

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**

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**From the Selected Works of Frank Shushok Jr.**

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# The Story We Find Ourselves In

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# The Story We Find Ourselves In: 20 Years of *About Campus*



**W**HEN THE FIRST EDITION OF *About Campus* hit mailboxes in March 1996, I was living in Flagstaff, Arizona, serving in my first higher education role, fresh out of a master's degree program, feeling truly *all about campus*. Now 20 years have passed, and it's time to celebrate.

Important anniversaries like this one help us remember where we've been, who we've become, and how we've been shaped on the roads we've traveled. For every season worth marking, the incremental and the exponential effects are the often hidden, but most valuable, gems. It's the who, the why, and the how over time that lodges seemingly isolated moments, decisions, and people into broader contexts we call legacy. Whether you find yourself reading this note from the beginning, midpoint, or the twilight years of your professional work, you likely sense you're lodged in this very legacy—you probably know you're both a benefactor and a recipient of something much larger than yourself. It's this something—this legacy—that *About*

*Campus* has been marking, celebrating, and even creating story by seemingly isolated story for more than two decades.

In short, it all adds up. Today's stories truly equal tomorrow's legacy.

When I was in my mid-twenties, *About Campus* arrived at my home. I would stay up late and read it from front to cover—I had so many dreams, but I never dreamed I might one day be an author. In my mid-30s, I mustered up the courage to submit my first manuscript to *About Campus*. I never dreamed I would actually dialogue with Executive Editor Marcia Baxter Magolda or that she would successfully coach me to toward publication. Now, in my mid-40s, I chuckle as I occupy the role that Marcia used to help me become a writer. And I still have so many dreams.

Seemingly isolated stories have ultimately allowed me to be a contributor and a recipient of a story much larger than myself. As I reflect over these decades, I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for the experiences I've had, and even more so, for the people who loved and challenged me through them.

What moments helped you become who you are today? What people have been instrumental in your life? What is the larger story at work in your daily living? A little reflection in this direction, I suspect, helps us be mindful of the potential brilliance found in the ordinary daily grind. In the hustle and bustle that often defines our lives and our work, perhaps we too often fail to realize the story-writing-legacy-making at work in higher education.

To be almost too blunt, someone reading this edition of *About Campus* is likely on the path to serve as executive editor one day, even though neither the idea

nor the person's potential has yet been recognized. But for this legacy to be realized, there has to be a you—a real educator—someone willing to lean into the life of the dreamy young professional who can't wait to be “all about campus” in the passionate field of higher education. I know this to be true—it happened to me.

And, it's why I think we're in the miracle business—because there are literally millions of legacies that would have gone unrecognized and untapped, but instead have been uncorked and launched in profound, yet inconspicuous, ways.

You are part of a grand and uncanny effort that is helping address poverty, that is unafraid of facing social concerns big and small, that is courageously

making the world more humane and just. Despite the challenges that emerge along the way, the legacy we're getting swept up into points to the stunning privilege it is to work in higher education.

As we tackle the next 20 years, I hope you enjoy several new directions for *About Campus*, including a redesigned look, the launching of an annual *About Campus* Writer's Retreat, and the transition to online submissions. We're learning—students are learning—and the grand story truly is worth celebrating.

With hope,  
Frank Shushok, Jr.  
Executive Editor