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Several state legislators were among the participants at a summit on school funding and tax reform held at Governors State University on January 31. The summit provided an opportunity for several community leaders and education experts to present alternatives to the present school funding formula, one which allows for vast discrepancies in the way public school districts are funded.

"Congressman Harold Murphy (D-30th), participates in the lunchtime discussion on school funding issues."

Under the current funding formula, per-student expenditures range from approximately $3,000 in some of the lower spending districts to more than $17,000 in those districts able to spend the most in the state. This vast difference is the result of a funding formula which is based almost exclusively on local property taxes. Those communities which have higher residential property values or a large commercial property base, particularly a power plant or shopping mall, have much more money available to dedicate to education spending. The resulting inequities in educational opportunities for students are based almost solely on what communities those students happen to live in.

More than 100 community, school and business leaders, as well as State Senator Debbie Halvorsen (D-40th) and Illinois state representatives from nine South Suburban districts, participated in the summit. The overriding theme of the day was that the time for action is now.

"All kids in Illinois will suffer and be at a competitive disadvantage if action is not taken
Dear Friends of GSU:

In this month's issue of @govst.edu we focus on a number of major concerns at GSU. Our cover story explores the recent education funding conference held at GSU that drew all the major legislators from this critical south suburban region for discussions and sessions on this important issue facing all residents of the state of Illinois. The conference, co-sponsored by the Metropolitan Planning Council, was intended to send a strong message to Springfield, a declaration calling for action this year. Equity must be achieved.

The second, but equally important story, is on GSU's Student Outcomes Assessment Program (SOAP), a priority initiative on our campus. We must continue to further refine means to judge and evaluate the education we are providing our students to assure that they receive the benefits of a better quality of life.

Diversity continues as a strong thread in our GSU mission. You will find features on African-American History Month, Women's History Month, the Chinese New Year Celebration... all in the past and current months. Read, enjoy and respond!

Sincerely,

Paula Wolff
President

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Summit

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now,” noted Josh Grenard, a student at an area high school who presented the keynote address of the opening session. “Several legislators from this area were elected on this issue,” noted Rep. Phil Novak (D-85th). “Both the Governor and the Speaker have made this a priority issue and legislation is likely to be written in the next few months.”

The day began with conference participants hearing four school funding proposals which are currently being considered. Conference goers, including the legislators, then broke into four working groups to develop several guiding principles for legislators to consider when they write the laws which will change the way schools are funded. Leaders from each group then met to develop one unified set of principles to present to the Illinois General Assembly. Those principles included the establishment of a state insured minimal education spending level for every child in Illinois, the use of an increase in the state income tax, coupled with local property tax relief, to fund the new minimum spending level, consolidation and streamlining to capture administrative and economic efficiencies, implementing a state capital plan for the physical soundness of school buildings throughout the state, and the preservation of local control at schools.

“Days like this are very important because we have everyone talking and striving for consensus,” noted Renee Kosel (R-38th). “The information which comes out of this conference will go a long way towards helping us draft meaningful legislation in Springfield.”

State Senator Debbie Halvorsen (D-40th) addresses the lunch time summit crowd in the Hall of Governors.

Icons

@govst.edu will always report accomplishments that help GSU meet its mission statement. Look for these icons which will indicate stories that directly relate to GSU's four goals.

Governors State University

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March 1997

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In conjunction with the North Central Association (NCA), the accreditation body for the north central region of the United States, GSU has begun implementing a Student Outcome Assessment Program (SOAP). Assessment programs such as SOAP are being implemented in learning institutions throughout the state, as well as across the country.

"Student assessment" refers to the systematic gathering, interpretation and use of outcomes to be used for improvement. Assessment serves to clarify student competence, proficiency or mastery after completion of a course, collection of courses or an entire program.

The program also serves to measure students' levels of achievement at the beginning, during and immediately after their educational careers, and lastly evaluates graduates.

While each institution tailors its plan to the goals and objectives of its particular curriculum, the NCA has developed criteria that they use in the evaluation of plans assessing student learning and outcomes. As the NCA criteria notes, the process "...flows from the institution's mission statement."

