If you should come this way on any weekday morning, you will see a scene that never changes, but never seems routine — students hurry past on bike, on foot and on skateboard down Fifth Street, some with cups of coffee in hand, some looking through you as they chat with black boxes held to their ears. A young man on a small silver scooter weaves his way slowly among those heading to Carroll Science and those sauntering toward their cars; he smiles while waving to a girl whose long hair shines against her bright jacket as she climbs the stairs into Burleson. Pushing off, he resumes his silent, smooth glide, seemingly sailing through time, outside of time.

On such mornings, the walk across the pedestrian heart of the campus feels European to me. But of course only here will one encounter trolleys painted green and gold and sidewalks in front of Tidwell chalked with “Jesus wept. Is your God man enough to cry?” or “Pink Tea at Midnight — Be There.” Here bricks have been inscribed in honor of special Baylor friends, events, and professors. And love, if not always in the air, is at least under foot. A brick I stepped on last week reads, “Amy, Will You Marry Me? Ken.” This is our beautiful, wonderful school. Faculty, students, staff and administrators breathe it anew each day as we look up at the spires and down at the squirrels, then race to our offices or classrooms.

Passing through the stained glass portal of Burleson Hall, one senses the work of the College of Arts and Sciences humming along. The administrative staff and deans are evaluating programs and personnel, deciding curriculum matters, handling complex technology decisions, managing crises, running committees and trying to take care of our undergraduates in groups and one-by-one. Even though the jobs are serious and the pressures palpable, there is a tone of cordiality here. Academic integrity is ingrained in the institution and service is a way of life.

Now in my eighth year as a member of the College administrative team, I often feel, as the British might say, that I’ve “fallen into a pot of jam.” I’ve had the privilege of interacting with countless students who were determined to maximize their educations, even while having to overcome considerable hardship. Some have held two jobs to pay for their courses, while others can be found waiting tables as many as 40 hours a week, just to make ends meet. Others inspire us to rededicate some of our time to the betterment of society as they set an example of giving many hours each week to public service or in mission work within their churches.

On any given day a senior may stop by to tell us the letter that was wanted has arrived: he has passed the Foreign Service test, she has been offered a position in Teach for America or with the firm of her dreams. For others, the message confirms the next step in their education — medical or law school, seminary or a graduate program in any of many fields.

Sipping coffee with a group of Honors students who are energized by each other and by the exhilaration of being smart and enrolled in great classes, I feel overwhelmed with the goodness of these young men and women standing before me and must check my cup to see whether it is the mocha special I ordered or some grand elixir of life.

All Baylor student stories do not, of course, have happy endings. We grieve when tragedy strikes our students as it did so painfully this summer, or unexpected difficulties prevent their continuing to study here. A student told me last spring she was late to our meeting because she had to drive home to Houston the night before to take care of her siblings and her mother who is ill — as she must do three times a week. More students than we would want to believe are car-
There is not space to describe the Cherry Lecturers, or the fascinating presentation by David Livingstone of Queens University in Belfast, or the conversations with national book award winner Barry Lopez, or the David McCullough talk or the university-wide focus on the history of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* that took place before a tremendous audience of attentive students, while lightning and thunder added import to every word! Suffice it to say, every week at Baylor the calendar proves to be, as one faculty member said, “an embarrassment of riches.” The College of Arts and Sciences supports many of these great performances through committee efforts and in some cases through financial backing. But the College is also made up of people who are the working engine that powers each ordinary hour of meaningful encounter between professors and students, day in and day out. Under the leadership of Dean Daniel, all of us aspire to make a difference in the lives of our students. We encourage them to confront questions about their own identity, callings, skills, and majors — Who am I? Where am I going? Why did I sign up for Japanese?

And at the same time the academic units ask them to ponder issues of their society and citizenship — Who is my brother? Why should I care about Africa? What am I doing to help make the world a better place? In addition, our students are learning responsibility and the consequences of not taking care of business — Where did I leave my backpack? How could I be overdrawn? What do you mean my classes have been cancelled?

We continue to believe that the College where we are engaged can be both the ship and the anchor for much that will be meaningful in their lives. So we go forward amid the buzz of morning duties, the call of students to one another across the gardens, and beneath this gentle purr of sounds, Baylor remains a special place. Even when a summer of tragedy pitched us “past pitch of the working engine that powers each ordinary hour of meaningful encounter between professors and students, day in and day out. Under the leadership of Dean Daniel, all of us aspire to make a difference in the lives of our students. We encourage them to confront questions about their own identity, callings, skills, and majors — Who am I? Where am I going? Why did I sign up for Japanese?

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