

Perseverantia (S1, Bonus): “PERSEWERANTIA? What’s in a Name”

Various speakers (montage of people mangling the pronunciation of Per-sev-er-ant-ia):

NOTE: Transcription of mispronunciations below is horribly wrong!

Oh, first serve or seven first sever antiA the Fitchburg State Podcast Network per servant. Nope.

Bursar purse of venchi Purser that I'm never going to be able to get that purse Cerveceria Purser van Shia

Persimmon Shia passante Abba perseverant Shia

Per sever and Anita or server Auntie or sever anzia per sever aunty like you're saying for severe but it's like extra okay or sever antiA for several

There you go okay? Per severance yet for Severin Shia per server and Shia

Katherine Jewell: 0:39

I'm Professor Katherine Jewell in History. One of the executive producers of Perseverantia: the Fitchburg State Podcast Network. I said it right, right? Or did I?

Unknown 8th Grader: 0:50

Um, so v's in Latin are pronounced like W's. Two examples would be Salve and Vale. Salve is spelled **s a l v e**. It means hello, and vale is spelled **v a l e** and it means goodbye.

Katherine Jewell: 1:06

That was my eighth grade son explaining to me that we're all pronouncing it wrong. Perseverantia, the name of our podcast network and the motto of Fitchburg State University is a Latin word. And apparently, we're all pronouncing it incorrectly.

Crap.

To get to the bottom of this, I'm going to talk to Professor Dan Sarefeld in History. He also teaches Latin in addition to classes on Ancient Rome and Greece. So he's the perfect person to explain what exactly we're doing wrong here.

Could you tell me Professor Sarefeld? How do I pronounce this word correctly?

Dan Sarefield: 1:55

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Per-ser-wer-antia.

So perseverantia is a noun and it has a range of meanings. It means steadfastness perseverance. It means obstinacy.

Katherine Jewell: 2:07

My eighth graders right that the v's are pronounced W's.

Dan Sarefield: 2:11

Absolutely.

Katherine Jewell: 2:11

And so what do you know about this word as Fitchburg state's motto.
What do you think of it as a motto?

Dan Sarefield: 2:17

Well, I know historically, that perseverantia has been the motto of Fitchburg State for many years now.

Not exactly sure how long it's been. I know that it least goes back to the Fitchburg State College era. Certainly, I know that it's connected to other parts of our identity, including the saxifrage, which is the little flower that breaks through the rocks has that quality persewerantia.

I think it's a great motto because it really embodies a quality that I think we want to bring out in our students. It's a quality that I think our students need to be successful as students because of the kinds of challenges that they face and that will enable them to be successful in the world.

Katherine Jewell: 3:02

So it seems that this word and its association with Fitchburg State University has a long history and a variety of meanings.

But one thing is clear. For the purposes of our podcast network, there are going to be a lot of different pronunciations. But I actually sort of love that. Certainly it takes perseverance and maybe even a little bit of obstinacy to pronounce our podcast network name.

It feels right that everyone can take their own creative approach though, to its pronunciation. Because that leap of faith that risk taking is at the heart of what we do here at Fitchburg State as an institution dedicated to public service. Our jobs as faculty

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are just to help our students understand the facts, the proper pronunciations, and the skills they need to be successful, but also to strive for more, to be brave and discover their own creative voice and take on the world and in this case, a word.

But this conversation with Professor Sarefeld left me with an open question. When did our university get this motto? And for that matter, become associated with this little white flower, the saxifrage?

Stay tuned for more episodes of Perseverantia. I'm not even going to try the W pronunciation.

To hear lots of voices from the university, our community, and maybe some investigations into the backstory of our university seal motto and other untold histories.

Dan Sarefield: 4:40

This is Professor Dan Sarefeld in History and you're listening to Persewerantia – the Fitchburg State Podcast Network.