"The student assessment plan really assesses institutional effectiveness," said Dr. Cecilia Rokusek, dean of the College of Health Professions. "Part of evaluation of institutions and accreditation criteria came about in this decade, the 1990s. [Assessment] is a new component of the accreditation process."

Rokusek and Dr. David Curtis, university professor of management, are reviewers for NCA on a regional basis. "I'm one of several hundred, called upon periodically to go to a sister institution, like Governors State, to accredit the institution for North Central. Part of that is assessment," said Rokusek.

Rokusek believes that assessment is with us into the new century. "It helps the students to reflect. Different, unique programs often will have unique type of assessment criteria. For example, if you're an artist, one of the things you have is a portfolio. At the end of your degree you should have done so many oils, so many water colors. The students actually show that they've accomplished that. In a science, for example, you may have to pass a national proficiency exam -- in addition, you may have to write so many papers and have proof of this."

"Nursing has one of the finest assessment plans," continued Rokusek. "Reviewers look at critical thinking skills; they actually assess critical thinking from the entry level of the student to when they graduate. Each program uniquely designs what's appropriate for them. The key thing with assessment is that there can be multiple measures -- every program doesn't have to do it the same, and we can't have just one measure." She went on to point out that an inappropriate measurement would be if 90 percent of graduating students got jobs upon graduation. A more appropriate measure might be if the student is employed in his or her field, performing related functions. In addition, effectiveness could be measured five years after graduation.

"[Assessment] also has to be linked to the institutional effectiveness and the mission," said Rokusek. "That's important. In our mission, we have areas like service. Do we expose our students to service and diversity? At GSU, we do a good job of that."

When would the worst day of your life be the best day too? When you won a computer because of an essay you wrote on your worst day.

Coolidge School in Phoenix, Ill. challenged 170 - 6th, 7th and 8th grade students to write a creative story on "the worst day of my life," as part of a Lincoln Project contest.

The Lincoln Project, headed by Larry McClellan, executive director of the South Metropolitan Regional Leadership Center at GSU, is a unique model, funded by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce to create a regional information infrastructure connecting individuals, groups, organizations and businesses. One of the goals was to create new ways for providing information access to widely diverse groups. The project utilizes both the telephone system and the Internet.

The Coolidge School students entering the contest were educated about the Internet, the Lincoln Project, writing and speaking skills and computer skills, because their essays were going to be published on the Lincoln Project's Internet location and telephone information line.

Top prize winner, 6th grade student Stephan Cobbin, received a computer donated by Turner Telecom of Bowling Green, Ky. First place winner in 7th grade was Calvin Rickmond, and 1st place winner in 8th grade was Katie Melsh.

Maureen Jamcock, instructional coordinator at Coolidge School and overseer of the contest, said, "This was an excellent opportunity for the students to become familiar with the Coolidge InfoLine, so now they are more willing to use it." Along with other information, the InfoLine carries homework assignments.

To view the stories, access the World Wide Web at http://www.lincolnnet.contest.html.
“Ambassador of Song” Jerry Vale at The Center for Performing Arts

The excitement continues at The Center for Performing Arts at GSU with several exciting shows in the weeks ahead. Con- summate entertainer Jerry Vale brings his romantic singing style to the stage of The Center for Performing Arts at GSU on Friday, March 7 at 3 and 8 p.m. Joining Vale is Anna Maria Alberghetti.

On Friday, April 11 at 8 p.m., experience the big band music of Grammy Award-winner Doc Severinsen and his former Tonight Show band. The Milwaukee Journal writes, "...An evening of sheer, unadulterated, showbiz-style 'pow.'"

Reserve your seats now for the world-renowned Joffrey Ballet appearing at The Center for Performing Arts on April 18 at 8 p.m., this company has become an American classic, admired for its richness and variety. The New York Times says The Joffrey Ballet is “One of the country's most glorious cultural institutions.”

Discounts are available for children, senior adults, GSU students, faculty and staff. Call to reserve your tickets now for these performances at (708) 235 2222.

“Learning in Context” Students From Cottage Grove Middle School Go to West Africa

On Sunday, Feb. 9, five students from Cottage Grove Middle School in Ford Heights, left for a week-long trip to Senegal, Africa.

