President Wagoner is both leader and friend

BY KALEB ASBFLUND
Markus Golja Werner

The voice is all there is. Slow, deep, drawing; you are under the spell of its easy-going, naturalness. You laugh, you understand, you know that everything will turn out for the best interests of fairness. And when you leave, you remain, for long after, your turn somewhere in the conversation. Oh, well, you say, remembering that it was the next time. And you know you will.

Augustana College President Ralph Wagoner has a way with people. A tall man with a droopy, yet cheerful face, and a swing in his step, he has become an institution at the institutions. As Augustana vice-president and dean of students, Wagoner talks with students and staff.

Reclining in a simple chair in his office, and with the buzz of activity behind him, Wagoner talks about the way they like to work with students:

"I personally hope I would be accessible enough and open enough to be wanted. It's important to be free to come in and ask," Wagoner said. "Not that this is with students and staff. Free to come in and ask," Wagoner added, "to Hey, I'm homesick for my dog. Can I play with yours?"

One of Wagoner's favorite questions is, "Can we come up and use your house?"

"It's not uncommon," Wagoner said, "for a group of students to get together. We need a little retreat and we don't want to do it right here. Can we come up and use your basement and play with the dog while we're there?"

Wagoner's eyebrows rise as his face seems to roll with the pleasure of the conversation.

"It was available," Wagoner added, "ninety nine point nine percent of the time we say yes."

The house gets a lot of use from students, beginning with a periodic running New Student Orientation, and continuing through the rest of the year. Wagoner explained his reasoning:

"I'll bet that door right there, if we're available," Wagoner said. "We'll have to involve Student Government."

"You're sitting down in your office and you're kind of confused about what I'm doing," Wagoner said, "and you say, We'll have to involve other people, but I will personally see that you get with the people we need to get with, and we'll give them a timeline to respond by, so that you don't think I'm just getting you out of here and blowing you off."

That particular situation illustrates one of Wagoner's highest priorities in dealing with students:

"To me, that's one of the most important things students. Say maybe I can't answer this question or solve this for you, but maybe there's somebody who can. Then I think my responsibility is to get them with the proper person," said Wagoner.

After a brief pause to lean forward in a more confidential pose, Wagoner adds, "But, put time deadline or date on it so that one of two things happen. A) It will get addressed and B.) They're not in a year coming from now saying, 'Jeez, Ralph, I was in there talking to you and you did get me over there, but not a damn thing happened.' "

I think people, as unhappy as they get, would rather hear, 'No!' with a reason, soon, than to blow 'em off and jerk 'em around when you know all along you've gonna have to say no," Wagoner said. "So, instead of having the guts to say, 'No, now, and sayin' where do we go now?' I'm real-ly kinda confused about what I wanna do. So then we'll go for a walk or we'll sit here and chat."

Wagoner has helped students with things ranging from deciding on a career to making a proposal of marriage. Students see him as a friend to be confided in, and he sees them as peers. It's almost impossible to find a member of the Augustana community with a complaint about him or his wife, Susie.

"We just like kids," he said.

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Establish goals—both long-term and intermediate goals which will logically lead to the fulfillment of long-term objectives.

Assess your current position. Where do you stand now? Are you getting enough experience and expanding crucial responsibility levels?

Assess needed exposure. Define the exact elements of new experiences needed.

Develop a plan of action. To get your goals you may have to involve a change in employment, retraining or your career or an industry shift.

Implement a plan of action. Don't just sit there wishing about what to do. Act on it in a reasonable time frame.

Remember that if you miss the boat, the conditions and take corrective action, if necessary. Are you getting the experience you need and gaining in responsibility? Is your current job conducive to progress? If you put it in don't measure up to your plan objectives,

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