

Remarks by SNF Co-President Andreas Dracopoulos upon receiving the Impact Award at Pace University's Spirit of Pace Awards

Thank you, Robert. for your kind and warm words, much appreciated! And thank you for connecting us to this great institution!

“Επίκεντρο ο Άνθρωπος”

I feel comfortable opening in Greek here first because Pace offers classes in Greek—though ancient rather than modern—and second because many people on campus have intimate familiarity with Greek letters: Alpha Phi Delta, Delta Kappa Epsilon, Zeta Phi Beta, and all the rest.....I know, still all Greek to you but you see where I am going to.

The meaning of this phrase is the reason we are all here tonight and is behind everything we do at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF): “Humanity at the core.” At the core of everything is the human being! We do our best to make sure that our support for real people, their needs, and their aspirations—and, by extension, on our society at large—is at the core of our work. Life’s essentials, such as quality education and health care, should be a given to every single human being, especially young people, no matter their background. This approach has guided our grantmaking for almost 30 years, in more than 135 countries, and with over 5,600 grants to our “grantee-partners,” a term we use because we view the people and the organizations we work with as our real partners in trying to fulfill our shared vision of contributing to a better world for all.

We are truly honored to be here this evening, but the highest honor has been to be able to contribute in some small way, through our partnership with Pace, to the lives of young people at a critical juncture in their growth with internship opportunities and mental health support.

Pace’s Community Impact internship program offers students paid opportunities to make a meaningful contribution in their community by embedding in public-serving organizations, from the New York Public Library to South Bronx United, a soccer-based youth development program. SNF supported a pilot during the pandemic, then reupped because of the elegant two-birds-with-one-stone nature of the program: students need the opportunity to gain real experiences; nonprofits need the energy and insights of young minds.

This includes us. This summer, SNF was excited to welcome two Pace students, Niko and Valentina, to our office in Athens as part of the internship program. We have hosted interns in partnership with other educational organizations in the past, and we can attest to the value it adds to our grantmaking.

SNF’s current priority is our Global Health Initiative (GHI), and a substantial focus of that initiative is on youth mental health around the world, helping meet present needs while setting young people up early for a successful, healthy journey through life. As part of the GHI, we are proud to support Pace’s mental health efforts in prevention and early intervention that seek to

help eliminate stigma and weave a culture of mutual support into the fabric of campus. That sort of culture is exactly what putting the human being at the core of everything looks like.

On behalf of all of us at SNF, our sincere thanks for this honor. Thank you to Pace University President Marvin Krislov and the whole Pace team for your vision for enhancing the wellbeing of your students, a quarter of whom will be the first in their families to graduate from college.

Institutions like Pace, a nationwide leader in initiative-taking student support, are at the forefront of preparing young people to face an increasingly murky future. We know that AI is capable of more with each passing day, but it will face real challenges of its own as it tries to instill in them the habits of mind that make for a fulfilling life, to foster the delicate balance between self-sufficiency and community participation that makes our civic life tick, or to develop our EQ, the all-important emotional intelligence that remains our unique value proposition as humans. Institutions of higher learning like Pace become more indispensable with each passing day.

EQ in action looks like kindness, and you, the Pace team, stand out for your decades of dedication to serving students and your collaborative, down-to-earth, and kind approach. As American psychiatrist Theodore Isaac Rubin said, “Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom.”

Thank you and stay human!