**Becoming their authentic selves:** The journey of self discovery and identity formation in your student’s first year at Simpson

As we look towards the conclusion of this academic year, let's reflect on the remarkable journey of identity development that has occurred during your student's year here. I’m sure it isn’t hard to think of times in your student’s life when you saw significant change over the course of several months, or a year.

The transition from high school senior to first year college student marks the beginning of a profound period of self-discovery and personal growth. During this pivotal first year, students undergo significant changes in how they view themselves and their place in the world. Unlike the visible developmental milestones of childhood, these transformations are more subtle but equally profound. Students begin to question and reshape their beliefs, values, and aspirations as they encounter new and different perspectives on the world. They start to form their adult identities independent of their family context, making autonomous decisions about their academic pursuits, social connections, and future goals.

Those of us who have the pleasure of supporting your students on campus have seen this growth firsthand. We've witnessed students develop their voices in class discussions, take on leadership roles in campus organizations, and form meaningful relationships with peers from different backgrounds. They've learned to navigate challenges independently, from managing their time to advocating for their needs. These experiences contribute to the development of their authentic selves and help them begin to answer the fundamental questions of "Who am I?" and "What do I want to become?"

Specifically in the programs related to my office, we support students who are in this process of discovery because we know that will make a difference not just in their growth of knowledge but in their growth of self. Programs that support belonging and community help students to deepen their own values and beliefs while engaging with other students who may differ from them. Ultimately, we seek to support students in the wide journey of faith, building bridges across lines of difference through discovering that the experience of being human has much more in common than not. Whether through service projects, attending campus events, joining a worshiping community, or having one on one conversations with our staff, it is clear that our students are developing into confident, self-aware individuals ready to contribute meaningfully to their communities here on campus and beyond.

With gratitude for the journey,

Rev. Mara Bailey

Simpson College Chaplain