EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Over the quarter century of its existence the University of Dallas has gradually developed a settled character answering to a distinct outlook upon the nature, purpose, and means of advanced education.

Students in a position to make comparisons between this and other schools usually comment upon the interdependence of the courses as the distinguishing mark of the curriculum. A definiteness in the conception of the purpose toward which all the resources of the University are directed accounts for this coherence. The University of Dallas intends to provide the kind of education that will prepare its graduates for roles as leaders. Whether they come to possess positions of authority or not these graduates will exercise leadership by setting standards within the field of their calling. The University's undergraduate program enables young men and women to become leaders by acquiring the liberal arts and by exercising these arts within a philosophical context.

The connection between liberal studies and leadership may need to be restated in our day. Perhaps we might define the liberal arts as the perfected habits of reading, writing, thinking, calculating, and speaking applied to subjects that are perennially important because they bring to sight the natures of those things that are always at hand. Mathematics, the natural sciences, philosophy, theology, politics, history, art, drama, and literature address realities that are ever present because
they are fundamentally constitutive of the world. By applying the arts of language and number to the study of timeless issues, one comes to grasp something about the character of an enduring whole, one comes to apprehend something of the ensemble of the salient features of being, seen in their interrelatedness. This means especially that liberal studies elucidate the terms upon which the individual human being stands in relatedness to society, to physical nature, to God, and to mankind present and past. Such learning aims to produce an ampleness of outlook and an appreciation of what is genuinely consequential, the breadth and the discrimination crucial for leadership.

A leader leads (purposively) by having reference to some end. It has been often remarked that the contemporary world tends to discourage reflection upon ends, preferring to refine techniques. The curriculum pursued at the University operates by continual reflection upon human purpose and upon connections between the various human purposes. It thereby provides a potential leader with training in his life's work of coordinating ends and determining the proper means to effect those ends.

By liberating the citizen for moral responsibility the way of education espoused by the University contributes to keeping a free society free. The ability to rule oneself is the necessary condition for enjoying responsible freedom. Self-government means subjecting the emotions to the guidance of a well-disposed heart informed by a lucid mind. Excellence of heart and moral wisdom may not be altogether teachable, but to the degree that moral virtue can be learned at all it can be called forth by the discipline required for the serious study of thoughtful writings or by the rigors of experimental science. Besides the self-control that is a by-product of pursuing knowledge, moral beauty constitutes a theme of traditional literature and ethics is a principal concern of philosophy, politics, and theology. One does not submit to the austerity
of Homer or the graciousness of Yeats without acquiring at least the
capacity to imagine strength or generous feeling in oneself. Having
been introduced to the dialogues of Plato and Cicero, the meditations
of Augustine, and the arguments of Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Rousseau,
and Kant, one will not likely be content to live a life that cannot
justify itself. The University does not attempt a direct formation
of character but trusts that by introducing students to the best intellects
of the West it thereby makes available a meeting of souls that can shape
the will.

Leadership requires means. In the civilized West the chief means
of leading has been literacy. The powers of written speech make possible
the organization, instruction, and direction of societies. If an ability
to grasp the truth is the indispensable foundation of good rule, the
ability to communicate and defend what one has grasped is the power equally
indispensable for effective leadership. Teaching the supremely practical
yet liberating arts of reading and communication is a responsibility that
at the University of Dallas is not confined to departments of English
or speech. Every course undertakes to guard the language against being
dulled by impression while promoting students' awareness of the impor-
tance of liveliness, clarity, vividness, and fluency in writing and
speaking. Leisured, alert, spirited conversation is the preferred
classroom medium. In a setting that assures a hearing to reason, a
student learns to trust and to practice rational discourse.

The two phases of the student's academic career -- his studies in a
general core curriculum and his dedication to a major -- develop two
dimensions of a preparation for leadership. The first and second years
comprise a program of liberal education designed to lead the student towards
self-knowledge. During this time he shares, with every other student,
training in an extensive core of courses in literature, philosophy, theology, history, mathematics, science, and art history. An important theme unifying these required studies is the idea of appropriating an intellectual tradition. For probably the first time in its life a mind becomes aware of the bones of thought in shared questions and shared aspirations that indicate a community of experience linking man today with men of every era. This awareness of a sustaining tradition helps one overcome the historical provincialism of being bound uncritically to the opinions peculiar to our present day. The student discovers that what he is he is largely because he appears at the latest installment of a story of thought and of decisions made in consequence of particular thoughts and decisions occurring to particular men. Moreover, he learns of the great alternatives of outlook that have arisen as the result of profound disagreements among the greatest thinkers regarding the greatest questions. The semester of study in Rome during the sophomore year focuses this effort to find a place within a tradition since from the art and architecture of Europe can be learned both the confluence of, and the tensions proper to, our threefold heritage of the classical, the Christian, and the modern.

In the last two years of study the student pursues a program organized around a major area of concentration. The major is conceived as training in a discipline. Embracing a discipline entails intensive work within a subject sufficiently broad to allow a grasp of the whole yet sufficiently defined to permit the hope of mastery in the course of a life's work. In this connection mastery ought to be understood not as conquest but as confident knowledge proceeding from a settled dedication like the understanding achieved by a long married couple. The confidence of having chosen a discipline combines with the modesty of recognizing that one has made only a beginning in possessing it. Confident modesty affords
a good spirit with which to greet the challenges of leadership.

Every act of leadership not simply arbitrary makes appeal to some authority beyond itself, and for Western man the two sources of guidance in the direction of human affairs have been Reason and divine Revelation. What are most worthy of being preserved of our civilization are products of reasoning or of faith. Yet perhaps the one thing we are charged most with preserving is that highest form of conversation wherein the participants are intelligence speaking on behalf of nature meeting intelligence speaking under the guidance of faith. By virtue of its Catholic character the University of Dallas acknowledges a special dedication to providing a setting where this conversation may thrive. Catholicism founds itself upon revelation while fostering the endeavors of intellectuals seeking to grasp the relationship between revealed truth and natural wisdom.

A mutually instructive exchange between principles of nature and supernature constitutes the Catholic intellectual tradition. The University of Dallas undertakes to continue that tradition by providing a center of learning in which students may follow the ways of nature to their completion in grace.