

October 21, 2014

Dear Gordon Administration,

After much deliberation and prayer, I have decided that my best course of action is to resign my position as the Director of the Office of Community Engagement. The last three months have been heartbreaking as I have witnessed a large majority of our longstanding community partnerships become severely troubled or come to an abrupt end. Even more consequentially, I have lost confidence that I would be able to continue at Gordon College as the visionary and energetic leader of our campus-community engagements considering the difference in partnership philosophy that has been evident in my response, and the College's official response, to the current crisis.

As the founder of this program in 2003, I have loved crafting student learning experiences in the context of a relational, incarnational, and asset-based community development model. I have given myself wholeheartedly to designing creative ways for Gordon students to serve and learn in Lynn while upholding values of respect, reciprocity, and community empowerment. Our work has always been grounded in community invitation and the posture with which we enter and maintain those relationships profoundly matters to me both in terms of our credibility and lasting fruit.

My goal is to transition out of my current role in the least disruptive way possible in order to serve the students, the larger Gordon community, and the City of Lynn. I would like to request that my last day of work be December 19, 2014. Because this is a complicated time for Gordon in which I cannot claim to understand all the dynamics, I would understand if this date is not acceptable to the administration. If this is the case, please consider this letter to be my two weeks' notice with my last day of work being November 4, 2014. Although I believe that leaving at the semester break is an easier transition, I am not comfortable signing any legally binding agreement that scripts how I engage in authentic conversations about why I am leaving my position. I will of course be conscientious in all of my conversations with students, colleagues and community partners about my departure. As always I will seek to maintain my integrity, bolster the Gordon community and strengthen and encourage OCE work.

I am extremely grateful to Gordon College and the Lynn community for making this bridge-building work so personally rewarding for so many years. I especially want to thank Rev. Ray Lee and Oasis Development for the initial vision and investment that jump-started this campus-community partnership endeavor. This work has truly been a thrilling and joyful experience for me. I am confident that Gordon can and will continue to cultivate meaningful service-learning relationships and be a good neighbor on the North Shore.

I would like to request that you let me know in the next 24 hours how you would like me to proceed in terms of the timing of my departure. In order to earnestly begin job searching through my relational networks and to properly inform and prepare my students and community partners for my departure, I need to start informing people about my plans to transition.

Respectfully,

Val Buchanan