Financial Validation Introduced by SFS

JOHANNA FLOREZ

Houghton’s Student Financial Services (SFS) office is pushing to ensure that financial plans are in place prior to students starting classes each semester.

An email from President Mullen’s office at the end of February announced an updated Financial Validation Checklist. The checklist clarifies the process of ensuring each student is able to pay their bill before the start of each new semester and establishing a “financially validated” status which all students must achieve before moving into college housing and starting classes.

No bill deadlines are changed from past academic years. Rather, the checklist reflects the Student Financial Services office’s push to have paperwork completed in plenty of time to send out accurate bills and set up payment plans before each semester’s beginning. “What we’re wanting is a concrete plan of how [students] are going to pay their bills,” explains Marianne Loper, the director of SFS. “That’s what’s going to constitute financially validated.” From now on, financial validation must be completed before a student’s return to campus, whether that means payment in full, an official monthly payment plan, or proof of an approved loan application which will cover the entire bill due date of August 8. Mindie Elwell, the assistant director of SFS, further clarifies, “The bill due date is not changing. It’s the same as it was. ... We’re trying to make the steps leading up to the bill clearer so that they’re building in order to be ready to pay that bill in August.”

The first step of the financial validation checklist is for eligible students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA for the 2019-2020 school year has been available since October, and Houghton’s priority deadline for completing it was February 15. Many students who submitted the FAFSA have already received their award letters (mailed to their home addresses), but almost 20% of returning students have yet to complete this first step towards financial validation.

After completion of the FAFSA and, where requested, additional income verification, the next step is for students to register for fall classes as soon as they are able and then secure their housing and meal plans for the upcoming year. Loper explains, “In order for [students’] bills to truly be accurate so they know what they’re going to owe, students need to have, before they leave campus, registered for their courses for fall and made sure their schedule is set, and make sure their housing and meal plans are set. Because that all feeds into what the bill is going to be in July.” Additionally, students who receive outside scholarships should submit those letters by May 1, and students with health insurance plans before each semester.

The excellently maintained housing offices, the checklist reflects the Student Financial Services office’s push to have paperwork completed in plenty of time to send out accurate bills and set up payment plans before each semester’s beginning. “What we’re wanting is a concrete plan of how [students] are going to pay their bills,” explains Marianne Loper, the director of SFS. “That’s what’s going to constitute financially validated.” From now on, financial validation must be completed before a student’s return to campus, whether that means payment in full, an official monthly payment plan, or proof of an approved loan application which will cover the entire bill. Loper explains, “In order for [students’] bills to truly be accurate so they know what they’re going to owe, students need to have, before they leave campus, registered for their courses for fall and made sure their schedule is set, and make sure their housing and meal plans are set. Because that all feeds into what the bill is going to be in July.” Additionally, students who receive outside scholarships should submit those letters by May 1, and students with health insurance plans before each semester.

Dr. Young Reusser will join Houghton’s faculty as a professor of the Psychology Department. She says that she likes coming to Houghton because of the wonderful experience she brings—so social psychology, statistics and research methods, and neuroscience—and her excellent record of research, including involving students as fellow researchers.

The excellent record of research that Dr. Young mentions includes her work on person perception in politics, which was published in Psychological Science and featured in the Huffington Post. As Dr. Young also mentions, Dr. Young Reusser works to involve students in research, something she says she’s particularly excited about doing at Houghton. “I have my own research projects,” she says, “and I’m always happy to help students with their own research ideas.”

For students, participating in this collaborative research as undergraduates is something they see as particularly valuable. Alanna Hilzer, a sophomore majoring in psychology, says that this kind of collaborative research offers an opportunity to for students to be more prepared for their work and study after graduation. “It’s scary to go out into the world and be like, ‘I’m not prepared for this!’ she says, “so if you can get as much research as you can and have opportunities like that, I feel like that’s good.”

As a Houghton graduate, Dr. Young Reusser has an appreciation for the integration of faith and learning that Houghton offers in every discipline. “I had a wonderful experience as an undergraduate,” she says, “and I want to continue Houghton’s legacy of producing scholar-servants - people who serve Christ with their heart, soul, and mind.” One of the ways that Dr. Young Reusser will help Houghton students to become these people is by pushing them to ask challenging questions. Dr. Young Reusser says, “One of my favorite aspects of teaching psychology is that as a discipline, it asks difficult, complicated questions about what it means to be in the world and be like, ‘I’m not prepared for this!’ she says, “so if you can get as much research as you can and have opportunities like that, I feel like that’s good.”

