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It's hard not to notice the colorful line of flags on the back of the Bemis International Center. What do the flags represent, and do they ever change?

Bryant McCray '16

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September 2013

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

It's hard not to notice the colorful line of flags on the back of the Bemis International Center. What do the flags represent, and do they ever change?

Bryant McCray '16

Answer:

My dearest Bryant,

What a wonderful inquiry! I'm grateful for the opportunity to satisfy your curiosity.

My friends Amy Van Boxel and Joseph Tullbane in the office of international education were most helpful in uncovering the answer to your question. As you suspected, the flags flanking the second floor balcony of the F.K. Bemis International Center serve a larger purpose than pleasing the eye.

In a tradition that began in 2000, the college proudly flies the flag of every country represented by our international student population. This group includes degree-seeking international students, English as a Second Language (ESL) students and international exchange students. The flags are changed each August in preparation for the academic year, and indoor versions of these same flags are used during Convocation, Commencement and various ethnic celebrations.

Flags flying in 2013-14 include those of Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany,



Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

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Honduras, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

In the event that a country has a traditional flag and a political one, the college leaves it to each visiting student to choose which flag to fly. For example, past Belarusian students have chosen to fly their traditional flag as a statement against that country's dictatorial regime. Students from the Faroe Islands have opted to fly the self-governing nation's own flag rather than that of the Kingdom of Denmark, of which the archipelago is a protectorate.

The Bemis Center flags help create an environment that involves all students in international education. They symbolize camaraderie with our international university partners and serve as a warm reminder of home for students who have traversed seas, countries and continents to receive a one-of-a-kind education at St. Norbert. I hope, Bryant, that you enjoy them – the flags, the students, and the richness they bring to your education – as much as I do.

Responses to "Ask the Abbot" questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, O.Praem., who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

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