It was three years ago that the students at Cottage Grove Middle School decided they wanted to raise money to send some students to Africa.

Fund raising methods included bake sales, school plays, and even selling hot dogs at Ford Motor Company in Chicago Heights.

Raising the money to cover expenses took longer than anticipated, said Dr. Willie L. Davis, superintendent of School District 169, but the student body was committed to the project.

After three years they raised enough money to send five students on the trip. Those students were randomly selected by lottery out of approximately 250 6th, 7th and 8th graders.

Dr. Davis said providing a multicultural education to the students is very important. Ninety-nine percent of the students at Cottage Grove, he said, are African-Americans. This trip will enable them to make a connection with their history. “These students,” said Dr. Davis, “will then be in a position to share their experience with their peers.”

Cottage Grove Middle School is one of the schools participating in GSU’s "Learning in Context" program. The goal of this program is to help Ford Heights children to aspire to and prepare for college and, ultimately, to contribute to the growth and stabilization of the area.

Ford Heights is one of the poorest communities in the nation. Only 30 percent of youths 18 or older have completed high school. Patricia Joseph-Wakefield, principal of Cottage Grove Middle School said, "I would like to thank GSU for embracing our school and for forming an educational partnership for the benefit of our students and community."


President's Faculty Salon

All GSU faculty, staff and students are invited to a faculty salon Wed., March 19 at 3:30 p.m.

Dr. Paul O'Brien of the College of Business and Public Administration will discuss tax issues.

He will also review the Small Business Jobs Protection Act, the Health Insurance the Portability and Accountability Act, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act and the Tax Payers Bill of Rights.

The salon will be held in the lobby of The Center for Performing Arts. R.S.V.P. on Ext. 4567.

Student Research Conference to be Held at GSU

The 8th Annual Student Research Conference will be held at GSU this year on April 4-5. Presentations in laboratory and field research in the biological, physical, mathematics and computer sciences from students of the five former Board of Governors Universities will be featured.

Salute to Graduates

Jostens and the Alumni Association are just two participants in the Salute to continued on next page
Chinese New Year Festival Celebrated

GSU celebrated Chinese New Year and the beginning of the “Year of the Ox” on Feb. 7.

According to Dr. Glenn Shive, who has a Ph.D. in Asian History, “it’s a very important holiday for the Chinese.” Based on the lunar calendar, this is also considered the spring festival.

There was a taste of Chinese cuisine and demonstrations of traditional Chinese music and dance at lunch time. Visitors had an opportunity to see exhibits, demonstrations of calligraphy, brush painting and Chinese arts and crafts. In addition, a video journey to China was shown in the Hall of Governors.

ICC Annual Meeting Held at GSU

The Illinois Chamber of Commerce held its annual meeting at GSU in The Center for Performing Arts. The conference was broadcast live via satellite to several chamber offices throughout the state.

Seen here is Sally Jackson, President and CEO of the chamber, addressing both the studio and television audiences.

WYIN-TV, Channel 56 to Air "Issues and Impact" Cable TV Program

GSU has announced that beginning in April WYIN-TV, Channel 56, will carry its monthly program “Issues and Impact,” significantly increasing the program’s distribution. The program is currently distributed by Jones Intercable in its south suburban region on Channel 29.

Jones Intercable has the potential of reaching 77,000 viewers in the eight south suburban communities which receive the GSU college access channel. WYIN is distributed through approximately half of the cable systems in the Chicagomarket. It has the potential of reaching 700,000 viewers in seven counties in northwest Indiana and 4.5 million viewers in the greater Chicago area.

“Issues and Impact” is a forum for addressing a wide variety of important issues facing the community, the region and the nation. Recent topics have included racism, women with AIDS, technology in education, natural prairie preservation and restoration, and prison boot camps.

The debut program on WYIN will focus on campaign finance reform, with Chicago Sun-Times’ Washington, D.C., Bureau Chief Lynn Sweet heading an expert panel. Dr. Paul Green, director of GSU’s Institute for Public Policy and Administration and a noted political analyst, will moderate the panel discussion.

