

VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

Hebrews 11:1-3: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible."

As you know, Valparaiso University suffered a great loss this past Friday afternoon. The damage resulting from the fire that broke out in the Art-Psychology building is extensive. The Art-Psychology building was not just a building — buildings can be replaced; it was a piece of Valpo's history and an incubator of the creative work of our students and faculty — in some cases, their life's work. We are thankful and blessed that no one was injured in the fire and want to express gratitude to those who helped evacuate the building.

The Art-Psychology building is permanently closed. Dickmeyer and Kroencke Hall are closed until further notice; anyone needing access to either building, please contact VUPD. Anyone with classes in these buildings, including Art-Psychology, will be notified by the University Registrar of classroom relocation. This loss was traumatic for many of you – please remember that the [University Counseling Center](#), including [TAO Connect](#), and the [University Chapel pastors](#) are here to support you.

A heartfelt thank you to the Valparaiso University Police Department who were first on scene and were quickly assisted by the Valparaiso Fire Department, and firefighters from Chesterton, Morgan Township, Washington Township, Union Township, and the Valparaiso Police Department. The quick response by our city departments and the support of our city officials ensured that the fire did not spread to the two adjacent buildings.

History of the Building

After World War II, four-year engineering programs were reinstated on campus through the initiative of students who raised funds and then designed and built the new engineering laboratory building. It was dedicated in 1949 and the engineering programs remained on that site until 1968 when they moved to the newly constructed Gellersen Engineering and Mathematics Center. The movie, [Venture of Faith](#), tells the story of this amazing student initiative. The building also served as the Art-Music building from 1968 to 1995.



Associate Professor of Communication and Visual Arts, Sarah Jantzi, recalled that the building is where her father took civil engineering classes. She has taught studio arts in the building for the past 18 years. “It is an old, well-loved building, and it is our home, not just to me but to decades of amazing students, conversations, and artistic discoveries. Our students and faculty hosted countless exhibitions, Lighter Coffeehouses, and Soup Bowl for the Hungry fundraisers in the space. Our students knew it best, loved it, and I’m proud of the work they made there. We have amazing art students, and thankfully, some of our seniors’ work was already on display across campus as part of their thesis exhibition Art Walk. While our building burned, our community came together to celebrate what we do best — create.” The seniors’ work will remain on display across campus this week.

In recognizing the loss, I also want to remind everyone that we will heal. In 1956, under the leadership of O.P. Kretzmann, the University suffered the loss of its beloved Chapel Auditorium. I lean on the wisdom of O.P. Kretzmann, who, in the spirit of hope and resiliency, vowed to continue with established traditions of that time of year despite the loss. As our semester comes to a close, we celebrate and reflect on our work. We, too, must not let this recent loss dampen our spirit.

When the Art-Psychology building, initially the College of Engineering, was built, the sign outside stated, “Initiated by students; planned by students; built by students;” let us remember these words, rise from the ashes, and give shape to the future of Valparaiso University’s campus.

We will come together as a community during this Wednesday’s Chapel Break (May 4 at 10 a.m.), for a 20 minute service of remembrance and thanksgiving, held on the lawn east of the Art-Psychology building. All of the campus community are invited to attend and reflect on the role this building had in our history and the lives who learned and created within its walls. We look forward to you joining us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "José D. Padilla". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'J' and 'P'.

José D. Padilla, J.D.

President

