We talk often about community at Luther and identify the best ways to bring to life the College’s mission statement which, in part, states “…we strive to be a community where students, faculty, and staff are enlivened and transformed by encounters with one another, by the exchange of ideas, and by the life of faith and learning.”

In my second year as VP and Dean for Student Life, I have witnessed the power of community. I looked and listened closely during my interview process in the spring 2012 for evidence of community that is so often highlighted at Luther. I was convinced Luther College and Decorah was a place to move our family in the summer of 2012. When my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer in October 2012, we discovered first hand the presence and power of community here.

I think often about community – our community – and how we can best achieve a place where all are welcomed and honored. I do know this – community does not happen by accident. We work hard to make community work at Luther. And, when it does not, we endeavor to discern why and make conscious contributions to righting what may be amiss.

One observation I have made has been that we may not always be engaged in conversation with one another about the impact of community. I think such conversations are absolutely critical to our understanding of the rights and responsibilities we share. If we do not dialogue with one another, we may miss the underlying attributes of community.

Our Student Life staff recently shared ideas about community. We asked each one another what are three essential attributes to community? We then asked how we have directly contributed to community at Luther? Finally, we asked how we have been received into this community?

These are questions we should be consistently asking our students and as parents, I encourage you to have similar conversations during the coming Thanksgiving holiday; certainly, these questions can be shared at any time. If we take time to explore with each other what community is, we will be much more attuned to recognizing its impact.