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Juan Santiago, a senior at Houghton Academy, is the current Executive Officer of Student Government. He is responsible for representing the student body at the college and ensuring that student concerns are addressed. Santiago notes that the student government is open to all students and that everyone has a voice in decision-making.

Santiago explains how, on the island, there is an issue among Puerto Ricans regarding their relation to the United States. In recent years, the Puerto Rican desire for either statehood or independence have both remained commonwealth has decreased, while those who favor a different approach to political parties in Puerto Rico, each with a historically unique set of options. In recent years, there has been a strong increase in the number of people who believe that Puerto Rico should become a state, with 26 percent wanting it to be a state, 26 percent wanting it to be a commonwealth, and 0.6 percent wanting it to be independent.

Santiago believes that education can be a key factor in changing the perceptions of the younger generation. He says, "I believe that education can be a powerful tool in changing minds and promoting a better understanding of the issues facing Puerto Rico. The younger generation is the future, and it is important that we educate them on the importance of making informed decisions about their future."

According to Santiago, the younger generation is increasingly interested in the issue of Puerto Rico's status. He notes that a survey conducted in 2017 showed that 15 percent of the population supported statehood, while 54 percent of those who voted indicated that they were not satisfied with the status quo, as defined by the United States (Britannica.com). In recent years, there has been a strong increase in the number of people who believe that Puerto Rico should become a state, with 26 percent wanting it to be a state, 26 percent wanting it to be a commonwealth, and 0.6 percent wanting it to be independent.

Santiago continues, "people died of heat exhaustion up in the mountains." He says, "I was told by a woman that she died of heat exhaustion up in the mountains. It was very hard to get up the mountains."

The hurricane has made the experience of Hurricane Maria even more difficult for the people of Puerto Rico. The United States has sent over 10 billion in aid (Vox) to Puerto Rico, but this aid has not been sufficient to meet the needs of the hurricane survivors who live on the island. The remaining commonwealth has decreased, while those who favor a different approach to political parties in Puerto Rico, each with a historically unique set of options.

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Seniors Celebrate Skip Day: Enjoy boat trip to Coburg, Ontario

This rerun column features various Houghton STAR articles from our archives. These articles do not contain current information, but are meant to show the past culture and events on Houghton Campus throughout the College’s history. This particular article is from Volume 24 Issue 27 of the STAR published on May 20th, 1912.

Skip day has rolled by once again. Must have been good for the seniors is still talking about it. Contrary to all belief that these noble upperclassman would go on Arbor Day, they left bright and early Monday morning. Keeney and her load, believe it or not, were the first to leave the Campus. Evidently she had little faith in her chariot for she left 45 minutes early before he designated hour. Five o’clock found most of the class at Mary K’s ready to receive all sorts of instructions from Thurber. However he fooled em and only told part. “Proceed to Farmsville while i go pick up another girl” ordered Thurber, and sure enough he drove clear back to fillmore to get Catherine McCarthy, a classmate who finished her A.B. in January. Catherine was all set and rarrin’ to go. For once Thurber met his equal for “stringing a line”.

Having arrived in Farmer ville President Alexis (better known as Walta) secured round trip tickets for Coburg via B.O. Railroad to Roaheastrand Ontario Steamer Ship Lines to Coburg. The train arrived “Peg” Ackerman was excited enough for the whole crew; however everyone seemed to show his share. Prof. LeRoy was extraordinarily interested in seeing that fruit and doughnuts were safely board ed – the poor conductor, fared well with oranges and howl – Some were good and some were good.

Were we surprised when we caught the first glimpse of the S.S.Ontario? Who expected such a large boat – and Captain?- A jolly captain of a mere 276 pounds welcomed up to his ship and was responsible for royal entertainment all day.

Coburg was very interesting place in which to spend a couple hours. Everyone “did” the town and Ester Brayley found a nize Frenchman who sold her a pair of shoes.