GSU professor Anthony Labriola, who directs the program and oversees all GSU television productions, said, “I think the program gives us an opportunity to discuss things and do things that you can’t see on broadcast television. We can take a unique, and perhaps even controversial, look at some interesting topics which the broadcast stations are unable to do.”

Happenings continued from previous page

Graduates taking place March 19-20. The event, scheduled from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days, will offer light refreshments and entertainment. Jostens will offer an opportunity for graduates to win a class ring as well as an automobile.

Continuing Education Seminars for Illinois Township Officials

Training seminars for Illinois township officials have been announced by the Institute for Public Policy and Administration at GSU.

Conference segments in March are: March 8, Hotel Pere Marquette in Peoria; March 15, Holiday Inn, Collinsville, and March 22, Holiday Inn Airport Convention Center in Moline.

Seminar times are 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the cost of each seminar is $40 per person or $240 for the entire board, up to nine people.

For more information or to register call Kathy Murphy at (708) 534-4997.

Volunteers Needed for Alumni Phonathon

Alumni Relations is looking for volunteers to participate in the annual GSU Alumni Relations Phonathon being held March 16-26. Phonathon hours are 5:30 - 9 p.m. Mon.-Thurs., and 4 - 8:30 p.m. Sundays in Engbretson Hall on campus.

Call (708) 534-4128 to sign-up for a worthy cause. Or send a resume for a paid Phonathon position to: GSU, Office of Alumni Relations, Wagner House, University Park, IL 60466.

Global Multimedia LapTop Series

Internet information, upgrading computer skills, creating professional presentations and creating a home page on the Internet are just a few topics offered in workshops at GSU.

Sponsored by GSU’s Center for Training and Educational Development (TED Center), the cost for each workshop is $155, or three or more workshops cost $140 each.

For more information on class times or to register call (708) 534-4099 or FAX (708) 534-8458.
GSU/Alumni News

GSU President Paula Wolff Elected to U of C Board of Trustees

GSU President Paula Wolff has been elected to the Board of Trustees for the University of Chicago. Her five-year term extends through June 2002.

Wolff currently serves on numerous committees and boards at the university. She received her B.A. in 1967 from Smith College, and an M.A. in 1969 and her Ph.D. in 1972 from the University of Chicago.

Storyteller Shanta will Present "Women of Spirit, Women of Power" During Women's History Month

In honor of women's history month, storyteller Shanta will present her "Women of Spirit, Women of Power" program at The Center for Performing Arts at GSU on Thursday, March 6 at 7 p.m.

In a moving collection of stories and songs, Shanta will explore the enduring strength, energy, love and courage of women. Great leaders, folk heroes, spiritual seekers and ordinary people grace the stage as Shanta punctuates her stories with the rhythms of African instruments.

For more information on this FREE program sponsored by Student Life, call (708) 534-4550.

Sculpture "Prairie Chimes" Leaves GSU

After nearly 30 years, sculptor Mark DiSuvero has moved "Prairie Chimes" from its home in The Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park at GSU to a new home in Petaluma, Calif.

It's time for a whole new set of people, even a new generation, to be exposed to this sculpture, said DiSuvero's office manager in California. It may even go to Paris for an exposition there, she added.

"Prairie Chimes" pre-dates GSU. In his dedication to DiSuvero in the book "The Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park," Lewis Manilow wrote "I first met Mark at a junkyard in Hoboken, NJ. Although then barely able to walk, he dominated the dreary weather and strange environment. I bought a 20-foot sculpture and offered him the summer out at my farm (on what is now GSU) plus availability of materials. He accepted, bringing only his crane with its huge peace insignia . . ."

That, perhaps, tells the story of the man, the sculpture and the time (1968). There are many stories to be told about that sculpture and the people who grew up around it. Those stories will remain a part of GSU's folklore, so don't stop looking northward beyond the pond where "Prairie Chimes" stood.

Perhaps a new sculpture will take its place one day to create memories for a new generation.

A Prairie Grows at GSU

Illinois is known as "The Prairie State," but have you ever really seen one? Chances are that you really haven't seen a native prairie and may not have given much thought to what a prairie is. In fact, you may just think wildflowers and grasses are no more than fields of weeds.

