Responding to Daniel H. Pink’s *A Whole New Mind*

by Christian Wallace

About a year ago, I was handed a bright orange book. The cover read: *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future* by Daniel H. Pink. “Sounds a bit ambitious,” I thought as I cracked the spine. On the page, a black-and-white picture of a man, eyes closed and cheeks puffed into a beaming smile, rested just below the word “PLAY” in plain, grey letters. I was a bit surprised. “Play” was not a word my mind had anticipated after reading the title. My intrigue led me to finish the entire chapter in that same sitting, and, soon after, the rest of it.

A lot has happened since my first glance at what I still believe is the most brightly-bound book I have ever seen. The Common Experience Team decided on *A Whole New Mind* as the chosen summer reading for all freshmen students enrolled in a University Seminar class. Also, the team took the Pink’s central message, that the workplace has shifted from an "Information Age" that valued knowledge workers to a "Conceptual Age" that values creativity and right-brain-directed aptitudes, and adopted it as the 2009-2010 Common Experience theme: *The Whole New Mind: Crossing Boundaries of Disciplines*. Just months after I first opened to the page with the smiling man, I found myself writing a summary of that same chapter for the University Seminar faculty manual. With a student partially responsible for writing a faculty manual, one that was distributed to the teachers on flash-drives in an interactive media format, it was obvious from the get-go that the following year was going to be one of many creative, fresh approaches to the normal routine.
As a member of the eclectic group of students, faculty, and administrators that make up the Common Experience Team, I have been fortunate enough to watch the idea planted in 250 pages of Daniel Pink’s text transform into a tangible movement at Texas State University and throughout the San Marcos community. Already a play written specifically for the incoming class of students has been used as a classroom tool combining all six of the senses (design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning) that Pink says are necessary to continued success in our ever-evolving, “high-concept” world. Other events planned for this year infuse dance with poetry, music with story, and art with history. Renowned creativity expert (yes, there is such a thing), Sir Ken Robinson is scheduled to speak during the spring, along with many other notable guests throughout the year.

One of the most exciting events will take place next week when the man responsible for the little paperback that has become a bestseller and ignited the now blazing “New Mind” movement will be visiting the Texas State campus to speak to students in person. In addition to *A Whole New Mind*, Pink has penned two other books, *Free Agent Nation: The Future of Working for Yourself*, and the first American business book in manga, *The Adventures of Johnny Bunko: The Last Career Guide You’ll Ever Need*. Pink also served as the chief speechwriter for Vice-President Al Gore from 1995 to 1997 and has since become one of the most sought after public speakers, delivering talks at universities and educational summits all over the world.

People who are familiar with Pink’s work seem as excited about this event as the Irish are about Saint Patty’s Day. I have been told that people are coming all the way from Houston to attend, despite the midweek scheduling. My cell-phone has been buzzing for days now with people asking, “is Daniel Pink really coming to campus?” or, if they are unfortunate enough to attend school elsewhere, “how the heck did y’all get Dan Pink?” Those who don’t call San
Marcos home have every right to be jealous; we have a special occasion here and those who wish to hear something worthwhile should not miss it.