The trip back was even better than going over there. One can explain effectually the best parts of the whole trip. However if you are interested ask “Squeek” to tell you all the stories the Captain told him, Art France how he enjoyed his mer ry-go-round ride, Foster where he learned his art for attracting the ladies’ attention. Margaret Carter what Lake Ontario fishes look like, Louise Zickler what the third flock of the left is for, Ruth Burgess why the boat rocks sometimes, Isabelle Hawn what she knows about rook, Cyril Little how he enjoys English Brand Coffee, Ruth Kissinger if she must get her shoes shine in such places, Gordy stevenson if anyone has seen Emelene, and so far into the night.

We missed those members of our class who could not go along. We wished who could not go along. We wished many times that “Bea” Jones could have enjoyed it all with us – See you in June, Bea – President Luckey and Prof. and Mrs. Franher were Senior guests for the day. To say the least the Seniors had some skip day. ★

Houghton

BASIL WELLS

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At first sight houghton is an ordinary New York village. The scattered group of houses, stragglng along the uneven highway or snuggly fitted into the shallow niches and benches of the hill-sides can be duplicated a hun dred times amount these same hills. Nor does the gleaming ox bow, made by the shallow Gene see just opposite the town, set her apart from ny other hamlet. High above the narrow road, however, a wedge-shaped plateau juts de fiantly out into the valley, bear ing Houghton College on its broad green back. It is here that Houghton bears no resemblance to other small towns.

A sense of peace and isolation from the hurryings strife of modern business and thought comes to the visitor as the crosses the velvety smoothness of the campus of eh first time. He sees the students crossing the broad lawns and wondered at the fel lowship and lack of animosity between the classes. He realizes that some fore beyond that exerci sed by the inhabitants of houghton is at work. And then, as he sees the serenity and beauty of the maple-cald kills above the quaint little village, he knows God is here. ★

Matthew Cicero

PAIGE COLLINS

Matthew Cicero ’22 has achieved the Highlander of the Week Award for the second-to- last week of March. Cicero is majoring in Chemistry, and is a member of the Houghton Men’s Tennis Team. He achieved a singles victory against SUNY Delhi and then again later in the week against PSU Behrend, earning him the award.

Cicero states that his coach has helped him reach such a productive week. He says, “With our new coach and all the stuff he’s implementing in practice, I can improve a lot. Even from last fall to this sea son.” He also attributes some of his success to the great coaching the Houghton Men’s Tennis Team received this past week.

As the season continues, Cicero has a number of goals and aspirations that he would like to achieve. He states that he would like to, “Improve as a player and fill our vacant spots in the lineup.”

As Cicero is only in his first year of Houghton Men’s Tennis, he has a variety of long term goals as well. He says, “I want to keep playing a higher level tennis every semester goes that by.” He continues, “My Senior year of High School was my best year and right now I think I’m a little bit better than my Senior year of High School.”

Cicero concludes that “I want to keep getting a little bit better, until I can hit with the top guys on the team.”

One of the key aspects of tennis that gets Cicero out on the court is the execution of the sport itself. Cicero states that, “Nice shots and nice form are beautiful to watch. It’s really fun when you hit them or fun to watch other people hit them.”

To get to know our Highlander of the Week a little better: Cicero is loyal to his sport. Although he watches some college football, his sole playing interest is tennis. There is a plethora of professional tennis players that Cicero is a fan of, but with so many to choose from, he admits that can’t name just one he likes best. His favorite TV show is Futurama, and if you see him up in the dining hall at the breakfast hour, he’ll likely have a heaping bowl of oatmeal, as it is one of his favorite meals. An additional note; he thinks porcupines and hippos are both pretty cool. ★

Write for the International Perspectives Column!

Are you an international student?

Do you want to report on current issues in your home country?

If so, the STAR wants to hear your insights!

Email editor@houghtonstar.com
Professor Connie Finney Delivers Valedictory Lecture

On Thursday, March 28th, a group of students, faculty, and community members gathered to hear Dr. Connie Finney give her valedictory lecture—"Of Lilies, Laughter, and Learning: Hodgepodge for the Soul". The group filled a large classroom to capacity, if not beyond, everyone eager to hear what Finney would say.

