully, you've y it proudly yourself. But who is "we"? What truly defines the Marquette experience? Wh joins the members of the Marquette family into "we"?

More than 200 people gathered for a unique event on January 27 to engage in a conversation about the answers to those questions. On this night, the ballroom in the Alumni Memorial Union was transformed into a "World Café," where students, trustees faculty, staff, administrators, Jesuits, alumni and community representatives gathered. I was among those invited to attend and participate in the conversation.

World Café-style events create a network of conversation around questions that matter. A Café conversation is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and identifying opportunities for action.

Capturing the Energy

Marquette's World Café-style event was born from the vision of MUSG Executive Vice President Paul Bergl. In the fall of 2003, Bergl and MUSG President Kate Agnew returned from summer break and sensed a palpable buzz and energy on campus, probably generated largely by the marvelous new buildings, record-breaking enrollment and the excitement of the previous men's basketball season.

"Campus was alive with this feeling, this excitement, this inertia that everyone seemed to be talking about," Agnew says. "It is hard to put a finger on any one or two specific things, but we knew that something needed to be done with this opportunity."

The two seniors met with Marquette administrators and plans got underway. They recognized a unique opportunity to engage not only students, faculty, and staff, but al alumni, Jesuits, trustees and members of the Milwaukee community.

The evening started in the ballroom with some opening remarks and instruction from facilitator [Rebecca Ryan](#), the founder of [Next Generation Consulting](#), an organization w studies the work and life trends of Americans. Ryan, among many things, is also an au and motivational speaker.



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And You Are?

During the first session of the evening, we were asked to find a partner, someone we had never met before whose role at Marquette was different from our own. We interviewed each other about our own personal Marquette experiences, the things we value as members of the Marquette community and three wishes we had for Marquette. After this one-on-one conversation, we went downstairs to Marquette Place for dinner in small groups.

Two students, a faculty member, an alumnus, a dean and I sat down together. We could have talked all evening, but with only one hour to complete this particular segment of the event, we got busy sharing the results of our interviews. Our conversation was lively at times emotional.

Marquette junior Courtney Hutton told us how a service learning trip changed her life. Her wish for Marquette was that the university would enroll a more diverse student body. Alumnus Jeff Sherman, Bus Ad '91, talked about how even as a graduate just about everything in life flows from Marquette, whether it's meeting alumni everywhere you go or connections that help you get a job or the sense of responsibility to the community that was instilled in you as a student. Sherman's wish for Marquette was heightened alumni participation. Dr. Michael McKinney, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, shared a memorable experience of traveling with an admissions group one summer and the sense of pride that trip gave him. He returned to the classroom the following fall with a renewed sense of commitment to students.

Perhaps most compelling to me was the story of Nick Jannetto, a senior in the College of Engineering. His father passed away when he was young. With only the income of a single parent supporting his family, a Marquette education didn't seem likely for this Milwaukee native. But scholarships and the ability to earn income while working in the engineering program made it possible for him to be present at our table. "I'm living my dream here at Marquette," he told us.

Wrestling with Questions

After dinner we gathered in groups of five and participated in 15-minute cycles of conversation during which we reacted to a specific question and then recorded our thoughts on poster-sized pieces of paper. At the end of each 15-minute cycle, the papers were collected and we moved to a new table with new faces and a new question to ponder.

- *When Marquette is at its best, what outcome does it produce with consistent quality?*
- *What should Marquette do more of, better, or differently to be our best?*
- *What is so integral to Marquette that without it Marquette would not be Marquette?*

These are some of the questions we wrestled with throughout the evening.

The responses were hung on the wall. Later, as I looked through them, I noticed that some things were mentioned repeatedly and by many groups. We agreed that Marquette distinguishes itself through its Catholic, Jesuit identity and that service is an important part of its mission.

The assembled groups gave important feedback on things that Marquette can do better at as well as heartfelt testimonials about what Marquette does right. Several things were listed more than one group, including the feeling that Marquette needs to do a better job with diversity, that the university needs to strengthen academic advising and faculty mentorship and that Marquette needs to take a more active leadership role in Milwaukee.

In addition to the group responses, participants wrote their own individual comments and suggestions at the end of the evening. The responses will be transcribed and analyzed in depth. As Marquette moves forward with strategic planning, Marquette leaders will utilize the results of this Café conversation as a tool to aid them.

Simply "Awesome"

"What you are doing tonight will really make an enormous difference," said Marquette President Robert Wild, S.J. He participated in the event, as did other senior Marquette administrators such as Provost Madeline Wake and Senior Vice President Gregory Kliet. The room was a rich mixture of people with a variety of backgrounds and Marquette experiences, including a number of students who are not regularly active in extracurricular activities. "Tonight you are helping to ensure that we capitalize on the momentum Marquette has gathered in recent years so that the university is transformed in a significant and lasting way," Father Wild said.

After the event I heard a small group of students continuing their conversation in the lobby of the AMU. "That was awesome," one student told another. "I've never done anything like that." And I overheard a faculty person say the experience "was awesome."

My Three Wishes

The event was truly a success and an enjoyable exercise to take part in. Our Café conversation was not just an exercise in communication. I feel that it started conversations that will contribute to the evolution of Marquette and I was honored to be a part of it. A clear example of how the leaders at this great institution are committed to keeping their finger on the pulse of campus. They genuinely care about the feedback from all of us.

My three wishes for Marquette? Continued success in athletics as we move to the Big East conference in the NCAA; that the conversations we started on this night will continue to inspire members of the Marquette community; and lastly, that our endowment will continue to grow so that students like Nick Jannetto will continue to live their dreams here. "We love Marquette."



What were your thoughts on the "World Cafe?" [Drop us a line!](#) We'll be posting them to this site in the very near future!

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