

4TH ANNUAL CULTURE DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE BUDDHAS IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

The fourth annual Culture Department conference was held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center July 22–25. For some of the participants, it was their fourth Culture Department conference. For others it was their first time at the FNCC. For all, this was the first conference led by the new Culture Department director, Eric Hauber.

The theme was “Equality and Humanity: The Buddha in a Professional World.” As lofty as it sounded, what was stressed both in meetings for all the attendees and in smaller gatherings was the concept of establishing friendship through dialogue with one’s peers both within and outside the SGI organization.

Arts Division Vice Director Gary Murie relayed his experiences of having informal meetings with other artists and sharing Buddhist concepts through conversation.

For most of the participants, it was the sharing of experiences that was the greatest source of encouragement. Members stood cheering when Amanda Rivera told of her struggle to be a principal in a Chicago school that has won many awards and citations under her leadership. Patricia Walker remained undefeated by an exam that stood between her and a coveted Ph.D., and received a full grant to study in Africa the day she was scheduled to leave.

—*PETER NELLHAUS*