Valedictory lectures are a part of the faculty lecture series when retiring professors offer final wisdom to the Houghton community. Finney chose to divide hers into six chapters. When asked why, she said, "I didn’t want to talk about just one thing, but a lot of different topics of my time at Houghton." In the first chapter, "Consider the Lilies,” Finney suggested that wildflowers carry the antidote to stress, reminding her of God’s intricate craftsmanship. Since she is not only an admirer of wildflowers, but also an avid photographer, this chapter concluded with a slideshow of Finney’s pictures.

In the second chapter, "Antidote Number Two," Finney talked about the difficulty of remaining cheerful during long winters when everywhere she looks, both inside and outside, there is grayness and not much else. The antidote she suggests for this is laughter; in fact, she says that she tries to laugh every day. Anyone who knows Finney was not surprised to hear this. Johanna Florez, a sophomore English and Adolescence Education major, when asked what was most memorable about the lecture, said, "I like how much laughter she always draws. People are always happy when she talks to them.”

The third chapter was called "The Third Way." Finney talked about her experience as a Mennonite, ultimately leading her to become the pastor of Sojourners Mennonite Fellowship in Belfast. Interestingly, she was the first woman ordained in the New York Mennonite Conference. Finney also explained how these values impact her teaching. For example, Mennonites value the priesthood of all believers, so rather than approaching her classes as though she were "The Grand Knower of All Things," she attempts to be open to the idea that her students may have valuable things to contribute too.

This transitioned into Chapter Four, in which Finney discussed her thoughts about teaching, including her insights into the drawbacks of the grading system. She emphasized the harmfulness of giving points for attendance, participation, and effort, which do not always reflect a student’s understanding. She suggested this practice, often intended to boost the grades of hardworking students, should not be necessary because “When a student is putting forth so much effort, they should be rewarded with learning,” and not need a boost to earn a good grade.

Finney titled the penultimate section, "Hodgepodge," suggesting that this mixture of breaded and deep-fried vegetables may be the food our souls need, rather than the classic chicken soup. She took this section to share humorous anecdotes from her time at Houghton, such as on her first campus tour when a then-student shouted from the fifth floor of Lamberton, "Houghton is a jail! Don’t come to school here!"

In the final chapter, “The Communion of the Saints,” Finney discussed communion’s role in the Christian faith, in part by contrasting it against baptism. One impactful idea from this section was the idea the elements become a physical, inseparable part of the person who takes them, and that this cannot be undone. The thunderous round of applause at its conclusion was evidence that the lecture was enjoyed thoroughly by the audience. Emily Allen, a junior Theology major, enjoyed when Finney talked about different people she has known during her time at Houghton, saying, “To hear her reminiscing like that and think of all her memories, I thought that was really sweet.” She adds, “Everyone should listen to it [the lecture] if they get the chance.” Florez says that she appreciated the different sections because, “Some were kind of goofy, some of them were more serious, and some of them were very theological, so the mix was cool.”

When asked how she felt about giving a valedictory lecture, Finney said, “I greatly appreciate that the college gives that opportunity” and adds that she is “very excited about retiring.” She is looking forward to the opportunity to write down more of her stories and continue her wildflower photography.
Greenhouse Offers Refuge

MELISSA HODDE

Even in the midst of sudden and inevitable late snowstorms, a vivid and secure island of life is visible across the quad from the campus center, tucked against Paino so that it connects to the first floor lab. The Houghton Lyric Theatre hosts ongoing experiments in botany and ecology, an ever-expanding collection of local houseplants, seating and areas for students hoping to study or paint, and the first sprouts that will become Houghton's outdoor vegetable garden.

A curious investigator who finds the greenhouse unlocked on a weekend day will have to care to avoid disturbing the rows of thick-stemmed tomato plants against one wall and weave between overflowing baskets of pink-flowered Christmas Cactus to reach the center of operations.

A few misting devices are aimed at the tables and shelves dedicated to students who propagate from larger plants - among them a few aloes, some seemingly stemless snake plants and a practically never-ending supply of fat-leaved jade trees.

Although very few things besides crosiers are blooming out in the greenhouse, a large Calla lily's violely purple flowers contrast with the fragile pink blossoms spilling from several species of plants tucked around the tables. The thoughtfulness of the community member who now cares for the greenhouse makes itself evident in the half a dozen pots with tiny fragments of older plants slowly growing into a life of their own, and the taperware container with a few inches of water inside that houses fallen leaves and spice bulbs.