That view is changing. Jo Shaw, GSU's landscape gardener, pictured on last month's cover of @goust.edu, is restoring small native prairie on GSU property so that this generation may get a glimpse of what a native tallgrass prairie was and what the pioneers saw as they crossed the vast Midwest.

At its peak the Grand Prairie sustained more than 300 species of plants, 60 species of mammals, 300 species of birds and well over 1,000 kinds of insects. Wildflowers bloomed amid the tallgrasses in a succession of color throughout the spring and summer and into fall.

What happened to the prairie?

The demise of the prairie increased dramatically in 1837 with the invention of the self-scouring steel plow, which could cut through the dense prairie plant roots. In Illinois, corn and soybeans took the place of wildflowers and tallgrasses. These grasslands have also succumbed to urbanization.

What does this mean? The bottom line is "less than one-hundredth of one percent of Illinois' tallgrass prairies remain, which makes these grassland communities considerably more endangered than the tropical rainforests," according to information published by Chicago Wilderness. With the elimination of this treasure went the diverse wildlife that inhabited it.

That is where people like Jo Shaw come in. With the assistance of five summer workers, Shaw has planted nearly an acre of native prairie in a pie-shaped plot just off GSU's main drive. Most of the seeds Shaw has collected herself, along railroad tracks and from remnant prairies. "It's always in the back of my mind," she said. She hopes eventually to increase the prairie to five acres, but there is very little money available for the project.

The location of the plot is not an accident. Shaw said she wanted a site that would be very visible. "We need to educate people," she said. "Some people think, 'What are they doing? It's a bunch of darn weeds.'"

She has noticed an increase in butterflies, birds and other wildlife since starting the prairie several years ago.

John Madison writes in the foreword to Wildflowers of the Tallgrass Prairie, "Native tallgrass prairie is still the rarest of all major North American biomes. Most of the rising interest in native prairie has come from a greater understanding of what quality native landscapes really are and of what they really mean. That understanding is the last, best hope for such places as redwood groves, wild seashores, alpine meadows, rich marshlands, and native tallgrass prairie. It may even be one of our own best hopes of happiness."

For more information on GSU's prairie restoration project, call Jo Shaw at (708) 534-5214.
Office of Development Welcomes New Employee

GSU’s Office of Development recently welcomed Wally Verdooren as the new director of corporate and foundation relations. This position includes cultivating and securing sources of economic support among corporate and private foundations.

Having more than 11 years of development experience, Verdooren has held numerous titles at various institutions in Illinois. He was the associate director of corporate and foundation relations at Roosevelt University and the Illinois Institute of Technology. He was also the director of advancement and alumni affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s College of Medicine. Other positions include program director at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Schaumberg and adjunct instructor at Roosevelt University and Elmhurst College.

Some of Verdooren’s past accomplishments in the area of development include directing overall fund raising for the largest medical school in the country, seeking and securing major gift support from all philanthropic sources and increasing annual giving totals in all areas to $10,000,000 per year. He also cultivated, solicited, and secured more than $2,500,000 in corporate and foundation grants, which included participation in all phases of program planning and full responsibility for proposal writing during the initial two years at the university.

Verdooren received a bachelor degree from Augustana University in Rock Island. He then earned a master’s degree in religion from Yale and participated in the master of arts program for writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Verdooren says he hopes to raise GSU’s visibility among corporations and foundations both locally and nationally and to broaden the base of support from these areas.

Marilyn Prater-Rivers
February Employee of the Month

Meet purchasing agent Marilyn Prater-Rivers, Governor’s State University’s employee of the month for February 1997.

Prater-Rivers works in the purchasing department and is said to be an extremely dedicated and loyal employee and does an outstanding job in everything.

Here is what a nominator had to say about her: “She is doing a fantastic job... Most of the problems with the (CARS) system have been solved thanks to Marilyn’s help.”

Prater-Rivers is commended for working above and beyond her duties by spending late evenings at her desk and working through her lunch hours to find a solution to a problem related to the CARS system.

Prater-Rivers always displays a high level of motivation when many are ready to throw in the towel, said a nominator, and a nominator concluded “Choosing River-Praters for employee of the month would be a very wise decision.”

