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Colleagues,

Recently, I watched the wonderful (and now Oscar-nominated) documentary, *Fire of Love*, which is about two volcanologists who were married and devoted to each other and their work. I was struck by how unique these individuals were. What makes a person interested in devoting their lives to studying dangerous volcanoes? It brought to mind how there are people dedicated to the most fascinating interests – people who study bugs or birds or help or rare diseases or obscure facets of the legal system or tax codes. While the idea of

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Like most of you, I have devoted my entire career to helping students succeed because, like the volcanologists or the ornithologists or the obscure legal system scholars, I have a very specific and fundamental interest deep inside of me. It's not an interest that everyone shares, which is fine – good even. We don't all need to be volcanologists or tax code experts, after all.

Thinking about students is what gets me out of bed every morning. It was what gives me the energy to keep on going when things get tough or confusing, or when I question whether or not our education system is actually effective in any sense of that word. It is what gives my life purpose. I know that many of you feel the same way.

This month, I am celebrating our individual differences and unique combinations of personality, talent, experience, and perspective that make each of us *us*. We can't all have all of the qualities or interests, and that's why we need to stick together, learn from each other, and share our special viewpoints with each other. The [NOSS annual conference](#) is a perfect place to do that with more than 140 distinctive presentations that will highlight many different aspects of the field of student success. I hope to see you and your unique self there!

Meredith



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