The greenhouse has waxed and waned in its activities over the years, and only came into major use as a place for student research under the supervision of Dr. Aaron Sullivan, the chair of the Biology department. Now, handwritten signs urge visitors not to touch the Venus flytraps, the tomatoes or the little pop-up tents housing chrysalides where a week before there were caterpillars. Flats full of deceased pitcher plants from an old research project are tucked under the low windows that holds trays of sprouting onions, peppers, thyme, eggplants and various other vegetables and herbs just entering the first few weeks of life.

The flats are under the care of a team of Eco Reps volunteers under the guidance of Sustainability interns, guided by the Sustainable Food Coordinator, Thomas Wagner ’20. The plants won’t be ready to move to the Center for Sustainability for at least a month - at least, the onions have yet to shed their seed coverings and seem to be wearing little hats, and the nearby Caladium and moonflower seedlings for the campus orchard are barely beginning to sprout - but local predictions don’t expect the ground to stop freezing before the second week of May, so all seems to run according to plan.

Of the tables scattered around the greenhouse, two host a gathering of chairs and enough space for tourists ready to move into the cluster of cacti and other plants in the greenhouse as a place of study and personal preference - despite its apparent sterility, the rambunctious strain of shifting panels interrupts the silence every few minutes throughout the day, and occasionally the misting devices produce a somewhat humid environment. One student who frequently visited the greenhouse in prior years, and still stops by after nearby classes to try the door, said she often finds it locked in the middle of a weekday. Nevertheless, the “peaceful” atmosphere (cited by the student above) consistently attracts guests aiming to polish off an assignment or conduct a quiet meeting with a few peers.

The jungle-esque giant leaves of monstera plants leaning into the walkway and near, pink-and-green pinions of spiderwort beside the artificial pond appeal to more than just the casual observers on campus. Professor of Art Ted Murphy brings his students to the greenhouse to practice watercolor and pastel painting, taking advantage of the year-round presence of flowering and active plant life as a useful subject material. In addition, some of the greenhouse plants have made their way into various student dorms through a plant sale that took place in the fall semester. Whether spreading plants elsewhere or bringing new ones in, each changing season will likely bring something new for the greenhouse.

Houghton Lyric Theatre Performs
The Marriage of Figaro

MARY CHICHESTER

This semester, Houghton Lyric theatre performed The Marriage of Figaro directed by Professor Amanda Cox. This Operatic Comedy, written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, was performed in the Wesley Chapel on March 21, 22, and 23. Every night drew a large audience, with long lines out the door and packed parking lots.

The performance featured a large set piece as the backdrop for every scene, courtesy of Deryl Stevenson, Tom Miner, and a team of set painters listed in the playbill. Above the stage was a projector screen showing translations from the original Italian. As the lights went down, the orchestra, conducted by Dillon Hirsch and hidden behind the set, began the show.

The first act opens with Susanna, a maid to the Countess, trying on and adjusting her wedding bonnet while her betrothed, Figaro, Valet to the Count, measures the space where he intends to put their wedding bed. Susanna and Figaro disagree as to whether the room is a good fit for them, as Susanna believes it to be too close to the Count’s chambers. This is when she reveals that the Count seems to intend on reinstating the droit du seigneur, a feudal rule that makes the Count seem to have the right to any servant women on their wedding night, a law he had done away with upon marrying the Countess Rosina. This leads the Countess, Figaro, Susanna, and Cherubino (a page, who is madly in love with the Countess) to team up against the Count. In what is called “a single day of madness,” secrets are revealed, plans are made (and come close to being ruined), and furniture is hid behind.

The response to the Lyric Theater performance was all around wonderful. Noah Wuerth ‘22 simply called the show “Fantastic!” adding, “The slides were a little bit behind, but I feel like it’s hard for them to keep up with . . . the different languages.”

Cast members had as much fun in the show as the audience did watching it. Cast member Rachel Schaarschmidt, who played Susanna on Friday and Saturday, said, “This was my first non-ensemble show and I am so blessed to have been cast. I never have doubted my talent and overall wonderful cast. They made this my first lead role such a great experience for me and I will forever be grateful for it.”

