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Niels-Erik Andreasen
President

Beautiful minds

“A Beautiful Mind” is a film based upon a book with the same title by Sylvia Nasar. It tells a story about John Nash, a brilliant Princeton student who went on to become a professor and Nobel Laureate in Economics. Along the way he suf-

fered from a severe mental disorder that negatively impacted his life, his work, his family, indeed everyone around him. The point of this is simply that every mind, brilliant or ordinary, comes in a human package that is determined by genetics, the environment, upbringing, health, social contexts, values, religious practices, etc. Our minds wrapped up in this are the key focus of education, and that is why education must be holistic in its approach—the mind is part of the whole human being, body, soul and mind, whom we are educating. That principle should also guide our relentless discussion about education including the recent debate of cost versus value in college.

For example, recently President Obama raised that question during a swing through the northeast and proposed that the federal government should introduce yet another system for evaluating colleges based upon student success, graduation rates, student borrowing for college, along with the employment opportunities and earning power following graduation. That ought to inform us about the real value of a college degree—does it lead to a job that pays enough for students to repay their loans?

The good thing about stating it this way is that it puts us all on notice that everything we do, including education, must have value and purpose, and this added value must be measurable in a meaningful way. Colleges and universities, including Andrews, should be transparent and forthright about the cost/value ratio.

The bad thing about putting it this way is that it tends to ignore the true nature of these beautiful, complicated minds with which we work. We are dealing with human beings, our children, young adults, the next generation. They do not all learn at the same speed. They are not all equally bright. They do not all mature at the same rate. They have not all been given the same chances in life. They do not all have the same skillsets, motivation and talents, and many come with deficits and disorders. But they all need education. These are the minds students bring to college and we must educate them. Sometimes this takes five years and a change of major. Sometimes they breeze through in three and a half. Some take out loans, others take time out to work. Some study day and night, others socialize a bit more than they should. Our academic and financial advisors are eager to work with students and parents to find the best way forward for everyone. But at the end of the day, graduation day, the really important question to ask is, what has happened to these students with their beautiful minds?

One of the nicest answers to this question I heard recently from a father who wrote me about his daughter, and gave me permission to share it with the readers of this magazine. Here are some excerpts:

From the father: “My wife and I have seen (our daughter) grow and mature exponentially over the past four years, and we credit the Andrews environment and deeply spiritual culture for the wonderful young lady she has become.”

From the daughter’s internship supervisor: “I just wanted to let you know how thrilled we are to have (your daughter) here. She is such an amazing talent—so confident, capable and inspiring—her drawings are among the most beautiful I’ve seen...She’s far more technically competent than I had hoped for and her outlook and composure are remarkable.”

And finally: “...we are unambiguously supportive of Seventh-day Adventist Christian education, however, the sole purpose of this email is to say thank you for the outstanding, Christ-focused education and excellence that is being dispensed by the Andrews team. We can truly hold our heads up high, as we uplift the name of Christ.”

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Editor

Patricia Spangler (BS '04)
focus@andrews.edu | 269-471-3315

Contributing Editors

Tami Condon (BS '91)
Becky St. Clair

Designer

Matt Hamel (AT '05)

Writers

Merlin Burt
Samantha Snively (BA '13)

Photographers

Sharon Dudgeon (MMus '86)
Darren Heslop (BFA '10)
David Jones
T. Ryan Keough (BT '03)
Joshua Martin
Arthur Mulyono

Andrews University

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Andrea Luxton (MA '78)

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Randy Graves (MA '72)

Vice President for Financial Administration

Lawrence E. Schalk (BS '64, MBA '71)

Vice President for Integrated Marketing & Communication

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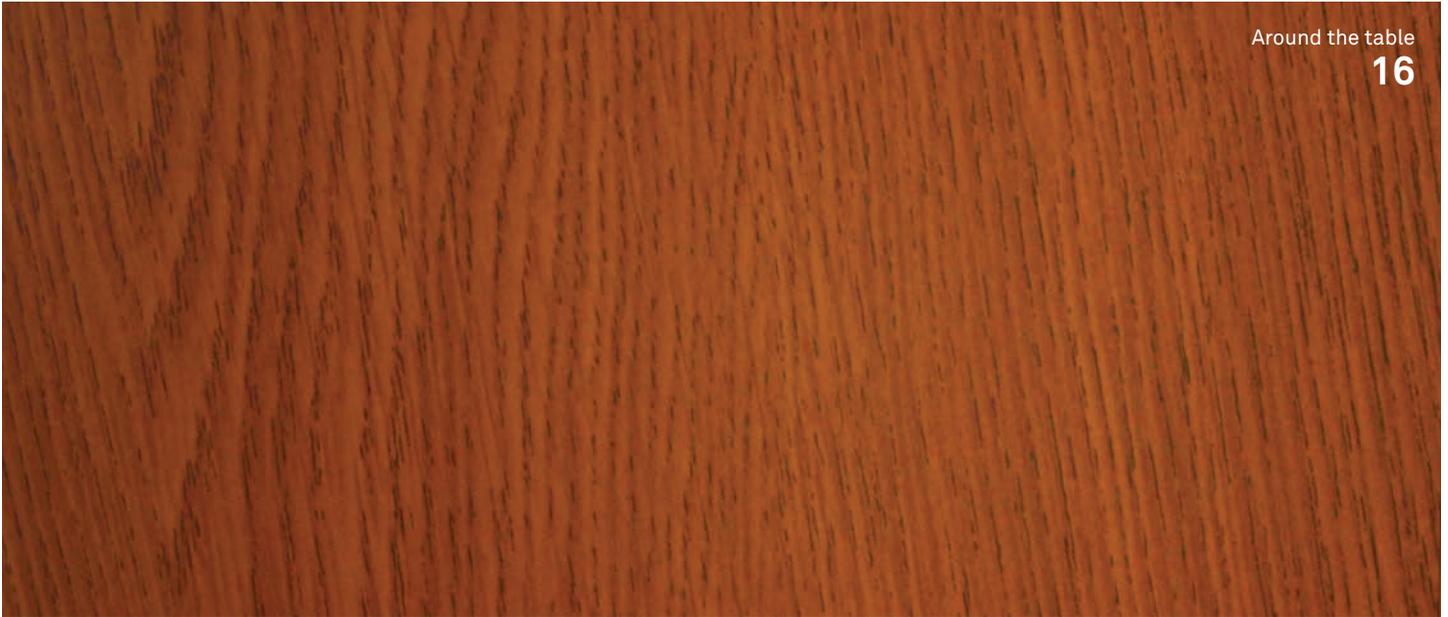
Frances Faehner (BSW '76, PhD '07)

Vice President for University Advancement

David A. Faehner (MA '72)

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