

**St. Cloud Times**  
**To a Higher Degree**  
**Nov. 28, 2010**  
**Earl H. Potter III, President, St. Cloud State University**

It's the time of the year when the media turn our attention to "person of the year" possibilities – individuals to honor not only for their accomplishments but for the extraordinary impact of those accomplishments. Among the many at St. Cloud State University who fit the criteria for such a tribute, two are particularly timely and deserving choices: local arts activist and Dean Todd DeVriese, whose death at age 49 two weeks ago stunned and saddened the university and local arts communities; and Student Government President Amanda Bardonner, whose work on the highly successful student referendum to raise fees in support of athletics has been heralded as among the best student leadership efforts ever at St. Cloud State.

Both these individuals have been positive players in the reorganization process that has been accelerated by state budget cuts on our campus and that of every other public college and university. The work of reorganization, strengthened by strategic planning and program appraisal, is moving St. Cloud State forward with a sharpened focus. While students will see little change in their academic programs or the delivery of their courses as a result of this process, some tough choices have been inevitable as we went about building a University that is more efficient, effective and responsive, enhancing the rigor of our academic programs and the total educational experience for our students.

Todd and Amanda have been first-rate examples of the first of the four priorities we have identified through reorganization as key to achieving our mission is Community Engagement (along with Active Learning, Sustainability and Globalization). We firmly believe we must be what we teach in order to provide our students with role models and real-life in action examples of what they are learning in the classroom. Todd and Amanda have listened, assessed and acted on their beliefs, and in doing so have had a significant influence on the culture of our campus and community.

Todd, who passed away unexpectedly on a U.S. Department of Education-sponsored trip to India, became a budding superstar in just 16 months as dean of the College of Fine Arts and Humanities. Already he was making a difference at the University and a deep impression in the community. In Todd's obituary it is said he "lived his life believing everything is possible, and he inspired that philosophy in everything and everyone he touched." A fellow member of the steering committee of the ArtWORKS Initiative in which he participated said he "saw great potential in bringing about significant change in the work we are doing...perhaps more than anyone he saw the big picture." Another credited him with having the greatest vision on the committee and expressed gratitude for his constant encouragement. Colleagues on and off campus agree he will be profoundly missed.

Amanda also has made a deep impression on the St. Cloud State and St. Cloud communities, demonstrating a mature understanding of complex issues, including those affected by these challenging economic times. Early on she grasped the seriousness of the situation and realized the potential positive role students could play. She studied these issues, educated others about them and stepped up to give students the opportunity to be part of the solution. They seized that opportunity and ran with it, turning out in record numbers to give the majority vote to a \$1.74 per credit increase in student fees for athletics and setting an example for others to join in fundraising to keep the Husky athletics programs healthy and sustainable.

Dean DeVriese was responsible for undergraduate and graduate programs in nine departments and more than 20 disciplines in music, theatre, film studies, dance, art, English, foreign languages and literature, philosophy, communication disorders, communication studies and mass communications. Perhaps more

importantly, he was responsible for helping to breathe new life into the future of those fields of study and new life into community arts and cultural activities.

As student government president Amanda is responsible for championing students' rights and representing their interests before state leaders, university administrators and, most importantly, each one of our 18,300 students.

Committed leaders such as these come into our University – sometimes for all too brief a time – to share their enthusiasm and dedication to something bigger than their individual careers or agendas. We are a better campus and a better community for their accomplishments.