The Marriage of Figaro had several elements that made production more complicated than previous shows, such as unique costumes and sets. The director however, seemed to have no problem with the help of God, would indeed be able to step up to the task, do the work, and thrive as these incredible and colorful characters. And they did not disappoint me!”

In an interview following the performance, Professor Cox stated, “The bottom line is that I am so pleased and proud of my students for their monumental achievement of beautifully and successfully putting on this opera in Italian. It was an experience that none of us will soon forget!”

The Marriage of Figaro was received well by the audience, and the cast made their director, peers, and most importantly, themselves, proud. ★
"Are you two dating?" is a question I have always winced at. Throughout my life, I’ve never once dated. Close male and female friends, I’ve excluded. I don’t know if it was intentional on the part of the rest of the kids in our class, but we’d always been a bit socially awkward and we found we preferred sitting and talking, making an illegal fort behind the administration building, and pretending seagulls were enemy planes, to the girls’ game of house and boys’ game, which involved a lot of running and throwing things. This idyllic state didn’t last long. We were soon berated with chants of “Phoebe loves Nathaniel,” and “Have you kissed yet?” That sort of behavior from our peers continued for years afterward.

Most college-aged people don’t act like the kids in my fourth grade class. And if they do, they are usually more subtle. But our culture still has trouble accepting the dynamic of male-female friendships which start platonic and remain platonic. Maybe this is changing, but at least at a Christian college I don’t have to constantly worry about it.

As a result, the question has resurfaced and I’ve been asked this question is well-intentioned. I love you, and they know that people will misunderstand that people will misunderstand my friendships with girls. As I mentioned before, a large part of this is language. I often tell my female friends, “I love you,” and they know exactly what I mean. Would I say this to a male friend? I want to. We should love all our friends, and our ways to express it. Of course, we can communicate this through actions, hugs, and other things we do, with our willingness to listen, and our commitment to spend time with and appreciate each friend. I suppose in the end how we act toward a friend is more important than how we talk, but I believe we should be able to express how we feel more freely without fear of misunderstanding. We should be open to showing our love. Love breaks social boundaries for it. Love should be part of building blocks of any life.

Another issue I’ve been confronted about is what a friendship between a woman and a man should look like. A comment I’ve often gotten from female friends is, “You can’t expect a friendship between a guy and girl to be the same as a friendship between two girls.” And I don’t. No friendship we have with one person is going to be the same as with another, whether they are the same gender as we are or not. In order to have realistic expectations in any relationship, no matter whom it is with, for what kind of relationship it is, we must work to understand that person as they are...

And so, lastly, boy-girl friendships are a perfect way to combat a lot of wrong assumptions that one gender can have about the other. We can’t go forward assuming that men and women are exactly the same, but it is an equal or greater danger to assume that men and women are from different planets. Loving someone well, getting to know them in all their beauty and imperfections, can counter those assumptions. We can’t forget that for all differences between men and women, we’ve actually got a whole lot more common ground. Through opposite gender friendships we can reconcile misunderstandings and love people as individuals: fully female, fully male, but most importantly, fully human.

Phoebe is a Sophomore majoring in English and Writing.

Why “Just” Friends?

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

We all have access to the internet. Because of this fact, we also have constant access to inaccurate portrayals of people with autism. I have to ask if these portrayals are causing unintentional bullying. For example, when we laugh at supposed “retarded” people in America’s Funniest Videos or on Facebook, we may actually be laughing at people with high functioning Autism. We are also not aware of the people on our college campuses that have Autism. Usually we think of these individuals outside the context of higher education. However, they are among us, in our media and on our campuses, and even Houghton students may lack awareness of their lives. There are three particular areas I think autism awareness can be improved in college life.

Before I unpack these areas, I would like to define Autism. According to the Autism Society, “Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental disability; signs typically appear during early childhood and affect a person’s ability to communicate, and interact with others.” This is a different term than “retardated,” which is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “slow or limited in intellectual or emotional development characterized by mental retardation.” The confusion between these two terms leads to unintentional cyber bullying. By using the word “retarded” to describe “autism” in Facebook videos and on social media sites we hurt our brothers and sisters that are diagnosed with Autism. “Retarded” is not a word that should be used to describe anyone.

