

The OLLU Fire – a Faculty Perspective
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Last Tuesday night as I drove toward the plumes of smoke at OLLU, my cell phone rang with calls from my Psychology faculty colleagues, who were all also on their way to help our students. Shortly after I parked on Commerce Street amidst a sea of cars and concerned neighborhood residents, a transformer loudly blew, leaving the street dark and without power. I left my OLLU-bumper stickered car, on which my family depends, without worry in that surreal place because I knew that the respect for OLLU in our Westside neighborhood runs deep.

That respect has been earned by the Sisters of Divine Providence, whose mission initiated our distinguished programs in Psychology, Social Work, Communication Disorders and Education, among many others, which prepare professionals to provide these services to others to areas in the greatest need. Our doctoral program in Counseling Psychology is one of 72 in the nation that is accredited by the American Psychological Association and our department is a model for training professionals to provide mental health services to Spanish-speaking populations.

As I stood at the police-taped barricade on 24th Street wearing my OLLU shirt, Red Cross workers, alumni, students and others asked how to help. OLLU's Counseling Psychology, School Counseling and School Psychology faculty and students worked with our Counseling Services staff to talk with displaced students in the dorms through the night. The selfless collaborative effort was impressive. Outside of our beautiful library, as we watched the flames rage behind Mother Mary's statue above us, we became more relieved as we heard, one by one, from our students and faculty that were in night classes in the Main and Moye buildings. When a student returned me to my (untouched) car in the wee hours of the morning, I was deeply grateful to be a part of such a close community in which each individual feels personal responsibility to improve the lives of others.

At the Mass of Thanksgiving on Wednesday, the extended to all of the Sisters of Divine Providence for their inspiration and service. This ovation has continued through this week through the outpouring OLLU community had the rare opportunity to give a standing ovation of support in e-mails and phone calls from other academic departments, alumni and friends, near and far. Please keep it coming. Your support will further enable us to continue to train outstanding, culturally competent practitioners who will serve our growing Latino populations.