That wise decision having been made, congratulations to Marilyn Prater-Rivers! She will receive $150, a special parking spot for the month and an opportunity to be selected employee of the year.

The Employee of the Month (EOM) award is a program to recognize GSU Civil Service employees who demonstrate exemplary performance. Anyone can nominate an employee.

Each EOM receives $150, a preferred parking spot for the month and eligibility for the Employee of the Year award with its accompanying $500.

Forms are available in Human Resources, outside the library and in the administration offices. Deadline each month is the 20th.

Contact Jennifer Blaeser in Human Resources at (708) 534-5306 for further information.

GSU/Alumni News
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GSU Retirees to Meet

Any GSU retirees wishing to enjoy lunch and conversation may do so on the 1st Tuesday of each month, March 4 and April 1 respectively, at the Urban Hills Country Club in University Park at 11 a.m. Please call Virginia Bixby at (708) 798-1266 for information.

Professor Addresses Australian Association

Dr. Michael Lewis, university professor of psychology and counseling, CE, has recently given the keynote address on his pioneering work in community counseling at the Australian Psychological Association meeting in Queensland, Australia.

Alumna Dances with Wolves

Plainfield, Illinois High School science teacher Denise Kachlic recently completed a timber wolf study in the Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota.

Kachlic, who received a master of science in environmental biology at GSU, kept touch daily with her freshman biology students at PHS via the Internet.

Kachlic’s research at GSU involved a coyote study, and this trip involved hiking long distances, frequently in rain, sleet and snow.

If you are receiving more than one copy of @gsu.edu, we’ll remove your name from multiple mailing lists. Call Denise Graham Zahn at (708) 534-6366.
Earn 3 Hours of Non-Western Credit - Register for the 23rd Annual Third World Conference


The Conference seeks to bring greater understanding of economic, socio-cultural, political, and technological changes in a rapidly changing world. Participants will examine the theoretical and practical issues of poverty, education and health that affect Third World and Diaspora societies.

The 23rd Annual Third World Conference will provide a unique opportunity for students, teachers and resource professionals, as well as community leaders, and the general public.


The conference is offered through GSU for 3 hours of undergraduate or graduate credit. The registration fee will cover the conference registration, lunch on March 20 and 21, and supplemental materials. For more information, please contact the College of Arts and Sciences at (708) 534-4101.

Meet... Barbara Peterson

“I wish there were 48 hours in a day.” Barbara J. “Bobbie” Peterson, Governors State University Board of Trustee member, would put it to good use.

This bubbly and gregarious wife, mother of four and grandmother of nine, is someone who has lived her life to the fullest and continues to do so into her 60’s. Peterson is the type of person you want battling for your causes, someone who looks out for the interests of the common person and believes in getting things done. And she listens to your concerns. “I’m the comfortable person to sit across the table and have a cup of coffee with,” she said.

Yet, this grandmother has been the consummate volunteer. “Volunteering and community activities were ingrained during my high school days. It was just there to be done. We donated many hours per week to charity. It was part of what was expected. I was room mother for 21 rooms.”

Peterson operated a union plumbing company with her husband, Charles, for 31 years in Will County. She currently belongs to more than 25 boards, farm bureaus, committees, and commissions, and is active in the Republican party. She was an alternate delegate to the White House Council on Aging.

Her family has raised livestock and grain for 38 years in Will County, close to the GSU campus. “I’ve seen GSU rise up from the cornfields,” said Peterson. She is a firm believer in continuing education, continuing her own education in public health, taxes and agriculture.

Knowledge is the most important thing,” she said. “I’m a firm believer in going forward with education. But, “you can have sheepskins all over the wall, what you do with that education is the important thing,” she said. Peterson is pleased to be of service to the Trustees. “I’m thrilled and honored to be on this board. It is an honor to work with Paula Wolff,” she said.

This “renaissance woman” keeps a full calendar. She is presently lobbying the state legislature for a stop light in her hometown of Beecher and serves on the school board that serves her community’s school district, which is involved in a $6 million referendum for education reform.

“I look at this as free service to this community. I give whatever job I get 100%.”