The next point I would like to address is the disrespect shown to autistics on television. Shows like Family Guy, King of the Hill, and South Park all poorly represent autism in our society. While television channel companies may think their portrayals are a joke, this kind of comedy is not amusing. Caught in the show, people laugh heartilyheartedly without any bad intentions and accidentally mock their autistic brothers and sisters.

By recognizing the influence of our media and the necessity of relationship it is, we must work to understand that person as they are.

And so, lastly, boy-girl friendships are a perfect way to combat a lot of wrong assumptions that one gender can have about the other. We can’t go forward assuming that men and women are exactly the same, but it is an equal or greater danger to assume that men and women are from different planets. Loving someone well, getting to know them in all their beauty and imperfections, can counter those assumptions. We can’t forget that for all differences between men and women, we’ve actually got a whole lot more common ground. Through opposite gender friendships we can reconcile misunderstandings and love people as individuals: fully female, fully male, but most importantly, fully human.

Phoebe is a Sophomore majoring in English and Writing.

Why “Just” friends? The very language at play here immediately devalues the relationship in place. As a result, the question has bothered me since I was nine years old. I’ve never thought it was strange to have friends of the opposite gender until I was in fourth grade and I met my friend Nathaniel.

Nathaniel and I clicked instantly. Fourth grade was the year that our class split into two large friend-groups: boys and girls. Nathaniel and I were excluded. I don’t know if it was intentional on the part of the rest of the kids in our class, but we’d always been a bit socially awkward and we found we preferred sitting and talking, making an illegal fort behind the administration building, and pretending seagulls were enemy planes, to the girls’ game of house and boys’ game, which involved a lot of running and throwing things. This idyllic state didn’t last long. We were soon berated with chants of “Phoebe loves Nathaniel,” and “Have you kissed yet?” That sort of behavior from our peers continued for years afterward.

Most college-aged people don’t act like the kids in my fourth grade class. And if they do, they are usually more subtle. But our culture still has trouble accepting the dynamic of male-female friendships which start platonic and remain platonic. Maybe this is changing, but at least at a Christian college I don’t have to constantly worry about it.

As a result, the question has resurfaced and I’ve been asked this question is well-intentioned. I love you, and they know that people will misunderstand my friendships with girls. As I mentioned before, a large part of this is language. I often tell my female friends, “I love you,” and they know exactly what I mean. Would I say this to a male friend? I want to. We should love all our friends, and our ways to express it. Of course, we can communicate this through actions, hugs, and other things we do, with our willingness to listen, and our commitment to spend time with and appreciate each friend. I suppose in the end how we act toward a friend is more important than how we talk, but I believe we should be able to express how we feel more freely without fear of misunderstanding. We should be open to showing our love. Love breaks social boundaries for it. Love should be part of building blocks of any life.

Another issue I’ve been confronted about is what a friendship between a woman and a man should look like. A comment I’ve often gotten from female friends is, “You can’t expect a friendship between a guy and girl to be the same as a friendship between two girls.” And I don’t. No friendship we have with one person is going to be the same as with another, whether they are the same gender as we are or not. In order to have realistic expectations in any relationship, no matter whom it is with, for what kind of relationship it is, we must work to understand that person as they are...
We are our experiences. Influence from parents, teachers, peers, video games, memes, and others contributes to who we are as people. To try to make a list of people who have influenced you. Maybe one or both of your parents come to mind. Maybe you think of a politician, or a celebrity, or a comic book character (Captain America, for me). You might imagine a past teacher or professor of yours, or a friend, or a bully from school. I’m sure there are others. So many unique people have a claim to a part of your psyche. They constructed your mind, from the ground up. Furthermore, they all started out as “blank slates”, just like you. Now, think of someone you use the influence you have to show the next generation how to love one another?...”

“...It’s clear we must be more conscious of the struggles LGBTQ+ children go thorough...will you use the influence you have to show the next generation how to love one another?...”

The mission of the Houghton Star is to preserve and promote the values of dialogue, transparency and integrity that have characterized Houghton College since its inception. This will be done by serving as a medium for the expression of student thought and as a quality publication of significant campus news, Houghton area news, and events.

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Artist of the Week
Matthew Heady
// senior art major

“From the time I was a child I knew I would make art. When the teacher told me to paint a landscape in second grade I painted a turtle. That’s the thing about being an artist. You don’t always play by the rules. Rules were meant to be broken.”